The Ultimate Super Mage

by Dean Shomshak

HERO PLUS™

The Ultimate Super Mage™

Version 1.0

by Dean Shomshak

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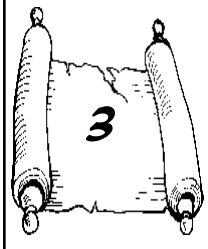

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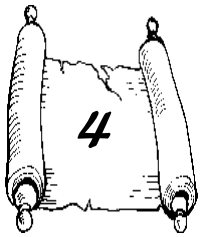

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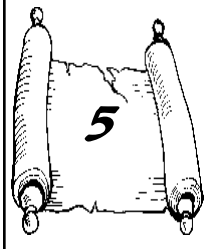

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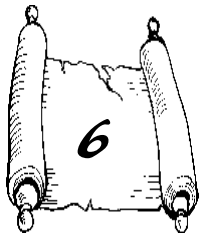
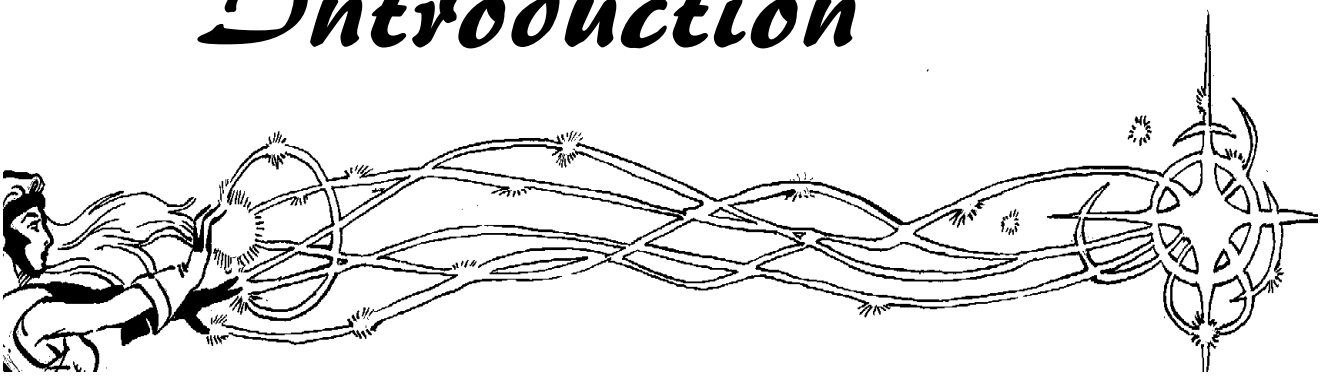


Introduction



Only the impossible has any real charm. All things that can happen have been vulgarized by happening too often.

— Clark Ashton Smith

Strange dimensions of myth and magic, where legends are real and humanity a dream…

Mighty rituals, talismans and incantations to command all the powers of Heaven and Earth…

Sinister demons, foulness incarnate, scheming to corrupt the souls of mortals…

A secret world of wizards and gods, battling for the destiny of mankind…

This is the world of the superheroic mage—the Super-Mage! Welcome to The Ultimate Supermage, or USM for short, another book in Hero Games' "Ultimate" series of source books exploring different comic-book archetypes. Although the super-mage has never been an especially common archetype in the comics, it is one of the oldest: indeed, the very first comic-book hero to wear a gaudy costume was a magician called Dr. Occult.

USM is not the Hero System's first exploration of comic-book magicians and their adventures. Back in 1989, there was *Mystic Masters.* That book, however, is long out of print. Hence, USM. While this book owes some of its ideas to Mystic Masters, the author and Hero Games hope it goes beyond MM, and into a whole new realm. Still, thanks are due to Allen Varney, for taking the first steps down this path.

How To Use This Book

The Ultimate Supermage is a guide to creating magic-based characters and using them in Hero System campaigns. While the focus is on CHAMPIONS campaigning, the material in this book should be useful in any genre involving sorcery and the supernatural.

USM is more than just characters and spells, though. Magical characters are defined less by game mechanics than by their style and milieu. Therefore, USM also describes the world of the wizard: the mystic dimensions, secret cults, artifacts, and forbidden lore. USM is not complete. No guide to the Magical World ever could be. USM is just a beginning. With help from USM, GMs can create a Magical World for their own campaigns. The dimensions, schools of magic and other background material in USM can be taken whole into one's campaign, as a basis for further developments; or the USM material can be used as a pattern and example for creating one's own milieu for adventures of modern-day magic.

Although some parts of USM can easily be used without reference to the rest of the book, GMs really should read the entire book before they try using the material herein. The Magical World is all interconnected. Unfortunately, it was not practical to publish USM in hypertext. References back and forth have been kept to a minimum. Sometimes this means repeating what has been said in another chapter. So be it. It is better to be repetitive than to be obscure. If any term remains mysterious, there is a glossary in the back of the book.

One can use USM, then, in several ways. It is most valuable if one wants to run a campaign that centers around magical heroes. Many sorts of magic-based characters are described, including special types of villains for magical campaigns. One can also use USM to add magic to a regular superhero campaign. Players may want to play a supermage in a regular campaign. GMs can get ideas for magical villains and adventures, as a change of pace from more worldly villains.

A Personal Disclaimer

Magic is unusual among super-powers in that many people believe it actually exists. Nobody thinks there really are people flying around in powered armor, or mutants who fire energy beams from their eyes, or people who became super-strong from exposure to radiation. While the martial arts are "really real," even their greatest enthusiasts can tell the difference between unusual but real abilities (like breaking bricks) and pure legend (like bouncing bullets). Thousands of people, however, seriously claim that they can do real magic: that they can read minds, summon spirits, tell

Since we have a new format, we have a new look for two old stand-bys.

The Magnifying Glass Icon has been replaced by a Caution Sign.

The Stop Sign Icon is new and colorful.

These symbols will help you quickly spot things to watch out for.

the future, and do other miracles. Billions of people—a large fraction of humanity—believe in evil spirits and witchcraft. Writing a source book about magic-based adventures, then, becomes a ticklish operation, for people's beliefs about magic are strongly tied to their beliefs about religion.

Because of this, I would like to make one thing perfectly clear. The magic described in this book is not real. In fact, magic itself is not real. There are no real wizards casting real spells: it's all a delusion. Yes, some of the material in USM is based on authentic magical beliefs, but it has all been greatly changed. Make-believe based on research is still make-believe. The fact is, the "real" occult is un-gameable. Most of it is tedious. While searching for ideas worth stealing, I've read a lot of occult literature, from ancient grimoires to the latest New Agers, and I must say that some occultists are either half-wits or lunatics. They aren't very imaginative, either: after all the fancy talk about Divine Power and Cosmic Wisdom, few promise anything more novel than love-spells, good-luck charms, and a curse or two to give enemies bad luck. Oh yeah, and "visions": apparently, these guys haven't heard of television. It's rather sad that such threadbare stuff has such a grip on the human imagination. The make-believe magic in comic books and fantasy novels is much better than anything the occultists can offer.

So if your religion frowns on magic—don't worry. Nothing in this book can hurt you. It's no more real than the Land of Oz. And if you religion embraces magic, don't take offense at what you find here. And if you're looking for occult wisdom and magic power—sorry, not here. What did you expect? It's a game. Read the book anyway: you might improve your judgment.

Summary Of Contents

USM begins where every storyteller must begin: with characters. Chapter One discusses the various sorts of magic-based characters available. Actual mages receive the most attention, but spirits, mythological gods, and other sorts of characters are not ignored. The career path of the archetypal mage is described, as well as some mystic philosophies a mage might follow.

Chapter Two is devoted to expansions and clarifications of the ***HERO System*** rules. New Skills, Perks, Powers and Disadvantages are introduced, although as always each GM has final say on what is allowed in their campaign. Most notably, this chapter has a full discussion of a famous super-mage Power, the Astral Form.

Chapter Three covers an important aspect of the Magical World: other dimensions. Wizards often travel to other planes of existence in their adventures. Now GMs have places for them to go, with suggestions for designing universes of magic.

Chapter Four gets to the heart of the super-mage, with a look at magic itself. Several styles of magic are described in detail, with dozens of spells for each. The chapter continues with discussions of magic items and artifacts and the wizard's headquarters, the "Sanctum Sanctorum."

Chapter Five introduces the special, secret subculture of magic, the Occult World. Its peculiar inhabitants are described, from cultists to cosmic entities.

Chapter Six is the Source book, laden with villains, monsters, cults, and a complete alien dimension. This is no bald list of characters, though. Villains are presented as examples of classic villain types. The chapter concludes with several examples of magical heroes ready to play, including a revised version of Solitaire.

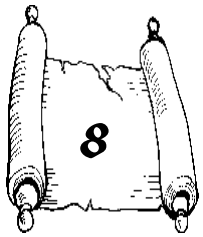
USM concludes with a glossary of arcane terms and a bibliography of inspirational reading.

Credit Where It's Due Dept.

Many people and books contributed ideas to USM, but I would like to make special mention of William Blake. You may wonder what a poet, artist and printer of the early 19th century has to do with comic-book wizards. Nothing, directly—but in his "Prophetic Books," Blake invented a really cool mythology as a way to explore mystical ideas. Both his mythology and his mysticism have been virtually ignored by fantasists. At most, a few writers have cribbed names from Blake's mythology while ignoring the ideas and principles they represent.

That's a real shame, because Blake's mythology was strikingly original and his insights sometimes profound. In adapting the "Four Zoas"—personifications of cosmic principles—into something that gamers could use I've had to change them a lot, but I hope Blake's central ideas have not been mangled too badly.

Blake deserves a nod for another reason too. The Prophetic Books were not just poems. Blake meant them to be read as he had printed them, with his own full-color illustrations on every page. They weren't comic books—but they were something close to it! Even Blake's style of art, with color added to printed drawings, was like a comic book. So who better to supply a mythology for a comic-book world? I am pleased to offer this small tribute to a neglected comic-book pioneer.



Chapter One:

Character Creation

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts…

—Shakespeare, As You Like It

Every story begins with characters. Super-Mage adventures are no different. The players need to create characters to play, of course, while the GM needs to create appropriate villains for them to face. This chapter addresses the fundamentals of creating magical heroes and villains.

One can begin anywhere when creating a character: an origin, a type of character, a power or set of powers, a role in a story, or even an appearance. Books, however, must be linear. We begin with a description of the major sorts of magical types suitable for Player Characters, each with a discussion of how to build them. The chapter continues with a discussion of origins and other traditional elements of the mage's career path, and concludes with a selection of mystical philosophies which wizards might follow.

What Is Magic?

Before anything else, however, it might be a good idea to get it straight just what magic is. Plenty of people, from occultists to sociologists, have offered definitions of magic, but they don't matter. The question is, what distinguishes magic from other sorts of super-powers? In this case, defining what magic is involves defining what it is not, and what a mage is and what a mage is not.

First, for humans magic is not an innate power. Spell casting is a skill, developed through training just like any other skill. Not everyone can do magic, but then, not everyone can write symphonies, solve the Rubik's Cube in 30 seconds, or keep a .400 batting average, either. Only a few people have the necessary talent in either case. Talent for magic may run in families, just like any talent, but there's no real genetic marker for magic any more than there is for playing the piano.

There is magic that doesn't involve spell casting, but this comes from supernatural beings such as demons or gods. All magic comes either from supernatural beings or spell casters. Magic weapons, for instance, are a form of stored magic: the magic was placed in the weapon by a spirit or a mage. A person can be enchanted to have magic powers: who did the enchanting? Even if the person got their powers from an accident with a magic artifact, who made the artifact? Eventually, the trail of magic leads back to an innately magical being or someone casting a spell.

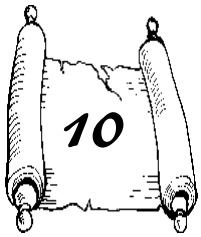
Second, the forces employed by magic have nothing to do with physical science. A scientist could examine a magic sword down to the subatomic level and find no reason why it glows and cannot be broken. That's not just real science either: even the greatest alien super-scientist would be equally at a loss. Magic can only be analyzed by magical means. A scientist could measure the voltage of a magical lightning bolt, but could not say where the current came from.

It's not hard to see why. Science manipulates matter and energy by manipulating other matter and energy. Magic works by manipulating symbols. As yet, science has not found any equation to calculate the number of kilowatt-hours in a sonnet or a painting. Any science that can make sense of magic will be a very strange science indeed.

What about psychic powers? Those seem like magic. A lot of magic duplicates psychic effects such as mind reading—and in the real world, ESP and suchlike "paranormal powers" are clearly just the old wine of magic in the new bottles of pseudoscience.

In most cases the difference is academic. Suffice it to say that if a character is defined as having learned mental powers, they are a mage. Mutants don't learn their powers, they just discover they have them.

So that's the essence of magic: making something happen by controlling mysterious forces (such as "force of will") through symbols. All the rest is just stage-dressing.



Magical Origins

Exalt thyself: be more than man.
Be saint or be magician,
And where the burning Sword awaits
Defy the old seraphic ban.

— Clark Ashton Smith, "Dominium in Excelsis"

The range of characters with magical or supernatural origins is quite wide. This work focuses on real wizards, as the type of hero and villain least like the "generic super," but at least some attention must be paid to other sorts, as the origin types have a fair bit of overlap.

In the magical community, some origins carry more prestige than others. Real mages enjoy pointing out that users of magic items or magically-empowered people are "not real wizards." Supernatural creatures may be entitled to respect since they embody the power that wizards use, but woe betide the upstart who merely bears an enchantment or carries a magic item yet claims to be a wizard! Many a mage, hero or villain, will take the trouble to demonstrate—graphically—that a few powers do not a wizard make.

Scholar-mages and priest-mages don't get along, either. Priests think they are better than scholar-magicians because they serve a god. Scholar-mages think they are better than priests because they don't serve a god. Unfortunately, becoming a wizard does not cure one of human nature.

True Mages

Somewhere, somehow, the true mage learned to cast spells. Strictly speaking, a true mage has no innate powers, only very unusual skills. Because of a mage's special knowledge and training, they can control energies unknown to most people—whether personal psychic powers or mystic energies channeled from trans-cosmic gods. Mages fall into three general categories: scholar-mages; wild talents and "mad mages"; and priests, pacters and Servants of Higher Powers.

The *Champions* Universe already has several examples of scholar-mages, including the superheroes Solitaire and Dr. Wraithe (from *To Serve And Protect*), and the supervillain Demonologist.

The *Champions* Universe also has several priest-magicians, shamans and witches. Zuvembie (*Enemies: The International File*), Rashindra Etien (*Classic Organizations*) and Tarot (*Murderer's Row*) pursue the dark side of Voodoo. The Black Druid (*European Enemies*) rules the forces of nature worshipped by his ancient faith. Granny Hex (*Creatures Of The Night*) is a modern-day witch. Nether (*European Enemies*) heads a pagan witch-coven, but her magic shows no obvious connection to the natural powers revered by the "Old Religion." Her cool, precisely subvocalized spells suggest a scholar-mage.

Before the present work, however, the CHAMPIONS Universe had no magic-users whose powers obviously grew from sheer delusional belief, or any wild talents.

Scholar-Mages

Among mages, the most "respectable" way to gain magic power is through long study of mystic lore. This is really all anyone needs to become a wizard, although as with nuclear physics, poetry and other intellectual disciplines, few people have the talent to be really good at it. Truly powerful scholar-mages tend to be elderly: in fact, they might be centuries old, using their magic to stave off their own aging. Gaining and keeping magic power through scholarship demands years of training in meditation, visualization and other mental disciplines.

Although scholar-mages gain power more slowly than other sorts of sorcerers, they can gain the greatest flexibility in the long run. What's more, their power comes with fewer strings attached.

Scholar-mages range from mystics seeking spiritual advancement, who regard the powers they gain as unnecessary distractions, to power-hungry warlocks eager to rule the world. Many scholar-mages are introverted intellectuals who use their powers neither for good nor evil, and just want to be left alone to continue their research.

Characteristics

A scholar-mage's power depends on mental ability and discipline, and their Characteristics typically reflect this. STR is not very important for mages. They can be lighter than most superheroes on PD, ED and STUN, too. Comic-book wizards like Dr. Strange and John Constantine have been cold-cocked by ordinary thugs with blackjacks. Mages rely on magical defense, not innate toughness.

Which is not to say they can't display great endurance. Mages do weird yoga meditations for hours, work around the clock researching a demon lord's name, and then pop off to a battle in Polkadot Hell without even grabbing a sandwich first. CON, REC and END could actually be pretty good, at least by normal human standards. Mages may be intellectuals, but PCs at least should have the fortitude to go toe-to-toe with the bad guys next to the mutants, martial artists and other heroes.

A good DEX and SPD are also a good idea for PC sorcerers, so they can dish out damage as fast as their colleagues and avoid damage from their enemies. Here, however, players and GMs have a free hand, depending on their conception of a character's magic. If spell casting is assumed to happen at literally the speed of thought—wish it and bang, it happens—DEX could be very high, like a martial artist's. If, on the other hand, one decides that a sorcerer has to chant some magic words and that can be done only so fast, then DEX might be comparatively low. That's not necessarily bad. After all, characters with lower than average SPD and DEX can free up quite a few points for more and better Powers and Skills.

Mental characteristics form the cornerstone of the archetypal mage. INT is vital: mages tend to emphasize INT-based skills. EGO is important too, to reflect general mental discipline and to get ECV for mental powers. A high PRE reflects a sorcerer's willpower, ability to face Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, and the well-documented, real-world charisma that comes from confidence, power and will. Socially inept sorcerers might buy PRE with the -1 Limitation, "Only for Defense."

Of course these rules can have exceptions. There's no reason why a scholar-mage couldn't also be a barbell boy, putting his strength at the upper end of what's humanly possible. Elder sages, the sort who can simultaneously be a PC mage's teacher and DNPC, might have kick-ass magic but be so slow and fragile that they dare not enter combat at all. Some mages might not be extraordinarily intelligent or strong-willed; these would have to be either extraordinarily patient and hard-working to gain their magic, or use some of the "shortcuts" described in the Disadvantages section below. Such a lack of innate talent might explain why a mage turns to evil: they see stealing artifacts, sacrificing virgins and cutting deals with terrible Powers and Principalities as a way to get more magical power.

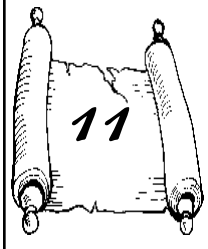
Skills

Magical and general scholastic skills are as important for scholar-mages as the GM wants them to be. Every scholar-mage should have at least a Knowledge Skill about magic, and maybe some more Knowledge Skills such as "Occult Lore," "Legends," "Great Wizards," "Spirits," or occult specialties like "Demonology," "Alchemy" or "Astrology." Mages who can travel to other dimensions should probably take the new "Dimensional Navigation" skill and KS: Other Dimensions, unless they really like getting lost. "Fake magic" skills such as Sleight of Hand can be useful too.

Other skills are pure gravy after the magical and scholastic skills are taken care of. Physical skills such as Climbing or Breakfall are fine if the character can afford them. A Professional Skill can represent the character's life before or apart from magery. At least a few miscellaneous skills help define a mage as a unique character, instead of just another wizard.

Talents

Mental Talents such as Cramming, Eidetic Memory and Speed Reading are very appropriate for scholar-mages. Combat Talents like Combat Sense or Find Weakness can reflect exceptional skill at spell combat, or a Zen-like mystic awareness of one's environment and opponent.



Powers

The only innate powers a pure scholar-mage will have are very minor powers that can be the result of training, such as extra Running or Mental Defense. In particular, innate resistant defenses are right out. There's no logical reason why scholar-mages shouldn't cast spells on themselves to give themselves innate powers; sorcerers in the comics just never do it, that's all, and whether one accepts the genre conventions or not is one's own business.

Powers bought as spells form the core of the scholar-mage and other mage types. This is such a big part of the whole mage character archetype that it gets a whole chapter to itself. In brief summary, however, scholar-mages are notable for the wide range of powers they can use, and their use of Mental Powers and even more unusual ranged attacks.

Scholar-mages may supplement their innate spell powers with magic items. These can merely be Foci to cut the cost of powers, or be potent Independent artifacts of elder wizardry. It's important to remember, though, that a scholar-mage shouldn't be completely helpless if they lose their Foci: the essence of scholar-mages is their knowledge, not their hardware.

Disadvantages

Scholar-mages follow a distinctive style in their Disadvantages as well. Psychological Limitations and social limitations—Hunteds, Watcheds, Rivalries, and DNPCs—are as important for mages as for any other sort of hero. The "physical" Disadvantages, however—Physical Limitations, Dependencies, Vulnerabilities, and Susceptibilities—require special versions such as Vows and Prohibitions (described in the "Disadvantages" section of chapter 2). Mages can also accept a Magic Restriction (again, see next chapter) to represent the restrictions of their training.

Wild Talents And Mad Mages

A few people are born with fantastic aptitude for difficult fields—like Mozart writing symphonies when he was five years old. Once in a while a child is born with a humungous natural talent for magic, and they learn how to do it all by themselves. These are Wild Talents. Eventually, Wild Talents usually attract the attention of trained mages. If the Wild Talent is lucky, a responsible wizard will agree to teach the Wild Talent how to develop their full potential. (Since Wild Talents often become the greatest mages, teaching one carries a fair bit of prestige.) If the Wild Talent isn't lucky, someone will either jealously try to kill them or greedily try to exploit them.

Lunatics can become very Wild Talents. Raw belief has power in magic, and the mad may get special insights denied to the sane. A loony with even a slight natural aptitude for magic might learn to cast spells without knowing it. It's nearly impossible to wean such Mad Mages from their madness, however, because they magically produce evidence to support their delusions! While Wild Talent lunatics might get power without any knowledge of formal magic whatsoever, they seldom go beyond the powers set by their delusions. Still, playing a total nut—who magically makes his delusions real—can be a lot of fun.

Wild Talents are not too different from scholar-mages, but they may specialize in peculiar ways. Think of a wizard whose spells all involve food, or who plays his spells on an electric guitar. Mad Mages are even harder to generalize about: practically by definition, they are all sui generis, with selections of powers based on their individual delusions.

Characteristics

Like scholar-mages, Mad Mages and Wild Talents tend to be physically normal in most ways, compared to other superheroes (unless part of a Mad Mage's delusion happens to included super-strength or something like that). Unlike scholar-mages, they don't have to be especially intelligent or strong-willed. Although many child prodigies become Renaissance men who are good at anything they try, this isn't universal. Many brilliant scientists, artists, poets and musicians are as stupid as the rest of us outside their specialties.

Skills

Magic-related skills are all not appropriate for a Wild Talent or Mad Mage, at least in the beginning. The whole point of these archetypes is that they don't know what they're doing. They literally don't know what they know!

Magic-faking skills and scholastic skills are inappropriate for the same reason—at least in large numbers. There's no reason why a Wild Talent shouldn't know something about the conventional occult, for instance, or why a Mad Mage couldn't be good at Ventriloquism. They just don't acquire such skills systematically.

Other skills are chosen just as for any other hero or villain, to fit the character's background or simply to give abilities the player wants the character to have.

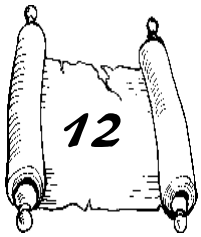
Skill Enhancers become unnecessary for characters who aren't going to have masses of Knowledge, Language or other such skills.

Perks

"Resource" perks such as Headquarters, a Vehicle, or Followers are unlikely, even if they aren't forbidden. Wealth might explain why a Wild Talent or Mad Mage has the time and freedom to develop their peculiar talents, but isn't necessary: the world is full of eccentrics living on modest incomes. In fact, Poverty (as a Disadvantage) seems like it could be quite common among Mad Mages, whose insanity could make it hard for them to earn a living.

Contacts, Favors, and miscellaneous Fringe Benefits are as open to Wild Talents and Mad Mages as to any other hero or villain.

The Initiate perk is not appropriate for Wild Talents. If they were part of an occult order, after all, they wouldn't be self-taught. Mad Mages aren't likely even



to be allowed in the door at most occult groups, even if they wanted to join, but they might head their own weird little groups (such as the Church Electric mentioned in Chapter 5.)

Talents

Any of the Talents are quite appropriate for these self-taught wizards, as minor magical knacks they have developed along with their more spectacular powers.

Powers

Innate Powers are just as inappropriate for Mad Mages and Wild Talents as for scholar-mages. They have spells, not powers. On the other hand, their magic might not show the usual traits of spell casting—no arcane gestures, cabalistic words or brandished talismans. For Mad Mages in particular, the spells might look like innate powers. Only examination by a magical specialist could tell the difference. On the other hand, a Mad Mage's powers might be so peculiar that they don't even register as magic!

Spells could be just about anything, but to keep the distinctive ambiance of magic they should probably be rather peculiar—at least with an unusual, "mystical" special effect. Wild Talents and Mad Mages could have really weird special effects!

Magic Items should be very personal: Foci for the character's powers, rather than true magic items any sorcerer could use. While there's no reason why a self-taught wizard couldn't have acquired a magical object, or even an Independent artifact, the whole point of these characters is the quirky magic they invented themselves. At least, such magic items shouldn't dominate the character.

As with scholar-mages, Multipowers and Elemental Controls are highly valuable. Variable Power Pools are right out: Power Pools should be the hallmark of supremely learned and expert mages or the mightiest of supernatural beings.

Disadvantages

Most of what goes for scholar-mages goes for Wild Talents and Mad Mages as well. Even Vows and Prohibitions are possible, except that no external power enforces them: they are purely psychosomatic. Mad Mages could unconsciously impose any sort of bizarre weakness on themselves.

Priests, Pacters, & Servants of Higher Powers

Most wizards invoke powerful supernatural entities in their spells. This doesn't imply any special reverence, or even belief in the entities named. Names of Power are just another tool in the sorcerer's kit. Some mages, however, seek a closer and stronger relationship to the Great Powers of the Multiverse. Depending on the nature of the relationship, these mages become Priests, Pacters, or Servants of Higher Powers.

Magic and religion have always been bound together like Siamese twins. Shamans, voodoo houngans, pagan witches and other such sorts might back up their religious beliefs with half-understood magic. Again, their raw power can be quite formidable, but priest-magicians are limited to what their religion considers possible and acceptable for priests.

Priest-magicians tend to belong to so-called "pagan" or "primitive" religions, or else worship extra-dimensional "gods" divorced from any Earthly religious context. The widespread "great" religions like Christianity and Buddhism disapprove of sorcery. The Judeo-Christian-Islamic complex, for instance, regards all magic (except exorcism, faith healing and speaking in tongues) as morally suspect if not actively Satanic, even though these religions gave the framework for kabbalism and demonology. Orthodox Buddhism suggests that as one moves toward enlightenment and nirvana one might develop various magical powers, but these powers are a distraction which one should ignore. All the "great" religions, however, spin off small heretical cults which may be intensely magic-oriented. Some cultic guru-leaders might back up their charisma with magic.

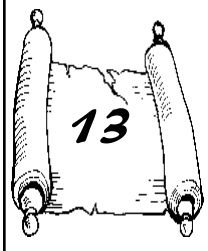
A priest-magician's "god" could be an actual god from mythology, a demon lord or other spirit, an extra-dimensional tyrant, a cosmic conceptual entity or a powerful elder sorcerer. The god could even be a figment of the priest's imagination, making the priest also a Mad Mage. Note that the "god" may lie about its identity: a priest may think he receives his powers and marching orders from Jesus Christ when actually his "god" is a loathsome demon or a dimensional conqueror disguised by illusion.

Priest-magicians are not quite the same as Pacters or Servants of Higher Powers. Pacters and Servants tend to have a more professional relationship with their quasi-divine masters, while priests feel more reverence. Pacters cold-bloodedly cut a deal with some Lord of Evil for power: buy now, pay later. As in become the entity's slave and plaything for all eternity. For the moment, Pacters serve just enough to keep their master happy. Servants of Higher Powers tend to feel that their employers have more worthy goals. The cosmic entity gives them greater magical powers to make them more effective troubleshooters.

The baseline priest, Pacter, or Servant of higher powers is still essentially a mage, but their spells are tied up with their service to a greater entity. Their patron may be able to revoke their ability to cast spells. Patrons may grant innate powers to their Servants as well, making this class overlap with Bearers of Enchantment (q.v.) This is particularly common with Pacters, who may want physical superiority in addition to greater magical power.

Characteristics

These are like scholar-mages, for the most part. Priests are notable for having a high PRE to fuel their communications skills. On the other hand, a high INT isn't as important.



Skills

Magic-related skills should be quite limited for priests, Pacters, and Servants of Higher Powers. They have a god to teach them spells, so they don't need Spell Research or other theory-oriented Skills. On the other hand, priests at least will certainly have Knowledge Skills related to their worship, such as "Cult Dogma" or "Legends." Pacters and Servants of Higher Powers may have Knowledge Skills related to their patrons, and a general skill "KS: Cosmic Entities."

Magic-faking skills, however, are quite common among priest-magicians. Even cult leaders with plenty of real power might prefer using tricks to impress the yokels, instead of sullying their sacred powers with such ignoble uses. Pacters and Servants of Higher Powers don't need them so much.

A priest, Pacter or Servant's physical competence depends on what the player and/or GM want. In particular, evil high priests fight with hysterical fury when cornered. They are also very good at sneaking into places and escaping when their plans are thwarted, so Combat Levels and Skills such as Stealth, Climbing, Concealment and Breakfall can be quite appropriate. Pacters may receive extra physical competence from their patrons, and fight as furiously as evil high priests: their masters do not approve of failure…

Communication Skills are where priests really shine. Oratory is practically a given, to keep the cultist Followers hepped up. Priests might also be skilled at debate (Persuasion), sounding people out (Conversation)—or torturing captured infidels for information (Interrogation). Servants of Higher Powers, on the other hand, adopt a more mysterious and low-key demeanor. Pacters often try to keep their occult connections completely secret; Acting is good for this.

Any other Skills are purely up to the player or GM. Skill Enhancers are as useful as always.

Perks

Headquarters and Followers are common "resource" Perks for literal priests (no surprise there), and most have the Initiate Perk. High-ranking priests in sizable sects might have Wealth, but usually this is subsumed in their Initiate Perk of rank (described in the next chapter). Priest-magicians, Pacters, and Servants alike often have whopping Contacts in the persons of their gods. Cult superiors or the leaders of allied cults are other possible Contacts.

Talents

Only one Talent deserves special mention. Universal Translator can represent the "gift of tongues," the legendary talent of a holy apostle to speak the language of whoever they meet—obviously a useful talent when one is spreading the One True Faith in exotic foreign lands.

Powers

Innate powers could be granted by a deity to their favorite priests, Pacters or Servants. In folklore, evil magicians (who are often pacters as well) share a special talent with ogres and their ilk, of making themselves unkillable by removing their heart and hiding it in some secret place.

As for spells, the priest-magician might believe that their magical power comes directly from their god—"God does it, I just ask"—and the spells might have been taught by the god, but the priests still essentially just cast spells. They may have a few funny Limitations. Casting a spell in a consecrated temple may count as all or part of the Variable Limitations on a spell, for instance.

Priestly magic tends to emphasize ritual. Even if the spell itself only takes the usual attack's half Phase to cast, it may well employ Foci from religious ritual, such as holy water or the deity's symbol. Power Frameworks are still common, but Multipowers may have fewer slots (depending on how wide a range of magic the god allows to its priests). Power Pools are completely inappropriate.

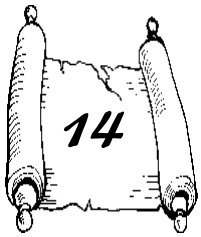
Pacters and Servants, on the other hand, may get to use very stripped-down, combat-effective magic. Pacters just don't want to be bothered with a lot of work in casting spells, and the cosmic kahunas expect to send their minions into dangerous situations where getting off the first spell is a matter of survival. Servants of Higher Powers thus often use High Magic (see Chapter 4).

Note that demon pacters seldom develop much power beyond what the demon gives them. They were too impatient to learn all the fundamentals of real spell casting, after all, and now the demon keeps them too busy for deep studies. Finally, demon magic often carries persnickety conditions and serious limitations on its use, with really nasty side effects for breaking the rules. For all these reasons, scholar-mages insist that deals with demons (or other Lords of Evil such as the Kings of Edom) aren't just wicked, they're downright stupid.

Magic items, both enchanted Foci and Independent artifacts, are common. Artifacts were usually made long ago by the patron god.

Disadvantages

Vows and Prohibitions are almost de rigeur. Gods are finicky about how their followers act, and the more a god invests in a particular follower, the more conditions they impose. Many priests might carry just one large Vow, "Deuteronomy"—a collection of mandatory rituals and taboos which are individually easy to live with but which add up into fairly strict limits on the character's behavior. Real-world religious taboos include dietary restrictions (Hinduism's are amazingly complex), mandatory prayer at specific times several times a day (as in Islam), and never cutting one's hair (Sikhism). Following a "Deuteronomy" might even be worth a Distinctive Features Disadvantage as well as a Susceptibility or Physical Limitation. Pacters and Servants get more freedom: as long as they do their job, their patron seldom asks for much more.



Naturally, priests, Pacters, and Servants get a whopping big Watched. They might be Hunted by an enemy cult or servants of rival powers as well.

Priests and Pacters should also take a Psychological Limitation representing their devotion to their god or religion; depth of commitment may vary.

Physical Disadvantages such as Vulnerabilities, Dependence, Physical Limitations, and so on are pretty hard to justify except as Vows or Prohibitions. Some priests, Pacters, and Servants might take a Conditional Distinctive Features from the taint of their god's mystical energies.

Pacters carry a special Physical Limitation: "Damned." Contrary to folklore, it's very difficult to cheat a demon lord: they are experts at contract law. Breaking the terms of a contract usually gives the demon legal grounds to carry the pacter off to Hell right away. In game terms, this is a 15 point Physical Limitation, acting Infrequently but Totally Limiting.

Occult Investigators

The "occult investigator" is one of the most enduring occult hero types, from William Hope Hodgson's Carnacki the Ghost-Breaker to DC Comics' John Constantine. This classic hero type ranges from occultists with no powers but their knowledge, nerve and wits to supernatural mystery-men whose powers leave even superheroes' jaws dropping in amazement. Occult investigators usually lack hard-hitting magic able to pound enemies into submission. They employ subtler tactics such as detective work (to find an occult creature's weaknesses), trickery, ritual magic and—when all else fails—manipulating other heroes into doing the dirty work. While occult investigators fit better in heroic-level campaigns (especially in *JUSTICE, INC.)* a high-end occult investigator can make an unusual guest star for a superhero campaign, and they settle comfortably into moodier all-magician campaigns.

Occult investigators specialize in street-level supernatural menaces such as ghosts, vampires and cultists. In fact, not all of their opponents are magical: an important part of an occult investigator's job is determining whether what's going on is really supernatural. Is Old Widow Fielding's house really haunted, for instance, or is her evil nephew trying to drive her crazy to get her money? On the other hand, what seems like a minor poltergeist or cult guru can turn out to be just the tip of a very large and nasty iceberg: Elder Gods, ancient curses, the End of Life As We Know It, that sort of thing.

Fortunately, the opponents of occult investigators tend to have Achilles Heels commensurate with their power, so a small nudge at the right moment can bring a massive evil plan crashing down. For a typical example, suppose a powerful cult plans to open a Gate to a horrible, nameless Nether-Verse and let the Dread Annihilator come to Earth. A four-color sorcerer would have to fight the Dread Annihilator. An occult investigator would discover the weakness in the cult's plan and prevent the Annihilator from arriving at all: say, by shooting the alien crystal that powers the Gate, or by resetting the cult's clock so they miss the once-a-century alignment when the Gate can open, or even using the force of the cult's ritual to summon a rival god to battle the Annihilator. Of course, if the villains' plot doesn't have such a weakness, that's a good reason for an occult investigator to team up with four-color wizards and other superheroes…

Finally, one curious feature of occult investigators is that they don't wear superhero-style costumes. In comics at least, their most common forms of garb are trench coats and formal evening wear.

Until this work, no classic occult investigators have appeared in the Champions Universe.

Characteristics

Occult investigators generally don't have any really superhuman Characteristics; physically, they are on par with extra-competent agents or street-level vigilantes. *Dark Champions* has many suggestions about creating such characters.

Skills

Occult investigators really shine in this department. Detective-style Skills are every bit as important as magic-related skills. Combat and physical Skills such as Breakfall or Combat Driving make a lot of sense too. Martial arts can help compensate for their comparative weakness compared to super-sorcerers and supernatural entities.

Perks

Occult investigators usually operate on a slender resource base. While Headquarters, Vehicles and Wealth are not impossible, they are not very traditional. A traditional detective's partner could be a Follower. On the other hand, an occult investigator could have plenty of Contacts and Favors; it might even be worth while to buy Well Connected for the character. Initiate or minor Fringe Benefits such as a private investigator's license or a concealed weapons permit make sense, too.

Talents

Most of the Talents are quite appropriate for Occult Investigator characters; a few of the Talents themselves border on magic.

Powers

Occult Investigators don't rely entirely on Skills. First, they may have "non-power Powers" like those described in *Dark Champions* or *The Ultimate Martial Artist,* developed through training. Super-stealthy movement (limited Invisibility or Teleport), immunity to pain through force of will (Damage Reduction), or super-disguise (Shape Shift) are typical examples.

While occult investigators can have magic, it won't be very flashy. Some occult investigators gain unearthly

powers through occult studies, like any normal mage. Others are Wild Talents whose powers manifest after some weird event such as a near-death experience or meeting with a spirit. Most occult investigator spells overlap a lot with psychic powers: "spells" to read minds, dominate wills, and the like. In fact, their powers might be innate psychic talents (in pulp fiction, the line between ESP and magic often blurs to nonexistence). Dispelling magicks and exorcisms are common too, although these tend to be lengthy rituals difficult to use in combat. Superhero-level occult investigators might cast powerful illusions, visit the astral dimensions or even travel through time—they just can't use these in combat.

Any psychic bolts or similar attack spells may take so much energy that carrying more worldly ordnance makes a lot of sense. Just because they are mystics doesn't mean occult investigators can't also shop through *Soldier of Fortune* or *Guns and Ammo,* making them even more like *Dark Champions* characters. A low-power magic item would not be out of place, either.

Disadvantages

Like true mages, most "physical" Disadvantages are quite inappropriate for occult investigators; they're just guys with skills, after all. On the other hand, one comic featured a vampire hunter who was crippled and confined to a wheelchair. A single physical Disadvantage can do a lot to make an occult investigator more interesting, as long as it grows naturally from the character's past. For instance, an occult investigator might be under a curse (a Vulnerability, Susceptibility, Dependence, or even Unluck) from a demon, and now hunts demons to pay them back. Some occult investigators may have incurred Vows and Prohibitions as part of their training.

Since occult investigators are often professional hunters of supernatural evil, those evils tend to strike back at the investigator: they do have Hunteds. An occult investigator might also be Watched by the local police. An experienced investigator might have a Reputation too, and not necessarily a good one. Word might have gotten around, for instance, that a certain occult investigator tends to abandon his friends to save his own skin. A DNPC or two helps round out the occult investigator's roster of social Disadvantages.

As always, Psychological Limitations are vital to define the character's core.

Spirits And Spirit Hybrids

I do believe in spooks, I do believe in spooks, I do I do I do I do I do believe in spooks…

—The Wizard of Oz

Spirits are one of the broadest classes of magical entities. They include angels and demons, ghosts, elementals, and many other types of beings. They are not made of matter in the normal sense, for their natural habitats are on the Astral Plane and its related dimensions, but some of them can assume a solid form on Earth.

Except for ghosts, spirits often personify states of mind or matter. Elementals, for instance, personify the classical "elements" of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water; other states of matter such as Ice, Dryness, or even Vacuum can have elementals as well. Demons (in all their varieties around the world) embody human ideas of Evil. Judeo-Christian-Islamic Angels (and their analogs in other cultures) express ideas of Goodness. The less familiar Atavisms personify emotions and physical drives. Finally, GMs may define their own original spirits personifying other abstractions, such as Chaos, Nature or Justice; a "Spirit of Vengeance" has had a very popular comic of late.

There are also spirit hybrids—the combination of a spirit's powers with a human body. One way for spirit hybrids to happen is possession, in which the spirit inhabits a human body and grants its host magical powers. A spirit might get fused to its human host so thoroughly that it cannot leave. This usually happens because of some enchantment (accidental or deliberate) on the human host. Finally, a person might have a materialized spirit for a parent and inherit that spirit type's powers. Spirit hybrids have a good excuse for putting "Only in Hero ID" on most of their powers and characteristics.

For the most part, spirit hybrids and permanently materialized spirits can be treated as straightforward superheroes and villains. These notes chiefly concern their differences.

General Discussion

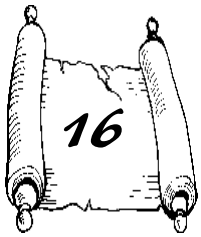
All the types of spirits are similar enough that there's no point in giving each type its own discussion of Characteristics, Skills, and so on. Instead, a single discussion will suffice for all, with notes about their differences under the description of each type of spirit.

Characteristics

Spirits may have superhuman strength, dexterity, constitution, or other Characteristics, but few types of spirits have really spectacularly superhuman primary Characteristics. On the other hand, many spirits have high PD and ED, to reflect that they are made of "ectoplasm" rather than normal matter.

Skills

This just isn't a skill-intensive archetype. Some simple-minded types of spirits, such as elementals, really shouldn't have any Skills except for combat levels. Spirits don't need the sorts of Skills that wizards do, because spirits don't do magic, they are magic. Which is not to say that a spirit can't have all sorts of Skills—it's just that these will be unusual spirits. Any PC spirit, of course, is already unusual by definition!



Perks

All the Perks are highly implausible for spirits. Few spirits could ever get a chance to acquire any Perks that would have meaning on Earth. Demon lords, for instance, have quite an elaborate hierarchy of ranks, but a demon's rank of Marquis, Duke, or Prince won't get him much on Earth—even in those countries where a noble title still means anything. *Burke's Peerage* doesn't cover the Descending Hierarchy. Likewise, spirits hardly ever get to own property or build organizations of Followers.

Talents

A few of these, on the other hand, work quite well. Consider, for instance, Bump of Direction: have you ever heard of an angel getting lost? Or Simulate Death: that ghost doesn't have to simulate! Feisty spirits such as warrior-demons could have any of the combat-oriented Talents such as Combat Sense or Defensive Maneuver.

Universal Translator deserves special mention. One hardly ever hears of language barriers between humans and any type of spirits. (In fact, the only case known to the author is a legend that Satan cannot tempt the Basque people of the Pyrenees: their unique language is so difficult that even the Devil can't learn it.) On the other hand, few spirits in stories or legends actually speak multiple languages. While Universal Translator makes sense for some cosmopolitan spirits, one can assume that most spirits just automatically speak their summoner's language, or the language of the region where they hang out.

Powers

Naturally most of a spirit's powers should be fully innate. A few spirits might also know spells; for instance, demonic patrons of black magic, or the ghost of a sorcerer. Powers bought through Foci should be quite rare. The whole point of a spirit character, after all, is that it is a creature of pure magic and doesn't need the "props" used by mortals.

As always with magical characters, Multipowers are so useful there seems no reason to build a spirit without one. Elemental Controls should be generously interpreted: an "Elemental Control: Spirit Powers" could hold all manner of mental and magical effects in addition to obvious powers such as Desolidification or Flight.

In particular, GMs should be generous about allowing some of the Special Powers in Elemental Controls. Virtually every spirit, for instance, should have some sort of Life Support—they just aren't bothered by many things which harm mortals, and Life Support can be quite expensive considering how seldom it becomes important.

Just because spirits are innately magical, however, doesn't mean they can have Variable Power Pools. Traditionally, spirits also have a narrow set of powers. Very few spirits should ever have any sort of Power Pool.

Disadvantages

Many spirits will have powerful Psychological Limitations. Legends and stories make clear that spirits often have very rigid, extreme personalities. In fact, many of them are flat-out crazy. Think of demons who have to be evil, or angels who have to obey the Divine Law every second, or a murder victim's ghost obsessively seeking vengeance. Even Berserks are not inappropriate for many spirits.

Spirits can have many "physical" sorts of Disadvantages as well. This author assumes that almost all summoned spirits have a Vulnerability to control spells and Presence Attacks from their summoner. Evil spirits traditionally suffer Susceptibilities to such things as sunlight or holy ground. Elementals have weaknesses based on the properties of the substance they embody. Each type of spirits' physical Disadvantages are discussed more fully below.

Morally aligned spirits, such as angels and demons, chaos spirits and so on, will be Hunted by their moral opposites. Other sorts of spirits don't have any automatic Hunted; individuals may have enemies, but not their class of spirits as a whole.

Demons

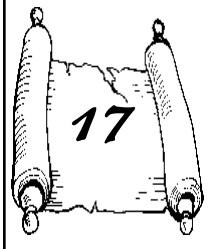
Naturally, demons usually function as villains. Any demon who isn't utterly vile will be a fluke, either cast out of Hell or on the run from other demons who want to destroy it for being "too nice." Demonic spirit hybrids, however, make wonderfully Gothic heroes, forever striving to stay human in spite of their demonic side.

Physically, demons are pretty tough: even without their magic powers, a lesser demon compares well to the usual VIPER-style super-agent, and a middle-ranking demon lord can match most supers. Few demons have very many skills, but some of the demon lords can have high skill rolls in their special fields of knowledge. Demons seldom have any perks that would mean anything on Earth, and the only talent that's at all common among demons is Universal Translator.

The magical powers of demons fall in the standard power range from agents to supers. depending on the demon's rank. Most demonic powers are innate: apparent Foci such as weapons or armor are usually just special effects. Multipowers are common.

It's fair to give demon lords an Elemental Control: Traditional Demon Powers, for legends are quite repetitive in describing what demons can do. Many of the greater demons are shape-changers or can dematerialize and turn invisible. They are hard to hurt by physical means and can fly or teleport. In the popular Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, demons are fiery beings, so fire-related powers could go in the Elemental Control as well. Demons should also have some exotic defenses such as Life Support, Mental Defense and Power Defense.

Demonic attacks vary widely, from the blatantly physical (i.e. claw or bite Killing Attacks) to the subtle and spiritual (such as using Telepathy and Mind Con-



trol to influence a person's actions). High-ranking demons have a Universal Transform power with which to grant pacters their desires.

Summoned demons always have a huge package of Vulnerabilities, Susceptibilities, and Physical Limitations: holy symbols intimidate and harm them, they can't cross the lines of a pentacle or attack anyone inside one, trespassing on holy ground snuffs a demon out in short order, and anything which violently disrupts their consciousness sends them back to Hell. By possessing a human, a demon can get around some of these Disadvantages, but not all. Demons also have massive Psychological Limitations such as "Treacherous," "Sadistic," or "Bloodthirsty." Many even have Berserks. In short, although demons are spirits of great power, they pay for it by equally great weaknesses.

Angels

Here we get into more sensitive territory. Classic Judeo-Christian-Islamic angels, being agents of God, aren't supposed to have limits—at least, no limits compared to mere mortals. One must assume either that angels are created with very finite power, or that any angel operating on Earth does so under severe restraints, either self-imposed or imposed by their Creator for whatever obscure reason he may have. Any angel spending a long time on Earth in material form is either on some special detached duty, or a goodhearted oddball whose willfulness is permitted for the moment.

A few other cultures have analogs to angels. The Zoroastrian religion has the Amschaspands and Yazatas, loyal followers of Ahura Mazda the Good Mind. Hinduism has the Devas, enemies of the demonic Asuras. In the last century, deva lore was picked up and amplified by the occult movement called Theosophy. Angels, yazatas, and Theosophical devas are pretty much the same in general, although they differ in their minute particulars.

Physically, the lesser angels don't have to be much beyond ordinary super-agents: Jacob was able to wrestle one, after all. They can range up to low superhuman characteristics. Their greatest emphasis is on their powers. The most traditional angelic powers involve light, such as Flashes and brilliant Energy Blasts or Killing Attacks with funky advantages such as NND, AVLD, or Based on ECV so they bypass most normal defenses. Dispel vs. Summon is also very appropriate, for casting demons back into Hell. Of course all angels have Flight.

Angelic Disadvantages are reversed forms of demonic Disadvantages. Most have Psychological Limitations such as "Total Honesty" or "Never Permits Deviation from Divine Law." Many angels are moral specialists with very limited ranges of behavior, so for instance an Angel of Mercy can never, ever fight while an Angel of Vengeance can never, ever let any sin go unpunished. (Just because angels are "good" doesn't mean they are all "nice.")

Angels are Susceptible to unholy ground, although they don't let that stop them from fulfilling their missions. They can be dispelled by being Stunned, knocked out or reduced to 0 BODY. They don't have Vulnerabilities to PRE Attacks under any circumstances, however, and there's no pentacle or other diagram that can keep them in or out.

Elementals

Elemental spirits embody states or types of matter. While Earth, Air, Fire and Water elementals are the best-known, in theory elementals could be evoked from any substance. In practice, most sorts of "exotic elementals" come from common, natural states such as mud, ice or smoke. So far, evoking elementals from man-made substances such as electricity, plastic, or smog remains a science in its infancy.

Elementals have lots of raw physical power and not much intelligence. They lack strong defenses against subtler magical attacks, however, and they are sitting ducks against mental powers. In game terms, they have some Power Defense and Life Support, but little or no Mental Defense. Each type of elemental has, naturally, an Elemental Control describing some of the powers it gets by virtue of its body substance: flight for air elementals, density increase for earth elementals, armor for any of them (their lack of internal structure makes them hard to damage) and so on. Elementals can occur in a wide range of power levels.

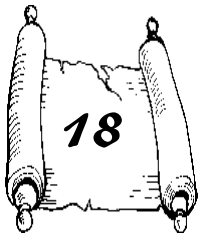
Like most spirits, normal elementals are Vulnerable to control by whoever summoned them, and they vanish if they are Stunned, unconscious or reduced to 0 BODY. Elementals are also cantankerous—a Berserk or two is appropriate. Most elementals have a Susceptibility or Vulnerability to opposing states of matter: earth elementals, for instance, must stay in contact with the ground; ice elementals take extra damage from fire.

Player character elementals don't have to use these Disadvantages—in particular, they can't be dispelled by a knockout punch! A few of these mystic Disadvantages, however, can help separate a PC elemental from all those other heroes and villains with "elemental" powers.

Atavisms

Atavisms embody strong emotions and raw, physical drives such as fear, desire, pleasure, pain, or hunger. Human thought spontaneously creates them on the Astral Plane; some sorcerers know how to summon them to Earth. Western Mainstream Occultism shies away from exploiting atavisms, but these very visceral spirits are well known to the priests, witch doctors, and shamans of tribal cultures, who often personify them as totem animals.

Atavisms are described in greater depth in the Source book section. While atavisms themselves are too mindless to make decent PCs, characters might gain powers through being fused to an atavism. Perhaps therianthropy (werewolves and other were-creatures) have some connection to atavisms.



Ghosts

Distinct from all these other types of spirits are ghosts. Many stories have been written about ghosts; a few ghosts have even starred in comic books.

Traditionally a dead person sticks around as a ghost either because of an exceptionally traumatic death, "unfinished business" from life and often both. The latter sort of ghost will "pass on" once its business gets taken care of. Traditional tasks include avenging its murder, getting its mortal remains buried in consecrated ground or passing a message to a loved one. On the other hand, some ghosts just hang around for centuries. Most ghosts only haunt a rigidly defined area, but a few can wander.

There are at least two ways to write up ghosts. First, they can be represented as having Persistent Desolidification and Invisibility. Alternatively, ghosts can be represented as dwelling on the Astral Plane and projecting attacks and Images of themselves to Earth. In the latter case, ghosts must receive special Disadvantages so that at least some kinds of attacks on the Image will affect the actual ghost. An opponent who can only be attacked through Transdimensional Powers is just too unfair!

Traditional ghostly attack forms include Telekinesis (for "poltergeists"), Mental Illusions, a "deathly touch" (which could be an Ego Attack, a Drain or what-have-you) and a kick-ass Presence Attack. A few ghosts can take over the bodies of the living. Players who want to play a ghost PC, take note: many ghostly powers cost lots of Active Points, making ghosts hard to fit into the standard 250 point range.

Mythological Gods

These really have very little of the true supernatural "feel," at least as they are usually presented in comics. They are an important part of the supernatural world, though, and may mingle with more occult sorts of heroes. Not only can mythological god superheroes team up with super-mages, wizard-heroes might visit the pocket dimensions where the pantheons live. Their chief point of interest, as far as the present work is concerned, is where they fit in the occult cosmos. In most other ways, they are just normal superheroes and supervillains.

Most comic-book universes seem to assume that all mythologies are true. So far, the Champions Universe has followed this assumption. The Greek pantheon has been published in a supplement of its own. The Norse pantheon has a reference in *Champions Universe*, while Thor appeared by himself in *Champions Presents* along with the Innua (Eskimo) pantheon. Each pantheon has its own pocket dimension. In this book, it is assumed that most of the various pantheons live in sections of the Land of Legends.

Having all mythologies be true, however, raises some sticky questions. Where do gods come from? Do the deeds of gods create the myths about them, or do the myths created by worshippers shape the characters of the gods? Do alien races have living gods? Why aren't all the old pantheons still recruiting worshippers? And the biggie: How to reconcile "All gods are true" with the Judeo-Christian-Islamic premise that "Only our God is true"? The mythologies are not compatible, to say the least. See Chapter Five, "The Occult World," for some suggestions on working mythological gods into a milieu.

Power Level

If mythological gods are freely available as PCs, then of course they should be built on the same point level as other PCs. If necessary, one can reduce costs using stratagems such as "Only in Hero ID" or permitting an "Elemental Control: God Powers." By wringing every last drop of efficiency from the Hero System, one can build a 250 Real Point character with 500-600 Active Points of real power. Even without such obsessive efficiency, though, a 250 point character would have seemed plenty "godlike" to simple folk in ancient times.

If, on the other hand, gods are assumed to be significantly more powerful than the usual 250 point superbeing, one can still assume that PC gods had their power reduced for some reason. The Hero ID Limitation is one option: the god is forced to live part of their life as a normal human. Perhaps when mythological gods leave their pocket dimensions they only keep their full power for a few hours before slipping down to "normal super" level. A PC god might be under a curse, or penalized by the pantheon head for some reason. Getting their full power back gives the character something to work towards. Or maybe the PC is just a minor god within the pantheon.

Pantheon rulers such as Zeus or Odin, however, should be significantly more powerful than any PC. On the other hand, to keep them from dominating the campaign they must seldom use their full power openly. In fact, their full power is better hinted at than shown. Pantheon heads may be barred somehow from acting on Earth, or have so much trouble in their pocket dimensions they just don't have time to muck in human affairs.

Characteristics

Physically, gods are clearly superhuman in every way, or at least at the upper end of human potential. The traditional view in comics is that gods are at least low-level bricks, with other powers added on. Spending at least 20-30 points each on STR, DEX, CON, and PD/ED makes a god suitably superhuman. PRE is also high, and in most of the European pantheons the gods are notably good-looking.

Mentally, however, most gods are nothing special. The myths of all nations make it clear that the gods are no smarter or wiser than the humans who worship them. The gods may claim superior wisdom, but their actions are those of impulsive, spoiled brats.

Skills

Mythological gods seldom have many Skills; in this, too, they resemble the average superhero. As a general rule, gods only have the Skills decreed by their special area of concern: combat skills for war gods; Paramedic for gods of healing; Stealth, Lockpicking and such for gods of thieving and mischief; and so on.

Gods who come to Earth automatically speak the local standard language (i.e. English), although they doth sometimes useth badly-mangled archaic forms. Buying their culture of origin's language would make a lot of sense.

Perks

Mythological gods should not routinely get any Perks at all. The Western mythologies, at least, have not been worshipped for over a thousand years. Modern neo-pagan revivalist groups are small and without influence; at best, they could be Contacts. Being a mythological god therefore does not automatically grant any social standing or resource base.

Talents

Most of the Talents are not especially appropriate, either. As with most supernatural hero types, there's no reason why a god shouldn't have Lightsleep, or Bump of Direction, or any other Talent, but no special reason they should, either. Combat-oriented Talents may be appropriate for war gods, however, to represent their experience at fighting.

Powers

Gods are pretty much invulnerable to attacks from mere humans, but the weapons of heroes can do them harm. 8 points of resistant defense make a god immune to small-arms fire and the average old-time sword-swinger, while still letting extraordinary weapons with extraordinary wielders do BODY. Unless a god is specifically notable for being hard to damage, defenses don't have to be much higher than an average superhero's. Exotic defenses such as Power Defense are quite optional, although Life Support vs. at Disease and Aging would be a good idea.

Attacks should be on the high end of the PC point range, if possible. As they appear in the comics, gods dish out impressive amounts of damage. The ever-popular war gods, for instance, aren't just bricks, they are some of the strongest bricks around.

On the other hand, gods have fairly limited ranges of powers. Although a few mythological god heroes in comics—most notably a hammer-swinging thunder god—have used an amazing variety of powers through their long careers, most of these are ad-hoc powers introduced by lazy writers and then forgotten. The standard repertoire of frequently used powers is quite small. Obviously, the powers assigned to a god will be based on the god's mythological character: storm gods get weather control powers, a god of hunting will carry a bow, healing gods have Aid powers, and so on.

Disadvantages

In this area as well, gods are not too different from other superheroes. A god PC may be Watched by the pantheon head, and is usually Hunted by a godly supervillain from the same pantheon. Psychological Limitations or Distinctive Features such as "Pompous" would seem appropriate, judging from how gods are usually portrayed in comics. To put it bluntly, these guys are very stuck on themselves. Finally, a god might have an unusual Susceptibility: born of human belief, they might take damage from sincere displays of mass disbelief and scorn.

Miscellaneous Types

Finally, there are the more peculiar or obscure types of magical beings that don't fit in any category but themselves. They will only be described briefly.

Undead

That is, corporeal undead—not ghosts. Of all the types of undead, vampires have received the most attention in books, comics, movies and role-playing games. The other sorts of living dead, the mummies, zombies, revenants and the like, have usually been presented in less interesting ways. That, however, is not necessarily because other sorts are intrinsically less interesting.

The corporeal undead are described as hard to damage, or at least hard to damage in any meaningful way. Since they are already dead, not much more can happen to them. Usually, they are also very strong, making them low-level bricks. All too many undead are left as nothing more than that.

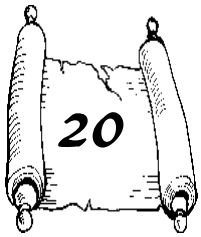
Vampires, with their hypnotism, shapeshifting and varied powers, make a notable exception. The classic vampire, however, combines many archetypes of evil in one package: the revenant, the ghoul, the plague-demon, the incubus, ghost, witch and sometimes others. GMs can create other interesting undead by adding other elements to the basic revenant. Undead wizards, for instance, have a long pedigree in games, sword-and-sorcery and horror stories. Even the basic Egyptian mummy combines the revenant with themes of curses, divine vengeance and reincarnation.

Several vampires have appeared in ***Champions*** products over the years. A few other undead have appeared as well: Crypt, in *Adventurers Club* #12, the Sacrifice in *Kingdom Of Champions* and Archimago, Brother Bone and Manitou in *Creatures Of The Night: Horror Enemies.* All but Crypt were explicitly undead wizards.

There have been no corporeal undead heroes published yet.

Magical Races

Magical Races dwell on other planes, or perhaps hidden corners of the Earth. The faerie-folk are the most notable example. While the faerie-folk dwell in the Land of Legends, technically an astral dimension, they don't show the characteristics of spirits. In practice they



are an extradimensional race with magical powers. Physically, they are on par with competent humans. Their magical powers emphasize illusion and transformation. Many other mythical beings can come from Faerie as well, and both PCs and NPCs could be members of these races.

Beyond Faerie, the number of magical dimensions is limited only by the GM's imagination. Many could hold races with innate magical powers. The description of the Congeries (see Chapter 6) includes a few magical races of the author's own invention.

Golems

These are artificial creatures animated by magic. The original Golem was a man of clay animated by a magic word, but golems could be made of stone, metal, wood, glass, rubber or anything else. While classic golems are robot-like, mindless servants, free-willed golems are possible as well. Jack Pumpkinhead and the Scarecrow, from the Oz books, were free-willed golems. The chief common denominator of golems is their resistance to damage. While a living statue is obviously resistant to harm, the Scarecrow survived losing all his straw stuffing on several occasions: as long as his head was safe (it was detachable), he could ignore any injury to his body.

The villain Kabbalah (in *Enemies: The International File*) had a classic golem as his minion.

Bearers Of Enchantment

Heroes and villains may also carry enchantments which give them super-powers. Such enchantments may come from sorcerers, supernatural beings, magic items such as potions or artifacts, or as an accidental consequence of magical activity. Some enchantments are even inherited (such as Jaguar's family curse).

For the most part, characters who gained their powers through enchantment are just normal heroes or villains. They don't differ very much from characters who gained their powers through radiation accidents, super-serums or other forms of "weird science." Their chief point of interest is their origin story: who did the enchanting, how, and why?

The *Champions* Universe includes many villains, such as Dark Seraph, who gained power through selling their souls.

Among villains, Aquarius, Earthmaster, and the Seven Horsemen wield magic power gained from artifacts. Up until now, the *Champions* Universe has included no heroes who, like Aquarius, learned limited spell casting from contact with an artifact. As of this writing, no hero or villain in the *Champions* Universe has gained power through a straight magical accident.

Enchantment by Powerful Entity

This origin is closely related to Pacters and Servants of Higher Powers (q.v.) Sometimes, powerful beings such as demon lords, mighty elder archmages, gods or cosmic entities might grant powers to humans. Usually they want the humans to do something for them in return. The classic case is the pact with the Devil: some power or favor, in return for one's soul. On the other hand, powerful beings might grant powers without expecting any direct service in return, or even by accident.

This origin is separated from true Priests, Pacters and Servants of Higher Powers in that the character has no idea how their powers work; they just use them, that's all.

Enchantment by Ritual

Even people who don't know real spell casting might succeed in casting one spell to give themselves superpowers. Such a spell will be a fairly extensive ritual, which the person will never have reason to cast again. The classic example is the magic ritual which Loup-Garou of Red Doom (see *Classic Organizations*) cooked up to turn himself into a werewolf. Origin rituals might be used by a sorcerer to give powers to a minion (who may or may not be willing), be learned from ancient tomes, or like Loup-Garou's be improvised by someone who doesn't really know what he's doing. In fact, origin rituals might be done without knowing it…

Enchantment by Magical Accident

When great magical forces are unleashed, some of the power might go in ways the unleashers didn't intend—especially when the forces conflict. This is a straightforward "radiation accident"-style origin event, only instead of nuclear waste, lightning bolts and experimental machines it employs weird artifacts, mystic bolts and cosmic entities. (The PCs themselves might cause an origin event or two by disrupting a villain's Doomsday Spell or breaking an artifact.)

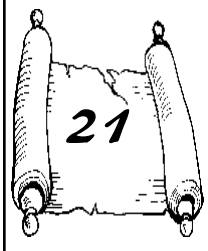
Characters who get their powers this way diverge least of all from the "standard superhero" idiom. Their origin, and perhaps their powers, are just a little more baroque, that's all. "You got your powers in a liturgical accident?"

Enchantment by Artifact

Some artifacts might contain such vast magical power that they can spontaneously grant powers to people. There has to be some reason why the artifact doesn't give powers to everyone who contacts it: perhaps it only bestows power on one person at a time, or under special conditions. Examples include a talisman which makes the first person who touches it superstrong and invulnerable, a magic book which impresses knowledge of how to cast specific spells on the reader's mind, or a potion which permanently confers some magical power on whoever drinks it.

Magic Items

One might have no magic of one's own, but wield a magical item—a magic wand, a sword, a suit of armor, a talisman, or whatever. In some ways, item-users are the furthest from being real mages, but using a magic item can give good practice in employing magical energies in case a character decides to learn real



magic (so they aren't helpless when their arch-nemesis takes that blasted Focus away).

Examples of heroes and villains with magic items in the Champions Universe are too numerous to list. There are two—Black Paladin and the Slug—in *Classic Enemies* alone.

Tulpas

"Tulpas" are artificial beings materialized from pure thought; the term comes from Tibet, where materializing tulpas is one of the most advanced spiritual disciplines. A Tibetan lama supposedly takes weeks to create a tulpa, but a more hard-core sorcerer might be able to speed the process somewhat. A tulpa can have whatever powers its creator can imagine, within the limits of the creator's power. A really powerful lama or sorcerer might be able to create a tulpa with superpowers.

The creator outlines the tulpa's personality during the process of evocation, but the tulpa has free will and its opinions may change, just like any other sentient being. Elements from the creator's unconscious mind may leak into the tulpa's mind as well, with unforeseen and probably undesirable consequences.

A tulpa cannot be discerned from a human being without magic or fairly sophisticated medical examination. When a tulpa dies, however, its body evaporates back into nothingness. If a tulpa lives long enough it can become fully real—real enough to leave a corpse, and to have children.

All those stories about writers whose characters come off the page and get a life of their own are about accidental tulpas.

Crossover Characters

It's not uncommon for magical characters to fall into more than one of the categories above. Mythological gods might use sorcery in addition to their innate powers; Pacters might be enchanted to have innate powers as well as their spells; anyone might have a potent magic item.

Characters who add magic as a sideline to their main sort of powers are quite rare. Most of these have been Master Villains: on top of their powered armor, legions of agents, deadly oriental martial arts, or whatever, they know some magic too. Such magic usually functions as an extra means to help the Master Villain achieve some non-combat objective, such as stealing a unique artifact or brainwashing the hero's best friend. Their magic isn't much use in combat.

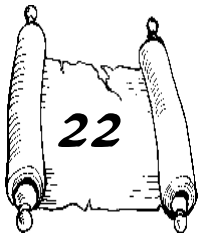
Among heroes, really wild martial artists who do things like split walls with chi-powered shouts could qualify as having magic as a secondary specialty. Anyone described as "learning" psychic powers could be considered sorcerers as well. A mystically-empowered character might function most of the time as a conventional brick, energy blaster, etc. and only occasionally cast actual spells. A few characters in comics have been flat-out confused, and it hasn't been clear which of their powers were magical and which were the result of mutation or whatever.

Theoretically, there's no reason why any sort of hero or villain couldn't learn a bit of magic on the side. In practice, there are good reasons for leaving sorcery to the sorcerers, as most comic book writers have done. They know a thing or two. First, magic is such a powerful premise for a character that it seems like a waste to use it as an add-on. A good character should have a fairly unified origin and set of powers. Mutant sorcerers, cyborgs with magic weapons and the like are just a little too cluttered. Even most Master Villains don't have strong enough personalities to carry magic on top of all their other abilities.

Some origins demand more from the characters than others. Anybody could be a mutant, or get zapped by a glowing meteor. Magical characters demand explanation: people don't become sorcerers, Servants of Higher Powers or mythological gods by accident. To use those three types as examples, sorcerers have to work for years to get their powers; even the Wild Talents have to practice. There are billions of people in the world: why did the Higher Power choose this person to serve instead of another? And while gods are born as gods, why is one god mucking around on Earth (as hero or villain) while the others are staying back in the Land of Legends? If one adds magic to a character's origin as a secondary specialty, this tail may start wagging the dog.

Second, characters with magic on the side aren't fair to the opposition. Players might like being able to escape from the death trap by activating that Gate spell their arch-nemesis didn't know about, but what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. How would players feel if the villains their characters captured with such effort started popping out of jail the same way? Magic can make things too easy. When things get too easy for the heroes, players get bored. When things get too easy for the villains, the players get frustrated.

Just as importantly, players deserve to feel like they know what's going on in the game world—that there's some internal logic. Powered armor characters have one sort of powers and act in certain ways; martial artists have other abilities; mutants, vigilantes, gods and yes, sorcerers have their own distinctive styles as well. If the powered armor villain starts incanting, or the gun-toting vigilante is revealed as a demon, the players' most probable reaction will be, "Huh? What's going on here?" Not that there's anything wrong with confusing the players once in a while, but it shouldn't be done without a good reason. A steady diet of bafflement gets old real fast.



Developing The Character

There's more to creating a character than spending points, and this applies to magical characters even more than to nearly any other character archetype. Fortunately, magical characters have an especially rich tradition to draw upon. Players and GMs can steal ideas not just from comic books but also from fantasy novels, mythology and folklore in creating origin stories for their characters and planning how their characters will develop. History, legend and myth even suggest a general career path for wizards: the Myth of the Magus.

Developing The Origin

The importance of the origin story has been mentioned already, but the point is worth repeating. Sorcerers and their ilk have their Powers, Skills, and Disadvantages for reasons, which the origin story should address.

These are some of the traditional plot-elements for the origins of magical characters in comic books, fantasy novels, and mythology. They are thoroughly nonexclusive. Many of them can be used at later points in a character's career as well.

Fallen And Redeemed

Originally, you weren't a very nice guy. You may have enjoyed wealth and fame as a doctor, businessman or other professional, but your pride, ambition and greed left no room in your life for any warmer human feelings. And then your life came crashing down—an accident, a legal probe, a partner's betrayal, something took your brilliant career and ripped it to shreds.

When you hit bottom, you found…magic. Perhaps a book, a teacher or an artifact showed you the way to a new life. Studying the mystic arts has become a path to redemption. Now you pursue a nobler ambition: to serve humanity with the powers you have learned.

Any powers are appropriate for this origin. Skills retained from one's earlier life help individualize the character. Disadvantages might include Hunteds (people you annoyed in your previous life?), Physical Limitations (from wounds or dissolute living), or Psychological Limitations like, on the one hand, "Haunted by past life" or "Lacks self-confidence" or, on the other hand, "Extreme sense of duty to mankind" or "Total code against killing."

Inheritor Of The Mantle

You are the latest successor to magical powers wielded by others before you. Perhaps a knack for magic runs in the family, or you has been chosen as the next keeper of a powerful artifact.

Such a character might also inherit Disadvantages with the powers, such as Hunteds, Watcheds (perhaps by one's predecessor), or various vows and prohibitions that must be observed for one to remain "worthy" of one's power.

Vengeful Hunter

A supernatural force did something rude to you or your loved ones, and now you want to commit rudeness right back at it. Vampire hunters are the best-known example of Vengeful Hunters. Either the original act of magical malfeasance gave you powers, or you went looking for magic with which to fight back: if not a true mage yourself, at least you have useful powers, weapons, or skills that let you fight alongside the real wizards.

Vengeful Hunters really load up on the Psychological Limitations, things like "Hunting for demons" or "Ruthless" or even "Hates everything supernatural." These, however, can make Vengeful Hunters lousy team players (especially in a magic-intensive campaign), so Psych Lims should be chosen carefully.

Vengeful Hunters also tend to be hunted right back by the ghoulies and ghosties they pursue.

In Too Deep

Honest, you never meant it seriously. You didn't really believe a demon would come to your pentacle, that your curse would kill, that the cult was more than a chance to play dress-up. You got involved with the supernatural as a lark…and now you can't get out. You've seen too much. For your own protection, you've had to seriously study the mystic arts, to fight the horrors with their own weapons. God help you.

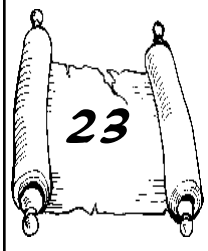
Characters who are In Too Deep tend not to start with very powerful or flexible magic. That's the whole point of the character: they are relative beginners, coping with circumstances beyond their control. To compensate, they may have weapons (magic or otherwise) or special skills. In Too Deep is a good excuse for a fledgling mage to join a team of regular superheroes. On the other hand, one could build a whole campaign around heroic-level characters who have fallen In Too Deep.

Obvious Disadvantages include Hunteds and Psychological Limitations like either "Fears the supernatural" or "Desperately seeking magical power." Considering how such characters discovered the supernatural, some Unluck may be in order, too.

Mystical Tests

This usually goes with some other origin bit. To obtain your magical powers, you had to pass a test of some sort. The cosmic entity needed to be sure your devotion was strong enough, or the elder sorcerer wanted to see if your heart was pure. Even if the magic powers don't come directly from the test, it shows you are worth teaching.

The mystical test of initiation turns up everywhere in folklore, fantasy and comics. They make good hooks



for stories: the hero needs to get something, so he has to pass a harrowing physical, mental or moral challenge. Mages in particular can expect to face mystical tests again and again.

The One Prophesied

It seems your destiny was set before you were born. Perhaps you discovered this when you visited some back-of-beyond place and all the villagers looked at you funny. Eventually some old coot or wise-woman explained that their god or culture hero or whatever had prophesied that one would come who fit certain conditions—conditions you meet. Or perhaps the old coot shows up on your doorstep, saying he's been looking for you for the last 20 years. Whatever the circumstances, the prophecy says he must give you something. The "something" could be a magic weapon or talisman, a scroll of ancient lore, a complete magical education, or even the revelation that you're the reincarnation of their god or hero, with powers you never knew you had. This usually comes as a bit of a shock, especially when the old loon adds that fighting some ancient demon comes with the job.

The One Prophesied is a close cousin to the Inheritor of the Mantle and combines with it very well. Magic weapons or innate powers are more "traditional" than real spell casting, but this can still be a big step on the way to becoming a real mage. One is usually Hunted by the arch-enemy of whoever did the prophesying. The person who reveals the prophecy and guides one to discover one's powers makes a fine DNPC.

A final note: What happens to the people who guarded the mystic legacy all those years or centuries? Having passed on the legacy, do they just shake hands and wave you on your way, or do they expect you to stick around and be their new culture hero? And when you don't, do they follow you? Pursuit by angry cultists or tribespeople who feel betrayed could be a headache. Pursuit by worshipful, would-be followers could be worse!

"Achmed, put that knife down! You can't go attacking waiters just because they say the restaurant is full!"

Elder Sage As Mentor

Wizards can live to incredible ages. Your teacher studied magic for decades, even centuries, gaining great knowledge and power. Age, however, has left him or her physically feeble. What's more, the Sage has several lifetimes' worth of enemies just waiting for him to step outside his well-protected sanctum. Your teacher would like to help more, but all too often cannot give anything but information and advice. Indeed, you must protect your teacher now and then.

Elder Sages might not have amazing raw power, but they can do just about anything, given time to prepare. Variable Power Pools are quite appropriate here. Sages run out of steam quickly, though, and are pushovers if an attack can penetrate their mystic defenses.

Such an Elder Sage makes a splendid teacher for a PC wizard, and a valuable NPC in any case. In terms of knowledge and flexibility, an Elder Sage is demonstrably far superior to the PCs. On the other hand, an Elder Sage cannot steal the PC's thunder because the Sage's physical infirmity prevents them from really getting into the action.

There's no law, however, that says an Elder Sage has to be a feeble, reclusive NPC. A somewhat more vigorous Elder Sage can be an interesting role-playing challenge for a creative player who doesn't need great power to have great fun.

The Myth Of The Magus

Dare with determined will to burst the portals
Past which in terror others fain would steal!
Now is the time, through deeds, to show that mortals
The calm sublimity of gods can feel.

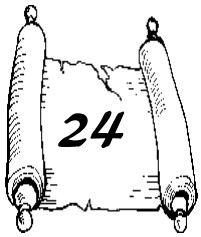
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust, part I

Literature builds on legend, and the legends of the world present a surprisingly coherent picture of how a mage's life proceeds. Not every wizard treads the full path, and each wizard emphasizes certain elements more than others, but the path is always there, hidden behind the details of biography. Players and GMs may not want characters to follow the Myth of the Magus, and they don't have to, but it can provide depth to a campaign. Mages deal with powers and face perils beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals, because they are the agents of Destiny. Their reward can be nothing less than godhood, because the Myth of the Magus fits inside an even grander pattern: the Myth of the Prophet or Savior. And here we tread on sensitive ground indeed, for the greatest Magi of history became founders of religions.

Initiation

The career path of the Magus begins with initiation. An initiation can happen suddenly and all at once, or can be a long and slow process. At one extreme, a god may simply appear and make some ordinary shmuck his servant, authorized to work miracles on demand. At the other extreme, becoming a wizard may require years of arcane studies that never really end. Most initiations fall somewhere in between: the future Magus must work a while to gain magical powers, but there is some special moment that marks the transition from student to master.

Very often, a future Magus begins as the apprentice of some older wizard or prophet. Merlin studied under Master Bleys. Pythagoras learned from the Scythian mage Abaris. Even the evil wizards, the Anti-Saviors, have their mentors: Simon Magus was the pupil of the cult leader Dositheus; Gerbert of Aurillac, later Pope Sylvester II, stole a book of black magic from a Saracen wizard. The teacher doesn't have to be human, either. Solomon learned his magic directly from God, and any



number of black magicians bought their magic from the Devil at the price of their souls.

Eventually the training ends. No mere dabbler, the Magus is confirmed as worthy to command the powers of Heaven and Earth. The ministry of Jesus began, for instance, with his baptism by John. Sometimes confirmation is no more than a graduation ceremony: Medieval legend claimed that the University of Salamanca offered regular courses in wizardry. Most of the time, however, the initiation involves a trial of some sort. The Buddha faced temptation as he meditated under the Bo tree. Simon Magus proved his power by defeating his teacher in a duel of magic.

Famous Deeds And Far Journeys

The main body of the Magus' career begins. They work wonders throughout the land. The good mages defeat monsters and demons, heal the sick, lift curses, and make the land bountiful. They may become the teachers of future kings, as Merlin taught Arthur or Aristotle (credited with books of magic in the Middle Ages) taught Alexander. The evil mages rise in the world through false miracles: Gerbert became Pope through the Devil's help; Faust made magical feasts for his friends; Aleister Crowley turned his disciple Victor Neuburg into a donkey.

Contests Of Magic

The Magus faces contests of magical power. The greatest (if most mismatched) of such battles was the contest of miracles between Moses and Pharaoh's sorcerers, but there are many other examples. For instance, Roger Bacon and his comrade Friar Bungay matched spells with the German sorcerer Vandermast; Zyto of Bohemia put a rival illusionist in his place by swallowing him whole, then vomiting him up again into a tub of water.

Persecution And Fall

The enemies of the Magus rally, however, and things turn bad for the Magus. Apollonius of Tyana stood trial for black magic in Rome—a capital offense. Nimue betrayed a love-besotted Merlin and imprisoned him in magic sleep. Love destroyed Solomon as well, leading him to foreign women and heathen gods. Doctor Dee lost his royal patronage. The evil mages find that their powers are not enough: Simon's magic failed whenever he met an Apostle. Faust, like so many other pacters with the Devil, learned that he didn't really want to go to Hell after all. Casanova (who ran occult con jobs in between seducing women) landed in the dungeons of the Inquisition.

Rise And Redemption

After the fall, however, there may be a literal or metaphorical Resurrection to greater glory. Jesus gave the ultimate case. Apollonius vindicated himself in court. Merlin, like Arthur, shall wake and return in England's darkest hour. At least some of the Devil-pacters repent at the last moment and reach Heaven, as did Gerbert, his predecessors Theophilus and St. Cyprian, and (in some versions) Faust. Casanova escaped in one of history's most astounding jailbreaks.

With the Resurrection, the Magus might also bring a final boon of wisdom for mankind: A Sermon on the Mount. Even Casanova did this in his old age, through his biography in which he explained every con he ever pulled.

Divinity: The Myth Of The Savior

In its rare final stage, the Myth of the Magus joins the Myth of the Savior: the Magus ascends to Heaven and becomes a god. Jesus succeeded; so did Apollonius, according to his biographer. Simon Magus tried to storm Heaven but was cast down by St. Peter, and died. Crowley tried to set himself up as Prophet of the New Aeon, and found a dubious "immortality" as the fountainhead of 20th century occultism.

After a successful ascension, the followers of a Magus-turned-god fill in the other stages of the Myth of the Savior after the fact: the divine or otherwise mysterious origin; portents at the Savior's birth; and childhood dangers. In fact, the Magus and Savior mythcycle has such a stranglehold on the human mind that founders of religions get the Myth spliced onto them even if none of the traditional events happened to them in life. Mohammed is a perfect example. As set forth in the Koran, Islam is the least magical of the great religions, and Mohammed never claimed any supernatural powers for himself. As the centuries passed, however, Mohammed's real history became encrusted with miracles and portents.

If the Magus is to become a Savior, the wonders and portents begin even before the wizard's birth: a god visits the future mage's mother, perhaps to father the mage. Pythagoras was fathered by Apollo; Zoroaster was the son of Ahura Mazda; and we all know about that kid from Bethlehem.

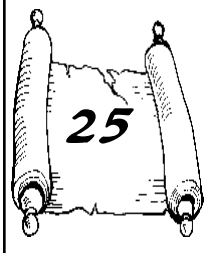
Only a complete thicko could miss the birth of a Savior-Magus, if the legends are to be believed. There are signs in the heavens and wise men from the East trotting around. At the birth of Mohammed, all the idols in the world fell off their pedestals. The Buddha walked straight out of his mother's womb and left footprints in solid rock.

Future Savior-Mages may face special dangers as agents of evil try to abort their destiny: thus, Moses escaped the slaughter of the Hebrew children because his mother set him adrift on the Nile to be found by Pharaoh's daughter.

Applications

So much for the Myth of the Magus as it has played out in history and legend. How can it be used in a game?

First, the Myth of the Magus demands that one pay special attention to the origin of a wizard PC. How did the character learn magic? What led them beyond the mundane? How were they initiated at the end of



their training? The details of a mage's origin story create many hooks for the GM: teachers who can give advice and assign missions, fellow students who became friends or rivals, enemies who tried to block the future wizard's course, and so on.

A mage PC might not have finished their apprenticeship yet: their eventual initiation as a true Master of Magic provides a goal for the character and a natural climax for a story arc. Wizards may cycle through several initiations, too, each with their own trial and reward. For a Magus destined to become a god, their downfall and "death" becomes just a particularly harrowing trial and initiation.

Remember that villains follow a distorted version of the Myth of the Magus as well. More than one adventure can revolve around an evil wizard's attempt to win initiation to some greater power. Evil wizards in comic books are particularly notorious for seeking godhood. Here the PCs become part of the hostile mage's initiation trial. (Simon Magus, in the Villains chapter, is trying to resurrect himself and achieve godhood this way.)

Contests of power are the very essence of comic-book adventures, whether the hero is a wizard or not. A Magus, however, may face challenges that can't be overcome by beating somebody up. A Magus faces moral challenges, sometimes with no clue as to what constitutes winning. Jesus faced temptation by the Devil, and won by refusing to work miracles. To be sure, a super-mage will face plenty of challenges where blowing away an enemy with flashing spells is entirely appropriate, but when the cosmic entities show up and demand that the character justify their existence—or the existence of all humanity—through a contest, it's best to think twice. Cosmic kahunas often look for wisdom rather than raw power.

One aspect of the Myth which comic books often overlook is the aspect of community service. Super-mages routinely block invasions from beyond and battle evil mages and demons, but they seldom actually do something proactively good for their community, nation, or mankind—only prevent evils. For an unusual adventure, GMs can challenge a group of PCs to use their mystic powers to teach someone a lesson in wisdom, rescue a group of people from danger, or even save a nation from drought, flooding, volcanic eruption or some other natural disaster. They may take on apprentices of their own, to carry on the tradition of service.

At the very least, good deeds can be used as introductory scene. A forest fire, for instance, might turn out to be a dimension lord's cover for an invasion. An attempt to reform a gang leader might reveal clues to a Satanic plot to wreck the city. Conversely, after saving some people from the supernatural consequences of their own folly, the PCs might want to offer a piece of their mind.

The fall-and-redemption or death-and-resurrection motif can provide powerful story arcs. These are big events in a super-mage's career, on par with the "radiation accidents" suffered by normal superheroes. A Servant of Higher Powers who breaks faith can undertake an epic quest of atonement (with a little help from their friends). Any super-mage might be tricked or seduced into evil and have to work their way back to the light. Even a character's death can be just an excuse for another adventure, as their allies try to resurrect them.

At the end of the Myth of the Magus waits the possibility of godhood. This can provide a really long-term focus for a mage campaign. Super-mage protagonists in comics never actually reach this goal—it's the end of the character's career, after all—but they may help their mentor or some other senior Magus become One with the Universe or otherwise transcend mortality. Their own victories can gain added meaning as steps on the path to Ultimate Wisdom or divine union.

Mystic Philosophies

It is a truism of the mystics that "as things are above, so are they below." This raises a speculation as to just how far above, or how far below, the ecstasy of the mystics has carried them.

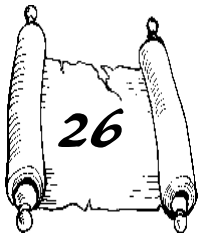
—Clark Ashton Smith, "Epigrams and Apothegms"

Esoteric philosophies are another area where a magical character can be developed. Comic-book or mythic wizards often fight on the basis of cosmic principles. Player-character wizards can do the same. They might even try to teach the philosophy they serve and make it a force in the lives of others.

A mage's philosophy can be intimately tied to their power. Every system of supernatural belief insists that moral qualities are forces in and of themselves. In Western culture, the forces are traditionally Good and Evil. There is magic powered by Goodness (usually regarded as coming from God) and magic powered by Evil (coming from Satan). For instance, holy ground (like a church) and holy relics are charged with the power of Good; a Satanic shrine or artifact would carry a charge of Evil power. Indeed, the whole Universe is a battleground between divine Good and demonic Evil, and if one is not on the side of Good then one is helping Evil by default.

Not all cultures use a system like this. In Taoism, for instance, the two great forces which drive the cosmos are Yin and Yang. Yang is masculine, active and associated with light and Heaven. Yin is feminine, passive and associated with darkness and Earth. Although Yang is also associated with life and growth and Yin with death and decay, neither one is good or evil. Both are necessary.

Eventually, GMs will have to make some decisions about the forces which underlie the Magical World. This means stepping into the territory of religion and



that is sensitive ground indeed. No matter what system one chooses, somebody, somewhere, would be offended. The most one can hope for is not to offend any of one's players too much.

Good and Evil are, of course, the most familiar poles of moral/mystical force to Western players. Not only are Judaism, Christianity and Islam built around the conflict between Good and Evil, so are innumerable fantasy novels, and of course most comic books are essentially "Good Guys" vs. "Bad Guys." If one's gaming group includes Jews, Christians, or Muslims who feel their religious commitment doesn't allow a little theological make-believe, then Good and Evil should probably be the top supernatural forces in the Multiverse. Whatever other mythological gods, dimension lords, or other powerful beings there may be, there's still the One True God over them and a Satan who is his adversary.

A number of fantasy novels, games and comics have used Order and Chaos as the poles of supernatural conflict. In practice, though, Order and Chaos tend to get treated as watered-down versions of Good and Evil. Ho hum.

This work suggests several more mystical philosophies that heroes or villains might follow. Two of them, the Doctrines of Transcendence, are fantastic extrapolations from real mystical doctrines, chiefly Eastern. After that are the doctrines of the Four Zoas, a set of four moral or supernatural "poles," inspired by the mythology created by William Blake for his "Prophetic Books." These are the forces of Order, Chaos, Art and Nature. All four Zoas can act to good or evil effect and each is associated with various cosmic entities—but those will be discussed in another chapter. Last comes the great Doctrine of Contraries which reconciles the Four Zoas.

Doctrines Of Transcendence

What boots this evermore creating, when
Things all sweep into nothingness again?

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust part II*

The mystic philosophies of transcendence are based on the premise that material existence is essentially bad. Everything brings grief and pain in the long run, no matter how good or pleasant they seem at the moment. Birth itself is a tragedy, for all that is born must eventually die.

The sorrow of existence comes from its incompleteness. Everything and everyone is finite and imperfect. Only the supreme, divine Source of All—what the Kabbalists call Adam Kadmon and the Hindus call Brahman—is complete and perfect. The Supreme Being encompasses everything, but in the lower worlds, it is fragmented into an infinitude of dimensions and beings. The solution to the fundamental badness of existence, then, is to merge everything back into the Source—to dissolve the illusion of Many-ness and Self-ness into the impersonal reality of One-ness.

Now, in practical terms this means destroying the Multiverse. Followers of the Transcendent Ways, however, argue that the Multiverse itself is the problem. Even losing one's selfhood in annihilation is really a benefit, since individual existence is just another trap and delusion. Better by far to dissolve one's existence in Infinitude and become one with God.

Nobody knows how the entire Multiverse might be destroyed at a stroke (and a good thing, too, for those of us who value our separate existences, illusory and sorrowful though they might be). So the seekers of Transcendence try to nudge individual beings and worlds further along the path to union and destruction. There are different ideas, though, about how this should be done.

The White School

The philosophy called the White School teaches that mages and mystics should try to raise themselves and their world to higher levels in the Multiverse. The higher one's station in the dimensional hierarchy, the closer one comes to union with the Infinite. A follower of the White School can push a little closer to transcendence by living in a higher, more magical dimension. Becoming a fully supernatural being, such as a ghost or elemental, brings one a little further. Becoming a semi-divine spirit of the Upper Planes is better still, but even this should be seen as merely a preparation for crossing the Abyss to the Ultimate Realms.

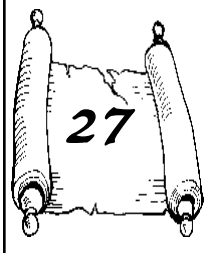
Planets and dimensions are more stubborn—there's a lot of inertia—but the compassionate Magus will help them by strengthening their connection to higher planes, such as by changing a world's laws of nature to make the forces of magic stronger, ultimately the dimension's basic character.

Another way is to attract influences from the Upper Planes of the cosmic entities: a Prince of the Universe can do more than any mortal mage to transform and raise a world, so anything that encourages a Prince of the Universe to manifest on a world is a good thing.

Following the White School thus does not rule out dealing with the Four Zoas or following one of their philosophies as well. In fact, White School mages often try to become Servants of Higher Powers as a shortcut to their own transcendence.

The Black School

The Black School philosophy agrees with the White School that physical existence, and ultimately even spiritual existence, should be annihilated through union with the Infinite, but the Black School look down the Tree of Life instead of up. The Black School is based on the observation that the Multiverse moves toward union and annihilation all by itself, through the process of entropy. After countless eons, each dimension wears out, decays, and is finally delivered to the nothingness of the Solipsist—the anti-god, the End, the one who personifies all non-existence.



The Black School concludes that Adam Kadmon and the Solipsist, the Source and the End, are really the same entity, seen from opposite directions. The Multiverse is an endless cycle. Seen from one side, the nameless Absolute multiplies the dimensions as Adam Kadmon, the All-Creator. Seen from the other side, the Absolute devours the dimensions as the Solipsist, the All-Destroyer. No energy is ever really created or destroyed, though; it just comes from Adam Kadmon again in a new form.

In that case, why fight the current by trying to rise through the planes? Everything moves toward reunion with the Absolute anyway. The secret to redeeming the Multiverse is to shorten the circuit, bringing the Solipsist end closer to the Adam Kadmon end by destroying the realms in between. When the entire Multiverse has been fed down Oblivion's gullet, the cycle of creation and destruction will cease and everything will be One again.

Most wizards think the Black School philosophy is completely bonkers, but don't say so to a Black School mage's face. Black School mages can be very powerful, while they last. They often employ forces and entities from the dimensions that have decayed beyond zero into negative energy. Not only are these "Qliphothic" forces exceptionally potent, their use and presence hastens a dimension's decay and so brings the dimension that little bit closer to dissolution and transcendence. Fortunately, qliphothic forces tend to destroy their users, so the most powerful Black School mages seldom have long careers.

Doctrines Of The Zoas

Four Mighty Ones are in every Man; a Perfect Unity…

—William Blake, The Four Zoas

Each of the Four Zoas, the highest of the cosmic entities who actively govern the Multiverse, personifies a philosophical outlook as well as various aspects of physical reality. All four doctrines, and the relationships between them, have been obscurely and symbolically described in the writings of the English mystic poet William Blake.

Both the White and Black Schools are basically hostile to the Multiverse and want to collapse the Many into One, or None. The Zoa philosophies have widely-differing visions of existence and people's place in the Multiverse, but they seek transcendence within reality, not transcendence from reality. They don't want to end the Multiverse to save it.

Actually, each Zoa philosophy comes in two forms, one activist and one passive and contemplative. (To use Blake's terminology, one is "Spectrous" and one "Emanative.") Spectrous philosophies are more like regular religions. They seek to change the Multiverse to make one aspect of reality—their Zoa—dominate the rest. Emanative philosophies are more mystical and inward-looking.

(Incidentally, this is the only part of this book which the author takes even the slightest bit seriously. Stripped of any supernatural content, the concepts of Order, Chaos, Art, and Nature and the need for balance between them seem like rather useful ideas—not strikingly profound, perhaps, but useful. Most "magical" or "mystical" doctrines of Divine Providence, Universal Mind, the Oneness of All and suchlike folderol chiefly consist of hot air and moonshine. The Four Zoas represent attitudes that real people have about real things. And in a world that seems ever more full of fanatics, the Doctrine of Contraries is refreshingly sane and moderate.)

Order

Let all things be done decently and in order.

—I Corinthians

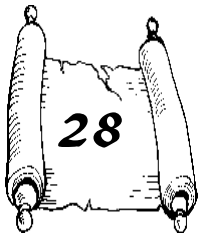
Order is a restrictive force which strives to create pattern, stability and predictability. There should be a place for everything, and everything should keep its place. The individual is less important than the group.

At its best, the world view of Order demands rational truth and proof, no matter how uncomfortable those truths may be. In this balanced form of Order, which might be called the scientific version, there is no place for mystery, illusion or sentiment. Every claim or opinion must prove itself through logic and evidence. Moral claims are not exempt: those who claim the right to preach and judge must show that they really do know what's best.

Unfortunately, most followers of Order do not reach this glacial purity of reason and the philosophy becomes one of mere obedience. In philosophies of Spectrous Order, a good person is one who does what they are told, whether the command comes from the government, one's superior at work, or the priest who speaks for that ultimate authority, God.

People dominated by Spectrous Order have reason and logic in plenty, but their axioms usually include something about punishing anyone who disagrees with them or asks too many questions. The great problem is that like all Spectrous philosophies, Spectrous Order is blind. Spectrous Orderists take traditional dogmas or their own thoughts as truth, without checking them against some objective standard. From these dubious premises they reason to insane conclusions, then force the result on everyone else. The European witch hunts gave a classic example: hundreds of thousands of people died in torment because people knew there had to be witches among them, working evil, and they invented "evidence" to fit—such as torturing suspected witches until they would confess to anything. Unfortunately, the witch hunt was not really that unusual. History is full of atrocities committed in the name of dogma.

As for Emanative Order, that focuses on stability, predictability and understanding. This sort of Order looks for pattern and meaning in life, and holds on to what it finds. People dominated by Emanative Order



are followers and conservatives. They aren't cowardly or stupid, they just want to know where they stand without some Yahoo pulling the philosophical rug out from under them.

The first sin of Emanative Order is complacency. Without a kick in the pants now and then, Emanative Orderists who find their answers tend to stand pat and stop thinking.

The saddest cases, however, are those Emanative Orderists who try to find reason and logic in morality, and who are clever enough to reject easy answers. All too often their search for perfect moral truth makes them too fair-minded: able to see all sides of an issue, they can select none. They mean well, weakly; they do not cause atrocities, but all too easily abet them through their high-minded, principled dithering. (See, for instance, the United Nations' responses to the genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda.) Such Emanative Orderists need a little Spectrous Order, or some Chaotic passion, to make them roll up their sleeves instead of wringing their hands—or even worse, making excuses for their own inaction.

Order has always been a popular and powerful philosophy, both on Earth and in the Multiverse at large. It isn't hard to see the reason: Order-lovers build institutions such as governments and churches which control people's lives and force-feed them their philosophy. It's worked. (When's the last time you heard a politician speak against "law and order"?) To be honest, Order can create greater good than any other force—but it can also cause greater evil. The institutions of Order amplify both the wisdom and the folly of their leaders.

Real-world social systems of Order are legion. Here are a few:

- Apartheid: One race rules, the other race obeys and "keeps its place."
- Brahmanism: Everyone in a caste has the same occupation and only interacts with people from certain other castes.
- Communism: Total submission of individuals to the State, the Party, and the "classless society" to come.
- "Great Society" Liberalism: Local choices of property, hiring practices, and association (or non-association) are suppressed to benefit the poor and dispossessed and thereby correct past injustices.
- Trade Unionism: Organizing workers for collective power in bargaining with employers and regulating hiring and promotion.

As Apartheid and "Great Society" Liberalism show, philosophies of Order don't necessarily agree with each other, but they all agree that individuals need professional help in running their lives. This is certainly true to some extent: commerce, public safety and health all require a lot of group cooperation guided by trained elites. Unfortunately, those elites sometimes forget that they too serve the society and think the society exists to serve them.

Chaos

The tygers of wrath are wiser than the hoses of instruction.

—William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Few people can live up to the severe demands set by philosophies of Order. Selfish desires, of both the flesh and spirit, lead people away from perfect obedience. Out of rebellious passion grows the philosophy and expansive power of Chaos, despite all attempts to reduce the individual to a cog in a machine. Blake referred to this force as "Energy."

Chaos glorifies freedom, individuality, emotion, chance and change. The Chaotic world view is personal and emotional, based on feelings instead of facts. Chaotics reject planning and hierarchy; they prefer to let everyone make their own way, find their own place and succeed or fail on their own efforts. A person's goodness or badness can only be judged by circumstance and intent, not by appealing to some abstract code of laws. The most extreme Chaotics completely deny the existence of Good and Evil: there is only desire, and whoever has the power gets to decide which desires are "Good."

At its best, the Chaotic life of sentiment can be very pleasant; even a towering rage can be invigorating. Emotion can bring people together in ways that are far more satisfying than any institution of Order. Chaotics can also be valuable social watchdogs, insisting that institutions keep respect for individuals.

Chaos has a dark side, though: extreme preoccupation with one's own feelings and desires can lead to selfishness, isolation, even madness, and unleash violent anarchy on the world. This is Spectrous Chaos. People dominated by Spectrous Chaos seek immediate gratification of their passions, without regard to consequences for themselves or anyone else. The punk who guns down another kid for a jacket or a pair of sneakers shows Spectrous Chaos. So does the revolutionary who tears down one government without another one ready to take over its duties.

Emanative Chaos is the capacity to feel emotion itself, and to empathize with others. Spectrous Chaotics, deficient in this trait, cannot identify with other people. They are blind to the feelings of others. Without a touch of Spectrous willpower, though, Emanative Chaos can become mere sentimentality, ineffectual and self-indulgent. This reaches far beyond housewives sighing over romance novels. The protester who holds sunset vigils against nuclear weapons shows domination by Emanative Chaos—it's a beautiful thought, but not very effective. Politicians who get weepy over Family Values and the flag and wax wroth over taxes and crime every election year try to manipulate voters through Emanative Chaos—for their own Spectrous ends.

Although there's plenty of Chaos about, its advocates seldom have opportunities to widely publicize Chaotic doctrines. Until quite recently on Earth, only tribal, barbarian cultures have glorified individual achievement over group loyalty. European heroic ep-

ics such as the Iliad, Volsung Saga, and some of the knightly romances preserve memories of such cultures.

Nowadays, some Chaotic doctrine has crept into politics by way of democracy, which seeks to give everyone a voice in government—however indirectly—instead of having decisions made by sacred elites. Other Chaos-oriented philosophies include Entrepreneurial Capitalism and its ugly side, Social Darwinism (the billionaire's creed of greed, "The meek shall inherit what's left"); the Quakers, Congregationalists, old-style Baptists, and other Christian sects which emphasize personal conscience and local control; and the entire self-help movement.

However, Chaos never dwells comfortably with either Church or State. The purest voices of Chaos belong to the hermit, the rebel, and the lover. Mystical hermits, of course, tend not to broadcast their views, although a few (like Henry David Thoreau and St. Anthony) wrote books about their experiences. Rebel passion now has an institutionalized voice, though: rock and rap music, which seldom sing the praises of good citizenship. Love, in all its many forms, has inspired art and poetry for thousands of years.

Some have equated Chaos with entropy and decay, but this isn't true. Without a hefty component of turbulence and disorder, life as we know it is not possible. Too much physical chaos is destructive, but a system with too little disorder is sterile—whether that system is physical, chemical, biological, or social.

Art

We are all better artists than we realize.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

Art is the subtlest of the four alignments, and the most difficult to grasp, because it doesn't immediately suggest any simple political agenda. Mystic Artifice goes far beyond the "fine arts." Rather, it is the ascendance of mind over matter—every aspect of experience that grows out of thought. Governments, religions, customs, language itself are products of Art.

To "Artifists," reality is something made and chosen, as Nietzsche suggested. It takes a mind to turn a collection of sensations into a sunset, a symphony and a lover's kiss. People create their destinies through their decisions. Societies don't just happen, people invent them and can change them at will. The most important aspect of existence, then, is Imagination. The body is a vehicle for the soul and the world is just so much raw materials.

People who guide their lives by Artifice include painters, poets, craftsmen, and artists, of course, but also other sorts of makers. The political or religious reformer who wants to change society follows Art. So does the entrepreneur building a corporation, or the inventor designing a new machine.

Art doesn't absolutely oppose Order, Chaos or even Nature, although they often think they oppose Art. From the "Artifist" point of view, the other Zoas simply miss the point. Nature is the most deluded in its basic premise—that there is an objective, "natural" world, and that this world is somehow better than the intelligences inhabiting it. To ascribe moral value to the blind processes of biology, chemistry and physics is ludicrous. As for Order and Chaos, they are just arguing over the fine points of arrangement. What really matters, the philosophers of Art insist, is that people recognize how their beliefs and actions create the world in which they live—and take conscious control of the process.

From such premises, Spectrous Art draws the conclusion that the world is whatever one wants it to be. The only question is whether one has the will to force one's vision on the world. If the world resists, hit it harder. If people resist, hit them harder. Anything can be changed. With magic, even the laws of nature are malleable.

Earth has seen all too much Spectrous Art in the last century. Every reformer is to some degree an Artifist, for they see how things could be different and try to make their vision real. Unfortunately, totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China carry the idea to monstrous extremes. After creating a new state, they try to create a new man, with no history, experience or belief except what the State provides.

Emanative Art draws a different conclusion. If every aspect of experience is artificial, then nothing is genuinely real. There is no solid foundation for belief. At this point, one has several options. The first is a fall into despair and a nihilism even more profound than that of the Black School: if everything is a lie, then what truth is there but Oblivion? The second choice is hedonism: if existence is meaningless, at least it can be pleasant. A third option is fanaticism: embracing one of the artificial belief-systems, pretending as hard as one can that it is real, and hiding from any evidence that it's not—or turning to Spectrous Art and Order to force everyone else to pretend too.

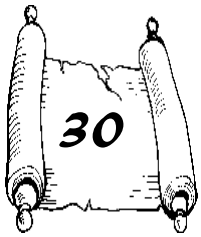
The final choice is to accept that life is a game, and simply try to play it well. With a bit of Spectrous Art (but not too much, not losing compassion for one's fellow players) perhaps one can even make the game better, more beautiful, and more humane…a better work of Art.

Nature

The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow;
nor the lion, the horse, how he shall take his prey.

—William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Naturists claim they just accept reality without trying to force it into categories of meaning. Very few Naturists, however, show such Zen-like purity. In practice the fundamental tenet of Naturism, without which none of the philosophy makes sense, is that what is, should be. Intelligence should not try to change the world. Instead, sentient beings should try to help natural processes along.



Spectrous Naturists try to enforce obedience to Nature. They see themselves as the champions of the environment and all the living things who cannot defend themselves against exploitation. They hate technology and civilization; some of the more extreme even disapprove of self-awareness itself. These extreme Naturists may try to "liberate" themselves and everyone else from sentience and return to an instinctive, animalistic existence.

Less extreme Spectrous Naturists argue that they don't hate humanity; they just take a broader view of human welfare. To their view, the artificial conveniences that seem to help individuals actually hurt the human species and the Earth in the long run. The medicine which stops plagues, causes a worse disaster through overpopulation and resource exhaustion. The factories which produce a wealth of goods poisons the consumers with pollution. Too much comfort for the body withers the spirit. People need to abandon their frenetic, high-tech cities, they say, and return to the slower rhythms of Nature.

On Earth, Spectrous Nature finds its most obvious expressions in the environmental movement—particularly the more radical groups who basically hate human existence. The animal rights movement shows Naturist tendencies in declaring human life no more valuable than the life of a dog, monkey, or lab rat. Vegetarianism, however, has nothing to do with Naturism: humans are genetically programmed to enjoy meat, and killing to eat is entirely natural.

More subtly, Naturism enters politics through conservatism. For many conservatives, Naturism takes the form of a reality check. Human nature is not infinitely malleable, they say, and people are slow to change. Reformers should work cautiously, to see which changes will really work as intended.

Unfortunately, bigots also use Naturism. They often claim that attempts to improve people and society are not just risky, they are "unnatural" and therefore evil. It is "natural" to keep women barefoot, pregnant, jobless and voteless, one race is "naturally" superior to another, homosexuality is "unnatural" so homosexuals should be persecuted, and so on ad nauseum. The appeal to sacred Nature, whatever that Nature is conceived to be, lies so deep in the human soul that it's very difficult to drag it into the light of day.

Emanative Naturists disapprove of activist tactics. As they see it, the Spectrous Naturists violate their own doctrine by trying to force change. Instead, Emanative Naturists say one should accept all aspects of existence, including one's own character. The best one can do is to ride the currents of the Universe with a minimum of effort. There is no need to oppose anything, for there is no "Should" or "Shouldn't," only what is. Civilizations, like individuals or species, will work within the limits set by their world, or they will die. When an Emanative Naturist takes action, it is to reduce conflict and let the processes of the Universe work themselves out; since they just encourage events which, in a sense, "want to happen" anyway, their interventions are usually so subtle that nobody but a mage would notice.

Emanative Naturism has no visible pure expression on Earth. Esoteric Taoism comes close: the Taoist mystic tries to comprehend the undivided wholeness of existence, without judging any part of it. The Taoist concept of wu-wei—acting without visibly doing anything—sounds a lot like Emanative Naturist notions of "intervention."

The most advanced Nature mystics, however, ignore politics and religion. They meditate on the awesome subtlety of natural processes such as evolution, predation, reproduction, and symbiosis, whose results put human artifice to shame. A recent example comes from that most artificial of domains, the computer.

A few computer scientists now experiment with "artificial life": programs which exchange code in an electronic analog of sex, reproduce, and survive based on their ability to perform a task. The programs start as random strings of code, but evolve into amazingly efficient programs that use strategies no one has ever seen before. Naturists smile. They are not surprised.

The Doctrine Of Contraries

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.

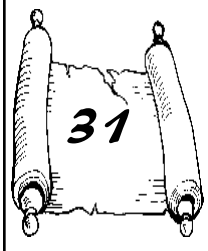
—William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

None of the Zoa philosophies is more "good" or "evil" than the other, although they are always in conflict and not just Art against Nature or Order against Chaos. Any Zoa can clash with any other. Each of them can create both good and evil, depending on what form their conflict takes.

There are two forms which opposing forces can take, contraries and negations. Good and Evil are the classic example of negations, and most conflicts tend to get interpreted in those terms: Light against Darkness, Life against Death, Us against Them. They are logical opposites who cannot coexist. Good must exterminate Evil, lest Evil exterminate Good.

Contraries are different. They oppose each other, but they can both exist. They are not perfect, logical opposites the way Good and Evil or Light and Darkness are. Consider Justice and Mercy: they are opposed, since Justice insists on punishment while Mercy seeks to avert it. Yet justice without mercy would be tyranny; mercy without justice would be anarchy. Contraries can both be good, despite their opposition. In fact, it is their balanced struggle which produces good. When one turns contraries into negations and declares that only one of the pair can be allowed, the result is evil—no matter which side one chooses.

So it is with the four doctrines of the Zoas. As long as they struggle as contraries, all four can produce good. A society which can simultaneously encourage Chaotic freedom, Orderly responsibility, Artifist invention and Naturist realism is a pretty good place to live. But let one Zoa demonize its opponent and declare itself the only good, and great evil may result.



The Doctrine of Contraries, then, exhorts its followers to embrace all four of the Zoa philosophies. When one achieves a perfect, dynamic balance of Order, Art, Chaos, and Nature in one's own psyche, one achieves Enlightenment—the Eternal Divine Humanity. One's personal universe of thought and perception is destroyed and re-created, purged of illusions:

> *…the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite and corrupt…If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.*
>
> —William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Still, this is only a personal Enlightenment. How can the physical world—indeed, the whole Multiverse—be Enlightened and redeemed?

The mystics of the Doctrine of Contraries, however, ask why the material world should need redeeming. They insist that the world is and always has been perfect and complete in itself. If the material world is sometimes inconvenient that isn't the world's fault. It's only consciousness that has problems.

A Magus who achieves Enlightenment, however, can invoke the power of all four Zoas—all four of the Prime Avatars of the Multiverse. That is great power indeed…a power to change the world, if the Magus chooses to wield it.

Fantastic Foci of Legend

These objects are all real, or at least plausibly documented. Some might be needed as ingredients or tools for special spells or rituals to make magic items; others might be magic items or powerful artifacts themselves.

Aztec Mosaic Skull

This is a real human skull encrusted with turquoise, with eyes of shell and wood. It might be meant to represent Tezcatlipoca, the Aztec god of night and black magic, in his role as the Lord of Misfortune.

The Angelic Crystal

The Elizabethan magus Dr. John Dee recorded that during one of his magical experiments, an angel gave him a magical crystal to help him contact the spirits more easily. Dee's assistant and medium, Edward Kelley, frequently asserted the spirits contacted were evil and deceptive; Dee had more confidence. The Angelic Crystal is now in the British Museum.

Holy Blood

More than one church in Europe claims to have an actual sample of the blood of Jesus, caught in a crystal vial. The Holy Blood forms the centerpiece of a yearly parade (usually Good Friday), on which occasion the blood miraculously re-liquefies. Skeptics say that the "Holy Blood" is really a faked-up inorganic glop that liquefies when it is shaken; science magazines have even published recipes. But what if one of these relics is real? It would be *the* most powerful Christian magical artifact *ever*—surpassing even the Holy Grail. (And at least one science fiction story has been based on fetching DNA from Holy Blood for cloning, a la *Jurassic Park!)*

"But we, immortal in our own strength, survive by stern debate
"Till we have drawn the Lamb of God into a mortal form.
"And that he must be born is certain, for One must be All
"And comprehend within himself all things both small and great."

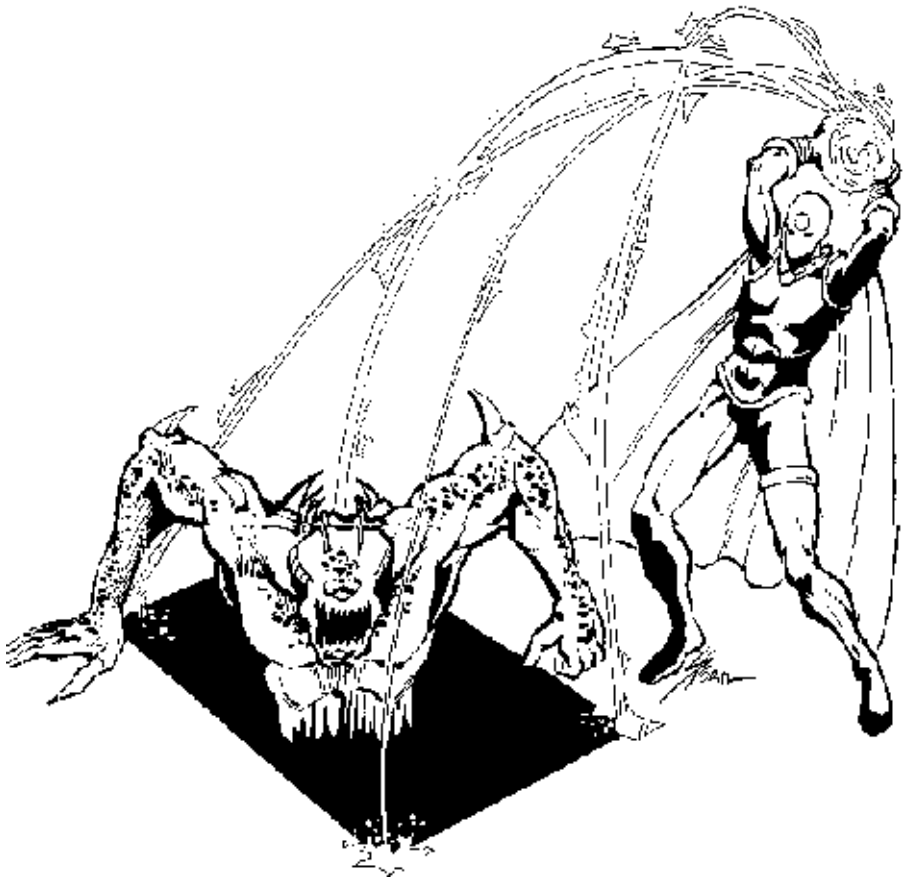
—William Blake, The Four Zoas

Chapter 2: Game Mechanics: Expansions And Suggestions

But to me my mother Themis, and not once only,
And Gaia, one person beneath the varied names,
Had foretold what was the future dispensation—
That the way of fate was not by strength or force of might:
Victory and power proceeded from intelligence.

—Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound

This chapter deals with the mechanics of writing up magical characters. Not only does it contain suggestions about which Skills, Powers and such are most "wizardly," it supplies several new Skills, Perks, Powers, and Disadvantages.



What Should Be Allowed?

"Hidden, set apart, in my stern counsels,
"Reserv'd for the days of futurity,
"I have sought for a joy without pain,
"For a solid without fluctuation."

—William Blake, The Book of Urizen

The ***HERO System*** already contains many subtleties and options; this chapter contributes more. Some are merely unusual applications of existing rules. Others are new extensions of the rules. GMs should treat everything in this chapter as coming with a stop sign—watch out how players use these "rules hacks," but don't forbid them. Magical characters may need them.

Classic super-mages carry three intrinsic weaknesses relative to "normal" superheroes. First, they are essentially normal humans with extraordinary skills—not mutants or cyborgs or augmented by powered armor—and unmodified humans are fragile. Second, mages are traditionally heavy on Skills. This cuts into the points available for combat Powers. Finally, mages are supposed to have a wide variety of Powers, for combat and otherwise. Unless the GM runs an unlimited-point campaign, a mage PC may need a few special dispensations from the GM to come in under 250 points and still be an effective character. This can be especially true for super-mages who must fight beside regular superheroes.

What rules hacks should a GM permit? The closest one can come to a general rule is that if a character needs a rules hack to keep up with the other PCs, it's okay. If a rules hack would make one PC significantly more powerful than the others, the hack should not be allowed.

The GM might also consider the skills of the players. Let's face it, ***CHAMPIONS*** players are not all equal. Some of them approach ***HERO System*** combat as a tactical exercise, using every trick in the combat rules to maximize their character's chances. Other players could not care less about clever tactics and just send their characters charging into combat chin first. The GM should be more restrictive with players who are "Mad Thinker" tacticians than with players who prefer style to strategy. The "Mad Thinker" already has a more powerful character, just because of who runs the character.

Abusive Attacks

This section suggests many new sorts of attacks, using new Power Modifiers or applying old ones in new ways. Wizards should have attacks unlike those of other super beings. In a "traditional" superheroic campaign, some of these attacks could be unbalancing, but not as unbalancing as one might think. In a supermage campaign where everyone follows the same standards, they are not unbalancing at all.

Indeed, the author's playtest campaign revealed something interesting. The players were invited to use the rules in the most abusive ways they could imagine within the 60-pt attack limit, short of using Power Pools. Through many combats, one 60 point Power emerged as the most abusive in combat—the most likely to quickly take down a villain who was supposed to be a major threat, or trash the heroes. Here it is:

4d6 RKA

That's it! The Variable NND Energy Blast, the Uncontrolled Penetrating Killing Attack, the BOECV Flash and all the other weird, "abusive" combat Powers proved no more effective than common Energy Blasts or Ego Attacks.

It's not hard to see why a simple RKA should be so effective compared to all the exotic attacks. In an all-mage campaign, everybody tends to have the exotic defenses that block the exotic attacks. That's just part of being a mage. The high-power Advantages like AVLD or Uncontrolled Continuous correspondingly reduce the base amount of damage. A simple Killing Attack, though, can generate huge amounts of STUN through a lucky STUN Multiplier roll. Given an average of 14 BODY damage, a x4 STUN Multiplier gives 56 STUN—the average damage of a 16d6 Energy Blast. A x5 STUN Multiplier gives 70 STUN, equivalent to a 20d6 Energy Blast!

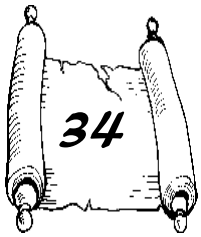
The laws of probability say that such high rolls should not be common. Murphy's Law, however, often overrides the laws of probability. Several times in the course of playtesting, villains who under any other circumstances would be very tough, only defeated through a long fight with clever strategy, would be knocked into next week by a lucky Killing attack. To be fair, this happened to the PCs a few times, too. Either way, it called for quick improvisation.

If there's one attack Power that GMs should view warily, then, it is the large Killing Attack. With Killing Attacks, there's no need for subtlety or strategy: just keep firing off those Killing Attacks, and eventually a good roll will come. The game becomes roll-playing, not role-playing, and that's a worse abuse than any funky Power Modifiers.

It is recommended that GMs try to strike a deal with their players: if they will avoid big Killing Attacks, so will most of the villains—and even the villains with large Killing Attacks will give the PCs fair warning of their lethal power. If the players won't "take the pledge," then the GM just has to give every major villain Damage Reduction—perhaps with the Limitation, "Only Against Killing Attacks" (-1).

Standards For Defenses

Normal super beings almost always have lots of regular PD and ED in both Resistant and Nonresistant forms. Other defenses are quite rare—except for super-mages. Because mages have such unusual attacks, a mage without exotic defenses will be a sitting duck



for the first enemy with an Ego Attack or AVLD, and that's not right. (Most normal supers are defenseless against exotic attacks, but they usually have enough STUN and CON to take a few attacks and make a few counterattacks before they fall.)

Every mage, then, should have at least a little Mental Defense and Power Defense, and maybe one or two other exotic defenses such as some kind of Life Support or a few points of Hardened Defense. A character with more than 10 points of Power Defense or 15 points of Mental Defense is very well protected: they will only be seriously damaged by really powerful exotic attacks.

There have to be limits, though, especially with PCs. PCs who cannot be damaged by any normal attack or simple exotic attack invite the GM to devise stranger attacks, piling on more Power Advantages. That in turn invites the players to give their characters still more thorough defenses. If the campaign allows Power Pools, the escalation proceeds rapidly: before long, everyone is buying that one point of Armor with ten levels of Hardened, just to block Autofire Killing Attacks with nine levels of Penetrating. Without Power Pools, the escalation just proceeds more slowly. The GM can do three things to prevent it.

First, restrict the use of Power Pools. (This is discussed in more detail in the section on Power Frameworks.)

Second, set standards for attacks and defenses, limits beyond which no one goes—not even the mega-villains like Dr. Destroyer. No one will buy, say, double-Hardened Power Defense if the players know that their characters will never encounter, say, double-Armor Piercing Drains or the like. As a suggestion, GMs should permit only one level of Hardened Defense on PD and ED. Power Defense, Mental Defense and other special defenses can never have Persistent, Hardened forms except in the case of really cosmic villains. (Hardened special defenses are acceptable in non-Persistent forms.) As a natural corollary, normal attacks never carry more than two levels of Armor Piercing or Penetrating, and exotic attacks never carry more than one level of those Advantages. Even these will be rare, special attacks few PCs will have or encounter.

Finally and most importantly, don't let the game become too lethally adversarial. Remember that the GM's job is to create an exciting story, not to crush the characters because the players left one tiny chink in the characters' defenses. Of course the villains will sometimes need to one-punch the heroes through some ridiculously powerful or bizarre attack, but that's only so the players can have the fun of outwitting the villain's death-trap and wiping the sneer off his face.

Skills

These are the Sciences which Magick takes to her self for servants and helpers; and he that knows not these, is unworthy to be named a Magician.

—Giambattista della Porta, Natural Magick

This section discusses the place of skills in creating magic-oriented characters. Rather than following an alphabetical listing, skills are here grouped in terms of their applications, with particular emphasis on their use by true mages.

Magic-Related Skills

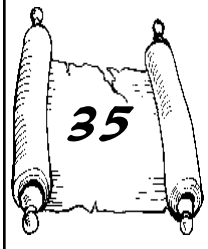
Of course the most important Skills for most magic-using characters are those skills which deal specifically with the supernatural. First are the Skills which apply to spell casting itself, then come a selection of important Knowledge Skills about the magical cosmos. For magicians, knowledge is power.

Magic Skill

This Skill from *FANTASY HERO* is actually not very useful in the context of a superheroic campaign. As seen in the comics, superhero magic is reliable; it never fizzles or blows up in the mage's face without some external reason. If players really want a little unreliability in their mage's spells as a way to get that -½ Limitation and save a few points, just taking "Activation 14-" gives the same results without having to spend points on a Skill.

Spell Research

The Spell Research Skill from *FANTASY HERO,* on the other hand, is very appropriate. This skill is a magical analog to the Inventor skill. It is good for devising new spells on short notice and figuring out how to use captured magic items. Spell Research can also double as a magic Power Pool control roll. Like the Inventor skill or any Power Pool Control skill, Spell Research rolls take a -1 penalty for every 10 Active Points in whatever the skill is used upon. Spell Research has a base cost of 3 points for a roll of 9 + INT/5, +1 per 2 points.



Astral Navigation

This skill facilitates rapid travel on the Lower Astral Plane. Someone who makes an Astral Navigation skill roll can automatically beat anyone who didn't. It is vital if one wants to use the instantaneous travel permitted on the Astral Plane, because otherwise one has very little chance of getting where one wants to go: getting lost in a world built from dreams and nightmares is no picnic.

Astral Navigation is an everyman Familiarity: since every human spends a significant amount of time on the Astral Plane when they dream, everyone has a free 8- rating in this skill. it has nothing to do with Dimensional Navigation (see below). Astral Navigation costs 3 points for a base rating of 9 + EGO/5, +1 per +2 points.

Dimensional Navigation

This skill is based on INT or EGO, depending on whether the GM thinks navigation between dimensions is a matter of cleverness or will. It enables one to travel between dimensions with some assurance of arriving at the right place. Kindly GMs may let everyone receive an 8- default roll with this skill for free, just for pure dumb luck and intuition—it's an Everyman skill characters didn't know they had. Dimensional Travel skill lets a character cross between the planes safely and accurately.

In general, the skill measures a character's ability to land on target. Making the skill roll means the character arrived quite close to the target area—within a few miles, say. A very good roll could put the character even closer. A failed roll, on the other hand, means that the character arrived a long way from the desired location, perhaps hundreds of miles away. An especially bad roll might indicate that the character accidentally alerted a hostile wizard or demon, let some Eldritch Thingie slip into the world, or arrived in the wrong dimension, depending on how nice the GM feels.

Example: *After an adventure in the City-States of Yong, Solitaire uses a dimension-travel artifact to bring the Champions home. Unfortunately, she only has an 8- default skill with Dimensional Travel and imprudently tries taking the Champions directly back to Homestead. Trying for a very precise target cancels out the benefits for a familiar destination. The GM rolls the dice for the skill check—a 17, very bad. The GM says the Champions have made it home, but someone seems to have left Homestead in a mess. And redecorated. And the staff is acting weird, cringing in terror. The Champions realize that they've actually gone to Backworld, and are at the headquarters of their evil counterparts in that world.*

The GM may assign modifiers to the skill check as appropriate. For instance:

-1 to -3	Very distant, isolated or obscure dimension.
-3	A dimension the character doesn't know anything about.
-3	Very specific destination (such as a demon lord's throne room).
+1 to +5	A familiar location in a familiar dimension. (+1: Character has visited the place a few times. +5: Home.)
+1 to +3	Accepting a wider target area (such as "Anywhere in Dante's Inferno" or "Anywhere in Pinchwell Cluster").

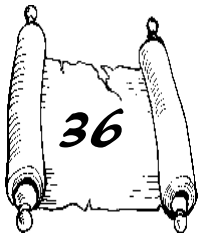
Taking extra time in preparing to move between dimensions will also give a bonus to the roll, just as with any Skill. It is up to the GM, however, to decide how much time it normally takes to attempt Dimensional Navigation.

A character may go further and make the skill roll necessary for their Extra-Dimensional Movement power to work at all, for a -½ Limitation.

KS: Analyze Magic Style

This Skill acts in a manner analogous to the KS: Analyze Style Skill in *The Ultimate Martial Artist.* It lets a character assess another person's magical abilities after observing the person using magic for at least a full Turn. The other person's general power rating can be guessed, their variety of magic identified, and probable strategies predicted. If a magical style has any special weakness—and in magic, simple lack of flexibility can be a weakness—this skill may be able to find such a weakness.

KS: Analyze Magic Style is an INT-based Knowledge Skill (base 3 points for a roll of 9 + INT/5, +1 to roll for +2 points). A character attempting a KS: Analyze Style skill roll gets +2 to their roll if the target has a Magic Limitation of at least 10 points (see discussion of this Disadvantage). The PER Roll for Discriminatory Detect Magic can be used as a complementary roll. The degree by which one makes a KS: Analyze Magic Style roll determines how much information one can gain:



Make Roll By:	Information Gained
0 (exactly)	Target's variety of magic; whether target is a novice, adept or master.
1 or 2	Target's power and skill relative to oneself (from "I'd easily beat him" to "He'd easily beat me"). Major Foci identified, even if they aren't Obvious.
3 or 4	Both favored and any alternate Limitations on main Powers can be identified (for instance, "She prefers using that talisman [OIF] but can get by at greater energy cost [x2 END]" for a target with Variable Limitation). No magical attack from target will get a Surprise Maneuver Bonus, if it is within the target's dominant style (a magical weapon based on a different style of magic may still take the analyzing character by surprise). Supernatural patron (if any) identified.
Half or Better	Any magic-based Disadvantages of target can be identified (i.e. any Vows, Prohibitions, Susceptibilities, or the like). Character knows what defensive Powers would be optimum before the opponent even attacks.

Esoteric Knowledge Skills

Wizards are defined by their special knowledge of hidden forces. Scholar-mages in particular should have appropriate Knowledge Skills. Here are some typical Knowledge Skills a super-mage might buy.

KS: Cosmic Entities

The possessor of this skill knows about the really powerful people in the Multiverse, the dimension lords, and conceptual entities. When one faces such beings, knowing their likes, dislikes, powers and (one hopes) weaknesses can be a real advantage.

KS: Dimension

This is a normal Area Knowledge skill, giving information about another plane's geography and cosmography, environment, life-forms, society, power groups, special dangers and so on. The more specific the area covered, the more specific the knowledge will be. A character who buys the very general Area Knowledge "Planes of Malkuth," for instance, would only know if a particular dimension was one of the better-known, more or less Earth-like dimensions, with basic information on the most commonly visited worlds. A character with AK: City of Pelferlost, City-States of Yong, could give directions to the best restaurants.

Dimensional Area Knowledge skill rolls can complement Dimensional Navigation skill rolls.

KS: Magic Style

Most true mages will have some knowledge of their own style of magic; probably, quite a lot of knowledge. They may also study other styles of magic. This Knowledge Skill deals with real magic, not the distorted and incomplete knowledge of Occultism. (On the other hand, KS: Occultism gives better information on how a magical tradition is perceived by people who aren't sorcerers themselves.)

KS: Occultism

This Skill does not deal with actual magic. Rather, it deals with the concepts and legends of particular occult traditions, such as Kabbalism, Taoism or Voodoo, along with the major writers about that tradition. Simply buying "KS: Occultism" only gives the most general information about occult beliefs, practices and folklore around the world. Buying a Knowledge Skill for a specific tradition gives more detailed information.

KS: Occult World

This Knowledge Skill deals with the secret subculture of magic and occultism that extends around the world. While it does not deal with other planes, a successful skill roll may suggest who's most likely to have contact with another dimension and where they hang out. Mere Streetwise does not deal with this material very well; at most, Streetwise will reveal what weirdoes the punks and lowlifes have learned to avoid.

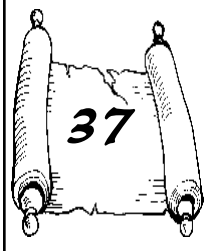
There's more to the Occult World than just sorcerers. In fact, locating a real sorcerer through KS: Occult World is a rather challenging feat (-0 to -5, depending on how zealously the sorcerer maintains secrecy). Even an 11- rating in KS: Occult World will suffice to automatically locate published occultists, the more public cult leaders and libraries and museums with major occult collections. With a skill roll, one can separate the dabblers, the deluded and the charlatans from the people with real power and/or knowledge. Private collectors and little-known sites of mystical power can be located. The Skill also serves to keep one abreast of interesting current events among one's fellow sorcerers and occultists. (For more about the Occult World, see that chapter.)

KS: Spirit World

Also called "Who's Who and What's That." The possessor of this skill is expert in the lore of ghosts, demons, angels and other spirits of the Astral Realms.

Fake Magic Skills

"Fake magic skills" are those which impersonate magical effects: Ventriloquism, Sleight of Hand, Mimicry and Disguise. They can be a last-ditch strategy when magic is impossible or unsafe. The great thing is, magical villains never seem to consider the possibility of an enemy wizard using non-magical methods to achieve their goals! On the other hand, remember that the smarter villains can use these tricks as well…



Disguise

Wizards operate in a dangerous world and acquire powerful and subtle enemies. Very often, the best defense is to seem to be someone else. One can conceal one's identity by shapeshifting or illusion, but sometimes a non-magical disguise is best. For one thing, spells to detect and dispel magic will not penetrate a mundane disguise!

Mimicry

Mimicry is most useful when combined with a disguise (magical or not) or Ventriloquism. The Disney version of *Peter Pan* gives an excellent example of using Mimicry to fool the arch-villain's obedient minions.

Sleight Of Hand

When a mage has been stripped of their magic, Sleight of Hand can let them seem to still have powers of some sort (did you ever see the movie *Willow*?) It also has more conventional uses such as picking the bad guy's pocket or palming a knife.

Ventriloquism

Misdirection can be a wizard's greatest weapon. Aside from the applications of "throwing your voice" mentioned in the *HERO System Rulebook,* Ventriloquism can be used to make one seem to be somewhere else. This can be useful if one is hiding from a powerful enemy and it matters who gets in the first shot:

> **Example:** *Solitaire is hiding from Oom the Unspeakable behind a rock. She uses Ventriloquism to make a noise behind a different rock. The noise fools Oom. He casts his Mystic Blast of Certain Death and kills the innocent rock. Then Solitaire pops out from behind her rock and zaps Oom the Unspeakable.*

One might also try using Ventriloquism to make the mega-villain's henchman mouth off at him (scratch one henchman). Finally, once in a while a sorcerer might want to call out an Incantation without anyone knowing who did it. No doubt clever players can think of other uses.

General Scholastic Skills

Deduction

Once information has been gathered through mystic senses, research among ancient lore and contacts with spirits, Deduction puts it all together and reveals what's going on. GMs should be fairly generous with Deduction, because players will seldom appreciate the significance of occult clues; very few of us have background knowledge of cultists, wizards and other dimensions comparable to the conventions of organized crime, robbery or terrorism one naturally picks up from TV, movies and comic books.

Area Knowledge

Not all travels are to other dimensions. Magical heroes may travel to exotic locations on Earth, and it's nice to know what one can expect. For mages and other occult heroes, an Area Knowledge might include information about sites of magical power, dwellings of ancient mages and other locations whose significance has somehow escaped the tourist guidebooks.

Language

Mages traditionally know a wide range of antique and obscure languages: not only are the works of the Ancient Masters seldom found in adequate English translation, some magical traditions insist that an archaic language is essential for spells to work. A student of Kabbalah, for instance, must know Hebrew, and the Renaissance demonologists assumed that spirits only responded to Latin.

Professional Skills

Sorcerers who use Foci might want to consider buying a Professional Skill or two so they can craft their own talismans and other paraphernalia. Some magical traditions insist that mages craft their own tools. A Professional Skill might also be a holdover from the character's life before becoming a mage, or what they do in their Secret ID.

Science Skills

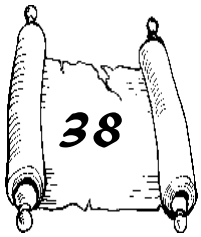
There's nothing wrong with magical characters knowing a few Science Skills. Some magical traditions even imply such knowledge. The old alchemists, for instance, used the most up-to-date lab techniques available (in fact, they invented those techniques). Why shouldn't a modern-day alchemist be at least Familiar with contemporary chemistry? Voodooists and witches both use herbs to work magic; SC: Botany would not be out of place. Nor would SC: Herbal Pharmacology. The few wizards who try to mix high-tech with their magic might get at least a Familiarity with Physics or other sciences, along with perhaps Electronics or Mechanics. Finally, the scientist-turned sorcerer (which includes doctors and psychiatrists) is a classic character type, and there's no reason such a character should forget everything from their former career.

Combat Skills

True mages seldom seem to engage in common brawling, but that doesn't mean they can't. Oriental mages often know Martial Arts as well as magic (in fact, in the Orient martial arts and magic blend almost without a trace). Any sort of mage might appreciate some Acrobatics or Breakfall when they are knocked head over heels by an opponent's spell. Magical characters who are not themselves sorcerers, such as spirits, mythological gods and mystic warrior types might have highly developed combat skills.

Communication Skills

Getting information can be quite important for wizards and other magical heroes. The dwellers in the Occult World do not divulge their secrets easily. Acting, Conversation, Persuasion, Trading and perhaps



some odd forms of High Society might be needed to gain a potential informant's trust. Cult leaders almost always have Oratory; so might any magical character, hero or villain, who must interact with crowds regularly. The European grimoires describe contests of will with summoned demons which sound a lot like an application of Interrogation to break the demon's will, using divine names and magical implements instead of the spotlight in the face and the rubber hose. As for Seduction applied to extradimensional beings…let's not even think about it.

Cutting Skill Costs

All this can add up to many points' worth of skills—points locked away from more important combat abilities. There are, however, some shortcuts.

First, some Language skills can be replaced by Cryptography. Wizards will seldom need conversational Hebrew, let alone Sumerian or Atlantean. Cryptography can represent their ability to translate an ancient magical document in a few days, no matter what obscure, ancient language it's written in.

Second, Skill Enhancers and using the INT-based skill rule helps save points on Knowledge, Professional and Science skills.

Finally, GMs may allow mage PCs to apply Skill Enhancers to the 1 point of skill gained through Cramming. This way, a few hours of research can let a character gain an 11- skill in some obscure lore (Cramming + Scholar), region or dimension (Cramming + Traveler), or 2 points of fluency in a language (Cramming + Linguist). GMs probably should not allow just any character to use this potent combination, but it is a way to represent a mage's vast erudition in subjects that are not useful very often, while leaving points free for combat abilities.

Perks

Contacts And Favors

These are quite common among all magical characters, and can be wonderfully bizarre. They make a good alternative to plain experience points, too. True magicians hobnob with dimension lords and cosmic entities—the mightiest contacts around. Since the cosmic kahunas seldom give any help besides cryptic advice, though, a Contact with the Great Geometer of Selestar might not cost any more points than a Contact with Freddy the Fence.

Other contacts to consider include: other sorcerers, especially the PC's teacher; relatively benign vampires, ghosts and other ghoulies; spirit mediums and other occult specialists; museum curators, rare book dealers and other folk who work with the old and obscure; unemployed gods of defunct mythologies; eccentric recluses with unique knowledge or skills; faerie lords; priests, mainstream or exotic; or whatever government agency investigates weird phenomena. Just to drive the group's grim-nightstalker-detective wild, one could even take the sentient spirit of the campaign city as a Contact; it always knows the "word on the street"!

Followers

In the comics at least, only "Master Villain" sorcerers have Followers. However, some hero mages have servants or apprentices as Followers. Good-guy mages' Follower never are very numerous; they tend to have only one or two, if they have any at all. A well-designed Follower, however, can be a boon for both a PC and a GM. A Follower can help compensate for a character's weaknesses, while (like a DNPC) providing another way for the GM to draw the PC into adventures.

Remember that a Follower doesn't have to be human: it could be a ghost or spirit, a familiar, a monster, a sentient magic item, or some other sort of magical "computer" or "AID."

As for evil cult leaders and the like, their congregations do not necessarily have to be bought as Followers. The special nature of cults means that the new Perk, "Initiate," may be enough.

Fringe Benefits

Most of the miscellaneous Fringe Benefits are no more and no less appropriate for wizards than for other heroes and villains. Mages who travel a lot might like an international driver's license, for instance. There are still parts of the world where a noble title means something—socially, if not legally. Sorcerers may bring professional licenses from their former careers. Mages who belong to public hero teams may win police powers. Finally, wizards get a few special Perks based on their training and deeds: Initiate and Dimension Access.

New Perk: Dimension Access

Some dimensions cannot be entered by just anyone with an Extra-Dimensional Movement power—or at least, not entered safely. There are persons or forces that block access or attack anyone who enters the dimension without permission. The right to freely enter such dimensions is not easily won.

Note that right of access does not mean the dimension or its masters necessarily will be hospitable. The dimension may still be horribly dangerous—but at least one has a chance.

The cost of this Perk depends on how many dimensions it covers and the value of the access. Access to a single restricted dimension is a 1 point Perk; a small group of related dimensions is worth 2 points; and a large group of dimensions is worth 3 points. In the system of dimensions used in this book, the only 3-point group of dimensions with restricted access are the Brialic Planes (see the chapter on Dimensions for an explanation of these). It is recommended that GMs not allow PCs to start a campaign with Brialic Access: the right to visit these important planes should be won through superior role-playing.

Some dimensions may be especially useful to the few who can visit them. Access to a dimension where gold and jewels are as common as rocks, for instance, can make a sorcerer a billionaire. A dimension with healing powers would also be especially useful. Access to such dimensions may be worth extra points. If a restricted dimension has a ruling intelligence who befriends anyone who passes its test to win access, then the PC who wins access must buy two Perks—the right of access and a Contact with the dimension lord.

Dimensional access makes a good alternative or addition to Experience Points for adventures involving cosmic entities. If the PCs bring the adventure to a successful close, the satisfied cosmic kahuna might award them the right to visit an important dimension.

New Perk: Initiate

Membership in some cults and magical societies carries privileges. First, one can sometimes get help from other members. Second, membership in a mystic society gives other sorcerers an idea of one's power, prestige and connections. It's sort of like two doctors comparing their medical schools and residencies—except the doctors aren't judging the risk of occult vengeance if they kill each other. Finally, occult groups may have connections with various supernatural beings, who may feel friendly to people who give the secret handshake. How many points a membership is worth depends on the size and power of the group, and one's rank within it. For instance:

Church Electric Deacon: 1 pt. The Church Electric is a small and obscure cult, but advanced members learn how to make friends with electricity. This lets them chat with lightning elementals, try exorcising possessed appliances, and other curious feats.

Bone Children Initiate: 1 pt. This necromantic cult is feared and despised by the living in the occult world, but high-ranking members who know its mysteries can locate and negotiate with ghouls, zombiemasters, vampires and other necromantic horrors around the globe.

New Perk: Cult Leader

This costs 3-5 points, depending on the size and power of the cult. To the occult world, cult leadership means one is a fairly important figure with notable supernatural power. To the mundane

world, it means one's income is tax-free and not subject to audit. For the head of a really large religious group, such as the Pope, the Aga Khan or the Dalai Lama, this fringe benefit goes as high as 10 pts.

This perk can substitute for other sorts of Fringe Benefits, particularly Followers. The difference is that a cult leader's "Followers" are loyal to the cult, not the leader. If one can discredit a cult leader, many of the cultists will desert and choose a new leader. If a congregation is genuinely loyal to the person rather than the office, they must be bought as Followers.

New Perk: God

This is one step up from a cult leader. It costs 10 points. Most dimension lords and many powerful spirits (Mephistopheles, for instance) have this Perk. Effectively they are heads of state, with resources to match.

Headquarters

Headquarters are quite common among real mages. A wizard's Headquarters is called a Sanctum Sanctorum. The Sanctum Sanctorum has many features which set it apart from a normal superhero or villain Headquarters, and so this subject receives its own discussion elsewhere.

Of the other sorts of magical characters, however, only the major villains are likely to have Headquarters.

Vehicles

Vehicles are not often seen among comic-book wizards and magical heroes and villains. This is strange, for magical vehicles such as flying carpets are certainly common enough in fantasy and folklore.

Wealth

Wealth is a peculiar case. On the one hand, comic-book mages have big old houses with luxurious furnishings, and they never worry about paying the bills. On the other hand, they never flaunt wealth by purchasing yachts or the like. Perhaps it's best to say that money is usually irrelevant to the mystical mage. They can live comfortably, and afford occasional plane tickets and artifact purchases, with no visible means of support.

Talents

Magical characters often have remarkable minor abilities which hint at the greater power they can wield. Some Talents can be considered minor spells; others simply suggest what a remarkable mind a wizard character has. Some are innate abilities of supernatural beings. Only a few deserve special mention.

Cramming

The use of Cramming in combination with Skill Enhancers has already been described. It's just the thing when Professor Weird must fight an ancient Mayan horror, for example, but he doesn't know about anything Mayan. For just 14 points (Cramming + 3 Skill Enhancers), a character can have any Language, Knowledge Skill or Professional Skill they want—just not all at once.

Danger Sense

Danger Sense for comic-book sorcerers usually acts on an area. They're always sensing some nameless menace growing to engulf the world. On the other hand, they are usually not much good at anticipating personal dangers such as a guy sneaking up behind them with a blackjack. After getting bushwhacked in a moment of inattention, they chide themselves for getting careless: "Curse me for a novice!" Danger Sense that's limited to a local area, with no clue as to whether it's the PC or somebody else in danger, gets a -¼ Limitation; Danger Sense that detects nothing less than a city-wide peril merits -½; and Danger Sense that only warns when the entire world is in danger gets a -1 Limitation.

Universal Translator

Universal Translator seems virtually universal itself among magical characters. No matter what weird dimension they go to, they never seem to have language troubles. Likewise, critters from other dimensions can usually make themselves understood when they come to Earth.

Yet Universal Translator costs a lot of points. In most cases one can assume that travelers to other dimensions automatically pick up the local lingo. Spirits summoned to Earth, for instance, will speak the summoner's tongue, while humans who go to the City-States of Yong will speak Yongese. Universal Translator is really only needed for multilingual situations, or for special cases such as musty tomes of eldritch lore written in archaic languages. Language problems just aren't much fun, so don't impose them very often, so few characters will ever need Universal Translator.

Powers

But here thy sword can do thee little stead.
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.

—John Milton, Comus

Wizards can justify having nearly any power. Those with Power Pools do have nearly any power. Yet mages in comic books and fantasy stories don't just pull abilities out of a hat. There is a "wizard style" which some ***HERO System*** Powers fit and some do not.

Adjustment Powers

These form an important part of the sorcerer's stock-in-trade. What's a cleric without a healing spell, or a sorcerer without a spell of spell breaking? Adjustment powers can simulate many classic effects. A Drain with a long recovery time, or a Persistent Suppress, makes a fine curse. Aid can represent many sorts of augmentations and healings. Even a fairly small Dispel can be useful if targeted at the right power: for instance, a Dispel vs. Life Support (Underwater Breathing) in an underwater battle.

One can create an Adjustment Power targeted at nearly anything. Adjustments on Characteristics are just a beginning. Think of Adjustments that affect Movement Powers. A Drain, Dispel or Suppress can remove the defense protecting an opponent from one's best NND attack. While there's no way to affect Skills directly, a Drain or Suppress can be targeted at the Characteristic on which the Skill depends, with a limitation that the reduction of the Characteristic only applies to the Skill in question.

Note that when using an adjustment attack against a fixed-cost power such as Life Supports, Enhanced Senses or Desolidification, the entire power must be Drained, Suppressed or Transferred before there's any effect. Draining 5 points from a character's N-Ray Vision, for instance, won't turn it off.

Uncontrolled Adjustment Powers

Most Adjustment Powers are Instant. Making them Continuous permits many unusual and powerful effects. GMs should view Continuous Adjustment powers, especially Uncontrolled versions, warily, but there may be circumstances where they are just the thing. Here are two notable applications:

Uncontrolled Suppress

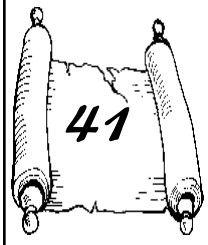
An Uncontrolled Suppress is a very efficient Power, especially if it is bought to 0 END or on Charges. First, an Uncontrolled, 0 END Suppress gives the same effect as a ranged Drain, at less cost. Indeed, an Uncontrolled Suppress is better in nearly every way—except that when the Suppress does shut off, all the Suppressed Characteristic or Power returns at once.

GMs who allow Uncontrolled Suppress should insist on a few conditions. Unless the Suppress is a villain's best black magic curse, there should be an easily discovered, easily used condition to stop the Uncontrolled. See the discussion of "Uncontrolled" in the section on Power Advantages.

Continuous Aid

This is another formidable Power. The character only needs half a Phase to activate the Aid (remember, this finishes one's Phase just like making an attack) and suddenly they are much tougher. A Continuous END Aid means the character never gets tired; a Continuous BODY Aid is much better than Regeneration (unless one gets hit by a Transform); a Continuous Aid vs. All Characteristics or All Powers (+2) makes one pretty much immune to Drains, Suppresses and Transfers. And they're cheap: a Continuous, O END Persistent 2d6 Aid only costs 30 Active Points!

Obviously, GMs should disallow such Powers in most circumstances, or everyone will want them. They might still be allowed in limited circumstances: for instance, letting a hero or villain have a single Charge of Continuous Aid with a short duration. (The



Hierophant, in the Characters section, has this.) Major villains and monsters, of course, can have anything, but the GM should still play fair. Like any other Uncontrolled effect, there should be some simple condition which will stop the Aid.

Concealment Powers

Powers of concealment and deception are quite common for mages, and no wonder. In a contest of magic, knowledge is as important as force. Many wizards believe that the best way to deal with enemies is to avoid them—until one is ready for a confrontation on one's own terms, ready to get in the first shot.

Darkness And Invisibility

Both of these powers have hidden depths. Usually, one only thinks of using these powers against visual senses, but possibilities are much wider. These powers can be applied versus any sense. Invisibility or Darkness vs. Hearing gives a spell of silence (which may block spells requiring Incantations). Invisibility vs. Taste/Smell is just the thing to get past guard dogs.

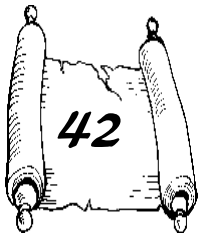
There are even more exotic possibilities. Area Effect Invisibility or Darkness vs. Magical Senses protects a sorcerer's lair from detection by enemies. Darkness vs. Mental Senses will play hob with searchers using Mind Scanning. And if a hero's Danger Sense regularly foils ambushes, let the villain whip up a spell for Invisibility vs. Danger Sense! (But keep this rare: the player devoted a lot of Character Points to that Talent, and will justifiably be upset if lots of villains can circumvent it.)

Images

Images is another power with diverse possibilities. First, Images can be cast affecting any sense, not just the usual vision or hearing: think of Images vs. Taste/Smell, Touch (the illusion even feels solid!), Magic Detection, Mental Awareness, Spatial Awareness or even vs. Danger Sense or Combat Sense.

One interesting use of Images, similar to the Darkness or Invisibility tricks mentioned above, is a use of Images to camouflage and conceal. This is an Image of something not being there. Such an Image vs. Detect Magic, of No Magic Here, isn't as completely concealing as Invisible Power Effects, but it probably costs fewer points (for a major spell anyway) and gets around one problem with Darkness or Invisibility. Those methods make an area impossible to magically scan, but a clever mage might realize that a blind spot is itself something of a giveaway. Images gives a searching mage something innocuous to detect.

An Images enchantment can even fool a Detect Magic into mistaking one sort of magic for another—for instance, to let a demon in disguise pass as an angel. This could be the only way to fool Aura Vision (see below).



Defensive Powers

Wizards in comic books, whether heroic or villainous, hardly ever have any Persistent Defensive Powers (Armor, Damage Resistance, Flash Defense, etc.) They leave that to the monsters, demons, non-sorcerers with magically-bestowed powers and interdimensional mega-villains. The one exception is Mental Defense, which is easily justified as sheer mental discipline, and which seems more "wizardly" than the power to bounce bullets off one's chest. Force Field and Force Wall are the defenses most often seen among comic-book mages. Non-persistent forms of Mental, Flash and Power Defense may be defined, including Mental and Power Defense analogs of Force Wall (more on this below).

There is no rational reason for this lack of persistent defenses. It certainly isn't beyond the power of a high-powered, comic-book sorcerer. They just never cast enchantments of invulnerability on themselves. The only reason seems to be that that's one of the signs that a character is a sorcerer and not a demon, mutant or whatever. It's a storytelling convention, like the white-hatted sheriff shooting the gun from the black-hatted outlaw's hand.

In fantasy at least, when human mages do have Persistent defenses against normal, physical attack, it usually has some eerie explanation and special effect. The classic is the wizard who has removed his heart (and thereby his life) and hidden it. One can run the wizard through and he doesn't bleed. The power is Armor, with the special effect that the damage just doesn't matter and heals instantly. (On the other hand, if the heroes find the wizard's hidden heart—as they always do in stories—the wizard has had it.)

Are Special Defenses Resistant?

In magic-intensive campaigns, Killing Attacks bought with AVLD or Based On ECV (BOECV, about which, much more below) are bound to occur. BOECV Attacks that do BODY raise the question most sharply: does Mental Defense block the BODY from the attack as well as the STUN? In other words, is Mental Defense (and by extension Power Defense, Flash Defense and so on) the equivalent of Normal Defenses or Armor? This has implications for defining Special Defense Force fields and Force Walls (see below).

There is a certain consistency to insisting on Resistant Mental Defense against Mental BODY damage, just like one needs Resistant Physical Defense against Physical BODY Damage. Such a system is used in *The Ultimate Mentalist*; that work includes an optional new Power, Mental Damage Resistance.

The Ultimate Supermage, however, does not use Mental Damage Resistance. It is assumed here that Mental Defense is analogous to Armor, for two reasons:

First, BOECV is already more efficient (in many ways) than AVLD, at less cost. An AVLD, for instance, does not gain Line-Of-Sight targeting. Saying that a

BODY BOECV Attack would put BODY through normal Mental Defense, while a BODY AVLD vs. Mental Defense would fail makes BOECV even more effective.

Of course, one could define the BODY AVLD as acting against Mental Damage Resistance instead, but that opens another can of worms. What about BODY AVLD vs. Power Defense or Flash Defense? Why should those defenses be more powerful, more able to block BODY, than Mental Defense? Should there be Resistant Power Defense too? Where does this end?

Finally and most importantly, players may not have read *The Ultimate Mentalist.* It is very poor form to hit PCs with attacks against defenses the players did not even know existed. Therefore, it is recommended that Mental Damage Resistance be limited to "pure mentalist" campaigns, in which all the characters are built using the same assumptions.

Extending Force Field

There's no reason why Force Field shouldn't be extended beyond PD and ED to cover Mental Defense, Power Defense and Flash Defense. These aren't necessary: one can simply give the character some Mental Defense (or whatever) that costs Endurance and only activates along with a regular Force Field. Creating special-defense Force Fields, however, can simplify a character's write-up. In such a case, each point spent on special-defense Force Field buys 2 points of defense—the same as defense that Costs END (-½) and is Linked to a regular Force Field (-½). Thus, one could define a 10 PD, 10 ED, 10 Mental Defense Force Field costing 25 points, or a 5 PD, 10 Mental Defense, 10 Power Defense Force Field costing 15 points.

(As mentioned, this assumes that Mental Defense is Resistant. If one uses the option of separate Mental Damage Resistance, then Force Field Mental Defense costs the same as PD and ED Force Fields—1 point per point of defense.)

As a shorthand when recording special-defense Force Fields, Mental Defense can be abbreviated as "MD," Power Defense as "PowD" and Flash Defense as "FD:___," filling the blank with the sense group of the Flash.

Extending Force Walls

Given special-defense Force Fields, special-defense Force Walls seem a logical extension. Unlike exotic Force Fields, exotic Force Wall defense costs the same as normal Force Wall defense: 1 point of defense per 2 ½ Base Points (if the Force Wall has an odd number of points of defense, round the last point's cost to 3 points). There's no cost reduction because exotic Force Walls have a special advantage over normal Force Walls. They are transparent to whatever special attack forms they don't have defense against. Thus, an 8 PD, 8 ED, 8 MD Force Wall will let Power Defense attacks (such as Dispels or Transforms) and Flash attacks pass through, but these attacks will not break the Force Wall.

If a Force Wall has, say, only PD and no ED, any energy attack will break the wall unless the wall was bought with a +½ advantage, "Transparent to ED." Exotic attacks such as Mental Powers, Dispels or Flashes, however, already go through a PD/ED Force Wall like it wasn't there (unless of course the attack has a PD or ED special effect, such as a projectile). It would be silly for a Dispel or Transform to pass through a normal PD/ED Force Wall without disturbing it, yet break a Force Wall that happened to have Mental Defense added but no Power Defense. Therefore, special-defense Force Walls are automatically transparent to attacks targeted on defenses the Force Wall doesn't have. That should be worth a few +½ advantages, which compensates for the lower cost of special defenses that cost END.

What if the Force Wall only has special defenses—such as a 6 MD, 6 PowD Force Wall? In such a case, PD or ED attacks go right on through without breaking the Force Wall. If that Force Wall were, say, 6 PD, 6 MD, 6 PowD, however, any ED attack would break the wall unless the PD portion is bought with the +½ "Transparent" advantage.

This only leaves the problem of how to actually use exotic Force Walls in combat. Normal Force Walls are broken by the BODY of an attack. In the case of NND attacks, the answer is easy: they bounce, because they have struck the defense which absolutely negates them, no matter how powerful they may be. AVLD Energy Blasts and Killing Attacks are treated just like normal attacks against normal Force Walls: count the BODY rolled on the dice (even if the attack is Stun-Only) and compare it to the Force Wall's relevant defense. But what about exotic attacks that don't do BODY in any normal sense? Unfortunately, no general system is possible. In each case, one must proceed by analogy.

Mental Powers vs. Mental Force Walls

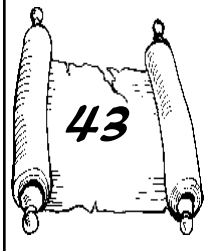
For Mental Powers, the solution is easy. Just count the BODY on the dice as if the Mental Power were an Energy Blast. Suppose a 4d6 Ego Attack did 15 STUN, with a roll of 2, 3, 4, 6. If this was an Energy Blast, this would do 5 BODY. A 4 MD Force Wall would break and the target would take 11 STUN. A 5 MD wall would bounce the attack, and the target would take no STUN at all.

Flash Attacks vs. Flash Defense Force Walls

Flash Attacks operate the same way. This is especially easy because one already counts the "imaginary BODY" from Flash Attacks.

Power Defense Attacks vs. Power Defense Force Walls

Attacks vs. Power Defense, however, present problems because they are so diverse. Here, one must proceed by analogy. Transforms are treated as Killing Attacks: count the pips on the dice and compare it to the Power Defense (PowD) of the wall. A Ranged Drain costs 1d6 per 15 points, so it is comparable to a Killing Attack too. Drains and Transfers are therefore also handled like Killing Attacks. 1d6 per 5 point Suppresses are treated as if they were Energy Blasts, with "imaginary BODY"; so are ranged Aids.



Dispels are an especially curious case, since they could be aimed at the Force Wall, or through it. If one tries Dispelling the Force Wall, the amount rolled on the Dispel attack is compared to the Active Points of the Force Wall in the normal way, although a PowD Force Wall gets to apply its own Power Defense against the attack. Casting a Dispel through a PowD Force Wall is handled like a Normal Attack against a normal Force Wall. Even if the wall breaks (a likely event considering how cheap dice of Dispel are), the Dispel's effect is reduced by the Power Defense of the Force Wall.

Notes On Life Support

Sorcerers in comics and fantasy often cast "spells of protection" to let them and their allies breathe underwater or live in other hostile environments.

When is Persistent Not Persistent?

GMs should not allow Life Support bought as a spell to be fully persistent—or at least, they shouldn't permit any Limitations to reduce the cost. No Limitation on starting up a power is meaningful if the power works by itself from then on indefinitely, with no attention from the caster.

One permissible form of more-or-less Persistent Life Support is a magic amulet which grants some form of Life Support as long as it is worn. This is acceptable because Foci can be lost or stolen.

Another option is Life Support which the caster must re-start every now and then. To use Underwater Breathing as an example again, the spell might protect the caster for 24 hours or until the caster takes a breath of air again, whichever comes first. Such a condition wouldn't even be worth a -¼ Limitation since 24 hours is a long time, but it could make other Limitations on the spell meaningful—such as Incantations, if the GM also stipulates that spells involving Incantations become difficult or even impossible for air-breathers to cast when they're breathing water.

LS: Immune to Disease on Others

LS: Immune to Disease bought Usable By Others deserves special mention. This will not restore any Characteristics reduced by a disease; that requires an Aid. On the other hand, the LS: Immune to Disease spell stops any further loss, which the straightforward Aid might not do.

Extending Missile Deflection

As it stands, Missile Deflection and Reflection can affect spells built on PD, ED, NND/AVLD, Flash or Adjustment Powers, but not Mental Powers (unless they have a physical object or energy bolt as a special effect). Having sorcerers able to deflect Mystic Bolts defined as Energy Blasts but not ones defined as Ego Attacks doesn't make a lot of sense. So, here are two new forms of Missile Deflection. They follow all the rules for standard Missile Deflection, except for which classes of attacks they affect.

Missile Deflection vs. Mental Powers

This has a base cost of 20 points. It is the equivalent of buying normal Missile Deflection with the "Based on ECV" Advantage (+1), then a Limitation, "Won't Affect Normal Ranged Attacks (a -1 at least) which cancels out the cost. It uses ECV instead of OCV.

Mental Missile Deflection affects any mental attack, including powers bought through the Based on ECV Advantage or NND/AVLD: Mental Defense attacks. The special effect only matters if the mental attack is bought as a physical missile, such as a drug-injecting dart. It can affect any sort of psionics, however, whether defined as mutant powers, magic or some sort of "psychotronic" device. Whether it lets one "deflect" an energy-based attack such as a pulsing laser beam that acts as an Ego Attack must be decided on a case-by-case basis by GMs. (Reflecting such an attack, though, is out of the question.)

Missile Deflection vs. Mental is appropriate for sorcerer "psychics." GMs might let other sorts of mentalists take it too.

Missile Deflection vs. Any Magic

Having gone this far, one might as well define a combined version of Mental and Normal Missile Deflection that only affects magic. This has a base cost of 20 points, just like Missile Deflection vs. Ranged or Mental. It affects any ranged attack with magic as its special effect, no matter what game mechanic is used to define the attack: Energy Blast, Dispel, Mental Power, Power Usable vs. Other at Range, whatever. On the other hand, it can't affect any non-magical ranged attack such as a thrown chair.

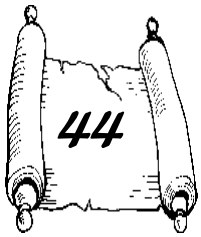
Combining Forms

Characters who want a Missile Deflection that affects multiple classes of attacks, such as any mental or normal ranged attack, or any magical or bullet-like attack, must add the base costs for each class together, then buy any pluses to the deflection roll and other modifiers. (Such "general deflection" powers can get very expensive.) There's no reason one couldn't place each type of Missile Deflection in a Multipower slot…the character just has to anticipate what class of attack will come next, that's all. (But putting different classes of Missile Deflection in Elemental Control slots is too abusive—just an excuse to cut the cost in half. Prudent GMs will not allow it.)

Information Powers

Special senses are very common for sorcerers and other magical beings. Just about every true mage should have a spell to Detect Magic; for more experienced mages, this could become virtually an innate power. Many supernatural beings can see in the dark.

Some special senses make more sense than others for mages. Senses to see in the dark are traditional. Likewise, Spatial Awareness or N-Ray Vision to represent forms of "mystical awareness" can fit in a Magical Sense Group. Senses like Ultrasonic Hearing or Tracking Scent are justified as spells conferring "animal senses."



New Power: Astral Awareness

This new Enhanced Sense enables one to see and target astral bodies and invisible ghosts, and that's it. It costs 3 points.

Magic-Detecting Senses

The Radio Sense Group and Active Sonar are too "tech" for most wizards, but one could define a 15 point magical analog to Radar and Active Sonar. The character emits "mystic emanations" which tell him, her or it the shape and position of objects. Magic detection powers will pick up these "Magic Radar Sense" emanations, just as Radio Hearing detects Radar Sense and Ultrasonic Hearing picks up Active Sonar.

One of the most common sensory spells is Discriminatory Detect Supernatural. A wizard with this power can find information about a spell, enchantment or magical creature with a successful PER roll. The more the wizard makes the roll by, the more detailed is the information obtained. Just barely making the PER roll might give the general type of a magical aura. Making the PER roll by 5 could give complete details of the spell's effect, function and power, including any keywords or other procedures needed to operate the spell, subject to the GM's discretion. With the appropriate Knowledge Skill rolls, the detector can even make a good guess about who cast the spell.

If the magic-detection sense is raised to a Sense, probably the easiest way to describe the sense is that the character "sees magic." Not only can such a person tell if an object or being is magical just by looking at it, the person can see spirits and other things which are invisible to normal sight. This does not, however, provide the character another Targeting Sense. One cannot target "invisible" entities with Discriminatory Ranged Sense Magic; one only knows that something is in a general area.

If one wants a completely independent, Targeting magical sense, buy Sense Magic/Supernatural with the Targeting advantage. (To be fair, buying Targeting should automatically make a sense Ranged and Discriminatory.)

"Aura Vision"

One magical sense that has become a traditional feature of real-world occultism is Aura Vision. Supposedly, all humans—some say, all objects—are surrounded by a shimmering halo of colored light which only the psychically aware can see. This power has already been described in some detail in the *HERO System Almanac 1*, but is summarized here for cheapskates who didn't buy that book.

Aura Vision is bought as Detect Aura, Sense, Discriminatory. Ranged isn't necessary because normal auras can't be seen more than 1 hex away. Since Aura Vision is a psychic effect, like the Sense Magic just described, auras cannot be seen at all in total darkness, even though they are more easily seen in dim light than bright light. (Not unless the character buys the sense as Targeting, anyway.)

The colors in a person's aura gives clues to their basic personality and current emotional state. (One system for matching colors with meanings is described in the HSA1. All that really matters is that one's system be consistent.) Aura Vision never gives precise answers, however. Without knowing a person for some time, there's no way to tell what part of an aura is due to basic character and what part is due to current emotion.

Example: *Jezeray the psychic is questioning Freddy the Fence and gets close enough to him to see his aura. Freddy's aura shows both the orange of sincerity and the yellow-green of deceit (yuck). Jezeray realizes this could mean either that Freddy is basically honest but now lying for some reason, or that he is normally a liar but is now telling a truth and anxious that he be believed. Jezeray suspects the latter, but starts thinking of more tough questions that might make Freddy's aura reveal more about his emotions.*

There is no non-magical way to disguise one's aura, but perhaps a sneaky sorcerer or demon could work out a spell for this (see "Images," above). If Aura Vision is quite rare in a campaign, however, few beings will ever think to disguise their auras.

Clairsentience

This is another common power. Think of wizards and witches with their crystal balls and magic mirrors. A few points about this power deserve clarification.

First, remember that if one wishes to use Clairsentience with a sense people don't usually have, such as IR Vision or Magic Detection, one must buy the basic Enhanced Sense as well as the Clairsentience.

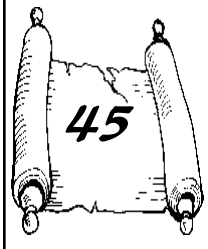
Second, Clairsentience does not let one instantly find an object in an unknown location. Clairsentience may speed a search because the searcher doesn't have to physically move from location to location, but searching a small town for something as small as a single person could still take days, and searching a major city for a villain's hideout could take weeks.

Finally, Precognition and Retrocognition demand special limitations, which the GM and player must agree to beforehand.

Controlling Precognition and Retrocognition

There are two ways to use precognition and retrocognition. The first is to scan a location's past or future. Using this method, one can see who (or what!) enters and leaves a given spot, but one cannot move the "point of view" beyond the normal range for Clairsentience. If something moves (moved, will move) outside that radius, the character can only follow by moving himself. The insane difficulty of retrocognitively following a person in a fast car is left to the reader's imagination.

Second, one can follow the timeline of a specific object or person. In this case, how far away someone might have been or will be from their present location doesn't matter, as long as they are within Clairsentience range now. Theoretically, one could watch an alien



visitor's timeline back to their birth on another planet! (One can't do this for people and objects of extradimensional origin, though, unless one's Clairsentience also has the Transdimensional option. Otherwise, timelines break when they enter or leave a universe.) This method has the limitation that one cannot switch targets in the past or future: one cannot, say, follow Cardinal Krait's timeline back to his meeting with Demonologist in Marrakech, then switch to Demonologist and see where he went after the meeting.

Just as normal Clairsentience can't scan a broad zone of space instantly, Precognition and Retrocognition can't scan a long timeline instantly. A second-by-second trace of a subject's timeline can be sped up, like a VCR on Fast Forward or Reverse, but details get lost because human brains pick up and process data at a finite speed. Quickly scanning whole decades of a subject's timeline just isn't practical.

Locating information by looking through time takes a Perception roll, and fast scans impose negative modifiers. The good old Time Chart can be used to give modifiers. Scanning the past or future in "real time" speed, one segment per segment, imposes no modifier. A faster scan, one Phase per segment, imposes a -2 modifier on the PER Roll; one Turn per segment gives a -4 modifier; one minute per segment gives a -6 modifier; and so on. Long-lasting, fairly static events give opposing bonuses: +2 for an event lasting a full Phase, +4 for a Turn, etc. Using this as a guideline, GMs can make up reasonable modifiers for fast scans. PCs may well decide to just scan short sections of a timeline and hope they get lucky.

Alternatively, a character can use a "selected highlights" version of scanning. It is not as precise and controllable as deciding to scan, say, everything that happened between 4 and 3 weeks ago, but when it works it saves the character a lot of time. In this system, each use of Precognition or Retrocognition picks up one important event from the subject's timeline. For objects, significant events include its creation, its use in a powerful magic spell or a murder, its destruction, or getting a new owner. For people, any event charged with strong emotion is magically important: birth, death, family tragedy, love's first kiss, sheer terror, etc.

The chief problem with this method is getting the right scene. The less important an event was to the subject, the harder finding the event will be. Suppose one is trying to solve a murder by Retrocognition, using objects at the scene of the crime as subjects. The murder weapon would be perfect: it was intimately involved in the crime, and very close to the killer. This would be a straight Perception Roll to spot the murderer's face. A vase shattered in the course of the murder would not be so good: it suffered a significant event (breaking), but it wasn't closely involved in the crime itself. Seeing the details of the crime from the vase's point of view would suffer a severe penalty, if it was possible at all.

If a character has Precognition or Retrocognition, they must select a system for how it works, and stick to it. If a character scans locations, they can't also scan along subject timelines. If they look for highlights, they can't also do continuous scans.

Whatever system a character uses, GMs should remember that Precognition and Retrocognition only give sensory impressions, which the character—and player—must interpret for themselves. GMs should try to merely describe what the character sees (or hears, smells, magic-detects, etc.) without explaining them in any way.

Mind Scanning

At the GM's option, Mind Scanning might give some very general hints about the nature of a target mind: "Vicious," "Nimble," "Like Nothing Human," etc. It adds color.

Telepathy

Many wizards and magical characters in comic books and fantasy novels can read minds or project their thoughts. Telepathy will be a common Power, with many uses—and a few headaches for GMs.

Hiding From Telepathy

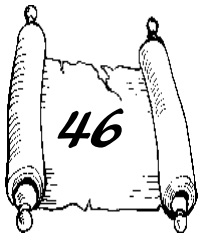
Even if a telepath successfully makes an ECV attack and can push past any Mental Defense, all is not lost for someone who wants to keep their true thoughts hidden. Telepathy is not an infallible way to get the truth.

First, surface thoughts can be hidden using Acting. This is the "Method" school of acting: get inside the character's head and try to think what they would think. The person using Acting has a Skill vs. Skill contest with the telepath, their Acting skill against the mind-reader's PER Roll.

Of course, this isn't enough if the telepath can read deep, hidden thoughts. Acting might, at GM's option, be enough to hide even hidden thoughts if the target wins the Skill contest by 5 points, but this is the limit. Nobody can hide memories or subconscious drives.

At least, not quickly or by themselves. Brainwashing can twist even deep, hidden thoughts to a desired pattern, although brainwashing takes weeks or even months. A few people might be able to brainwash themselves through self-hypnosis, but this will still take several hours at least, and some quite exotic skills.

For still deeper mental conditioning, actual Powers are needed. A psychic adept might buy an Images vs. Mental Sense Group, literally creating a phony mind for an attacker to read. Mental powers might also be used to edit and rewrite another person's mind. Simple changes such as "Forget you saw a monster" might be done with Mind Control or by Telepathy at the memory-affecting level (remember, Telepathy can send as well as receive at every level). These changes will be fragile: any reminder of the event or previous mental condition will restore the person's memory or drives. Permanent change requires a Transform (q.v.)



Adding Color to Deep Telepathy

In comics, it's traditional for really deep mind probes to be played out as little psychodramas. Telepaths don't get a dry account of the target's memories or desires, they perceive themselves as moving into a full-sensory, wraparound world. The memory they seek will be played out right before their eyes. A probe into the target's subconscious mind gets even more interesting, as the telepath can interact with allegorical characters representing aspects of the target's personality. These inner dramas can seem to last several minutes or even hours, although only a few seconds pass in the real world.

This "psychodrama" approach makes mind-peeping a lot more interesting, to GMs and players both. A deep probe can even develop into an adventure in itself, as the telepath searches through the target's inner world. In such cases, the GM can scrap the "One fact per Phase" and breakout rules. The Telepathy lasts through at least one full dramatic scene, and external time doesn't matter. The subject may get a chance to break the telepathic contact at especially stressful points in the psychodrama.

Beyond the Subconscious

As it stands, the Telepathy Effect chart only reaches to EGO +30. At GM's option, Telepathy at the EGO +40 level reaches into humanity's collective unconscious. The telepath can encounter living archetypes—legendary figures from the subject's cultural and ethnic background, personifying universal mythic themes. Any American, for instance, might have Uncle Sam or Abraham Lincoln in their deep unconscious; probing the mind of an American of Nordic descent might turn up Thor or Odin; the mind of anyone in the world might contain the Earth Mother, the Wise King or the Divine Fool…or the telepath might get a meeting with the Dragon. Any of them can join in psychodramas.

Mind Link

This power can represent spells allowing communication with cosmic entities and dimension lords. Mind Scanning is still needed to initiate contact, but if the extradimensional bigwig is already well-disposed to the character, this should not be difficult. Once the Mind Scanning locates the target's mind, the Mind Link can be established. The Mind Link can have a colorful special effect, such as a phantom version of the entity's face appearing to talk with the caster, or the entity's voice speaking from a flame in a brazier.

Note that Mind Link is a Persistent power. If characters want, they can keep a low-level Mind Link going indefinitely—until they enter a zone that blocks Mental Powers, such as an area of Darkness vs. Mental Sense Group.

Mental Powers

Wizards use Mental Powers a lot: the illusion to trick a powerful foe, the hypnotic command to make bystanders forget what they've seen, and so on. Defining a sorcerer's mystic bolts as an Ego Attack instead of an Energy Blast makes them both more effective and more mysterious to non-sorcerers. To bystanders, two sorcerers hurling Bolts of Befuddlement at each other just seem to be gritting their teeth and wiggling their fingers. Then, suddenly, one of them collapses. Only people with Mental Awareness will see the spectacular bolts flying back and forth. As always, sorcerers can give their Mental Powers all sorts of funky special effects.

Note that a spell doesn't literally need to be a Mental Power to have a mental special effect. A "basic spell of disguise" to make people see a mage as wearing ordinary clothes instead of a costume might be called a "psychic illusion" but the actual power is still just Instant Change.

The "Based on ECV" (BOECV) Advantage lets one add many innovative powers to the Mental Power roster; see "Based on ECV" in the Power Advantages section below.

Movement Powers

Of course Flight is the most common for wizards, with Extra-Dimensional Movement a close second. (OK, EDM is actually in the Standard Powers list. So what.) Teleportation is pretty common, too.

For some reason, spells to grant extra Running, Swimming, Superleap or Clinging just don't seem very "mystical." At any rate, they aren't seen much in either comics or fantasy fiction. Gliding's pretty rare, just because Flight is so much more glamorous.

Tunneling is rare too, perhaps rarer than it should be: with the right special effect, Tunneling can seem quite mystical enough.

FTL Movement is justifiably rare, for the whole idea of interstellar travel is just too "tech" to work comfortably with ancient secrets and mystic lore.

Size And Self-Changing Powers

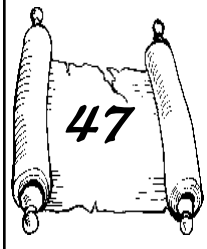
Growth is usually seen only as a special effect in astral battles, where both combatants might grow miles high. This is best represented as a PRE Aid, not Growth. Shrinking magic seems almost entirely confined to fantasy stories for children: "Magic words of Poof Poof Piffles/Make me just as small as Sniffles!" Players (and their characters) may be more enterprising.

Among related self-changing powers, Density Increase is unusual, but possible special effects like a body of living stone or metal make it a natural for mages specializing in mineral magic.

Stretching is an unusual power for any character, mage or not.

Desolidification has many appropriate special effects besides Astral Travel (which see below). Mages can become clouds, or shadows, or assume "ghost form."

Shape Shift is better known from fantasy than from comics. (Think of the famous shapeshifting duel between Merlin and Madame Mim in *The Sword in the Stone.*) Even in comics, though, wizards may use Shape Shift to get close to an enemy by posing as one of the



enemy's lackeys. The special effect may be a "disguise of magical illusion," but the Power is Shape Shift. Turning into an animal is another common use of Shape Shift. Although by a strict reading of the rules the character only gets the animal's shape, GMs may allow shapeshifted characters to also get the animal's natural abilities, at their natural power level: a real bird's Flight or a real wolf's Killing Attack are pretty feeble by superhero standards.

Duplication is as rare for mages as any other sort of character. Considering the point cost, this is no surprise.

Multiform, on the other hand, is not too uncommon: for werewolves and other therianthropes, at least, if not for true mages. Here the question is simply how one justifies a mage having such a radically different alternate form. (Sirius, in *Champions Of The North* and Golem, from *Creatures of the Night* give two good examples of Multiforming mages.)

Special Powers

The heterogeneous "Special Powers" are discussed (if they are discussed at all) under other categories. Defensive Special Powers are discussed under "Defensive Powers"; Duplication and Multiform under "Size and Self-Changing Powers"; Enhanced Senses and Mind Link under "Informational Powers"; and Instant Change and END Reserve under "Other Powers."

Other Powers

Energy Projection Powers

The familiar ranged attacks of the energy projector—Energy Blast, Ranged Killing Attack, Flash, Telekinesis and Entangle—are at least as common as mental Powers for mages. Mages are set apart from mutants, victims of radiation accidents and other energy projectors, however, by their bizarre and colorful special effects and, perhaps, more exotic modifiers than usual.

Change Environment

Change Environment is pretty common for wizards. Weather mages can create or banish rain; necromancers cast a magic gloom to protect their undead legions from sunlight; just about any sort of mage can summon magical illumination. Well chosen with a good range of effects, Change Environment spells can be an important part of a wizard's arsenal. The wizard only needs to find out who's Susceptible to what…

END Reserve

It makes a lot of sense for a wizards to pay the END of their spells through an END Reserve instead of personal END. First, this can represent a person who can keep casting spells 'til the cows come home without making them as physically tireless as a "Brick." Second, Reserve END is cheaper than personal END. Finally, Reserve END doesn't go away if one is knocked unconscious. A END Reserve is worth considering.

Instant Change

This power is very common among comic-book magicians. The special effect is usually an illusion to make their flashy "working" costume look like ordinary clothing.

Presence

Under some circumstances, extra Characteristics can be bought as Powers. But why would one want to buy extra Presence this way? Many players regard Presence as a largely worthless Characteristic anyway.

In fact, as a Characteristic it is largely worthless. One must buy large (expensive) amounts of Presence to get really effective Presence Attacks. EGO is just as useful for defending against Presence Attacks, and it can be used for more things. Presence bought as a Power for special purposes, however, is highly effective.

Offensive Presence

Presence that can only be used for attack receives a -½ Limitation. The Presence may receive a further -¼ Limitation if it only applies to Presence Attacks for a limited purpose: for instance, only to cause fear or only to inspire trust. With these Limitations, extra Presence becomes quite inexpensive—enough for a character's Presence Attack to become a major attack by itself. With a total of 60 Offensive PRE, for instance, one gets a 12d6 Presence Attack doing, on average, 42 points. This will get a +10 effect on virtually any opponent. Many may suffer a +20 effect, making them lose a Phase in which they are at ½ DCV. That's no small potatoes—as good as an Entangle.

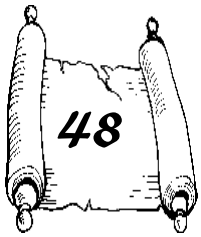
Extreme Presence Attacks

As it stands, the Presence Attack Table (page 170, *HERO System Rulebook*) only goes to (EGO or PRE) + 30 effects. This is good enough for most situations, but once in a while characters may be subjected to even greater PRE Attacks. The GM may want some correspondingly severe effect.

An (EGO or PRE) + 30 effect PRE Attack to inspire fear can make the target flee in terror, faint or surrender on the spot. If loyalty and courage are intended, the target will follow the attacker into suicidal danger. In effect, it temporarily gives the target new Psychological Limitations with Strong commitment. Previous Psychological Limitations of less than Total commitment that might conflict with the attacker's command no longer apply. Total Psychological Limitations can be overcome with an EGO Roll.

A PRE Attack getting a +40 effect is even more severe. The target is pretty much insane, and will be for some time. The new Psychological Limitations are Total. No pre-existing Psychological Limitation can override them. A frightened target will flee in blind panic or slip into catatonia; a target inspired with loyalty will regard the PRE attacker as a living god. The target's personality can be drastically changed.

Such effects can last a long time. Completely incapacitating effects such as catatonia will only last from a few minutes to a few hours; they can be beat by an



EGO Roll at minuses (-5 for 1 minute after the attack; -4 for 5 minutes later; -3 an hour later; and so on). It is pure GM's Option when less crippling personality changes are thrown off. Possibilities include:

- When the target encounters a situation that would trigger the previous Psychological Limitations: for instance, a target with a Strong Code against Killing being made to murder someone.
- When the target has an opportunity to calm down and collect themselves. This requires at least several hours without stress. It may require the target's friends to remind the target of his or her previous character.
- For hyper-PRE attacks to inspire loyalty, the effect might be broken by seeing the object of devotion utterly humiliated.
- For extreme cases, therapy by a trained psychiatrist or the use of Mental Powers like Telepathy or Mind Control.
- If the new Psychological Limitations have received reinforcement for several days, the target's original personality might be restored by nothing less than another hyper-Presence Attack the other way, or intensive treatment—Mind Surgery—by a telepath.

Even after the full effect of the PRE Attack is broken, though, the character's Psychological Limitations might be permanently changed. If the PRE Attack went along with the target's personality, those Psychological Limitations could be permanently strengthened. Conversely, PRE Attacks that opposed the target's normal personality might permanently weaken the relevant Psychological Limitations—or make them stronger in reaction. Permanent phobias might be gained.

It may seem excessive to have a Presence Attack giving results similar to a Major Transform, but consider how powerful the Presence Attack must be. Assuming a 20 PRE character—and that's pretty typical—the PRE Attack must do at least 60 points. That takes a 17d6 PRE Attack to give a 50/50 chance of affecting the character at the PRE + 40 level. Let's face it, in a campaign where most attacks run around 60 Active points, any 85 point attack should have a fair chance of putting a PC down for a long time.

Naturally, PCs in such a campaign shouldn't throw around 85 point PRE Attacks. This is just the thing, however, for Unspeakable Lovecraftian Horrors: it's how they drive insane people who just see them. Nothing else adequately represents this effect.

Defensive Presence

As has been mentioned elsewhere, Presence usable only to defend against Presence Attacks is bought with a -1 Limitation. This is so cheap that GMs may want to limit how much of it can be bought, just as with other defenses. It should be noted, however, that super-mages often seem quite unflappable compared to other folk—even other superheroes.

Summon

Mages have a virtual monopoly on this power. Summoning chiefly requires agreement between the player and the GM about what, precisely, the character can summon.

Note that a spell can have Summoning as a special effect without using Summoning as the base power. The College of Demonology in *FANTASY HERO,* for instance, includes a spell which summons a little imp which carries things about as the spell caster directs; the actual power is Telekinesis, with summoning as a quaint special effect.

Expanding Transform

Transforms have so many intriguing applications that no one could hope to list them all. These are just a few interesting new options.

Visible Effects for Cumulative Transforms

As the rules stand, a Cumulative Transform has no effect until the total passes twice the target's BODY. At the GM's and player's option, cumulative Transforms might partly change the target in some tactically negligible but visually interesting way.

Example: *Dr. Weird has a 2 ½d6 Cumulative Major Transform, "target to frog." He uses the Transform on a bank robber, rolling 9 BODY. This is completely insufficient to transform the 12 BODY robber, so the robber suffers no physical penalty. His skin turns green, however, while his eyes bulge out and webs form between his fingers.*

Admittedly, this does make a cumulative Transform more powerful—as long as the GM plays NPCs as subject to panic at unearthly events (like real people are), instead of as purely rational tacticians (like most PCs).

The logic in the above case is that Dr. Weird will need 3 shots to Transform the bank robber. Turning a person a third of the way to a frog, however, could fairly be considered a minor Transform. An all-or-nothing 6d6 minor Transform costs the same as a cumulative 2 ½d6 major Transform, is within the standard point range for superhero powers, and would have a good chance of successfully affecting that burglar, so why not allow the cumulative, visible effect?

Transform Causing Mental Change

Transforms could be targeted against EGO instead of BODY, to represent changing a target's personality instead of their physical form. One would defend against such a Transform with Mental Defense instead of Power Defense. This is neither an Advantage nor a Limitation, since both are rather exotic defenses.

On the other hand, not all mind-changing Transforms need be targeted at EGO. Particularly in magic-rich campaigns, where characters routinely have high

EGOs and Mental Defense, targeting a Transform against BODY and Power Defense will probably be more effective.

A merely "cosmetic" Mental Transform can minor personality traits such as habits, tastes and mannerisms. Single Psychological Limitations can be changed by up to 5 points; for instance, reducing a Limitation from Total to merely Strong commitment, or imposing a personality trait that only occasionally becomes a problem. The activation or recovery roll for a Berserk or Enraged can be changed by one step (say, from 11- to 14-). Distinctive Features based on behavior can be changed by 5 points, too.

Minor Mental Transforms can change Psychological Limitations by up to 15 points: either the subject of the Limitation, the frequency of the Limitation or the depth of commitment can be changed. (Thus, a Very Common Limitation with Total commitment could not be erased, but it could be given a new object or reduced to Moderate commitment and Common frequency.) Berserks can be similarly adjusted. Behavior-based Distinctive Features can be changed by up to 10 points. Addictions to milder drugs such as alcohol or marijuana can be cured or imposed. Memories of isolated events can be changed (for instance, to make a person forget they saw something.)

Major Mental Transforms can change the target's mind in any way conceivable. Whole new personalities can be created, assuming the person using the Transform has sufficient skill.

Transform Causing Social Change

Fantasy and folklore are full of cases where magic changes a person's social condition. Examples include all those deals-with-the-Devil stories where the pacter not only becomes rich, but famous and politically powerful. The simplest way to represent this is through a Transform such as "poor person to rich person," or "nobody into celebrity."

Of course, it can work the other way around, too (look at the Biblical Book of Job). Imagine the horror of a curse which makes everyone forget that you exist, and the government insists that your ID is all forged… It's easy to write up: "Person to legal nonentity." This is a major Transform.

In fact, this is such a major Transform that it's best left to NPCs such as demon lords and djinns. Any sorcerers who have a major Social Transform should be reluctant to use this dangerous power. The change in the world is never seamless: there are always flaws and contradictions left in the social fabric. At best, these let other people deduce that an impossible change has occurred (which is a good reversal condition for the Transform). At worst, reality itself starts spontaneously changing, until the world reaches a timeline without contradiction. Usually this means erasing the existence of the Transformed person and the Transforming wizard alike.

Not all Social Transforms are so complete or so dangerous. "Cosmetic" Social Transforms produce minor changes in status: the loss of a job, hiring at a position for which the person is reasonably qualified or granting or removing tiny Perks and Fringe Benefits such as a minor Contact or an international driver's license. Giving someone a job for which they are not plausibly qualified or granting local celebrity or serious disgrace would be minor Transforms. So would changing the target's Wealth by 5 points (up or down) or granting or removing fairly major Perks or 3-point Fringe Benefits. Minor Transforms can also be used to create or remove local paper trails (for instance, to remove documentary evidence of business dealings). A major Social Transform can create any social status or disability—but not without risk.

Transform vs. Powers

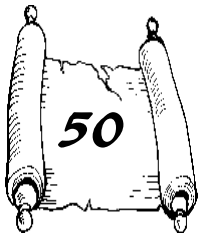
Finally, can one transform things that don't have BODY at all, such as enchantments? A sorcerer twisting one spell into another is not unheard of in fantasy novels or comics.

The logic behind Transform is that "if you could kill someone, you might as well have changed them into something else." The logic could be extended to Dispels vs. Powers: if you could dispel a Power and replace it with another Power just as great, one might as well have Transformed the Power. Since Dispel costs a fifth as much as the Killing Attack on which Transform is modeled, one gets a lot more Power Transform than Normal Transform for the points. For a Power Transform, roll a normal 1d6-per-15 points Transform and multiply the result by 5. If the result is double the Active Points of the Power, one has Transformed it into a different Power—perhaps into no Power.

Example: *Dr. Weird tries stripping Solitaire of her Force Field power (a result of a tragic misunderstanding). Solitaire's Force Field costs 26 Active Points, so the Wizard's Power Transform must roll at least 52. Dr. Weird casts an all-or-nothing 3d6+1 Variable Power Transform (Any Power to No Power). He rolls a 12, which multiplies to 60: low for that number of dice, but more than enough for the purpose. Solitaire cannot use her Force Field spell until Dr. Weird relents or she finds the reversal condition.*

A Major Power Transform can change a Power in any way the GM will allow. Advantages, Limitations and even the nature of the Power could be altered. Minor Power Transforms can change Powers in ways which may bring minor benefits or problems to the user, such as: changing a Power's Special Effect (for instance, a fire-based EB into an ice-based EB); changing any single Modifier on a Power; or changing one sort of Image Power into another. There are no Cosmetic Power Transforms.

As always, the basic Power Transform only does one kind of change: for instance, turning a Ranged attack into a Nonranged attack. For a +¼ Advantage, the



Power Transform can do a limited class of changes, such as "Any Adjustment Power to Any Other Adjustment Power," or "Rewrite Any Limitations." For a +1 Advantage, the Transform becomes Universal, able to change any target Power any way imaginable.

Transform vs. Power definitely merits a stop sign. It can, however, represent a number of unusual effects difficult to define any other way.

Finally, it is recommended that Power Defense be subtracted from Power Transform rolls before multiplying by 5. Otherwise, a Cumulative Power Transform becomes virtually impossible to block. Transforms aren't supposed to be easy!

Regulating Universal Transforms

Few powers are so potentially destabilizing to a campaign, in so many ways, as a Cumulative Universal Transform. Quite simply, the ability to change anything in any way imaginable raises a character to a level of power beyond even most superheroes or villains. A hero who can turn Doomsday Machines into ducklings, give super-powers to any schmuck on the street, create thousand-dollar bills out of thin air or turn heads of state into hoboes can really screw up an adventure—or even an entire campaign. GMs must insist on some sort of restriction.

First, buying Transform with the Universal Advantage does not literally let one Transform anything in any way imaginable. A Universal Transform only deals with one class of change: physical, mental, social or power. GMs have two choices in how they enforce this separation. There's no reason why both could not be used in a campaign.

The most restrictive way is to say that physical, mental, social and power Transforms are actually completely separate powers. If one wants Transforms (Universal or otherwise) that will cause, say, both physical and mental changes, one must buy two separate Transforms. Of course, these different types of Transforms can be placed in a Multipower.

The second way is to insist that characters must buy special Knowledge Skills, analogous to Weapon or Transport familiarities, in order to use the exotic Transform applications defined above. The standard Physical Transform is free. For a Universal Transform to also cause mental, social or power-changing effects, however, the character must spend at least 2 points on a Knowledge Skill concerning that type of Transform. Simple, easily defined changes don't require skill rolls, but GMs may ask for skill rolls if the character wants to cause some subtle, complicated or far-reaching change such as rewriting a judge's political convictions, booby-trapping a hero's energy attacks so they all turn into 0 Range Explosions if used against the caster, or changing who's head of state.

(As always, GMs can create special exceptions if they want to. One good example is changing a person into an animal or monster. This is done as a purely physical Transform, but after a while the human personality might be subsumed in the instincts of the animal or monster, a delayed mental effect.)

Another good way to limit Universal Transforms is insist that characters must know what they are doing if they want to create something with significant capabilities of its own.

Most traditional transformations do not require characters to know much about what they are making, but then most traditional transformations don't try to give the subject new abilities. If one turns a prince into a frog, one doesn't need to know about amphibian anatomy; but then, frogs have no useful powers. Turning a block of lead into a block of gold is easy, too, because lumps of metal don't do anything by themselves. Turning an apple into a Macintosh computer, however, should require more than casual knowledge: a computer can do a great many things "by itself."

In game terms, then, some applications of Universal Transform demand that a character have certain skills. These applications fall into a few general categories:

Creating Functional Objects

Creating a useful device requires a fairly detailed knowledge of how the desired object works and is made, whether the object is a TV set or a magic wand. Creating a working machine, for instance, would require that a character have Mechanics, Electronics and/or perhaps an appropriate Knowledge or Professional Skill. Creating a magic item calls for a KS: Enchantment skill roll and perhaps a Spell Research roll as well. Any weapon more advanced than a basic club, spear or axe would need an appropriate Weaponsmith skill roll. Creating a computer would require skill rolls in Electronics, Computer Programming and SK: Computer Architecture, at the very least.

The upshot of this is, no, you cannot use Universal Transform to create a device—magical or technological—with Powers you lack, not unless you have the relevant skills to create the device by normal means.

Forgery

It's assumed that a mage with a Universal Transform can create any simple object they can imagine; it's just that for complicated objects, they need special skills to be able to imagine them in enough detail. A wizard can easily make basic objects such as silverware, doors or statues. Unless the wizard has a relevant Professional or Knowledge Skill, however, objects created this way will be nothing to write home about. A wizard who tries creating a painting when he doesn't know anything about art will create a pathetic daub, not a thing of beauty. (He should stick to modern art, where nobody can tell the difference.) As for forging a copy of an existing work of art, forget it. Only an expert in the craft or art form could have a hope of duplicating a Rembrandt painting or Ming vase without the actual object in front of them to use as a model.

Granting Super-Powers

Some wizards can give "origins" at will; usually these are evil wizards who use this power to create lackeys for themselves, but there's nothing to stop a hero with a Universal Transform from giving people powers. A heroic mage might also want to temporarily change their comrades into a creature that happens to have innate powers, or temporarily grant some single useful power (such as Life Support for an adventure in an unusual environment).

Again, the wizard must buy special skills. Causing an origin (or just granting that one useful power) is rather like creating a magic item. Like that, the wizard needs a special Knowledge Skill, which might be called "Origin Enchantment." Turning a person or other being into a magical creature (such as turning a human into a dragon) takes a different skill, "KS: Magical Beings."

Imparting Skills

Through Transform, it is possible to grant someone use of a new skill. One cannot, however, confer a skill one does not have oneself. For instance, a wizard who wanted to magically give someone the power to speak French could only do this if he himself spoke French. (And no, Universal Translator would not mean the wizard automatically knows all languages, all the time. The best the wizard could do in this case is to talk to a French-speaking person, or read a French book, until he'd temporarily picked up the language. Then for a few minutes he could impart French to other people.) Likewise, while a sorcerer could grant an ancient artifact the power of speech, he could not make it explain its own origin and use, because that would require creating knowledge the sorcerer himself doesn't have. (The proper Power to represent getting information from the artifact would be Retrocognition.)

For Knowledge, Professional and other Background Skills, as well as General Skills, one cannot impart a skill at a greater level than one has oneself. (I.e. if one only has Disguise on an 11-, one cannot grant another person Disguise skill at 12- or better.) For skills based on DEX, INT or PRE, one could conceivably grant a higher skill proficiency, if the target's Characteristic was higher than the caster's. For instance, a wizard with a DEX of 11 and a Climbing skill of 12- costing 5 points imparted Climbing skill to someone with a DEX of 20, he could give the skill at a 14- proficiency (base 9 + DEX/5, +1 for the +2 points the caster spent on the skill).

Creating Sentience

Creating a sentient being by magic is one of the most difficult of all feats—so difficult that in most cases it should not be allowed at all, on grounds that it is a Summon, not a Transform. It's easy to turn a prince into a frog, but it's not so easy to start with a frog and make a prince.

And while we're at it, this goes double for raising the dead. Resurrection involves a lot more than a Transformation defined as "dead person to live person." This might be enough to get the body working again, but the mind? Not to mention the soul? Hah.

Most wizards know better than to try. But if a PC wants to resurrect a fallen comrade through such a Transform, let them try it—and get a demon in their comrade's flesh. At the very least, a genuine resurrection requires a metaphysical quest into far dimensions to recover the person's soul.

Getting Around the Skill Requirements

Most of these limitations can be evaded if the caster has a proper model to work from. It's easy for a wizard with Universal Transform to copy something they already have on hand. Returning to the example of making a Macintosh, if the wizard has a normal personal computer in front of them, they can make magical duplicates with ease: the Transform becomes defined not as "turn an apple into a very complicated mass of wires and circuits and stuff," but as "turn an apple into this object right here." Likewise, a wizard who wanted to forge the Mona Lisa would need great knowledge of painting, unless he had the actual Mona Lisa on hand. Conferring skills works the same way: a sorcerer could magically grant people knowledge of the French tongue if she had someone else who spoke French available.

"Origin magic," however, can't take this shortcut. Such a Transform is just too powerful. Trying to turn a person into a magical being using a living model, but without knowledge of magical creatures, is possible but risky. For one thing, the copying might be too exact and subjects might forget their own identity!

Power Advantages

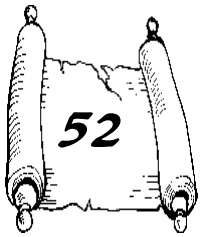
Affects Desolidified

This Advantage becomes very important in magic-oriented campaigns, what with astral projectors, misty vampires, air elementals and all. If the power only affects magically Desolid creatures, that is a -¼ Limitation tacked onto the Power.

Attack Versus Limited Defense

Attacks with this Advantage are a good way to represent mystical forces which ignore "merely physical" defenses.

Note that some Powers are intrinsically "AVLD": the only defense against a Flash is Flash Defense, the only defense against Adjustment Powers is Power Defense, and so on. What if one wants to switch Special Defenses on such a power—to create, for instance, a Drain that acts against Mental Defense instead of Power Defense? By a strict interpretation of the rules, this requires buying the Drain with the AVLD Advantage, so



that 1d6 of Drain Vs. Mental Defense costs 25 points. Yet would substituting defenses this way really make the Drain so much more effective? At the GM's option, characters might be allowed to define Powers which act against some other Special Defense than the one listed in the rules, at no change in cost. In such a case, the substitution would be noted as a +0 Power "Advantage."

Even still, not all Special Defenses are equal. Mental and Power Defense are bought by characters about equally often and in about the same amounts. Flash Defense vs. Vision is common, but hardly anyone ever buys more than 5 points of it. As for Flash Defense vs. Hearing, Smelling or other senses, forget it. An exotic attack vs. Defenses like that must be bought with an AVLD Advantage, just as one would for an Energy Blast or other "normal" attack Power.

BASED ON ECV

This is one of the workhorses for a mage character. BOECV can be used to create many devious new powers. As the *HERO System Rulebook* explains, powers with this advantage do not automatically grant one free Mental Awareness; they are visible; and they can only have effects other than STUN by the GM's permission. The first two conditions are not very relevant since most true mages will have Mental Awareness anyway, one way or another, which makes all Mental Powers visible to them.

Permission from the GM is presumed for the sake of discussion. It is further assumed that the new powers all act vs. Mental Defense unless otherwise noted.

Note that in many ways a ranged attack Based on ECV is superior to one bought as an NND or AVLD vs. Mental Defense, at equal or lower cost. So be it; but in a campaign replete with mages, Mental Defense may be as common as resistant PD or ED.

BOECV Attack Does BODY

A number of stories, in and out of comics, have presented psychic bolts with the power to kill. This is represented by an Energy Blast or Ranged Killing Attack bought Based on ECV, yet keeping the power to do BODY. Just as with NND attacks that do BODY, however, this raises the cost of the Power Advantage to +2.

Each point of Mental Defense subtracts one point of STUN and BODY from the damage done by the attack. As explained above, under "Defensive Powers," it is assumed that Mental Defense is analogous to Armor. If one has Mental Defense be nonresistant, BODY BOECV Killing Attacks become rather more powerful—though not overwhelmingly so as long as attacks are kept in the 60 Active Point Range.

Example: *The Hierophant has a new spell, the Souldeath Spear, a 1d6+1 RKA with BODY BOECV. He uses it on Solitaire and gets a pretty good roll: 6 BODY, 18 STUN. If Solitaire's 8 Mental Defense (from her Vrilshield) is Resistant, she takes no BODY and only 12 STUN. If not, she takes full damage…bad, but she is not incapacitated. On her next action, she will do something nasty right back at the Hierophant. A good STUN roll on a 4d6 RKA would have been much worse.*

BOECV Used Only for Targeting

The first special use of "Based on ECV" is simply to make a power Indirect, with line-of-sight range. Such a power can be targeted with Mind Scanning, but otherwise acts vs. normal defenses. In this case, an ECV Entangle is just an Entangle targeted as if it were a Mental Power; ECV Telekinesis still acts against normal Strength; an ECV Energy Blast is still blocked by normal ED or PD. When characters have powers Based on ECV, one must define which version of the power they use—and stick to it!

BOECV Telekinesis: Psychic Puppeteering

The BOECV Advantage can create two quite different Powers when applied to Telekinesis. The first version only uses BOECV to make the TK Indirect and based on Line of Sight instead of normal range modifiers. The STR of the TK is still just physical STR, which the target resists with their own STR. If used against inanimate objects, which lack an ECV for targeting, the object's DCV (based on the object's size, velocity and such) can be used instead.

Alternatively, ECV TK can be a purely mental power. This version can only be used against targets with minds. Targets pit their EGO against the STR of the ECV TK, just as they would pit their STR against the STR of normal TK. If the target wins, it acts freely. If it fails, the attacker controls the target's body for that Phase. The attacker can deliver a "psychic squeeze" doing STUN (with Mental Defense giving protection), or manipulate the target's body like a puppet on strings.

Like a puppet, however, the controlled person cannot do precise and detailed work unless the BOECV TK was bought with "Fine Manipulation." With Fine Manipulation, the controller can make the victim fight with their own DEX, SPD, combat skills and powers. (This is better than normal TK used to control a victim, as described in ULTIMATE MENTALIST, because the BOECV TK works directly on the victim's mind, not their body.) If the controller lacks Fine Manipulation and tries using the victim as a puppet fighter, the victim is at ½ OCV and DCV cannot use any form of combat but normal HTH combat maneuvers, with no skill Levels, and can only perform one action per Phase at the controller's behest.

With or without Fine Manipulation, this version cannot be used to lift or throw a target. That requires physical force, which Psychic Puppeteering lacks.

BOECV Entangle: Mental Paralysis

Entangles bought with the BOECV Advantage can also take two forms. The first, using the +1 Advantage, is just a normal Entangle given "Mental Power" tar-

geting. The second has a purely mental effect. Instead of restraining the target's body, it restrains the mind. Such an Entangle is untouched by any physical force: one breaks out by pitting EGO or a Mental Power against its DEF and BODY.

Such a true "Mental Paralysis" also requires an additional +1 Advantage. Aside from the fact that Mental Paralysis is very powerful against characters who don't have a high EGO or Mental Powers, it is doing BODY with a mental effect—and that's a +2 Advantage. It doesn't matter if the BODY is to harm or to restrain. (A slightly cheaper but more complicated version of Mental Paralysis is described in *The Ultimate Mentalist;* GMs may take their pick.)

For purposes of resisting Mental Paralysis or Psychic Puppeteering—but nothing else—GMs may allow victims of these powers to Push their EGO in trying to break free. It may seem strange to push EGO, especially in heroic campaigns where EGO determines one's ability to Push, but that does preserve the analogy with STR used against normal Entangles. An activated Berserk, Enraged or Strong to Total Psychological Limitation may grant a few extra dice of Pushed EGO at the GM's option.

Several other new options for BOECV Entangles are described in *The Ultimate Mentalist;* they are worth considering.

BOECV Flash: Psychic Blinding

When a Flash is bought with "Based on ECV," it may bypass Flash Defense but each point of Mental Defense negates 1 Phase's worth of Flash effect. It is thus very easy to avoid Psychic Blinding at low cost, but this is no different from a normal Flash. The Flash attack is so potent it has to be easy to guard against. As always, the BOECV may be defined as just for targeting, and the Flash still acting against Flash Defense.

BOECV Area Powers

Powers such as Images, Change Environment, Darkness and powers bought with Area Effect can also take the ECV Advantage. In this case, however, the only real benefit is that the power becomes Indirect and targeted by Line of Sight, perhaps through Mind Scanning. The Power is targeted at a hex with a CV of 3, the same as always. (Mentally-targeted area Powers are also discussed in more detail in *The Ultimate Mentalist.*)

Damage Shield

Although Damage Shield is usually applied to attack powers such as Energy Blast, it can be applied to some other Powers as well. First, it can be combined with Usable Vs. Other to create truly peculiar effects. Consider, for instance, a Damage Shield version of Teleport Usable Vs. Other—just the thing against grabby opponents. Damage Shield applied to high Presence may discourage mentalists from attacking. Finally, Damage Shield could be applied to Missile Deflection, the defense that works like an attack, to create a Continuous version that can be maintained while one makes other attacks. This is a great "mystic shield."

Delayed Effect

Although intended for use in heroic fantasy campaigns, sorcerers in other milieus might use this Advantage once in a while. It's a good way to represent one-shot powers bestowed by a demon or god: before using the power, the sorcerer must conduct a lengthy ritual to contact the spirit and ask permission.

Ego Attack Does Knockback

This Advantage was actually invented specifically for mages. In many ways the force-bolts tossed around by comic-book wizards act like Ego Attacks, but they can still send a target flying backwards when they hit.

Invisible Power Effects

As mentioned in the notes on Powers, things can be made Invisible to senses other than the usual sight and hearing. For purposes of this Advantage one may define a magical sense group comprising magic-based Detects, Mental Awareness (but only with regard to sensing spirits or magical attacks based on mental powers), Astral Awareness and special senses such as N-Ray Vision or "Magic Radar" which use magic as their special effect.

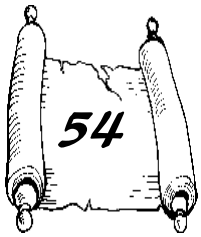
Attacks made invisible to Danger Sense or Combat Sense (which may be considered a sense group of their own) can be very nasty. This option definitely comes with a stop sign. Still, it's a good way for a wizard villain to finally get the drop on his hated nemesis and put him in a death trap.

Remember that attacks using the Based on ECV Advantage are still visible to normal senses unless the Invisible Power Advantage is used too.

No Normal Defense

Like AVLD, this gives wizards eerier, more "mystical" powers which ignore mundane defenses. It should be noted that in an all-magic campaign, Mental Defense and Power Defense (which seem to be the most common defenses for NND attacks) are almost ubiquitous; use AVLD or BOECV instead. NND attacks vs. various sorts of Life Support, though, create wonderfully Gothic effects: strangling tentacles for an NND vs. LS: Breathing, withering for an NND vs. LS: Aging, or an NND vs. LS: Disease for an attack which makes the target's flesh rot away in stinking corruption! NND attacks that do BODY—like that last—take a +2 Advantage instead of +1.

NND attacks can make even a tiny power pool a valuable asset —so one can get those few points of Taste/Smell Flash Defense or Life Support needed to block that really weird NND one's enemy has. (But NNDs and AVLDs against really exotic defenses like Hardened Power Defense or Double-Hardened Resistant PD should not be allowed unless Power Pools are



common…and one wants a campaign filled with manic power-gaming. NND vs. The Defense Nobody Ever Has is very bad form, for GMs and players alike.)

Trigger

Powers with Trigger can represent many wizardly effects. For instance, a wizard might cast a STUN Aid or EDM spell on himself, Triggered to go off if he is knocked unconscious. (These can be very abusive; GMs should think twice, or thrice, before allowing a PC to have such Triggered Powers.) Powers with a Variable Trigger can represent all manner of traps and curses; add charges, and the trap can fire over and over again.

When making a Triggered magic trap, the spell either needs Area Effect, or Usable By Other to let the spell affect the person who Triggers the trap instead of just the item the spell was cast upon. For instance:

Dr. Weird puts a spell on the door to his workroom so that if anyone opens it without knocking in a certain way, an Ego Attack strikes them. Just an Ego Attack with the Trigger would mean that the Ego Attack would hit the door, not the intruder (not very useful.) Adding Usable By Other at +¼ lets the door fire the Ego Attack at the intruder. Since the intruder is touching the door, neither the door nor Dr. Weird has to make an attack roll.

A Triggered power is normally visible when cast and when it goes off, but is not necessarily visible to normal senses in between. Like a bomb disguised as a teapot in a china shop, the power may be hard to notice—or it may be quite obvious, like a bundle of dynamite wired to an ominously ticking clock. In the case of a bomb, how obvious the Triggered power is depends on the Focus. As a suggestion, a spell waiting to be Triggered can be found by Detect Magic, and also by subtle cues: a slight electrical feeling, a particular rune engraved on a ring, a faint odor, or something else which a careful and observant person could detect with their normal senses, even if they couldn't tell what it meant. If the waiting magic leaves really obvious traces such as a bright glow, sparks or a reek of brimstone, the Visible Limitation would be quite appropriate.

Finally, remember that a Triggered Power does not gain sentience. The Triggering effect must be something which can be objectively defined, using the senses of the character who set the Power, but not any of their knowledge. "Trigger: When Someone Who Hates Me Enters" is only possible by hooking the Triggered Power to something with Telepathy. Nor can one use "Trigger: When Mechanon Enters," unless one somehow hooks the Power to something (perhaps a spirit, represented as an AI?) which can recognize Mechanon. On the other hand, a Trigger such as "When 7' Tall Metal Humanoid Enters" is fair. So is "When Feel Pressure But See No One," for a Triggered Power set on a floor or a door, to guard against invisible intruders, because in this case the invisibility is objectively defined: something which cannot be seen has touched the Trigger object. A Mental Attack could even bear a Trigger like "When Target Thinks of Disobedience," since the ability to affect someone's mind implies at least some ability to sense it.

Uncontrolled

This Advantage has many applications. Uncontrolled Continuous attacks won't have enough Base Effect to do much harm, but if they do damage at all they can be remarkably effective in the long run. Uncontrolled Suppresses and Aids have already been mentioned (see "Adjustment Powers," above).

Stopping Uncontrolled Effects

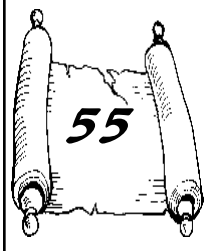
Here are some suggestions for "Ending Conditions" to stop an Uncontrolled combat Power, whether a defense, an Aid, Suppress or other attack.

- A fixed time limit: For directly damaging attacks, one turn makes a good limit. For an Uncontrolled Suppress or Transform, the limit can be raised to one minute. If an attack is permitted to go on longer than a Turn, though, there should still be some other way to stop the effect.
- Charge duration: Again, however, there should still be at least one other way to stop the Suppress prematurely (just as with an Uncontrolled attack using a store of END or bought to 0 END) if the Charge's duration is over a Turn.
- Any Dispel on the affected character, whether relevant or not.
- Knocking out or Stunning the caster of the Uncontrolled effect or making them flee.
- A roll after each Turn or time chart increment of effect, to see if the effect continues. For instance: an 11- chance per Turn that an attack or defense continues.
- Until significantly disturbed: Powers that don't actually cause harm by themselves, such as Images or Change Environment, might last indefinitely, until disrupted by some outside force. For Uncontrolled Images, a traditional ending condition is for the illusion to be recognized as such.

Usable Versus Others

This Advantage is so powerful that GMs should carefully examine any use of it. Remember, every power bought Usable vs. Others must have some defense which is either reasonably common (but not too common or the Power is worthless), or which characters can plausibly figure out and obtain; for instance, a Hardened Force Wall or Force Field to block a UVO Teleport or Extra-Dimensional Movement. If one can't figure out anything else, how about a Characteristic roll at minuses? With a DEX Roll at (say) -5, the UVO "didn't really hit" because the victim twisted out of the way at the last moment; with an EGO Roll, the victim gritted his teeth and resisted the diabolical attack by sheer force of will; and so on. As usual, it all depends on the Special Effect of the attack.

Mage characters have the possibility of running a lot of spells at the same time. If they get involved with the use of Trigger or Delayed Effect, the door is open for abuse. One way to combat this is to give a mage a number of "spell slots" equal to his INT/5. The mage would only be able to run a number of spells equal to or less than his spell slots at any one time. A mage could buy up his spell slots for 3 pts. each. Magical items with extra spell slots (such as a wizard's staff) are common, and a lot of fun! A common power of a familiar is to give the mage an extra spell slot or two.



Usable By/With Others

Use of this Advantage with Trigger has already been discussed. Adding this Advantage to a defensive power lets a good-guy sorcerer protect innocent bystanders from horrid thingies or hostile magic—a very heroic thing to do. Movement powers like Flight or Running made Usable With Others can represent a flying carpet or a summoned horse and carriage.

Variable Advantage

Although expensive, a Power with this Advantage can be very useful. A 60 Active Point attack with a Variable Advantage can't be overwhelmingly powerful, but it will let a character do at least some damage whenever they hit—if they can figure out what they need. Even a Variable NND (net +2 Advantage) is not an unreasonable Power—on average it only does 14 STUN, and the attacker may guess wrong about the target's defenses. Variable Advantage can also make the difference between hitting with a small attack and not hitting at all, since the Variable Advantage can be used to put an Area of Effect on an attack. All in all, it is a good way to represent the flexibility which is such a hallmark of wizards.

Variable Special Effect

This Advantage is another good way to represent a wizard's trademark flexibility. With a +½ Advantage, one can make a simple Energy Blast come out as lightning, fire, acid, pure mystical force, high-velocity brass bookends or what-have-you. The added point cost becomes well worth while if one can identify a foe's Vulnerability!

"Any magical effect" would be a +½ Advantage since magic is so all-encompassing. Even "Any elemental effect" is still quite broad.

Power Limitations

Activation Roll

This shouldn't be common for superhero mages—they never seem to blow a spell, except under the most extreme conditions (as, for instance, right after someone's sandbagged them). This Limitation works well, however, for inexperienced mages, or mages whose magic is intrinsically a little out of control. Activation Rolls also make a good alternate option for characters with Variable Limitation.

Activation Rolls such as 14- or 15- should not be allowed unless the character takes some serious consequence to failing the roll, such as Jammed or a Side Effect. Otherwise, the Activation Roll is little more than a way save a few points—or if it's applied to a Multipower with a lot of slots, it can save a lot of points, with little real detriment to the mage.

Charges

In comics, super-sorcerers never seem to have this Limitation on their standard repertoire of spells. On the other hand, taking 16 or more Charges on a power may be worthwhile for the Endurance it saves. (C'mon, how often will Dr. Weird really need to cast more than 16 Bolts of Befuddlement in one day?)

Continuing Charges on Instant attacks deserve special mention. Continuing Charges on an attack does not give a character an Uncontrolled Continuous attack without paying points for such a hefty Advantage. If an Instant power is to keep doing damage to a target through a Continuing Charge, despite the attacker's turning to do other things or the target's running away, the attack must be bought to Uncontrolled. Otherwise, the Power will just hang around the spot of the original attack instead of clinging to the target. A firebolt bought with Charges of 1 turn, for instance, would hit its target and do damage, but the target could move away on its next Phase and leave the firebolt behind. If the attacker can use the Power very many times in a day—which had better be the case for attack Powers—for any significant duration, the Continuing Charges can easily become a hefty Advantage.

Concentrate

However appropriate this may be for High Fantasy or heroic-level modern fantasy, this Limitation is usually out of place for superheroic-level magical combat. Super-mages don't hold back, they dive right into the thick of combat! Concentration works, however, for special big spells which the heroes must cast without interruption to save the world, or which the villains want to cast and the heroes have to stop them. It may also be used as one of the alternate options for characters with Variable Limitation.

Extra Time

What goes for Concentration goes for this Limitation, too.

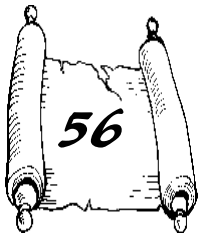
Focus

This Limitation is entirely appropriate for comic-book wizards. While few magic heroes rely exclusively on Foci, many of them have an enchanted amulet, magic weapon or some other magic item.

Gestures And Incantations

Superficially, these seem very common in magic-oriented comics. At least one heroic Sorcerer Supreme is famous for wiggling his fingers and calling out little rhymes in the middle of magical battles. Even this hero, however, doesn't do this consistently—most of his regular combat spells don't need the rhymes, for instance, and he's broken magical bonds as they tightened around him. On the other hand, it's equally well established that this hero can't cast spells if he's gagged and his hands are bound.

When judging whether a spell caster uses Gestures or Incantations, one must remember both the inconvenience of these Limitations, and their practical effects in combat. First, both Gestures and Incantations are very obvious: no whispered words or stealthy twitch of the fingers, someone who Gestures swings their arms



around like an orchestra conductor, and Incantations are spoken loudly and clearly. Onlookers will know that something is up. One can forget about striking from surprise.

Gestures carry the further limit that if any damage gets through one's defenses while the Gesturing takes place, the power is aborted. One has wasted an action. For Instant Powers bought without Extra Time (such as most attacks) this isn't much of a problem. An enemy can, however, Hold their action to try attacking on the same segment, at the same DEX as the mage to abort the mage's attack. Such cases call for a DEX vs. DEX roll: if the enemy with the Held action wins, then if a single point of STUN, an inch of Knockback or any other damage gets through, the spell fizzles. This is an acceptable triggering condition for a Side Effect.

Increased Endurance Cost

There's nothing wrong with this Limitation for special spells. Comic-book mages can keep casting their standard repertoire of spells 'til the cows come home.

Independent

This Limitation isn't really meant for superheroic campaigns in any case, but it might be appropriate for special, powerful artifacts the mage keeps in his sanctum sanctorum, and which the GM permits as plot devices to get adventures going. (See "Magic Items" in Chapter Four.)

Only In Hero Id

This is fairly appropriate for super-mages, who only seem to do major spell casting when in full regalia.

Requires A Skill Roll

Like "Activation," this really isn't appropriate for superhero-level mages. In the comics they rarely fail. Although, a student of magic might take this Limitation.

Side Effects

If a super-mage never blows a control roll, then Side Effects would seem out of the question. There is no reason, however, that Side Effects cannot be triggered by something other than a failed control roll. Side Effects might happen if a spell is disrupted in the middle of casting. If someone grabs Dr. Weird on the same segment that he casts his firebolt spell and interrupts his Gestures, for instance, Dr. Weird might get a firebolt targeted on himself instead. Few characters accept control rolls more limiting than 14-; any other circumstance that's about this common is acceptable as the trigger for a Side Effect.

This sort of Special Effect is often seen with special, major spells, as a way to add dramatic tension. "Keep them away! The slightest interruption could be FATAL!" In particular, a spectacular Side Effect when the heroes disrupt the villain's Master Spell makes a great way to end an adventure with a bang—and we all know that the awesome mystic forces lashing back at the evil sorcerer didn't really vaporize him…

Limited Harm Side Effects

Remember, Side Effects don't have to directly damage the character through STUN, BODY or other simple attacks. They can also Drain the character's Powers. If a Drain only works against one of a large number of Powers, though, it should not receive full value as a Limitation. Consider, for instance, a wizard whose Multipower of attack spells carries the Side Effect that any spell which is aborted (through interrupted Gestures or Incantations) or Dispelled suffers a 3d6 Drain—but the other spells in the Multipower are not affected. Such a 30 point Side Effect would only be worth half as much, -¼ instead of -½.

Side Effects That Always Happen

Finally, a Side Effect which always happens when the character uses the Power should be worth more than normal. Double value seems appropriate. This works out about the same as an Activation Roll, representing how reluctant the character will be to use such a self-destructive Power. A 30 point Side Effect is an inconvenience, but can often be endured. A 60 point Side Effect will only be endured in a dire emergency.

Variable Limitations

This seems particularly appropriate for experienced heroic-level or superheroic ritual mages (see "Ritual Magic" and "Hermetic Theurgy" in Chapter Four) who must endure hefty Limitations on their spells, but have some leeway about which Limitations they use at any given time. Normally, for instance, they might rely on a magic wand or talisman, an Obvious Accessible Focus; if they lose the Focus, they might get by with Gestures, Incantation and an Activation Roll or some other set of Limitations.

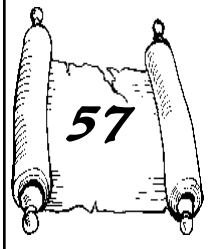
Optional Environmental Limitations

One possibility, familiar from fantasy, is a sorcerer whose powers become greater at a special time or place: during the night, in a consecrated shrine, on water, etc. The special time or place substitutes for Limitations such as Extra Time, Concentration or Increased END Cost that normally limited the sorcerer's combat effectiveness.

If PC mages use this option, the player and GM must agree upon a set of permitted Variable Limitations. Both "Only during the daytime" and "Only during the night" are fair Limitations, but if a character can use either one then Variable Limitations is no Limitation at all.

Visible

Originally, this Limitation only referred to Mental Powers which were detectable by normal senses. Its meaning, however, has gradually extended. Visible can also apply to Powers that can't help but attract attention, such as an Energy Blast that creates a clap of thunder one can hear a mile away. Especially powerful or evil magic might alert wizards—or even normals—from miles away that Something Is Up and they had better do something about it.



Power Frameworks

Power frameworks are absolutely necessary for all mages. Multipowers are the best way to get a lot of spells, especially if one can think of a few limitations to put on the point reserve. Elemental Controls can be very useful as well, for minor spells and powers a character can all use at the same time. Variable Power Pools, however, should be handled with extreme care.

Special Powers In Power Frameworks

The question of Special powers and Power Frameworks deserves special mention. The HERO System rules forbid putting Special Powers in Power Frameworks without special permission from the GM. GMs are urged to be fairly liberal in granting permission, at least with noncombat Special Powers. Some of the Special Powers are overpriced, considering their limited usefulness in combat, and some do not need to be Persistent for all characters. To fill out their concept, magical characters often have to buy odd powers that are only occasionally useful. A relatively free hand in cutting Special Power costs will help them keep up with regular superheroes and villains, who more fully concentrate on combat in their design.

Also, the ability to put Special Powers in Power Frameworks makes super mage characters unique and special. Everyone should be allowed to strut their stuff. Empower your workers of magic!

Multipowers

The only real reason to ban many Special Powers from Multipowers is that they have Persistent effects and would have to go away when the character switched slots. For this reason, Powers like Duplication, Multiform, Instant Change or END Reserve obviously can never be placed in a Multipower. For Powers like Enhanced Senses or Life Support, however, what's the harm? The character just can't use that Power all the time, that's all. To use Life Support for an example, its chief use is in resisting NND attacks. Why shouldn't a mage have a spell to defend against such attacks, without continuous immunity to hostile environments?

With Force Field expanded to cover special defenses, obviously most of those defenses can now be bought through a Multipower slot.

Elemental Controls

Many GMs consider Elemental Controls abusive; since some players try to use ECs as an excuse to halve the cost of all their Powers, they do have a point. Allowing Special Powers in ECs won't make the problem any worse. The real criterion for whether a Power should be allowed in an EC is not whether it costs END or some arbitrary classification, but whether the Power is part of a focused character conception.

For instance, consider Life Support. For a golem or other construct, obviously Life Support is a must. A classic living statue simply could not be harmed by hunger, poison gas, disease or a host of other hostile agents. For a golem, therefore, putting Life Support in an EC slot makes perfect sense. Likewise, ghosts, demons and other spirits have many such immunities. Whoever heard of a ghost getting cold or a demon getting sick?

An ordinary mage, however, could not justify an EC slot of Life Support as constant magical immunity to the shocks that flesh is heir to. Life Support isn't a logical necessity for wizards the way it is for golems or spirits. On the other hand, a magic-detecting Enhanced Sense in an EC slot would be all right because spells are a wizard's raison d'être. Spirit are traditionally sensitive to magic as well, but allowing a magic-detection sense in an EC would be a matter of taste. Golems, though, have no traditional or necessary connection to exotic senses, so allowing special sense modes in an "EC—Golem Powers" would be absurd.

Variable Power Pools

Variable Power Pools are so potentially destabilizing that letting characters buy Special Powers through them doesn't make a spot of difference. As with Multipowers, the real question is whether the Power has some effect that endures beyond the moment of its use.

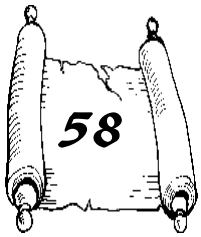
In many ways, the Variable Power Pool expresses the essence of the mage character. In the comics, a top-flight mage can produce a spell for nearly anything, given a few moments to think about it. Yet GMs should view Power Pools with grave suspicion. Here, at least, GMs should be very strict in what they allow and enforce every rule minutely.

First, Power Pools can slow down play as the player decides what Powers to make next and recalculates everything.

More importantly, GMs may find difficulty in challenging a character who can have any power, especially if the character has a (shudder) Cosmic Pool. What's more, such a character automatically becomes more powerful than any character without a comparable Power Pool—so pretty soon everyone wants Power Pools. The campaign can easily degenerate into a war of wits between players and GMs as the GM tries to find ways to keep pool-using PCs from knocking over villains with contemptuous ease, and the players try to figure out a Power that gets around each new villain's defenses.

Finally, if most wizards have Power Pools they may start seeming too much the same. "Dr. Weird's powers? Well, he can do just about anything with his Power Pool. What about your guy?" "The Phantasmal Stranger? He can do nearly anything too."

This is not to say that GMs should flat-out forbid all use of Power Pools. GMs simply have to be careful.



A small Power Pool so a character can tailor a special added defense, Life Support form or Enhanced Sense isn't a problem, especially if the Pool can't easily be changed in combat. If a PC is going to buy their chief attacks through a Power Pool, however, GMs should follow a few rules.

Enforce the rules governing Power Pools. Remember that even with a Control Skill Roll, changing powers in a Pool takes a full Phase (unless the "0 Phase to Change Pool" Advantage is bought).

If the player goes whole-hog and buys a Cosmic Pool which requires neither a Skill Roll nor any time to change, closely examine the Limitations used to bring down the Control Cost. Make sure that the Limitations really limit!

Putting pre-existing Limitations such as Gestures, Incantations or Focus on a Power Pool help give mages distinctive styles, and give GMs a handle for challenging the character. A mage who relies on Incantations, for instance, would have to use some clever strategy to beat a demon who radiated a wide aura of silence. A wizard who can't change Powers in the middle of combat is also not quite so obnoxious.

Insist that the player choose a well-defined special effect for all magic bought through the Pool. All a mage's spells might have space-warping as a special effect, or fire, or summoning. Any powers drawn from the Pool would have to be justifiable in terms of that special effect and share minor limitations because of that special effect. A fire mage, for instance, might lose much of his power underwater, and any water-based spell might neutralize a firemage's spells, as if it were a Dispel or Suppress of as many Active Points.

Make it clear that Powers which don't fit the special effect will not be allowed. An elementalist cannot produce Mental Powers from a Pool; a psychic cannot summon demons. That fire-mage could not use whole classes of Powers (such as size-changing, most Mental powers and several others). Since players tend to be quite creative at finding excuses why a Power fits a given special effect, Limited Special Effect is usually only a -¼ Limitation on a Pool, and this Limitation cannot be used to reduce the Real Point cost of the Powers bought through the Pool.

Finally, a mage might be limited to a list of approved spells. Such a character could start with a list of specific spells he can pull out of the Power Pool—say, one for every point of INT. Further spells can only be added to the list through the course of play by learning them from other mages, tomes of lore or mystic entities, or through lengthy spell research conducted according to guidelines agreed upon by the player and GM. This is only a -¼ Limitation on the control cost[1].

Disadvantages

Magical characters can have Disadvantages that are as distinctive as their Powers. Some Disadvantages will be unusual in and of themselves, including the new Disadvantage called Magic Limitation. Other Disadvantages will be unusual because of why the character has them.

Sources Of Disadvantages

Magical Accident

Many Disadvantages can be justified as the result of a mage trying to take shortcuts to power. Learning true magic takes years and years. Mages can get impatient, just like anyone else. Such shortcuts may have nasty unforeseen consequences: mages trying to cast spells beyond their real competence may suffer a magical accident and suffer some disability as a result. For instance:

Psych: Gluttonous + DF: Obese (5 + 5 pts). A sorcerer's headlong search for power led him to skimp on his mental discipline. This led to a magical accident which left him with an insatiable craving for rich food.

Deliberate Act

A mage might even knowingly inflict some deformity or mutilation on him or herself as a way to get extra power (Distinctive Features, and maybe a Physical Limitation). Only a real fanatic, however, would choose such a course as a way of getting more power. Examples:

Phys: One Arm (10 pts). A Satanist is so desperate for power from a demon lord that he hacks off his own right arm as a sacrifice to show his devotion to the "left-hand path." The demon lord is impressed.

DF: Hunchback (10 pts, concealable with effort). A rather unpleasant dimension lord marks all its servants this way.

Vows And Prohibitions

Vows and prohibitions are another sort of shortcut. In brief, the mage gets more power either by regularly doing something special, or by faithfully not doing something ordinary. This is a common gimmick in tales of magic and magicians. Vows set one apart from common humanity and therefore seem magical.

Sometimes the vow is to do something: for instance, always to help those in need, or always to wear blue. More often the vow is not to do something: a vow of celibacy, for instance, or never to show one's uncovered face to others. The vow may be as simple as a schedule of rituals one must perform.

In folklore and religion, the reasoning is either that some acts are spiritually "polluting" and so make one unfit to wield magical powers, or else that the gods like certain standards of behavior and reward them by granting magical powers. The greater the inconvenience, the more power the mage gets.

There are many ways to represent vows and prohibitions. Some are best treated as Psychological Limitations: there's no physical consequence for breaking the vow, but the character is nevertheless reluctant to do so. Example:

[1]The Editor thinks that limiting Power Pools to a pre-approved list of spells is a good thing. It allows a mage flexibility while limiting his power. Seriously consider this option.

Psych: Must Help Anyone in Need (20 pts). The sorcerer has vowed to help anyone who is in real danger and asks for help, even their worst enemy. The Ultimate Powers of Good reward the sorcerer's selfless devotion with more power.

Other vows really affect a character's powers, and if the character breaks the vow their powers go away for a time. Such a vow is a Physical Limitation. While such vows probably won't affect the character Frequently, if all the character's important powers would be lost then the vow affects the character Greatly or even Totally. Recovering one's powers usually requires a lengthy and difficult ritual of purification—perhaps even a special quest to prove one's contrition to the gods. For instance:

Phys: Vegetarian (10 pts). This mystic must never eat meat, or he will contaminate his mystic purity and be unable to muster more than 15 Active Points per spell. Regaining his purity, and the right to use magic, requires a long period of fasting, meditation and ritual asceticism. (Greatly limiting but Infrequent. It won't be triggered in combat. Note that the mystic doesn't have to know he's eaten meat, or something derived from meat such as a cookie made with lard-based shortening.)

If a broken vow causes more gradual harm to the character, it could be a Dependence or Susceptibility. Breaking such a vow is also not as serious, since as soon as the condition which violates the vow is gone, the character can get their STUN or powers back. Example:

Susc: 3d6 STUN, Attacking First (20 pts). The mage has a vow of pacifism, an important spirit's price for teaching the mage some powerful magic. The mage can only fight in self-defense, once someone else has attacked first. If the wizard breaks this vow, they feel some of the pain they meant to cause another. Since there are many occasions in which not getting in the first shot is a real combat disadvantage, this is a Common circumstance.

Phys: Lose 15 Active Points per Spell for Each Day without Ritual Observance (10 pts). The mage must engage in a demanding set of rituals every day to keep their power. Perhaps the mage must spend hours meditating, perform a Mass, invoke the planetary spirit of the day or make obeisance to their ancestors at the family shrine. Each day they go without such observance, every spell loses 15 Active Points of effect. The wizard won't get these Active Points back until they perform even more demanding rituals to "get caught up." (Greatly limiting, but probably Infrequent unless the sorcerer must return home to perform the rituals.)

Commentary On Disadvantages

Accidental Change

This Disadvantage is seldom relevant for true mages, but makes sense for spirit hybrids, mythological gods posing as normal humans and other character types who actually have a distinct "Super ID" which has powers they lack in their normal, human ID.

This Disadvantage could be extended to cover Multiple Personality Disorder or possession. In such a case, Accidental Change describes the circumstances that could cause a change of the controlling personality, and the probability of the change occurring. The player and GM must also agree on what conditions make the character change back to their "normal" personality.

Age

This Disadvantage might seem appropriate for mages, especially scholar-mages: one does not learn magic quickly, and traditional wizards are usually old. Even comic-book mages often have a touch of gray in their hair.

Age, however, adds on to Normal Characteristic Maxima, and that Disadvantage is right out in most superheroic campaigns. Not recommended.

Berserk

This Disadvantage is very inappropriate for most mages, who gained their power through long and disciplined study. It works well, however, for mighty megalomaniac mages, dimensional conquerors and perhaps for some fanatical cultists, lunatics or demonpacters.

Dependence

This Disadvantage only really works if the concept is stretched a bit, such as a curse on the character which is held in abeyance by a special talisman the character must wear at all times. A Dependence could be done as a progressive Drain against all the character's magic unless certain conditions are constantly met, making it a sort of vow or prohibition.

DNPC

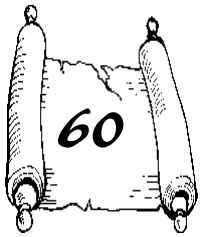
Wizards, gods and other magical characters can have the usual DNPC family members, love interests and the like, but the comics have supplied two types of DNPCs which deserve special mention.

The Impassive Servant

At least one famous comic-book mage has an impassive Oriental servant who tends his sanctum. The Warlock, a.k.a. Dr. Wraithe, of the San Francisco Protectors has a tight-lipped and precognitive butler (see "The House that Jack Built" in *ADVENTURERS CLUB* #18). Impassive Servants will be Competent DNPCs, possibly with useful noncombat skills. Perhaps their greatest ability, of course, is their knack for keeping a cool head while all Hell breaks loose around them.

The Enfeebled Teacher

Some wizards learn magic on their own, but many have a mentor of some sort. Such a mentor might seem like an odd candidate for DNPC-hood: after all, the mentor must know more magic than the pupil, right? Well, yes, at least for a starting character. The mentor might be so old and frail, however, that he or she cannot really engage in combat.



An aged mentor-type is thus slightly less powerful than the PCs and has useful noncombat skills, for a cost of -5 points plus whatever their frequency of appearance might give. The maximum Disadvantage value for an Enfeebled Teacher is thus 10 points. GMs should play up the teacher's physical frailty; otherwise, the teacher would have to be a Contact.

Distinctive Features

These are usually concealable, and not too extreme: mages are basically people who know some unusual skills. One possibility, however, is the conditional distinctive feature that can only be recognized by a relatively small fraction of the population. Either only a small group of people can detect the feature, or only a small group can appreciate what it means. While there are rules for Conditional Distinctive Features based on how easily they are detected, here it will be assumed that all Conditional Distinctive Features have a base point value of 5, for a Distinctive Feature which a small group will notice but which does not automatically provoke strong reactions.

Mystic Aura

Some Distinctive Features can only be detected by beings which have magical senses such as Detect Magic or Aura Vision. A demon's ineradicable magic aura of evil is a good example. In this case the demon's aura would be worth 10 points as a Disadvantage, because of the strong (usually negative) reactions of whoever detects the demon. Other sorts of supernatural beings which can otherwise pass for human could have mystic aura Distinctive Features. Some styles of magic (such as Necromancy) mark their practitioners with a mystic aura, too.

A "mystic aura" cannot be worth more than 15 points, for a subtle feature which causes an extreme and uncompromising reaction in the few who can detect it.

Membership Token

This Conditional Distinctive Feature consists of some symbol which marks the character's allegiances in the Occult World. It may be a tattoo, a ring, an amulet worn as a tie tack or what-have-you. Anyone can see it, but only people in the occult subculture have any chance of appreciating its significance. Such membership tokens are generally used for members of a group (such as a cult) to recognize each other when they meet in public life. On the other hand, people "on the other side," whatever that is, may notice membership tokens as well.

Priests and Servants of Higher Powers often wear membership tokens as a sign of devotion, just as many Christians wear a cross. A token might even have functions in spell casting, so the character won't want to be without it.

Hunted/Watched

The dwellers in the twilight world of magic are a fractious lot. They tend to have enemies. What's more, initiates to occult groups will be Watched by their superiors and Hunted by opposing societies. Those in contact with Higher Powers may be Watched by their benefactors. (Note that Higher Powers may have funny ideas about inappropriate behavior—see "Vows and Prohibitions" above.)

Normal Characteristic Maxima

Superficially, Normal Characteristic Maxima seem almost obligatory for true mages. After all, their powers all come from their knowledge. The problem is that they are also supposed to be superheroes and supervillains. With Normal Characteristic Maxima, it's extremely expensive to buy DEX and SPD on the same level as the mutants and powered armor jocks. In an all-mage campaign where allies and opponents tend to operate on the same scales, this isn't a problem. If a mage is the only SPD 4 hero in a mixed hero team, however, this is a big problem. Not recommended.

Physical Limitation

Many vows and prohibitions can be represented with these (see notes above and below).Mages might also have a "physical" limitation in terms of what sort of magic they can do; see more below, under "Magic Limitations."

More ordinary sorts of physical limitations might be used too, of course. They might even have helped motivate the character to become a sorcerer, in hopes of finding some way to remove the limiting condition. Example:

Phys: Blind (15 pts). Blinded in an accident, the mage had to develop "subtler senses," ultimately leading to greater magical proficiency.

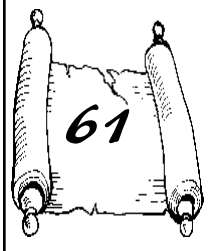
Most spirits have formidable Physical Limitations such as being dispelled when they are Stunned, unconscious or at 0 BODY. PC spirits should be exceptions to this rule, for rather obvious reasons.

Public ID

Public ID is extraordinarily rare. Very few wizards ever achieve that level of popular fame or notoriety. Simply being well-known to the occult, or even extradimensional community, is a Reputation.

Reputation

Reputations can be common in the occult world: lots of people in the occult community can know who the sorcerer is and what they can do, even if the general public has never heard of the wizard. Even beings on other dimensions might know about a super-mage. Reputation among a limited group (the Occult World) is worth 5 points less than a general Reputation. (See *Dark Champions,* pp. 41-42, for further details).



Rivalry

Pretty common. As mentioned. mages are a contentious lot.

Secret Id

This Disadvantage is very common, as many mages try to hide their powers from the common herd of humanity.

Susceptibility

The notes for "Dependence" apply to this Disadvantage, too.

Characters who gain their powers through deliberate enchantment by a wizard or supernatural being may have extreme Susceptibilities to uncommon effects as an "insurance policy" by the enchanter: "So you turn on me, do you? Fool! What I created, I can also destroy!" Example:

Susc: 3d6 STUN/phase, Freezing Purple Light (25 points). The wizard who gave the character their powers arranged that the person would suffer extreme pain in areas with bright purple light and freezing cold. Naturally the sorcerer has a Change Environment spell to create such an area. (Such an exotic Susceptibility would be worthless if someone besides the character did not know of it and have the ability to create such a condition.)

Unluck

No more or less common among mages than among other heroes or villains.

Vulnerability

Not forbidden for mages, but not recommended, either. Most mages have enough trouble with getting one-punched before they get their defenses up anyway, without adding to the problem with a Vulnerability. Spirits, mythological gods and other supernatural beings may well have such weaknesses, though.

New Disadvantage: Magic Style Restriction

This Disadvantage has three aspects. First, it restricts what sort of magic a wizard can acquire. It does not so much limit what the character is now—that's represented by Limitations on the mage's Power Frameworks and the like—as how the character can develop. Of course all a wizard character's starting powers must fit the restrictions. More importantly, any new spells gained through experience must conform as well. What's more, some magic items and artifacts may fall outside the limits set by a Magic Restriction. It doesn't matter how desperate the situation is, the character cannot buy or borrow certain Powers.

A Magic Restriction can also represent intrinsic weaknesses of a magical style. Perhaps spells must always use a certain Limitation or small set of Limitations. The style might impose special weaknesses or restrictions on the character, individually too small to count as separate Disadvantages.

Finally, Magic Restrictions also function like the Style Disadvantage for Martial Artists. A Magic Restriction means that the character's magic is relatively predictable. Anyone attempting a KS: Analyze Magic Style gets +2 to their roll if the target has at least 10 points in Magic Restriction.

The point value of a Magic Style Restriction depends on how wide and flexible the magic style is, and how severe are the restrictions and penalties suffered by the character.

+5 pts	Character only uses 1 broad style of magic
+10 pts	Character only uses 1 narrow style of magic
-5 pts	Character's magic style is especially strange or obscure
+5 pts	Character takes minor Limitations or penalties
+10 pts	Character takes major Limitations or penalties

Here are some examples of Magic Style Restrictions:

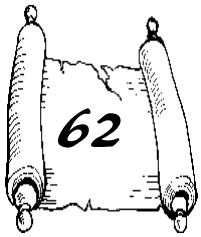
An alchemist's magic relies almost exclusively on Expendable Foci which take considerable time and effort to replace. The only exceptions are very minor spells to help him in his work. He cannot use any magic items or artifacts, except those created by alchemy. This is a broad style of magic, but with major Limitations: if he runs out of potions and can't get back to his lab to re-stock, that's it, he has no magic: 15 points.

Members of the Sodality of the Third Eye only do mental effects and cannot evoke physical forces at all. What's more, they must either wear their Third Eye talisman (an OAF) or take an equivalent -1 Limitation from Extra Time and Concentration (a -1 Variable Limitation, for a -½ Limitation on every spell). They can only use magic items carrying mental powers. "Mental effects" is a broad group of Powers, but Third Eye mages suffer two significant weaknesses. Their powers are worthless against inanimate objects or automata, and they must take care not to lose their Third Eye: 15 pts.

The Bone Children cult only employs necromancy, and keeps discipline with this Magic Restriction: "Magic Ineffective vs. Anyone Who Know's Caster's Real Name": 20 pts, for a narrow style which imposes a severe weakness. The cult leaders know all the lesser members' real names, while the lesser members only know the cult leaders' pseudonyms. Naturally, all the cult members try to establish Secret Identities!

More examples of Magic Style Restrictions are given in the chapter on magic and spell casting, in the descriptions of particular magic styles.

Do remember that not all mages need to take a Style Restriction! A mage might know and use spells from more than one style of magic, or they might have gained enough proficiency in their style that they can work around its limitations.



Astral Travel

Magicians in purely magic-oriented comics sometimes move their consciousness outside their physical bodies to travel in astral form—an invisible, ghostly double that can travel at the speed of thought. Sorcerer heroes and villains who spend a lot of time with "regular" heroes and villains don't use astral travel much. Partly this is just a plot convention. Characters who can instantly go anywhere and snoop around can ruin a plot's suspense: "Hey Dr. Weird, before we crash Evil Man's base why don't you slip in astrally, check for ambushes and find where they've stashed the President?"

In a regular hero team, on the other hand, astral travel isn't good for much besides spying. Astral travel gives a mage matchless mobility, but other team members must plod along with less exotic forms of movement. Also, the comics are clear that astral travelers have very little power to affect the solid world. They can't be seen or heard (except by other magicians), can't touch solid objects, and for the most part can only cast spells at other astral travelers.

(This powerlessness does have one important exception. Master magicians can possess other people—usually a DNPC or an enemy agent—and use their bodies to cast spells and charge to the rescue.)

For these reasons, astral travel will not be a common power in the sample characters provided. In case anyone wants it for a PC or villain, however, here's a summary of how to represent magical astral travel in ***Champions.***

The Astral Form Power

In the ***HERO System,*** the power to travel in one's "astral body" is represented using Desolidification with a -1 Limitation, as outlined on pages 62-63 of the *HERO System Rulebook.* What follows is an elaboration of that basic rule. While these new rules are generally stated in terms of magical characters, analogous forms of "Astral" Form Desolidification can be defined based on other special effects—thus, a mutant mentalist who clairvoyantly projects his entire consciousness, or a high-tech version of Astral Form based on transferring the mind into an electromagnetic "energy body."

Characters may use Desolidification to create astral forms. This means that they project some part of their essence (their soul, mental self, astral body, etheric double, whatever) as a vehicle for their consciousness. Their physical body is left behind, comatose and helpless. Leaving a vulnerable body behind this way is a -1 Limitation on Desolidification. Like other Desolid characters, astral forms cannot affect the solid world in any way, unless they buy Powers with the standard +2 Advantage on them. Ordinarily, Astral Form Desolidification will be bought to 0 END, and in the comic books it always seems to be Persistent as well.

Every Desolid character has, of course, one class of attacks by which they can be affected; for astral forms, these are mental powers (including Based on ECV Powers which are not, strictly speaking, in the Mental Powers Group) and, for sorcerers and magical beings, most forms of magical attack. (Magic defined as generating a physical effect, such as fireballs or magically-created spears, will not affect an astral form. Any magic defined as spirit-based, however, or classic comic-book High Magic, will definitely affect an astral form. See the chapter on magic for further notes on styles of magic and their Special Effects.) For magical astral projection, astral forms can also be attacked by entities on the supernatural Astral Dimension.

The comatose physical body is the greatest Limitation on Astral Form Desolidification. Any damage done to the physical body is done to the astral form as well, no matter how far away the astral form may be—even on another dimension. Thus, it is possible to kill the astral form by killing the physical body. In the comics, the astral form also must return to the physical body within some set time period (24 hours is traditional) or the host body and astral body will both die. This would seldom be a problem, except that bodies can be mislaid. If an astral projector's physical body is moved while they are away, they cannot automatically locate and rejoin it. (This may amount to a separate Limitation at the GM's option, but this is not recommended.)

Several other special rules apply to Astral Form Desolidification. A character in astral form—at least the magical version—has entered the fringes of a new reality, the "Astral Plane." On the Astral Plane the rules governing existence are different than they are in the solid world. (The character has not fully entered the Astral Plane described in chapter on other dimensions, but they have almost entered it.)

First, characters in astral form do not need to eat, sleep or breathe. They do not age, catch diseases or suffer from extremes of climate. Those are problems for bodies, and an astral character doesn't have one.

Second, astral characters can travel almost instantaneously — at the "speed of thought." They can move from New York to Calcutta in the blink of an eye. The only requirement is that they know where they're going. If an astral character wants to go to Calcutta but doesn't have at least a rough idea where Calcutta is, they are out of luck. (Astral projectors should study their geography.) On the other hand, if they know Calcutta when they see it, they have no chance of losing course or "overshooting" their target. The typical range for travel in astral form is the solar system one is in, but this may vary depending on the campaign.

Astral forms are not detectable by normal human senses; a new Enhanced Sense, "Astral Awareness," is required to detect them. (For non-magical versions of Astral Form, other senses may be substituted, based on the special effect of the Desolidification. For instance, a high-tech "energy body" would be detectable by radio senses.) Against an astral form, the sense which

can detect it is always Targeting, even that isn't normally the case with that Enhanced Sense. What's more, astral characters are visible to other astral projectors and to creatures on the Astral Plane, and anyone with Mental Awareness can at least sense an astral form's presence, even if they can't Target it.

The undetectability of astral forms has a down side, though. Astral characters can be too undetectable. Unlike a normal Desolid character, they cannot talk to their physical comrades, only to other astral beings or to beings with Astral Awareness. If the astral character wants to talk to or be seen by someone who doesn't have the necessary Enhanced Senses, the character must use some Power bought to Affect Solid World, such as Mind Link, Images or Astral Awareness Usable vs. Other.

Astral characters possess all the innate powers they had in their physical bodies, including their Characteristics and Skills. Thus, a mutant still has his mutant powers or a wizard her spells. However, all equipment—anything bought with the Focus Limitation—remain with the host body and cannot be used! (This can be circumvented either by not taking the Focus Limitation on a gadget or magic item, or by giving the item itself the Astral Form Power.)

Astral characters may use whatever powers they possess to attack other astral beings they may encounter. As mentioned, however, an astral being's powers cannot affect the solid world unless bought with a +2 Power Advantage. Nor may they affect characters whose Desolidification is based on a different special effect (unless of course the astral character has a Power with the "Affects Desolid" Advantage).

Astral characters can travel through any mundane barrier, whether physical or energy, but they cannot pass through any barrier which has been purchased with the "Affects Desolid" Advantage. Such a barrier must be broken by force, just like when a physical character faces a physical barrier—only any attacks against the barrier must carry the +2 "Affects Solid World" Advantage to affect the barrier! At the GM's option, some other forms of defense may block astral forms as well (for example, a mentalist astral form might be blocked by a Mental defense Force Wall).

Astral forms thus have several advantages over basic Desolidification: chiefly invisibility, instantaneous travel and Life Support. These "free" powers, however, are paid for by the loss of other important abilities: chiefly, the ability to communicate with others, and the ability to monitor one's body and keep it safe.

Finally, there's the matter of Persistent effects. Anyone who plans on doing much astral traveling will certainly want to buy the Power to 0 END, and astral travel in the comics is always Persistent. But Persistent Desolidification costs a lot of Active Points. It's expensive even after the Astral form Limitation. And in this case, it shouldn't be.

Consider what happens when an astral character is knocked unconscious. If the Astral Form is Persistent, the Power continues. An unconscious, helpless astral body is left at the enemy's mercy. If the Astral Form is merely bought to 0 END, the rules say that when the character is knocked out, the Power shuts off. The astral body instantly snaps back to the physical body—still unconscious, but perhaps thousands of miles or a dimension away.

Which situation, pray tell, is more advantageous to the character?

One of the guiding principles of the ***HERO System*** is that Limitations which don't limit are worth no bonus, and Disadvantages which don't disadvantage are worth no points. The same should go for Advantages which give no advantage. In fact, for Astral Form the reversed usefulness of 0 END and 0 END Persistent means the Advantage values should be reversed too. So making an Astral Form be Persistent is just a +½ Advantage, while leaving it 0 END with the "getaway special" intact is a +1 Advantage.

Using Astral Form

Perceptions

Astral travel does not automatically grant a character the power to see in the dark or other special senses (unless the character bought special senses usable in astral form). Thus, an astral traveler could stick his head inside a safe, but couldn't read the documents stored inside.

Astral bodies are detectable only by Astral Awareness and magical senses. Ghosts, other astral projectors and other entities on the Astral Plane can see astral bodies just fine, unless the sorcerer has a separate spell to make themselves invisible to astral entities.

Sensitives

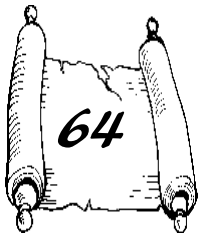
"Sensitives" are people who can see and/or hear ghosts, astral projectors and other invisible spirits. Some people just have the knack, without any training. In game terms, they have Astral Awareness or Mental Awareness defined as a magical sense.

Sensitives often depart from "commonsense" mentality in some way. Children, lunatics, weird artists and superstitious old peasant women are common types of sensitives. Prosperous, middle-aged white males are never sensitives. Well, hardly ever. If the GM wants to give someone unexpected the "second sight," that's fine. Surprise keeps players on their toes.

Damage

Astral Projection itself can be Dispelled or gradually Drained away. When this happens, the astral body instantly snaps back to the physical body.

Astral bodies take damage just like real ones, or at least real bodies that happen to be Desolid and only affected by magic. Most types of magic will affect an astral body. The exceptions are types of magic that create purely physical effects, such as spells to create elemental effects: fireball Killing Attacks, stone Entangles, lightning bolt Energy Blasts and so on just go through an astral body like it wasn't there, causing no harm.



If the Astral Projection power is Persistent, a stunned or unconscious astral body does not snap back to the physical body. If the astral body is killed, the physical body dies too. If the physical body is attacked and killed, the astral body dies as well—again, barring special circumstances. At the GM's option, a "dead" astral projector can continue to exist, in astral form, until the astral projection time limit is up. They have that long to either arrange a resurrection, find a new body (see below) or find a way to exist as a ghost. This could be an opportunity for a "radiation accident" and a rewrite of the character.

Shelters

Again at GM's option, an astral body kept from reuniting with its physical body could avoid extinction for a while by taking refuge in some other creature's body. This does not give any control over the host body unless the character has Mind Control powers it can use astrally.

If resurrecting the astral projector's own body isn't possible, it may be possible to find the astral body a permanent new body. This must be a body without an already resident "soul." What this means in practice is up to the GM, since as mentioned this is a rather drastic change in the character. Possibilities include cloned bodies, the newly-deceased whose bodies haven't entirely stopped working, a person in a persistent coma whose body is kept alive by life-support machines, a developing fetus (reincarnation!) or the character's own body reanimated as a lich or zombie.

Combat

A person in astral form has all their powers, except for those powers specifically blocked by the rules. Most notably, all Focus-based powers are lost, unless the Focus itself has the Astral Form Power. A sorcerer can thus cast spells normally, as long as the spells do not require material components. The spells cannot affect the real world, however, unless they have the Affects Solid World Advantage—so in practice an astral sorcerer can hardly affect the solid world at all. Combat between an astral and a material sorcerer is very mismatched! A pair of astral sorcerers can fight each other normally.

Astral Pursuit

What if one astral entity wants to fight and the other one doesn't? With instantaneous travel, it's very easy to run away—poof, gone. One can try to track a fleeing opponent through Mind Scanning. Once one has a fix on where the opponent is, one can likewise reach that area instantly. The phases spent locating one's opponent, however, give said opponent time to rest and regain endurance—and maybe plan a trap. Nobody said being a sorcerer was easy…

Astral Search

Players who think that Astral Form lets their character invisibly and unstoppably scour a city in minutes to find Evil Man's secret headquarters or the billionaire's runaway daughter are bound to be disappointed. For one thing, Astral Form travel gets one to one's destination instantaneously—one cannot see the scenery along the way. That means a person cannot zip through every building in a city at super-speed, looking for criminal hideouts. Astral searchers are limited to whatever movement rates they have otherwise. Even at superhero flight speed, searching a city could take days of constant effort. (This is another reason to buy some Mind Scanning or a long-range Detect.)

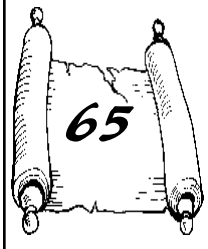
Note that while "normal" villains won't think to guard against astral snoops—and most of them couldn't do it even if they wanted to—a sorcerer villain will certainly take precautions. (See "Sanctums for Sorcerers" for further details.)

Astral Form And The Astral Plane

A character in Astral Form is not on the Astral Plane described in the chapter on other dimensions, or at least not completely. Magical Astral Forms skim the border between the physical and astral worlds. They can interact with ghosts and other permanent astral beings who stay in that part of the Astral Plane closest to Earth, from which the physical world is visible, but they cannot go deeper into the Astral Plane. To do that, they must use Extra-Dimensional Movement. Since everything on the Astral Plane is made of spirit instead of matter, an Astral Form that has fully moved onto the Astral Plane will be solid again, at least as far as anything or anyone else on the Astral Plane is concerned—even to beings who moved to the Astral Plane physically.

Permanently Astral Beings

Astral characters can face special perils. The Astral Plane has its own denizens, such as ghosts and atavisms. Such creatures are considered to be in Astral Form themselves for purposes of combat. They don't have to buy the actual Power, though, because under normal circumstances they cannot leave the Astral Plane. Nor can they go deeper into the Astral Plane at will. Their permanent astral condition is thus actually a disadvantage compared to astral projectors, who can escape back to their physical bodies.



Extra-Dimensional Movement And "Gates"

She had told Judge Hathorne of lines and curves that could be made to point out directions leading through the walls of space to other spaces beyond, and had implied that such lines and curves were frequently used at certain midnight meetings…

—H. P. Lovecraft, "The Dreams in the Witch-House"

A "Gate" goes beyond basic Extra-Dimensional Movement. A Gate is a hole in space connecting two widely-separated locations. Anyone can go through an active Gate, in either direction, or fire attacks through at targets on the other side.

The base power is usually Extra-Dimensional Movement, although Teleport is possible for short-range Gates within a dimension. (Very long-range Gates within a dimension, such as Gates to Mars or to the Bandok System, are best represented as EDM. Functionally, there's little difference between another planet and another dimension: both are "exotic places inaccessible to most people.") Someone who can only open a Gate between a pair of dimensions uses the basic, 20 point EDM; a Gate spell that can reach any dimension, one at a time, needs a base of 40 points; a Gate through time costs +20 points; each +5 points doubles the mass a Gate can handle in 1 Phase.

To the basic power is added the Advantages Continuous (+1) and Usable by Others (at least +¼). How much of a Usable by Others Advantage the Gate receives depends on how many people the Gate's creator wants to be able to use the Gate at once. If the Gate can only handle one passenger at a time, only a +¼ Advantage is needed. A greater Advantage, or adding Area Effect of some sort, lets more people use the Gate at a time.

The Gate takes a new Limitation, Open Both Ways, for -½: if a character opens a Gate from A to B, someone at B will see the Gate open and can attack or cross through to A. Gates also take another special Limitation, Stays Open Until Creator's Next Phase (-½), meaning that shutting the Gate down isn't a 0-Phase action that its creator can do any time. A Gate stays open at least 1 full Phase. Indeed, for a further Limitation a Gate might take quite a while to shut down, during which time God knows what might come through!

Going through a Gate normally counts as a 1 Phase, Full Move action. (The exception would be a Gate based on a Teleport half-move.) If a being going through a Gate has more mass than the Gate is designed to handle, the Gate just takes longer to send the being through—assuming the massive entity can fit into the Gate's opening at all. (A normal Gate, without any Area Effect Advantage, is assumed to be about the size of a normal, household doorway.) A gate will handle as much mass as it can on each of its creator's Phases. If an entity had 4 times the mass a Gate was designed to handle, for instance, it would take 4 Phases to get through.

Gate Tricks

These only scratch the surface of interesting Gate variations. For many examples of tricky Gates, see the *World of Tiers* series by Philip Jose Farmer.

Permanent Gates

Normally a Gate only stays open as long as its creator pays END. A Gate can be bought to 0 END Persistent/Uncontrolled (+1), however, creating a permanent "Wormhole." (Adding the Independent Limitation will bring the point cost down a lot, although it presents dangers of its own.)

One or both of the Wormhole access points can be mobile, such as a portal from a headquarters to a vehicle. Such a mobile endpoint is usually connected to a Focus which moves or is carried around. The Focus Limitation applies to the whole Wormhole even if only one end of the Wormhole has a Focus attachment, since if the Focus is somehow removed or incapacitated the Wormhole stops working.

Gate Attack

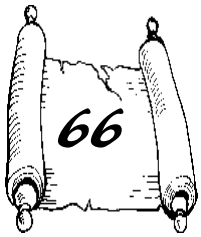
Normally, one has a choice whether or not to proceed through a Gate, even if one is within its area of effect. By making the Gate Usable Vs. Others (+1) instead of Usable By Others, the Gate's creator removes that option. Such a Gate—perhaps primed by a Trigger—makes a truly formidable trap. (But remember, a Power bought Usable Vs. Others must always have some defense which is not impossibly rare. Having EDM abilities of one's own and making a DEX or EGO roll would be an appropriate defense against a Gate trap in an all-magic campaign; in a normal superhero campaign, Power Defense might be enough.)

Invisible Gates

Normally a Gate or Wormhole is visible and obvious. One looks through it and sees an area that doesn't match one's surroundings. A Gate or Wormhole with an Invisible Advantage gives no such clue to its present. One unwittingly steps into such a Gate and bang, one goes from New Jersey to the Netherworld. This can be a bit of a shock.

Reducing Gate Costs

Instead of Continuous, one can use a Limitation, Charges with duration. Of course, if one wants to open a Gate several times a day, for fairly long periods each time, this Limitation easily becomes an Advantage. It



still has the improvement over Continuous in that the Gate's creator doesn't have to keep paying END every phase. For a further Limitation, the Gate's creator can't turn it off: the Gate stays open until the duration of the charge runs out. This is worth at least a -½ Limitation, and for long durations perhaps even more, but the Gate must be bought with the Uncontrolled Advantage. The GM must decide how often a Gate maker will get in trouble because their particular Gate won't close.

All the traditional spell casting Limitations such as Gestures, Concentrate, Focus, extra Time, etc. can apply to a Gate. (In fact they had better, since Gates often have tremendous Active Point costs.) Extra Time is especially good, since it prevents PCs from using Gates as a quick and easy escape route. If opening a Gate takes an hour, when the Champions Gate into the demon's castle, they're committed.

In fantasy or science fiction, Gates often use Bulky or Immobile Foci. This may be an ancient monument, an elaborate golden door-frame, a huge, sigil-marked pentacle inlaid in the floor, or a Time Tunnel with banks of machinery. Again, this helps restrict access as well as reduce the Real Point cost.

Multiple-Destination Gates

Normally a Gate opens to only one place in one dimension at a time, and the Gate's creator selects that destination. Even a Gate or Wormhole spell which can access any dimension only accesses one dimension at a time; everyone who enters the Gate comes out at the same place. There are two ways, however, to change this and produce Gates which send different people to different locations—even though the people think they are entering the same Gate.

First, there might simply be two or more Gates set in the same location. Someone who walks into the Gates' area of effect goes through one of them at random. Adding a Trigger to each Gate lets the user or creator control which Gate activates. For instance, an alternating pair of Gates would have the Triggers, "Next person after other Gate used." A set of overlapping Gates could each be Triggered by the user saying a specific command word. Overlapping Gates might even be given linked sense modes so that, for instance, people carrying magic are sent to one destination while people without magic are sent somewhere else. The devious possibilities for multiple, Triggered Gates are limitless.

Second, a +¼ Advantage can let the Gate open to a variety of locations. This is the same as the +¼ Advantage used to give variable results on Adjustment Powers and Transforms, but here the specific Advantage used is Usable By Other. Gates already have Usable By Other, but that is simply to let someone besides the creator go through the Gate; a second Usable By Other lets each user select a destination among a predetermined range while the Gate is open. The set of dimensions available is limited only by the base power of the Gate, and what the caster allows. For instance, a powerful wizard might create a Wormhole which lets one enter any of Earth's astral extensions.

Gating Within A Dimension

Extra-Dimensional Movement, the HERO SYSTEM rules make clear, cannot be used to travel within a dimension, either directly or by taking quick hops to and from other dimensions. This is undeniably arbitrary: if one can arrive by EDM at any location in the City-States of Yong, why can't one arrive back at any location on Earth?

On the other hand, nobody can afford enough Teleport to allow long-distance travel within a dimension using Gating as a special effect—and character in the comics do this quite often. There are two solutions:

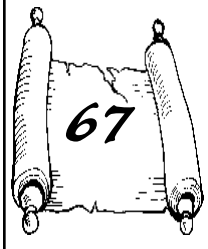
First, throw out that line in the rules about EDM sending characters back to the place on Earth that they left. It's really not that unbalancing if the character has EDM at the 30 or 40 point level. Such niceties of the rules matter most for combat situations. For 35 points a character can buy a 15" Teleport with an out-of-sight Floating Point, and in most combat situations that is enough to let a hero or villain escape. If the GM doesn't allow EDM to be used at combat speeds anyway, whether one goes from New York to Fairyland or to Tokyo is really quite academic.

Sample Gates

Here are some basic Gates and (active points only), and a few examples of "customized" Gates.

Standard Gates

45	EDM to 1 plane, Continuous, Use by Other x1 (+¼)
67	EDM to Group of Planes, Continuous, Use by Other x1
90	EDM to Any Plane, Continuous, Use by Other x1
65	EDM to 1 Plane, Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END, Use by Other x1
97	EDM to Group of Planes, Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END, Use by Other x1
130	EDM to Any Plane, Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END, Use by Other x1



The Obelisk Of Bromion

The Lord of Order called Bromion uses these small enchanted obelisks as a sampling device. He sends them to magic-rich worlds. They are primed to go off when they are among a suitable concentration of psychic energy. (They have an auxiliary function, not relevant to this discussion, which makes them attractive to people with untapped magical potential and provides fake "psychic insights.") Then the obelisk snatches everyone within a broad area to Bromion's plane, the Millworks. The obelisk itself stays behind, as a reference point. Bromion magically transforms his captives into brainwashed agents and sends them back with instructions to send him more groups of people.

The Obelisk is a slender pyramid of gray stone roughly a foot square at the base and four feet tall. Its surface is carved with occult sigils.

13 EDM to Millworks, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged, Trigger: Supposed Power Invoked in Area With High Psychic Potential (+¼), Personal Immunity, 6" Radius AE (+1), Independent (-2), Bulky OAF (-1 ½), 0 Range, 4 charges of 1 phase [80]

Shining Door

As everybody knows, mirrors are weak points in space-time. Alice fell through the looking-glass, the Chinese have legends which prophecy an eventual invasion through mirrors, and mirrors are as popular as crystal balls for scrying. Every mirror is a gateway to the Astral Plane just waiting to open.

This spell turns an ordinary mirror into a Wormhole to the Astral Plane. The only requirement is that the mirror be large enough for one to move through. The Wormhole leads to the section of the Astral Plane corresponding to the mirror's location on Earth.

The Shining Door will eventually decay on its own if someone doesn't close it, but it will certainly last for hours and might last for days. If all else fails, the Shining Door also can be cast on the Astral Plane to get to Earth: one must simply find a mirror which has been in the same place on Earth for long enough to have an astral version form.

The caster must recite a lengthy incantation while tracing designs on the mirror with his finger or a pointer. A Shining Door is discernable from an ordinary mirror in that the reflected image blurs and ripples, as if seen through water. To use the Shining Door, one steps through into the section of the Astral Plane corresponding to the mirror's location.

13 EDM to/from Astral Plane, Continuous Uncontrolled 0 END, Use by Other x1 (+¼), Opens Both Ways (-½), 1 Phase Extra Time to Close (-½), initial 5 minutes Extra Time to Open (-1), Gestures, Incantation, OAF Mirror, Concentrate to 0 DCV (-½) [65]

More Fantastic Foci of Legend

"Venus" Figures

Paleontologists have found hundreds of these little stone statues in European and Middle Eastern caves where stone age humans once lived. They depict women with huge breasts and hips. No one knows exactly what they were used for, but they certainly had something to do with fertility.

The Hope Diamond

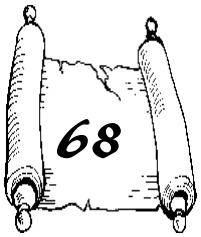
This jewel is unique: a steel-blue diamond that fluoresces deep, bloody red in ultraviolet light. If there was ever a documented case of a real life curse, this is it. The story goes that the Hope was cut from the diamond eye of an Indian idol, and the goddess Sita destroys every owner of the diamond. In fact, a remarkable number of the Hope's owners (including the one for whom it is named) have died from murder, suicide or violent accident, and one went mad. The Hope diamond is now on display in the Smithsonian Museum: its current owner is the United States Government. 'Nuff said?

Madame Blavatsky's Apport Teasets

Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, founder of Theosophy, never worried about being short a teacup, saucer or set of sugar tongs; depending on the story, she either just materialized them by psychic power, or her immortal Tibetan teacher would teleport the needed item to her. Many items of her magically produced tableware are still owned and revered by the Theosophical Society.

The Crystal Skull Of Lubaantun

This life-size human skull carved out of rock crystal was allegedly discovered in a ruined Mayan city in 1927, and archeologists still don't know if it is a real antiquity or a clever fake: it's impossible to date. Other crystal skull models have been found in Maya country, but none have displayed such skilled workmanship. If a light is applied at the "neck" of the Crystal Skull, the eyesockets glow.



Chapter 3: Other Dimensions And The Multiverse

Before my murmured exorcism
The world, a wispy wraith, shall flee:
A stranger earth, a weirder sea
Peopled with shapes of Faery,
Shall swell upon the waste abysm.

—Clark Ashton Smith, *Song of the Necromancer*

Ah, yes. The infinite planes of the Multiverse. Visits to bizarre, alien universes form an important part of comic-book wizardry. Heroes may need to harrow Hell, fight an extradimensional conqueror on his home ground, escape from a hostile cosmos or quest through strange worlds to stop a villain's plot. Even the familiar "dreamscape" story, in which the heroes have to search through the hallucinatory landscape of another person's mind and memories, is a visit to another dimension.

This chapter provides some hints and suggestions for designing alien dimensions and using them in a campaign. It also supplies a general scheme for the Multiverse and earth's place within it, which GMs can use if they like. Finally, the bulk of the chapter is taken up with descriptions of several dimensions, ready for GMs to use as settings for adventures.

Functions Of Alien Dimensions

Other dimensions play several roles in a superheroes campaign.

First, they make colorful settings for adventures. This can be pure tourism. Other dimensions give GMs a chance to let the heroes visit locations and people that could never exist on Earth. While the mundane world has its uses as a setting for fantasy, it's fun to imagine visiting someplace spectacularly different. A vivid description of an extradimensional scene raises the players' sense of wonder and prepares them for further wonders.

Second, other dimensions provide a home for creatures of magic and fantasy, from goblins to gods. Such creatures conspicuously do not exist on Earth: as long as one keeps the game milieu even remotely like the real world, the monsters and magical races have to live somewhere else.

Alien dimensions, like alien worlds, also give the GM a chance to play with bizarre cultures. An alien culture may be no more than another bit of local color ("Hey Dr. Weird, why does everyone wear fruit on their head like Carmen Miranda?") or it may form the focus of the adventure. The dimension's inhabitants might be hostile to PCs who break some odd cultural taboo, or try to be helpful but in counterproductive ways. GMs can even try a little social satire by exaggerating some modern trend or other feature of their own society.

Last (and probably least), other dimensions can present interesting strategic challenges to the PCs. In an alien cosmos, the different environment and different laws of nature can change the rules of combat. To give a few simple examples, there may be dimensions where all combat uses EGO and ECV instead of DEX and CV; where some classes of powers just don't work (such as flame powers in a water-filled dimension); where space is so bent and twisted that any ranged attack is as likely to hit oneself as an enemy; or where space is filled with some continuous harmful effect, such as a continuous Flash or Darkness versus one sense group, Energy Blast, Drain or Cumulative Transform.

Designing Dimensions

But infinitely beautiful the wondrous work arose
In sorrow and care, a Golden World whose porches round the heavens
And pillar'd halls & rooms receiv'd the eternal wandering stars.

—William Blake, *The Four Zoas*

Designing a universe can seem like a tall order. Here are some thoughts to make it easier.

What's A Dimension For?

The first question to ask oneself when designing a dimension is what its function will be in the campaign. Will the dimension become a regular setting for adventures, or will the heroes visit it just once? In the latter case, what will be the reason for the visit? There are several possibilities, with their own implications for the design process. The functions may overlap, of course.

Trap

By force or guile, a villain might maneuver the heroes into another dimension with the expectation that the heroes will be trapped there. Either the dimension itself is dangerous, or the villain thinks that the heroes just have no way to leave. In this case, the most important aspects to designing the dimension are what dangers the heroes will face and how they will overcome the dangers and leave. If the characters have Extra-Dimensional Movement powers (as most super-mages do), GMs must invent some reason why the heroes cannot just pop back to Earth.

Treasure Hunt

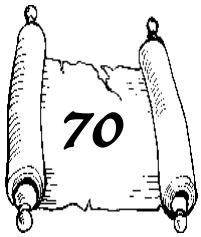
The heroes might visit a dimension in search of something. Once they have it, they leave and have no immediate reason to return. In this case, the most important features are the prize the heroes seek, and whatever obstacles they must face to get it.

Home Of Petty Obstacle

The heroes might visit for a number of reasons. A villain might decoy them into a Petty Obstacle's home dimension, or use the Petty Obstacle as a catspaw. A Petty Obstacle of a minor dimension lord might commit rudeness on Earth and the PCs follow him home to teach him some manners. The PCs might even land in the Petty Obstacle's home dimension by accident. Whatever the reason, all that really matters about such a dimension is the Petty Obstacle villain him, her or itself. The rest is just stage-dressing.

Opportunity For A Good Deed

Here the danger is directed at someone else—probably the natives of the dimension—and the natives want the PCs' help in dealing with it. Perhaps the locals can reward the heroes with something they need, or perhaps the locals can only offer their thanks and a



Favor in return. The local problem may or may not bear any relation to the ongoing conflicts of the campaign. In either case, obviously the most important factor of the dimension is the problem the PCs must solve.

Setting For A Fight Scene

A dimension might be no more than an unusual setting for a fight. There are any number of reasons why the heroes and villains might be there together, from sheer accident ("I told you not to use that spell in the temple") to a formal challenge ("So, pathetic humans, meet me for combat in the Plane of Perilous Prunes—if you dare!") While such a dimension might be no more than interesting scenery, GMs may want to give the dimension some peculiar quality that makes the fight more interesting. Perhaps the villain knows how the dimension affects combat and hopes this will ensure the heroes' defeat; perhaps the villain is just as surprised as the heroes!

Conclusions

In general, when designing "one-shot" dimensions, the GM merely has to decide what peril or obstacle, if any, the heroes will face; what their reward will be for overcoming the peril; any specific characters the heroes will meet; and a few details of the local scenery. The "obstacle" can be as simple as being lost, and the "reward" no more than figuring out which way to go to get home. Nor do settings have to be developed in much detail: even if the dimension in question is as big as the real Universe (and that is very large indeed!) only the parts the PCs directly encounter need to be described—and that may be no more than a few hundred feet wide. If no actual characters need to be written up, on a good day designing a one-shot, limited-use dimension takes no more than a few minutes.

Designing The Environment

After deciding what a dimension is for, one selects the dominant features of the environment. If the dimension is to be used for more than a brief visit, one may even want to think about the overall shape of the world and space. Alien dimensions can be quite Earth-like, or they might be mind-bogglingly strange.

Cosmology

First, how big is the dimension? A cosmos might be billions of light-years across, like our real Universe, or a cosmos might be no bigger than a city block, or anything in between.

Assuming that the dimension is big enough, does matter collect in stars and planets of some sort, or does this dimension create less familiar structures? The "world" could be flat, or doughnut-shaped, an endless cylinder, the inside of a sphere, or some other shape—or have no shape at all.

"Ditkospace"

Comic books often show chaotic dimensions of taffypull blobs, drifting platforms, tunnels and doors in space and suchlike oddities. The most notable depicter of such dimensions in comic books was Steve Ditko, so this author likes to describe these chaotic planes as "Ditkospaces," in tribute to the master.

"Pathway" Dimensions

Many minor dimensions are essentially linear: there's only one way to go in them, or at least only one way worth going. The lone path might be a road, a tunnel, a staircase or a series of platforms hanging in the void. Sometimes the "pathway" works more subtly, just by giving the characters strong reasons to go in one direction: for instance, going in toward a lone planet instead of out into the fiery rings bounding the dimension, or following the paths which increase the characters' movement rate.

Time Passage

Time does not necessarily pass at the same rate in another dimension as it does on Earth. If time passes more slowly, one might spend a few hours in another dimension and find that a much longer time has passed on Earth. Conversely, if time passes more quickly, a week in another dimension might be a day or less on Earth—maybe even only a few seconds. The time chart provides an easy standard for time passage that differs from Earth. One dimension might operate on a 1 day = 1 Earth week ratio, another on a 1 day = 5 Earth hours ratio, and so on.

Remember that time differentials—especially cases where time passes very slowly compared to Earth—can really screw up a character's life. One shouldn't have the PCs spend a day in another dimension and return to find that a year has passed on Earth and everyone thinks they are dead or skipped out, unless one plans on building a whole adventure or two around this—and one is sure the players won't be upset at the gratuitous disruption of their characters' lives.

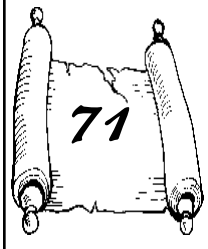
"Theme" Environments

Ditkospace is the outer limit of spatial strangeness. One can also get interesting effects from taking one bit of reality and patterning an entire world around it. This can range from simply making this the dominant feature of an otherwise Earth-like environment, to using this element as pattern for the world itself, or as the theme for a Ditkospace.

Landforms

A dimension might be all mountains, all river valley, all ocean, all desert, all plains, all swamp, all caverns, all badlands (Roadrunner cartoon-style), all glacier or icecap, all volcanic, all canyon, and so on.

For instance, imagine a world that's all canyon. The PCs arrive in a little canyon. At its mouth they can see that this is just a gully in the walls of a bigger canyon. If they try to get out of the big canyon, they find that it is just a channel of a vastly greater canyon, hundreds



Sample One Shot Dimension:

This nameless dimension is the storage-place for a magical artifact which the heroes need to save the world. (What the artifact is does not matter.) The artifact was hidden here long ago by a great wizard—let's say, Apollonius of Tyana—with three deathless monsters as guardians. Three monsters suggests a fairy tale, where obstacles come in series, so let's make this a "pathway" dimension (see below), with a Greek style. For monsters we can use write-ups of minor villains from *Classic Enemies*, with some Mental and Power Defense added so they won't be pushovers for sorcerer heroes.

The starting-point is a Greek temple on a platform suspended in churning chaos. The heroes must fight the first monster for the key to the inner chamber of the temple (the temple walls are indestructible). The monster is a Cyclops; use the write-up of Hideous.

of miles wide with furrowed walls a dozen miles high. Beyond those walls is another vast channel, and another…

Organic Forms

Dimensions might be dominated by one lifeform, or take their shape from some living thing or part of a living thing. Possibilities include trees, flowers, vines, insects, fish, animals, birds, humans or body parts such as hands, heads, eyes or bones. Imagine a Ditkospace with giant heads floating among the blobs, their dreams visible through their eyes. Imagine a world covered in a layer of bleached bones, or all forest. Imagine endless vines a dozen miles wide, and people building cities in the flowers. Dimensions based on organic forms can be especially eerie or poetic.

Artificial Forms

Man-made objects such as buildings and machines can provide more themes for dimensions. At least, on Earth these things are man-made; on other dimensions, they might occur naturally, or seem to. A dimension might be all one huge building: all castle, or all factory, bureaucratic office-building, or whatever, with no "outside." A factory dimension would overlap with dimensions based on machinery. Imagine a dimension filled with clockwork or giant computer circuits or the pipes, boilers and cooling towers of an infinite oil refinery. Other manufactured items can suggest striking dimensions as well. A fight in a dimension of mirrors could get interesting. A world that's all graveyard or ruins would be great for a moody, downbeat adventure.

The Dutch graphic artist M. C. Escher produced some marvelous pictures of warped architectural spaces where up, down and sideways intersect in mind-twisting ways. Dimensions in this style, where one person's floor is another person's wall or ceiling, can be called "Escherspaces."

Geometric Forms

Dimensions might even be based on pure geometric forms. The dimension of the Spectral Spheres (mentioned in the chapter on magic) is a typical example: a space occupied only by globes of iridescent force. Dimensions based solely on geometric forms tend to be very simple, suitable only for one-shot use, but geometric themes combine well with other sorts of themes. M. C. Escher, for instance, did a picture of a strange planetoid shaped like a tetrahedron (a 4-sided die) entirely covered with city; a combination of geometry with an artificial form.

Unusual Substances

Another way to make dimensions more exotic is to change what objects are made of. On Earth, for instance, trees are made of wood, animals are made of meat and bone and the ground is rock or soil. On another dimension, perhaps everything is mineral: the trees are rock and the animals are metal and crystal. Or perhaps the trees are made of meat and bone, while the animals are made of wood or other vegetable substances. A dimension where everything, including the ground, is animal, alive and mobile could be very strange and dangerous. Other possible substances to consider include ice, gelatin, plastic, various liquids, clouds and luminous force.

Color Scheme

What colors are most common in the dimension? Earthly skies are blue, except when covered with gray or white clouds, or at sunset. What color is another dimension's sky, assuming it has one? What color are the inhabitants, if any? Some dimensions might have a more limited range of colors that Earth. A dimension might even lack colors entirely: everything is in shades of gray.

Supernatural Bias

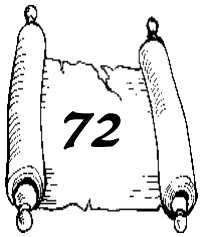
Does the dimension have some intrinsic bias toward some forces and away from others? Worlds where magic works and technology doesn't are not too uncommon in fantasy fiction. Utopian worlds of goodness and hellish dimensions of evil are common too. Some authors have posited worlds dominated by Order or Chaos, or caught in conflict between those forces. The present work adds Art and Nature as conceptual forces which could dominate a world. Any combination is possible: thus, one dimension might be oriented to Order, Nature and evil, with technology dominant, or neutral on the Order/Chaos axis, tending toward Art and Good, but neither magic nor technology working very well.

Dimensions dominated by Order will display tightly-knit societies with restrictive laws and traditions and well-defined social classes. They are the safest dimensions for visitors who can follow the rules, and the deadliest for visitors who can't. Note that in some Orderly dimensions, simply being a visitor may be against the rules!

Chaos-oriented dimensions, on the other hand, emphasize personal freedom, with many options open to individuals. The cost of such freedom, however, is the loss of security which a strong collective can offer. Even if most of the inhabitants are kindly, there are probably rogue elements who may attack visitors. On the other hand, if the people tend towards evil and hostility, it's easier to hide and there may be an "underground" willing to help.

Art-dominated planes could have any sort of society; Art shows itself in people's relationship to their environment. Art planes are either shaped by their inhabitants, or in them apparently natural processes produce objects that on Earth must be made by people.

Theoretically, there's no reason why a Nature plane should not have any sort of society, but in practice they should have tribal societies—that's what seems "natural" to most Twentieth-Century Earthers. These dimensions are wildernesses of some sort, or at least dominated by Life. A garden, after all, could be considered the intersection of Nature with Order.



In extreme cases, worlds dominated by one force might count as consecrated ground. A Nature spirit on an Art plane, or a Chaos being on an Order plane, might start taking damage.

Other magical effects are possible, too. As mentioned above, dimensions might have intrinsic Powers affecting everyone who visits. Dimensions might change the form of visitors, a Transform no one short of a cosmic entity can resist. They might even change the rules of combat and how Powers work.

Inhabitants

The last step in designing a dimension, though hardly the least, is to invent the people. Anything is possible since this is another universe, but remember that the players need something they can imagine interacting with. Presenting a truly alien being is one of the greatest challenges a storyteller can face; it's great if one can do it, but difficult. As a shortcut, one can achieve a feeling of "alien-ness" by shortcuts such as combining familiar elements in unfamiliar ways. For instance, people who talk are familiar, and mountains are familiar. Talking mountains are strange. Or, humans are ordinary, and things made of silver are ordinary; humans made of silver are exotic.

Classic Types

The comics have established certain traditions for the people of other dimensions. One might even call them clichés, but they work.

Pretty Much Human

No matter how bizarre and unearthly the dimension may be, somehow it's given rise to beings who are just like humans in every important way. They may have blue skin, funny hair, bumps on their heads or antennae, but they still look awfully human—perhaps Caucasian human at that. (We're talking "Star Trek" aliens here.) Usually, only a few leader-types have special powers.

Lone Dimension Lord

Many dimensions only have one inhabitant, a minor dimension lord who is invariably hostile and usually quite psychotic. (Well, what do you expect? They've been in solitary for centuries.) These funny-looking humanoids have moderately formidable magic powers, enough to give the PCs a decent fight, but they are basically petty obstacles.

Humanoid Animals

Just like worlds designed by science fiction writers of little imagination, other dimensions may have inhabitants who are humanoid versions of familiar Earthly animals: cat-men, lizard-men and bird-men seem especially popular.

Mythological Creatures

One way to show that another dimension is a place of fantasy is to place creatures from familiar Earthly mythology within it. For some reason, dragons seem especially popular, but Western mythology offers plenty of alternatives.

Culture

One could easily write a whole book about designing fantasy societies, but that really isn't necessary. This is another area where there's just no substitute for one's own creativity. All this work can do is offer a few hints to help one get started.

Romantic Feudalism

In many comic book dimensions, the people live a traditional, high-fantasy lifestyle, with kings, knights, peasants and the rest. Often there's an evil wizard causing problems. This is so familiar it needs no further explanation.

Dimension Lord Despotism

Most dimension lords are not nice people. They are far more powerful than anyone else in the dimension, and power has corrupted them. The government consists of the dimension lord and a few minions, who keep the rest of the populace in terrified subjection. The only law is the dimension lord's whim. Since the PCs' usual reason for visiting these dimensions is to fight the dimension lord as quickly as possible, they usually don't get much opportunity to see the details of how people live under tyranny—they just know that it's not good.

It's possible that heroes might succeed in heroically overthrowing the tyrannical dimension lord. In that case, the GM has some really juicy story possibilities as the dimension's society turns upside down. With the old despotic government gone, things get very unstable. (Just look at what's happened in the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia and numerous countries in the Third World.) Some factions will certainly try recruiting the PCs to help them; others will try killing the PCs, if only to prevent them from allying with the opposition. The PCs may wish they'd left well enough alone!

Exotic Human Cultures

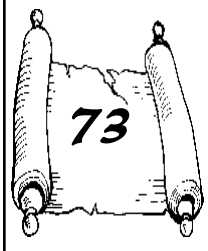
Societies on Earth are a rich source of material for cultures of other planes. Humans have tried a dizzying variety of social arrangements, ranging from despotic empires to Utopian communes. There have been societies where everyone's life was planned from cradle to grave; other societies have allowed virtual anarchy. Leaders? There have been god-kings, Commissars, Presidents, family elders, warlords, merchant princes and dozens of other sorts. One doesn't need a degree in history or anthropology, either: a stack of National Geographics can provide exotic cultures by the dozen. Or just read the world news section of the local newspaper.

Satiric Exaggeration

As mentioned, other dimensions are an opportunity for social satire. To do this, create a society based on some aspect of your own, exaggerated to comedy or horror. Don't like "tax-and-spend liberals"? Invent

Instead of an inner chamber, however, the door in the temple leads to another chaos-space. A trail of floating disks leads to another platform and temple and the second monster. Plague will do as an Empusa (a donkey-legged vampire hag).

The door in this temple opens to yet a third chaos-space and line of stepping-stone platforms, but to make this more interesting, the crossing itself appears dangerous: turbulent winds (8 STR Telekinesis) threaten to blow the PCs off the disks. The third monster is of course the most formidable. The Griffin can be used as basis for a real griffin. When the heroes defeat the third monster, they can easily fetch the artifact from the temple's inner chamber.



a world utterly drowning in an incompetent bureaucracy that demands everything and delivers nothing. Or are the "Religious Right" the guys you love to hate? Have the PCs visit a theocratic state where everyone is watched by the "family values" thought police to make sure they pray on time, while crime, chaos, plague and poverty run the streets. Science fiction writers have done this sort of thing for decades. Why should they have all the fun? Just be sure that your players agree with you — or make the adventure enough fun that they don't care about your politics.

Social satire will be sharpest if set on an "alternate Earth." On the other hand, setting the story on a fully invented world lets the satire sneak up on the audience—like in Aesop's fables, where the animals stand in for humans.

Structure Of The Multiverse

How all things live and work, and ever blending,
Weave one vast whole from Being's ample range!
How powers celestial, rising and descending,
Their golden buckets ceaseless interchange!

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust, Part I

This section proposes a general structure for the Multiverse. Obviously, GMs don't have to use it if they don't want to, but it does offer certain advantages. It gives an illusion of logic to the Multiverse. It's based on a real magical cosmology for a feel of occult authenticity, but loosely: no real occult theory has ever made room for worlds unconnected to the Earth. (500 years after Copernicus, the occultists still think the Earth is the center of the Universe!) The system described below gives a place for the Earth-centered Otherworlds of mythology and folk religion, without short-changing the really alien dimensions.

The Four Worlds

Western sorcerers use the language of Kabbalism to describe the general structure of the Multiverse. Reality is divided into 4 "levels" of being, which the kabbalists call "the Four Worlds." At the bottom is ASSIAH, the Material World. Next is YETZIRAH, the Formative or Astral World, BRIAH the Creative or Mental World, and finally ATZILUTH the Archetypal World. All the myriad dimensions fit within these four worlds.

Assiah contains the universes that run by the purely material principles of natural law, such as Earth's cosmos. Inhabitants of Assiatic planes may use magic, but their worlds don't run by magic.

The planes of Yetzirah do run by magic. On these dimensions, symbols and beliefs can control matter and energy. All the planes of Assiah and Yetzirah are linked by the ASTRAL PLANE. (That's why Yetzirah is called the "Astral World.")

The worlds of Briah are completely spiritual, embodying concepts and states of mind. They aren't made of matter at all. Conceptual entities—the really big-time cosmic entities—live on these dimensions.

Atziluth contains the ultimate aspects of reality, beyond time, space and even separation into distinct entities. Atziluth is almost impossible to reach even in visions.

The Sephirothic Tree Of Life

…all the gods
Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptered phantoms; heroes, men and beasts…

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, Prometheus Unbound

Over this scheme, the kabbalists superimpose the "Tree of Life," the chain of the 10 "Sephiroth"—emanations from God—cascading down from Kether ("the Crown") through various concepts to Malkuth ("the Kingdom"). Western sorcerers use the Sephiroth to further subdivide the planes into various groups. While sorcerers argue details about which planes go in which sephiroth, they agree on the general classification scheme. Atziluth, Briah and Yetzirah each contain three of the sephiroth, and Assiah contains just one.

Assiah

At the bottom of the Tree of Life is MALKUTH, the Kingdom or material world. The Earth is in Malkuth, but this Sephira contains many other worlds as well. Some sorcerers use "Malkuth" interchangeably with "Assiah" to refer to all purely material planes. Others restrict Malkuth to planes containing worlds that are recognizably similar to Earth in important ways, while Assiah includes all the really weird planes running by systems of natural law that make them very unlike Earth and its cosmos.

As if that weren't confusing enough, some sorcerers misspell "Assiah" as "Asia," leading to some decidedly peculiar narratives of "travel in Asia." "Asia" in turn is derived from the Greek "Askia," "Place Without Shadows" (it originally referred to the southern part of modern Turkey); "Assiah" is Hebrew. Just to be obscurantist, a few sorcerers go further and refer to other planes in Assiah as "Shadowless Realms."

Yetzirah

The Yetziratic World holds most of the dimensions which heroes will visit. First are the Inner Planes which accompany the Earth; beyond them are the Outer Planes, whose variety has no end.

Yesod: Imaginal Realms and Demi-Planes

YESOD, the Foundation, is the first sephira of the world of YETZIRAH. Yesod holds the Lower and Middle Astral Planes and Earth's psychic "Imaginal Realms," so-called because they are created from the Astral Plane by human imagination. They are also called the Parterres (the "Lands Beside.") The chief Imaginal Realms are the Land of Legends (also called Faerie), Babylon, the Netherworld, Elysium and the

Dreamzone. They exist because people know in their hearts that they must exist. The Parterres and the Lower Astral Plane are sometimes called the "Inner Planes."

The Land of Legends holds the "Wild Magic" forces of Nature: elves, nature spirits, mythological beasts and most of the pagan gods. Such creatures are neither good nor evil. As the "ethical" religions such as Christianity and Buddhism have grown, the creatures of Faerie have lost access to Earth. The Land of Legends is still, however, the plane closest to Earth: in fact, spontaneous nexus points between Earth and Faerie may form.

Babylon, on the other hand, embodies the world of human Artifice. For better or worse, it is the epitome of cities.

The Netherworld is composed of all the Hells ever imagined. It tends toward Chaos, since the most influential human cultures have considered disorder to be evil. The Netherworld is dismayingly easy to enter.

The syncretic Heaven of Elysium, in contrast, is quite difficult to reach. Ironically, this dimension of self-proclaimed pure Good can be as dangerous to visit as the Netherworld: many of the lords of Elysium have little tolerance for human imperfection. They insist that humans live up to the ideals of their religions.

The Dreamzone is just that, all the dreams being dreamed at any given moment. An adept who can enter the Dreamzone can visit other peoples' dreams. It is a section of the Lower Astral Plane.

Humanity is not the only creature to shape the Astral Plane.

Animal life on Earth creates its own Parterre called the Blood Tide. Even plants get into the act, creating an astral realm called Yggdrasil. These are extremely alien dimensions which humans find difficult to enter.

Yesod also receives most of the odd little "demiplanes," scraps of space that are usually simple in structure and content. As sorcerers explain it, the material planes are like the rooms of an infinite mansion, but a mansion is more than its rooms: it is also closets and wainscoting and all the spaces above the ceilings, below the floors and between the walls. These places are seldom thought about, and sometimes never seen, but they are just as important to the structure of the house.

Hod and Netzach: The Outer Planes

The Yetziratic world also contains the sephiroth HOD (Glory/Splendor/Fame) and NETZACH (Conquest/Victory/Permanence). These are the magical worlds. Hod generally receives the planes that run by magic but still basically run by themselves, while Netzach planes have a controlling intelligence who may be physically united with the whole substance of the plane. Netzach planes are also called "The Dominions." There's a fair amount of overlap between these types. Either type may or may not have native races using the ambient magic.

Briah

Anyone can reach any of the planes of Assiah or Yetzirah by magic. One merely needs to know how to find one's destination. The planes of BRIAH are different. They cannot be reached by traveling the Middle Astral Plane. Before one can enter Briah one must pass a barrier called the Veil of the Temple, the "highest" division of the Astral Plane. Passing the Veil takes more than magic power. It takes wisdom, as well. The Veil is a test, and nobody is exempt, no matter how great their power. Those who fail the test are hurled back to the realms of matter. Those who succeed pass to the realms of the gods.

Nobody perceives the Brialic planes as they really are. Human visitors perceive these realms as being made of matter, because human senses and minds can't perceive pure Spirit. Brialic realms also sometimes have emotional auras.

The three sephiroth in Briah are TIPHERETH (Beauty), PACHAD or GEBURAH (Strength/Justice) and CHESED or GEDULLAH (Greatness, or Love/Mercy/Pity). The Veil goes in Tiphereth, the lowest sephira; the Prime Avatars of Order, Chaos, Art and Nature, the highest of the Brialic powers, have their realms in Chesed. Assigning other planes to sephiroth is pretty much a matter of taste.

A few notable Brialic planes are the Garden of Earthly Delights, where all physical desires are satisfied; the Gradient, a seven-leveled plane expressing the evolutionary Chain of Being from primal ooze to godhood; the City of Pyramids, a place of intellectual despair; and of course Death's Dominion. Some of these planes can entrap visitors.

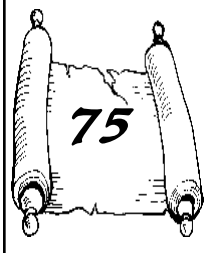
The Prime Avatars, also called the Four Zoas, each have their own dimension. Urizen, Prime Avatar of Order, rules the starry wheels and labyrinths of Ulro. Urthona, great Lord of Art, dwells in the cosmic city of Golgonooza. Tharmas, who rules all Nature, has a realm simply called Generation; in nature, things have no names, so neither does his demesne. Luvah the Anarch, the Zoa of Chaos and passion, rules over an ambiguous Eden called Beulah.

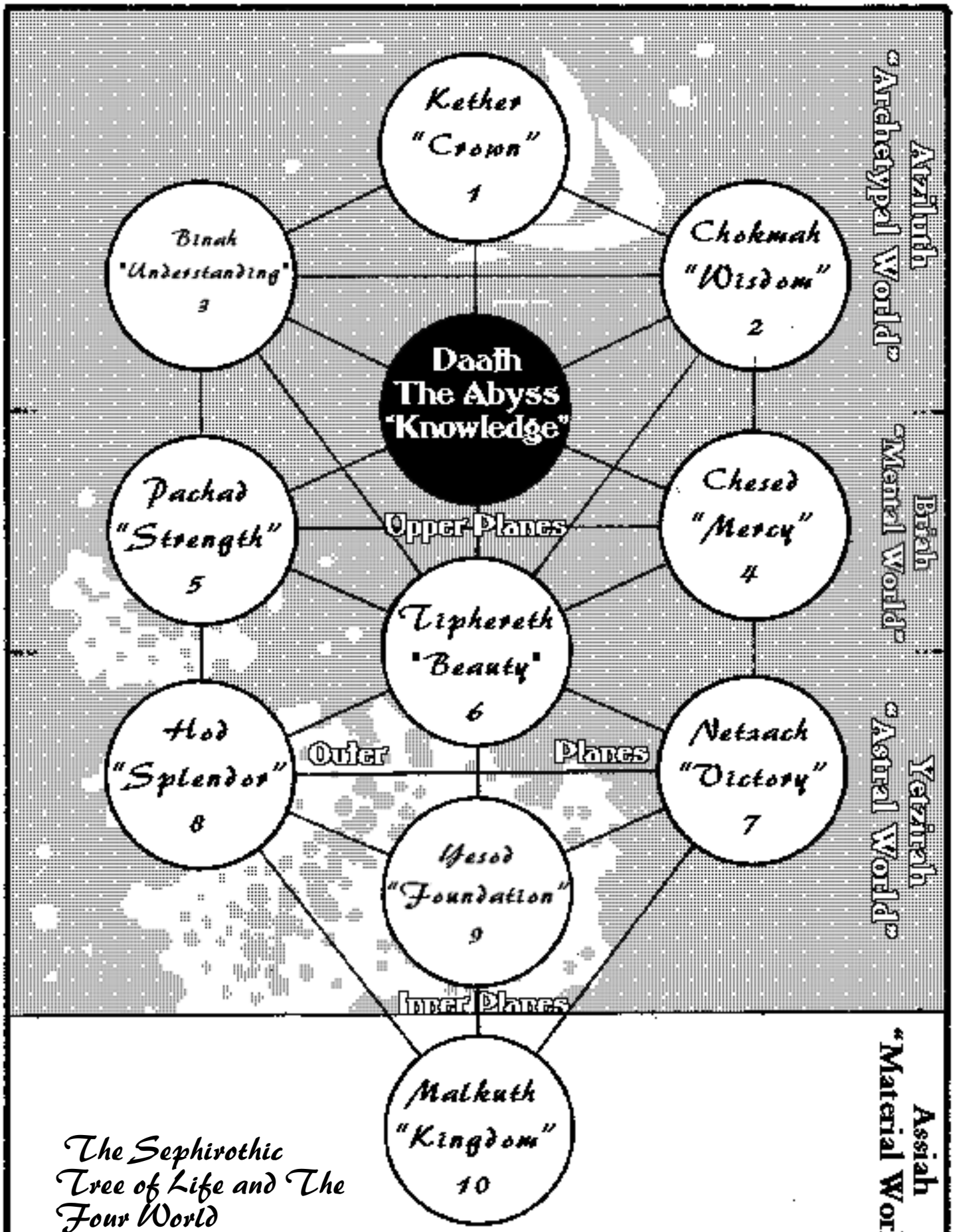
While it's difficult for dwellers in the material worlds to get to Briah, the Brialic powers can send emissaries into the lower worlds without great trouble. Sorcerers can even summon such emissaries, although they run the risk of angering the spirits' masters. The Powers themselves can't enter the physical worlds, but they can send anthropomorphic personifications of themselves, of great but finite power. Such incarnations can be controlled by a powerful sorcerer, but the sorcerer thereby makes an extremely powerful enemy.

Atziluth

Beyond the realms of the Four Zoas lies the Abyss. The Abyss is the edge of space, time, and division into discrete entities. It is an even more difficult barrier than the Veil of the Temple. Anyone who tries crossing the Abyss and fails is annihilated, body and soul, or warped into something monstrous beyond recognition.

ATZILUTH contains three sephiroth: Binah (Understanding), Chokmah (Wisdom) and Kether (the Crown). Each is considered a single plane. BINAH is





The Sephirothic Tree of Life and The Four World

sometimes called the Dark Sea of Being. It is an infinite reservoir of power for creation or destruction. CHOKMAH is also called the Bright Sea of Forms. It contains every possible archetype of objects, actions, ideas, structures, or any other category one could name. Mystic tomes say that the light of Chokmah shines on the dark waves of Binah—and the sparkling reflections off the waves is the Multiverse.

Even the distinction between objects and archetypes breaks down in KETHER, the most inaccessible of the planes. Kether, also called the Primum Mobile, the Mundane Shell or the Aleph, is the ultimate realm of indivisible being. In Kether, everything is One. Someone who reaches Kether will see everything, in fact be everything, the whole multiversal expanse of time, space and dimension.

Reaching Kether isn't a feat for a sorcerer, because anyone who could reach Kether wouldn't be a sorcerer anymore. They'd be God—Supreme Being of the Multiverse. What's more, to those on the lower levels of reality they've always been God, because Kether is outside Time. (Everyone else whoever has or ever will reach Kether is God too—but this doesn't bear thinking about too hard.)

The Atziluthic zone also includes a fourth element, the "lost sephira" called DAATH, the link between Wisdom and Understanding, balanced in the Abyss between timeless Atziluth and the realms below. Archimedes said, "Give me a lever long enough, and a place to stand, and I will move the Earth." Daath is that place. From Daath, one can call on the limitless power of Binah, shape it with the archetypes of Chokmah, and cast it down into the realms of Time. This is true creation, not transformation, and the only limit on what can be created is the intelligence, patience and skill of the sorcerer at detail work: that aside, it is no more difficult to make a galaxy than a flower. What's more, since Daath is outside time, the sorcerer can insert his new creation at any point in history—past, present or future. Daath's nature is, rather understandably, one of the greatest secrets in sorcerous lore.

The Qliphothic World

I have seen the dark universe yawning
Where the black planets roll without aim,
Where they roll in their horror unheeded,
Without knowledge or lustre or name.

—H. P. Lovecraft, "Nemesis"

Some sorcerers add a fifth level to the kabbalistic scheme, the QLIPHOTHIC planes—either resting below Assiah, or as a sort of dark "back side" to the Tree of Life. These are ancient dimensions whose energies have decayed into forms inimical to all normal sorts of life and existence. The Kings of Edom originally came from qliphothic dimensions, and they aren't the only horrors spawned by these decrepit, evil planes.

Just as the Atziluthic world holds the fountainhead of all existence, the Qliphothic world holds the drain down which all existence eventually runs. This is the "anti-God" called the Solipsist or the Decreator. The Decreator itself is unknowable: just as anyone who reached Kether would become one with the Creator and Creation alike, anyone who reached the Solipsist would join its total Unbeing and be annihilated.

The closest any being can come to the Solipsist is the entity called Quemetiel, the "Crowd of Gods." Quemetiel is a churning, chaotic fusion of long-defunct cosmic entities. It mindlessly sucks in anything that comes near, like a supernatural black hole. Anything eaten by Quemetiel is gone forever.

Special Dimensions

The Tree of Life isn't a perfect or total model of the Multiverse. There are "dimensions" that don't fit on it.

Alternate Histories

The biggest exception are the "Parallel Worlds" or "Alternate Earths." Other Earths where history took a different turn have been a very important part of all the major comic-book milieux, and the Champions Universe is no different (see *Champions in 3-D*, which was chiefly devoted to these adventures in alternate history.) Yet parallel worlds have no place in the kabbalistic scheme.

That's no accident or oversight. Alternate history is an exclusively science-fictional concept. It has never been part of any mythology, religion or occult tradition: it's a genuinely modern idea. The many stories set on alternate Earths where magic works are science fiction at their heart, not fantasy. So, no matter how important parallel worlds may be to a campaign, the wizards haven't heard of them. They are left to the super-scientists.

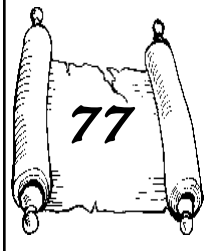
Pocket Worlds

One gimmick that turns up in fantasy stories or comic books now and then is the "pocket world." This is a dimension that's entirely tucked within some object—for instance, a complete working town inside a paperweight, or a painting one can step into and it becomes real. Such pocket worlds cannot be accessed by normal Extra-Dimensional Movement through the Astral Plane.

Most often the pocket world is within some object, which carries the necessary magic to transport people into the pocket world. The classic Djinn Bottle could be treated as a magic item which accesses a pocket world, which one can only depart with the help of someone outside.

The "Hollow Earth"-style cavern realms so beloved of comic books could be pocket worlds too: that would explain why they don't collapse and why seismologists can't detect them. There can even be spells to create pocket worlds.

Finally, a pocket world is a great place to hide things. First, one has a fairly substantial area, which may have dangers for uninvited visitors, in which to hide something. Then the object which contains the pocket world can itself be hidden. The catch is that one might mislay an entire world, or have it stolen!



Minds as Dimensions

Plenty of comic-book stories have dealt with journeys inside another person's mind. From the inside, the person's mind is a little world where scenes from memory and imagination shift kaleidoscopically. This can be handled through another application of Extra-Dimensional Movement, even if a person's mind isn't literally another dimension. Sorcerers might even enter another person's mind physically; mere psionics have to leave their bodies behind.

Cyberspace

This is another science-fictional concept, treating a computer network as a "dimension" one's mind can enter. With comic-book super-science, it may even be possible to enter cyberspace physically, as in the move *Tron.* Strictly speaking, since cyberspace is from science fiction it is outside this book's scope, but comic-book wizards tend to get around. Cyberspace can be treated much like the Astral Plane. In fact, cyberspace might be a new astral dimension, a realm of machine consciousness analogous to Yggdrasil or the Blood Tide. (See the description of Technomancy in Chapter Five for further speculations.)

The Astral Plane

…where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*

The Astral Plane is one of the most important of the dimensions. Both Eastern and Western occult traditions have proposed a dimension where spirits dwell. It has been important in magic-oriented comic books as well. Not only does the Astral Plane provide access to other dimensions, it can be an interesting —and dangerous—place in its own right.

General Nature

The Astral Plane comes in three sections, each with its own distinctive nature and appearance. The ability to reach one section of the Astral Plane by Extra-Dimensional Movement does not automatically grant one the ability to reach the other two sections: they are effectively three connected planes. Each section contains access routes to the other two sections, however.

The three divisions of the Astral Plane are the Lower, Middle and Upper Astral. The Lower Astral Plane impinges directly on Earth. People who astrally project about the Earth stay on the interface between the Lower Astral and material planes (see "Astral Form" for more details). Other dimensions have their own Lower Astral zones as well. The Middle Astral enables one to move between all the Lower Astral Planes of Assiah and Yetzirah. (One moves from Earth's Lower Astral, to the Middle Astral, to the Lower Astral of the other plane.) The Upper Astral gives access to the higher, spiritual dimensions of Briah, but the passage to the Brialic planes is not easily made.

The Astral Planes aren't made of matter in the normal sense of the word. Instead, they and their denizens are made of ectoplasm—a substance that bridges the gap between ideas and matter. Thus, on the Lower Astral, thought can create objects all by itself. That's how ghostly pirates get ghostly ships to sail, for one example. Buildings, objects or places that were the focus of great thought and emotion for a long time can endure on the Lower Astral long after their material form was destroyed. On the Lower Astral Plane, for instance, Stonehenge and the Parthenon are still undamaged. In fact, thoughts can even create quasi-living beings on the Lower Astral Plane, such as Atavisms and Imaginary People (see below).

Connections To Other Planes

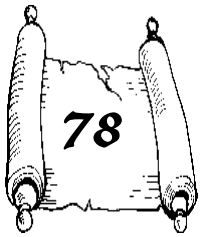
The Lower Astral Plane has connections to several other dimensions that grew out of it. The many districts of Faerie can be reached from the Astral Plane by normal astral movement, without using any sort of Extra-Dimensional Movement power. So can the Netherworld, Elysium and Babylon. Once entered, however, these realms can only be left through some sort of EDM or by pre-existing nexus points.

The Lower Astral known to most sorcerers is shaped by human life and thought, but sorcerers have found that animal and plant "consciousness" have created their own astral planes. Currently, the most popular names for these dimensions are the Blood Tide and Yggdrasil. These are very strange, inhuman dimensions; only masters of astral travel can find the way to enter them at all.

If one travels in the right direction on the Lower Astral—into the Fourth Dimension—one leaves Earth for the colorful, swirling chaos of the Middle Astral. From here one can reach countless other dimensions. It's just a matter of knowing which route to take. If anything dwells permanently on the Middle Astral, it remains unreported so far. The Middle Astral is also called Limbo, or the Void, because nothing exists there except a way to someplace else. Beyond the Middle Astral in turn lies the Upper Astral Plane, also called the Veil of the Temple. Because of the Upper Astral Plane's importance and unusual properties, it receives a separate description.

Perceptions

While traveling in the Lower Astral, one sees the Earth—or whatever other world one is on—but colors are washed out and everything has a silvery cast, as if it glowed with a faint grayish light. This "astral glow" does not, however, provide any real light. It's just an odd effect of normal light as seen from the Astral Plane. An astral traveler in a pitch-black cave would be just as blind as a normal person.



All other sensations on the Lower Astral are muted, too. Sounds come thinly, as if from a distance. (This does not actually affect hearing Perception rolls, though.) Taste and smell don't exist at all. Obviously, material objects can't be felt on the astral plane. Their astral counterparts, created by people perceiving the real objects, can be felt only faintly. Texture and temperature hardly exist at all. Even pain from attacks is less, although damage stays just the same.

Strong sensations on the Lower Astral only come from consuming an atavism; this lets a spirit briefly experience the emotion or sensation that created the atavism. Since most atavisms get made by very unpleasant feelings, most spirits leave atavisms alone. (Demons, however, enjoy feeding on atavisms and encourage their production.) The massed thought of religious ceremonies, however, can create strong positive atavisms. In particular, spirits flock to ceremonies in which an animal is killed, cooked and eaten. It lets the ghosts smell and taste food again.

Divisions Of The Lower Astral

What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook…

—John Milton, *Il Penseroso*

The Lower Astral itself has subdivisions. Travel between them may sometimes be difficult, but requires no special powers. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. GMs can add other astral territories, as desired.

Astral Earth

Part of the Lower Astral corresponds to the Earth. In this section of the Lower Astral one can see normal mountains, beaches, trees, houses, roads, cities and so forth. One does not, however, see the people living in them and using them. That's because the Earth seen on the Lower Astral Plane is not the real Earth: it's a copy projected onto the Lower Astral. The people who occupy "Astral Earth" are ghosts, dreamers and the like (see "Inhabitants" below). As mentioned above, objects and places about which people have thought and felt strongly can endure long after their physical originals were damaged or destroyed. Conversely, places that no one ever thinks about much are thinned out or compressed: the Lower Astral oceans, for instance, tend to fade out into gray limbo once shore is out of sight, because nobody pays much attention to any particular part of, say, the mid-Atlantic. Antarctica hardly exists at all on the Astral Plane.

People traveling in astral form merely skim the edge, as it were, of Astral Earth. They do not fully enter Astral Earth and therefore cannot move from Astral Earth to other parts of the Astral Plane, not without Extra-Dimensional Movement. Many creatures of the Lower Astral, however, can move from Astral Earth to the interface with real Earth and interact with astral projectors, inflicting and taking damage when they fight.

Imaginary Places

The Lower Astral also contains places that have no physical counterpart at all. They are entirely the product of imagination. One must leave the guide of Earthly geography behind to locate most of these places. These places are archetypes, generalized examples of locations. The ghost port of Puerto Muerto, for instance, is created out of memories and stories about the Age of Piracy: it doesn't correspond to any particular town in the Caribbean, but it has the classic elements of any seedy port from a tale of pirate adventure. Other imaginary places grow from dreams many people have dreamed, such as the Spooky Empty House, the High School Where You're Naked, or the Sky where You Fly.

The Dreamzone

The Lower Astral provides access to people's dreams. Since all dreams are "near" each other on the Lower Astral, one can fairly speak of a special division of that plane devoted just to dreaming. This section is called the Dreamzone (see CHAMPIONS IN 3-D for further details of the Dreamzone).

Cysts

Finally, strong magic or strong, weird thought can create pockets of the Astral Plane with really strange properties. No one has ever cataloged these pockets of weirdness. They appear and disappear without warning in the remote, unfrequented areas of the Lower Astral.

Sample Regions

An example is worth a thousand explanations. Here are some typical locations which astral voyagers might visit.

The Ghost House

This house in what is now a slum district existed for almost a century and acquired three ghosts, or rather its astral "echo" acquired the ghosts. The real house burned down a decade ago; its lot remains vacant. The astral house still exists, though, maintained by the ghosts. The ghosts are friendly in most ways, but they are fiercely protective of their home.

Puerto Muerto

This ramshackle port is one of the more curious "imaginary places" on the Lower Astral. It is a collection of old-fashioned, run-down buildings of wood and stucco on the shore of a bay. Clumsily built docks reach out from the sandy shore. Dilapidated boats with rotting sails are tied up at the docks or rest at anchor further out in the little bay. The whole town is totally quiet. The only person visible at first is a fisherman mending a net out on the dock. His shabby clothes drip water. He's missing an eye, the flesh has fallen away from his bones in a few places, and he's slightly translucent. Welcome to Puerto Muerto, a real ghost town…

Only after meeting the net-mending fisherman will visitors see the other inhabitants of Puerto Muerto. All the people of an old-time waterfront are here: fish-

ermen and floozies, sailmakers, carpenters, tradesmen and their wives, even a few guttersnipe children. Everybody is a translucent specter. Some are otherwise lifelike. Others range from the merely drowned or knifed, through various stages of decay, to skeletons in seafaring garb. The people aren't friendly to "breathers," as they call the living, but fear or a good bribe can overcome their surliness.

The best place in Puerto Muerto to meet people and get information is a sleazy waterfront dive called Cutthroat Carl's. It's easy to see how it got its name: Carl the bartender has a slit throat, though he's in pretty good shape every other way. Lurly the barmaid is downright gorgeous: the way her damp, low-cut gown clings to her body could make any man ignore the seaweed in her hair. She and her boyfriend Rhody are the two chief dangers in Puerto Muerto.

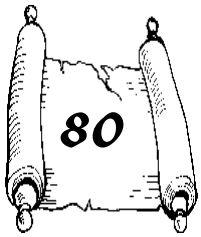
Although Lurly is a flirt, she's a dangerous girl to romance. Aside from Rhody, her kisses literally drown men. "Lurly" is actually Lorelei, the ghost of a woman who drowned herself in the Rhine because of a faithless lover, and subsequently lured men to a watery doom. What she's doing in Puerto Muerto is anybody's guess.

"Rhody" is Rhodeon, the son of one of the nymphs of the Hesperides by Poseidon's son Triton. This hero, whose exploits have been lost even to legends, died in battle. His ghost headed west, the direction of his mother's garden and the Underworld across the Ocean Sea. He got lost and ended up in the New World. His divine heritage makes Rhodeon super-strong and able to breathe underwater.

Rhodeon is extremely jealous and protective of Lorelei. If he catches any man paying too much attention to her, Rhodeon tries to beat that man into a pulp. After several centuries, Lorelei finds Rhodeon's possessiveness rather annoying, so she flirts all the more in hopes of finding a man who will beat Rhodeon and take her away from Puerto Muerto. She has only stayed with Rhodeon this long because he's the only man her kisses don't drown.

A few miles up the shore from Puerto Muerto, another inlet holds a small, ruined fort occupied by ghost pirates. The skeletal pirates come to Puerto Muerto every now and then and raise hell with their roistering. Fortunately, none of the people in Puerto Muerto can really die because they're all already dead. The pirates also occasionally sail their ghost ship to Earth.

Half a mile from shore, the gray sea fades away into the gray space that lies between astral locations. The same happens only a quarter-mile inland. Puerto Muerto thus consists of a strip of coastline a few miles long, fading out on every side into nothingness.



The Sky Where You Fly

This imaginary place grew out of flying dreams. It is a cloudscape with birds and a fuzzy, indistinct ground far below. Astral travelers who enter this zone find that instead of falling, they are flying. Flight here has no Endurance cost. One gets 1" of Flight per point of EGO. This does not add to any Flight powers the person may already have.

The Spooky Empty House

This zone grew from nightmares about being chased by unseen monsters through an endless house. Once one enters the Spooky Empty House, the nightmare begins. If one lets the nightmare run its course, one will be chased by the monsters (which are never seen, only heard) and eventually open a door and fall down an endless precipice back to the general Dreamzone. Alternatively, the character can make an EGO roll to break out of the dream's storyline and change its course, such as turning and facing the monsters. The monsters may turn out to be less terrible than one had imagined.

Kaleidoscape

This Cyst is a weird "chaos zone" of turbulent light and twisting shapes. It is only likely to be entered through a botched attempt at instant astral travel. Space in the kaleidoscape warps back on itself so a person quickly comes back to where they started. The second escape attempt only comes after the trapped character calms down, studies the environment and makes an INT roll to find the zone's hidden pattern of activity. A successful INT roll complements the subsequent Astral Navigation roll.

Missile combat is almost impossible in the Kaleidoscape. The spatial turbulence acts as a continuous Missile Deflection with an OCV of 10 affecting all ranged attacks. Movement is also affected: people who try to move to a particular hex (for instance, to close with an opponent for hand-to-hand combat) must make an attack roll to hit the target hex, just as if they were leaping or targeting an Area Effect attack. In the kaleidoscape, however, hexes have a DCV of 6.

New Golgotha

This Cyst consists of a few distorted, nightmarish city blocks. It folds back on itself: moving four blocks brings one back where one stated. New Golgotha grew from a paranoid's fantasies of power and persecution. The paranoid believed he was Jesus, and the CIA was after him with pain-ray machines. As a further complication, the paranoid is long dead but his ghost keeps the fantasy going. To have any chance of escaping, the character must confront the paranoid's ghost and make a convincing effort to counter his delusions. Not only will the CIA Men in Black stalk the lost character, the paranoid will respond to challenges by calling blue bolts from Heaven.

Astral Inhabitants

As the mind of God creates by His word, so man by his mind and speech can procreate immortal progeny.

—Lodovico Lazarelli

The Lower Astral is occupied by a lot more than just plane-traveling wizards. Many sorts of beings visit the Astral Plane or even dwell there permanently. Normally, everyone on the Astral Plane is visible and solid to everyone else, although astral beings may be harder to damage than are physical creatures.

Ghosts

Large numbers of ghosts dwell on the Lower Astral Plane. Most ghosts only spend a short time—if any—on the Lower Astral before they evaporate and the person's soul moves on to its eternal reward, but Earth's vast population ensures a steady supply of new ghosts. A few ghosts endure for decades or even centuries.

Dreamers

People may stray onto the Lower Astral in their dreams; in fact, dreamers are as common as ghosts. Usually, dreamers stay in a layer of the Lower Astral called the Dreamzone, where their private visions take form, but once in a while dreamers stray off the Dreamzone to the general Lower Astral without realizing it, and no one knows why.

Dreamers can also enter the Lower Astral through dreams that are so common they've achieved a certain independent existence and created places in the general Astral Plane. Common nightmares are one example: the millions of people who have dreamed of being chased through an empty house by monsters, for instance, have created the location called the Spooky Empty House, which can act as a portal from the Dreamzone to the rest of the Astral Plane.

Finally, people who die while they're dreaming may endure as ghosts. Some move from the Dreamzone to the general Astral, while others stay on the Dreamzone, caught in infinite dreams.

Imaginary People

Many of the imaginary locations come with imaginary people to complete the scene. To use the examples below, the Spooky Empty House has its elusive monsters, and Puerto Muerto has a complete population of imaginary fishermen, sailors and tradesmen. Most of these imaginary people are just ordinary people except that they never really die. They fill their roles, and that's it.

Atavisms

Whenever humans experience strong, visceral emotions such as rage, pain, ecstasy or terror, they create a grotesque little spirit on the Lower Astral. These creatures are called atavisms or (confusingly) elementals. Atavisms might evaporate in a few days, or hang around for centuries. Although most atavisms are not actually evil, they embody raw emotions and drives which most "white" magicians prefer to keep restrained. Much of "Black Magic" consists of the deliberate creation and control of atavisms for evil ends.

Visitors From Other Planes

Spirits from Elysium and the Netherworld may enter the Lower Astral to observe human affairs and prompt good or evil thoughts. Rare astral travelers from other dimensions may visit. Not all are friendly. Some are astral predators.

Travel On The Astral Plane

"Distance" doesn't have the same meaning on the Astral Plane as it does on Earth. Places can be "near" or "far" based on how similar they are. To an experienced astral voyager, it's a shorter trip from the grain fields of Kansas to the grain fields of Ukraine than to the mountains of Colorado. Astral Colorado, in turn, is not too far from Astral Chile or Astral Switzerland—they are all lands of high, rugged mountains.

Mundane Travel

A traveler on the Lower Astral can follow Earthly geography using their normal movement abilities. All the freeways, roadsigns and cities echo onto the Lower Astral. That, however, is the slow way to travel, and one is limited to sections of the Lower Astral that mimic real locations on Earth. Many of the most interesting parts of the Astral Plane are purely imaginary and don't correspond to any specific place on Earth.

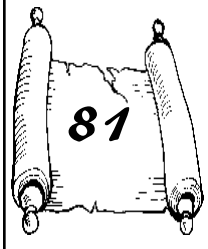
Fast Travel Shortcuts

To bypass normal geography, or reach imaginary locations such as the High School Where You're Naked, it is only necessary to think about the desired location as strongly as possible, and keep moving. It doesn't matter whether one walks, flies or rides an astral train. Eventually one will arrive. How quickly the scenery shifts depends on one's mental discipline (i.e. EGO) and experience. One might also have to pass through several other zones of the Lower Astral, which might not be very pleasant.

How long a "shortcut" journey takes cannot be precisely defined. A trip between similar locations takes less time than a trip between very different locations. Familiar locations are quicker and easier to reach than a location one knows little about. If two people separately travel between two locations, the person with the higher EGO score arrives first—everything else being equal. If one person's EGO is at least 5 points greater, that person arrives much sooner. On the other hand, if people travel in a group, they all travel at the rate set by the person with the highest EGO.

One can buy a skill, Astral Navigation, which improves the speed and accuracy of "shortcuts" on the Lower Astral. Someone who makes an Astral Navigation skill roll can automatically beat anyone who didn't.

While it would be possible to create some table or formula relating travel time to target location familiarity and similarity, EGO and Astral Navigation skill, there's really no need. An astral shortcut doesn't take "23 minutes," it takes "long enough to get boring." Clocks don't work on the Astral Plane. If for some reason it really matters who travels faster, make Astral Navigation rolls for the parties concerned and modify the results according to how well the people know their destinations, their EGOs, how similar the destinations are to the starting points and—let's be honest here—what would make a good story!



Instant Travel

Finally, some spirits and experienced astral voyagers can move anywhere in the Astral Plane at the speed of thought. (In game terms this is FTL Movement. Astral projectors who have EDMed onto the Astral Plane automatically have this power.) The catch is arriving at the right place. One can flash to personally familiar locations with a simple Astral Navigation roll. Less familiar locations may put minuses on the Navigation roll, and may even require that the astral traveler also make a KS: Astral Geography skill roll. Failing a roll means arriving in an undesired and probably unknown location.

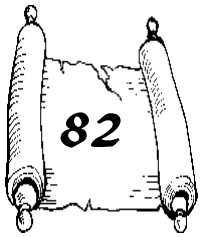
Getting Lost

Getting lost on the Lower Astral usually isn't serious. One simply "shortcuts" back to a familiar location and starts over. Occasionally, however, there are problems.

First, some locations (such as Cysts) are so weird and disorienting that they interfere with one's ability to leave them. Such regions are always disconnected from Earthly geography, so normal movement will not suffice to escape them. "Shortcut" travel and instant travel both require Astral Navigation rolls at hefty minuses to succeed, and one cannot just keep making skill rolls over and over. One must wait a while between attempts, which means one will perforce interact with the new environment.

Exactly how long one must wait is up to the GM, but as a suggestion the character's condition must change and the character must experience a dramatic scene of some sort. At its simplest, this could consist of the character exploring the location and discovering a route back to the normal Astral Plane. Raising the drama level, perhaps the character must experience some emotion or perform some action before they escape. (In such cases, the GM should provide plenty of clues about what the character should do—after all, this is an interruption, not an adventure of its own.)

Some locations may have inhabitants who can help or hinder lost characters. Lost travelers may have to face some danger or gain the help of a local spirit to escape. Strange locations might have equally strange inhabitants. Indeed, some bizarre pockets of the Astral Plane may be intrinsically damaging in physical or mental ways.



The Land Of Legends

"For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new…"

—Robert Browning, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*

The Land of Legends, or Faerie, is the oldest of the Imaginal Realms. Here dwell the nature spirits and the pagan gods, born when people imagined everything in Nature to possess a human will. For millennia before the "ethical religions" pushed the Godhead beyond the sky, every stream and mountain and forest grove had its ruling genius. Greater gods spoke in the crash of thunder and the ocean waves. There was nothing abstract or symbolic about these gods and spirits: they were as real as one's next-door neighbor, and it was a rare person who did not encounter a god, elf or spirit sometime in their life.

Then the Ban fell and slowly pushed the gods and spirits from the world. The Land of Legends pulled away from the Earth and became a recognizable world of its own. That was when the "legends" actually became legendary.

The Land of Legends remains partly open to Earth. Spontaneous nexus points from wilderness areas still cast the occasional human into Faerie, or let an elf or satyr visit its former haunts for a time. Nexi become rarer every century as humanity cuts down the forests, plows the land, delves the earth and wraps the world in concrete, asphalt and steel. A glamour has passed from a world no longer sacred. But now the Ban is crumbling. Ancient powers wake, eager to reclaim their emperies, unwilling to sleep again…

Geography

There I suck the liquid air,
All amid the garden fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing around the golden tree.

—John Milton, *Comus*

Of all the Parterres, the Land of Legends most resembles Earth. It has all the natural features of earthly landscapes: forests, seas, meadows, deserts, mountains and all the rest. Nexus points always lead from an Earth location to a very similar region of the Land of Legends. One might be in Faerie for hours without knowing it! The Land of Legends, however, is a "good bits" version of the Earth. Large, homogeneous, boring regions such as oceans, deserts or steppes are compressed in the Land of Legends. There's nothing the size of the Atlantic Ocean, Sahara Desert or American Great Plains. Any distinct region in the Land of legends can be crossed in a day or two by boat or horseback. The Land of Legends' geography does not make sense on

the large scale. Landscapes flow into each other in impossible ways: mountain into swamp, jungle into desert. Different regions can even have different seasons.

Connections between regions aren't consistent, either. For instance, suppose two travelers set out from the same location in the Land of Legends. One traveler goes 100 miles north then 100 miles east, while another traveler goes 100 miles east and then 100 miles north. They will not arrive at the same place! Connections between regions can even change, depending on the time of day or the weather.

The Land of Legends does, however, have a structure on the largest scale. It is flat, not a sphere. The sky is a dome of unbreakable blue glass during the day, star-spangled black glass at night; the Sun and Moon move along their tracks by hooks hanging from the dome.

Just as it has a top, the Land of Legends also has a bottom: it rests on the back of an immensely, impossibly huge dragon, the Dragon, chained there until the end of the world. Beneath the Dragon is Chaos—the Astral Plane.

Landscape Elements

Certain elements occur again and again in Faerie landscapes. The most wondrous, unearthly regions are set on islands, mountains or underground. Of course there are no cities, but spectacular, fairy-tale castles are not uncommon. These might be made of gold, or perch on clouds or pillars, or spin like tops. Fountains, jewels, caves and gardens with miraculous trees or flowers are very traditional as well.

Most of the Land of Legends is more beautiful than the average wilderness on Earth. Most regions seem caught in perpetual spring or early summer, with lots of flowers. The exceptions are correspondingly more ugly and frightening: nightmare forests of twisted, dead trees and deathly fungi, for instance, or wastelands inhabited only by lurking, slinking abominations.

Pantheon Realms

Most of Faerie is held in common by the lesser spirits, particularly the elven-folk. Pockets of the Land of Legends are held by old (and not-so-old) "pagan" pantheons such as the Greco-Roman, Celtic, Yoruba or Shinto gods. Historically, the pantheons kept to themselves and kept the borders of their regions closed. In recent centuries, however, the pantheons have communicated more. Even if humans have stopped believing in some of them, they can believe in each other and live off the immense reserve of stored belief that is the Land of Legends itself.

Sample Regions

The Onyx Kingdom

A cave in the Dragon Mountains leads through miles of passages to a huge cavern hung with gigantic stalactites. Equally huge stalagmites squat about the cavern floor. All the cavern, however, is of black onyx. Dim light comes from huge jewels hanging from the stalactites on silver chains. The largest stalagmites bear delicately carved little onyx palaces on their tops. This is the Onyx Kingdom, principality of the svartalf Clan Ectol, and the original home of Vilsimbra the Dark Elf (see the Devil's Advocates in Creatures of the Night: Horror Enemies).

Clan Ectol is divided into six great Houses, each with its own palace. The Prince of the First House is nominal ruler of the Onyx Kingdom, but he is really just the first among equals; he has no real power over the Princes of the other houses. The Dark Elves devote their immortal lives to endless, tangled intrigues for prestige. Mortal visitors will inevitably get swept into these plots and counter-plots. The svartalfar might also enslave unwary humans.

Wondrous Islands

The seas of Faerie have many islands. Traditionally, islands are "otherworldly" places, so Faerie's islands tend to be quite strange. A few have useful or dangerous features or inhabitants; most are just colorful bits of scenery to pass by. For instance:

- Island girdled with cliffs of dark rock veined with gold.

  On top is a dense forest of wild shrubbery and gloomy cypresses. In the center is a natural-looking fountain of water perfumed with a bittersweet scent (myrrh). This is the Water of Death which repairs any damage a corpse may have suffered, but which is infallibly fatal to the living when imbibed. It also acts as a 15d6 Dispel against magic when sprinkled on something or someone.

- Tiny island raised over 500' high on a huge silver pillar.

  On top is a little silver palace surrounded by a belt of flowering herbs and trees. Nothing lives on the island but bees and small golden birds.

- Island surrounded by spike-topped brass palisade carrying a brass fishnet.

  The wind in the net makes a menacing hum. The island is covered with dark firs bearing cones of deep bronzy glass. A grim brass tower is intermittently visible through the trees. The only visible inhabitants are large black birds that attack anyone who crosses the palisade, but someone unfriendly lives in the tower.

For further inspiration, see accounts of the voyages of Maeldun, St. Brendan or Sinbad the Sailor (classical), or *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C. S. Lewis (modern).

The Even Wilder West

Even the supernatural world of the Native Americans has been invaded by the white man. The legendary of the Old West grew while the Old West still existed, and it hasn't faded with time. A flood of dime novels and movies created a surge of old-style mythic belief which grounded in the Land of Legends. The Native American sections of Faerie swelled.

The first new inhabitants were the Native Americans themselves. In some cases, the Ghost Dance actually worked. Hundreds of Native Americans magicked themselves to the Land of Legends, where the buffalo still roamed and the white men hadn't come. As the myth of the West grew, however, the Land of Legends insisted on players to fill all roles. Nexus points sucked in cowboys, homesteaders, outlaws and anyone else convenient. Within a few decades, the Even Wilder West took shape: a blend of the Happy Hunting Grounds, Western movie clichés and generic Fairyland.

The land itself encourages Caucasian visitors to act like cowboys, sheriffs, outlaws, schoolmarms and other classic roles, even to supplying clothing and other necessary props through outrageous coincidence. Visitors and residents interact with Native American tribes, but also with Native American-styled elves, gods, spirits and monsters. The whites have guns (which hardly ever need reloading); the Native Americans have magic and the friendship of the supernatural powers. They're quite evenly matched.

Inhabitants

And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?

—John Milton, *Comus*

The inhabitants of the land of Legends are, of course, tremendously varied. Most of the various races live all mixed together now, without regard to their mythology of origin. One might encounter North European elves, Greek satyrs, the Russian Baba Yaga and Japanese tengu all in the same forest. Fortunately, in Faerie everybody (including visitors) speaks the same language. The inhabitants can be grouped into six general categories.

Fairy Folk

Fairies are not unique to northern Europe. Similar humanoid beings occur in mythologies around the world, such as the Peris of Persian legend or the Nunnihe of the Cherokee. In Europe alone, the fairy-folk had many names: Elf, Sidhe, Sith, Tylwyth Teg, Fay/Fee, and so on.

Although some traditions divide the elves into "good" and "bad" tribes, such as the Peris and Deevs (Persia) or the Seelie and Unseelie Courts (Scotland), none of the elves can be considered truly "good" in a human sense. Some races of elves simply aren't actively hostile to man. The fairies of the Land of Legends are not the bright and noble elves of Tolkein: the careless immortals of folklore are all capricious, deceptive and dangerous. They can be amazingly generous when it suits them, but they are just as likely to wreck a mortal's life for sport. Remember, they were called the Fair Folk or the Good People out of fear, in hopes this would prevent their anger.

The dominant races of elves look very much like regular humans, although in European legend at least they have finer features and sometimes pointed ears and slanted eyes. They live in forests, grottoes or in palaces under hills. Variant races live in other environments. Undines (also called nixies), for instance, live in lakes or beneath the sea; the sinister svartalfar, the Dark Elves, live in caverns deep underground and fear the Sun. For more information on elves, see their description in the Source book.

The various sorts of fairies do not count as spirits. They can be truly killed by normal attacks, not just dispelled. Since they have no souls, the price they pay for immortality, they will take death as seriously as any human—once it's staring them in the face.

True Nature Spirits

Besides the faerie-folk, who vaguely represent the powers of Nature in general, the Land of Legends also holds creatures which are clearly spirits personifying particular natural phenomena. Dryads, for instance, are the spirits of the trees, with magic powers over vegetation. Air-spirit Sylphs dwell in the clouds. Naiads live in rivers, lakes and fountains.

The nature spirits are not terribly powerful overall, but they can have great magical control over their own home. They are even flightier than the elves; few of them can keep their minds on one topic for more than a minute.

Mythological Races

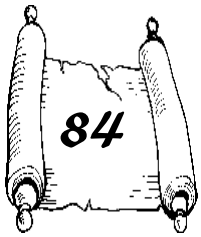
Many cultures have legends of monsters and intelligent but distinctly nonhuman races. They are flesh and blood, like humans, rather than spirits. Some of these races have magical powers, others do not. All of them live in the Land of Legends.

Listing all the mythological monsters possible would take a small book in itself. The *HERO System Bestiary* makes a good starting place.

Gods

Not every godling or tribal spirit survives. A god has to be believed in by tens of thousands of people at a time, for hundreds of years, before it coalesces out of the Astral Plane and takes up residence in the Land of Legends. (The gods of small tribes are usually just atavisms, or are held in common by many tribes under different names.) What's more, there must be real worship; minor gods invented just because someone thought there ought to be a god of something don't count. (The Greek poet Hesiod, for instance, lists numerous "conceptual entity" gods in his account of the world's creation: Moros [god of doom], Hypnos [god of sleep], and so on. None of them were actually worshipped, so none of them became real.)

Some pantheons are far more powerful than others. The old European and Middle Eastern gods are just scrimping by, after 2000 years of Christianity and Islam, while still-worshipped pantheons such as the Japanese and West African gods are quite powerful and active.



The different cultural pantheons don't like each other, any more than different human cultures like each other, but the common threat posed by the "ethical religions" has prompted an indefinite truce between most pantheons. The unprecedented contact between pantheons has resulted in inter-cultural amours, and even a few children—new godlings unknown to mythology (but they'd better become known if they want to survive long).

Talking Animals

The Land of Legends includes populations of most of Earth's wildlife—at least, of all the species people cared about. (Microbes and a few zillion species of insects and other tiny creepy-crawlies might be missing, leaving an ecology that only works because it's supernatural, but who'll notice?) Some of these animals can talk or have even more remarkable powers. Talking animals are one of the most common features of fairy tales and legends. Usually they help the hero, in return for some favor the hero has done for them. Talking animals are seldom powerful enough to fight PCs; that's not what they are for. They are advisors, wish-granters and givers of gifts, not another notch on the belt.

Humans

The Ban between Earth and the Land of Legends isn't perfect. Humans still slip into Fairyland now and then, and not all of them get out again. The Land of Legends has ways of dealing with them.

Some humans are allowed to live in the Land of Legends. They must find roles for themselves suitable for a myth or fairy tale. The Land accepts humans who become hermits, consorts to faerie lords or ladies, peddlers, knights, poor but honest woodcutters and the like. (Or in the Even Wilder West, humans who assume classic Western roles.) A human who finds a place among the mythic races—with the satyrs, centaurs, gnomes or tengu, for instance—will change into a member of that race in just a few days.

A human who refuses any sort of assimilation will eventually be caught by the elves and placed in an enclave with other stubborn humans. This little village of exiles is located in the Sullen Country, a drab moor under perpetual overcast skies, completely surrounded by treacherous, viper-infested bogs. As long as the exiles don't try to leave, the faerie-folk let them farm in peace. Theirs is a hard life, with the dubious compensation of immortality.

Special Conditions

The Land of Legends itself has certain special properties which further distinguish it from Earth. Most of them cannot be represented in game terms, or at least it would not be practical.

Flexible Time

The passage of time in the Land of Legends has little relation to time on Earth. A person can spend months in Faerie, yet return to Earth mere hours after they left—or one can return from a night's revels in Faerie and find that decades have passed on Earth. Usually, however, the difference between Earth time and Faerie time is not so extreme (in game terms, only 1 step difference on the Time Chart either way, or less).

Time isn't even consistent between the various regions of the Land of Legends. What seems like a day to one visitor can seem like a week or an hour to someone else. Time only stays consistent within a group of visitors: if anyone gets separated from the group, time might go funny for them.

GMs should not impose severe time differentials arbitrarily or often. Minor time differentials simply emphasize that the heroes really have gone "beyond the fields we know," The threat of more severe time distortion helps keep a group of heroes together in the Land of Legends: characters will think twice about striking off on their own if they know that they could come back a day later and find that the rest of the group gave them up for lost and returned to Earth weeks ago. On the other hand, if one hero gets separated from the group by circumstances beyond their control, a time differential can give mind-blowing effects. The separated PC might have their own adventure lasting weeks or even years (narrated in summary by the GM), then encounter the other PCs again and find that they've only been gone a few minutes! In short, time differentials should be used to enhance a story, not just to make the PCs' lives more difficult.

Some of the faerie lords and gods can control the time differential. For instance, if King Oberon feels really pleased with something the heroes have done, he might make their two-week quest through Faerie only have taken two hours on Earth. Conversely, if the PCs visit an elf-mound and give offense, their host might make their night in Faerie last a century on Earth—but only if the GM wants to do a time-travel adventure.

Life Support vs. Aging

Most inhabitants of the Land of Legends stay one age forever. Human visitors gain a similar benefit in most parts of the Land of Legends; the homelands of defunct pantheons may have lost their aura of immortality. As usual with Faerie, however, immortality is a mixed blessing.

First, humans dwelling in the Land of Legends cannot have children. Any children who enter the Land of Legends will stay children forever, like Peter Pan. Gods or elf-lords can suspend this effect if they choose, at least long enough for a child to be born or grow up.

Second, aging is sometimes merely deferred, not avoided completely. On returning to Earth, sometimes one gains back lost aging—based on the passage of time on Earth rather than Faerie. If this amounts to decades, coming home can be a considerable shock, as Rip Van Winkle found out! Like the time differential itself, this effect seems totally beyond human control, but stays consistent within a group of visitors; and likewise, most big shots in the Land of Legends can con-

trol the return of lost aging, if they so choose. Legends speak of Faerie lords and ladies storing the deferred aging in a small box which they give to a returning mortal, with instructions never to open it. Unfortunately, the human never gets an explanation of why the box should stay closed—so eventually someone opens it, and the person instantly grows old.

Fixed Paths

The Land of Legends tries to ramrod visitors into its ancient story motifs, and sometimes it isn't at all subtle. A danger foreshadowed becomes a danger unavoidable: if the PCs learn that the route to their goal holds certain hazards, the Land might not let them bypass those hazards. This happens most often at doorways, tunnels and other passages between one place or another, where a normal person's movement would be constricted. For instance, if one must face a monster to get through a mountain pass, it's no good trying to fly, teleport or tunnel past the monster. The pass just goes on forever, and when the PCs eventually stop there's the monster again, waiting to ask its riddle, demand its tribute or issue its challenge to fight.

Curses

Any permanent resident in the Land of Legends can put a curse on anyone who deeply wrongs them. Typical situations when a curse can be laid include: a dying person, on their killer (if they didn't die in a fair fight); a host, against a treacherous guest; a guest, against a treacherous host; a parent, against an ungrateful child; or on oneself, as a penalty if one breaks an oath. There can even be a "whoever" curse, linked to a place or item, such as the curse Alberich put on the Rhinegold when Wotan robbed him of it. A person must have a genuine grievance for a curse to work, such as murder, theft, or betrayal of trust. Merely disliking someone is not enough.

A proper, Legendary Curse cannot really be represented in terms of game mechanics because its effects are so complex and far-reaching. If one absolutely must represent a Legendary Curse as an attack, it is a Transform: Person to Cursed Person. Since this power can only be used in the Land of Legends, however, it can be left as a plot device. (The curse's effects, however, can hound a person through the Multiverse.)

A Legendary Curse does not involve any sort of direct attack. Instead it manipulates future events to the victim's detriment. Curses can wait for years to act. There's no way to avoid a curse: the very actions one takes to block a curse will probably set in motion the events which bring one's destruction.

On the other hand, the curser has no control over the curse either, except to annul it. Legendary Curses often have side effects the curser really didn't want, making the curse a hollow vengeance. A classic case forms the plot of the Iliad. The Greek leader Agamemnon offends Achilles by claiming as his prize a girl whom Achilles had captured. Achilles not only drops out of the siege of Troy, he asks his mother (a goddess) to make the Greeks lose battles. Once Agamemnon apologizes, Achilles will re-join the war and the gods can favor the Greeks again. The curse works: the Greeks suffer a crushing defeat and Agamemnon grovels…but Achilles' best friend Patroclus dies in the battle.

A Legendary Curse can be lifted in three ways. First, the person who set the curse can revoke it. Second, a few extremely powerful persons can lift some curses. In Faerie, Oberon and Titania or the pantheon heads have this power. Outside Faerie, most cosmic entities can lift a curse. Some curses, backed by mighty artifacts or special oaths, are beyond any power in Faerie. (Wotan, for instance, couldn't do a thing against Alberich's curse, which was backed by the power of the Rhinegold.) Anyone who can break a curse will require a very strong motivation to do so…which brings in the third method, of atonement. Performing some difficult and/or dangerous task might break a curse, by showing one's sincere contrition. Some curses might come equipped with atonement loopholes: "Henceforth, you will suffer [fill in the torment] until you [fill in the task]." In other cases, a work of atonement might persuade some powerful entity that one is worth saving from the curse.

Legendary Curses should be used sparingly, but they should be used. First, curses are a threat to prevent PCs from charging through the Land of Legends as if it were a shooting gallery or a monster-filled dungeon crawl. One good curse from an elf they beat up or robbed should convince most PCs to mind their manners in the future. Second, a Legendary Curse can drive an adventure, even when the PCs aren't the target. A really big curse can start wars, manipulate kingdoms, propagate through generations and drag in the gods themselves.

Adventure Use

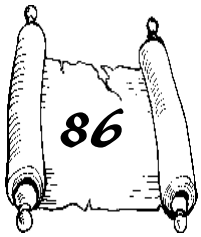
The Land of Legends can easily become an important part of a campaign, since it gives a GM all of mythology and folklore to work with. These suggestions can only scratch the surface of the possibilities.

Origins: Gods and other mythical creatures can come from the Land of Legends, whether as PCs, NPCs or monsters.

Quests: A quest through the Land of Legends can make an uncommonly memorable adventure. The goal of the quest is less important than the striking characters the PCs meet along the way: tricky elvish nobles, helpful talking animals, pagan gods, wicked witches in gingerbread houses…

Tricky Tests: This motif can be worked into other plots. Myths and fairy tales are full of contests where things are not as they seem—perhaps because one's opponent is disguised through illusion, or because of some danger one was not warned about.

Resources: The Land of Legends contains many things of use to sorcerers, or other heroes and villains for that matter. Chief among these are the inhabitants themselves. If a recipe for a magic potion or ritual calls for



dragon scales or centaur blood, one must go to the Land of Legends. What's more, some of the Land's inhabitants know much that is hidden, or have special magic powers: the trick is getting them to help. Powerful magic items may be tucked away in remote parts of Faerie as well. Finally, the Land may hold natural resources difficult if not impossible to find on Earth, such as blue roses or mythical minerals like the toadstone.

Confronting The Dragon: The ongoing threat of the Dragon will eventually lead to a face-to-face meeting on the underside of Faerie. Heroes might try forcing or tricking information from the Dragon (fat chance), or they might have to keep the Dragon's servants from breaking its chains.

The Netherworld

My object all sublime
I shall achieve in time:
To let the punishment fit the crime,
The punishment fit the crime!

—Gilbert & Sullivan, *The Mikado*

The Netherworld is the Imaginal Realm built from human ideas of evil. Here dwell the demons, incarnations of hate, fear, rage and all other negative emotions, in a chaotic landscape as hostile as themselves. The Netherworld isn't just Hell: it is every Hell ever imagined, mashed together.

Geography

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe…

—John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

The Netherworld has no consistent, large-scale geography. It can seem completely different from visit to visit. Particular regions are locally stable, but the connections between them are fluid. Large sections of the Netherworld might even seem to follow some overall plan, but different visitors can find completely different geographies. On one visit, heroes might land in the nine descending circles of Dante's Inferno. On a return visit, they might find the city of Pandemonium from Milton's Paradise Lost instead. If one travels long enough, though, any Hell can be found eventually.

Landscape Elements

The Netherworld's landscape varies widely, but it is all unpleasant, composed of elements that people find ugly or frightening. There's lots of traditional fire, smoke, lava and barren stone. Every place in the Netherworld is dimly lit and the air reeks. Other traditional features for Netherworld scenery include: sandy desert; glaciers and plains of ice; pits and trenches; swamps; rivers and lakes of fire, boiling blood, pitch, slime or icy black water; garbage and offal; dark, trackless forests; reptiles; insects, worms and maggots; vicious beasts.

Cultural Hells

The Netherworld isn't limited to Judeo-Christian-Islamic ideas of Hell. A Hindu visitor will arrive in that religion's demon-realm of Naraka. A Taoist encounters the Chinese Hells. Even the Greek Hell of Tartarus and the Norse Hell of Niflheim might be encountered, although since those pantheons are no longer actively worshipped it is unlikely that anyone would appear in them spontaneously. In fact, no matter what Hell one appears in, it's possible to enter other cultures' Hells—for instance, to descend a crack in the plain of ice at the bottom of Dante's Inferno and end up in Niflheim.

Demon Lord Fiefdoms

The more powerful demon lords might shape stable, personal demesnes according to their tastes. Here they torment the souls of former pacters and people whose ruling passion put them in the demon's jurisdiction. The tortures of the damned often show a certain rough justice…or at least they would if they were not infinite punishment for finite crimes.

Personal Hells

Finally, the Netherworld also tucks in very personal Hells. Everyone has "personal demons"—private fears, feelings of guilt and situations they dread facing. A visitor to the Netherworld might turn a corner and step into their private Hell. Personal Hells need not be confined to a single location: they can take the form of a subplot or a sequence of characters threaded through other sections of the Netherworld.

GMs should design a "personal Hell" scene for at least one character on any adventure to harrow the Netherworld, using the character's personality and history as a guide. Encountering a personal Hell might be no more than a jab at a character's Psychological Limitations, or it might put a hero in deadly peril. Here, for instance, are the private Hells the Champions might encounter:

Defender gets attacked through his need to uphold the family name. He meets his heroic father, grandfather and great-grandfather, chained and tormented, and learns that they weren't so heroic after all as his ancestors confess their crimes. The first James Harmon cheated the native Africans to establish the family fortune. James II took bribes and misused his police power. James III took the victorious soldier's ancient "privilege" of having his way with the local girls. Each of them fell from virtue only once, but their moment of selfishness and hypocrisy was enough to land them in Hell. There's a fourth set of chains ready for Defender.

Jaguar fears losing control to the Beast's fury. His private Hell is a meeting with his bestial half—his family curse given independent existence—amid the bodies of everyone who has ever died because of him.

The corpses get up and attack, and only Jaguar can hurt them. He has to knowingly, deliberately kill them all again, as his vicious double cheers him on.

Obsidian can count himself lucky not to have a personal Hell: as an alien, humanity's Netherworld has no claim on him. On the other hand, the demon lords may make a special effort to destroy him because they fear his alien-ness.

Quantum's anger is fueled by her feelings of guilt at living while so many of her friends and family died. On a raid into a demon's fortress, she finds a (phony) "dimensional viewer" that lets her see and talk to her dead parents. They revile her for letting them die when she had the power to save them.

Seeker, the carefree swashbuckler in pursuit of Enlightenment, still has a hook for the Netherworld: his vanity. His teacher Mr. Edo appears to accuse him of seeking nothing but glory and girls, that his honor and heroism come from self-serving pride rather than genuine altruism. The phony Mr. Edo magically strips Seeker of his brawn and horribly scars his face. Then Seeker gets a nasty confrontation that challenges him to defend someone who dislikes him from deadly peril. If he can show selfless courage despite weakness and ingratitude, he beats his private Hell and gets his strength and looks back.

Solitaire has trouble with moral ambiguity. She always wants to "do the right thing," and fears she might make a mistake. She discovers that the Senator she refused to kill really was evil, a servant of the demons assigned to destroy America from within—and his plans are nearly complete.

Of course, everything the heroes hear and see in their private Hells is a lie: Defender's ancestors, Jaguar's vengeful victims, Quantum's parents, Seeker's teacher Mr. Edo and the rest are demons in disguise or illusions, and they're lying their heads off. One seldom finds truth in the Netherworld!

Sample Regions

The War Zone

Baphomet, Lord of Wrath, receives the souls of people whose lives were dominated by anger and violence. He has shaped his demesne into a patchwork of battlefields from humanity's dirtiest wars: the jungles of Vietnam, the alleys of Beirut, the trenches of Gallipoli and so on. Here the damned fight and refight their wars for eternity, against each other and against the gangs of thugs and brigands who reveled in brutality. Superhero visitors to Baphomet's war zone will certainly meet a few deceased supervillains—and maybe a former hero or two.

Mount Mulciber

Mulciber, Hell's greatest smith and artificer, keeps a very small demesne: a barren, black volcano in whose cavern-riddled depths he keeps his forges and workshops. Since very few people are drawn into evil by passion for craftsmanship, most damned souls in Mulciber's forge will be there because Mulciber bought them from another demon lord. They aren't there to work as slaves, Mulciber bought them to use as raw materials. He does his best work in soul-alloyed metal.

The Labyrinth of Greed

The Lord of Avarice, Lucifuge Rofocale, has a spectacular demesne of twisting, jewel-studded caverns. The caverns are constantly shrouded in magical darkness, however, for Lucifuge Rofocale is so greedy that he can't stand the thought of anyone but him even looking at his possessions. Here avarice demons oversee chain gangs of pirates, con men, industrial robber barons, petty thieves, bankers and princes—all people whose lives were ruled by greed, slaving for eternity among unseen riches.

Niflheim

Niflheim was the Norse Hell, the destiny of those who had died "straw deaths" as cowards. (The Prose Edda says this included all men who died of sickness or old age, but other epics tell of men who died peacefully yet achieved Valhalla.) The mistress of Niflheim was Hela, daughter of Loki, who was normal flesh-color on one side of her body and blue-black on the other.

Niflheim is a dark land wreathed in icy fog. The fortress-hall of Hela is named Sleet-Cold; its threshold, Falling-To-Destruction; her dish, Hunger; her knife, Famine; her servant, Idler; her maid, Sloven; her bed, Disease and her bed-cover Unhappiness. The hall is guarded by a giant dog called Garm, whose breast is sprinkled with blood.

Niflheim also included a special hall, however, for the very worst sinners, set apart on Nastrand, the Strand of the Dead. As the Prose Edda explains, "It is all woven of serpent-backs like a wattle-house; and all the snake-heads turn into the house and blow venom, so that along the hall run rivers of venom; and they who have broken oaths, and murderers, wade those rivers."

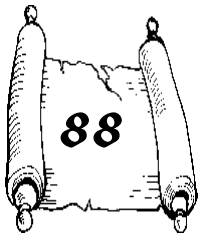
Inhabitants

We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime…

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*

Demons

The dominant inhabitants of the Netherworld, of course, are the demons. One can get a lot of gaming mileage from demons based on Judeo-Christian-Islamic mythology (such as the sample demons from *Creatures Of The Night: Horror Enemies*), but a little research in mythology and folklore can turn up fascinating demons from other cultures, such as Hindu Rakshasas or the plague-causing Maskim from Mesopotamian myth. The gods of evil or death from defunct mythologies might stay active as demon lords.



In fact, famous demons like Beelzebub and Astaroth started as the gods of nations competing with the ancient Hebrews (most notably the Phoenicians and Syrians.)

Demonic Animals

In some parts of the Netherworld, the demons receive assistance from animals. Many demon lords ride some sort of beast: examples of demon steeds from the grimoires include horses, wolves and crocodiles. Infernal "hell hounds" are also quite traditional. Dragons, vipers and other vicious beasts also help the demons torment their charges.

Damned Souls

The other chief inhabitants of the Netherworld are damned human souls. The damned usually look just as they did at their time of death, aside from any damage inflicted on them. Depending on what section of the Netherworld they are in and what punishment they receive, the damned might be naked, dressed in tattered clothes they wore in life, or something more exotic: in Dante's *Inferno,* religious hypocrites had to walk in immensely heavy cowled robes of gilded lead. In some cases, the damned might be altered in strange and horrible ways, such as in the Wood of the Suicides (Dante again), where the damned were turned into bleeding, speaking trees.

Special Conditions

Indestructible Spirits

None of the Netherworld's inhabitants can truly die or lose consciousness no matter how they are tortured or mutilated, because they are already dead. Conditions which would spell death for a living person (sufficient negative BODY) only incapacitates a damned soul. Given time, it will regenerate. (1 BODY/turn Regeneration is enough.) Likewise, negative STUN simply means that a damned soul cannot do anything. It remains aware of what happens around it, or to it, as if it were continually Stunned. This lets the demons do truly horrible things to their charges…and the damned stay conscious through it all.

On their home turf, demons share these immunities; they can't even be dispelled. Once incapacitated, however, demons or the damned can be truly destroyed by special means. Being eaten is one method; demons feed upon damned souls, and the more refined demon lords have their own version of gourmet cooking (as described by C. S. Lewis in *Screwtape Proposes a Toast*). Lesser demons who fail in their assignments may end up on the dinner table as well.

Some kinds of magic might permanently destroy a soul or spirit. These should be fairly exotic attacks, such as AVLD Killing Attacks or Adjustment Powers. An AVLD Killing Attack vs. Mental Defense, Penetrating BODY Drains or a strong enough Dispel once a demon or soul is incapacitated by BODY loss might be enough. Avarice demons Transform the damned into metal and stone, then break them up for raw materials for their craftsmanship; this is pretty final, too.

Any method chosen to kill a Netherworld inhabitant should be somewhat difficult. Christian theologians call Hell "the Second Death." Delivering a third and ultimate death to a spirit should be a momentous event that might have serious consequences, not to be done lightly.

Environment Control

The highest ranks of devildom, the true Arch-Devils and Demon Kings, have special power over their personal demesnes which is not reflected in their write-ups. This is really a power of the demesne itself, to respond to its master's desires. While such responsiveness is hard to quantify, some guidelines can be given. In most cases, exact numbers aren't necessary.

None of these environment control effects cost any END. They are plot devices.

Change Environment

First, the demesne's master can produce any non-damaging environmental condition which is even remotely appropriate for its territory. This will cover as much of the demesne as the demon wants. Typical effects include greater light, gloom, wind, rain, heat, cold or odors.

Topographic Control

The demon king can change its demesne's landscape at will, creating or destroying hills, valleys, rivers, gorges and other landforms. Again, by itself this can't be used as an attack, although it may be used as the Special Effect of an attack (see below). Changing the landscape can still cause inconvenience, though; for instance, a demon king might fracture the land with a network of canyons to hinder someone who tries escaping on foot.

Illusions

A demon king can create wide-area, virtually undetectable illusions in its demesne. Illusions are used to deceive intruders about where they are, who they face and what sort of danger they are in. Any combat automatically breaks the illusion. Illusions are especially popular with the subtler sort of archdevil, who would rather trick and seduce the heroes.

Limited Omniscience

The master of a Netherworld demesne can have great awareness of local events. The demon king effectively has Clairsentience with all its senses, enabling it to look anywhere in its demesne that it pleases. The demon king can also Mind Link with any of its demon minions at will. Fortunately for heroes, archdevils don't spend all their time spying on their fiefdoms—only if they have reason to suspect a threat, or once in a while just to keep their minions paranoid.

Environmental Attacks

Finally, features of the environment can be evoked and controlled as attacks. In a volcanic demesne, for instance, the demon king can create small eruptions

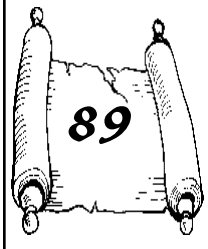
Sample Torments Of The Damned

In the unlikely event that a GM lacks a suitably sadistic, perverted imagination, here are some typical punishments for the damned to suffer. All are taken from that excellent guide to the Netherworld, the Inferno of Dante Alighieri. Some of the sins Dante saw on his trip through Hell may seem quaint nowadays, but manic cruelty never goes out of style.

THE LUSTFUL are blown about like leaves in perpetual storms. HOARDERS AND WASTERS, natural enemies, spend eternity trying to smash each other by rolling huge rocks around. HERETICS are sealed into tombs of red-hot iron. MURDERERS wade through a river of boiling blood. Centaur archers on the banks prevent them from getting out. FLATTERERS march through excrement.

SIMONISTS—people who sell holy offices—are stuck head-first in pits, with flames on the soles of their feet. FORTUNETELLERS are forced to march with their heads twisted backwards; nevermore will they see where they're going. SOWERS OF DISCORD get sliced up by demons, over and over.

TRAITORS are frozen into a lake of ice.



(RKA Explosions) and streams of lava (RKA with Linear Area of Effect). In a swamp, belts of quicksand (Area Entangle with Limitations) can be laid down and the plant life animated to clutch and strangle (Nonselective Area TK).

The Active Point cost of such environment-based attacks should be about the same as the Active Point costs of the demon king's main attack powers…except that the following Power Advantages are available for free: Continuous, Uncontrolled, and Indirect.

Although Range Modifiers shouldn't count, the OCV for long-distance environmental attacks should be quite low: it's no fun to have characters exterminated by an enemy they never even see. Environmental attacks should also come with fair warning, such as a small earth tremor and wisps of smoke before a volcanic eruption, or a light sprinkling of acid rain a Turn or so before it becomes a deadly downpour. Environmental attacks are to weaken and hinder heroes, not kill them outright, and to demonstrate how powerful a demon lord is on its home ground.

Once the heroes face the demesne's master directly, though, this gentlemanly code is suspended. A demon lord can use its environmental attacks simultaneously with its personal attacks—remember, it's the demesne itself that's attacking, not the demon—and will use them to maximum effect in combat. No, doubling the demon king's attack capability is not in the least bit fair to the players. But what sort of idiot expects fair play in Hell?

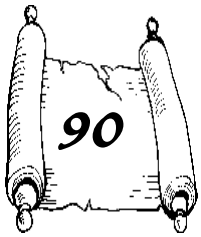
Adventure Use

Heroes can find many reasons to harrow Hell. In fact, a trip to Hell is practically obligatory for heroes in mythology. While modern heroes (mage or otherwise) might simply be stranded in the Netherworld by accident and have to escape, usually heroes go to Hell deliberately.

One classic plot is the rescue from Hell: a demon lord or evil god holds a hero's DNPC captive, and the hero goes to free them.

Legends about heroes who go to Hell to get something they need are pretty common too. A demon lord might own an artifact the PCs need, or one of the damned might have knowledge the heroes can't get any other way.

Finally, a demon lord's plot to wreak havoc on Earth might lead the heroes to a personal confrontation in the Netherworld. Heroes should be warned, though, that attacking a high-ranking demon lord in its own fortress is extraordinarily dangerous. Foolhardy, even. And in the Netherworld, there really are fates worse than death.



Elysium

The heaven of hogs is a sublimated hog-wallow.
—Clark Ashton Smith, *Pertinence and Impertinence*

Elysium is the Imaginal Realm formed from human ideals of Goodness; more specifically, the ideals set by the so-called "ethical" religions. Since the most widespread moral doctrines define "goodness" chiefly in terms of obedience to some authority, Elysium tends to reflect Order more than anything else. Certainly, the most aggressive, activist dwellers in Elysium tend to be rigidly authoritarian. They are "good," by the standards of the cultures and religions which created them. That does not necessarily make them gentle, merciful or in other ways "nice." The Great Powers of Elysium have plans for humanity, and those plans take little regard for individuals.

Elysium began forming in the Astral Plane in the 6th century BC. This century saw a remarkable wave of religious reformers, prophets and mystics. In China, Lao-Tzu revealed the mystic vision of Taoism and Kung Fu-Tzu (Confucius) proposed a more worldly philosophy of good conduct and social contracts. In India, Siddhartha Gautama became the Buddha—the Enlightened One—and set forth a path of inner peace and transcendence. Vardhamana, founder of Jainism, preached the doctrine of total nonviolence and reverence for all life. In Persia, Zarathustra (Zoroaster) proclaimed the duty of every person to choose the right side in the eternal war of Good and Evil. The Jews in Palestine were reforming the Torah after their captivity in Babylon. In Greece, philosophers like Thales and Pythagoras laid the foundations of rational inquiry and humanism.

All these thinkers rejected the capricious, all-too-human gods of their time as irrelevant or even nonexistent. They created new moralities, based on higher laws than mere tribal custom and the whims of fickle gods. Their new Laws were meant for all people and all circumstances. New beliefs created new spirits and new spirit-realms which gradually pulled away from the Land of Legends even as the Land of Legends pulled away from the Earth.

Geography

Elysium is the most difficult of the Shadow Realms to reach from the Astral Plane. Without an invitation or a total religious commitment, attempts to reach Elysium by Extra-Dimensional Movement take -5 on the Dimensional Navigation rolls.

It's not easy to go from one section of Elysium to another. In the other Parterres, connections between regions are easy and visible: it's just a matter of traveling the right path. In Elysium, however, the regions have not yet grown together. To pass from one region to another, one must locate hidden nexus points, or have Extra-Dimensional Movement powers. As a general rule, The Judeo-Christian-Islamic Heavens have pretty good access to each other (even if they won't

admit it), and the Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist Heavens have very good connections (and are even willing to admit each other's existence), but the Heavens of the Eastern and Western religions have no contact between them.

On the other hand, Elysium also has nexus connections to the other Imaginal Realms—even its enemy, the Netherworld. Nexus points to the Netherworld and Babylon are carefully guarded, but the zones of the Eastern religions maintain strong, even promiscuous, connections to regions within the Land of Legends. Taoism, for instance, is only half an ethical religion: popular Taoism is inextricably tied to older animistic beliefs in gods, nature-spirits and ancestor-worship. Chinese sections of the Land of Legends, for instance, are ruled from the Celestial Emperor's court in Elysium.

Landscape Elements

If human ideas about Paradise are fuzzy, they are also quite repetitive. Gardens and palaces are the most common environments. Even when Paradise features mountains and forests, they are stylized, well-behaved mountains and forests, with terraces and pavilions from which one can enjoy the view.

All the lesser symbols of ease and pleasure show up over and over in Elysium, too. Palaces, fountains and even trees are made of silver and gold. Jewels appear as gravel in streambeds, or the pavement of halls. Fruit trees and flowers abound. The blessed wear clothes of costly fabrics and dine on the finest food and drink, but no one has to do laundry or go to the bathroom.

The regions where the Great Powers themselves dwell, however, go for grandeur instead of luxury. Here the scenery runs to mammoth temple-palaces of gold, marble and jewels, with rivers of fire, blinding light and hosts of spirits singing praises.

Religious Heavens

Most regions derive from the Heavens or Paradises envisioned by a particular religion. Here are the luxurious Seven Heavens of Islam, the paradisiacal island of P'eng-lai from Chinese mythology, and many more: popular Taoism and Buddhism have dozens of Heavens. Since human ideas of Paradise are often quite fuzzy, many regions in Elysium merely echo general ideas of what a Heaven should be, without following specific myths too closely.

The most isolated bloc of Elysian regions are the Jewish, Christian and Muslim demesnes. There is some communication between regions since the three religions share their God (even if they disagree on his message). The Judeo-Christian-Islamic spirits, however, refuse to even admit the existence of the other Heavens. In fact, the angels are under orders not to tell the blessed of each religion that people of the other two religions made it in. The Eastern bloc spirits (Buddhism, higher Taoism and higher Hinduism) think this is funny.

Ironically, the region which gives Elysium its name is small and isolated from the rest of the dimension. Elysium was the Paradise envisioned late in the history of Greek religion, when Pythagoras and other mystics created an ethical religion on a mixture of Greek, Middle Eastern and even Hindu ideas. Pythagoreanism lasted until at least the 2nd century AD, but the triumph of Christianity stifled it.

Popular Heavens

Several of the Heavens in Elysium, however, were never formally defined by dogma. They are the Paradises of popular imagination. Here, for instance, is the Heaven of folk Christianity, all fluffy white clouds and harp music. Specialized Heavens for particular occupations fall into this category too, such as Gourmet Heaven (all dining room), Fiddlers' Green (a place with great fishing, good sailing and a fine port town is where all sea-faring men dream of going) and Doctor's Heaven (a golf course).

Sample Regions

The Heavenly Jerusalem

"It had a great, high wall, with twelve gate, and at the gates twelve angels…The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel…and the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass…And the city had no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb." (Revelations 21:12-23)

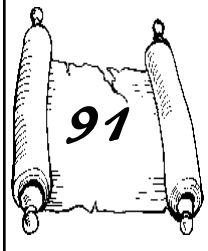
The Garden of Eden

"And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east…And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."—Genesis 2:8-9.

Four rivers spring from the hill where the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge grow. There is no rain, but a mist periodically rises from the ground to water the plants. All kinds of animals dwell in the Garden, except the accursed serpent.

Eden is somewhat unusual among paradise-gardens in that it is relatively natural: the trees and plants may bear flowers and fruit continuously, and the animals are all vegetarians, but the plants are still just plants and the animals are just animals: they aren't made of gold or anything like that. Even the Trees of Knowledge and Life look like regular fruit trees.

Although Eden is connected to other Jewish, Christian and Muslim Heavens, access is forbidden. Eden has angelic guards with flaming swords at its access points with orders not to let any human enter for any reason.



The Palace of God

In the mystical Book of Enoch, the pre-diluvial patriarch is carried in a vision to Heaven and God's own palace. He described it thus:

"I came near a wall built of crystals and surrounded by tongues of fire…I went into the tongues of fire and came near a large house built of hailstone crystals. The walls of the house were like a tesselated floor of crystals, its floor also was crystal. Its ceiling was the path of stars and lightning. Between them were fiery cherubim…A fire surrounded the walls and its portals blazed…There was a second house, greater than the former…its floor was fire, and above it stars and lightning. Its ceiling also was fire. And I looked and saw a lofty throne. Its appearance was transparent hailstone, its wheels like the sun, and then the sight of the cherubim. From underneath the throne came streams of fire so that I could not look directly at it. The great Glory sat there. His raiment shone more brightly than the sun and was whiter than snow…" (1 Enoch)

Pop Heaven

This is the Christian Heaven as popularized in countless movies, cartoons and TV commercials: fields of puffy clouds inhabited by white-robed men and women (all Caucasian—so far, mass culture hasn't let Pop Heaven get racially integrated) with white wings and tinsel haloes. Some of them have little harps. Pop Heaven is entered through a gate of golden filigree, with St. Peter (or at least someone who says he's St. Peter) as gatekeeper, with a book listing who's due to arrive.

Janna

"Janna" ("Garden") was the name given to the Heaven of Islam. The Koran describes it thus:

"This is the similitude of Paradise which the god-fearing have been promised; therein are rivers of water unstaling, rivers of milk unchanging in flavor, and rivers of wine—a delight to the drinkers, rivers, too, of honey purified; and therein for them is every fruit, and forgiveness from their Lord." (Sura 47:16)

Other stanzas mention the houris, the beautiful, dark-eyed and perpetually virginal maidens who wait to pleasure the faithful Muslim man when he wants a change from drinking water, milk, honey and the wine that was forbidden to him in life. Unfortunately, the Koran does not mention any corresponding rewards for faithful Muslim women.

P'eng-Lai Shan

These three islands form the Eastern Paradise of popular Taoism. Here life is all ease and pleasure. The houses are of gold and silver, and the trees bear coral and pearls. The birds and animals are white. They drink, like the inhabitants, from the Fountain of Life. The flowers constantly scent the breeze with delicious perfumes, and their seeds make whoever eats them immortal. P'eng-lai's most famous inhabitants are a group of deathless sages called the Eight Immortals.

Legends claimed that P'eng-lai was hard to reach even for an Earthly paradise. The water around the islands had no buoyancy, so ships would sink; they could only be reached by magic. Actually, P'eng-lai was never on Earth at all, but it's still true that no one can sail or swim in the waters around these blessed isles.

Amitabha

Amitabha is only the most notable of the Buddha-land Heavens. Amitabha features avenues of trees decorated with jewels, lotus ponds, birds which sing in tune with spirit musicians, perfumed air and jewels strewn like gravel. It is inhabited by Buddhas, Boddhisattvas ("saints"), angelic spirits and minor gods.

Buddhism is notable among religions in that its Heavens are not places for permanent residence after death. They are merely pleasant way stations between incarnations for advanced souls. The real goal of Buddhism is nirvana—dissolving the self into the Cosmic Mind which is the only true reality.

Rock Candy Mountain

"Oh, the buzzing of the bees in the peppermint trees, and the soda-water fountain…" The modern version of the garden of luxury, as envisaged by a hobo, features candy growing on trees and other tasty surprises. No supernatural powers have yet claimed Rock Candy Mountain. It's a thoroughly pagan bit of Paradise where a fellow can loaf to his heart's content, and even tease the ineffectual, wooden-legged cops and the dogs with rubber teeth. Of course, it gets dreadfully boring after a while, but that could be said of most of the Heavens ever described.

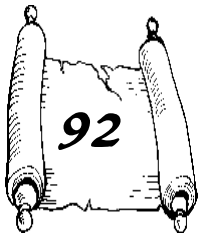
Inhabitants

The inhabitants of Elysium are not as diverse as those of Earth's other Shadow Planes, but they include some of the most powerful of spirits. The gods of Elysium are actively worshipped by millions of people, so they have abundant magical energy to share with their subordinates.

Some of the Elysian spirits have roles in more than one religion. The Archangel Gabriel, for instance, is an important figure in both Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Gabriel must keep hopping between demesnes and pretend in each one that the other demesnes don't exist because their religion is false.

Angelic Spirits

Each of the ethical religions has its own classes of servitor spirits. In the Judeo-Christian-Islamic complex, these are angels. The amschaspands and yazatas of Zoroastrianism are very similar. Hinduism and Buddhism share the devas. Popular Taoism has assorted fairies and genies called shen. Confucianism has no spirits of its own, but advises followers to revere their ancestors and the gods of Taoism, because they are part of tradition.



The angels are currently the most active and militant of the Elysian spirits (and certainly the spirits most familiar to most readers of this book). Note, however, that few angels are warm-and-fuzzy benefactors of mankind. Only the Angels of Mercy fit that modern, watered-down conception. Older lore insists that angels punish as often as they reward or assist…

Blessed Souls

The souls of notably good, or at least notably religious people can go to Elysium when they die, just as evil souls go to the Netherworld. It may be noted that Elysium's population is considerably smaller than that of the Netherworld.

Saints And Sages

The mightiest among the blessed are the saints. Their "god" delegates power to them; some have magic powers of their own, developed before their death; some even receive significant worship on their own. The term "saint" here refers not just to Christian saints, but also to the Hebrew prophets such as Elijah and Isaiah, Muslim imams and Sufi mullahs, great Hindu gurus and yogins, Buddhist bodhisattvas and Taoist and Confucian sages. Even a few secular people whose virtues brought them reverence have become saints in Elysium, including rare, saintly wizards such as Apollonius of Tyana.

The great holiness of the "saints" in life has let them stay more or less active after death as helpers of humanity in their various ways. Since the Ban affects the spirits of Elysium too, saints seldom get to help people on Earth in direct and spectacular ways, but they may give advice through visions to susceptible humans. Having been mortal themselves once, saints have more sympathy for the problems of ordinary people.

Gods And Demigods

This is the touchiest area for players and GMs. The "gods" of the various religions dwell in Elysium: Jehovah/Allah and numerous Chinese gods such as Shang-Ti the Celestial Emperor, as well as deified founders of religions such as Jesus, the Buddha and Lao-Tzu. These are the ones who tell the angelic spirits what to do and bear the responsibility for their actions.

It should be noted that the gods have the power and personalities ascribed to them by popular belief, not official doctrine. Whatever the theologians say about their god's infinite power, perfect wisdom and total goodness, most people still regard their god as a big daddy in the sky who will give them a spanking if they upset him but can be bribed or finessed. The gods of Elysium are not all-knowing, and they do make mistakes. Some of them even have temper tantrums.

These gods are rather more powerful than the "pagan" gods of the Land of Legends, even the pagan gods which still receive worship. Fighting these guys directly is seldom a good idea, even when it's possible. The "power" gods popularly conceived as monarchs (Jehovah/Jesus/Allah, Shang-Ti, Ahura Mazda) have power on the order of Dr. Destroyer, and aren't afraid to use it. The "wisdom" gods (the Buddha, Lao-Tzu, Confucius) have just as much power, but most of it is dedicated to defense, evasion and knowledge. The Buddha, for instance, is a total pacifist who is almost impossible to harm or restrain in any way. This makes the "wisdom" gods more unstoppable than the "power" gods—except the "wisdom" gods are less activist and more willing to listen to reason.

In most cases, the gods can be treated as plot devices with mouths: they talk (and talk, and talk) and give the occasional display of mind-numbing power, but heroes and villains will do most of their interacting with the saints and angelic spirits.

Special Conditions

Indestructible Spirits

Like the demons and the damned of the Netherworld, the blessed spirits of Elysium cannot be destroyed by any normal means. "Death" on other planes just dispels them back to Elysium and "death" in Elysium itself just forces a temporary discorporation; they will re-form eventually. Certain terrible magic spells can bring true death to an Elysian—but if giving the final death to one of the damned is a thing not done lightly, think how portentous it would be to kill one of the blessed!

Immortality

In all the districts of Elysium, there is no sickness or death (at least, no natural death). While in Elysium, mortals become immortal: all diseases are healed and aging stops for the duration of the visit. It's quite easy to become permanently immortal (i.e. get Life Support vs. Disease and Aging), if one of the Great Powers concurs; stealing immortality is more difficult and one can make powerful enemies that way. In fact, some districts of Elysium contain items which will cure disease and prolong life even if taken to Earth, such as the Peaches of Immortality from Chinese mythology.

Environment Control

Just as the chief powers of the Netherworld can control the environment or their personal demesnes, the Great Powers of Elysium can manipulate the Heavens under their control. (See the Netherworld description for details.)

Adventure Use

Allies and Patrons. With all the enemies the heroes have, one would think they'd like a few powerful friends. Elysium would seem to offer such allies. Actually, Elysium offers fewer friends than PCs might expect.

First, the Great Powers of Elysium are not especially cordial. The "wisdom" gods are reluctant to offer anything but advice. The "power" gods insist on absolute obedience. Both types may insist that characters prove themselves worthy of any help at all, and they have very high standards.

Second, even though the ethical religions which created the Ban also created Elysium, the Elysians themselves are still affected by the Ban. When the ethical religions pushed Godhood off the Earth into the Great Beyond, all the gods were banned from massive, direct intervention on Earth—even the gods and spirits created by the ethical religions themselves. Just like the demons or the gods of pagan myth, the Elysians can only appear on Earth through great effort or with the help of an Earthly sorcerer.

Finally, misery on Earth is not necessarily bad for Elysium. Secularism is as great an enemy to the gods of Elysium as any of the evil powers of the Netherworld. Religion—all religion—flourishes in times of trouble. As long as a menace doesn't directly threaten to reduce their worship, Elysium's Great Powers don't care.

Limited Favors and Resources. Even if the PCs don't want a permanent alliance with one of the Great Powers of Elysium, they may still seek a favor on some special circumstance. The Elysian spirits do have great power, which they might be persuaded to use on a character's behalf. There are two catches: the Elysians may demand that PCs prove themselves worthy of help, and they will certainly insist on some favor in return.

Desperate characters (player or NPC) may try to steal some sort of help from Elysium. For instance, a person with a Significant Other dying of cancer, AIDS or the like might try getting an all-curing apple from the Tree of Life in Eden. This would lead to conflict with Elysian spirits, either in Elysium or on Earth afterward.

Elysian Enemies. Since the religions which created Elysium do not all tolerate each other, neither do the Elysian powers. Religious conflicts on Earth may get supernatural intervention. Wars create civilian casualties. Heroes who try to stop a "Holy War" may find themselves fighting against Elysian spirits. After that, they may be put on one of the Great Powers' hit lists.

What's more, as mentioned above, Elysians are not infallible. They may be deceived, deluded or misguided, or just in the wrong place at the wrong time. (See "Lahatiel," in the Enemies section of the Source book, for an example.)

Babylon: The City Of Man

The catalogue of forms is endless; until every shape has found its city, new cities will continue to be born.

—Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Babylon is the fourth of the great astral realms: the reflection of Art onto the Astral Plane, completing the Great Quaternion. Once it was tiny, but as the human race has multiplied and bound the Earth in railroads, highways and cities, Babylon has exploded in size and power. It is still smaller and less mighty than the Land of Legends, Elysium or the Netherworld, but it is only a matter of time before it eclipses the Land of Legends.

Mystics say that the lords of Elysium and the Netherworld view Babylon's rise with both hope and fear. Babylon tips the ancient balance of power. An alliance with Babylon could give either realm a final victory…or Babylon might gain the power to conquer both and make Man truly the measure of all things.

Among humans, the principle of Artifice finds its greatest expression in cities, and so Babylon is the ultimate city. It echoes all the great cities of the past and present, real and imagined; perhaps even the cities to come. Mere size is not enough. A city must have radiated its image into men's thoughts, so that it became a thing of symbol as much as of wood and stone and steel. The London of Queen Victoria is more real than the London of today—at least in Babylon. Hiroshima, whose famous cherry groves serenely bloom a short walk from humanity's most terrible feat of destruction, echoes in Babylon more powerfully than does Osaka, a sprawling megalopolis which exists only because it is useful.

Thus Babylon is like every great city on Earth, only more so. Its skyscrapers tower impossibly high. Its freeways are wider than football fields; its back alleys form a cramped and tangled maze. It is built on a bay, a river, a crossroads and an oasis. Like Rome and San Francisco, it has seven hills. In its malls and department stores and arcades and bazaars one can buy anything possible to human art or fancy—but some things cost more than money.

What most worries the Powers and Principalities of the other astral realms is that Babylon is, above all, the realm of secular ambition. Power, money and skill rule affairs in Babylon. True, the world's great religions have ordained cities as their hearts: Jerusalem, Rome, Mecca, Benares. Babylon holds many a temple, cathedral and mosque. But the cities have found so much more to occupy men's minds; so many ways to distract people from religion. St. Augustine advised Christians to renounce the City of Man for the City of God. As fewer and fewer people take his advice, Babylon grows. When humanity realizes it can build a new Heaven and new Earth all by itself, what will happen to the gods?

Geography

I behold Babylon in the opening streets of London…

—William Blake, *Jerusalem*

One can journey to Babylon directly from other planes, or approach it from the Astral Plane. From the Astral Plane, Babylon seems quite small, a tightly-bounded blur of towers. Once one enters the city gates, however, Babylon explodes outwards to the horizon in every direction and one is in the city center. From the inside, in fact, Babylon doesn't seem to have an outside: whichever way one goes, one just finds more city, and eventually one comes back to where one began. Many of the main streets seem to go straight but actually form closed loops. It is possible to find the city gates again and leave for the Astral Plane, but one must know the proper route.

Babylon has many districts, each with its own character. The districts interpenetrate, appearing and disappearing like overlaid mirages. A short walk down an alley can take one from Victorian London to ancient Alexandria. A flight of steps might connect imperial Beijing to a Middle Eastern bazaar or a modern mall. Somewhere in Babylon—it's not shown on any map—there's a subway leading to the city of Pandemonium in the Netherworld, and an elevator that can reach Heaven.

And speaking of maps: guides to the mazy, shifting streets of Babylon are sold throughout the city, but interpreting the maps is a task fit for an Einstein. New visitors are advised to get expert help, such as a cabby (unlike New York, Babylon's cabbies sometimes speak English) or a street urchin.

Historical Districts

Some districts mimic the great cities of the past and present, from ancient Athens to modern Los Angeles. Some of the oldest districts are starting to fade, though; only fragments remain of cities from more than 2000 years ago.

Imaginary Districts

Babylon also contains hints and fragments of imaginary cities such as the Emerald City of Oz or the sky-piercing spires of the traditional science-fiction city, complete with monorails and helicopter pads. These districts are usually only seen in the distance; it's quite difficult to actually reach them. (Every city has its districts where "you can't get there from here.")

Abstract Districts

Finally, some districts are based on abstract, stripped-down aspects of cities. Imagine a neighborhood where only the plumbing of the buildings stands, or a huge, tangled cloverleaf where it's always rush hour and the traffic is always jammed, or a district entirely composed of funeral parlors and tombs.

Sample Districts

Futuropolis

This is the classic sci-fi movie city, complete with mile-high, Art Deco skyscrapers and aircars flitting about. Everyone is Caucasian and wears a silver jumpsuit. Fins make buildings, vehicles and machines look aseptically high-tech, in a quaint and clunky sort of way. There's no sign of plant or animal life, wild or domesticated.

Paradise City

This district is still under construction. In fact, it always will be under construction. It is meant to be the perfect, Utopian city. The people constructing it, however, are never satisfied. Buildings and streets get demolished as fast as they are built, to make way for something better, so nothing ever gets finished. While they work at this unending task, the people live in tents and shacks of scrap lumber, canvas and trash.

Byzantium

This is the central, administrative district of Babylon, where Artifice shows itself most beautifully. Byzantium features broad streets and plazas lined with stately public buildings and villas in Greco-Roman style: lots of white marble, columns, domes, mosaic floors and carved friezes. Even the apartment buildings, shops and taverns on the district's fringe show a crisp, quiet dignity. Besides government, the chief industries of Byzantium are architectural and ornamental. Byzantium has plenty of stonecutters, mosaic-layers, gardeners, goldsmiths, potters and painters. One looks in vain for knackers, rat-catchers or sewer-cleaners.

In the middle of Byzantium stands the palace compound of the Emperor. (The Emperor has no name; he's just "The Emperor.") The vast, labyrinthine palace compound includes gardens, barracks and a huge throne room with a vaulted roof of dark blue lapis lazuli set with jeweled constellations. Absolutely everything in the palace is beautiful, or at least not ugly. The palace contains enough Greek statues, Ming vases, Japanese scroll-paintings, jeweled Faberge knickknacks and Persian carpets to pay off the debts of every nation on Earth. Whole businesses in Byzantium work full-time creating more objets-d'art to divert the Emperor and his court.

In some ways, the Imperial Palace is a microcosm of Babylon, just like Babylon is a microcosm of Earth. The Palace extends into several districts of Babylon, where it takes the form of celebrated buildings from history and legend. In the Old China district, the Palace takes the form of the Forbidden City. In Classical Athens, the Palace is entered through a copy of the Parthenon. From Victorian London, the Palace can be entered through the Tower of London.

The Library

The Library of Babylon is one of the more incredible repositories of knowledge in the Multiverse. It has copies of nearly every book or magazine ever formally published on Earth, and a lot that weren't.

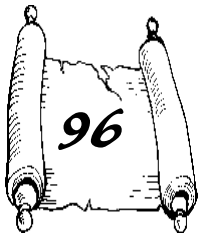
The Library's acquisitions program even extends to books that don't yet exist, and might never exist. One room in the Library's basement is so large it is virtually a dimension of its own. It holds millions of automated printing presses churning out every book that could ever be written. For centuries, the presses simply printed pages of random letters, on the theory that eventually they would print out everything. Naturally. most of what the presses produced was meaningless. In 1973, however, Archimago gave the Library an entropy spirit able to sift meaningful information out of random processes; the spirit makes sure that the presses only print syntactically meaningful statements—real words in real languages, not gibberish. In return for this, the Library's staff put their entire resources at Archimago's disposal; that's how he learned how to destroy universes and many other dreadful secrets of magic.

Archimago's gift has vastly accelerated the Library's program, although they still have the problem of finding out what stuff is actually true (the spirit knows nothing but grammar; it can't sort truth from falsehood).

A borrower's card for the Library of Babylon is a 1 point Fringe Benefit. This lets one use the Library's reference services at a low level. Effectively, the Library has an 11- rating in every conceivable Knowledge Skill. A privileged membership, which raises the Library's knowledge rating to 13-, costs 5 points. Reference searches take hours to days, at GM's whim—no benefit for extra time—for low-priority users, or up to an hour for high-priority users. No PC can start as a high-priority user; this Fringe Benefit is only granted by the Library in return for a bequest as magnificent as Archimago's entropy spirit.

The Rookeries

The name comes from Victorian London, but most major cities have had these noxious, violent, crowded slums. Babylon's Rookeries are the worst of all. The slab-like public housing high-rises of concrete jostle smaller tenements of decaying red brick. Streets and alleys between buildings have been roofed over and divided into rooms. Shanties perch on the rooftops and improvised bridges, tunnels and ladders connect the various structures. The chief industry is crime. The people see all intruders as targets for robbery and murder. If a criminal escapes into the Rookeries, nothing short of magic can locate him or drag him out again.



Inhabitants

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enameling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake…

—William Butler Yeats, *Sailing to Byzantium*

Humans

Most of the inhabitants of Babylon are just ordinary humans, gathered from all the great urban civilizations. While most Babylonians live with their own kind in their own districts, they travel through the city freely. Walking down a street in Babylon, one might see a Chinese rickshaw dodge an elephant bearing a sumptuous Indian howdah, a Medieval bishop arguing theology with a Greek philosopher, pinstriped Chicago mobsters eyeing Los Angeles Bloods strutting in their colors, a French courtier dripping with lace and jewels, Victorian streetwalkers and merchants of Timbuktu. Many people are difficult to place; tradesmen, laborers, petty crooks and street vendors look pretty much the same in all ages. Every native of Babylon speaks at least three languages fluently. This usually includes English (currently the world's most popular language).

Conurbites

This magical race is analogous to the elves of the Land of Legends. The Conurbites live TV-commercial lives of glamour and conspicuous consumption. They look mostly human; some of them have "cyborg" machine parts, and their skin has a plastic sheen. Like the faerie-folk, they have innate powers. Conurbite powers usually deal with controlling or reshaping matter. Each also has a special attack form based on an appliance, such as "morphing" a hand into an electric carving knife (HKA) or a super-powerful blow dryer (EB with Double Knockback). The Conurbite race is very new, and hasn't found its final form yet.

Pop Icons

People, real or imagined, can materialize in Babylon if enough people think about them. John F. Kennedy and Elvis live in Babylon. So do Bugs Bunny and Ronald McDonald. Watch out for Jack the Ripper: Babylon's version is as lethal and unstoppable as people have imagined Jack to be, making him far nastier than the real Jack ever was.

The Emperor

The Emperor of Babylon might be human, but then again he might not. Nobody knows what the Emperor looks like, because he always goes masked or in disguise. The Emperor often moves about Babylon in-

cognito. He is reputed to be an extremely powerful magician or spirit; this would explain how he manages to balance the many competing factions of Babylon and keep the city from self-destructing. The common people often simply call the Emperor "The Man"—authority without a face.

Living Machines

Everybody treats the machines in their lives as though they had thought and will—so in Babylon, some of them do. Earthly cities have problems with packs of stray dogs. Babylon has problems with packs of stray cars.

Living Art

Babylon also has the occasional living statue, store mannequin or gargoyle. Even if they can't move, they can talk. Talking paintings are pretty common, too. In Babylon, anything which counterfeits the human form tends to come to life.

Really Weird Things

Finally, Babylon is starting to generate strange creatures worthy of the wildest urban legends. More than one hook-handed serial killer stalks Babylon's streets. One really doesn't want to meet the mutant alligators in Babylon's sewers, or the elementals of smog and toxic waste. This is final proof, if any were needed, that Babylon has come of age as a dimension: it has started generating places, creatures and images of its own, instead of merely copying things directly from human imagination.

Special Conditions

Town air makes you free.

—Holy Roman Empire law

Aside from its geographic peculiarities, the dimension of Babylon has only one physical special conditions that could affect play. In many ways it is the most Earth-like and "human" of the Parterres. Most of Babylon's "special conditions" are social.

Long-Distance Scanning

Babylon's twisted, interwoven, many-folded space has implications for any attempt to locate things at a distance (as by Mind Scanning or Telescopic Enhanced Senses). On the one hand, for purposes of scanning nothing in Babylon is more than 1 kilometer (500 hexes) away: after that, range modifiers stop. On the other hand, it is impossible to register the direction of anything more than 100 meters (50 hexes) away. A scan beyond this range will register a shimmer of readings from all directions, appearing and disappearing. Babylon is a great place for hiding.

Money

All forms of currency, from all periods in history, are accepted in Babylon, at least in the banks. (One may have trouble finding a shop that accepts stone-disk money from Yap, but the banks can handle it.) It's quite possible to pay for something in florins and receive change in a mixture of dollars and denarii. None of the money in Babylon, however, is quite like any on Earth. Archaic money has the problem that it is new: a numismatist might pronounce it a fair copy of an old coin, but worthless except for the metal it contains. Paper money, especially contemporary paper money, isn't even a convincing fake. A Babylon dollar, for instance, looks like "Monopoly" money. (And maybe it is: a lot of people play that game.)

Real-world money, however, can be spent in Babylon. In fact, it's worth more in Babylon than on Earth—about ten times as much! The Babylon government, however, frowns on people tossing real-world money around freely. Any honest citizen will direct visitors from Earth to the nearest bank, where they can exchange their cash or (in modern districts) withdraw money from their Earthly checking accounts in Babylon currency. Dishonest citizens will accept the Earth money, but lie about how much it's worth.

Why is real-world money so valuable? Because money is concentrated secular power, that's why—a talisman carrying the power of the State, and that's big magic. The Netherworld takes power from damned souls; Babylon takes power from money, and as more real-world money lodges in Babylon, the city becomes more real and draws closer to Earth.

Secret Societies

Politics in Babylon gets bizarre. The diverse population holds no consensus about how the city should be run. To make things worse, beings on other dimensions—demons, gods and dimension lords—lobby and conspire for influence.

The result is a plethora of scheming secret societies. A major fraction of Babylon's population belongs to one society or another. The leaders of the societies are often wizards or Servants of Higher Powers of some sort. Fortunately, the Emperor has personally infiltrated most of the societies. Here are a few of the largest conspiracies:

The Shadow Cabinet

The Shadow Cabinet serves the cause of Order. It seeks to take over the government of Babylon and create a regimented society, as prelude to taking over the Earth itself. The Shadow Cabinet can call on limited help from Elysium, but serves Urizen the Prime Avatar of Order before all others. Many rich and powerful people in Babylon belong to the Shadow Cabinet. The supreme leaders, however, are all Servants of Higher Powers working for various Lords of Order such as Bromion. They offer members group solidarity and protection, a religious experience of the Great Unity and the promise of power and influence in the New Society.

The Shadow Cabinet controls an array of spirits with strange powers and even stranger appearances, such as the War Pigs, large hogs with self-working machine guns mounted on their backs; the Futures Traders, two-faced men in suits who talk backwards and forwards and remember the future as well as the past; and the Young Pioneers, truculent boys in coonskin caps, armed with oversized hatchets and paralyzing squirt guns.

The Fool's Parliament

This conspiracy is the chief enemy of the Shadow Cabinet. Its leader have pacts with various Lords of Chaos and promote radical freedom through a program which outsiders describe as "political surrealism" but which the leaders describe as "Jell-O wrestling with penguins." Order-lovers often deride individuality and impulse as foolish. The Parliamentarians reply that if freedom is folly, they are glad to be fools—and dress the part, too.

Membership in the Fool's Parliament does offer practical benefits. It can act as a labor union of sorts, helping workers deal with management injustice or financial problems. Those who want it can find a pietistic religious experience with a Lord of Chaos. Some people join for a chance to strike back at society, or for a chance to wear a silly outfit. A few people even join for serious philosophical reasons.

The greatest weapon of the Fool's Parliament is Carnival. By declaring Carnival, the FP can paralyze whole districts of Babylon as revelry draws people from work to jam the streets. Carnival can force business leaders to take the FP's demands seriously. The FP can also cause or provoke sabotage, walkouts and other labor actions. Against politicians, they prefer weirder methods such as dream control and guerrilla home redecoration.

The Fool's Parliament controls its own strange creatures and agents, such as the insidious Men In Plaid with their hypnotic googly-eye glasses and INT-Draining ninny hammers.

Red Gold Society

This secret society flourishes in most of the Chinese districts in Babylon: Imperial Beijing, Pulp-Era Shanghai, Modern Hong Kong and Chinatown. The lone exception is Mao Industrial Park, representing modern Communist China, and the Red Gold Society is working hard to make inroads there, too. The Red Gold Society is both a cult and a political conspiracy, with a triple purpose. First, it fights Communist influence in Babylon. Second, it seeks Chinese domination of Babylon (and eventually Earth as well). Finally, it promotes traditional Chinese culture and religion.

Most of the Society's leaders are sorcerers and priests of the Chinese gods. These leaders often have public lives as businessmen, bureaucrats or aristocrats, although a few (like The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu) stay hidden at all times. The remaining leaders are Chinese gods themselves: either they pretend to be human or stay behind the scenes (except during worship services) as "silent partners." No cosmic entities are involved in any way.

The Red Gold Society controls or allies with several other Chinese groups such as Tongs and Triads, using street gangs for muscle. Front groups include the Three Rings Triad, the Black Phoenix Tong, and gangs like the Blue Turbans, the Tiger Fists and the Jade Daggers. The Society, however, has no monopoly on Chinese organized crime in Babylon.

Not all the members and operatives of the Red Gold Society are human. The Society has recruited a variety of Chinese spirits and monsters from the Land of Legends and the Netherworld, including Chinese vampires, goblins and ghosts.

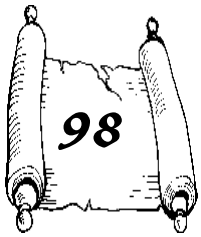
The Red Gold Society has already set up regular contact with Earth. The Jade Empress, an aged alchemist and last daughter of the Manchu dynasty who runs the Silver Scorpion Triad in Hong Kong, has been made a full partner in the Society.

Adventure Use

Look For Someone/Something. Babylon has people with amazing skills. Its merchants can obtain just about anything (if the price is right). Its library infinitely surpasses anything on Earth. Finding an object or consultant in Babylon, however, can be an adventure in itself—especially if someone else doesn't want the PCs to succeed.

Follow A Villain There. Villains can exploit Babylon's resources too. A villain might journey to Babylon to obtain something, or just to hide out. Some villains might even operate out of Babylon; for instance, heroes who clash with the Silver Scorpion Triad might follow the Jade Empress to Babylon.

Meet Famous People—real and imaginary—as long as they are urban. Babylon gives PCs a chance to team up with Sherlock Holmes or superheroes from their favorite comic books. On the other hand, they might have to fight Al Capone's gang or Jack the Ripper.



Miscellaneous Dimensions

Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
Sphere within sphere; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep…

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*

Not all dimensions call for the detailed treatment suggested for the Astral Plane, the Parterres and (in the Source book section) the Congeries. In most cases, just a few locations and important characters will do. The dimensions below are not meant to be important, recurring settings within a campaign. Rather, they are examples to illustrate the sorts of worlds found in the various divisions of the Multiverse. Enough information has been given so that GMs can use them for an adventure or two. If a dimension is a hit with the players, one can develop it further.

Malkuth: Loezen

This ancient world orbits a dying green star that only gives a tenth as much light as earth's sun. A few bright stars are visible even during the day. Only powerful magic, focused on great megaliths, permits life to continue. The megaliths boost the sun's light for miles around them, giving light equal to a heavily overcast day on Earth. The civilized folk of Loezen dwell near the megaliths. Beyond the areas of full effect, the light gradually dims and the land becomes colder and wilder.

Humans, or beings much like humans, are a distinct majority in the civilized regions. There are also human-animal hybrids and intelligences that are wholly alien. About half a million years ago, Loezenian mages began exploring other planes and imported numerous species from them, including some that were sentient. Other things came too, unbidden, subtle forces that the wizards did not detect until it was too late to control or dispel them. One of these caused the sun's decline: a qliphothic entity entered the heart of Loezen's sun and has grown larger for hundreds of millennia, draining away the sun's energy.

About 250,000 years ago, Loezen's mages created the megaliths to delay planetary death and hold back the monsters that had begun appearing. Since the Time of the Blazing Star c. 200,000 years ago, however, the greatest magical knowledge has been lost. Things are slowly decaying. As the emerald sun weakens, and erosion and mischance take their toll, megalith after megalith falls, one every few centuries. The most powerful and evil of the monsters seem to delight in living near failed megaliths, blocking wizards from repairing them. In any case, the wizards of the present age are an uncooperative lot. And so the wild regions grow, and the monsters become bolder and more powerful. By now, some former settlements couldn't be restored even if the monsters were driven off: ancient spells have mixed and decayed there, producing perils to the soul as well as the body.

Among the perils of the wildlands are "They Who Laugh and Leap," degenerate hyena-like humanoids; the Spidertrap Vines, which telepathically lure victims to the deadly heart of their nets of tendrils; "They Who Strike in Storm" and their steeds, the bat-winged "Ones Who Swoop in Silence"; the three-headed Slow Howlers; and the Specter Groves, where bizarre mutilations of the spirit can take place.

Loezen still has many mighty mages. If they would only work together, they might even be able to save their world. Unfortunately, they are all too jealous of their own power and independence to trust each other; Loezen shows the downside of Chaotic individualism. Some of the notable mages are:

ROTAZ TAZORN, the Sacred One, dwells in an underground labyrinth. He's over 100,000 years old; he's spent most of that time in suspended animation in an armored sarcophagus. His mind is still aware and active, however, and his magical helmet-crown lets him use his super-psychic wizardly powers despite his physical impairment. He spends most of his time and energy magically feeding energy into Loezen's sun. He also rules a small community of storm strikers which help guard his labyrinth.

QUEEN CHARSADDA has ruled the city of Olm for the last century. She married Olm's last King, who died soon after. Charsadda has strange powers over life and death: apparently she hasn't aged since she came to Olm, and people killed by her secret police have turned up alive again years later. What's more, for assassins she uses duplicates of the victim's friends or relatives. She owns a mighty Talisman which makes its wearer almost totally invulnerable.

NOROM BARCALDINE, the Prince that Never Was, erased his kingdom of Arzakeen through his rash experimentation with time travel. He himself survives (as a "glitch" in space-time) and he knows a spell that lets him enter and leave the lost land of Arzakeen, despite the fact that now Arzakeen never existed. He managed to save a day of Arzakeen's existence; now Arzakeen lives that day over and over again, and only Norom knows it (just like the movie, *Groundhog Day*). When he tires of Arzakeen, Prince Norom wanders about Loezen. In addition to his general-purpose spells, including some powerful combat spells, Prince Norom knows a lot about time magic. His chief advise to wizards who want to travel in time, however, is simply: don't.

Clearly, Loezen is a doomed world. The ancient wizards actually understood this: the megaliths were intended only as a stopgap measure until they found a way to leave Loezen for another world, which they did through the agency of the Blazing Star. Why some people stayed behind must remain a mystery of human and inhuman nature. An impressive quest for Earthly heroes would be to find a way to save Loezen from its slow doom.

Yesod: Yggdrasil, Realm Of Plant Life

…move along these shades
in gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.

—William Wordsworth, *Nutting*

Yggdrasil is most simply defined as the Astral Plane created by plant consciousness, but this still requires some explanation. Plants have no consciousness in any human sense, but they do have awareness. They react to their environment and to each other. An individual plant's "mental" field is much weaker than a human's, or even an animal's, but there are an awful lot more plants in the world! Yggdrasil, the ash-tree supporting the world in Norse myth, supplies the most popular name for the dimension created by these massed "mental" fields.

Unlike Faerie, which grew from human ideas about Nature, Yggdrasil is truly a realm apart from humanity. A wizard who enters Yggdrasil—physically, astrally or clairvoyantly—finds nothing comprehensible in human terms. There is no sight in Yggdrasil, because plants do not see when they reach toward light. Nor do they hear. There is something like touch in Yggdrasil, and something like taste or smell, since plants react to tissue damage and chemicals, but even these senses register in ways alien to human minds. Just learning to interpret the sensations of Yggdrasil would be the work of years.

Nor is Yggdrasil a friendly plane. Humans who think of the vegetable kingdom as placid and gentle don't know much about plants. Plants compete with each other—as individuals and as species. The trees in a forest strive to overspread each other and claim a greater share of precious light. Different species secrete chemicals to attract or repel insects, or to boost or inhibit another species' growth, a vegetable diplomacy known to every master gardener. Parasitic plants slowly, vampirically feed upon their hosts. The "spirit in the woods" is one of ruthless war.

Yggdrasil reflects this. Human visitors to Yggdrasil may encounter the psychic equivalent of chemical warfare, parasites burrowing into their bodies, and even less comprehensible attacks, all driven by passionless, relentless hunger. Yggdrasil doesn't ignore animal intruders: to it, they are fertilizer that needs to stop moving. Visitors must leave quickly, or go mad—and maybe not leave at all.

Hod: The City-States Of Yong

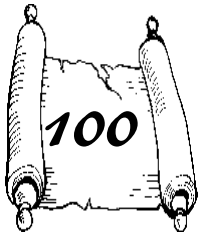
On this plane the largest bodies of matter are no more than a few miles in diameter, although they have surface gravities comparable to Earth. The larger planetoids are inhabited by humanoid beings with catlike eyes, Caucasian skin tones and features (at least in those sections of Yong yet seen), and hair colored black, green, blue or purple, fading to gray or white as they age. Light for these small worlds comes from orbiting rings of yellow-white glowing rocks. Meteor-streams of such rocks occur naturally.

Groups of these planetoids, gravitationally bound in clusters, form the City-States. Each city-state is ruled by an Autocrat elected by a council of the cluster's leading merchants. To cement the election, the new Autocrat receives superhuman powers. The Autocrats are all intense rivals, although the physical nature of the plane makes real war and conquest impractical. Espionage is an accepted part of inter-city relations, and has a code of professional ethics of its own. Most of the Yongese are farmers, but a sizable minority lives in the cities (1/cluster) as tradesmen and artisans. Remote clusters sometimes have trouble from pirates.

The entire plane is filled with air, so transport between planetoids is not difficult, at least not on a small scale. Planetoids within a cluster are only a day or so apart, whereas going between clusters can take up to a month. Of course, Yong doesn't actually have "days" or "months." (Planetoids do have "oscillations" of the rings, which last from 6 to 48 hours.)

Among Yongese, magic is fairly common and accepted as a normal part of life, but isn't used very creatively. Magic flying boats are the second-commonest way of moving between planetoids, after pterodactyl-like beasts. Yongese magic always requires lengthy rituals and is usually used to make magic items. Autocrats gain their powers through a rather dangerous magic ritual, but few are themselves sorcerers. The ritual is kept a great secret, because it strains the fabric of Yong's reality and can have unpredictable side effects. No two Autocrats get exactly the same powers. Physical enhancement and energy projection are common results; mental abilities are less common.

Among the city-states that have been heard of are Yelbock in Pinchwell cluster, Vimpstead in Skartaven, and Pelferlost (cluster and city have the same name). Pelferlost Central's light-ring glows greenish instead of yellow, because of the empowerment ritual being used three times in a single hour.



Netzach: The Millworks Of Bromion

And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

—William Blake, *Milton*

The Millworks is a plane of Order ruled by an Ordainer named Bromion. Most wizards consider it one of the Dominions, in Netzach, because Bromion's control is so total.

The Millworks consists of two interpenetrating spaces. The first space is full of industrial machinery. It's a vast foundry and machine shop full of gears, lathes, furnaces, triphammers and conveyer belts, lit by scattered gas jets and vats of molten metal. The second space is lit by sourceless, clear white light and is mostly empty. Huge silvery spheres ranging from 100' to 200' in diameter hang in the void. Irregular, rounded holes in the spheres give access to the second space. Occasionally a conveyer belt, chain or curving bridge of silver metal reaches between spheres.

The machine-space has normal gravity and lots of catwalks to walk upon. The sphere-space seems to have normal gravity—a fixed "up" and "down"—but a person can walk around in empty space as if there was a floor. (Effectively, everyone's Running is turned into an equal amount of Flight.) If a person wants to move up or down, they merely need to walk up or down an imaginary stairway. If a person stands still for more than a few seconds, a 1 hex disk of silvery metal grows under their feet. Such disks vanish less than a minute after people leave them.

Bromion is not alone in the Millworks. He shares the dimension with a race of bizarre humanoids which tend the machines. These creatures have the legs and head of a horse and a four-armed humanoid torso, but are covered in shiny black chitin and have large compound eyes, like an insect. These workers never tire and obey Bromion without question. They are also completely devoid of original thought: they only do what Bromion tells them, even to the point of letting someone kill them because they haven't been ordered to defend themselves.

Bromion and his workers try to capture all intruders and "reprocess" them in the machines to turn them into loyal slaves of Urizen. This involves melting captives down in special furnaces and casting a new person from the resulting "metal." (In game terms it's a Transform, with rather baroque special effects.)

Tiphereth: The Veil Of The Temple

Through ultimate cycles, as in cycles old,
Phantoms and apparitions manifold,
Shall pass before the spectral eyes of Man
In whom illusion doth itself behold.

—Clark Ashton Smith (Fragment)

Beyond the Middle Astral lies the endless, rippling grayness that is every visitor's first view of the Upper Astral. The Upper Astral is tricky: its substance is almost infinitely responsive to thoughts—so responsive that it externalizes and makes real any hopes, fears or expectations a visitor may have. One can materialize whole phony dimensions from the Upper Astral. On the Upper Astral, all gods and beliefs are true, because the dimension shapes itself to fit.

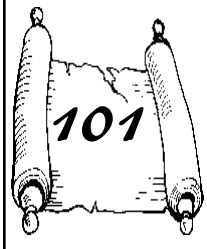
The great challenge of the Upper Astral, in fact, is to stop projecting onto it. The Upper Astral will copy anything. Does the character keep on his guard against attack? The Upper Astral obligingly produces enemies. Does a character seek mystic Enlightenment? God Himself appears to give it…but this God has nothing to say that the character hasn't heard or thought already. Within minutes of one's arrival, the Upper Astral Plane will cocoon one in a pocket dimension.

The Upper Astral Plane is called the Veil of the Temple because it blocks access to the Brialic Planes of pure Spirit. To pass to the realms of the cosmic conceptual entities, the true "gods" of the Multiverse, one must first control one's own mind and stop projecting one's own beliefs and fantasies onto the Upper Astral. Successfully passing the Veil is one of the greatest initiations a wizard can undergo.

Pocket dimensions created by the Veil can have any characteristics the GM wants. Anything can happen in them, for essentially the characters are subjected to a Mental Illusion of unlimited power. Characters can revisit their own past, meet omnipotent gods or experience godhood themselves, die and be reborn—anything. But none of it is real; none of it has any effect outside the astral pocket, except for what the characters may learn about themselves and each other.

Adventures in the Upper Astral Plane necessarily tend toward psychodrama. The Veil of the Temple chiefly responds to the unconscious minds of visitors; it isn't an Instant Magic Wish-Fulfilling Dimension (for that, go to the Garden of Earthly Delights). The Veil builds its pocket dimensions based on visitors' memories, deep-seated attitudes and mythic archetypes. Visitors to the Veil tend to find painful memories replaying themselves, perhaps in disguised form. Phobias, obsessions and other neuroses get triggered. In short, the Upper Astral Plane wrenches characters by their Psychological Limitations.

Visitors to the Veil can even become more than one person. The Veil can externalize suppressed aspects of a person's personality. A macho, tough-guy character might encounter his Anima, the suppressed feminine side of his personality. A character much concerned with virtue might meet her Shadow, a compilation of amoral drives she's never wanted to face. Conversely, a



cynical villain might be shocked to encounter their own lost idealism in the person of their younger self…and if this is starting to sound a lot like "A Christmas Carol," well, it is. Dickens wrote an excellent model for an adventure on the Upper Astral Plane.

All this psychological wrenching is not without its rewards, though. First, an adventure in the Upper Astral is a great excuse for buying down a Psychological Limitation that's become too great a nuisance. Cosmic entities may use the Veil of the Temple as a testing-ground for PCs, to see of they are worthy of a boon. Finally, anyone who wants to gain access to the Brialic dimensions must run the gauntlet of the Upper Astral. Before the Veil will let one cross to the Mental Worlds for the first time, one must show some sign of spiritual progress in an Upper Astral psychodrama. In game terms, this could mean that a character encounters an "other self" and reconciles with it in a convincing display of role-playing, or they beat an important Psych Lim. Instead of Experience Points, they get the Fringe Benefit, "Access to Briah" (3 points).

Tiphereth: Death's Dominion

"Nobody sees Death,
Nobody sees the face of Death,
Nobody hears the voice of Death,
Savage Death just cuts mankind down…
Dragonflies drift on the river,
Their faces look upon the face of the Sun.
But then suddenly there is nothing…
Death's picture cannot be drawn."

—The Epic of Gilgamesh

Death's Dominion is cold, still and dark. The night never ends. The impossibly brilliant stars, set in unearthly constellations, do not turn; the black, black shadows never move. No breeze blows. A thousand atom bombs could not move a single grain of sand in Death's Dominion. It's too late for Time and change here; this is where all stories end, and there's nothing left to tell.

The realm of Death goes on forever, its barren plains, dry valleys and harsh stone mountains black and silver in the eternal starlight. Here and there one finds clusters of buildings: cottages and condominiums, huts and high-rises. Sometimes there are whole cities, for cities die too. In the buildings sit or stand the dead, patient and unmoving as a trunk of forgotten magazines in the attic. The doorways have no doors to close them.

Only the living can bring change to Death's Dominion. Living visitors, who cast no shadows here and leave no footprints, can briefly rouse the dead. In most cases the dead merely speak for a few seconds but do not move. The specters of family, friends and loved ones can be roused to movement and speech for a few minutes, but no more. Normally one only finds the dead of one's own species.

Sooner or later, one comes to Death's palace of ebon stone. The doors stand always open. A vaulted passage taller than most trees and nearly a kilometer long leads to Death's throne room. Light comes from torches on the walls, their heatless white flames caught in midflicker forever. Death's stark, angular throne looks empty…but anyone who comes to the throne room somehow knows that it is not. To speak for Death, some deceased relative or loved one of a visitor will stand at the foot of Death's huge throne. As the Epic of Gilgamesh says, Death itself cannot be seen or heard by the living, no matter what their power.

Now for practical considerations.

Everything in Death's Dominion is absolutely indestructible, except visitors. There is no way to kill the dead, or even to take a souvenir.

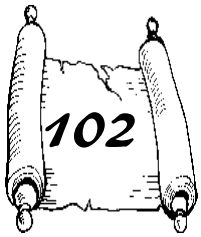
Time in Death's Dominion is an illusion. No matter how long a visitor stays in Death's Dominion, they return to the worlds of time and matter at the same moment they left. Visitors do not need to eat, excrete or sleep, and nothing in Death's Dominion could cause them harm except Death itself, who usually won't bother. While heroes may fight Death's avatars, the "masks" it wears to make itself seen and heard by mortals in the lower worlds, on its home turf Death wears no mask and cannot be fought. Death cannot even be targeted, no matter what Enhanced Senses a character might have. What visitors do to each other is their own business.

One can bargain with Death to restore someone's life, but Death always demands a life in return: if someone is to live beyond the span of years allotted by fate, someone else must take their place in Death's Dominion. Sometimes, Death may demand that heroes fetch to its Dominion someone who has cheated Death and lived too long, such as by becoming undead or by stealing other people's bodies.

The true measure of Death's power comes with the restoration to life if a bargain is fulfilled. This will be no vulgar opening of tombs. Death simply rewrites the past so the person didn't die: the fatal bullet missed, the heart attack wasn't quite so bad, or the medics arrived sooner. Only the people who went to Death's Dominion will know that history changed; even the person restored to life won't remember. The resurrection, however, is not a rejuvenation. If the person was old when they died, they remain old when they come back.

Alternatively, Death can restore a person through transmigration. This requires that someone offer to die so that the other person can live again—to sacrifice all their remaining years. In this case, Death puts the resurrectee's soul in the selfless person's body, to live out that person's destined lifespan. Death never says how long that will be.

The final mystery of Death's Dominion concerns its relationship with the lower astral realms such as the Netherworld and Elysium. How can the deceased be both in Death's Dominion and whatever afterlife their religion decrees, or a ghost on the Astral Plane? Some mystics propose that people have multiple souls, with multiple destinies after death. Others say that Death can fetch souls out of any "afterlife" whenever it pleases and plunk them down in its Dominion for visitors to



meet, or that the solid specters in Death's Dominion are mere "records" of the dead, like a photo album equipped with memories. In practice, it really doesn't matter.

Pachad: The Garden Of Earthly Delights

At first, visitors to the Garden of Earthly Delights might think they are in a section of Elysium. The Garden is just that, a lush, fantastic garden or park filled with fruit, flowers and brilliantly colored birds. The magic of this dimension is that anything a visitor wishes for, becomes real. Anything. Well, anything physical. The Garden cannot grant knowledge or wisdom. It can, however, satisfy any desire for pleasure, possessions, power or nearly anything else, materializing whatever objects, people or other "props" are necessary. Want to be Emperor of the World? The Garden of Earthly Delights will create a whole phony Earth if it has to.

So what's the catch? Simply this: nothing that happens in the Garden is real. It seems real by any test that any visitor could attempt, but nothing created by the Garden can pass beyond it. The luxuries, the perfect friends and lovers, the powers given by the Garden vanish the moment one tries to take them from the Garden to another dimension. The Garden is the sweetest, most seductive trap imaginable: everything one could want, with no responsibility, forever. But a gilded, upholstered, perfumed cage is still a cage.

The ultimate futility of the Garden's pleasures is best shown by two visitors to the Garden trying to fight. The Garden accommodates them both by tracelessly substituting a fake for each opponent. That way, both people can win—and yet neither of them has really won at all. They've both been given private fantasies of victory, and the Garden keeps them separate to preserve the delusion.

Chesed: Realms Of The Four Zoas

The Prime Avatars of Order, Chaos, Art and Nature have a quartet of linked dimensions in Chesed. They have no stable appearance: instead they flicker between a set of images. In fact, mystics say that these are really just one dimension, viewed four different ways—just as the Prime Avatars are really four aspects of one being, called Albion by William Blake or Adam Kadmon by the Kabbalists, but the Avatars have forgotten their basic unity. The best evidence for this view is that all four dimensions share the image of a dark forest called Entuthon Benython.

Ulro

Ulro is the realm of Urizen the Prince of Light, Prime Avatar of Order. Ulro shows four faces to the visitor. The first is the Forest of Entuthon Benython. The entire forest grew, banyan-like, from the Tree of Mystery which sprang up under Urizen's heel as he sat writing his books of laws. The tree-trunks rise like pillars; the leafy branches interlace in a dense web, creating dark, vaulted spaces like caves, the second image of Ulro.

In this view, Ulro is a labyrinth of caverns, with the peculiar property that every path, from every point, leads downhill. One cannot backtrack, because the caves change behind one. Crystals in the walls and ceilings glitter with points of light like stars in the night sky, the third image.

Ulro becomes a huge void holding layer on layer of slowly turning concentric rings bearing stars and planets, like an old armillary-sphere model of the Solar System. The rings themselves are of crystal, only visible by an occasional glint of reflected light. The sky of Ulro is full of clockwork.

Each star or planet is an entrance to a shining, crystalline space, the fourth face of Ulro, where dwell the spirits who serve Urizen. The "sun" in the center of the starry wheels is Urizen's palace of marble and crystal, blazing with light to illuminate all the space around it. Around the palace are Urizen's garden and orchard, including the Tree of Mystery, which can easily expand and darken to become the Forest of Entuthon Benython again.

Urizen is not always found in his palace. Sometimes he explores the cave and forest with a globe of fire in his hands, seeking he knows not what. Sometimes he makes adjustments to his starry wheels. He often goes to the Tree of Mystery to argue fruitlessly with Orc (see below).

Beulah

The demesne of Luvah, Prime Avatar of Chaos and emotion, is a "soft, moony realm" of summer nights and perfumed bowers. It is also the wilderness of Entuthon Benython in its fiercest aspect. Beulah changes to echo the mood of whoever is in it. Beulah can be a maudlin romance-land, a garden for play, a hellish waste of hate and violence, or anything in between—but the moonlit, summer garden of love and the wilderness of tortured, twisted passions are its most common form. In the latter form, Luvah takes the form of Orc, a young giant wrapped in flames, chained to the Tree of Mystery. In the romance-land version of Beulah, Luvah and his other aspect Vala appear as young lovers. Luvah and Vala take many other forms as well, as many as there are emotional states.

Generation

The realm of Tharmas, Prime Avatar of Nature, has no proper name; such things do not exist in Nature. "Generation" describes what Tharmas does: create and maintain the blind cycles of birth, life and death.

Again, Entuthon Benython is a fundamental image of this dimension. Under the influence of Tharmas, the forest is wild and tangled, almost a jungle, with spirits resembling wild animals. This can flip without warning to other images, such as a forest-like kelp bed (only the water does not inhibit breathing), or the tangled jungle of veins, nerves and tissues inside a vastly magnified living body, lit by sourceless light.

The central image of Generation, however, is a wild and rocky seashore. Entuthon Benython surrounds a dark and bitter lake called Udan Adan; this lake can expand in a moment to a seashore, with Tharmas rising from the water like a tidal wave.

Golgonooza

Golgonooza is the city of Urthona, Prime Avatar of Art. The forest of Entuthon Benython completely surrounds it, with the farmlands of Allamanda as a buffer zone. Golgonooza is a square, fortified city, with castellated, golden walls, four gates in each wall and four massive statues by each gate. The walls are low but the interconnected buildings within tower thousands of feet into the air.

Golgonooza lacks most of the features of a real city, like shops or vehicles. It is actually more of an architectural fantasy of towers, terraces, streets and courtyards, as much a castle as a city.

In the middle of Golgonooza are the twin citadels of Luban and Cathedron. Luban holds the great forge of Los the Smith, one aspect of Urthona. Cathedron holds the looms of Enitharmon the Weaver, another aspect and Los' wife. There do Los, Enitharmon and their children create spaces and times for other beings to live in. Cathedron and Luban are both indefinitely tall: one can see that they have a top, but one can never reach it, no matter how far or how fast one travels.

The overall form of Golgonooza is stable, but its character changes. The buildings of Golgonooza can be made of gold like the walls, or silver, iron or brick and stone. They can be crisp, Art Deco spires like something from an old science fiction illustration, or lush palaces with carved walls, onion domes and minarets, or pagodas, or the grim, forbidding skyscrapers of an urban nightmare. Golgonooza shows all the faces of Artifice, from the best to the worst.

Qliphothic: The Shining Darkness

Step not down, therefore, to the darkly-shining world: beneath is spread the Deep, forever formless, lightness, foul, joying in illusion, irrational, precipitous and sinuous, ceaselessly whirling around its own maimed depth, eternally wed to a shape inert, not breathing and void.

—The Chaldean Oracles

Nearly everything in this mystical cosmos is black, in a multitude of shades and hues. Darkness itself is a form of radiation in this dimension. Human eyes are not happy viewing the Shining Darkness. This is the home plane of the darques, and many other sorts of qliphothic entities live here as well.

In the Shining Darkness, huge, angular masses rise from vast, warped planes in utter disregard for gravity. Indistinct things flop and writhe between them. Every few kilometers is a loose cluster of humanoid statues, like huge, sitting fetuses made of compacted gray ash. Darques and necheshiron nest in the empty eye sockets of their oversized heads.

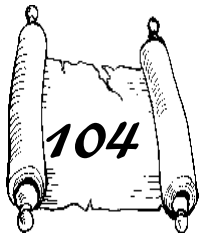
Humans and other organic beings face danger just from being on this plane. The darkness slowly leaches away life-energy and replaces it with the plane's own mysterious energies. This is a Penetrating, Cumulative 1d6 Transform every 10 minutes. As the Transform proceeds, skin darkens. When the Transform is 3/4 complete, the being's body is completely black and starts to glow with the Shining Darkness' radiance. When the Transform is complete, the being's body crumbles and the victim becomes a darque.

If the victim returns to Earth before that, he/she will radiate a 1" radius field of Darkness vs. All Vision lasting 1 minute for every point of Transform taken over the victim's BODY. (This would make a great "radiation accident.")

It's virtually impossible to bring a steady source of normal light into the Shining Darkness. Mundane light sources such as flashlights or matches explode the moment they are activated, as the dimension rips out their stored energy. A simple kitchen match would be a mere 1/2d6 Energy Killing Attack Explosion; a flashlight or cigarette lighter full of fluid would be a 2-3d6 KA Explosion; a more powerful light source would give an even more powerful blast. Other energy-emitting Powers and devices would suffer a similar effect, turning into KA Explosions of x1 1/2 the Active Points of the Power, using up triple Endurance or Charges. Weapons can be adjusted to work normally with an Inventor Skill Roll. Magical energy-emitters use Spell Research. Innate energy-projection Powers will work normally after the character makes both INT and EGO Rolls at -3. (These rolls should be made by the GM, out of sight of the player: the character doesn't know if they succeeded until they use the Power.)

If the Shining Darkness is used as the site of a Treasure Hunt adventure, it needs no further dangers, just a special location to hold whatever it is the heroes seek. If the only challenge of the Shining Darkness is to be getting out of it, then the GM needs to add some reason why the heroes can't just EDM away.

As a suggestion, a PC can realize (with a Spell Research roll) that any Extra-Dimensional Movement from the Shining Darkness to a positive-energy dimension such as Earth's would open an uncontrolled Wormhole. The horrors of the Shining Darkness could pass to Earth, while Earth's energies would drain away to the Shining Darkness. Therefore, they must seek a "neutral energy point" where Gates can be opened safely. (The "neutral energy point" is a plot device defined by the GM. The PCs will know it when they see it. The important point is, it isn't nearby and the PCs must find it before they turn into darques or get eaten by something horrid.)



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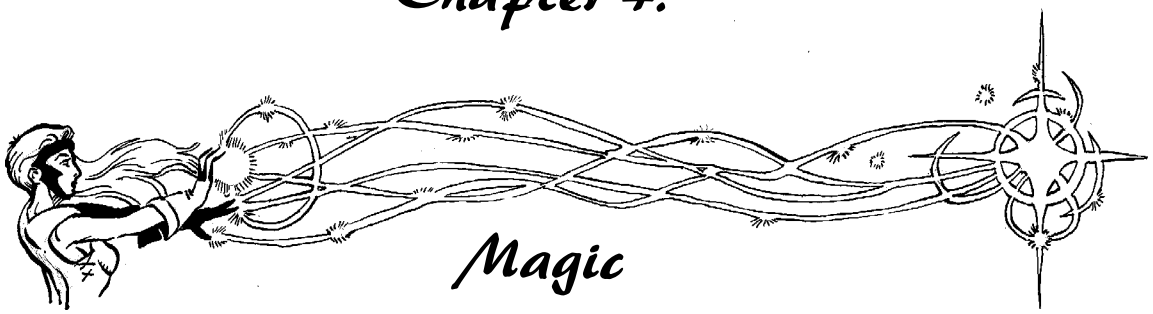


Magic

I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped and let 'em forth
By my so potent art.

—William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Magic powers, of course, form the very *raison d'etre* for mages. Everything else is just frills. Selecting spells is one of the most important steps in designing a super-mage. This chapter tells how to build an effective spell caster, with descriptions of several distinctive styles of magic.

There's more to magic than just spells, though. Tales of magic also feature magic items, ranging from good luck charms to mighty artifacts of the gods. Examples of magic items and artifacts are given as well.

Magic Styles And Magic Theory

The Earth has seen about a dozen major styles of magic, each with its own literature and theory. These came from the civilized cultures of Europe, Egypt, the Middle East, India, China and West Africa. Every tribal or barbarian culture has its own style of magic too, although in many cases the differences between tribal styles would only interest anthropologists; primitive magic is strikingly uniform. On top of this, fantasy fiction has invented dozens of more styles of magic. Just describing all the major styles of magic would take a fat book of its own—and probably would be rather more information than most players would want!

Fortunately, the many styles of magic fall into three general classes: Natural Magic, Ritual Magic and High Magic. Although styles of magic seldom fit precisely and absolutely into a particular class, one type of magic usually dominates. Each class has a basic theory about how magic works.

Natural Magic

Most primitive styles of magic fall into this class. So does Alchemy and, to a large extent, Voodoo. Natural Magic assumes that various substances have intrinsic magical properties. These occult virtues are just as natural, in their way, as a substance's color, taste or texture. According to classic Natural Magic theory, casting a spell is rather like baking a cake: one assembles the right ingredients and combines them in the right way, and the magic happens. The magic is in the ingredients, not the person casting the spell. The modern theory admits that in fact Natural Magic also involves the caster's personal psychic energy, which acts as a catalyst to unlock and direct the magic of the spell's ingredients.

"Ingredients" for Natural Magic include herbs, stones, parts of animals or humans, water from various sources, and pictures and images—usually of gods. Why does an herb or stone have one occult property and not another? The ingredients for a Natural Magic spell are selected according to five overlapping criteria:

The *Law of Sympathy* says that things which seem alike in some way really are alike, and can affect each other. By this reasoning, a plant with lung-shaped leaves must be good for breathing problems. Gold is bright and yellow like the Sun, so gold must promote life and growth the way the Sun does. Birds fly away, so a charm of feathers will make bad luck fly away. And so on forever.

Sympathy is strongest if the ingredient *really does* have the property desired for the "spell." To cultures naive of science, there is no great difference between a curse, a poison and a gun; black magicians use all three. This might be called the *Law of Reality.* In a world of "real magic," a Natural Magic spell might magnify the genuine properties of substances, such as using a drop of gasoline or a book of matches in a fire spell.

The *Law of Contagion* says that things once in contact can still affect the other. Thus, one can cast a spell on someone by doing something to a snippet of their hair or clothing. Just touching an object can be enough to pick up its magical powers. (Here one sees the reason for celebrity endorsements: use the same product as a famous person, the ads seem to promise, and you will gain some of the celebrity's charisma.)

Any *Exceptional Object* is apt to seem magical. A four-leaf clover, for instance, only seems magically "lucky" because most clover only has three leaves. The first or last of anything is exceptional and magical.

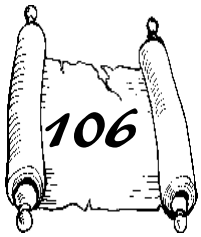
Finally, some magical attributions are pure *Tradition.* Why is a rabbit's foot lucky, when it didn't help the rabbit? Why does the Yoruban god Orunla favor the colors green and yellow, or the Greek god Dionysus favor the panther instead of some other animal? If there was a reason, it was forgotten long ago.

Ritual Magic

When a Natural Magician invokes a god through the god's sympathetic link to its image or symbol, the spell starts to overlap with Ritual Magic. This style of magic works through the agency of spirits and psychic influences, invoked and controlled through ritual. In its most grandiose forms, Ritual Magic claims to command even the gods, or God. Magic rituals involve magic words and prayers, the names of the spirits, special gestures, magical diagrams and talismans, pictures and images of gods, sacrifices and various symbolic tools. Either the spirits do what the magician commands, or they grant some magical power to the magician, or the magician's own ritual-fortified spirit does the job.

In most of the sophisticated magical traditions, it is accepted that spirits operate in a separate world which touches the material plane but is not part of it. Each culture has its own name for the spirit world, and some cultures postulate many layers of spirit worlds, but in Western Mainstream Occultism this other dimension is called the *Astral Plane.* For this reason, magic which uses control of the spirit world to effect change in the material world fairly may be called Astral Magic or Spirit Magic instead of Ritual Magic.

Note that even though Ritual Magic requires lengthy preparation, this does not mean that every casting of a spell requires a ten minute incantation with incense and a rune-struck circle. Some do, but super-sorcerers can toss Ritual Magic around as easily as High Magic. Ritual magicians can prepare their magic in advance, ready to be called upon at need. Traditionally, they do this by consecrating magic items such as wands and talismans, or by dealing with powerful spirits. The sorcerer does either of these in a long, fancy ceremony; after that, they can trigger the magic whenever they want.



Most of the more famous, real-world traditions of magic are forms of Ritual Magic. Kabbalistic magic, for instance, is based on commanding angels and devils by using their names and the omnipotent Names of God. The Hermetic magic of the European Renaissance assumed that the planets radiated mysterious influences which one could concentrate and control by rituals directed at their ruling spirits. Hindu and Tantric magic stripped the "astral theory" down even further: they claimed that Spirit was the true reality and the physical world just a sort of collective dream. By developing one's will through austerities, meditation and ritual, one could take over the dream and re shape it to suit oneself.

Three styles of Ritual Magic will be described in some detail. The first, Hermetic Theurgy, is the style of magic built up by Western Mainstream Occultism over the last 2000 years. The version presented here is a loosely based on what grimoires and occultists actually claim for their dubious art, with some legend and pure fantasy. As always, historical accuracy has been sacrificed to produce something gamers can actually use. The second, Necromancy, has only slight connections to occult lore but has a distinguished history in fantasy fiction. The third, Technomancy, is pretty much brand new, with only a few literary antecedents and no precedents at all in occultism.

High Magic

High Magic is essentially fictional. In its pure form, it works without any instrumentality at all—no magic words, talismans or incantations, no images or herbal brews, nothing. This is the magic of gods and spirits themselves. Mythological gods, demons, djinns and the like don't muck about with drawing magic circles or other hugger-mugger, they just wish for something and it happens.

High Magic is the sort of magic most often seen in comic books, where the emphasis is on action, not explanation. Many of the wizards in fantasy novels are basically High Magicians too. High Magicians in fiction may keep a veneer of Ritual Magic: they may say some magic words, wiggle their fingers or wave a magic wand, but precisely how the magic works is never explained. The magician can get along without these props if it suits the author's purpose. These magicians seem to tap into cosmic energies or their own psychic power directly, without the help of spirits or collections of magic substances. Quick and flashy, High Magic is the style most obviously suited to super-mages and dimension lords.

Classes Of Magic And Dimensional Energies

The three basic kinds of magic dovetail neatly to the Kabbalistic model of the Multiverse proposed in Chapter Three. All magic starts with the caster's own psychic force, but humans don't have enough intrinsic magic to do anything very impressive. Mages must use their intrinsic magic to tap into some external power source and shape it to their will.

Natural Magic employs the magical energies of the Earth itself. The substances used in Natural Magic are both conduits and batteries of this power. Natural Magic is the easiest form of magic to learn, because humans are part of the magic field themselves.

The catch is that a Natural Magician is totally dependent on their Foci and their connection to the Earth. Oh, Natural Magic will work in other dimensions *for a while,* as a kindness to players who would like to play a Voodooist or Alchemist…but away from the Earth, a Natural Magician's spells gradually lose power and reliability. On Earth's Imaginal Realms this loss will be a matter of days or weeks; in the Outer Planes, it could be a matter of hours. Spells built as Charges stored in a Focus will last indefinitely, but the Charges cannot be recovered off Earth.

Of course, Foci lost in the Outer Planes will be impossible to replace until the magician gets back to Earth. (In some of the Imaginal Planes such as the Land of Legends or Babylon, appropriate substances *might* be found.) All this will be part of any Magic Restriction they take as a Disadvantage. (As presented, it's still too slight to be worth an actual Limitation on the Powers themselves, on top of the Limitations already taken for Foci and possibly Charges.) Ritual Magic draws its power from the Astral Plane. It works as well on any of the Imaginal Planes as it does on Earth itself. Some spells might not work in the Outer Planes, because the requisite spirits don't exist on those dimensions. Only spells which literally summon an Earthly spirit are likely to be affected right away, though. Other spells will gradually become less powerful and reliable, but the magician won't have trouble for a few days. Skillful Ritual Magicians might even learn how to adapt their spells to use the native spirits of the dimension. (This would require a Spell Research roll at -1 per 10 Active Points of the spell, plus several days in which to study the dimension's magical traditions.)

High Magic works equally well throughout the entire Multiverse. Some dimensions naturally inhibit magic, but at least High Magicians will be no worse off than any other sort of wizard. The forces which High Magic calls upon are truly universal; they ultimately derive from the cosmic entities of the Upper Planes.

The classes of magic can be associated with the sephiroth on the central pillar of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, the main filing system for Western occultism. The sephiroth show what dimensions supply the power for each class of magic.

Natural Magic draws its power from the Earth, in the sephira Malkuth in the Assiatic division of the Multiverse—the "Material World."

Ritual Magic operates through the Lower and Middle Astral Planes, which are filed under Yesod, the first and central sephira of the Yetziratic or Astral World. The astral power of Yesod flows naturally down

the channel to the Earth in Malkuth, but with some effort a sorcerer can pull Yesod's power to the Outer Planes of Netzach and Hod as well.

The High Magic energies used by most dimension lords and sorcerers of the Outer Planes come from the realms of Briah, the Mental World, by way of the sephira Tiphereth.

As for the cosmic entities of Briah themselves, their power is bound into the structure of the entire Multiverse. Beyond all limits, it flows down from Kether, the fountainhead of Creation itself.

Buying Spells Through Power Frameworks

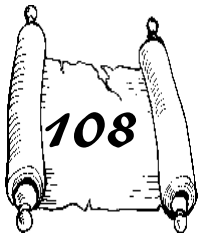
Most of the attack spells are given in versions with about 60 active points, giving them parity with the attacks of most superheroes. Some of them can be learned in less powerful versions; any could be scaled up to greater power levels. Defensive, movement and other miscellaneous spells usually run to about 30 points, although there are examples of 60 some Active Points or even higher.

While these spells are described using separate Multipowers, a sorcerer doesn't have to buy a separate Multipower for each spell. Since one can only attack once in a Phase anyway, all of a sorcerer's attack spells might as well be consolidated into a single Multipower.

Nor does a sorcerer have to buy all the versions of a spell. A High Magician could buy, say, three slots of Sorcerer's Stars, two slots of Koriol's Crimson Crystals, one slot of the Suns of Saravane and a Hypnotic Helix. The spell versions given below are only some of the more common variants; over the centuries, mages might have created dozens of variations of some classic spells.

Less powerful spells such as defenses, movement Powers and information Powers can be put in a smaller Multipower or an Elemental Control. A Multipower is cheaper, all other things being equal, but with an EC the character can use more than one spell at a time at full power.

If the character is meant to only use one low-power spell at a time, the small Multipower pool might as well be added to the large Multipower pool to make an even bigger pool. Each Phase, then, the mage can select a 60 point attack power and a 30 point defense power, a 60 point slot for all-out defense and a 30 point slot for movement (in case the mage needs to get away from something really bad) or use three 30 point Powers at once. As a final bonus, the mage can take a few spell slots of 90-some Active Points for major non-combat powers or even (if the GM is generous) a special attack power for situations dire enough that the character is willing to forego defense, movement and information.



High Magic: Thaumaturgy

I will repeat a subtle rune—
And thronging suns of Otherwhere
Shall blaze upon the blinded air,
And spectres terrible and fair
Shall walk the riven world at noon.

—Clark Ashton Smith, *Song of the Necromancer*

Thaumaturgy is the stripped down, flashy, combat-oriented magic used by comic-book super-sorcerers and dimension lords. Such sorcerers just wave their hands, perhaps chant a little rhyme, and balls and beams of light appear to do what they want. It is the most familiar form of High Magic and may be used as a model for other styles.

The downside of Thamaturgy is that learning it takes longer. In terms of game mechanics, this reflects the relative lack of cost-reducing Limitations on High Magic spells. Ritual Magicians can get more spells for their points, at cost of accepting more serious Limitations (such as Focus or Charges) and consequently a greater chance of their powers being taken away from them.

Magic Theory

Thaumaturgy calls on the energies of the Outer and Upper Planes. For some spells, the Thaumaturge draws energy directly from the Upper Astral Plane or various Outer Planes and shapes the energy into a spell. In other cases, the Thaumaturge invokes a powerful dimension lord or cosmic entity—the "Higher Powers"—to tap a stream of power already partly shaped by that entity. The Higher Power does not actually cast the spell and create the effect. It may not know that it is being invoked. Rather, the invocation acts like a lens or filter, giving the magical energy a tendency to generate certain effects, making the Thaumaturge's job easier.

Invoking Higher Powers this way doesn't automatically make the sorcerer a Servant of Higher Powers. Most of the Higher Powers don't insist on any special relationship with mages who call on their power for Thaumaturgy. They may notice a mage who repeatedly calls on them, however, and take action later. If the Higher Power approves of the sorcerer, it might become a Contact. On the other hand, if it doesn't like the sorcerer it might cut off the sorcerer's link to its power so that particular spell fizzles or blows up in the sorcerer's face. If neutrally disposed, it might simply ask for some service in exchange for all the times its power helped the sorcerer.

What do the Higher Powers get out of this arrangement? One suggestion is that the more a cosmic entity's power is used by sorcerers, the bigger that power grows. As an alternative explanation, some cosmic entities might permit lesser beings to use their special spells as a way to get publicity. Or perhaps when an entity reaches a certain level of mystical power, its magic

"spills over" and the entity can't really stop sorcerers in other dimensions from exploiting its overflowing power.

Powers And Modifiers

Users of Thaumaturgy are notable for their lack of Limitations. Thaumaturges may call out little rhymes when they cast their spells—but not always. They make sweeping gestures to call their power—but blast off Entangle effects. They fire off spells as quick as thought, ducking and dodging enemy spells nimbly. Use of tools is rare and their magic seems highly reliable. Do they use Limitations at all?

Quite possibly not. Few Thaumaturges, however, have reached this acme of austere purity. Some do use Foci, Gestures or Incantations, or they accept a little uncertainty in their magic through Activation Rolls and perhaps even Side Effects. With time and practice (and Experience Points) they will reduce the Limitations on their spells.

One good strategy for Thaumaturges is to take Variable Limitations. This makes the mage virtually impossible to "disarm" completely, but the mage may have to accept some inconvenience under some circumstances. The following Limitations are especially good for filling a High Magician's Variable Limitation:

Activation Roll

Concentrate

Extra Time

Gestures

Incantation

Only in Hero (or Villain) ID

Side Effects

"Only in Hero ID" can be an acceptable Limitation on Thaumaturgy all by itself. In the comics, Thaumaturges never do their thing in ordinary clothing. They might do tiny spells in their Secret ID, but when the sky is falling and nameless horrors run amuck, they Instant Change into colorful outfits before they start blasting away with their mystic bolts. This limit, however, is not mandatory and is not assumed in the spell descriptions below.

Disadvantages Of Thaumaturgy

Thaumaturgy is one of the most inclusive styles of magic a sorcerer can choose. No Powers are excluded. While Thaumaturgy itself does not directly employ spirits the way Ritual Magic does, Thaumaturges are not automatically excluded from also learning Ritual Magic spells or using Natural Magic items. In fact, many sorcerers may use Thaumaturgy for combat and other styles for non-combat effects. Generic Thaumaturgy imposes no Magic Style Restriction on its practitioners. Individual Thaumaturges may take a Magic Style Restriction to reflect a dominant "theme" in their magic or an inability to use other sorts of magic, but they don't have to do so.

Style Notes

Thaumaturgic spells are often named after various extra-dimensional entities and power objects—thus, "Koriol's Crimson Crystals" or "The Suns of Saravane." The sorcerer often calls out the name of the spell, sometimes as part of a little rhyme. (In the comics, though, this is just a Special Effect.) The spells appear as simple luminous forms such as globes, disks, swirls and beams, maybe with zigzags, spurs and sparkles.

Sample Thaumaturgic Spells

It is assumed that all these spells take a -½ Variable Limitation, for a -¼ value. As mentioned above, other Limitations are quite possible.

Attack Spells

Auras Of Elan

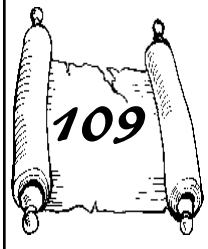
This spell is an old favorite. No one knows who invented it. It makes glowing auras appear around whatever the sorcerer wants to affect, and the target moves at the caster's will.

Cost	Powers	END
49	Multipower (61 pt pool), -½ Var Lim (-¼)	
5u	33 STR TK, ½ END [61]	3
5u	25 STR TK w/Fine Manipulation, ½ END [59]	3
5u	23 STR TK, Indirect (+½), ½ END [59]	3
5u	18 STR TK, Selective 3" Radius AE (+1 ¼) [61]	6

Bindings Of Bromion

The dimension lord Bromion, one of the Ordainers of Urizen the Lawgiver, began the use of these potent spells. Bromion hates free will in other beings; he calls it "rebellion." He shared his Bindings with sorcerers on other planes who also served Urizen, to help them quash "rebellion." Centuries later, sorcerers of whom Bromion would never approve use the Bindings, too.

Cost	Powers	END
50	Multipower (62 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	12d6 Mind Control [60]	6
5u	10d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal (+¼) [62]	6
5u	2d6 Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2) [60]	6
5u	20 STR TK, BOECV (+1) [60]	6
5u	14 STR TK with Fine Manipulation, BOECV [62]	6



Cerulean Spells

These psychic bolts are another very common attack. Even minor sorcerers might have lower-powered versions of the Cerulean Spells. These attacks are only visible to the victim and to anyone with Mental Awareness. They appear as sparkling beams of blue light.

Cost	Powers	END
50	Multipower (62 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	Cerulean Spear: 5d6 Ego Attack, ½ END [62]	3
5u	Cerulean Spray: 5d6 Ego Attack, Nonselective 1 Hex AE [62]	6

Fuzonic Flames

These spells evoke the awesome, fiery energy of the dimension called the Burning Sky. That dimension's ruler, Fuzon, apparently never objects to anyone tapping its dimension's energies this way.

Cost	Powers	END
50	Multipower (62 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	4d6 ERKA [60]	6
5u	2 ½d6 ERKA, 1 Hex AE [60]	6
5u	2 ½d6 ERKA, Penetrating [60]	6
5u	1 ½d6 ERKA, Penetrating, Continuous [62]	6

Hypnotic Helix

This spell creates a glowing spiral of multicolored light which makes people extremely suggestible. Sorcerers throughout the Multiverse have use the Hypnotic Helix, or spells just like it, for thousands of years. Many variations exist: the slots given are just the two most common.

While unscrupulous sorcerers often use a Hypnotic Helix to force people to serve them, champions of Good prefer to use the Helix to make bystanders forget traumatic supernatural events. For most people, forgetting that they had a supernatural scare is an action they would like to do anyway, so not much Mind Control is needed.

Cost	Powers	END
34	Multipower (60 pt pool), -½ Var Lim, Concentrate to ½ DCV (-¼), Max Range 4" (-¼)	
3u	12d6 Mind Control [60]	6
3u	5d6 Mind Control, 20" Cone AE (+1 ½) [62]	6

Koriol's Crimson Crystals

This spell ensemble was invented millennia ago by a mighty extra-dimensional sorcerer called Koriol. They have been popular ever since. Swirls of light coalesce into shards of red glass that envelop the target or form a protective barrier.

Cost	Powers	END
50	Multipower (62 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	6d6 Entangle [60]	6
5u	4d6 Entangle, Damage Transparent (+½) [60]	6
5u	4d6 Entangle, Backlash (+½) [60]	6
5u	Force Wall (10 PD, 10 ED), ½ END [62]	3

Saffron Spheres

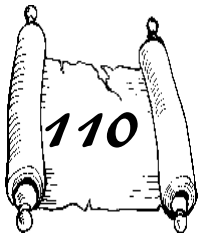
This is another spell that even beginning sorcerers often learn. It creates a glowing yellow ball. This darts out and either explodes in a blinding yellow flash or radiates bright yellow light for a minute without any further attention from the sorcerer. A final form creates a zone of strobing light that can actually knock a person out.

Cost	Powers	END
48	Multipower (60 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	4d6 Flash, Nonselective 1 Hex AE (+¼), ½ END [60]	3
5u	3d6 Flash, Nonselective 4" Radius AE (+¾), ½ END [60]	3
5u	Change Environment (Light), 32" Radius, 0 END, Uncontrolled for 1 minute (+½) [60]	6
5u	4d6 EB, AVLD: Flash Defense vs. Sight (+1 ½), 1 Hex AE [60]	6

Scintillant Suns Of Saravane

The starlike bodies in the dimension of Saravane radiate a "psychic light." By calling upon the light of Saravane, a sorcerer can blind a foe no matter how carefully shielded the foe's eyes might be. Mental defense, however, gives protection. The Scintillant Suns aren't much good against other mages, but are very effective against other super beings.

Cost	Powers	END
48	Multipower (60 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	3d6 Flash: Vision, BOECV (+1) [60]	6
5u	2d6 Flash: Vision, BOECV, 8" Cone AE (+1) [60]	6
5u	2d6 Flash: Vision, BOECV, 4" Radius AE (+1) [60]	6



Silver Circles Of Selestar

The dimension of Selestar is entirely controlled by the Geometers, minions of Urizen the Lawgiver. The Geometers have developed many spells using geometrical forms, which they share freely with Urizen's other followers. The Silver Circles create a swarm of silver hoops which wrap around the spell's target. Many variations exist.

Cost	Powers	END
48	Multipower (60 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	6d6 Entangle [60]	6
5u	4d6 Entangle, Damage Transparent (+½) [60]	6
5u	4d6 Entangle, Sticky (+½) [60]	6
5u	3d6 Entangle, 6" Cone AE (+1) [60]	6

Sorcerer's Stars

This flexible spell provides a wide range of basic mystic bolts. It is one of the most common of Thaumaturgic spells. Each form of the spell fires a many-pointed ball of light at the target. Most versions only do STUN to the target. Many more versions are possible.

Cost	Powers	END
50	Multipower (62 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	12d6 EB [60]	6
5u	8d6 EB, AP [60]	6
5u	8d6 EB, 1 Hex AE [60]	6
5u	6d6 EB, AP, 1 Hex AE [60]	6
5u	5d6 EB, AVLD: Power Defense (+1 ½) [62]	6
5u	4d6 EB, AVLD: Power Defense, 1 Hex AE [60]	6

Spectral Sphere

Long ago, a sorcerer discovered a pocket dimension that held nothing but strange, iridescent globes of force. From the outside these globes were as yielding as soap bubbles, but from the inside they were extremely tough and able to bounce both physical, energy and mystical force. The sorcerer developed a spell to summon one of these bubbles from its dimension, to use as an attack. The Spectral Sphere sucks in whoever it hits, forcing them to curl into a ball as the Sphere bobs in the air.

While use of the Spectral Sphere is not too uncommon, so far only this one function is known.

Cost	Powers	END
48	4d6 Entangle, Backlash (+½), -½ Var Lim [60]	6

Evil Attack Spells

Some Thaumaturgic spells are widely regarded as unethical or irresponsible to use. The spell may invoke an entity of evil, or affect targets in morally dubious ways, or simply have side effects that present dangers to the surroundings. Sorcerers who use these spells anyway either don't know about the problems with them, or they don't care.

Cursed Clutch Of Cassai

This spell evoke arcs of ghostly violet light which wrap around targets, draining away psychic energy in painful or even fatal ways. The drained psychic energy goes to the dimension lord Cassai, who has taught this spell to sorcerers throughout the Multiverse as a way to increase his own power. Many sorcerers aren't too keen on helping Cassai in this way. Fortunately, the Clutches carry their own retribution. If a sorcerer is interrupted in casting the Clutch, the arcs turn around and drain some of his psychic energy instead. (For more about Cassai, see the Source Book.)

Cost	Powers	END
34	Multipower (60 pt pool), -½ Var Lim, Side Effect: 3d6 Ego Attack if Interrupted (-½)	
3u	6d6 Ego Attack [60]	6
3u	4d6 Ego Attack, AP [60]	6
3u	1d6 RKA, BODY BOECV (+2), Penetrating, +1 STUN Mult (+½) [60]	6

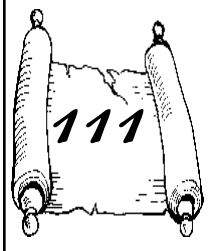
Qliphothic Claws

This spell invokes the annihilating energies of a deep Qliphothic dimension to form a black aura around the caster's hands. Whoever the caster then strikes is drained of life energies. The more the Claws are used, the stronger they become: this is a Transfer, and the life- force goes to make the Claws more powerful. As long as the caster doesn't switch to another attack form, the Claws can increase in power without limit, since each added damage class of the Claws increases the maximum amount of BODY that could be Transferred. When the Claws reach really high power levels, however, their great power can have mind-altering, intoxicating effects on the caster; this could even be a magical "radiation accident" turning the caster berserk or causing permanent changes in powers.

Cost	Powers	END
48	2d6 BODY Transfer to Transfer, Return 1 pt/turn (+¼), Damage Shield Only With Grab (+¼), 0 END, -½ Var Lim [60]	0

Sinister Sigils Of Set

These sigils, created by that evil god thousands of years ago, drain away the victim's life force in various debilitating ways. The spell is tremendously flexible. Originally this was a Ritual Magic spell using rings or plaques bearing the Sigils, but unscrupulous sorcerers have worked out a Thaumaturgic version which no longer requires such a Focus. While Set is *apparently* long dead, his Sigils have been used so often by evil mages that other wizards will automatically assume that anyone who uses the Sigils must be corrupt. The spell creates weird glyphs that shine an unholy light on their victims.



Cost	Powers	END
50	Multipower (62 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	5d6 Suppress, vs. Any 1 Phys Char (+¼), Uncontrolled (1 minute), 0 END to Maintain, Personal Immunity [62]	6
5u	1 ½d6 Drain, vs. Any 1 Phys Char, Ranged, Continuous, Uncontrolled (1 minute), 0 END, Personal Immunity [60]	6
5u	2d6 Drain, vs. Any 1 Phys Char, Ranged, Personal Immunity, 4" Radius AE (+1) [60]	6

Vipers Of Vorkill

This spell, named for its extra-dimensional creator, summons the magic-eating entities called the Necheshiron in astral form. The caster uses the astral Necheshiron to weaken or destroy other spells. The catch is that sometimes the Necheshiron appear physically, not astrally, and outside the caster's control. The thought of an infestation of Necheshiron on Earth gives any sensible sorcerer the shivers.

Cost	Powers	END
24	Multipower (61 pt pool), -½ Var Lim, Acts 15 (-¼), Side Effect: 4 x 100 pt Summon Necheshiron (-1)	
2u	16d6 Dispel, vs. Any 1 Magic Effect (+¼) [60]	6
2u	3½d6 Drain vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼), Ranged [61]	6
2u	1½d6 Drain, vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼), Ranged, Uncontrolled (1 minute) Continuous 0 END to Maintain [56]	6
2u	8d6 Suppress vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼), ½ END [60]	6
2u	5d6 Suppress, vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼), Uncontrolled (1 minute), 0 END to Maintain [56]	6
2u	3d6 Suppress, vs. *All* Magic Effects (+2), Uncontrolled (1 minute), 0 END to Maintain [60]	6

Defensive Spells

Thaumaturgy also provides the quickest and most convenient defensive powers for mages. These spells usually take the form of glowing disks which block incoming attacks: even if the disk is not very large, attacks are drawn to strike it. Stronger defenses might be indicated by layers of disks which an attack must break through. Other common forms for defenses include glowing spheres around the caster or a hole in space which sucks away incoming attacks.

Most of the defensive spells below fall into two power levels. The ones of about 30 Active Points are meant for use in Elemental Controls or small Multipowers, as described above. Others are about 60 Active Points, for "all-out defense" spells fitting in a wizard's major Multipower.

Deflecting Disk

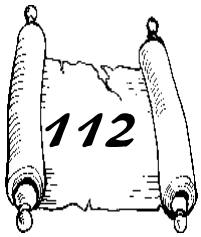
This is an extremely common spell. A disk of light appears in front of each incoming attack. If the disk holds, the attack bounces. If the disk breaks, the attack hits with undiminished force. Several forms of Deflecting Disk are possible. Some forms deflect any non-mental ranged attack, magic or not; others deflect any magic attack, including ones based on mental powers, but won't affect non-magical attacks. While the four versions shown here are given as a Multipower, an individual slot could be selected and made part of an Elemental Control.

Cost	Powers	END
24	Multipower (30 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
2u	Missile Deflection +5 vs. All Ranged Attacks [30]	
2u	Missile Deflection +5 vs. All Magic Attacks [30]	
2u	Missile Deflection +0 vs. All Ranged, Adjacent Hex (+½) [30]	
2u	Missile Deflection +0 vs. All Magic, Adjacent Hex (+½) [30]	

Haloes Of Huland

This spell creates softly glowing auras around the caster which cannot themselves stop attacks, but they reduce the damage. A red Halo reduces damage from physical attacks, a yellow Halo from energy attacks, and a blue Halo from mental attacks. While the Haloes are most useful if all three are used in a Multipower, single Haloes might be known in the form of Elemental Control slots. (But GMs shouldn't let PCs put each kind of Halo in an EC slot. That's just an excuse to chop the cost in half, and that's blatant rules abuse.)

Cost	Powers	END
20	Multipower (30 pt pool), -½ Var Lim, Non-Persistent: defense shuts down if character unconscious (-¼)	
2u	Damage Reduction (½ vs. resistant PD) [30]	
2u	Damage Reduction (½ vs. resistant ED) [30]	
2u	Damage Reduction (½ vs. Mental) [30]	



Ordonian Aura

This all out-defensive spell lets one protect other people as well as oneself, as long as the other people stay close enough to touch. The first version is best for mundane threats; the second version is meant for situations where one might have to weather a wide variety of magical attacks.

The Auras appear as cascading ripples of colored light, like water running down a pane of glass, enveloping the caster and any person touching him. Up to 3 other people can be protected, or 4 if the caster does not protect himself with the Aura.

Cost	Powers	END
48	Multipower (60 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	Force Field (15 PD, 15 ED), Use by Others x4 (+¾), ½ END [60]	3
5u	Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 10 MD, 10 PowD), Use by Others x4, ½ END [60]	3

Shield Of Selestar

This spell, developed by the Geometers of Selestar, was originally taught to servants of Order. The spell was useful enough that sorcerers with no cosmic commitments started using it too. The Shield consists of intersecting silvery lines forming a filigree globe around the caster.

Cost	Powers	END
25	Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 10 MD), ½ END, -½ Var Lim [31]	1

Soul's Citadel

This spell makes a dome of force that is virtually impervious to mental powers. One may put the Citadel around oneself and one's friends, or put it around someone at a distance—a great way to defeat a mentalist, since the dome is quite transparent to all other attacks.

Cost	Powers	END
17	12 MD Force Wall, -½ Var Lim, Must Make Closed Dome (-½) [30]	3

Wizard Walls

This is a linked set of spells for defending an area, or for all-out defense with a wizard's other defensive powers. It creates barriers of force. These look like vertical disks of pastel light hanging in the air, connected by arcs of light. Many versions are possible.

Cost	Powers	END
50	Multipower (62 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	Force Wall (10 PD, 10 ED), ½ END [62]	3
5u	Force Wall (8 MD, 6 PowD, 6 FD: Sight), ½ END [62]	3
5u	Force Wall (8 ED), Transparent to PD (+½), ½ END, + Force Wall (8 MD), ½ END [60]	2
5u	Force Wall (8 PD, 8 ED, 8 MD) [60]	6

Information Spells

Wizards are all information junkies; aside from the pleasures of pure knowledge, knowing the score helps them stay alive in a dangerous profession.

Akashic Eye

Eastern occultists say that humans have an nascent "Third Eye" sensitive to psychic impressions, which can be developed through meditative exercises. This spell creates a literal Third Eye in the caster's forehead, which lets them see into the thoughts of other people. This luminous Akashic Eye is only visible to the person it is used upon, or to mentally aware people. It only works on people within 4 hexes.

Cost	Powers	END
35	10d6 Telepathy, ½ END, -½ Var Lim, Concentrate ½ DCV (-¼), Max Range 4" (-¼) [62]	3

Astral Vision

This spell lets the caster look onto the part of the Lower Astral Plane corresponding to their location on Earth and see what's going on. This is particularly valuable when facing astral entities that can sense and act upon people on Earth.

Cost	Powers	END
27	Clairsentience: normal vision, Transdimensional, 0 END, 0 Range, Only to Lower Astral Plane (-½), -½ Var Lim [60]	

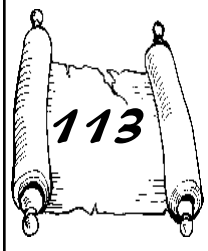
Contacting The Great

This is a generic interdimensional contact spell; nearly every type of magic includes some version of it. First the sorcerer uses the Mind Scan to locate the target entity, then the Mind Link (which falls outside any spell Multipowers or Elemental Controls) to communicate if the entity is willing. An extra-dimensional patron or Contact is always considered a familiar mind, giving a bonus to the Mind Scanning "attack" roll.

Even very minor magicians might be able to contact powerful entities on other planes. Most Satanists, for instance, can't summon their demonic patrons; they just contact them and ask them to come. Mages use this spell to contact their cosmic Contacts and patrons. There may even be powerful spirits who act as information brokers, trading their knowledge of obscure lore for equally obscure favors.

The spell given here assumes the sorcerer can only contact one powerful extra-dimensional being. If the sorcerer can contact more than one entity (which for an experienced Thaumaturge is quite likely) the Mind Scan will need a bigger Transdimensional advantage (at cost of some ECV plusses) and the Mind Link will cost more.

The Thaumaturgic version of this spell creates a swirling vortex of light in which the face of the contacted entity appears.



Cost	Powers	END
15	6d6 Mind Scanning, Trans-dimensional to Patron's Plane (+½), +8 ECV, -½ Var Lim, Visible, Concentrate 0 DCV, 5 minutes Extra Time (-2) [61]	3
+5	Mind Link to 1 being, Any Distance, Any Dimension, Only via Mind Scanning (-½), -½ Var Lim, Visible, constant Concentrate 0 DCV (-1) [15]	

Fada's Far Seekings

These classic spells are widely used. Once a target's general location is known through the Mind Scan, the Clairsentience may be used to pinpoint the target's location. Unfortunately, in the interdimensional version, at best the caster finds which dimension the target is on. In that case, the Clairsentience simply gives a view of a swatch of that dimension, so the caster knows what they're getting into before they venture there. The standard version used on Earth scans the Quaternion. There may be other versions that scan groups of Outer Planes.

The spell creates a spinning disk of iridescent light from which threads of light radiate out to infinity; only the caster and mentally aware people can see these threads as they sweep through the world or beyond, seeking their target. When the caster chooses to use the Clairsentience options, the center of the disk opens into a view of the desired region.

Cost	Powers	END
36	Multipower (63 pt pool), -½ Var Lim, constant Concentrate ½ DCV (-½)	
3u	9d6 Mind Scanning, +8 ECV [61]	4
3u	6d6 Mind Scanning, Trans-dimensional: Astral (+¾), +3 ECV [63]	4
3u	Clairsentience: Vision, x64 Range (95 miles) [60]	6
3u	Clairsentience: Vision, Other Dimensions (Astral), x16 Range (6 miles) [60]	6

Temporal Trance

This spell, whose origin is lost to history, lets the caster briefly experience the future. This will be the future of whatever location the caster is at, not the caster's personal future. The caster sits cross-legged in the air and weaves a twisting halo of silvery threads around himself. For several seconds, the caster seems to stand in the future scene, seeing the sights, hearing the sounds, and so on—even sensing what magic is in use, if the caster has a magic detection sense. The Temporal Trance is so debilitating, however, that no human being could survive casting it twice in one day.

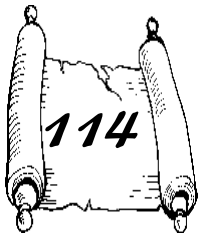
The Trance is inherently imprecise. As always with precognition, it merely shows the most probable future…or rather, what was the most probable future before the caster gained foreknowledge. The Trance must reach at least an hour into the future: closer times remain hidden. Finally, there is always uncertainty about what time will be seen, one step down on the Time Table from the length of time in the future desired. Someone looking 1-4 hours into the future has an uncertainty of plus or minus 5 minutes from the target time; looking more than 5 hours into the future gives an uncertainty of up to 1 hour; looking more than a day into the future gives a 5 hour uncertainty; and so on.

GMs should remember that the Temporal Trance only gives *experience* of the future. One should avoid giving explanations and just tell what the character sees, hears, feels and smells (and magic detects, if relevant). While some scenes can be self-explanatory ("Your comrades and your party guests are talking, laughing and dancing. The munchies are almost gone") they may often be ambiguous ("Ten hours in the future, the landscape is scorched and cratered. The air stinks of smoke and blood. You see several twisted bodies, burned beyond recognition, scattered about the battlefield").

Cost	Powers	END
10	Clairsentience: normal Vision, Hearing, Touch, Smell, Sense Magic, Precognition, 1 charge of 1 turn (-1 ¼), Automatic Side Effect: 6d6 CON Drain (-2), initial Gestures, Concentrate 0 DCV throughout (-1), initial 1 turn Extra Time (-½), Limited Control over When Seen (-¼) [60]	[1c]

Miscellaneous Spells

Then there are spells neither for attack, defense nor information. Some are for "all-out movement" (see "Extra- Dimensional Movement and Gates" in Chapter Two for more powerful movement spells). Others are "combat support": they have uses in combat, but have both offensive and defensive applications.



Aethyrs Of Edirne

About once a century, the dimension lord Edirne personally teaches versions of her spells to some wizard she considers worthy. A few of those wizards have passed the secret of her Aethyrs on to other wizards.

The Aethyrs create zones of swirling, foggy light that inhibit magic in various ways. One slowly drains power from enchantments; the second strips away Power Defense; the third blocks magical senses. They are usually bought as Charges with Duration and the Uncontrolled advantage so a wizard can cast an Aethyr and then use other magic.

Cost	Powers	END
52	Multipower (65 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
4u	1d6 Drain, vs. All Magic (+2), Ranged, NND: Hardened Power Defense (+1), Uncontrolled, Personal Immunity, 10" Radius AE (+1 ¼), 8 chgs of 1 turn (-0) Cost END to cast (-¼) [65]	6
4u	4d6 Suppress vs. Power Defense (x½), Uncontrolled, Personal Immunity, 16" Radius AE (+1 ½), 8 chgs of 1 turn, Cost END to Cast [65]	6
4u	2" Radius Darkness vs. Mental Awareness, Normal Vision and All Magic Senses, Uncontrolled, Personal Immunity, 8 chgs of 1 turn, Cost END to Cast [61]	6

Levitory Locus

When a sorcerer wants to carry several people a long distance, the Levitory Locus gets the job done. The Locus creates a filigree disk of magical force which carries people through the air along with the caster. Note that the spell uses a combination of Usable by Others x2 and 1 Hex AE instead of Usable by Others x8. The former method lets the spell's passengers move around a bit and fight without having to keep hold of the spell's caster—though if they are knocked out of the hex of the Locus, they're in trouble.

Cost	Powers	END
54	12" Flight, Use by Other x2 (+½), 1 Hex AE, x8 NCM, -½ Var Lim [68]	2

Shadows Of Shaldus

This spell casts a mantle of impenetrable darkness around the caster. While this doesn't stop attacks, it does make the caster hard to hit. The caster, on the other hand, can see out of the Shadows perfectly well.

Cost	Powers	END
44	1" Radius Darkness vs. All Vision, Damage Shield, Uncontrolled, 0 END, Personal Immunity, -½ Var Lim [55]	0

Teng Wei's Translocation

The ancient Chinese sorcerer Teng Wei developed several spells of teleportation, which he taught to a few other sorcerers in his travels around and off the Earth. In the 2800 years since Teng Wei's apparent death in a teleport accident, other sorcerers have created dozens of variations on Teng Wei's spells, until it's impossible to tell which were the original versions. These are only a few variations.

Cost	Powers	END
50	Multipower (62 pt pool), -½ Var Lim	
5u	25" Teleport, ½ END	1/10"
5u	15" Teleport, x4 Mass, x4 NCM, 2 floating Points [60]	3
5u	11" Teleport, x250 NCM [62]	1/10"
3u	Extra-Dimensional Movement, any plane, x4 mass, ½ END, 1 phase Extra Time (-½) [62]	3

Notably Powerful Spells

Some of these spells are attacks: anyone who can cast these spells as *regular* attacks is significantly more powerful than the average mage. While such beings have distinctive spells with normal combat effects too, these sample spells all use more peculiar powers, just to show what's possible.

Ordinary human mages might be allowed one or two of these spells for really desperate situations. It is recommended that PC spells of "all-out attack" only be usable once per day, or carry some other serious Limitation. At the very least, they should require full Gestures and Incantations—plus something else to fill a Variable Limitation.

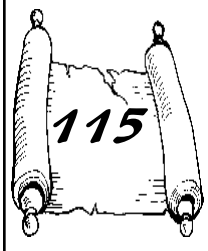
Curse Of Premature Burial

This ghastly spell makes the ground open beneath the victim and suck them down, trapping them in a little cyst 10 feet underground. The victim has air for the moment, but will soon suffocate and die without Life Support, a rescue or some way to dig or teleport their way out. While this is a Thaumaturgic version, Hermetic Theurgists could have their own version based on invoking earth elementals.

Cost	Powers	END
70	2", DEF 5 Tunneling, Close Behind, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged (+½), -½ Var Lim [87]	9

Loom Of Space

This awesome spell is the epitome of mystic Artifice: the creation of a new dimension from scratch. The caster projects raw power into Limbo and creates not just matter, but space and time for it to occupy. The caster can design the new cosmos any way they want, to the limits of their imagination. Even the Four Zoas, however, cannot build a universe of any complexity and have it come out fully as designed. There are always surprises, and once a universe is created the caster has no intrinsic control over its destiny.



In game terms, this is a Transdimensional Transform. It had better be Cumulative or the dimension will be *very* small—perhaps the size of a suitcase—and Variable, or the mage will only be able to create one very simple sort of dimension. Rules for both Physical and Power Transforms apply: the caster must build up double the BODY of any object in the new dimension, and double the Active Points of any intrinsic Power. The point cost of space itself comes from the Size Table for Headquarters (*Hero System Rule Book* p. 187). Putting anything at all complex (including intrinsic Powers) in a plane counts as original creation of a complex item without a pattern, so the spell will require at least one Skill Roll using a new Skill, *Dimensional Engineering* or *Worldsmithing*.

Not surprisingly, casting such a potent spell is no easy matter. Unlike most Thaumaturgy, the Loom of Space carries many Limitations. Gestures, Incantations and special tools are required to direct the cosmic energies into their proper form. Failing a Worldsmithing Skill Roll means the caster has lost control of the spell. The backlash will hurl the caster (and anyone else nearby) into some other dimension (and probably a nasty one) while blocking any dimension travel powers for an indefinite period.

(Simple dimensions, however, will give the caster plusses on the Skill Roll. Alternatively, the creator can forego trying to define the dimension's properties. In this process, the spell caster just tosses a number of objects into the spell and hopes the new dimension takes its pattern from them. Tossing a shoe into the spell means the new dimension will probably feature shoes: perhaps shoe trees that grow their own shoes, or a shoe-shaped planetoid, or shoe monsters. But the caster won't be able to predict just how the "shoe theme" will manifest.)

Creating a universe, even a tiny one, requires tremendous energy, and that energy has to come from somewhere. In game terms, this is a Variable Limitation. If no other source of power is available, it comes from the caster (CON and BODY Drain), which will probably be fatal with more than two or three Phase's worth of creation.

(Remember, there is no defense against a Side Effect. On the other hand, the caster's ghost can become the spirit of the dimension.) Alternatively, the caster can sacrifice something: a powerful artifact (adding the Expendable Limitation at -1 on the Focus requirement); a large number of sentient, souled beings (does anyone need to be told how evil this is?); or a pre-existing pocket dimension or Astral Cyst.

Once a new dimension is built up to a certain size, it can continue growing on its own. No one knows what the threshold for independent growth is. Likewise, no one knows how big an artificial cosmos might grow. Which raises the question: is there such a thing as a "natural" universe, or were they all created by sorcerers of older dimensions? Another disturbing question is the matter of reversal conditions. Every Transform either "heals" with time, or it has some condition which reverses it at once. Artificial dimensions are no different. The caster can choose something fantastically obscure and improbable as the reversal condition, but the dimension *must* have some circumstance which will destroy it. Some wizards believe that a new universe's "Achilles Heel" will fade with time, but they don't *know* this. Do the ancient, "natural" dimensions have "Achilles Heels" as well? This is one question most wizards would rather not see answered.

Cost	Powers	END
12	1d6 Transform, Universal (+1), Cumulative, Indirect (+½), Transdimensional: The Dimension Created (+¾), Continuous, Hard to Dispel (+¼), constant Gestures (-½), constant Incantations (-½), constant Concentrate 0 DCV (-1), OAF Ritual Paraphernalia, Requires a Skill Roll: Worldsmithing (-½), Side Effect: EDM to Nasty Dimension vs. All in Area + All EDM Powers Removed (-1) -1 Var Lim: 4d6 CON + 4d6 BODY Drain/Phase Side Effect, Expendable Focus or Sacrifice (-½) [75]	7

Trokin's Reluctant Journey

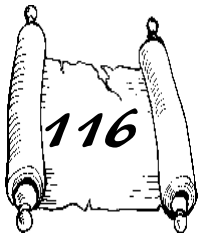
The Chaos Lord Trokin, a mischievous but generally well intentioned meddler, enjoys using this spell to humiliate opponents. A few other powerful entities have learned this spell as well. For combatants without ranged attacks or high movement rates, the spell can at least take them out of a fight for a Phase or two—which can change the strategic balance of a fight completely. If Trokin feels the need to get serious, it can use the spell to teleport a non-flying opponent straight up into the air (for 10d6 damage when they hit) or Hold its action to teleport one opponent into another opponent's attack. The defense against this attack is to have teleportation Powers of one's own, plus a DEX Roll.

The special effect for Trokin's Reluctant Journey is a pair of disks of iridescent light. One sweeps across the target, making him disappear; the other disk mimics the first disk's movement somewhere else, where the target reappears.

Cost	Powers	END
60	15" Teleport, Use vs. other (+1), Ranged (+½), -½ Var Lim [75]	7

Vortex Of Banishment

This thoroughly obnoxious spell sends the target to another dimension, which for most beings means they will never be seen again (or for supervillains, that they won't return until several adventures later). The dimension chosen will usually be one that is very dangerous, to make doubly sure the target won't come back.



So powerful an effect simply cannot be applied to maximum effect, or it will be the end of the campaign. First, there has to be *some* defense against this attack, although the PCs might not know it at first. Second, it's ironclad tradition that beings with power on this level are also selectively stupid. They never select a dimension which will mean instant death for the heroes. While the dimension of banishment may have mystic properties which prevent a simple EDM escape, the heroes can always find a way out eventually, either because of an ancient, hidden Gate, by combining their powers, or with the help of some entity living in the dimension.

Cost	Powers	END
72	Extra Dimensional Movement: One Plane, x4 Mass (30 pts), Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged (+½), 1 Hex AE, -½ Var Lim [90]	9

Wizardbane Web

This potent spell completely removes a wizard's ability to cast one particular spell, which the caster specifies when they cast the Web. A wizard can strip away an opponent's magic powers, one by one, through repeated use of this spell. Mercifully, the Web cannot remove a spell that the caster doesn't know the target has.

The Web appears as a tangle of purple-red strands that wrap around the target and disappear. The power used is a Power Transform (as described in Chapter One): take the points rolled on the Transform dice, subtract the target's Power Defense, multiply by 5, and compare the result to the Active Points of the spell to be stripped away. If the result is twice the spell's Active Points, the target can no longer use that spell.

Cost	Powers	END
60	4d6 major Transform vs. Power, Remove Any 1 Magic Power (+¼), -½ Var Lim [75]	7

Word Of Unmaking

This is an attack of ultimate power. It calls upon the Solipsist, the Avatar of Unbeing, to de- create the target. Not only will the target be destroyed, it will *never have existed!* (The "retroactive" aspects are gradual and unreliable, though: it takes several days for all the memories and records of an unmade thing to disappear, and a few strong-willed people might remember its existence. The caster always remembers things unmade.) The spell comes in two versions, one for small targets and one to unmake everything in an area.

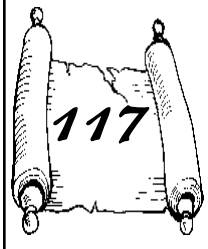
Few sorcerers have the power to cast the Word, and few of them are so corrupt as to use it. Most sorcerers regard the Word of Unmaking as a crime against reality. Even many villainous mages will seek to destroy the Word's user—as a matter of self preservation, if nothing else. Mages who follow the sinister creed of the Black School, however, regard the Word of Unmaking as the sacred pinnacle of magic: they claim that by annihilating things, they free them from the bounds of Time and Space to become one with the Absolute.

The Word of Unmaking poses further dangers, too. Its use requires great precision. Any disruption of the spell's casting will turn its effects against the caster. It is not impossible that the caster could be caught within the area version and be unable to escape.

What's more, unmaking things can have far-reaching consequences. Reality will try to accommodate, but the greater the causal ties a target has to the rest of the world, the more serious the wrenching will be. Unmaking an ordinary person or a patch of desert probably won't affect the rest of the world much. Unmaking a world leader or the Empire State Building would severely twist reality: many people would remember the change, and all sorts of weird disruptions of time and matter would occur.

Once the Word is started, it keeps running until its target has been annihilated. It is too powerful to dispel. The only spell that would stand a chance of stopping the Word of Unmaking would be the Loom of Space with an appeal to Adam Kadmon, the One Who Is All.

Cost	Powers	END
35	Multipower (95 pt pool), -½ Var Lim, 1 Phase Extra Time (-½), Side Effect: Caster Annihilated if Spell Disrupted (-1)	
6u	1 ½d6 Transform, NND: Hardened Power Defense (+1), Cumulative, Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END to maintain, Hard to Dispel x1 (+¼), x3 END (-1) [109]	33
2u	1d6 Transform, NND: Hardened Power Defense (+1), Cumulative, Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END to maintain, Hard to Dispel x1 (+¼), 6"x16 Radius AE (+2), x3 END [94]	27



Ritual Magic: Hermetic Theurgy

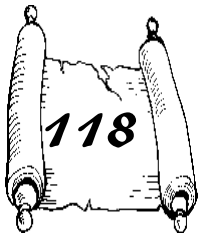
I invoke, conjure and command thee, O Spirit N., to appear and show thyself visibly before this circle, in fair and comely shape, without deformity or guile, by the Name of ON; by the name Y and V, which Adam heard and spake; by the name of JOTH, which Jacob learned from the Angel on the night of his wrestling and was delivered from the hands of his brother Esau; by the Name of God AGLA, which Lot heard and was saved with his family; by the Name ANEHEXETON, which Aaron spake and was made wise; by the Name SCHEMES AMATHIA, which Joshua invoked and the Sun stayed upon his course…

—*Lemegeton* (Lesser Key of Solomon)

Hermetic Theurgy is the dominant European form of Ritual Magic, built up over the course of 2000 years. Occultists have never agreed on a name for the European tradition of ritual magic. Many just call it "Magick," with the "k" to distinguish it from stage illusions. (The most pretentious occultists even tack on a silent "e" at the end.) The name given in this work, "Hermetic Theurgy," comes from the history of Western magic.

The Neoplatonists were the first Europeans to propose a complete theory of how magic worked. They used Theurgy ("God-Working") to obtain visions of the gods and draw divine power down to Earth. At about the same time, Jewish mystics created Kabbalism, which likewise offered visions of God and control of spirits. Christianity suppressed Theurgy, but in the Renaissance, Europe discovered the ancient world's magic as well as its art, law and science. Theurgic and Gnostic texts such as the *Picatrix* and *The Emerald Tablet* were called the "Corpus Hermeticum" because supposedly they had been written by Hermes Trismegistos ("Thrice-Great Hermes"), either the actual god or a mighty Egyptian wizard of the same name. The Renaissance occultists called themselves "Hermetic Philosophers"—calling oneself a philosopher was a lot safer than calling oneself a wizard!

The Hermetic and Kabbalistic occultists strongly influenced the writers of grimoires such as the *Key of Solomon,* but Kabbalism itself remained little known until the 19th century. 19th and 20th century occultists such as Eliphas Levi and Aleister Crowley later added Kabbalism and older Theurgic ideas such as the Astral Plane and pagan gods to the magic of the grimoires, to make modern Western Mainstream Occultism: hence, Hermetic Theurgy.



Hermetic Theurgy can be used as a pattern for other styles of Ritual Magic, such as Taoist magic or Tibetan Tantric magic. The particular Foci will differ, as will the relative emphasis on Gestures, Incantations and other elements, but that's just window dressing. The technical differences between styles of Ritual Magic do not matter much in game terms.

Magic Theory

Some people assert that the feelings and conceptions of our souls can by the force of the imagination be rendered volatile and corporeal, so that, in accordance with their quality, they can be carried up to certain planets and, affected and strengthened by the power of the planet, they will come down again to us and will obey us in whatever we want.

—Fabio Paolini, *Hebdomades*

Modern Western magic takes its theoretical base from astrology, kabbalism and the Theurgic notion of an astral plane where spirits dwell. Renaissance astrologers decided that rather than predicting absolute destinies, the planets radiated a mysterious influence which predisposed events on Earth to happen in various ways. For instance, a committee of savants blamed the coming of the Black Death on an especially baleful conjunction. Kabbalism gave each planet a ruling angel or demon who might be invoked to increase that planet's effect on a magical operation. Kabbalism's hierarchies of angels, heavens and "emanations" from God gave an acceptable, Judeo-Christian way to interpret the spiritual dimensions where Theurgy said the gods dwelled. The old Theurgists identified these levels of the Astral Plane with the crystal spheres around the Earth which held the stars and planets—neatly returning to astrology.

Self-proclaimed modern mages have *very reluctantly admitted* that the Sun and planets do not orbit the Earth in crystal spheres, and so their power is seldom invoked directly. Instead, occultists invoke the "sephiroth" (divine emanations) of kabbalism. The sephiroth, however, have been matched with the various planets, and so have acquired their associated gems, metals, perfumes and other correspondences: thus the astrological core remains. Tarot cards, pagan gods, kabbalistic angels and other mystic ideas further extend this mammoth, tangled web of symbolism. The kabbalistic "Tree of Life" (a diagram of the sephiroth) serves as a filing system.

Through intensive concentration on these symbols, the magician creates a "thought-form" on the Astral Plane. Whether the symbols of astrology, kabbalism and pagan gods refer to external powers or aspects of the unconscious mind is deemed irrelevant. What matters is that these symbols are channels of energy which can charge a thought-form with enough power to affect the physical world. Raising enough power, however, requires lengthy rituals.

Once a magician has built a spell out of thought-forms, they can fire off the spell right away or store it for later use. In Hermetic Theurgy the most popular method is to bind the spell to a talisman. Once consecrated this way, the talisman can be used again and again. Another option is to personify the spell as a spirit which serves the magician or which confers a magic power the magician can then use at will. Again, whether the magician has summoned a real spirit or just imagined one doesn't matter: the power *acts* as if it were a spirit. In these ways, Hermetic Theurgists use long ceremonies to gain magical powers they can use later at a moment's notice.

Powers And Modifiers

While the description of how Ritual Magicians "store" their magic might seem to imply that they buy all their spells with Delayed Effect, it's not so. The ritual to gain the spell—to consecrate the talisman, bind the spirit, or whatever—is just a plot device to add "color" to the character's powers. Once the magic wand or talisman has been made, it can be used indefinitely; it's just a Power on a Focus. Once the spirit has been summoned and it has granted a gift of power, it doesn't have to be summoned over and over again.

Actually, the Theurgist's use of "stored" magic imposes *Limitations*, not Advantages. Many traditions insist that a magician needs special Foci to cast spells. Incantations are common to invoke the spirits. Gestures are pretty traditional too: waving the magic wand or the ritual "god-form" postures used to invoke pagan gods. Charges can represent a magical Focus that only carries a certain amount of energy, or a power one is forbidden to use more than a certain number of times per day. Perhaps a ritual only gives one a magical power for a limited time, and the ceremony must be performed every day.

Non-combat spells such as summonings, divinations and exorcisms can have their cost reduced by insisting on a full ritual each time the spell is cast. In this case, not only are Gestures, Incantations and Foci practically obligatory, the spell also takes Extra Time and perhaps Concentration or Increased END Cost. Some powerful spells might even take the Limitation that they can only be cast at a special time or place. Such "ritual conditions" can be as simple as "Only at Night" or "Only in a Church" (suggested value: -½) to "Only on a Mountaintop, At Midnight, with the Full Moon in Pisces" (at least -3).

Just like Thaumaturges, the best of all Limitations for Hermetic Theurgists to take is Variable Limitations. This way they can have a "preferred method" for casting their spells, which lets them act as effectively in combat as any other hero or villain. Theurgists, however, must take a bigger Limitation.

Remember that Variable Limitation shouldn't be a carte blanche to take any old Limitation at will: the player and GM should define a "standard" set of Limitations and a list of acceptable substitutions ahead of time. (See "Variable Limitation" in Chapter Two for further discussion.)

Disadvantages Of Hermetic Theurgy

If the character can only use Hermetic Theurgy and can never learn spells or use magic items of other magical styles, they get a 10 point Magic Restriction: a broad style, imposing minor restrictions (large Variable Limitations; spells weaken outside the Quaternion). Since Hermetic Theurgy is itself a fairly broad style with many borrowings from other styles, no Hermetic Theurgist has to take any Magic Limitation if they don't want to.

Specialized substyles (such as only Tarot magic or only planetary magic) may impose another 5 points in Magic Restriction to reflect their narrowness.

Hermetic Theurgists should also take a Physical Limitation as a Vow: they must keep up a schedule of rituals and consecrations to maintain their power. Since this rarely interferes with adventuring, this is only worth a *small* Disadvantage. This is worth 5 points if they lose power slowly from not keeping up their schedule of rituals (such as losing 2d6 Active Points from each spell per day, or suffering a progressively worse Activation Roll). If the loss is more severe, the Vow may be worth 10 points, or even 15 points if the character loses their magic completely an Infrequent event, but Totally limiting.

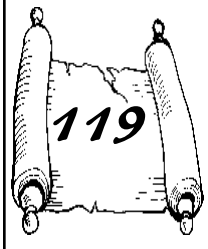
Style Notes

For the evocation of the genii who served the Old Man of the Pyramid it suffices to say: THOMASOS, BENESSER, FLIANTER. You are then liable to be encompassed by thirty-three several intelligences. To obtain their consideration say: LITAN, IZER, OSNAS, and they will bow down before you, individually remarking: NANTHER.

—The Black Pullet

The literature of the Western occult tradition gives a wealth of information for GMs and players who want to add color to Hermetic Theurgist characters. Admittedly, one must sift through a lot of garbage to find the good stuff, but a little cribbing from the grimoires can add verisimilitude.

The Special Effects of Hermetic Theurgy spells should reflect their occult background. For many spells, the Special Effect is actually that of a spirit appearing to perform some action. Another possible effect is glowing symbols appearing in the air: Hebrew letters for kabbalistic and angelic spells, astrological symbols for planetary magic, flaming sigils of demon lords for demonic magic, and so on.



Talismans

Broadly speaking, a "Talisman" is a small object which confers some magical power on its bearer. If the talisman's power is passive, protective and continuous, the talisman is an "Amulet." Amulets and talismans can be as simple as a four-leaf clover, or as elaborate as an engraved and jeweled pendant.

Amulets and talismans were originally believed to get their powers from their materials, their shape and the words, pictures and symbols drawn upon them. In the 19th century, occultists such as Eliphas Levi and the Golden Dawn decided that a talisman actually got its power from the labor of its creation: in shaping the talisman and consecrating it in a ritual, magicians impressed their own psychic force on the talisman and directed it to some particular goal. The materials, form and symbols were just devices to set the magician in the right frame of mind. A talisman made of cardboard would work as well as one made of gold and gems.

Consecrating a talisman is one of the chief spell casting methods of modern magic. Modern talismans are usually just simple hand-held disks, squares or other shapes, bearing magic sigils and sacred names. Some magicians include Bible verses written in Hebrew. Other traditional forms for talismans include rings, brooches and pendants. All the details of the consecration ritual—the colors of the talisman, the time of the ritual, the incense burned and more—are chosen according to complicated systems of astrological and kabbalistic correspondences.

Most talismans can be assumed to be Universal Foci: any sorcerer (at least, any Hermetic) can use any talisman if they make a Spell Research roll, although talismans quickly burn out when used by anyone but their creator. Its maker can keep a talisman working indefinitely by repeating its consecration every few months. Some sorcerers, however, might make talismans which no one else can use.

True Summoning

The acme of Hermetic Theurgy is to summon a spirit into visible, solid manifestation. Angels and demons are the most powerful spirits available to a Hermetic Theurgist, but also the most dangerous to summon. They require especially intricate rituals. Just making the tools for such rituals can take months. Even the tools for making the tools must be handmade and consecrated! Thus a ritual magician must make their own sword, knife, sickle, wand, staff, bell, trident, trumpet, pen, ink, cloth, paper and book. Without such elaborate preparations, however, a summoned demon could escape the pentacle and destroy the magician. Elementals and other spirits aren't quite so dangerous to summon, and so require less preparation, but no summoning is ever completely safe.

In game terms, then, a Hermetic Theurgist will usually buy the Summoning power with massive Limitations: Bulky Foci (to represent the numerous tools involved), lots of Extra Time, Concentration, Incantations, the Side Effect of an outraged and unbound spirit if the ritual is interrupted, and perhaps even an Activation Roll to reflect that it's so easy to make a mistake in such a complicated project.

If a Hermetic Theurgist wants a spirit they can summon at will to fight or serve, standard practice is to summon the spirit in a full ceremony, bind it to serve and then key it to a talisman. By invoking the talisman, the sorcerer can make the spirit instantly appear to fulfill its obligation. In game terms this is a Summoning power bought through a Focus, probably with Charges and Incantations.

Names And Words Of Power

Most styles of Ritual Magic include "Words of Power," secret words which rouse the spirits to action, and Hermetic Theurgy is no exception. The best Words of Power are the secret names of the gods and spirits themselves. Hebrew kabbalists carried this idea to its ultimate conclusion. According to some kabbalists, every object, force and process in the Universe is under the control of its own special angel. If one knows the name of an angel, one can control it—and thereby control whatever the angel controls.

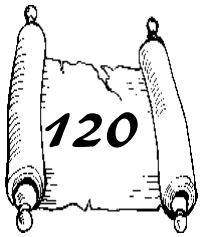
If one could not find the name of the requisite angel, one could still employ the ineffable Names of God. Much of kabbalism was actually devoted to searching for divine Names hidden in the Pentateuch. So powerful was the name YHVH that even the term used to describe it—*Tetragrammaton*, literally "Four Letter Word"—became a Word of Power.

Names and Words of Power, then, make a great way for a Hermetic Theurgist to cast spells. A spell can be keyed to a word, such as the name of an angel. The spell goes off when the caster incants the name. The spell itself might be personified as a spirit with a name, and so by calling the name of the spell spirit one calls it forth to act.

In game terms, this is simply a power with the Incantations Limitation. Other Limitations are optional. The sorcerer will still have to expend END, of course, unless the spell was bought with Charges or 0 END. Nor does the spell necessarily have the Trigger or Delayed Effect Advantages, although this is a great excuse for such spells. Usually, activating the latent spell with a Word of Power is just a special effect.

Traditional Foci

Hermetic Theurgists use many special tools in their rituals, and any of these might be further consecrated to carry magic powers, in the manner of talismans. Each of these tools must be separately consecrated by passing it through the smoke from special incense or sprinkling it with consecrated water. Most of them have various mystic sigils drawn on them as well. All in all they are a fair handful. A wizard who uses diverse Foci for spells can still take a single Focus Limitation: the Focus is the satchel in which they carry all their tools.



These are the major implements:

ASPERGILLUS: A device for sprinkling holy water or other liquid. Normally it's used to consecrate other tools. Sometimes it is a bundle of dried herbs.

ALTHAME: A ceremonial dagger. Athames are used for breaking magical connections, banishing hostile forces and other aggressive magical acts.

BACULUM: A magic wand that's been to college. See WAND.

CENSER: A bowl with some charcoal and incense burning in it. Hermetic rituals need special incenses depending on their purpose. Not only does the incense help set a mood, spirits can form temporary bodies out of the smoke.

CHALICE: A consecrated cup, also called a GRAIL. Used, naturally enough, for containing and receiving—often literally, as a container for sacred oil or filled with water for scrying.

CROWN or HAT: A symbol of authority. In the *Key of Solomon* the Crown is just a paper circlet bearing the inevitable symbols. The mask of a costume could be consecrated as a Crown (hint, hint).

PENTACLE (1): Another name for a talisman.

PENTACLE (2): Also called a MAGIC CIRCLE, although not all of them are circular. The classic five point star (the Pentagram) is just the best known example; pentacles in grimoires are usually much more elaborate, and may include candles, braziers, bundles of herbs or such exotically noxious substances as the skull of a parricide and a bat drowned in blood.

Magic circles serve two functions. First, they concentrate and direct the energies of the ritual. Second, they protect the wizard from hostile entities, either by keeping them outside the pentacle or by keeping them inside a designated part of the diagram.

RING: For summoning some spirits, the magician needs special protection in the form of a magic ring. Rings make an excellent form for talismans, too (Inaccessible Foci).

ROBE/COSTUME: Hermetic magic demands special dress for its rituals. The traditional mage's costume was based on an old-time scholar's gown, but modern mages can be more up to date with their symbolic garb ("Obey, spirit! By the Power Tie of Solomon, I command it!").

SWORD: Like an athame, only more so, a sword is used to threaten reluctant spirits, or attack hostile ones. It doesn't have to touch its target: the weapon symbolism is enough. The grimoires unanimously say that ceremonial swords must be made of unalloyed metal.

WAND: Wands are symbols of authority, like the bishop's crozier or the monarch's scepter. They are used to summon and direct magic forces. A Hermetic wizard will probably have several wands, of different designs for different purposes.

Sample Hermetic Theurgy Spells

In most of the sample spells, it is assumed that characters use at least a -1 Variable Limitation. Some spells have fixed Limitations as examples of more restrictive substyles; for instance, spells based on talismans or Tarot cards. Any of them can be rewritten to have different Limitations if one so desires.

Attack Spells

Angelic Attack Spells

According to Kabbalism, everything in the Universe, from each speck of dust to stars and planets themselves, is under the control of an angel. By properly invoking an angel, one can influence whatever is under that angel's control. More precisely, one can invoke one's personal Holy Guardian Angel and make it convey one's commands to the angel controlling the phenomenon.

The old rabbis recorded the names and powers of dozens of angels, far too many to describe in detail. Instead, several of the more important "elemental angels" will be listed, with the phenomenon they control. Creating specific powers is left, as they say, as an exercise for the reader. Such powers would carry the Incantation Limitation, but everything else is negotiable.

BARADIEL: hail

BARAKIEL: lightning

DUMIEL: silence

GABRIEL: fire

KOCHBIEL: darkness

MATHARIEL: rain

RA'AMIEL: thunder

RA'ASHIEL: earthquake

RACHAB: the sea

RUACHIEL: wind

SAWAEL: whirlwind

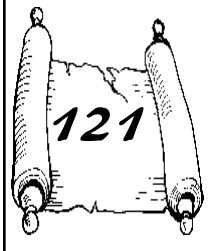
SHAMSHIEL: daylight

SHALGIEL: snow

Atavistic Attacks

The Ritual Magician's control of spirits may include the deliberate creation and control of atavisms. In the Western tradition, use of atavisms has always been regarded as black magic, and so has been little documented.

The French novelist J. K. Huysmans, however, found himself in the middle of a long-distance battle between atavism-employing sorcerers: the famous "Battle of Bewitchment" between Abbe' Boullan (leader of the Vintrasian cult) and the Marquis Stanislas de Guaita. Huysmans described the symptoms of atavistic attack as extreme anxiety, bruises, smears of slime, the smell of rotting meat, "poltergeist" activity, spontaneous small fires and the sound of the strange "astral Bell," ranging from a clear bell like tone to a faint click. The



atavism itself is invisible except to the victim and any nearby "clairvoyant" persons (i.e. anyone with Mental/Astral Awareness).

While the various forms of atavistic attack can be used close up, it is really most useful cast at a distance and targeted through Mind Scanning, as was done in the "Battle of Bewitchment."

Cost	Powers	END
40	Multipower (60 pt pool), -1 Var Lim (-½)	
4u	6d6 Ego Attack [60]	6
4u	3d6 Ego Attack, Continuous [60]	6
4u	1d6 RKA, BODY BOECV (+2), Invisible to Sight (+½), +1 STUN Mult (+½) [60]	6

Egyptian Soul Magic

The Greek Theurgists drew heavily on the ancient magic of Egypt. The Egyptian priest-magicians had made profound study of the human soul, and from this derived many potent spells. The catch was that Egyptian magic took a long time to cast, requiring long prayers, consecrated images and other impedimenta. In the last 2 centuries, the rediscovery of ancient Egyptian culture by archeologists has led to a revival of interest in ancient Egyptian magic as well. Modern Hermetic Theurgists have refined the Egyptian spells into subtle and powerful magical attacks.

The Egyptians believed that human beings had more than just a body and soul: there was the *ka*, or spirit double; the *ba*, the breath or life force; the *ib* or heart, the conscience which would be judged by Osiris; the *sekhem*, which was both will and magical power; and several others. Many spells operated by restraining or loosing various of these aspects of the spirit, in an opponent or in oneself.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Asphyxiate/Bind Ba: 4d6 EB, Based on ECV (+1), Continuous [60]	6
4u	Force Truth/Invoke Ib: 12d6 Telepathy [60]	6
4u	Quell Sekhem: 3d6 Suppress, vs. EGO, PRE & All Spells (+2), Uncontrolled for 1 minute, 0 END to maintain [60]	6
4u	Project Possessing Ka: 18 STR TK, Based on ECV (+1), ½ END [61]	3

Julianic Soul Disjunction

Classical Theurgy was founded by Julianus the Chaldean, author of the *Chaldean Oracles,* and his son Julianus the Theurgist. The older Julianus could make the souls of other people leave and re-enter their bodies. The younger Julianus turned this into a rather peculiar attack spell, by making the target's soul move *partly* out of their body, and stick there. For instance, the body still stands vertically, but the soul (which contains the victim's point of view and sense of where their body ought to be) is spun about horizontally. This greatly inhibits the soul's ability to control the body.

Cost	Powers	END
40	6d6 DEX Suppress, Uncontrolled (1 minute), 0 END to maintain, -1 Var Lim [60]	6

Physical Phantasms Of Simon Magus

Simon Magus, the con-man wizard whose pretensions of godhood were fatally punctured by the Apostles, was nevertheless one of the ancient world's greatest masters of illusion. In fact, he was so skillful he could make his illusions real. Simon's discoveries have survived to the present day as masterpieces of the illusionist's art.

Simon's phantasms include four spells useful for combat:

His Malison of Madness causes perpetual hallucinations; these are only "cosmetic" changes to the environment, but they are patterned by the victim's own fears and can make effective action difficult. If used from surprise, even strong-willed people can be affected. It can be broken through Mind Control, Mental Illusions or Telepathy at EGO+20 effect, as well as Dispels.

The Apparitional Attack creates an illusionary attack with real effects. It could be a bolt of flame, a pack of vicious, biting dogs, or virtually anything else.

The Forceful Phantasm materializes "spirits"—traditionally angels or demons—which do what the caster wills.

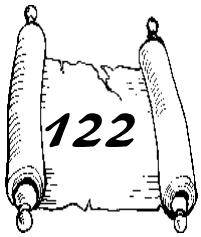
Finally, the Etherealization spell makes real things imaginary. As its BODY drops, the target turns wavery and transparent, until it vanishes completely. Instead of Power Defense, Mental Defense blocks this attack, since a strong-willed person can force themself to stay real. (See "AVLD" in the chapter on Powers for more discussion of this.)

Other, non-combat versions of Simon's Physical Phantasms are found in the Miscellaneous Spells section.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Etherealization: 2 ½d6 BODY Drain, Ranged, Continuous, Blocked by Mental Defense, not Power Defense (+0) [62]	6
4u	Apparitional Attack: 2 ½d6 RKA, Variable Special Effect (+½) [60]	6
4u	Malison of Madness: 6d6 minor Transform vs. EGO [60]	6
4u	Forceful Phantasm: 26 STR Telekinesis w/Fine Manipulation, ½ END [61]	3

Talisman Of Havoc

This is one of a set of talismans described in *The Black Pullet.* According to that grimoire, this talisman will cause all manner of destruction, including earthquakes, storms and hail, but can also be used to protect one's friends. The talisman is made of poppy-red satin embroidered with silver; the magician must also wear a ring engraved with certain characters, and say a different magic word to activate each function of the talisman.



Cost	Powers	END
28	Multipower (62 pt pool), OAF Talisman, Incantations	
3u	Hail: 5d6 EB, Indirect (+½), 4" Radius AE (+1) [62]	6
2u	Earthquake: 4d6 EB, x2 Knockback (+3/4), 8" Radius AE (+1 ¼), Only vs. things touching ground (-1) [60]	6
2u	Storm Winds: 13 STR TK, Continuous, 4" Radius AE (+1), ½ END, No Punch/Squeeze (-¼) [62]	3
2u	Destruction: 4d6 RKA, Only vs. Rigid Structures (-1) [60]	6
2u	Protection: 12 PD, 12 ED Armor, Use by Self or 1 Other (+¼), Uncontrolled, 4 Charges of 5 Minutes (-0) Cost END [63]	6

Tarot-Based Spells

The Tarot cards have gone far beyond mere fortune telling to become a central part of general occult symbolism. Modern theurgists have found that Tarot cards make excellent talismans. The 22 "Major Arcana" are best since they have the most vivid symbolism, but in some decks (notably the "Thoth" deck designed by Aleister Crowley) all the cards have distinctive illustrations. The spells below are merely examples. Not all of the spells are attacks, but enough are that the whole set might as well be filed in this section.

Cost	Powers	END
31	Multipower (62 pt pool), OAF Tarot cards	
3u	The Fool: 6d6 INT Suppress, Uncontrolled for 1 minute, 0 END to maintain [60]	6
1u	The Magician: 5d6 Aid, to Any 1 Spell (+¼) [31]	3
3u	The Emperor: 12d6 Mind Control [60]	6
3u	The Chariot: 12" Flight, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged (+½) [60]	6
8u	The Chariot: 13" Flight, Use with 3 Others (+3/4), ½ END, x8 Non-combat [72]	1/10"
1u	The Hermit: Invisibility vs. Detect Magic & All Vision [30]	3
3u	The Wheel of Fortune: Missile Reflection +6 vs. All Ranged, +2 Return OCV [62]	
3u	Strength: 5d6 Suppress, vs. Any 1 S pell (+¼), Personal Immunity, Uncontrolled for 1 minute, 0 END to maintain [62]	6
3u	Death: 4d6 BODY Drain, Ranged [60]	6
3u	Temperance: Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 10 MD, 10 PowD), Uncontrolled for 1 minute, 0 END to maintain [60]	6
3u	The Tower Struck By Lightning: 4d6 RKA [60]	6
3u	The Moon: Images vs. Hearing & All Vision, 7 PER, 2" Radius (+¼), ½ END [61]	3
3u	The Sun: 3d6 Flash vs. Vision, 3" Radius AE (+1) [60]	6
3u	The Last Judgement: 12d6 Telepathy [60]	6

Tetahatia's Blinding Darkness

The grimoire called *Armadel* describes a series of potent spirits which can confer all manner of powers and secret knowledge on their summoner. The angel Tetahatia lets the magician create a field of utter darkness. The magician may cast this spell using a talisman bearing Tetahatia's sigil, or by other means such as calling on Tetahatia while gesturing and intensively visualizing the angel's sigil. A copy of the sigil appears in the air and waves of darkness roll out from it.

Cost	Powers	END
41	5" radius Darkness vs. normal vision, ½ END, -1 Var Lim [62]	3

Thavael's Plant Mastery

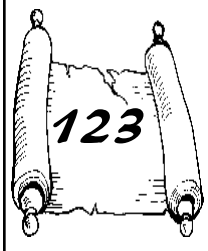
Another spirit from the *Armadel* promises to confer all the secret lore of plants. Successfully evoking the spirit Thavael would be a great excuse for a character to buy Knowledge Skills such as Herbal Medicine or Occult Herbalism. The *Armadel* doesn't mention that Thavael can also confer some flashier powers relating to plants. These spells let the wizard animate and control local plant life for various forms of attack.

These spells are most easily used in locations where plant life is plentiful. "Need Plentiful Plant Life" as a Limitation can fill -½ worth of the Variable Limitation because there are many circumstances in which vegetation _won't_ be plentiful: flying, on a boat, on most city streets, and so on. If there is no plant life nearby for the wizard to animate, the spells are more difficult to cast (because the wizard must scrape together other Limitations); the necessary vegetation sprouts from a glowing copy of the sigil.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Clutching Vegetation: 4d6 Entangle, Indirect (+½) [60]	6
4u	Choking Vegetation: 3d6 EB, NND: LS: Breathing or Rigid Neck Protection (+1), Uncontrolled for 1 turn, Continuous, 0 END to Maintain [60]	6
4u	Animate Plants: 23 STR TK, Indirect (+½), ½ END [59]	3
2u	Cracking Roots: 4d6 RKA, Only vs. Rigid Masses (-1) [60]	6

Zyto's Annoying Alterations

The trickster-wizard Zyto of Bohemia was best known for his mastery of illusion but, like Simon Magus, some of his illusions were powerful enough they became real. One of Zyto's most notorious spells was one to cause minor physical changes to his victims. The tale is told how Zyto got revenge on nobles who had insulted him at court by standing out in the castle courtyard and shouting "Fire, fire!" When the offending nobles stuck their heads out the window to see what was going on, Zyto conjured stag's horns on them, so they couldn't pull their heads back in. The transformations caused by this spell do not, in and of themselves, harm the victim in any way—but as the



story shows, they can still be quite effective in the right circumstances.

Cost	Powers	END
41	10d6 cosmetic Transform, Any non-impairing minor change to victim's body (+¼), -1 Var Lim (-½) [62]	6

Planet-Based Spells

Each of the planets bears certain traditional associations in Western occultism, which suggest the powers that can be gained by invoking each planet. As usual, the planetary energies can be stored in talismans or invoked by other means. These sample spells are drawn from the general character of each planet rather than any specific claim from a grimoire.

Not every sorcerer who employs planetary magic will know spells for every planet, or every spell listed for any particular planet. The spells are just typical examples, showing the sort of effects a sorcerer could get from each planet.

The various magical associations of each planet were first definitively set forth by the Late Renaissance German occultist, Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, and no later occultist has substantially disagreed with him. Since Agrippa, however, three more planets have been discovered. The discovery of Uranus, the first planet beyond Saturn, threw astrology into a spin from which it has yet to recover. Associations for the outer planets are still shaky, and few sorcerers try using them. In the real world, astrologers haven't even suggested metals or colors for the new planets. Magicians haven't agreed on Sephirothic attributions for the outer planets, either.

The most popular theory is that new planets take their mystical character from the dominant trends on Earth at the time of their discovery. (Well, from the dominant trends in the *Western world* at the time of their discovery. Apparently, Asia and Africa don't count in Western astrology. Asian astrologers return the favor by steadfastly ignoring the new planets.) Each of the three outer planets seems like a more intense version of one of the inner planets; the inner planet is raised to a "higher octave," in the words of one astrologer.

Sun Magic

The Sun is associated with light, will and the life force; it is considered a beneficial "planet." Its element is Fire, its metal gold (no surprise) and its color yellow. The Sun is associated with Tiphereth on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.

By invoking the Sun, magicians can not only create brightly luminous magical attacks, they can heal, render people somewhat resistant to magic, enhance the magic of their friends and banish spells which call on Dark Forces such as demons.

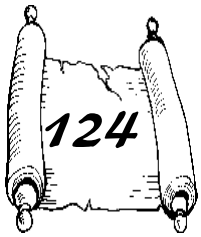
Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Sun Bolt I: 8d6 EB, AP [60]	6
4u	Sun Bolt II: 8d6 EB, Affects Desolid (+½) [60]	6
4u	Sun Bolt III: 5d6 EB, AVLD: Flash Defense vs. Vision (+1 ½) [62]	6
4u	Flare: 3d6 Flash vs. Vision, 3" Radius AE (+1) [60]	6
4u	Banish Dark Forces: 16d6 Dispel, vs. Any Darkness or Demonic Magic (+¼) [60]	6
4u	Enhance Magic: 7d6 Aid, vs. Any 1 Spell (+¼), Ranged [61]	6
2u	Solar Ward: Force Field (12 PD, 12 ED, 6 MD, 6 PowD), Use by 1 Other (+¼), Uncontrolled, ½ END, Only vs. Magic (-1) [60]	3
2u	Illumination: Change Environment: Sunlight, 4" radius, Uncontrolled 0 END to maintain [30]	3
1u	Healing: 5d6 Aid, vs. Any Characteristic (+¼), Restore Only (-½) [31]	3

Moon Magic

In Western astrology, the Moon is associated with change and things which change: emotions, mirages, illusions and magic itself. It is a feminine planet, often considered quite sinister, or at least ambiguous. Its element is Water, its metal is silver and its color is white. On the Tree of Life, its place is in Yesod.

The Moon's fluid power is chiefly invoked in spells of illusion and transformation. Lunar energies are also used to increase or decrease the power of other spells, or for secrecy.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Moon Mirage I: 12d6 Mental Illusions [60]	6
4u	Moon Mirage II: Images vs. Normal Hearing, All Vision, 10 PER, ½ END [62]	3
4u	Transmutation: 2d6+1 Physical Transform, Any Substance, Same Shape (+¼), Cumulative [61]	6
4u	Inflict Lunacy: 2d6+1 Transform vs. EGO, Cause Any Insanity (+¼), Cumulative [61]	6
4u	Alter Spell: 3d6+1 Power Transform, to Any Similar Power (+¼) [62]	6
4u	Spell Waning: 3 ½d6 Drain, vs. Any 1 Magic Effect (+¼), Ranged [61]	6
2u	Spell Waxing: 5d6 Aid, vs. Any 1 Magic Effect (+¼) [31]	3



Mercury Magic

The swift motion of Mercury led to associations with thought, travel, exploration, the element of Air and the metal mercury or quicksilver. Its color is gray and its sepher is Hod. Superficially, Mercury seems quite an innocent planet, but its qualities of restlessness and impersonal, abstract thought give it an amoral aspect. Mages invoke Mercury to gain information through mind-reading and various forms of Clairsentience. Mercury can also be used to build spells to move oneself or others quickly.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Wings of Mercury I: 15" Flight, ½ END, x64 NCM [62]	1/10"
4u	Wings of Mercury II: 13" Flight, Use w/Others x4 (+3/4), ½ END, x8 NCM [62]	1/10"
4u	Forcible Leap: 12" Flight, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged (+½) [60]	6
4u	Forcible Jump: 12" Teleport, Use vs. Other, Ranged [60]	6
4u	Hear Thought: 8d6 Telepathy, Invisible vs. Mental [60]	6
4u	Free Thinking: Clairsentience: Normal Sight, Hearing, Detect Magic, x16 Range (5 miles), ½ END [62]	3
4u	Roving Mind: 8d6 Mind Scanning, +11 ECV [62]	4
2u	Leap of Mercury: 15" Teleport [30]	1/5"
1u	Quicken Mind: 6d6 INT Aid [30]	3

Venus Magic

Brilliant Venus is associated with all things related to the goddess which gave it its name: love, beauty, pleasure, fertility and the gentler emotions. Its metal is copper, its element is Earth, its color green and its sepher Netzach.

Traditionally, the most aggressive application of Venerean energies has been the creation of love charms. Venus is more useful for calming opponents than overwhelming them. Yet Venus is not an entirely benevolent planet; it is also Lucifer the Morning Star. Venus can be used to manipulate and seduce.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
3u	Emotion Control: 12d6 Mind Control, Only for Emotions (-½) [60]	6
3u	Spread Peace: 7d6 Mind Control, Nonselective 4 Hexes AE (+3/4), Only to Stop Anger/Aggression (-½) [61]	6
3u	Plant Suggestion: 8d6 Mind Control, Var Trigger (+½), Only Emotions (-½) [60]	6
2u	Charisma: 8d6 PRE Aid, Invisible (+½), Self Only (-½), Only to Attract & Persuade (-1) [60]	6
3u	Healing: 3d6 Aid, to All Chars (+2), Ranged, Restore Only (-½), + LS: Disease, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged [59]	6

Mars Magic

From the most ancient times, the blood-hued planet has been associated with war and all violent emotions. Astrologers call it the "Lesser Maleficent" of the planets. Yet Mars also supplies courage, energy and force of will. It is more concretely associated with iron, fever, blood, the color red and the element of Fire. Its place on the Kabbalistic Tree is Pachad.

Magicians employ Mars for works of violence, hate and destruction. Mars-based attack spells use fire and iron for their special effects. Mars can also be used, however, for defense.

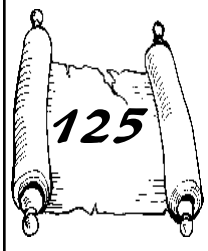
Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Fire Blast/Iron Javelin: 4d6 RKA [60]	6
4u	Flaming Sword: 2d6+1 HKA, AP, ½ END [61]	3
4u	Warrior's Power: 3d6 STR Aid + 3d6 DEX Aid, Lose 1 pt/minute (+½), Uncontrolled [60]	6
3u	Fever: 3d6 EB, NND: LS: Disease (+1), Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END to Maintain, 1 turn Gradual Effect/ increment (-½) [60]	6
3u	Enrage: 10d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal, Fixed Effect: Rage (-½) [62]	6
3u	Instill Courage: 5d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal, 6" Radius AE (+1 ¼), Fixed Effect: Courage (-½) [62]	6
2u	Iron Ward: Force Field (8 PD, 8 ED, 8 MD, 8 PowD), Hardened [30]	3

Jupiter Magic

The planet named for the King of the Gods carries associations of rulership, law and justice; also money, faith, morals, truth, the sky and weather. Its element is Air, its color blue and its metal tin. Magicians associate Jupiter with Chesed.

Although astrologers call Jupiter the "Greater Benevolent," the planet can be invoked for direct attacks through its association with storms. Jovian energies are also almost as good as Mercurial for getting at the truth. Finally, Jovian magic gives authority and power over others.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Lightning Bolt: 12d6 EB [60]	6
4u	Storms of Jove: 13 STR TK, ½ END, Personal Immunity, 24" Radius AE (+1 3/4) [62]	3
4u	Calm Tempest: Change Environment: No Wind, 32" Radius, Uncontrolled 0 END to Maintain [60]	6
3u	Command Confession: 12d6 Mind Control, Fixed Command: Tell the Truth (-½) [60]	6
3u	Penetrate Deception: +10 EGO; +10 Mental Defense, Hardened; + N Ray Vision; + 5 Enhanced N Ray PER; Only to Penetrate Mental Illusion, Images, Shape Shift, Etc. [62]	
4u	Reveal the Truth: 10d6 Suppress, vs. Any 1 Illusion or Deception Spell (+¼) [62]	6
2u	Dignify: 4d6 PRE Aid, Lose 1 PRE/ minute (+½) [30]	3



Saturn Magic

Slow moving Saturn has associations with time, slowness, weight, age and death. The ancients figured out that Saturn must be the outermost planet, adding associations with restriction and limitation. Its element is Earth, its metal the dull and heavy lead and its color black. On the Tree of Life, Binah receives Saturn.

Saturn is the "Greater Maleficent," the planet which binds and destroys. Yet Saturn has its purpose in the scheme of things: it forces people to face their own limitations and overcome them. Saturn also provides stability and perseverance.

Magicians, however, usually employ Saturn's darker aspects. Saturnine energies can be used to hinder, slow and restrain enemies, or for even deadlier effects.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Leaden Bonds: 6d6 Entangle [60]	6
4u	Weight of Time: 6d6 SPD Suppress, Uncontrolled (1 Minute), 0 END to Maintain [60]	6
4u	Weariness of Age: 6d6 END Suppress, Uncontrolled for 1 Minute, 0 END to maintain [60]	6
4u	Leaden Limbs: 3d6 Suppress, vs. DEX, SPD & All Movement Powers (+2), Uncontrolled for 1 Minute, 0 END to maintain [60]	6
4u	Wither: 2d6 BODY Drain, Regain 1 BODY/2 turns (+¼), Ranged, Continuous, ½ END [60]	3
2u	Stability of Saturn: Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 10 PowD), ½ END [31]	1

Uranus Magic

Uranus was discovered in 1781, when the Age of Reason bore the fruit of revolution and laid the foundations of modern science. Consequently Uranus governs science, technology, electricity and revolutionary change. Some occultists claim Uranus as their planetary patron as well. Its element is Air. In many ways Uranus echoes Mercury. Aluminum would seem like an appropriate metal: it was discovered just a few decades before Uranus and is manufactured using electricity.

The few mages who invoke the outer planets employ Uranus to control electricity, machinery and the spells of others. None of the yet-unassigned colors seem appropriate for Uranus, so it gets Transparence—no color at all, not even white. Alternatively, it gets orange, on the grounds that that's the only color left.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Surprising Reversal: Missile Deflection +6 vs. All Magic, to Any Target	
3u	Animate Machines: 25 STR TK w/ Fine Manipulation, ½ END, Only vs. machines (-½) [59]	3
3u	Call the Current: 2d6+1 RKA, Fully Indirect (+3/4), Only from Electrical Source/Machinery (-¼) [61]	6
2u	Detect Magic, Ranged, Discriminatory, +12 Telescopic [31]	

Neptune Magic

This planet was discovered in 1846, a time of confusion and uncertainty in Europe and America. Romanticism had reached its full hysteria; Communism, Anarchism and other -isms challenged the political Establishment; just two years later, a wave of abortive revolutions would sweep Europe. In many ways, Neptune is like the Moon: it is a planet of chaos and diffusion, governing mysticism, madness, dreams, gasses and other unbounded, indefinite things. This character makes Neptunian magic peculiarly difficult to defend against. Neptune's element is Water. Magnesium (extracted from sea water) might be an appropriate metal, and cyan (blue-green) an appropriate color.

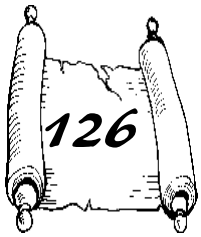
Cost	Powers	END
40	Multipower (60 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Inflict Sleep: 1 ½d6 STUN Drain, NND: Hardened Power Defense (+1), Uncontrolled (11-chance/turn to continue), Continuous 0 END to Maintain [60]	6
4u	Inflict Insanity: 1d6 Transform to Hebephrenic, Cumulative, Penetrating, Uncontrolled (1 minute) Continuous 0 END to Maintain [60]	6
4u	Gaseous Form: Desolidification, not vs. Wind Powers, 0 END [60]	0
2u	Dream Gate: EDM: Dreamzone, x4 Mass [30]	3

Pluto Magic

The newest and outermost planet—so far—was discovered in 1930. Scientists were penetrating the structure of the atom. Nazism, Fascism and Soviet totalitarianism were consolidating their power, setting the stage for the World War Two apocalypse.

Pluto has the traits of Mars, raised to fearsome intensity. Mars rules violence and war; Pluto rules holocaust and death. Mars governs willpower; Pluto governs mass movements, the "Triumph of the Will" over reason and conscience. Mars is fiery, but Pluto is *thermonuclear*, the planet of radical transformation. Pluto also carries associations with things which are "underground," literally or metaphorically, such as mines and tunnels, espionage, secrecy and treachery.

The perfect metals for Pluto would be plutonium or uranium, but platinum is pretty good too: the platinum family of metals fall right below the iron family of metals in the periodic table of elements—a fair analogy to iron, the metal of Mars, raised to "higher octave." As a suggestion, it receives purple, the dark hue of royalty and absolute power.



Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Transmutation: 2d6+1 Transform, to Any Substance (+¼), Cumulative [61]	6
4u	Disintegration: 1d6 RKA, BODY NND: LS: Radiation or Hardened Power Defense (+2), Continuous [60]	6
4u	Mass Appeal: 12d6 PRE Aid [60]	6
4u	Darkness of the Outer Void: 3" radius Darkness vs. Sense Magic/All Vision, Personal Immunity, ½ END [60]	3
2u	Open the Depths: 3", DEF 8 Tunneling [30]	1/5"

Spirit Summoner's Spell Package

Whatever type of spirit a Hermetic Theurgist summons, pretty much the same sort of spells will be needed: one to summon the desired type of spirit, one to bind it to service, and one to get rid of the spirit if binding doesn't work.

Conjure Spirit

This spell summons one class of spirits—demons, angels, elementals, atavisms, or what have you. Traditionally, summoning a spirit involves a lengthy ritual with a magic circle and all manner of paraphernalia. Super-mages can cut down the ritual somewhat, but the spell still takes at least a minute to cast, with Gestures, Incantations and Concentration. The Variable Limitation can be filled by Foci, more Extra Time, Increased END Cost, an Activation Roll and/or a Side Effect. The most distinctive Focus for Summoning in the European grimoires is the magic wand.

Note that by itself this spell merely *summons* the spirit. It gives no control whatsoever!

Cost	Powers	END
15	1 x 100 pt Summon Spirit, Var: Any Spirit of Class (+¼), -1 Var Lim, 1 minute Extra Time (-1 ½), Gestures, Incantations, Concentrate 0 DCV (-½) [62]	6

Bind Spirit

Once a spirit has been summoned, it must be bound into service. While there are several ways to force obedience from a spirit, the most straightforward is simple Mind Control. Even here, some subtlety is needed: Mind Control never lasts very long, even with the Vulnerability to binding spells from their summoner which most spirits have. Simply ordering a spirit to do something may compel service for a minute or so, but for tasks which take longer the sorcerer must subdue the spirit so that it serves more or less willingly.

Binding a spirit for a lengthy task, then, requires a fair bit of preparation. The spirit must be threatened, bribed or otherwise convinced that it really ought to do what the sorcerer asks, if only because it fears the sorcerer's retribution. Then the Mind Control command is not "Do this," it becomes "Do a service for me"—and the spirit thinks that agreeing to do the task was its own idea.

Cost	Powers	END
24	12d6 Mind Control, -1 Var Lim, Only vs, Spirits (-1) [60]	6

Exorcise Spirit

If a spirit cannot be bound (and in the case of spirits which the sorcerer did not personally summon this is quite likely), this spell will send it back to wherever it came from…if the spirit isn't too powerful, or the summoning spell didn't carry the Difficult to Dispel Power Advantage. In that case, the sorcerer will be in trouble. Spirits know when someone has tried to Dispel them, and it makes them very angry. The really smart masters of summoning always keep yet another spell ready for a fast getaway!

Cost	Powers	END
40	20d6 Dispel vs. Summon, -1 Var Lim [60]	6

Defensive Spells

The published occult literature mentions very few spells or talismans to protect one from ordinary, physical harm, although the grimoires are full of pentacles to protect one from the spirits one summons. Ordinary, persistent defenses can be handled through amulets or enchanted clothing, giving the sorcerer enough defenses to get by in most circumstances. These spells are for special circumstances.

Air Walls

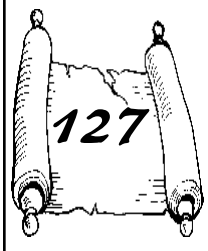
A number of medieval wizards knew spells to create walls of "solid air." Roger Bacon was even said to have built a bridge of solid air across the English Channel, dissolving it when he had passed across. Air walls are not quite invisible; they can be seen by light reflecting off them, like well polished glass. Some walls are permanent, while others only endure while the sorcerer concentrates on them.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
2u	6d6 Entangle, Only to Create Walls (-1) [60]	6
2u	3d6 Entangle, 12" Linear AE (+1) [60]	6
4u	Force Wall (10 PD, 10 ED), ½ END [62]	3

Talisman Of Stealth

This is another talisman from *The Black Pullet*. This talisman and ring "gives invisibility, even to the eyes of genii, so that God alone shall witness the actions of the possessor. It is accompanied by the power of penetrating everywhere and passing through brick walls." The talisman is made of yellow satin embroidered with black silk.

Cost	Powers	END
27	Multipower (60 pt pool), OAF Talisman, Incantations	
3u	Invisibility vs. Sense Magic & All Vision, 0 END [60]	0
3u	Desolid, not vs. magic, 0 END [60]	0



Vigilant Spirit Of Artephius

The sorcerer Artephius, author of "The Art of Prolonging Life," proved the value of his methods by writing his book in the 12th century at the alleged age of 1025. The most important part of prolonging life, Artephius wrote, was not getting killed by one's enemies, so he designed defensive spells for all occasions. One of them was a spell to summon a spirit to follow one around and interpose itself between oneself and attacks. The spell is bound to a ring the sorcerer wears. The spirit stays invisible until it is needed.

Cost	Powers	END
21	Missile Deflection +4 vs. All Ranged, Damage Shield, Uncontrolled, Trigger: Danger Sense goes off (+¼), IIF Ring, 1 chg of 1 minute (-1), 1 minute initial Extra Time (-3/4) [63]	
15	Danger Sense, out of combat, +2 to roll, IIF Ring	

Watchful Ward Of Artephius

This spell was another important part of Artephius' system of magic and concentrated paranoia. The Watchful Ward summons a spirit which protects the sorcerer at all times, but is especially useful when the sorcerer has to sleep. If anyone attacks the sorcerer, the invisible spirit instantly raises a force field to block the attack and sounds a load alarm.

Cost	Powers	END
15	Force Field (14 PD, 14 ED, 12 MD, 12 PowD), Trigger: Attack on Caster (+¼); + Change Environment (alarm), 2" radius, Trigger (+¼); 1 charge of 1 turn (-1 ¼), 1 minute Extra Time (-1 ½), -1 Var Lim [62]	

Miscellaneous Spells

Convenient Kerubic Craftsman

This spell invokes the mighty Kerubim, the angels of the material world, for their help in magically repairing broken objects. The Kerubim themselves do not appear. Instead, the broken fragments glow, move together and re-join.

Unfortunately, this may be only a stopgap measure. While small objects can be totally and permanently repaired by a single phase's application of the spell, large objects slowly "heal back" the Transformation BODY they have taken, and so slowly fall apart again. (In game terms, if a single application of the spell will repair an object, the repair is permanent: there is no "reversal condition." If 2 shots are needed, the object has an Activation Roll to survive each month: 15- if 2 shots were needed, 14- for 3 shots, 12- for 4 shots, etc.) If a repaired object gets hit with magical attacks, it *quickly* falls apart again—whether the attack did BODY or not.

Cost	Powers	END
41	2d6+1 major Transform (broken to whole), Var: Any Object (+¼), Cumulative, -1 Var Lim [61]	6

Expel Pestilence

The greatest old-time wizards, like Pythagoras and Apollonius of Tyana, saved whole cities from plague with their magic. With the rise of Christianity, this power became a feature of saints rather than sorcerers. Even the few Medieval and Renaissance mages who won reputations as good guys never matched the healing feats of the ancients. Evidently this useful spell has been lost.

The spell has two components. First, it grants Life Support vs. Disease to everyone in its Area of Effect to stop whatever disease they have. Then a small Aid helps speed their recovery.

Cost	Powers	END
15	LS: Disease, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged (+½), Indirect (+½), Invisible vs. Sight/Sound (+3/4), 1"x512 Radius AE (+3 ¼); + 1d6 Aid, vs. All Phys Chars (+2), Ranged, Indirect (+½), Invisible, 2"x256 Radius AE (+3); 1 hour Extra Time (-2 ½), -1 Var Lim [60]	6

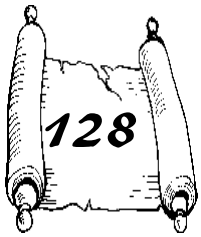
Faust's Enchanted Feast

Yes, Virginia, there really was a Doctor Faustus…and he was one of the pettiest, weediest self-proclaimed Masters of Magic in history, who never deserved literary immortality. He did, however, know how to throw a good party, complete with gourmet food produced by magic. One tale says that Faustus summoned magic servants who would merely step out of sight and return seconds later with a covered dishes full of food. In this way, Faustus once supplied a thirty-six course banquet, with whatever drink the guests desired. In game terms, the magic servants are just a fanciful special effect for a Transform (food from thin air). Each casting will supply several kilograms of food, with serving dishes.

Cost	Powers	END
25	3d6+1 Transform, Var: Any Food/ Drink (+¼), Gestures, Incantations, 1 turn Extra Time (-1) [62]	6

Physical Phantasms Of Simon Magus

Simon's power to erase the boundary between reality and illusion was good for more than fighting. The Morphic Mutation can change small objects—or beings—in any way imaginable, or even create objects from thin air. Simon claimed that he had actually created a living boy using this spell. Simon also performed miraculous healings by creating an illusion of the subject's body being made functional again, then making the illusion real. Through this he made the lame walk, gave sight to the blind, cured lepers and the insane and generally did *most* of the miracle cures attributed to his competitors, Jesus and the Apostles—but he couldn't raise the dead.



Cost	Powers	END
40	Multipower (60 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
3u	Morphic Mutation: 2d6 major Transform, Universal (+1), 1 phase Extra Time (-½) [60]	6
3u	Healing Hand: 2 ½d6 major Transform (maimed/diseased body to whole), Cumulative, 0 Range [60]	6

Prophecy Of Danger

For millennia and around the world, one hallmark of a true Magus is the ability to predict disasters such as earthquakes, storms, plagues and wars. Such news was not always well received by the people in charge.

The sorcerer sends his spirit forward in time, checking for major upsets. The spell actually consists of two powers: Danger Sense and precognitive Clairsentience. These Powers work together to locate a time of peril (with a successful Danger Sense roll). With luck, the sorcerer can then tell what the danger will be just by looking around at the future scene. Typically the spell requires several minutes of trance. Some versions employ scrying Foci such as a bowl of water or crystal ball.

Cost	Powers	END
20	Clairsentience: normal vision, Danger Sense, future; + Danger Sense, out of combat; initial 5 minutes Extra Time (-1), Concentrate 0 DCV constant (-1) [60]	4

Self-Transformation

Another traditional power of sorcerers is the ability to change their shape. Sometimes this was a genuine alteration of the mage's body; at other times, this power was believed to be just a very thorough illusion. In practice, it usually doesn't make much difference.

By itself, this spell does not grant the wizard any special abilities. Its chief uses are disguise and intimidation (by assuming the shape of some horrible monster).

By making the Shape Shift Uncontrolled and 0 END, it could become a Multipower slot without keeping the sorcerer from using the other spells in the Multipower—if the GM is generous.

Cost	Powers	END
20	Shape Shift: any human/animal/monster, -1 Var Lim [30]	3

Zyto's Solid Seemings

Around Zyto of Bohemia, no one could be sure what was real, as when he made a goose seem to pull a heavy wooden beam, or made his own leg fall off. Zyto could make illusions one could touch and heft. He never shared his secrets, but later mages have reconstructed some of his best spells, with good reason: an illusion one can touch can be just the thing to fake out an opponent. Zyto could even make simple, solid-seeming illusions that could continue without him maintaining them at all.

Cost	Powers	END
43	Multipower (64 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
4u	Images vs. normal Sight/Hearing/Touch, -10 PER, ½ END [62]	3
4u	Images vs. normal Sight/Hearing/Touch, -5 PER, 4" Radius (+½), ½ END [61]	3
4u	Images vs. normal Sight/Hearing/Touch, -4 PER, 0 END Persistent [64]	0

Notably Powerful Spells

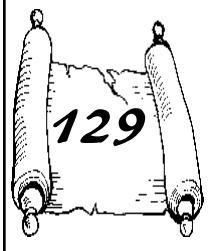
These sample spells are built on about 90 Active Points. They are examples of the sort of special spells a Ritual Magician might have. These should seldom be spells for direct attack: in a campaign where 60 Active Point attacks are the rule, only cosmic entities and mega-villains should be able to throw a 90 Active Point attack, even going all-out. A wizard can show great power in other ways besides crushing opponents, though.

Call To The Kerubic Contractors

This spell is just the thing for a sorcerer who is building a Sanctum Sanctorum. (See later in this chapter for more about these Headquarters for wizards.) The mage summons the mighty Kerubim and instructs them in what they shall build. The Kerubim can produce nearly anything, from plumbing to enchantments. First, however, one must engage in lengthy negotiations with the Kerubim about how much work one is entitled to receive at a time, and the Kerubim will never pass that limit. (In game terms, they will only build as much as the character has spent Headquarters Points to have.) With greater power and experience (and putting Experience Points into the Headquarters Points reserve) the Kerubim will raise the limit of what the character can receive.

Summoning the Kerubim requires lengthy preparations, including the drawing of an elaborate pentacle, and can only be done once per day. Each day, the Kerubim will complete one task, either a Physical or a Power Transform. On the first day of work, for instance, they might build the physical structure of a Sanctum, from the foundation to the plumbing and wiring; on the second day, create the furnishings; and on each subsequent day create one magical effect for the Sanctum.

Cost	Powers	END
16	1d6+1 Transform, Cumulative, Universal: Anything for a Sanctum (+1), Uncontrolled, Hard to Dispel x1 (+¼), Selective 7" Radius AE (+1 ¼), -1 Var Lim, initial 1 Hour Extra Time (-1 ¼), 1 charge of 1 minute (-1 ¼), Costs END, x3 END (-1) [90]	27



Grand Soul-Ward

Sometimes whole populations need protection from attack. This mighty spell can protect everyone in an entire city from psychic attack, without the people knowing a thing. It's not possible to raise a permanent soul ward, but just shielding the people for a critical minute or two can save them from untold horrors. While the Soul Ward requires total concentration to maintain, the power to thus shield thousands of people at once marks a wizard as truly a great soul.

Cost	Powers	END
31	Mental Defense (12 pts), Hardened, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged, Indirect (+½), Invisible vs. Sight/ Hearing (+3/4), ½ END, 5" x 1024 Radius AE (+3 ½), -1 Var Lim, initial 1 turn Extra Time (-½), Concentrate 0 DCV Constant (-1) [94]	4

Infernal Vortex Of All-Consuming Flame

Now, this spell does have combat uses, when one wishes to destroy a great many people at once—or at least get them to run away very fast. It is an evil spell, for it summons the very fires of Hell to radiate out from the caster. These flames will burn virtually anything, given time, and they sweep out to cover a broad area.

Not only is invoking the Powers of Hell this way morally dubious (to say the least), it presents dangers to the caster, too. If the spell is forcibly interrupted (as, for instance, the caster's Focus being taken away or their Gestures being broken) the spell rebounds and hurls the mage into the Netherworld. The mage is sure to arrive in an *especially* unpleasant region, from which they will not return any time soon.

Cost	Powers	END
34	1 ½d6 RKA, Penetrating, Damage Shield, ½ END, 6" x4 Radius AE (+1 ½), -1 Var Lim, initial 1 Phase Extra Time (-¼), Side Effect: Disrupting Spell Sends Caster to Netherworld (-1) [94]	4

Mass Exorcism

Swarms of summoned monsters can be a nightmare for a sorcerer, because even if the monsters were summoned in a group by one spell, once the monsters spread out they must be Dispelled one by one. Hence the advantage of an exorcistic spell with a broad Area of Effect.

Admittedly, the Mass Exorcism only works against quite weak spirits such as minor spirits and atavisms—but those are the spirits most likely to be summoned in large mobs as well.

This example of a Mass Exorcism has a great advantage in that the exorcism ignores walls and other barriers; spirits can't escape a Mass Exorcism by ducking behind something. The spell has a disadvantage, though, in that the caster must remain stock-still and focus their entire mind on casting the spell. The caster will be a sitting duck for any attack.

Cost	Powers	END
45	12d6 Dispel vs. Summon, Indirect (+½), 5" Radius AE (+1), -1 Var Lim, Concentrate 0 DCV (-0) [90]	9

Quaternion Banishment

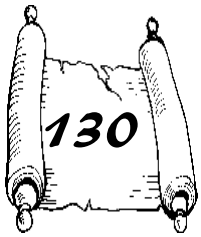
This powerful spell is the ultimate and irresistable weapon against beings from the Outer Planes. The spell hurls the power of the entire Quaternion—Elysium, the Netherworld, the Land of Legends, Babylon and Earth—against an Outer Planes intruder. A flaming symbol, the Quaternion Seal, appears around the target. The target will be hurled from the Quaternion and will die if they ever return: Earth and its whole panoply of Imaginal Realms has become like a deadly poison to them.

In rules terms, this is a Transform which only affects beings from outside the Quaternion, but conversely those beings have no defense against it. The spell takes a few seconds to cast and at least a Turn to reach its full effect (i.e. for the continuing Transform to cumulate to twice the target's BODY). The spell can only be cast once per day. The Uncontrolled effect stops prematurely if the caster is knocked out or flees, or if the target voluntarily leaves the Quaternion before the Transform is complete.

When the Transform is complete, the target vanishes back to its home dimension. Henceforth it suffers a Susceptibility of 3d6 STUN per Phase if it enters any dimension of the Quaternion again. Regeneration will not remove this Transform, because the final effect of the Transform is to negate any Regeneration Power's ability to "heal" this particular Transform's effect on the target. (This may seem like a lot for a single Transform, but this *is* a 90 Active Point Power. With that sort of Active Points, one can stretch the rules a bit.)

Like any Transform, though, the Quaternion Banishment has reversal conditions. First, the Banishment is lifted if a spirit from any of the four Parterres of the Quaternion invites the target to return. The target can also evade the Banishment by possessing the body of a human, elf or other creature from a Quaternion plane. Finally, the caster's death lifts the banishment.

The Quaternion Banishment can only be cast by a Theurgist who at some point has received power from ruling spirits of all four Parterres. (For instance, the caster might have been healed by an archangel, extorted a magic power from a demon king, had a curse removed by the Emperor of Babylon and wielded the magic weapon of a pagan pantheon head.) Need one emphasize that it is very difficult to achieve such favor? No PC can start out qualified to cast a Quaternion Banishment, but winning the requisite gifts of power in time to stop a dimensional conqueror would make a good adventure. Then all the heroes have to do is keep the dimensional conqueror from creaming them while the Banishment takes effect…



Cost	Powers	END
26	2d6 Transform, NND: Being a Quaternion Native (+1), Cumulative, Uncontrolled, -1 Var Lim, 1 Charge of 1 Minute (-1), Costs END, initial 1 Phase Extra Time, Only Usable On Quaternion Planes (-¼) [90]	9

Zyto's Fabulous Phantasm

The most powerful of the spells attributed to Zyto of Bohemia created an illusion which could endure for days without any further attention from the caster. The image had to be fairly simple to be convincing, but the illusion could be heard and even touched. Despite including tactile sensations, the Fabulous Phantasm could not actually exert pressure or resist force; pushing through a Phantasm would break the spell and make the illusion vanish.

Fabulous Phantasms can include sound and movement, but by themselves they can only follow a fixed sequence of actions, like a film loop on endless replay. A few specialists in illusion have learned an additional spell which summons a minor spirit (effectively a disembodied AI) which can control the Phantasm and let it seem to react to events.

Cost	Powers	END
45	Images vs. Touch, Hearing, All Vision, Detect Magic, -5 PER, 1 Hex (+0), Uncontrolled, 0 END to Maintain, 1 Var Lim, initial 1 turn Extra Time (-½) [90]	9

Ritual Magic: Necromancy

How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

—Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Prometheus Unbound

Properly speaking, *Necromancy* is a divination technique: summoning spirits of the dead for information. For some reason, people have always believed that any slob would become a fountain of divine wisdom once they're dead. Perhaps Lucan's witch Erichtho (see the sidebar) had the right of it: anyone with the nerve to raise the dead deserves a straight answer.

And necromancy did take nerve, once upon a time. Both the Jews and Romans made necromancy a capital crime. Christianity continued the suppression quite effectively. In the 19th century, however, necromancy made a surprise comeback in the form of Spiritualism. All those respectable Victorians gathering in parlors for their seances were actually would-be necromancers. The Spiritualist movement never entirely died. Indeed, a few necromancers still pull in gobs of money. They call it "Channeling."

A middle-aged woman twitching and talking in a fakey accent, however, is not what most people think of as a proper necromancer. It took the deliberate artistry of the fiction writer to take all the old legends of witches, black magicians, ghosts, ghouls and the walking dead and create a full-fledged Enchanter of Death like Erichtho. *That's* the sort of necromancy we gamers love! Enough reality—on with the fantasy!

The dreadful science of necromancy began, of course, in Egypt. The Egyptians built much of their religion around death. Their sorcerer-priests found that the separation of body, soul and life force at death was not total and might be reversed. So that the dead might guard their own tombs and advise the living, the priests found ways to make the dead walk and speak, as if anticipating the future day when mighty Osiris would raise them to true life again. In times of decadence the priests conducted less reverent experiments as well. Later and wiser priests banned the awful secrets learned from committing abominations upon the living and the dead, but the suppression was never complete. Whatever one necromancer discovered, the terrible Dragon learned as well and passed on to necromancers of the future. There's always someone who lusts to master the power of Death.

Necromancy remains one of the rarer styles of magic, but it has spread to every culture with a sophisticated magic tradition. While it is not an absolute rule that every necromancer must be a black-hearted fiend, the very nature of this magic means that practitioners must break the religious and civil laws of their community.

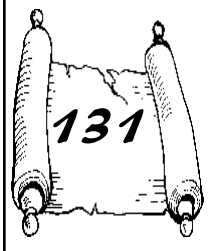
Necromancers often know something of at least one other magical tradition as well. Necromancy's extreme secrecy means that practitioners usually have a background in some other tradition before they find and use the forbidden magic of Death. The evil Voodoo sorcerers called Mayomberos, for instance (see "Voodoo," below) always act on at least the fringes of necromancy.

Magic Theory

Necromancy is closer to Natural Magic than most Ritual Magic styles, through its frequent (almost omnipresent) use of bones and other body parts as Foci. Corpse-based Foci, however, must still be properly consecrated. Necromantic magic is all based on controlling the spirits of the dead; Foci and ritual tools made from corpses control the ghosts through the Law of Contagion (since the ghosts were once in bodies, parts of such bodies retain a magical link to them). The necromancer can then force spirits to occupy, animate and empower dead bodies or the Foci. The necromancer can also use the ghosts as a link to the fearsome gods of Death, Darkness and Destruction.

Powers And Modifiers

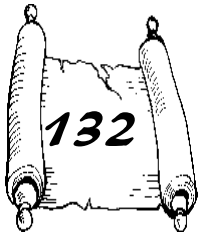
Necromancy's reliance on Foci has been mentioned. Other limitations are more optional. While the Egyptians were very big on Words of Power, modern necromancy has broken away from its Egyptian roots enough that Incantations are not obligatory. Side Effects if a spell is disrupted, however, are quite appropriate: the necromancer deals with exceptionally dan-



A Thessalian Witch Raises The Dead

There was foam on her lips as she [the witch Erichtho] raised her head and stared at the ghost beside her; but it shrank from re entering the punctured breast. Why should it be confined to a prison so hateful as a body dead of a deep belly wound? Poor ghost, cruelly robbed of death's final gift—absolution from the fate of ever dying again!

Erichtho was astounded and furious that the Fates allowed the ghost to vacillate. First she took live serpents and beat the rigid body with them; then she magically opened the vents that led to the Underworld, and barked down angrily into the silence below: "Hey there, you, Tisiphone and Megaera, what are you about? Did you not hear? I have been expecting you to hurry with your relentless whips across the empty floor of Erebus and make this ghost obey me. Observe that I no longer call you Kindly Ones. I am using your proper names, you Stygian bitches! Be careful, or you will find yourself hounded relentlessly by me from tomb to tomb and from pyre to pyre in broad daylight without escape…And you



gerous forces. For combat magic, Concentrate and Extra Time are obviously out of the question—and although the necromancer's greatest powers have nothing to do with combat, they fully recognize the need for fast, violent spells as a matter of self-preservation.

It's especially important to give necromancers a few high-power ritual spells. These make the necromancer villain more than just a local nuisance. While a necromancer may have a high-powered combat spell or two, more often these spells are lengthy ritual enchantments which act as devices to drive the plot.

Disadvantages Of Necromancy

Because they usually know other magic as well, necromancers seldom take a very large Magic Restriction disadvantage: 5 points for their need to periodically consecrate their Foci and propitiate the spirits of the dead. A magician who *only* knew necromancy, or at least whose combat magic was all necromantic, would take another 10 points to reflect the narrowness of their style. On the other hand, a necromancer's need to rob graves for raw materials, plus the general ickiness of what they do, means that a necromancer is *automatically* Watched by the local authorities. Those authorities may not know about the necromancer, but if they find out they won't be happy. Necromancers are also often Hunted by churches and by other wizards. Necromancers are necessarily peculiar people, so baroque Psychological Limitations would seem in order. A necromancer might have an unwholesome aura of death about him that other wizards and sensitive people might detect; death wizards might even have a Vulnerability to magic styles based on Light and Life.

Style Notes

Necromancy deals with more than animating the dead and harming the living. Forces and conditions traditionally associated with death can be evoked as well. Thus, necromancy includes spells to evoke darkness, silence and terror. For special effects, these spells have putrid-hued glows or motes of light, inky shadows or unholy stenches (using an olfactory effect instead of a visual or auditory effect).

Human arm bones and leg bones make excellent wands and rods of power. Skulls have many uses. Amulets might be carved of bone as well. Blood, human or animal, can be shed in ritual sacrifice or be used as an ingredient for noxious compounds. Mummy dust, corpse hair and preserved body parts find frequent use in necromancy. Some rituals and spells call for other materials associated with death and decay, such as lead, graveyard dirt, bitumen, pitch, natron and myrrh (used in mummification), luminous fungus and other oddments.

Sample Necromantic Spells

As usual, major spells hover around 60 Active Points. For these examples, it is assumed that spells carry the usual -1 Variable Limitation. A few spells have additional Limitations unique to themselves.

Attack Spells

Necromancers generally know several vicious attack spells. Many necromancers come to decide that the best defense is a good offense. What's more, some fields of necromantic research work best if the, erm, *ingredients* are fresh. Very, very fresh…

Arms Of The Unhallowed Dead

This is one of the most visually dramatic attack spells a necromancer can learn. It is based on the principle that all soil contains the decayed remains of living creatures, including humans. It uses those remains to evoke skeletal arms from any soil. These arms grab at the spell's target, holding him in place. The spell cannot affect flying targets and only restrains a target's legs: the victim is only at ½ DCV until they can break free of the clutching hands. On the other hand, the spell's special effect is so surprising that GMs may award an OCV bonus the first time it is used.

Cost	Power	END
24	4d6 Entangle, Damage Transparent (+½), Only to Hold Legs to Ground (-1), -1 Var Lim (-½) [60]	6

Enfeeblement

This spell afflicts the victim's life force. While it doesn't directly harm the victim, it greatly reduces their energy. This may be enough that the strain of serious exertion—such as spell casting—will quickly knock the victim out. The enfeeblement lasts at least 1 turn. After that, the victim gets a CON Roll (9 + CON/5) at -3 to recover. The victim gets another CON roll, at -2, a minute later, and so on for every interval on the Time Chart, getting +1 on the roll each time.

Cost	Power	END
40	6d6 Suppress END, Uncontrolled, 0 END to maintain, -1 Var Lim [60]	6

Fear Of Death

This simple spell simply invokes the fear of death which all beings have, and uses it to make the necromancer seem more frightening. Even if the spell does not actually make opponents (or potential opponents) flee in terror, it may give the necromancer a Phase in which to get off the first shot.

Cost	Power	END
12	+30 PRE, Only to Cause Fear (-1), -1 Var Lim [30]	

Horrors Of The Grave

This spell raises the fear of death so intensely that the victim may hallucinate. The caster can emphasize the hallucinatory aspect to make the victim experience his flesh rotting off his bones, attack by shambling hordes of zombies or other horrors; this must be at least a major change to the victim's setting. Whether the victim will take STUN is optional. Alternatively, the caster can emphasize the fear, making the victim literally pass out from terror. Many variations are possible.

Cost	Powers	END
40	Multipower (60 pt pool), -1 Var Lim	
3u	12d6 Mental Illusions, Must be visions of deathly horror doing major change to setting (-½) [60]	6
4u	6d6 Ego Attack [60]	6
4u	3d6 Ego Attack, Continuous [60]	6
4u	3d6 Ego Attack, 3" Radius AE (+1) [60]	6

Remote Corpse Animation

This spell manipulates a corpse like a puppet. Through this spell the necromancer can act, and even attack, from far away. Since the animated body is simply a remote terminal for magical force, it can absorb tremendous amounts of damage without losing its effectiveness as a puppet. Of course the necromancer must have some way of seeing what they are doing.

The versions of this spell shown below use the "Based on ECV" Advantage to make the Power Indirect and act on Line of Sight. Necromancers who will settle for only animating nearby corpses can drop the Advantage and perhaps get a stronger TK.

Cost	Powers	END
24	Multipower (60 pt pool), Need Corpse to Animate in Target Area (-1), -1 Var Lim	
2u	20 STR TK, Based on ECV (+1) [60]	6
2u	13 STR TK + Fine Manipulation, Based on ECV [58]	6

Rigor Mortis

This spell makes the victim's muscles seize up, as they do in a corpse during the rigor mortis phase. The victim's physical strength is irrelevant: it takes strength of will to break this spell's grip.

Cost	Powers	END
40	2d6 Entangle, BODY Based on ECV (+2), -1 Var Lim [60]	6

Rot

This spell makes a patch of the target's flesh literally rot away. It doesn't work on inorganic materials such as metal or concrete, which cannot be afflicted by disease.

Cost	Powers	END
40	1d6+1 RKA, BODY NND: LS: Disease (+2), -1 Var Lim [60]	6

Withering Touch

This spell calls on the forces of age and decay to temporarily debilitate a victim. The spell's chief disadvantage is that the necromancer must get up close and personal with the target, and most necromancers like to keep a safe distance from their foes. There are versions which act at a distance, at the cost of a less powerful effect.

Cost	Powers	END
41	Multipower (62 pt effect), -1 Var Lim	
4u	4d6 Drain, vs. Any Physical Characteristic (+¼), Recover 1 pt/turn (+¼) [60]	6
4u	2 ½d6 Drain, vs. Any Phys Char, Recover 1 pt/turn, NND: LS: Aging (+1) [62]	6

Defensive Spells

Necromancers need spells to keep themselves safe from harm at least as much as other sorts of wizards. Their repertoire of possible defensive powers is as wide as any other mage's: from directly making themselves more resistant to damage, to evading damaging forces completely, to simply not letting a foe know that there's anyone to attack.

Death Aura

This spell creates a dark aura of deathly energy which withers anything which touches the caster, such as grabbing enemies or Entangles. Naturally, the Death Aura is never bought with the Gestures Limitation.

Cost	Powers	END
41	3 ½d6 BODY Drain, Recover 1 BODY/2 turns (+¼), Damage Shield, -1 Var Lim [61]	6

Spectral Form

Through this spell a necromancer turns their body ectoplasmic, literally turning into a ghost. Not only does this let the necromancer walk through walls, it renders them absolutely immune to nearly all sources of damage. Only certain very exotic physical/energy attacks (i.e. those bought with "Affects Desolid") or some kinds of magic will affect the necromancer. (See notes on spirits as characters for the sorts of magic which can affect a necromancer who's "gone ghosty.")

Cost	Powers	END
40	Desolid, not vs. Spirit Affecting Magic, 0 END, -1 Var Lim [60]	

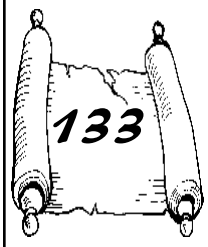
Spectral Ward

The necromancer turns their body partly ectoplasmic, halfway between living and ghostly form. This makes the necromancer resistant to normal sorts of damage but does not interfere with other spell casting.

Cost	Powers	END
20	Force Field (12 PD, 12 ED), ½ END, -1 Var Lim [30]	1

pale, dirty creature, Proserpina Hecate; before paying your annual visit to the Olympians, you undergo a little beauty treatment, eh? But I shall prevent that in the future, and force you to display your real complexion. I shall tell everyone exactly what food is served to you down there beneath the earth, and what guilty secret attaches you to that gloomy royal husband of yours! When Mother Ceres hears of your defilement, she will never want to see you again. As for you, Pluto, who got far the worst share of the world when it was divided at your father's dethronement, unless you are prudent I shall crack the roof of your den and let the sunlight in to strike you blind!"

…The corpse's frozen blood grew warm; it coursed into the blackened wounds and through each artery until it reached the fingers and toes. Both lungs began to work and new life invaded the marrow of his bones, so that each joint throbbed,



each muscle tightened, and then, instead of slowly raising himself limb by limb from the ground, he leaped up suddenly and stood erect. Granted, his jaw still hung down and his eyes glared; indeed, he looked more like a dying man than one restored to life, because he remained pale and stiff and seemed stupefied by his return to the upper air. Nor did a sound come from his mouth; Erichtho's charm allowed him to reply only, not to volunteer information.

—Lucan, *Pharsalia*

Dust Of The Silent Tomb

The best defense against attack, of course, is not to let an enemy know that one is present at all. By sprinkling this dust on their shoes and an outer garment, necromancers render themselves unseen and unheard.

Cost	Powers	END
21	Invisibility vs. Normal Sight, Hearing, ½ END, -1 Var Lim [31]	1

Wall Of Bone

This spell can be used both to confine an enemy and as protection from attacks. It creates a wall of interlocking bones. This wall endures on its own for a minute at most before collapsing into dust. Typically, casting the Wall of Bone requires a pinch of powdered bones.

Cost	Powers	END
40	Force Wall (6 PD, 6 ED), Blocks Vision, Uncontrolled, 6 chgs of 1 minute (-0), -1 Var Lim [60]	[6c]

Zone Of Obscurity

This spell's effect is like that of the Dust of the Silent Tomb, but it acts over an area. The Zone of Obscurity isn't perfect at concealing those within, but at night it is certainly enough to carry a small horde of undead minions past any merely human guards. The Zone can be made to block more senses, at cost of being less perfectly concealing.

Cost	Powers	END
29	Images vs. normal Sight, Hearing, -8 PER, 2" Radius (+¼), ½ END, -1 Var Lim, Fixed Image: Nobody There (-½) [58]	3

Miscellaneous Spells

These spells are not directly for combat, but they include the enchantments which form the heart of the necromancer's craft: the spells to create and control the Undead.

Clutch Of The Damned

This very minor spell illustrates how necromancers might use their art for relatively mundane goals. The Focus is an articulated, skeletal human hand attached to a strong cord. The necromancer uses this as a grappling hook: the hand actively grabs for any support. This can be used to help in scaling walls or crossing between buildings. The necromancer can also use the hand to grasp loose objects and pull them back.

Cost	Powers	END
10	Multipower (21 pt pool), OAF	
1u	5 STR TK + Fine Manipulation, ½ END [21]	1
1u	5" Swinging [5]	1

Control Undead

The undead of a necromancer's own creation are usually quite loyal, but it never hurts to have insurance. This spell is also useful if the necromancer meets undead who roam free or who serve another master.

What about types of undead built using the Automaton rules, which don't have an EGO? One can assume that lesser undead Automata have an effective EGO of 10 against necromantic mind control, but no other sort of mental powers. More powerful undead might have a higher EGO. Since this doesn't help such undead and even hurts them by laying them open to control, this special use EGO may even be considered a Disadvantage.

Cost	Powers	END
25	10d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal (+¼), Only vs. Undead (-1), -1 Var Lim [62]	6

Create Lesser Undead

This ritual raises undead horrors from the grave. The spell requires suitable human or animal remains: for instance, creating a zombie requires a complete body, while raising a ghost might simply require that the spell be cast upon the target's grave. The spell might also require a Focus such as a rod of command or a brazier of burning blood, a ritual diagram traced around the remains, invocations to dark gods or even a small blood sacrifice.

Cost	Powers	END
25	1 x 100 pt Summon, Any Undead (+¼), -1 Var Lim, 1 turn Extra Time (-1) [62]	6

Gloom

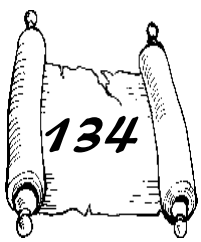
Many of the undead take damage from sunlight, which can severely limit their usefulness. This spell creates a broad zone of deep shadow in even the brightest day. The Gloom takes no effort to maintain.

Cost	Powers	END
20	Change Environment 8" radius, 0 END, -1 Var Lim [30]	

Speak With Dead

As mentioned, the purpose of real world necromancy was to get information from the dead. This spell enables a necromancer to communicate with spirits of the dead. Part of the intended person's corpse will do for targeting purposes, since it is assumed that the spirit and body retain some link. Without such a physical link to the spirit, the necromancer must target through Mind Scanning or some other method—or like the Spiritualist medium, send a general call into the Beyond and hope that someone answers: "Is anyone there?"

Cost	Powers	END
40	8d6 Telepathy, Transdimensional: Afterlife (+½), -1 Var Lim [60]	6



Notably Powerful Spells

Finally, these are the potent rituals which form the necromancer's greatest power.

Such major enchantments always require Obvious Accessible Foci, Gestures, Incantations and Concentration to 0 DCV (for -2 worth of Limitations) plus at least 5 minutes' worth of Extra Time to cast. Side Effects for interruption, Increased END Cost, Charges and assorted ritual conditions are other possibilities to fulfill the Variable Limitation.

Create Greater Undead

This spell enables the necromancer to generate high powered undead creatures such as ghosts and mummies; a variant spell creates groups of lower-powered undead. The spell requires suitable human remains, plus several items of ritual paraphernalia such as a rod of human bone and lead, a mixture of blood and alcohol to burn in a skull brazier, and various liquids and powders to sprinkle on the body or bodies.

Cost	Powers	END
14	1 x 200 pt Summon, Any Undead (+¼), Limits Package (-2), 1 hour Extra Time (-2 ½), -1 Var Lim [87]	9

Hand Of Glory

The notorious Hand of Glory can be produced as an Independent magic item, but there's also a version which is simply a spell cast using a Focus. Physically, the Hand of Glory takes two forms, both based on a severed human hand. In one version, the fingers of the hand are set on fire. In the other, a candle of human fat is planted on the back of the hand and this is set alight. In either case, anyone besides the wielder who sees the flame from a Hand of Glory is either paralyzed or falls asleep. This version causes paralysis. While the Hand will be virtually useless against sorcerers, whose wills are too strong, a Hand of Glory can incapacitate whole mobs of normal humans.

Cost	Powers	END
19	2d6 Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2), Personal Immunity, Uncontrolled, Nonselective 7" Radius AE (+¾), Limits Package (-2), Focus is Expendable (-¼), -1 Var Lim, 0 Range, Victims Must See Flame (-¼), 1 chg of 5 minutes (-¾) [90]	[1c]

Promise Of Undeath

This spell is cast upon a person who yet lives. When the recipient dies, they are automatically reanimated as some sort of undead (decided in advance by the caster). There's nothing to stop a necromancer from casting this spell on themself—potentially a nasty surprise for anyone who kills the necromancer.

The spell requires a lengthy ritual in which the spell's recipient is symbolically represented as dying and returning to life. One version of the spell is essentially a twisted version of a Catholic "Requiem" Mass.

Cost	Powers	END
15	1 x 150 pt Summon, Any Undead Type (+¼), Trigger: Target of Spell Dies (+¼), Limit Package (-2), 1 Hour Extra Time (-2 ½), -1 Var Lim [90]	9

Zone Of Horror

This spell is a more powerful version of the "Horrors of the Grave" spell described above. This spell acts over a wide area, forcing the terror of death on everyone within (except the caster). While the spell won't harm other sorcerers, and other supers can probably endure its effects, in a few phases all normal people will succumb to unconsciousness. This spell is thus an excellent way for a necromancer to assure that they won't be interrupted in other work, or to clear out guards.

The Zone of Horror takes 5 minutes to cast, but can be maintained continuously from then on. The Zone cuts through all barriers except those based on Mental Defense.

Cost	Powers	END
20	2d6 Ego Attack, Continuous, Indirect (+½), Personal Immunity, ½ END, 24" Radius AE (+1 ½), Limits Package (-2), initial 5 minutes Extra Time (-1), -1 Var Lim [90]	4

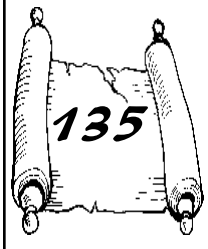
Ritual Magic: Technomancy

"Why shouldn't a modern city have its special ghosts, like castles and graveyards and big old manor houses once had?"

—Fritz Leiber, *Our Lady of Darkness*

Technomancy—the fusion of science and magic. With two such powers conjoined, what would not be possible? Imagine computers casting spells with digital precision, a million times faster than any human wizard. Imagine machines brought to life with synthetic souls. Imagine mass-produced magic and cyborged spirits.

Imagine a load of bullcrap, say most wizards. Magic and high tech are just too different, they insist. Science is about what works even if you don't believe in it: objective, impersonal, measured and precise. Magic, on the other hand, is fundamentally subjective, ambiguous and very personal. The magician views reality as a network of interconnected symbols vibrant with meaning, life and power. Intangible and "subjective" qualities such as moral character and mythic resonance are as fundamental to magic as they are alien to scientific thought. A computer could no more cast a spell than a toaster could write a symphony.



And yet…could it be that science is simply too new, not yet assimilated? And that wizards who deny the possibility of technomancy are just miffed at being upstaged by high-tech wonders they can't understand?

Well, maybe. A few of the younger mages are experimenting with combining modern technology and magic. They have made some progress. Television sets, for instance, work just as well as crystal balls for scrying. Spells to enchant bows and arrows can be adapted to guns and bullets. Summoners have raised elementals from scrap metal, electricity and smog.

So far, however, these self-proclaimed "technomancers" have only performed traditional feats using new materials. Scrying with a TV set, to return to that example, only exploits the TV set's symbolic character as a "device for seeing" without involving or understanding how television actually works. The "urban elementals" show more promise, since they are attempts to exploit forms of matter with new properties.

What "technomancy" exists, therefore, should more properly be called "urban magic." It uses the products of technology as symbolic foci for magic, or crafts spells specifically to affect technological artifacts, or relies on occult energies generated by modern cities. It is the newest and rarest of the magic arts. As a new discipline lacking tested traditions to guide research, it is also quite dangerous. Experiments in urban sorcery have produced some quite appalling accidents.

Maze, of the Devil's Advocates (see *Creatures Of The Night: Horror Enemies*), was the first urban sorcerer to show real power. Not only has he used strange, technomantic rituals to boost his dimension-warping powers, he's summoned "urban spirits" such as smog elementals and junkyard golems. Unfortunately, Maze is so loony he couldn't explain his magic even if he wanted to. Other technomancers tend to be eccentric as well.

Magic Theory

The premise of technomancy is that when people create and use their machines, they invest them with psychic energy. What's more, large concentrations of "processed" matter such as steel, concrete and glass warp the Earth's "magic field," creating their own strange elementals. Just as older styles of Ritual Magic invoked the spirits of nature or the planets, technomancy invokes the new spirits and psychic forces of the city.

Urban magicians have already evolved some shared terms. Urban ley lines are called "power mains" or, since they often follow main roads, "thoroughfares." Ley line intersections are "substations" or "juncture boxes." A city's pattern of mystic energies is called "the Grid."

Some urban magicians hypothesize that the energies of cities even create an astral dimension similar to Yggdrasil or the Blood Tide. They call this dimension "The Grey" (always with British spelling, just to be pretentious) or "The Silverbright." It would form the substrate of Babylon just as Yggdrasil and the Blood Tide are linked to the Land of Legends. Two wizards have already disappeared in the course of trying to directly enter the Silverbright.

Powers And Modifiers

As the sample spells below demonstrate, Technomancy is quite a heterogeneous art: some spells require many Limitations, while others get by with just one. Many Technomantic spells only require that the caster be in a certain environment, such as one with cables of some sort or an electric power outlet. This is because Technomancy is so new that no standards have been established. Every Technomancer has their own substyle, with its own strengths and weaknesses. Some casters require Foci, or Incantations, Charges or some other common Limitation on all their spells; some don't. Players and/or GMs who create Technomancers must decide on their own what Limitations the characters take.

Disadvantages Of Technomancy

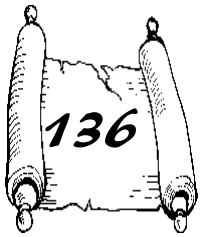
Technomancers do not need to take a Magical Style Restriction, for two reasons. First, they probably know some other style of magic as well. Second, technomancy is *weird*—every urban mage's spells are custom creations. Their uniqueness compensates for any narrowness of style, making technomancers no more vulnerable to Analyze Style than any other mage.

At most, an urban mage might take a small Vow-based Physical Limitation from their need to stay in contact with a city's Grid, just as Hermetic Theurgists must conduct rituals to maintain their powers. A Technomancer will conduct peculiar rituals such as meditating under high tension lines while wearing a tinfoil hat, or carrying a pocketful of batteries three times around the crosswalks at an intersection.

Style Notes

Special Effects can vary widely in technomancy, as the spells below demonstrate, but they keep an "urban" feel. Spells might be accompanied by sparks, fluorescent glows or puffs of smoke. Nearby lights may flicker and machines behave oddly.

Foci are common. When used, they often have a strong connection to the desired spell effect. Thus, a spell to evoke or manipulate electricity might require a penlight, electric toothbrush or some other small, battery-powered item. A spell to summon elemental forces of concrete, metal, smog or glass would require a Focus of that substance, or related to it at any rate. Smog spells, for instance, might use a talisman cut from an old muffler and steeped seven days in gasoline and old motor oil.



Sample Urban Magic Spells

These spells employ modern technology as foci, or are designed to affect machinery and the urban environment. First comes a set of 60 point attack spells suitable for a wizard's main Multipower, then a few defensive spells and a variety of miscellaneous spells of various power levels.

Attack Spells

Animate Cables

The mage makes any cables, cords or wires in the area animate and attack the target. If necessary, the cables will rip out of the wall or out of the ground. The cables can attack from any direction. If they happen to carry heavy electric current, so much the better, but this can't be guaranteed. If the caster uses this spell around power lines, the electric current from the broken lines can make this spell very powerful indeed (see "Living in a Dangerous World," p. S44, *Hero System Rule Book*). If the only cables available are telephone cords and such, the caster must be satisfied with their ability to grab and squeeze.

Cost	Powers	END
39	23 STR Telekinesis, Indirect (+¾), Only in regions with wires, cords and cables (-½) [59]	6

Electric Carving Knife Of Dancing

With this spell, the wizard gives an electric carving knife the ability to run without a power source, and to fly through the air. The caster then tosses the knife at an opponent. The knife will loop around the opponent, trying to slash each phase; the caster does not have to control the knife and can even depart. The attack stops within 1 minute or when the target manages to strike the knife out of the air. (An electric carving knife's small size gives it a DCV of at least 8; its OCV for each attack equals the caster's.)

Cost	Powers	END
22	1d6+1 RKA, Continuous, Uncontrolled, 0 END, OAF, Incantations, Must Make Attack Roll Each Phase (-½) [60]	

Kiddie Space Gun Of Doom

This spell works by literalizing a metaphor: it makes a toy plastic "space gun" shoot a real energy bolt. One can use a toy laser gun (such as is used in Laser Tag and similar games) or one of those toy guns that spits sparks when its handle is squeezed.

Many sorts of exotic attacks are possible: an urban mage might buy several sorts of attacks through a Kiddie Space Gun.

Cost	Powers	END
30	6d6 EB, NND: Power Defense (+1), 16 chgs, OAF [60]	[16c]

Power Surge

This spell causes a massive surge in an electrical system, damaging whatever machines draw power from it. Although the spell does very little damage by most standards, most of the machinery in an ordinary building has very little DEF or BODY. Thus, the spell can knock out lights, security cameras, electronic locks and other non-massive equipment, even if it's hidden inside a wall (from the Indirect advantage). If the building or region's fuse box or transformer is in the area of effect, it may be damaged as well—which could shut off power to an entire skyscraper or city block.

The spell caster needs some small, battery-powered item to wave while invoking Barakiel, the angel of lightning; a penlight will do.

Cost	Powers	END
20	1d6 RKA, Invisible to Sight/ Hearing (+¾), Indirect (+¾), 16" Radius AE (+1 ½), Only Affects Machines Hooked to Power System (-1), Gestures, Incantations, IAF [60]	6

Smog Alert

With this spell, the mage gathers choking pollution out of the air and forces it into the victim's lungs. The pollution's corrosive properties are increased even further by the magic. The caster invokes the names of air spirits and industrial corporations with bad pollution records.

Cost	Powers	END
48	4d6 EB, NND: LS: Breathing (+1), Continuous (+1), Incantations [60]	6

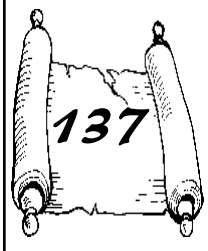
Spirit Gun

This spell enchants a gun so its bullets can affect ghosts and other desolid entities. The gun itself must be specially prepared by having a mystic symbol drawn on it, and the caster must say a magic word as he fires. The charges of the spell are limited by the number of bullets the gun will hold.

The version given here assumes the caster uses a pistol. One could easily develop versions for use with automatic weapons. Many other sorts of enchanted guns can be developed, too.

This spell can be a Multipower slot. If one is willing to buy spells outside Frameworks, one can build a version of the spell wherein the Affects Desolid advantage is a "free floating" Power Advantage that can be applied to any gun (up to a certain base power level).

Cost	Powers	END
22	2 ½d6 RKA, Affects Desolid (+½), OAF (Gun), Incantations [60]	[8c]
or		
11	Affects Desolid on up to 40 pt attack, Variable Special Effect: Any Gun (+¼), OAF (Gun), Incantations [25]	



Defensive Spells

Clothes Of Steel

This spell makes the caster's clothes as strong as steel without making them less flexible. The clothes gain a silvery sheen and a momentary hard, metallic finish where impacts land.

Cost	Powers	END
30	Force Field (12 PD, 12 ED), ½ END [30]	1

Dereliction

If an urban mage wants to move about unseen, this spell is just the thing. The countless millions of people who have studiously ignored beggars have created a powerful psychic force a mage can harness. By invoking this force through the chant of "Spare Change? Spare Change?" and an outstretched hand, the caster can move unseen virtually anywhere. The caster isn't literally invisible; people just refuse to notice him. Because this is magic, it doesn't matter if the wizard is actually in full costume, walking through the White House; if anyone looks at him, their eyes glaze and they quickly walk past.

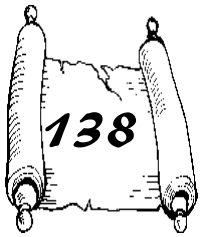
The spell has two great weaknesses. First, it only works on people, not animals or cameras and other mechanical sensors. Second, getting involved in any sort of combat nullifies the spell. On the other hand, it isn't necessary to whine for change and hold out one's hand all the time, just when within 1 hex of other people.

Cost	Powers	END
34	Invisibility vs. Detect Magic, All Sight, All Hearing, 0 END, initial Gestures, constant Incantation (-½) [60]	

Warding Debris

This spell sets a cloud of any convenient trash orbiting the caster. Chunks of debris dive in front of incoming ranged attacks to take the damage. The spell is given in two levels of power and effectiveness. The first must be actively maintained. The second is better at intercepting attacks and can run by itself for a turn before it needs renewing. (The Damage Shield makes the spell Continuous and Missile Deflection already costs 0 END; one merely need give a reasonable condition to end the Uncontrolled effect.)

Cost	Powers	END
20	Missile Deflection +0 vs. All Ranged, Damage Shield, Need Supply of Small, Solid, Discarded Objects (-¼), -½ Var Lim (-¼) [30]	
40	Missile Deflection +5 vs. All Ranged, Damage Shield, Uncontrolled, Need Supply of Trash (-¼), -½ Var Lim (-¼) [60]	



Miscellaneous Spells

Mind Radio

This spell enchants a portable radio/headphone set so that it picks up "thought waves" instead of radio waves. By tilting the radio at a person and fiddling with the dials, a particular person's mind can be read. This does require some concentration.

If the caster is able to read the target's memories (and wants to), the memories are received in the form of an old-time radio drama, complete with Hammond organ background music and a narrator. At least with *most* people there are no commercials.

Cost	Powers	END
35	10d6 Telepathy, ½ END, IAF, Concentrate ½ DCV [62]	3

Summon Cab

This spell has a prosaic but useful effect: it makes a perfectly ordinary taxicab drive up, ready to take the wizard where he wants to go. There's even a good chance that the driver speaks English. The spell works anywhere there's a road; the driver's mind is clouded so he can't explain why he happened to be deep in the Ozarks or wherever.

The driver will, however, still expect the caster to pay his fare. Getting out of this is the caster's problem, but a mage of power should have no difficulty.

The Focus for this spell is a little plaque shaped like a taxi, cut from metal taken from a wrecked cab. Variant spells can be created to summon an ordinary policeman, a pushcart vendor, or even a parking space (equivalent to Summoning a 0 point Vehicle with no DEF, BODY, Movement or anything else but SIZ), or a general form with a +¼ Advantage.

Cost	Powers	END
20	1 x 25 pt Summon (cabbie with Vehicle), Gestures, IAF [35]	3

Tomorrow's News

This spell lets an ordinary TV set pick up broadcasts from the future. Unfortunately, the caster can't always control how far in the future the TV set will reach. What's more, just as with any foreknowledge, it only shows a *probable* future, which may be changed by the wizard's own actions. Even if getting probable news broadcasts from a few days or weeks ahead doesn't give a mage absolute foreknowledge of dangers and opportunities, a few glimpses at future football games and currency markets can take care of all a wizard's financial needs. The spell only works once per day.

Cost	Powers	END
9	Clairsentience: Vision, Hearing, Precognition, Bulky OAF (TV set, -1 ½), Gestures (Fiddle with "rabbit ears" antenna), Incantations, Concentrate ½ DCV constant, 1 charge of 1 minute (-1), Acts 12-, 1 turn initial Extra Time (-½) [45]	[1c]

Notably Powerful Spells

Electric Wall

This spell creates a broad, thin sheet of crackling electricity which the caster can form into simple shapes, rather like a Force Wall. The Electric Wall, however, does not block things from moving though. Instead, anything that goes through an Electric Wall receives a nasty shock. Most super beings will barely feel the Electric Wall, but normal people will be in great pain; most will know better than to try going through the Wall.

Like the Power Surge spell described above, this spell requires an invocation to Barakiel while waving a small, battery powered object.

Cost	Powers	END
35	4d6 EB, AP, Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END to maintain, 14 Hexes AE (+1 ¼), initial Gestures, Incantations, OAF, initial x2 END (-¼) [95]	18

Urban Renewal

This ironically named spell shows urban magic at its highest power level. This is an urban mage's greatest spell.

The caster twists the Grid of city forces to cause a massive release of energy in a target area. The destructive force might take the form of a very local earthquake, or a freak, super hot fire, an explosion, etc. The authorities can probably find a "rational explanation." The spell can completely destroy a small building, and severely damage a large one. If the building is weak, or the caster succeeds with a Demolitions skill roll, the spell could topple a skyscraper.

Casting the spell takes at least 5 minutes. The spell must be performed at a precise place in the city to tap into and direct the full power of the Grid, and must be cast at a particular time (such as midnight, or when the full Moon is highest in the sky). As a consequence of this, it can only be cast once per day. The particular place, time and Foci must be determined anew for each target, demanding a KS: Urban Magic skill roll for each use of the spell. If the caster fails, the Grid short circuits and does something spectacularly nasty and unpredictable, with the caster in the center of it. This should be a disaster of Biblical proportions.

Cost	Powers	END
30	5d6 RKA, Variable Special Effect (+½), Indirect (+¾), No Range Modifier (+½), 20" Radius AE (+1), Must be Cast at Correct Place and Time (-1), 5 minutes Extra Time (-2), 1 Charge (-2), Costs END, Gestures, Incantation, OAF (varies), Concentrate ½ DCV, Must Make KS: Urban Magic Skill Roll (-½), c. 140 point Side Effect: GM's Choice (-½) [281]	28

Alchemy

High-housed within the Alchemic Citadel,
We are served by Azoth and by Alkahest.
Out of the gleamless mire and sand we make
Pactolian metal. Fumed from our alembics
The world dissolves like vapors opium wrought…

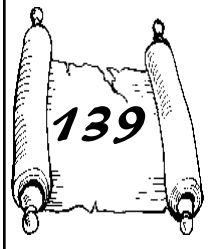
—Clark Ashton Smith, "*Soliloquy in an Ebon Tower*"

The alchemist is a special sort of wizard. Alchemists try to exploit the supposed occult virtues of natural substances, concentrating and combining them into new substances with magic powers; this is Natural Magic in its purest form. The best-known goal of alchemy was the Philosopher's Stone, which could turn lead into gold. The Elixer of Life, which cured all disease and made one immortal, was nearly as famous.

Alchemy was independently invented in Egypt, then India and China. The first alchemy consisted of recipes for creating colored metal alloys and fake gems. Success led the alchemists to seek more ambitious transformations: if they could change a metal's color, why couldn't they change its properties completely—and turn lead into gold? In China, the alchemists tried to go beyond medicines for specific ailments to a universal medicine that would prevent age and death itself.

For centuries, alchemy relied on purely physical and chemical processes to change the form of matter, such as heating, mixing, dissolving and distilling. As long as the alchemists kept discovering new chemical techniques and reagents, the art flourished. In this way, European alchemists laid the foundations of modern chemistry and pharmacy. Occultism entered alchemy simply because it was the only theory around to explain the world—and no clear line was yet drawn between natural and supernatural influences. Making properly clear glass, for instance, was thought to depend as much on the phase of the Moon as the right mixture of ingredients.

The chief occult theories adopted by the alchemists were astrology and the Doctrine of Signatures. Astrology claimed that for any operation, from shoeing a horse to fighting a war, some arrangements of the planets were good and some were bad. What's more, there were mysterious affinities between the planets and various metals, jewels, plants, animals, symbols, perfumes and even diseases. The Doctrine of Signatures claimed that visible forms revealed occult virtues. Thus, by astrology and the Doctrine of Signatures, to treat heart disease one needed an herb with heart shaped leaves, administered when Mars (which governed blood and the heart) was in a favorable conjunction. Alchemists combined lab work and magic in hybrid operations such as heating a substance in a crucible decorated with planetary symbols, or distilling a liquid seven times while the Moon was in Pisces. At first, however, the astrological side of alchemy was not considered magical: the influence of the planets and the Zodiac was



considered natural and automatic, like the influence of the Moon over the tides.

In India, alchemy died out after only a few centuries. In China and Europe the art began to wither in the 17th century AD. The search for the Philosopher's Stone produced much fraud but little gold. In China, alchemists thought that compounds of mercury and arsenic were the key to immortality. Emperor after Emperor died of self-administered poison: so much for the Elixer of Life. In both cultures, the wealthy elite which had kept the alchemists in business realized they were wasting their time and money. The rise of science gave new alternatives to magic. As early as the 16th century, the alchemist and doctor Paracelsus called gold making a delusion and urged that alchemists should turn to pharmacy. After 1800, only a few crackpots still believed in alchemy.

At least, that's the *public* story.

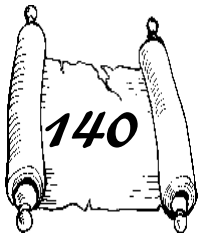
Many alchemists were no more than con men. Many more honestly believed that turning lead into gold was just a matter of cooking the right stuff the right way. A few, however, pushed beyond astrology to the secret lore of Hermetic and Taoist ritual magic. They combined sorcery with their own studies of matter to create a new mystic art. Lead into gold? Feh! They could change matter into magic, and Man into God!

The new breed of alchemists could have revolutionized the world. They created magic in a bottle, ready for anyone to use. Because of three factors, they did not.

First, the wealthy nobles who supported alchemical research weren't interested. The princes of Europe wanted gold. The Chinese mandarins wanted immortality. That was all. Nobody wanted to hear that alchemy could have other uses. Even Paracelsus' modest suggestion of alchemical pharmacy was scorned by everyone but a few other alchemists: acknowledged in his life as the greatest healer in Europe, he nevertheless lived in constant poverty.

Second, Renaissance Europe was a dangerous time for sorcerers. This was the age of the witch hunts. Church dogma said that all magic came from the Devil. A sorcerer who showed his powers to the wrong person could face prison, torture and death. Neither Protestant nor Catholic witch-hunters cared about the technical differences between witchcraft, sorcery or Hermetic alchemy. By the time it was safe for sorcerers to show their faces again, the whole idea of alchemy had sunk into disgrace. Magical alchemy has remained a secret art even by the standards of the occult world.

Finally, as for China, change simply wasn't allowed. No one would even think of making magic available to the common people. After all, peasants were expendable, as decreed by Heaven. Improving their lives wouldn't just be a waste of time, it might even be blasphemy. Taoist alchemy remained a secret held by a few priests and magicians: to the common folk, alchemical magic was just another wonder tale.



Magic Theory

Sorcerous alchemy assumes that all substances have magical properties as well as physical and chemical properties. These magical properties, however, are very weak in their natural state. Through ritualistic laboratory processes, the alchemist concentrates the occult virtues of ingredients and combines them to further strengthen and shape their effect. The final product remains matter, but matter charged with intense spiritual force. This concentrated magic can be used by anyone. (With a bit less effort, the alchemist can make a less refined product that only he or she can trigger; i.e. an ordinary Power on a Focus, without the special Power Modifiers of true alchemy.)

Powers And Modifiers

Alchemists can create potions and items for nearly any effect, using nearly any Power. Alchemy is defined, to an unusual extent, by Advantages and Limitations.

Foci

In game terms, alchemy is a style of magic which utterly depends on Expendable Foci, and usually Charges as well. The alchemist cooks up his Foci in the lab, and uses up a bit of each Focus whenever the power is used: a dose of potion is imbibed, a powder sprinkled, a capsule thrown. Foci take quite a long time (at least a few days) to produce from strange and perhaps rare or costly ingredients. Without appropriate lab facilities and ingredients, alchemists cannot restore their Charges. For most of an alchemist's "spells" a -¼ Limitation, "Expendable," tacks onto the Focus Limitation. The Focus in turn is usually Accessible, and Obvious to other wizards at least, even if a little Sleight of Hand can conceal its use.

Charges

Charges are an easy Limitation to handle for ordinary Instant powers such as a Healing/BODY Aid potion or an alchemical grenade. A bit of the Focus is used up, the Power triggers and a Charge has been expended. Continuous powers such as Armor or Invisibility can be bought using Charges with duration.

Alchemical Foci which permit one to use an Instant power at will for a limited period of time, such as a potion that for one hour confers the power to read minds, are less obvious. One option is to give the power an ad-hoc Limitation, "Only Usable Within Period After Expend Focus" certainly worth no more than a -¼ Limitation for a 1 hour period of use, with no bonus for Charges.

Inappropriate Limitations

The way that alchemical Foci are prepared in advance through long procedures might make Extra Time and Delayed Effect seem necessary, but actually neither is appropriate for alchemy in superheroic campaigns. Since the long work of cooking up Foci will usually be done between adventures, the time this takes

isn't worth a Limitation. The inconvenience is adequately represented by the -¼ "Expendable" Limitation. Without the Extra Time, the "Delayed Effect" Advantage loses any purpose.

Standard Advantages

Alchemical spells might be usable only by the alchemist. Alchemy is most distinguished from other magic, however, when its products can be passed around to other people. The familiar "magic potion" is the classic example. If alchemical magic only occurs as a plot device for villains and minions—they carry a potion like VIPER agents carry guns—the magic can be treated as a Universal Focus magic item. If one introduces an actual alchemist character, however, one might want to explicitly recognize alchemical magic as powers that can be stored and shared with other people. "Usable by Others x1" (+¼) and "Trigger" (+¼) represent this quite well: the alchemist "casts the spell" in the lab, and can then pass around Charges of it for other people to Trigger and use. No matter how many Charges are in the power, obviously each Charge can only be used by one person, either the caster or somebody else.

Do remember, though, that a character who can loan their powers out to other characters can have drastic effects on a campaign. If one character in a group can make the other characters invisible, or boost their defenses, characteristics or powers, effectively the other characters have a bunch of powers they never paid points for. GMs should carefully scrutinize alchemist characters for anything which would make their group too powerful. This goes for NPC alchemists in villain teams, too! And only a fool would let a PC get an alchemist Follower who would cheerfully hand out new powers to all his boss' buddies.

Power Frameworks

When building an alchemist character, one must consider that some alchemy "spells" are to be used on oneself to give continuing effects, while others are to be used directly on others and are either Instant effects or are Uncontrolled and can be left to their own devices. One solution is to use more than one Multipower, one for self affecting "potions" and one for alchemical "weapons." They cannot be placed in one Multipower because otherwise throwing a stink bomb (one slot in the Multipower) would deactivate one's Potion of Invulnerability (another slot in the Multipower).

Having more than one Multipower might seem expensive, but Limitations on the Multipower point reserve cut costs a lot. All alchemical spells are based on Expendable, Obvious Accessible Foci. By the strictest interpretation of the rules an alchemy Multipower shouldn't take this Limitation on the point reserve as well as the slots because each slot of the Multipower is a different Focus. Since there are many ways an alchemist could be disarmed of all his potions at once, however, forbidding the Limitation on the point reserve would be needlessly strict. An alchemist's many potions, pills and powders still *act* like a single Focus, so it's entirely fair to Limit the Multipowers as if they were bought through a single Focus—an Expendable one at that. With the cost of each point reserve more than cut in half, two Multipowers become quite affordable.

Alternatively, one can buy an Alchemy Power Pool. With a Power Pool, the problem of keeping a "potion" effect running while attacking with an alchemical "weapon" disappears. Power Pools, however, do have problems of their own.

Disadvantages Of Alchemy

Alchemists may take a fairly hefty Magic Limitation. Alchemy can achieve nearly any effect, but carries major weaknesses. Although alchemists can still acquire and use magic items and artifacts, having to cast all their own spells through Expendable, Accessible Foci is always greatly limiting (from running out of Charges and the time and expense of recharging). The result is a 15 point Magic Style Restriction. Alchemy imposes no other Disadvantages.

Style Notes

Alchemical potions, pills and powders can produce nearly any effect. Alchemical magic is distinctive, though, for producing physical (including energy) effects. For instance, Desolid spirits are not affected by alchemical attacks unless the attack has Affects Desolid. Alchemy hardly ever produces mental or spiritual effects directly. Instead, a potion gives its imbiber mental powers.

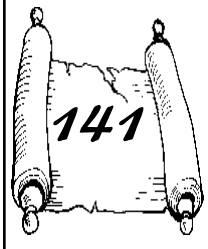
Trigger Methods

There are many possible ways to activate alchemical magic. A certain well-known fantasy roleplaying game has popularized the potion, a liquid one drinks to trigger its effects, but there are other options. Some nasty alchemical attacks—drugs, poisons and the like—might need to be unwittingly consumed by the victim, or could be delivered by syringe or dart. Sprinkled powders are another possibility. So are oils or lotions, pills, pellets and capsules, liquids sprayed from an atomizer or squirt gun, or even cupcakes with "Eat me" written on the top in frosting.

Sample Alchemical Magic

In the real world, the legends of alchemy are pretty much limited to gold making, magic medicine, magic poisons, and potions to turn people into animals or monsters, like Circe used in the *Odyssey*. Fortunately, fiction is broader than legend.

Alchemical magic divides into three sections. The first, referred to as "Potions" for its most famous form, confers some magical power on the user. "Other Items" are treated more like normal Foci: they are used directly on another person or the environment to create an effect. Finally, alchemists can buy minor "Lab work



Spells" to help them in their work. Unlike other alchemical magic, Lab work Spells don't require Expendable Foci on Charges, but they are very weak.

As always, the examples provided are just that: examples, chosen to illustrate whole ranges of possibilities.

Potions

These examples of self-affecting "potions" have three power levels. Some are minor effects built on 30 Active Points. The majority are built on the game standard 60-some Active Points, although since most of them carry the Usable By Others and Trigger Advantages their real value is somewhat less. Finally, a few examples are given of potions built on about 90 Active Points. These potent potions can be a villainous alchemist's "ultimate weapon" or a non-combat effect useful in advancing plots.

An alchemist could build a Potion Multipower with a 90-some point reserve and buy one or two special, 90 point slots and numerous 60 point and 30 point slots. This lets them use more than one potion at once, but only one major effect on themselves.

Other users of an alchemist's potions must abide by the same use limitations as the alchemist themself. Just as a potion's creator cannot use more than one major potion effect (a Multipower slot) going at once, neither can anyone else. Changing a Multipower slot is changing a Multipower slot, even with Charges of effect that can be passed around.

Offensive Potions

Potion Of Strength

This is just one simple example of a self-enhancing potion. Other variations could boost the user's DEX, SPD, REC, STUN, Running or whatever.

Cost	Powers	END
11	+20 STR, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, 4 chgs of 5 minutes (-0), No Figured Chars (-½) [30]	[4c]

Potion Of Domination

This potion temporarily grants the ability to influence the minds of other people. In this case there are no Charges. Instead there is a period in which the potion's user has this power; the user must still deliberately turn on the Power and expend some END.

Cost	Powers	END
24	7d6 Mind Control, ½ END, Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, Power Usable for 1 Hour (-¼) [61]	3

Potion Of Earth Control

Made from rare minerals and bits of the body of an earth elemental, this potion grants the power to animate soil and rock. Like the Potion of Domination, the Powers granted can be used for 1 hour.

Cost	Powers	END
24	Multipower (60 pt pool), Expendable OAF, Powers Usable for 1 Hour (-¼)	
2u	23 STR TK, ½ END, Usable by Others x1, Trigger: Ingest, Only vs, Earth/Stone & Things in Contact (-½) [59]	3
2u	4d6 Entangle, Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Only vs. Targets Near Earth/Stone (-½) [60]	6

Potion Of Immolation

This is an example of a variant potion. It could be shared around like a regular potion, or treated as a personal magic item. The latter version permits a more powerful effect because no Active Points are being spent on making the Power be usable by others. Here, these two versions are represented as Multipower slots. If an alchemist wants just the personal-use version, this can be justified by saying that only a person with experience at magical forces can rouse the energies stored in the potion.

In this potion, the effect stored is an aura of flame which doesn't harm the user or their possessions, but will harm anyone else who comes into contact with the user. Many other potions can be treated this way.

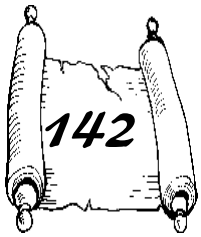
Cost	Powers	END
27	Multipower (60 pt pool), Expendable OAF, 6 chgs of 1 minute (-0)	[6c]
3u	2d6 RKA, Damage Shield, Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest [60]	
3u	2 ½d6 ERKA, Damage Shield [60]	

Divine Dragon Elixer

This is an example of a really powerful potion. This potion changes whoever takes it into a dragon, with full powers: armored scales, flight, claws and fangs, the works. The original Chinese version turned one into a Chinese dragon, with magic powers over wind and water; a European version would turn one into a European style, fire breathing dragon.

Obviously, many variations on this potion are possible. The Transform doesn't even have to be into a monster; the potion's user could simply gain great power in some way from the Transform. A whole adventure could be built around an evil alchemist's attempts to get the exotic ingredients needed for a potion like this, with a fight against the transformed alchemist at the climax. Fortunately, a potion's effects are always temporary. An hour after taking the potion, the villain changes back and loses the added powers.

Cost	Powers	END
25	2d6+1 Transform to Dragon, Cumulative, Uncontrolled, Use by Other x1, Trigger, Expendable OAF, 1 Chg of 1 turn (-1 ¼) [87]	[1c]



Defensive Potions

Invisibility Potion

Invisibility is one of the more common powers claimed for wizards of all sorts, and it's a power that is always in demand for illicit purposes. Never mind the adulterous trysts and other pranks, though; both heroes and villains might use an Invisibility Potion to sneak around, steal things and escape from their enemies.

Cost	Powers	END
27	Invisibility vs. All Vision, No Fringe, Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, 4 chgs of 5 minutes (-0) [60]	[4c]

Potion Of Shrinking

Being small can be useful in many ways. This potion shrinks its user to between 4 and 5 inches tall. Not only does this make the user very hard to locate and hit, it lets them reach many places blocked to normal-size folk. Best of all, any Foci carried will shrink along with the user, so a shrunken alchemist can still use their arsenal of alchemical weapons.

Cost	Powers	END
24	40 pts Shrinking, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, 3 chgs of 1 hour (-0), Cannot Stop Until Charge Duration Ends (-¼) [60]	[3c]

Potion Of Steel Skin

This potion temporarily makes one highly resistant to most normal forms of damage by turning one's skin into flexible, living steel.

Cost	Powers	END
28	Armor (14 PD, 14 ED), Use by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, 4 chgs of 5 minutes (-0) [63]	[4c]

Miscellaneous Potions

Elixer Of Ascent Into The Roseate Clouds

This product of Taoist alchemy will move whoever takes it to the Celestial Emperor's court in the dimension of Elysium. The effect is that the person rises into the air and vanishes among pink-glowing clouds.

Cost	Powers	END
9	EDM to Elysium, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF [30]	[4c]

Fragrance Presentation Elixer

This odd Chinese potion pill temporarily grants one a sense of smell so keen and accurate that it's as good as vision for finding one's way around—or for fighting.

Cost	Powers	END
13	Targeting Sense on Smell, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, 3 chgs of 1 hour (-0) [30]	[3c]

Snake Oil

This proverbial potion is like the Strength potion described above, but it acts on Presence instead, making its user incredibly persuasive.

Cost	Powers	END
11	+20 PRE, Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, 3 chgs of 1 hour (-0) [30]	[3c]

Winged Flight Potion

This potion, known both East and West, temporarily grants the power to fly by making great feathered wings sprout from the ingester's shoulders. This may present minor inconveniences. Two versions are given. Versions of this potion which simply levitate the imbiber are more common, but less colorful; one such is the famous "Supernatural Flight Elixer of Grandee Chang."

Cost	Powers	END
11	10" Flight, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, 3 chgs of 1 hour (-0), Restrainable (-½) [30]	[3c]
or		
23	14" Flight, ½ END, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Uncontrolled, Expendable OAF, 3 chgs of 1 hour, Restrainable (-½) [63]	[3c]

Azoth

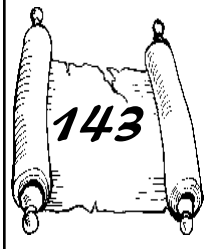
Few alchemical products will make more friends for an alchemist than this one, the Life Principle supposedly isolated by Paracelsus. Azoth instantly heals even mortal wounds, as long as the person who uses the potion is still alive. Properly administered, it can work an even greater marvel and restore life to dead tissue. Alas, Azoth can only revive bodies, not minds and souls. If used on a very fresh cadaver the mind may be quite similar to what the person had before, but won't be identical (i.e. a PC resurrected by Azoth will actually be a brand new character, with no Experience Points.) If the body has been dead more than a few minutes, the result will be either a mindless husk or a totally unexpected consciousness (like, say, a demon).

Cost	Powers	END
19	Multipower (62 pt pool), Expendable OAF (-1 ¼)	[4c]
2u	8d6 BODY Aid, Use by Other (+¼), Trigger: Ingest (+¼), Only to Restore Lost BODY (-½) [60]	
2u	1 x 100 pt Summon, Var: Any Dead Thing Restored to Life (+¼), Only Revives Body, Not Mind/Soul (-½) [62]	

Golden Flower Elixer

This marvelous potion pill temporarily grants the ability to read minds. To the target of the Telepathy, the user's face seems to radiate tendrils of golden light.

As with the Domination and Earth Control potions above, each Charge simply grants the ability to use the potion's Power for a given time span.



More Chinese Elixers

The Chinese elixer names in the main text are all real, even if their effects are from the author's imagination. The names are taken from a Chinese alchemist's recipe book, the *Tan Ching Yao Chueh of Sun Ssu Mo*, translated with extensive commentary by Nathan Sivin. Sun Ssu Mo gives a long list of various "Immortality Elixers," with recipes for several of them. As inspiration, here are some more elixers with evocative names from Master Sun's list:

Grand Unity Jade Powder Elixer

Fine Day Elixer

Grand Unity Spirit Summoning Elixer

Elixer of the Four Wonderful Substances

Elixer for Salvation from Distress

Wonderful Metamorphosis Elixer

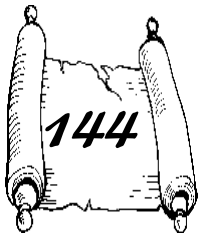
Scarlet Snow and Flowing Pearl Elixer

Beaming Moonlight Elixer

Scarlet Brilliance Elixer

Nine Cauldron Elixer of the Yellow Emperor

Liquid Gold and Jade Flower Elixer



Cost	Powers	END
22	7d6 Telepathy, ½ END, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, 4 chgs of 5 minutes (-0), Cost END [61]	[4c]

Potion Of Animal Form

This potion lets the imbiber take the form of any animal, including hybrid forms such as griffins or unicorns, but one keeps the same mass. Whether "non-magical" abilities such as wing-based Flight or a small Killing Attack come with the new shape is up to the GM. One can choose whatever shape one pleases on taking the potion, but cannot assume any other shape until the potion's effect ends an hour later (or when one ingests another potion). This includes one's *natural* shape—if the animal form chosen becomes inconvenient, one cannot resume human form at will.

Cost	Powers	END
11	Shape Shift: Any Animal Form, Use by Other, Trigger: Ingest, Expendable OAF, 3 chgs of 1 hour (-0), Must Stick With First Shape Chosen (-½) [30]	[3c]

Philter Of Ultimate Wisdom

Well, not quite, but this potent drug *will* enable its user to enter a trance and contact powerful entities on one of Earth's astral shadows. One version might put the user in touch with the "Great Powers" of The Land of Legends, while another version might enable contact with the "Great Powers" of the Netherworld. The Philter gives up to 5 minutes of mental contact.

6d6 of Mind Scan might seem insufficient to locate high EGO pantheon leaders, demon kings, archangels or whatever, especially since these beings always have Mental Defense. One may assume, though, that these big shots are usually interested in contacting people on Earth. Once they feel the philter user's mind in the area, they drop their Mental Defense. After that, the user only has to roll higher than the target's EGO once to establish the Mind Link.

Someone who uses the Philter doesn't have to specify a particular being as a target. Instead they can simply cast their mind out with an invitation to make contact. Of course, this can present certain dangers, especially if the user doesn't know which dimension will be searched…

Cost	Powers	END
22	6d6 Mind Scan, Transdimensional (+½), Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Ingest; + Mind Link x1 to "Great Powers," Any Distance/Dimension, Usable by Other x1, Trigger, Expendable OAF, 1 Charge of 5 Minutes (-¾), Concentrate 0 DCV Constant (-1) [90]	[1c]

Other Items

Any product of alchemy that isn't used on oneself is simply an "Other Item." The examples shown below all carry the "Usable by Other" and "Trigger" Advantages for consistency's sake, but if an alchemist character is never going to hand these items out for other people to use, these Advantages can be dropped and the Active Points made up by increasing the item's base effect.

Offensive Items

Alkahest

According to some alchemists, making the Philosopher's Stone could only be done by first making a substance called Alkahest, the Universal Solvent. Alkahest could dissolve any form of matter. (How one would keep Alkahest from dissolving its container never seems to have been recorded.)

Hermetic alchemists succeeded in making Alkahest centuries ago. Alkahest, they have learned, is not *quite* a universal solvent; there are a few rare substances (also the product of alchemy) that it can't affect. Nor can Alkahest dissolve through force fields, which are not made of matter. Nevertheless, few alchemists are willing to try storing Alkahest; instead they prepare two liquids which will become Alkahest when combined.

Not only is diluted Alkahest a powerful laboratory tool, concentrated Alkahest is a fearsome weapon. Pure Alkahest can dissolve *thousands* of times its mass; a few ounces can dissolve a tank and eat a crater in the ground before it is neutralized. One had better be careful when preparing and handling the capsules of proto Alkahest; any accident could be deadly…

Cost	Powers	END
27	1d6 RKA, BODY NND: Force Field (+2), Uncontrolled, Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Mix Capsules and Throw, Expendable OAF, 6 chgs of 1 minute (-0) [60]	[6c]

Congealed Frost Elixer

This powder must be kept in tightly sealed vials. To use it, a vial of elixer is uncapped and thrown as far away as possible. The powder explodes in a burst of snow and icy fog, creating a zone of more-than-Arctic cold that will quickly incapacitate anyone who isn't specifically protected against cold.

Cost	Powers	END
27	3d6 EB, NND: LS: Cold (+1), Uncontrolled, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Throw, 5" Radius AE (+1), Expendable OAF, 6 chgs of 1 minute (-0) [60]	[6c]

Demon-Expelling Pellets

Since evil spirits might interfere with delicate alchemical operations, Chinese alchemists developed these exorcistic pellets compounded from stinking, irritating and toxic substances. Burning one creates a cloud of smoke that will force any spirit in the area to leave quickly. It's none too pleasant for any humans, either, but not actually damaging.

The original version of these pellets had to be burned in a brazier of charcoal. Modern science has supplied an improvement: nowadays, Demon-Expelling Pellets can be tipped with the same mixture of chemicals used in matches, so they can be ignited by scratching them against any rough surface.

Cost	Powers	END
27	½d6 RKA, BODY AVLD: Power Defense (+2 ½), Penetrating, Uncontrolled, Use by other x1, Trigger: Ignite, 5" Radius AE (+1), Expendable OAF, 6 chgs of 1 minute (-0) (60)	[6c]

Fiendish Poison

This insidious toxin will kill just about anything in a minute or less. It has the disadvantage that it takes effect mere seconds after the victim consumes the poison; this means that it's very obvious that the victim was poisoned and may not give the poisoner a chance to get away.

The Fiendish Poison is neither ranged nor non-ranged. It only works if the victim swallows the poison, making it useless in combat. The poison does have a distinctive taste and odor, but in some strongly-flavored food this won't be noticed by anyone who doesn't have Discriminatory Smell. It can be tasted in wine, beer, soda or other beverages with a normal PER Roll—but then it's too late.

The poison's progress is very swift. If a Paramedic Roll is made in the *first Turn* after the poison takes effect, the victim takes no further damage: the victim has been induced to vomit up the poison. On the second Turn of effect, the Paramedic roll to stop the poison is at -2; on the third Turn, at -4; and so on. Even if the poison is stopped, the victim may still die because of Bleeding effects.

Cost	Powers	END
22	1d6 RKA, BODY NND: Immunity (+2), Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Victim Ingests, Uncontrolled, Expendable OAF, 6 chgs of 1 Minute (-0), Use Restrictions (-½) [60]	[6c]

Spirit-Returning Elixer

This shimmering powder is compounded from substances traditionally believed to be hostile to the spirit world. Tossing it on a spirit may force the spirit to return to its own dimension.

Cost	Powers	END
21	14d6 Dispel vs. Summon, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Throw, Expendable OAF [63]	[6c]

Wizard Glue

This alchemical adhesive makes a pretty good trap. The Wizard Glue consists of a thick liquid which is brushed onto a surface. Each Charge of Wizard Glue is enough to cover a full Hex of surface. Then the surface is lightly dusted with a fine powder. Any sharp impact (such as a footfall) will make the Wizard Glue set instantly, trapping whatever was touching it that Phase. If several people run through a patch of Wizard Glue on the same Phase, the glue will trap all of them.

Since the Wizard Glue can be brushed quite thin, it may appear like nothing more than a slight discoloration or dampness on the treated surface. An area trapped with Wizard Glue is easy to spot if one searches for it deliberately; if not, it may be noticed with a Concealment roll (possibly at minuses for bad lighting) or a PER Roll at -5.

Cost	Powers	END
11	3d6 Entangle, 1 Hex AE, Usable by other x1, Trigger: Surface Touched, Expendable OAF, Only immobilizes the body part touching area (-1), 1 turn Extra Time to use (-1) [60]	[4c]

Essential Salts

A long and complicated alchemical process, first described by the scholar Borellus, takes the body of a living (or once-living) thing and reduces it to a powder. This powder can be activated by other substances or magic words to reconstitute the former entity.

As with Azoth, restoring minds and souls has proved far more difficult than restoring bodies; animal instincts and reflexes survive the reduction to Essential Salts, but memories and other aspects of true personality are lost. The only known solutions to the mind loss problem involve pacts with powerful and evil spirits. Still, an alchemist can store a whole zoo in a small spice rack through the use of this spell, and call up the creatures on demand.

Theoretically, a revived creature could be returned to its Essential Salts, stored and re-used, but in practice this is seldom possible and Essential Salts remain Expendable.

Cost	Powers	END
30	1 x 100 pt Summon Animal, Var: Any Animal (+¼), Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Add Reconstituting Agent, Expendable OAF [87]	[4c]

Defensive Items

Egg Of Night

This is nothing more than an alchemical smoke bomb. Unlike smoke grenades produced by orthodox chemistry, the smoke from an Egg of Night will also block magic detection.

An Egg of Night is just a large pellet about the size of a fat almond. Any sudden, hard impact will set them off which is a good argument for keeping them in a padded pouch.

Eightfold Luminosity Elixer

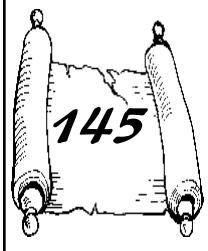
White Snow Elixer of Master Mao

Elixer of Meteors' Halting at the Moon

Dark Pearl Elixer of the Emperor of the North

Elixer of Fright at the Falling of the Moon

Immortal Child Elixer



Cost	Powers	END
22	2" radius Darkness vs. Detect Magic & All Vision, Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Sharp Impact, Uncontrolled, Expendable OAF, 4 Chgs of 1 turn (-½) [60]	[4c]

Miscellaneous Items

Scrying Oil

This iridescent oil can let anyone "scry" scenes far away. All one has to do is pour the oil into still water and stare into the shimmering swirls. The Oil will show what's happening at that moment at any location one thinks about, as long as it is within range.

Cost	Powers	END
15	Clairsentience: Normal Vision, x16 Range (6.4 km/4 mi.), Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Pour in Water and Stare, Expendable OAF, 3 Chgs of 1 minute (-¾), Concentrate 0 DCV Constant (-1) [60]	[3c]

Philosopher's Stone

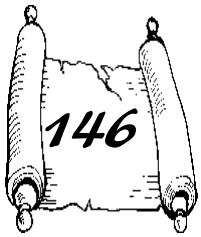
By the time the Hermetic Alchemists found a reliable recipe for the Philosopher's Stone that would turn base metals into gold, such transmutations were no longer a major field of interest. The Philosopher's Stone is still one of the more difficult products for an alchemist to attempt, but many modern alchemists support themselves by gold-making. Even those who don't make the Philosopher's Stone themselves can trade with alchemists who do. Selling alchemical gold takes some discretion, however, because the Transform which makes the gold can be reversed by certain conditions (such as contact with reasonably pure iron).

The Philosopher's Stone isn't actually a lump of rock. The historical accounts of alchemy claim that the "Stone" was actually a reddish or ocher powder. This form was also called the Powder of Projection, a name the author has never seen explained. Most accounts say that lead was changed to gold by heating it in a sealed crucible with a tiny amount of this powder.

Cost	Powers	END
11	2 ½d6 Transform (lead to gold), Usable by Other x1, Trigger: Heat with Lead, Expendable OAF, 0 Range, 1 hour Extra Time (-2 ½) [60]	[4c]

Lab Work Spells

Each lab work spell is explicitly given as an example of a class of related spells. While they were invented as a way to make alchemical work more "magical," some lab work spells have intriguing possibilities in creative hands. Lab work spells are the only form of alchemical magic which doesn't use Expendable Charges. No lab work spell can go over 15 Active Points. A Multipower of lab work spells is very cheap, but one might as well just buy a Power Pool of them and be done with it.



Analyze Alchemy

This process identifies what an alchemical product is supposed to do. The Focus consists of small bottles of various tinctures, miniature wands attuned to the various forces of Natural Magic, and so on; a complete kit can be packed in a small satchel. While an analysis kit costs quite a lot, it can be used over and over again. Of course, a kit is useless except in the hands of a trained alchemist.

Similar spells identify samples of animal, vegetable or mineral matter. For minerals, a wand of silver and magnetite is rubbed with the unknown specimen and held to a tablet holding samples of known minerals: the wand will point to the sample most like the unknown mineral. Vegetable or animal specimens are soaked in special solutions. The solution is then dripped onto pads of absorbent paper or felt, where it forms a picture of the plant or animal the sample came from, and blurry symbols representing the organism's occult virtues. Anything beyond that is up to the alchemist's own knowledge and reference books.

Cost	Powers	END
2	Detect Alchemical Magic, Discriminatory, OAF, 1 minute Extra Time (-1 ½) [8]	

Liquefy

This spell takes a small amount of solid matter and renders it liquid without any application of heat. The substance will stay liquid for days. Alchemists use this spell to mix together substances which can't usually be alloyed, such as metal with glass, as part of potion-making or experiments. (It is also a quick, safe way to make unusual castings, such as a ring of cast ruby.) The Focus is a hollow glass wand filled with the liquid metal quicksilver.

Similar spells change the properties of matter in other ways, such as freezing liquids, crystallizing substances that don't naturally occur as crystals, or changing a substance's color to something more symbolically appropriate for a magical operation. Each such spell uses a wand made from something with the desired properties, such as a chalcedony wand for a freezing spell (quartz was once thought to be ice so thoroughly frozen it couldn't melt again), or wands of colored glass for a color changing spell, and so on.

Cost	Powers	END
4	1d6 Transform to liquid, OAF, 1 minute Extra Time, 0 Range [15]	1

Hybrid: Voodoo

"Be careful what you do,
Or Mumbo-Jumbo, God of the Congo,
And all of the other
Gods of the Congo,
Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you…"

—Vachel Lindsey, *The Congo*

Actually, this section should be called "Magic of the Afro-American Religious Complex," but that's just too long and scholarly to endure. So this whole tangled mess of African-derived religion and sorcery might as well take the name best known to Americans: Voodoo. Voodoo, a mixture of Natural Magic, Ritual Magic and religion, may be used as a model for the folk magic of many tribal cultures.

African slaves carried their religious ideas and folk magic to the New World. In what became the United States, the slaves were outnumbered by the ruling whites, so much of the religion was lost, overwhelmed by Christianity. In Brazil and the Caribbean, however, there might be dozens of black Africans to every white European, so the old ways fared better.

To hide their beliefs from their masters, the slaves adopted a veneer of Catholicism, producing several hybrid cults: Macumba, Santeria, Voudon and many others. Native American beliefs quickly seasoned the mix. Later came bits of Spiritualism and European grimoire magic. The Voodoo religions are still evolving.

The larger, more public Voodoo sects serve the same magical functions as any other religion. The priest asks the gods to bless the members of the community, make them prosper, keep them from harm but to harm their enemies. Worshippers may consult the priest-magician privately for more personal goals, such as fortune telling, a love charm or a spell to drive away evil spirits and curses…or a curse of their own to put on an enemy. Officially, the Voodoo priests only cast hexes on deserving targets, but we all know how flexible ideas of guilt can be.

Until recently, mainstream "white" culture tarred all the Voodoo religions with the same brush. Voodoo meant blood-crazed cultists dancing orgiastically to pounding drums while devil-masked priests stuck pins in dolls and raised zombies from the grave: "Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you." Serious, unbiased studies of Voodoo are quite a new thing; one can understand why Voodooists have been reluctant to go public.

While Voodoo ceremonies do involve drumming and dancing, one sees far less overt sexuality than in, say, the average discotheque. Sacrificed animals are cooked and eaten by the congregation; repugnance at seeing one's dinner butchered is a peculiarly Western quirk. Most Voodooists are as disgusted by the thought of human sacrifice and magical murder as any good Christian, Buddhist or Secular Humanist.

BUT

Not all Voodooists follow such a benign path. The horrors of slavery, poverty and oppression made some people invoke powers of death, destruction and vengeance instead of life and healing. From this grew more sinister cults, steeped in murder and sorcery. Even today, these cults keep their secrets remarkably well. In the 1950s, the anthropologist Lydia Cabrera discovered the vicious Abakua cult surviving in the hinterlands of Cuba, decades after even the Cuban peasants had dismissed the cult as long extinct. In 1989, the disappearance of an American college student in Matamoros, Mexico led to the discovery and suppression of another murderous Voodoo cult, which may have practiced Abakua. Ominously, there are reports that Cuba's collapsing economy is causing a resurgence of Abakua in that country.

The cults of Voodoo form a spectrum. Santeria and the "Rada" form of Haitian Voudon represent the benign side of Voodoo. The "Petro" branch of Voudon worships fiercer gods; the *bokors* (sorcerers) of Petro Voudon are quite willing to cast death-curses for their clients. Santeria priests warn against the necromancers of Palo Mayombe. Mayomberos concede that they rob graves and command ghosts, and that some mayomberos act as supernatural hit men, but they don't kill humans in their ceremonies. The yet more secretive Abakua cult is rumored to do just that; certainly the Matamoros cultists did. The Matamoros cult leader, Adolfo Jesus de Constanza, would torture his victim, perhaps skin him alive, then rip out the victim's heart and drink blood from it—if possible, before the victim lost consciousness and died.

Magic Theory

Voodoo combines Spirit Magic with Natural Magic. Most of the practical magic claimed for real Voodoo practitioners combines herbs and other natural ingredients with an invocation to a god or ghost.

All the Voodoo religions have four features in common: spirit possession; equating African gods with Catholic saints; belief that all natural things have magical power; and blood sacrifice.

Practitioners of Voodoo believe in a complicated spirit world. There is a God who created the Universe, but he delegates the work of running the world to lesser spirits—the gods of Voodoo—who are called 'orishas,' 'loas' or 'saints.' The spirits of the dead are also very important to Voodooists. All of these spirits can take over the bodies of willing humans. In a Voodoo worship ceremony, the worshippers get to meet their gods face to face. A few will temporarily *become* gods. Incarnate through their worshippers, the gods can use their magic to help or harm.

Each African god is matched with a Catholic saint or other religious figure. The slaves recognized features of their own gods in the statues and icons their masters made them worship. They decided that the saints and gods were just different names for the same beings. Yemanya, blue- robed goddess of motherhood and the sea, was the Virgin Mary; Jesus was Obatala,

white-robed lord of purity; Babalu-Aye, god of healing, was St. Lazarus. Gods and saints could even have different genders, as when the slaves identified St. Barbara with Chango, god of fire, lightning and justice: both St. Barbara and Chango were just masks the spirit used to make itself known to mortals.

The power of spirits was closely linked to the magic of the natural world. Water, minerals, animals and especially herbs had magical properties which a clever person could exploit. In Santeria, this natural magic is called *ashe'* (ah-SHAY). Not only do Voodoo priests use ashe' to help in contacting the spirits, the spirits can help the Voodooist turn ashe' to more worldly goals. Professional Voodooists must learn the uses of a multitude of herbs, animal parts and other substances.

The last core belief is related to the third. To call the gods and get favors from them, one must feed them the life-force of sacrificed animals. Actually, most religions contain blood sacrifice in some form or another, but few accept the exchange of blood for power in such a businesslike way.

Powers And Modifiers

Voodoo magic is extremely Focus oriented. The Foci might not be noticeable, as with the drug-based magic which is such an important part of Voodoo, but almost every power a Voodooist has will operate through some sort of Focus. *Almost*—but not necessarily all.

A significant part of Voodoo magic consists of magical drugs and potions. These might be written up the same way as Alchemy.

Disadvantages Of Voodoo

Voodoo is a broad, heterogeneous style. It carries with it only minor inconveniences. Foci are extremely common, but not inevitable: one cannot count on a Voodooist being helpless without Foci. The greatest problem a Voodooist faces in being a Voodooist is the demands of their religion. Voodooists must keep on the good side of their gods, who are capricious even when benevolent, and that takes a significant investment of time and resources. Voodooists in America may endure petty harassment from neighbors who object to their religion, particularly animal sacrifice. Generic Voodoo never takes more than a 10 point Magic Style Restriction, although a 5 point Watched by Local Authorities is possible.

Style Notes

The magic of "real Voodoo" magic is seldom supposed to have visible effects. A cursed person gets sick or loses their job; a blessed person's problems end and that's it. "Fictional Voodoo" is far more lurid. Voodoo's stealthy nature still accounts for much of its glamour, but a victim of Fictional Voodoo knows they are under attack, even if the attacking Voodooist is miles away. A victim doesn't just quietly keel over from a heart attack; no, they hear the pulsating rhythms of the Voodoo Drums pounding in their head, catch a glimpse of the priest in full regalia holding the doll and pin, and *then* the pain hits.

Some Voodoo Sects

Santeria

This Voodoo sect originated in Cuba. Its gods, the orishas, come from the Yoruba people of Nigeria. Its terminology and liturgy is in a mixture of Yoruban and Spanish. Cuban immigrants have spread Santeria through black and Hispanic communities in the US, and it has started to gain white converts as well. In Santeria the orishas are temperamental but on the whole benign. Its priests are called santeros. Special priests, called babalawos, are trained to use a complex fortune telling system called the Table of Ifa. By now, most major cities have a *botanica*, a shop for herbs, icons and other Santeria supplies.

Voudon

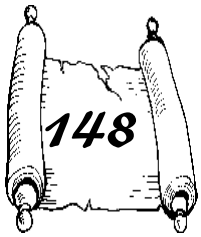
This sect comes from Haiti, with a long- established branch in New Orleans. Its gods, the loa, come in two main groups. The Rada group is based on Yoruba gods; they are generally benign. The Petro gods, either from Congo gods or invented in Haiti, are fiercer and more willing to help in works of vengeance and hate. The language of Voudon is Creole. Priests are called houngans, priestesses are mamans and their temples are houmforts. Voudon sorcerers are bokors. According to anthropologist Wade Davis the most notorious element of Haitian Voudon, the Zombie, is quite real, but done through drugs rather than necromancy. Like Santeria, Voudon concentrates on possession by the gods, but with a brisker sideline in curses and counterspells.

Palo Mayombe

Also called Palo Monte. This cult derives from Congo tribal beliefs, by way of Cuba. Instead of gods, Palo employs spirits of the dead. The palero or mayombero invites possession by ghosts as a way to master them. Such spirits become the sorcerer's agents to commit magical murder and give him a spirit's invulnerability to harm. According to one author, not all paleros use their powers for evil; a few American doctors have studied Palo because it has a vast store of medical magic as well. Still, the mayombero's scepter is a human shinbone wrapped in black cloth; the focus of his power, the nganga, is a cauldron filled with human remains stolen from graves, animal blood and other noxious ingredients.

Umbanda

This Brazilian cult combines traditional African and Catholic elements with a form of Spiritualism, in a rather complicated hierarchy of orishas, angels, Native American spirits and saints. Umbanda ceremonies may include a seance. Umbanda has a "black magic" version called Quimbanda.



Macumba, Candomble, Batuque

These are the older forms of Voodoo in Brazil. They are pretty much the same as Santeria, even to the names of the orishas.

Abakua

The most vile and vicious of the Voodoo cults derives, like Palo and Petro Voudon, from Congolese sources. It comes from Cuba. If the Matamoros cult was actually Abakua, then Abakua's rites feature human sacrifice of the most grotesque sort.

In the 19th century, Abakua cultists called Ñañigos were greatly feared in Cuba. They were sort of a cross between the Mafia and the Boogyman, notorious for their skill at kidnapping and murder, a skill alleged to come from magical powers. Eventually the authorities suppressed the Ñañigos and they were forgotten. Actually, like the Japanese ninja clans they had merely retreated into the hills, as Cabrera found out. Unfortunately for research- minded GMs, Cabrera's work on these "Voodoo Ninjas" does not seem to be available in English.

Obeah

Obeah is the form which Voodoo takes in Jamaica and the West Indies. Obeah emphasizes practical magic over religious devotion. Casting and lifting curses is an important part of the business of an "obeah man." Obeah curses are often backed up with poison.

Sample Voodoo Spells

There is malice, oh!

—Voudon ritual chant

Attack Spells

Voodoo is full of aggressive magic; a proper bokor or mayombero can kill a victim six ways from Sunday, or so it is claimed. Yet very little of this is flashy, in-your-face magic—the sort a comic-book adventure demands. Voodoo curses work from far away, and the victim seems to die in an accident or from sudden illness. Even the gods seldom use lightning bolts or other such gross displays of power.

Still, there are some spells from the Voodoo traditions which can be adapted for reasonably straightforward combat. Beyond this, the magical theories, practices and Foci of Voodoo sects suggest more fanciful, showy spells. Even if they aren't anthropologically correct, they preserve the *feel* of Voodoo, and that's what matters most.

Domination

The expert Voodooist has a fearsome hypnotic power over both spirits and their fellow men. Both can be commanded to do nearly anything. When a Houngan or Maman picks up their sacred rattle, the *asson*, or a Mayombero brandishes his shinbone scepter, the *kisengue*, wise men hope they have given no offense.

Cost	Powers	END
30	12d6 Mind Control, OAF Symbol of Power [60]	

Whisk Away Spirit

Voodoo priests know many spells to drive away evil spirits; it's an important part of their trade. This spell uses an *iruke*, a ceremonial feather duster or flywhisk. The priest twitches the *iruke* at the spirit while invoking a god or two, and the spirit is whisked away—or at least gets a strong incentive to leave. There are several ways to write up this power.

Cost	Powers	END
28	Multipower (60 pt pool), OAF Iruke, Incantation	
3u	13d6 Dispel vs. Summon, Affects Desolid (+½) [58]	6
2u	4d6 Ego Attack, Affects Desolid (+½), Only Affects Spirits (-1) [60]	6
2u	EDM to Remote Part of Astral Plane, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged, Affects Desolid (+½), Only Affects Spirits (1) [60]	6

Zombi Astral

According to Haitian Voudon, the human part of the soul, *the ti bon ange,* can be caught and placed in a pottery jar when a person dies. Normally this is done as part of the funeral rites, to protect the soul for a while before helping on its way. It is also possible to capture a soul and turn it into a *zombi astral*, a ghost slave. The *zombi astral* can be written up as a separate entity summoned through the jar and sent to work the magician's will, or as a power.

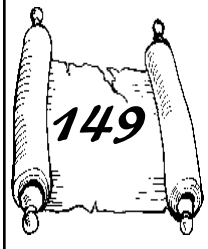
This example of a jarred soul has powers like a poltergeist; it moves things around as its master directs. It is too weak to be a significant attack by itself, but it can lock doors, steal unguarded Foci and do other things to hamper a person. Naturally, it is best used from far away, guided by Mind Scan. The special effect for the TK is a transparent phantom. The *zombi astral* can be freed by breaking its jar.

Cost	Powers	END
28	10 STR TK w/Fine Manipulation, BOECV (+1), ½ END, OAF [56]	3

Control Doll Magic

Probably the most famous feat of Voodoo magic is the control doll: a little mannikin of rags, wax or clay, charged with a bit of the victim's hair, clothing or nail clippings. It might have some graveyard dirt, bone shavings or herbs in its stuffing to help it work. The diabolical voodoo witch-doctor sticks a pin in the mannikin, and the victim has a heart attack. Mind control and other powers are supposedly possible through the control doll as well.

Actually the "voodoo doll" is quite rare in real voodoo; it's more a feature of European witchcraft. However, control dolls are not unknown. What's more, control dolls can be used to transmit blessings as well as curses—but the curses are all one ever hears about.



A control doll is most effective when used from a long way away, using the doll's magic link to the victim to target the attacks. In such a case, voodoo sorcerers can concentrate and take all the time they want to make the attack. Up close, victims seldom sit still long enough. The doll can still be used, but it becomes less reliable and the doll can be taken away. In effect, control doll spells have a Variable Limitation: from close up, they carry an OAF and Activation Roll; from far away, in which condition the doll obviously can't be taken away from the sorcerer, the spells carry Extra Time.

The Attacks

This set of spells is assumed to be for a master voodoo sorcerer, who doesn't actually need something from the victim to cast these attacks; he or she just mentally concentrates on identifying the doll with the victim. A Voodooist who *must* have something from each victim would take a further Limitation. The sorcerer can cause intense pain or actual heart attacks to whittle the target down, hypnotize them into working the sorcerer's will like a puppet on strings, or send horrible hallucinations.

Cost	Powers	END
35	Multipower (62 pt pool), 1 ½ Var Lim (-¾)	
3u	Pain: 6d6 Ego Attack [60]	6
3u	Heart Attack: 1d6 RKA, BODY BOECV (+2), Invisible Except to Mental (+1) [60]	6
3u	Domination: 10d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal [62]	6
3u	Puppeteering: 13 STR TK, Based on ECV (+1), Invisible Except to Mental (+1), ½ END [62]	3
3u	Hallucinations: 12d6 Mental Illusions [60]	6

Remote Effect

When casting curses, the sorcerer concentrates on the doll, imagining that it is the victim and the pins are going into the victim's body instead of the doll's. Distance is no object.

The version given here is just a basic minimum, to let a Voodooist attack the average superhero if the sorcerer has a fair idea where the hero will be so Mind Scanning won't be too hard. A really dangerous Voodoo sorcerer could (and probably should) have more dice of Mind Scan and more plusses to ECV. A Voodoo sorcerer who really wants to do someone harm will try to get a Sympathetic Link to help in targeting.

Cost	Powers	END
18	7D6 Mind Scan +5 ECV 1 minute Extra Time (-1 ½) [45]	3

Sympathetic Link

A Voodoo sorcerer's psychic attacks are more certain to succeed if they have something connected to the victim, as closely connected as possible—preferably an actual part of the victim, such as a lock of hair, nail clippings or spittle. Sorcerers may go to great lengths to get such a relic of a victim. (This is the "Law of Sympathy" mentioned in the discussion of Natural Magic, hence a "Sympathetic Link.")

Cost	Powers	END
10	+5 levels Any Attack ECV, Need Something from Target's Body (-1 ½) [25]	

Drug Magic

Priests and sorcerers in all the branches of Voodoo are masters of herbal medicine. Their knowledge can be used to harm as well as heal. Voodooists can create powerful magic toxins from poisonous herbs, animals and purely occult ingredients such as human bones and colored chalk. Their magic makes their drugs act more quickly and selectively than any real toxin.

Typically, the drug is in the form of a powder. Voodoo legend has it that it is enough to leave a packet of the powder near the victim's home, or sprinkle it where they walk. More plausibly, the victim could ingest the powder. The most dramatic technique is to blow the powder in the victim's face. Unless the victim is in hermetically sealed armor or has a suitable Force Field, the drug will be instantly absorbed through the skin and take effect. In some examples, it is assumed the powder is blown in the face; in others, that the powder can be used in several ways.

All these powders are based on Charges, but in most cases no number has been given. In some cases, the Charges must be shared among the slots of a Multipower, to represent a powder that can be used in different ways, and sometimes one use will be a continuing effect (Charges with Duration). For the examples, it is usually assumed that there are enough charges that they do not represent a Limitation on the power.

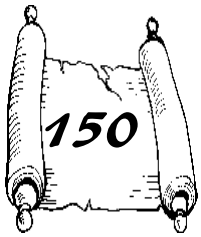
Curse Powder

This magic dust is compounded from a variety of stinging and burning ingredients, such as poison ivy and cayenne pepper, then enchanted. The victim immediately gets an extremely painful rash, like being stung all over by nettles. The powder can also be puffed around to affect many people at once.

Cost	Powers	END
31	Multipower (62 pt pool), OAF, [chgs]	
2u	6d6 EB, NND: Force Field (+1), 0 Range [60]	
2u	5d6 EB, NND: Force Field (+1), 1 Hex AE, 0 Range [62]	

Hallucinogen Powder

This powder is made from several herbs containing dangerous alkaloids, such as datura (a.k.a. zombie cucumber). Either the victim instantly has a walloping great hallucination, or is plagued by continuous minor hallucinations for several minutes. The caster gets to select the general content of the hallucinations, too (something not possible with a mere drug).



Cost	Powers	END
30	Multipower (60 pt pool), OAF	
2u	12d6 Mental Illusions, 0 Range [60]	
2u	8d6 Mental Illusions, Uncontrolled, 0 Range, 4 chgs of 5 minutes (-0) [60]	

Paralytic Powder

This is a quicker-acting but less effective version of the Zombie Powder (see below). It instantly paralyzes the victim when blown in their face, but the victim stays conscious. The sorcerer has a choice when using the powder, to treat this as a physical or mental Entangle, based on what seems most likely to hold the target: the ECV Entangle will hold even the strongest muscleman if his will is weak, while high-EGO mentalists and mages can be paralyzed by the physical Entangle effect.

Cost	Powers	END
30	Multipower (60 pt pool), OAF [chgs]	
2u	4d6 Entangle, Damage Transparent (+½), 0 Range [60]	
2u	2d6 Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2), 0 Range [60]	

Sedative Powder

This powder simply puts the victim to sleep. Unlike the previous powders, its great value comes from use by stealth. Instead of being openly blown in the face, it is slipped to the victim in some secretive way: as a drug in their food, for instance, or a powder sprinkled in their shoes to be absorbed through the skin (hence the Ranged advantage, to reflect that the sorcerer can plant the powder and be far away by the time it takes effect). The powder will keep a person unconscious for a long, long time.

Cost	Powers	END
34	2d6 STUN Drain, Recover 1 STUN/minute (+½), Ranged, Uncontrolled, Var Trigger (+½), IAF, Use Limitations (-¼), 4 chgs of 1 minute (-0) [60]	[4c]

Zombie Powder

Finally, this is the celebrated Zombie Poison discovered by anthropologist Wade Davis. Its chief chemical component is tetrodotoxin, obtained from either the puffer fish or the sea toad. The Haitian *bokors* who compound the drug, however, give credit to the shavings of human bone and the ritual of preparation. The version presented here inclines more to romance than fact.

The Zombie Powder is not quite instantaneous, but will put anyone not protected by magic or a non-human metabolism into a deathlike trance in less than a minute. Only a close medical examination can tell that the victim is still alive. Yet the victim remains conscious through the pronouncement of death, the nailing shut of the coffin, burial… The poison wears off anytime from 12 hours to 2 days later, at the discretion of the *bokor*. Then, the hallucinogenic Zombie Cucumber is used to complete the brainwashing process and turn a live man or woman into a mindless zombie slave.

The Zombie Powder differs from the other magic dusts presented here in that it can be used by someone other than its creator, making it even more like a true product of alchemy. It can also be used in many ways besides being blown in the target's face, such as being placed in the victim's food.

Cost	Powers	END
35	1 ½d6 major Transform to Deathlike State, Use by Other (+¼), Var Trigger (+½), Uncontrolled, Hard to Dispel (+¼), IAF, 4 chgs of 1 minute (-0), Use Restrictions (-¼) [62]	[4c]

Indirect Attack Spells

The Voodoo traditions also include various ways to attack a person indirectly, by attacking their property or social standing: Voodooists are notorious for curses based on Social Transforms. A skilled Voodooist can make a person's life utterly miserable.

Bad-Luck Curse

This is just one form of a curse to inflict bad luck on a person. This version comes from Palo Mayombe. It uses a powder compounded from poison ivy, pepper, the brains of a black cat and a black dog, a whole tarantula, salt, sulfur and graveyard dirt. A packet of powder is placed near the victim's house, whose luck then turns bad.

Cost	Powers	END
23	1d6 Transform to person with 4d6 Unluck, Cumulative, Uncontrolled, 5" Radius AE (+1), Indirect (+½), Invisible vs. Sight/Hearing (+¾), IAF, 1 chg of 1 minute (-1), Use Restrictions (-¼) [64]	[1c]

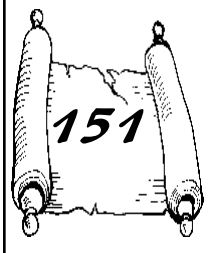
Fire Curse

This curse comes from Santeria and invokes Chango, god of fire and lightning, to destroy a building. A mixture of several powders is wrapped in red silk and scattered on the building's door at midnight, and then a photograph of the building is ritually burned in the flame of a red candle. Some days later, the building catches fire. The magic makes 1 hex worth of fire for 1 minute; with luck, the rest of the building catches and burns naturally.

Cost	Powers	END
15	1d6 RKA, Indirect (+½), 1 Hex AE, Trigger: Random Number of Days (+¼), Uncontrolled, IAF, 1 chg of 1 minute (-1), Minor Ritual Conditions (-¼) [41]	[1c]

Job-Loss Curse

As a final example, Voodoo priests can cast a curse for the specific purpose of making someone lose their job. This is a cosmetic Social Transform. It is targeted from far away, using some form of Mind Scan, analogous to the Control Doll given above. Instead of a doll, though, this Santeria spell uses a lemon, the sacred liquid called *omiero*, a powder called *precipitado rojo* and



a bird to sacrifice. The victim (and anyone else nearby) gets a brief vision of the santero throwing the prepared lemon at them while cursing them—the visual and auditory effect of the spell.

Cost	Powers	END
13	6d6 cosmetic Transform to unemployed, BOECV (+1), OAF, initial 1 hour Extra Time (-1 ¼), Incantation, Concentrate 0 DCV (-½), Must be Targeted via Mind Scan (-½) [60]	6

Defensive Spells

Defensive magic is very common in Voodoo, but it all takes the form of amulets and exorcisms to drive away bad luck and evil spirits. There's very little in the way of flashy defenses against open attacks, magical or otherwise. While Haitian folktales tell of bulletproof Bokors, details are sadly lacking. Here one has no choice but to stray further from documented Voodoo practice.

Amulet Of Chango

Chango is the Yoruban god of war, lightning, fire and kingship. He has become one of the most popular and widespread of the Voodoo gods. Properly invoked, he will warn his devotee of harm and help them escape it. His amulet is a small pouch of red velvet stuffed with herbs, aloes, brown sugar and other ingredients, sewn shut with red thread and stuck with a tiny gilded sword engraved with the name of St. Barbara. The sword breaks when danger threatens and must be replaced.

Cost	Powers	END
11	Danger Sense, Any Threat; + 4 levels DCV; IAF, 1 chg of 1 phase [40]	[1c]

Amulet Of Ogoun

Ogoun is another Yoruban war god. He governs weapons and all things made of metal. One of his symbols is a smith's hammer. Properly consecrated, a miniature hammer will bring the blessings of Ogoun, protecting the bearer from harm.

The Amulet of Ogoun only gives a low level of invulnerability by super being standards, but it's about as good as Voodoo can do. If the Amulet supplies enough defense that no BODY from an attack gets through, the attack visibly bounces. If any BODY gets through, the attack shows no deflection, but simply doesn't do as much damage as it should have against a seemingly unprotected person.

Cost	Powers	END
20	Armor (6 PD, 4 ED) + 9 PD, 6 ED, IAF [30]	

Death-Bar Bracelet

Santeria claims that the god Orunla, patron of diviners, won a special power for his *babalawo* priests: the power to overturn fate's grimmest decree and bar Death itself. A dying person can be kept alive through a ritual cleansing with cotton balls, cocoa butter, powdered eggshell, two white pigeons touched to the person's body and then released, and Orunla's bracelet of green and yellow beads. After this process, no one in the same room as a person wearing a consecrated bracelet of Orunla can die!—Not unless the bracelet is taken off or the person leaves, at any rate. This can give a sick person a chance to recover on their own.

In Haitian superstition, a powerful Houngan or Bokor can achieve a similar result by removing the *Ti Bon Ange* from the body and hiding it away in a bottle; they can do this to themselves or to others. A person whose *Ti Bon Ange* is protected this way can never die until their soul is freed from the bottle, although they can still suffer harm.

Cost	Powers	END
10	1d6 CON Aid + 1d6 BODY Aid, Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END, Invisible to Sight/Hearing (+¾), 4" Radius AE (+1), Fragile IAF, initial 1 hour Extra Time (-1 ¼), initial x4 END (-¾), Only to Keep People Just Barely Alive (-1 ½) [47]	

Elekes

These are the five bead necklaces of the most popular gods of Santeria: Obatala, Eleggua, Oshun, Yemanya and Chango. Each necklace has its own pattern of colored beads. Properly consecrated, the necklaces grant the wearer limited protection from many of the subtler forms of magical attack.

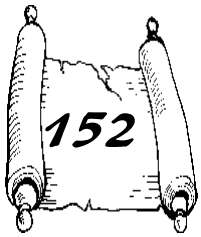
Cost	Powers	END
7	Mental Defense (base 5 pts) + Power Defense (5 pts), IAF [10]	

Miscellaneous Spells

Basic Possession

The fundamental act of Voodoo religion is possession by one's gods. Every Voodooist has a particular patron god, but may be possessed by other gods on occasion. Possession only happens after at least several minutes of dancing and the sacrifices to the gods. While possessed, a celebrant acts the role of the god and speaks in its name—even in its voice. The god's ritual paraphernalia and favorite food must be given to it or it will be unhappy. The god may be able to channel some minor powers through its host. The host may or may not remember what happened while they were possessed.

Possession is represented through two Powers. First is a Mind Scan to locate the god. It is not a very accurate Mind Scan by most standards, but then it doesn't have to be: the gods are familiar to their worshippers, and neither priest nor worshipper is very picky about which god they get. Once the Mind Scan makes contact, the priest creates a Mind Link between the god and the worshipper. The god takes it from there. The Mind Link between god and worshipper is deeper and stronger than a normal Mind Link because the Voodooist is trained to willingly submerge their own per-



sonality and give the god full control of their body.

The Mind Scan portion of the spell may be placed in a Multipower. The Mind Link only happens after a Mind Scan contact, so the Mind Link receives all the Limitations placed on the Mind Scan portion of the spell.

Cost	Powers	END
15	6d6 Mind Scan, Transdimensional (+½), Use by Other x1 (+¼), +5 ECV, initial 5 minutes Extra Time (-1), Bulky OAF Ritual Paraphernalia and Assistants (-1 ½), Gestures, Incantations [62]	6
6	Mind Link to Voodoo Gods, x1, Any Distance/Dimension, Use by Other x1 (+¼), Only in Ritual Setting (-3) [25]	

Cribo Curse

Real criboes are large black snakes found in the West Indies. They are harmless, but popular superstition asserts that criboes have deadly supernatural power. This Obeah spell attracts a phantom cribo to bite anyone who disturbs the cursed object in a predefined way. The cribo is sure to hit because the victim has already touched the trigger object. The cribo's victim will quickly "swell up and bust"—the invariable end of an Obeah curse. The spell can be used either as a murderous trap or to protect an item from theft or other disturbance.

The cribo, which is only visible in the moment that it bites, is conjured through a lengthy incantation with much hand waving. The spell caster also ties a little bottle onto the object to be protected. The bottle holds sea water, laundry bluing and small oddments such as a dead cockroach, a rusty nail or a bit of red flannel.

Cost	Powers	END
17	½d6 RKA, BODY NND: Power Defense (+2), Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END, Var Trigger (+½), Use by 1 Other: Protected Item/Place (+¼), Personal Immunity (+¼), initial 5 minutes Extra Time (-1), Gestures, Incantations, Concentrate 0 DCV (-½), IAF Charm Bottle [60]	

Horn Of Ghosts

Mayomberos use the *npaka*, an animal horn filled with a noxious liquid, to materialize ghosts. Not only can the *npaka* force a ghost or other astral spirit to materialize, the mayombero can store enslaved ghosts within it and call them out to defend him. In this example, the spirits are Trauma Ghost Atavisms (see the Source Book chapter) whose rigid plan of behavior is to attack their master's enemies.

Materializing a spirit can be handled by yanking the spirit from the Astral Plane to Earth. Note that this spell acts interdimensionally but not at range: the mayombero must poke the *npaka* into the space corresponding to the spirit's location on the Astral Plane. If the spirit is written up using Persistent Desolid and Invisibility, an alternate spell can be used, a Transform.

Cost	Powers	END
30	Multipower (60 pt pool), OAF	
1u	8 x 75 pt Summon Trauma Ghost Atavism	[1c]
3u	EDM to Earth, Use vs. Other (+1), Indirect (+½), Transdimensional to Astral Plane (+½) [60]	6
2u	½d6 Transform, Cumulative, Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END to Maintain, Affects Desolid, NND: Hardened Power Defense (+1), 0 Range [50]	5

Love Bath Liquid

The bread and butter magic of most Voodooists has nothing to do with combat; they make their living off spells to help people achieve ordinary desires…such as getting cozy with that special someone. This magical potion is quite typical: a consecrated mixture of *omiero* and several other liquids and herbs, added to an otherwise normal bath. For several hours afterward, the bather radiates a magic aura of sexual attraction. This isn't enough to force another person's will, but it can powerfully augment natural charms.

Cost	Powers	END
32	5d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal, Damage Shield, Use by Other (+¼), Trigger: Bathing (+¼), IAF, 1 chg of 5 hours (-¼) [56]	[1c]

Workroom Of A Voodoo Sorcerer

The dirty little room was littered with the Obeah man's stock in trade. A number of vials containing some sort of unholy liquor were lying ready to be handed over to some foolish negro in exchange for their weight in silver. In every corner were found the implements of his trade, rags, feathers, bones of cats, parrots' beaks, dogs' teeth, broken bottles, grave dirt, rum, and egg shells. Examining further, we found under the bed a large *canarie* or earthen jar containing an immense number of round balls of earth or clay of various dimensions, large and small, whitened on the outside and fearfully and wonderfully compounded. Some seemed to contain hair and rags and were strongly bound round with twine; others were made with skulls of cats, stuck round with human or dogs' teeth and glass beads. There were also a lot of egg shells and numbers of little bags filled with a farrago of rubbish.

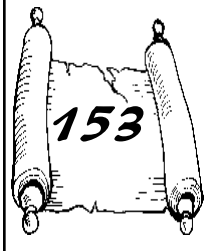
—Hesketh J. Bell, *Obeah: Witchcraft in the West Indies*

Voodoo Terminology

ASHE': In Santeria, the magic power within natural substances, especially herbs.

ASSON: A sacred rattle used in Haitian Voudon, a gourd filled with seeds or snake vertebrae, covered with a loose web of beads or more snake vertebrae.

BAKA: An evil spirit in Haitian legend. It usually appears in animal form and may serve an evil sorcerer. The most common form for a baka is a goat horned dog.



BILONGO: An evil spell of Palo Mayombe or Palo Monte.

BIZANGO: A network of Haitian secret societies with a fearsome reputation. It acts as a neighborhood court which decides whether or not a troublemaker should be punished by being turned into a zombie. Also called SHANPWEL, ZOBOP or many other names.

CANARI: A pottery jar for holding the Ti Bon Ange after a person's death. Usually it is broken during the funeral rites. Also called a GOVI.

CEIBA: The silk-cotton tree, the premier sacred tree in all the Caribbean sects of Voodoo. In the northern United States, many Voodooists consider a cedar tree an acceptable substitute.

CORPS CADAVRE: The body in Haitian Voudon, as distinct from the souls, the GROS BON ANGE and TI BON ANGE.

COUP L'AIR: An "air" spell in Voudon, a means of harming someone from a distance without using a powder.

COUP POUDRE: A "powder" or drug-based spell in Voudon.

DJAB: In Voudon, a devil or baka.

DUPPIE: A West Indies or Jamaican ghost, also called a JUMBIE.

EBBO: In Santeria, an amulet or talisman.

EMPEREUR: Founder and supreme leader of a region's Bizango societies.

FWET KASH: A sisal whip used in Bizango rituals.

GAD: A tattoo charm against evil, given at initiation into a Voudon society.

GROS BON ANGE: The "Great Good Angel," one of the souls everyone has in Haitian Voudon. Unless captured by magic, it immediately returns to God when a person dies. (Note: writers about Voudon, and even practitioners themselves, do not agree about which soul should be "Gros" and which should be "Ti.")

GUEDE': A Haitian graveyard spirit, known for malicious mischief and rampant sexuality. Also a proper name, a pseudonym for the Petro Voudon death-god Baron Samadi.

HAND: In United States Voodoo magic, a pouch filled with diverse ingredients, used to work magic. Functionally equivalent to a Hermetic Theurgy talisman.

HOUMFORT: A Voudon temple. It may be as simple as a tent.

IRUKE: Ritual feather duster or fly whisk used in Santeria to banish spirits.

KISENGUE: A human tibia wrapped in black cloth, used as a scepter or magic wand by a Mayombero.

LOOGAROO: In West Indies Obeah, a person who can take off their skin and become a vampiric will-o-the-wisp. From the French Loup-Garou.

MADOULE: A miniature sacred coffin, the symbol of Bizango societies.

MAMADJO: The Obeah name for mermaid-like spirits who inhabit certain lakes and springs.

NGANGA: A cauldron filled with blood, bones and other disgusting things; the fundamental focus of a Mayombero's power.

NPAKA: An animal horn filled with a special liquid. It is used in Palo Mayombe to make ghosts manifest.

OMIERO: A complicated potion used in Santeria for medicine, consecration and spells.

OTAN: Sacred stone of an Orisha, which keeps a santero in touch with his gods. Otanes must be kept in ornamental bowls and occasionally "fed" with sacrificial blood or "cooled" with herbal baths.

PAQUETS CONGO: A name for a "Hand" in Haitian Voudon.

PIERRE TONNERE: "Thunderstones," allegedly created by spirits and thus filled with magic power. Actually they are Arawak axeheads.

PRESIDENT: Leader of a Bizango cell.

REINE: "Queen," a female rank in Bizango societies. A full Bizango cult will have a Premier Reine, Dieuxieme Reine, Troisieme Reine, Reine Drapeau and Reine Voltige. The last is often supposed to be a Loup-Garou (see LOOGAROO).

RIEGO: Sprinkling with sacred liquid, used in Santeria for consecration and exorcism.

SAHUMIERO: Fumigation with incense, used in Santeria for consecration and exorcism.

SEANCE: A Bizango meeting.

TI BON ANGE: "Little Good Angel" in Voudon, the part of the soul which carries the personality. It stays around after death and faces various dangers which houngans try to prevent.

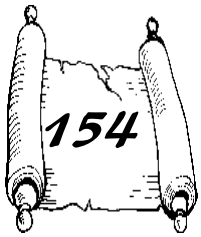
TONTON MACOUTE: "Uncle Strawbag," a wandering conjure- man used as a traditional Haitian boogyman. The Duvalier regime patterned its notorious secret police on this legend and the GUEDE'.

VEVER: Symbolic designs drawn in flour or ashes to attract the loa in Voudon. Abakua uses something similar.

WANGA: In Voudon, a charm or talisman used for selfish or harmful purposes.

ZOMBI CADAVRE: A zombie of the flesh, missing only its Ti Bon Ange; the familiar sort of zombie.

ZOMBI ASTRAL: A Ti Bon Ange captured by sorcery and kept in a jar as a slave.



Other Styles

There are many other real and fictional styles of magic, but most of them can be treated as variations on High Magic, Ritual Magic or Voodoo. As examples, here are discussions of Elemental Magic and Shamanism, with a few suggestions about what sort of magic would be most appropriate for champions of Order, Chaos, Art and Nature.

"Elemental" Magic

Many stories and games have featured wizards whose magic is all based on a single natural phenomenon. Most familiar, perhaps, are styles of magic based on the classic "four elements": thus, Air Magic, Earth Magic, Fire Magic and Water Magic. One can use other states of matter, too, to define schools such as Ice Magic or Dust Magic. Even more abstract physical qualities such as light, darkness, space and time can form the basis of magical styles. One might as well add Plant Magic and Animal or Flesh Magic; they've certainly been used often enough. Such styles are "elemental" in the sense of an Elemental Control, based on a single underlying theme.

The *Fantasy Hero* and its two companions give numerous "elemental" styles. While *Fantasy Hero* spells are entirely different from superhero-level magic, the Spell Colleges can provide plenty of inspiration.

Whether an "elemental" style of magic is High, Ritual or Natural Magic is up to the player and GM. If the spells have few Limitations and are treated more like regular super-powers, then the character is probably using High Magic. On the other hand, if the mage must cast all their spells through Foci which consist of fairly literal representations of the element controlled, then the mage uses Natural Magic. Either way is fine.

An "elemental" theme has the advantage that the wizard immediately stands out from other sorcerer characters—as long as the other character do not use the same theme! Elemental magic also narrows down one's choices when designing a character. Sometimes this can be a benefit: wizards can present so many options that choosing among them can be difficult, especially for inexperienced players.

Most elemental themes suggest quite obvious attack powers. Powers for defense, movement and information can present more difficulty: GMs may have to be liberal in what they will accept as fitting within a theme. If elemental sorcery has a downside, it is that elemental mages can easily seem no different from other energy projectors.

One way to emphasize the difference between elemental mages and other energy projectors with similarly themed powers is through quirky little abilities the character has. A wizard with air and weather magic might never lose his hat or get wet, no matter how hard the wind blows or rain falls. Pets always like a visiting animal mage (though guard dogs are another matter), and birds take food from her hand. A wizard of space and time never has to wait at stoplights. Such little bits of "business" aren't useful enough to write up as powers, and they aren't obvious or important enough to count as Distinctive Features, but they can make it clear that this guy isn't just another mutant.

Elemental mages should buy a Knowledge Skill of their style of magic. Skills related to the natural behavior of their "element" would be appropriate as well: a plant wizard could have the Science Skill Botany, a fire mage might know how to construct fireworks or other pyrotechnic devices, an earth mage could be a skilled prospector or mining engineer, and so on.

Absolute restriction to an elemental theme is a 10-15 point Magic Limitation disadvantage, depending on how broadly the GM and player interpret the elemental theme.

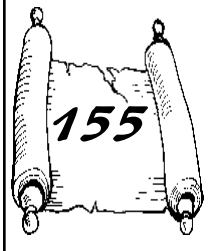
Shamanism

Shamanism is very "in" nowadays. The New Age folks have loved shamans for years. A few of the more pretentious comic-book writers picked them up, too. Shamans have even turned up on TV, in the show *Northern Exposure*. They would seem to be a natural character type for mages…but first let's see what shamans really are.

Shamanism is a widespread and very ancient religious and magical tradition. Its purest form is found in Siberia (the very word "shaman" comes from a Siberian tribal language) but shamans are also found among the Inuit, Native Americans, Indonesians and other peoples. There's evidence of shamanism practiced long ago in Europe, India, China and Tibet.

Defining shamanism isn't easy. It blurs into other religio-magical professions, such as priest, witch doctor, exorcist and healer, but the core feature of shamanism is the shaman's ability to put himself in a trance. While in trance, the shaman can separate his soul from his body and send it great distances through this and other worlds. This enables the shaman to deal with the gods and spirits directly. The shaman absorbs some of the powers of a spirit himself, most notably an immunity to fire and knives. The shaman enters his trance by drumming, dancing and singing. In some cultures the shamans use drugs as well. In his trance, the shaman narrates and mimes his journey through the mortal and spirit worlds.

While the shaman puts on a good show, he's no mere entertainer. Many cultures believe that a person can lose their soul, either from a bad scare, conflict with another person, an evil spirit or simply by accident. People who lose their souls become too listless and depressed to function normally. What's worse, the fear inspired by a case of soul loss can make other people lose their souls. In a society that lives hand to mouth, an epidemic of soul loss can wipe out a tribe. The tribe needs the shaman to find lost souls, put them back in their bodies and stop the contagion. This may mean ransoming a soul from Khan Tengri, Lord of the Dead. The shaman also exorcises evil spirits, guides the souls of the dead to their afterlife, and takes the souls of sac-

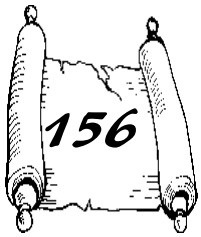


Miscellaneous Divinatory Techniques

Most of the so-called "occult sciences" started as vulgar fortune telling systems. There are literally dozens of such divinations. Most of them have little use in adventure gaming: heroes are unlikely to be menaced by a villain's mastery of Moleosophy, the art of telling a person's character by the moles on their body. Tiromancy (divination by cheese) and cromniomancy (divination by onions placed on an altar at Christmas Eve—I'm not making these up) also seem unlikely to spawn occult menace or heroic power. A few of the lesser divinatory techniques, however, suggest interesting special effects for magic or at least provide names for traditional schools of fantasy magic.

AEROMANCY: Divination by atmospheric phenomena. Related, AUSTROMANCY, divination by winds.

ANTHROPOMANCY: Divination by the entrails of a human sacrifice. One or two of the later and weirder Roman emperors used this. Cf. Haruspicy.



rificed animals to offer them directly to the gods. Conversely, a shaman can send evil spirits to plague an enemy.

While one can deliberately set out to become a shaman, one will never be better than second-rate. The best shamans are chosen by the spirits themselves. Moody, erratic or hysterical behavior is the first sign of a shaman's calling. Most shamans are male. The shaman to be is trained by an older shaman, or by the spirits (often the ghost of a dead shaman). The shaman's initiation climaxes in a vision quest in which he experiences his own death and resurrection.

A realistic shaman has little to recommend him as a super-mage. A character who needs to drum and dance for half an hour to do any magic at all has certain disadvantages in a fight. In any case, shamans are doctors, not fighters. They get things done in the spirit world by knowing who to talk to and what to say, not by raw power. With a little stretching, however, a shaman makes a fine occult investigator. Shamanic training can also be used as just one aspect of a mage character; for instance, a character trained at shamanism and High Magic, or shamanism and nature magic. Shamanic initiation is certainly a good reason for a character to know astral projection!

One can stretch the shaman archetype even more to create combat-effective spells based on commanding spirits. In this case, shamanism is just another flavor of Ritual Magic. Such a "fantasy shaman" bears little similarity to what's claimed for real shamans, but the same could be said for Voodooists, Hermetic mages or in fact any other sort of wizard based on a "real" style of magic.

Inspiration for Fantasy Shaman spells can be found in the sections describing Hermetic Theurgy and Voodoo. Shamans will employ homely Foci such as drums, bullroarers and charms made from wood, bone, feathers and other natural substances. They will have spells to summon, bind and exorcise astral spirits. With spirit control as a Special Effect, Fantasy Shamans might evoke and control natural forces such as wind or wild animals. Finally, real shamans must know herbal medicine and a Fantasy Shaman could expand this into knowledge of powerful magic drugs like those employed in Voodoo.

'Zoa'-Based Magic

For the most part, Servants of Higher Powers will just use ordinary Thaumaturgy, Ritual Magic or some other style. Servants of Higher Powers are defined by their motives, not their powers. Since the Four Zoas are such an important part of the supernatural world, however, GMs and players might want to invent a few "trademark" spells for servants of each Prime Avatar. Such spells mark a sorcerer as a follower of a particular cosmic entity: "Aha, he's using the Bindings of Bromion in their original form—he must work for Urizen!"

Some players may also feel that sorcerers and entities aligned to a particular Zoa should have an entire, distinctive style of magic. Here are a few suggestions for such styles:

Art Magic

Since mystical Artifice consists of imposing one's will on reality, in a sense all magic is Art Magic. Indeed, magic is often called "the Great Art." Beings aligned toward Urthona, however, might favor spells which particularly emphasize the supremacy of Mind over Environment. Transforms, or spells using transmutation or transformation as a Special Effect, are a good example. So are Images and Mental Illusions—to make people sense what you want instead of what's really out there. Since cities are the most artificial environment on Earth, a few Art Mages might be technomancers.

Art-oriented Ritual Magicians would use carefully hand-crafted Foci. Art spells might have reduced effect against things in their natural state, such as uncut stone, trees or wild animals.

Nature Magic

Servants of Nature would evoke elemental forces such as Air, Fire, Earth and Water, as well as magic of Plants and Animals. Thus, a Nature Mage's Energy Blast might take the form of a bolt of lightning or a blast of hail; an RKA might take the form of a wolf appearing from nowhere to bite the target; an Entangle would consist of vines, grass or tree branches twining around the target. Other Nature spells might affect the target's body and life force directly. Some Nature Mages might have problems in cities or other places where natural things are excluded.

In a more abstract vein, spells might be based on natural principles such as adaptation, evolution and symbiosis. An "Adaptive Shield," for instance, might become more and more effective against one attack Special Effect, at cost of becoming less effective against other forms.

Order Magic

Servants of Order would most often favor Thaumaturgy. First, Thaumaturgy emphasizes pure light and simple geometric forms in its Special Effects, and both light and geometry are often used to symbolize perfect order. More importantly, Thaumaturgy is uniform throughout the Multiverse, so in a sense all of Urizen's servants will be using the same magic. Since Servants of Order have a clear social mission, most will probably have a spell or two for controlling the wills of other people. Spells to break the magic of the servants of rival powers, and to contact their own patrons, are likely as well.

Chaos Magic

Chaos embraces ideas of emotion, unpredictability, freedom and autonomy. All of these can form the basis of spells. Chaos mages might be adept at rousing or quelling the emotions of other beings. Chaos magic might also come well supplied with defensive spells: with a good enough defense, one can ignore the threats of others. Unpredictability can be introduced through odd stratagems such as spells with random Variable Special Effects or even Multipowers where one never knows which slot will be activated. Finally, Chaos is often associated (justly or not) with destruction, and Chaoticists often find themselves in the role of the rebel. A few spells of violent, even indiscriminate destruction would not be out of place at all.

Magic Items And Artifacts

In the recess some four feet deep reposed a strange collection of articles: a wand of hazelwood, a crystal set in gold, a torch with a pointed end so that it could be stuck upright in the ground, candlesticks, a short sword, two great books, a dagger with a blade curved like a sickle moon, a ring, a chalice and an old bronze lamp, formed out of twisted human figures, which had nine wicks. All had pentacles, planetary signs, and other strange symbols engraved upon them, and each had the polish which is a sign of great age coupled with frequent usage.

—Dennis Wheatley, *The Devil Rides Out*

There's more to comic-book magery than casting spells. Magic items are important too. A well-designed magic item can become the center of a character, an adventure or even a whole campaign.

Magic items come in two classes: ordinary magic items and artifacts. Artifacts are distinguished from ordinary magic items in that they carry the Independent Limitation. Each artifact is a unique, irreplaceable object; artifacts tend to be more powerful than rank-and-file magic items as well.

Magic Items vs. Magic Foci

One may wonder what the difference is between a real magic item (such as an enchanted Wand of Fireballs) and a Focus which just happens to be used for casting spells. In game terms the differences are pretty small.

A magic item has a fixed set of powers. A given Focus, however, might be used for different spell powers by different mages. For instance, that "Wand of Fireballs" has just one power: it shoots fireballs. A "golden wand tipped with a sulfur crystal," on the other hand, might be used for any number of fire magic spells, or even for spells where any wand would do.

A magic item *might* be used by anyone who makes their Spell Research roll to figure out its use (unless it's a personal Focus). A mere Focus is worthless to anyone, sorcerer or not, who doesn't know the relevant spell.

A magic item takes a lot of work to replace. A mere Focus is easier to replace—not necessarily easy, just easier than it would be if it had to be enchanted. (But a magic item is still easier to replace than an artifact.)

A magic item always has an aura which registers to the Detect Magic power. A Focus which just happens to be used for magic might not have an aura, and if it does the aura will be weak—a mere echo of the spells it was used to cast.

In practice, the differences between a magic item and a magic Focus usually only matter if a wizard's spells carry Variable Limitation. A Focus is a good way to fill a Variable Limitation. If one takes away a magic item, those powers are simply gone. If one takes away a Focus, the wizard might be able to substitute something else.

Making Magic Items

At some point, PCs may want to make their own magic item or artifact. What's more, trying to stop a villainous mage from making a magic item or artifact can form the basis of an adventure. In the baldest game terms, making a magic item is easy: one pays points and writes down the new Powers. This may be enough in some cases, but it's rather boring, isn't it?

More precisely, magic items are created using the Power Transform described in Chapter 2. Each Power of the item requires a separate use of Power Transform, rolling at least double the Active Points of the desired Power. Cumulative Power Transform makes it possible to create very powerful items. When the item is completed, its user then spends the Character Points to own it.

This is better, but still rather cold-blooded and abstract. This is one area where game mechanics are not enough.

In story terms, creating a magic items requires a lot more than using a Power and spending Character Points. One must assemble special tools and materials, perform long rituals and generally go through hoops. Making a magic item is a long, complicated process and may form the basis of an adventure in itself.

Materials

Magic items are made from rare and exotic materials—not necessarily precious, just hard to obtain. Commonplace substances such as wood or metal must be obtained under persnickety conditions such as only at an astrologically propitious hour, and prepared using properly consecrated tools. Some materials might be flat-out bizarre; if not incorporated into the finished item, they will be used up in some way during the enchantment process.

BIBLIOMANCY: Divination by book, opening a book (usually the Bible, *the* Book) at random and sticking a finger in. The sentence one touches supposedly gives an answer to one's question. Also called STICHOMANCY. RHAPSODOMANCY does the same thing but uses poetry.

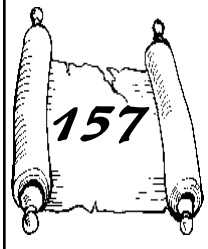
BOTANOMANCY: Divination by plants. Related, XYLOMANCY, divination by wooden twigs.

CAPNOMANCY: Divination by smoke.

CARTOMANCY: Divination by cards—the good old Tarot reading. The Tarot cards are great for made up magic because they have so much symbolism built in.

CATOPTROMANCY: Divination by mirrors (using a mirror instead of a crystal ball).

CEROMANCY: Divination by the shapes formed from dripping wax. Related



MOLYBDOMANCY, interpreting the shapes formed by dripping molten lead into water.

CRYSTALLOMANCY: The old crystal ball trick. Also called *scrying*. Other scrying tools have included bowls of water, ordinary mirrors, black mirrors, jewels, a pool of ink cupped in the palm, or a polished seed.

GEOMANCY: Interpreting the designs formed by tossing a handful of earth into a circle—in particular, looking for certain patterns of dots which geomancers have given special Latin names. There are many variations, including HALOMANCY (using salt instead of dirt) and TASSEOGRAPHY (tea leaf reading).

Here are some examples of the sort of strange substances that might be used in making a magic item:

Mineral

Colored diamond, meteoric iron, water from a geode, sand from Mt. Sinai, fulgurite (dirt fused into glass by lightning), a fossil.

Vegetable

Mandrake root, seeds of a rare orchid, wood from 1000 year old oak, a rare spice or herb, a 12 leaf clover.

Animal

Blood or bone (human/rare animal/dragon/etc.), mummy dust, a virgin's tears.

Tools

Several traditional occult tools have already been mentioned in the description of Hermetic Theurgy (see above), but these do not exhaust the possibilities. Some tools are used to shape the magic item. Others are used as paraphernalia for rituals of consecration.

In the European tradition of ceremonial magic, major rituals call for a magic circle, an altar, special vestments, candles, a book holding the words of the spell, perhaps a brazier burning special incense, and maybe even an assistant or two. Less common are cauldrons, mirrors, idols or musical instruments such as a bell or trumpet.

Environmental Conditions

An enchantment ritual's success may depend on its being cast at a certain time or place. Weather and other special conditions may be needed as well.

Special Times

Solstice, equinox, dawn, midnight, planetary conjunction, eclipse.

Special Places

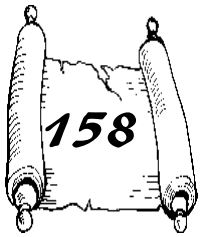
Megalithic circle, ruined church, 1000 year old graveyard, mountain top, the North Pole, a Place of Power in other dimensions.

Special Conditions

Lightning storm, comet, aurora, special cloud formation, "Green Flash" at sunset, a major riot or carnival.

Sample Magic Items

None of these magic items are enough by themselves to equip a character, whether hero or villain, but they can be an important part of a character's power. The Blasting Wand or Planetary Bell could supply the main attack forms of a starting hero or subsidiary villain. The Tarnkappe would be just the thing for a villain who specializes in getaways. A new magic item can be just the thing to upgrade a villain.



Blasting Rod

The Blasting Rod is a classic magic item from the Western tradition of ceremonial magic. Its powers are vast; the *Grand Grimoire* promises to tell how to make "the dreadful Blasting Rod, which causes the spirits to tremble; which God also used to arm his Angel when Adam and Eve were driven out of the Earthly Paradise; wherewith finally, he smote the rebellious Angels, precipitating their ambitions into the most appalling gulfs by the power of this very Rod—of this Rod which collects the clouds, disperses tempests, averts the lightning, or precipitates each and all upon any portion of the Earth at the pleasure of its director."

Well, not quite. Maybe God's own Blasting Rod could do all this with a worldwide range, but mere mortals have to settle for a less awesome instrument. Even with more limited powers, however, a Blasting Rod is quite a formidable weapon. It raises or calms storm winds in areas small by natural standards but big enough to humans, throws lightning bolts and bolts of supernatural force, and both compels and dispels spirits. The *Grand Grimoire* describes a Blasting Rod made of hazelwood capped with magnetized steel, with typically convoluted conditions on its manufacture.

Cost	Powers	END
31	Multipower (62 pt pool), OAF	[16c]
3u	Lightning: 12d6 EB [60]	
3u	Concussive Force: 7d6 EB, x2 Knockback (+¾) [61]	
3u	Mystic Force: 5d6 EB, AVLD: Power Defense (+1 ½) [62]	
3u	Raise Tempest: 10 STR TK, Personal Immunity, ½ END, 128" Radius AE (+2 ½) [60]	
3u	Disperse Tempest: Change Environment: Calm, 128" Radius, 0 END [60]	
2u	20d6 Dispel vs. Summon, Only vs. Spirits (-1)	
2u	12d6 Mind Control, Only vs. Spirits (-1)	

Planetary Bell

The German grimoire called *Magia Naturalis et Innaturalis* describes a substance called *electrum magicum*, an alloy of the seven planetary metals (gold, silver, copper, mercury, iron, tin and lead). A bell made of *electrum magicum* will summon angels or treasure spirits.

This is a simple handbell, decorated with sigils representing the seven astrological planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Sun and Moon). By ringing the bell and calling out a magic word, a sorcerer can evoke spirits of the planets to work their will. The solar spirit creates blinding light; the lunar spirit creates illusions; the mercurial spirit carries the wizard and up to 3 other people with great speed; the venerean spirit puts people in a dreamy languor in which they cannot do much of anything; the martial spirit strikes with a spear of magical force; the jovian spirit subjects others to the magician's will; and the saturnine spirit inflicts a weary slowness.

Finally, an eighth magic word conjures a spirit which empties a huge bag of golden ducats at the magician's feet. (A sorcerer with a Planetary Bell never needs to worry about money, but nowadays this function of the Bell must be used carefully. Both government agents and the local Mafia will become *very interested* in a person who suddenly has a lot of gold. Still, it's a good excuse for a sorcerer to have the Wealth perk.)

Cost	Powers	END
27	Multipower (61 pt pool), OAF, Incantation	
3u	Sun Flare: 4d6 Flash vs. Vision, Explosion [60]	6
3u	Moon Mirage: Images vs. normal sight, Detect Magic, -4 PER, 2" Radius (+¼), Uncontrolled (until detected), 0 END to Maintain [61]	6
3u	Mercurial Flight: 10" Flight, Use w/ Others x4 (+¾), 0 END, x16 NCM [60]	
3u	Languor of Venus: 2d6 Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2) [60]	6
3u	Spear of Mars: 8d6 EB, AP [60]	6
3u	Jovian Rulership: 12d6 Mind Control [60]	6
3u	Saturn's Slowing: 6d6 SPD Suppress, Uncontrolled (1 Turn), 0 END to maintain [60]	6
1u	Treasure Spirit: 4d6 Transform air to gold ducats, 0 Range, Only Use Once/Month (-4) [60]	6

Tarnkappe

The original Tarnkappe was created by the dwarf Alberich and his enslaved brother Mim. When Wotan robbed Alberich to pay off the giants Fasolt and Fafnir, the giants got the magic cloak as well as Alberich's treasure and the Rhinegold. Fafnir killed Fasolt and used the Tarnkappe to turn himself into a dragon. Later, the amnesiac Siegfried used the Tarnkappe to impersonate a fellow called Gunter (see *Ring of the Nibelungs* for the full sordid tale, although Wagner changed the cape into a helmet.)

As usual, later copies are not as good as the original. Modern tarnkappen only let their wearer turn invisible or assume the superficial form of anything the same mass. One could use a tarnkappe to take the shape of a dragon, but would not gain a dragon's size, bite, flight or flaming breath. Still, this cloak of black metal threads is just the ticket for wizardly espionage. An upgraded version could itself form the basis of a formidable character.

Cost	Powers	END
30	Multipower (45 pt pool), IAF	
3u	Shape Shift, anything, 0 END [45]	0
3u	Invisibility vs. Detect Magic, All Vision, 0 END [45]	0

Magic Artifacts

Artifacts are those potent, Independent magic items which play many important roles in tales of magic. A hero or villain might own an artifact; indeed, such an artifact might be an important part of the character's power. Many a story has revolved around a hunt for an artifact of great power. A particular artifact may be the only way to defeat a powerful villain. Conversely, a villain might obtain a black magic artifact which lets him defeat the heroes. One common plot is that the villain is searching for such an artifact, and the heroes have to stop the villain from getting it.

Artifacts have a number of common traits. Not every artifact will have every trait, but every artifact will have most of them.

First, artifacts are usually very old. Occultists and fantasy writers don't believe in progress: the mightiest magic is always the oldest. Thus, attributing magic lore and artifacts to the Egyptians is good; ascribing them to Atlantis is even better, to an occultist's way of thinking. It's true that extreme age gives anything an air of mystery and romance.

Second, artifacts don't get made by mere mortals. They are gifts from the gods, or created by legendary wizards so powerful (and usually so far in the past) as to be nearly divine themselves.

In consequence, artifacts often provide some form of contact with the god involved in its creation. A PC wizard with an artifact might buy a Contact along with the artifact. And they usually help pay for the artifact and Contact by being Watched by the deity or cosmic entity in question!

The greatest artifacts often pose dangers to their users. Their magic might be too powerful for humans to use safely. Worse, black magic artifacts often enslave their wielders—a very deliberate curse built into the artifact by its evil creator.

Personal Artifacts

The Tablet Of Destinies

The Tablet of Destinies is the mightiest magic item from Mesopotamian myth. Its first owner was Tiamat, the great primal dragon who lived before the gods or the world existed. When the gods rebelled against Tiamat, she gave the Tablet to her son Kingu, commander of her army of monsters. The god Marduk took the Tablet when he defeated Kingu and Tiamat. The Tablet became the prime token of rulership for whoever was king of the gods (in some traditions Marduk, in others the god Ellil or Enlil). The Tablet had more than symbolic importance: when Anzu the Storm Bird stole the Tablet from Ellil, all the gods save Ninurta refused to challenge the rebel god's stolen power:

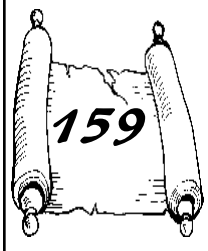
HARUSPICY: Divination by the entrails of a sacrificed animal. Very popular back in the Roman empire. The kinks and blotches of the intestines gave messages from the gods.

HYDROMANCY: A scrying technique using water. Possibly related PEGOMANCY, divination by fountains.

LITHOMANCY: Divination by precious stones, either by scrying or as a geomantic technique. Subtype MARGARITOMANCY, divination by means of a pearl.

ONEIROMANCY: Interpreting dreams for omens.

PYROMANCY: Divination by fire, either scrying or throwing tokens into a fire and interpreting how they burn. Scrying with a lamp flame is called LAMPADOMANCY.



RHABDOMANCY: The famous divining rod. Also called DOWSING.

SCIOMANCY: Divination by shadows or ghosts ("shades").

SPODOMANCY or TEPHROMANCY: Divination by ashes.

THEOMANCY: Divination by oracles or persons possessed by gods.

ZOOMANCY: Divination by the behavior of animals. Many specialties, such as OPHIOMANCY (snakes) and MYOMANCY (mice).

"Father, who could rush off to the inaccessible mountain?

"Which of the gods your sons will be Anzu's conqueror?

"For he has gained the Tablet of Destinies for himself,

"Has taken away the Ellil power; rites are abandoned!"

The ancient myths give few clues about precisely what the Tablet can do, but they make one thing clear: the Tablet of Destinies bears a power even gods must fear.

The Tablet of Destinies is a rectangular slab of translucent white alabaster inlaid with golden cuneiform writing and little drawings of human, animal and abstract forms. The back bears a drawing of a stylized, dragon-like monster. The Tablet is only about 33 cm long, 23 cm wide and 1 cm thick. Holes drilled in the corners let one attach cords to the Tablet and wear it like a breastplate.

The Tablet is written in Sumerian, a language not well understood even today. If one touches the Tablet and speaks a certain command word, the writing and pictures change; in all the Tablet holds 20 "pages" of small print and illustrations.

The main powers of the Tablet deal with control of individuals and societies. With the Tablet, one can force other people to do one's command, or completely enslave them to one's will. (The latter effect is undone if the enslaver loses possession of the Tablet for 24 hours.) The Tablet can change a being's place in society in any way imaginable: a homeless bum can become billionaire, or a world famous celebrity can become a legal non-person forgotten by all. The Tablet can also boost the power of any spell cast by its bearer.

Anyone who wears the Tablet gains a "mantle of radiance" which inspires awe and terror in others. The Tablet can also deflect all ranged attacks, wards its owner's mind and makes its owner lucky—while it is actually being worn.

Anyone who would employ the Tablet must study it intensively for weeks, unless they have skills concerning the Sumerian language and Mesopotamian magic; that cuts study time down to a few days. Once a function of the Tablet is known, it can be used at will.

The greater powers of the Tablet are somewhat unreliable in human hands. If the user fails an INT roll when using the Tablet, the Tablet glows brightly and the writing shifts for 1 minute into an explanation of how it has spontaneously changed the user's destiny. Effectively, this is 8 dice of Unluck on the caster, imposed within the next few days. While the Tablet cannot flat-out kill its user, it can shape future events to make the user face terrible danger and strip away possessions and social connections that might help the user to cope—all achieved through outrageous coincidence. Very often, this string of bad luck involves giving power to some minion of the Dragon, for the Tablet seeks to return to its creator.

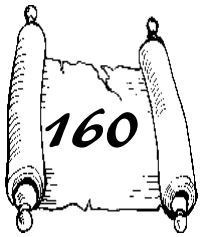
Cost	Powers	END
16	Multipower (82 pt pool), OIF (-½), Independent (-2), Spell Research + Cryptography Needed to Discover Each Function (-¼), Requires INT Roll to Use (-½), Side Effect: 8d6 Unluck (-½)	[8c]
1u	16d6 Mind Control [80]	
1u	8d6 Mind Control, 4" Radius AE (+1) [80]	
2u	3 ½d6 major Transform to Willing Slave, Cumulative [82]	
1u	13d6 Aid, to Any 1 Spell (+¼) [81]	
1u	2d6 major Social Transform, Universal (+1), Cumulative, Hard to Dispel (+¼) [82]	
7	Mantle of Radiance: +30 PRE, Offensive Only (-½), Ind, OIF (-2 ½)	
10	Missile Deflection +2 vs. Any Ranged Attack, Damage Shield, Ind, OIF	
5	Mental Defense (+17 pts), Ind, IIF (-2 ¼)	
6	4d6 Luck, Ind, IIF	

The Scepter Of Night

The Scepter of Night is much older than humanity; in fact, it is older than life on Earth. The Scepter is a tool of the Kings of Edom, a device by which lesser beings can tap the Kings' incredible power. Like all Edomite artifacts, however, the Scepter of Night presents peculiar dangers to its wielder.

In this case the danger is nothing more—and nothing less—than an involuntary Mind Link to the Kings of Edom. Each time one uses the Scepter, one must make an EGO Roll. Failure means that one's mind has been involuntarily linked to a King of Edom such as Vulshoth or Deizzhorath the Dissolver. The Scepter's wielder can have Mind Links to more than one King. One will start receiving dreams from that King. Some of the dreams will tell how to use other functions of the Scepter and giving instructions for more Edomite magic. All these dreams will be weird and frightening. As time goes by, the King will be able to deepen the link, gaining more power over the Scepter's wielder and eroding their sanity. Getting rid of the Scepter will not break the Mind Links. Eventually, anyone who uses the Scepter of Night becomes a gibbering madman or a fanatical slave of the Kings, if not both.

The Scepter does, however, provide many useful powers. It can slow time, warp space to provide instantaneous travel or access to worlds and dimensions once ruled by the Kings, drain life energies or project stunning mental force. It can summon any lesser Edomite entities, as long as the summoning power adds up to 60 base points (i.e. 1 x 150 pt Summon, 4 x 100 pt Summon, etc.) and lets the wielder communicate with such creatures. Alas, the communication is one way: the Scepter's wielder can send thoughts, but not receive them. Edomites recognize the Scepter as a tool of their masters, and so will probably obey the wielder, at least for a while, but the Scepter provides neither real control over the entities it calls, nor any way to force them back from whence they came.



The Scepter can even grant people super-powers, although once more these come with certain unpleasant side effects. (What powers and what side effects are left to the GM's fevered imagination, but they should be thoroughly grotesque and leave the augmented person open to control by the Kings.)

Physically, the Scepter is a slender rod of pitted black stone, about 1.3 meters long and 2 cm wide, bound in a web of shiny black metal. At the end, a claw grip holds a globe of crystal that seems full of dark, swirling clouds. Stone, metal and crystal are all unknown to science. The Scepter cannot be destroyed by anything less than a cosmic entity or a supernova.

Cost	Powers	END
15	Multipower (76 pt pool), Independent (-2), OAF, Spell Research to Discover Each Function (-¼), EGO Roll to Avoid Side Effect (but power still works, -¼), Side Effect: Involuntary Mind Link to King of Edom (-½)	
1u	60 pt Summon, Any Edomite Monsters (+¼) [75]	7
1u	5d6 Telepathy, 6" Radius AE (+1 ¼), + Universal Translator, Only to Send Messages to Edomites (-1) [76]	6
1u	Empower: 1d6+1 Transform, Grant Various Powers (+¼), Cumulative, Uncontrolled Continuous, 0 END to Maintain, 0 Range, Target Must be Willing [75]	7
1u	Slow Time: 2 ½d6 SPD Drain, Ranged, Regain 1 SPD/2 minutes (+¼), Continuous, ½ END [75]	3
1u	Life Drain: 1 ½d6 Drain, vs. All Phys Chars (+2), Regain 1 pt/turn (+¼), Ranged, Continuous, ½ END [75]	3
1u	Area Life Drain: 1d6 Drain, vs. All Phys Chars (+2), Regain 1 pt/turn (+¼), Ranged, Continuous, Personal Immunity, ½ END, 5" x32 Radius AE (+2 ¼) [75]	3
1u	Mental Bolt: 6d6 Ego Attack, ½ END [75]	3
1u	Cast Gloom: Images vs. Normal Vision, -3 PER, 256" Radius (+2), Uncontrolled, 0 END, Fixed: Darkness (-½) [76]	8
1u	True Gating: Extra Dimensional Movement: Edomite Planes, Continuous, Use by Other (+¼), ½ END, Opens Both Ways (-½), Full Phase to Close (-½) [75]	3
4	Mental Defense (+8 pts), Doesn't Work vs. Edomites (-1)	

The *Krypticon*

The *Krypticon* is the world's greatest tome of Thaumaturgy. It was written by the ancient Greek magus Thestor, who claimed he transcribed it from a book shown to him by the cosmic entity Kryptos, God of Secrets. The *Krypticon* tells fabulous secrets of magic dealing with space, time and dimension.

Since then the *Krypticon* has had many owners. It is something of a tradition for each owner to add records of their own magical discoveries to the *Krypticon*, making the book three times longer than it originally was but also making it an excellent research aid. The *Krypticon* not only raises its owner's effective rating in all magic-related Knowledge Skills, it greatly increases the chances of successful Spell Research.

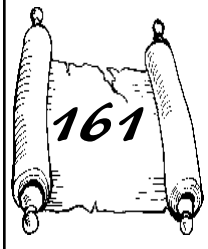
The heart of the *Krypticon,* however, is the mighty spells recorded by Thestor. One must be able to read Greek to use the *Krypticon,* but for most mages this is not a problem. Each spell slot requires a separate Spell Research roll to learn, but once a mage succeeds in this roll they can use that particular spell whenever they want; they don't have to keep making Spell Research rolls. A mage trying to master a spell from the *Krypticon* can attempt a Spell Research roll once a week.

Once mastered, a spell from the *Krypticon* takes a full hour of study to memorize, and these spells are so powerful that no mortal brain can hold more than one of these spells at a time (hence the Charge limitation on the entire Multipower). Once cast, the spell fades from memory. Spells take a full turn to cast, with Gestures, Incantations and Concentration, so they cannot really be used in combat. They are so powerful that a sorcerer thousands of miles away can detect their use, no matter what shielding or concealment the user might employ.

The *Krypticon* also carries a powerful version of "Contact the Great" (see "Thaumaturgy" for a description of this spell) which enables the book's owner to contact entities on other planes. While the Mind Scanning component of this spell is not strong enough to force contact with most cosmic entities, it is strong enough that cosmic entities will notice and probably allow contact anyway; the *Krypticon* is known to everyone who's anyone, cosmically speaking, and anyone who uses it is worth their notice.

The great power of the *Krypticon* inevitably causes trouble for its owner. Quite simply, it's too valuable. It is unique: no one has ever succeeded in hand-copying Thestor's text, and purely mechanical attempts at reproduction (such as copy machines) always fail. Photographic film burns if it catches the image of a *Krypticon* page. Other wizards will try to take the Book of Secrets, by force or stealth; the Book of Secrets works as well for villains as for heroes.

Dimension lords and cosmic entities keep their eyes on whoever uses the *Krypticon* as well. If a Great Power see the *Krypticon's* owner using it in a way that's against their interest, they will make their displeasure known. And one cannot get involved with the Great Powers without offending *somebody!*



Cost	Powers	END
14	Multipower (145 pt pool), OAF, Independent (-2), 1 hour Extra Time to prepare (-2 ½), 1 turn Extra Time to cast (-1), Gestures, Incantations, Concentrate 0 DCV (-½), Visible (-¼), 1 reusable Charge (-1), Costs END, Spell Research Roll to gain use of each slot (-¼)	
1u	Open Gate: EDM: Any Plane, Continuous, Use by Other (+¼), 1 Hex AE, 0 END to Maintain, Delayed Effect (+¼), Opens Both Ways (-½), Full Phase to Close (-½) [140]	14
1u	Banish: EDM: Creature's Home Plane (20 pts), Use vs. Other (+1), x2exp18 Mass (+4 ½), Ranged, Delayed Effect [145]	14
1u	Banish: 38d6 Dispel vs. Summon, Delayed Effect [142]	14
1u	Mass Banish: 19d6 Dispel vs. Summon, 14" Radius AE (+1 ¼), Delayed Effect [142]	14
1u	Very Mass Banish: 12d6 Dispel vs. Summon, 5"x128 Radius AE (+2 ¾), Delayed Effect [144]	14
1u	Close Gate: 38d6 Dispel vs. Gate, Delayed Effect [142]	14
1u	Spellbreaking: 32d6 Dispel, vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼), Delayed Effect [144]	14
1u	Summon the Great: 1 x 430 pt Summon, Various Dimension Lords (+¼) [145]	14
1u	Cloud Memory: 6d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal, Indirect (+½), 5"x256 Radius AE (+3), Only to Forget Something (-½) [142]	14
1u	Invent Your Own	
1u	Invent Your Own	
10	Contact the Great: 7d6 Mind Scan, Transdimensional: Any (+1), +14 ECV, Ind, OAF (-3), Gestures, Incantations, Concentrate 0 DCV, 5 minutes Extra Time (-2), 4 chgs Cost x2 END	14
5	+ Mind Link x1, Anyone, Any Distance/Dimension, Ind, OAF (-3), Concentrate 0 DCV Constant (-1)	
3	+4 levels Spell Research, Ind, OAF	
2	+2 levels Any Occult Knowledge Skill, Ind, OAF	
-15	Hunted 8- by other mages who want the *Krypticon* (More Pow)	
-10	Watched 11- by Cosmic Entities (More Pow)	

The *Clavicle Infernalis*

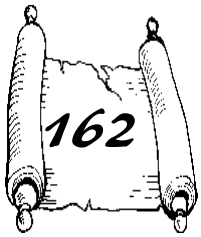
The celebrated *Krypticon* is neutral; its great power can be used for either good or evil. The *Clavicle Infernalis*, another of the great tomes of magic lore, is very definitely evil. It is the premier text of black magic. Grimoires like the *Lemegeton*, the *Red Dragon* and the *Grimorium Verum* are pale shadows of this blasphemous tome. There have been only three copies of the *Clavicle Infernalis* in all history; for its spells to work, they must be hand-copied in demon's blood on parchment made from human skin. Its title translates as the *Key to Hell;* it is also called the *Nether Key.*

The first *Nether Key* was written by the Gnostic cult leader and arch-heretic Basilides in the 2nd century AD. The archmage Abra-Melin recorded that he destroyed this book in the 9th century AD, but someone must have made a copy before then, for the 16th century French Satanist called Ansuperomin boasted that he owned the *Key* and had made another copy. Since then, copies of the *Nether Key* have been owned by several notorious Satanists, such as the German necromancer Johann Georg Schropfer and the hideous Abbe Guibourg.

Most of the spells in the *Clavicle* are straightforward feats of demonology. Before opening it, one must recite the words which open the Gates of Hell: *Zazas, Zazas, Nasatanada Zazas.* The book provides spells for summoning both single demon lords and armies of minor demons. Its binding spell can compel absolute obedience from most demons (as long as the demon was summoned by the caster); if binding isn't possible, it provides a powerful spell of dismissal. Another set of spells brings the Netherworld to Earth: the first by opening a portal, the second by physically moving a hefty chunk of Netherworld territory to Earth. The third simply creates a huge cloud of dark, sulfurous smoke to make a region more homey to demons and other horrors. The remaining spells are purely miscellaneous. An area effect Mind Control lets the *Nether Key's* owner prompt evil thoughts and deeds in a wide area. The *Nether Key* also lets one grant demon-based superpowers to others, as an excuse for origins. Other spells are up to the GM; they may be added as desired, since the *Clavicle Infernalis* exists chiefly as an excuse for demonic mayhem on a grand scale.

The great power of the *Clavicle* presents three dangers to its owner. That its power corrupts practically goes without saying: even its banishment works by calling on the superior evil power of the Dragon. Second, many good-aligned wizards (especially Jewish, Christian or Muslim ones) will try to destroy any *Nether Key* they hear about. They will try to destroy its owner, too, assuming that anyone who'd own a *Nether Key* must be hopelessly corrupt. For that matter, Satanist wizards will pursue the *Key* as well, wanting to claim its power. Finally, the spells themselves are dangerous. Any interruption while chanting the *Clavicle's* long invocations will prompt a horrible backlash.

Exactly what this means is left to the GM and should be decided on a case by case basis, but it should be spectacular—a disaster of truly Biblical proportions. Having the *Nether Key's* user dragged off to Hell is the least of the Side Effects possible. Uncontrolled demonic armies, all water within 10 miles tuning to blood and rains of fire are other possibilities. Go wild. Afterwards, the *Clavicle's* user should be gone and the heroes should be saying, "No one could have survived that!" This time, they might even be right.



Cost	Powers	END
15	Multipower (115 pt pool), OAF, Independent, 1 minute Extra Time to use (-1 ½), Incantations (-¼), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½), Spell Research to cast each spell the first time (-¼), c. 114 pt Side Effect if Casting Disturbed (-1)	
1u	1 x 300 pt Summon, Any Demon Lord (+¼) [112]	11
1u	256 x 100 pt Summon, Any Minor Demons (+¼) [112]	11
1u	Induce Demonic Possession: 6d6 Transform to Demon Possessed Person, Acts vs. EGO (+0), Any Demon (+¼) [112]	11
1u	Rule Demon: 7 ½d6 Transform to slave for 1 mission, Acts vs. EGO (+0) [115]	11
1u	38d6 Dispel vs. Summon [114]	11
1u	Gateway to Hell: EDM: Netherworld, x2 Mass, Use by Others x2 (+½), Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END, 9" Radius AE (+1), Opens Both Ways (-½), Full Phase to Close (-½) [112]	11
1u	Hell On Earth: EDM: Earth, Use vs. Other (+1), x8 Mass (+¾), Ranged, Indirect (+½), Transdimensional to Netherworld (+½), 36" Radius AE (+1 ½) [115]	11
1u	Hellish Atmosphere: Change Environment: Stench and Gloom, 1024" Radius, 0 END Persistent to maintain [110]	11
1u	Veil of Sin: 6d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal, 4"x64 Radius AE (+2 ½) [112]	11
1u	Infernal Empowerment: 6d6 Transform, Give Any 'Demonic' Powers (+¼) [112]	11
1u	Invent Your Own	
4	+6 Levels for Any Demonology Skills (inc. Spell Research), Ind, OAF (-3)	
-10	Hunted 8- by Heroic Mages (As Pow)	

Star Of Urizen

The Star of Urizen is a talisman created by the Prime Avatar of Order for his favored servants. Actually there are many such talismans, but Urizen only assigns one Star per dimension. (Why just one? It's traditional, that's why.) Not only does a Star of Urizen provide several useful powers to its wielder, it can considerably enhance the power of whatever spells its wielder knows already.

Urizen does not permit Stars to stay long in the hands of wizards who are not firmly committed to his cause. As long as the Star's owner uses it to seek out and destroy the minions of Chaos, Urizen asks no more, but if the Star's owner uses it too much for personal causes, eventually Urizen will send one of his Order spirits to take the Star away. Such minions will be able to deactivate the Star or even make it attack its owner.

A Star of Urizen is a golden disk about 7 cm in diameter, with a band of geometric engraving around the rim and a spiky, multifaceted crystal about 5 cm wide in the center. When in use the Star's crystal glitters with white light. A Star of Urizen might be worn as a necklace or used as a brooch (for instance, as a clasp for a cloak).

Note that a Star of Urizen is not officially a Focus. This lets a Star be used by a sorcerer in astral form: the Star does its own astral projection along with its wearer. However, since the Star is still Independent, it can still be stolen or lost.

Cost	Powers	END
15	Multipower (54 pt pool), Independent (-2), Can Be Controlled by Urizen or Ordainers (-½)	
1u	18d6 Dispel vs. Summon [54]	5
1u	10d6 Mind Control [50]	5
1u	10d6 Telepathy [50]	5
1u	8d6 Aid, to Any Spell (+¼) [50]	5
1u	7d6 Mind Scan, Transdimensional: Ulro (+½) [52]	5
4	Mind Link x1 to Order Minions, Any Distance/Dimension, Independent, Costs END, Concentrate 0 DCV Constant (-1)	2
2	Sense Chaotic Forces, Ind	
4	+ Ranged +6 Telescopic, Ind, Costs END, Visible	1
-10	Watched 11- by Urizen (More Pow)	

Artifacts For Headquarters

These artifacts are meant to be built into a sorcerer's "Sanctum Sanctorum"; they are too bulky to move around. Typically, such artifacts either protect the headquarters, provide information or otherwise help the sorcerer get into adventures. They seldom enhance the sorcerer's combat power in any meaningful way.

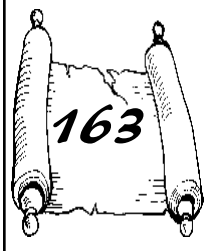
For further relevant notes, see "Sanctums for Sorcerers."

The Mirror Of Ozoth

The Mirror of Ozoth goes all the way back to the lost civilization of Shamballah (see "Those Obligatory Lost Civilizations", Chapter 5), making it over 5000 years old. It was made by the Lord of Art called Ozoth, the Master of Ultimate Vision. Ozoth gave the Mirror to the mystic Nagas. After the fall of Shamballah the Mirror passed from one human magus from another. It has been lost and rediscovered several times.

The Mirror is a powerful scrying device. It can view any place on Earth, or look through the Outer Planes. The Mirror cannot, however, view the Imaginal Planes of Earth it was made before those dimensions existed. Magic auras become visible when scryed through the Mirror. One can target a viewing location directly, or by looking for a person via the Mind Scan function.

The Mirror does have a few little problems. When improperly handled, it does unpleasant things. For instance, if it is struck by a magical attack it might suck everyone in the room into a hostile dimension or into a shared dreamscape. If one uses the Mirror's scrying to target a mental attack, and miss badly, the Mirror might reflect the attack back at the caster. GMs should come up with their own set of rare circumstances in which the Mirror of Ozoth malfunctions, and what entertaining things it does to people in the area. At



least one such malfunction should discourage the Mirror's owner from using it to target attacks, since zapping a person from a thousand miles away isn't very heroic.

Physically, the Mirror of Ozoth is an oval of glass about 1 meter wide and half again as high, in a simple golden frame decorated with plaques bearing mystic symbols. It might be mounted on two freestanding pillars or hang on a wall. It weighs about 30 kilograms (75 pounds). No mundane force could ever break it. The glass bears a spiralling pattern of low ripples which makes the Mirror's face a shimmering whirlpool of fragmented, distorted images and silvery-golden streaks. When someone concentrates and activates the Mirror, the twisted reflections blur and swirl. After several seconds a clear view of the target location expands out from the center to fill the glass.

Any magical adept can figure out how to use the Mirror of Ozoth with a simple Spell Research roll. Even a person with no training in magic might activate the Mirror by accident. This is not always a good thing: they may unwittingly scry targets which can trace the Mirror's energies back to their source.

Although technically portable, the Mirror of Ozoth does not travel well. Aside from being heavy and bulky, the Mirror must be kept in an area shielded from unwanted psychic influences which can make the Mirror scan the wrong location or show false visions. Shielding requires an exorcism process that takes days to complete. In practice, this means the Mirror must be kept in a sorcerer's sanctum.

Cost	Powers	END
14	13d6 Mind Scan, ½ END, +10 ECV, Base OAF (-2), Independent (-2), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½), 1 turn Extra Time (-1), 50 pt Side Effect: GM's Discretion (-½) [101]	4
29	Clairsentience: Normal Vision, Sense Magic, x2exp14 Range (worldwide), 0 END, No Range Modifier (+½), Independent Base OAF (-4), Concentrate 0 DCV Constant (-1), initial 1 turn Extra Time (-½) [190]	
3	+Transdimensional on Clairsentience (Outer Planes), Independent Base OAF (-4), Concentrate 0 DCV Constant (-1), initial 1 turn Extra Time (-½)	
4	Mind Link x1, anyone, any distance/dimension, Above Limits (-5 ½) [25]	
2	Sense Magic/Ranged/Discriminatory, Above Limits (-5 ½) [15]	

Astral Weathercock

The Astral Weathercock comes from old China. Less than a dozen were ever built, and only a few survive to the present day. They are universally acknowledged as a masterpiece of occult engineering, combining Taoist sorcery with precision mechanics.

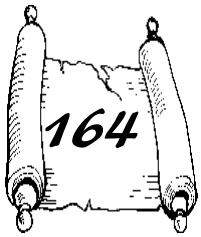
The world's first seismograph (a device to detect and locate earthquakes) was invented by the Chinese scientist Chang Heng in 132 AD. His "Earthquake Weathercock" consisted of a bronze urn holding a heavy inverted pendulum free to swing in any direction, attached to a system of levers. The urn was ringed with eight dragon heads, each one holding a ball in its mouth. When an earth tremor—even one too faint for a human to feel—shook the urn, a lever flipped the ball from the dragon head facing opposite the direction of the quake.

A Chinese wizard of the Third Century adapted this seismograph to produce a device which sensed disturbances in the magical ether instead of disturbances in the ground. Instead of a simple vibration sensing pendulum, the Astral Weathercock's urn holds three pendulums whose bobs are miniature golden shrines to gods of magic, hooked together by levers, gears and pulleys inscribed with mystic signs. A smaller vessel above the urn holds several balls of white jade inscribed with Chinese numerals, like lottery balls. When powerful supernatural forces shake the ether, a valve opens and balls drop from a dragon's mouth into a padded bowl while a chime sounds. The head gives the direction of the disturbance; the numbers give the distance. While the Astral Weathercock isn't infallible, it can locate a magical disruption to within a few tens of miles.

In game terms, the Astral Weathercock has worldwide Danger Sense, limited to magical sources of widespread danger. It detects any strong supernatural event, even ones not directly malevolent (such as spells from the *Krypticon*); technically Danger Sense shouldn't detect such outbursts, but what the heck. Magic that strong is bound to be a threat to *somebody*.

As always with Danger Sense, the Astral Weathercock provides no real advance warning of occult disturbances. If Oom the Unspeakable is coming to Earth to ravage and destroy, the Astral Weathercock only registers a menace once Oom actually arrives. Fortunately, most supernatural threats take time to develop. Once the Astral Weathercock registers a disturbance, its owner might have an hour in which to plan a response before the situation becomes critical.

Cost	Powers	END
6	Danger Sense 12-, out of combat/ sensory (magic sense), worldwide; Base Independent OAF (-4) [32]	
4	+ 11 levels to Danger Sense, Base Independent OAF, Only to Locate Danger Source (-1) [22]	



Sanctums For Sorcerers

Comic-book sorcerers sometimes turn their homes into full-fledged headquarters. After the home of Dr. Strange™, comicdom's most intensely detailed sorcerer, a wizard's headquarters home is called a "Sanctum Sanctorum." Not all super-mages have a sanctum, but a well-developed sanctum can become both an important part of a wizard's power and virtually a character in its own right.

Traditional Features

A few traditions have grown up about sanctums. Not every sanctum should follow every tradition listed here, but these are all classic features which help create a mystical ambiance.

High Fashion And Respectable Age

Wizards just don't live in tract houses or condos. They prefer spooky-looking old mansions, stone towers, even castles on the astral plane—at the very least, a distinguished-looking, elderly townhouse. Fortunately, just about every metropolitan area in North America has a few old Victorian houses, so wizards should have no problem finding suitably atmospheric places to live. (And fortunately for detail-minded players, books of old house plans are easy to find.) Europe of course is stuffed with stately homes.

An Eerie Past

The wizard's home might have been unusual even before the wizard moved in. Perhaps it was built on an Indian burial ground or ritual site. It may have gained a reputation as a haunted house or "bad place" because of insanity, suicide or murder among previous tenants. It doesn't matter that such antecedents suggest a house steeped in *black* magic. Any peculiarity in a house's construction or history helps emphasize that this no ordinary place.

Books And Artifacts

Wizards tend to accumulate all manner of occult knicknacks and souvenirs. These might be quite powerful items in rules terms, or they might just look odd and grotesque. It really doesn't matter, as long as the wizard isn't going to use them as a matter of course.

Typically, such occult artifacts either have no power in and of themselves (they're just interesting Foci for spells which the sanctum's owner might not even be able to cast) or they have powers one wouldn't really want to use very often anyway. For example, the Black Stone of Bolingbroke can suck people into the Plane of Perilous Prunes, but will frequently swallow the person who triggered it, too. The chief use of such trinkets is as hooks to draw the PCs into adventures, such as when DNPCs accidentally trigger the Mirror and the heroes have to rescue them.

Likewise, sorcerers often keep a library of mystic lore. Great locked tomes bound in dragonskin, crumbling scrolls of faded runes, metal plates or stone tablets etched with the sinister glyphs of prehuman races—one can tell at a glance that these did not come from Waldenbooks. The library may be nothing more than a bit of colorful scenery to explain how the character learns spells. It might constitute a magical "lab" built into the Headquarters. A few special books might even be potent magic items in their own right, artifacts bought through Headquarters Points (see below).

Magical Wards

All this valuable—and sometimes dangerous—paraphernalia needs a bit more protection than the average home security system can provide. And of course, wizards have enemies who laugh at deadbolts and burglar alarms. Sanctums usually carry special warding spells to keep out intruders, especially intruders of the magical sort. A skilled and determined sorcerer can probably bypass any conceivable set of wards given time, but a sanctum's defenses can usually keep out any normal burglar and at least delay any mystical assault. (A bit of Hardened Armor or Force Field to keep out those pesky teleporters and extra-dimensional gaters is essential.)

Wards can be handled in two ways. First, they can be bought as Powers for the sanctum, using Headquarters Points. Second, the sorcerer might simply have a few spells which impart Persistent or Uncontrolled defenses to any building they are cast upon. This works especially well if the sorcerer can get the spells through a Power Pool! Examples of such warding spells are given elsewhere.

Such warding spells bought through a Power Pool don't cost the wizard any points, but they have the disadvantage that they break. Once the Lavender Doom breaks through the force field on the door, the whole sanctum becomes vulnerable until the spell is cast again. Defenses bought with Headquarters Points are more enduring.

Space Warps

Space itself may do funny things inside a sanctum. A sanctum might be bigger inside than out. Rooms and corridors might connect in ways not possible in three-dimensional space. A sanctum might even incorporate Gates to other dimensions or zones of folded space where any surface might simultaneously be the floor to one person, a wall to a second person and a ceiling to a third (the "Escher Effect," from the perspective-warping pictures of Dutch artist M. C. Escher.)

Gates are bought normally, either as Headquarters powers or as free-floating persistent spells. A sanctum's being bigger inside than out requires nothing more than paying the points for the area: one pays points for the area inside a Headquarters, not for how much land it covers. If a small bungalow happens to contain

rooms the size of football fields, that's just an interesting special effect and maybe a few points spent on Disguise for the sanctum. Likewise for space-warping connections within the sanctum: how the rooms connect in a Headquarters is purely up to the player. Since "Escher rooms" are a blatant effect which might affect combat, however, such areas ought to be bought as Persistent Change Environment powers for the sanctum.

Special Occupants

Sorcerers don't need to live alone in their sanctums. Sorcerers may have live in DNPCs; an impassive servant is traditional. Other occupants might be magical beings such as ghosts, fairies or talking statues, who merely provide some more colorful ambiance to the sanctum.

Power Boosts

A sanctum might be more than just a colorful safehouse for relaxing between adventures. A sanctum might provide real power to its owner. A wizard's sanctum might house some potent artifact: the extra -1 Limitation on a Focus bought as part of a base, on top of the 1:5 ratio between Character Points and Headquarters Points, makes this option extremely attractive. A prudent GM, however, will make sure that these Focused Powers really never leave the sanctum. Preferably these artifacts will carry powers which merely help involve PCs in adventures. One classic example is a scrying device which scans far places and other dimensions for supernatural naughtiness.

Special ritual chambers offer another power boost for a sanctum's owner. A ritual chamber might be represented by an Aid on spells cast within it. It might even be a Power Pool a wizard can call upon as long as he or she is inside the chamber, to use directly or to augment other spells.

Building A Sanctum

In terms of game rules, building a sanctum is easy: just shell out the points and haggle with the GM about what one can get for them. If one just wants to have the sanctum and get it over with, that's enough. Within the context of the game world, however, just how does one turn an ordinary mansion into a magical fortress? Here are some suggestions, for those who are interested.

Specialty Spells

One may assume there are spells which warp space, turn brick, wood and glass stronger than steel and ban intruders from other dimensions. These spells take a long time to cast and require expensive ritual equipment. They might seriously deplete the caster's magical powers for a time, leaving him or her dangerously vulnerable for days. In essence, they have such severe limits on their use that they are only worth casting if one is building a sanctum.

The "Kerubic Contractor" spell (in the Hermetic Theurgy section above) is one such spell. Sanctum-building spells don't actually have to be written up, though: in essence, the points sorcerers spend on their sanctums shows how well they know these special spells and what sort of resources they have available. Such a sorcerer could build a sanctum for someone else, but only if that other person had the appropriate time, money and both physical and metaphysical resources to support the effort (i.e. has points of their own to spend).

The sanctum-building spells might not be widely known, and casting them might require tools and materials that simply cannot be obtained by ordinary means. What's more, building a sanctum might require the cooperation of cantankerous local spirits who want favors in return.

Instant Sanctum

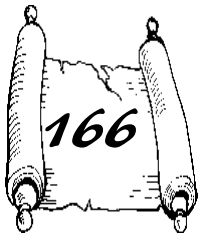
Actual spells to create all the effects that go into a sanctum could cost more points than the sanctum itself. Sorcerers with Power Pools, however, already have every spell in the world—limited by their power level and character conception, of course. Even a modest, 45 point Power Pool can supply spells to simulate many features of the classic sanctum, such as Persistent Force Fields and space warps. Examples of such "instant sanctum" spells are given below. The problem with such spells is that if something happens to break or dispel them, they're gone until the spells can be cast again.

Hire A Contractor

If one lacks the spells or resources to build a sanctum oneself, one might be able to hire someone else to do the job. For instance, an aged sorcerer might specialize in building sanctums for young pups new to the business, in return for later favors.

Various spirits and extra-dimensional entities might specialize in occult architecture as well. In the *Arabian Nights,* Aladdin had a djinn build him a complete palace in one night. In Jewish legend, King Solomon employed djinns and demons to build his magnificent palace and the great Temple of Jerusalem. Suitably powerful djinn (such as Haseem, in Chapter 6) make the most reliable contractors in the spirit world, assuming one can be bound into service. Presumably, such djinns can do alterations to existing buildings as well as building sanctums from scratch.

Likewise, several demon lords from the grimoires are said to build towers, temples, camps and fortifications. They can probably do sanctums too—but demons are hard to command, and habitually treacherous. A demon lord who builds a sanctum under duress will certainly include a number of unpleasant surprises in his design! (Anyone for Mystery Disadvantages? *Lots* of Mystery Disadvantages?) Demon lords only work willingly and reliably for villainous mages who sell their souls or work hideous evils in payment.



This Old Sanctum

The PCs might even simply find a sanctum created and abandoned by some other sorcerer long ago. While this begs the question of how sanctums get built in the first place, it does speed things up and lets the GM give the PCs a sanctum with story hooks already installed, as it were. The sanctum might be in poor repair after years, decades or even centuries of neglect. Magical traps and defenses might still be in place; old spells might have decayed and interacted to create unplanned dangers. Ghost and weird things from other dimensions might have moved in. All in all, this is one fixer-upper even Bob Vila can't handle.

Sanctum-Related Adventures

Treasure Hunt

PCs who want to build a sanctum need something unusual and hard to get: a special book of spells, perhaps, or a relic like a stone from the Temple of Solomon. The PCs have a lead about where to find the necessary item. Actually getting the item, however, requires going someplace exotic—perhaps even through time or to another dimension. Once there, the PCs must overcome obstacles such as guardian monsters, possessive current owners, mechanical and magical traps, or perhaps even a mystical test to determine if they are worthy to receive the item.

Quid Pro Quo

Somebody involved in building the sanctum (either a hired builder or a local spirit who must be appeased) wants a favor in return. This could be the story hook for a Treasure Hunt, or the person might want some special deed performed. The deed doesn't actually have to be dangerous, just challenging to the PCs' abilities.

For instance, the ghost of a murdered man haunting the sanctum to be might want the PCs to pass an important message to his daughter, but he doesn't know where she lives and in fact she has changed her identity through the Witness Protection Program.

Or, local Native American spirits could insist that the PCs perform a special ritual before the spirits will let the PCs exploit the energies of their ancient sacred ground. The problem is finding instructions for the ritual when apparently the last person who knew it died a century ago. The spirits won't say anything more until the ritual is done—not even to tell the PCs how to do the ritual.

Gander-Sauce

In the above adventures, the PCs might be hindered by enemies or rivals who don't want them to build their sanctum. Well, turnabout's fair play: the PCs' enemies will face the same difficulties in building their own sanctums, and the PCs can hassle them in turn. For this adventure, the PCs learn that one of their enemies is building a sanctum that will increase his or her power. The PCs try to stop the evil mage from completing his or her own Treasure Hunt or Quid Pro Quo. First the PCs must figure out the villain's specific objective. Then they must catch up with the villain, who by then has a considerable head start. The PCs may have to face the same dangers and obstacles their enemy has already passed through. At last they must face their enemy and keep him or her from the objective.

Unwanted Tenants

Once the PCs get their sanctum, they might discover that they aren't its only occupants. *Something* has moved in when they weren't looking. Whatever it is, it's weird, elusive and at least potentially dangerous. The PCs must catch it and either get rid of it or determine that it isn't a threat. "Something under the bed is breathing…"

Ordinary(?) Problems

A sanctum may be a Fortress of High Wizardry, but that doesn't mean it can't have ordinary problems like phones that quit or rusty pipes. The PCs, like any sensible person, call in the appropriate service personnel (electrician, plumber, carpenter, whatever). Unfortunately, that's the day when something truly mind-blowing attacks the sanctum. The PCs must repel the attack while protecting the innocent workman and if possible without blowing their Secret IDs.

"Instant Sanctum" Spells

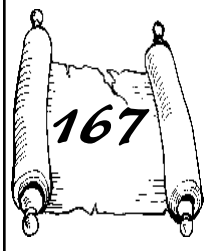
These spells are all built on 45 Active Points or less. There is no reason why they could not be more powerful; the 45 point limit is just to show what's possible with a rather modest Power Pool or a few Multipower slots. As always, GMs have the final say on what's allowed in their games, and admittedly these spells stretch the rules pretty broadly. Still, it's interesting to see just how much one can put in a sanctum without actually spending Headquarters Points.

Limitations aren't given. Suffice to say that "Instant Sanctum" spells should take at least a few minutes each and be moderately inconvenient to cast so wizards aren't magically fortifying every building they enter. The spells might wear off in a few days without magical maintenance, too.

Basic Ward

This spell reinforces the walls of a building, making them as strong as steel armor plate. Then the wizard casts versions for ED, Mental Defense and Power Defense Force Fields. All should share the Limitations that they cannot cumulate—two 14 PD wards are no better than one—and that if one ward breaks, they all break.

Cost	Powers	END
	14 PD Force field, 0 END Persistent, Invisible to Sight/Hearing (+¾), Hardened, Use by Other (the building, +¼) [45]	



Concealment Spell

This spell hides all the other "Instant Sanctum" spells that have been cast on a building.

Cost	Powers	END
	Invisibility vs. Magic Detection,, 0 END Persistent, Use by other (+¼) [45]	

Space Warping

This expands, twists or otherwise reshapes the rooms in a building so it can have more space inside or to create "Escher effects."

Cost	Powers	END
	Change Environment 4" Radius, Any Spatial Distortion (+1), 0 END Persistent [45]	

Alarm Spell

This spell is set to create a loud alarm when a certain condition is met: someone who opens a certain door without knocking, for instance. Normal Triggered spells are assumed to have only normal human senses, but no intelligence and hardly any ability to tell one person from another.

Cost	Powers	END
	Images vs. Hearing; 8" Radius (+1), Variable Trigger (+½) [25]	2

Watcher Spell

This spell gives the Alarm Spell the ability to use non-standard senses such as Detects. (Alarms set to Detect Invisibility are especially valuable.)

Cost	Powers	END
	Clairsentience: one sense, Use by Other (+¼), 0 END Persistent [45]	

MageDrainer

This nasty little number gradually drains away all of an intruder's magic as long as he, she or it is inside the building. The only way to stop the drain is to turn off all one's magical defenses—which turns most wizards into sitting ducks.

Cost	Powers	END
	½d6 Drain; vs. All Magic (+2), Recover 5 pts/minute (+¼), Personal Immunity (+¼), Invisible to Sight/Hearing (+¾), NND vs. Natural (non-magical) Power Defense (+1), Continuous, Uncontrolled, 0 END, Ranged, 8" Radius AE (+1 ¼) [45]	

Bilocation

Finally, here's a really powerful Instant Sanctum spell, the sort a wizard with a large Multipower might have as one of their major, non-combat spells. This spell makes a building exist simultaneously on Earth and on another, pre-chosen dimension—perhaps the Land of Legends or Babylon.

Although written using a Radius Area of Effect, the dimensional overlap is confined to the sanctum itself. One can enter the house from one door on Earth and go out another door to the other dimension.

Making a building bilocate does have one great disadvantage: while it makes it very easy for the new sanctum's owner to reach the other dimension, it is just as easy for creatures from the other dimension to get to Earth. Turning off Bilocation is at least as difficult as turning it on.

Cost	Powers	END
	EDM: Other Dimension/Earth, Use By Other x1 (+¼), Continuous, 0 END Persistent, Invisible vs. Sight (+½), 8" Radius AE (+1), Opens Both Ways (-½), 5 Minutes Extra Time to Close (-1) [95]	

More Fantastic Foci of Legend

Vintrasian Host

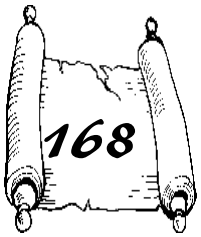
The 19th century cult leader Pierre Vintras claimed to miraculously produce Communion wafers stained with the blood of Christ. The occultist Eliphas Levi inspected three of these Hosts, however, and claimed that on all three the alleged blood formed Satanic symbols.

Sword Of Paracelsus.

The great doctor and alchemist had a sword with a crystal pommel, on which was engraved the word AZOTH, Paracelsus' word for the life principle. Legend says the pommel was also the stopper for the hollow hilt of the sword, in which Paracelsus kept the Elixer of Life. Modern scholars say that Paracelsus' great magical medicine was laudanum—tincture of opium—but then, modern scholars don't know everything

Devil-Trap Bowls

For a while in some parts of Mesopotamia, people would bury these pottery bowls under their thresholds or at the corners of their homes. The incantation written in a spiral around the inside of the bowl was supposed to fix the attention of any evil spirit that came near and so prevent it from entering the house.



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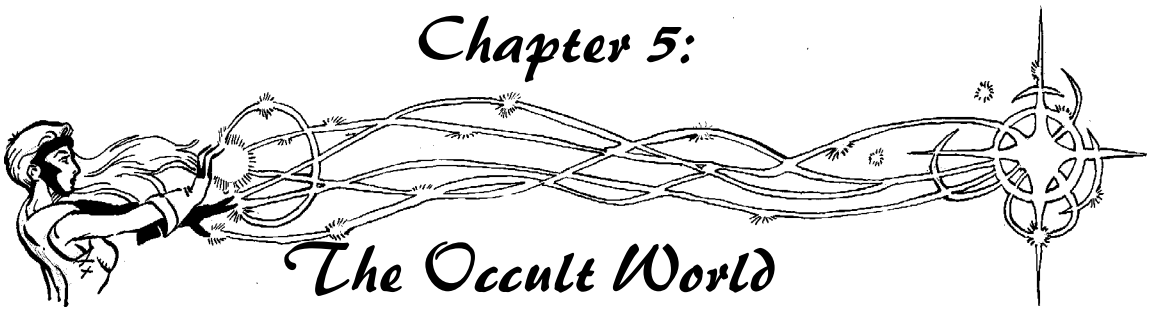


The Occult World

"*Superstitious? Perhaps. Baloney? Perhaps not…*"
—The Black Cat

This chapter is concerned with the secret world of sorcery. Mages deal with a panoply of groups, entities and forces which most people never see. First, the hidden subculture of wizards and would be wizards is described. Then several special features of the Occult World are discussed, such as cults, cosmic entities and—of course those obligatory lost civilizations like Atlantis, which occultists love to claim as the source of their magical wisdom.

The Occult Subculture

"You want the Elucidated *Brethren of the Ebon Night. Three doors down."*
"Who're you, then?"
"We're the Illuminated and Ancient Brethren of Ee."

—Terry Pratchett, *Guards! Guards!*

Sorcerers, mystics, occultists and spirits form a distinct subculture the Occult World. "Occult" means "secret" as well as "magical," and the Occult World has both traits. The Occult World is like an onion of four layers, each layer more secretive and magically potent than the last.

Most people never see more than the most superficial aspects of the Occult World. A person with the "Occult World" Skill only has significant knowledge of their own layer of involvement (and of course the higher, or shallower, layers). Of deeper layers they will know little, and their information will be vague and probably not very accurate. For instance, the local "Psychic Palm and Tarot Reader" will only know about the Pop Occult World in detail, no matter how high his Occult World skill rating may be. At most, he knows how to contact a few serious occultists. Even sorcerers, players in the True Magic World, know far more about their fellow practitioners than about the spiritual "Powers and Principalities" from whom the magic forces flow.

It's worth repeating that KS: Occult World is a *general* Skill. What's more, it is chiefly concerned with people and organizations; it gives little or no knowledge of occult or magical doctrines, legends, literature, spirits or the like. For precise information, one needs more specialized Knowledge Skills such as "Cults," "Magic Theory," "Occult History," "Grimoires" or "The Spirit World."

Levels Of The Occult World

Level 1: The "Pop Occult" World

The outermost layer consists of the most superficial aspects of occultism: the newspaper astrologers, crystal mongers, trance channellers, storefront psychics and other charlatans and honest dupes of the New Age. A lot of these people and their clients genuinely believe they have tapped the wellsprings of wizardly power. Most of them wouldn't know real magic if it bit them. Their chief value to practitioners of real magic is that their gullibility makes them perfect lackeys and experimental animals. Real world example: your local palmist, astrologer, channeler or crystal healer.

Level 2: The True Occult World

The next layer in consists of the serious occultists. These people know just enough about real magic to get themselves in trouble. A few even know enough to *avoid* real trouble. Many cult leaders fall into this class. Other examples of second layer occultists include a few proprietors of occult bookstores, private collectors of occult memorabilia, Hebrew scholars and genuine Satanists.

Not all these people necessarily believe in magic, but they can tell genuine esoteric lore from phony imitations. Books written by these people are seldom found outside specialty stores and superior University libraries. Few of these people ever achieve much fame or notoriety in the mundane world, even if they try. Real world example: Gershom Scholem, the 20th century's top scholar of kabbalism.

Some magical heroes and villains may fit in the second layer of the Occult World as well. They may have gained their powers through magic or wield a magic item, but they don't actually know much about the supernatural. ***Champions*** Universe example: Loup Garou (from Red Doom in *Classic Organizations*).

Level 3: The Magical World

People in the third layer of the Occult World know and perform real magic. Most Super Mage heroes and villains fall into this category. So do the cults with real magic. These people may battle in public, but on the whole they agree that mundane people must not be told what's really going on. Even pro-magic radicals like Demonologist never try to explain the facts of magic to the masses.

Level 4: The Supernatural World

The fourth and last layer of the Occult World usually shows itself only to third layer magicians. This layer goes beyond the Earth and consists of the prime movers of the supernatural world, from demon kings and dimension lords to the Four Zoas themselves. These beings don't *use* magic, they *are* the magic. A few of the mightiest wizards may become fourth level powers if their agendas are broad enough. Archimago, for instance, became a fourth level power when he became the Solipsist's minion and set out to destroy the Universe.

Actually, the fourth layer can only be considered part of the Occult World because its denizens sometimes interact with humans. While the "Occult World" skill can be used to get information about spirits, gods and cosmic entities, such rolls will be at severe minuses: at least -5, and only the most general information can be found. For any sort of specific information about supernatural beings, characters must use other skills, such as Spirit World, Occult Cosmology or Gods and Mythology.

People Of The Occult World

There are many sorts of people in the Occult World, with varying degrees of involvement, from storefront psychics to super sorcerers. Descriptions of some of the more common types follow. As always, individuals may fall into more than one type.

Occultists

Occultists study magical claims and beliefs, but they do not necessarily claim to have any magic powers of their own. Many occultists practice "occult sciences" such as astrology or Pyramid Power, but claim these "sciences" work by themselves, regardless of who uses them. The class of occultists includes peripheral scholars such as anthropologists, folklorists and fantasy authors, who study beliefs about magic powers without believing in the powers themselves.

Charlatans

Charlatans don't have real magic powers, but they claim they do. At most, a few of them have minor talents such as aura vision or dowsing. Some charlatans are sincerely self-deluded; they have convinced themselves that they have "powers" of some sort. Many charlatans are deliberate frauds who prey on the gullible. They pretend to tell the future, remove (or inflict) bad luck and curses, talk to spirits or bend spoons. A few of them write weighty tomes of occult doctrine. A deliberate charlatan's greatest fear is a stage magician, who knows all their tricks.

Charlatans often have ambivalent feelings about real sorcerers, who have the powers to which charlatans pretend. Charlatans are seldom willing to admit, even to themselves, that their own powers are false. Still, they want the real power the sorcerer commands. Some charlatans may seek out real mages and beg for lessons. Others try to stay away from wizards. Charlatans aren't helpless, though: their skills can gather them great wealth and wide, loyal followings. A charlatan who has the ear of the Mayor or a local Mafia don can cause a lot of trouble for a hero.

True Magic Users

This class includes priests, people with magic weapons, occult investigators with genuine powers and all other people who at least use magic, even if they aren't wizards themselves. Naturally, these are the most important people in the Occult World for the purposes of the campaign.

Cultists

Cultists worship occult forces. Their leaders may be occultists, charlatans or true mage priests. In fiction, cultists are notable for fanatic, even suicidal devotion to their leaders and their gods. Cultists are discussed in more detail below.

Supernatural Beings

Most supernatural beings fall outside the occult subculture. They embody the power which occultists seek, but they generally do not become part of the web of social interactions which makes up the Occult World. Even the supernatural beings who live in the middle of humanity, such as vampires, hide their nature from occultists as much as from ordinary people. Thus, KS: Occult World gives very little information about spirits, undead or other supernatural beings. At most, knowledge of the Occult World gives vague, general and inaccurate information about what sort of ghoulies might be out there.

As always, there are exceptions. If a spirit or magical being becomes the god of a cult, it has become part of the Occult World. Its connection to the cult will become known, even if the spirit's true nature and powers remain a mystery. If any mediums or channellers have genuine "spirit guides," those spirits become part of the Occult World as well. And of course, any gods, demons or other supernatural beings who become superheroes or supervillains will become as well known in the Occult World as in the mundane world.

Occult Societies

Occult practitioners do not all operate alone. Many of them band together to form occult societies of various sorts, ranging from sorcerous supervillain teams to guilds of psychic advisers, crystal healers and other New Agers. This section deals with more or less "secular" groups. If the group exists for the purpose of worship, it is not an occult society but a cult which sort of group will be described in turn.

Designing Occult Societies

Purpose

Sorcerers and occultists can form societies for many different reasons. The many specific reasons, however, boil down into four main classes. As usual, none of the classes are exclusive.

Social

Many societies form simply as a way for like minded people to be with each other. Occultists and wizards are no different, and with their esoteric interests they can have problems finding people who can chat about the same things. Such occult societies can be no more than informal bull sessions, or full fledged professional associations. (Don't laugh. Who do you think organizes those "psychic fairs"?) Of course, public associations will only consist of occultists and charlatans; any real mage who joins is probably shopping for minions.

Promote A Style Of Magic

People in the same profession often band together to establish standards of workmanship, protect their "turf" from outsiders (such as government regulators, foreign competition or people in similar professions)

and attract people to the profession. Of course, guilds of wizards will be much smaller than guilds of plumbers or cosmetologists.

It is up to each GM to describe how widespread, focused and disciplined a mage's guild may be. At one extreme, all necromancers might belong to the Dread Legion of the Grave and follow a Master Plan to conquer the world. At the other extreme, a society might consist of one master wizard and her students, who have agreed to help each other out if they get in trouble.

Magical societies which emphasize teaching a style of magic form an excellent part of a mage's background. Such a society explains where and how the character learned magic. If the character maintains good relations with the society it gives a convenient justification for the character learning a new spell. If the character doesn't maintain good relations with the society which taught them, the society can become a formidable Hunted. After all, they know all the character's tricks…

Promote A Cause

The members of this sort of society might use many different styles of magic, but they share some general goal or ideology. They might all be servants or promoters of mystical Order, Art or some other orientation, or they might follow a particular religion or political cause. The Devil's Advocates (see *Creatures Of The Night: Horror Enemies*), for instance, share the goal of destroying all modern technology.

Complete A Project

Finally, mages might gather to achieve some specific goal, such as defeating a common enemy or creating a powerful artifact. When (or if) the goal is achieved, the group splits up.

Mage PC groups will probably fall into the third class: the "cause" they promote is "stopping the bad guys." Exactly what "stopping the bad guys" entails is up to the players and GMS. It may be as simple as thumping any dimensional conquerors who show their face on Earth or as vast and complicated as bringing Enlightenment to humanity.

Magical Power

Of course, societies of full super mages are most interesting, but GMs may find uses for societies of occultists and charlatans as well. These groups can't fight the PCs spell for spell, but they may have social or financial influence that can be brought to bear.

On the other hand, a group of occultists can be a useful Contact for PCs as well. Not everyone has to be an enemy. Collectively, the group may have more esoteric Knowledge Skills and a better library than it is practical for the PCs to spend points upon. Such a group may be happy to help out real mages, in return for favors such as magic lessons or contributions to the library.

Of course, it is possible for such a group to become too friendly. A gang of hero worshipping occultists following the PCs around, pleading to become their disciples, could be quite a nuisance!

Size

It is assumed in this work that societies of real wizards will be quite small. First, there simply aren't that many wizards in the world, and they are scattered thinly. Second, there just isn't any literary precedent (in novels or comics) for large syndicates of wizards. Indeed, fiction and history (of real occult societies such as the Golden Dawn) suggests that sorcerers (and self proclaimed sorcerers) are a fractious lot addicted to schism and infighting.

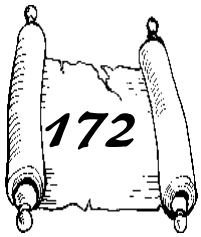
Finally, and most importantly, keeping wizard groups small keeps the focus of the campaign firmly on the PCs. On the one hand, they are not faced with indestructible, inexhaustible enemies. After the PCs have knocked down their 50th wizard from the Syndicate of Evil and wizard #51 pops up spoiling for a fight, they may well wonder what good they're doing. On the other hand, if there are no benevolent wizard groups much larger than the PCs' own group, that keeps the responsibility for stopping the bad guys firmly on the PCs' shoulders, where it belongs. If there's a big syndicate of good guy sorcerers, PCs may be tempted to run to them for help and advice every time they hit a snag.

All this only applies, however, to societies of super level mages. Societies of occultists and charlatans can be very large, for the same reason that cults are very large: because most of the members have little power. Indeed, a super mage society may encompass hundreds of students and acolytes, as long as only a few members are mages with significant power.

Openness

The more genuine power an occult society has, the more secretive it will be as well. That's one of the basic rules of the Occult World. As in the real world, societies of occultists and charlatans may be completely out in the open obscure to most people, perhaps, but not actually hiding. (Charlatans may be a little dodgier, if they are deliberate con men.) Groups which dabble in fragments of real magic will be more secretive: they will communicate with other "serious students" but they won't be in the Yellow Pages. Traditionally, groups of true sorcerers will stay completely hidden from common humanity. After all, they have enemies as powerful as they are.

(There are two plausible exceptions to this rule. First, a small cabal of sorcerers might use a public occult society as a blind, a recruiting ground for students or as a source of cannon fodder. Second, a team of sorcerers might masquerade as more conventional superheroes or supervillains a form of hiding in plain sight.)



Organization

The small size of societies of real mages gives them very simple organizational charts. Either there is a leader and a few followers, or the group is an alliance of nominal equals. Individual members may have grandiose titles, but these have no practical significance. These groups operate according to the personalities of the members, not some abstract chart.

Teaching orders (like the Vril Society in the Source Book or the historical Golden Dawn) are somewhat more complicated. They tend to be organized in grades, from rank novices to the masters. One's rank supposedly shows one's magical prowess. A one room schoolhouse is a pretty fair model for these societies, although a few historical groups claimed hundreds of members (and the Freemasons, back when they still pretended to be occultists, had thousands).

Sample Occult Societies

The Vril Society, described in the Source Book, is an example of a teaching occult society. The Sylvestri clan is a loose occult society as well as a family. The Devil's Advocates, a society of supervillain mages, was described in *Creatures Of The Night: Horror Enemies*. They and these capsule descriptions can guide GMs in designing occult societies.

Newtonian Society

Now defunct, but once a very important group. Back in the 17th century, Isaac Newton (one of the most brilliant scientists in history) turned his attention to the supernatural and mastered wizardry as easily as he had mastered physics and mathematics. Newton's researches revealed the potential of a defense against demons that was even better than religious faith: cold disbelief. Demons could not influence people who flat out did not believe in them! Newton shared this discovery with several contemporary wizards, and they formed a society with the goal of hiding the existence of magic from the public.

Up until the 1940s, most wizards of the Western world cooperated in this goal, although many did it for selfish reasons. Those who refused to hide their magic were discredited or otherwise forced to comply. The Newtonians' last great success was preventing Nazi Germany from mastering black magic. Archimago, however, proved beyond the Newtonians' power to restrain, and the Devil's Advocates have been even more public. In 1987, the Newtonians decided that their goal of mass disbelief in Black Magic Horrors could not be achieved by any ethical means, and the society dissolved. Since then, members have gone their own ways.

Reformed Druids Of Gaia

This group of wizards and their students serves mystical Nature. The group formed in the 1960s, when a few scattered members of the "back to nature" movement became the disciples of Nature oriented mages. The disciples met through groups like Greenpeace and the Sierra Club and persuaded their masters to form an alliance. Now some of the students are masters themselves.

The Reformed Druids are benevolent but mostly pacifistic. They work to acquire legal title to wilderness areas, using methods which if not entirely ethical are still nonviolent (they are quite willing to use mind control to further a purchase). Along the way, they try to promote "green" attitudes.

Tetragrammaton

This society dates back to the occult boom of the 16th century. It is a professional alliance of Thaumaturges. Its chief purpose is to train apprentices and carry on the traditions of Thaumaturgy. It also acts to mediate disputes between members. It espouses no other goals or ideology, declaring itself above "worldly" conflicts. If individual members want to muck about in worldly affairs, such as by becoming heroes or villains, that is no concern of the other members as long as they leave each other alone. Any member who attacks another member will be expelled.

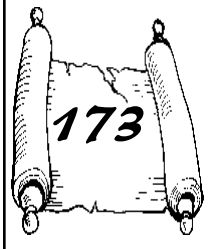
The name of this society refers both to the great four letter name of God in kabbalism, and to the four "Guiding Words of the Magus": to Know, to Will, to Dare and to Keep Silence.

Triskele

The Devil's Advocates weren't the first group of wizards to try establishing a reign of magic. From the 1910s to the 1940s, the group calling itself Triskele tried a number of schemes to force large scale magic on the world. Their last attempt was Nazi Germany an attempt to indoctrinate a nation, and through it all of Europe, in a radically anti rational ideology which embraced all manner of occult notions. The resulting horrors convinced the Newtonians (and several other wizards besides) that Triskele had to be destroyed. Most of the Triskele wizards died in the purge, but a few escaped and remain in hiding so far.

Cults

> *For example, the Garrison investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy in New Orleans brought to light the "Orthodox Old Catholic Church of North America," a deviant sect dating back to an obscure schism in Utrecht, Holland, in the 18th century, which, after numerous permutations, had become occult and homosexual in orientation.*
>
> —Daniel Lawrence O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning*



Cults are an important part of the magical world. Just like vigilantes have their street gangs and crime syndicates and superheroes have their high tech terrorist agencies, sorcerer heroes have cults to fight. The function is the same: providing large numbers of low power opponents for the heroes.

How Cults Work

A cult's general structure resembles that of any other villain agency. At the bottom are scads of low power "agents." At the top is an autocratic leader, or perhaps a small cabal of leaders. In between, the larger cults probably have a cadre of officers. The leaders consider the rank and file members expendable. If the cult has multiple leaders, they probably scheme and jockey for power over each other. If the leaders never squabble, they are probably just higher ranking officers fronting for a secret, true leader.

Cults differ from other agencies, however, in their motivations. First and foremost, they are religious organizations. Cultists aren't soldiers or employees, they are worshippers. Even when cultists rob, extort or kill, they do so out of faith. They may love their leaders or fear them, but they never doubt them, for the cultists believe their leaders' authority is divine.

The leader's divine authority is, in fact, the chief difference between a cult and a normal religious sect. Leaders of mainline sects (Christian or otherwise) may claim to interpret divine will, but they don't claim to be their god or gods' sole spokesperson. Cult leaders generally do. In fact, cult leaders may claim to be gods themselves, or at least superhuman. A lot of them really believe it, too. Because cultists think their leaders are divinely infallible, cultists have very high morale. Cultists may be quite willing to throw their lives away in a fight. The most fanatical cultists can commit the most loathsome crimes without remorse: because they were on "a mission from God," they perceive no sin or guilt.

Cults employ lots of magic whether the magic really works or not is open to question. In a comic book world, some cult leaders can have real magic powers, either through sorcerous training or the favor of the cult's "god." Cult leaders seldom have a very wide range of magic, but their magic can be powerful within its narrow limits.

Officers might have weaker versions of the leader's powers. Rank and file cultists seldom have true magic powers at all, but their skills and fanatical devotion can make them more formidable than they seem. A few cult leaders might even bestow low power enchantments or magic items on their followers. They won't, however, give their cultists anything that could be used against the leaders or that they can't afford to lose.

Every cult needs a god to worship. Many real world cults deify their leaders, who claim to be the reincarnation of Jesus or someone like that. Most comic book cults serve arch demons, horrific Elder Gods or other powerful extra-dimensional beings. Cults serving ancient pagan gods of evil such as Set are not unknown, either. The greatest danger from these cults is that the cult leader usually has some way to summon the cult's "god." In fact, the cult usually clashes with the heroes because of the cult's attempt to do this. If the cult succeeds, the heroes have a bad fight on their hands.

As a rule, the more powerful a cult's "god" is, the harder it is to summon. Cultists of Baphomet (a good fight for a team of heroes but not overwhelming) can summon their "god" almost at will, but cultists of Vulshoth (a world shaking peril) might only get one chance to summon the Elder God as a result of a long and difficult procedure.

Even if the cult claims to worship a more "conventional" god or gods, their beliefs will be twisted and grotesque. Real Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Voodooists and such won't have anything to do with such heretics. Their worship might be based on a demon's impersonation of the god in question.

Cultists seldom have very creative strategy. They can be clever at getting entrance to where they want to go; if they have lots of time to prepare, they get a cultist hired at the museum, billionaire's house or other place they want to raid. In fact, one classic cult story routine is the trusted VIP who turns out to be a ruthless undercover cultist—in fact, usually the cult leader! Once their target for theft or murder is in sight, however, off come the overcoats, out come the daggers and weird costumes, and the cultists make a human wave attack while the leader casts spells. Succeed or fail, most of the cultists will prove expert in getting away, too, since they always know a lot more about escape routes than the police or heroes do. In fact, they may build secret tunnels to enter and leave.

Oh yes, the weird costumes. Comic book cultists love dressing in floppy robes and strange masks or headdresses. Leaders may wear tights, but it isn't common. Cult leader outfits are elaborate and gaudy: imagine the Pope gone Heavy Metal. Tasteful understatement is *not* the cultist way.

Designing A Cult

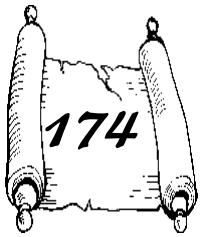
One must make a number of decisions when designing a cult besides its deity: its purpose, size, magical power, operating structure, aggressiveness, worldliness and other factors. Some of these factors deserve special mention.

Cult Purpose

Cults have many different purposes for existing. Most of them, however, fall into several broad categories. None of these categories are mutually exclusive; in fact, most cults fall in two or three categories at once.

Occult Cults

These promise "secret wisdom" and magical power to their members. Most comic book cults fall into this category. Real world examples include Theosophy and the "mystery cults" of the ancient world.



Pietist Cults

These promise surer salvation through a closer, more intense religious experience than "mainstream" sects provide. Charismatic, Pentecostalist and Fundamentalist Christian denominations are examples of real world pietist cults.

Therapy Cults

These cults promise "inner growth" and help with psychological problems, not necessarily with direct experience of deity. Transcendental Meditation, Scientology, the Hari Krishnas and many "New Age" groups are therapy cults.

Apocalyptic Cults

The cult believes that something world shaking will happen soon, and they want to be ready for it. In the real world, this is usually Armageddon and the Last Judgment. The cult sets up a compound with bomb shelters and entirely too much heavy weaponry, or it exhorts everyone to sell their possessions and gather on the hilltops. In the former case, at least, the cult probably cannot complete its desired preparations legally. Of course, fantastic cults may also be preparing to summon their god and *cause* the Apocalypse. Real world examples are legion, with the late David Koresh's Branch Davidian group in Waco and the Om Shinri Kyo cult in Japan as famous recent cases.

Missionary Cults

This sort of cult wants to convert the unbelievers. A villainous, black magic cult may have to do this slowly and covertly, but members may still dream of a future age when everyone worships Ug the Unspeakable. Every major religion began as a Missionary Cult.

Political Cults

This is often a more aggressive strategy for conversion: it would be easier to make everyone worship Ug the Unspeakable if every other religion was illegal. Or, the cult's religious beliefs might be tied up with some political goal as well. (For instance: forbidding abortion; kicking out a foreign monarchy; giving one ethnic group power over all others; creating a dictatorship.) Politically active Fundamentalist sects fall into this category.

Utopian Cults

These cults are a specialized form of Political Cult. These guys want to build a better society. This can range from setting up a commune to taking over the world. They differ from normal Political Cults in that they genuinely want to improve people's lives, not just gain power over them. Their ideas of Utopia, however, might not jibe with most people's desires.

Libertine Cults

These cults let members satisfy desires repressed by society usually involving sex and violence. In the ancient world, libertine cults were often open, even dominant in some societies; they gave structured, socially sanctioned opportunities for occasional frenzy while keeping order the rest of the time. Nowadays, libertine cults must be small and secretive.

Criminal Cults

These cults also engage in robbery and murder for profit, giving cultists financial as well as religious benefits. Thuggee was a criminal cult; so are the real world Leopard Societies.

Greedy Cults

Strangely, cults whose members must renounce worldly goods often have leaders who acquire worldly goods in amazing quantities usually from the members. When the cult leader can't shear enough from their loyal flock of sheep, maybe they will look elsewhere. Notably psychotic leaders might use their minions for violent crime instead of the usual bunko schemes, making the cult also a Criminal Cult.

Hereditary Cults

These cults could have any purpose, but membership is restricted to people born into certain families, clans or castes; conversely, anyone of a given family, clan or caste may be expected to be part of a cult. Many tribal cults are hereditary.

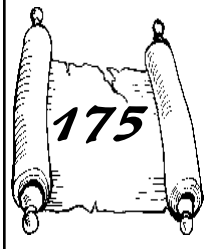
Magical Power

Cults vary widely in the magic they can muster. Some might be just like cults in the real world, without any real magic: they are dangerous because of what they can persuade people to do with the means at hand (especially when the means at hand include automatic weapons or poison gas.) Other cults might have just enough magical knowledge to cause trouble. (The classic scenario is a cult leader who gets hold of a real magical artifact, and either becomes power mad or unleashes some dreadful menace.) Finally, some cults might control powerful, serious magic. These last form the most common cultic opponent to mages.

The variety of magic available to a sorcerous cult bears repetition. Cults may get magical powers directly from their "god", as priest-magicians; this can be any sort of magic available to other mages. Cults may employ Ritual Magic within a framework of some religious tradition such as Voodoo, Satanism or Shamanism. Or, the cult leader may simply be a scholar mage or Wild Talent who's decided to gather some followers.

Openness

What is the cult's attitude to the gentiles around them? Some cults retreat from the world of "unbelievers" and are only occasionally dangerous to outsiders. At the other extreme, some cults want to End Civilization As We Know It. A comic book style villainous cult will naturally tend toward the latter end of the spectrum, because it's easier to get the heroes involved in fighting them. On the other hand, a reclusive cult might just be biding its time until it can summon its god and destroy the world. Some cults pursue their goals quite openly; others keep their true objectives secret even from most of the members.



Size

How many people belong to the cult? A cult with only a dozen or so members is only a one shot opponent, unless the members are quite extraordinary. When the heroes bust the cult, that's it: there are no more cultists to carry on. If the cult is large, however, the cult is probably also quite spread out, with several cells in different regions. Even if all the cultists stick together (perhaps they have their own town) many cultists will certainly escape the heroes, and can turn up again to work further evil.

When cults are used for horror and suspense in fiction, the cults are very large. Dennis Wheatley's Satanists, Sax Rohmer's Si Fan or H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Cultists, for instance, number in the tens of thousands and operate worldwide. A milieu can only support one or two giant occult conspiracies, however, lest it seem cluttered.

Organization

Small cults use the basic schema described above: a leader, a few lieutenants, and the rank and filers. Larger cults, however, may need to use more complicated organizational plans.

The simplest expansion is the polysegmental cult. When one cell gets too big, a cult lieutenant leaves to start a new cell. Each cell is pretty much the same and operates on its own. Such cults may be persistent, but each cell probably isn't very strong. More commonly, however, the cells are more firmly linked by some shared hierarchy.

First, each cell leader could answer to a super leader. The super leader may command a larger, more powerful central cult, or he/she/it might normally stay in relative isolation in a secret temple or on another dimension, or the super leader might shuttle between local cults.

If the cult is very large and old, its "branch offices" could have lesser cells of their own. Heroes would start by busting a small, local cult, move on to the more powerful regional cult center, then finally tackle the deadly master cult itself. Busting such a cult can be the focus of an entire campaign.

Leaders seldom command in isolation. Every leader likes to have a staff to handle the routine work and stroke their ego. This staff of special functionaries creates a more complicated hierarchy within the cult. This might not be significant in combat the Most Reverend Keeper of Sacred Missives is probably just a regular cultist with special duties but when heroes actually want to find out the cult's secrets, finding the right person to interrogate can be important.

What's more, cults with internal hierarchies develop infighting as officers jockey for position and the leader's favor. Everyone remains a fanatic, of course, but internal rivalries may be strong enough that one officer will betray another to the heroes.

GMs don't actually have to create complicated organizational charts, even for the campaign's largest and most important cult. After all, the players will never see most of it. In designing an important cult, however, it may be worth one's time to note a few cult officers who can present special problems or opportunities to the heroes in the adventure planned.

The Cultists

The others were waiting for him in the Inner Sanctum, standing around with the sheepish air of people not normally accustomed to wearing sinister hooded black robes.

—Terry Pratchett, *Guards! Guards!*

Why Cultists Join

Cultists don't come from nowhere. In the real world, people join cults because they like what the cult offers: a close society of like minded people, a profound religious experience, a purpose to life, and so on. It's only once a person is in the cult that brainwashing may start to keep them from leaving, and most real cults don't brainwash at all. Fictional cults may be more aggressive. Here are some common reasons real or cribbed from fiction and urban legend why people join cults.

Attracted By Points Of Doctrine

People might become cultists because they like one aspect of a cult's beliefs or practices (such as free love, shared property or isolation from corrupt, secular society) so much that they will excuse less savory aspects (such as human sacrifice).

Kidnapped And Brainwashed

Some cults get members by grabbing people off the street and brainwashing them into loyal zombies. (This doesn't happen in real life, but it's a classic for fiction.)

Progressive Radicalism

People who feel the need for a more intense religious experience may go from a mainstream church to a pietistic sect to a loony tunes radical cult.

Raised In Cult

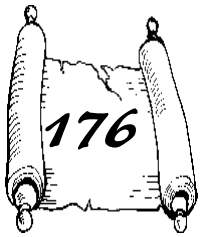
This begs the question, but it does give a reason for a cultist's faultless loyalty. Cultists tend to raise their children as cultists too.

Recruited By Significant Other

A friend, relative or lover invites the person to join them in the cult (at first probably not saying what the cult really is see below). The person joins to keep or increase the emotional relationship.

Recruited Under False Pretenses

The cult pretends to be some other sort of organization, which can recruit people openly. This could be anything from a normal church to a kennel club. Members are gradually drawn into stranger, more secretive and less wholesome activities.



Thrill Seeking

Some people might join a cult just to shock their staid relatives, to play dress-up or because they think belonging to a secret society is romantic. They get more than they expected.

Generic Basic Cultist

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack 3½d6
10	COM	0	12-	
8	PD	5		Total: 8 PD
8	ED	5		Total: 8 ED
3	SPD	6		Pha 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 42

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Cultist Skills & Abilities:

- Cult Weapon/Power of Choice (see below) (20)
- Cult Defensive/Miscellaneous Power of Choice (see below) (20)
- Minor Power/Weapon/Skills of Choice (see below) (5)
- KS: Cult Dogma 8- (1)
- Choice of two of the following skills:: Breakfall, Climbing, Concealment, Disguise, Special KS, Language, Lockpicking, Special PS, Security Systems, Shadowing, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, Streetwise or Tactics (6)
- 2 Levels w/ Weapon/Power of Choice (6)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 58

Total Character Cost: 100

Disadvantages: 500+

Distinctive Features:

- Distinctive Feature, Easily Concealed (Cult Costume, Tattoo, Ornament, Secret Handshake, etc.)

Psychological Limitation:

- Religious Fanatic (vc, total) (25)

Watched:

- Cult leaders, more powerful, 11- (10)
- Local Authorities, as powerful, NCI, 11- (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 100

These are "high end" cultists which have unusual weapons or abilities. A few examples are given below. Such cultists, acting in concert, can be more than a mere nuisance—especially to the community unlucky enough to have them. "Low end" cultists simply carry everyday weapons such as knives, clubs or guns.

These cultists have been brainwashed into fanatical devotion to the cult and its beliefs and practices. When they fight, their hysterical fury makes them comparable even to well trained fighters such as VIPER agents, although they lack the classic super agent hardware. They can make suicide attacks; indeed, they may deliberately kill themselves as "human bombs" or sacrifices to summon powerful monsters. In a heroic campaign, a mass of cultists can be a serious threat. In a superheroic campaign the cult leaders use cultists as cannon fodder while they prepare their own attacks or escapes.

Sample Cultist Weapons, Powers And Skills

Defensive Abilities and Weapons

Fanatic Resistance To Pain: Very often, cultists can suck up unbelievable amounts of damage without falling. It's not that they take less tissue damage from attacks; they just don't care! Until tissue damage (i.e. BODY) actually stops the body from working at all, a cultist keeps going. Any attack powerful enough to knock out a cultist with this power will probably wound the cultist fatally anyway.

The cultist's resistance to pain and shock usually requires some special display of faith. Traditional forms are a hymn, prayer or chant constantly repeated, a cultic costume, or a sacred symbol carried by the cultist.

Cost	Powers	END
20	+20 PD, 20 ED; Not vs. BODY of Normal Attacks (- ½), -½ Limit of Choice: Incantations Constant, IAF Holy symbol, OIF Cult Costume [40]	

Active Magic Ward: This is an actual enchantment carried by a cultist, protecting them from most forms of magical or material harm. It has some sort of physical sign: a costume, a sacred symbol, or even mystic symbols painted on the skin. The spell lasts one hour.

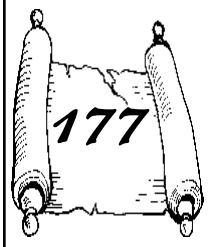
Cost	Powers	END
20	Force Field (13 PD, 13 ED, 13 MD, 13 PowD), OIF or IAF, 1 chg of 1 hour (-½) [40]	[1c]

Magical Deflection Ward: This enchantment could be carried by the same sort of physical sign as the ward above. Whenever a spell hits a cultist bearing such a ward, the cultist gets a Missile Deflection roll to see if the spell bounces. (The Damage Shield advantage lets the cultist Missile Deflect even without a half phase free.)

Cost	Powers	END
19	Missile Deflection +3 vs. Any Magic, Damage Shield, OIF or IAF, 1 chg of 1 hour (-½) [39]	

Mundane Major Weapons

Mundane Guns: see the *Hero System Rule Book* or *Dark Champions* for lots of these. Particularly note the discussion of special ammunition on pp. 78-82 of *Dark Champions.*



Living Bomb Suicide Harness: This is just one form of the Living Bomb Suicide Harness, several sticks of TNT strapped to the cultist's body with a quick triggering device. The cultist's job is to get into a certain place and blow themselves up. This may be to assassinate someone, blow up a building (such as the heroes' Headquarters), to clear a building before the other cultists charge in, or just to terrify the populace. Seeing a cultist happily blow himself up this way should be worth *at least* +5d6 on a Presence Attack!

Variations include using several hand grenades, for an Autofire Explosion, or explosives on some sort of deadman switch so if the cultist is incapacitated they still might succeed in their mission or at least make sure the cultist can't spill secrets to the authorities.

Cost	Powers	END
19	4d6+1 RKA, Explosion, 0 Range, 1 chg, OIF, Side Effect: Certain Death (-1) [97]	

Chain: This is just a length of ordinary chain. The cultist can use it as a flexible club, or whirl it out to wrap around an opponent, also causing an impact.

Cost	Powers	END
16	4d6 Entangle, Damage Transparent (+½), OAF, 0 Range, 1 Reusable Charge (-1 ¼) [60]	
+4	+3d6 HA, OAF [9]	1

Magical or Exotic Weapons

Enfeeblement Chain: This is a magical addition to the chain weapon described above. When the cultist succeeds in Entangling a victim with the chain, the cultist then activates the spell on the chain. The STR Drain is just one option, to keep very strong victims from breaking out of the chain. The helpless victim is then attacked in other ways. STUN or BODY Drains are other options.

Cost	Powers	END
20	2d6 STR Drain, Uncontrolled Continuous, OAF, Linked to Normal Chain Attack (see above) [50]	[16c]

Hellish Drug: In pulp fiction, cults often know how to concoct drugs that act more quickly and powerfully than any mundane drug. The drug may be administered in various ways. Injection or forced inhalation clapping a pad dosed with the drug over the victim's face are the most melodramatic methods, but cultists might use more subtle techniques. A drug might be slipped into a victim's food or drink. An inhaled drug might be concealed as a perfume spray or a corsage. A drug might be a contact toxin, absorbed through the skin, painted on something the victim handles or in a liquid "accidentally" spilled on the victim. Whatever the method, the cult tries to have several cultists on hand to keep the victim unconscious.

Treat a drug syringe as if it were an AP 1d6 RKA, although it doesn't actually do any damage. If this "imaginary" KA would penetrate the character's physical defenses, the NND takes effect. This way, the syringe has a good chance of penetrating armored cloth costumes and such, but can't affect the *seriously* invulnerable characters.

Cost	Powers	END
20	Injected: 8d6 EB, NND vs. Immunity to "Imaginary" 1d6 AP RKA (+1), OAF, 0 Range [80]	[2c]
20	Sneakily Administered: 8d6 EB, NND vs. LS: Breathing or Other Defined Immunity (+1), IAF, 0 Range, Use Restrictions (-½) [80]	[2c]

Magic Club: This is a club enchanted to cause more stunning force than usual. The club bears distinctive painted or carved symbols.

Cost	Powers	END
20	1d6+1 HKA, +2 STUN Mult (+1), OAF [40]	[16c]

Vampire Dagger: The Vampire Dagger is obvious, potent magic. It looks like a dagger of unusual design; it might have a blade made of glass, or enameled some color, or its hilt might have some grotesque form. When the cultist wills, however, the dagger's blade shines with eerie light and it slides through flesh, clothing, armor or even normal force fields as if they weren't there. The victim feels the pain and damage, however. A few strikes from a Vampire Dagger can kill a normal person, leaving a withered, aged corpse.

Cost	Powers	END
20	1d6 HKA, BODY NND: LS: Aging (+2), OAF, [45]	[12c]

Minor Abilities

Mundane HtH Weapons: See the *Hero System Rule Book* or *Fantasy Hero*.

Cultists might employ all manner of small, non magical weapons such as clubs, daggers, power drills and torches. Most of these do ½d6 or 1d6 HKA damage, with OAF and perhaps a STR Minimum. They might be used with martial arts.

Intimidating Display: Military history shows that being rushed by a gang of howling lunatics often makes people cut and run. It doesn't matter whether it's the famous Rebel Yell or "Kill for the love of Kali!" Some cults take advantage of this and send the cannon fodder into battle chanting the praises of their god, hoping for a Presence Attack good enough to let the cultists get in the first shot.

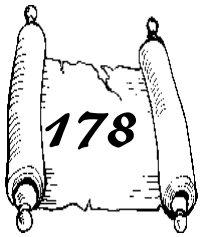
Cost	Powers	END
5	+12 PRE, Offensive Only (-½), Only with Gang of Other Cultists (-½), Incantations Throughout (-½) [12]	

Bulletproof Gear: Kevlar vests and other gear are other mundane equipment that some cults will not disdain. They may not help much against mages and other superheroes, but it can give the cultists an edge against police, security guards and other normal humans.

Cost	Powers	END
5	Armor (4 PD, 4 ED), OIF, Acts 12- [12]	

Mental Defense: The cultist's fanaticism renders them somewhat resistant to mental powers.

Cost	Powers	END
5	Mental Defense (7 pts total) [5]	



Self Sacrificial Minor Summoning: This lesser version of the Self Sacrificial Summoning gives a trapped cultist a final way to strike back by using themselves as a human sacrifice to their god, summoning a servant of the god who might be better at fighting or achieving the mission. By definition, it can only be used once.

Cost	Powers	END
5	1 x 50 pt Summon, 1 Charge Costs END, x4 END (-1 ½), OAF Weapon, Side Effect: Own Death (-1), Incantations, Concentrate ½ DCV (-¼) [40]	16

Witchsight: The cultist can see in the dark.

Cost	Powers	END
5	IR Vision [5]	

Miscellaneous Major Abilities

Martial Arts: The cultist has 20 points worth of maneuvers, extra damage classes, weapon elements and/or skill levels. The martial art may be barehanded or use a weapon. If the cultist uses a weapon, the cultist could spend points for a weapon or, if the cultists use normal weapons, the cultists could just buy a Weapon Familiarity.

Self Sacrificial Major Summoning: With this power, cultists use themselves as human sacrifices to summon a powerful servant of their god. A cultist stabs herself in the heart, cuts his own throat or leaps to his death from a precipice, while calling out a prayer…and something really nasty appears. Typically, just a few especially "favored" cultists have this power.

The spell cannot be stopped once the fatal wound is inflicted. The cultist cannot be healed: the spell makes sure the cultist dies. The prayer is not really an Incantation, and the means of the cultist's suicide doesn't matter. By adding a few other Limitations on this spell, such as Costs END or Extra Time, in some cases it may be possible to raise the spell's power enough that the cultist can summon the god itself.

Cost	Powers	END
20	1 x 250 pt Summon, Side Effect: Mortal Wound on Self (-1) [80]	[1c]

Sample Cults

Two other cults, Ouroboros and the Hunter's Moon, are described in detail in the Source Book. GMs can flesh out these capsule descriptions of other cults if they wish.

The Astral Light Fellowship

The Fellowship is a fully public cult: it keeps the details of its rituals secret, but it's in the local phone book and Yellow Pages under "Metaphysical." The Fellowship offers a limp sort of New Age "occult wisdom": all is One, all is Love and all is God; one can develop psychic powers through meditation, an odd diet and wearing the right crystals; anything is true if it's "true for you"; great spiritual Masters guide human development from the Astral Plane; and so on. A few members join and a few members leave every month, but total membership stays about 50. Members are all normal men and women with no special skills (i.e., victims).

Nobody in the Fellowship has any real magic, including their beloved guru, the Reverend Orville Makepeace. The Reverend knows just enough occultism, however, to get into serious trouble if a real magical artifact fell into his hands. The Fellowship's structure is very simple. There's Reverend Makepeace, a few minor officers such as the treasurer, and everybody else.

The Church Electric

The Church is quite public; in fact its leader, who calls himself Father Spark, would love publicity. Father Spark's claims are so weird, however, that no one in the media will take him seriously.

Father Spark believes that it's God who pushes the current through the wires. The Church Electric's ceremonies feature electronic music, light shows and enough sparking machinery for a mad scientist's lab. As a sacrament, celebrants hold hands and let current flow through their bodies. Not surprisingly, the Church Electric is very small (only about 30 members). Most of the members have done entirely too many drugs.

The catch is, Father Spark is a Mad Mage with amazing powers over electricity. He can pull current from any wall plug or power line and make it work his will. He can even summon powerful "electric angels." He insists his powers are a gift from God. As further proof, he's taught a few members of his church how to make friends with electricity, making them highly resistant to electrical damage and able to talk to appliances.

Although a day with Father Spark will set a scientific rationalist whimpering, there's nothing malevolent about the Church Electric. (Not every cult has to be evil.) In fact, Father Spark can be a useful Contact for PCs. He hears a lot through the power line.

The Leopard Societies

These West African cults combine banditry with their murderous religion. Native anti witch movements, colonial authorities and modern African governments have all failed to eliminate the Leopard Societies. Not only do the Societies provide a religion, comradeship and loot to their members, they promise lethal power.

By wearing metal claws and special masks and costumes, Society members supposedly gain the power to turn into leopards. They use this power to rob and murder. Anthropologists say it's a classic bit of totemism.

What the anthropologists don't know is that the Leopard Societies' magic really works. Cultists start out with just costumes and metal claws. Through ritual murders, in which they eat part of the victim's flesh, they first gain enchantments on their paraphernalia, and eventually become true were leopards. This, however, is their only magic.

The Seven-Headed Beast

This cult claims to rule Satanism worldwide. While this is an exaggeration, the 'Beast does control a major fraction of the world's Satanists. The Seven-Headed Beast is actually an alliance of Satanic cult leaders there's supposed to be seven, one for each of the Seven Deadly Sins, but they can't always manage that who coordinate their efforts to spread evil through the world in their own distinct ways.

Each Head is wealthy and powerful. The Head of Wrath, for instance, is the Death Merchant, a billionaire arms dealer. The Head of Pride, who also calls himself the Mysteriarch, runs a leading think tank; his minions are spread through American Federal, state and major city governments. The Manager, Head of Avarice, has dozens of entertainment stars under contract to himself and to Satan. And so on. Thus, while the Satanists who serve the Seven-Headed Beast have little magic and are weak in combat, the Heads not only have their demonic magic, they have vast social power. Most of the time they operate separately, making them a serial opponent.

The Vicars Of Saint Michael

This group believes they serve the Archangel Michael. Actually, the entity their leader Bishop Joseph Clay calls to their services is the dimension lord Cassai (see the Source Book). In return for their service, Cassai has given the cultists, and especially Bishop Clay, limited Thaumaturgy. Cassai wants to drain Earth's magical energies, but he cannot stay on Earth very long. He has the Vicars locate objects and places of great magical power for him. They summon him to that location, and he siphons the magic.

There are only 20 full Vicars, but Bishop Clay has deputized a few senior cultists to set up branch churches. When they have a squad of suitably devout fanatics, they will call Cassai and be confirmed as Vicars as well. The Vicars believe they are building a "holiness underground" that will save the world from black magic.

Relations With The Mundane World

The Occult World is never wholly separate from the mundane world of ordinary people. The top level, the Pop Occult World, is neither secret nor secretive. It is a tradition in the comics, however, that the people who operate in the deeper levels of the Occult World hide themselves from the Mundane World. The usual explanation is that mundane people are "better off not knowing."

Not knowing what? Throughout all history, virtually everyone has believed in ghosts, demons and black magic; skeptical materialism is a very modern thing. Most people still believe in a god of some sort, who personally intervenes in people's lives. Studies suggest that tens of thousands of psychics, astrologers, palmists, crystal healers and other occult types practice in the United States alone, with millions of clients. It ain't "superstitious" Third World peasants keeping them in business!

And that's in the *real* world. Think what the belief level must be in a typical comic book world, full of people who can fly, lift a truck, shoot ray beams from their eyes or read minds. Persuading people that something is magic would not be a problem. If anything, the problems will be the other way: no doubt myriads of educated Americans will believe that super powers come from pacts with Satan instead of mutation or chemical accidents.

So it seems strange that real wizards even the villains would avoid the public eye, when so many people will believe in them anyway. If one keeps this tradition in one's campaign, however, there are more or less rational, practical reasons for a wizard to keep a low profile.

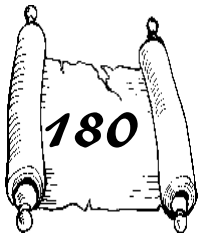
First, believers are more dangerous than disbelievers especially believers in positions of power. Sensible villains don't want the awesome manpower and firepower of agencies like the FBI bought against them. Remember, wizards are people of superior intelligence. Evil mages just might notice that flamboyant, public supervillains spend a lot of time in jail, which is a real crimp in the lifestyle. As for the heroes, they don't want to be pestered with hordes of would be acolytes and of course they are too enlightened to prostitute their hard won skills in big business or the talk show circuit. Nor do they want right wing religious nuts shooting at them.

Nearly all wizards would agree that the Secret Arts are, well, *secret*. Maybe one could rend the veils of mystery and make wizardry a science as accessible as electrical engineering, but would that be wise? The more selfish mages prefer to stay "the few and the proud." They spent years tracking down the cryptic lore of wizardry and winning their initiations. No way do they want ordinary slobs picking up *Thaumaturgy Made Easy* in Waldenbooks and doing just as well!

Other wizards might worry about the effects of unsupervised dabbling in the Black Arts. Even a villain might shudder at the thought of thousands of blundering Sorcerer's Apprentices unleashing things far worse than animate brooms.

Socially responsible wizards might also want to keep the common people in the dark about the real supernatural menaces facing mankind. The now defunct Newtonian Society, for instance, promoted rational materialism because of its discovery that demons could not influence people who did not believe in them.

Finally, the supernatural forces that most people believe in are really quite feeble. As such, even people's witches, demons and other bogeymen give them comfort, because they can be faced and controlled. How will people react to terrible Powers like the Dragon,



the Kings of Edom or Skarn the Conqueror's forces appeased by no ritual, blocked by no charm, conquered by no friendly god? The horror writer H. P. Lovecraft warned:

> *We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far… Some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.*
>
> —*The Call of Cthulhu*

Governments And The Supernatural

> *"There are virtually no laws against the practice of Black Magic in this country now. Only that of 1842, called the Rogues and Vagabonds Act, under which a person may be prosecuted for 'pretending or professing to tell Fortunes, by using any subtle Craft, Means or Device'!"*
>
> —Dennis Wheatley, *The Devil Rides Out*

It's impossible for governments to be completely in the dark about magic. They probably won't understand any of it, but they *will* know that wizards and demons and gods are real. Scientists will test captured magical villains within an inch of their lives. Even if science cannot discern anything about magic the scientists will prove the existence of powers completely beyond physical explanation. Research and intelligence agencies will certainly go looking for more information. This won't mean public disclosure of the supernatural's existence, though: the Feds (of whatever nation) will keep everything secret, so as not to give information to rival governments.

Intelligence Agencies

Intelligence agencies will be the most avid researchers of the supernatural. Magic would be just too *useful* to them: agencies would love to have spies who could read or control minds, walk through walls, turn invisible or kill from a distance with no weapon at all. In a world with real magic, mages may find themselves under pressure to assist in programs of 'ESPionage.'

Spy agencies tend to run out of control and do things the nation's legitimate authorities would not allow. When the Agency asks Dr. Weird to teach them about magic, they might take no for an answer…but then go to his nemesis Count Evil and try making a deal with him instead. And of course, Secrecy and National Security are well known solvents for any moral qualms about reckless experiments on human subjects.

The nation and its government won't even benefit from their spies going supernatural. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and that's especially true with the supernatural. People who use magic carelessly often end up getting used by the magic instead. "Enslaved" spirits become the masters. Minds get warped in strange ways. The "occult research" units of intelligence agencies will probably turn into cults following demented versions of National Security. Their agents might not even be human anymore.

Magic And The Law

With wizards and elves and God knows what all running around, legal questions are bound to arise, just as with other super beings. The supernatural, however, can lead to some especially bizarre situations that will be mentioned only briefly.

First, have the courts gotten the word that magic is real? Or will a claim that a crime was committed by magic get the case thrown out of court? Even if the courts accept the existence of magic, proving that Count Evil used Voodoo to murder someone from miles away could be tricky. Worse, there might be witnesses who saw Count Evil sitting quietly while the victim collapsed from a sudden heart attack witnesses without Mental Awareness, who couldn't sense Count Evil's deadly psychic bolts striking his victim down.

Then there are civil rights. Have summoned and bound spirits been kidnapped and enslaved? Can nature spirits claim aboriginal rights? If your wife dies and comes back as a vampire, are you still married? If a hero stakes her, is it homicide? Let's merely shudder and pass by the possibilities of giving Social Security and the vote to vampires, ghosts and liches: "Excuse me, we object to the term 'undead.' We prefer to think of ourselves as 'living impaired'…"

Supernatural Influence On The Mundane World

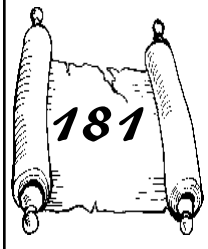
Connections between the Mundane World and Occult World work the other way, too. Denizens of the Occult World may shape events in the Mundane World. In fact, it's an open question just how much of current events is really due to secret magical manipulation.

Why Don't Wizards Rule The World?

Good question. But then, who says they don't? Or at least rule *parts* of the world? Admittedly, no single mage or group of mages, not even the Devil's Advocates or the Sylvestri clan, could rule a world that didn't want to be ruled. Running even a small country requires the cooperation of large organizations such as the army or the police, the bureaucracy and major industries.

A wizard could secretly influence a government (or some other large institution) indirectly, though. The simplest method is to control the leaders' minds. The problem there is that, as mentioned, there are actually more leaders than most people think. Controlling one or two isn't enough to really hold a nation in a grip of iron.

Alternatively, a sorcerer might try influencing the masses directly, by using Mind Control or Telepathy over wide areas to put ideas into people's heads. Enhanced Presence used on people via television would



give a similar effect. But does anyone need to be reminded how about the fickleness of the public?

The greatest argument against such occult overlords is that the world is such a mess. Many wizards have ways to know the future, and that would be a formidable power in itself. A nation's power brokers would embrace a wizard with genuine precognition as if he was their long lost brother. With leaders warned in advance of every disaster and opportunity, the nation's government would display uncanny efficiency and wisdom. That's a more unbelievable fantasy than superheroes.

Either things really are as they seem, with lots of little power brokers following their own conflicting agendas and nobody really knowing what's going on, or the Secret Masters *want* chaos, confusion and misery. At least, *one* set of manipulators wants that. There could be several secret cabals jockeying for control, undercutting each other's efforts at any point. In that case, the game world is just like the real world, only there are more interest groups than people think.

Possible Secret Connections

Controlling governments is not the only way in which supernatural forces could affect the mundane world. If the GM wishes, quite a lot of current affairs could be due to such hidden forces. These examples are provided just to start the imagination working.

Tip-Offs

Mages can have better intelligence sources than any spy agency. Some of them can see into the future, through divination. Others can commune with spirits who see just about everything.

Even if wizards with such information sources do not meddle in politics or business, they might discreetly intervene when warned of global disaster. Why are heroes so lucky at stopping Doctor Destroyer and his ilk from conquering the world and Ending Civilization As We Know It? Somehow the heroes always learn what's afoot before it's too late. Perhaps a wizard has subtly helped them along prompting a hero to patrol near the Technodyne building on the night the arch villain's henchmen steal the Neutronic Reverser, or nudging the villain to issue his demands before he's really got the world by the throat.

Causeless Events

Sometimes things happen for no apparent reason. *Big* things. Experts try to explain them, but the explanations seem weak. It's as if an elephant knocked down a house, without leaving any footprints. So maybe once in a while the paranoids are right and there *are* secret forces at work—not all the time everywhere, just once in a while. It's not Catholics or Jews or Communist Bankers…it's *magic*. Let's take a few examples from modern history:

- In 1988, the Soviet Union was a superpower. By 1991, the Soviet Union was *gone*. It abolished itself. Did a wizard use Mind Control on the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies? Did some vast and terrible Power decree an empire's doom? Or (a scarier thought) was it all an accident? When a Social Transform is too implausible, history and reality buckle and warp to remove the glitch, and no one knows how far the effects can reach. Did the Soviet Union have its history pulled out from under it?
- What is it about Yugoslavia? The Balkan people look the same, talk the same and have lived next door to each other for centuries, yet they still hate each other. The Serbs are the strangest of the lot. Attacking Croatia to avenge the massacres your parents suffered in World War Two is comprehensible (if reprehensible). Hating the Muslims because of the Battle of Kossovo *six hundred years ago* is impossible. *Nobody* holds a grudge that long. Indeed, Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims who emigrate to the United State get along just fine. It's as if the land itself was under a curse…
- In the 1960s, NASA was an amazingly competent organization. The American space program had a bad start, but NASA learned quickly and developed dozens of new technologies, from multi-stage rockets to ball-point pens. The Apollo Project put a man on the Moon *ahead* of schedule (!) and *under* budget! The Space Shuttle, however, has been plagued with delays, cost overruns and technical problems. Actually, that's what a reasonable person would expect from a hideously complicated machine using several experimental technologies. Instead of being put under a curse, has NASA lost the blessing of some outside Power?

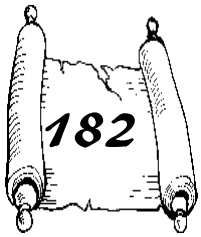
Physical Anomalies

Supernatural forces might reveal themselves through strange physical phenomena. In the early decades of this century, Charles Fort gained some notoriety through his books about rains of frogs and other oddities. More recently, Robert Corliss has produced similar collections of anomalous events reported by scientists and witnesses of good character, ranging from cases of rapid fossilization to unconfirmed sightings of new planets.

Now, most physical anomalies are merely rare; there is no challenge to science in the "Green Flash" at sunset or in rocks that give a musical tone when struck. Strange lights on the Moon, local darkening of sunlight on clear days, rains of peculiar objects and such are less easily explained away. Perhaps they are side effects of powerful magical forces used in the area.

Alien Abduction

A lot of hoo haw has been raised of late about people being kidnapped and experimented on by aliens. The aliens paralyze people in their beds and levitate them out through windows and walls turned insubstantial, into waiting flying saucers. In the United States, the aliens are short and gray, with huge, jet black eyes.



(Other parts of the world report aliens who look quite different.) The aliens stick their victims with needles, perform medical tests and sometimes implant small metal objects in them. Then the aliens levitate their victims back.

Now, obviously this can't be happening at the rate which abduction promoters claim: tens of thousands of people floating over city streets into big flying saucers just could not be hidden. Nor have any of the metal implants ever been recovered and studied. The whole thing seems to be a sort of spontaneous dream or hallucination, patterned by decades of bad sci fi movies.

But that's the real world. In a *magic* world, here's no problem. Obviously the "Grays" aren't *space* aliens, they must operate from the Astral Plane. Nobody sees flying saucers hovering over houses and apartment buildings, or bodies floating through the air, because the aliens are pulling out people's astral bodies. The implants don't show up on X rays because they are really made of ectoplasm.

But what are the implants for? What are the Grays up to? Two things are for certain: it is nothing good for humanity, and it's a major operation. Super mage heroes had better put a stop to it PDQ!

Cosmic Entities

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats, tho' unseen, amongst us.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, "*Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*"

The Multiverse holds beings whose power dwarfs that of even most super beings. Some of them—the lesser ones—can be objectively represented in game terms, with Characteristics, Skills and Powers. Others are purely metaphysical: they operate on scales humans can barely comprehend, as pure plot devices. Fighting them is as absurd as fighting the laws of arithmetic. These are the Cosmic Entities.

Sooner or later, GMs using the Occult World will have to make some decisions about who's running the Multiverse. Even to duck the question and leave it a mystery is to declare something about the putative Supreme Power: either that there isn't one, or that he/she/it/they deliberately stays hidden and unknowable. One must also decide how the lesser cosmic entities relate to the Supreme Power or Powers. Of course this is intimately related to one's game system of moral or mystical alignments, and like that is a question of religion.

GMs should use cosmic entities sparingly. They won't inspire much awe if they show up too often or act in ways that are too ordinary. Even lesser powers such as Skarn or the Dragon, who are explicit enemies of the heroes, should be managed carefully to preserve their aura of mystery. A cosmic entity's appearance should be a big event in a campaign, even in a magical campaign. They don't show up just to kibitz, take tea or swat the PCs down. That's what minions are for. The really cosmic entities only do big stuff, like issuing cryptic warnings of Doom or subjecting the heroes to harrowing tests. And they don't feel obliged to explain their motives.

What follows is a sample hierarchy of cosmic entities. It is loosely arranged by the kabbalistic model of the Multiverse, starting with the entities most associated with the Earth and humanity, moving up to the truly universal entities.

Astral Gods

The most immediate of the cosmic kahunas are the local Great Powers of Earth's Imaginal Realms. These are the various pagan pantheon heads, archdevils, faerie royalty and Great Gods of human religion and myth, plus the Emperor of Babylon. These are powerful beings, but still finite. Very powerful humans, such as Dr. Destroyer, can equal or surpass them in power.

The Dragon is the great exception to this rule. Its power is truly beyond calculation; but fortunately, that power is bound, so the Dragon can only act in limited ways.

Dimension Lords

Many of the Outer Planes of Netzach and Hod are ruled by powerful supernatural beings. Most of these dimension lords are not overwhelmingly mighty compared to a group of superheroes or mages from Earth, but a few of them have terrifying power. Some of them aren't content with ruling a whole dimension and instead want to rule them all. These are the "dimensional conquerors." Skarn the Shaper (in Chapter Six) is a good example of a dimensional conqueror; he is at about the upper limit of power for a dimension lord.

The Multiverse is eternal, but individual dimensions are not. As eons pass, even a universe can wear out and decay. From these ancient, decrepit dimensions come horrors like the Kings of Edom and the Qliphoth: the "Shells" or "Husks," creatures whose very nature opposes and destroys the energies of life, magic and existence itself.

Lords Of Order, Chaos, Art And Nature

In the Multiverse, the four poles of the moral compass are Order, Chaos, Art and Nature (see "Mystic Philosophies" in Chapter One). Each of these concepts has powerful exponents. Some of these Zoa Lords are mighty spirits sent from the Brialic planes by the four Prime Avatars. Urizen the Lawgiver, for instance, sends powerful minions called Ordainers throughout the Multiverse to create and enforce Order. Mrs. Meigs (see *Creatures Of The Night: Horror Enemies*) and Bromion (see the Characters chapter) are examples of Ordainers. Entities of similar power promote Chaos, Art and Nature and rule many of the dimensions.

The Kings Of Edom

Countless aeons ago, dimensions now lost spawned the monstrous beings which the secret lore of kabbalism calls the Kings of Edom—supposedly the

lords of "practice worlds" which God created and destroyed before making the Earth. The Kings of Edom and their minions are all horribly alien and utterly deadly to other forms of life. It's not that they want to rule or corrupt other beings; they just regard humans and similar beings as cattle…or ants, to be crushed in passing.

A few billion years ago, a massive alliance of Great Powers managed to imprison the Kings of Edom on barren planets and hidden dimensions. Unfortunately, this did not completely expunge the Edomite taint from the Multiverse. Some of the Kings' minions remained free, and mortals could still contact the imprisoned Kings and receive trickles of power from them.

The Kings rarely affect human affairs. When they do, it is usually because some insane human has opened a way for them or their monstrous minions. Even when they act directly, it is usually long distance, through mind-controlled humans or as psychophysical projections. Having a King of Edom actually get free to act physically should be a once-per-campaign, apocalyptic event.

No one has ever done a census of the Kings of Edom, because A) nobody knows where more than a few of their prison planets and dimensions are located, and B) the Kings of Edom tend to make gibbering, drooling maniacs out of anyone who contacts them and has nothing to offer. Vulshoth, the Lord of Black Tentacles (in *Creatures Of The Night*) is just one King of Edom. Other documented names include Deizzhorath the Dissolver and Pthaar the Phantast, Master of the Scarlet Sun.

Each King of Edom is a unique creature with its own distinctive appearance and special powers. All of them have mighty mental and paraphysical powers of some sort. Their powers register faintly to special senses as magical, but also as psychical and as exotic science. They seem to fall outside the categories recognized by humans. Even a minor King is as mighty as most dimension lords. A major King like Vulshoth is as powerful as any dimension lord, even when still weak from imprisonment. The full power of a major King of Edom would dwarf even a dimensional conqueror like Skarn.

Quemetiel

Quemetiel, the "Crowd of Gods," is the name given in secret kabbalistic lore to the mightiest of Qliphothic entities. It is the final end of all natural and supernatural existence, the drain down which the Multiverse eternally runs. In Quemetiel the long-forgotten, decaying gods of moribund dimensions smash together and merge into a mindless, gibbering chaos. Whatever Quemetiel can grasp, it pulls in and consumes, but its feeding only makes it hungrier. One can easily come too close to Quemetiel, too: located on the boundary where existence breaks down, space and time themselves are uncertain. Is Quemetiel as big as a planet? As small as a baseball? Near? Far? Are you going toward it or away?

Although Quemetiel is mindless, some people will propitiate it. Quemetiel has limitless power to consume and destroy, and some beings find uses for such power. What's more, one can gain power by feeding Quemetiel: as with a black hole, throwing things in releases energy. Sacrificing a major god or a dimension lord to Quemetiel, for instance, could give a mage almost unimaginable power.

Princes Of The Universe

The "Creative World" of Briah holds dimensions of pure spirit. This is where the true gods dwell, the entities which embody concepts and forces felt through the entire Multiverse.

Each of the Brialic dimensions is home to a cosmic entity. These conceptual beings are sometimes called the Avatars, the Entelechies or the Princes of the Universe. Above even the Princes are the Four Zoas: the Prime Avatars of Order, Chaos, Art and Nature.

Each Prince of the Universe embodies some universal concept. The Princes of the Universe include Death; the Trickster; Chroneval, the maintainer of Time; the mystic Triple Goddess; Kryptos, the god of secrets; and Thaumiel, the two-faced avatar of duality and negation.

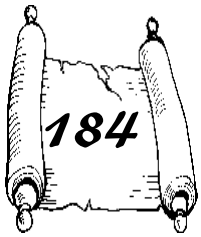
The Princes are quite beyond human limitations. In their home planes, fulfilling their proper functions, they *cannot* be defeated. For instance, nobody—not even another Prince—can hide anything from Kryptos, because Kryptos knows *all that is hidden.* The Trickster can deceive anyone. Death, as everyone knows, takes everything in the end simply because everything ends. The only way to overcome an Avatar is to act outside its sphere of control, or get the Avatar itself to operate outside of its sphere of control.

Some Princes may, on occasion, materialize on Earth or other planes to pursue their objectives: the Trickster to cause mischief; Thaumiel to create a conflict; and so on. A materialized Prince can only wield finite power, although it is still more powerful than any but the greatest of dimension lords. A Prince might appear in any form conceivable, including a mythological god of Earth. They are only recognizable as supernatural entities if they will it.

Materialized or not, a Prince of the Universe seldom acts as a direct opponent of heroes. Rather, it creates a situation with which the heroes must cope, using its chief power: Plot Device.

The Trickster

The Trickster is an important aspect of Luvah the Anarch. It is the Chaos Lord with humans are most familiar. The Trickster has acted in the form of many human gods, wearing them as a human might wear a mask. As Thrice-Great Hermes, god of messengers,



merchants and thieves, he brought divine visions to human wizards. As Loki, he wove webs of treachery and laughed at the death and destruction he caused. Anansi, Coyote, Eshu, Satan—his names have been legion. Whatever mask he has worn, the Trickster has sought to upset established power and custom and make life…interesting.

Chroneval The Timekeeper

Although it is Urthona, Prime Avatar of Art, who creates Time itself, it is Chroneval, a servant of Urizen the Lawgiver, who maintains it. Chroneval makes sure that causes come before effects and watches out for paradoxes like people going back in time to kill their grandfathers. Small changes in history may escape Chroneval's notice, but when paradox threatens he sends out powerful minions (the Chronstables) to change history so the paradox is averted. Often this means trying to kill the time traveler. (Simon Magus, who is trying to change history on a massive scale, has had to evade dozens of attacks from Chroneval.)

In his own dimension, the Villa of Centuries, Chroneval appears to be a man swathed in a hooded robe. Where his head should be, however, is an hourglass flanked by two eyes floating in the air. The irises of his eyes are spinning, toothed gearwheels. Chroneval's hands are jointed bands of brass. He may also manifest as a time-god such as Ptah.

The Triple Goddess

The Triple Goddess is one of the most powerful of the Princes of the Universe, and one of the most mysterious despite also being one of the most active. The Triple Goddess has assumed literally hundreds of forms on Earth. Indeed, she has taken over two dozen roles within the Greek pantheon alone. Her manifestations are most obvious when a full trinity of goddesses appears, such as the Fates, but the Triple Goddess can possess and use single members of trinities as well. Continuing with the Greek pantheon, for instance, as Artemis, Selene, and Hecate she embodied the Moon as maiden, mother, and crone; as Hera, Amphitrite, and Persephone she was Queen of Heaven, Sea, and Hell (never the Earth, though; the Earth-Mother goddesses were energized by a different Avatar).

The Triple Goddess is one of the great Powers of Nature. Some wizards even think that she is a feminine form of the Prime Avatar of Nature itself. Her motives are especially hard to fathom, for the Triple Goddess embodies the full cycle of birth and death. She kills as easily as she nurtures. Goddess theologians say that her killing is itself a form of nurturing: she hurries one creature to the grave to become fertilizer for other beings yet to come. This is cold comfort, though, when one is about to become mulch.

Thaumiel

Thaumiel (Hebrew, "Twins of God"), also called the Two-Faced God, is the lord of negation and opposition. It is responsible for making people mistake contraries, qualities which can both be true and good, into negations—one Good and one Evil. The conflict between contraries is invigorating and purely mental; Thaumiel does his best—and worst—to push the conflict between Good and Evil into physical form. As far as Thaumiel is concerned, anyone who won't kill for what they believe is a slacker. After all, you can't compromise with Evil. If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

Usually, though, Thaumiel has created both sides of a conflict. If two groups of people are screaming at each other and both sides proclaim their virtue and neither will budge an inch, it's a safe bet that Thaumiel controls them both.

Thaumiel insists that what it does is fundamentally good. It argues that if it weren't for Evil, no one would know what was Good. Actually, though, it just wants to keep people fighting. When people start thinking in terms of contraries instead of negations, they become (shudder) Free Thinkers and Thaumiel loses its power over them.

In the material planes, Thaumiel is only seen through the people and gods it has energized to create purges and wars. In the Veil, Thaumiel is seen as a dualistic face, two faces combined into one. It often influences Veil scenarios, trying to trap visitors in conflicts with their own images of evil. Thaumiel does not want people passing the Veil, for in the Brialic realms they might learn too much.

The Four Zoas

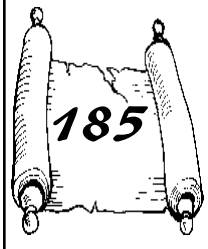
They saw their Wheels rising up poisonous against Albion:
Urizen cold & scientific, Luvah pitying & weeping,
Tharmas indolent & sullen, Urthona doubting & despairing,
Victims to one another & dreadfully plotting against each other
To prevent Albion walking about in the Four Complexions.

—William Blake, *Jerusalem*

The greatest of the conceptual entities are the Four Zoas, also called the Prime Avatars of Order, Chaos, Art and Nature. The Prime Avatars are like the Princes, only more so. Despite their power, however, the Prime Avatars most often act through their agents, the Lords of Order, Chaos, Art and Nature.

The Four Zoas are beyond good and evil; or at least, they inspire both good and evil. Their conflict is eternal and even necessary. In their proper, balanced mental relationship, each Zoa curbs the excesses of its opposite. Unfortunately, the Four Zoas are themselves fallen beings. They strive for supremacy instead of balance.

What's more, the fallen Zoas are themselves divided. Each Zoa has active and passive aspects; these are called the Spectre and Emanation of the Zoa. Humans generally perceive the Spectre as male and the Emanation as female—a cultural quirk which, one should not be



surprised to learn, has nothing to do with the fundamental reality of the Zoas. The Fall also gave each Zoa's Spectre and Emanation separate, often conflicting wills.

When did the Great Fall happen, and how may the Zoas be redeemed? To answer that question, one must remember that the Zoas are mental abstractions. They don't exist within space or time. As sentient symbols, they exist in their fallen and unfallen forms at once, everywhere and everywhen.

Mere humans, however, can only perceive the Zoas and receive their influence one way at a time. The Zoas appear imperfect because Man is imperfect. If one can master one's own soul and balance the influence of the Zoas, what seemed like a deadly fourfold strife will be revealed as a perfect fourfold harmony.

Urizen, Zoa Of Order

"Let each chuse one habitation,
"His ancient infinite mansion,
"One command, one joy, one desire,
"One curse, one weight, one measure,
"One King, one God, one Law."

—William Blake, *The Book of Urizen*

The Prime Avatar of Order is Urizen the Lawgiver, who rules the labyrinthine dimension of Ulro. Urizen and his followers strive to make the Multiverse rational and predictable, with a place for everything and everything in its place.

Humans usually see Urizen in his Spectrous form as an old man with long, white hair and beard, perhaps wearing royal robes and a crown—very much like popular Christian images of God the Father. He often carries a globe of fire or simple scientific instruments such as scales, a compass or a quadrant. In his unfallen form, Urizen is young, handsome, and blazing with light. He may be dressed as a farmer, carrying a shoulder bag of the Seeds of Wisdom.

Urizen's Emanation is Ahania. She is Urizen's conscience, and the embodiment of conscience in general, which establishes moral order within the soul. When estranged from Urizen's force of will, however, she is impotent regret, sorrow and confusion. The Spectrous Urizen won't even admit that Ahania exists. When estranged, Ahania appears as a shadowy phantom, or even nothing more than a voice weeping on the wind.

Urizen's followers like to claim that in fact he is the original Creator, who made the cosmos by defining its scientific laws:

Times on times he divided and measur'd
Space by space in his ninefold darkness,
Unseen, unknown; changes appear'd
Like desolate mountains, rifted furious
By the black winds of perturbation.

—William Blake, *The Book of Urizen*

At the very least, Urizen personifies the *comprehensibility* of the Universe. If there were no consistent, unchanging laws of nature, no one could hope to predict or control their environment. But there are such laws of nature, so people can act with some confidence that what worked yesterday will work today and tomorrow—and they can hope to figure out these rules through their own reason.

Luvah, Zoa Of Chaos

"I suffer affliction
"Because I love, for I was love, but hatred awakes in me,
"And Urizen, who was Faith and certainty, is chang'd to Doubt."

—William Blake, *The Four Zoas*

The Prime Avatar of Chaos is Luvah, a.k.a. the Anarch, ruler of Beulah. Not surprisingly, Luvah is tremendously unpredictable; he inspires both horrible atrocities and the most selfless acts of love and self-sacrifice. Luvah has as many forms as he has personalities, and his personalities are as varied as passion itself. In Luvah's most destructive, Spectrous mood he is Orc, a flaming giant. When Luvah manifests as the holy devotion of the saint or martyr, he might be seen as Jesus or some similar religious figure.

Luvah's Emanation is called Vala. Reconciled with Luvah, she represents empathy and the pleasure that comes from fulfilling an emotion—even the cathartic effect of a good cry. When estranged, she is the arch-deceiver, emotionality that blinds reason and thwarts effective action. She brings both pleasure and pain, delight and despair. Like Luvah, she can appear in many forms, from a sweet little girl to a frenzied Maenad.

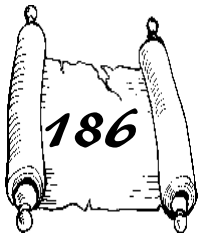
Urthona, Zoa Of Art

Therefore Los stands in London building Golgonooza,
Compelling his Spectre to labours mighty; trembling in fear
The Spectre weeps, but Los unmov'd by tears or threats remains.
"I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's.
"I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create."

—William Blake, *Jerusalem*

The Prime Avatar of Art is Urthona, who dwells in the cosmic city of Golgonooza. Cities are an important symbol to Artifists. That so many cities are horrible places, say Artifist thinkers, just shows that humans have yet to face up to their abilities—and responsibilities—as creators.

Urthona differs from the other Zoas in having three chief forms instead of two. Properly speaking, Urthona's Spectrous aspect is Los the Smith, who hammers out the chain of Time on his anvil. Los appears as a strong, mature man of the viewer's own race, wearing a blacksmith's leather apron and carrying a mighty hammer.



Los is unique among the Zoa Spectres, however, in recognizing that he is a fallen being. He externalizes his own tendency to blind willfulness as the nameless Spectre of Urthona. The Spectre is an awesome presence, a fierce giant covered in iron scales, with flaming red eyes. Yet Los can keep the Spectre chained to labor in his cosmic forge.

The Emanation of Urthona is called Enitharmon. She weaves spaces on her loom, just as Los forges time. Enitharmon creates consensus reality: people's ability to agree on what is real and how things should be done. When estranged from Los, however, Enitharmon becomes a deceiver, trapping people in social games like governments and religions. Enitharmon has been so successful at this that most people become very upset when someone tries showing how arbitrary and artificial their society is. Mortals see Enitharmon as some woman who was an important influence on them—often their mother, but a friend, teacher or lover are other possibilities.

Tharmas, Zoa Of Nature

> *Tharmas replied, riding on storms, his voice of Thunder roll'd:*
> *"Image of grief, thy fading lineaments make my eyelids fail.*
> *"What have I done? both rage & mercy are alike to me;*
> *"Looking upon thee, Image of faint waters, I recoil*
> *"From my fierce rage into thy semblance. Enion, return."*
>
> —William Blake, *The Four Zoas*

The Prime Avatar of Nature is Tharmas; among Western mages and mystics, he is often called Pan. Naturists claim that Tharmas is the oldest of the Zoas, because Art, Order, and Chaos are only possible in a pre-existing world of Nature. The dimension of Tharmas has no proper name, for there are no names in Nature. William Blake called Tharmas' domain Generation, a fair name as it implies both birth and death. Every living thing ever born has passed through Tharmas' hands.

Tharmas can appear as any living thing, but one of his more common forms is that of a giant wrapped in a free- standing wave, rising out of Life's first home, the sea. Tharmas himself might be made of water. He may also grow wings and take to the air, wrapped in clouds, glittering with rainbow hues.

Tharmas' Emanation is called Enion. She represents the natural processes of growth and development, the mute energy that keeps life going for its own sake. Estranged, Enion becomes existential Despair at the blind cruelty of Nature, wherein all life feeds on death. In this form Enion appears as a blind, bent old woman in rags, wailing a lament. When reconciled with Tharmas, however, she is the Earth Mother herself, a mature woman whose charisma goes far beyond mere beauty.

The Supreme Powers

Atziluth, the Archetypal World, is beyond time, space and even individual identity. In Kether, the highest of the Sephiroth, all existence becomes unity. This unity is also called the Primum Mobile, the Absolute, Brahman, the Tao or Adam Kadmon the Primal Man. In his poems, William Blake called it Albion, the fusion of the Four Zoas. Adam Kadmon has intelligence, since it contains all intelligences, but nothing about its will is humanly conceivable beyond the "I Am That I Am" of pure existence.

Viewed as Adam Kadmon, the Multiverse is its own supreme being. There's little point to invoking Adam Kadmon in magic, though. Adam Kadmon plays no favorites at all. In it, the noblest saint and most heinous sinner, the mightiest god and tiniest particle, are all the same—just tiny fragments of the eternal, timeless whole.

Adam Kadmon does, however, have an enemy. From the mystical point of view, everything has its dynamic opposite. The totality of all existence implies a corresponding totality of non existence, just as the notes of a song define a space of silence. Adam Kadmon is the sum of all contraries. Adam Kadmon's opposite, the De-Creator, the Anti-God, is the Solipsist—the sum of all negations. And the Solipsist is not passive. It hungers to consume the Multiverse and turn the Infinite into Zero. A few wizards have hit the absolute nadir of corruption and willingly become its accomplices.

How can the Solipsist do this? How can something which by definition does not exist have power? How can it help and protect a wizard who serves it, as it protected Archimago from the Kings of Edom and all his other mystic creditors? This is a great mystery, one far beyond this author's power to explain.

Those Obligatory Lost Civilizations

> *the commonest and gravest error of modernity lies in believing that antiquity is dead.*
>
> —Clark Ashton Smith, "*Epigrams and Apothegms*"

Mysterious "lost" civilizations are so common in fantasy fiction they've become a cliché. The fantasy writers, however, cribbed the idea from the occultists. Occultists don't believe in progress; in every occult tradition, the dogma is that once, long ago, the lore of magic existed in a pure and complete state. Usually it was given to humanity by superior beings from higher dimensions, such as God or angelic powers. Over the millennia the secret lore was lost or corrupted. Occultists hardly ever admit to actually inventing anything; they prefer to claim that they have rediscovered that original lore from Egypt, Tibet, Atlantis or wherever, perhaps with the help of those superior extradimensional beings.

While occultists are very good at ignoring contrary evidence, they really prefer to avoid any chance of disproof. Hence, they try to ascribe their magic lore to extinct cultures of which little is known. Egypt was popular as the fountainhead of magic ever since Roman times. In the 19th century, however, the Egyptian hieroglyphics were translated and systematic archeology began. Occultists started looking for new progenitors. The mysterious East and its ancient, exotic magical traditions filled the bill for a while. Tibet proved the most popular. Occultists who wanted to stick to European sources invoked the Druids, who were 2000 years dead and had obligingly written nothing down.

In 1882, however, a lawyer named Ignatius Donnelly provided the perfect ancient civilization through his epochal book, *Atlantis: the Antediluvial World.* Occultists loved it. Here was a civilization older than Egypt, they could invent whatever facts they wanted and *no one could prove them wrong!* Donnelly's claims for Atlantis as the birthplace of civilization were comparatively modest. Occultists like Edgar Cayce and H. P. Blavatsky added tales of mingled sorcery and super science that have been a fixture in "lost continent" fantasies ever since.

Naturally, some occultists wanted to hog the glory by inventing their own lost continents and civilizations. Blavatsky took 'Lemuria,' a hypothetical land bridge connecting South Africa to India (proposed by 19th century biologists), and rewrote it as a lost continent more ancient than Atlantis. Early in the 20th century, "Colonel" James Churchward promoted his own version of Lemuria, which he called 'Mu' and moved to the Pacific Ocean. Other occultists added polar lost lands such as Hyperborea and Thule.

Atlantean and Lemurian revelations continue, obtained by channeling dead wizard-priests and warrior-kings, or by perusing "Akashic records" on the Astral Plane. Continental drift and direct studies of the ocean floor have proved that lost continents are completely impossible, but that doesn't bother occultists a bit, or the fantasy and comic book writers who crib from them.

In case one wants to use Atlantis, Lemuria, et al. in one's ***Champions*** campaign, here's an overview of their history and culture as revealed by the crackpots. It is of course a compromise between many conflicting sources.

Civilization is immensely older than the 5000 years or so which historians and archeologists know about—hundreds of thousands of years older. Civilization began on Mu or Lemuria and spread to other continents, most notably Atlantis. First Mu collapsed into the sea, leaving Atlantis as master of the world. Atlantis in turn set up colonies in Central America and Egypt (which is why both the Egyptians and Aztecs built pyramids) and a few other places. Then Atlantis sank about 11,000 years ago. Cut off from the mother land, the colonies fell into barbarism, but the lore of Atlantis was preserved in legends and secret priesthoods.

The Atlanteans and Muvians were sun worshippers with caste-based societies. One ruling class consisted of priest-magician-scientists commanding technology and sorcery of vast power, far more advanced than anything known today. The other ruling class consisted of a European-style feudal nobility which controlled the military. The king (who was also sometimes head priest) had Ra or Atlas as his title.

Being immensely wise, the priests knew that their knowledge and powers would be misused by ordinary slobs like you and me, so they selflessly kept the common folk living like Medieval peasants. Thus, the Atlanteans had flying warships and ray guns for the aristocrats, but not spin dryers or automobiles for the commoners. Such was the wisdom of the angels, gods or space aliens who taught civilization to Mu and Atlantis.

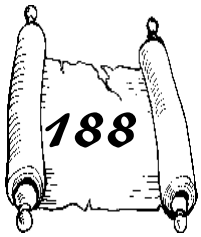
Unfortunately, the priest-kings weren't wise enough to predict their continent sinking and save themselves. Atlantists fall into two schools about this. One group says that the catastrophe was natural: one day the Earth hiccuped, and Atlantis was gone. (Some claim the convulsion was worldwide, and the present continents rose from the sea as Atlantis and Mu sank.) The other group says that the Atlanteans fell into wicked ways, misused their vast powers and blew up the whole continent.

(The latter version of the end of Atlantis would explain the lack of physical evidence. For just 127 Active Points one can build an Uncontrolled Continuous 1d6 Transform with a huge radius of effect; the effect is "small land mass to unbroken ocean floor." It is a Social Transform, too—in fact, a bigger version of the "Word of Unbinding" from the Thaumaturgy section of Chapter Four—so that the land mass in question is not only gone, it never existed and any cultural effects on the world at large get erased as well. This could erase an entire cycle of civilization. Only artifacts protected by Power Defense would survive. It makes a hell of a Side Effect for a spell gone wrong.)

One doesn't need tired old Atlantis, though, to provide lost civilizations where magic might have flourished. Archeologists have found several genuinely "lost" civilizations…and some of them aren't that ancient! Legends suggest other civilizations which could be added to the ancient world without tossing out basic facts of history and geology.

In the last few decades, Soviet archeologists uncovered the Bactrian civilization in central Asia, contemporary to Pharaonic Egypt. The centuries of Bactrian history remained virtually unknown to the empires of ancient Europe and the Middle East.

Satellite surveys of Saudi Arabia recently discovered the ruined city of Ubar, long believed mythical. Ubar presents a genuine mystery, for this little walled town was built in the heart of Arabia's "empty quarter," the Rub' Al Khali, the driest and most hostile desert on Earth! What's more, Ubar met its end in a truly Atlantean cataclysm, when a huge cavern under the city collapsed.



The first Phoenician traders to visit Tartessos in Spain (the Biblical Tarshish) had to cast their anchor stones of silver, so much of the metal did they receive for their cargo of wine and oil. Now, not even the ruins of Tartessos remain.

The Indus River cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa remain mysterious as well; their writing defies translation.

Moving forward in time, Sub-Saharan Africa had over a dozen major kingdoms spanning more than 2000 years of history: Kush, Axum, Ghana, Zimbabwe, the Swahili trade cities, Songhai, the holy city of Ife… Africa doesn't need made-up empires; the real ones were fabulous enough. Timbuktu, center of Africa's trade in gold, had a university equal to anything in Europe. A Dutch traveler to Benin in the 17th century reported that the King's palace was larger than the whole city of Haarlem.

African civilization collapsed from a combination of European exploitation and wars among themselves. State- supported Portuguese piracy ravaged the opulent trade cities of East Africa. The slave trade set the West African kingdoms at each other's throats and drained away the best and most skilled workers. Attacks from Morocco and nomads like the Tuareg further weakened the African states. By 1900, the empires which had dazzled European visitors three centuries before had vanished into ruin. Their histories either were never written down or were lost in the sacking of their cities.

Finally, legends speak of cities and kingdoms that *could* have been real, even if they weren't. For instance, the Aztecs claimed that they came from a land called Aztlan somewhere to the north; speculations place Aztlan anywhere from northern Mexico to Washington state. (The lost continent nuts have not ignored the similarity of "Aztlan" and "Atlantis" either.) Centuries later, the Spanish Conquistadors chased the mirage of Cibola, the City of Gold.

Buddhist legends in India mention Shamballah and Agharti, somewhere north of the Himalayas.

Very ancient Mesopotamian myths tell of a yet more ancient Earthly paradise to the east called Dilmun. Some archeologists think that Dilmun might have been the island of Bahrain; in fact, they've found traces of irrigation systems dating back to Sumerian times. The Bible contributes the city of Erech, founded by Cain in the land of Nod.

None of these historical or might-have-been nations can match the occult magnificence of Mu and Atlantis, with their flying warships, giant power-crystals and eons of history. It doesn't take a million-year empire, however, to account for magic artifacts and the like. Most of the great achievements of antiquity, like the Parthenon, the Great Pyramid or the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, were built in less than one human lifetime by nations whose glory days only lasted a few centuries—in some cases, only a few decades. A nation's size doesn't really matter, either. The tiny city state of Athens achieved heights of culture and influence surpassing the cruel majesty of mighty Assyria.

Local Golden Ages can be created for little-known or imaginary kingdoms without wrenching real history: the bright centuries when Cairo, Baghdad and Timbuktu were centers of art and scholarship faded without permanently affecting even their own lands, let alone anyone else. Bactria, Tartessos or Dilmun could have had wizards on every street corner without any modern historian being the wiser. GMs should do a little reading and build their own lost citadels of wizardry—and leave poor old Atlantis to rest in peace.

Heavy Mysteries

Wherefore, from Magic I seek assistance,
That many a secret perchance I reach
Through spirit-power and spirit-speech…
That I may detect the inmost force
Which binds the world and guides its course.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust, Part I*

Eventually, players will wonder why the campaign world is the way it is. Why do people get super-powers? Why haven't people always had them? Where did mythological gods come from? What's so special about the Earth, that dimensional conquerors should focus on it and not some other world? These are the Heavy Mysteries of the campaign.

There's no need to answer such questions right away; too much planning in early stages can be bad for a campaign. Indeed, some mysteries might be left "ufficially unknown and unknowable." As a campaign develops, though, GMs might want to give some thought to the Heavy Mysteries—and nowhere more so than in a magical campaign. The Occult World is built on mysteries.

Below are some possible answers to a few supernatural Heavy Mysteries. As always, *these are only suggestions,* examples taken from the author's campaign of the sort of answers GMs might invent. Use them or ignore them as you will.

Why Does Earth Have Magic?

This is the fundamental "Heavy Mystery" of a magical campaign. What makes Earth so special? Why does Earth have gods and wizards and astral realms, while other worlds in this Universe apparently do not?

As a suggestion, the reason has nothing to do with humanity. Earth has a "magic field" because of events billions of years in the past, when the Earth was still forming. It is a mystery whose full solution is not suspected by even the wisest of sages. Even the Dragon doesn't know. Only Kryptos, that Prince of the Universe who is Knower of All Secrets, could tell the tale.

Eons ago, a vast and terrible war swept through the Multiverse, a war against the dreadful entities called *the Kings of Edom.* The Kings of Edom and their more powerful servitors were eventually conquered and

imprisoned in hostile dimensions and barren worlds. Their bindings were meant to last for Eternity. Unfortunately, things don't always work out as planned.

One of the prison worlds, a small, frozen rogue planet drifting between the stars, was caught in the gravitational field of a new star. It became part of the new system of planets forming around the star, following a slender cometary orbit. Hundreds of meteors and planetoids struck the small world, but not hard enough to break it open and free the Kings. After a few million years, though, one of the new planets got in its way. They hit. The little planet shattered and melted. The impact didn't do the bigger planet any good, either. Most of the two planets merged. Some of the material splashed out by the tremendous impact eventually coalesced into a large satellite. Thus were the Earth and Moon formed.

The captive Kings just barely survived the impact, although their physical bodies did not. They regenerated themselves using the materials at hand: the molten minerals of the Earth's interior. They soon found, however, that they had exchanged one prison for another. Their bodies were not stable; they could project their minds freely through the Earth's substance, organizing new bodies wherever they pleased, but they could not escape its substance. They had become a new race. Billions of years later, certain sages among the small sentient beings who evolved on the planet's surface would call them the Gaiagens—the Earth-Born. A distorted form of the name would become better known:

There were Giants in the Earth in those days.

Earth is magical because deep in its mantle dwell dozens of Kings of Edom. The Earth's magic field began as the spillover of their personal power. It has grown since humanity began; human minds act as tiny lenses and amplifiers, augmenting the magic field and shaping it into new forms like the Imaginal Realms.

If the Gaiagens wanted, their massed power could pull the Moon from the sky or exterminate humanity in about five minutes. Fortunately, they don't want to. They do know of humanity. A few thousand years ago, a few Gaiagens used volcanoes to create temporary bodies on the surface world. Mythology dimly remembers them as entities such as Surtur, Lord of the Fire Giants, or Typhon the Terrible, whose fifty mouths belched flaming stones. The Gaiagen explorers decided that humanity was irrelevant to their current existence. Humanity had better hope that nothing disturbs the Gaiagens in their incomprehensible world of liquid stone. Otherwise, Typhon the Terrible might walk the Earth's surface again…

How Humanity Learned Magic

In the real world, most ancient magic is childishly primitive stuff. That doesn't stop occultists from claiming that ancient wizards were the greatest of mages. The whole "Occult Wisdom of the Ancients" routine was well established even by Roman times…and it's true that for several centuries if an enterprising Greek or Roman wanted to learn astronomy, mathematics or other "secret arts," he had to go to Egypt or Mesopotamia.

Rather conveniently for GMs, though, any amount of fantasy magic can be spliced into the ancient world without distorting history: before the modern period, everyone believed the world *was* full of gods, demons, wizards and monsters, and lived their lives accordingly. Now we know they were wrong, but if magic *had* been real, very little would have been different. The ancient world is a marvelous source for mighty artifacts, secret tomes and eerie legends.

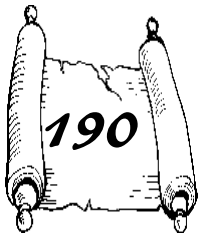
The only question, then, is where did all this occult wisdom come from in the first place? The usual answer— then and now—is that it was imparted by some god or spirit. Whether this happened in Egypt, Tibet or Atlantis or some other "lost civilization" is just a matter of taste. As an example of how humans might have learned magic, here are the Nagas and the lost civilizations of Agharti and Shamballah.

The Nagas are described in the Source Book. For here, suffice to say that they are benevolent serpentmen with obscure connections to their great enemy, the Dragon. Six thousand years ago, the Nagas created the first human civilizations worthy of the name. The Dragon had just manifested on Earth. It was already at work, recruiting people by guile or force for its grim empire of Agharti, based along the northern edge of the Tibetan Plateau. The Nagas responded by creating the nation of Shamballah in what is now Mongolia.

The Nagas never forced the proto-Mongols into civilization. They just showed them the advantages of sanitation, a food surplus and specialized professions, and the proto-Mongols accepted. The Nagas not only taught the Shamballans how to work metal, use the wheel and many other useful arts, they guided them in evolving a system of government based on clan councils and taught them about justice and honor. The Shamballans quickly developed a martial code very much like that of the Medieval knight.

The Nagas picked the proto-Mongols for their martial valor; as nomadic herders, living on the harsh steppes of central Asia, they were the toughest, bravest people in the world. The Nagas knew, however, that stopping the Dragon would require more than lances, swords and bows. The Dragon was teaching its minions to use magic. The Nagas did the same. The best and the brightest of Shamballah's men and women learned Thaumaturgy from the Nagas, so that sorcery could be met with sorcery.

After centuries of war, the Dragon won. Agharti destroyed Shamballah. Its cities were razed to the ground. But the Dragon also lost; while its energies were focused on Shamballah, the Nagas had planted other civilizations in other parts of the world, such as Dilmun in the Middle East and Cibola in South America, and they wrought Agharti's doom. Mythology dimly remembers that ancient conflict as the battle between Marduk and Tiamat. The Dragon bent its will to corrupt or destroy these other civilizations in turn, but a third wave of cultures was already rising: Egypt,



Sumeria, Mohenjo-Daro, the Minoans… History was on its way.

The first wizards, Shamballan and Aghartan, had to learn Thaumaturgy: no other style of magic was known. The Astral Plane was empty, for the faerie-folk, demons and other creatures of legend were not yet born. It was Dragon chained in humanity's collective unconscious that linked mankind to the Astral Plane and made its dreams turn real. Thus the Netherworld, oldest of the Imaginal Realms, formed in the Dragon's belly and Faerie, the next realm, condensed on its back.

The Dragon, the Nagas, and the wizards recognized the potential these new spirits had as allies. The Dragon, with its vast mental power and inside view of humanity, was most successful at recruiting or creating spirits. Hence it is that an entire Parterre is devoted to its service and even the faerie-folk are less than friendly to their human creators. Hence it is too that the craft of dealing with spirits has always been viewed with suspicion.

Still, no one could deny that the craft was useful. The astral spirits were more easily commanded than the forces of the Outer Planes. As the centuries passed, there were more and more types of spirits, too: atavisms, nature spirits, demons, ghosts and gods. Eventually, some mages didn't bother learning Thaumaturgy, relying exclusively on the new spirits. Thus did the first styles of Ritual Magic evolve.

Natural Magic fissioned off as well. From the first, the Nagas and the Dragon had taught their disciples how to use material objects to focus their will. Some substances, they found, already had natural affinities for some kinds of magic. Indeed, they had magic of their own: if one could tap this power, one could conserve one's own energy. Again, some mages eventually turned this "supplemental" art into whole new styles of magic.

By the start of recorded history, Ritual Magic and Natural Magic both flourished beyond the control of either the Dragon or the Nagas. Both types of magic got tangled up in religion, producing hybrids such as Voodoo and Classical Theurgy. Indeed, most of the really creative work in magic has been in Ritual and Natural Magic: very few new styles of High Magic were ever developed. Still, there are quite a few Thaumaturges out there.

Research in every field continues, for the same reason as when the new magic styles began. The war against the Dragon has never stopped, only gone underground. The Dragon and its minions still seek new ways to conquer and subvert mankind, and humanity's defenders still seek new ways to block the Dragon's evil schemes.

Provisional Answers To Godly Questions

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations and whatever their enlarged and numerous senses could perceive.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity,

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of, & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood:

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.
And at last they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such thing.
Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

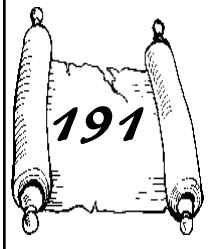
—William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

This author assumes that worship builds up a magical "static charge" which eventually materializes gods and their pocket dimensions out of the Astral Plane. (In most cases, the pocket dimensions were welded onto Faerie.) The gods are just how their worshippers think they should be, right down to believing the origin stories of their own mythology. Dozens of different pantheon heads firmly believe that they created humanity; they even remember doing it! Learning the truth would hit them hard. Some might even flip out or self-destruct.

There are no "alien gods." Earth and humanity are special this way. That's why the dimensional conquerors like Skarn want to conquer Earth but ignore, say, Bandok VII.

By all evidence, worship is as old as *homo sapiens* itself. Between five and six millennia ago, however, the quality of worship changed. For one thing, gods became worshipped by entire nations. Before then, each tribe— even each extended family—had its own sacred ancestors or animal totems. With the birth of civilization came the idea of great gods that anyone might worship. Usually these were organized as the patron gods of social classes or professions (i.e. warrior gods, priest gods, gods of agriculture, sea gods for fishermen and sailors and so on). For the first time, a god might be worshipped by thousands of people instead of a mere few hundred.

Mythology also received a boost. In this age of open war between the followers of the Nagas and the minions of the Dragon, there were men and women with great powers who did great deeds. Their deeds passed into legend and people worshipped their faded memories. There never was a human Zeus, an Indra or a



Marduk, but there were mighty warriors who hurled the lightning at monsters. There never was an Athena, but there was a stern woman who taught Achaean tribes the arts of war and peace.

The legendary figures of ancient heroes became the focus of new state cults. Other gods would be invented from whole cloth, but like the legendary heroes would be given human faces. As worship grew, more and more psychic energy condensed around these figures of human gods, until…hey presto! They were real.

Since the mythological gods are only deluded spirits, there's nothing to seriously offend Jewish, Christian or Muslim players. The big God can remain as the true Creator and Supreme Being. (Note that in many mythologies, the primordial, true Creator of the Universe is an impersonal force not actually worshipped.) On the other hand, if none of the players care very much, then even Jehovah is just another local spirit with delusions of grandeur.

For the last 2500 years, the pantheons have been inhibited from acting on Earth, which is why they are defunct in so many parts of the world. Sorcerers call this "the Ban," and it started with the advent of the first widespread religions to propose general standards of conduct instead of mere obedience to a god's whim of the moment.

As the gods had more trouble manifesting on Earth, more of their worshippers defected to the newer "ethical" religions such as Buddhism and Christianity. As the gods' pool of worshippers dropped, they weakened and were even less able to act on Earth. By the 10th century AD, all the European and Middle Eastern pantheons were near death. Even the major Far Eastern, African and Native American pantheons could only appear on Earth physically with great effort. The cultural disruption caused by European colonialism and missionary work weakened these gods still further.

Then *something* happened in the first half of the 20th Century; what it was remains a Heavy Mystery. People started getting super-powers. Archimago declared a Dark Renaissance of magic. And the Ban weakened. The gods are still weak—but they have a second chance. They mean to make the most of it.

Here are some sample "case studies" of pantheons:

Babylonian

These gods haven't been worshipped for almost 2000 years. Even their mythology was forgotten until archeologists started digging up the Middle East. The gods who began in Sumeria and adapted themselves to Akkad, Assyria, Babylonia, and Chaldea found themselves utterly without worship when Christianity took over. They couldn't even draw on the common energy of the Land of Legends because they were city gods, with a tiny astral realm of their own.

A few gods, like Nergal and Ereshkigal, survived by becoming demons in the Netherworld. The minor gods simply died. The remaining major gods retreated to their temple home, sealed it and cast themselves into suspended animation. All that keeps them alive is the Tablet of Destinies (see Chapter Four).

Unbeknownst to them, their little astral realm has grown into a major dimension: Babylon, the City of Man. While they still aren't worshipped, if they left their temple they would be super beings of significant power.

Aztec

This vicious pantheon suffered a profound shock when the Spanish conquered Mexico. These gods had never dealt with any Old World pantheons, so they hadn't heard about the troubles those gods faced because of the ethical religions. The energy from human sacrifice had let them ignore the Ban. Within a decade after the Spanish arrived, worship of the Aztec pantheon dropped precipitously, and the Ban fell on them with full force.

For centuries, the Aztec gods lived a hungry existence, too proud to ask the other pagan pantheons for help. They survived through dribbles of worship: as characters in tales, propitiated through bits of folk magic and ritual…but no sacrifice! No more delicious spurt of blood from a ripped out human heart!

Then the Ban suddenly lifted. Like most of the old gods, the Aztec gods took decades to notice, but when they did it sparked a whirlwind of plotting to regain their bloody dominion on Earth. They need sacrifice to restore their power. If no one will sacrifice to them, maybe they can do it themselves; and if they can't get any humans, maybe they can kidnap and sacrifice *other gods*…

Chinese

For thousands of years, the Chinese had the world's largest and mightiest pantheon. The more philosophical and mystical aspects of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism never replaced the common folk's faith in human gods. The gods became complacent. They hardly noticed the Republican revolution that ended the Manchu monarchy. By the time they agreed they should do something about the Japanese invasion in World War Two, the war was over. Then the Communists took over and virtually outlawed all religion.

The small gods of rivers, mountains and cities died in a few years, and even the greatest gods found themselves in a bad way. Suddenly the Chinese Diaspora—the colonies of immigrants in Southeast Asia, the United States and around the world—became very important.

The Celestial Bureaucracy still hasn't fully reorganized, but the gods are learning how to get by on a greatly reduced base of worship. The official policy set by the Emperor of Heaven is to wait Communism out: it will eventually fall, the people will remember their old gods and China will become China again. In the meantime, they must follow the example of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia: get out there and *hustle!* The gods don't agree on their methods—some would gain reverence through terror, others through helpfulness, some through deception and as always the Eight Taoist Immortals treat the whole situation like a joke—but they all break through the Ban to Earth every chance they get.

What Happens After Death?

For characters in most games, death is the end. Not in a magic campaign, though: in the Magical World, death is just a change of venue. Lots of dead people can stay active.

So what happens to people after they die? Religion and occultism propose dozens of answers. In a game milieu, they can all be more or less correct.

Some people's souls go to Elysium or the Netherworld. People who have genuinely lived up to the high ideals of their religion get their faith's Heaven in Elysium. Notably wicked people get the Hell they deserve. They may not think they deserve it, but they don't make the choice: their evil has strengthened their unconscious connection to the terrible Dragon who carries the Netherworld in its belly. They have given themselves to the Dragon in life; the Dragon takes them at death.

Other people don't really have any strong convictions about the Afterlife, and no great burden of sin to make the decision for them. These people's souls often become ghosts on the Lower Astral Plane, clad in their astral bodies.

Some ghosts reincarnate. They hang around Astral Earth until they see an opportunity to occupy a developing embryo, and slide in. Usually this pretty much erases their memories, but once in a while someone remembers bits of their past life. Naturally they haunt the lands they knew in life, so most reincarnation happens in India and the Far East, where most of the believers in reincarnation live.

Other ghosts stay on the Astral Plane for a greater or lesser time. Some of them are destroyed by astral predators. Most eventually dissipate on their own when they get bored with existing. Nobody knows what happens to the souls when the astral body finally dissolves; perhaps they go to Death's Dominion and merge with the effigies that all deceased sentient beings have in that realm, or perhaps they merge with the Astral Plane itself.

In practice, what this means is that just because a character is dead doesn't mean they are out of the game. A character (PC or NPC) can be resurrected, go to Heaven or Hell, or become a ghost. They might even stay active in the campaign, making death just an especially severe "radiation accident."

Books Of Magic

Books of magic have a sort of life of their own. Some have altogether too much…

—Terry Pratchett, *Sourcery*

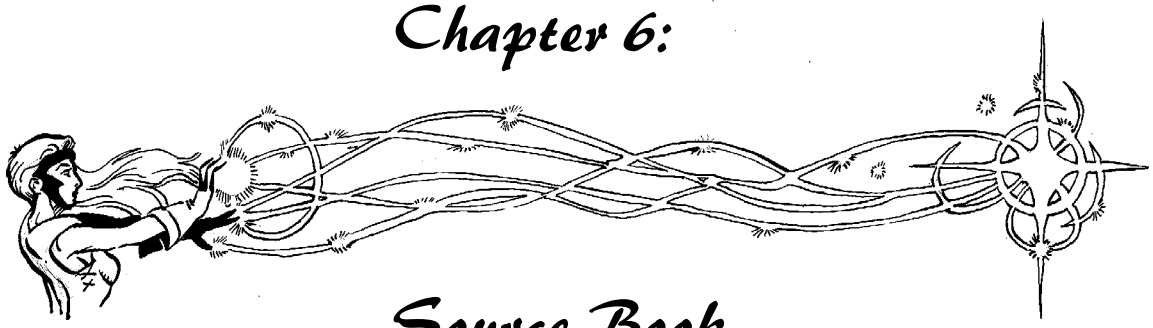
Books of spells and mystic lore are a traditional feature of magical adventures. Some of these grimoires are real books, although one has been lost for over a thousand years. Others are from legend, but claimed to be real.

The Key Of Solomon: This grimoire is the foundation document of Western ceremonial magic, supposedly written by King Solomon himself (although the *Key* can't possibly date from before the Middle Ages). The *Key* tells how to summon spirits and extort services from them, with instructions—*insanely complicated* instructions—for making the numerous magical tools required. Although the *Key's* English translator S. L. Mathers claimed it was a book of "white magic," the use of animal sacrifice in the *Key's* procedures make this claim a teeny bit suspect. Still, the *Key of Solomon* has a reputation as the supreme book for summoning and controlling spirits. Of course, no real sorcerer would use the Mathers English translation: they'd have an unexpurgated Latin manuscript.

Chaldean Oracles: The "last holy book of the ancient world" was the guiding text of Neoplatonist Theurgy. It was written around the 1st century AD, either by the magus Julianus the Chaldean or his son Julianus the Theurgist. The book itself is lost, known only through quotations by other late Classical authors at least, no one admits to owning a complete copy. The *Chaldean Oracles* gave instructions for Theurgy, a system of religious magic based on Greco-Roman gods. Theurgy's most practical goal was the consecration of idols to give them magic powers. The "Oracle" part came with the second goal, obtaining messages from the gods by channeling them in seances. Finally, the *Oracles* give instructions on rising through the layers of the Astral Plane, with magic words and sigils to get one past the lesser gods and spirits of the planes. The goal is to reach the plane of the Supreme Godhood.

Stanzas Of Dzyan: This monumental, enigmatic guidebook to the origin and history of humanity and the Universe was invented by Madame Helena Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy. She claimed that *Dzyan* was the fundamental text of occultism, preserved in secret by the Mahatmas of Tibet. Her own magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine,* was a commentary on excerpts of the *Stanzas*. Skeptics pointed out that her quotes from the I were suspiciously similar to sections of the well-known Hindu *Rig-Veda;* Blavatsky shot back that the *Rig-Veda* was plagiarized from the divine *Stanzas of Dzyan*. Blavatsky's "quotes" from *Dzyan* are splendid examples of mystical gibberish, babbling of Dhyan Chohans, lotus buds, Fire Mists and the Seven Rays. Her voluminous explanations make their meaning even more opaque. Clearly, the *Stanzas of Dzyan* is a masterpiece of Cosmic Wisdom, and probably a potent grimoire of High Magic.

Chapter 6:



Source Book

Therefore, since the world has still
Much good, but much less than ill,
And while the sun and moon endure
Luck's a chance, but trouble's sure,
I'd face it as a wise man would,
And train for ill, and not for good.

—A.E. Housman, "*Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff*"

This chapter deals with the hardware of setting up a magic-based campaign. It begins with a discussion of plot frameworks a GM can use as the basis of a story arc, or even of an entire campaign. The bulk of the chapter consists of sample villains, cults and monsters. In particular, it supplies two powerful villains who can form the focus of campaigns: Skarn the Shaper, the insane ruler of a patchwork dimension; and the Dragon, the personification of all human evil.

The author does not expect all these villains to be directly useful to all GMs. They are not, however, just isolated characters. They are given as examples of types of villains, to help GMs design their own.

Campaign Frameworks

GMs and players in an all-wizard campaign might want to use a running plot line or subplot to provide unity to their adventures. Not all adventures will fit into the campaign framework, but enough will that the players feel like their characters are part of an ongoing epic. What's more, such a framework provides clear goals for the PCs, whether it's to save the Earth from the Unspeakables from Beyond, become the world's greatest wizard, or just to earn their rent for another month.

Some frameworks are open-ended: there can always be another Nameless Horror, and dimensional conquerors are pretty much indestructible. Other frameworks provide definite termination points: one hero becomes Archmage, the magic artifact is finally located, or whatever. When the PCs reach the resolution, the GM either ends the campaign or switches to another framework. Some frameworks can overlap.

Invader From Beyond

This is a classic. In it, a hyper-powerful villain—a "Dimensional Conqueror"—has set his sights on Earth. The PCs, as the most powerful and capable of the good-guy sorcerers, must stop the conqueror. The conqueror launches plot after plot to invade the Earth; before long he's also launching attacks specifically at the PCs.

Requirements

A powerful, psychotic dimension lord; his cadre of lackeys and allies; his weird, patchwork home dimension, stitched together from conquered worlds; ways the dimension lord could conquer the world; knowledgeable but limited friendly NPC sorcerers as informants and teachers; bad-guy sorcerers willing to sell out humanity. Most importantly, the PCs really must be the sorcerers most willing and able to defend the Earth.

Dark Renaissance

A cabal of evil sorcerers wants to destroy technological civilization and establish the rule of magic over the world. The PCs oppose them. The PCs are powerful, but not uniquely so among good-guy mages. They might be part of a wide community of mages divided by the Dark Renaissance agenda.

Requirements

Evil sorcerer activists; plans by which the bad guys really could cause such a profound change in the world.

Holy War

The bad-guy sorcerers try to promote one god or ideology. The good-guy sorcerers follow a different god or ideology and try to stop them. Most famously, the bad guys are Satanists out to take over the world and deliver it into Evil. Other possible conflicts include Order vs. Chaos, Art vs. Nature, humanists vs. religious fanatics, the autocratic East vs. the democratic West, allied pagan pantheons vs. Judeo-Christian-Islamic complex, and so on . (Alas, many of the classic conflicts are now defunct or politically incorrect.)

Requirements

A duality which lets one clearly define "Us" vs. "Them," typically with no confusion about who's good and who's bad; fiendish plots whereby the "Them" can promote their unholy goals.

Horror Hunters

Terrible, fiendish Things lurk just outside common human knowledge. If unchecked, they would bring about a reign of horror and destruction. The PCs, the few who know, must seek out the Horrors and drive them back to the shrieking pits of madness which spawned them.

Requirements

Fiendish Thingies—whether vampires, demons, or Slimy Unspeakables is up to the taste of the GM and players; ancient lore telling of the terrible menace; magic artifacts that are as dangerous as they are helpful; remote locations for the Horrors to come from; perhaps a senior horror-hunter to pass on the mission before he gets munched himself; lots of victims. This is best as a heroic-level campaign framework, but superheroes can have running clashes with horrific monsters too. (The monsters just have to be that much tougher.)

Troubleshooters

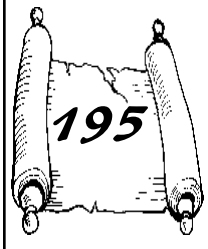
A slight variation of the "Horror Hunters" campaign. The PCs help people with all sorts of supernatural problems, not just horrible Things That Go Bump in the Night; the overall tone is much lighter. The supernatural isn't always menacing; occult creatures such as ghosts, fays and castaways from other planes might need expert help from the sorcerer PCs, too. The PCs might operate for pay (like the "Ghostbusters"), or they might just be terribly altruistic.

Requirements

A wide variety of supernatural creatures; clients, human, and otherwise; a way for clients to locate the PCs; a base of operations. This also has a strong heroic-level feel, but superheroic-level troubleshooters and occult detectives aren't impossible.

Top Wand

Who's the top sorcerer in the world? Sorcerers might compete intensively for power and status. Being "top wand" might bring more than just prestige: perhaps Earth's "Sorcerer Supreme" or "Archmage" gets a special fund of magical power or custody of some tre-



mendous artifact. The competition goes far beyond formal battles between sorcerers. Would-be Archmagi will hunt for magic items, occult lore, and other ways of increasing their power. They might also try to reduce the competition by murdering other competitors…

Requirements

Rival sorcerers of comparable power, so the PCs are neither hopelessly outclassed nor cakewalking over their rivals; things to fight over; some authority, mystical or social, which can certify a wizard as "Top Wand"; a reason why the PCs should work together (at least for now) instead of stabbing each other in the back.

The Quest

This is the most short-term, closed-end framework. The PCs are trying to obtain something rather important to them: a mystic artifact, an ancient spell—even a long-lost relative or teacher. They must first locate the target object, then pass by assorted dangers and barriers to get the object.

Requirements

A target object for the quest, whether a lost princess or mystic enlightenment; a reason for all the PCs to seek the object together; clues to the object's location; opposing forces (animate and inanimate) to hinder them.

The Congeries

I am haunted by recollections
Of lands that were not of earth,
Of places where mad perfections
In horror were brought to birth…

—H. P. Lovecraft, "*Primavera*"

If one chooses the "Invader From Beyond" campaign framework, one needs not just a powerful "Dimensional Conqueror," one needs a dimension for the villain to use as a base of operations, a cadre of subsidiary villains to act as officers, and various sorts of minions. When one fights a really high-end dimensional conqueror, one also fights his whole organization. As an example, here is the supernatural tyrant Skarn the Shaper and his mad domain, the Congeries.

The Congeries is a chaotic, patchwork dimension. First, Skarn built the Congeries by merging dozens of little dimensions, each with its own wildly different environment, into his native plane of Orom. Then Skarn capriciously altered local environments still further. By now the Congeries has literally hundreds of different environments, as one idea after another caught Skarn's fancy.

It's hard to gauge the size of the Congeries. Space itself is warped, twisted and so riddled with wormholes that whether a location is "near" or "far" depends only on which route one takes. Most of the Congeries' volume, however, is just air or otherwise uninhabitable. The relatively "normal" areas in which human-like creatures can live are collectively no larger than a medium-sized state. The Congeries' population is in the tens of millions.

The "center" of the Congeries is the former dimension of Orom, a broad band of land twisted into a trefoil knot. Several platforms of land drift nearby. The band and platforms bear compact towns, farmland and forest, with only small anomalous regions such as impossibly deep pits of blue fire or patches of living quicksand. In the very center is a knot of interlocking wormhole portals to other sections of the Congeries, including Skarn's palace. Bridges lead from the trefoil band to the portals. Orom is one of the most sable parts of the Congeries.

The Congeries' inhabitants are as diverse as its geography. A major fraction are humanoid because the original Oromians were humanoid and Skarn prefers to annex dimensions with humanoid inhabitants, but even the humanoids vary wildly. By now the people of the Congeries range from normal-seeming humans to talking rock formations.

All the people of the Congeries have one thing in common, though. Skarn is their God. They dare not question his will.

Region Generator

The Congeries is far too diverse to list its regions. Instead, GMs should create weird environments as needed for adventures. Most of the pocket environments have a short descriptive phrase of the form "<Place Term> of the <Adjective> <Noun>" instead of, or in addition to, proper names. Using the lists below, one can generate new place names quickly. Add new words as old ones get used.

D20	Place Term	Adjective	Noun
1	Mountain(s)	Red/Orange	Stones
2	Valley	Yellow/Green	Statues
3	Plain	Blue/Purple	Walls
4	Hills	Black/Dark	Windows
5	River	White/Pale	Spires
6	Lake	Gray/Brown	Eyes
7	Marsh	Silver/Golden	Mouths
8	Garden	Brazen/Iron	Faces
9	Forest	Crystal	Hands
10	Desert	Burning	Giants
11	City	Frozen	Flowers
12	Hall	Liquid	Trees
13	Castle	Flowing	Slime/Ooze
14	Caverns	Flying	Beasts
15	Dungeon(s)	Dancing	Men
16	Island(s)	Singing	Blades
17	Domain	Moaning	Gates
18	Land	Screaming	Mirrors
19	Temple	Dreadful	Fires
20	Place	Shining	Mists

Skarn's Hunting Preserves

Skarn has created several special enclaves in the Congeries, zones of space accessed only by one or two wormholes. He uses these areas as game preserves wherein he may amuse himself by hunting using only his physical abilities. Skarn stocks the preserves with fierce and powerful beasts from throughout the Multiverse. He also pops captured enemies into game preserves if he thinks they might give him good sport. Typically, Skarn uses the hunt as an opportunity for a wager: anyone who survives the hunt and finds the hidden way out of the preserve can go free and maybe win some other boon as well.

One typical hunting preserve consists of a bubble of space about 3 miles in diameter, giving it an area of 30 square miles. (Gravity is reversed so the entire inner surface is "down.") It is entered through a door in Skarn's palace. If that door is closed—which is usually the case—the only exit is through a cunningly hidden wormhole leading to a waiting room back in the palace. The waiting room has strong walls, locked doors and narrow, barred windows in case some strong, ferocious beast finds the wormhole.

The preserve is lined with a "floor" of earth, but this "floor" has gaps. Anyone who passes through a gap emerges half a mile above the surface of the bubble at the point opposite the gap. Looking through a gap, then, one sees the opposite floor! Light shines evenly from the horizonless sky, brightest at the zenith where one looks through the greatest thickness of self luminous air.

The preserve's rolling terrain is covered in thin to dense forest, with patches of marsh, brush and a few ponds. Both flora and fauna are varied, fantastical and occasionally dangerous. The largest plant is a huge tree, up to half a mile tall, with blue-green round, cupped leaves 5-10 feet wide. One such tree grows up through a gap in the sky, where its leaves hide the gap. Pools of water in the leaves and vines and moss hanging from the broad branches support whole ecologies in the sky. Hazardous plants include strangling animate vines, fungi that explode like hand grenades, adhesive moss and giant pitcher plants offering treacherous concealment or fruit within.

There are always several large, dangerous animals in the preserve. These alone should be designed as fairly serious hazards, at least to PCs who have had some of their powers stripped away by Skarn. Typical beasts could include a truculent herbivore rather like a rhinoceros covered in iron scales, or a cross between a puma and a centipede. In addition to these "showpiece" beasts, the preserve has various "nuisance" beasts such as giant, camouflaged land clams that try to swallow people whole; horned snakes that leap from trees to impale their victims; giant insects; and *something* that shoots huge, grasping tentacles out of the ground.

Skarn The Shaper

Background: Sorcerers throughout the Multiverse fear and respect the power of the sinister Skarn, shaper of worlds. Skarn's appetite for conquest knows no limits. As people of several dimensions have learned the hard way, Skarn cannot be appeased by tribute, concession, or compromise. Nor does he fear threats of terrorism or revenge by powerful allies, for few beings have greater power than Skarn.

Skarn, however, became a dimensional conqueror by accident. Originally he was merely one of the ruling Triumvirs of the little dimension of Orom. The Oromians ruled themselves through a collective presidency called the Triumvirate. Many Triumvirs, Skarn included, were also sorcerers.

Skarn had the bad luck that the other two Triumvirs hated each other, far beyond mere party rivalry. Their hatred led both Triumvirs to the awful step of inviting possession by cosmic entities, each hoping thereby to crush his rival and make his own party supreme. One became a Lord of Nature called the Beast, devoted to razing Orom's cities and making people live simple lives in harmony with their environment. The other became the Lord of Art called Nomarch Phase, equally determined to let everyone shape their part of the world however they willed.

The battles between the Beast and Nomarch Phase caused terrible destruction throughout Orom. To make things worse, their parties took up arms against each other too. What the Beast and Nomarch Phase didn't wreck, the civil war quickly ruined.

Skarn grimly vowed to save Orom by destroying both cosmic entities. After great effort, Skarn learned a spell that could link their life forces into a vicious circle of mutual destruction. It would be horribly dangerous. The Beast and Nomarch Phase would have to strike him with their magic at the same time for the spell to work. What's more, Skarn had no idea what effect he himself would suffer.

Still, the spell worked. Skarn tricked the Beast and Nomarch Phase into casting bolts of destruction at him at the same instant. He caught both attacks and bounced the power back, changed into spells of life draining. The Beast sucked the life out of Nomarch Phase; Nomarch Phase drained the Beast, with Skarn in the middle. Both cosmic entities struggled against the curse, but neither would let the other one go. They dragged each other down into death, evaporating like an evil dream.

But what of Skarn? He had served as the conduit for the life forces of two gods as opposite as night and day. When they died, their power and souls crashed together into Skarn, and merged. Skarn became more than mortal, a living paradox of contrary cosmic forces. Worse, the three minds shattered as they came together. A new mind coalesced from the fragments of memory and passion, a mind that called itself Skarn but certainly was not the Skarn who had risked everything to save his world.

From Nomarch Phase came a passion to change the world. From the Beast came an equally strong will to force people to live in harmony with their environment. The original Skarn provided a messianic streak. All three had an iron determination to see their will done, no matter what the cost.

The new Skarn quickly conquered Orom. Getting the Oromians to accept the changes he wanted to make in their world and themselves took longer. Many thousands died in the purge rather than submit to transformation.

Once Skarn had reshaped Orom to his satisfaction, he turned his attention to nearby dimensions. Why, they needed his help as much as Orom had! Rallying all his power, Skarn merged the smaller dimensions with Orom so he could "improve" them in turn. Centuries later, Skarn has spliced dozens of little dimensions together with Orom, producing a composite universe called the Congeries. Now he's ready to tackle bigger game. Earth, with its high magical potential and billions of inhabitants, has Skarn drooling with anticipation. Ultimately, Skarn wants to merge the entire Multiverse into the Congeries, with himself as "benevolent" despot leading everyone to universal Utopia—no matter how much death and destruction he must cause along the way.

Quote: *"Rejoice, puny mortals! I, Skarn, have come to transform your worthless, insignificant lives!"*

Personality: Skarn is a fanatical Utopian reformer as well as a megalomaniac. He wants to create a perfect universe full of contented, perfect people. The catch is that Skarn's notions of perfection have very little to do with what anyone else wants. If he decides that a region really needs rains of acid every Thursday, he'll reshape it to fit. If the people are lucky, he'll remember to reshape them to withstand the acid. The practical result is a capricious, Old Testament sort of godhood, sending blessings and curses virtually at random.

Since Skarn firmly believes that *everything* he does is for the best, he's very hard to turn aside from any course of action. Nothing is too vicious for him, because "the end justifies the means." Anyone who disagrees with him is obviously an enemy of reality (or at least a victim of false thinking) and must be destroyed for the good of the Multiverse. Even if one can outfight Skarn, that's only a brief stopgap measure. Skarn can, however, be tricked into renouncing his claim on a world—at least for a while.

Skarn takes godhood very seriously, in his fashion. He justifies his conquests through his own supposed perfection, and refuses to show any sign that he is less than perfect. Thus, if he makes a promise he must keep it—to the letter, if not the spirit—because as a god, he can't show such "merely mortal" traits as lying or treachery. He can also show godlike generosity in repaying his debts. The catch is finding a way to put him in one's debt; this requires doing him a quite extraordinary favor that comes as a complete surprise. He won't offer to spare the Earth, for instance, if the heroes will only get him the Orb of Fluxweaving. Hag-

gling is not very divine.

Skarn also likes a good fight. This is one of the few things that can temporarily override his messianic complex. His very favorite sport is hunting; he loves "the most dangerous game," hunting sentient prey (such as PCs) through his "game preserves" in the Congeries, using only his physical powers. Naturally he always expects to win, and this can make him rashly accept side bets such as relinquishing his claim to the Earth. Of course, he'll also ask for a rematch: "Same thing next year?"

Powers/Tactics: Even without magic, Skarn is a strong and skillful brawler (part of his heritage from the Beast). He also has a fairly wide range of innate powers of attack, defense, dimensional travel, and transformation, using conventional light-show special effects (i.e. Thaumaturgy). Skarn is also extremely hard to damage because his body can become a sort of living hole in space. If he wishes, things can fall through him into endless Limbo.

(Specifically, by becoming a hole in space Skarn gains the powers listed in his Elemental Control, plus extra Damage Resistance and hardened defenses, and his claw or bite attacks become Armor Piercing and Penetrating. Skarn normally keeps his Elemental Control up every waking moment, but he will drop it for a nonmagical duel. He also loses these Powers while stunned or unconscious.)

Finally, Skarn is a sorcerer of almost limitless flexibility. He was quite skilled even before his apotheosis. Becoming a god, and the cosmic knowledge gained from Nomarch Phase, raised his power even more. As long as Skarn stays in the Congeries, the worship by his subjects lets him cast whatever spell he wants, instantly. On other planes, away from his worshippers, Skarn is not quite so infallible and has to spend a few seconds (a Phase) changing the roster of spells in his Power Pool.

Skarn fights fair, at least in formal combat. One on one, he will restrict himself to his opponent's SPD unless he's clearly losing; then he'll rise to 1 SPD higher. If he still loses—why, he *meant* to lose, as a reward for a gallant foe. Skarn would even rather lose than use his magic when he's promised not to, but woe betide any outsider who intrudes on a fight, even to help Skarn. At least at the start of a combat, Skarn doesn't use combat subtleties such as Held Actions. If he's been insulted or no formal rules have been agreed upon, he uses all his power to annihilate his opponents as quickly as possible, with whatever backup he has available.

Appearance: Skarn is a 7' tall, bear-like humanoid, seemingly made of star-flecked space. His only visible features are some reflections off body contours, luminous yellow orange eyes and short ivory horns, jaws and claws. If he wishes, he can return to physical form, in which case he has a sleek auburn pelt over a formidably muscular body. He wears a golden loincloth.

Skarn The Shaper

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	25 ton; 10d6 [5]
26	DEX	48	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
50	CON	80	19-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
28	INT	18	15-	PER Roll 15-
26	EGO	32	14-	ECV: 9
40	PRE	30	17-	PRE Attack 8d6
12	COM	1	12-	
31	PD	21		Total: 31+ PD/16+ rPD
31	ED	21		Total: 31+ ED/16+ rED
7	SPD	34		Pha 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
25	REC	10		
100	END	0		
70	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 355

Movement: Running: 16"/32"
Swimming: 7"/14"
Teleport: 16"/32"

Powers & Skills:

Dimension Lord Powers:

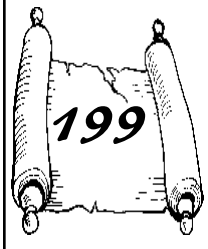
Universal Translator 15- (20)

Magic Spells: Power Pool, (100 pt. pool), Cosmic (+2), Lose Cosmic Off Congeries (-½), ½ Var Lim (-¼) (186)

Spell Research (Magic Pool Control) 21- (15)

Innate Powers: Multipower (115 pt pool) (115)

- u - **Claw/Bite:** HKA 2d6+1, ½ END, AP *and* Penetrating Only w/ "Hole in Space" Powers (+1, -¼) (79/6) [4]
- u - **Thaumaturgic Blast: EB** 15d6 (75/7) [7]
- u - **Dimensional Blast:** EB 10d6, Affects Desolid (+½) (75/7) [7]
- u - **Cosmos Blast:** EB 10d6, Variable Special Effect (+½) (75/7) [7]
- u - **Ray of Enfeeblement:** EB 6d6, AVLD: Power Defense (+1 ½) (75/7) [7]
- u - **Bolt of Many Forms:** EB 5d6, +1 Var Advantage (+2) (75/7) [7]
- u - **Dispel Magic:** Dispel 20d6, vs. Any 1 Magic Effect (+¼) (75/7) [7]
- u - **Protective Aura:** Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 8 MD, 6 PowD) 0 END (40/4) [0]
- u - **Wall of Force:** Force Wall (8 PD, 8 ED) (40/4) [4]
- u - **Aura of Deflection:** Missile Deflection vs. Any, Ranged (+1) (40/4)
- u - **Planar Gate:** EDM to Any Plane, Use by Others x2 (+½), ½ END (70/7) [3]
- u - **Gating From Congeries:** EDM to Any Plane, Continuous, Use by Others x2 (+½), ½ END, Opens Both Ways (-½), Full Phase to Close (-½), initial Concentrate 0 DCV (110/4) [5]
- u - **Gating To Congeries:** EDM to Congeries, Continuous, Use by Other x1 (+¼), 0 END Persistent, 6" x 64 Radius AE (+2 ½), Open Both Ways, Full Phase to Close, Concentrate 0 DCV (115/4) [0]
- u - **Gate Snatch:** EDM to Congeries, Use vs. Other x8 Mass (+1 ¾), Ranged, Indirect (+½), Transdimensional to Any (+1), 10" Radius AE (+1), 1 turn Extra Time (-1), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½) (115/4) [11]



u - **Reshape Area I:** Transform 2d6 major, Universal (+1), Cumulative, 2 x 7" Radius AE (+1 ¼), Concentrate 0 DCV (112/7) [11]
u - **Reshape Area II:** Transform 9d6 cosmetic, Any Environment (+¼), 12" Radius AE (+1 ¼), Concentrate 0 DCV (112/7) [11]
u - **Thaumaturgic Transformation:** Transform 3d6 major, Person to Anything (+1), Cumulative, 1 turn Extra Time, Concentrate 0 DCV (112/4) [11]
u - **Power Boost:** Aid 4d6, Max +30 pts (+3 pts), to All Magic (+2), Ranged, Indirect, Transdimensional (+1), Only for Others (-½), Concentrate 0 DCV (115/6) [11]

Living Hole in Space: Elemental Control (20 points) (20)
a - Damage Reduction (50% vs. resistant PD, 50% vs. resistant ED), Not Persistent (-¼) (60/32)
b - Teleport 16", ½ END (40/20) [1/10"]
c - **Missile Falls In:** Missile Deflection +3 vs. All, Damage Shield (39/19)
d - **Attacker Falls In:** EDM to Limbo, Use vs. Other (+1) x4 Mass (+½), Damage Shield, 0 END, Only vs. Grab/Move Through/ Haymaker (-¾) (70/29)

Tough Skin:
Damage Resistance (16 rPD, 16 rED) (16)
Damage Resistance (+15 rPD, +15 rED), Only when "Hole in Space" Powers Active (-¼) (12)
Hardened Defense on Damage Resistance (31 rPD, 31 rED), Only when "Hole in Space" Powers Active (-¼) (8)
Hardened Defense on 31 PD, 31 ED, Only when "Hole in Space" Powers Active (-¼) (12)

Dimension Lord Defenses:
Flash Defense, Sight: 5 (5)
Mental Defense: 20 (15)
Power Defense: 10 (10)
Lack of Weakness: -5 (5)
Life Support: Total (30)

Movement Abilities:
Running: +10" (16" total) (20) [1/5"]
Swimming: +5" Swimming (7" total) (5) [1/5"]

Keen Perceptions:
N Ray Vision (blocked by magic Force Field/Wall) (20)
Tracking Scent (10)
IR Vision (5)
Astral Awareness (3)
Mental Awareness (3)
Ultrasonic Hearing (3)
Sense Magic, Ranged, Discriminatory (15)
Bump of Direction (3)
Combat Sense 15- (3)

Skills & Perks:
Acrobatics 14- (3)
Breakfall 14- (3)
Climbing 14- (3)
Concealment 15- (3)
Dimensional Navigation 15- (3)
Stealth 14- (3)
Tracking 15- (3)
Scholar (3)
KS: General Magic 15- (INT Based) (2)
KS: Empowerment Magic 15- (2)
KS: Transmutative Magic 15- (2)
KS: Plane Lore 15- (2)
KS: Analyze Magic Style 15- (2)
Perk: Brialic Access (3)
God (15)
Headquarters Reserve (300 pts) (60)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 886

Total Character Cost: 1221

Disadvantages: 100+

Berserk:
when Humiliated (common) 14- 11- (25)
Distinctive Features:
Bestial Cosmic Entity (Can't hide, cause fear) (20)
Psychological Limitation:
Insists on Respect (25)
Never Lies or Breaks a Promise (25)
Devoted to Reshaping People and Worlds (15)
Loves a Good Fight (15)
Public ID (10)
Reputation:
Reputation: Messianic lunatic conqueror 14- (extreme) (20)
Susceptibility:
3d6 STUN, Being Gated/Teleported by Surprise (uncommon) (15)
3d6 STUN, Dimension Warping Attacks, Even If Deflected (uncommon) (15) (15)
2d6 STUN, Attacks Affecting Desolid, Even If Deflected (uncommon) (10)
Unluck: 3d6 (15)
Vulnerability:
x2 STUN, BODY, Dimension-Warping Attacks (uncommon) (20)
x1 ½ STUN, BODY, Attacks Affecting Desolid (uncommon) (10)
Villain Bonus (881)

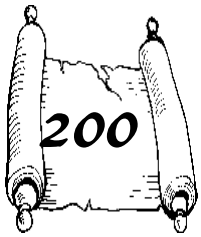
Total Disadvantage Points: 1221

Skarn's Palace

One of the warp portals in the center of the Congeries leads down a hallway to the massive doors of Skarn's palace. A pair of living statues of sphinx-like beasts guards the doors, but these are relatively easy for a skillful sorcerer to sneak past or deceive. (Skarn is so sure of his power that he's never bothered to install locks on the doors or really paranoid and perceptive doorkeepers.)

Beyond the door, one finds oneself in the central courtyard of the palace. The courtyard is actually a large hollow space completely surrounded by the palace, an Escher- like labyrinth of warped perspectives, staircases, arcades, towers and intersecting planes of gravity.

Skarn's palace is virtually a self-contained town. Visitors who wander its halls could encounter nearly anything. The palace has all the normal fixtures of a royal residence: throne room, ballroom, council chamber, kitchen, bedrooms, servants' quarters, storerooms, and all the rest. Very little else about this palace is normal, though. Some of what characters encounter in Skarn's palace will be funny, some of it macabre, and some merely bizarre, but GMs should try to keep a visit to Skarn's palace constantly disorienting.



Sample Strangeness

- A door labeled "Sandbox." It opens onto a sandy beach on a sea of green champagne. The beach and sea are in a vaulted room at least a kilometer square, lit by a huge, glowing banana hung from the ceiling.
- A concert hall with a rack of disembodied, still-living heads on stage. Skarn gathered the best singers of the Congeries and gave them dubious immortality and "freedom from distractions," then forgot about them.
- Rooms with no walls or ceiling and nothing under the floor: they are just platforms hanging in a Ditkospace void, with doorways in and out.
- An "impossible stairway" that somehow forms a closed loop without ever changing direction: someone who goes up or down it eventually comes to the place where they started.
- Mirrors that reflect things reversed top to bottom instead of side to side.
- Ranked desks of skeleton clerks with quill pens, doing the palace paperwork.
- Quivering, tentacled balls that drift through the air to no apparent purpose.
- A hallway where everyone else is walking on the walls. They give strange looks at anyone who walks on the floor.

Skarn's Throne Room

A hallway of crystalline Gothic arches leads to Skarn's grandiose throne room, a huge hollow globe with floating platforms carrying petitioners, courtiers and servants in sublimely random disregard of gravity. The only stable platform, hanging opposite the entrance, carries Skarn's throne of gold, ice and time-stopped flame.

Palace Guards

In the palace, one frequently encounters guards, either alone or in small groups. Most are humanoid, but a few look completely non-human. Some might be mistaken for furniture. Use the "All-Purpose Petty Obstacle Warrior" (see "Soldiers of the Congeries" below) for palace guards. Most will have weapons designed to stun or capture intruders.

Special Equipment

Skarn's palace has a number of special pieces of equipment which may give intruding PCs a hard time.

The All-Seeing Eye of Skarn

In the middle of the courtyard hovers the huge All-Seeing Eye of Skarn. The one-hex wide eyeball turns to look at (and magically scan) everyone who comes through the doors; it is harder to fool than the doorkeeper golems. It constantly scans the palace with its Clairvoyance, looking for people or objects whose visual, magical and Spatial Awareness images aren't consistent. It is programmed to regard such people as using concealment magicks, and therefore probably hostile. As soon as the person comes into the open, it blasts the person with its Dispelling beam (21d6 Dispel vs. all magic) and raises the alarm.

Skarn and some of his cadre can set other duties for the Eye as well. The Eye can look into virtually any section of the Congeries and watch for specified objects or activities. Since it lacks genuine intelligence, however, it needs detailed, specific instructions for searching—just like a computer.

The Mage Prison

Skarn has a special prison for mages and supernatural beings. This chamber's anti-magical field continually drains 1d6 Active Points from all magic within it, including a wizard's ability to cast spells. It acts on SPD 3, like the Eye.

The Image-Projecting Mirror

This large, ornate mirror can act as a "terminal" for the Eye of Skarn, allowing the Eye to show what it sees. (The connection with the Eye is a 0 point ability, analogous to a TV screen hooked up to a computer-controlled security system. For the Congeries, this is "off the shelf technology.") The mirror can also project huge, multiple images of whatever happens before it throughout the Congeries. Skarn uses this power to make public announcements.

The Royal Family

Yes, Skarn's a family man, of sorts. He's had many wives, and many more concubines. At least three lasted long enough to bear him children, although there is no guarantee they survived the experience. If Skarn has any other children, they are as yet not publicly known.

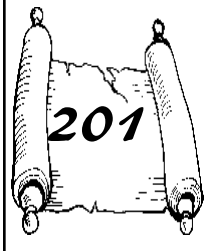
Arthon

Background: Skarn's son Arthon inherited his father's great skill at magic, but only a small measure of his bodily strength and toughness. Arthon has become the Congeries' second most powerful sorcerer, and a formidable mage by any standards. He often acts as Skarn's proxy on magical military operations.

Quote: "*One would think that even outworlders would have better manners when meeting royalty; but no. It seems one will have to deliver a lesson.*"

Personality: Arthon is a cold-blooded schemer who always keeps an eye out for his own advantage. He's particularly intent on increasing his own powers of magic, and will exploit and betray anyone else to get what he wants—as long as this doesn't directly compromise Congeries security.

Arthon is also insufferably proud. Anyone who doesn't bow and scrape to him is likely to receive a "lesson in manners" which may well prove fatal. Absolutely nobody except Skarn likes Arthon, but Arthon thinks that people are more obedient to masters they



fear than to masters they love.

Finally, Arthon loathes his half-brother Torvost, whom he considers a stupid, vulgar brute. Arthon isn't ready to murder Torvost, not as long as Skarn lives, but he won't miss a chance to undercut Torvost and make him look bad.

Powers/Tactics: Arthon has dimensional powers similar to his father's. He is also tremendously learned in Thaumaturgy, but for most feats he still needs the "crutches" of ritual procedures for maximum effect; thus, he cannot easily muster his full power in combat, and most spells remain slightly unreliable (the Magic Skill Roll). Most often he fulfills his Limitations requirement through Foci (he always keeps several OAF talismans stashed in pockets in his belt), Gestures, and Incantations. If necessary he will accept Increased END Cost. He only uses Extra Time or Concentrate for non-combat spell-casting, and only dire need would make him accept Side Effects on a spell.

Since Arthon isn't especially brave and he dislikes bruises, he prefers to do his fighting from behind a screen of expendable soldiers. He never goes to all-out attack; he often Holds his action and always keeps good defenses up. In fact, one of his favorite strategies is throw his entire Multipower into defense by putting up both of his mystic shields and Shrinking to raise his DCV, then using his Power Pool to craft a pair of devastating 75 point attacks (with OAF, Gestures, Incantations and x2 END), with the remaining 25 points placed in miscellaneous defenses or Invisibility. Even if he doesn't have time to adjust his Power Pool for this, his Power Pool "default setting" includes a number of defensive spells and at least one full-power attack.

Appearance: Arthon looks like a slender bear-man just over 6' tall, with small horns on his head and delicate claws on his fingers and toes. He wears a long, belted tabard with a high collar and a large, talismanic brooch on his chest. When not using his dimensional powers, he has short, light brown fur. When he has his dimensional shield up, his body seems made of black, starry space.

Historical Mages

History gives no shortage of people who either claimed to be wizards, or whom later legend turned into wizards. Such legendary masters of magic can be used to add verisimilitude to the background of invented artifacts, books of magic or even characters. These are only a few of the most famous mages of history. All these people really existed, although in some cases the facts of their lives are now difficult to discover.

Agrippa, Henry Cornelius

(1486-1535 AD): The author of *The Occult Philosophy* tried to harmonize the natural science of his day (which meant Aristotle, filtered through the Catholic Church) with occult lore. He thus established the framework for ritual magic using invocation of planetary powers which would persist for over 300 years. Even in his own life he was reputed a great Magus.

Albertus Magnus, Saint

(1206?-1280): Albertus, Bishop of Ratisbon was one of the greatest scholars of his day. His contemporaries called him *Doctor Universalis*—master of all knowledge. He worked to reconcile Christian theology with Greek logic, a task completed by his pupil Thomas Aquinas. As an alchemist, Albertus was the first person to isolate and describe metallic arsenic. After his death he was awarded the title of Doctor of the Church, and was canonized in the 20th century. Albertus also recorded contemporary beliefs about the properties of herbs, charms and talismans; his book on the subject became a standard grimoire. In legend, he was a true Archmage. He possessed the Philosopher's Stone and could change the weather or even the seasons. He even made an oracular android or golem—which Thomas Aquinas smashed because it wouldn't shut up and let him study.

Apollonius Of Tyana

(flourished 1st century AD): This Greek archmage traveled as far as India, which he claimed was the original home of Pythagorean doctrine. According to his biographer, Apollonius ended plagues, exorcised demons and did many other good works with his magic, all the while exhorting people to follow the teachings of Pythagoras. In Rome, his enemies falsely accused him of black magic. He refuted the charges in a stirring speech, then vanished from his prison cell. He briefly reappeared to one of his disciples later, but his death is not known.

Arthon

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	800 kg; 5d6 [2]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
23	CON	26	14-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
21	EGO	22	13-	ECV: 7
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack 5d6
10	COM	0	11-	
20	PD	15		Total: 20+ PD
20	ED	15		Total: 20+ ED
5	SPD	19		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	0		
50	END	2		
35	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 175

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Teleport: 10"/20"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Training:
Combat Levels: 1 Level w/ Magic Multipower (5)
Blood of Skarn Abilities:
Universal Translator 14- (20)
Magic Spells: Power Pool, (75 pt. pool), Requires Magic Roll (-½), Max 25 Real Points per Power (-1) (90)
Spell Research (Magic Pool Control) 20- (15)
Innate Powers: Multipower (91 pt pool), Gestures (-¼) (73)
u - **Black Bolt:** 12d6 EB (60/5) [6]
u - **Black Burst:** 8d6 EB 1 Hex AE (60/5) [6]
u - **Black Lance:** 8d6 EB, AP (60/5) [6]
u - **Aura of Elan:** 33 STR TK, ½ END (62/5) [3]
u - **Aura of Elan:** 23 STR TK 1 Hex AE, ½ END (61/5) [3]
u - **Soul Binding:** 2d6 Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2) (60/5) [6]
u - **Gate Attack:** 12" Teleport, Use vs. Others, Ranged (60/5) [6]
u - **Mystic Shield:** Force Field (12 PD 12 ED), ½ END (30/2) [1]
u - **Mystic Shield:** Force Field (10 PD 10 ED), Use by Other x2 (+½) (30/2) [3]
u - **Size Alteration:** Shrinking 2 Levels, 0 END (30/2) [0]
u - **Size Alteration:** Growth 4 Levels, 0 END (30/2) [0]
u - **Gate:** EDM, Any Plane, x4 Mass, Use by Others x4 (+¾), Freely Open for Full Phase (-½) (87/5) [9]
Living Hole in Space: Elemental Control (13 points) (13)
a - Damage Resistance (20 PD, 20 ED), Hardened, Not Persistent (-¼) (25/10)
b - Teleport 10", 2x Mass (25/13) [1/5"]
c - **Missile Falls In:** Missile Deflection +3 vs. All (26/13)
d - Life Support: Full, Not Persistent (-¼) (30/14)
Tough Skin:
Hardened Defense on 20 PD, 20 ED (10)
Mystic Defenses:
Flash Defense, Sight: 5 (5)
Mental Defense: 16 (12)
Power Defense: 5 (5)
Keen Perceptions:
Astral Awareness (3)

Blood of Skarn Skills and Perks:
Cryptography 14- (3)
Deduction 14- (3)
Spell Research 14- (3)
Scholar (3)
KS: General Magic 14- (INT Based) (2)
KS: Other Dimensions 14- (2)
KS: Cosmic Entities 14- (2)
KS: Cosmic Legends 14- (2)
Upper Nobility (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 374

Total Character Cost: 549

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
Inhuman Wizard (Won't Conceal) (15)
Psychological Limitation:
Insists on Respect/Obedience (25)
Greedy for Magical Power (15)
Fear/Dislike of Close Combat (15)
Devious and Treacherous (15)
Public ID (10)
Reputation:
Skarn's Viceroy, 8-, Extreme/14-, Local (10)
Rivalry:
Torvost (5)
Susceptibility:
2d6 STUN, Being Gated/Teleported by Surprise (uncommon) (10)
2d6 STUN, Dimension Warping Attacks, Even If Deflected (uncommon) (10)
2d6 STUN, Attacks Affecting Desolid, Even If Deflected (uncommon) (10)
Vulnerability:
x2 STUN, BODY, Dimension-Warping Attacks (uncommon) (20)
x1 ½ STUN, BODY, Attacks Affecting Desolid (uncommon) (10)
Watched by:
Skarn, 8- (More Pow, Mildly Punish) (5)
Villain Bonus (274)

Total Disadvantage Points: 549

Torvost

Background: Skarn's son Torvost inherited his father's physical prowess, but not his magical skills. Torvost has developed his combat skills until in some ways he surpasses even Skarn. Torvost often leads armies invading other dimensions: he's no tactician, but in close combat he can out-fight nearly any opposition.

Quote: "*Hey, let's fight! C'mon, it'll be fun. Well, at least it'll be fun for* me."

Personality: Torvost's two favorite things in life are a good fight and a good party. Not only is he the Congeries' greatest warrior, his godlike constitution makes him the ultimate party animal. He's mostly honest, absolutely fearless and all in all a pretty decent chap. Admittedly, being a demigod has given Torvost a teeny little ego problem, but this only makes him rip people's heads off when he's gravely insulted or when circumstances make him look foolish. And of course he wouldn't dream of disobeying his father.

Torvost is very popular with the rank-and-file soldiers of the Congeries, with whom he spends much of

his time. The only person in the Congeries whom he flat-out dislikes is his half brother Arthon, whom he considers a bloodless, cowardly sneak.

Powers/Tactics: Torvost is a "brick" with unusually refined fighting skills. In addition to normal combat maneuvers, he knows some special tricks: choking or squeezing the breath from an opponent, wrapping up an opponent in any sturdy wreckage that might be available, and a punch with tremendously concentrated force that tends to shatter any rigid object he hits. Torvost is also highly resistant to damage. His only magical talent is the ability to understand and speak any language.

Like Skarn, Torvost prefers fighting one on one. His tactics aren't very subtle, since usually he can win through raw force. If an opponent proves unusually tough, or Torvost must fight a group of competent opponents, he will use more sophisticated combat maneuvers such as grabbing one opponent to throw at another. Torvost is never stupid, just direct.

Appearance: Torvost is a shaggy, hugely muscular bearman standing just over 7 feet tall. His fur is a deep golden brown. Like Skarn, he has two small horns on his head. Normally he only wears black metal wristbands and a breechcloth-like plaque on a chain-link belt.

Torvost

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	25 ton; 10d6 [5]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
28	CON	36	15-	
18	BODY	16	13-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 14-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
28	PRE	18	15-	PRE Attack 5½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
35	PD	25		Total: 35 PD/ 20 rPD
30	ED	24		Total: 30 ED/ 20 rED
7	SPD	36		Pha 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
20	REC	8		
56	END	0		
60	STUN	3		

Total Characteristic Cost: 271

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Swimming: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Training:
- **Combat Levels:** +3 Levels w/ Combat (24)
- Combat Sense 14- (7)
- Defense Maneuver (5)

Martial Arts—*General Combat Training* (22)

Maneuver	*OCV*	*DCV*	*Notes*
Punch	+1	+3	10d6 Strike
Kick/Roundhouse	-2	+1	14d6 Strike
Disarm	-1	+1	60 STR Disarm
Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
Escape	+0	+0	65 STR vs. Grabs

Special Maneuvers: Multipower (50 pt pool) (50)
- u - **Bite:** 3d6+1 RKA, 0 Range (50/3) [5]
- u - **Choke:** 3d6 NND vs. LS: Breathing or Neck Protection (+1), Continuous, ½ END, 0 Range, Must Grab (-½) (49/2) [2]
- u - **Shatter:** 3d6+1 (6 ½d6 w/STR) HKA 1 Phase Extra Time, Concentrate ½ DCV, Only vs. Rigid Matter (-1) (50/2) [5]
- u - **Wrap Up Opponent:** 5d6 Entangle, 0 Range, Need Some Tough Material (-¼) (50/3) [5]

Blood of Skarn Powers & Abilities:
- **Damage Resistance** (20 PD, 20 ED) (20)
- **Running:** +5" (11" total) (10) [1/5"]
- **Swimming:** +4" (6" total) (4) [1/5"]
- **UV Vision** (5)
- **Telescopic Vision:** +4 (6)
- **Telescopic Hearing:** +4 (6)
- **Perception Levels:** +2 Levels w/ all PER Rolls (6)

Blood of Skarn Skills, Talents, & Perks:
- Ambidexterity (3)
- Universal Translator 12- (20)
- Breakfall 14- (3)
- Climbing 14- (3)
- Concealment 12- (3)
- Stealth 14- (3)
- Survival 11- (3)
- Tracking 14- (7)
- Upper Nobility (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 225

Total Character Cost: 496

Disadvantages: 100+

Berserk:
- if Tricked or Humiliated, 8-, 14- (15)

Distinctive Features:
- Beast Man (Can't Conceal) (15)

Psychological Limitation:
- Will Never Surrender, Flee or Refuse Physical Challenge (25)
- Expects Respect/Obedience (15)
- Loyalty to Skarn (15)
- Honest & Honorable (10)

Public ID (10)

Reputation:
- Skarn's Champion, 8-, Extreme/14-, Local (10)

Rivalry:
- Arthon (5)

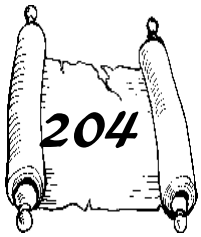
Watched by:
- Skarn, 8- (More Pow, Mildly Punish) (5)

Villain Bonus (271)

Total Disadvantage Points: 496

Brell

Background: Skarn's daughter Brell is considerably younger than her half-brothers Arthon and Torvost. She shows signs of formidable potential, but since she has not greatly developed either her physical or magical powers, and doesn't get involved in palace rivalries or other affairs of state, the movers and shakers in the Congeries tend to ignore her. She spends much of her time out in the Congeries, helping the people cope with Skarn's latest modifications to them and their environment. Her good works have made her the most popular of Skarn's children with the common folk.



Quote: "*Please, you mustn't judge my father harshly. He only wants what's best, in his fashion.*"

Personality: Brell is quite modest and unassuming, a remarkable thing in a family of raging egomaniacs. Ever since she was a child, Arthon and Torvost both made it very clear to her that she could never hope to be as powerful as them, so she never tried. Her "charity work" started as an excuse to stay away from the palace, and has grown into a genuine interest in the Congeries and its diverse population.

As a result, Brell is probably the only really important person in the Congeries who might give the PCs a fair hearing. While she has great respect for her divine father, she has to admit that sometimes Skarn's will is awfully inscrutable.

Powers/Tactics: Brell's parentage gives her incredible vitality by human standards, and she has casually picked up a bit of Thaumaturgy. Her single greatest ability is shape-shifting. She can assume an incredible variety of forms. She can stay in any humanoid form indefinitely.

As long as she stays in humanoid form, she can also cast Thaumaturgic spells for attack and defense. None of her spells are very formidable, but then she's a lot less fragile than the average human mage. Brell strongly dislikes combat, however, and would only fight—physically or magically—if she had to.

Appearance: In her natural form, Brell is a humanoid female with sleek, cinnamon-hued fur, a bear-like head with small ivory horns, and small claws on her fingers and toes, but she can look any way she wants.

Brell

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	800 kg; 5d6 [2]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
23	CON	26	14-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack 4d6
20	COM	5	13-	
17	PD	12		Total: 17+ PD/ 6+ rPD
17	ED	12		Total: 17+ ED/ 6+ rED
4	SPD	10		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
10	REC	0		
46	END	0		
35	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 148

Movement: Running: 18"/36"
Flight: 12"/48"

Powers & Skills:

Shape-Shifting Powers:

Form Changing: Multipower (45 pt pool) (45)
- u - **Humanoid Form:** Shape Shift, any humanoid, 0 END Persistent (40/4) [0]
- u - **Radical Shift:** Shape Shift, anything, 0 END (45/4) [0]

Enhanced Shifts: Multipower (30 pt pool), Only when using non-persistent Shape Shift (-¼) (24)
- u - **Growth:** 4 Levels, 0 END (30/2) [0]
- u - **Shrinking:** 2 Levels Shrinking, 0 END (30/2) [0]
- u - **Natural Weapons:** 1d6+1 HKA, Var Sp FX (+¼), ½ END (30/2) [1]
- u - **Running:** +12", ½ END (18" total) (30/2) [1/10"]
- u - **Wings:** Flight 12", x4 NCM, Restrainable (-½) (29/2) [1/5"]

Function Follows Form: Power Pool (16 pt pool), Only Powers Suitable to Altered Form (-¼) (22)

Magic Abilities:

Mystic Learning: Multipower (65 pt pool), Gestures (-¼), Only in Persistent Humanoid Form (-¼) (43)
- u - **Mystic Bolt:** 9d6 EB (45/3) [4]
- u - **Mystic Bolt:** 4 ½d6 Ego Attack (45/3) [4]
- u - **Mystic Bonds:** 3d6 Entangle, Damage Transparent (+½) (45/3) [4]
- u - **Spell Breaking:** 12d6 Dispel vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼) (45/3) [4]
- u - **Mystic Shield:** Force Field (5 PD, 5 ED, 5 MD), ½ END (19/1) [1]
- u - **Spell Deflection:** Missile Deflection +0 vs. All Magic (20/1)
- u - **Change the Living:** 1½d6 Transform, Universal (+1), Cumulative 1 phase Extra Time, Concentrate 0 DCV (57/2) [6]
- u - **Augmenting:** 4d6 Aid vs. All Physical Characteristics (+2) 1 phase Extra Time, Concentrate 0 DCV (60/2) [6]

Blood of Skarn Powers:

Damage Resistance (6 PD, 6 ED) (6)
Mental Defense: 10 (6)
Universal Translator 13- (20)
Bump of Direction (3)

Blood of Skarn Skills & Perks:

Scholar (3)
KS: Congeries Geography 13- (INT Based) (2)
KS: Congeries Races 13- (2)
KS: Body Alterations 13- (2)
KS: General Magic 11- (1)
Upper Nobility (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 219

Total Character Cost: 367

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
Alien Magical Aura (Few Detect) (5)

Psychological Limitation:
Abhors All Combat (20)
Loyalty to Skarn (15)
Honest and Honorable (15)

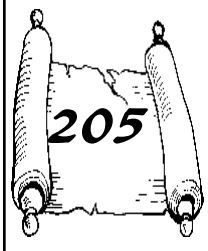
Public ID (10)

Reputation:
Skarn's Daughter, 8-, Extreme/14-, Local (10)

Watched by:
Skarn, 8- (More Pow, Mildly Punish) (5)

Villain Bonus (187)

Total Disadvantage Points: 367



Soldiers Of The Congeries

There's more to fight in the Congeries than Skarn and his children. Skarn's armies are as heterogeneous as their dimension. They have the same functions as any soldiers in a villainous organization: petty obstacle between the heroes and the main villain; combat support for the main villains; occupying force for conquered territory; legwork in tracking down heroes and making their lives miserable; and all-around gofers.

Hussar

The Hussars are an elite cavalry unit noted for their religious devotion to Skarn. Hussars never surrender, and only quite overwhelming opposition can make them accept the shame of breaking off a mission.

Hussars carry two weapons, a non-magical lasso and a magical polearm called a glaive. A glaive shoots a variety of magical blasts from its runic tip, while its blade can easily chop through a brick wall. Standard Hussar tactics are for one Hussar to paralyze a target, then other Hussars immediately attack with impact or life drain blasts, phase after phase. Once an opponent is incapacitated, the Hussars either carry off the target with their lassoes or land and hack the target up with the blades of their glaives. In a battlefield situation, Hussars target opposing officers. In such a case, they alter the routine to paralyze targets, lasso them and then either blast them in the air or carry them up very high and drop them.

Most Hussars look essentially human (although perhaps with odd hair and skin colors), but they wear sword-and-sorcery outfits of leather straps, metal plates enameled with mystic glyphs, helmet, cloak, greaved boots and arm bracers. They ride harpy-like creatures called Harridans.

Hussar

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	200 kg; 3d6 [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
14	PRE	4	12-	PRE Attack 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
8	PD	5		Total: 15 PD/ 7 rPD
8	ED	5		Total: 15 ED/ 7 rED
3	SPD	5		Pha 4, 8 ,12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
28	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 54

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Training:
- **Combat Levels:** +2 Levels w/ Glaive & Lasso (10)

Magical Equipment:
- **Glaive & Lasso:** Multipower (56 pt pool), OAF (28)
  - u - **Force Ray:** 9d6 EB, ½ END (56/3) [3]
  - u - **Life Drain Ray:** 4d6 EB, AVLD: Power Defense (+1 ½), ½ END (55/2) [2]
  - u - **Paralysis Ray:** 2 ½d6, 2 DEF Entangle, Damage Transparent (+½) 1 Hex AE, ½ END (56/3) [2]
  - u - **Blade:** 3d6 RKA, ½ END, 0 Range (56/2) [3]
  - u - **Lasso:** 25 STR TK, ½ END, Only to Grab and Hold (-½), Full STR Only with Mount (-¼) (47/2) [2]
- **Magic Harness & Bracers:** Elemental Control, OIF (9)
  - a - **Armor:** (+7 PD, +7 ED) + **Power Defense:** 5 (26/9)
  - b - **Bracers: Missile Deflection** +3 vs. All Magic (26/9)

Hussar Training:
- Animal Handler 11-: Harridan (3)
- Breakfall 12- (3)
- Riding 12-: Harridan (3)
- Follower: Harridan Steed (20)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 106

Total Character Cost: 160

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
- Otherworldly Warrior (Hard to Conceal, Weirds People Out) (15)

Psychological Limitation:
- Fanatic, Worshipful Loyalty to Skarn (20)
- Devoted to Mission (15)

Watched by:
- Commanding Officer, 11- (More Pow, Mildly Punish, NCI) (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 160

Harridan

Harridans look like a bizarre, harpy-like hybrid of woman and pterodactyl: a human head and breasts on a pterodactyl body. Their scaly hides are dark purple, blue or green, while the human parts are lighter shades of the same color. Their large claws exude a venom which weakens victims. (The victim loses 1d6-1 STR per turn until the victim makes a CON roll—9 + CON/5—at -5.)

Harridans are too smart to be mere animals, but aren't quite smart enough to be people (one of Skarn's more abominable works). The average Harridan has a vocabulary of less than 20 words, and can't put more than 3 words together in sequence. Trained Harridans become very loyal to their riders and won't carry anyone else. Wild Harridans are almost berserkly vicious.

Harridan

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	400 kg; 4d6 [2]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
20	CON	20	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
8	EGO	-4	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack 3d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
15	PD	11		Total: 19 PD/ 4 rPD
15	ED	11		Total: 17 ED/ 2 rED
3	SPD	5		Pha 4, 8 ,12
8	REC	0		
40	END	0		
30	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 67

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 15"/60"

Powers & Skills:

Harridan Abilities:

Body Form: Elemental Control (17)
- a - **Claws:** 1d6+1 RKA, AP, ½ END, 0 Range (35/12)[1]
- b - **Wings:** 15" Flight, x4 NCM, Restrainable (-½) (35/12) [1/5"]

Claw Venom: 1d6 STR Drain, Recover 1 STR/turn (+¼), NND: Inorganic Body or Immunity (+1), Continuous, Uncontrolled, 0 END, Linked to Claw, Only if Claw does BODY (-½) 1 turn Gradual Effect per increment (-½) (17) [0]

Armor: (+4 PD, +2 ED) (9)

Telescopic Vision: +4 (6)

Flight Training: +2 Levels w/ Flight (Turn Mode, Move By, Move Through, DCV) (10)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 83

Total Character Cost: 150

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
Hideous Monster (Can't Conceal, Extreme) (25)

Psychological Limitation:
Ferocious, reluctant to quit fight (15)
Loyal to Rider (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150

Myrmidon

Skarn uses Myrmidons for living-wave assaults and simple guard duty. Myrmidons have no sense of self-preservation: they will advance into blatant, certain death if ordered. Their greatest power is their sheer refusal to lay down and die. They are so relentless that if they can't break out of a restraint (an Entangle spell, handcuffs, glue on the floor, etc.) they will literally tear themselves apart trying.

Myrmidons have three ways to attack. Each Myrmidon carries a weapon, either a spear, scimitar or mace. A jewel set in the Myrmidon's forehead fires a magical energy beam. Finally, in close combat Myrmidons can spit webs that hinder an opponent's movements.

A mass of Myrmidons in combat with a single target receive a collective Tactics skill check each phase to do something clever such as Coordinating or starting to stagger attacks so they can attack on more segments each turn. For instance, on the first Tactics roll a group of 6 Myrmidons staggers its attacks so that 3 attack on segments 6 and 12, while 3 Hold their actions to attack on segments 3 and 9; on the second Tactics roll a Myrmidon from each trio holds its action until after their opponent has made its attack and can't act further that segment; and so on. Myrmidons actually become smarter and smarter fighters as a combat progresses, and new additions to a squad instantly pick up on the tactics in use.

Myrmidons look a bit like humanoid ants, only with beetle-like wing cases hanging from their shoulders. (They have wings, but they are non-functional.)

Another Historical Mage

Chang Dao-Ling

(flourished 1st century AD): The greatest wizard of Chinese history has been called "the Taoist Pope." He gave Taoism an organized church and turned its priests into hucksters of magic charms. Chang Dao-Ling first built his reputation as an exorcist. He had a magic sword which could kill demons or trap them in pottery jars. Then he set his sights on immortality. Chang learned how to make the Pill of Immortality, but the process was fearfully expensive. To finance the project, Chang set up a town and taxed the inhabitants. He also charged nine bushels of rice for magical healings. Eventually he did create the magical Pill. He shared the Pill with the one disciple who had the faith—or stupidity—to jump off a cliff with him. Both of them took the Pill and flew up to Heaven, where Lao Tzu, the legendary founder of Taoism, made Chang Dao-Ling the master of all spirits. Chang's descendants inherited his stature as the patriarchs of Taoism. They ruled a section of western China as a semi-independent, semi-theocratic state for many centuries. After the Communist Revolution the patriarchy moved to Taiwan. They still have Chang's magic sword and guard hundreds of trapped demons. Ordinary Chinese still employ the charms designed by Chang Dao-Ling and keep a picture of him riding through the sky on his tiger.

Myrmidon

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	200 kg; 3d6 [1]
11	DEX	3	11-	OCV: 4/ DCV: 4
10	CON	0	11-	
8	BODY	-4	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
N/A	EGO	0	—	ECV: N/A
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack 3d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
5	PD	12*		Total: 10 rPD
5	ED	12*		Total: 10 rED
2	SPD	-1		Pha 6, 12
5	REC	0		
20	END	0		*Modified for
N/A	STUN	0		Automaton

Total Characteristic Cost: 26

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Training:
- **Combat Levels:** +2 Levels w/ Multipower(6)
- **Weapon Fam:** Spear, Scimitar & Mace (2)

Myrmidon Abilities:
- **Attack Abilities:** Multipower (25 pt pool) (25)
  - u - **Forehead Gem Beam:** 1 ½d6 ERKA (25/2) [2]
  - u - **Spit Webbing:** 2 ½d6 DEX Drain (25/1) [6c]
  - u - **Weapon Choice:**
    - **Spear:** 1d6 (1 ½d6 w/STR) HKA, AP, OAF (22/1) [2] *or*
    - **Scimitar:** 1 ½d6 (2 ½d6 w/STR) HKA, OAF (25/1) [2] *or*
    - **Mace:** +5d6 HA, ½ END, OAF (19/1) [1]
- **Unstoppability:** Elemental Control (23)
  - a - **Automaton:** Takes No STUN (45/23)
  - b - **Armor:** (+5 PD, +5 ED)* (23)
- **Active Sonar** (15)
- **Tactics** 11- (3)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 123

Total Character Cost: 149

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
- Humanoid Bug (Can't Conceal, Causes Fear) (20)

Physical Limitation:
- Mute (15)

Psychological Limitation:
- Obeys Anyone Who Uses Command Words (15)

Susceptibility:
- 1d6 STUN+BODY/phase, when restrained (c) (40)

Watched by:
- Commanding Officers, 11- (More Pow) (10)

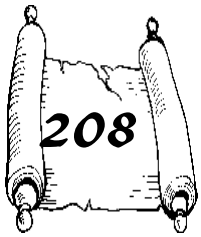
Total Disadvantage Points: 150

All-Purpose Petty Obstacle Warriors

Petty Obstacle Warriors may have many different forms and missions, but they all fulfill one role: token opposition. They aren't powerful enough to actually win an open fight with a mage, but it should take a few Phases to defeat a small group of them, too. An attack on a group of PCs by Petty Obstacle Warriors has little chance of success, but it lets the PCs know someone is gunning for them. Conversely, Petty Obstacle Warriors as guards or defenders can show that the PCs' enemy really is trying to block them from their goal, without actually hindering the PCs that much. They are easy opponents for use early in an adventure.

Skarn uses Petty Obstacle Warriors for several purposes. His palace guards are Petty Obstacle Warriors. Their secondary spells/items emphasize detecting concealed intruders. He may send a platoon of various Petty Obstacle Warriors to attack the PCs and watch the fight via scrying, as a way to gauge the PCs' power and look for weaknesses. These have more lethal attacks and spend their secondary item points on more defenses. Many of Skarn's soldiers in an invasion will be Petty Obstacle Warriors. Replacing their Distinctive Features with another limitation, such as "Secretive," they can be used as spies. Indeed, Petty Obstacle Warriors can be used for nearly anyone in the Congeries who acts as a nuisance to the PCs.

Petty Obstacle Warriors can range in appearance from oddly-garbed humans to weird, alien thingies. Each has one major power, just strong enough that PCs have to take it seriously.



All-Purpose Petty Obstacle Warriors

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6[1]
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	7		Total: 17 PD/ 7 rPD
10	ED	7		Total: 17 ED/ 7 rED
3	SPD	3		Pha 4, 8 ,12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
25	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 56

Movement: Running: 7"/14"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Training:
Combat Levels: +2 Levels w/ Primary Weapon or Spell (6)

Magical Equipment:
Primary Spell or Item:
Mystic Englobement: 5d6 Entangle, Gestures (29) [8c]
Soul Bolt: 5d6 Ego Attack, Gestures (29) [8c]
Enervation: 6d6 END Suppress, Uncontrolled, Gestures, 6 chgs of 1 turn (-¼) (30) [6c]
Magic Wand: 35 STR TK, ½ END, Gestures, OAF (29) [3]
Talisman of Negation: 20d6 Dispel vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼), Incantations, OAF (29) [12c]
Secondary Spell or Item:
Flying Disk: 10" Flight, OAF (10) [1/5"]
Magic Sight Helm: "Radar" Sense, OIF (10)
Amulet: Missile Deflection +3 vs. Any Magic, OAF (10) [8c]
Standard Equipment and Training:
"Uniform": Armor (7 PD, 7 ED), OIF (14)
Mental Defense: 7 (5)
Running: +1" (7" total) (2) 1/5"
Skill Choice: Breakfall, Concealment, Tactics, Etc. (3)
KS of Choice 11- (2)
PS of Choice 11- (2)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 74

Total Character Cost: 130

Disadvantages: 75+

Distinctive Features:
Weird Appearance (Hard to Conceal)(10)
Psychological Limitation:
Loyalty to Skarn (15)
Vulnerability or Susceptibility, GM's Choice (20)
Watched by:
Officers, 11- (More Pow, NCI, Mildly Punish) (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 130

Adventures In The Congeries

Most obviously, PCs can go to the Congeries to fight Skarn. Of course, attacking Skarn on his home turf, with his Cosmic Pool and palace guard, is a bit suicidal unless the PCs have a really clever strategy and a bit of luck. Direct attack, however, is not the only reason to visit the Congeries.

Rescue

Skarn, or one of his minions, has captured a DNPC, a PC's teacher, or somebody else important. The PCs go to the Congeries to rescue the person from durance vile.

Spying

The PCs need to know more about Skarn and his plans. They slip into the Congeries in disguise to gather information.

Foment Revolution

This is difficult, since for centuries the people of the Congeries have been conditioned to obey Skarn without question. Revolutions only succeed when the existing regime has grown feeble and mild. A strong, brutal tyranny may experience palace coups, but never genuine social revolutions. So it is with Skarn: as soon as his secret police find evidence of serious disloyalty, the Army will occupy the region while Skarn turns everyone into something loathsome. Building a true revolutionary movement could take years, and even then the PCs and revolutionaries must wait for a time when Skarn is out of action.

Prospecting

This assumes that a PC who's making a magic item or planning a ritual needs some special substance, like a purple moonstone or the bile of the Great Crested Whatamore. Unfortunately, this substance is only known to occur on one dimension, which Skarn conquered and merged into the Congeries a century ago. The PCs must enter the Congeries, find the requisite substance in the remains of the dimension, and get out again without being caught by Skarn's spies.

Deal With The Devil

Skarn may be a villain, but he's also one of the mightiest sorcerers in the Multiverse. If the PCs can't research a potent spell or locate an obscure dimension any other way, they can beg Skarn for help. Or the GM can raise the stakes by putting the whole Earth in danger, and only Skarn has the power to stop the threat. If properly approached, Skarn can be talked into doing just about anything—for a price. Skarn may insist that the PCs become his quarry in a hunt: if they live and escape, Skarn will give them what they want.

For a world-sized favor, Skarn will insist on a world-sized favor in return, such as the PCs releasing him from any vows to leave Earth alone. Skarn might even ask the PCs to conquer a pocket dimension for him. (Kindly GMs might make the target dimension be a hotbed of evil, so that PCs won't feel too bad about handing it over to Skarn.) Remember, Skarn never dickers: his first offer is his only offer.

The Dragon And The Nagas

Hidden in the caverns of inaccessible mountains, or coiled in the unfathomed depths of the sea, he awaits the time when he slowly arouses himself into activity. He unfolds himself in the storm-cloud, he washes his mane in the darkness of the seething whirlpools. His claws are in the fork of lightning, his scales begin to glisten in the bark of rain-swept pine trees. His voice is heard in the hurricane, which, scattering the withered leaves of the forest, quickens a new spring. The dragon reveals himself only to vanish.

—Okakoro Kakuzo, *Book of Tea*

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of this fruit your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

—Genesis 3:4

Skarn the Shaper is a straightforward, in-your-face sort of mega-villain. It's entirely up to the GM to make him seem a convincing threat. One can also take a more metaphysical approach, creating a mega-villain who presents a spiritual threat instead of a physical danger. When designing this style of villain, it helps to do some research in religion, mythology and folklore, to find the powerful symbols which will make a villain more than just another enemy. Such a foe is the Dragon.

Cultures around the world have legends of snakes or part-snake creatures as bestowers of magical knowledge and power, whether for good or evil. Here are a few:

Sumeria: The primal dragon Tiamat was the original owner of the magical Tablet of Destiny which gave rulership of the Universe.

Egypt: The solar serpent called the Uraeus showed the king's divine right to rule, granted by Ra the King of the Gods.

China: Dragons were mostly benevolent creatures who control rivers and the weather and have many magical powers. The trigrams of the *I Ching* were first seen on the back of a "dragon horse."

Greece: The semi-divine snake-man Cecrops, an early king of Athens, taught humans to build in stone. One story of Teiresias, Greece's most famous seer, had it that he gained his powers when a serpent sent by Athena licked his ears. The healer-god Asclepius was shown a magic herb by a serpent.

India: The Nagas of India, like the Chinese dragons, controlled rivers. While some legends paint them as malevolent, in many they are guardians of Heaven and the teachers of heroes.

Semites: The Serpent, "subtlest of beasts," persuades Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The name of the Seraphim, one of the highest orders of angels, literally means "Fiery Serpents."

Central America: The Aztec Quetzalcoatl and Mayan Kukulkan taught the civilized arts to Man. (Quetzalcoatl also told the Aztecs not to give him human sacrifices, but they did it anyway.)

Wizards know that all this is more than coincidence. There are *two* reptilian Powers in the magical world: the Dragon and the Nagas. The Dragon is the supreme Power of Evil of Greater Earth. It wants to corrupt and rule mankind. The mystic race of Nagas opposes the Dragon; they seem to care about human welfare, although the details of their motives remain inscrutable.

The Dragon

"Now will you obey me, or must I appeal to your Superior, at the sound of whose name the earth trembles, who alone can look directly at the Gorgon's head, who can make the very Furies cringe and lash them with their own scourges? Yes: I mean the God who dwells in an underworld beneath your underworld, and therefore ranks you contemptuously with the Olympians—the God who is not afraid to swear by your Styx and then break his oath!"

—Lucan, *Pharsalia*

Background: We have met the enemy and it is us.

Since the dawn of civilization, the Dragon has lurked in humanity's collective unconscious. The Dragon is the original Power of Evil. Mythology remembers the Dragon under many names: Tiamat, Apep, the Midgard Serpent and many others. The best evidence is that humanity acquired the Dragon about 6000 years ago—just before the invention of civilization. Earth was no Eden of loving-kindness, but humans were cruel and violent only by impulse and practicality, as animals are. The studied, deliberate evil of a Nazi Holocaust or a drug pusher was unknown.

Strictly speaking, the Dragon exists wherever any human goes. It does, however, have a focus of awareness and action, an astral form chained beneath Faerie, glaring down on the Void of Dreamless Sleep. Its vast mouth is a portal to the Netherworld, which is why Medieval artists would represent Hell as located in the jaws of a monster. As long as that astral form is bound, the Dragon's power is restrained.

While the titanic chains binding the Dragon seem to be made of steel, that is only a seeming. Nothing physical could hold the Dragon. The Dragon's chains were forged by ancient magic out of the noblest aspects of humanity, such as courage, altruism, faith and honor. Tradition says there are a thousand chains. When humanity follows its higher instincts, the chains tighten. In times of cowardice or surrender to evil, chains break and the Dragon's power grows. If the Dragon broke free, humanity would cease to be human—if it survived at all.

The Dragon resents its imprisonment. For 6000 years, it has tried to escape into the physical world. Various cults and sorcerers have fallen under its sway and tried to help it. It taught black magic to mankind; it and its minions created the curses of lycanthropy and vampirism; it taught the first empires how to rule by armed terror and religious mystery. It still broods and schemes to corrupt mankind through its pawns, slipping its monstrous dreams into the minds of humans too much ruled by hate, fear, greed and ambition.

So how did humanity get stuck with the Dragon? The Dragon's origin is a great mystery. The few entities who know, refuse to divulge the secret. Mages and mystics have several theories, though, each with points for and against them. Here are a few of them:

- Some believe the Dragon is a degenerate aspect of one of the Four Zoas. Many Chaos-oriented mages, for instance, believe the Dragon is Urizen. Servants of Order, on the other hand, think the Dragon must be Orc, an avatar of Luvah. William Blake's ecstatic verses could support either views. In fact, there are also a few passages in which Tharmas and Urthona are described as malevolent and scaly. So if the Dragon is one of the Zoas, which one? Its behavior gives no clue.
- Another theory has it that the Dragon is simply that part of the collective unconscious controlled by the reptilian hindbrain, the ancient part of the brain responsible for territoriality, aggression and the will to power. But then why did it suddenly activate 6000 years ago?
- Some suggest that the Dragon is an intruder, a spirit from one of the Outer Planes, or maybe from another world in this dimension. After all, the Dragon seems to be older than any of the demon princes, faerie lords or other beings of the Imaginal Realms. If the Dragon is older than these products of human thought, then it must be the result of inhuman thought. But then where did the Dragon come from, and how did it get locked in humanity's collective unconscious?
- Some Christian mages and occultists have an explanation: the Dragon is "that old serpent" Satan himself, the true Satan who opposes the true God of the Multiverse. The chief problem that other mages see with this theory is its parochiality: what makes humanity so special—for good or evil—that we have to be the Dragon's jailers and keep the rest of the Multiverse safe?
- Finally, a few occultists think that the Dragon is a relic of a supposed civilization of sentient dinosaurs. Some believe the dino-wizards died out 65 million years ago; others believe they lived more recently on a lost continent. Either way, the Dragon is a fusion of their malevolent ghosts, or something like that. Most wizards think this theory is too stupid to need refuting.

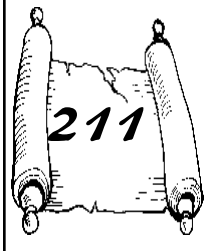
The real question, though, is how can humanity get rid of the Dragon? As yet, the only known way to destroy the Dragon is to exterminate mankind. No one cares much for that solution.

Even if some other way could be found to kill or expel the Dragon, psychic adepts say that the consequences would be appalling. The Dragon is too much part of us. Losing it would be the psychic equivalent of hacking off a limb. The Land of Legends would fall apart without the Dragon's support as well, and that's another hefty chunk of the collective unconscious. The psychic maiming would surely drive all humanity insane. The Dragon, then, cannot be destroyed. It can only be contained, its influence on mankind mitigated.

Some mystics even say that the coming of the Dragon—the loss of humanity's innocence—was a fortunate fall. Before the Dragon, humanity was largely static. Within a thousand years of the Dragon's entrapment, however, humanity had farming, stone architecture, pottery, writing, astronomy, arithmetic…and magic. Humanity became dynamic. A few mystics even claim that the Dragon makes it possible for humans to work magic. Without the Dragon, the spirit world would have been closed to mankind forever.

Will there ever be an end to this battle? Will humanity never be free of this cancer on its soul? The mystics offer one faint and distant hope. A few adepts—a very few—have broken free of the Dragon's influence by rising to the ultimate heights of psychic self-mastery. They have completely walled off or excised the part of their mind that holds the Dragon; in a sense, their minds are no longer human. Such masters are beyond even the Magi. Some call them Archmages. Unfortunately, the Archmages usually lose all emotional commitment to humanity with their liberation from the Dragon, and depart for other planes.

Once every several hundred years, though, an Archmage retains human compassion and stays a while to help the rest of humanity reach Enlightenment. These masters might be called Buddhas or Messiahs. If all humanity can be brought to Enlightenment—not abandoning their human nature but transcending it—the Dragon will be exorcised forever. Good luck!



Quote: *"You would try to deceive Me? I know you better than you know yourself: your dreams, your terrors, your darkest desires…"* (Here the Dragon tells the PC about something they thought was utterly secret.)

Personality: The Dragon doesn't have a reason. It is evil, like water is wet. It has two great desires: to break free and to conquer humanity. If it ever succeeded in ruling the Earth, its "policy" would be to maximize human misery; like the Inner Party from Orwell's *1984*, its rule would be like a boot stamping on a human face, forever.

The Dragon cannot even be used to fight other cosmic evils. It doesn't care if humanity gets conquered by Skarn, the Kings of Edom or anyone else; as long as enough of humanity survives to sustain its own existence—such as its worshippers—it would enjoy seeing everyone else die horribly. If the Dragon sees a chance to get free with some other cosmic evil's power, it will even sacrifice its own minions.

Naturally, the Dragon is not the forgiving sort. If anyone thwarts its plans, that person is marked for death, by the nastiest way the Dragon can arrange. Death can be averted, however, by submitting to the Dragon and letting oneself be broken into miserable, mindless slavery.

Powers/Tactics: Despite being bound, the Dragon still has influence. After all, it's part of every one of us. Normally, the Dragon cannot access people's conscious minds but it can read or influence dreams. Sometimes its promptings slip through as a whisper in the back of one's mind. One such whisper led a geneticist to invent the COIL gene and become King Cobra. Another prompted an American Senator to name a secret society VIPER. There's no telling how much of the dark side of history was due to the Dragon.

The Dragon's powers depend on what form it's in. Normally, the Dragon is a spirit on the Astral Plane, magically bound in chains. In this "base form" the Dragon's power is quite limited, although it is indestructible and almost omniscient. Its chief power is its tremendous Presence. Its voice alone can terrify or compel attention, and only persons of exceptional will can resist its hypnotic eyes. It also may employ a few other mental powers. Alone, these would not be deadly, but they can bedazzle mortals long enough for a few demons to squeeze out between the Dragon's teeth. Most Netherworld creatures obey the Dragon without question and will be happy to murder some poor fool caught in the Dragon's mental snares.

Sometimes the Dragon gets a partial escape from its bondage. The Dragon has many mortal servants. Once in a while they can magically create a body on Earth as a conduit for the Dragon's mind and power. By possessing such a synthetic body, the Dragon can act in the physical world directly.

Bodies for the Dragon can vary widely, according to the power and skill of their makers. Bodies might be golems, creatures of magically-prepared flesh and blood, or *tulpa* constructs of ectoplasm. Naturally, the Dragon's servants try to give it as powerful a body as possible. One ectoplasmic body for the Dragon has endured for centuries: it is called the Death Dragon. While the Death Dragon is very powerful, like its "parent" it too is magically bound and can only act in limited ways. (See *Watchers Of The Dragon* for more about the Death Dragon.)

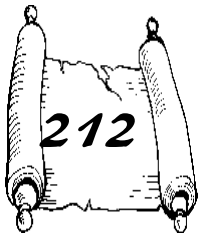
While bound on the Astral Plane, the Dragon cannot do much directly; it must work through its minions. Its minions, however, are many and varied. Some are humans who deliberately open themselves to the Dragon through cults like the Red Banner or Ouroboros and work the Dragon's will directly. The Dragon also has inhuman servants. It or its human servants have created whole races of monsters such as the Uraei and Ophites. The greatest wave of monster creation happened more than 5000 years ago, in a conflict mythologized later as the battle between Marduk and Tiamat:

> *Sharp of tooth and unsparing of fang.*
> *She filled their bodies with venom instead of blood.*
> *She cloaked ferocious dragons with fearsome rays,*
> *And made them bear mantles of radiance…*
>
> —Enuma Elish

A few of the original Dragon Warriors still survive, hidden in long-lost crypts or magical prisons. They are formidable creatures indeed. Recovering Dragon Warriors is a high priority for Dragon cultists.

While many of the Dragon's minions are quite powerful, though, the Dragon's counsel is their greatest power. The Dragon is the ultimate secret mastermind. It gathers vast amounts of information through its own ability to tap people's dreams and memories. It shares what it learns with its minions. One can assume that if *any* human knows something, the Dragon can find it out in a month or so. There are few secrets from the Dragon, and so there are few secrets from its minions. It can tell them about Mr. Big's secret escape tunnel, or a hero's Secret Identity, or the launch code for a nuclear missile…

Appearance: The Dragon's appearance depends on which form one encounters. Its astral "base form" is of course a gigantic dragon. The Dragon prefers to possess bodies that resemble its base form, and its minions try to satisfy it, but bodies that don't look at all dragon-like are possible.



The Dragon Bound

And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years…

—Revelations 20:2

This is the Dragon, still bound beneath the Land of Legends. Effectively it is an AI controlling a large set of powers. No physical force can affect it in any way. It can only be attacked mentally, and there is no way to stun it or knock it out. On the one hand, the Dragon is so unbelievably huge that even a nuclear explosion would be a pinprick. On the other hand, the chains which bind the Dragon keep it from acting any way but mentally (with a few special exceptions), so it might as well not have a body at all.

The Dragon's mental powers, however, make it quite formidable enough to face. Most of these derive from the fact that the Dragon is literally part of everyone on Earth—and every Earth-descended human dwelling in Babylon, the Land of Legends or any other plane, for that matter.

First, the Dragon can find any human's mind, anywhere. This may take a while, in the case of people with very high EGOs or who have gone to an Outer Plane, but the Dragon can find them eventually. This Mind Scan is completely undetectable, by the target or any mentalist nearby, and no amount of Mental Defense will block it because in a way the scan is coming from inside the target's own mind!

Once the Dragon locates its target, it can read the target's mind. Again, for humans this is undetectable (20 points of the effect rolled *must* go to keeping the target from noticing the Telepathy). This Telepathy carries another curious Limitation, in that the Dragon accesses minds from the bottom up. It resides at the EGO + 40 level of mentality (the collective unconscious). By rolling more than the target's EGO on its Telepathy roll, it can access the next level up, the target's personal unconscious mind. Through this it can tap into people's dreams, neuroses and drives. At target's EGO +10, it can read memories. Only at EGO + 30 would it read surface thoughts, and this is rare.

Note that the Dragon's Telepathy also lets it project. It can send dreams to virtually everyone, and plant deep, hidden thoughts in most normal people's heads.

Since Mental Defense *does* work against this Telepathy, strong-willed super mage PCs don't have to worry about the Dragon getting anywhere close to their conscious minds. Even dream-tapping, though, is enough to let the Dragon learn a great deal about them, and eventually the Dragon is sure to get a few lucky rolls and access to their memories. Unless the Dragon's target has an EGO + Mental Defense of at least 50, the Dragon will learn one's Secret ID, DNPCs and major weaknesses in a matter of weeks. And while the Dragon cannot act on this information, it can relay the data to minions who can.

Even if one can completely shut the Dragon out of one's mind, the Dragon can still hunt one down. It can search other people's minds for memories of the target person. It could take months, even years for the Dragon to find what it wants to know, but it has plenty of time…

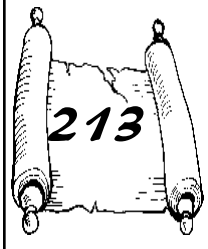
The Dragon's other powers are only usable in special circumstances. Visitors to the Astral Plane who come within the Dragon's Line of Sight can be telepathically contacted. There is no way for a human to shut the Dragon's mental "voice" out of their heads. Nor does it matter if one refuses to talk to the Dragon; it "hears" what one thinks, and can probably catch even hidden thoughts.

Face to face, the Dragon's first form of attack is its unbelievable Presence. Seeing a monster whose *eye* is the size of a city can be rather overwhelming! Those who try using mental powers on the Dragon, however, face something even worse. The Dragon will happily open its mind to them…and let them feel the infinite foulness within, the foulness *that they carry within themselves.* At 23 dice of Presence Attack, even strong-willed psychics may go mad with horror. However, the Dragon cannot really control the long-term effect of this mammoth Presence Attack. Some maddened victims might start worshipping the Dragon (which the Dragon likes) but an enduring terror is more likely.

Finally, the Dragon has a Power Pool it cannot use—at least, not very much. The Dragon has a very few attacks it can use freely through the Power Pool. Whenever the Dragon breaks a chain, it gets another attack form. When a new chain is forged, the Dragon loses a slot. Both are rare events. Powers should be based on mental effects or the Dragon's close connection to the Netherworld (for instance, it can open its jaws a crack, just large enough to form a Gate to the Netherworld through which a demon can exit).

There *is* one circumstance in which the Dragon can use its Power Pool freely. If some fool makes contact with the Dragon's mind and the Presence Damage Shield doesn't slap them down, the Dragon can use the Power Pool to strike back, but only against that person. Thus, if one mentally attacks the Dragon—and the Dragon can only be attacked using mind-based attacks (i.e. Mental Powers, BOECV Powers, Transforms vs. EGO)—the Dragon can counterattack freely on that Phase, against that person, as long as the counterattack is also a mind-based effect that costs no END.

Appearance: Bound on the Astral Plane, the Dragon seems to be about 400 miles long. Its stony scales are the size of football fields; its eyes, like lakes of swirling, dark fire. It is wrapped in mammoth iron chains. Each link is the size of a supertanker. (Of course the chains aren't really iron: nothing of mere matter could hold the Dragon.) Its back is imbeeded into the underside of the Land of Legends. A few of the chains have broken, their ends trailing into the void beneath.



The Dragon Bound

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
N/A	STR	0	—	
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
N/A	CON	0	—	
N/A	BODY	0	—	
30	INT	20	15-	PER Roll 15-
35	EGO	50	16-	ECV: 12
N/A	PRE	0	—	
N/A	COM	0	—	
N/A	PD	0		
N/A	ED	0		
4	SPD	20		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
N/A	REC	0		
N/A	END	0		
N/A	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 90

Movement: N/A

Powers & Skills:

Bound Powers:

Awesome Powers: Power Pool (105 pt pool), Cosmic (+2), Very Restricted Use (-1) (183)

Massive Psychic Powers: Elemental Control (86 pt pool) (86)

a - **Mental Foulness:** 115 PRE, Damage Shield vs. Mental, Offensive Only (-½), Limited Effects (-¼) (172/49)

b - **Locate Mind:** 14d6 Mind Scan, NND: Not Being Human (+1), Transdimensional: Wherever Earth Humans Are (+¾), Invisible vs. Mental Senses (+½), 0 END, +10 ECV, 20 Pts of Rolled Effect Must Go to Make Scan Unnoticed (-¾) (292/118) [0]

c - **Read Mind:** 17d6 Telepathy, Transdimensional (+¾), Invisible (+½), 0 END, 20 Pts Go to Make Telepathy Unnoticed (-¾) (234/85) [0]

d - **Open Mental Contact:** 10d6 Telepathy, NND: Not Being Human (+1), 0 END 13" Radius AE (+1) (175/89) [0]

Fearsome Aura: +40 PRE (40)

Commanding Gaze: +40 PRE, Not for Skill Rolls (-¼), Need Eye Contact (-¼) (27)

Ugly Visage: +2 COM (1)

Flash Defense: Vision, Hearing, Mental: 7 each, Hardened (27)

Mental Defense: 30, Hardened (29)

Power Defense: 20, Hardened (25)

Inescapable Mind:

Mental Awareness, Targeting, +20 Telescopic (53)

Mind Link x4 to Anyone, Any Distance/Dimension (35)

Cramming (5)

Eidetic Memory (10)

Background Skills & Perks:

God of Major Cult (10)
Concealment 15- (3)
Conversation 17- (3)
Deduction 15- (3)
Persuasion 17- (3)
Spell Research 23- (19)
Scholar (3)
KS: General Magic 15- (INT Based) (2)
KS: Black Magic Horrors 15- (2)
KS: Occult/Magic/Supernatural World 15- (2)
KS: Secret Things 15- (2)
KS: Human Evil 15- (2)
KS: World History 15- (2)
KS: World Politics 15- (2)
KS: Who's Who in Everything 15- (2)
KS: Analyze Magic Style 15- (2)
PS: Researcher 15- (INT Based) (3)
Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ any Knowledge Skill (6)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 933

Total Character Cost: 1023

Disadvantages: 100+

Hunted by:
Naga and Allies, 14- (As Pow) (20)

Physical Limitation:
Can Only Act in Very Limited Ways (25)

Psychological Limitation:
Lusts to Rule and Corrupt Humanity (25)
Vengeful (20)
Relishes Fear and Pain (15)
Fear of Non-human Minds (10)

Reputation:
Supreme Power of Evil 14- (extreme, limited group) (15)

Watched by:
Lords of Babylon, Elysium & Faerie, 8- (As Pow) (5)

Villain Bonus (788)

Total Disadvantage Points: 1023

Sample Power Pool Slots

Mental Illusions: 14d6, 0 END (105) [0]

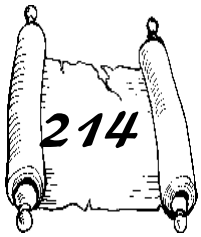
Mental Binding: 3d6, 3 DEF Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2), 0 END (105) [0]

Hellfire: 2d6 RKA, BODY BOECV (+2), 0 END (105) [0]

Gating: EDM: Netherworld, x4 Mass (30 pts), Continuous, Use by Other x2 (+½) 1 Hex AE, 0 END, Opens Both Ways (-½), Full Phase to Close (-½) (52) [0]

Summon Demon: 4 x 200 pt Summon Demons, Any Demons (+¼) (100)

Bind Soul: 2d6 Transform vs. EGO to Insane Slave, Cumulative, BOECV (+1), 0 END (105) [0]



The Dragon Incarnate

Straightway Odin cast the serpent into the deep sea, where he lies all about the land; and this serpent grew so greatly that he lies in the midst of the ocean encompassing all the land, and bites upon his own tail.

—Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*

This is an extremely powerful ectoplasmic body for the Dragon, one powerful enough to devastate armies and defeat whole teams of heroes. It's hardly plausible that such a body could be made from scratch, except maybe with the help of a high-powered artifact like the Tablet of Destiny. More likely, the Dragon's minions would incarnate it in a less powerful body and increase its power through further rituals featuring the sacrifice of magic items and hundreds (if not thousands) of human victims.

Thus incarnate, the Dragon loses much of its contact with the minds of all humanity, but it gains tremendous destructive power. Its gigantic body can crush a tank in one bite, knock over a skyscraper with a swat of its paw or send a whole convoy flying with a sweep of its wing or tail. Nor need it fear any mundane weapon less powerful than a nuke.

On top of that, it still has magical powers. Some are physical: the ability to breathe devastating blasts of fire, lightning or cold. Others are psychic, for it is still a master of minds. If it wants to take the time, it can cast powerful spells for any other effect it wants. (The GM must define what spells it has built when it is encountered.) It also still has its Presence Damage Shield, although not when it concentrates on attacking other ways (the Damage Shield is the default slot for the Multipower).

Free to act, with this sort of power, at first the Dragon will ravage the world, destroying whole cities for the fun of it. In a few days, however, it will settle down to establishing its New World Order. It will more selectively annihilate centers of government and use its mental powers to enslave political, military, business and cultural leaders. The very people needed to rally humanity against the Dragon will become its front men.

The Dragon will then set itself up as a god. King Cobra, VIPER, and the various Satanist cults will join it almost at once as they recognize their true master. Its minions will recruit other organizations notable for their evil, such as drug syndicates, racist groups, and of course supervillains, by promising them power over their enemies, swelling its cadre of worshippers. Gates to the Netherworld will unleash the Hordes of Hell on the Dragon's enemies. Unless the Dragon's body can be destroyed, in a month it will rule the world and the Earth will become a Hell of torment and despair. Forever.

Fortunately, such a mighty incarnation has impressive weaknesses as well. It is still only a projection or extension of the real Dragon, and that makes it vulnerable to certain exotic forms of magic which disrupt its astral cohesion. Its aura of evil is so powerful that every sorcerer and psychic in the world will know that it's loose, and have some idea what direction it is: within the hour, wizards by the dozen will mobilize to fight it and its minions. The Heavenly Hosts of Elysium will follow as soon as they can find a way to Earth, to engage the infernal legions of the Netherworld. But will they be enough?

In this form, the Dragon is about 400 feet long from nose to tail. It is a classic European dragon, with batlike wings, huge claws and teeth, scales the size of shields and a jagged crest running along its head and down its spine. Most of its body is shiny black, but the scutes along its belly are blood red.

The Dragon Incarnate

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
110	STR	10*	14-	100 kton; 22d6 [5]
18	DEX	24	15-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
40	CON	60	14-	
35	BODY	14*	12-	
28	INT	18	12-	PER Roll 15-
30	EGO	40	12-	ECV: 10
40	PRE	30	13-	PRE Attack 8 d6
0	COM	-5	9-	
30	PD	36		Total: 30 PD/ 30 rPD
30	ED	32		Total: 30 ED/ 30 rED
6	SPD	32		Pha 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
20	REC	16		
80	END	0		*Growth bonuses added
65	STUN	0*		in

Total Characteristic Cost: 287

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 30"/1920"

Powers & Skills:

Magical Abilities:

Spell Pool: Power Pool (105 pt pool), 1 Turn Between Attempts to Change Pool (-½) (140)

Spell Research: Pool Control 23- (19)

Giant Dragon Abilities:

Giant Monster Powers: Elemental Control (60)

a - **Growth**: 18 Levels, 0 END Persistent, Always On (80)

b - **Damage Reduction** (¾ vs. rPD, ¾ vs. rED) (60)

c - **Flight:** 30", 0 END, x32 NCM (60) [0]

Monstrous Attacks: Multipower (95 pt pool) (95)

u - **Claw/Bite:** 5d6 HKA (10d6 w/STR), ½ END (94/9) [4+]

u - **Swat:** 14d6 HA (22d6 w/STR) 1 Hex AE, ½ END (73/7) [3+]

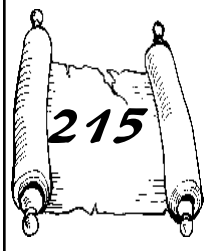
u - **Wing/Tail Sweep:** 9d6 HA (14d6 w/STR), x2 Knockback (+¾), 20" Cone AE (+1 ½), ½ END (94/9) [4+]

u - **Swallow Into Hell:** EDM: Netherworld (20 pts), Use vs. Other (+1), x500 Mass (+2 ¼) 1 Hex AE (95/9) [9]

u - **Portal To Hell:** EDM: Netherworld, x2 Mass (25 pts), Use by Other x1 (+¼), Continuous, 8 Hexes AE (+1), 0 END, Opens Both Ways (-½) (94/6) [0]

u - **Fire Breath:** 5d6 RKA, PI (94/9) [16c]

u - **Lightning Breath:** 19d6 EB (95/9) [16c]



u - **Frost Breath:** 2d6 RKA, BODY NND: LS: Cold (+2) (90/9) [16c]
u - **Ripping the Mind:** 7 ½d6 Ego Attack, ½ END (94/9) [4]
u - **Mental Illusions:** Mental Illusions, ½ END (94/9) [4]
u - **Telepathy:** 15d6, ½ END (94/9) [4]
u - **Mind Control:** 15d6, Nonverbal (94/9) [9]
u - **Mindlock:** 3d6, 3 DEF Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2) (90/9) [9]
u - **Mental Foulness:** 60 PRE, Damage Shield vs. Mental, Offensive Only (-½), Limited Effects (-¼) (90/5)
Foul Aura: +30 PRE, Damage Shield vs. Mental, Linked, Offensive Only, Limited Effects (20)
Tireless in Combat: ½ END on STR [27]
Wings & Tail: Extra Limbs (5)
Flash Defense, Vision, Hearing: 5 each (10)
Lack of Weakness: -5 (5)
Mental Defense: 20 (14)
Mental Damage Resistance: 6, Hardened (4)
Power Defense: 20, 5 pts Hardened (21)
Life Support: Full
Targeting Sense on Mental Awareness (23)
UV Vision (5)
Telescopic Vision: +8 (12)
Mind Link x1, Anyone, Any Dimension (25)
Cramming (5)
Eidetic Memory (10)
Universal Translator 15- (20)
Background Skills:
Perk: God of Major Cult (10)
Concealment 15- (3)
Conversation 17- (3)
Deduction 15- (3)
Persuasion 17- (3)
Scholar (3)
KS: General Magic 15- (INT Based) (2)
KS: Black Magic Horrors 15- (2)
KS: Occult/Magic/Supernatural World 15- (2)
KS: Secret Things 15- (2)
KS: Human Evil 15- (2)
KS: World History 15- (2)
KS: World Politics 15- (2)
KS: Who's Who in Everything 15- (2)
KS: Analyze Magic Style 15- (2)
PS: Researcher 15- (INT Based) (3)
Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ any Knowledge Skill (6)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 919

Total Character Cost: 1206

Disadvantages: 100+

Berserk:
When defied or insulted (vc) 11- 14- (20)
Distinctive Features:
Horrific Giant Monster (Can't Conceal, Extreme) (25)
Every Sensitive On Earth Knows It's Loose (Can't Conceal, Strong) (20)
Hunted by:
Naga and Allies, 14- (As Pow) (20)
Lords of Elysium 14- (As Pow) (20)
Physical Limitation:
No Fine Manipulation (15)
Psychological Limitation:
Lusts to rule and Corrupt Humanity (25)
Vengeful (20)
Relishes Fear and Pain (15)
Reputation:
Supreme Power of Evil 14- (extreme, limited group) (15)
Susceptibility:
3d6 STUN + BODY, Going 24 Hours Without 20 Human Sacrifices (uncommon) (30)
Unluck: 3d6 (15)
Vulnerability:
x2 STUN, BODY, from BOECV Attacks that do BODY (uncommon) (20)
x1 ½ STUN, BODY, Other Effect, Transdimensional Attacks (uncommon) (15)
x 1 ½ STUN, BODY, Other Effect, Affects Desolid Attacks (uncommon) (15)
Watched by:
Lords of Babylon, Elysium & Faerie, 8- (As Pow) (5)
Villain Bonus (811)

Total Disadvantage Points: 1206

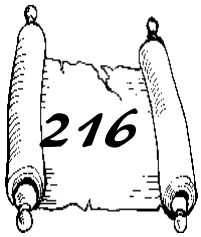
The Dragon Incarnate, Mk. II: The Tiamat Brazier

The Tiamat Brazier is another way the Dragon could manifest on Earth; this time, by possessing a golem specially created and consecrated for that purpose. The Tiamat Brazier could be created by a sorcerer or cult in service to the Dragon, such as an Ouroboros cell or a member of the Sylvestri clan. Any halfway competent group of sorcerer heroes could defeat and destroy the Tiamat Brazier; even a single hero could do it, with good strategy. Of course, the heroes will have to get past the cultists or other defenders first.

It's not its combat abilities, however, that make the Tiamat Brazier dangerous. Once a month, on the night of the New Moon, it can send a wave of psychic force sweeping outward almost half a mile. Because of the Area effect and Indirect, Line of Sight is not necessary; everyone in the Area of Effect has their mind opened further to the Dragon's influence.

The next time the person feels some selfish, antisocial urge—to shoplift something she can't afford, to beat hell out of that annoying kid, to force himself on the pretty dame who keeps saying no, whatever—the Dragon gives them a nudge to make them act on that urge. (This is an EGO + 10 effect; something the target wouldn't mind doing.) When the Tiamat Brazier has fanned the fires of Id, an incredible wave of beatings, muggings, thefts, rapes and murders follows. Heroes, being strong willed sorts, can ignore the Tiamat Brazier's perfidious influence…but what will happen to the city?

The Tiamat Brazier appears to be a knobby, black iron statue of an emaciated, wingless dragon; the style is rather like one of H. R. Giger's Aliens. The top of the head, however, is cut off to form a bowl of fire. This fire also shines through the red glass eyes. This fire is the Tiamat Brazier's greatest weakness: if the flame is extinguished, the Brazier goes berserk, cannot use its mental powers and gradually loses its life force. A similar but even more rapid weakening happens if the Brazier is enveloped in a Mental Defense Force Wall, which interferes with the Dragon's possession of the golem body.



The Dragon will do its best to keep the Tiamat Brazier free and active. Not only does the Brazier increase the Dragon's grip on thousands of people at a time, it lets the Dragon gain direct experience of the material world. And so what if it must ditch the minions who created the Brazier? With its power to read human desires and exploit them, it can recruit new minions easily enough.

The Dragon Incarnate, Mk. II: The Tiamat Brazier

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
35	STR	10*	16-	3200 kg; 7d6 [3]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
25	CON	30	14-	
12	BODY	2*	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	26	12-	ECV: 8
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack 6d6
0	COM	-5	9-	
16	PD	10*		Total: 29 PD/ 13 rPD
16	ED	9*		Total: 29 ED/ 13 rED
5	SPD	22		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	12		
50	END	0		*Growth & DI bonuses
45	STUN	10*		added in

Total Characteristic Cost: 178

Movement: Running: 12"/24"
Swimming: 0"/0"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Ability:
- **Combat Levels:** +2 Levels w/ Claw (6)

Living Statue Powers:
- **Living Statue:** Elemental Control (15)
  - a - **Huge Size:** 10 pts Density Increase + 5 pts Growth, 0 END Persistent, Always On (30/10) [0]
  - b - **Claw:** 1 ½d6 HKA, ½ END (31/16) [1+]
  - c - **Brazier Body:** Armor (+13 PD +13 ED) (39/24)
  - d - **Pain Resistance:** Damage Reduction (¼ vs. rPD, ½ vs. rED) (45/30)
  - e - **Golem Metabolism:** Life Support: Full (15)
- **Mental Flame:** Multipower (75 pt pool), Fragile IAF Flame in Head (-¾) (43)
  - u - **Mind Control:** 10d6 Nonverbal, ½ END (75/4) [3]
  - u - **Telepathy:** 12d6, ½ END (75/4) [3]
  - u - **Breathe Fire:** 2d6 RKA, AP, +1 STUN Mult (+½), PI, ½ END (75/4) [3]
  - u - **Foul Aura:** +50 PRE, Damage Shield vs. Mental, Offensive Only (-½), Limited Effects (-¼) (75/3)
- **Fan the Fires of Id:** 6d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal, Trigger: Next Selfish, Antisocial Urge (+¼), Indirect (+½), 6" x 64 Radius AE (+2 ½), Fixed Command: Do It! (- ½), 0 Range, Only at Dark of the Moon (-2), 5 minutes Extra Time (-2), Fragile IAF Flame in Head (-¾) (15) [1c]
- **Flash Defense**, Vision: 5 (5)
- **Mental Defense:** 20 (15)
- **Power Defense:** 8 (8)
- **Knockback Resistance:** -2 (4)
- **Targeting** on Mental Awareness (23)
- **Running:** +6" (12" total) (12) [1/5"]
- **Swimming:** -2" (-2)
- **Universal Translator** 13- (20)

Background Skills:
- Climbing 13-
- Concealment 13- (3)
- Deduction 13- (3)
- Persuasion 15- (3)
- Scholar
- KS: General Magic 13- (2) (INT Based)
- KS: Black Magic Horrors 13- (2)
- KS: Occult World 13- (2)
- KS: Analyze Magic Style 13- (2)
- KS: Secret Things 13- (2)
- KS: Human Evil 13- (2)
- KS: World History 13- (2)
- KS: World Politics 13- (2)
- KS: Who's Who in Everything 13- (2)
- **Skill Levels:** +1 Level w/ any Knowledge Skill (3)

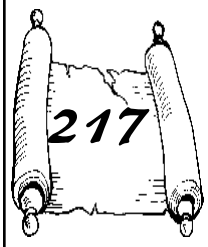
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 310

Total Character Cost: 488

Disadvantages: 100+

- **Berserk:**
  - When defied or insulted (vc) 8- 14- (15)
  - If head flame is extinguished (c), 14- 14- (20)
- **Distinctive Features:**
  - Grotesque Living Statue (Hard to Conceal, Scary) (15)
- **Hunted by:**
  - Hunted by occult Heroes, 8- (More Pow) (15)
- **Physical Limitation:**
  - No Fine Manipulation (15)
- **Psychological Limitation:**
  - Striving to Corrupt and Rule Mankind (25)
  - Vengeful (20)
  - Relishes Pain, Fear and Worship (15)
- **Reputation:**
  - Supreme Power of Evil 8- (extreme, limited group) (10)
- **Susceptibility:**
  - 1d6 STUN/Turn, Head Flame Extinguished (c) (15)
  - 1d6 STUN/Phase, Being Inside Mental Force Wall (uncommon) (15)
- **Unluck:** 2d6 (10)
- **Villain Bonus** (198)

Total Disadvantage Points: 488



The Nagas

Korkpee the first snake-man came up out of the salt water by the Larakia country in the north. He carried with him a big bundle of the sacred objects called Darndurr and he carried a big bundle of kininga, the yam sticks, with which he made spring water.

—Australian Aboriginal legend

Background: Humanity has never stood alone against the Dragon. We've had the Nagas as helpers and advisors. Curiously, humanity's allies are also reptilian. Mythology speaks of serpents, dragons and snake-men as bringers of wisdom, prosperity and civilization as often as it portrays them as corrupters and destroyers.

The Nagas refuse to disclose their own origins, but they have been around as long as the Dragon has. Between them, the Nagas and the Dragon founded the first civilizations and used them to make war on each other—a war for the future of humanity. That war continues to this day.

Nowadays, though, the Nagas stay in the background. They seem bound by an inscrutable code of conscience: they have raised empires and cast them down, but they never meet force with force. Unlike the Dragon, the Nagas never *compel* people to do anything. Instead, they create situations in which a carefully selected person is overwhelmingly likely to do what they want—the right person in the right place at the right time. With wizards who have shown concern for humanity, they are more straightforward: they warn mages about major plots by the Dragon and suggest they put a stop to them.

What are the Nagas? From whence did they come? Why have they opposed the Dragon for 6000 years? The masters of occult lore agree that solving the mystery of the Nagas would also solve the mystery of the Dragon—or vice versa. No one seems to know the answers but the Nagas themselves, and they won't tell. They only say that until humanity can master the Dragon on its own, they must follow their duty.

Quote: "*My identity is unimportant. I believe you should know that a threat to Humanity is growing on Sakhalin Island—I must say no more. Here are plane tickets, if you need them.*"

Personality: Despite their commitment to human destiny, the Nagas are pacifists. They are teachers, advisors and sometimes manipulators; only a truly desperate situation will prompt them to act directly, and even then the Nagas eschew violence. They may help humanity's champions, but they insist that humanity must solve its own problems and fight its own battles.

Powers/Tactics: All Nagas are masters of both Thaumaturgy and Theurgy (although their form of theurgy is not limited to the traditions of any one human culture). Each has mastered at least one other style of magic as well, such as elementalism or alchemy.

In its basic form, a Naga only has a 52 point Power Pool, and when it takes human form it must take a Phase and use a Spell Research roll to shift the Power Pool. In a crisis, a Naga can assume its full-power, "Seraph" form in which its Cosmic Power Pool increases to 80 points and it gains several other powers besides. The Nagas can only use their full power for a short time as it tires them greatly. (There is a practical as well as a philosophical reason for making humanity look after itself.)

Until a Naga is directly attacked, it uses its magic to prevent confrontation. They often use illusions to keep potential menaces distracted, at least long enough for innocent bystanders to get away; then they vanish themselves.

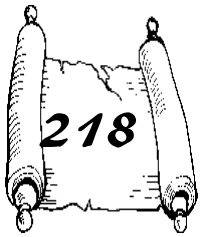
Appearance: The Nagas have three forms. Their basic "Naga" form is a snake-man, a humanoid torso on a long snake body. Their entire skin is scaly. They have narrow, triangular faces. Instead of hair, they have a saw-toothed crest on their head. Individual Nagas can be recognized by slight differences in their features and the color patterns of their scales. They are generally spoken of as male, just because they show no female sexual features, but no one really knows if they have gender at all. Their scales are yellow-green, dark green and bronze.

When the Nagas use their full power, they change to their second form. They turn transparent white, surrounded by a swirling aura of iridescent light. Wings unfold from their shoulders; their aura gives an appearance like feathers. This is their "Seraph" form.

Finally, the Nagas often use their magic to assume human form. They use a form of neutral race: is the person a light-skinned black, a swarthy Caucasian, or an Asian? The head is totally bald; the eyebrows, the only hair they show, are black but the eyes might be any color. They dress conservatively and unobtrusively. In the Western world, for instance, typical garb might be a tan suit, with a green tie and a golden tie-tack shaped like a Chinese dragon as the only distinctive element. They seem male, but that's probably just to fit cultural assumptions about authority figures. They use obvious pseudonyms like "Mr. Smith."

At least, these are the Nagas' *usual* forms. Their magic would let them temporarily assume any form they wanted, if it suited their purpose.

The Nagas make their home in a secret valley somewhere in the high mountain ranges of Central Asia. Their magic protects it from detection and invasion. There they keep the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. In the West, most people think the Tree of Knowledge is an apple tree. The Chinese claim that the Tree of Life is a peach tree. Since both trees grow wild in the Central Asian mountains, the legends may be right.



The Nagas

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	100 kg; 2d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
20	CON	20	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
28	INT	18	15-	PER Roll 15-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack 3½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	8		Total: 27 PD/ 16 rPD
10	ED	6		Total: 27 ED/ 16 rED
4	SPD	12		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	4		
40	END	0		*Only in Hero ID (-¼)
25	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 116

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 12"/384""

Powers & Skills:

Magic Abilities:
- **Spell Casting:**
  - **Power Pool** (52 pt pool), Cosmic in Super ID (+2, -¼), -½ Var Lim (-¼) (104)
  - **Enhanced Magic** Power Pool (+28 pt pool), Cosmic*, -½ Var Lim (-¼), Only in Fully Energized Form & Taking CON Drain (-1) (45)
- **Mental Defense:** 14, 6 pts Hardened (11)
- **Power Defense:** 5 (5)
- **Life Support:** Immune to Disease, Does not Age (6)
- **Sense Magic**, Ranged, Discriminatory (15)
- **Astral Awareness** (3)

Energized Form:
- **Energized Form:** Elemental Control*, Side Effect: 1 ½d6 CON Drain, Recover 1 CON/2 Hours (-1) (10)
  - a - **Force Field** (11 PD 11 ED, 6 PowD), Hardened, 0 END (47/11) [0]
  - b - **Energy Aura:** 2d6 RKA, Damage Shield (45/10) [4]
  - c - **Wings:** Flight 12", x32 NCM (44/10) [1/5"]
  - d - **Energy Enhancement:** 2d6 Aid, Max +18 Pts (+3 pts), vs. All Chars Except CON, INT & COM (+2), Lose 1 pt/minute (+½) (45/10) [4]
- **Energized Armor:** Armor* (+5 PD, +5 ED) (12)
- **Tail:**
  - Extra Limb*, Limited Manipulation (-½) (3)
  - **Reach:** +1" Stretching*, 0 END, Limited Manipulation (-½) (4) [0]

Background Skills & Abilities:
- Cramming (5)
- Eidetic Memory (10)
- Conversation 13- (3)
- Cryptography 15- (3)
- Deduction 15- (3)
- English, fluent, no accent (3)
- Jack of All Trades (3)
- KS: Analyze Magic Styles 15- (INT Based) (2)
- KS: General Magic 15- (2)
- KS: Legends 15- (2)
- KS: Magical Beings 15- (2)
- KS: Occult/Supernatural World 15- (2)
- KS: Other 15- (2)
- KS: Other Magic Style 15- (2)
- KS: Thaumaturgy 15- (2)
- KS: Theurgy 15- (2)
- KS: World History 15- (2)
- Linguist: Native Nagan
- Other Language, fluent, no accent (3)
- Other Language, fluent, no accent (3)
- Other Skill of Choice (3)
- Other Skill of Choice (3)
- Scholar (3)
- Spell Research 18- (9)
- Initiate: Legendary Fount of Magic (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 341

Total Character Cost: 457

Disadvantages: 100+

Accidental Change:
- to Naga Form if Struck by Magic Attack (c) 14- (20)

Distinctive Features:
- Serpent Man, Great Magical Power (Hard to Conceal, Strong Reaction) (15)

Hunted by:
- Hunted by Dragon & Minions 14- (As Pow) (20)
- Hunted by Assorted Evil Wizards, 8- (As Pow) (10)

Psychological Limitation:
- Always Uses Minimum Force (25)
- Committed to Human Welfare in Broadest Form (20)
- Secretive (15)

Susceptibility:
- 1d6 STUN/Turn, Being Near Dragon, its Avatars or Creations (uncommon) (10)

Bonus (222)

Total Disadvantage Points: 457

Another Historical Mage

Levi, Eliphas

(1810?-1870): Pseudonym of Alphonse Louis Constant, a defrocked French priest and artist who became the most famous occultist of the 19th century. His books, such as *Dogma and Ritual of High Magic, The Key to the Mysteries* and *History of Magic,* popularized both kabbalism and the notion of the Astral Plane among European occultists. Indeed, Levi coined the term "occultism." Although Levi geve lessons in occultism, he did not claim to be a practicing sorcerer. He did claim that once an admirer talked him into summoning the spirit of Apollonius of Tyana, but that the experiment gave ambiguous results: a spirit briefly appeared and knocked Levi out, but Levi didn't know if it was the ghost of the famous mage.

Villains

"Attempting to be more than Man We become less"

—William Blake, *The Four Zoas*

Magical heroes need villains to fight. Magical villains can be amazingly diverse. This section can only give a few examples of villainous mages, magical beings, and their organizations.

Special Villain Types

These are types of villains particularly associated with wizard heroes and an all-magic campaign, as distinct from villains who just happen to have magical powers.

Dimensional Conqueror

"Ah! Are there other wars beside the wars of sword and fire?
"And are there other sorrows beside the sorrows of poverty?
"And are there other joys beside the joys of riches and ease?
"And is there not one law for both the lion and the ox?

—William Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*

At the high end of the power scale is the ultra-powerful magical tyrant who rules an entire cosmos. Even this isn't enough for the Dimensional Conqueror, however. These megalomaniacs want to take over worlds in other dimensions, too. To be precise, DCs want to annex the Earth, which for some reason is an extremely valuable piece of real estate. Perhaps the presence of super beings has something to do with this…

The Dimensional Conqueror often has some mystical link to its home plane that augments its power. Sometimes the DC is just a very powerful sorcerer. Other DCs are purely supernatural beings or cosmic entities with innate powers instead of spells: they don't *use* magic, they *are* magic, and sorcerers on other planes may invoke their power. Others can be somewhere in between, mighty sorcerers who magically transubstantiated their bodies from flesh and blood to mystical force.

It's a good idea not to introduce too many Dimensional Conquerors into a campaign. One or two highly distinctive "regulars" are quite enough, with one or two more as occasional fill-ins. Each DC should have some unique feature of its appearance, powers or methods, for there is danger of DCs seeming like cookie-cutter stereotypes. All DCs are megalomaniacs in the extreme, with a lust for committing rudeness on Earth that passes all reason—if they didn't, there'd be no story. Anything that distinguishes one DC from another, or from other powerful magical villains, is useful.

A high-end Dimensional Conqueror has enough raw power to trash an entire superhero team in a simple brawl. Low-end DCs are still powerful enough that heroes must consider their tactics instead of just blasting away. Every DC has a 100+ point Multipower for special feats and favorite attacks and/or defenses. A high-end DC will add a hefty Power Pool. Attacks should be 15-20 active points higher than the normal range for the heroes' attacks, with correspondingly high defenses. Damage Reduction is obligatory, so a lucky Stun Multiplier roll on a Killing Attack doesn't one-punch the DC.

Fortunately for the heroes, Dimensional Conquerors have equally large limitations on their actions, which provide the key to their defeat. Very often the DC has such a monstrous ego that it fights with one hand tied behind its back, so to speak, deliberately not using its full power so as better to display its omnipotence.

Bromion, Lord Of Order

Background: The Ordainer called Bromion didn't always work for Urizen the Lawgiver. Originally, Bromion was one of the greatest of the Lords of Artifice, a Son of Los and one of his father's chief assistants at the forge of worlds. Bromion was the Prime Avatar of Art's envoy to Order, personifying the critical faculty. He often worked with Urizen when the Zoas of Art and Order cooperated in creating a civilization.

Bromion came to sympathize too strongly with Urizen's plans to order and regiment life throughout the Multiverse. He decided that Urizen's Order was also the highest expression of Art, and therefore Los, Enitharmon, and all their children should support Urizen without reservation. This led him into conflict with other children of Los. The dispute escalated until Bromion raped Oothoon, the soul of sweet delight and Emanation of his brother Theotormon. Outraged, Theotormon captured Bromion and imprisoned him. Bromion escaped, however, by renouncing his status as a Son of Los and cosmic entity. Instead he became one of Urizen's Ordainers.

When Bromion fell from Briah into the worlds of Matter, he lost much of his power. After creating the Millworks as a base of operations, however, he still has enough power to bring other worlds under Urizen's sway. He is one of the most devoted and dangerous of the Lords of Order.

Quote: *"All evil is disobedience and disharmony. Without free will, there can be no evil. Submit!"*

Personality: Bromion is a fanatic. When he fell from true cosmic status and became a mere Ordainer, his mind shrank as well as his power. He is a mere Spectre of his former self. His love of structure and planning hardened into a blind hatred of disobedience and "messiness." Even most of Urizen's mortal servants think that Bromion is a bit extreme. Bromion sees his task as that of eliminating all free will, so that no one will ever disobey Urizen's Law.

About the only thing that can turn Bromion aside from fighting people whom he has set out to capture and enslave, is damage to an area he has shaped into his ideal of mechanistic perfection—especially damage to the Millworks itself. His impulse to keep things tidy is as strong as his drive to capture and "correct" rebellious mortals. This is an opportunity for an Unluck check: if Bromion receives even a single point of Unluck, his neatness fetish makes him break off combat to make repairs.

For such a compulsively self-controlled guy, Bromion's attitudes toward his former alignment are woefully confused. Deep down, Bromion knows that his defection was wrong; that's why he defends it so fanatically. Servants of Art painfully remind him of his former state. If a Servant of Art seems at all sympathetic, Bromion will try recruiting them to the side of Order as well; their defection will confirm his own. If the Servant of Art is not sympathetic, Bromion will make a special effort to destroy them and may hunt them thereafter.

Powers/Tactics: While Bromion no longer has the incalculable power he once had as a Son of Los, his magical powers are still quite vast. His ability to subtly shape thoughts has curdled into a set of spells, the Bindings of Bromion, for brute-force mind control. He also knows several other spells, either generic or developed by other Ordainers, and some of these are very powerful as well.

In combat, however, Bromion prefers his lesser (75 Active Point) spells so he can keep his full defenses. Normally Bromion fights cautiously. He prefers spells which simply prevent opponents from fighting back, such as the Silver Circles of Selestar, his ECV Entangle or the Cloud of Unknowing. Once Bromion has all his opponents restrained, he breaks out the spells that do STUN. He only uses his full-power attacks if he's lost his temper. His Power Pool usually goes to create special senses or defenses (for instance, an Enhanced Sense so he can see through his own Cloud of Unknowing, or a defense to block an NND attack to which he is otherwise vulnerable.)

Bromion's importance to Urizen rests, however, on his knowledge of magical smithcraft. Bromion can create magic items of great power or completely transform a captive. Bromion can make a person as fanatically devoted to Order as he is, and even give them super-powers. Bromion prefers to work his smithcraft through the Millworks, since once the Millworks machinery is set for a task, it and Bromion's drone servants can do the job on their own with no further supervision.

Bromion can even transport people from any other dimension to the Millworks. Fortunately, he usually considers such personal kidnapping to be beneath his status. Unfortunately, he has created magic items to do his dirty work for him and spread them through dozens of dimensions, including Earth. (See "Obelisk of Bromion" under "Gates" in Chapter Two.)

Finally, Bromion can create vast magical effects through the Millworks: this is represented through his Headquarters points. Automated soul-smithing is just one effect. Bromion can also manufacture magic items or do anything else a plot demands, if he has time to prepare. For instance, Bromion can spy on other dimensions or even look through time if the GM so desires, create magical super-weapons or assemble special-purpose automaton minions. If Bromion has reason to expect an invasion of the Millworks, he will certainly put Headquarters points into special attacks or defenses for himself and set traps for the attackers.

Appearance: Bromion's head and arms look like those of a normal human. He has a narrow face and his lips are usually pursed in disapproval. Most of his body, however, is hidden by his swirling, faceted robes. He could be thin or fat, tall or short. (In fact, under his Ordainer's robes Bromion is quite brawny; pumping bellows and swinging a hammer for a few eternities will keep even a spirit in good shape. No physical, magical or mental force can remove Bromion's robes, however, since they are part of his self image and therefore part of Bromion himself.) In addition to his shining, pastel robes, Bromion wears a cylindrical white headdress and a large, golden disk as a brooch.

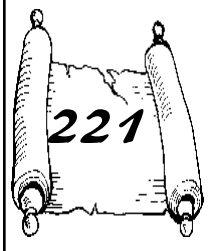
Bromion's Bindings take the form of rhombs of colored light. Most of his other spells are generic globes and beams of light. His big repair spell has an especially impressive special effect: a miles-high phantom image of Bromion appears and tendrils of white light spread out from its fingers. As the tendrils move through the Millworks, damage to the machinery disappears.

Bromion, Lord Of Order

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	1600 kg; 6d6 [3]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
30	CON	40	15-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack 6d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
25	PD	19		Total: 35 PD/ 35 rPD
25	ED	19		Total: 35 ED/ 35 rED
6	SPD	27		Pha 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	6		
60	END	0		
45	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 238

Movement: Running: 6"/12"



Powers & Skills:

Magic:

Library of Spells: Multipower (106 pt. pool) (106)

u - **Bindings of Bromion:** 12d6 Mind Control, ½ END (75/7) [3]

u - **Bindings of Bromion:** 2 ½d6, 2 DEF Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2) (75/7) [7]

u - **Bindings of Bromion:** 20 STR TK, BOECV, PI, ½ END (75/7) [3]

u - **Mystic Bolt I:** 5d6 EB, AVLD: Power Defense (+1 ½), PI, ½ END (75/7) [3]

u - **Mystic Bolt II:** 6d6 EB, BOECV (+1), PI, ½ END (75/7) [3]

u - **Nimbus of Nullity:** 20d6 Dispel, vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼) (75/7) [7]

u - **Silver Circles of Selestar:** 6d6 Entangle, PI (75/7) [7]

u - **Cloud of Unknowing:** 1" radius Darkness vs. Sense Magic, Danger Sense & All Vision, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged, Uncontrolled, 8 chgs of 1 turn (-0), Cost END (75/5) [7]

u - **Mystic Shield I:** Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 10 MD), ½ END (37/4) [1]

u - **Mystic Shield II:** Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 10 PowD), ½ END (37/4) [1]

u - **Deflecting Disk:** Missile Deflection +5 vs. Magic (30/3)

u - **Magical Enhancement:** 5d6 Aid vs. Any Physical Characteristic (+¼) (31/3) [3]

u - **Greater Bindings of Bromion:** 8 ½d6 minor Transform vs. EGO, Any EGO +10 Mind Control Effect Made Permanent (+¼), Gestures (106/9) [11]

u - **Greater Bindings of Bromion:** 10d6 Mind Control, Nonselective 10" Radius AE (+1), Gestures (100/8) [10]

u - **Greater Bindings of Bromion:** 25 STR TK w/Fine Manipulation, BOECV, ½ END, Gestures (108/10) [5]

u - **Broad Mystic Blast:** 6d6 EB, AVLD: Power Defense (+1 ½), PI, Nonselective 16" Cone AE (+¾), (105/8) [10]

u - **Gating:** EDM, any dimension, Continuous, Use by Other x1 (+¼), ½ END, initial Gestures, Opens Both Ways (-½), Full Phase to Close (-½) (100/4) [5]

u - **Gating Snatch:** EDM to Millworks x2 Mass, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged, Indirect (+½), Transdimensional: Any (+1), G, 1 phase Extra Time (-½), Opens Both Ways (-½), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½) (100/4) [10]

u - **Repair the Millworks:** 1d6 Transform (damaged to whole), Cumulative, Indirect (+½), Continuous, ½ END, 5" x 2exp11 Radius AE (+3 ¾), constant Gestures (-½), constant Concentrate 0 DCV (-1) (105/4) [5]

u - **Smithing:** 2 ½d6 Transform, Universal (+1), Cumulative, Gestures, 0 Range, Concentrate 0 DCV (-½) (95/4) [10]

Magic On the Fly: Power Pool (20 pt pool), 0 Phase to Change (+1), INT Roll to Change (+0), Only 1 Power At a Time (-½) (33)

Lord of Order Abilities:

Spirit Powers: Elemental Control (15)

a - **Damage Resistance** (25 PD, 25 ED), Hardened (16)

b - **Life Support**: Full (16)

c - **Sense Magic,** Targeting, +2 PER (15)

d - **Spiritual Resistance:** Damage Reduction (½ rPD, ½ rED), Only vs. Killing Attacks (-1) (22)

Hardened Defense on base PD, ED (12)

Flash Defense, Sight: 5 (5)

Lack of Weakness: -5 (5)

Mental Defense: 15 (10)

Power Defense: 10 (10)

Universal Translator 14- (20)

Background Skills:

Breakfall 14- (3)

Deduction 14- (3)

Spell Research 14- (3)

Scholar (3)

KS: Thaumaturgy 14- (INT Based) (2)

KS: Plane Lore 14- (2)

KS: Urizen's Law and Organization 14- (2)

KS: Mental Transforms 14- (2)

KS: Physical Transforms 14- (2)

KS: Spell Transforms 14- (2)

KS: Time Lore 14- (2)

Perk: Head of State (10)

200 pt Headquarters Reserve (40)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 483

Total Character Cost: 721

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:

Visibly Radiates Power (Can't Conceal, Scary) (20)

Hunted by:

Agents of Chaos, 8- (As Pow) (10)

Psychological Limitation:

Won't Compromise or Negotiate (vc, strong) (20)

Hates Disrespect/Disobedience (20)

Driven to Create/Maintain Order (15)

Hunting Servants of Art (15)

Public ID (10)

Reputation:

Order Freak, Hates Free Will 11-, Extreme (10)

Susceptibility:

1d6 STUN/turn, Being in Area Consecrated to Chaos (uncommon) (15)

Unluck: 3d6 (15)

Vulnerability:

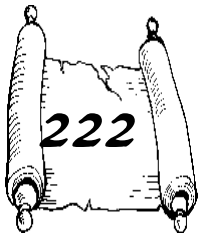
x1 ½ STUN, BODY, Chaos Magic (uncommon) (10)

Watched by:

Urizen, 11- (More Pow) (10)

Villain Bonus (451)

Total Disadvantage Points: 721



Petty Dimension Lord

These wannabe cousins of the Dimensional Conqueror have far less power. They may threaten visitors to their home dimensions, but have no hope of conquering other worlds. Very often, they rule their tiny home dimensions simply through lack of any serious opposition. While a Petty Dimension Lord often has a few really formidable special powers, once the heroes find a way around the PDL's main power the PDL isn't much tougher than a regular, superhero- level sorcerer. With clever tactics, even a lone PC wizard can fight a Petty Dimension Lord and win.

Petty Dimension Lords seldom become regular enemies of sorcerer heroes. They are usually encountered because a sorcerer has landed in their dimension by mistake, or because the PDL has some artifact or information the hero requires. A Dimensional Conqueror or other magical villain might decoy a hero into a Petty Dimension Lord's realm as a trap.

Cassai

Background: There isn't one. Cassai has been around a long time, doing pretty much the same thing he does today. Since he is fundamentally a minor character with a one-dimensional personality, created to fill a few specific roles, he doesn't need a fancy background. If one wants to make Cassai a recurring character in the campaign, one can invent a life story for him. If not, all one needs to know about this Petty Dimension Lord is that he used to be mortal; now he's not; and he is tremendously paranoid and greedy for magical energy.

Cassai is an avaricious specialty craftsman. He's quite skilled in making magic items, and will do this for anyone who will pay him. He only takes payment, however, in magical energy, the same energy he uses to enchant magic items. He always demands at least twice as much energy (in Active Point terms) as the item will require. Cassai will take magical energy in the form of other magic items, standing enchantments he can Drain, or raw life-force taken from willing or unwilling victims.

One employs Cassai by contacting him extra-dimensionally and shipping "payment" to him. Then, at a pre-arranged time, Cassai will place the finished item at a pre-arranged place in his dimension for the client to pick up. Delivery to a client's own dimension costs extra. The only time Cassai ever willingly lets anyone else into his dimension is when a client sends beings (these must be sentient beings) for Cassai to drain. Cassai will leave victims just barely alive if so instructed; otherwise, he will assume that he can take all their life-force.

Quote: "*Intrudings! Thievings!* ***Punish and destroy!"***

Personality: Cassai has two ruling passions: greed and paranoia. He wants to increase his store of magical energy, and he lives in fear of robbers taking his precious energy. He expects that robbers will also try to kill him. Thus, Cassai hardly ever leaves his dimension, even to collect fees or deliver finished items, because he always suspects that enemies will ambush him, keep him from returning home and thereby kill him, and then loot his treasury.

Why does Cassai collect magical energy so fanatically? He just does, that's all. If Cassai is developed into a more significant character, then Cassai is probably building a stockpile for some really tremendous feat of enchantment—using his Cumulative Power Transform to create something with hundreds of Active Points, such as a major artifact or a spell to turn himself into a dimension lord on the order of Skarn.

Powers/Tactics: Cassai is quite an expert at manipulating magical energy. Most of his spells work by stealing, absorbing or redirecting magical energy. His "Cursed Clutch" spells are actually ranged variations on his spells to Transfer magic or life-force, although they cost more energy than they send to Cassai—unless someone else uses them, the reason why Cassai teaches them (for a surprisingly low price) to mages on other planes. (The "Cursed Clutch of Cassai" is described more thoroughly in Chapter Four.)

Unless Cassai has gone Berserk, in combat he merely tries to incapacitate opponents, so he can siphon away their magic and life-force later. Thus he prefers to use Ego Attacks and the AVLD attacks, with Flashes to blind opponents. If opponents prove unusually hard to subdue, or Cassai has gone Berserk, he switches to the lethal form of his Cursed Clutch and the Sorcerer's Star EB. If opponents seem especially dangerous, Cassai will keep his Precessive Shield up and try to turn the enemy's spells against them.

Cassai's most valued spell, however, is his Power Transform. When he has built up enough magical energy in his own body (i.e. when his END is high enough), he materializes it in the form of an iridescent crystal egg. This is a Cumulative Power Transform—pure magical energy, ready to be turned into enchantments for magic items. Since Cassai has already cast the Transform, anyone who knows the rituals to shape the energy (the Trigger) can use these crystal eggs.

Appearance: Cassai stands at least 8' tall but is very thin, with long arms and legs and a long, wedge-like head. He wears a ribbed tabard belted at the waist. His body seems to be made of pale blue crystal, his tabard of sheet silver. Circular ripples of lavender energy constantly radiate from his head, torso, hands and feet.

Cassai's small dimension is a taffy-pull chaos of gaunt, angled bands of white stone and twisting streams of blue fire in empty space. A simple disk of white stone hanging in space is the only part of Cassai's dimension where one can enter or leave through Extra Dimensional Movement or where one can teleport: in the rest of the dimension, those movement modes are blocked as if by a Hardened Force Field (of course Cassai is immune to this effect). Cassai's palace looks like several abstract, Art Deco cathedrals set base to base to form a star.

Cassai

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	400 kg; 4d6 [2]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
21	EGO	11	13-	ECV: 7
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack 4d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
20	PD	16		Total: 28 PD/ 18 rPD
20	ED	16		Total: 28 ED/ 18 rED
6	SPD	29		Pha 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	14		
40	END	0		
35	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 191

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 10"/20"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Multipower(10)

Magic:
Magic Powers: Elemental Control (15)
a - **Mystic Shield:** Force Field (8 PD, 8 ED, 8 PowD), 0 END (36/24) [0]
b - **Life Support:** Full (30/15)
c - **Flight:** 10", 0 END (30/15)
d - **Sense Magic,** Targeting, +2 PER (29/15)
e - **Magic Absorption:** 3d6 ED Absorption, Max +30 pts (+6 pts), to All Magic (+2), Lose 5 pts/Minute (+¼); +1d6 ED Absorption to END, Max +20 END (+4 pts), Lose 2 END/Turn (+¼); Only vs. Magic (-½) (79/43)
Spells: Multipower (69 pt pool), -½ Var Lim: GI/Acts 14- (-¼), Side Effect: 3d6 Drain vs. Aborted/Dispelled/Reflected Slot (-¼) (46)
u - **Cursed Clutch:** 6 ½d6 Ego Attack (65/4) [6]
u - **Cursed Clutch:** 4 ½d6 Ego Attack, AP (67/5) [7]
u - **Cursed Clutch:** 1d6 RKA, BODY BOECV (+2), Penetrating, +2 STUN Mult (+1) (67/5) [7]
u - **Siphon Magic:** 3d6 Transfer to END, vs. Any Magic (+¼), Return 1 pt/Turn (+¼) (67/5) [7]
u - **Siphon Life Force:** 3 ½d6 BODY Transfer to END, Return 1 BODY/2 Turns (+¼) (69/5) [7]
u - **Saffron Sphere:** 4d6 Flash vs. Vision, 1 Hex AE [60/4] [6]
u - **Saffron Sphere:** 4d6 EB, AVLD: Flash Defense vs. Vision (+1 ½), 1 Hex AE, PI (65/4) [6]
u - **Sorcerer's Star:** 13d6 EB (65/4) [6]
u - **Sorcerer's Star:** 5d6 EB, AVLD: Power Defense (+1 ½) (62/4) [6]
u - **Precessive Shield:** Missile Reflection +9 vs. Any Magic, to Any Target (68/5)
u - **Store Magic:** 1 ½d6 Transform, Universal (+1), Cumulative, Trigger: Ritual (+¼), x8 END (-3 ½) (63/1) [48]
u - **Clairsentience:** Normal Vision/Sense Magic, Other Dimensions, 0 END, Concentrate ½ DCV Throughout (-½) (67/3)
u - **EDM:** Any Plane, x4 Mass (50/3) [5]

Dimension Lord Powers:
Damage Resistance (10 PD, 10 ED) (10)
Flash Defense, Vision: 5 (5)
Mental Defense: 20, 5 pts Hardened (17)
Power Defense: 7 (7)

Background Skills:
Breakfall 13- (3)
Dimensional Navigation 13- (3)
Spell Research 13- (3)
Trading 14- (3)
KS: High Magic 13- (INT Based) (3)
KS: Spell Transforms 13- (3)
KS: Other Planes 11- (2)

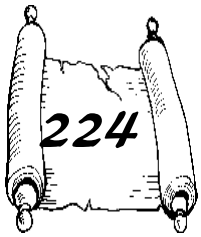
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 294

Total Character Cost: 485

Disadvantages: 100+

Berserk:
if Struck (very common), 8-, 11-(20)
Distinctive Features:
Over Forceful Manner: Always PRE Attacking (Hard to Conceal, Annoying) (15)
Enraged:
by Theft (Real or Imagined) (common), 14-, 14- (10)
Magic Limitations:
Limited High Magic Style (10)
Psychological Limitation:
Vengeful (vc, strong) (20)
Paranoid and Possessive (vc, strong) (20)
Greedy for Magical Energy (vc) (20)
Susceptibility:
1d6 STUN/Phase, Darkness Fields (common) (20)
1d6 STUN/Minute, Being On Other Plane (common) (10)
Vulnerability:
x1 ½ STUN+BODY, Indirect Attacks (uncommon) (10)
Villain Bonus (230)

Total Disadvantage Points: 485



Wannabe

Through the ghoul-guarded gateways of slumber,
Past the wan-mooned abysses of night,
I have lived o'er my lives without number,
I have sounded all things with my sight…

—H. P. Lovecraft, "*Nemesis*"

This magical villain wants to take over the Earth and become a dimension lord or sorcerous tyrant, but doesn't have the raw power for it…yet. Such sorcerers tend to be almost as obsessive and arrogant as Dimensional Conquerors. Once the heroes block a Wannabe's scheme to gain power, the Wannabe may become a Vengeful Rival as well (see below). Wannabes fall in a wide range of power levels. A less powerful Wannabe will usually be found working for some demon lord or more powerful sorcerer, hoping to gain power through service. Wannabes might easily be more powerful than PC magicians, but they all fall far short of a Dimensional Conqueror's might. After all, that's what draws the Wannabe into conflict with the heroes: the Wannabe tries getting more power and doesn't care who gets hurt in the process.

Simon Magus

Background: Simon Magus was one of the greatest wizards of the first century AD, but not half as great as he pretended. Simon studied magic in Egypt from the wizard Dositheus. He ousted Dositheus as master of the school when Dositheus angrily swung at Simon and his staff passed through Simon as though his body were made of smoke—only the first wonder Simon faked through his illusions.

Mere wizardry didn't offer enough fame or wealth for Simon. He decided to become the god and prophet of his own religion. Why not? The cult of that guy Jesus seemed to be doing well, and with Simon's magic powers he wouldn't get nailed to a post, either. Simon tossed together some dumbed-down magic lore, mysticism and Greek philosophy, and invented Gnosticism.

Simon built quite a following in Palestine, and his fame spread through the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, he angered the Apostles when he tried to buy what he supposed to be their magic tricks. Several Apostles clashed with Simon, exposing his illusions, but Peter and Paul became his special nemeses. The rivalry came to a head in Rome, where the Emperor Nero commanded that Peter and Simon fight a duel of miracles—and Simon didn't do well. One case was typical: Simon made ferocious dogs appear and rush at Peter, but Peter made them disappear. Simon realized he had better use one of his few spells that wasn't an illusion, his power to fly…but he would claim he was ascending to Heaven itself.

The next day, Nero and Peter gathered to see Simon make good his boast to storm Heaven. Simon stepped off the roof of a tower and swiftly rose upwards. As he flew he read Nero's mind; if Nero accepted this as proof of divinity, Simon would return and become the Emperor's favorite. If not, he'd get out of town.

Nero was impressed. Simon decided to climb out of sight, then hover an hour before returning. But Peter wasn't done with him. Peter commanded the "spirits" bearing Simon to depart in the name of God. Suddenly, Simon found himself plummeting from the sky, and he couldn't get his flight spell to work again! Simon crashed in a street ironically named Holy Way, and died. So much for Simon the god.

Except that's not the whole story.

Simon's talents included astral projection. Mostly he used it to spy on people. As he fell, he tried something dangerous, something he'd never tried before—but what did he have to lose? He projected his astral body through time. If he searched the past and future, maybe he could find some way to bring a rescue back through time just before his body hit.

Simon has searched through the millennia, looking for magic he could carry through time. Since he can only stay in astral form for 24 subjective hours, he possesses weak-willed beings. In his borrowed bodies, he searches for magic secrets and for other people he might possess; children and animals are easiest, but he prefers adult bodies. On the other hand, in a few cases he's possessed people through almost their entire life. Such is the way of Simon Magus, Lord of Illusions.

Quote: *"Stop interfering! This is a matter of life and death!"*

Personality: Simon is a greedy, ambitious con man. When he wants something, his natural impulse is to trick someone into giving it to him. Failing that, he'll try stealing it. Making an honest deal comes a distant third. He hates to fight or otherwise risk his borrowed body's skin; after all, he could still die if he didn't leave in time. He's quite ruthless, if violence ever becomes necessary.

Curiously, although Simon has now lived in borrowed bodies for centuries longer than he lived in his own flesh, he still wants to regain his own body and time. First, there's no place like home. Second, he's got a serious mad on at Christianity; if Simon regains his body, he'll devote his new life to strangling Christianity in its cradle and establishing Simonism as the religion of the Roman Empire. Eventually, though, frustration might drive Simon into madness, leading him to try changing history before his own birth, making even his spiritual existence a paradox.

Simon's hatred for the heirs of Peter and Paul lead him into frequent conflict with agents of the Roman Catholic Church. His attempt to drastically change history has earned him the enmity of Chroneval, the cosmic entity who guards the stability of the space-time continuum, so he must contend with Chroneval's agents, the Chronstables, as well.

Simon frequently uses his magic to reach a position of social prominence. This could be anything from a congressman to the coolest kid in school. When in a male body, he's almost sure to have a girlfriend whom he calls Helen; part of Simon's Gnostic doctrine held that an aspect of God was lost on Earth, incarnated as

a series of women, including Helen of Troy. (Yes, Simon was the first magician to have a beautiful assistant. In Roman times, his divine 'Helen' was a prostitute from Tyre. Simon claimed he was another aspect of God, come to redeem her.)

Simon manages a curious bit of doublethink; he really believes this, even while he knows he made it up. A lot of his self-confidence depends on maintaining this controlled delusion, so he really does revere each "Helen."

Powers/Tactics: Simon has many spells relating to illusion and mind control. He reached such mastery of illusion that he could make some of his illusions more or less real, or dissolve real things into illusion. He also learned various low-powered, common spells. Centuries of time-hopping have raised his powers even further. Now, he can even create short-lived, mini-dimensions—cysts—on the Lower Astral Plane.

Simon prefers using some combination of Gestures, Incantations, and/or Focus amulets to cast his spells, but if all else fails, he can cast the spells of his Multipower through sheer concentration. The magic from his Power Pool generally uses Foci and Charges; he usually keeps a few small Triggered Powers for escaping from Entangles and to protect him from Flash Attacks.

Simon's chief combat tactic is avoidance. He never fights if he doesn't have to. If he faces opponents he can't simply bypass, he tries bribery, deception and intimidation. One common strategy is to pretend to give up, go away, and spy on his enemy clairvoyantly to discover what they want, believe and expect, the better to fool or bribe them. If all else fails, Simon tries to recruit lackeys and hirelings to handle rough stuff.

When Simon absolutely has to fight, he tries to surprise his foes and make them fight among themselves. Through Illusions (Mental and Images) he creates false targets and spreads confusion. Only once his opposition is thoroughly disorganized will Simon use his Apparitional Attack and Etherealization. He also has no scruples about taking and threatening hostages to get what he wants. If he has plenty of time to prepare for a conflict, he might even shape an astral cyst into a kill zone of traps and illusions (some bought through Headquarters Points, others as Triggered Powers created through the Power Pool), and try to lure his enemies into it. (He can use his Power Pool to put Advantages like Invisible Power Effects on his Gate spell so heroes won't detect the Gate—until they are through it, in a world gone mad, with a Hardened Force Field around the cyst preventing their escape.)

Finally, Simon's nonlinear life gives him considerable foreknowledge of events. Not only has he lived in future centuries, he has studied all recorded history in detail, looking for clues to magic that would let him save his life. If he expects to need really detailed information about a period, he just occupies a body in a near future time and questions people who lived through the events which interest him. In modern periods, he can peruse almanacs, newspapers and histories. He may even research the careers of heroes he expects to meet.

Simon's time-hopping has one great limitation, though. He cannot double back on his personal timeline. Thus, he cannot possess anyone in a timeframe when his past (or future!) self is already possessing someone else. That's what keeps him from simply possessing someone back in the 1st century AD and catching his falling body through Telekinesis, or murdering the Apostle Peter before their clash in Rome: Simon already exists in that period, so that time frame is barred to him forever.

Appearance: Simon's appearance depends on what body he's in. He could be young or old, male or female, any race or even in the body of an animal if it suits his purposes. (He wouldn't possess an animal unless he was desperate or very sure he could get what he wants that way: spell casting becomes difficult in a non-human body.)

Another Historical Mage

Crowley, Aleister

(1875-1947): The 20th century's most notorious and influential self-proclaimed sorcerer was the child of psychotically strict Fundamentalist parents. At a young age, he decided that his mother was correct: he was a child of the Devil. Crowley loved scandal, billing himself as "the Beast 666." The press responded by dubbing him "the Wickedest Man in the World." Protégé and later rival of S. L. "MacGregor" Mathers in the Golden Dawn, Crowley virtually rewrote ceremonial magic to bring it up to date. He also gave it an ideology and metaphysics of his own invention, complete with a short gospel channeled from a spirit called Aiwass: The Book of the Law, in which he proclaimed the end of the Judeo-Christian "Aeon of Osiris" and the dawning of a new "Aeon of Horus." At the heart of Crowley's doctrine was the Motto of Thelema: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." Crowley is credited with feats such as turning the poet Victor Neuberg into a donkey and letting himself be possessed (temporarily) by the arch-demon Choronzon. His non-occult achievements include translating Baudelaire, writing poetry and a pretty good occult novel called Moonchild, world-class mountaineering and addiction to heroin. He died peacefully, in genteel poverty. His funeral was bizarre.

Simon Magus

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	100 kg; 2d6 [1]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: [7]/DCV: [7]
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
21	EGO	22	13-	ECV: 7
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack 3½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	8		Total: 22 PD/ 12 rPD
10	ED	6		Total: 22 ED/ 12 rED
5	SPD	19		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
36	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 130

Movement: Running: 10"/20"
Flight: 12"/24"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Multipower(10)

Magic:
Ritual Magic: Power Pool (52 pt pool), Hours or Lab to Change (-½), -1 Var Lim (-½) (65)
High Magic: Multipower (69 pt pool), ½ Var Lim: Activation, Concentrate, Gestures, Incantation, Focus (-¼), All from END Reserve (55)
u - **Psychic Bolt:** 6 ½d6 Ego Attack (65/5) [6]
u - **Psychic Phantasms:** 13d6 Mental Illusions (65/5) [6]
u - **Visible Phantasms:** Images vs. Normal Sight/Hearing, -8 PER, 4" Radius (+½), ½ END (68/5) [3]
u - **Forceful Phantasms:** 30 STR TK w/Fine Manipulation, ½ END (69/5) [3]
u - **Apparitional Attack:** 3d6 RKA, Var Sp FX: Any (+½) (67/5) [7]
u - **Etherealization:** 2½d6 BODY Drain, Ranged, Continuous, ½ END, Blocked by Mental Defense, not Power Defense (+0) (69/5) [3]
u - **Malison of Madness:** 6½d6 minor Transform (65/5) [6]
u - **Exorcism:** 23d6 Dispel vs. Summon (69/5) [7]
u - **Spirit Bolt:** 9d6 EB, Affects Desolid (+½) (67/5) [7]
u - **Mind Reading:** 13d6 Telepathy (65/5) [6]
u - **Mind Reading:** 9d6 Telepathy, Invisible vs. Mental (+½) (67/5) [7]
u - **Mind Reading:** 4d6 Telepathy, Affects Solid (+2), 0 Range, 1 Phase Extra Time, Concentrate ½ DCV (-¼) (60/2) [6]
u - **Illusions:** 4d6 Mental Illusions, Affects Solid (+2), 0 Range, 1 Phase Extra Time, Concentrate ½ DCV (60/2) [6]
u - **Domination:** 13d6 Mind Control, 1 Phase Extra Time (65/3) [6]
u - **Morphic Mutation:** 2d6 major Transform, Universal: Physical (+1), 1 Phase Extra Time (60/3) [6]
u - **Healing Hand:** 6½d6 minor Transform (Diseased/Impaired to Whole), 0 Range, 1 turn Extra Time (-1) (65/2) [6]
u - **Time Travel:** Extra Dimensional Movement, Any Time, Only in Astral Form (-½) (60/3) [6]
u - **Shape Cyst:** 1d6 Transform, Universal (+1), Cumulative, Invisible vs. Magic (+½), 5"x4 Radius AE (+1 ½), Only on Astral Plane (-½), 1 Turn Extra Time (-1) (67/2) [7]
u - **Gate to Cysts:** EDM: Astral Cysts (30 pts), Continuous, Use By Other x1 (+¼), Opens Both Ways (-½), Full Phase to Close (-½) (67/3) [7]
Magic Powers: Elemental Control, ½ Var Lim: Activation, Concentrate, Gestures, Incantation, Focus (-¼) (12)
a - **Force Field** (12 PD, 12 ED), ½ END (30/12) [1]
b - **Flight:** 12", ½ END (30/12) [1/10"]
c - **Clairsentience:** Vision, Hearing, Sense Magic, (30/12) [3]
d - **Astral Form:** Desolid, not vs. Spirit Magic, 0 END (Persistent), Lack Body (-1) (80/29)
e - **Possession:** 4d6 Transform vs. EGO: Person's Mind to Simon's Mind, Affects Solid (+2), Only While Astral vs. Physical Targets (-½), Side Effect: Astral Form Vanishes (-1), 0 Range, Concentrate 0 DCV, 1 Phase Extra Time (-½) (180/31) [4c]
Mental Defense: 15, 5 pts Hardened (12)
Power Defense : 11, IAF (Amulet) (7)
Sense Magic, Ranged, Discriminatory, Costs END, Acts 14- (7) [1]
Mystical Energy Reserves: 100 pt END Reserve, Recharges 6 END/Turn (16)
Universal Translator 14- (20)
Cramming (5)

Background Skills:
Acting 14- (3)
Astral Navigation 14- (3)
Conversation 14- (3)
Deduction 14- (3)
Oratory 14- (3)
Sleight of Hand 13- (3)
Spell Research 14- (3)
Trading 14- (3)
Ventriloquism 12- (5)
Jack of All Trades (3)
Scholar (3)
KS: Gnosticism 14- (INT Based) (2)
KS: General Magic 14- (2)
KS: World History 14- (2)
KS: Occult History 14- (2)
KS: Occult World 14- (2)
KS: Spirits 14- (2)
KS: Worldsmithing 14- (2)
Traveler (3)
Initiate: Any Gnostic Sect (5)
Headquarters: 100 pt reserve (20)
Skill Levels: +1 level w/ Acting, Sleight of Hand, & Ventriloquism (3)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 469

Total Character Cost: 599

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
Possessing Spirit (Few Detect) (5)
DNPC:
Current 'Helen', 11- (Normal) (15)
Hunted by:
the Catholic Church, 11- (Less Pow, NCI) (15)
the Local Bunko Squad, 11- (Less Pow, NCI, Mild) (10)
Chronstables, 8- (As Pow) (10)
Psychological Limitation:
Hungers for Social Prominence (15)
Seeks Magical Power (15)
Manipulative & Deceptive (15)
Coward (10)
Rivalry:
Christian priests & churches (superior position) (10)
Unluck: 2d6 (10)
Villain Bonus (369)

Total Disadvantage Points: 599

Manipulator

These sneaky wretches might have considerable raw power on their own, but they prefer to talk or trick someone else into doing the dirty work while they themselves stay safely hidden in the background. The Manipulator may appear as an "adviser" to a powerful person, or assume some even more insignificant role.

Simply exposing a Manipulator may be enough to foil its evil scheme. For one thing, their dupes tend to be proud as well as powerful, and such people get upset at being played for fools. Even if the powerful "front man" knows that the humble Manipulator is the real brains of the outfit, it may be possible to convince the front man that the Manipulator is going to betray him.

Whatever powers a Manipulator may have, they always have great skill at persuasion and deception. A Manipulator might not have any real powers at all—just an unholy talent for talking people into doing things.

Pope Joan

Background: Jo-Anne Hocking decided that she was a witch when she was 10. She spent the next 20 years becoming one. She read every book about the occult she could find and joined dozens of New Age movements. None of it gave her the power she wanted, but she gained the skills that let her join the Vril Society and learn a little real magic.

Hocking might have stayed with the Vril Society, but she kept experimenting on her own with other occult disciplines. One experiment got her in serious legal trouble (something involving hallucinogens and a teenage boy.) She had to leave the area quickly and the Society kicked her out. She had her introduction to the Magical World, though. A year later she located one of the surviving members of Triskele (the occult society whose attempts to force magic on the world had climaxed with Nazi Germany) and became the apprentice of Montage, mistress of theurgy. Montage could not only summon spirits, she could, through extended effort, create entirely new spirits to order.

Several years later, Hocking set out on her own. She had learned enough to work out her own version of Montage's great spell of evocation. She could only use it to put a synthesized spirit into the body of a psychically vulnerable and utterly deluded person, and she had to work from a pattern; a mythological god. With her feminine wiles and sorcery, however, meeting those conditions wouldn't be much of a problem. And with a super-powered love-slave at her command, who knew what she might accomplish?

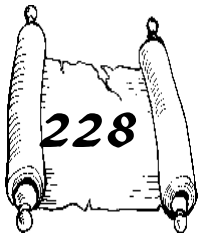
Quote: *"Pluto, be a dear and get rid of these people, will you?"*

Personality: Pope Joan is quite brilliant, but she's fundamentally lazy. (Ironically, she has worked far harder to become a sorceress than she would have to become a doctor, lawyer or company executive. She doesn't regard studying magic, however, as "real work.") She's also quite ruthless, as long as she herself doesn't have to do the violence. Avoiding combat makes a lot of sense for her, but she lacks defensive spells because she figured her wits would keep her out of danger, so why go to all the trouble of learning how to cast mystic wards? Her laziness even extends to her standard *modus operandi* of making a man her super-powered slave instead of doing the dirty work herself.

Powers/Tactics: Pope Joan practices a narrow form of *theurgy*—magic dealing with spirits, the soul and the gods. Her style is much closer to Classical Theurgy than to modern Hermetic Theurgy. Her greatest power is to give her lover the powers of a mythological god. This spell requires a bed decked out as a sort of magical shrine, a few relics of the god in question and some lesser ritual paraphernalia. It also requires at least a month of subtle brainwashing to make her lover believe that he really is the god while making him utterly obedient. Pope Joan has a special Mind Link to her empowered lover which other mentalists can't detect.

(The lover is not, however, possessed by the actual god. He is simply delusional, with super-powers. If something breaks the delusion, such as Telepathy at the EGO+30 level or losing a fight with the *real* god, the Transform reverses and the powers vanish. Empowered love-slaves are built on up to 300 points. Pluto, in the section on "Supernatural Super-Thugs" below, can be used as a model.)

Pope Joan also has several other spells. Her greatest combat spell, a version of "Julianic Soul Disjunction" (see "Hermetic Theurgy" in Chapter Four), rips people's astral bodies partly free of their material bodies and freezes them that way. Such people have difficulty controlling their bodies (SPD loss) until their astral and material bodies merge again. She also has a weaker version for use on a single target. Her other spells are relatively generic, although most deal with influencing the mind or soul. Pope Joan prefers to focus her spells through small talismans she wears as pins, pendants or bracelets (IAF); without them, she needs Extra Time or Gestures and Incantations.



Her own mind is well shielded. Pope Joan has even learned how to make her mental defenses undetectable using special crystal earrings.

Pope Joan knows perfectly well that she is hopelessly outmatched in any fight with even a single super-mage, so she tries to stay out of fights. If a fight comes looking for her, she casts a Mass Soul Disjunction. With the enemy slowed, Pope Joan either tries to run away or she seeks cover to snipe with her spells while her love-slave fights.

Appearance: Pope Joan appears to be a remarkably beautiful, auburn-haired woman in her mid 20s. She dresses in New Age kitsch: stone-washed jeans and tie-dyed shirts or peasant blouses, dripping with "mystical" pins and pendants (ankhs, pentagrams, crystals, unicorns, zodiac symbols, etc.) This is to conceal the *real* talismans she prefers to use in her magic, mixed in with the trash.

Actually, Pope Joan is in her late 30s, and not quite so ravishingly beautiful; she uses low-level enchantments to preserve a seeming of youth. Any Dispel cast on her will remove her glamour spell.

Notes: Jo Anne's rather odd pseudonym comes from the scurrilous Medieval legend of a woman called Joan who disguised herself as a man, became a priest, and eventually a Pope. None of this stopped her from carrying on love affairs, which eventually resulted in pregnancy. Everything came out—as it were—when she had the baby in the middle of a church procession. She was put to death in an attempt to hush the whole thing up, but some occultists claim she is commemorated in the Tarot card called The High Priestess or The Female Pope. Jo Anne sees the Pope Joan legend as symbolizing masculine fear of feminine sexual and spiritual power. She also puts the card on the sign advertising her New Age supply store and consultation service, the "Astral Karma Metaphysical Center."

Pope Joan

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	100 kg; 2d6 [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
10	CON	0	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack 4d6
20	COM	5	13-	
2	PD	0		Total: 2 PD
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED/
3	SPD	5		Pha 4, 8, 12
5	REC	2		
20	END	0		
20	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 65

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Level +1 Level w/ DCV (5)

Magic Abilities:

Spells: Multipower (52 pt pool), ½ Var Lim (-¼), Acts 15- (-¼) (35)
- u - **Psychic Assault:** 5d6 Ego Attack (50/3) [5]
- u - **Psychic Puppeteering:** 13 STR TK, BOECV (+1), Invisible vs. Sight/Hearing (+¾) (52/3) [5]
- u - **Soul Disjunction:** 5d6 DEX Suppress, Invisible vs. Sight/Hearing (+¾), ½ END (50/3) [2]
- u - **Hypnotic Illusions:** 10d6 Mental Illusions (50/3) [5]
- u - **Hypnotic Mastery:** 10d6 Mind Control (50/3) [5]
- u - **Hypnotic Mastery:** 6d6 Mind Control, Invisible vs. Mental (+½), Nonverbal (+¼) [52/3] [5]
- u - **Spellbreaking:** 14d6 Dispel, vs. Any 1 Magic Effect (+¼) (52/3) [5]
- u - **Warding Spirit:** Missile Reflection +6 vs. All Normal (52/3)
- u - **Warding Spirit:** Missile Reflection +6 vs. All Magic (52/3)
- u - **Mirages:** Images vs. Normal Hearing, All Sight, -7 PER, 2" Radius (+¼) (51/3) [5]
- u - **False Aura:** Images vs. Detect Magic, Aura Sense, -6 PER, 0 END, 0 Range (49/2) [0]
- u - **Soul Fortification:** 3d6 EGO + 3d6 STUN Aid, Lose 5 pts/minute (+¼), Ranged (52/3) [5]

Mass Soul Disjunction: 6d6 SPD Suppress, Uncontrolled, 9" Cone AE (+1), 1 chg of 1 minute (-1), Costs END, x2 END, Concentrate 0 DCV, 0 Range (19) [14]

Empower/Enslave Lover: 7d6 Transform, Grant Powers of Any Mythic God, Max 300 pts (+¼), Immobile OAF: Shrine Bed & Paraphernalia, Must Have Steady Love Affair With Target for 1 Month (-2) (19) [1c]

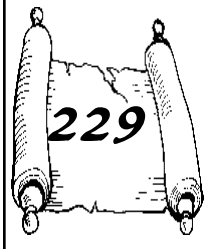
Mental Defense: 10, Invisible vs. Mental w/IAF Crystal Earrings (+½, -½) (8)

Mind Link to Current Pawn, Invisible vs. Mental (7)

Background Skills:
Acting 14- (5)
Conversation 13- (3)
Disguise 12- (5)
Greek (accented, English is native) (3)
KS: Mental Magic 11- (1)
KS: Mythology 13- (2)
KS: Occult World 11- (1)
KS: Theurgy 13- (2)
KS: Western Mainstream Occultism 13- (2)
Latin (fluent) (1)
Oratory 13- (3)
Persuasion 13- (3)
Scholar (3)
Seduction 13- (3)
Sleight of Hand 13- (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 170

Total Character Cost: 235



Disadvantages: 100+

DNPC:
Current Lover/Pawn, 14- (As Pow) (10)
Hunted by:
Vril Society, 11- (More Pow) (20)
Magical Hero, 8- (As Pow) (10)
Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)
Psychological Limitation:
Fear of Close Combat (15)
Manipulative (15)
Treacherous (10)
Greedy for Magic Power (10)
Secret Identity (15)
Villain Bonus (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 235

Corrupter

A variant of the Manipulator, but instead of power and control the Corrupter just wants to draw people into evil ways. The subtler sort of demon lord often falls into this category.

Brujo

Background: Lysander Cordas was a second-rate sorcerer who'd hit his limit of competence. As he grew old without growing wiser or more powerful, he concluded that he'd wasted his life. If he had his life to live over again, he wouldn't waste his youth on dusty tomes of mystic lore; he'd go for the gusto!

In a normal man, such regrets would be vain—but even a minor sorcerer can call Mephistopheles, the Lord of Pacts. In return for the promise of Lysander's soul, Mephisto offered him youth, strength, good looks, and fighting skill. Instead of a sage, he could try life as a rogue. Mephisto would collect Lysander's soul when Lysander reached his present age again.

Lysander, happy at receiving a 40+ year delay in paying his side of the bargain, agreed at once. Mephisto, true to his promise, turned Lysander into a brawny young stud who could whip wildcats with his bare hands.

Lysander used his new physical prowess, with the magic he still had, to take over a street gang. He's living it up, debauching himself with all the pleasures he denied himself before. His Hispanic followers call him *El Brujo*—the Witch-Man.

Quote: *"Hey,* hombre. *You about to have some really bad luck."*

Personality: Brujo lives for violence, pleasure and thrills, making up for previous decades of monk-like existence. Since he's never been beaten, he's developed a lazy arrogance, like a tiger closing in on a deer with a broken leg. He'll challenge any man to fight, anywhere, anytime. He's just as insufferable with good-looking women; again, in his new life he's been seldom refused and never failed to get what he wants. He takes drugs with an abandon that would kill a normal man, but his superhuman constitution and mental training let him get away with it. Brujo's topping it all off with leading his gang to dominance of the city's underworld, just for the pleasure of pushing people around.

Like any convert to a new ideology, Brujo wants to spread the word. He encourages others to follow his example of amoral hedonism. He doesn't set out to destroy people's lives this way, but that is the usual result. With his magic, Brujo can escape the consequences of his new taste for sex, drugs, crime, and violence; not so the young men and women he lures into his gang. Brujo knows perfectly well that his new buddies and lovers risk disease, addiction, prison or death, but he doesn't care. He was a selfish man even before his pact and now he just wants to keep the party going.

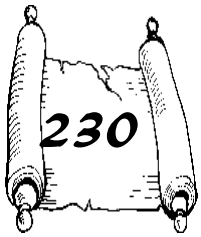
Powers/Tactics: Most importantly, Brujo is a hand-to-hand fighter of rare speed and power. On top of this, he still knows how to use spells. They may not be very powerful spells, but they give him a definite edge in most combat. He loves the feel of his fists smacking into an opponent who is stumbling around blind in his Darkness field. As Lysander Cordas, he cast his spells through lengthy incantations and mystic passes; now, as a shortcut he's stitched his combat-useful spells into his vest, ready to call upon in an instant.

Normally, Brujo uses his spells lightly, to preserve the mystery and terror of his magic. Only in a real knock-down, drag-out battle will he use his full magic powers. His greatest magical achievement is a spell on his most loyal henchmen. He says the spell makes them unbeatable. In fact, they have unwittingly agreed to let themselves become possessed by wrath demons. (Brujo can possess people with other lesser demons types, too.) When Brujo says a special word, the spells will go off and the four young men will turn into wrath demons. They will never turn back. Brujo will save this for an emergency.

Appearance: Lysander has become a 6'1" tall young man with bronzed skin, black hair and a lean but powerfully muscular build. He's extraordinarily handsome, in a sullen and dangerous sort of way. He wears skin-tight black leather pants with lots of zippers, chains and studs, and an open leather vest stitched with interlocking mystic runes.

Notes: Mephisto gave Lysander a terrible Achilles heel. A magic scan clearly shows that Brujo's physical prowess is the result of some magical augmentation; only a very close and detailed examination shows that this is a total transformation instead of a mere enhancement. A Dispel against any of Brujo's major combat statistics (STR, DEX, etc.) will undo Mephisto's transformation and turn Brujo back into old Lysander Cordas. And then Mephisto will appear to claim Lysander's soul, as per the *exact* wording of their contract.

Brujo could be used to give *Dark Champions* vigilantes a supernatural surprise. As a combatant, he is no match for a team of *Champions* superheroes and little more than a nuisance for a team of super mages. Brujo serves two functions in a super mage campaign. First, he can be a petty obstacle between the heroes and their goal, whatever that might be. Second, he can present the heroes with a moral challenge. Convincing Brujo's followers that altruism and responsibility



really matter could be far more difficult than just beating him up. For a little extra urgency, Brujo could have seduced a hero's DNPC into his gang.

Brujo

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	200 kg; 4d6 [2]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 14-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack 4d6
20	COM	5	13-	
19	PD	15		Total: 31 PD/ 12 rPD
19	ED	15		Total: 31 ED/ 12r ED
6	SPD	26		Pha 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
12	REC	8		
40	END	0		
35	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 185

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Level +2 Levels w/ Hand-to-Hand Combat (10)

Martial Arts—*Dirty Infighting* (28)

Maneuver	*OCV*	*DCV*	*Notes*
Low Blow	-1	+1	4d6 NND
Punch	+0	+2	10d6
Trip	+0	+1	8d6+v/5; target falls

+4 Damage Classes (already added in)
Use Art with Knife

Demon Pact Powers:
Spells: Multipower (41 pt pool), Incantations, -1 Var Lim (-½) (23)
u - **Hypnotic Domination:** 8d6 Mind Control (40/2) [4]
u - **Hypnotic Illusions:** 8d6 Mental Illusions (40/2) [4]
u - **Mind Reading:** 8d6 Telepathy (40/2) [4]
u - **Hypnotic Paralysis:** 2d6, 2 DEF Entangle, Damage Transparent (+½), Invisible vs. Vision (+½) (40) [4]
u - **Spellbreaking:** 11d6 Dispel, vs. Any 1 Magic Effect (+¼) (41/2) [4]
u - **Mystic Shadows:** 2" radius Darkness vs. All Vision, Personal Immunity (+¼) (37/2) [4]
u - **Curse:** 1d6 Drain, vs. Any 1 Char (+¼), Regain 1 pt/minute (+½), Ranged, Continuous, Invisible vs. Vision (+½), ½ END (40/2) [2]
u - **Damage Deflection:** Force Field (12 PD, 12 ED, 8 MD), ½ END (40/2) [2]
u - **Scrying:** 6d6 Mind Scanning, +5 ECV, OAF Silver Bowl of Water (40/1) [3]
u - **Scrying:** Clairsentience: Vision, x16 Range (4 miles), OAF Silver Bowl of Water (40/1) [4]
u - **Scrying Vision Quest:** Clairsentience: Vision, to "Astral" Planes, OAF Silver Bowl of Water (40/1) [4]
u - **Conjure Scratchets:** 2 x 25 pt Summon Scratchets, Requires Ritual (-2) (40/1) [4]
u - **Fuse Person with Demon:** 1d6+1 major Transform, to Any Lesser Demon Type (+¼), Cumulative, Trigger: Command Word (+¼), Requires Ritual (-2) (40/1) [4]
u - **Contact Mephisto:** 5d6 Mind Scan, Transdimensional: Netherworld (+½), +1 ECV, Only to Contact Mephisto (-1), OAF Ritual Gear, x3 END (-1 (40/1) [12]
More Contact Mephisto: +3d6 Mind Scan, Transdimensional: Netherworld (+½), +1 ECV, Only to Contact Mephisto (-1), OAF Ritual Gear, x3 END, Incantations, -1 Var Lim (-½) (6) [+9]
Still More Contact Mephisto: Mind Link to Mephistopheles, Any Distance/Dimension, OAF Ritual Gear, Costs END, x3 END (-1), initial 5 minutes Extra Time (-1), Gestures, Incantations, constant Concentrate 0 DCV (-1) (2) [3]
Lecanomancy: Detect Magic, Discriminatory, OAF Bowl, Water & Oil, 1 turn Extra Time (-1), constant Concentrate ½ DCV (-½) (2)
Mystic Vest: Power Defense: 7, OAF (3)
Knife: 1d6 HKA, OAF , STR Min 5 (-¾) (5)
Mental Defense: 10 (6)

Background Skills:
Breakfall 14- (3)
Combat Sense 13- (3)
Cryptography 13- (3)
English (as perfect as he wants) (3)
KS: Gang Life 13- (2)
KS: General Magic 13- (2)
KS: Occult Legends 13- (2)
Latin (accented) (1)
Linguist (Spanish is native) (3)
Scholar
Sleight of Hand 14- (3)
Streetwise 13- (3)
Weapon Fam: Common Street Weapons (2)

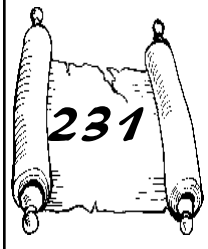
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 139

Total Character Cost: 324

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
Swaggering Gang Megahunk (Hard to Conceal) (10)
Damned (Few Detect, Strong Reaction) (10)
Hunted by:
Hunted by Police, 11- (Less Pow, NCI) (15)
Hunted by Rival Gang, 11- (As Pow) (15)
Physical Limitation:
Successful Dispel vs. Primary Physical Characteristic Reverses Transform—and Pact Comes Due (inf, total) (15)
Cannot Fight or Flee Mephisto (inf, total) (15)
Psychological Limitation:
Showoff (20)
Proud and Egotistical (15)
Pursues Pleasure (15)
Watched by:
Mephisto, 14- (More Pow, NCI) (15)
Villain Bonus (79)

Total Disadvantage Points: 324



Mad God

Circumstances release a powerful supernatural being on Earth, and the heroes have to stop its rampage. The being might be truly insane, lashing out according to its own weird agenda, or it might just be angry. The traditional Mad God scenario is, "Foolhardy Westerners disregard native warnings and tamper with something they should have left alone"—a shrine, idol, cave, or whatever. Either the "god" is enraged by the "sacrilege," or the stupid meddlers release a horrible demon imprisoned long ago.

On the other hand, the Mad God might be frightened and confused at being thrust into the incomprehensibly alien world of Earth. Whatever the reason, a Mad God is a great excuse for a tough fight with lots of property damage. Mad Gods are usually one shot enemies.

Lahatiel

Background: "Oh come on, Rabbi! If it was an angel, why did it try to kill me? I'm one of the good guys!"

"Sure, I know that, and you know that, but he doesn't know that. This is an Angel of Wrath and Vengeance—one of God's hit men. He doesn't interpret the Law, he enforces it. And the Law says, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' You being a sorcerer and all, that puts you in a bad spot. Down here on Earth, we make compromises. This angel, he doesn't know about compromise. What do you expect, his last job was probably Sodom and Gomorrah!"

"But why is he here, now? I don't think that porno shop I found him burning down—and the block of buildings it was in—was so especially evil that it called for divine intervention."

"Ah. Yes, boychik, now that is a very good question."

Whatever the reason, Lahatiel ("Flaming One of God") is on Earth now. Few of the humans who cross his path will find it a blessed event. As an angel, Lahatiel can follow the Law of God in every detail. Mere humans cannot live up to his standards of perfection.

Quote: "*No mortal is innocent. All sin must be punished, the Law upheld!*"

Personality: Lahatiel is an executioner without mercy or pity. His function is to be aimed and fired at a target selected by broader, wiser minds than his. On Earth without supervision, he will find missions of his own. There's no shortage of sinful behavior to punish, and for Lahatiel the sentence is always death.

The greatest weakness of the Angel of Vengeance is his mental inflexibility. To him, there is nothing between perfect virtue and vilest evil. If Lahatiel can be tricked or manipulated into doing something "sinful," such as damaging a church, he flips out and may even dispel himself. He may hurt a lot of innocent bystanders, however, before he goes.

Powers/Tactics: Lahatiel has the typical powers of his order of angels, the Aralim ("Valiant Ones"): a sword of flame he can materialize at will, a blinding burst of light, levitation, a fiery aura, great resistance to damage and superhuman fighting skill. He can mentally follow a fleeing target, as long as he has some idea (i.e., to within a city block) of where the person is. He can be superhumanly strong if he wants, and increase any one Characteristic (or pair of Characteristics, to a lesser degree) at will. Thus, if Lahatiel needs to speed up he can increase his DEX and SPD, if he needs a better Perception roll he can boost his INT, and so on.

Warrior angels like Lahatiel fight in a distinctive style which some humans call Jihad: "Holy War." A fighting angel stays as still as possible until the last possible moment, then moves with blinding speed. Every motion is pared down to a bare minimum. Jihad emphasizes defense and counterattack; thus, Lahatiel's best sword attack can only be used after a successful Block.

Appearance: Lahatiel doesn't *quite* look like the stereotypical fair-haired bloke with white robes and wings. Think of a slim, muscular man, about 6' 6" tall. He'd be spectacularly beautiful if he weren't made of blazing, blue-white light, and there was more human feeling in his too-perfect face. In one hand he carries a large sword of blue flame. From his back spring six broad, arching triangles of shimmering pale violet, as well as several violet streamers that curl and wave around his body and form his only clothing. That's an Angel of Wrath and Vengeance.

Another Historical Mage

Dee, Dr. John

(1527-1608): This physician, mathematician and general genius devoted his life to seeking knowledge of the spirit world through scrying. For his troubles, a mob once burned his house down. Unfortunately, Dee himself was no good as a seer, despite receiving a magic crystal from an angel. His most successful scryer was a part-time alchemist and full-time rogue named Edward Kelley. Through a long and stormy partnership, Dee recorded many volumes of Kelley's conversations with spirits. The spirits had a great deal to say: invocations in Enochian, the alleged language of angels; strange cures for minor ailments; and much windy occult lore about the Astral Plane. The problem was, the spirits never told where the two men could find some much-needed money. Despite occasional appointments as astrologer or alchemist to Queen Elizabeth and other monarchs and nobles, Dee often lived in poverty.

Lahatiel

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	14-	400 kg; 4d6 [2]
23	DEX	39	15-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
18	CON	16	14-	
10	BODY	0	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack 4d6
12	COM	1	13-	
15	PD	11		Total: 25 PD/ 10 rPD
15	ED	11		Total: 25 ED/ 10r ED
5	SPD	17		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	4		
36	END	0		
29	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 130

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 13"/52"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Jihad(6)

Martial Arts—Jihad (21)

Maneuver	*OCV*	*DCV*	*Notes*
Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
Counterstrike	+2	+2	6d6/3d6 KA, Must follow Block
Defensive Strike	+1	+3	4d6/2½d6 KA
Grappling Throw	+0	+2	6d6, Target falls, only after grab
Reversal	-1	-2	35 STR Escape Grab 2 limbs

Use Arts with Barehanded, Flaming Sword

Angelic Powers:
Multipower (46 pt pool) (46)
u - **Flaming Sword:** 1½d6 HKA, Penetrating, ½ END (44/4) [2]
u - **Cast Light:** 3d6 Flash vs. Vision, Nonselective 1 Hex AE (+¼), ½ END (45/4) [2]
u - **Joint Break:** 1d6 HKA, BODY NND: Lack of Weakness/Double Jointed (+2), Only Targets Limb to Impair/Disable (-½) (45/3) [4]
u - **Righteous Rage:** +37 STR, ½ END, No Figured Chars (-½) (46/3) [+3]
u - **Tracking:** 8d6 Mind Scanning, +3 ECV, 1 phase Extra Time (-½) (46/3) [4]
Fiery Spiritual Nature: Elemental Control (18)
a - **Flaming Aura:** 1d6 RKA, Penetrating, Damage Shield, 0 END (37/19) [0]
b - **Armor** (10 PD, 10 ED), Hardened (37/19)
c - **Flight:** 13", ½ END, x4 NCM (39/21) [1/10"]
d - **Enhancement:** 3d6 Aid + 3d6 Aid, to Any 1 Characteristic Each (+¼), Self Only (-½) (37/13) [4]
Hardened Defenses on PD, ED (7)
Flash Defense, Sight: 5 (5)
Lack of Weakness: -5 (5)
Mental Defense: 8 (5)
Power Defense: 5 (5)
Life Support: Need not breathe, Immune to Disease, Aging, Extreme Heat/Cold (19)
Universal Translator 12- (20)
Combat Sense 12- (3)
Defensive Maneuver (5)
Breakfall 14- (3)
KS: Jihad 12- (3)
KS: Theology 11- (2)

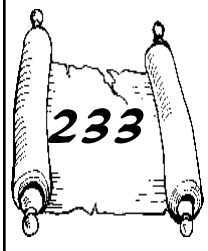
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 263

Total Character Cost: 393

Disadvantages: 100+

Berserk:
if he believes he has sinned, 14-/11- (20)
Distinctive Features:
Inhuman Power & Perfection (Can't Conceal, Cause Awe/Terror) (20)
Style Disadvantage (10)
Hunted by:
Demons & Satanists 11- (As pow) (15)
Physical Limitation:
Dispelled if Stunned/Unconscious/0 BODY (20)
Brightly Luminous, Can Never Be Unobtrusive (10)
Psychological Limitation:
Utterly Devoted to Enforcing Divine Will (25)
Relentless and Merciless (25)
Susceptibility:
3d6 STUN+BODY, Believing Has Sinned (uncommon) (30)
1d6 STUN+BODY/phase, Satanic Symbols/Places (uncommon) (30)
Watched by:
God 11- (More Pow) (10)
Villain Bonus (78)

Total Disadvantage Points: 393



Prankster

This is a variation on the Mad God, but the Prankster has a different agenda. The Prankster wants to cause social havoc, not physical destruction. The Prankster has a great sense of humor but their victims seldom appreciate the jokes.

Pranksters don't have great attack powers; that's not what they are about. They are, however, exceptionally slippery foes.

Imp Of The Perverse

Background: The Imp of the Perverse is a powerful Chaos spirit from a Brialic dimension. It is a fairly typical example of Luvah the Anarch's spirit minions. It is not a human spirit at all, and so lacks the weaknesses which help mere mortals cope with demons, angels, and other local supernatural fauna.

How the Imp of the Perverse gets to Earth is the GM's problem. Once here, however, the Imp immediately starts doing what it does best: being a pest. Playtesting has shown that most sorcerers would rather fight Skarn blindfolded than deal with the Imp.

Quote: *"HoohaHEEhahahaha! I KILL me!"* [Whereupon the Imp "morphs" one hand into a gun, shoots itself through the head, falls backwards with a lily in its hand, and teleports away.]

Personality: The Imp of the Perverse is a 'Toon on amphetamines, a compulsive maker of mischief. The more serious a person is, the more the Imp will torment them. It tries to enrage its victims so much that they chase it, following it into one humiliation after another. At least the Imp never deliberately does serious physical harm to its victims, although it often forgets that mortals lack its resilience—and the psychological harm it causes can be devastating.

Powers/Tactics: The Imp bedevils people in two ways. First, it uses its shape-shifting powers to pull pranks and put people in embarrassing situations. Second, it reverses personality traits in its victims. In game terms, this is a Transform which reverses a single one of the target's Psychological Limitations. Because the choice of Psych Lims is random, and the personality is not entirely changed, this Transform is considered Minor but not Variable.

The Imp can teleport. Not only does it use this ability to move, it makes small teleports—just a few inches—to avoid ranged attacks. (This is the special effect of its Missile Deflection.)

Finally, the Imp can muster incredible Presence. It seldom uses this to cause fear; it prefers to join this with its Shape Shifting to assume a role and make its victims play along. For instance, if the Imp suddenly decides to take the form of General Patton (complete with backdrop flag) it can use its Presence to make its luckless victim take the role of a private due for a chewing-out. If the Imp is cornered with no way out, it uses the Presence as a last-ditch defense: it just looks up at its angry pursuers as tears well in its big, soulful eyes.

Appearance: In its natural form, the Imp of the Perverse is a small, green-skinned humanoid with a shock

More Historical Mages

Paracelsus

(1490?-1541): Pseudonym of Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim, a German physician and alchemist. On the one hand, Paracelsus introduced the medical use of opium and zinc oxide to Europe, argued that alchemists should seek medicines instead of gold, and chided his fellow doctors for blindly following Classical authorities instead of seeing what actually worked. On the other hand, he wrote about elementals and produced symbolic gibberish no different from that of other alchemists of his day. Paracelsus' aggressive contempt for his fellow doctors made him extremely unpopular with them. They used their wealth and influence to hound him from town to town. Despite winning international fame as Europe's most successful healer, Paracelsus died in poverty. In legend, Paracelsus had a magic sword whose crystal pommel both contained a bound spirit and the Elixer of Life. A manuscript telling how to make a magic mirror is also attributed to him.

Pythagoras

(flourished 6th century BC): This philosopher brought Egyptian and Babylonian mathematics to Greece, discovered the dodecahedron and found the mathematical basis of musical harmony. He also established a cult-like school of philosophy in Italy whose symbol was the pentagram. Pythagoras' most important doctrine was that the Universe operates by numbers and ratios. He also taught pacifism, vegetarianism and reincarnation. The school was later suppressed by the Romans. His later followers ascribed the usual miracles to Pythagoras, such as stopping plagues, and said he was the son of the god Apollo.

of bright orange hair. It can, however, look like anything it wants. *Anything.* Magical senses will not reveal its true nature. Whatever its form, it may be recognized by its maniacal giggle.

Note: No, the Imp of the Perverse is *not* a serious villain. That's the point. It is very much a change-of-pace villain. Wait until the PCs have saved the world and are feeling puffed up. Then spring the Imp on them, throw in some incredibly pompous villain as a fellow victim and try for maximum silliness.

Imp Of The Perverse

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
15/35	STR	5	12-	200 kg; 3d6 [1]
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
23	CON	26	14-	
15/19	BODY	10	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 14-
17	EGO	14	12-	ECV: 6
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack 4d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
20	PD	17		Total: 30 PD/ 10 rPD
20	ED	15		Total: 30 ED/ 10 rED
5	SPD	23		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	0		CHA after slash
40	END	3		includes bonus for
35/39	STUN	0		Growth

Total Characteristic Cost: 140

Movement: Running: 18"/36"
Teleport: 15"/30"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
- **Combat Skill Levels:** +3 OCV, Reverse Psych Lims (6)

Imp Powers:
- **Chaos Spirit Powers:** Elemental Control, Can't Use in Area Consecrated to Order (-¼) (12)
  - a - **Shape Shift:** Anything, 0 END, Invisible vs. Magic Senses (+½) (60/36) [0]
  - b - **Armor** (10 PD, 10 ED) (30/12)
  - c - **Life Support:** Full (30/12)
  - d - **Peversion:** 10d6 minor Transform: Reverse 1 Psych Lim, 0 Range, Can't Control Which Psych Lim Reverses (-½) (100/38) [16c]
- **Imp Abilities:** Multipower (60 pt pool) (60)
  - u - **Incredible Presence:** +60 PRE, Offensive Only (-½), Requires Acting Roll (-½) (60/3)
  - u - **Ignore Damage:** +40 PD, +20 ED, Requires Breakfall Roll (-½) (60/4)
  - u - **Teleport:** 15" (30/3) [1/5"]
  - u - **Running:** +12" (18" total), ½ END (30/3) [1/10"]
  - u - **Shrinking:** 2 levels, 0 END (25 kg mass, +4 DCV, -4 PER, +6" KB) (30/3) [0]
  - u - **Growth:** 20 pts, 0 END (1600 kg mass, -2 DCV, 4" KB, +2 PER, +1" reach) (30/3) [0]
  - u - **Heal Self:** 6d6 Heal Aid, Self Only (-½), Restore Only (-½) (30/1) [3]
- **Flash Defense,** Sight: 5 (5)
- **Mental Defense:** 12 (9)
- **Power Defense:** 5 (5)
- **Clinging:** STR 15 (10)
- **Enhanced Perception:** +2 with all PER Rolls (6)

Imp Skills:
- Acrobatics 12- (3)
- Acting 13- (3)
- Breakfall 12- (3)
- Concealment 12- (3)
- Disguise 11- (3)
- Mimicry 11- (3)
- Stealth 12- (3)
- **Skill Levels:** +2 Levels with all Skills (10)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 262

Total Character Cost: 402

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
- Bizarre Cackle (noticed) (5)

Hunted by:
- Order Minions or Past Victims, 11- (As Pow) (15)

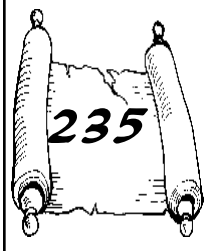
Physical Limitation:
- Dispelled if Stunned/Unconscious/0 BODY (20)

Psychological Limitation:
- Must Cause Confusion & Disruption (20)
- Goes Along w/a Gag or Routine (15)
- Provokes Pursuers to Continue Pursuit (15)
- Hyperactive, Short Attention Span (10)

Susceptibility:
- 1d6 STUN+BODY/Turn, Ground Consecrated to Order (common) (30)

Villain Bonus (172)

Total Disadvantage Points: 402



Vengeful Rival

In some way a PC showed up the Vengeful Rival, and the rival has never forgiven this humiliation. The rival and the PC may have studied magic together. The Vengeful Rival makes a great Hunted for PC sorcerers, because the Rival will ally with anyone else hostile to the PC. Vengeful Rivals often cut deals with Dimensional Conquerors to destroy their mutual nemesis.

Although Vengeful Rivals may have more raw power than a PC sorcerer—perhaps through deals with extra-planar beings—they aren't as clever or flexible at using their power. Once their death trap fails or their plot unravels, they usually flee.

Hierophant

Background: No one but the Hierophant himself knows his story. He has hidden his past well: no government has his fingerprints or tax records on file; he has no bank account, credit cards or picture ID; putting his face on a "Wanted" poster will not turn up anyone who remembers this man from years before. Even the occult community's grapevine can't find who he is, or at least any teachers he had either won't recognize him now or they won't talk. He is a true legal non-person.

The Hierophant's past, however, isn't really what matters. The Hierophant has big plans for the future. He intends to become the most powerful person in the world—no matter what the cost, to him or anyone else.

Quote: "*What?! Solitaire! Accursed witch, you have interfered with my plans for the last time!*"

Personality: The Hierophant is a simple man, and a simple villain. He just wants power. He'd be hard-pressed to explain *why* he wants power; it's not a question of celebrity, or any special project he wants to finish. He's just deeply insecure, and needs ever-greater magical power to feel in charge of his life.

The Hierophant is too insecure, however, to stand alone as a power unto himself. He wants some more powerful being as backup. Thus the Hierophant has become a mercenary priest, always hustling to make a deal with some dimension lord, offering it worship on Earth in return for greater power for himself.

The Hierophant also has a vicious temper. Normally he keeps it under tight control, but when his pride is affronted his wrath can drive him to imprudent attempts at revenge. Once the PCs thwart a plot to bring some malevolent godling to Earth, the Hierophant will vow to destroy them. After two or three defeats, the Hierophant will get a reason for seeking power: for revenge, and the Hierophant will become a full fledged Vengeful Rival.

Powers/Tactics: The Hierophant commands impressive Thaumaturgy. He knows many spells for a wide range of effects. He can be a formidable combatant, for he can tailor his Baleful Bolt and Goetic Glow as NNDs versus defenses a character doesn't have—if he can guess their weakness or deduce it from analysis of their magic. What's more, he wears an amulet which feeds him all the Endurance he needs. This only lasts for one minute, so he must take care not to enter combat prematurely. As a last ditch defense, he has the Shocking Word, a powerful concussive spell he only uses when Entangled or surrounded by many foes.

Although the Hierophant uses Thaumaturgy, he can employ magic items of other sorts. His Magic Limitation simply reflects that although he is quite learned, his spell casting is rigid and pedantic—there's little personal creativity. This makes his magic style easy to analyze (see "KS: Analyze Magic Style" in Chapter Two for details).

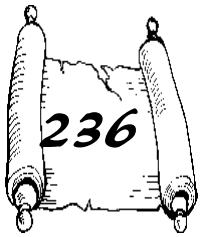
The Hierophant likes to have minions. He knows spells to summon elementals and one class of Outer Plane spirits. (This class is left for GMs to define on their own, as a surprise for players.) His magical minions are exceptionally loyal, since he magically enslaves them. If he can trap a hero, of course he will try to enslave them too.

He also tries to attract followers by promising incredible spiritual revelations and occult powers. While he prefers to attract social leaders such as politicians and businessmen, he has use for common nobodies as well. Not only do followers feed his ego, their life-force feeds the magical amulet that enhances his spell casting. (In game terms, the amulet is recharged by somebody taking 2d6 CON Drain, at a recovery rate of 5 pts per *season*. The Hierophant cajoles or bullies his rank-and-file "disciples" into taking the CON Drain for him.) As a result, the Hierophant has no true Followers he can count on in a pinch: since he doesn't bother wasting magic on enslaving his cultists' wills, they feel few qualms about deserting him.

The Hierophant usually builds himself a sanctum sanctorum before launching any plans to gain power. (A typical sanctum of his follows.) He's quite expert at building sanctums.

Appearance: The Hierophant is a swarthy, Caucasian man of medium height and weight. It's hard to tell his true age, but he looks middle-aged. His eyes, heavy eyebrows and short, triangular beard are black. He shaves his head. The Hierophant speaks in a deep, cadenced voice.

The Hierophant wears a bloused silk tunic and trousers tucked into gold-cuffed black gloves and boots, a billowing black cloak with a high collar clasped by his amulet, a belt and a fairly elaborate headdress (which may change from adventure to adventure). The tunic bears a large, flamboyant design. His usual colors are red and purple.



Hierophant

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 3½d6 [1]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack 3½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	7		Total: 20 PD/ 10 rPD
10	ED	6		Total: 20 ED/ 10 rED
5	SPD	19		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	2		
36	END	0		
26	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 118

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Teleport: 15"/30"
Flight: 12"/24"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Level: +1 Level w/ Magic Multipower (5)

Magic Spells and Abilities:

Spells on the Fly: Power Pool (10 pt pool), Spell Research Roll to change & use (-½) (13)

Thaumaturic Spells: Multipower (94 pt pool), Only in Villain ID (-¼), -½ Var Lim: GI/Acts 14- (-¼), Side Effect: at least 3d6 Drain vs. SPD if Aborted/Dispelled/Activation Fails (-½) (47)

u - **Aura of Elan:** 23 STR TK, 1 Hex AE, Personal Immunity (61/3) [6]

u - **Baleful Bolt:** 4d6 EB, +1 Var Advantage (+2) (60/3) [6]

u - **Cerulean Spear:** 6d6 Ego Attack (60/3) [6]

u - **Goetic Glow:** 2d6 Flash vs. Vision, +1 Var Adv (+2) (60/3) [6]

u - **Hypnotic Helix:** 12d6 Mind Control (60/3) [6]

u - **Hypnotic Helix:** 12d6 Telepathy (60/3) [6]

u - **Koriol's Crimson Crystals:** 6d6 Entangle (60/3) [6]

u - **Nimbus of Nullity:** 16d6 Dispel vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼) (60/3) [6]

u - **Nimbus of Nullity:** 5d6 Suppress vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼), Uncontrolled for 1 minute, 0 END to maintain, Personal Immunity (62/3) [6]

u - **Sigils of Set:** 5d6 Suppress vs. Any Phys Char (+¼), Uncontrolled for 1 minute, 0 END to maintain, Personal Immunity (62/3) [6]

u - **Sorcerer's Star:** 12d6 EB (60/3) [6]

u - **Brief Gate:** EDM: Any Plane, x2 Mass, x2 END, +x8 Mass, 1 Turn Extra Time (-1), x2 END (60/2) [8/12]

u - **Extra Mystic Shield:** Force Field (9 PD, 9 ED, 6 MD, 6 PowD) (30/1) [3]

u - **Shadows of Shaldus:** 1" Radius Darkness vs. Sense Magic + All Vision, Personal Immunity, ½ END (30/1) [1]

u - **Fada's Far Seeking:** 5d6 Mind Scanning, +3 ECV (31/1) [2]

u - **Vanishing Paths:** 15" Teleport (30/1) [1/5"]

u - **Enslavement:** 1 ½d6 Transform, Cumulative, NND: Hardened Mental or Power Defense (+1), Continuous, ½ END, Max Range 4" (-¼) (86/4) [4]

u - **Grand Transubstantiation:** 2d6+1 major Transform, Universal (+1), Cumulative, 1 turn Extra Time (-1), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½) (72/2) [7]

u - **Shocking Word:** 10d6 EB, Explosion, Personal Immunity, 0 Range, 1 Charge, Costs END, Incantation (87/1) [9]

u - **Conjure Elemental:** 1 x 225 pt Summon Any Elemental (+¼), 1 Turn Extra Time (-1), x2 END, 1 Var Lim: OAF/More Extra Time (94/2) [18]

u - **Conjure Outer Plane Spirits:** 1 x 225 pt Summon Class of Spirits (+¼), 1 Turn Extra Time (-1), x2 END, -1 Var Lim: OAF/More Extra Time (94/2) [18]

Array of Spells: Elemental Control, Only in Villain ID (-¼), -½ Var Lim as above (-¼), Side Effect as above (-½) (15/7)

a - **Mystic Shields:** Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED), 0 END (30/7) [0]

b - **Deflecting Disk:** Missile Deflection +0 vs. All Magic, Damage Shield (30/7)

c - **Levitation:** 12" Flight, ½ END (30/7) [1/10"]

d - **Mystic Senses:** Sense Magic, Targeting (30/7)

Mental Defense: 10 (6)

Amulet of the Hierophant, IAF:

Power Defense: 5 (3)

Endless Energy: 1d6 END Aid, Continuous, 1 chg of 1 minute (-1), Hard to Recharge (-1), Self Only (-½), Restore Only (-½) (2) [1c]

Mystic Wardrobe: Instant Change: Costume, Gestures, Incantations (3)

Cramming (5)

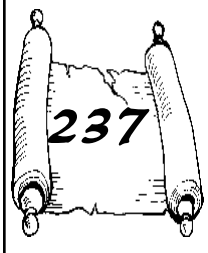
Simulate Death 13- (3)

Background Skills:

Acting 13- (3)
Concealment 13- (3)
Conversation 13- (3)
Cryptography 13- (3)
Dimensional Navigation 13- (3)
Oratory 13- (3)
Spell Research 13- (3)
Stealth 13- (3)
Scholar (3)
KS: Thaumaturgy 13- (2)
KS: Occult World 13- (2)
KS: Spell Transforms 13- (2)
KS: Physical Transforms 13- (2)
KS: Spirits 13- (2)
KS: Dimension Lords 13- (2)
KS: Dimensions 13- (2)
Linguist (native English) (3)
Latin, fluent with accent (1)
Arabic, fluent with accent (2)
Hindi, fluent with accent (2)
Headquarters: 100 pt reserve (20)
Perk: John Doe (2)
Well Off (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 250

Total Character Cost: 368



Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
Sinister Charisma (Concealable) (5)
Hunted by:
PCs, 11- (More Pow) (20)
Magical Limitation:
Just not very creative (10)
Physical Limitation:
Funny Diet Restrictions (10)
Psychological Limitation:
Craves Power and Respect (20)
Extremely Vengeful (20)
Paranoid (10)
Susceptibility:
1d6 STUN/phase, Public Ridicule/Humiliation (uncommon) (15)
Vulnerability:
x2 STUN, Ordinary HTH Attacks (very common) (30)
Watched by:
Current Patron, 11- (More Pow) (10)
Villain Bonus (115)

Total Disadvantage Points: 368

Mage-Hunter

Some people fear and hate the supernatural. (Is it any wonder, with psychopaths like the Hierophant around?) Some people hate the supernatural so much they want to eliminate it—by killing every sorcerer they can find.

By definition, Mage-Hunters are seriously obsessive people. Their hatred of magic doesn't stop them, however, from using a bit of magic themselves: they rationalize it as "turning the enemy's weapons against him." Mage-Hunters can't hope to compete with real mages in innate power and flexibility, but they make up for it with skills and special weapons (magical or otherwise). Mage-Hunters rely on a deadly surprise attack. If this doesn't incapacitate the target, Mage-Hunters will usually flee. Mage-Hunters usually become obsessed with victims they fail to kill, go mad and come to very sticky ends.

Witchfinder

Background: One night, little Jeremy Blaine's comfortable, middle-class childhood came crashing down. He and his parents were walking home from the movies. They took a shortcut through an alley, where they met Archimago, fleeing from a scheme's ruination.

Archimago needed a quick human sacrifice or two to regain his power. He instantly paralyzed the little family. Jeremy watched helplessly as the old wizard drained the life-force from his parents and transformed their husks into demons. Archimago didn't need a third sacrifice, and so he spared the boy. Jeremy didn't appreciate the favor.

Jeremy grew up in foster care. He became a top student and star athlete in high school, but he turned down all the offers he received from college recruiters. On his 18th birthday he inherited his parents' modest savings and used the money for a 5-year trip around the world. He visited private libraries and esoteric sages, martial arts trainers, and weapon smiths. At the end he was ready to begin his life's work.

That meeting with Archimago had taught Jeremy that there were devils in the night, and the worst of all were the devils in human form who treated with the Dark Powers. He had lost his parents to black magic, but he could stop the magicians from claiming any more victims…by killing them all first.

Quote: "*'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'—so you can suffer and die!*"

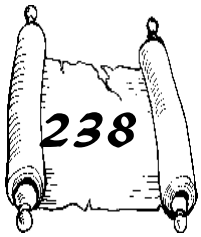
Personality: Jeremy has never forgiven himself for living while his parents died, and his irrational guilt fuels his hatred of all sorcerers. He's determined to purge all magic from the world—kill the wizards, burn their books and sanctums, and destroy the artifacts—or die in the attempt. A few magic items can be spared if they help him kill wizards, but he plans to destroy them too, once the last sorcerer is dead. If one sorcerer manages to escape ambushes a few times, however, Jeremy might get so obsessed with that particular wizard that he would use any magic, even make his own pact with a supernatural being, just to kill his nemesis.

Powers/Tactics: The Witchfinder has only one item of magic, a pair of ornate bracers that parry spells and glow to point the direction of magic. (He doesn't know that Mephistopheles arranged for him to get the bracers and can turn them off whenever he wants. The Witchfinder won't get a chance to kill Old Nick's most favored servants—just their competition.)

Beyond that, Jeremy is a hyper-competent man with a lot of paramilitary hardware: guns, grenades, explosives, etc. He's got something to kill, or at least hurt, just about anything supernatural. He even built special holy water grenades to use on vampires and demons.

The Witchfinder never openly challenges the mages he tries to kill. Instead he stalks them, learning their habits so he can find an opportunity to attack with complete surprise. Although he'll settle for shooting a sorcerer through the head from a rooftop, he really prefers to leave a messy corpse as a warning to people about what they can expect if they meddle with the Black Arts. If his target doesn't die quickly, he flees to try again later.

Appearance: The Witchfinder is a wiry man of middle height, in his mid to late 20s. He has crewcut brown hair, gray eyes and a brooding expression. He wears a big game hunter-style ammunition vest and belt hung with grenades and tool pouches, over a camo-patterned flak suit.



Witchfinder

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	400 kg; 4d6 [2]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	18	13-	PRE Attack 3½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
9	PD	5		Total: 17 PD/ 4 rPD
9	ED	5		Total: 17 ED/ 4 rED
5	SPD	19		Pha 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
10	REC	4		
40	END	0		
33	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 134

Movement: Running: 7"/14"
Swinging: 7"/14"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Combat (16)
Range Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Range Mod (6)

Martial Arts—*Jiu-jitsu* (16)

Maneuver	*OCV*	*DCV*	*Notes*
Slam	+0	+1	4d6+V/5; target falls
Choke Hold	-2	+0	Grab, 2d6 NND
Joint Break	-2	+0	1d6+1 HKA
Disarm	-1	+1	STR 30 Disarm

Witch Hunting Equipment:
Weapons: Multipower (70 pt pool), OAF (35)
u - **Rifle:** 2d6+1 RKA, AP, +1 STUN Mult (+½) (70/3) [16c]
u - **SMG:** 2d6 RKA, Autofire (+½), +1 STUN Mult (+½) (67/3) [30c]
u - **Combat Shotgun:** 2½d6 RKA, x2 Knockback (+¾), Reduced by Range (-¼) (70/2) [6c]
u - **Incendiary Grenades:** 1d6+1 RKA, Penetrating, 1 Hex AE, Uncontrolled Continuous, 2 chgs of 1 minute each (-¾) (70/3) [2c]
u - **Thunderstrips:** 8d6 EB, Explosion, Indirect (Under doors, etc. +¼), Sliding Range (-¼) (70/2) [2c]
u - **Gas Grenades:** 5d6 NND vs. LS: Breathing (+1), 1 Hex AE, PI, Thrown Range (-¼) (69/2) [2c]
u - **Flash/Bang Grenades:** 4d6 Flash vs. Sight/Hearing, Explosion, Thrown Range (-¼) (67/2) [2c]
u - **Plastic Explosive:** 3 ½d6 RKA, Time Delay (+¼), 0 Range, 1 turn Extra Time (-1) (69/1) [4c]
u - **Smoke Pellets:** Darkness 2" Radius vs. All Vision, Thrown Range (-¼), 2 chgs of 2 phases each (-1 ¼) (30/1) [2c]
u - **Holy Water Grenades:** Change Environment 2" Radius, 2 chgs of 2 phases each (-1 ¼) (10/1) [2c]
Costume: Armor (4 PD, 4 ED) + 4 PD, 4 ED, OIF (13)
Visor, OAF:
Flash Defense, Sight: 5 (2)
Vision Enhancement: UV Vision, +4 Telescopic Vision, (5)
Swingline: Swinging 7", OAF (3)
Mystic Bracers, OIF:
Missile Deflection +3 vs. All Magic, (17)
Mental Defense: +5 (3)
Power Defense: 5 (3)
Detect Magic, Ranged, +2 Telescopic (7)
Trained Abilities:
Mental Defense: 10 (6)
Running: +1" Running (7" total) (2) [1/5"]
Witchhunting Skills:
Breakfall 13- (3)
Bugging 13- (3)
Climbing 13- (3)
Concealment 13- (3)
Demolitions 13- (7)
Interrogation 13- (3)
Lockpicking 13- (3)
Paramedic 13- (3)
Security Systems 13- (3)
Sleight of Hand 13- (3)
Stealth 13- (3)
Weaponsmith 11- (Slugthrowers) (3)
Lightsleep (3)
Scholar (3)
KS: Occult 13- (2)
KS: Supernatural Beings 13- (2)
KS: Sorcerers 11- (1)
KS: Real Magic 11- (1)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 203

Total Character Cost: 337

Disadvantages: 100+

Hunted by:
FBI & Police, 11- (As Pow, NCI) (15)
Devil's Advocates, 8- (More Pow) (15)
GM's Choice Supernatural Being, 8- (As Pow) (10)
Psychological Limitation:
Hatred of Mages and Supernatural Beings (25)
Fear of Capture (20)
Ruthless (15)
Reputation:
Murderous lunatic, 8- (10)
Secret Identity (15)
Villain Bonus (110)

Total Disadvantage Points: 337

Fanatic Priest

This type of villain serves some other entity, a "god" of some sort. The "god" gives the priest magical powers to use on its behalf. The priest seldom has much magic beyond what the "god" provides. Since the Fanatic Priest always appears as a villain, either the "god" is itself evil, or the priest misunderstands the god's motivations. (Indeed, the god might have no motivations humans *could* understand.)

Fanatic Priests often appear as leaders of cults, but not necessarily. A Fanatic Priest could be a lone worshipper, although they might have ambitions of starting a cult someday.

A Fanatic Priest's deity could be a mythological god, a demon lord or other spirit, an extra-dimensional tyrant, cosmic entity or powerful elder sorcerer. It could even be a figment of the priest's own imagination, making the Fanatic Priest also a Mad Mage (see "Mage Origins" in Chapter One).

If they're lucky, Fanatic Priests have attacks and defenses in the same power range as the PC mages, but their powers are less varied than a true wizard's. Priests also have the disadvantage that they must constantly please their god, who is probably a real bastard. (If it wasn't, the Fanatic Priest wouldn't be a villain.) If a Priest doesn't follow all the rules and prohibitions commanded by the god, and generally display Fanatic loyalty, the god will take away the Priest's powers and maybe even drag him or her off to eternal torment. Failure in a mission may be seen as disloyalty.

Tappan Arkwright III

Background: Tappan Arkwright III doesn't deserve his life. It's not his fault that he's trying to deliver mankind into the monstrous clutches of the Kings of Edom. Arkwright is a scion of one of Boston's oldest, richest, and most respectable families. Not one ancestor for the last ten generations wasn't a millionaire; most were other Boston Brahmins. Perhaps a touch of inbreeding is responsible for Arkwright's curious deformity.

Arkwright's birth defect isn't large—only two inches across. He can comb his hair to cover it. On the back of Arkwright's head is a tiny second face. It cannot breathe or speak, because its nose and mouth lack a throat, but it can move its lips. It is Arkwright's twin brother, imperfectly absorbed as a fetus. The twin has a little brain of its own, connected to Arkwright's.

Normally the Twin sleeps, but somehow its walnut-sized brain receives mental emanations from the imprisoned Kings of Edom, although it cannot initiate contact. When Arkwright sleeps, sometimes the mad dreams of the Edomites leak across.

And sometimes the Twin wakes. If Arkwright himself is unconscious at the time, the Twin can take control of him, body and brain. The Twin is a loyal servant of the Kings of Edom, from whom it has learned much. Arkwright knows the Twin does terrible things; he's tried to kill himself twice. Both times, the Twin overpowered his will and stopped him. He just hopes that the Twin can be stopped before it succeeds in freeing its dread masters.

Quote: *"Now die, and know that your death is…utterly meaningless."*

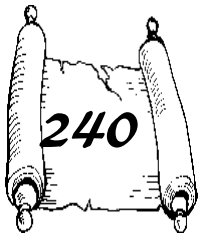
Personality: Arkwright himself is a gentle person whose only expertise is in Art Nouveau engravings, but the Twin is a murderous magician and fanatical worshipper of the Kings of Edom. The Twin despises human beings. The Kings of Edom have promised to give it a new, inhuman body, one it will exclusively control, when they are free. Until then, it enjoys murdering humans—any race, age or gender—whom it thinks will not be missed too quickly. So far, the Twin has covered its tracks well: the FBI suspects the existence of a serial murderer who kills his victims in ritual fashion, but they haven't yet connected any of the crimes to Arkwright or to the Twin's other, patternless killings.

Powers/Tactics: Arkwright, or rather the Twin, has learned several powerful spells from the Kings of Edom themselves. Some of the spells involve channeling trickles of power from particular Kings such as Vulshoth. All but one of these spells draws their energy from a reserve of power; the remaining spell is a ritual of human sacrifice which charges the reserve. To cast this spell, Arkwright must slash his helpless victim in several places before stabbing the victim's brain with an icepick and sucking out the mingled blood and cerebral fluid.

When controlled by the Twin, Arkwright is also uncannily resistant to damage. His body is not physically tougher than a normal man's, but his fanaticism acts like PCP: he just ignores the damage and keeps fighting. Thus he can survive wounds that would incapacitate or kill a normal man.

If Arkwright has any reason to expect combat, he immediately summons Edomite monsters to fight for him. He can Summon a single monster of up to 200 Base Points, or up to four monsters of base 150 points or less. Arkwright prefers to let the monsters do his fighting for him, which the monsters will do because of the authority the Kings have given him. While the monsters engage Arkwright's enemies, Arkwright takes the best cover he can find and snipes with his own spells.

Appearance: Tappan Arkwright III is a slender, unassuming man in his mid-30s, with a narrow face and fine, web-like dark hair worn artistically long (but less than shoulder length) to conceal the Twin's face and swept back from his receding hairline. He dresses conservatively, but wears a silk scarf instead of a tie.



Tappan Arkwright III

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	75 kg; 1½d6 [2]
21*	DEX	26	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18*	CON	13	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
23*	INT	10	14-	PER Roll 14-
17*	EGO	11	12-	ECV: 6
20*	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack 4d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
17*	PD	12		Total: 17 PD/ 4 rPD
17*	ED	10		Total: 17 ED/ 4 rED
4*	SPD	7		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
6*	REC	0		
36*	END	0		
30*	STUN	6		*Only in Villain ID (-¼)

Total Characteristic Cost: 100

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 25"/400"

Powers & Skills:

Edomite-Given Powers:

Edomite Spells: Multipower (90 pt pool), Incantations, *, most from END Reserve (60)
- u - **Power Ritual:** 6d6 BODY Transfer to END Reserve, Restore Only (-½), 1 Turn Extra Time (-1), Expendable OAF: Human Sacrifice (-1 ½) (90/2) [9]
- u - **Black Tentacles of Vulshoth:** 4d6 Entangle, Shares Damage (+¼), +1d6 BODY Drain, Ranged, Recover 1 BODY/2 Minutes (+½), Uncontrolled (while Entangle lasts) Continuous 0 END (90/6) [9]
- u - **Vulshoth's Clutch of Horror:** 3d6, 3 DEF Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2) (90/6) [9]
- u - **Deizzhorath's Kiss:** 6d6 RKA (90/6) [9]
- u - **Deizzhorath's Kiss:** 2d6 BODY Drain, Ranged, AP x2, Uncontrolled (11- chance each turn it continues) Continuous 0 END to maintain (90/6) [9]
- u - **Pthaar's Reign of Dreams:** 18d6 Mental Illusions (90/6) [9]
- u - **Dominion of Edom:** 14d6 Mind Control, Nonselective 1 Hex AE (+¼) (87/6) [9]
- u - **Domination and Corruption:** 7d6 minor Transform vs. EGO, Var: Make Any EGO+20 Mind Control Effect Permanent (+¼) (87/6) [9]
- u - **Between the Spaces We Know:** 25" Teleport, x16 NCM, x4 Mass, 2 Floating Pts (90/6) [1/5"]
- u - **Summon Minion:** up to 1 x 200 pt Summon, Var: Any Edomite Monsters (+¼) (87/6) [9]
- u - **Clairsentience:** Vision, x256 Range (95 miles), 0 END (90/6) [0]

Awful Energy: END Reserve: 100 END * (8)

Resist Damage: Damage Reduction (50% vs. rPD, 50% vs. rED), * (48)

Damage Resistance (4 PD, 4 ED), Invisible Power Effects (+½), * (5)

Mental Defense: 15* (10)

Link to Kings of Edom: Mind Link x1 to Kings of Edom, Any Distance/Dimension, Target Has Mind Link (-1), No Conscious Control (-2) (5)

Priestly Skills:
- Concealment 14- (3)
- Cryptography 14- (3)
- Stealth 13- (3)
- Streetwise 13- (3)
- KS: Edomite Lore 14- (3)
- SC: Edomite Hypergeometry 14- (3)
- Wealth (5)
- Initiate: Edomite Cult Leader (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 226

Total Character Cost: 320

Disadvantages: 100+

Accidental Change:
- if Knocked Out, either way (very common), 14- (25)

Distinictive Features:
- Double Aura, one nasty (Few Detect, Creepy) (10)

Hunted by:
- FBI Special Crimes Unit, 8- (As Pow, NCI) (15)
- Occult Investigators, 8- (As Pow) (10)

Psychological Limitation:
- Devoted to Kings of Edom; Sees humans as Cattle (20)
- Murderous (15)
- Fear of Killing Attacks (15)

Susceptibility:
- 3d6 STUN, Whenever a King of Edom Wants (uncommon) (15)

Unluck: 2d6 (10)

Watched by:
- Edomites, 11- (More Pow) (10)

Villain Bonus (81)

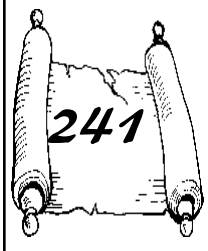
Total Disadvantage Points: 326

Thugs

Master Villains often like to have a squad of comparatively low-powered thugs to do the dirty work and back them up in a fight, and magical Master Villains are no different. Their thugs may be minor demons or elementals, brainwashed cultists, ethereal wraiths, low-power undead such as zombies, mind-controlled animals, or even stranger things. Each Master Villain's thugs should be as distinctive as the villains themselves. An Oriental mastermind sorcerer, for instance, might employ ninja with cloaks of invisibility and magic daggers.

Of course, thugs never receive magical weapons or powers that are very powerful. Just as with more conventional agent hardware, wimpy items are cheaper and easier to produce than high powered weapons, and the bosses don't want to hand out goodies that could be too effectively used against them—either by rebellious thugs or the heroes.

Magic-oriented thugs are usually fanatical, if not actually mindless. This is worth playing up: it makes them seem creepier and more formidable than their power level really justifies. Heroes used to mowing down VIPER agents by the score may still get the creeps from cultists who cheerfully die for a chance to take a hero with them.



The Sylvestri Clan

Background: The Sylvestri clan has been in the thick of supernatural evil for 300 years. The clan consists of several related, extended families: the Sylvestris themselves, the McFarlanes, the Liefelds and a few other minor families. Members of the Sylvestri Clan are found on at least three continents.

The lineage's involvement in black magic began with Count Giacomo Sylvestri, a friend and pupil of the notorious 17th century Satanist, Pietro Mora. Unlike most Satanists, Giacomo had the patience and discretion to learn magic of his own instead of relying on what the Lords of Hell would proffer. He became powerful enough, both magically and politically, that he could defy both Church and State. Giacomo even escaped his deal with the Devil by going beyond the demons to serve the Dragon directly, if you can call that an escape. Through magic he has prolonged his life for centuries, with no end in sight, and has become one of the Dragon's most favored servants.

Giacomo raised his children as Satanists and Dragon worshippers as well. They continued the tradition with their own children. The Sylvestris married other black magicians, bringing them into the extended family. By now the far flung clan includes at least twenty adepts of significant power, and dozens of minor sorcerers. The clan members described here are fairly typical. Even family members with no talent for magic may stay involved as cultists and accomplices. Not all the family members choose to follow this peculiar "family business," and they have a high attrition rate, but after 300 years they are numerous enough to constitute a major power bloc in the Magical World.

The Sylvestris are more than just Satanists. They all know that the Lords of Hell are just front men for the Dragon, and many Sylvestris serve and worship the Dragon directly. (At least two Cardinals of Ouroboros are Sylvestris.) They will also ally with other evil powers, such as evil gods, non Judeo-Christian demons, extra-dimensional tyrants and minor qliphothic entities. Giacomo has forbidden any contact with the Kings of Edom, though, because he recognizes that the Edomites' goals are fundamentally incompatible with the goals of the Dragon.

The Sylvestris have several Headquarters. The most important of them are located in the three family homelands. Castello di Sylvestri in the Apennine Mountains of Italy is the supreme headquarters. McFarlane House is located in a small town in Scotland. The Liefeld Commerzbank Tower in Frankfurt, Germany is the chief nexus for the clan's financial web. All these Headquarters have extensive defenses both mundane and magical, including full suites of "Instant Sanctum" spells cast on them.

Goals: In brief? Whatever would please the Dragon. In the long term, this means freeing the Dragon, annihilating civilization as we know it and making the Earth an eternal Hell of misery from which even death gives no escape. In the short term, however, the Sylvestris follow many goals. Close relatives are more likely to work together, but for the most part Sylvestri sorcerers only cooperate for brief, specific missions. Typical operations for Sylvestris can range from creating a magic item or kidnapping victims for sacrifice to provoking wars, plagues and famines: if it's nasty, Sylvestris will do it. Some Sylvestris even hire out to other evil sorcerers and cults, as a way of making contacts—and keeping an eye on potential rivals of the clan.

Tactics: Since the Sylvestris don't work together as a tightly integrated unit, they share no tactics. Each individual Sylvestri has their own characteristic modus operandi and combat style.

Group Relations: Relationships between the Sylvestris are weird. They will work together on missions, and any Sylvestri can count on help from the others if they're in danger from outside forces such as hostile cults, good guy sorcerers, churches, or governments. Indeed, there is quite a lot of inbreeding in the Sylvestri Clan from "kissing cousins," a practice Giacomo encourages for reasons of his own. At the same time, the Sylvestris are selfish amoralists who will gladly betray each other when things are going well, if they think they can gain more power that way. Keeping up with family gossip on who's doing what with whom (or to whom) is a major preoccupation.

The Sylvestris agree, however, that family patriarch Giacomo is the boss, after the Dragon. First, Giacomo has the most seniority and experience; he's definitely the clan's most powerful sorcerer. Second, he's survived every assassination attempt and killed the would be assassins. Finally, the Dragon says Giacomo is the boss, and most Sylvestris know better than to argue with the Dragon.

Other senior Sylvestris receive respect and obedience in proportion to their age, power and favor with Giacomo. Giacomo appoints an informal council of elders to advise him and oversee family operations. Obedience to elders is preached as an important part of Sylvestri etiquette. Actually, respect for elders is a matter of self preservation in Clan Sylvestri: young snots who mouth off at their seniors don't live to become seniors themselves…

Clan Sylvestri has fairly cordial relationships with other Satanic and Draconic cults and sorcerers. Other evil mages and cults may work with individual Sylvestris, but keep their distance from the clan as a whole. Among the various minions of Evil, no one hates the Sylvestri clan enough to try wiping it out, with revenge from the united clan if they fail. Naturally, all good aligned mystic organizations despise the Sylvestris.

Reputation: The Sylvestris are bad to the bone and dangerously unpredictable: there are so many of them, with such diverse powers. They'd be even more dangerous if they worked together more closely. As it is, one simply never knows what they'll do next.

Most law enforcement agencies have no idea what the Sylvestris are up to. The Sylvestris devote quite a bit of effort to keeping the cops in the dark. It's not

easy, considering that many Sylvestris engage in kidnapping, torture, murder and other perverse activities. The family is also hip deep in the international drug trade, more for its value as a corroder of social values than for the money; through their demonic connections, the Sylvestris have amassed total assets worth billions of dollars and several are multi-millionaires. A few Sylvestris have fallen because of their criminal activities, but so far the family has passed them off as isolated "black sheep" and hidden the occult aspects.

Campaign Use: Most obviously, the Sylvestris are an ongoing threat to the heroes. They make a fine source for new villains, too. If one cannot think of some other origin for an evil sorcerer or magical super thug, one can say they are another Sylvestri. The Sylvestris can be an excuse for all sorts of different sorcerers, villains and monsters to work together.

The Sylvestris are so widespread and have their fingers in so many pies that they are easy to justify as a hero's Hunted. Heroes might have thwarted Sylvestri plots in the past, or gained their powers by accident from a Sylvestri magic ritual, and so on. For one intriguing possibility, a hero might even be a Sylvestri who's "gone rogue" for some reason, and the family wants them back—or dead. In every generation, a few Sylvestris try to drop out and lead normal lives. If they succeed, their children might inherit a knack for magic and become Wild Talent mages. If they fail, they might seek good guy sorcerers like the PCs for help.

Patriarch

Background: After twenty years, the Comte Giacomo Sylvestri at last would have a child: his third wife was pregnant. His ancient line and title would continue. As great a relief, the unfruitfulness of his past wives and mistresses was not his fault. He'd had a brilliant life: a successful army commander; fluent in French, German, Latin and Greek; a shrewd investor; a patron of the arts. He had succeeded at everything except siring an heir.

Then too, on his business trip to Milan, Giacomo had consulted the notorious Pietro Mora, rumored to be a sorcerer as well as a doctor and astrologer, and obtained from him a horoscope. His wife's child was a boy, Mora had said, and Giacomo would have more sons than Jacob of Israel. Giacomo had returned early from Milan to tell his wife the news. In high heart, he strode to their chamber, threw open the door to greet her—and felt a dagger of ice in his heart.

His wife was naked on their bed. So was the handsome young guard. They broke their embrace, as surprised as he. Giacomo moved first. They barely had time to scream before he slew them both with his sword.

A week later, Giacomo sobered up. Wine could not erase the horrid clarity of that moment at his chamber door. The child had not been his. Killing his wife and her lover did not kill the truth that he could never sire an heir. He was the last Sylvestri. Giacomo had to laugh, remembering Pietro Mora's assurance: more sons than Jacob indeed! And so Giacomo decided to ride back to Milan and kill Mora as well. What was another murder? He did not regret killing his faithless wife any more than he regretted the men he'd slain on the battlefield.

Only Mora did not die. When he saw Giacomo's sword, Mora simply raised his hand and spoke a Word. One of the rings on his fingers flashed red and Giacomo felt fire explode in his head. He staggered forward, half blind with pain, until a second blast sent him crumpling to the floor.

To his surprise, Giacomo woke up again. Mora wanted to know why Giacomo sought his death; it was a strange reaction to good news, was it not? Giacomo told of his wife and why he'd slain her. "Your horoscopes are no better than fart wind, wizard."

Mora frowned, but thoughtfully. "Not my words, but those of my lord and patron, the great Duke Astaroth. He has never been wrong before, but his words must be considered closely. He said the child was a boy. He never said it was yours. The rest of his prophecy may yet come true—if you dare to fulfill it. Will you accept damnation to gain an heir?"

Giacomo laughed bitterly. "God has shown His 'love' for me well enough. I am an adulterer and a murderer and do not repent it! Let your devil do his best and worst. If he can make my seed fertile, he shall be my liege as well!"

So it came to pass. Giacomo sold his soul to the archdevil Astaroth and took another wife. Soon he had a baby daughter, with another child on the way. As Astaroth commanded, none were baptized. With proof of Hell's power, Giacomo contacted Mora again. He wanted to learn sorcery himself. Since Milan was becoming too hot for Mora, the Satanic wizard gladly moved to Castle Sylvestri.

As always, the Comte did well at his chosen task. When Mora left five years later, Giacomo was able to summon demons himself, and just in time. The Pope had allied with a neighbor to conquer and destroy him. Many of Giacomo's own people welcomed the invader; he was as thorough in damnation as everything else, and had earned their hatred. The few who stayed loyal were not enough, but a few Wrath Demons sent among the besiegers at night evened the score. Even as the army retreated from his gates, though, an arquebus shot pierced him. The wound festered into gangrene; mortal medicine was helpless, and so Giacomo summoned the demon called Marbas, a President who can cure disease and appears in the form of a lion.

To Giacomo's dismay, this time his conjurations did not cow the demon. His sickness made him too weak. "Payment, son of Adam!" the demon growled as it stalked around Giacomo's magic circle. "Life and health I give, in return for what else is most precious to thee!"

"Fiend!" he cried. "My soul is pledged already!"

The demon bared its fangs, a grin. "That I know…but what did you get that was worth damnation? Give it to me, with thy two hands, and perfect health shall be thine for all thy days."

What could the demon mean but his eldest son Pietro, his heir? A fine little lad, though Giacomo didn't see much of him; that was the nanny's job. But then, he had two other sons, one legitimate, and already wise folk did not question his word… "Agreed, spirit. With my own two hands will I grant thy desire in…a week? If you will assure my life until then?"

"A week," Marbas agreed. "I shall know if thy payment is given with less than thy full heart." And it vanished in a flash of flame.

In the days to come, Giacomo announced sadly that little Pietro was sick. The nanny did not contradict him. Pietro got all the toys and sweets he wanted. And then Giacomo stood in the circle again, his son sleeping in his arms from an herbal potion. Pietro would not suffer, he told himself. Once more the lion Marbas paced outside his circle. Once more it grinned.

"Come forth and be healed," the demon said. Steeling his nerve, Giacomo stepped out of the circle, knelt and laid Pietro on the stone floor. "Now, let all infirmity depart!" the demon commanded. A wave of sulfurous fumes swirled around Giacomo, making him cough, but he felt the pain and corruption leave his flesh. Pietro coughed as well and opened sleepy eyes.

"Daddy?" he murmured. Then he shrieked, a thin, brief sound as Marbas leaped upon him and swallowed him whole, knocking Giacomo back into the circle.

"Thou payest well, son of Adam," the demon said. It licked its chops and vanished. Giacomo regretted his damnation for the first time. And the last. Henceforth, no crime was beyond him and the Lords of Hell were much pleased.

Over the years Giacomo became a mighty wizard, both from the powers the demon princes gave him and what he learned on his own. In fact, he proved a little too skilled for them: he has escaped Hell, if you can call it an escape.

When old age closed in on him, Giacomo contacted the Dragon that had spawned his demon servant-masters and made a final pact. The Dragon gave him immortality in exchange for eternal service as its tool for mankind's destruction. As token of their pact, to maintain his immortal life he must sacrifice one of his own blood every year. This Giacomo has done for three hundred years. He has had dozens of children, as Astaroth foretold, and hundreds of grandchildren and further descendants…and his hands have run red with their blood.

Quote: *"A moment, please, before you attempt something heroic and foolish. There is something you should know…"*

Personality: Giacomo is haughty, cold and vicious. He's an amazingly competent person, and he knows it. He's become the Dragon's favorite acolyte in the Quaternion, and he knows that, too. As far as Giacomo is concerned, the Multiverse divides into four categories: the Dragon; himself; that which serves the Dragon and himself; and that which *should* serve the Dragon and himself. In short, he's a psychopath and a fanatic. He's good at hiding it in public, though. Giacomo can be quite charming when he wants.

Giacomo is never foolish. He hasn't lived three centuries in a dangerous profession by taking needless risks. He doesn't get personally involved unless he has to: not only does he ensure his own safety, he can blame underlings for failure. Thus, heroes usually encounter Giacomo only at his pleasure, when he has lots of backup, deadly pre-cast spells ready to trigger and a hostage DNPC or two—or when the Sylvestris have captured them.

Powers/Tactics: The Sylvestri Patriarch is a theurgist of amazing power; in any ranking of Earth's wizards, he's always near the top of the list. He has only three significant limits on his magic.

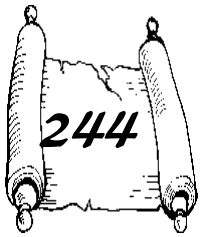
First, he can only cast theurgic spells; the Dragon has forbidden him to use other sorts of magic. (Giacomo can use alchemical potions since they are actually spells cast by someone else, but the Dragon will punish him for it later.) Giacomo uses Hermetic Theurgy with a demonic emphasis. He starts by using his sword cane (in either sword or cane form) as an OAF to fulfill his Variable Limitation; if he loses use of the sword cane he uses his talismanic rings (OIF) with Gestures and Incantations or a 14 Activation Roll.

Second, Giacomo must sacrifice one of his descendants every year. If he does not, he loses the magical toughness and immortality granted by the Dragon (his Damage Reduction, Regeneration and Life Support) and 5 points off his STR, DEX and CON. What's more, all his magic will take a 14- Activation Roll. (Giacomo practices other rituals to maintain his power as well, but he doesn't need to follow a strict schedule.)

Finally, Giacomo must observe limits on the Active Points of his spells. He can build spells of up to 77 Active Points, but these spells must take 1 turn Extra Time (in addition to the Variable Limitation) and can only be performed under ritual conditions such as only at certain hours of the day or night, or only in a properly consecrated chamber (i.e. when it suits the GM's plot). His combat magic produces spells in fixed ranges of power: up to 63 points, 31 points, or 15 points.

Thus, in a particular Phase Giacomo might produce a 62 point attack spell (31 Real Points), a 31 point defensive spell (15 Real Points), a 31 point movement Power (15 Real Points), a 15 point special defense (7 Real Points) and a 15 point Enhanced Sense (7 Real Points, for 75 Real points total). If interrupted while casting a major ritual, his Power Pool might hold the 70-77 point ritual spell (22 Real Points), a 60-63 point attack spell (31 Real Points), a 31 point defense (15 Real Points) and a 15 point miscellaneous Power (7 Real Points, for 75 points total). Any change in his Power Pool requires a Spell Research roll (as, for instance, to change his attack spell each Phase or to change the Limitation on a spell).

Giacomo carries an enchanted sword cane. The demon forged Hell Sword in the cane only does a little damage when it hits—it's only a sharpened epee, after all—but the hellfire flickering along the blade will damage *anything*, and keeps burning for a full Turn. (The



sword does full damage, with Damage Classes from the Fencing maneuvers, when it hits; after that the hellfire does 1d6 Double Penetrating Killing damage each Phase.) Giacomo is quite skilled at its use and often practices with his great great grandson Dashwood, a.k.a. Matachin.

Appearance: The Patriarch carries his centuries well; he looks like he's in his mid 40s. He's a handsome fellow, with a narrow mustache and just a few streaks of gray in his wavy black hair. When in public, mingling with Italian high society, he wears immaculately tailored, gray silk suits. Only close inspection of his dragon headed sword cane and rings would hint that Giacomo is a sorcerer; his rings bear demonic sigils, while the gold wire embedded in the rosewood of his cane twists into runes.

On formal occasions Giacomo wears opulent, seventeenth century garb slightly modified for the demands of ritual sorcery: trousers and broad collared jacket of dark, richly embroidered material, with lace cuffs, a ruffled cravat and leather belt and boots. He adds a black mantle lined with red silk and a golden coronet. The belt, mantle and coronet all bear Hebrew letters and mystic characters. The mantle is held across his shoulders by two ensymboled brooches linked by a golden chain. The collar of his jacket is embroidered in gold with a rampant dragon on one side and the Secret Seal of Solomon on the other.

Patriarch

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	400 kg; 4d6 [2]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
23	CON	26	14-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
23	EGO	13	14-	ECV: 8
28	PRE	18	15-	PRE Attack 5½d6
14	COM	2	12-	
15	PD	11		Total: 15 PD
15	ED	10		Total: 15 ED
5	SPD	17		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	2		
70	END	12		
35	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 192

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Magical Attacks (10)

Martial Arts—Fencing (19)

Maneuver	*OCV*	*DCV*	*Notes*
Froissement	-1	+1	Disarm, 30 STR
Parry	+2	+2	Block, Abort
Lunge	+1	-2	+2 Killing DC
Strike	+0	+2	+1 Killing DC

Use Art with Normal Sword, Hell Sword, Single Stick

Hell Sword: 1d6 HKA, Penetrating x2, Uncontrolled (1 turn), Continuous, 0 END, OAF (30) [0]

Theurgy:
Demonic Theurgy Power Pool: (77 pt pool), 0 Phase + Skill Roll to Change (+1), -1 Var Lim: Focus/C0DCV/GI/Acts 14-/Side Effect (-½), Slot Active Point Limits (-½) (115)
Spell Research/Pool Control 20- (15)

Abilities Granted by the Dragon:
Damage Reduction (¼ rPD, ¼ rED), Must Keep Ritual Schedule (-¼) (24)
Regeneration: 1 BODY/Turn, Must Keep Ritual Schedule (-¼) (9)
Life Support: Need not breathe. Immune to Disease, Aging, Extreme Heat/Cold, Must Keep Ritual Schedule (-¼) (15)
Mental Defense: 15 (10)
Power Defense: 5 (5)
Sense Magic, Ranged, Discriminatory (15)
Astral Awareness (3)
Wizard's Wardrobe: Instant Change, any clothing (10)
Cramming (5)

Background Skills:
Astral Navigation 14- (3)
Breakfall 14- (3)
Cryptography 14- (3)
Deduction 14- (3)
Dimensional Navigation 14- (3)
English (Fluent, No Accent) (3)
French (Fluent, No Accent) (2)
German (Fluent, No Accent) (2)
Greek (Fluent With Accent) (2)
Hebrew (Fluent With Accent) (3)
High Society 15- (3)
Interrogation 15- (3)
Italian (Native) (0)
KS: Analyze Magic Style 14- (2)
KS: Demonology 14- (2)
KS: Dragon Lore 14- (2)
KS: Fencing 11-
KS: Hermetic Theurgy 14- (2)
KS: Imaginal Planes 11-
KS: Occult History 11-
KS: Occult World 14- (2)
KS: Spirits 14- (2)
KS: Western Occultism 14- (2)
Latin (Fluent, No Accent) (2)
Linguist: (3)
Oratory 15- (3)
Scholar (3)
Sleight of Hand 14- (3)
Trading 15- (3)
Weapon Fam: Blades (1)
Contact: Ouroboros 12- (3)
Contact: Cult of the Red Banner 11- (2)
Contact: The Seven-Headed Beast 11- (2)
Initiate: Cult Leader (5)
Wealthy (10)
Headquarters: 200 pt. Reserve (40)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 411

Total Character Cost: 603

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
Powerful, Tainted Magic Aura (Few Detect, Strong Reaction) (10)
Enraged:
by Defiance, Insult or Humiliation (common), 11-, Recover 14- (8)
Hunted by:
Magical Heroes, 8- (As Pow) (10)
Magic Restriction: Only Theurgy (10)
Physical Limitation:
Must Perform Sacrifice Rituals to Keep Physical Toughness & Magic Powers (10)
Psychological Limitation:
Devoted to the Dragon (15)
Vengeful (15)
Treacherous (10)
Reputation:
The Dragon's Chief Disciple, 11- (Extreme, Limited Group) (10)
Susceptibility:
3d6 STUN + BODY, Whenever Dragon Wants (uncommon) (30)
1d6 Drain/Turn vs. All Magic on Holy Ground (uncommon) (10)
Watched by:
the Dragon, 11- (More Pow) (10)
Devil's Advocates, 11- (More Pow) (10)
Authorities because of Murder Rituals, 11- (As Pow, NCI) (10)
Villain Bonus (335)

Total Disadvantage Points: 603

Bocal McFarlane

Background: "He's a deep one," his parents used to say about young Bocal McFarlane. "He'll go far." His cousins thought Bocal was just boring. Even as a child, Bocal listened more than he spoke. While his cousins pestered their parents to initiate them so they could work deviltry, Bocal kept his nose in a book, studying whatever occult lore was permitted.

At sixteen, Bocal was to be initiated into Satanism. To Giacomo Sylvestri's surprise, Bocal already knew how to summon and control minor demons: he'd studied more than was allowed. The Sylvestris, though, are practical people in their fashion. First the Patriarch whipped Bocal within an inch of his life for his disobedience, then initiated him anyway and authorized more advanced training.

At eighteen, Bocal announced that he was going away. He wanted to learn how certain demon lords changed the forms of mortals—and he wanted to learn from the demons themselves. Bocal endured five years of torment in the Netherworld as the slave of Zepar, a Duke in the Cohort of Lust. When he returned, Bocal gave a brief report of what he learned: "Their way doesn't work for humans." Remarkably, however, this failure only seemed to have sharpened his interest in body magic. A month later, Bocal left for India to learn the body control techniques of the fakirs.

Bocal pursued the lore of biomancy for decades, becoming quite proficient in this rare style of sorcery. At last, in the Library of Babylon he learned of the mysterious Lords Carnidine, powerful servants of Nature dwelling on one of the Outer Planes. A little trading of favors gained him a plane travel device from one of his relatives and Bocal vanished from human ken for over a decade. To this day, the other Sylvestris do not know Bocal's adventures in pursuit of the Lords Carnidine, but they know he found them. Bocal returned as a true master of life magic.

Bocal became one of House Sylvestri's most effective operatives. Few mages were ready for his unusual style of magic. The other Sylvestri elders, however, never trusted him. Despite his age and experience, he was not admitted to Giacomo Sylvestri's confidence and accepted as a family elder. He had never accepted a permanent pact with either a demon lord or the Dragon.

That changed several years ago. Bocal announced a new project. He would transform himself into a living avatar for the Dragon to possess. To do it right would take many years, but in the end the Dragon would have a body fit to channel its awesome power. The die was cast; he was not only bound to the Dragon, he would sacrifice himself to *become* the Dragon. Such loyalty could not go unrewarded: Bocal was finally admitted to the inner circle of Sylvestri councils.

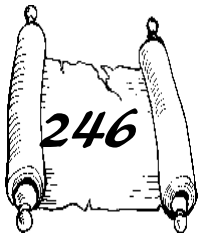
Now Giacomo trusts Bocal completely. After all, the Dragon would warn Giacomo if Bocal plotted treachery against him and the family, and after the pact Bocal couldn't possibly keep secrets from the Dragon, right?

Quote: *"Do you know the legend of Prometheus? If you do not tell me where you have hidden the Tablet of Destinies, I will rip out your liver and eat it. Then I will heal you. Then I will rip out your liver again—and again—and again…"*

Personality: Although his metamorphosing body and spells make Bocal a powerful combatant, he's no dumb bruiser. He only indulges his lust for physical combat and cruelty when it seems relatively safe for him; if he lacks sufficient backup he sticks to sniping from afar or even aborts the mission and retreats. Bocal is not the most intelligent Sylvestri (although a genius by normal human standards), but he is one of the most patient. What he lacks in raw insight he makes up for in persistence.

In the same manner, Bocal is seldom mastered by his ambition. His appetite for power is not yet sated, but he feels he can afford to work slowly. Indeed, none of the other Sylvestris yet know the full extent of Bocal's plans, and they probably never will. For instance, Giacomo doesn't know that despite Bocal's pact with the Dragon, the Dragon cannot harm Bocal at will as it can Giacomo. Quite possibly, even the Dragon doesn't know this; Bocal has never needed punishment so far. The Dragon *should* know all of Bocal's plans, as it knows the deep motives of all humans…but is Bocal still human? Quite possibly, he is not. And if anyone in the Sylvestris can cheat the Dragon, it's him. As his parents said, he's a deep one.

Powers/Tactics: Bocal's magic lets him do many nasty things to people's bodies. His magic is actually not as



flexible as it once was (he used to have a Power Pool); his slow but continuing metamorphosis into a dragon forces him to keep adjusting his spells. For instance, he has given up Gesturing when he casts spells. This also accounts for his magic's slight unreliability.

Bocal still has some formidable spells. He can inflict many sorts of pain and harm, from muscle cramps to severe astigmatism. If he is willing to put all his power into one spell, Bocal can lay out whole crowds through migraine headaches or make a target's flesh literally melt off their bones. Most of the time, however, he settles for his lesser attacks so he can keep his defenses up. If he can close with an enemy, he may even eschew ranged attacks, put up double defenses (both Force Field and Damage Reduction) and rip into his enemy with teeth, claws and his Kinetic and Disrupting Touch spells. Bocal enjoys such rough and tumble if he's sure he will win.

Bocal's magic has one great weakness. It doesn't work against inorganic entities. Thus, if he faces a disembodied or astral spirit such as a ghost or Mob Ruler atavism, the only attack he can use is his Mind Control. (He can, however, use his magic on materialized spirits such as summoned demons.) Nor can he magically affect inorganic golems, to say nothing of robots. This accounts for 5 points of his Magic Limitation; the other 5 points comes from his limited style of combat magic.

Bocal has become one of House Sylvestri's top interrogators. Instead of mind reading, he employs more traditional forms of persuasion—given a special twist through his magic. Bocal starts by augmenting the victim's CON so he will stay conscious. Then Bocal rips off one of the victim's arms and chews off the flesh as if it were a drumstick. Before the victim dies from blood loss, Bocal heals him and restores the arm. Then Bocal says he will continue eating and restoring parts of the victim's body until he talks. That's when he hits the victim with a Mind Control to tell what he wants to know: at that point, even the strongest willed person could be forgiven for wanting to spill his secrets instead of his guts.

Appearance: Bocal McFarlane's meta-morphosis into a dragon is well underway and continuing: every year he splits his skin like a reptile and emerges a little larger and a little less human. His massive body is covered with armored scales; his face has pushed forward into a blunt muzzle with long, sharp fangs; he's grown wings and a tail; his hands and feet are becoming taloned paws.

Out of combat, Bocal dresses in the manner of his Victorian youth, in oversized black formal wear, complete with a top hat and gold headed cane. (Of course this is a calculated absurdity.) In a fight, Bocal lets his clothes rip away (stretching his wings pretty much shreds his shirt and waistcoat), but he may wave the cane as he casts spells in hopes that the opponent will mistake it for a Focus. He walks hunched over, and is as comfortable on all fours.

Bocal Mcfarlane

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
33*	STR	13	16-	800 kg; 6½d6 [3]
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
23	CON	26	14-	
15*	BODY	6	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
17	EGO	14	12-	ECV: 6
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack 4½d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
16	PD	11		Total: 23 PD/ 7 rPD
16	ED	11		Total: 23 ED/ 7 rED
5	SPD	23		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	0		
46	END	0		*Bonus for Growth
40*	STUN	1		added in

Total Characteristic Cost: 144

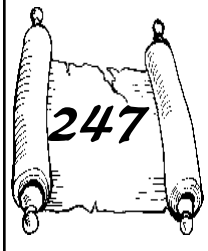
Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Wings: 15"30"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Multipower (10)

Dragon Powers:
Dragon Body: Elemental Control (10)
a - **Huge Size:** Growth 10 pts, 0 END Persistent, Always On (400 kg mass, -1 DCV, 2" KB, +1 to PER) (20/7) [0]
b - **Claw/Bite:** 1d6+1 PHKA (20/10) [2+]
c - **Tough Hide:** Armor (7 PD, 7 ED) (21/11)
d - **Wings:** 5" Flight, Restrainable (-½), x2 END, + 10" Gliding, Restrainable [15" total] (20/5) [2/5" for the Flight]
Lack of Weakness: -5 (5)
Mental Defense: 10 (7)
Power Defense: 5 (5)
Regeneration: 1 BODY/Turn (10)
Life Support: Immune to Aging (3)
Life Support: Immune to Disease, Use by Other x1 (+¼) (4)
Tail: Extra Limb (5)
Sense Magic, Ranged, Discriminatory (15)
Cramming (5)

Biomancy: Multipower (94 pt pool), Incantations, Acts 14-, Side Effect: 3d6 Drain on Slot Used (-¼) (47)
u - **Prospero's Curse of Cramps:** 6d6 DEX Suppress, Uncontrolled 0 END to maintain (CON Roll each Turn to stop) (60/3) [6]
u - **Momentary Migraine:** 6d6 Ego Attack (60/3) [6]
u - **Meat Puppets:** 20 STR TK, BOECV (+1) (60/3) [6]
u - **Paralyze:** 4d6, 4 DEF Entangle, Damage Transparent (+½) (60/3) [6]
u - **Twisting Joints:** 1d6+1 RKA, BODY NND: Lack of Weakness/Double Jointed/Contortionist Roll (+2) (60/3) [6]
u - **Induce Astigmatism:** 3d6 Flash vs. Vision, NND: Hardened Power Defense (+1) (60/3) [6]
u - **Bladeskin:** 2d6 RKA, AP, Damage Shield (60/3) [6]
u - **Domination:** 12d6 Mind Control (60/3) [6]
u - **Conjure Demon:** 100 pt Summon, Var: Any Minor Demon Type (+¼), 3 Chgs (-1 ¼), Costs END, x3 END (62/1) [18]



u - **Kinetic Touch:** +6d6 HA (9d6 total), x2 Knockback (+¾) (31/1) [3+]
u - **Disrupting Touch:** +3d6 HA (4d6 total), BODY AVLD: Lack of Weakness (+2 ½) (31/1) [3+]
u - **Body Toughening:** Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 10 PowD) (30/1) [3]
u - **Body Toughening:** Damage Reduction (¼ rPD, ¼ rED) (30/1)
u - **Body Control:** Life Support: Full (30/1)
u - **Augmentation:** 4d6 Aid, vs. Any Phys Char/Movement Mode (+¼), Lose 1 pt/Turn (+¼) (30/1) [3]
u - **Psychic Sight:** Clairsentience: Normal Sight, Sense Magic, ½ END (31/1) [1]
u - **Melt Flesh:** 1d6 RKA, BODY AVLD: Power Defense (+2 ½), Penetrating, +2 STUN Mult (+1), Continuous, ½ END, initial 1 Phase Extra Time (-¼) (94/4) [4]
u - **Mass Migraine:** 2 ½d6 Ego Attack, Continuous, PI, ½ END, 6" x2 Radius AE (+1 ¼), initial 1 Phase Extra Time (-¼)(94/4) [4]
u - **Flesh Sculpting:** 2d6 Transform, Any Change to Living Tissue (+1), Cumulative, 0 Range, 1 Phase Extra Time (-½), Concentrate to 0 DCV (-½) (75/2) [7]
u - **Conjure Demon Lord:** 1 x 225 pt Summon Demon, Var: Any Demon Lord (+¼), 5 minutes Extra Time (-2), x3 END, Concentrate to 0 DCV, OAF Ritual Paraphernalia (94/1) [27]

Background Skills:
Acting 14- (3)
Cryptography 13- (3)
English (Native) (0)
Gaelic (Fluent with Accent) (2)
Hindi (Fluent with Accent) (2)
Interrogation 14- (3)
Italian (Fluent with Accent) (2)
KS: Body Magic 13- (2)
KS: Demonology 11- (1)
KS: General Occult 13- (2)
KS: Life Shaping and Augmentation 13- (2)
KS: Monsters 11- (1)
KS: The Lords Carnidine 11- (1)
Latin (Fluent with Accent) (2)
Linguist (3)
Paramedic 13- (3)
SC: Biology 13- (3)
Scholar (3)
Spell Research 13- (3)
Initiate: Senior Sylvestri (2)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 245

Total Character Cost: 389

Disadvantages: 100+

Berserk:
if Take BODY (common), 8-, Recover 11- (15)
Distinctive Features:
Large Dragon-Man (Can't Conceal, Scary) (20)
Hunted by:
Magical Heroes, 8- (As Pow) (10)
Magic Restriction: Biomancy, Limited Methods (10)
Psychological Limitation:
Bloodthirsty & Sadistic (15)
Ambitious (10)
Susceptibility:
3d6 Suppress for 1 minute vs. All Magic if Eat Anything But Raw Meat (uncommon) (15)
1d6 STUN/Phase, On Holy Ground (uncommon) (15)
Vulnerability:
x1½ STUN, BODY, Cold Attacks (uncommon) (10)
Watched by:
the Dragon, 11- (More Pow) (10)
Patriarch, 8- (As Pow) (5)
Villain Bonus (154)

Total Disadvantage Points: 389

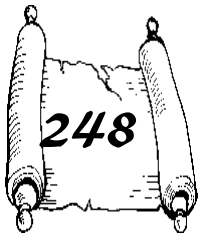
Cornelius Liefeld

Background: Cornelius Liefeld was something of a rebel in his younger days. What do you do to shock your parents—but not so much they try to kill you—when you come from a family of Satanic sorcerers? Why, say you want to be a scientist, of course. Cornelius got a doctorate in chemistry, and studied alchemy on the side as a concession to his parents.

Like most young rebels, though, once Cornelius got a taste of the real world he settled down and became just like his parents. There was no dramatic turning point in his life. He just kept encountering situations in which it was inconvenient to be a law-abiding scientist. First he compromised his principles just a little by using some alchemy, but in a few years he was murdering enemies, trading favors with other family members, and generally behaving like any other Sylvestri. The clan has forgiven Cornelius' youthful rebellion, and he is now highly respected for his remarkable powers of alchemy.

Quote: "*Who, me? Sir, I have not the faintest idea what you are talking about. If you don't leave me alone, I shall call the police.*"

Personality: Cornelius is not actively vicious, just completely amoral. He has no loyalty to anyone; all relationships, even with the Sylvestri clan, are kept strictly business. He wouldn't save his own mother's life if he wasn't paid for it in some way, in money, resources or a promise of favors in return. His blunt and mercenary ways have irritated senior Sylvestris, but not enough for any of them to chastise him. After all, they are hardly in a position to prate of virtue. Cornelius would even betray the clan, if the profit to himself was great enough and he was sure he would get away with it.



There is one thing that can override both Cornelius' avoidance of danger and his greed: his pride in his magic. He will not easily let pass any slur on the art of alchemy, *his* alchemy, especially from other kinds of sorcerers. He just might lose his cool and toss an attack potion at the insulting person.

Powers/Tactics: Cornelius has adapted modern lab techniques to the ancient art of alchemy, with spectacular results. He has become one of the top alchemists in the world, expert in both European and Taoist traditions, while still in his forties. He can create potions and other alchemical items for nearly any effect he wants. At the moment he's researching immortality and invulnerability, although so far his only results have been to addict himself to heavy metal toxins such as mercury, and the ability to place himself in suspended animation.

His alchemical mastery, however, has not turned Cornelius into a fighter. While competent compared to a normal person, he is no fighter and he knows it. For the most part he supplies alchemical weapons to cultists or agents working for the clan. One common strategy is to hire some crook with an obscenely high Sleight of Hand skill to slip a vile magical toxin or potion into someone's food or drink.

Cornelius might be watching nearby to make sure his potions are used correctly and to gauge their effectiveness, but he won't be part of an assault on heroes. He carries potions on his person in case he is noticed and attacked, but these are almost all for defense and to help him get away. Any offensive potions will be for Flashes, Darkness or other powers to delay or hinder pursuit. He might carry one Continuous Area Effect attack with which to threaten bystanders as a diversion. If he can't get away, he will try to surrender—in a public place, to a policeman. He knows he's safe in government hands, and will never spend more than a few days in custody.

As a typical example, the set of potions and personal items shown below might be used to set up a trap. Enemies of the Sylvestris (such as PCs) would be lured to a restaurant and shown their seats. All but one of those seats, however, would be painted with Wizard Glue primed to go off about a minute after people sit down. The waiters are all Sylvestri agents. The one person who sits on an untrapped seat gets a drink spiked with the Theriomorphic Potion: when he drinks, within 2 Turns he turns into a berserk monster—and his comrades are stuck in their seats, which are firmly bolted to the floor. Cornelius is in a booth nearby, watching to be sure it all works. If the transformed person runs off before killing his friends, Cornelius has a vial of Congealed Frost Elixer ready to freeze them into unconsciousness.

Appearance: Cornelius Liefeld is a fat, middle aged man. He is completely bald, without even eyebrows (a side effect of thallium poisoning). His skin is fishbelly pale, except for about an hour after he doses himself with arsenic, when he looks flushed and almost lifelike. Outside the lab he dresses in suitably large, black business suits with a string tie and porkpie hat. He keeps various small potion vials and capsules in pockets inside his jacket and other places hidden about his person. Every few hours he takes a small sip of mercury from a hip flask or snorts a pinch of a powdered lead and arsenic compound. If he goes a day without a "fix" he gets jittery and nauseous (reduce INT and EGO by 5 and DEX by 3).

Cornelius Liefeld

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
18	CON	16	13-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
23	INT	16	14-	PER Roll 14-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack 2d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
6	PD	4		Total: 6 PD
6	ED	2		Total: 6 ED
3	SPD	6		Pha 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
36	END	0		
25	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 63

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Alchemy:

Alchemical Power Pool (96 pt pool), Expendable OAF (-1 ¼), Only Personal & True Alchemy (-½), Only change in Lab (-½), Max 4 Charges per Slot (-¼), Max 48 Active Points for Personal Alchemy (-½) (108)

Alchemy Labwork Power Pool (15 pt pool), Only Alchemy labwork Spells (-1), OAF Lab Kit (17)

Immunity: Metallic Toxins (2)

Simulate Death 12- (3)

Background Skills:

Arabic (Fluent Conversation) (2)
Classical Greek (Fluent with Accent) (2)
Concealment 14- (3)
Cryptography 14- (3)
English (Native) (0)
German (Fluent with Accent) (2)
KS: Alchemy 14- (2)
KS: Astrology 11- (1)
KS: Occult Naturalism 14- (2)
KS: Occult World 11- (1)
KS: Western Occultism 14- (2)
Latin (Fluent with Accent) (2)
Linguist (3)
Paramedic 14- (3)
PS: Apothecary 11- (2)
PS: Glassblower 11- (2)
SC: Anatomy 11- (1)
SC: Biology 11- (1)
SC: Chemistry 14- (2)
SC: Metallurgy 11- (1)
SC: Mineralogy 11- (1)
SC: Pharmacology 14- (2)
Scholar (3)
Scientist (3)
Sleight of Hand 12- (3)
Headquarters (75 pt reserve) (15)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 193

Total Character Cost: 256

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
Pale, Bald Fat Man (Noticed) (5)
Hunted by:
Magical Heroes, 8- (More Pow) (15)
Magic Restriction: Exclusive Alchemist (15)
Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)
Physical Limitation:
Addicted to Heavy Metal Toxins (5)
Psychological Limitation:
Avoids Combat (20)
Mercenary (10)
Proud and Defensive of his Art (10)
Unluck: 2d6 (10)
Watched by:
Senior Sylvestris, 11- (More Pow) (10)
Villain Bonus (36)

Total Disadvantage Points: 256

Sample Power Pool Potions And Items:

True Alchemy:
Congealed Frost Elixer: 3d6 EB, NND: Life Support: Cold (+1), Uncontrolled, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Throw, 5" Radius AE (+1), Exp OAF (-1 ¼), 2 Chgs of 1 Minute (-¾) (60/20) [2c]
Theriomorphic Potion: 1d6+1 Transform to Berserk Monster, NND: Nonhuman Metabolism (+1), Uncontrolled, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Victim Ingests Potion, Hard to Dispel (+¼), Exp OAF, 1 Chg of 1 Minute (-1) (65/17) [1c]
Wizard Glue: 3d6 Entangle, 1 Hex AE, Use by Other x1, Trigger: Surface Touched, Exp OAF, 1 turn Extra Time (-1), Only immobilizes body part touching glue painted area (-1) (60/12) [4c]
Personal Items:
Armor Potion: Force Field (16 PD, 16 ED, 16 MD, 16 PowD), 3 Chgs of 1 Turn (-¾) (48/16) [3c]
Invisibility Potion: Invisibility vs. Detect Magic, Magic Radar, Mental Awareness, All Vision, 2 Chgs of 1 Minute (-¾) (40/13) [2c]
Smoke Bomb: 2" radius Darkness vs. Detect Magic, All Vision, Personal Immunity, 2 Chgs of 1 Turn (-1) (37/11) [2c]
Portable Hole Spray: 7" Teleport, Use By Other x1 (+¼), Uncontrolled, Opens Both Ways (-½), Stays Open Full Turn (-½), 4 Chgs of 1 Turn (-½) (24/6) [4c]

Astralle

Background: Perrenon Sylvestri was eager to leap into the thick of Sylvestri magical operations. She didn't want to spend years getting some serious power. On the other hand, she didn't want to sell her soul outright and become a demon lord's pawn. So she struck a compromise. Perrenon contacted each of the seven planetary demons: Aratron, Barsabel, Bethor, Hagith, Och, Ophiel, and Phul. In exchange for small bequests of magical knowledge and power from the demons, she offered herself as a lover to all seven, with a promise of other favors. Through this, Perrenon quickly gained a wide range of magic powers. On the rare occasions when she needs a supervillain-style pseudonym, she calls herself "Astralle." When undercover, she calls herself "Perry Wood."

Quote: Undercover: *"Hi, what's your sign?"*
In Combat: *"Barsabel, shield me! Aratron, bind him!"*

Personality: Perrenon is entirely cynical about human motivations. Most people, she believes, have just two desires, lust and greed, and follow these desires blindly. Clever people (like her) manipulate these two desires in others to gain power, which is all that really matters. Men are particularly easy for a beautiful woman like her to control: just offer them some nooky and they'll do anything. Hey, look how she got her powers. In a world of stupid sheep, it's practically a moral duty to be a wolf.

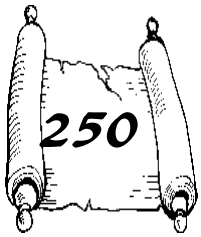
Perrenon never reflects on the possibility that her pursuit of power made her just as easy to control as the "sheep" around her. This wasn't lost on the Planetary Demons, though…

Powers/Tactics: The Planetary Demons each gave Perrenon one attack spell and one defensive or miscellaneous spell which she can mix and match any way she wants. She also has a number of other spells based on demonology or astrology. Her planetary spells are cast using a belt of enameled plaques bearing the sigils of the seven Planetary Demons and some combination of Gestures, Incantations, Concentration or an Activation Roll.

Perrenon's greatest power is actually her skill at astrological forecasts; by studying the positions of the planets in the Zodiac, Perrenon can often get visions of the future. She's especially skilled at predicting the future actions and circumstances of individuals (represented by a mixture of Precognitive Clairsentience and Mind Scanning). The more she knows about a person, the greater her chance of making an accurate forecast. (Of course this combination—Mind Scanning into the future—is an obscenity no *PC* should be allowed to have.)

Perrenon's chief tactic, then, is to search people's timelines for events which she can turn to her advantage. If she wants to find someone, she looks forward to find where they will be; then she goes there at the appointed time…or sends her hirelings. Perrenon values her own safety above all else. When she can't get what she wants by working undercover, she tries to get somebody else to do the dirty work or at least back her up in a lightning-quick operation. If she encounters unforeseen problems, Perrenon immediately flees.

Appearance: Perrenon Sylvestri is a voluptuous woman with cornsilk blonde hair. When not undercover as "Perry Wood" she wears flowing costumes of dark blue silk that leave her arms and legs bare, with lots of décolletage, and a blue-lined black satin cape. Around her waist is the belt of dark blue and gold sigil plaques. A black domino mask is optional and strictly for effect.



Astralle

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	100 kg; 2d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack 3½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
7	PD	5		Total: 7+ PD
7	ED	3		Total: 7+ ED
4	SPD	12		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
36	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 90

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 17"/136"
Teleport: 13"/26"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +1 Level w/ Main Magical Multipower (5)

Planetary Demon-Given Magic:

The Favor of the Demon-Planets: Multipower (79 pt pool), OIF Talisman Belt, -½ Var Lim (-¼) (45)
- u - **Och's Solar Flare:** 3d6 Flash vs. Normal/IR Vision, 1 Hex AE (52/2) [8c]
- u - **Och's Illumination:** Change Environment: Sunlight, 8" radius, ½ END (25/1) [1]
- u - **Phantasms of Phul:** 10d6 Mental Illusions (50/2) [8c]
- u - **Concealment of Phul:** Invisibility vs. Normal Vision/Detect Magic (25/1) [2]
- u - **Ophiel's Forcible Flight:** 10" Flight, Use vs. Other (+1), Ranged (+½) (50/2) [8c]
- u - **Ophiel's Instant Transport:** 12" Teleport (24/1) [1/5"]
- u - **Hagith's Mental Mastery:** 10d6 Mind Control (50/2) [8c]
- u - **Hagith's Attractive Aura:** +20 PRE, +10 COM, Costs END, Only to Persuade (-¾) (25/1) [2]
- u - **Barsabel's Flaming Spear:** 2d6+1 RKA, AP (52/2) [8c]
- u - **Barsabel's Iron Shield:** Force Field (7 PD, 7 ED, 6 PowD), Hardened (25/1) [2]
- u - **Lightning of Bethor:** 10d6 EB (50/2) [8c]
- u - **Bethor's Revelations:** N Ray Vision, Only to See Through Magic (-1) + Ranged Sense Magic (35/1)
- u - **Aratron's Leaden Bonds:** 5d6 Entangle (50/2) [8c]
- u - **Aratron's Subtle Clutch:** 5d6 DEX Suppress (25/1) [2]
- u - **Contact Demon:** 8d6 Mind Scanning, Transdimensional: Netherworld (+½), +6 ECV, 1 turn Extra Time (-1), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½) (78/2) [6]
- u - **Astrological Search:** 13d6 Mind Scanning, +7 ECV, 1 hour Extra Time (-2 ½) (79/2) [6]
- u - **Open the Way:** EDM: Earth, Use by Other x1 (+¼) Ranged, BOECV (+1), Transdimensional: Netherworld (+½), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½), x2 END (65/2) [12]

Minor Gifts of the Demon-Planets: Multipower (45 pt pool), Only in Villain ID (-¼), -1 Var Lim: Focus/G/I/C/ET (-½) (26)
- u - **Shield of 7 Star Demons:** Force Field (16 PD, 16 ED, 8 PowD), ½ END (45/2) [2]
- u - **Winds of Asmodeus:** 17" Flight, x8 NCM (44/2) [1/5"]
- u - **Astrological Forecast:** Clairsentience: Sight, Mind Scan, Precognition (45/3) [4]
- u - **Astral Gate:** EDM: Astral Dimensions/Earth, x4 Mass, 1 phase Extra Time (-½), x2 END (40/1) [8]
- u - **Call Scratchet:** 4 x 25 pt Summon Scratchet, 3 chgs Cost x2 END (45/1) [8]
- u - **Contact Demon:** Mind Link x1 to Demon Lords, Any Distance/Dimension, Concentrate 0 DCV Constant (-1) (20/1)

Astrology: +8 ECV on Mind Scanning, Only in Villain ID, -½ Var Lim, Requires PS: Astrologer Skill Roll and Info About Target (-½) (8)

Flash Defense, Sight: 5 (5)

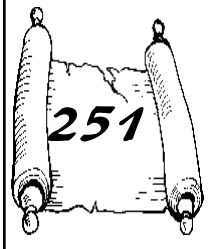
Mental Defense: 9 (5)

Costume: Instant Change, Costs x4 END (-2), -½ Var Lim (- ¼) (1) [4]

Background Skills:
Acting 13- (3)
AK: Babylon 11- (2)
Concealment 12- (3)
Conversation 13- (3)
Dimensional Navigation 12- (3)
English (Idiomatic, Native Accent) (4)
Italian (Native) (0)
KS: Astrology 12- (2)
KS: Demonology 12- (2)
KS: General Occultism 11- (1)
KS: Occult World 11- (1)
Latin (Fluent Conversation) (1)
PS: Astrologer 13- (4)
Scholar (3)
Seduction 13- (3)
Shadowing 13- (7)
Library of Babylon Borrower's Card (1)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 177

Total Character Cost: 267



Disadvantages: 100+

- **Distinctive Features:**
  - Demon-Tainted Aura (Few Detect, Strong Reaction) (10)
- **Hunted by:**
  - Sorcerer Hero, 8- (As Pow) (10)
- **Physical Limitation:**
  - Main Multipower Can Be Controlled by Demonic Patrons (15)
  - Demonic Patrons Can Summon *Her* (15)
- **Psychological Limitation:**
  - Terrified of Capture, Punishment or Death (20)
  - Greedy for Magic Power (10)
  - Lecherous (10)
- **Secret Identity** (15)
- **Susceptibility:**
  - 3d6 STUN + BODY, Whenever Planetary Demon Wants (uncommon) (30)
  - 1d6 STUN/Turn. Holy Symbols/Ground (uncommon) (10)
- **Unluck:** 2d6 (10)
- **Watched by:**
  - Senior Sylvestris, 11- (More Pow) (10)
  - Planetary Demons, 11- (More Pow) (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 275

Supernatural Super-Thugs

Like other villains, evil wizards may want a bit of muscle to back them up, something more than the usual cultist. If a project might lead them into conflict with another sorcerer, they want to be sure they can kick butt—in a spiritual sense, of course. As always with wizards, however, style is everything. Supervillain wizards never just hire some cheap hoods with big guns to blow away the opposing wizard. No, they hire *mystical* cheap hoods.

There are many sorts of magical super-thugs. Lower-powered demons make fine, colorful super-thug lackeys; so do elementals. Lesser sorcerers with a few combat effective powers might hire out as mercenaries in return for greater mystical knowledge. Some wizards can create their own minions, such as mummies, lesser vampires, golems or stranger creatures. Such undying entities may survive their creators and be employed by later sorcerers, too.

A supernatural super-thug probably won't get much chance to display a sparkling personality. Their only role, after all, is to fight the heroes. They become interesting through their unusual powers, special effects or appearance.

If one doesn't have the time or energy to create super- thugs from scratch, one can easily modify lower-powered villains from Enemies books. Just change the name and make the appearance and special effects weirder. From *Classic Enemies*, for instance, Hideous or any other brick could become a golem or earth elemental; Plague could be a bizarre spirit from another dimension; or Lazer could be a minor mystic with a cloak of levitation and a wand that shoots flaming vipers.

A throwaway super-thug's background doesn't really matter very much. If one needs to quickly add a background to a supernatural super-thug, here are some classic options, with sample characters.

Transformed Human

Another option is a hapless human transformed into a super-powered slave (as in the case of Leech from *Classic Enemies*.) The person could be the victim of an occult accident. Or, the human could have been a volunteer: in return for becoming a lackey, the person got power, revenge, immortality, a cure for a loved one's fatal illness, or the like. The person could even have transformed themselves.

Pluto

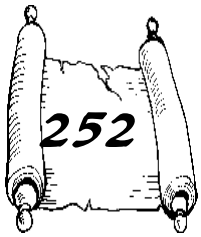
The manipulative theurgist villain, Pope Joan, seduced the bank vice-president Lloyd Barclay and, using her magic, gave him the delusion that he was Pluto (the Roman god of wealth and the dead), with powers to match. While Pope Joan could have simply used Barclay to embezzle the bank's funds, she wanted more. After all, the ancient relics she uses in her magic often are not for sale at any price, and to her it seems silly to *buy* materials for her magic research when she has a besotted demigod who's willing to *steal* them.

Barclay-Pluto, then, goes out nights with Pope Joan to carry off bags of money and gems from bank vaults and jewelry stores. Pope Joan has told him that it's a personal insult that banks do not sacrifice to him or otherwise acknowledge his authority over them, so they should take money as forced "tribute."

Although Pluto is under orders to avoid fights, he does not always obey this command. He's quite sure he can defeat any mere mortal. With his Death Touch and power to turn invisible, he's not entirely unjustified. Note that although Pluto needs his black-enameled metal helmet to use some of his powers, the helmet is not actually magical; Pluto's need for it is entirely psychosomatic, because in myth the real Pluto used such a helmet.

Pluto's greatest weakness, of course, is that his powers all depend on Pope Joan's magic and his own delusion. Pope Joan can deactivate any of his powers at will, or even cancel the whole enchantment. A Mind Control or Telepathy powerful enough to reach into Pluto's memories will also turn him back into Barclay by suppressing the false identity created by Pope Joan's brainwashing. Finally, losing a fight to the real Pluto could break the delusion. The real Pluto knows about Barclay and is not amused. Neither are the other Greco-Roman Gods. A meeting with Pluto or Hecate would not be implausible.

Barclay is a handsome, muscular man in his late forties, with a few streaks of gray in his curly black hair although his beard and mustache are still all dark. (The other people at the bank have noticed how fit Barclay



now seems.) At work, in his "disguise" as Barclay, he wears tailored black suits with a royal purple silk tie and golden cufflinks and tie tack. In his "real" identity as Pluto, he wears a black chiton clasped by a golden brooch, black sandals, and a black metal helmet in Greek style with a black horsehair crest.

(Note: Pluto can be used as a model for writing up "real" mythological gods who take a human form Secret ID. By removing the "Only in Super ID" Limitations and adding a few other Multipower slots, Pluto can also be used as a basis for the actual god Hades/Pluto.)

Pluto

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
40*	STR	24	17-	6400 kg; 8d6 [4]
21*	DEX	26	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
23*	CON	21	14-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
25*	PRE	12	14-	PRE Attack 5d6
14	COM	2	12-	
20*	PD	10		Total: 20 PD/10 rPD
20*	ED	12		Total: 20 ED/10 rED
4*	SPD	7		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
13*	REC	0		
46*	END	0		
45*	STUN	0		*Only in Hero ID (-¼)

Total Characteristic Cost: 129

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +1 Level w/ Hand-to Hand Combat (5)

Pope Joan-Given Powers:
Multipower (42 pt pool), * (34)
u - **Death Touch:** 4d6 HA (6d6 w/STR), BODY AVLD: Power Defense (+2 ½) (42/3) [4]
u - **Death Aura:** 2d6 BODY Drain, Damage Shield, AP (40/3) [4]
u - **Desolidification,** not vs. magic, Concentrate ½ DCV Constant (-½), IAF Helmet (40/2) [4]

Helmet of Darkness: Multipower (45 pt pool), IAF, * (26)
u - **Invisibility** vs. Detect Magic + All Vision, 0 END (45/2) [0]
u - **Aura of Darkness:** 2" radius Darkness vs. Detect Magic + All Vision, Personal Immunity, ½ END (45/2) [2]
u - **Returning to the Underworld:** 7", 7 DEF Tunneling, Can Fill Behind (45/2) [1]

Damage Resistance (10 PD, 10 ED), * (8)
Mental Defense: 8* (4)
Power Defense: 5* (4)
Life Support: Immune to Disease (3)
IR Vision (5)
Bureaucratics 14- (3)
KS: World of Finance 12- (3)
PS: Banker 12- (3)
Headquarters: 25 pt reserve (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 116

Total Character Cost: 245

Disadvantages: 100+

Accidental Change:
if EGO+20 Telepathy/Mind Control Suppresses Delusion (common), 14- (20)

Enraged:
by Challenge to Godly Identity (very common), 11-, Recover 14- (20)

Hunted by:
Vril Society, 8- (More Pow) (15)
Real Greek Gods, 8- (More Pow) (15)

Physical Limitation:
Pope Joan Can Turn Off Powers At Will (inf, total) (15)

Psychological Limitation:
Infatuated with Pope Joan (20)
Overconfident (20)
Greedy (10)

Watched by:
Pope Joan, 11- (More Pow) (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 245

Another Historical Mage

Solomon

(flourished 10th century BC): In real life, King Solomon briefly turned Israel into a major regional power. He is credited with the Biblical books of Proverbs and the Song of Solomon. Later legend expanded on his wisdom and splendor to make him the ultimate Magus, whom God himself had given mastery over all the spirits and all the powers of nature. Some famous European grimoires of the Renaissance were claimed to be the work of Solomon himself. More legends center on Solomon's seal and ring, with which he bound demons to serve in building the Temple in Jerusalem and imprisoned rebellious djinns in brass bottles. Solomon had a weakness for women, though. Like any Middle Eastern monarch, he had many wives from many lands. His foreign wives led him into idolatry, and God punished him by taking away his magic powers.

Summoned Entity

This could account for nearly anything. The Multiverse is full of bizarre entities. Here's an amusing thought: perhaps there's a dimension lord who runs an employment agency for supernatural mercenaries.

Lerajie

Lerajie is one of the many minor demon lords described in the *Lemegeton*. As occultist A. E. Waite quaintly summarized in his *Ceremonial Black Magic*, Lerajie is "a powerful marquis, coming in the likeness of an archer, clad in green and bearing bow and quiver. He occasions battles and causes arrow wounds to putrefy."

Lerajie thus makes an excellent soldier for a demon-summoning sorcerer. He can either make a victim instantly break out in running sores or cause small wounds that quickly turn gangrenous. His arrows can also have a purely spiritual effect, inspiring undirected rage. (See *The Ultimate Mentalist* for a discussion of emotion based Mind Control.)

Technically, Lerajie cannot be disarmed for more than 1 Phase: a new bow will just appear in his hands on the next Phase. If his arms are restrained so he cannot draw his bow, however, he cannot use his magical archery.

Lerajie

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
23	STR	13	17-	600 kg; 4½d6 [4]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18	CON	16	14-	
10	BODY	0	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	14-	PRE Attack 3½d6
12	COM	1	12-	
23	PD	18		Total: 23 PD/8 rPD
23	ED	19		Total: 23 ED/8 rED
5	SPD	19		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	2		
36	END	0		
31	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 140

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
- Combat Skill Levels: +2 Level s w/ Wounds, Sores, Enrage (6)
- Range Skill Levels: +2 Range Mod Levels s w/ Wounds, Sores, Enrage (4)

Archery: Multipower (75 pt pool), Restrainable (-½) (50)
- u - **Cause Sores:** 1d6+1 RKA, BODY AVLD: Power Defense (+2 ½), ½ END (75/5) [3]
- u - **Putrefying Wounds:** 4d6 ERKA, ½ END, 1 hour Gradual Effect (-2) (75/2) [3]
- u - **Enrage:** 10d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal (+¼), ½ END, Fixed Emotion: Rage (-1), Use Normal CVs (-¼) (75/3) [3]
- u - **Cause Battle:** 10d6 Mind Control, Nonverbal, Nonselective 1 Hex AE (+¼), Fixed Emotion: Rage, Use Normal CVs (75/3) [7]

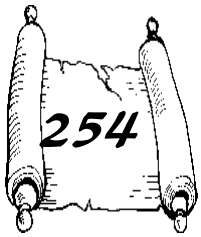
Demon Lord Powers:
- **Demon Resistance:**
  - **Damage Resistance** (8 PD, 8 ED), Hardened (10)
  - **Hardened Defense** on base PD, ED (12)
  - **Mental Defense:** 8 (5)
  - **Power Defense:** 5, Not vs. Transforms (-½) (3)
- **Life Support:** Need not Breathe, Immune to Disease, Aging, Extreme Heat/Cold (19)
- **IR Vision** (5)
- **Universal Translator** 12- (20)
- KS: The Cohort of Wrath 11- (2)
- PS: Archery Tutor 11- (2)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 151

Total Character Cost: 295

Disadvantages: 100+
- **Berserk:** in Combat, 8-, Recover 11- (20)
- **Distinctive Features:** Demon (Hard to Conceal, Scary) (15)
- **Physical Limitation:** Dispelled if Stunned/Unconscious/0 BODY (20); Movement, Powers Blocked by Pentacles (15)
- **Psychological Limitation:** Treacherous (15); Vain About Archery Skill (10)
- **Susceptibility:** 2d6 STUN + BODY/phase, Contact w/Holy Symbol/Place (50)
- **Vulnerability:** x2 Effect, Summoner PRE Attacks/Bindings (common) (20); x2 Effect, PRE Attack After Holy Symbol Attack (common) (20)
- **Watched by:** Baphomet, 11- (More Pow) (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 295



Weapon-User

The sorcerer either supplied magic weaponry to a loyal minion, or hires someone who already has formidable magic items. The *Champions* Universe already includes several villains whose powers come from magic items.

Matachin

Matachin's proper name is Dashwood Sylvestri, of the far-flung Sylvestri clan. Although not a sorcerer himself, Matachin wields the Qliphothic Sword, which channels forces of negative existence to debilitate whoever it hits, utterly ignoring all conventional defenses. Even when not in use the Qliphothic Sword will drain life-force from anyone who touches it without proper protection. The enchantments which let Matachin wield the Sword give him some minor life- draining powers of his own.

Matachin doesn't just act as an enforcer for the Sylvestris. He also hires himself out to other evil wizards and cults. He *usually* reports what he learns about his employers to the senior Sylvestris, but not always: like all Sylvestris, he does not fully trust his kinfolk. As the Sylvestris say, knowledge isn't power; knowledge *other people don't have* is power.

Matachin

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	400 kg; 4d6 [2]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	18	13-	PRE Attack 3½d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
13	PD	9		Total: 31 PD/ 18 rPD
13	ED	9		Total: 31 ED/ 18 rED
5	SPD	19		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	0		
40	END	0		
30	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 119

Movement: Running: 7"/14"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:

Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Fencing (6)

Martial Arts—Fencing (22)

Maneuver	*OCV*	*DCV*	*Notes*
Ballestra	+2	-2	6d6 AVLD/ 4d6 Drain; Requires a half-move
Disarm	-1	+1	STR 30 Disarm
Parry	+2	+2	Block, Abort
Slash	-2	+1	6d6 AVLD/ 4d6 Drain
Strike	+0	+2	5d6 AVLD/ 3½d6 Drain

Use Art with Swords, Swords are the Default

Qliphothic Sword: Multipower (65 pt pool), OAF (32)
- u - **Strike Through Defenses:** 4d6 EB, AVLD: Power Defense (+1 ½), AP, ½ END, 0 Range (65/2) [3]
- u - **Ghost Strike:** 4d6 EB, AVLD: Power Defense (+1 ½), Affects Desolid (+½), ½ END, 0 Range (65/2) [3]
- u - **Drain Vitality:** 3d6 BODY Drain, Recover 1 BODY/2 turns (+¼), AP, ½ END (60/3) [3]
- u - **Default Draining Aura:** 2d6 CON Drain, Damage Shield, 0 END Persistent, Use by 1 Other: Sword (+¼), Trigger: No Other Slot in Use (+¼), Personal Immunity (60/3)

Antilife Powers: Elemental Control (12)
- a - **Transfer Life Force:** 1d6+1 BODY Transfer, to Any Phys Char (+¼) (25/13) [2]
- b - **Armor** (8 PD, 8 ED) (24/12)
- c - **Force Field** (10 PD, 10 ED, 5 PowD) (25/13) [2]

Magical Mask, OAF:
- **Flash Defense:** Sight: 5 (2)
- **Mental Defense:** 8 (2)

Minor Skills & Abilities:
- **Power Defense:** 7 (7)
- **Life Support:** Immune to Extreme Cold, Disease (6)
- **Running:** +1" (7" total) (2) [1/5"]
- **IR Vision** (5)
- Combat Sense 12- (3)
- Acrobatics 13- (3)
- Interrogation 13- (3)
- KS: Fencing 12- (3)
- KS: Occult World 12- (3)
- KS: Black Magic 11- (2)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 161

Total Character Cost: 280

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
- Aura of Cold and Shadow (Can't Conceal) (15)

Hunted by:
- Mage Hero, 8- (As Pow) (10)

Physical Limitation:
- Virtually Blind in Bright Light Without Mask (15)

Psychological Limitation:
- Glory Seeking/Showoff (20)
- Loves Transferring from Helpless Victims (15)

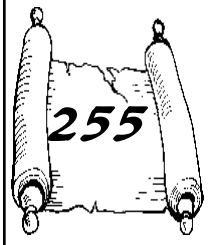
Susceptibility:
- 1d6 STUN/minute, Hot Environment (common) (10)
- 2d6 STUN, Aid Spells (uncommon) (10)

Vulnerability:
- x1 ½ STUN+BODY, Heat/Fire Attacks (common) (20)

Watched by:
- Senior Sylvestris 11- (More Pow) (10)

Villain Bonus (55)

Total Disadvantage Points: 280



Ouroboros

They reptilize upon the Earth.

—William Blake, *The Book of Ahania*

Background: Ouroboros is a major cult, with branches throughout Europe, the Americas, Australia and several satellite groups in Asia and Africa. It worships the Dragon in the form of the Gnostic serpent god Abraxas. The leaders of Ouroboros plot to subjugate humanity to the Dragon's will.

Ouroboros claims to date back to the original Gnostic cults of the 1st to 4th centuries AD. In one sense this is true; the worship of the Dragon does extend back to the Gnostic cults, and hasn't changed all that much. The Dragon's cults, however, enjoy no tradition of apostolic succession like that of the Roman Catholic Church. The traditions endure, but individual cult groups come and go.

The modern cult of Ouroboros began early in the 19th century. Volunteer soldiers from throughout Europe (including Lord Byron) joined the Greek revolution against the Turks. Some of the soldiers belonged to Satanic or witchcraft cults. Their dreams led them to Greece, to a little monastery belonging to no recognized church, and a tiny cult which preserved ancient rituals and enchantments. The partisans found the true cult of which theirs was a distorted echo, and their true god…the Dragon.

The partisans carried the word of the Dragon back across Europe and did their best to fuse their own cults to the cult in Greece. After decades of growth, conflict and reorganization the great cult of Ouroboros assumed its multifarious modern form.

Doctrines and Goals: Ouroboros worships the Dragon under the name of Abraxas. According to cult doctrine, the human soul is a spark sent out by the nameless Supreme God, trapped in a material body and a material world by the wicked demigod Jehovah. To redeem the lost sparks of his own divinity and bring them back to himself, the Supreme God created another demigod, Abraxas. Abraxas began the job in the Garden of Eden by persuading Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of Knowledge of Good and Evil—the first step in breaking the restrictions imposed by Jehovah. The duped minions of Jehovah have said that Abraxas is "that old serpent" Satan, the Enemy, but actually Jehovah is the real "god of this world" and enemy of the true God.

Ouroboros doctrines spin out from there. For someone who has "Gnosis," the awareness of one's own divinity, nothing is evil anymore…at least, nothing done to the unenlightened mass of humanity. Most humans are not capable of Gnosis because they only have "animal souls" instead of divine souls. Even if a person has a divine soul and doesn't know it, if they die they just reincarnate. Since the divine soul is indestructible, what happens to the body doesn't matter.

There's a lot more to Ouroboros theology, but the practical consequences can be stated simply. For the Ouroboros cultist, Good is Evil, human life is trivial and whatever a Cardinal says, goes.

Organization: Ouroboros has a partially segmented, decentralized structure. The cult is run from several headquarters called Fanes. Each Fane controls a network of local covens spread through a wide region. The high priest of the Fane, called a Cardinal, deputizes lieutenants called Canons to lead each coven. A coven's meeting place is called a Chapterhouse. Chapterhouses and Fanes are often disguised as ordinary, semi-public buildings. (These bases don't have to be paid for by the controlling Canon or Cardinal, since they belong to the cult as a whole. Chapterhouses seldom run to more than 50 points plus disadvantages; Fanes run around 150-200 points.)

The Dragon selects one Cardinal to become the Archimandrite, its personal viceroy as leader of the whole cult. Still, Cardinals retain considerable freedom of action—as long as their actions successfully promote the Dragon's goals. If a Cardinal fails, he or she must explain matters to the Archimandrite.

The Archimandrite and Cardinals are powerful priest-magicians. Each one is a distinctive supervillain. Canons are elite agents (base 75 points), and all pretty much the same. Cultists are base 50 point competent normals. The cult includes at least a dozen Cardinals. Each Cardinal controls 3-18 Canons. Local covens have 10-30 members. If a coven expands much beyond 30, the Cardinal splits off a new coven with its own Canon.

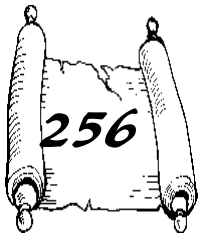
Cardinals themselves directly control larger cult groups, ranging up to 50-60 members. What's more, at each worship service at a Fane there will probably be a visiting local coven or two. Special events may draw even more covens, so Fanes are built to accommodate hundreds of cultists.

A Cardinal's congregation may include squads of special, elite cultist agents. These can vary widely from Cardinal to Cardinal (and are left for GMs to invent). The cult also commands various low to intermediate power monsters created by the Dragon or by priests and wizards of the past.

Canons and Cardinals often have considerable worldly power as well. They might be able to call on resources unrelated to the cult, such as conventional criminal gangs and supervillain mercenaries, political or business connections, or even alliances with other cults.

Finally, note that Ouroboros is just one form of the Dragon's worldwide cult. The cult takes other forms and other names in other parts of the world, such as China, Africa and the Middle East. These cults have their own hierarchies. Nevertheless, if the Dragon orders another of its cults to work with Ouroboros, the cults will cooperate. Only the Cardinals and Archimandrite know the full size of Ouroboros and its connections with other Draconic cults.

Magic and Equipment: The Canons and Cardinals employ Ritual Magic emphasizing Foci and Incantations. Their combat magic comes from their elaborately carved and jeweled staves of gilded bronze and



human bone. Every Canon knows 3 spells: a basic psychic bolt (which the victim sees as a bolt of bright green light), a Sigil of Set (the actual rune is carved inside the mouth of the serpent head atop the staff), and a curse of slow death.

The Death Curse deserves special mention. It has no visible effect, so unless the victim sees the caster point the Serpent Staff or hears the Words of Power spoken, the victim might not know that a spell has been cast on them. Each hour thereafter, however, the victim suffers a 1d6 BODY Drain. The curse proceeds for 16 hours; with the return rate factored in, the victim will take 20 BODY *on average.* A normal person thus has a 50% chance of death. The curse can be stopped by dispelling, giving the victim Power Defense, or exorcism. (Exorcism from any religious or magical tradition will do, so long as the victim can win a Skill Roll struggle, his EGO vs. the Death Curse caster's EGO. The victim can try again for each hour of exorcism.) The Death Curse is used for stealthy assassinations; it's not much use against supermages.

Cardinals add another Sigil of Set to their repertoire of staff based powers, as well as a powerful destructive bolt called the Dragon's Kiss, spells to summon and bind minor demons and reptilian monsters created by the Dragon, and at least one noncombat spell of their own choice. The Death Curse can be sent long distance, psychically. The typical Cardinal adds another Multipower of low power defensive or miscellaneous spells bought through another Focus.

For defense, the Canons and Cardinals have the Warding Band. This is also made of gilded bronze, with a few tiny disks of semiprecious stone engraved with mystic runes. It could be a necklace or choker, a bracelet or even a watch band. Its design always includes a snake biting its own tail. It provides temporary protection against physical and some magical forces.

Cardinals may add more magical abilities if they wish. These are always bought through some sort of Focus.

Finally, each Canon and Cardinal has a reserve of points to use for lengthy, non combat ritual spells. While these can change from adventure to adventure, they aren't bought through a Multipower or Power Pool; they are a plot device. The cult leader can even apply these points to their Fane's headquarters' points, getting five times the Real Points—as long as the spells are cast from the Fane's ritual chamber.

Very few of the Ouroboros cultists have Spell Research. They learn magic from scrolls left by previous cults of the Dragon. Once in a while the Dragon teaches a new spell to a Cardinal, who writes it down.

Costumes: Ouroboros costumes are typical cultist robes, tied with a sash around the waist. Their favorite color is green and they use lots of snake and dragon motifs. Canons have fancier robes, with a hooded cloak and a tasseled stole. Cardinals get an even fancier costume, with a high collar to the hooded cloak and a gilded half mask covering the upper face.

Tactics: Ouroboros is insidious. The cult tries to sneak cultists into a community gradually, recruiting as they go. Leaders try to achieve positions of influence in the community, such as doctor, police captain, teacher, business leader or even priest of a public church. Only the smallest of towns can be controlled outright, but in a year or two the cultists can build enough of an organization to hide their activities from casual view. Then they can get on with their real projects.

Ongoing projects, such as producing more Uraeus serpents, are usually run by low key, well established cult cells. These operations can stay hidden for decades and will probably be discovered only through information found at other cells. Projects with a clear end condition, such as finding and reviving a long buried Draconic monster, creating a body for the Dragon to possess or kidnapping homeless people to turn into brainwashed Ophites, are more easily discovered since they require more contact with the outside world.

Ouroboros always tries to avoid open fights. The cultists prefer to stay hidden. Ouroboros would rather bomb a Sanctum, hold a DNPC hostage or slip poison in an enemy's food than attack directly. Every cell includes a few trained investigators skilled at discovering Secret IDs and DNPCs, assuming they have time to work. If the cultists must fight in person, though, they attack with hysterical fury. If cult losses mount, the leader will order the rank and file cultists to launch a human wave attack. Once the leader has gotten away, the surviving cultists scatter, to regroup weeks or months later. Compromised bases are destroyed whenever possible. The cultists will sacrifice themselves for their leaders.

Sometimes the sacrifice is quite literal. It's a mark of special favor from the Dragon for a cultist to receive the Self Sacrificial Summoning power (see "Cults" in Chapter Five). It's not unusual for an Ouroboros group to include one cultist (often a Canon) with this power, or some other mighty and destructive spell activated by self murder. Cultists with such powers are eager to use them, killing themselves to show their devotion and bring victory for their cause.

Relations with Other Agencies: As mentioned, Ouroboros cooperates with any other cult of the Dragon, if such joint ventures are commanded. Ouroboros will also work with Satanic cults such as the Seven-Headed Beast or Bullet Bulls on an ad hoc basis, since they share the same long term goal of a humanity enslaved to Evil. The degree of cooperation is really up to the Satanists: the Ouroboros leaders recognize that the demon lords grew from the Dragon's influence on humanity's collective unconscious, but the Satanists seldom recognize the Dragon's primacy.

Other cults are viewed with total disdain, if not active hostility, even other black magic cults. Cardinals sometimes team up with individual evil sorcerers whose goals do not conflict with Ouroboros. Mundane criminal agencies are considered mere pawns and hirelings. Law enforcement agencies are zealously hidden from.

Cardinal Krait

Background: Cardinal Krait is actually Lester Bowen, a locally prominent judge and pillar of the community. He's a second-generation cultist, directed by the cult to become first a lawyer and then a judge so the cult has an operative high in the region's legal system. Now that he himself is the region's cult leader, Bowen hopes to carry this plan even further. He would like to reach elected office—preferably Governor or Senator, but he'd settle for becoming a representative in the state legislature…for now.

Bowen has another grand plan in the works as well, a plan to create an avatar for the Dragon. He has raised his daughter Venus to become the Bride of Abraxas and bear the god's child for the god to possess. Venus doesn't know this. Although she's been raised by cult nannies, taught by cult tutors and protected from "unsuitable" aspects of the world (such as unchaperoned meetings with boys) by cult bodyguards, she hasn't been introduced to the cult itself. Bowen thinks it's very important that Venus be an innocent virgin when she meets her future husband (one of the powerful monsters created by the Dragon long ago, serving as a stand in for the Dragon). On the other hand, he's had her educated so that she wouldn't find anything too shocking about mating with a reptilian "god."

Bowen's personal congregation and Fane is disguised as the local branch of the Shriners. (Go on, make the players wonder if the whole club is a front for Ouroboros). It is described below.

Quote: "***Attack****, my minions! Abraxas commands their death!*"

Personality: Cardinal Krait is a typical cult leader: loud and leading from the rear. He's no fool, though. He's a skilled administrator who keeps his cult cell prosperous and well-hidden. So far, no hint of scandal has clouded his name, despite a superficially public life. No one would believe he leads a vicious cult.

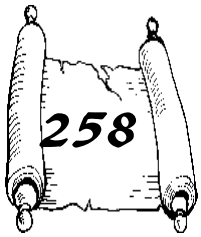
Bowen's connections with organized crime remain hidden too, for the same reason: anyone who learns anything gets murdered, and cultists in the local police force and city government destroy all the evidence. Bowen would actually have to be caught in the act with witnesses to be arrested for anything, and even then he could probably get off. The scandal of arrest, however, could block his political aspirations—and earn PCs his undying hatred.

Powers/Tactics: In addition to Krait's main spells, he can create various minor defensive effects using the talismanic rings he wears at all times. Most importantly for the cult, he can not only mentally contact the Dragon, he can share that contact with others: his cultists can have the ultimate religious experience.

Krait tries to deal with problems quietly when possible. First he tries legal harassment against people who stand in his way. Then he hires ordinary local thugs (who have no idea who hired them) to attack them; he also uses thugs against ordinary people who have learned of the cult's existence.

If the cult has to fight its own battle, Krait stays in the rear, exhorting the cultists while casting Sigils of Set on their opponents. He flees if there is any chance his hood might be removed and his identity exposed.

Appearance: Lester Bowen is a stout, middle-aged man, balding on top. His costume is a belted green robe with a full-face hood, high triple collar, flaring sleeves and lots of embroidery.



Cardinal Krait

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 [2]
20	DEX	30	12-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18	CON	16	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	12-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	20	12-	ECV: 7
18	PRE	8	12-	PRE Attack 3½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	7		Total: 20 PD/ 10 rPD
10	ED	6		Total: 20 ED/ 10 rED
4	SPD	10		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	2		
36	END	0		
26	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 110

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Magical Combat (10)

Serpent Staff: Multipower (70 pt pool), OAF, Incantations (31)
- u - **Mystic Bolt:** 5 ½d6 Ego Attack, ½ END (69/3) [3]
- u - **Sigil of Set:** 6d6 Suppress, vs. Any 1 Characteristic (+¼), 0 END, Uncontrolled (67/3) [0]
- u - **Sigil of Set:** 4d6 Suppress, Vs. Any 1 Characteristic (+¼), 0 END, Uncontrolled, Personal Immunity, 5 Hexes AE (+1) (70/3) [0]
- u - **Dragon's Kiss:** 4 ½d6 RKA, 0 Range (70/3) [7]
- u - **Death Curse:** 1d6 BODY Drain, Ranged, BOECV (+1), Recover 1 BODY/2 hours (+1 ¼), Invisible vs. Sight/Hearing/Mental (+1), Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END to maintain, Personal Immunity, 1 Hour Gradual Effect between increments (-2) (70/3) [7]
- u - **Summoning:** 2 x 100 pt Summon, Any Minor Demon or Creature of the Dragon (+¼), 4 chgs (70/2) [4c]
- u - **Binding Spell:** 7d6 minor Transform vs. EGO (Willingly do 1 task), Only vs. Spirits or Willing Recipients (-½) (70/3) [7]
- u - **Greater Scrying:** Clairsentience: Normal Vision, Hearing, Sense Magic, x32 Range (10 miles), ½ END, constant Concentrate ½ DCV (-½) (69/3) [3]
- u - **Contact Dragon:** 9d6 Mind Scan, Transdimensional: Astral Plane (+½), +1 ECV, initial Concentrate 0 DCV (- ½), 1 phase Extra Time (-½) (70/2) [7]

Rings of Defense: Multipower (20 pt pool), IIF Rings, Incantations (13)
- u - **Damage Reduction** (50% vs. normal PD) (20/1)
- u - **Damage Reduction** (50% vs. normal ED) (20/1)
- u - **Missile Deflection** +0 vs. Any Magic (20/1)
- u - **Invisibility** vs. normal vision (20/1) [2]
- u - **Clairsentience:** Vision (20/1) [2]

Warding Band: Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 5 MD), OIF, 4 chgs of 1 minute (-¼) (14) [4c]

Talismanic Ring: Power Defense: 5, OIF (3)

Magesight Talisman: Sense Magic, Ranged, Discriminatory, IAF (9)

Worship Ritual: Mind Link to Dragon, Any Distance/Dimension, Use with Others x4 (+¾), initial 1 turn Extra Time (-½), OAF Staff, constant Concentrate 0 DCV (-1) (7) [5]

Individual Noncombat Ritual Spells (see "Hermetic Theurgy: Notably Powerful Spells" and "Instant Sanctum Spells" in Chapter Four for inspiration) (27)

Background Skills:
Acting 13- (3)
High Society 13- (3)
Oratory 13- (3)
Persuasion 13- (3)
Streetwise 13- (3)
Scholar (3)
KS: Gnostic Cult Doctrine 13- (2)
KS: Occult World 13- (2)
KS: Western Occultism 13- (2)
KS: Law 13- (2)
KS: Local Criminal Underworld 13- (2)
Ancient Greek (Completely Fluent w/ Accent) (3)
PS: Judge 13- (3)
Contact: Police Chief 12- (3)
Contact: Mob Leader 12- (3)
Perk: Cult Leader (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 188

Total Character Cost: 298

Disadvantages: 100+

DNPC:
Daughter, normal, 11- (15)

Hunted by:
Occult Hero, 8- (As Pow) (10)

Magic Restriction: Only Spells Allowed by Dragon (20)

Physical Limitation:
Can Be Possessed by Dragon Any Time (inf, total) (15)

Psychological Limitation:
Religious Fanatic (25)
Politically Ambitious (15)
Ruthlessly Secretive (10)

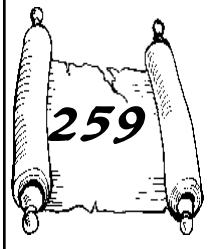
Secret Identity (15)

Susceptibility:
2d6 STUN, Successful Attack On Serpent Staff (uncommon) (10)

Watched by:
the Dragon, 11- (More Pow) (10)
Archimandrite, 8- (As Pow) (5)

Villain Bonus (46)

Total Disadvantage Points: 298



Typical Canon

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 [2]
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack 3d6
10	COM	0	11-	
8	PD	5		Total: 18 PD/ 10 rPD
8	ED	5		Total: 18 ED/ 10 rED
3	SPD	3		Pha 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
25	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 65

Movement: Running: 6"/6"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Magic (10)

Serpent Staff: Multipower (56 pt pool), OAF, Incantations (25)
u - **Mystic Bolt:** 5 ½d6 Ego Attack (55/2) [3]
u - **Sigil of Set:** 5d6 Suppress, vs. Any 1 Characteristic (+¼), 0 END, Uncontrolled (56/3) [6]
u - **Death Curse:** 1d6 BODY Drain, Ranged, Recover 1 BODY/2 hours (+1 ¼), Invisible vs. Sight/ Hearing (+¾), Uncontrolled Continuous 0 END to maintain, 1 Hour Gradual Effect between increments (-2) (52/2) [5]

Warding Band: Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 6 MD), OIF, 4 chgs of 1 minute (-¼) (13) [4c]

Talismanic Ring: Power Defense: 5, OIF (3)

Magesight Talisman: Detect Magic, Ranged, Discriminatory, OAF, Incantations to start, Costs END, x3 END (3) [3]

Individual Noncombat Ritual Spells (see "Hermetic Theurgy: Notably Powerful Spells" and "Instant Sanctum Spells" in Chapter Four for inspiration) (22)

Background Skills:
Oratory 12- (3)
KS: Gnostic Cult Doctrine 11- (2)
KS: Western Occultism 11- (2)
Pick 2 Skills from the following List: (Acting, Bribery, Interrogation, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, Magical KS, Appropriate PS) (6)
Perk: Initiate: Ouroboros Lieutenant (3)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 98

Total Character Cost: 163

Disadvantages: 75+

Magic Restriction: Only Spells Allowed by Cardinal (20)

Physical Limitation:
Can Be Possessed by Dragon Any Time (inf, total) (15)

Psychological Limitation:
Religious Fanatic (25)

Secret Identity (15)

Watched by:
Watched by Cardinal & Dragon, 8- (More Pow, NCI) (10)

Villain Bonus (3)

Total Disadvantage Points: 163

Regular Cultist

The regular Ouroboros cultist conforms in every way to the Generic Cultist (q.v.) Their standard defensive ability is the Chant of the Faithful (extra PD and ED, with constant Incantation and an IAF Holy Symbol). For attacks, the cultists carry normal, non-magical weapons such as submachineguns, pistols with special ammunition, clubs and chains.

Chapter House: Zion Apostolic Church

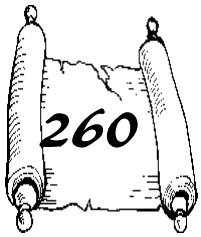
The Zion Apostolic Church is tucked into a solid block of small businesses in an aging retail district downtown. Once it was another shop. Now its shabby, windowless front has a cross over its door and a sign giving its name. It is not affiliated with any other church. Now and then someone enters: a derelict, a tired woman shepherding two small children, a clerk. Inside is a tiny chapel with folding chairs and a wooden cross, made antiseptic by white walls and a tiled floor. Visitors can talk to either Reverend George Smith or a deacon. The church is open from 9 AM to 8 PM every day, sometimes later, with services on Sunday morning and occasionally at other times.

The only visible clue that things are not what they seem comes from that tiled floor: someone who studies the pattern of the tiles and the straight or curving lines and dots engraved in some of them and makes a Spell Research or Magic Knowledge roll will realize that the tiles form the sigils of a magic spell. The spell is to hide any other magic used in the building. Careful searching for magic will reveal that the church's wall are reinforced with spells. A really good magical Perception roll shows that quite a lot of magic has been done in the building: dark, evil magic.

Reverend Smith is an Ouroboros Canon and the church is just a front. The special church services are held in the basement, in honor of Abraxas. One wall holds a gilded plaque of a stylized dragon biting its own tail. The stone altar top and concrete floor are carved with gutters leading to a drain in the floor. A locked cabinet in the altar holds an ornate dagger and bowl, a brazier, a box of foul incense and a bottle of bleach. The walls are painted with reptilian monsters amid churning abstraction. When the bare fluorescent tubes in the ceiling are turned off, streaks of luminous paint in the murals form distorted, runic writing. The floor and altar are very clean, but close inspection of the walls and ceiling finds spots of dried blood.

Most of the time, of course, nobody but Reverend Smith or a deacon are in the church. During the night, even they aren't there. The basement shrine, however, always has a guardian living in a compartment behind the dragon plaque: a reptilian creature called a Uraeus. It defends the shrine to the death—and as long as it stays within 2 hexes of the plaque, it is nearly indestructible.

When the cultists arrive for the "special" church services, one person doesn't leave. That person is a



drugged, kidnapped victim, usually a homeless derelict or a young runaway. The victim is slaughtered on the altar, the cultists and the Uraeus drink the victim's blood, and the Uraeus disintegrates the corpse.

Fane: Shriner's Hall

The neighborhood used to be quite upscale, back in the 1950s. Now its fine houses have been converted into apartments. The main streets carry a Bohemian mix of used book stores, import shops, repertory theaters and cafes. All the telephone poles are thickly papered with handbills for obscure local bands.

One side street holds the old Shriner's Hall, a two story brick and concrete building. The Hall proper occupies most of the ground floor, although the building's front holds a cafe called "Lotta Latte." The upper floor is divided into small office suites, only two of them occupied ("Bergson Enterprises," a one-man operation whose business changes monthly, and "Illuminator Press," which publishes little religious tracts). Nobody in Lotta Latte, Bergson Enterprises or Illuminator Press even knows that the building has a basement.

Only Illuminator Press is genuine. Bergson Enterprises owns the building through a holding company that also owns Lotta Latte and five or six skyscrapers downtown; the Shriners who meet at the Hall are all Ouroboros cultists; Mr. Bergson is a Canon; and the nonexistent basement holds horrors.

Most significantly, the basement holds the large, ornate shrine to the Dragon. This is like the shrine in the Chapter House given above, only bigger and fancier. The gilded and jeweled statue of the Dragon biting its tail is the focus for a spell which enhances cult magic used in the shrine. A locked chamber off the shrine holds the cult group's most important possession, a reptilian skull carved out of black crystal which monitors this Fane and permits mystic communication with other Fanes. If anyone invades the Fane, the Black Crystal Skull will track their progress, alert the Cardinal and coordinate the resistance by the Ophites. If the defenders lose and the Fane itself faces destruction, the Skull passes everything it knows about the attackers to Black Crystal Skulls in other Fanes.

Other chambers in the basement include a barracks for the Ophite guards, prison cells, a torture chamber and apartments for visiting dignitaries. A network of shafts, crawl spaces and hidden sliding panels in the ceilings let the Ophite guards invade any room in the building without being seen.

Ophite

The Ophites are no longer human. Some were cultists who were so fanatical that they gave up humanity to be magically transformed into reptile men, the better to serve their god. Others were just people kidnapped, brainwashed, and transformed by the cult. Ophites are often used as guards by Fanes. Their standard tactic is for one Ophite to grab or knock down an opponent, and then all the other Ophites claw and bite while the target is helpless. They may use their Clinging and Concealment to set ambushes, lurking above doors to leap down on victims.

Ophites have only one physical weakness: the magic that transformed them isn't a perfect spell, so any magic which changes them in other ways or drains their life force causes a shock them.

Ophites look like muscular men (they are actually neuter) covered with heavy, scaled hide, a tail and distorted, snakelike heads. They have impressive claws and fangs.

One of Ouroboros' ongoing projects is an improved Ophite, with more intelligence and able to breed.

Ophite

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
18	STR	8	13-	300 kg; 3½d6 [2]
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack 3d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
10	PD	6		Total: 17 PD/ 7 rPD
10	ED	6		Total: 17 ED/ 7 rED
3	SPD	3		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	0		
36	END	0		
28	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 67

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Martial Arts (6)

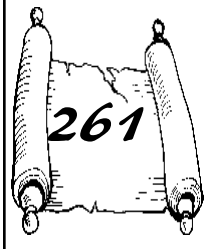
Martial Arts—Wrestling (10)

Maneuver	*OCV*	*DCV*	*Notes*
Grab	-1	-1	28 STR Grab
Takedown	+1	+1	3½d6, Target Falls
Escape	+0	+0	STR 33 vs. Grabs

Reptile Powers: Elemental Control (11)
a - **Claw/Bite:** 1d6 HKA, AP (1½d6 w/ STR) (22/11) [2+]
b - **Scaly Skin:** Armor (7 PD, 7 ED) (21/10)
Clinging (18 STR) (10)
Breakfall 12- (3)
Concealment 11- (3)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 63

Total Character Cost: 130



Disadvantages: 50+

Distinctive Features:
Reptile Man (hard to conceal, cause horror) (20)
Strong, Inhuman Aura (few detect, cause horror) (10)

Psychological Limitation:
Religious Fanatic (25)

Susceptibility:
2d6 STUN, Magic Adjustment Attacks & Transforms (common) (15)

Watched by:
Watched by Cardinal , 11- (More Pow,) (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 130

Dragon Warrior

This is a brand-new Dragon Warrior, like the ones which fought in Tiamat's War more than 5000 years ago. This example, however, was created by a cultist using the Self-Sacrificial Major Summoning. Its mind is not yet developed. It instinctively serves Ouroboros and the Dragon, but at first it has very little idea what it serves. If it lives very long, the cult will indoctrinate it.

Its existence is not completely stable, either. Given time, consumption of at least its own mass in human blood, and certain ritual practices, it will trade in some of its Disadvantages. For instance, the surviving original Dragon Warriors aren't mute, but they only understand Sumerian. Once stabilized, Dragon Warriors are immortal unless killed. If sealed into an airless crypt (or other rare circumstances which GMs can define), instead of dying they go into suspended animation until disturbed (this is one of their replacement Disadvantages).

This particular Dragon Warrior not only has great physical power, it commands a deadly black flame. It can breathe this out in a weak form as often as it wants, or four times a day spit a concentrated bolt that can burn away anything not protected by high quality mystic shields. Eight times a day, it can exhale a dilute version of the black flames in a zone of impenetrable darkness.

This Dragon Warrior has glittering black scales, narrow bat-like wings and sharp spines running down its back and on its joints. Other Dragon Warriors can look quite different. Some are more serpent like. Some of them aren't even reptilian: the list of Tiamat's Dragon Warriors includes several types of monsters, such as Scorpion Men, Mad Lions and Whirlwinds.

Dragon Warrior

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
53*	STR	23	20-	37.5 ton; 10½d6 [5]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
23	CON	26	14-	
16*	BODY	4	12-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
17	EGO	14	12-	ECV: 6
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack 4d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
20	PD	13		Total: 31 PD/ 11 rPD
20	ED	15		Total: 31 ED/ 11 rED
6	SPD	27		Pha 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
12	REC	0		
46	END	0		*Bonus from Growth
45	STUN	0		added in

Total Characteristic Cost: 165

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 17"/68"

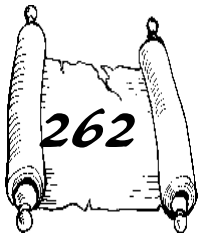
Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Multipower (10)

Dragon Powers:
Dragon Body: Elemental Control (20)
a - **Huge Size:** Growth 20 pts, 0 END Persistent, Always On (1600 kg, 5 meters long, -4 DCV, -4" KB, +2 PER Rolls Against, +1" reach) (40/13)
b - **Scaly Hide:** Armor (11 PD, 11 ED), Hardened (41/21)
c - **Wings:** 17" Flight, x4 NCM, Restrainable (39/13) [1/5"]
Dragon Warrior Attacks: Multipower (52 pt pool) (52)
u - **Claw/Bite:** 2d6 HKA (4d6 w/STR), AP, ½ END (52/5) [2+]
u - **Wing/Tail Sweep:** 4d6 HA (6d6 w/STR), x2 KB (+¾), 1 Hex AE, ½ END (30/3) [3+]
u - **Blackfire Breath:** 10d6 EB (50/5) [5]
u - **Blackfire Bolt:** 1d6 RKA, BODY NND: Hardened Power Defense (+2), Uncontrolled, 4 Chgs of 1 Turn (-½) (52/3)[4c]
u - **Shadow Breath:** 2" radius Darkness vs. Detect Magic/All Vision, Personal Immunity, Uncontrolled, 8 Chgs of 1 Turn (-0), 0 Range (52/3) [8c]
Black Aura: +25 PRE, Only to Cause Fear (-¾), Costs x2 END (-1) (9) [4]
Mental Defense: 10 (7)
Power Defense: 7 (7)
Life Support: Full (30)
Mystic Sense: Radar Sense (15)
Wings & Tail: Extra Limbs (5)
KS: Dragon Lore 8- (1)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 222

Total Character Cost: 387



Disadvantages: 250+

Berserk:
if takes BODY, 11-, Recover 8- (25)
Distinctive Features:
Glittering, Spiny Black Dragon (Can't Conceal, Terrifying) (25)
Physical Limitation:
No Fine Manipulation (15)
Mute (10)
Psychological Limitation:
Dedicated to Service of Dragon and Destruction of Others (20)
Susceptibility:
1d6 BODY Drain/Turn, Stunned or Unconscious (very common) (20)
2d6 STUN, Adjustment Attacks vs. magic (common) (15)
Vulnerability:
x1½ STUN+BODY, Attacks w/"Affects Desolid" (10)
Villain Bonus (147)

Total Disadvantage Points: 387

Vril Society

Only, the more I think of a people calmly developing, in regions excluded from our sight and deemed uninhabitable by our sages, powers surpassing our most disciplined modes of force, and virtues to which our life, social and political, becomes antagonistic in proportion as our civilization advances,—the more devoutly I pray that ages may yet elapse before there emerge into sunlight our inevitable destroyers.

—Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The Coming Race*

Background: This occult society was born from a Victorian novel. Edward Bulwer Lytton (he of "It was a dark and stormy night") wrote *The Coming Race,* a tale of a man who discovers an underground civilization of supermen, the Vril-Ya. Their Utopian society is based on their mastery of *vril,* the force which underlies all other forces. Through *vril,* the supermen light their cavern homes, read minds, run their machines and annihilate solid rock with a thought.

The narrator finds his 19th century American attitudes hopelessly at odds with Vril-Ya customs. A Vril-Ya woman who has fallen in love with him despite his inferiority helps him escape, with much tragic sentiment. The narrator fears, however, that his visit has sparked Vril-Ya interest in the surface world and that if the Vril-Ya ever emerge from their underworld they will supplant ordinary humanity.

Bulwer Lytton never pretended that *The Coming Race* was anything but a satiric fantasy. Bulwer Lytton, however, was a leading occultist as well as a popular novelist. *The Coming Race* so captivated some of its readers that they wondered if it might be partly true—that Bulwer Lytton had published secret lore in the guise of a novel. Thus the Vril Society began, a collection of loonies dedicated to developing their own mastery of the psychic power of *vril.*

The Vril Society flourished in 1920s Germany, a nation then agog over both Master Races and lost civilizations. As Hitler consolidated his power, however, he suppressed the occult societies which had helped prepare his way. Several Vrilists found havens in the Nazi Party, while staying in contact with other former Society members.

After the War, some surviving Vrilists secretly revived the Society to make themselves worthy of joining the Coming Race. Their Nazi contacts had obtained for them a share in the Nazi trove of sorcerous books, artifacts and experimental data. Now the Vrilists actually had some idea what they were doing.

Decades later, the Vril Society has developed truly formidable magical powers. What's more, the leaders have decided not to wait for the Vril-Ya but to impose rule by humanity's closest analog to the all wise Coming Race—predictably, themselves.

Doctrines and Goals: The Vril Society members like to think of themselves as the vanguard of a rational Utopia. They agree with Bulwer Lytton's Vril-Ya that when everyone has absolute power, everyone necessarily learns absolute responsibility. By developing their own vril-power, the Society members hope to lay the foundations of a perfect society on the Vril-Ya model. In this perfect society of self sufficient small towns, there will be no hunger, poverty, ignorance or oppression. When the Coming Race arrives on Earth's surface, they will find people worthy of acceptance as equals.

The problem is that to rebuild society on the Vril-Ya model, the Society must get rid of the societies humanity already has. They have Bulwer Lytton's assurance (in the person of a Vril-Ya scholar) that other societies, including Western style democracy, cannot abide the presence of a genuine Utopia. Conflict would be inevitable, so the Vrilists mean to strike preemptively. This will mean the death of countless millions, but the lives of ordinary humans mean little to these self-proclaimed supermen.

So far, however, the Vril Society has done very little but squabble with itself and other occult societies. Their most promising field agent, a girl raised by the Society who showed amazing talent for vril manipulation, went rogue on her first mission and became the superhero Solitaire. The leaders of the Society are still bickering over that one. If the Vril Society ever agrees on what to do next, it could become a force to be reckoned with.

Vril itself is a curious concept. According to *The Coming Race,* all other forces are just aspects of vril. It can manifest as light, heat, electricity, magnetism, disintegrating force (an intriguing anticipation of nuclear energy) or even—in fact, especially—as psychic energy. The human mind can generate vril energy in tiny amounts; the superhuman minds of the Vril-Ya race could generate it in *large* quantities.

Now that some of the Society members have learned to use vril to some degree, they would like to contact

the Coming Race and implore their help in developing their vril further and taking over the world. Society members will be extremely interested in any reports which hint at subterranean races or "lost worlds." (The Society does not believe scientists who argue that the giant, deep cavern network described by Bulwer Lytton could not exist.) Many members have tried to psychically contact the Coming Race. Some of them claim they briefly touched minds of vast power deep in the Earth, but have gained no real information. (They aren't lying, though: they felt the presence of the Gaiagens in the Earth's mantle.)

Group Organization: The leaders of the Vril Society have the nerve to style themselves Vril-Ya, like Bulwer Lytton's super race. The Vril-Ya's claim that they would bring peace, order and wisdom to the world would be more convincing if they weren't so fractious themselves. The eight Vril-Yas are so busy with their own feuds and rivalries that they hardly have time to think about world domination. Their alliances shift weekly; each has tested each other's powers in secret conflicts; each Vril-Ya seeks an edge to make him or her the undisputed leader of the "leaderless" Society, and all try to keep each other from getting that edge.

Of course the lower ranking members see none of this. The Vril-Yas put up a united front when other people are watching.

The Vril Society has four levels: Aspirant, Initiate, Adept, and Vril-Ya. Aspirants are drawn from other occult societies. The Adepts all have memberships in other occult and New Age groups as recruiters. Likely candidates for membership are asked if they'd like to get some real magical power in exchange for total secrecy and total obedience. Those who accept become Aspirants. Aspirants practice meditation, yoga, and other mystical exercises to activate their innate vril. They also pay most of the Society's bills and keep the Vril-Yas living in high style. They don't learn about the Society's world takeover pretensions. Aspirants only hear that the Vril-Yas work by spiritual means to advance mankind.

When Aspirants first show signs of psychic ability, they advance to the Initiate tier. Here they receive intensive training in using their mystic talents. The Society keeps a list of magical powers for Initiates to achieve, rather like Boy Scout merit badges.

Initiates must completely abandon their old life: quit their jobs, cut off friends outside the Society, even abandon their families. The Society is their family now. (And the Vril-Yas are happy when that becomes literally true. Some of the Society's best students in the last 20 years have been children of members, raised like Solitaire within the Society and trained from early childhood.)

Initiates who develop real power and earn enough "merit badges" advance to the tier of Adepts. Adepts receive a large magical crystal that helps them channel their powers more efficiently and progress from psychic powers to full High Magic. (Solitaire was an unusually capable Adept.) Adepts are addressed as "Brother" or "Sister."

If an Adept is lucky, he or she will eventually be promoted to Vril-Ya and receive a Vril Rod, a more potent tool for focusing magic. Promotion requires the agreement of at least four Vril-Yas. Adepts thus get practice at rivalry, backbiting and cliquishness as they curry favor with the Vril-Yas. Vril-Yas are addressed as "Master" or "Mistress."

Among their duties, Adepts recruit new members and train Aspirants. Senior Adepts and some Vril-Yas run training centers in several cities scattered through Europe and North America. Initiates eventually move to the Vril Society's secret headquarters somewhere in western Europe, to receive advanced training from the Vril-Yas.

There are only 8 Vril-Yas, each built on a base of 100 points, plus disadvantages and a little experience. The Society has 14 or so Adepts, based on 75 points. The 30+ Initiates are built on 25-50 points plus disadvantages, while the 80 or so Aspirants are just 0 point normals with a little occult knowledge. The whole Vril Society would never be encountered all at once.

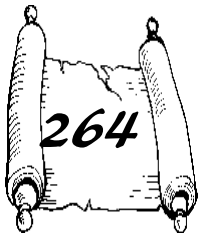
Magic and Equipment: The Vril Society employs a mixture of mentalism and High Magic. Members start by learning low power psychic disciplines—basic Ritual Magic—but as their power grows and attunes them to cosmic energies, their spells evolve into High Magic. They still keep a strong emphasis on mental effects. Their training methods let them cast spells by sheer force of will, usually without even gesturing. While Vril Magic is limited to energy and psychic effects, the Vril-Yas can do nearly anything they imagine within that broad limit.

The most important tool is the Vril Rod carried by each Vril-Ya. A Vril Rod looks like a hollow tube of silvery metal about 4 feet long, decorated with a knurled collar and a few sliding switches a third of the way along its length. The user slides switches and turns the collar to evoke different powers.

Examining the inside of the tube reveals a number of wires, crystal beads and metal baffles set in the walls of the tube. The switches and collar can connect different wires to each other or change the position or angle of the baffles. The Vril-Yas claim that changing the settings changes how vril currents flow and vibrate in the rod. None of this makes sense either to scientists or other sorcerers, but sabotaging a Vril Rod destroys its power so it must be true.

The Vril Rod not only reduces the fatigue of casting spells for a Vril-Ya, it makes channeling and shaping the vril force so much easier that the effect is of a dramatic increase in power. (In game terms, the Vril Rod puts a -1 Focus Limitation on the powers created though the Vril-Ya's Power Pool. This lets a Vril-Ya keep more Powers going at once: for instance, to make 70 Active Point attacks while maintaining a 70 Active Point defense.)

The Vril Society's second notable piece of equipment is the Vril Crystal, a faceted ball of transparent quartz which Adepts receive. The Vril Crystal helps them focus their energies more easily, reducing fatigue.



(Solitaire's "Widget" is of course a Vril Crystal, but a very unusual one. No other Vril Crystal talks to its owner.)

Finally, Adepts and Vril-Yas are allowed to wear special artificial wings. These are held by straps around the shoulders and a belt around the waist and fold over the shoulders so the wing tips fall at knee level. When the wearer slips their arms into straps in the wings and energizes them with vril power, they can fly. This, however, takes so much energy that only a Vril-Ya can do other magic while remaining aloft. Even then, they must settle for gliding instead of full, powered flight (unless the Vril-Ya allocates some of their Power Pool to that purpose).

The wings are not generally issued on field missions, since they cannot be hidden. (That's why Solitaire didn't have a set of wings on her first mission. She could use these wings if she ever acquired a set, but she doesn't know how they are made.) Vril-Yas routinely wear Vril Wings as part of their ceremonial garb. Adepts may be issued Vril Wings if on missions where sudden getaways may be needed, or if they must get someplace unobtrusively.

The Vril Society keeps its bases hundreds of feet underground, in huge caverns hollowed out by their Vril-Yas and illuminated by magic. Not only does this emulate the subterranean lifestyle of the Coming Race, it gives them passive protection against attack and most magical searches.

Costumes: The Vril Society is unusual among occult groups in preferring simplicity—a *calculated* simplicity—in their garb. Members wear sandals and sleeveless robes or tunics and trousers in solid colors and plain designs. The Vril-Yas all wear sleeveless, hooded robes of shimmering white. Their Vril Wings are of a solid, very pale tint of their choice, glittering with silver from the quills of the artificial feathers.

Tactics: As yet the Vril Society has no plan for taking over the world, but individual Vril-Yas, pairs or trios may engage in plots to gain power, prestige, occult knowledge or other goals. Since these are not sanctioned by the Vril Society as a whole, they have little consistency between them. One Vril-Ya might try currying favor with a hero team by advising it on mystical matters, while another Vril-Ya hires villains to steal magic artifacts from museums.

All the Vril-Yas, however, take care to preserve the Society's secrecy. They don't even mention the Vril Society to anyone but a sorcerer or serious mystic whom they are pretty sure will keep the secret. Usually, the most a Vril Ya will admit is that he or she belongs to "a mystical society" without naming names. (Sometimes their judgment is wrong. Also, sometimes students quit and blab. Thus, the Society's existence is known to most advanced occultists, even if they don't know any details.)

Vril-Yas will always avoid capture at all costs. In fact, Vril-Yas will help each other avoid capture, no matter what rivalries may lie between them. They are smart enough to realize that even if a captured Vril-Ya didn't talk, a good detective could discover a lot about the Society just from a member's identity, past and paper trail.

Finally, all the Vril-Yas agree that people who know too much about the Vril Society must be silenced. They differ, however, in the extremity of the measures they would use. Some insist on assassination, while others believe a good scare, a good bribe or a little telepathic memory wiping is enough.

As a result, the Vril Society generally stays in the background, whatever their methods or objectives—besides, they consider themselves too physically too weak for front line combat. When the Vril-Yas do organize enough to seek real power, their takeover attempts will be fairly subtle, aiming at real control rather than the trappings of power. Their chief methods will be blackmail, bribery (offering officials help with election or re election, rather than money), sabotage, mind control and discreet assassination.

If open combat is forced upon the Society, however, the Vril-Yas can muster potentially awesome firepower through the "Vraser Effect," a technique discovered in 1986 by the most recent Vril-Ya. The Vril-Yas line up in series and feed all their power into one of their number, who delivers an attack of devastating power. The Vril-Yas were a little surprised, but highly gratified, to discover that by working in concert they really can have the city destroying power Bulwer Lytton described. Nothing but a full scale assault on a Society base, however, can prompt them to work together this way.

(In game terms, the Vraser Effect is done by a chain of Aid powers. The first Vril-Ya does an Aid on the second Vril-Ya's Aid to the third Vril-Ya's Aid, and so on, to the one who does an Aided Aid on the final Vril-Ya's actual attack. While this requires close coordination, four Vril Yas in series can generate a 175 point attack, with only average rolls on the Aids. All eight could muster 215 Active Points, but they'd more likely work in two teams of four.)

Relations with Other Organizations: The Vril Society has no close allies or active enemies. It maintains friendly neutrality with less esoteric occult societies, and chilly neutrality with any group which knows more real magic than the Vril-Yas do. The Vril-Yas won't have anything to do with Dark Renaissance activists. The Seven-Headed Beast tried a hostile takeover of the Society a few years ago, which prompted a rare instance of cooperation among the Vril-Yas and the first field use of the Vraser Effect. The Satanists didn't repeat the attack and the Vril-Yas never agreed on a counterattack. Law enforcement agencies such as the FBI, PRIMUS and UNTIL would oppose the Society if they knew of its existence, power and goals.

Vril-Ya: Irene Bradford

Background: Irene Bradford is a fairly typical Vril-Ya. She joined the Vril Society in 1962; she was recruited from the Theosophical Society in London. As usual, her recruiter gave her *The Coming Race* to read before sounding her out any further. Irene liked Bulwer

Lytton's portrayal of Vril-Ya society, especially the high place of women within it. One facet of Theosophy that annoyed her was that the great Ascended Masters were all *men.*

Irene advanced rapidly through the Society and became a Vril-Ya in 1978. Part of the reason for her advancement was her special project. Back in the 1960s, she had theorized that prenatal telepathic conditioning could greatly increase the ease and power with which a person learned vril manipulation. By the late 1970s, her research project showed clear success at a surprisingly young age. Irene had to endure much grief from her fellow Vril-Yas when the girl Elaine went rogue despite her conditioning, but she survived it.

Quote: "*There is no hatred or ambition in what we do. If you are a threat to our enlightened way of life, you will die. It's as simple and rational as that.*"

Personality: Irene now seeks some dramatic success with which to restore her prestige in the Society. Along the way she would like to erase the mistake she made in the person of Solitaire, making her the Society's most strident advocate for Solitaire's death or capture. She feels no mother love for Solitaire: such sentimentality is unworthy of the Coming Race.

Indeed, she hates Solitaire, and not just for her betrayal. Irene fears her daughter. Just how powerful will Solitaire become? What will happen if Solitaire discovers that Irene is her mother? Irene knows what she would do to someone who'd wronged her so deeply. And if a vengeful Solitaire got her hands on a Vril Rod…it wouldn't be pretty.

Powers/Tactics: With her Vril Rod in her hands, Irene can evoke just about any energy or psychic effect imaginable. She cannot, however, transmute matter or perform delicate biological manipulations (thus no Aid, Growth or other self adjustment powers, and very little in the way of Transformation effects: while Irene can loosen or break the forces between molecules that keep matter solid, only one Vril-Ya ever succeeded in manipulating nuclear forces, and the radiation release killed him). If something can be justified by telepathy, telekinesis or energy manipulation, though, Irene can do it, even to telekinetically warping space time to teleport. Irene also can't create Persistent effects, although she has learned how to set up Triggered Powers to defend herself while she sleeps.

If Irene needs no special movement powers to conduct a fight, she will put up a powerful Force Field to defend herself, then blast away. If she needs to keep a minor third Power going, she will scavenge points by taking more Limitations on her attacks, such as Gestures or an Activation Roll. Her power is much reduced without the Vril Rod: changing powers takes a full Phase and a Vril Mastery Skill roll then, and she must either seek alternate Limitations or reduce the number or power of her effects. She can only use these alternate Limitations: OAF Vril Crystal, Gestures, Concentrate, Extra Time or Activation Roll.

Appearance: In her youth, Irene Bradford was quite beautiful. She is still slim and well preserved although in her fifties, a side effect of heavy vril use (none of the Vril-Yas look as old as they really are). She stands 5'8" tall, with whitening blonde hair, the same vivid green eyes as her daughter Solitaire, and an expression of majestic, inhuman calm. Her Vril Wings are pale green.

Vril-Ya: Irene Bradford

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	10	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
21	EGO	22	13-	ECV: 7
20	PRE	10	11-	PRE Attack 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
3	PD	1		Total: 3+ PD
3	ED	0		Total: 3+ ED
3	SPD	6		Pha 4, 8, 12
5	REC	0		
30	END	0		
22	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 67

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 10"/20"
Gliding: 20"/40"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Magical Combat (10)

Vril Powers:
Vril Mastery: Power Pool (70 pt pool), 0 Phase and No Skill Roll to Change with OAF Vril Rod (+2, -1), Slightly Limited Range of Powers (-¼) (129)
Vril Mastery Skill 19- (15)
Vril Wings: Multipower (20 pts), OIF (13)
u - **Gliding:** 20" (20/1)
u - **Flight:** 10" (20/1) [1/5"]
Mental Defense: 20 (16)
Power Defense: 5 (5)
Vril Rod: +20 END, OAF (5)

Vril-Ya Skills:
Deduction 13- (3)
Interrogation 13- (3)
KS: Vril Science 13- (3)
KS: Occult World 13- (3)
KS: Western Occultism 13- (3)
German (Fluent with Accent) (2)
Perk: Vril-Ya (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 217

Total Character Cost: 284

Disadvantages: 100+

Age:
40+ (5)
Distinctive Features:
Mind of Power (Few Detect) (5)
Cult Costume, Vril Rod (Easily Concealed) (5)
Enraged:
by Confronting Inferior Intellects (common), 8-, Recover 14- (5)
Hunted by:
Seven-Headed Beast, 8- (As Pow, NCI) (20)
Magic Restriction:
Limited Range of Effects, Reduced END Only with Vril Rod/Crystal (15)
Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)
Psychological Limitation:
Fear of Close Combat (20)
Pride/Arrogance in Abilities (15)
Paranoid (15)
Susceptibility:
3d6 STUN, Losing Vril Rod While Using it (common) (20)
Watched by:
other Vril-Yas, 14- (As Pow) (10)
Villain Bonus (29)

Total Disadvantage Points: 284

Adept: Heinrich Warrenfeld

Heinrich Warrenfeld knows exactly what he wants from the world, and that's power. When he tells people to do something, he wants them to do it. Beyond that, his tastes are not extravagant. Stories of "Secret Masters" who could control events led him into the occult. The Vril Society has given him the power he sought: with his Mind Control, he usually *can* make people do what he tells them.

Heinrich's current assignment in the Society is as a recruiter within other occult societies. He uses his Conversation skill and mental powers to persuade the leaders of societies to let him join, then he inspects the other members to see who has the talent and attitude the Vril Society wants.

Heinrich sees his assignment as an important stepping stone to Vril-Ya status as well. He plans to build a network of Contacts in the occult world, for his own benefit. If he can retrieve some mystic tome or artifact, or nip some plot against the Society in the bud, he figures that this will make the other Vril-Yas more willing to promote him. In the meantime, he practices his powers and seeks to develop them as much as he can.

(The PCs can thus encounter Heinrich in a variety of situations. If any PC or DNPC belongs to an occult society, Heinrich will join and start recruiting. If the PCs try locating some potent artifact, Heinrich and some super-thugs he's hired are after it too. Heinrich might even try getting the PCs to attack some group hostile to the Vril Society's interests.)

Adept: Heinrich Warrenfeld

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	100 kg; 2d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
10	BODY	10	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
17	EGO	14	12-	ECV: 6
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
3	PD	1		Total: 13 PD/ 10 rPD
3	ED	0		Total: 13 ED/ 10 rED
3	SPD	6		Pha 4, 8, 12
5	REC	0		
26	END	0		
22	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 50

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 10"/20"

Powers & Skills:

Vril Powers:
- **Vril Mastery:** Multipower (50 pt pool) (50)
  - u - **Vril Blast:** 8d6 EB, * (50/4) [2/4]
  - u - **Mental Blast:** 4d6 Ego Attack, * (50/4) [2/4]
  - u - **Mental Control:** 8d6 Mind Control, * (50/4) [2/4]
  - u - **Vril Manipulation:** 27 STR TK, * (49/4) [2/4]
  - u - **Mind Reading:** 8d6 Telepathy, * (50/4) [2/4]
  - * ½ END with OAF
  - u - **Vril Wings:** 10" Flight, OIF (20/1) [1/5"]
- **Vril Protection:** Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED), -½ Var Lim: x2 END or OAF Vril Crystal (-¼) (16)
- **Mental Defense:** 8 (5)

Background Skills:
- Conversation 12- (3)
- KS: Western Occultism 12- (3)
- KS: Occult World 11- (2)
- KS: Vril Science 11- (2)
- German (Native) (0)
- English (Native Accent) (3)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 105

Total Character Cost: 155

Disadvantages: 75+

Distinctive Features:
- Cult Costume, Vril Crystal (Easily Concealed) (5)

Magic Restriction:
- Limited Range of Effects, Reduced END Only with Vril Rod/Crystal (15)

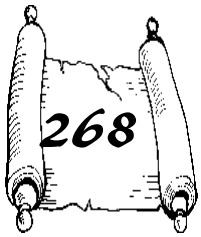
Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)

Physical Limitation:
- Takes Damage Done to Vril Crystal (15)
- Ambitious (10)
- Fear of Close Combat (20)
- Pride/Arrogance in Abilities (15)
- Paranoid (15)

Unluck: 1d6 (5)

Watched by:
- Vril-Yas, 11- (More Pow)(10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 155



Monsters

Not all a super mage's enemies are human. There are also races and monsters, from Earth and beyond. Some might be Summoned by enemy wizards; others have lives of their own. They might come to Earth or be encountered when mages do the traveling. Here are a few examples that GMs can use, from almost trivial threats to creatures that can challenge an entire group. A few might even be friendly, under the right circumstances. These examples also introduce two new classes of monsters: the Atavisms and the Qliphothic entities.

Atavisms

Atavisms are spirits embodying strong emotions and the raw drives of the body. Any intense experience can produce an atavism on the Lower Astral Plane. Most atavisms lack true intelligence, but that doesn't mean they can't be dangerous. Under the right circumstances, an atavism's blind will can be as dangerous as a demon's malice.

Many sorts of experience can create atavisms. Strong emotions such as love, hate, rage or fear often generate atavisms; the stronger the emotion, the more powerful the atavism will be. (Unfortunately, the negative emotions seem to carry the most visceral power.) Intense physical sensations such as agony and ecstasy create atavisms as well. DT hallucinations, for instance, aren't all in the drunkard's head: the creepy critters can really appear on the Astral Plane.

Many people sharing an experience not only makes atavism creation more likely, the atavisms tend to be more powerful. Religious ceremonies can create atavisms of awe, reverence and joy. More sinister atavisms can grow from lynch mobs, angry or exultant crowds at sporting events, or other riot prone situations. Sometimes these powerful atavisms can psychically dominate their creators or even other people who happen to be nearby, sucking them into a primitive, obsessive mass mind. Psychologists call it "mob fever" and explain it away as the power of suggestion. Sorcerers know that when everyone in the revival tent starts falling and speaking in tongues, or innocent, moral bystanders get swept into a mob and commit hideous crimes, they have fallen under the power of an atavism.

Pain and passion come together most intensely in violent deaths. Murders, fatal accidents and other deaths can create a "psychic snapshot" of a person, similar to a ghost but actually an atavism.

Finally, atavisms might be created deliberately. Some sorcerers know how to incarnate their emotions as atavisms, but they don't have a monopoly on the art. Demagogues, charismatic preachers and "crowd pleaser" entertainers might have a knack for creating atavisms, without even knowing it. They just know that sometimes they get a crowd "in the palm of their hand."

In most cases, atavisms don't last very long. Either they evaporate on their own or some astral predator (such as a stronger atavism) eats them. In some cases, however, atavisms can last indefinitely. Atavisms are more likely to survive long periods when similar atavisms are created over and over in one place. Prisons, brothels, churches and casinos, for instance, may be "haunted" by atavisms on the Astral Plane. Repeated, deliberate creation of an atavism in a ritual framework has the same effect. Eventually the atavism never dispels. In time, such atavisms may develop into angels, demons or gods.

Atavisms can vary quite a bit, but their powers follow simple patterns. Their chief power is usually to transmit the feeling that created them to another being's mind. Some powerful atavisms can do this to people on Earth while they themselves stay on the Astral Plane. Atavisms also have fairly typical spirit powers: high defenses, partly resistant, at least some Mental and Power Defense, some Life Support, and perhaps Flight. Atavisms which can affect people on Earth might have Transdimensional Clairsentience or other transdimensional powers.

Atavisms vary tremendously in appearance, though. Spontaneous atavisms created from pain or negative emotions are all grotesque, but all unique. These usually look like bits of human bodies spliced together with parts of ugly, frightening animals such as octopi, bugs and reptiles. Positive motion atavisms also look rather weird, even if they're not ugly. Atavisms created by death traumas look like the person who died. Ritually evoked atavisms take whatever shape their creator imagines, usually some totem animal or legendary monster.

GMs can use atavisms as one more hazard for the Lower Astral Plane. They might be "wandering monsters" or they might haunt a location the PCs want to visit. Atavisms which can attack or control people on Earth while they stay on the Astral Plane can also make an interesting challenge to heroes.

Atavisms are also another class of spirit for sorcerers to use. In the "developed" world, usually only evil magicians employ atavisms; the traditions of Europe, the Middle East, and the Orient do not approve of these id created spirits. They did not even have a name until the English painter and occultist Austin Osman Spare thought of calling them "atavisms" to represent the earthy, primitive energies they embody. Before that, they were (rather confusingly) called "elementals"—when they were referred to at all.

In "primitive" cultures, however, priests and shamans routinely evoke atavisms. An atavism might actually be Summoned for a specific purpose, or it might just be the "special effect" of a spell. Most obviously, atavisms can be used to deliver a "psychic attack" to one's enemies. Atavisms can also be used, however, to augment a person's strength, endurance or other physical abilities. As totemic familiars, they can help shamans in all sorts of work on the Astral Plane.

Fearling

Fearlings are an example of the weakest sort of atavism. Their touch transmits the feeling of terror which created the atavism; this sudden, pointless terror has a stunning effect. The victim may even get a brief vision of the circumstances which created the fearling.

The fear touch attack has a curious weakness. It cannot affect beings who are immune to fear for some reason, and if this happens the fearling takes a terrible feedback. Beings can be immune to fear because they have no emotions at all, have enough Mental Defense to block the attack, or have strong Psychological Limitations such as "Suicidal Overconfidence." In fact, anyone who doesn't see the attack coming is considered fearless for the moment. For this reason, atavisms try to show themselves before they attack, but since they are stupid creatures they sometimes forget.

Fearlings are not only created from fear, they need it to survive and they take damage from strong emotions opposed to fear. One can actually harm a fearling by rolling higher than its Presence with a Presence Attack based on courage, love or humor.

Other negative emotions may create similar atavisms. In these cases, the Ego Attack's special effect is a blast of hate, rage, pain, or other feeling.

Like most atavisms, fearlings and their cousins have no distinctive shape, but they are all small and grotesque.

Fearling

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
8	BODY	-4	11-	
5	INT	-5	10-	PER Roll 10-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack 3d6
0	COM	-5	9-	
10	PD	8		Total: 23 PD/ 13 rPD
10	ED	7		Total: 23 ED/ 13 rED
3	SPD	6		Pha 4, 8, 12
5	REC	0		
30	END	0		
20	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 34

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Superleap: 9"/18"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Fear Touch (6)

Fearling Powers:
Spirit Form Powers: Elemental Control (20)
a - **Small Size:** 2 levels Shrinking, 0 END Persistent, Always On (+4 DCV, -4 PER, +6" KB, 1.5 kg mass) (40/13) [0]
b - **Armor** (13 PD, 13 ED) (39/20)
c - **Fear Touch:** 4d6 Ego Attack, ½ END, 0 Range (50/20) [2]
Mental Defense: 6 (4)
Power Defense: 5 (5)
Life Support: Need not Breathe, Immune to Disease & Aging (16)
Leaping: +7" Superleap [9" total] (7) [1/5"]

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 111

Total Character Cost: 145

Disadvantages: 25+

Physical Limitation:
Dispelled if Stunned/Unconscious/0 BODY (20)
Fear Touch Blocked by Fearlessness (10)
Area Mental Defense Acts As Force Wall to Atavisms (10)

Psychological Limitation:
Relentlessly Aggressive (20)

Susceptibility:
3d6 STUN + BODY, Using Attack on Immune Person (30)
1d6 STUN, Successful PRE Attack Based on Positive Emotion (common) (10)

Vulnerability:
x2 STUN, BODY, Magic w/Affects Desolid (uncommon) (20)

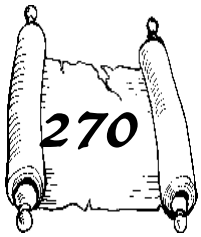
Total Disadvantage Points: 145

Dreadling

Dreadlings are a more powerful version of fearlings. There's no way to tell them apart just by looking, until the dreadling uses its incredible Presence Attack. Dreadlings have a Fear Touch just like their lesser cousins, and add the power to literally paralyze an opponent from fear, if only for a moment. (Even normal humans can easily break this small Mental Entangle.)

Dreadlings can also cast a fear aura which can affect beings on other planes which touch the zone of space corresponding to the dreadling's position. The usual situation is a dreadling on the Astral Plane which can affect both astral and Earthly beings, but it works the other way too: if the dreadling is materialized on Earth, its fear aura will affect creatures of the Astral Plane. Fortunately, dreadlings cannot see transdimensionally to use this power deliberately on beings on other planes. On the other hand, dreadlings keep this slot active when they aren't using their Multipower any other way. People who enter a place haunted by dreadlings on the Astral Plane may well walk through a dreadling's fear zone.

The link between Earth and the Astral Plane works the other way for dreadlings, too. Mental or magical senses (such as mental Awareness, Astral Awareness or Aura Vision) can pick up an off plane dreadling's fear aura, and the sensing person can try attacking the dreadling with mental powers or any spell carrying the Affects Desolid advantage.



Dreadling

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
18	CON	16	13-	
8	BODY	-4	11-	
5	INT	-5	10-	PER Roll 10-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack 3d6
0	COM	-5	9-	
14	PD	11		Total: 27 PD/ 13 rPD
14	ED	10		Total: 27 ED/ 13 rED
3	SPD	6		Pha 4, 8, 12
7	REC	0		
36	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 57

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Superleap: 9"/18"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +1 Level w/ Multipower (5)

Dreadling Powers:
Spirit Form Powers: Elemental Control (20)
a - **Small Size:** 2 levels Shrinking, 0 END Persistent, Always On (+4 DCV, -4 PER, +6" KB, 1.5 kg mass) (40/13) [0]
b - **Armor** (13 PD, 13 ED) (39/20)
Fear Powers: Multipower (50 pt pool) (50)
u - **Aura of Dread:** +50 PRE, Offensive Only (-½), Fear Only (-¼) (50/3)
u - **Paralyzing Fear:** 1½d6, 1 DEF Entangle, BODY BOECV (+2), ½ END, 0 Range (49/3) [2]
u - **Fear Touch:** 4d6 Ego Attack, ½ END, 0 Range (50/3) [2]
u - **Fear Aura:** 2d6 Ego Attack, Transdimensional: Earth/Astral (+½), Damage Shield, 0 END (50/5) [0]
Mental Defense: 7 (4)
Power Defense: 5 (5)
Life Support: Need not Breathe, Immune to Disease & Aging (16)
Leaping: +6" Superleap [9" total] (6) [1/5"]

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 153

Total Character Cost: 210

Disadvantages: 75+

Physical Limitation:
Dispelled if Stunned/Unconscious/0 BODY (20)
Fear Touch Blocked by Fearlessness (10)
Area Mental Defense Acts As Force Wall to Atavisms (10)
Can Be Attacked from Earth Using Mental Powers or Magic w/Affects Desolid (10)

Psychological Limitation:
Relentlessly Aggressive (25)

Susceptibility:
3d6 STUN + BODY, Using Attack on Immune Person (30)
1d6 STUN, Successful PRE Attack Based on Positive Emotion (common) (10)

Vulnerability:
x2 STUN, BODY, Magic w/Affects Desolid (uncommon) (20)

Total Disadvantage Points: 210

Trauma Ghost

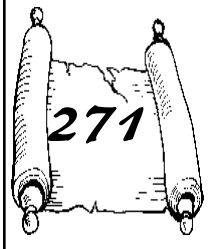
Trauma Ghosts aren't real ghosts; they are atavisms created by violent deaths or near deaths. Most hauntings are actually Trauma Ghosts. A Trauma Ghost looks like the person whose emotion created it, while its ectoplasmic body shows whatever circumstances caused its death (a person who died from stabbing leaves a Trauma Ghost that drips spectral blood from its wounds, a hanged person's Trauma Ghost shows rope burns on the neck, and so on.)

A Trauma Ghost even thinks it is the person who created it, and might not admit that it's dead. Trauma Ghosts only have frayed copies of minds, however; they are only capable of a few simple thoughts. Left to itself, a Trauma Ghost will play out the same course of actions again and again, for centuries (another trait of most hauntings). Talking to a Trauma Ghost can be like talking to a skipping record, as they respond to everything with their small stock of little monologues.

Many Trauma Ghosts are harmless if they aren't disturbed. A few, however, have behavior programs that make them dangerous to the living. A typical example is the Trauma Ghost of a murder victim that seeks vengeance for its murder. It attacks anyone who reminds it of the killer. Just being the same gender might be enough to set it off.

Any Trauma Ghost might turn murderous if one threatens its existence through magical attacks or attempts at exorcism. This can be a proper bell book and candle religious exorcism, or simply an attempt to convince the Trauma Ghost that it should "pass on." (In game terms, an improvisational exorcism is a Presence Attack. If it exceeds the Trauma Ghost's PRE, it takes 1d6 damage, STUN and BODY both. Mind Control achieving at least +10 EGO has the same effect. True exorcism causes continuing Susceptibility damage; PRE attacks and Mind Controls do instant damage.)

Trauma Ghosts exist on the Astral Plane, where they are fully solid at all times. They can see events on Earth if they want, and make themselves visible. (If the viewer fails a PER Roll, the ghost might be mistaken for a live person.) While visible, they can attack with a "deathly touch" that chills the soul.



Trauma Ghost

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	100 kg; 2d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
7	BODY	-6	10-	
5	INT	-5	10-	PER Roll 10-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack 5d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
9	PD	7		Total: 26 PD/ 17 rPD
9	ED	6		Total: 26 ED/ 17 rED
3	SPD	6		Pha 4, 8 ,12
6	REC	2		
30	END	0		
20	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 54

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +1 ECV w/ Deathly Touch (2)

Trauma Ghost Powers:
Spirit Form Powers: Elemental Control (25)
a - **Deathly Touch:** 4d6 EB, BOECV (+1), Transdimensional: Earth (+½), ½ END, 0 Range, Must be Visible (-½) (55/15) [2]
b - **Display Trauma:** Images vs. Hearing + All Vision, -1 PER, Transdimensional to Earth (+½), Indirect (+½), 0 END, 0 Range, Fixed Image: Self (-½) (57/16) [0]
c - **Clairsentience:** Normal Vision, Hearing, Interdimensional, 0 END, Only to Corresponding Point on Earth (-1) (67/21) [0]
d - **Armor** (17 PD, 17 ED) (51/26)
Mental Defense: 10 (7)
Power Defense: 7 (7)
Life Support: Need not Breathe, Immune to Disease & Aging (16)
KS: Human Original 8- (1)

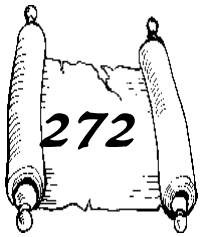
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 136

Total Character Cost: 190

Disadvantages: 75+

Berserk:
if Exorcism Attempted (very common), 11-, Recover 11- (25)
Physical Limitation:
Dispelled if Stunned/Unconscious/0 BODY (20)
Area Mental Defense Acts As Force Wall to Atavisms (10)
Can Be Attacked from Earth Using Mental Powers or Magic w/Affects Desolid (10)
Psychological Limitation:
Rigid Program of Behavior (25)
Susceptibility:
1d6 STUN+BODY/minute, Exorcisms (common) (20)
Villain Bonus (5)

Total Disadvantage Points: 190



Qliphothic Monsters

The qliphothic planes are the dimensions of negative energy. Some of these deathly, decrepit dimensions have brought forth their own weird forms of anti-life and anti-spirit. Qliphothic creatures are entirely inimical: they are entropy incarnate. When a qliphothic creature enters a normal cosmos, it disrupts its surroundings as it feeds on positive energy; and the more it feeds, the hungrier it gets. Some qliphothic entities live by destroying matter or energy. Some feed on magic. Some affect space-time itself. Qliphothics are not even made of matter in any normal sense, although some varieties can wrap themselves in warped, transmuted matter, producing perverse mockeries of life. Some sages believe that the Edomites are such hybrid forms.

The monsters described below are typical qliphothics. There are many more. The esoteric lore of the Kabbalah gives names to some of the Qliphoth. Some orders of Qliphoth are single beings; others are races of beings. A list is given below, as inspiration for designing more qliphothic entities. (The reader will notice that Quemetiel and Thaumiel have also been used in this book, as the names of inimical cosmic entities.)

Many of the Hebrew names of the qliphoth, however, are quite long and virtually unpronounceable for English speakers. In the last few decades, some Western sorcerers have started coining vernacular names for these creatures.

Claynull

The a'abiriron (ah-ah-BEER-rear-on), more popularly called the argillan or claynull, is one of the more powerful and dangerous qliphothic monsters. Its touch drains away the energies which hold matter together. That is how it feeds. Anything it touches is reduced to a heavy, frictionless fluid—the atoms have lost their ability to combine in molecules or interact with anything else. It isn't even really matter in the normal sense anymore. (For the scientifically minded, this residue is denser than mercury, chemically inert, has the superfluid properties of Helium II and is an almost perfect electrical and thermal insulator. It has all the properties of a vacuum except the absence of matter. A super scientist could do incredible things with it. It is also immune to Transforms because technically it has no BODY anymore.)

While a claynull can feed off any matter, it is especially attracted to energy rich forms such as radioactives, explosives and corrosive chemicals. This may include superbeings with energy manipulation powers. It will pursue such matter even into harmful situations, although it will then try to grab the matter and retreat to safety as it eats.

The claynull's behavioral "program" is simple but effective:

1) Move around slowly, eating.

2) If you "taste" energetic matter, stop and eat it. Move around enough to eat all of it.

3) If bright light or anything else causes harm, go underground. A claynull will let itself lose half its BODY to the Susceptibility before it retreats from quality food.

4a) If something hits, hit back once before retreating.

4b) If something causes real damage, go berserk and hit it real good several times.

5) After eating and growing enough, bud off other claynulls. (The GM has total discretion about what constitutes "enough.")

The name "a'abiriron" is Hebrew for "clayey," and this well describes this creature. It is nothing but a big flowing blob of clear, pale silvery ooze, with no internal structure. (Actually, the creature itself is invisible, but its Damage Shield keeps it covered with a very thin layer of transmuted air.) It forms pseudopods with which to attack. Anything touched by it starts dissolving, and continues dissolving for 1 turn, taking another 1d6 of damage every 2 segments. While a BODY Aid will restore damage, it will not stop the dissolution. The claynull is highly resistant to nearly all forms of damage and wounds seal up almost instantly. (Note: Yes, an Automaton with BODY Aid is obnoxious, but this creature is supposed to challenge a hero group's abilities.)

Claynull

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
38	STR	3*	17-	2400 kg; 7½d6 [4]
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
25	CON	10	14-	
14	BODY	0*	12-	
3	INT	-7	10-	PER Roll 10-
—	EGO	—	—	ECV: 8
20	PRE	10	14-	PRE Attack 4d6
0	COM	-5	9-	
12	PD	30#		Total: 12 rPD
12	ED	30#		Total: 12 rED
3	SPD	3		Ph (2), 4, (6), 8, (10), 12
6	REC	0		#Automaton Cost
30	END	0		Bonus for Growth &
—	STUN	—		DI added in

Total Characteristic Cost: 95

Movement: Running: 2"/4"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 OCV w/ Strike (4)

Qliphothic Monster Powers:

Giant Ooze Powers: Elemental Control (22)
- a - **Huge Size:** 20 pts Growth + 5 pts Density increase, 0 END Persistent, Always On (3200 kg, -5" KB) (50/19) [0]
- b - **Automaton:** Takes No STUN (45/23)
- c - **Damage Resistance** (12 PD, 12 ED), #, Hardened (45/23)
- d - **Tunneling:** 2", DEF 10, Close Behind (44/22) [1]
- e - **Spatial Awareness** + N Ray Vision, +2 PER (49/27)
- f - **Wounds Just Re-Seal:** 3d6 BODY Aid, Continuous, 0 END Persistent, Self Only (-½), Restore only (-½) (45/11) [0]

Matter Disruption: 1d6 RKA, Penetrating x2, Uncontrolled for 1 turn, Damage Shield, 0 END Persistent, Always On (40) [0]
Power Defense: 10, Hardened (12)
Life Support: Full (30)
Matter Melts Away: +3 SPD, Only for Uncontrolled Matter Disruption Effect (-1) (15)
Pseudopods: Extra Limbs (5)
Slow Speed: -4" Running (-8)
Sinks Like a Stone: -2" Swimming (-2)
Stealth 12- (3)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 246

Total Character Cost: 341

Disadvantages: 200+

Berserk:
if Take BODY (common), 11-, Recover 14- (15)
Distinctive Features:
Liquescent Horror (Can't Conceal, Extreme Reaction) (25)
Physical Limitation:
No Manipulation (15)
Psychological Limitation:
Total Compulsion to Seek and Eat Energetic Matter (25)
Susceptibility:
1d6 BODY/Phase, Sunlight or Other Bright Light (very common) (50)
Vulnerability:
x2 BODY, Transdimensional Attacks (uncommon) (10)
x2 BODY, Affects Desolid Attacks (uncommon) (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Darque

Darques are strange creatures from the qliphothic plane called The Shining Darkness. They appear as large knots of shimmering black streamers floating in the air. They feel ice cold and filmy. Some occultists call darques "Schichiriron," but this is a mistake: the true schichiriron are rather more powerful.

Darques attack by wrapping around victims and absorbing their life force, leaving the victim weak. They can also project an aura of darkness around themselves. They can see through this darkness just fine, and so can people they've wrapped around. Such a person will also see the world as darques see it: dark areas seem lit with silvery radiance, while well illuminated areas seem dark. Light sources are cores of blackness radiating obscurity. Being insubstantial, darques are unusually resistant to normal sorts of damage, but bright light shocks and evaporates their substance. Naturally they try to stay in dark surroundings as much as possible.

Darque

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 [1]
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
13	CON	6	12-	
6	BODY	-8	10-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack 3½d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
17	PD	14		Total: 30 PD/ 13 rPD
9	ED	6		Total: 22 ED/ 13 rED
3	SPD	3		Pha 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	2		
20	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 51

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 17"/34"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ DCV(10)
Combat Skill Levels: +1 Level w/ Grab (3)

Qliphothic Monster Powers:

Living Darkness Powers: Elemental Control (20)
a - **Sapping the Strength:** 1d6+1 STR Transfer to STUN, Return 1 STR/turn (+¼), AP, Damage Shield, ½ END (50/30) [2]
b - **Darque Aura:** 1" radius Darkness vs. All Vision, Personal Immunity (+¼), Use w/1 Other (+½), ½ END, 0 Range, Must Share Immunity with Grabbed Victim (-¼) (40/11) [2]
c - **Armor** (13 PD, 13 ED) (39/20)
d - **Damage Reduction** (½ PD, ½ ED) (40/20)
e - **Dark Flight:** 17" Flight, ½ END, Not in Bright Light (-½) (42/15) [1/10"]
f - **Inescapable Grasp:** +27 STR, 0 END, No Figured Chars (-½), Only for Holding Onto Grabbed Victim (-1 ½) (40/7) [0]

Flash Defense, Sight: 5 (5)
Flight: 5", x3 END (-1), Only in Bright Light when Can't Use Other Flight (-0) (5) [3/5"]
UV Vision, Use w/1 Other (+½), Must Share w/Grabbed Person (-½) (5)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 151

Total Character Cost: 202

Disadvantages: 100+

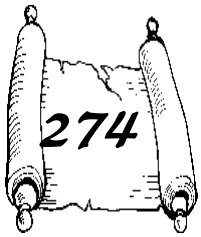
Physical Limitation:
Bright Light = Normal Darkness for Darque Vision (10)
Mute, can only communicate with humans by gestures (15)

Psychological Limitation:
Hatred of high Energy Beings (15)

Susceptibility:
2d6 STUN, Flash Attacks (common) (15)
1d6 STUN+BODY/turn, Bright Light (very common) (40)

Vulnerability:
x1½ STUN, Light Based Attacks (common) (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 205



A Catalog Of Qliphoth

According to Aleister Crowley's *Magick in Theory and Practice,* each order of Qliphoth represents an inversion of a positive mystical idea. Thus, Quemetiel, the "Crowd of Gods," denies the basic mystical premise that everything is fundamentally connected in unity and wholeness; A'athiel, "Uncertainty," embodies ignorance; the A'arab Zarag, "Ravens of Dispersion," are an evil parody of the Heavenly Host of angels. The Qliphoth also correspond to various elements of kabbalism and astrology, such as the sephiroth and the signs of the Zodiac. No real sorcerer takes these associations seriously.

Crowley's list of Qliphoth goes as follows:

QUEMETIEL: "Crowd of Gods"
BELIA'AL: "Worthlessness"
A'ATHIEL: "Uncertainty"
THAUMIEL: "Twins of God"
GHAGIEL: "Hinderers"
SATARIEL: "Hiding," "Concealers"
GHA'AGSHEBLAH: "Smiters," "Breakers in Pieces"
GOLACHAB: "Flaming Ones"
THAGIRION: "Litigation," "Disputers"
A'ARAB ZARAG: "Ravens of Dispersion"
SAMAEL: "False Accuser," "Deceivers"
GAMALIEL: "Obscene Ass"
LILITH: "Woman of Night"
BA'AIRIRON: "The Flock"
ADIMIRON: "Bloody"
TZALALIMIRON: "Changers"
SCHICHIRIRON: "Black"
SCHALEHBIRON: "Flaming"
TZAPHIRIRON: "Scratchers"
A'ABIRIRON: "Clayey"
NECHESHTHIRON: "Brazen"
NECHESHIRON: "Snakey"
DAGDAGIRON: "Fishy"
BAHIMIRON: "Bestial"
NASHIMIRON: "Malignant Women"

Sample Heroes

So much for villains, cultists, and monsters. What about heroes? As a service for players, here are several magic-based PCs. First is good old Solitaire, rewritten to show off more "magical" features. Since her original appearance, she has also gained a bit more detail in her origin. Solitaire is followed by some characters from campaigns the author has run or been in: tested PCs.

These PCs have been chosen to show off as wide a range of origin types and game mechanics as was possible. There is still some overlap. Both Zontar Bok and Artifex, for instance, use END Reserves instead of buying up their own END. Having players copy ideas from each other is not a problem, as long as the characters are in different campaigns.

The author thanks his fellow players for contributing their characters, and Steve Long for fleshing out rather sketchy ideas about Solitaire's past with the Vril Society.

The Revised Solitaire

Background: "Lift that block," Irene Bradford commanded.

Elaine looked at the block of concrete and concentrated. She'd never picked up anything that heavy before. The crackling power of Vril, the master force which underlay all other forces, gathered around the block. Ever so slowly it began to rise above the floor, an inch at a time, until Elaine had lifted it a full foot.

"Very good. Put it down."

Elaine lowered the block more quickly than she'd intended, making it crash to the floor. Mistress Irene glanced at her in disapproval.

"Sorry," Elaine said.

"Defend yourself!" Mistress Irene shouted suddenly, telekinetically flinging a knife at the girl. Without even thinking about it, Elaine shaped a shield out of crackling vril, and the knife bounced harmlessly away.

"Find Brother Anthony and bring him here."

Elaine projected her mind outward, seeking the vril-trace of Brother Anthony's mind. It didn't take long. Before he could raise his shields, she sent, *Come here!* Bereft of self control, Brother Anthony left his books and walked at once to the Training Room. A hint of a smile tugged at Mistress Irene's mouth when he opened the door and walked into the Training Room. Elaine recognized the blank look on Brother Anthony's face as the sign of her mental control.

"Release him," Mistress Irene said.

She did. In a moment the blank look went away, and Brother Anthony shook himself. "Where am…oh, hello, Vril-Ya," he said with a low bow to Mistress Irene. "Is there something you want of me?"

"No," she replied. "Return to what you were doing."

After he left, she turned to Elaine. "Now, for your last test, destroy that block."

Again Elaine concentrated, and one after another, bolts of mystic energy dashed against the stone. To show off her control of vril, she varied them, from fire to cold to light to a dozen other forms of energy besides the force of raw vril. In a minute, there was nothing left of the block but flinders.

What power! Mistress Irene thought to herself. *My experiment has worked! Elaine will be the most powerful agent and assassin the Vril Society possesses—and she is mine to command! The Seven Fools are about to learn a thing or two about true power.*

"Congratulations, Elaine," she said to the girl. "You have passed every single test and have become an Adept of the Society. You have learned well over the last seventeen years, and the Vril Society and I are very proud of you. You will be a great help to us in the coming years, as we strive to advance the Good."

"Thank you, Mistress. I am honored to serve."

"As a reward for your diligence and loyalty, the Society has a gift for you. Behold!" And as she spoke the last word, Mistress Irene brought forth from her robe a shimmering crystal globe that floated into the air and began circling Elaine's head.

Hello Elaine the crystal said to her, in her mind.

Elaine was enchanted. She thought the Vril Crystals which adepts received were beautiful, but she hadn't imagined they could *talk! Hello…Uh, what do I call you?*

Call me whatever you like the crystal replied. Was that a note of humor in its voice?

I think I'll call you…Widget! Elaine sent, delighted to have a new friend.

Widget it is

Reaching the Senator was easy. Just a trickle of vril in a person's mind, and they did whatever Elaine commanded. Now the Senator's evil would be purged and justice done, as the Vril Society commanded. She blasted his office door off its hinges and exclaimed, "Senator Jeremiah Relm, for your abuse of power and crimes against humanity you must pay the ultimate penalty!"

"Wait! What abuses? What do you think I've done?" the Senator cried.

Solemnly, Elaine listed off the Vril Society's charges. But for each charge, the Senator had a defense: her facts were wrong, or there was another side to the issue; his actions in Congress had not been Evil, they had been Good. Changing people's opinions was the Senator's business. After debating with Elaine for an hour, her indignation had faded into doubt and unanswered questions. Could the Society have sent her after the wrong person?

Irene Bradford was furious. She was watching Senator Relm's press conference on C-SPAN. Elaine had failed! She almost couldn't believe it, but there was the Senator, sitting in the middle of his smashed-up office, explaining what had happened.

"Mistress?" came an Adept's hesitant voice from the doorway.

"What?" she snarled back at him.

"Esteemed Vril Ya, the Adept Elaine is here."

"She's *what?*" Irene asked, unable to believe her ears.

"She's here, Vril Ya. She says she has questions for you."

"You fool! She's been corrupted by that Senator! She's obviously returned to spy on us, or betray us to the authorities! Capture her for interrogation!"

"At once, Vril Ya!" the Adept said.

Alone again, Irene stared at the TV without really seeing it. Somehow, her daughter had developed a will of her own. What would she do? Irene remembered how she had raised her daughter, remembered the punishments that were supposed to break Elaine to the Society's will. What would she herself do, in her daughter's place? And she shuddered.

Elaine was alone, miserable and scared. Her world had ended.

She couldn't believe it when Widget had warned her that her friends were coming to hurt her. But then she saw it herself in their minds. Using her superior abilities, she had fought her way out of the Society's secret enclave and escaped. Now she was on a bus going to New York, with no friends, no money and little knowledge of the world outside the Society.

Things will be all right Widget said, trying to comfort her. It didn't work.

She had done her best to be Good, to live up to the Society's expectations—but the Society had attacked her. She was Good—did that make the Society Evil? Had the Society merely tried to use her for its own Evil ends? She tossed these questions back and forth in her mind for a long time, but there was no escaping the obvious answer to both of them…yes. Yet the Society had made her what she was. Did that mean that she was really evil? That question was even more disturbing. She realized right then and there that she could never have anything to do with the Society again.

But she knew that there had to be some way she could use her abilities for Good. While pondering this dilemma, she glanced at the headline on the newspaper held by another passenger on the bus. CHAMPIONS FOIL VIPER ATTACK ON BANK it said. She'd heard of the Champions; the Society described them as thoroughly Evil people with powers like hers. But if the Society said they were Evil, wouldn't that make them Good?

When the other passenger put the paper down, Elaine picked it up and read the story. The Champions had stopped this other group, VIPER, from stealing money from a bank, and had protected several bystanders in the process. They definitely didn't sound Evil. Once again, the Society had tried to deceive her. This was a way she could use her powers for Good: she could join the Champions!

Personality: Elaine King (she picked the last name on the spur of the moment prior to her interview with the Champions) was raised to be a tool of the Vril Society, and it shows. The Society raised her to believe in a very Manichean view of the world. She sees everything in terms of black and white, Good and Evil, right and wrong. The Good must be protected, the Evil destroyed. Unfortunately for the Society, however, Solitaire realized that there was more to Good and Evil than obedience to the Society.

This is not to say that Solitaire is a prude or that she does not allow for human failings. She has gradually accepted just how far from perfect the world really is, and tries to allow for this. Her wrangling disputes about whether an action is Good or Evil sometimes irritate her more pragmatic teammates Jaguar and Quantum. Still, Solitaire can be surprisingly harsh, even ruthless, once she's convince that something is definitely Evil. If not for her disgust at how the Vril Society tried to make her an assassin, her fear at making an irreversible mistake and her innate compassion, Solitaire could easily have become a vigilante instead of a more typical superhero.

Solitaire's trainers brutally punished her whenever she made a mistake: Irene Bradford did not tolerate failure. To this day, Solitaire fears to make mistakes or fail in her chosen tasks. She believes, quite wrongly, that her friends would abandon her if she fouled up too badly. When she does make a mistake, she tries to correct it herself, without letting her friends know about them.

The Society also raised Solitaire to avoid strong emotion and close relationships. This has left her shy and reserved; she is content to stay in the shadow of

her more flamboyant teammates.

(Paradoxically, for someone so shy, Solitaire's chosen profession in her Secret ID—fashion model—makes her the center of attention. Again, this is the result of her training, which taught her to work with a role no matter how much it conflicts with her personal inclinations. To compensate, she jealously guards her private life from the media.)

Solitaire gets along with her teammates well; they are the first "family" she has ever really known. Quantum draws Solitaire out while Solitaire restrains Quantum's temper. Obsidian finds her ethical concerns similar to his own *nobless oblige*. Although Seeker's flirting often leaves Solitaire blushing, they share a mystic quest for truth. While Solitaire has relatively little in common with Jaguar, they remain civil and Solitaire is the only teammate who really understands what it's like to live with magic.

Out of all the Champions, however, Solitaire feels closest to Defender. They have felt a strong mutual attraction almost from the time they met. So far, however, they have pulled back from an intimate relationship. Defender worries about inadvertently hurting the emotionally inexperienced Solitaire, while Solitaire feels it might not be ethical to date a teammate; she wouldn't want Defender to compromise his duty to the entire team out of feeling for her. Quantum has been working on Solitaire, and Seeker on Defender, to overcome their scruples and get them together: their friends realize what a fine couple they would make.

Quote: "*But that's not right!*"

Powers/Tactics: Due to the *in utero* telepathic conditioning she received from her mother, Solitaire is an especially capable manipulator of magical force. She calls this energy "vril." Vril can be converted into nearly any form of energy (as the Variable Special Effect EB shows), but is particularly suited for psychic effects.

The Vril Crystal she calls Widget is an important part of Solitaire's magic. As long as she has Widget around her, she can cast spells by pure will, with amazing speed and little fatigue. Without Widget, Solitaire must concentrate or take extra time, perhaps point at her target, and her powers become less reliable. Widget glows whenever it assists in a spell or warns her of danger. It must freely orbit Solitaire to do this. Their psychic link is so strong that Solitaire suffers any damage done to Widget.

(Vril Crystals are not normally intelligent and telepathic. Irene Bradford certainly did not know about Widget's special properties when she gave the crystal to Solitaire. Why Widget is different is a mystery Solitaire does not yet know she should explore.)

At present, Solitaire only knows relatively straightforward applications of Vril magic. She knows, however, that supposedly vril can be turned into any force imaginable. As she experiments, she will develop more powers, both mental and physical, and hone the powers she already has. She does not suffer from a Magic Restriction: first, Vril Magic is a High Magic style, and second, it is a rare and unusual style which few wizards have encountered. The Society's "official" claim, in fact, is that Vril Magic isn't really magic at all, but super-advanced science (witness the tech-seeming Vril Rods).

In combat, Solitaire usually takes a "support" role: telekinetically holding enemies in place for someone else to blast, mentally controlling lesser villains into surrendering or wasting actions so her teammates can concentrate on more serious threats, and so on. She has also used Mimicry and Ventriloquism to confuse opponents—for instance, by making their leader seem to order them to flee, or by making one villain think another villain insulted him. In noncombat situations, Solitaire's skills make her a superb infiltrator.

Appearance: Solitaire is a beautiful young woman standing 5'10" tall, with green eyes, auburn hair and exquisite features that somehow never get marred by dangerous situations. She wears a dark rose, ankle-length hooded cape and thigh-length boots over a shiny bodysuit of a similar color. Her cloak pin is of gold with a large, red crystal (which has no value whatsoever, as a Focus or otherwise). She does not wear a mask or gloves. Her Vril Crystal, Widget, is an iridescent globe of faceted crystal which orbits her body.

Notes: For a vastly more powerful version of Solitaire, showing how she could develop with experience, see *The Ultimate Mentalist* by Steven S. Long.

As originally presented in the ***Champions*** rulebook, Solitaire was part mentalist and part energy projector, but had very little magical "flavor." This has been changed by giving her a wider range of Powers and Skills, making her a more flexible character. These have been paid for by putting mage-style Limitations on her Elemental Control and Multipower, and lowering some of her Characteristics to the heroic human range. Solitaire still lacks the traditional intellectual skills of a scholar mage; the details of her background were chosen to reflect this. With Experience, she will learn more about the occult world and the supernatural. She is still, however, a good model for a fledgling mage.

Solitaire

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack 2½d6
18	COM	4	13-	
8	PD	5		Total: 21 PD/ 13 rPD
6	ED	2		Total: 19 ED/ 13 rED
5	SPD	20		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	2		
36	END	0		
26	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 108

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Teleport 15"/30"

Powers & Skills:

Vril Powers & Abilities:

Vril Magic Powers: Elemental Control, -1 Var Lim: OAF Widget/Extra Time or Concentrate + Activation Roll (-½) (10)

a - **Vrilshield:** Force Field (13 PD, 13 ED, 8 MD) (30/10) [3]

b - **Vrilpath:** 15" Teleport, x2 END (-½) (30/7) [2/5"]

c - **Mental Eye:** 6d6 Mind Scanning, x2 END (30/7) [6]

Vril Magic Spells/Mentalism: Multipower (51 pt pool), -½ Var Lim: Gestures/IAF Widget/Concentrate/Extra Time/Activation Roll (-¼), ½ END with OAF Widget (-1 Limitation on +¼ Power Advantage) (46)

u - **Raw Vril Blast:** 10d6 EB, (50/4) [5/2]

u - **Shaped Vril Blast:** 7d6 EB, Var Special Effects (+½), (52/5) [5/2]

u - **Mental Blast:** 5d6 Ego Attack, (50/4) [5/2]

u - **Domination:** 10d6 Mind Control, (50/4) [5/2]

u - **Mind Reading:** 10d6 Telepathy, (50/4) [5/2]

u - **Vril Manipulation:** 33 STR TK, (50/4) [5/2]

Widgetvision: Danger Sense 11-, out of combat, any attack, local area, OAF (12)

Background Skills:

Bump of Direction (3)
Acting 12- (3)
Disguise 11- (3)
Mimicry 11- (3)
Stealth 13- (3)
Ventriloquism 11- (3)
KS: Vril Society & Magic 11- (substitutes for Everyman skill AK: Home Country) (0)
KS: Occult 11- (2)
Donation for Homestead, the Champions' base (1)
Donation for Slingshot, the Champions' plane (4)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 142

Total Character Cost: 250

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:

Talks to Widget (Concealable, Weirds people out) (10)
Powerful psychic aura (Few Detect) (5)

Hunted by:

VIPER, 11- (As Pow, NCI) (20)
Vril Society, 8- (As Pow, NCI) (15)
Howler, 11- (As Pow) (15)

Physical Limitation:

Takes any damage done to Widget (15)

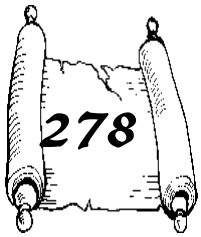
Psychological Limitation:

Avoids strong emotion or intimacy (15)
Moral absolutist (15)
Fear of making or admitting to mistakes (15)

Secret Identity (15)

Unluck: 2d6 (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 250



Artifex

Created by ***James Ganong***

Background: Billy Doyle hated his miserable life. It wasn't easy being a smart, sensitive kid in a South Boston slum where a musical car horn was most people's idea of an uplifting cultural experience.

There were only two points of light in his gray neighborhood. The first was the library. It was small and as dingy and beat up as the neighborhood, but it had a few books on art that weren't too badly defaced. The second was Uncle Button, who walked barefoot in the Boston winter and covered his stained and faded clothes with tassels, little mirrors, and buttons. Uncle Button made and sold buttons from bits of metal, wood, and plastic he scavenged from dumpsters. He also told wonderful stories: stories from history, from mythology, from books, or all three mixed together—like how George Washington crossed the Styx to rescue Minnie Mouse from the Grand Inquisitor.

One day, when Billy was thirteen, he asked Uncle Button where he got his stories. Uncle Button answered, typically, with a story. He told how once upon a time a young man, who had been rich but now was poor, had wanted to understand his own story, and if he might change its course. He walked the cold, unfriendly streets of his city, looking for meanings as much as for work and food. One day he saw a street that looked more inviting. In it were jugglers and costermongers, children playing, merchants weighing gold dust and women haggling over fish. That street led to another street and another. He found a whole city, secretly woven into the city he'd known before—a city called Babylon. From Babylon he traveled to many other lands, and in the fullness of time he discovered where stories come from. Uncle Button waved his hand. "Here."

It was sort of a disappointing ending for the story. A few days later, Billy heard unfamiliar sounds from an alley. He followed the sounds to a street he'd never seen, bustling with fantastically varied people. "Hey, what city is this?" he asked a pushcart vendor.

The vendor looked at Billy like he was crazy. "The only city there is," he replied. "Babylon!" Billy quickly looked back over his shoulder. The alley was gone.

Billy's life in Babylon could fill a novel—one by Dickens. It was not an easy life. He saw Babylon's rookeries and workhouses more than its palaces. After a year, though, Billy found himself as an apprentice to a conurbite mask-maker and then things were better. Two years later, Billy discovered the Fool's Parliament and was accepted as a student of the Great Art of magic.

Billy proved an enthusiastic student. He didn't miss South Boston a bit. As a dweller in Babylon, as a prospective member of the Fool's Parliament, he invented a new life for himself, right down to a new name and a new appearance. Now he called himself "Art Long." He looked forward to becoming a full member of the Fool's Parliament and helping to build a new and

spritelier world.

And then one day his master, Mr. Lowjink, threw him out. "You're a damn yes-man, Art! You've got nothing in your head but what I put there! Get some experience! Get some ideas of your own! ***Get a life!***"

Well, that was a bit of a shock, but Art got over it. He now divides his time between apartments in Babylon and Los Angeles, taking advantage of the currency exchange rate between worlds. He manages a modest living by making fanciful, high-quality masks; he's had a few exhibitions in a Los Angeles gallery and is a familiar figure in the L.A. art scene. As Artifex, Master of the Cosmic Craft, he also does his bit to build a new world of freedom and Artifice where everyone can make the life they please.

Quote: "*We all make our own reality. Of course, I'm better at it than most.*"

Personality: Artifex is an enthusiastic, even obnoxious, spokesman for the ideology of Art. As far as he's concerned, everything is just raw materials. It annoys him that most people just accept whatever they get from chance and the power elite instead of making their own way. Artifex has a quarrel with the Powers of Evil because they would take away what little opportunity for self-creation and self-improvement people have (he's also a radical libertarian). And really, can't the demon lords and dimensional conquerors think of something more *original* than conquest and slaughter? Any dunce can wreck things; improving the world, now *that's* a challenge.

Artifex will freely admit that others may be more powerful than him, but he's always sure that he's smarter than his opponents. He tells them so, too. In his short career he has already insulted Mephistopheles, the Dragon, Skarn and Bromion to their faces. The word on the occult grapevine is that one should not stand too close to Artifex. Pretty soon, someone is going to blow him up real good.

Powers/Tactics: Artifex is a Ritual Magician of an unusual sort, who's trying to become a High Magician and Servant of Higher Powers. His Hero ID is far more than just a costume; it's a complete physical transformation, what Artifex calls his "Body of Art." In this form he can cast spells. His diverse selection of spells is somewhat weak in offense and defense, but his noncombat abilities are remarkably flexible, including most of the Physical Phantasms of Simon Magus.

Artifex has even started learning how to Transform spells and make magic items by himself. (If he fails an Activation Roll when Transforming a spell, his Transform seems to work but the new Power has a -½ Limitation which neither Artifex nor the Power's possessor knows about. Each failed roll imposes another -½ of Limitations.) Artifex's Clairsentience spell is particularly notable: he can make objects literally talk and recount whatever happened to them, including any magic they were involved in.

His Variable Limitation makes Artifex hard to "disarm." he prefers to fill the Variable Limitation with his magic staff (OAF), but if he loses that he can switch to his rune-stitched gloves (OIF) with Gestures and Incantations or 1 Phase of Extra Time. If he loses the gloves too, he must Gesture, Incant and take either Extra Time or lower his Activation Roll to 12-. Failing all, he can cast spells by pure will, with a full turn of Extra Time. Artifex must, however, be in his "Body of Art" hero mode. If knocked out, he changes back into his normal human ID and cannot cast spells until he takes a Turn to change back into Artifex. If he's tied up, he can't change.

Artifex knows that he's weak on combat magic, but he tries to out-think opponents instead of pounding them into submission. He avoids direct confrontation. Instead he tries to snoop around, concealed by illusion if necessary, and find an opponent's weaknesses. He has no intention of "fighting fair": as a Chaotic Artifist, he makes his own rules.

Appearance: Artifex is in his late 20s now. In his "merely human" identity of Art Long, he stands 5'8" and weighs 140 pounds. He has straight, sandy brown hair, pale blue eyes and average, forgettable looks. He regards this form as an annoying but necessary part of his life on Earth. In Babylon, he stays in his "Artifex" form. In his "Body of Art" he is 6' tall, slim but fit, with shoulder-length, curling blonde hair, silver eyes and the impossibly regular good looks of a Pre-Raphaelite angel. He moves gracefully, like a dancer, always with a hint of posing for a photo op.

Artifex's costume varies, since it is also his regular clothing (or at least his regular clothes for the Babylon half of his life). The most stable feature is the fluted silver mask that covers the upper half of his face. Next comes his flaring greatcoat. This is made of ballistic cloth, with no magic enhancement at all—just in case. The coat is usually indigo with a black silk lining and a high collar, but Artifex can change its color at will. He wears this as Art Long, too. As Artifex he also wears black gauntlet-style gloves stitched with magic runes in silver and gold and carries an ornate golden staff topped with a fleur-de-lys. Mask, gloves and staff are all enchanted so he can fold them up into bundles small enough to fit in pockets inside his greatcoat. All other garb changes, but Artifex likes loose, belted tunics and trousers tucked into knee-high black boots.

Artifex

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	100 kg; 2d6 [1]
20*	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20*	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	18	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
20*	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack 4d6
20*	COM	4	13-	
8*	PD	5		Total: 14 PD/ 6 rPD
8*	ED	3		Total: 14 ED/ 6 rED
4*	SPD	8		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
6*	REC	0		
26*	END	6		
35*	STUN	8		* Only in Hero ID (-¼)

Total Characteristic Cost: 94

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 15"/30"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Level: +1 Levels w/ Ranged Combat(5)

The Great Art of Magic:
Major Magic: Multipower (63 pt pool), *, Acts 15- (-¼), -1 Var Lim (-½), All from END Reserve (31)
u - **Mage Bolt:** 12d6 EB (60/3) [6]
u - **Apparitional Attack:** 2½d6 RKA, Var Sp FX: Any (+½) (60/3) [6]
u - **Forceful Phantasm:** 25 STR TK w/Fine Manipulation, ½ END (59/3) [3]
u - **Spellbreaking:** 16d6 Dispel, vs. Any Magic Effect (+¼) (60/3) [6]
u - **Spellweaving:** 2½d6 minor Power Transform, Any Small Change to Power (can't change base Power) (+1), Cumulative, Activation to 14- (-¼), Side Effect: GM Selected -½ Limit on Power (-½) (62/2) [6]
u - **Morphic Mutation:** 1½d6 Transform, Universal Physical (+1), Cumulative (62/3) [6]
u - **Masterful Mirage:** Images vs. Detect Magic, normal Hearing, All Vision, -8 PER, ½ END (61/3) [3]
u - **Memory Search:** 12d6 Telepathy, 0 Range, Only to Memory (-1), 1 Turn Extra Time (-1), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½) (60/1) [6]
u - **Talk to Inanimate:** Clairsentience: Detect Magic/Hearing/All Vision, Retrocognitive, +3 All PER, Only on Inanimate Objects (-1), 0 Range, Concentrate 0 DCV (61/1) [5]
Minor Magic: Multipower (30 pt pool), *, Acts 15-, -1 Var Lim (-½), All from END Reserve (15)
u - **Mystic Shield:** Force Field (9 PD, 9 ED, 9 MD, 9 PowD), ½ END (30/1) [1]
u - **Magic Wings:** 15" Flight, x2 NCM (30/1) [1/5"]
u - **EDM:** Planes of Art/Earth (30/1) [3]
u - **Healing Hand:** 6d6 BODY Aid, Restore Only (-½), 1 Turn Extra Time on Others (-¼) (30/1) [3]
Magic Reserves: END Reserve: 80 END, 5 REC/Turn, * (10)
Mental Defense: 9 (5)
Power Defense: 5 (5)

Crime-Fighting Equipment:
Kevlar Coat: Armor (6 PD, 6 ED), OIF, Acts 15- (10)
Mask:
Sense Magic, Ranged, Discriminatory, IAF (10)
IR Vision, IAF (3)
Phrasebook: Universal Translator 13-, OAF (10)

Background Skills:
Dimensional Navigation 13- (3)
Streetwise 13- (3)
AK: Babylon 13- (3)
PS: Maskmaker 13- (3)
Scholar (3)
KS: Art Magic 13- (2)
KS: Who's Who and What's That 13- (2)
KS: Other Dimensions 11- (1)
KS: The Four Zoas 11- (1)
KS: General Magic 11- (1)
Babylon Residency Permit (1)
Library of Babylon Borrower's Card (1)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 156

Total Character Cost: 250

Disadvantages: 100+

Accidental Change:
out of Hero ID if Unconscious, 14- (common) (20)
Distinctive Features:
'Unnatural' Looks (Hard to Conceal) (10)
Hunted by:
Hunted by Ouroboros, 8- (As Pow, NCI) (15)
Hunted by Agents of Nature, 8- (As Pow) (10)
Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)
Psychological Limitation:
Arrogant (15)
Pushy Advocate of Artifice/Dislikes Nature (10)
Feels Contempt for Authority (10)
Reputation:
Annoying Artifice Freak, Makes LOTS of Enemies, 8-, Extreme (10)
Susceptibility:
1d6 STUN/Turn, Areas Consecrate to Nature (uncommon) (10)
1d6 Drain/Turn vs. All Magic, Areas Consecrate to Order (uncommon) (10)
Watched by:
Lords of Art, 11- (More Pow) (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 250

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Jezeray Illyescu And Zontar Bok

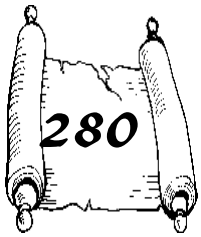
*Created by **Jeff Skagen***

Jezeray

Background: Jezeray Illyescu is a genuine psychic. Her Gypsy grandparents came from Romania at the start of World War Two and assimilated. Jezeray grew up in an ordinary American suburb.

She was not, however, a normal child. As far back as Jezeray can remember, she could see colored auras around people—auras nobody else could see. And while it isn't strange for children to have imaginary playmates, it is a little strange to get help from them in class. Once Jezeray figured out that you could tell a person's true emotions from their aura, her social isolation became complete. Not only did she talk to people who weren't there and look strangely at people who were, she was not tactful in reporting what she saw in people's auras.

Her Gypsy grandmother explained the problem to her. Jezeray had the Second Sight; she was psychic and other people weren't. Still, maybe she could make money at it, like J. Z. Squire or that Madame Zora who sometimes advertised on late night TV, between the infomercials. Jezeray was getting the hang of reading psychic impressions off objects. Between that and the spirit world, how could she lose?



Jezeray's first attempts to be a psychic fortuneteller after school were a dismal flop. Not many people would take a teenage psychic seriously. Much of the time, people's questions were not something she could answer by psychometry or asking around the spirit world. When she could—especially when her flashes of precognition came—her clients didn't like what she told them.

Maybe Madame Zora could give her some tips. And maybe…just maybe…Madame Zora was a real psychic too?

She wasn't. In fact, Madame Zora was quite amazed to meet someone who really had the powers to which she pretended. Madame Zora and Jezeray formed a partnership. Madame Zora taught Jezeray how to put on a good show, tell people what they want to hear and keep them coming back. Most clients, she said, really just need someone to talk to. Give them a cup of tea, a sympathetic ear, and some reassurance and they'll be fine. So what if they think the reassurance comes from their dear departed Uncle Fred? In return, Madame Zora got a genuine psychic to cover her charlatan butt when a client had a *real* problem.

Jezeray and Madame Zora became rather fond of each other, but when Jezeray graduated from high school it was time to set up shop for herself—which she has. Her trailer sees a small but steady trickle of clients come for seances and help with minor personal problems. Now and then it sees far stranger things as well…because of Jezeray's new partner.

Some objects carried stronger psychic traces than others. Old objects with colorful pasts became a special interest of hers. In a junk shop one day, a green glass ball someone had turned into a paperweight caught her eye. Its psychic aura was rich and intense, almost *alive* She bought it and scanned it.

To her astonishment, she found not just a past, but a person—a spirit in the glass ball. He called himself Zontar Bok and said he was a Warrior-Mage of Shamballah. Jezeray received impressions of flashing energy bolts, ferocious monsters in sinister temples and warriors on horseback thundering over the steppes. She had to giggle; it was all straight out of a trashy sword-and-sorcery movie. This must be one crazy ghost! And yet, her retrocognition had never lied before.

To give him credit, this "Zontar Bok" spun a good yarn. He never slipped in his stories; the detail was incredible. What's more, he never showed any knowledge of the real world. Maybe he *was* real. Jezeray had never heard of Shamballah, but she'd heard of Atlantis. J. Z. Squire channeled an Atlantean priest king called Mathra. Maybe she could channel Zontar Bok and move into the big money.

Zontar liked the idea. He'd been a teacher in life, he was sure he could give some sage advice. In fact, he'd be glad to talk to anyone under any circumstances. Jezeray's attempt to channel him, however, worked better than either expected. Zontar found himself in the body of a nineteen- year-old girl, an embarrassing position for one of his age and dignity. Fortunately for Jezeray, Zontar is an honorable fellow. He managed to put himself back in the orb and return her body to her—although not before raiding the refrigerator and having his first meal in 5500 years.

Jezeray and Zontar still tried to add channeling to her routine, but it didn't work out. Zontar proved too blunt and too ignorant of modern life. They found, however, that Zontar has lost none of his skill as a wizard. They have formed a partnership. Through Zontar, Jezeray gets to move in a much higher circle of the Occult World, with the super-mages. Through Jezeray, Zontar gets to live again and carry on the war against the Dragon. They both find the arrangement agreeable.

Quote: "*I sense a disturbance in the Force…Eww, this Hierophant is one sick puppy.*"

Personality: Jezeray is still rather shy at heart, although Madame Zora's training lets her pretend not to be. Now she wants to be taken seriously. Channeling Zontar has increased her reputation as a nut in some circles, but has opened a new option to her: through him, she can become a superhero. She doesn't mean to let Zontar hog all the glory, though. Jezeray hopes she can establish herself in the superhero or super-mage community *as* herself, as a psychic detective. Either way she can win approval for herself.

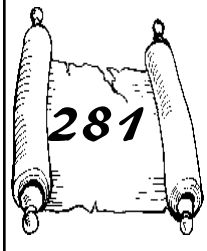
Powers/Tactics: Jezeray is a powerful psychic, a Wild Talent mage. Her greatest power, of course, is her ability to channel Zontar Bok, but she can also contact spirits and see auras, the past and (to a limited extent) the future.

As yet, Jezeray has no offensive abilities at all. If danger threatens, she finds someplace to hide so she can channel Zontar. She does, however, have two excellent defensive abilities. The first is her precognitive awareness of danger: very little takes Jezeray by surprise, and she unconsciously knows how to be where harm isn't. Jezeray can also become psychically invisible: actually, people see her but a low level psychic domination makes them ignore her. Of course this only works on people in her direct vicinity; it won't affect security cameras, robots or the like. Small and defensive though this Power may be, it hints that Jezeray has the potential to develop other, more dangerous psychic powers.

Finally, Jezeray sometimes has precognitive dreams warning of future dangers to humanity. (This is the Planetary Range with No Conscious Control added to the Danger Sense.) Because these are dreams, they are symbolic and imprecise, never saying directly what the danger will be or where it will happen. They exist to give the GM another plot hook.

Jezeray knows perfectly well that she is an investigator, not a fighter, but she resists summoning Zontar until absolutely necessary. She doesn't have to worry much about getting hit. Besides, she doesn't want to miss anything: she doesn't want to come back to her body and hear about all the cool stuff that happened while Zontar was in charge.

Appearance: Jezeray is a 19-year-old girl and rather pretty in a long-legged, coltish sort of way. Her usual



outfit consists of a bustier, rumpled jacket, shorts, nylons and low-heel shoes. She wears Zontar's green crystal orb on a chain around her neck. She often stands close to people and stares intently just off to one side of them, inspecting their aura, or looks at spirits no one else can see (at least, no one without Astral Awareness).

Incidentally, because of her previously poor social skills, Jezeray is still a virgin. On the up side, she can make friends with unicorns. On the down side, she's a spell component. Now and then evil sorcerers try to sacrifice her.

Notes: Jezeray herself is an example of an occult investigator. Her Multiform with Zontar Bok, a magical "combat monster," is an interesting solution to the problem of creating a magical character who has both effective combat abilities and lots of investigative Powers and Skills. The challenge is to play both characters fully, instead of treating one as an appendage of the other.

Jezeray

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	100 kg; 2d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 14-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack 3d6
14	COM	2	12-	
4	PD	2		Total: 4 PD
4	ED	0		Total: 4 ED
4	SPD	12		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
36	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 80

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +6 Levels w/ DCV, Linked to Danger Sense (-½)(20)

Wild Mage Powers:

Psychic Powers: Elemental Control (22)
- a - **Pull Back the Veil of Time:** Clairsentience: normal Vision, Past, Future, Can't See Present (-½), 0 Range, initial 1 Turn Extra Time (-½), constant Concentrate 0 DCV (-1) (60/11) [6]
- b - **Spirit Seeking:** 6d6 Mind Scan, Transdimensional: Lower Astral (+½), Only vs. Spirits (-½), 1 Turn Extra Time (-1), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½) (45/8) [4]
- c - **Unnoticeability:** Invisibility vs. normal Hearing/Smell/All Vision, ½ END, Not vs. Mechanical Sensors (-½) (44/15) [2]
- d - **Sense Coming Threat:** Danger Sense 15-, Out of combat, Mystical; + Planetary Scale, No Conscious Control (-2) [43]
- e - **Channeling:** Multiform to Zontar Bok (230 pts), OAF Orb, 1 Phase Extra Time (½), Concentrate 0 DCV (-½)(46/16)

Mind Link x1, Anyone, Any Distance/Dimension, initial 1 turn Extra Time (-½), Concentrate 0 DCV Constant (-1), Only to Astral Spirits (-½), Linked to Spirit Seeking (-½) (70

Mental Defense: 14 (10)

Astral Awareness (3)

Sense Aura, Discriminatory (10)

Enhanced Perception: +2 w/ all PER Rolls (6)

Bump of Direction (3)

Background Skills:
- Acting 12- (3)
- Concealment 13- (3)
- Deduction 13- (3)
- Persuasion 12- (3)
- Sleight of Hand 13- (3)
- Stealth 13- (3)
- Scholar (3)
- KS: Spirits and the Spirit World 13- (2)
- KS: Psychic Phenomena/Manifestations 13- (2)
- KS: Occult Lore 11- (1)
- KS: Local Ghost Stories 11- (1)
- PS: Psychic Advisor 8- (1)
- PS: Library Researcher 11- (2)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 170

Total Character Cost: 250

Disadvantages: 100+

Distinctive Features:
- Strong Psychic Aura (Few Detect) (5)
- Odd Behavior (Noticed) (5)

Hunted by:
- Hunted 8- by Ouroboros (More Pow) (15)
- Hunted 8- by Hierophant (As Pow) (10)

Magic Restriction: Only Psychic Powers (15)

Money: Poor (5)

Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)

Physical Limitation:
- Nearsighted, needs glasses (5)

Psychological Limitation:
- Avoids All Combat (15)
- Hungry for Approval (15)
- Seeks Psychic & Occult Knowledge (10)
- Nosy (10)

Public Identity (10)

Reputation:
- Amazing Psychic/Complete Nutcase Fraud (depends who you ask), 8- (5)

Vulnerability:
- x1½ Effect, Mental Powers While in Trance (5)

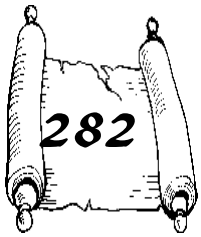
Watched by:
- Police Bunco Squads (Less Pow, NCI, x½) (5)

Villain Bonus (334)

Total Disadvantage Points: 250

Zontar Bok

Background: Zontar Bok's career in life was pretty normal for a warrior-mage of lost Shamballah. At that time, Shamballah had existed for nearly 200 years. Zontar was born and raised in what is now Mongolia and spent his boyhood years herding sheep and yaks, learning horsemanship and other nomad skills. While still a teenager he survived a few battles against raiders from Agharti. When he was seventeen he decided to seek his fortune in a colony town. His wits and diligence brought him to the attention of a wizard, who



took him as an apprentice. Zontar eventually proved worthy of advanced training by the Nagas themselves.

Zontar served Shamballah and the Nagas as a warrior-mage for many years, fighting in dozens of battles against Agharti. Eventually he retired from field duty to teach new students while improving his own understanding of magic, and in time he died.

Unlike the other wizards of Shamballah, however, death was not the end of Zontar Bok's story. Somehow, the crystal orb from the top of his wizard's staff survived the millennia. By devious routes it came to America, where it was found by a young psychic, Jezeray Illyescu. Jezeray noticed the orb's powerful psychic aura. When she tried "reading" its aura to discover the orb's past, she contacted the soul of Zontar Bok. Now Zontar lives again, if only for short periods in a borrowed body, and continues fighting the good fight against the evil minions of the Dragon.

Quote: "*Yes, it is an honor to meet me.*"

Personality: Back in Shamballah, Zontar Bok was a Very Important Person, and he still expects to be treated that way. After all, he was one of the favored disciples of the godlike Nagas. He automatically assumes that other people, even other mages, will defer to his judgment. If it weren't for his fierce devotion to fighting the Dragon, he'd be insufferable.

Zontar does not enjoy occupying the body of a young woman. It's…undignified. Showing his embarrassment, however, would be even more undignified, so he acts as if everything were normal.

Zontar feels an avuncular regard for Jezeray and chides her when she puts herself in danger. He tries to take care of her body when he's occupying it, but there's only so much he can do, even with the Restorations of the Ragnar. More than once, Jezeray has returned to her body to find it bruised and aching, or in the grip of a hangover. Zontar considers modern beer greatly superior to what they had back in Shamballah, and sometimes he overindulges.

Powers/Tactics: Zontar Bok knows a wide range of combat spells. As long as he has his orb, he can keep firing off spells for a very long time indeed. If he has time to raise his two defensive spells, he becomes nearly indestructible by normal means.

As a warrior mage, Zontar Bok never learned any magic that wasn't useful in combat: even his magic-detection spell was to help in locating Aghartan forces. In his retirement, however, he started studying fundamental magic theory and thereby gained a small Power Pool. Through this he can create nearly any effect he wants—as long as it has no more than 10 Active Points.

Zontar's strategy in a fight is to hide until he can get his defenses up. Then he charges in and blasts away. If he has comrades, he tries for a surprise attack by teleporting them into the middle of the enemy group. He's a good team player. Zontar's code of honor deals strictly with keeping his word and loyalty to his comrades: in a general melee, or against minions of the Dragon, he sees no dishonor in striking from behind.

Appearance: At the time of his death, Zontar Bok was an elderly Mongolian man; people with psychic senses will see an image of this Zontar Bok overlaid on Jezeray when he possesses her body. If he occupies her body for very long and he has the time, he Instant Changes her clothing (through the Power Pool) to a copy of the boots, trousers, caftan and fringed, sleeveless jacket that were his usual garb in life. Zontar's orb is a 2" sphere of green crystal; once it surmounted his staff, but now Jezeray and Zontar wear it as a pendant on a necklace.

Notes: Zontar Bok is a Thaumaturge. As a tactical exercise, he is unusual chiefly for his complete focus on combat and complete reliance on Gestures. Still, even a 10 point Power Pool can be useful to create special sense modes and unusual defenses.

Some GMs may well balk at allowing characters to get such high defenses, albeit temporary ones, for two piddling Multipower slots. What can I say, I felt generous that day. On the other hand, notice that there is virtually nothing underneath those two magic shields: physically, Zontar is no tougher than a VIPER agent. What's more, it takes two Phases for Zontar to put those defenses up. In an ambush, that can be a real problem.

Zontar Bok

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	100 kg; 2d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 14-
20	EGO	10	13-	ECV: 7
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack 3d6
14	COM	2	12-	
4	PD	2		Total: 4+ PD
4	ED	0		Total: 4+ ED
4	SPD	12		Pha 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
36	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 89

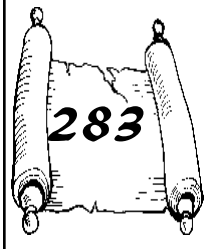
Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 15"/120"
Teleport: 10"/320"

Powers & Skills:

Thaumaturgy:

Thaumaturgy Multipower (62 pt pool), Gestures, -1 Var Lim: OAF Orb/1 phase Extra Time, Concentrate ½ DCV, Activation 15- (-½) (35)

- u - **Cerulean Spear:** 5d6 Ego Attack, ½ END (62/3) [3]
- u - **Cerulean Spray:** 4d6 Ego Attack, Nonselective 1 Hex AE (+¼), ½ END (60/3) [3]
- u - **Sorcerer's Star:** 12d6 EB (60/3) [6]
- u - **Sorcerer's Star:** 5d6 AVLD: Power Defense (+1½) (62/3) [6]
- u - Hypnotic Helix: 12d6 Mind Control (60/3) [6]
- u - **Fuzonic Flame:** 4d6 RKA (60/3) [6]
- u - **Fuzonic Flame:** 1½d6 RKA, Penetrating, Continuous (62/3) [6]
- u - **Scintillant Sun of Saravane:** 2d6 Flash vs. Vision, BOECV, 8" Cone AE (+1) (60/3) [6]



u - **Spectral Sphere:** 4d6 Entangle, Backlash (+½) (60/3) [6]
u - **Tendrils of Tarlac:** 18 STR TK, Selective 3" Radius AE (+1 ¼) (61/3) [6]
u - **Runes of Raladon:** 8d6 Suppress, vs. Any Phys Char (+¼), ½ END (60/3) [3]
u - **Runes of Raladon:** 3d6 Drain, vs. Any Phys Char (+¼), Recover 1 pt/turn (+¼), Ranged (60/3) [6]
u - **Darwilt's Dweomer Disruption:** 16d6 Dispel, vs. Any 1 Magic Effect (+¼) (60/3) [6]
u - **Reflections of the Ragnar:** Missile Reflection +10 vs. Any Magic (60/3)
u - **Spengler's Spectacular Shield:** Force Field (12 PD, 12 ED, 10 MD, 10 PowD), Uncontrolled, ½ END (59/3) [3]
u - **Resilient Raiment of the Ragnar:** Armor (13 PD, 13 ED), Uncontrolled, Activation 15- (-¼) Activation may be lower depending on coverage of current clothing (-¼), Costs 6 END/Turn (-¼) (58/2) [6]
u - **Spectral Steed:** 15" Flight, Uncontrolled, ½ END, x8 NCM (62/3) [1/5"]
u - **Telgar's Transposition:** 10" Teleport, x32 NCM, x4 Mass, 1 Floating Pt (60/3) [1/5"]
u - **Restoration of the Ragnar:** 4d6 Aid, vs. All Chars (+2), Restore Only (-½) (60/3) [6]
u - **Darwilt's Dweomer Detection:** Sense Magic, Ranged, Discriminatory, +8 Telescopic (27/1)

Thaumaturgy Power Pool (10 pt pool), Gestures, Requires Spell Research Roll (-½), 1 turn Extra Time (-1), 30 pt Side Effect: GM's Choice (-½), -1 Var Lim: OAF Orb/Concentrate 0 DCV, Acts 14- (-½) (12)
Magesight: IR Vision
Magic Reserves: END Reserve: 100 END, 11 RC/turn, -1 Var Lim: OAF Orb/REC is per 5 minutes (-½) (17)
Extreme Self-Confidence: +5 PRE, Defensive Only (-1) (2)

Background Skills:
Spell Research 13- (5)
KS: Thaumaturgy 13- (4)
KS: Nagas 12- (3)
PS: Warrior-Mage 8- (1)
Trans Fam: Horses (replacement Everyman skill) (0)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 141

Total Character Cost: 230

Disadvantages: 100+

Accidental Change:
o Jezeray when Asleep/Unconscious, 14- (20)
Distinctive Features:
Loud, Pompous (Easily Concealed) (5)
Hunted by:
Minions of the Dragon, 8- (As Pow) (10)
Hierophant, 8- (As Pow) (10)
Magic Restriction: Only Thaumaturgy (10)
Normal Characteristic Maxima (20)
Physical Limitation:
Unfamiliar with Modern World (10)
Nearsighted, Needs Glasses (5)
Psychological Limitation:
Won't Break Word (15)
Overconfident (15)
Arrogant and Overbearing (10)

Total Disadvantage Points: 230

Morningstar

Created by ***Dean Shomshak***

Background: Virgil Keats Rohan has two fathers. One is an accountant with a taste for classic literature. The other is the demon lord Belial. This has complicated Virgil's life.

Belial sired Virgil 24 years ago, with the help of a Satanist sorcerer. The sorcerer intended to incarnate Belial on Earth: the sorcerer thought that if Belial possessed his own, half-human child he could wield his full power on Earth without having to worry about either dispelling or a rebellious and fragile host. Of course, binding spells on the child would make sure that Belial wielded his vast power to the sorcerer's benefit.

The sorcerer chose Virgil's mother according to occult criteria. She was hypnotized so she would not remember the supernatural rape. The sorcerer planned to donate the human side of the impregnation himself. While he attempted to consummate his part, however, the police burst in and rescued Virgil's mother. It all made the papers, but nobody but the sorcerer himself knew this was more than just a case of kidnapping and rape by a Satanist pervert.

Several months later, Virgil's mother married the safest, most non-threatening man she could find. The year after that, she gave birth to Virgil. Neither she, nor Virgil's father, nor Virgil himself had any clue that he wasn't entirely human.

Virgil had a turbulent but mostly happy adolescence. He had even less emotional self-control than usual for teenage boys, but he had a core of decency that tempered his mercurial passions. For instance, he was more likely to put up his fists for someone else's benefit than his own. Fortunately, Virgil could let go of an emotion as easily as he picked it up.

Virgil became an excellent student and athlete. Tae kwon do became his favorite sport: it calmed his mind while it exercised his body. Virgil's not sure what made him decide to become a biologist.

When Virgil was 22, however, the sorcerer returned. The sorcerer meant to regain Belial's favor by capturing Virgil and presenting him to the demon lord—whether as son or sacrifice would be up to Belial!

The sorcerer activated Virgil's latent demonic powers and recounted the true circumstances behind Virgil's conception. Virgil's human nature, however, remained dominant despite his demonic form. Virgil repudiated Belial and, in his struggle with the sorcerer, broke the pentacle holding the demon lord. Belial grabbed the sorcerer and sent him down to Hell: Belial has little patience for failures. Before departing himself, however, Belial promised that someday Virgil would serve his demonic sire, whether he wanted to or not.

Virgil hasn't told his parents about any of this: he's sure his mother would flip, and his father wouldn't be any help in any case. So far, his only confidante is his brother Horace. Keeping secrets goes against his nature, but then he's never had this big a secret to keep.

Quote: "*Yeah, I'm a demon…well, half demon. But aren't you forgetting something? Demons are supposed to* ***punish*** *people like you.*"

Personality: Virgil himself hasn't yet decided what to make of his occult parentage. His powers and satyrlike alternate form don't bother him as such; in fact, he thinks they're kind of cool. What bothers him is what they mean. His attitude toward all religion wavered between boredom and disgust (the latter because he always got sick when his mother dragged him into church). Learning that he's half the son of a real live demon is a bit much for a lifelong materialist to take. He's trying to learn more about demons and the supernatural, more than half in hopes of fitting it all into some rational framework. He can't believe that he himself is automatically damned just because he's half demon. Learning his true parentage, however, has sharpened his moral concerns. That played a large part in his decision to act as a part-time superhero while he finishes college.

Along the way, Morningstar is trying to make contacts in the Magical World. Belial's agents don't leave him alone for long. He knows that eventually he will have to fight his demonic father directly, and when that happens he wants to have all the power and allies that he can.

Virgil also still wears his heart on his sleeve. He's a rotten poker player: he can't bluff, or hide when he has a good hand. He's easily roused to aggressive emotions such as anger, love or protectiveness (effectively, PRE attacks based on such emotions are always 1 level higher on the PRE Attack chart than rolled). Fear and suchlike "restraining" emotions, however, have less power over him. They go against his extroverted nature. The pain of taking BODY damage, though, can send him into demonic fury.

Powers/Tactics: Morningstar has low-level superhuman strength (in the 3-4 tons range), invulnerability (his skin easily resists small arms fire) and borderline superhuman reflexes. He can jump 70' forward or 30' up. He also commands the burning light of his demonic father, but so far he's only figured out 7 specific applications. Morningstar prefers to stay well back from opponents when he uses his ranged attacks and use tae kwon do and his Force Field for infighting. The flaming sword is reserved for occasions when he needs to do a lot of damage quickly. With practice and experience, he may learn how to generate attacks of some sort while keeping his aura of flaming force up. He can sense the presence of demonic forces, if they are very close to him. To assume his demi-demon form he has to say or at least think the word "Morningstar"; his clothes transform but the process takes several seconds, so it isn't an Instant Change.

Virgil only has two physical disadvantages. First, Judeo-Christian symbols and consecrated ground cause him nausea and pain. Second, the presence of demons or Satanic magic can make him involuntarily change into his demi-demonic form. (Fortunately, when he feels the change starting he has a Phase in which to get out of sight of onlookers.)

Description: Virgil is blond-haired and blue-eyed, quite good looking, with a light but athletic build. (He doesn't look "pumped.") As Morningstar he gains golden-furred, goatlike legs and tail, horns, pointed ears and a considerably more powerful build. His costume resembles golden wrestler's tights, but with flaring shoulders, a high collar and flamboyant curves along the chest and collar.

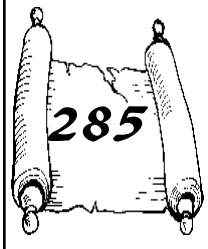
Notes: Morningstar is a straightforward superhero given an occult spin. He could provide a magical connection to a normal superhero team, or provide physical force for a team of magical characters. He can be used as a model either for spirit hybrid or mythological god PCs.

Morningstar

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
30*	STR	16	15-	1600 kg; 6d6 [3]
23*	DEX	3‘	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
25*	CON	14	14-	
12	BODY	4	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
25*	PRE	12	14-	PRE Attack 5½d6
14	COM	2	12-	
20*	PD	11		Total: 20 PD/ 10 rPD
20*	ED	12		Total: 20 ED/ 10 rED
5*	SPD	14		Pha 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10*	REC	2		
50*	END	0		
40*	STUN	0		*Only in Hero ID (-¼)

Total Characteristic Cost: 135

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Superleap: 11"/22"



Powers & Skills:

Combat Skills:
Combat Skill Levels: +2 Levels w/ Tae Kwon Do (6)

Martial Arts—*Tae Kwon Do* (16)

Maneuver	*OCV*	*DCV*	*Notes*
Arm Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
Front Kick	+0	+2	8d6 Strike
Roundhouse Kick	-2	+1	10d6 Strike
Takedown	+1	+1	8d6 Strike; Target Falls

Demon Hertiage:
The Burning Light of Belial: Multipower (62 pt pool), *, initial Gestures (-¼), Side Effect: 3d6 Drain vs. Any Slot that's Aborted, Dispelled or Reflected Back (-¼) (35)
u - **Blinding Bolt:** 5d6 Flash, ½ END (62/3) [3]
u - **Blinding Burst:** 3d6 Flash, 3" Radius AE (+1) (60/3)6
u - **Blazing Bolt:** 5d6 EB, AVLD: Flash Defense vs. Vision (+1½) (62/3) [6]
u - **Burning Bolt:** 2 ½d6 RKA, AP (60/3) [6]
u - **Burning Sword:** 2d6+1 HKA, AP, ½ END (61/3) [3+]
u - **Blazing Shield:** Force Field (10 PD, 10 ED, 10 PowD), ½ END (31/2) [1]
u - **Dramatic Pyrotechnic Effects:** +30 PRE, Offensive Only (-½) (30/1)
Burning Fists: +3d6 HA, *, Only with Force Field Up (-½) (5) [+1]
Tough Skin: Damage Resistance (10 PD, 10 ED) * (8)
Flash Defense, Sight: 5* (4)
Power Defense: 5 (5 pts)
Leaping: +5" Superleap [11" total] * (4) [1/5"]
Sense Demonic Forces 12- (5)

Background Skills:
Breakfall 14- (3)
KS: Tae Kwon Do 11- (2)
KS: Demonology 11- (2)
KS: English Literature (0)
SC: Biology 11- (2)

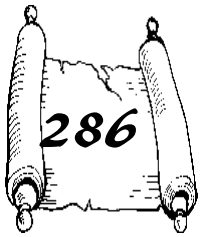
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 115

Total Character Cost: 250

Disadvantages: 100+

Accidental Change:
to Hero ID in Presence of Demon Magic, 11- (15)
DNPC:
Brother Horace, 8- (Normal) (10)
Distinctive Features:
Satyr (Hard to Conceal, Noticed) (10)
Demonic Aura (Few Detect, Strong Reaction) (10)
Enraged:
When Take BODY (common), 11-, 11- (x½) (10)
Hunted by:
Agents of Belial. 11- (As Pow) (15)
Psychological Limitation:
Showoff (15)
Strong Sense of Duty (15)
Seeks Knowledge of Supernatural (10)
Very Emotional (10)
Secret Identity (15)
Susceptibility:
1d6 STUN/turn, Contact w/Holy Symbol/Ground (15)

Total Disadvantage Points: 250



More Historical Mages

Bacon, Roger

(1214-1294): This English Franciscan friar, philosopher and scientist is generally credited as the first European to make and describe gunpowder. In his writings, Bacon did not deny the possibility that magic might be real, but he considered it weak and unreliable compared to natural science. Despite his skepticism, Bacon was later mythologized as a great wizard. Through his secret science he could create illusions, summon spirits, instantly transport people hundreds of miles, build a bridge of "solid air" across the English channel and witness events far away. He once made an oracular head of brass, but a careless assistant spoiled the experiment and the head exploded. After a well-meant use of his far-seeing device for a student led to tragedy, Bacon renounced magic and lived his last years in a monastic cell built into the wall of a church. When he died, he was buried there. Admiring contemporaries called Bacon *Doctor Mirabilis*—the Miraculous Doctor.

Cagliostro, Count Alessandro

(1745-1795): In the 18th century, occult pretensions were simply part of the act for roguish courtier adventurers, but Cagliostro outdid them all. In his years of promoting Egyptian Rite Freemasonry, he gave vast amounts of money to the poor despite no visible income; but then, it was claimed that he could make diamonds by alchemy. He also evoked the spirits of Voltaire and other famous men at a banquet, healed thousands by the laying on of hands—and charmed the socks off European high society. Then a jealous rival produced a sleazy journalist and part-time blackmailer who claimed that Count Cagliostro was really Giuseppe Balsamo, a cheap thug from Sicily. Cagliostro could not refute the claims. His brilliant career ended in disgrace and he died a prisoner of the Inquisition.

Nostradamus

(1503-1566): Pseudonym of Michel de Notre Dame, a physician and astrologer who became Europe's most famous seer. He produced a series of four-line poems whose remarkably opaque imagery is supposed to contain prophecies of world events far into the future, including the End of the World.

Appendices

Glossary

Many obscure terms have been used in this work. Some are taken from real occultism; others were coined by the author. While most have been defined at some point in the text, here is a quick for the reader.

ABYSS: The barrier between the Briah planes of Spirit and the Atziluth planes of ultimate reality. The Abyss annihilates anyone who has not overcome desire and balanced all the aspects of their own soul.

ADAM KADMON: The "Primal Man" of Kabbalism, representing the sum of all things, or God made manifest. Western sorcerers use Adam Kadmon to represent the totality of undivided existence in Kether. Other traditions call this Avatar of Everything the Source, the Absolute, Brahman, the Tao or Albion.

AMULET: A magical object intended to protect its owner from harm. Amulets take many forms, but most can be worn.

ANGEL: The spirits who serve God in the Judeo Christian Islamic religious complex. Officially angels are all good, but there are angels responsible for death and destruction. The Bible even describes God as sending "lying angels" to deliver false prophecies. Other religions, such as Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, also include spirits pretty much the same as angels.

ASSIAH: The "Material World," the division of the Multiverse holding universes that run by systems of natural law and not by magic (even if magic is used by the universe's inhabitants). The Earth's universe is an Assiatic Plane.

ASTRAL BODY: An invisible, intangible "spirit body" which a mage can detach from their physical body and use as a vehicle for their consciousness. Astral bodies travel at near infinite speed and are virtually undetectable and unstoppable, except by magic, but they cannot affect the physical world. According to occult lore, astral bodies are made of ECTOPLASM, everyone has one and people routinely wander in their astral bodies when they dream. Astral and physical bodies are connected by a silver cord that only breaks at the physical body's death. Souls may hang around in their astral bodies after the physical body's death as a ghost. Eventually the soul sheds the astral body, which either evaporates or becomes a mindless haunt.

ASTRAL MAGIC: Another name for Ritual Magic.

ASTRAL PLANE: A dimension made, so occultists claim, either of a kind of matter more "subtle" and "finely divided" than normal matter, or else of pure thought. People who know how can use the Astral Plane to reach other dimensions. Dreams happen on the Astral Plane, whose substance is extremely susceptible to influence by thought. The Astral Plane has three layers, the Lower, Middle and Upper Astral Planes. The Middle Astral Plane is also called the Void. The Upper Astral Plane is the VEIL OF THE TEMPLE.

ASTROLOGY: The doctrine that the arrangement of the Sun, Moon and planets in the signs of the Zodiac can influence events on Earth. Astrology is one of the chief sources of Western Mainstream Occultism and Hermetic Theurgy.

ATAVISM: Spirits associated with raw emotion and unconscious drives, often imagined in totem like animal forms. Hideous, twisted atavisms can be created by pain, violence, hate and fear. Black magicians may deliberately create such atavisms and use them to attack their enemies.

ATZILUTH: The "Archetypal World." There are only three Atziluthic Planes: the Dark Sea of Power which sustains all existence, the Bright Sea of Forms which supplies all concepts and patterns of form and substance, and the Primum Mobile of total, undivided existence. Access to the Atziluthic Planes is blocked by the Abyss.

BINAH: "Understanding." Third station on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Mages call Binah's dimension the Dark Sea of Being, the reservoir of raw energy from which the Multiverse is made.

BLOOD TIDE: The astral dimension created by animal consciousness. The Blood Tide is difficult to locate and enter. It is dangerous and quite alien. Fortunately, there is little contact between the Blood Tide and the human astral realms.

BRIAH: The "Mental World" of purely spiritual dimensions, where the symbolic "true gods" of the Multiverse dwell. Access to the Brialic Planes is blocked by the Veil of the Temple.

CHESED: "Mercy." Fourth station on the Tree of Life. It holds the quadripartite dimension of the Four Zoas.

CHOKMAH: "Wisdom." Second station on the Tree of Life. In the Kabbalistic model of the Multiverse, it receives the Bright Sea of Forms, a dimension made of the pure archetypes of all existence.

CYST: A "pocket" in the Astral Plane, a tiny, self contained environment. Cysts can be made as a side effect of powerful magic, by human madness or for no reason at all. Once entered, cysts are hard to leave. They are often quite nightmarish.

DEMON: Generally, any evil spirit. Specifically, the evil spirits associated with the Judeo Christian Islamic religious complex. Also called "Devils."

DIMENSION: Actually, a "dimension" is just some quantity that can be measured, such as length, duration, temperature or Gross National Product. Thanks to generations of comic books and occultists who thought that ghosts operated in "the Fourth

Dimension," the term is also used for other universes. Also called a Cosmos, World or Plane.

ECTOPLASM: A form of spiritualized matter or materialized spirit, more "finely divided" than regular matter. Ghosts, astral bodies and demons, among other things, are made of ectoplasm.

ELEMENTAL: A spirit embodying a state of matter or natural condition, such as fire elementals, earth elementals, lightning elementals, and so on. Confusingly, some occultists use "elemental" to mean a spirit created by strong emotion, pain or violence. (in this work, such spirits are called ATAVISMS.) Styles of magic based on a particular kind of matter or energy, such as earth magic, air magic and light magic, are often called "elemental" styles.

GRIMOIRE: A book that gives instructions for spells. Hardly any of the real grimoires were written by their claimed authors.

HIGH MAGIC: Magic that harnesses truly cosmic energies through pure force of will (perhaps with the cooperation of various dimension lords).

HOD: "Splendor." Eighth station on the Tree of Life. It receives the dimensions that work by magic but are not bound to a dimension lord.

IMAGINAL REALMS: The dimensions created by thought out of the Lower Astral Plane. The chief Imaginal Realms are the Parterres and the Dreamzone. Small but distinct astral settings such as Puerto Muerto or CYSTS are Imaginal Realms, too. So are the realms created by nonhuman consciousness, the Blood Tide, Yggdrasil and the Silverbright. Sometimes the Lower Astral Plane in general is included as an Imaginal Realm. The Imaginal Realms are also called the INNER PLANES.

INNER PLANES: The dimensions associated with the Earth. These are the Lower Astral Plane, the Parterres of the Quaternion and the realms of nonhuman consciousness. Also called the IMAGINAL REALMS.

KABBALISM: Jewish mysticism combining esoteric theology and cosmology with magical beliefs about numbers, letters, words and spirits. It is one of the chief sources of Western Mainstream occultism and Hermetic Theurgy. Also spelled "Cabalism" or "Qabalism," depending on how popular or pretentious the writer is.

KETHER: "Crown." First and topmost station on the Tree of Life. It represents the ultimate unity of all things.

LYCANTHROPE: A werewolf. People who change into other animal forms are THERIANTHROPES.

MALKUTH: "The Kingdom." Tenth and lowest station on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Mages assign to Malkuth the dimensions bearing Earth-like worlds.

MANCY: A suffix indicating a fortune telling method; thus, geomancy (telling fortunes through a handful of dirt) or pyromancy (throwing symbolic objects into a fire and seeing which ones burn first). By extension, mancy is used in the names of magic specialties, such as "necromancy" for magic of death and the dead, or pyromancy for any magic dealing with fire, not just fortune-telling. (The proper suffix should be turgy or urgy, "working," but nobody's likely to change at this point.)

NATURAL MAGIC: Magic that relies upon the magical energies and properties of plants, animals, minerals and other sorts of matter.

NECROMANCY: Magic of the dead. Originally it meant summoning spirits of the dead to ask them questions. Since most traditions held that calling up a ghost required exhuming the body and doing disrespectful things to it, necromancy came to include magic to make zombies, death spells and other abominations. Necromancy in the old sense is still practiced, though: it is called "Channeling."

NETZACH: "Victory." Seventh station on the Tree of Life. Mages give it "the Dominions," the dimensions bound to and ruled by mighty spirits (dimension lords).

OUTER PLANES: The material (but magical) dimensions of Yetzirah, which exist independently of Earth.

PACHAD: "Justice." Fifth station on the Tree of Life. It receives certain Brialic dimensions, most notably those particularly considered to test the character of visitors.

PARTERRE: The astral dimensions which are, to some degree, extensions of the Earth. Usually the term is limited to the dimensions of the QUATERNION: the Land of Legends, the Netherworld, Babylon and Elysium.

PLANE: A universe, cosmos or dimension.

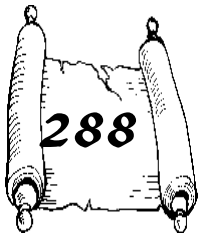
PRINCES OF THE UNIVERSE: Powerful spiritual entities of the Brialic Planes. They personify archetypal concepts. In the field of action which thay symbolize, they are unstoppable. Also called "Avatars."

QUATERNION: The four main IMAGINAL REALMS of Earth: Babylon, Elysium, Faerie and The Netherworld. Sometimes the Earth itself is included, as the Quaternion's hub.

QUEMETIEL: The last, degenerate stage of existence before complete nonentity. It is a mindless, chaotic fusion of long defunct gods and spirits at the "bottom" of the Qliphothic Planes.

QLIPHOTH, QLIPHOTHIC: Hebrew, "Shells" or "Husks." Referring to dimensions of negative energy and the associated forces and beings. Qliphothic entities and energies dissolve and degrade the substance and magic of normal, positive energy universes.

RITUAL MAGIC: Magic that uses complex rituals to command spirits or to augment the magician's own



spirit to give it magical powers. Also called Astral Magic or Spirit Magic.

SANCTUM SANCTORUM: Latin, "Holy of Holies." A wizard's Headquarters so called because of its inaccessibility by ordinary folk.

SEPHIROTH: Hebrew, "Emanations." The stations on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, each one representing an attribute of divine power. Mages use the Sephiroth to catalog dimensions.

SILVERBRIGHT: An astral realm of "machine consciousness" proposed by technomancers. So far there is no direct proof of its existence. Some mages call it "The Grey."

SOLIPSIST: The Avatar of Unbeing, personification of nonexistence. It seeks to annihilate all existence.

SPIRIT MAGIC: Another name for Ritual Magic.

TALISMAN: An object which confers some magical power on its owner or user usually an "active" power such as good luck, wealth or control of a spirit, to distinguish talismans from "passive" protective AMULETS.

THAUMATURGY: Greek, "Wonder Working." In general, magic treated as a way to affect the physical world for practical goals. More specifically, the quick, combat oriented style of High Magic most often seen in comic books. Thaumaturgy is characterized by gesturing, invocations to various dimension lords and simple luminous forms as the Special Effect of spells.

THERIANTHROPE: This is the general term for a curse that turns a human into a ravening animal or beast man. "Lycanthropy" only refers to wolf men. In folklore around the world, people also turn into many other sorts of animals, such as hyenas, foxes, tigers, leopards, bears, snakes and sharks.

THEURGY: Greek, "God Working." Classically, magic devoted to religious ends such as prophetic visions. More generally, Theurgy includes all magic which deals with spirits and the soul, such as astral travel and getting magic power from spirits. In this work, the modern synthesis of Classical Theurgy, Kabbalism, Medieval demonology and diverse forms of mind and spirit magic is called Hermetic Theurgy.

TIPHERETH: "Beauty." Sixth station on the Tree of Life. Mages assign the Veil of the Temple and various other planes of Briah to Tiphereth.

TREE OF LIFE: A Kabbalistic icon, showing the ten "emanations" of god from the primal, unmanifest Godhead to the material world. It is the chief "filing system" for symbols in Western Mainstream Occultism. It is also used in this work as a "map" of the Multiverse.

TULPA: A synthetic person magically created out of pure thought. According to Tibetan occultism, someone skilled in the proper meditations can create a person just by imagining that person very strongly for a long time. Tulpa creation is one of the most advanced of magical arts.

UPPER PLANES: The dimensions of Briah, where the really cosmic spirits hang out.

VEIL OF THE TEMPLE: The upper level of the Astral Plane which both gives and blocks access to the planes of Briah. The Veil of the Temple tends to externalize the desires, fears and expectations of visitors.

WITCHCRAFT: This term has several meanings, depending on who you talk to. The most important are: 1) A mixture of traditional herb lore, midwifery and simple folk charms, used by both rural and urban lower class folk around the world. 2) Satanism. According to the witch hunting churchmen and civic authorities of Renaissance Europe, the Devil gave his worshippers magical powers with which to work evil. 3) An innate magical power to cause harm to others, perhaps without knowing it; sometimes called "the Evil Eye." This form of "witchcraft" is known to and feared by every folk culture in the world. 4) A vulgar name for Wicca and its offshoots: neo pagan cults inspired (sometimes very loosely) by fragments of ancient pagan lore. Many adherents of the "witch religions" now admit they are inventing a new religion based on old ideas, not literally reviving an old one. (The "scholarship" supporting claims for a unified "Old Religion" of Earth Goddess worship pervading Europe has been discredited.)

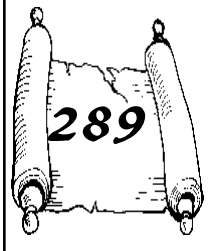
WORLD: This word can have several meanings: 1) A planet within a universe or dimension. 2) A whole small dimension which is mostly one habitable area, with no "outer space." 3) A major division of the Multiverse, holding dimensions of a certain type. The "Four Worlds" are ASSIAH, YETZIRAH, BRIAH and ATZILUTH.

YESOD: "Foundation." Ninth station on the Tree of Life. Mages file the Lower and Middle Astral Plane, the Imaginal Realms and the tiny Demi Planes to Yesod.

YETZIRAH: The "Astral World" or "Formative World," holding the material universes that run by magic instead of natural law. The Yetziratic Planes are all connected by the Middle Astral Plane.

YGGDRASIL: The astral dimension created by plant consciousness. There is almost no contact between Yggdrasil and the human astral realms, and a good thing too: Yggdrasil is very alien and very dangerous for human visitors.

ZOA: One of the four Prime Avatars, or the conditions they personify: Order, Chaos, Art or Nature. Can also refer to anything connected with the Prime Avatars, such as Zoa magic, Zoa spirits and so on.



Bibliography

The literature of magic, in comics, fantasy fiction, nonfiction and folklore is overwhelmingly vast. This is hardly an exhaustive listing.

Other Games

Dozens of role-playing games have included magic, but few have placed magic in a modern setting. The games listed here are especially notable, mostly for their examples of secret occult subcultures.

Mage: The Ascension (White Wolf Game Studio). This game not only presents magic in the modern world, it proposes a milieu in which mages simultaneously rule the world and stay utterly hidden from mundane humanity. Conflicts arise because different factions of mages have different ideas about how the world should be run. This game has many intriguing concepts despite flashes of New Age pretension. It and its many supplements are well worth reading. Other titles in White Wolf's "Storyteller" system can be mined for inspiration if one wants a powerful supernatural subculture for one's campaign.

Call of Cthulhu (Chaosium). Spellcasting is only a minor part of this game, but the whole premise is that a horrific secret world of unearthly forces lurks just out of public view. If one wants a strong horror element in a campaign's Occult World, one should definitely take a look at Call of Cthulhu and its many supplements. It's the best game treatment of the Lovecraftian Slimy Unspeakables which inspired the Kings of Edom.

Nephilim (Chaosium). Unfortunately, Chaosium's success with Call of Cthulhu did not carry over to this new game. It is of value chiefly as an example of what not to do, working from the silliest elements of popular occultism—even an astrology chart to determine how the characters' powers wax and wane each day. Some of the spells might be worth cribbing, though.

Kult (Metropolis Games). Another horror game of the "Reality is nothing like we believe" type. Some interesting notions, really creepy cults (in the supplements) and another take on the idea of an archetypal city dimension.

Comic

Magic-oriented comics come in waves. At the moment of writing, one such wave is at its height, or just past. Some of the titles listed are no longer published, but are available in compilation volumes. The titles listed here are simply some highlights.

Books of Magic (DC Vertigo). Adventures of a very young wizard who has just discovered his powers and doesn't really know how to use them. Weird and wonderful.

Dr. Strange (Marvel). This is *the* definitive super-mage title. All the characteristic elements of super-mage adventures—light show spells with alliterative names, weird dimensions, cosmic entities, the works—are found in this comic, and most were invented there.

Ghost Rider (Marvel). The original Ghost Rider was about a man fused to a demon. The present Ghost Rider has a rather more complicated origin, which fortunately does not matter. A good example of a magic-based superhero operating in a grim and gritty Occult World—Super-Mage meets Dark Champions.

Hellblazer (DC Vertigo). Very grim title about John Constantine, a heroic-level occult investigator who frequently needs new DNPCs.

Sandman (DC Vertigo). A look at Dream, a true cosmic entity, and how he and his fellows interact with humanity and each other. Sometimes enigmatic, always good.

Fiction

There have been literally hundreds of fantasy novels with wizards as protagonists or in their major supporting cast. These few authors are included because GMs can draw specific material from their work.

Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy* (*Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradisio*). "Inferno" is *the* classic guided tour of Hell. The other sections continue through Purgatory into Heaven, but they are less interesting.

Bear, Greg. *The Infinity Concerto, The Serpent Mage.* Interesting version of Faerie and fairy folk.

Beckford, William. *Vathek.* If you're ready to go beyond Sinbad, Aladdin and Ali Baba but the full Thousand and One Nights seems too intimidating, try this. It's the best Arabian fantasy ever written in English.

Blish, James. *Black Easter, The Day After Judgment* (also published in one volume as *The Devil's Day.*) The only novels ever to present grimoire demonology, take it seriously and push it to its logical, horrifying conclusion. Suggests what a Ritual Magician must do to get and keep their powers; also, a look at what might happen to the world if the heroes lose.

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities.* Undefinable and indescribable, but it was the main inspiration for Babylon. GMs can get lots of ideas for exotic cities from this book.

deLint, Charles. *Moonheart.* Celtic and Native American magic at work in contemporary Canada, interplanar conflict and a great Sanctum Sanctorum.

Dietz, Tom. Nearly everything. Very good portrayals of magic secretly at work in modern Georgia, using both Celtic and Native American mythology.

Hodgson, William Hope. T*he House on the Borderland.* An Irish house is the focus of creepy, enigmatic, cosmic forces. It would make a great Sanctum Sanctorum.

Hughart, Barry. *Bridge of Birds, Story of the Stone, Eight Skilled Gentlemen.* Very funny, and a wonderful introduction to Chinese myth and magic.

Lucan. *Pharsalia.* Mostly this is a satiric history of a Roman civil war, but Chapter 6 includes Erichtho, a truly classic wicked witch and necromancer.

Niven, Larry & Pournelle, Jerry. *Inferno.* A science fiction writer goes through Hell in this updated version of Dante's classic. Good source material for the Netherworld.

Weinberg, Robert. *A Logical Magician, A Calculated Magic.* Fluffy look at how supernatural creatures might adapt to the modern world—with a few deeper thoughts on where they come from and how they can be defeated.

Wheatley, Dennis. The "Black Magic" Novels. Dennis Wheatley's novels of noble heroes pitted against Satanism pretty much defined the Satanic Cult Conspiracy for the twentieth century. Wheatley was not a very good writer, but he was very popular in his day. His heroes often seem a little ridiculous, but his Satanists are still creepy—and a good model for incorporating a Black Magic Conspiracy into one's campaign.

Nonfiction

Yes, this is the heavy stuff. One might even say ponderous. About a zillion books have been written about "real magic," but very few have anything worth a gamer's attention. Also look for books of mythology. No specific titles will be given, since there are just too many.

Blake, William. Collected Works. The inspiration for the top cosmic entities presented in this work. Cool stuff. Blake's last three "Prophetic Books," Vala, or The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem are tremendously obscure, but don't let that stop you: since the experts don't agree what they mean, your interpretation is as good as theirs. Try to find facsimile editions of Blake's original, illustrated versions—ancestors of the comic book!

Butler, E. M. T*he Myth of the Magus.* The history of magic told through the lives of its most celebrated practitioners, from the original Magi to Theosophy.

—. *Ritual Magic.* Surveys European ceremonial magic through biography and the grimoires, including several side trails ignored by Waite's book.

Cavendish, Richard (ed.) *Man, Myth and Magic:* An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Supernatural. What it says.

Crowley, Aleister. *Magick in Theory and Practice.* Crowley talks a good game, as charlatans go. This is supposedly an a workbook for would be Ritual Magicians…after they've spent a decade or so mastering Yoga, Meditation, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Still, Crowley's appendices can be mined for inspiration.

Cummings, Richard. *The Alchemists: Fathers of Modern Chemistry.* Light, popular introduction to European alchemy.

Davis, Wade. *The Serpent and the Rainbow.* Good introduction to Voudon and its role in Haitian society. The movie inspired by the book is more lurid but a lot of fun too.

deCamp, L. Sprague. *Lost Continents.* Definitive survey of the Atlantis myth and its many Lost Civilization spin-offs. Tells of some of the weirder people in 19th-20th century occultism.

O'Keefe, Daniel Lawrence. *Stolen Lightning: the Social Theory of Magic.* Why people believe in magic, and what it *really* is they believe in. Very scholarly.

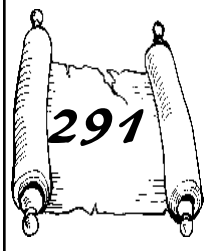
Thompson, Stith. *Motif-Index of Folk Literature.* Massive research guide to world mythology, organized by motifs such as "Dragons," "Magic Item Gained Through Test of Bravery" and the like.

Waite, Arthur Edward. *The Book of Ceremonial Magic.* A detailed overview of grimoire magic. Waite's Edwardian writing style and pious interjections are sometimes a bit thick, but it beats the grimoires themselves. Don't read them, read this.

Wallis Budge, E. A. *Amulets and Talismans.* Definitive, illustrated guide to, what else, amulets and talismans. Good ideas for Foci. Wallis Budge also discusses Kabbalism and other aspects of Western Mainstream Occultism.

—. *Egyptian Magic.* Lots of ideas for Egyptian styled wizardry.

Webb, James. *The Occult Underground, The Occult Establishment.* History of occultism in the 19th and 20th centuries, showing its back-door connections to better known movements in art, religion, psychology and even politics, with many portraits of bizarre people and events.



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