How do You do That?

A Practical Guide to Sphere Magick for Mage 20th Anniversary Edition

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The Heirophant

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for Mage 20th Anniversary Edition

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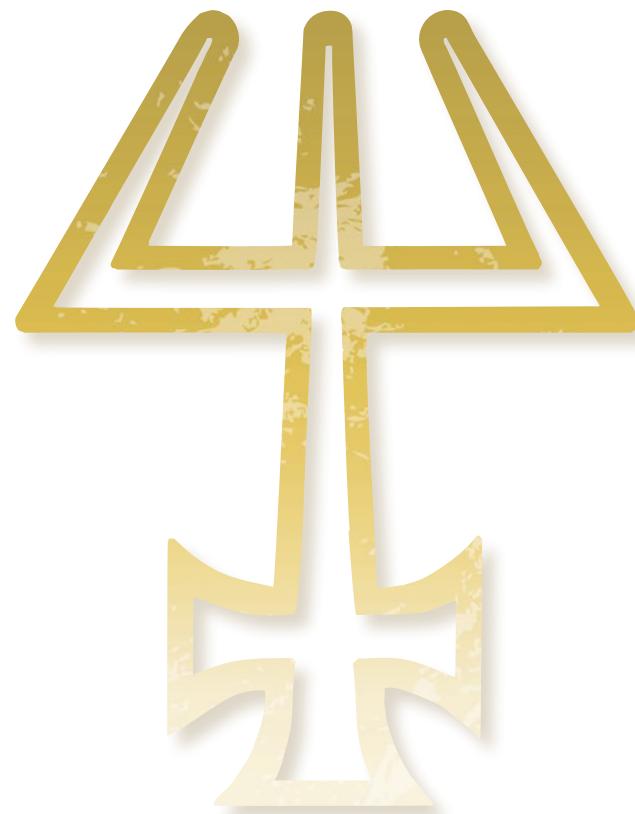
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How Do You Do That?

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LONG DIVISION

The truth, certainty, truest, without untruth. What is above is like what is below.
What is below is like what is above. The miracle of unity is to be attained.
— Hermes the Thrice-Great, from the Leyden Papyrus

I am here, there, and everywhere.

My wings beat a blur in the humid air, my heart pumping a blastbeat under tiny hollow bones. The nectar slides through my sucking mouth, and though I cannot taste it, it can tell it's good.

My roots draw endless sustenance from fertile ground, glacial-slow, a timeless symphony of arboreal endurance. Woven through soil, winding past stones, drinking vitality from the earth.

My legs pick their way across the bark, all eight appendages pin-sharp with questing hairs. The web plays out behind me, and the glistening trap not yet built spans in my mind's eye, a sticky source of struggling food.

I am the sun. I am the air. I am the memory of a song split to infinities of being, time, and space.

I would not trade this feeling for the world.

Drawing a deeper breath, we slide our consciousness from the multitude and settle it back into my tiny human frame. The sun warms my shoulders. The grass tickles my skin. The hummingbird's wings whirl like an endless pack of cards being shuffled by a tireless machine. The spider disappears against the bark of the tree as my perspective settles back to its finite human view. "We" becomes "I." *All* becomes *Me.*

Open my eyes and release the air within. Feel the breath uncoil as I sink into myself.

I am infinite. I contain multitudes.

As do we all.

Damn...

If only everyone could see what I see. Feel what I feel. Climb the miracle and taste its life.

Yeah, babe. Good luck with that.

I try not to sigh with frustration, but lose that particular war.

War. Why is it always about war? Why must the defining verb of human existence be boiled down to eternal conflict? I mean, it's not like nature herself isn't eternally in conflict, but that's about balance and flow and life. Flies don't look for spiders to battle. Trees don't kill so that the soil may live. I'm not naïve enough to think that nature exists in perfect harmony with itself, but what is it about the human condition — Awakened and otherwise — that drives us to fight for everything and view everything as a fight?

I wish I had the luxury of answers, but luxuries are in short supply.

NAME: CAESARA JOHNSON WHITE,
AKA JONATHAN EDGAR WHITE,
AKA WHITE JOHNNY,
AKA JOHNNY CAESAR

DOB: 6/25/1992

AG: 23.46

HT: 176.829

WT: 97.7272727273

ENGAGE WITH CAUTION – COC

COC: Capture or Cancel.

The VDAS spews a list of capabilities and affiliations. I plan my strikes accordingly. The heavyset "Caesar" shifts into a posture familiar to anyone who fights with knives.

I am quite familiar with knives. And with fighting.

Knife-fighting may be the most brutal form of combat known to man. A fighter must be willing to deal with the physical and psychological traumas involved in close-in killing: the bone, the meat, the gush of fluids, the smell of blood and feces. And the noise a wounded animal makes in very close proximity. Mr. Johnny White is well acquainted with those sensations. I do not need the VDAS feed to tell me he enjoys them.

I do not care to waste time on lower forms of life.

I could end this confrontation with a stare. I could have avoided it altogether. But Johnny White, this "Caesar," is the type of man I enjoy killing. It does me no great honor to realize that I still enjoy it, but I left delusions about myself behind a long time ago. I do not enjoy murder. I do enjoy pest control.

Johnny White is less than a cockroach. Cockroaches serve an honest role within a healthy ecosystem. Men like Johnny White do not.

He does not even see me move.

Unless restrained by an external force, a knife and a body fall at the same rate of speed. I do not permit Mister White to fall. Not yet.

Observations indicate compound fractures of the right clavicle, upper sternum, and ribs 1-4. Multiple fractures of right radius, ulna, carpals, metacarpals. Fractured right humerus. Substantial tissue damage. Muscular integrity significantly compromised. Collapsed right lung. Grade 6 liver laceration. External blood loss minimal, limited to compound fractures of clavicle, sternum, and ribs. Aortic arch rupture; internal blood loss significant. Traumatic shock imminent. Immediate medical procedures advised.

"Mister White," I inform him, "the only reason you are not dying on the pavement at this moment is because I am curious about something."

"The *fuck*, dude?" Eloquent. Then again, if I truly wished for information, I could have had it far more easily than this.

"Is this the nature of the last words of a Caesar?"

"What the fuck you *talkin'* about, man?" Shock has begun to set in. Then again, I do not imagine Mr. White would be much more coherent under better circumstances.

"From your response, I presume that you do not yet feel the true extent of your injuries. It is entirely possible that your pain receptors have temporarily shut down. That is, in common terminology, a small mercy. It will not last long. Nor will you."
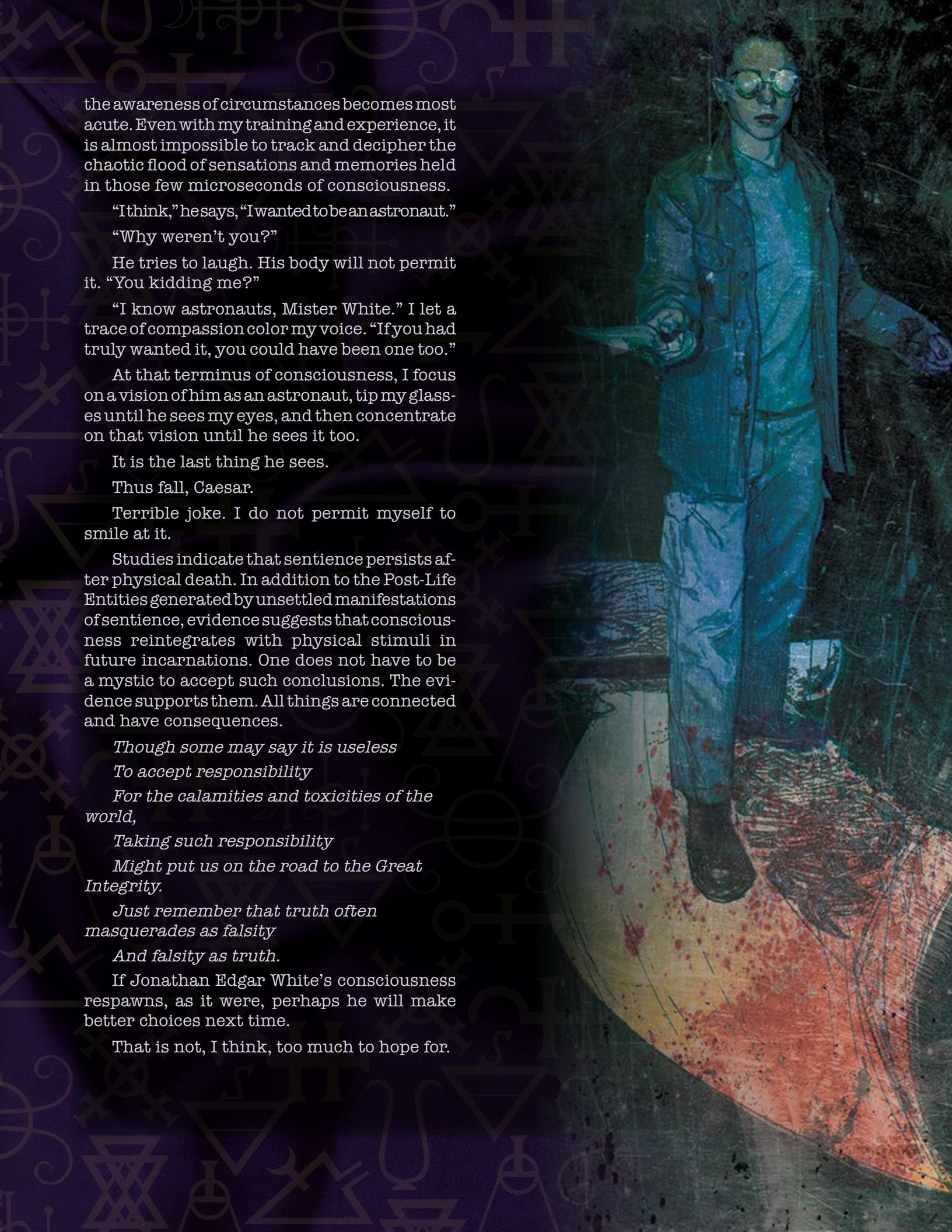
I learned long ago that an absurdly clinical demeanor can be extremely unsettling.

"As I said," I tell him, "I am curious. Did you ever think about who else you might have been?"

"What?"

"Your life, Mr. White. The choices you have made that brought you to this moment. Did you ever stop to consider the other choices you might have made, and how things would be different otherwise?"

His eyes, dulled with shock, open slightly. His pupils expand, as if in recognition. I have always found this to be the most intriguing moment of human consciousness: the moment when comprehension of mortality dawns and

the awareness of circumstances becomes most acute. Even with my training and experience, it is almost impossible to track and decipher the chaotic flood of sensations and memories held in those few microseconds of consciousness.

"I think," he says, "I wanted to be an astronaut."

"Why weren't you?"

He tries to laugh. His body will not permit it. "You kidding me?"

"I know astronauts, Mister White." I let a trace of compassion color my voice. "If you had truly wanted it, you could have been one too."

At that terminus of consciousness, I focus on a vision of him as an astronaut, tip my glasses until he sees my eyes, and then concentrate on that vision until he sees it too.

It is the last thing he sees.

Thus fall, Caesar.

Terrible joke. I do not permit myself to smile at it.

Studies indicate that sentience persists after physical death. In addition to the Post-Life Entities generated by unsettled manifestations of sentience, evidence suggests that consciousness reintegrates with physical stimuli in future incarnations. One does not have to be a mystic to accept such conclusions. The evidence supports them. All things are connected and have consequences.

Though some may say it is useless

To accept responsibility

For the calamities and toxicities of the world,

Taking such responsibility

Might put us on the road to the Great Integrity.

Just remember that truth often masquerades as falsity

And falsity as truth.

If Jonathan Edgar White's consciousness respawns, as it were, perhaps he will make better choices next time.

That is not, I think, too much to hope for.

Introduction: Crunch Time

I pray that I may forget
Those matters that with myself I too much discuss
Too much explain
— T.S. Eliot

"Oh, do shut up!"

Cats sulk magnificently, and this black one sulks more magnificently than most. "I merely pointed out," he says in a tone of haughty pique, "that the slippers are supposed to be GREEN, not GLASS."

"Glass is traditional," Penny Dreadful replies. "Translations be damned, this is what suits the story now."

Eyeing the slick transparent shoes, Penny slides one graceful foot into the left glass slipper - really more of a high-heeled pump shaped from unyielding crystal. "That," she says to no one in particular, "is pretty much the opposite of comfortable." Still, it IS traditional, and so she slips on the right glass shoe and tries to stand.

The cat cleans his shoulder, not bothering to care.

Penny's ankles wobble in the rather unstable footwear. She scowls. "Like hell Cinderella ran anywhere in these. Prince Charming didn't find her at the bottom of his staircase with a twisted ankle and a broken neck."

Mister Mistoffelees licks an errant paw. "The appeal of shapely coffins on one's feet has always escaped me."
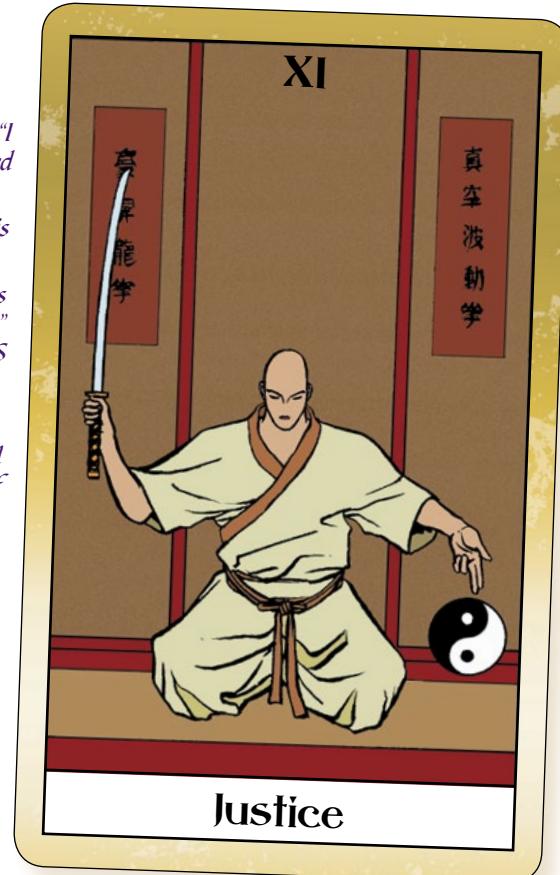
"That's because you spend more time on my shoulder than on the ground."

"Merely my due as one of Nature's higher beings."

Penny slips her black-lace-stockinged feet from the brittle glass slippers. Pings one fingernail off the ringing side of her left shoe. Quirks one corner of her mouth in supreme dissatisfaction.

"The green Docs it is, then," she says at last, putting the shoes aside. "And to hell with tradition."

Reserving comment, the black cat merely licks his paw.

A Bit of This and That

"*How do you DO that?!?!*" The question echoes through four editions of **Mage: The Ascension**, often with good reason. **Mage**'s greatest rules-based asset – its flexible, personalized magick system – can also, bluntly speaking, be a royal pain in the ass when you're trying to translate Sphere Ranks and Arete levels into "*I turn him into a newt; how long until he gets better?*"

We present this book in an effort to minimize the headaches when your mages warp the fabric of reality.

The Arts are theoretically infinite. Even so, certain classic bits turn up again and again in mystic legends and **Mage** chronicles. And although the *Common Magickal Effects chart* in **Chapter Ten** of **Mage 20th Anniversary Edition** reveals the basic Spheres involved in many classic acts of magick, the following entries can answer questions and suggest possibilities for certain elaborate feats of Awakened Will.

How Do You *DO* That? cannot, of course, reflect every possible act of magick you and your fellow players can imagine. Nor should it. Part of the fun of **Mage: The Ascension** involves clever acts of imagination. Each mage has her own way of doing things, and each **Mage** player employs an individual approach to magick. You'll come up with things we hadn't even dreamed of. Even so, this book features a wide array of magickal feats – transformation, influence, martial arts, and so on.

This is not a book of spells or a collection of rotes; instead, it's an assortment of feats and tricks that mages of all kinds might employ in one form or another. Rather than having a Hermetic summoning ritual entry, for example, this book has a section that deals with many aspects of **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding** – the basic systems, the essential Traits, the game systems involved when making a pact with an Umbral entity, and the tactics smart mages use in order to avoid having their Awakened asses kicked into some Otherworldly hell by the entity in question. Although most of the basic feats can be found on the **Common Magickal Effects** section in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten**, this book offers more detailed guidelines for the rolls, Traits, long-term consequences, and so forth that tend to be involved with those various feats.

Unless otherwise noted, the following entries cover the rules for any mage's practice. A Black Suit, an alchemist, a rock star, and a witch would all use the same game systems when charming a person with *Uncanny Influence*; the practices, instruments, and beliefs will differ, but the rules remain pretty much the same. For details about those stylistic differences and the way your characters use them, see *Focus and the Arts* in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, pp.565-600**, as well as the character creation process outlined in the same book, **Chapter Six, pp.**

256, 259, 264, and 339. For simplicity's sake, however, we'll default to *mage, magick,* and so forth throughout this book without making distinctions between types of mages or the differences between mystic magick and Enlightened Sciences.

Two traditional magickal feats are notable by their absence here: Otherworldly travel and the creation of enchanted objects. Both feats can be found in **Mage 20** – the travel details in **Chapter Nine**'s sections about the *Otherworlds* and the *Digital Web* **(pp. 465-485)** and the enchantment details in *The Toybox* from **Appendix II (pp. 652-653)**. Computer-specific rules can also be found in **The Book of Secrets**, **Chapter Two**, although computers and information technology have become a common focus instrument for all kinds of feats.

Unlike most **Mage** books, **How Do You *DO* That?** is strictly business. Aside from bits of flavor text that show appropriate glimpses into a mage's world, there's no setting or character information offered here. Instead, we deal simply with the game systems involved. Our tone may be playful or snarky in places, but we aim to be straightforward whenever possible here and save the poetry for other occasions.

Finding Your Way

The following sections have been divided up into a selection of broad categories, based upon what the mage in question is trying to accomplish.

Beyond this **Introduction, How Do You *DO* That?** contains a single chapter, *Classic Magickal Feats*. That chapter, in turn, features an array of sub-chapters based around certain reality-altering feats:

- **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification**, which deals with the creation and modification of inanimate objects and living creatures.

- **Elemental Mastery**, which shows you how to work with the raw forces of Nature.

- **Energy-Work**, which focuses on the many applications of Quintessential energy.

- **Enhanced Perceptions**, which explores farsight, prophecy, aura-reading, magickal detection, and the simple yet underrated powers of basic Sphere perceptions.

- **Martial Arts**, which reveals the most arcane disciplines of the fighting arts.

- **Mystic Travel**, which shows some of the ways in which mages use their Arts to get from one point to another… or to bring one point *to* another.

- **Necromancy**, which explores the many Arts of the Dead.

- **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding**, wherein the hazardous traditions of spirit-entities are discussed and described.

- **Time Distortion and Travel**, which unravels the confounding puzzles of temporal Arts.

- **Uncanny Influence**, which describes the systems behind enchantment, possession, exorcism, illusions, and more.

- Finally, **The Index: Where Can I Find What?** helps you quickly locate specific rules and guidelines within this book.

Each section features *The Basics* behind that type of magick, followed by various entries that deal with specific permutations of the feat in question.
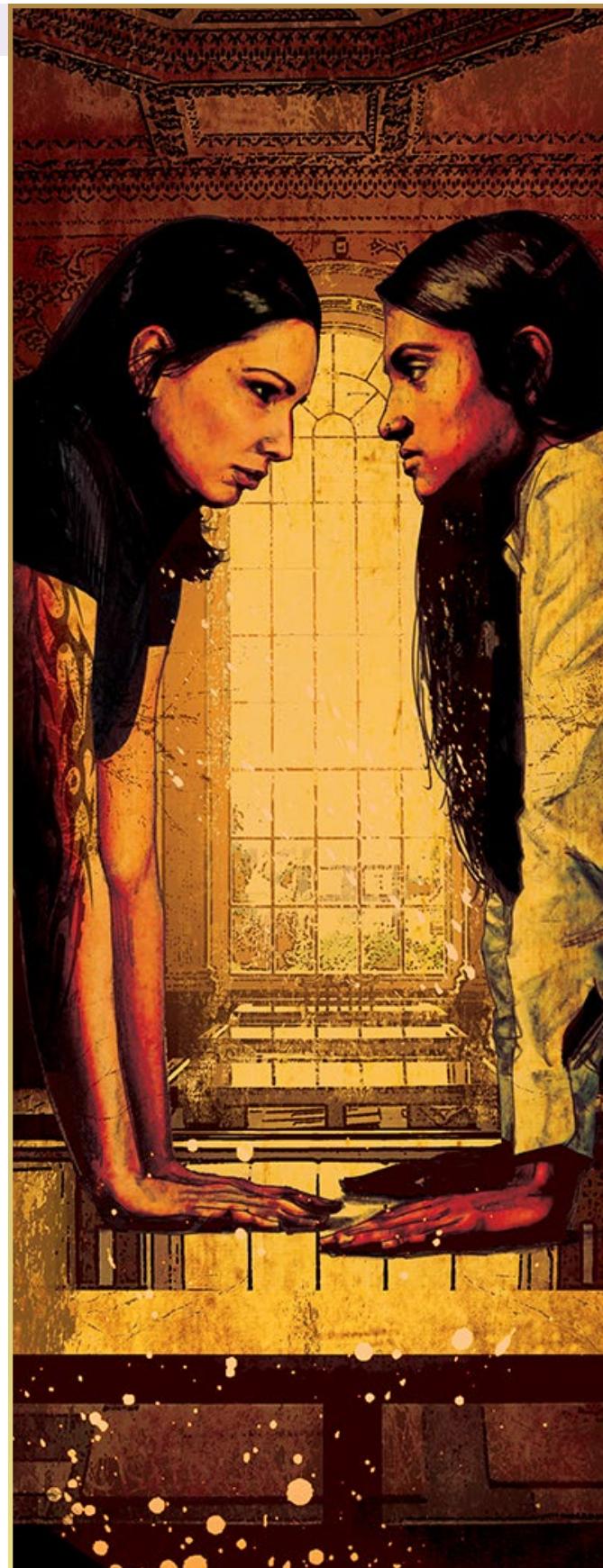
As always, the Storyteller has the final say about whether or not a given trick or procedure works in his chronicle. Although there's a section that deals with time travel, for example, your Storyteller may rule that player characters cannot travel backwards through time, *period*. In such cases, then, the Storyteller can overrule the systems given in this book. We advise against doing that unless there's a really good reason, if only for consistency's sake; players must be able to count on the official rules, after all, if only to a certain extent. Still, if you're running a game with house rules that contradict the systems presented in this book, it's ultimately *your* game... and thus, your rules... that matter most.

Systems and Editions

Speaking of rules and contradictions...

The following systems are based in the **Mage 20th Anniversary** rules. Although most of the Sphere Ranks and their associated Effects remain consistent between **Mage 2nd Edition** and **Mage 20**, a handful of Ranks and Effects (such as the **Mage Revised Edition** Prime 2 "lightsaber" Effect, which demands Prime 3 in **Mage 20**) differ between editions. When in doubt, default to **Mage 20, Chapter Ten**.

Ultimately, **How Do You *DO* That?** is an instructional appendix to the massive toolkit provided in **Mage 20**... and began, in fact, as large chunks of that book's ninth and tenth chapters. Use what feels right for your chronicle, especially when those tricky questions like *but how long does that magickal thunderstorm last?* crop up, as they inevitably do. And if (or when) the following rules interfere with your chronicle's flow, consider dropping them, modifying them, or otherwise adjusting things to suit the tone of your particular chronicle. Magick, after all, has many rules but few absolutes.

Classic Magickal Feats

And above all else, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who don't believe in magic will never find it.
— Roald Dahl, from his Jubilee Books Author Profile

He remembers the moment just before it happens: a tight second of incandescent clarity. Around him, the leaping figures hold their place, locked into an eternal instant. The baseball hovers in the path of the bat, its doomed trajectory prophesied by the expression on the batter's face. The angle of his lunge. The muscles in those frozen arms, gleaming with sweat in the fading light.

It'd be a simple matter, Paolo knows, to freeze this second that, to him, has already passed. Maybe walk out on the field and pluck the baseball out of its trajectory. It'd be a mercy for the poor thing, wouldn't it? I mean, that batter knocked the fuck out of that baseball. Maybe if Paolo turns back the clock and takes advantage of the moment...

"Paolo?"

"Huh? Yeah?"

"Don't you wanna leave yet?" Rebecca stands over him as the shadowed bleachers empty out. The arc lights illuminate a field spotted with after-game debris, human and otherwise.

"Oh. Yeah," he says, shaking off the frozen moment that happened three hours ago. "Yeah, let's go hit Chuckie's too. I'm starving. My treat."

Rebecca crosses her arms. An amused expression plays across her face. "Lost track of time again, huh?"

"Me?" Paolo asks, all innocence. "Nah – that never happens to me..."

Moments of Magick

You know those moments – the feats that define words like *magick* or *wizardry* in the popular imagination: the enchanter who breaks a person's will with a hypnotic glare; the gizmo-slinging inventor crafting grand technology from nothing but sheer will and table scraps; the rune-crusted pentacle where dazzling designs help a chanting magus rip down the walls between worlds and allow some uncanny *Thing* to step through... Such are the moments that epitomize the Awakened Arts. And although the trappings depend upon a given mage's focus (see **Focus and the Arts** in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten**), those moments hold primal appeal in any game about magick and the people who use it.

If you're playing a game called **Mage**, you obviously want to stage classic acts of wizardry. The mage in question might use wings or a jetpack instead of a broom, but it's reasonable to assume that you want her to fly. This book, then, presents

many classic acts of True Magick and Enlightened Science, showing the rules behind the deeds. That way, when your mage shapeshifts, steps back through time, or makes a group of people drop into instant slumber, you know how to use those elusive Spheres and die rolls to make the moment come alive. Although we can't present every possible act of magick here, the following sections take broad categories of classical feats and then break them down into the essential die rolls, Spheres, successes, and so forth.

Unless otherwise noted, the rules and charts referred to throughout this chapter come from **Mage 20th Anniversary Edition**, **Chapter Ten**. So when the text says "check the *Optional Dividing Successes Rule chart*," that's the chart on **p. 504** of **Mage 20**.

Again, these descriptions handle the bare-bones mechanics of the act. The details and poetry come from your imagination. When your cyborg pops her fangs, your blood-working berserker channels his inner beast, or your medicine trickster opens herself to the spirit of the Wolf in order to grow sharp fangs, the Spheres they employ are pretty much the same; the differences between those three mages come from the focus they employ and the way you describe the moment. Rules just provide the framework within your game. The heart of the magick, as we've often said, is you.

Basic Magick

In game terms, all **Mage** magickal Effects are cast the same way:

- Check the *Sphere entries* (or the *Common Magickal Effects chart*) in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, to see what you can do, and then figure out which Spheres and Sphere Ranks you'll need in order to do what you plan to do.

- Describe what your *character* is doing and how she's getting it done in terms of the story and that mage's paradigm, practice, and instruments... that is, in terms of her *focus*.

- Determine whether the Effect is coincidental or vulgar. The answer will set the difficulty of your roll. (Hint: In the modern world, large and/ or obvious magick is usually vulgar.)

- Roll your character's Arete Trait. Large Effects demand large numbers of successes. See the *Magickal Feats chart* for the suggested Base Successes, and remember that extended rolls are usually an option.

All of the following sections build upon that foundation. Regardless of the specific details, permutations, and Effects, the basic process is the same.

Optional Rule: A Bit of Spirit?

The example of the Wolf-channeling shaman touches on an interesting question from an online **Mage** forum: *Do you need to use the Spirit Sphere if you're playing a character whose miracles come through her connection to the spirits?* The example in that forum came from the magnificent animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender,* and the question of whether a bender was using Forces and Prime alone or whether the spiritual element of the bending Arts required the Spirit Sphere as well.

As an *optional rule,* assume that a mage whose reality-bending Arts involve her connection to the spiritual essence of the world – as a bender would in the *Avatar* series – needs a Spirit Sphere Rank of 2 or better (the **Touch Spirit** Effect), in addition to any other Spheres she might employ. Our fang-sprouting shaman, then, would use Life 3/ Spirit 2 – Life to grow the fangs, and Spirit to call upon the spiritual essence of Wolf in order to invoke that totem's power. (The player could also add Prime 2 in order to inflict aggravated damage with those fangs.)

If the character actually channels Umbral entities, opens gateways, or performs other acts of big magick, then of course the required Spirit Rank depends upon the feat in question. Our shaman needs only Spirit 2 to call upon her connection to the essence of wolfishness; if she wants to call up an embodiment of Wolf, however, then she'd need to use Spirit 3 or better.

This option applies to all sorts of Effects. If the shaman invokes spirits of decay in order to use Entropy Effects, she should have Spirit 2 in addition to the Entropy Sphere. If she calls upon the essence of Chronos in order to slip through time, add Spirit 2 to the Time Sphere Rank involved.

The rule also applies to rotes built for a spirit-rooted practice. A shamanic spell simply won't work for someone who has no innate understanding of the spirit world. Any mage with Life 3 can grow fangs, but the ceremony in which a mage invokes the power of Wolf requires a level of spiritual comprehension that a purely materialistic mage won't grasp.

Ultimately, a mage's methods depend upon her focus – that combination of paradigm, practice, and instruments that guides a mage's Awakened will and knowledge. Thus, a spiritual mage will use a spiritual focus... which is not, by the way, the same thing as a *religious* focus. A Void Engineer might not be religious, but his focus is certainly spiritual in the sense that Dimensional Science deals with spirit worlds. (And so, yes, Dimensional Science does count as the Spirit Sphere under this rule.) It stands to reason that any mage whose practice depends upon spiritual connection is going to have a Spirit Rank of *at least* 2, so that Sphere requirement is no big deal for the player and character in question. This way, though, you can reflect the difference between a mage (or the rote) that manipulates elemental physics and a mage or spell that manipulates the elements through a spiritual connection to their essence.

A Matter of Success

Just because a feat is *possible* doesn't mean it's *easy*. The godlike power of the Spheres is often balanced by the effort necessary to accomplish great things... and when those great things involve displacing the momentum of consensual reality, the line between *possible* and *im*possible gets pretty hazy.

For players entranced with the idea of turning werecritters into silver with a mere glance (and for Storytellers appalled by the possibility of doing that sort of thing), it's important to remember that **Mage** magick doesn't merely demand the right Ranks in the proper Spheres buzt also the minimum number of successes on the Arete rolls. As shown on the *Magickal Feats chart* in **Mage 20 (Chapter Ten, p. 502)**, small feats of Enlightened Will are easy. Bigger feats, however, demand larger numbers of successes – typically gathered through extended rolls that, in turn, demand continued success against heavy odds. Titanic feats require titanic efforts, with catastrophic penalties for failure. That's especially true of vulgar magicks, in which godlike feats can blast a mage to atoms even if she succeeds. What looks simple on paper can be damned near impossible to perform.

In the **Mage 20** rulebook, the section called ***Rituals, Rolls, and Extended Successes*** details the process of gathering large numbers of successes. (See **Chapter Ten, pp. 538-542**.) Rituals, Quintessence, and other factors can decrease the difficulty of a spellcasting roll, but even then that difficulty cannot be modified further than +/-3, and the difficulty cannot drop below 3 in any case. Thus, epic feats of magick face epic challenges too. Yes, mages can be among the most powerful denizens of the World of Darkness. Given the matter of successes and difficulties, though, they're not likely to turn the Vampire Prince of Las Vegas into cream cheese anytime soon.

Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification

Hey-yah!

Hey-yah!

Hieeeeeeee-yo!

Hey-yah!

Hey-yah!

Hieeeeeeee-yo!

Skin tingles, sliding into unfamiliar shapes.

Red fur blossoms like soft grass the color of dark flame.

Fingers and toes curl, their nails thickened into claws.

Where a man once stood, a fox now runs.

A chant to spirits fades away...

Arts of Change

Whether they're turning men into mice or suitcases into missile-launchers, mages love to transform things. In game terms, those transformations combine two or more Spheres into a conjunctional Effect that turns the Pattern of one thing into the Pattern of another.

The process is simple:

The Basics

- To conjure basic material from "nowhere," combine the appropriate Sphere with Prime 2. Creating a rock, for instance, would take Matter 3/ Prime 2.

- To transform one form into something else that's governed by the same Sphere, like a cat into a tree, use the appropriate Sphere at the appropriate Rank.

- To change one thing into another thing governed by a *different* Sphere, like a cat into water, combine the appropriate Spheres – in this case, Life and Matter.

- To transform your own shape, use Life 3 (minor alterations) or 4 (major alterations).

- To transform the shape of a simple organism (bug, plant, fruit), use Life 3. To transform complex organisms (dog, whale, elephant, etc.), use Life 4 (minor alterations) or 5 (major alterations).

- To create a complex form, or to transform one into another complex form, use the appropriate Spheres. Creating a cat from scratch, say, would require Life, Prime, Mind, and – if you wanted that cat to have an innate spiritual essence – Spirit. Changing that cat into a self-willed metal beast that spits fire would demand Life (the cat), Mind (his mind), Matter (the metal), Forces (the fire), Prime (the energy that conjures the fire), and possibly Spirit too (if you wanted him to have a soul).

- If you're trying to create, or shapeshift into, a living being that has dramatically unusual properties (fire-breath, invisibility, the ability to levitate without wings, etc.), then that unusual property must be added to that being with the appropriate Spheres (usually Forces and Prime). Such abilities typically use one point of Quintessence per application (one point to levitate, one point per blast of fire, and so forth — see **p. 20**).

- If you're trying to change more than one thing at a time, either add more successes, or else check the **Optional Dividing Successes Rule chart,** and then split your successes between the targets involved. Generally, each new target demands one more success than the usual base amount. If you need five successes to change a tiger into a mouse, then changing three tigers into mice would require seven successes.

- Assume that something that's either conjured from raw energy or transmuted into a different form returns to its original state when the spell's duration passes. (See the **Base Damage or Duration chart.**) A "time-trigger" (see Time 4) can set conditions around this reversal, and a large number of successes might make the transformation permanent.

Base Successes for Transformation

As shown on the *Magickal Feats chart*, transformations require between two and five successes:

- Two successes for a mage to change herself into a fairly similar shape (woman to man);

- Three successes for that mage to change herself into a radically different shape (woman to mist);

- Four successes to change another character into a fairly similar shape (man into pig);

- Five successes or more to change that other party into a radically different shape (man into cobblestone).

For details about conjuring and shaping inanimate objects and natural elements, see the *Elemental Mastery* section, (pp. 26-41).

Shapechanging

Mastery of living organisms is one of the most complex applications of the Arts and Sciences. The most accomplished Life-mages spend most of their time delving into the possibilities of such feats. Even then, the potential complications are endless. One slipped gene or muscle-fiber can have many unpredictable effects. In game-terms, botched rolls create horrific mutations. At the Storyteller's option, even a *failed* roll can have nasty, if initially invisible, consequences; sure, you didn't *think* you'd changed anything, but you didn't spot that altered bone-structure until you needed to use it...

As detailed above under **The Basics**, altering your own form takes Life 3 for minor shifts of appearance and ability, Life 4 for major transformations of shape, and Life 5 for perfect metamorphosis. Altering another organic being demands one Rank higher than that (Life 4 and 5), with supposedly "perfect" metamorphosis being the province of legendary Archmasters and Oracles.

Shape is not necessarily nature. A person changed into a tiger is still a human being at heart, and will need some time to get used to her new form. By the same token, a tiger transformed into a person isn't going to be any manner of "civilized" or "tame" person. Although a shapechanged character may wind up "getting lost" in her new shape (see below), the essence of the original form carries through into the transformed one. For an excellent example of this principle in action, check out Storm Constantine's story "My Lady of the Hearth," in which a man discovers that a cat who's transformed into a woman is still very much a cat.

Resonance and Nature

Resonance carries through as well, especially if it's really strong. A murderer who's been changed into a mouse will come across as the world's scariest mouse. For the most part, though, this "carryover" effect manifests through storytelling

and roleplaying, not in game-systems. No one really needs to keep track of the number dots of Murderous Resonance that the new-forged mouse possesses, but the Storyteller might describe the "re-formed" killer as "*a twitching bundle of compressed rage, watching the world with evil red eyes and a seething sense of bloodlust.*"

A new form also tends to follow its original nature. That tiger-lady will be sleek, muscular, and tawny, with long nails and a tendency to snarl. The murderer will be more likely to change into an especially nasty black rat unless the mage specifically *wants* to make him cute and tiny. Also, a transmuted organism retains its original mind and memory, at least for a while, unless the mage takes extra measures to replace that mind with another one. The killer-mouse remains a man in a rodent body, while Lady Tiger is literally an animal passing for a human being.

Partial Transformations

Either intentionally or by accident, a mage can transform someone halfway – giving him goat-legs and a human torso, for example, or manifesting jaguar claws at the end of otherwise-human arms. Game-wise, this involves rolling at least half of the usual successes needed. For, say, Jennifer Rollins to give herself jaguar claws, she'd need only one success; to give *Jinx* those claws, however, she'd need at least two.

The "minor alterations" applications of Life 3 (or, for other complex organisms, Life 4) can also be used for apparently "partial" transformations, too. If Jennifer wants claws, she could simply use Life 3, to grow jaguar claws, instead of Life 4, which would allow her to transform into a full jaguar form.

Abilities of the New Form

A shapechanged creature retains his original mind and abilities; the new form, of course, might prohibit him from using them – a cat, after all, cannot text accurately on a cell phone even if he knows what he's doing!

If the new form has certain innate physical abilities (wings, claws, gills, a tail), then the shapechanger can use them naturally; however, abilities that human beings could not innately possess – fire-breath, levitation, poison, etc. – do not automatically come with the new form. A mage can use other Spheres to create those abilities (say, Forces and Prime to conjure fiery breath), but such powers must be "built into" the shapechanging Effect, as described above under **The Basics** – they're not automatically "part of the package."

Additional Abilities

This "building-in" process usually requires at least one more success, per new ability, than the usual amount of successes needed for that transformation. If Jennifer were to transform herself into a fire-breathing tiger, she'd need at least four successes (three for the tiger, one for the fire) in addition to the Forces 3/ Prime 2 Effect that would allow her to breathe fire in the first place.

Extremely powerful new abilities – like the ability to radiate an aura of crackling electricity – may require two additional

successes or more, depending upon the Storyteller's judgment and the power of that Effect. Transformation into a fire-breathing woman-tiger who could teleport around with inhuman levels of speed (high Ranks of Correspondence/ Life/ Forces/ Prime/ Time) would probably take seven or eight successes, maybe even more, to complete. And yeah – that's vulgar as fuck.

Also as mentioned above, such abilities expend one point of Quintessence per use. A poisonous bite, for example, would cost one Quintessence per venomous injection. This Quintessence typically comes from the mage's personal supply, or from the innate life-force of a living creature if that creature *isn't* a mage. (See the *Quintessence Amounts chart* under the *Energy-Work* section, p. 51.) Yes, a mage could use both her life-force *and* her additional Quintessence supply, but that would be literally playing a dangerous game.

Mages who often assume such shapes tend to carry *Periapts* of additional Quintessence that can fuel those special Effects. See *The Toybox* in **Mage 20**, **Appendix II**, for details about those Wonders and their properties.

Acclimation to the New Form

Under most circumstances, a transformed creature needs to take time and get used to its new body. The more radical the change, the longer that transition period becomes. A man transformed into an ape will adept much more quickly than that same man transformed into a horse, seal or squirrel. Animals changed into people still favor their old movements and body language; our tiger-lady, for example, will literally move like a big cat and won't even know how to speak until someone gives her the knowledge and training to do so.

Generally, a character in a brand-new form raises her difficulties by +1 (a vaguely similar form) to +3 (a radically different form). The penalties fade as she adjusts to that new body, a process that can range from a few hours to a few days, depending on the differences between the original form and the new one.

Losing One's Self/ "Purchasing" a New Self

The imperfect shapechanging of Life 4 also bears the risk of *sublimation*: a person can soon forget who he really is. This holds true for people who get changed into radically different human bodies too; the man changed into a woman might forget his original sex and self, while a clone imprinted to replace a person may soon believe she's the real deal.

Game-wise, a character must spend one Willpower point per day that he spends in a radically different form (like a mouse), or one Willpower point every three days spent in total immersion as a similar person (like a man as a woman, or a clone as her original).

To avoid such complications, a shapechanger can spend two experience points and "purchase" that new form. Essentially, this reflects her growing familiarity with an identity other than her own.

The shapeshifting mastery of Life 5 allows a mage to retain her original identity in any form, for any length of time. The people she transforms, however, have no such tie to their original minds and may soon lose themselves in that new identity.

Shapeshifting and Consecrating Possessions

Life magick deals only with living organisms. Transforming clothing or other objects requires several dots in Matter as well. The exact Rank necessary depends upon the nature of the object; a simple rock would require Matter 2, while a laptop would require Matter 4 due to its complex material structure (plus Forces 3/ Prime 2 to provide the power if you wanted the thing to function like a laptop afterward).

A mage can *consecrate* simple objects to herself using the Prime 1 Effect of that name; as usual, this usually requires one additional success per item. A consecrated item (pants, backpack, sword, etc.) will shapeshift along with the mage, although one item that carries other items (like a backpack full

Shapechanging Shapechangers

Generally, it's not wise to try to change shapechanging Night-Folk into other shapes. Werewolves, spirits, shapeshifting mages, and other creatures with an essentially innate ability to change their forms can usually shift back to their natural forms at will (as with werecreatures), or else use their Arts to change as they Will (as with mages).

That said, a mage with Spirit 3 and Life 4 or higher *can* force a werecreature to remain in its current form for the duration of the Effect, or else send her into one of her other forms for a similar time. Needless to say, the feral-folk do not enjoy being jerked around by some wise-ass mage, and they tend to view such transformations... *poorly*.

Certain creatures, such as vampires with form-changing Disciplines like Protean and Vicissitude, may shift shape through their own innate powers. Although such changes often require expenditures of blood or other resources, those Night-Folk won't remain bound by some mage's antics for long...

For details about the necessary Spheres and the innate resistance many creatures have to human magick, see **Night-Folk Counterspelling, p. 546** in **Chapter 10** of **Mage 20**, and the **Body Magick** entry on the **Common Magickal Effects chart** in the same rulebook. Remember, though, that *harming* a character is not the same as *transforming* him. Shapechanging a Night-Folk critter still demands the usual Life 4 or 5, not the Sphere-Ranks it takes to merely *hurt* that creature.

of stuff) will require more successes than one simple object (a pair of pants) demands.

Objects that get consecrated, or bound by Matter magick, into a person's Pattern become parts of that character for the duration of the Effect. After that, they lose that connection and must be re-bound.

Even so, they retain a Resonance-connection to the character in question, which makes those items into potential liabilities. An item that has been consecrated or bound to a character's Pattern gets treated as a "personal object" until and unless it gets "deconsecrated" by another Prime 1 Effect afterward. A mage who wants to use that object against its owner reduces his difficulty by -3 if he employs it in a spell directed against that character afterward. (See *Using a personal item from target*, on the *Magickal Difficulty Modifiers chart* in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, p. 503**.) For that reason, among others, many shapechangers prefer to strip off all of their clothing and possessions before changing into another form; those possessions still hold a hint of the owner's energy (perhaps enough for a -1 modifier), but they're not significant liabilities... with Periapts, of course, being a major exception to that rule because their energy is bound to the owner by default.

Clothing or possessions also tend to get in the way when a mage changes shapes, either binding the new shape (as with tight clothes) or else tangling it up (loose clothing, bulky possessions). Generally, it takes a turn or more to shed those possessions... which can be a major hazard in desperate situations.

Multiple Forms

Skillful mages can use Correspondence 4/ Life 4/ Mind 2 to transform into multiple creatures (generally one per success over the base), each one of them a living entity sharing the original mage's mind and spirit. A Master of Life can use Life 5 to do the same thing without the other Spheres, although Mind 2 helps that Master divide her consciousness and perceptions between the other forms without difficulty.

Each separate creature has the original mage's health levels and Abilities. Individual members can be injured or killed, but so long as one of them survives, the mage endures. That mage will, however, suffer the damage when all the different "selves" reunite into one form; thus, it's a good idea to heal up before joining those different shapes back into a single form again. Any one of the surviving creatures can turn back into the original mage; once she returns to her natural form, all of the other "selves" disappear.

For more details about multiple forms, see *Everywhere at Once*, under the *Mystic Travel* section, .

Body Modifications

Whether the character's adopting organic biological modifications or technological biomods, the game systems are essentially the same even though the story elements (and the associated practices and tools) differ.

Altering Characteristics

Rank 3 Life Arts (Rank 4 for other characters) can boost or lower body-based Attributes by one dot per success rolled. Altered Physical and Social Attributes generally reveal themselves in obvious ways: rippling muscles, beautiful features, straighter posture, rapid reflexes, and so forth. Mental Attributes might be increased the same way, either by altering the character's sensory organs (raising Perception) or his brain matter and capacity (raising Intelligence or Wits). Those mental augmentations, however, might not be obvious to someone looking at the transformed character unless they involve some radical change from the way that person normally appears.

As with all other Effects, those enhancements last for the length of the Effect's duration unless the mage makes those changes permanent (see below). So long as the changes remain within the normal human range – between one and five dots – and do not radically and abruptly alter the subject's normal appearance (as it would if you suddenly turned a skinny dude into an underwear model), the alterations remain coincidental; if the changes go beyond the normal human maximum, however, or make other radical changes to a person's appearance (huge eyes, antlers, etc.), then the alterations become vulgar. Radical and permanent changes may also (Storyteller's call) inspire *Genetic Flaws*, as detailed in **Appendix II** of **Mage 20, (pp. 648-651)**.

"Unnatural" Forms and Appendages

Shapechangers may indeed take the form of Bygones and other weird critters. Such transformations, however, are considered *vulgar with witnesses*, thanks to the Unbelief Paradox effect. (Described in **Mage 20** under *The Paradox Effect*, **Chapter Ten, p 553**.) The same circumstance applies to six-armed humanoids, two-headed transplants, and other clearly bizarre shapeshifting "projects."

Permanent Changes

Typically, a mage needs four to six successes to change her shape permanently, or eight to 10 successes in order to transform someone else the same way. Even then, however, that mage can undo the spell whenever she likes. If she adopts an animal form more or less permanently, however, then she'll need to spend Willpower and experience points in order to retain her true mind in that new form unless she uses Life 5 to do so. Having made such a radical transition, she's risking eventual loss of her identity. Human forms, however, have no such problems; although a shapechanged mage might still wrestle with identity issues, those conflicts are more psychological than metaphysical. (See the nearby sidebar *Sex, Gender, and Shapeshifting*.)

Another mage with similar levels of Life-Arts can also try to "reweave" the subject's original form. In game terms, this feat requires either Life-based unweaving countermagick which beats the original number of successes (see *Countermagick* in **Mage 20, p. 545**), or else an application of Life 4 or 5 that shapechanges the subject back into his original form.

Sex, Gender, and Shapechanging

A person who can change physical shape can easily change sex and gender too. *Sex*, in this case, refers to the primary physical attributes (reproductive organs, body mass, etc.), while *gender* refers to the social characteristics generally associated with a given sex (facial features, tone of voice, body language, and so forth). Especially in the 21st century, issues of gender and identity often become scientific, political, and theological battlegrounds, and so there's plenty of argument about where one aspect of a person ends and the other begins... and about whether such characteristics matter in any meaningful way to begin with!

Is "gender" constructed entirely from social expectations, or is it an intrinsic part of who you are? Does even *biological* "sexual identity" matter in a world where surgery, cosmetics, virtual society (names, data, preferred pronouns, Internet personas, and the like), and other elements let a person be whoever they want to be *without* the aid of magick? Every person has a different answer to that question these days, and so the issues of gender identity – especially among mages who can change physical form – depend more upon the individual mage than upon solid bedrocks of sexual division.

For many 21st-century mages (shapechangers and otherwise), sexual and gender identity are flexible. A person could retain all the biological characteristics attributed to the male sex, but feel innately female and so adopt a feminine or androgynous gender identity. The Life Sphere allows that person to change "him"-self into "her"-self in every physical way, and the Mind Sphere allows "him" to become "her" in terms of psychological identity. An appropriately skillful mage could work those same changes on another person, too. And so, the line between gender and biological sex is blurred past definition when magick gets involved.

And yet, sex and gender have huge repercussions in the rest of the world. Heteronormative masculinity enjoys more legal and social status than any other gender identity, and most social and legal institutions divide sexual identity into binaries of Male and Female despite all the potential disputes about what sex and gender truly *mean.* Even among mages, "masculine" and "feminine" principles have incredibly significant roles in traditional forms of magick and symbolism. Ironically, the Verbena Tradition – the group most often associated with shapechanging – also retains many ancient ideas about sex, gender, and their roles in life and magick. Younger members of the group often challenge such assumptions, but those ideas are (to use an obvious but appropriate metaphor) deeply rooted in that Tradition regardless.

In yet another level of irony, the Progenitors – members of the supposedly "static" Technocracy Conventions – tend to have more flexible ideas about gender and sexuality than many Verbenae do. Despite common misconceptions, science often *does* offer more possibilities than longstanding "traditions" hold. Science, when presented with new data, revises its precepts and draws new conclusions; tradition usually digs in its heels when challenged. And so, in character terms, a Life- or Mind-oriented technomancer will probably feel more comfortable about gender fluidity than a tradition-bound member of the Hermetic Houses or the Verbena... and *certainly* more so than a mage from one of the gender-rigid groups like the Wu Lung, Templars, and Hippolytoi!

What does all of this mean in practical terms for your chronicle? Just that certain mages will switch sexual and gender identity without much reflection about it, while others will retain deep-seated convictions about what their "true" sexual identity is. Faced with a radical change of that identity, one mage could shrug and say "Well, *I* don't see any difference," while another could freak completely out and spend a lot of time and energy soul-searching about who s/he "really is." And even if the shapechanger themself (yes, that's an intentional *them*) has no issues regarding their sexual/ gender identity, other mages might be deeply offended by that person's ability to transcend things they consider sacred. Yeah, even so-called "awakened" people carry cultural baggage, and so certain mages might *never* willingly change sex and/ or gender even though they have the ability to do so under the rules.

Game-wise, a feat that magickally changes a character's sexual and/ or gender identities could be either coincidental or vulgar, depending upon how obviously radical that transformation becomes. An androgynous mage who turns into her "twin brother," or who applies body-language and a few cosmetic changes in order to adopt a different sexual identity, is typically using coincidental magick, while a thin teen boy who transforms into a curvy and obviously feminine woman is clearly using vulgar magick. And given the usual propensities of teen guys, that transformation could be considered "vulgar" in more ways than one...

Permanent Modifications

If the mage wants to make certain "modifications" permanent, then she needs to either pay experience points to retain increased Attributes; or gain permanent Paradox dots for inhuman modifications – claws, wings, cybernetics, etc. – and buy them as the **Enhancements** Background, described in **Mage 20, Chapter Six, pp. 312-313**.

In the case of increased Attributes, they cost one-half of the normal experience-point expense if they've been raised by permanent Life-Sphere Effects. If the player does *not* pay the points to retain those Attributes, then the character suffers a Paradox-inflicted rotting disease, organ-rejection, nasty steroids-style side-effects, or other symptoms of bodily rejection. That rejection process inflicts one lethal health level in damage per day (no soak possible) until the player pays the necessary experience points in order to "stabilize" the character's transformation. (Again, see the **Genetic Flaws** section of **Mage 20's Appendix II**.)

Cybernetics and Biomods

The majority of the systems involved in essentially permanent installations of cybernetic parts or biomodifications can be found under the **Enhancement** Background in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Six**, and in that same book's **Appendix II**, **pp. 657-661**. A few refinements, practiced mostly by the Technocracy in general and the Progenitors specifically, include the following:

Adaptive Prosthetics

Designed for "hot swapping," these ready-made appendages are pre-packaged and ready to go. Though neither elegant nor permanent, they *do* offer some quick fixes for crisis situations. Several options can be found in *The Toybox* from **Mage 20**'s **Appendix II**; these prosthetics may be "installed" or removed in a single turn (or traded out in two) by a qualified Progenitor technician with the proper gear. The subject, however, must have already been "established" as a recipient of such advanced Enlightened technology. (That is, he must already have the **Enhancements** Background Trait.)

Game-wise, these adaptive prosthetics have a Background-points cost; items of identical cost can be "hot swapped" in an exchange for one another. The character may have an "open slot" (so to speak) with a few points set aside for modular gadgets. If the character already "owns" these mods himself, he'll have to pay the Background cost for each separate item, even though he doesn't "wear" them all at once.

Each prosthetic has six soak dice and five health levels (four OK, and one Demolished) independent of the "host."

Comprehensive Biomods

Often grown separately and then grafted onto the character (though occasionally grown directly into his body), comprehensive biomods become part of the "host" once they're "installed." Like the prosthetics, they cost Background points, but cannot be exchanged without extensive and invasive surgery.

Installing or removing a comprehensive biomod inflicts one lethal health level for each point in the Background cost, and puts the character out of commission for at least one day per point as he recovers from the operation.

Xenotransplants

One of the weirder Progenitor practices involves grafting pieces of Reality Deviants onto Technocratic subjects. Mad scientists of other factions (notably, but not limited to, the Society of Ether) perform such transplants too, with similar results.

Because the human body isn't made to accommodate werewolf hearts, second heads, tentacled arms, and other weird biomods, the character may have two points' worth of Background points for each dot in his Stamina Trait. (A Stamina of 3, for instance, could accommodate six points in xenotransplants.) If the character gets more transplants than he can "afford," then the remaining Background points turn into persistent lethal damage that cannot heal until the excess biomods are removed.

Xenotransplants require regular maintenance; after a week without treatment, the body rejects the biomod (or vice versa), inflicting three levels of aggravated damage and probably some other problems too. Thanks to the Unbelief effect, the rejection process occurs far more quickly around the Masses... possibly within hours rather than days.

Like comprehensive biomods, xenotransplants inflict damage when they're "installed"; in this case, however, that damage is aggravated, and requires one week per Background point, rather than one day, before the character can fully recover.

For more details about xenotransplants, including several sample Enhancements, see the **Revised Edition Convention Book: Progenitors**.

Cloning, Creating, and Impersonating a Living Creature

A popular, though not always very effective, trick for shapeshifters and bioconstruct mage-types involves creating duplicates of an original body. Such duplication is easy enough to do when the creature is relatively uncomplicated, has a fairly low intellect, and shares minimal social ties to its fellow beings; cloning a sheep, for example, is simple – even *Sleepers* can do that. However, when the subject is a high-intellect, complex

organism with distinct individual ties to its fellow beings – say, a dog or person – then the process becomes infinitely more complicated, and far more subject to failure.

Creating Living Things

Rules-wise, a mage needs Life 3/ Prime 2 in order to create very simple organisms – plants, crabs, ants, etc. The "social life" of such organisms is largely based upon chemical reactions, and so the mage doesn't really have to worry about duplicating a specific ant within a colony, so long as he gets the basic chemistry right.

Higher organisms are much trickier: Life 5 for the body, Mind 5 for the consciousness, and Prime 2 for the energy, at the very least. Adding a soul involves Spirit 5 as well. A spirit could be bound into a mindless flesh-bag with a simpler Life 5/ Spirit 4/ Prime 2 Effect, but the resulting creature would essentially be a puppet for the entity inside... which, in many cases, presents its own set of problems.

Growing an organism from samples of another organism is possible through modern Sleeper technology if you're willing to invest the time and money to do so; bio-labs cook up "basic" clones of simple animals all the time. *Rapid* cloning, however, still demands the usual Life 5/ Mind 5/ Prime 2 process (often with Time 3 added to "speed the clock"), plus the time it takes to teach and train the resulting critter if you want it to do

anything more than stand around drooling. The complexity of this process explains why the Tellurian isn't overflowing with Black Suit clones and cyber-tooth tigers. Even with established labs, processes and personnel, creating effective clones demands time, effort and materials.

(A mage with the proper Life, Mind, and Prime Spheres could quickly conjure up simple beasts to fight his battles for him; such instant genesis, however, is vulgar as hell, and the resulting creations won't be good for much other than simple labor or combat.)

Once the living creature exists, a mage could use Mind 4 or 5 to "imprint" a speed-teaching process on that creature; that process, though, would require plenty of successes if the mage wants his creation to be even remotely intelligent. The vast range of skills and understanding mastered by even a household pet, much less a functional human being, is staggering. The Storyteller may rule that a creature who has not been given an extensive training and adjustment period suffers significant penalties with social, mental, and probably physical feats (possibly a +3 difficulty to all but the simplest activities) because it hasn't had enough time and experience to learn how to function beyond the bare minimum of its capabilities. Again, a Time 3 Effect can speed that process up considerably; that's vulgar too, though. Even if the mage uses an additional Mind 5 Effect to transfer or duplicate an existing creature's

consciousness onto a "blank slate" clone, that clone will need some time to adjust its muscle-memory to accommodate the imprinted data.

(All this explains why Doctors Frankenstein and West had such rotten luck with their creations; it's one thing to energize a complex biomass, but quite another to produce a functional member of society.)

Impersonating Other Beings

Assuming that you have a creature who's capable of complex social interaction, the impersonation process involves a lot of subtle cues. Again, dropping a cloned sheep into a herd is fairly simple… though the other sheep will probably regard the stranger as a little odd. A memorable individual, however, is much harder to impersonate correctly; she might look just like the individual in question, but folks can usually tell an imposter from the real deal unless the impersonator limits her interactions or has *serious* skills and the data to back them up.

In game-terms, assume that an impersonating creature (clone, shapeshifter, disguise expert, etc.) uses the Subterfuge Ability + either Intelligence or Wits in order to pass for the imitated character; simple acts of deception have a difficulty of 5 or 6, but challenging acts of deception require higher difficulties.

Beyond that, the imposter adds +1 to simple social interactions, +2 to complex social interactions, and +3 to intimate social interactions until and unless she's had time to adjust her impersonation to the situation. Simple interactions involve basic surface-level behavior (greeting, eating, small-talk, and so forth); complex interactions involve dealing with people the original person knew fairly well (co-workers, casual friends, etc.); and intimate interactions involve dealing with the people that the original knew well (relatives, close friends, lovers, etc.). Success means that the imposter has managed to keep the charade going, failure means that she's made some minor mistake, and a botch signifies a revealing error that threatens the whole masquerade. Thus, it's easy to use Life magick as a minor disguise technique, but difficult to maintain a sophisticated impersonation for long… especially among the folks who knew the original pretty well.

Duplicating Yourself

What if the clone duplicates the mage herself? Assuming that the clone was somehow "imprinted" with the original mage's personality and knowledge – typically through Mind 5 magick – that clone would have the Abilities that the character possessed at the time of that imprinting process. (For details, see *The Rebooter Self-Retrieval Bio-Printer* at the end of **Mage 20**, **Appendix II**.) Even then, though, there's probably going to be a period of adjustment while that clone's muscle-memory catches up with her mental memories. After all, a football-playing clone won't immediately adopt the original's physical reflexes even if she holds all the memories of the original player! Abilities and experiences that have been accumulated after the imprinting process, of course, won't carry over unless the mage sends her original mind into the duplicated body… again, a Mind 5 feat.

Beyond that "catch-up process," the duplicated self would be identical in all respects to the original character at the time of duplication. An associated Correspondence 5/ Mind 5/ Life 3 feat would allow the mage to control several different duplicates at a time, generally at a cost of one success per additional "self." (Again, see *Everywhere at Once*, under the **Mystic Travel** section.) Even so, changes that occur on one body won't carry over to the others. If a mage gets punched in the face, the resulting bruise won't appear on her clones… and vice versa… which could lead to some awkward questions if that mage has been up to shenanigans in one body and then sends another one back to the scene of the crime in its place.

Change Your Self, Change Your World

We are creatures of transformation. Conceived as lumps of cells, born as bundles of potential, human beings grow up to become radical agents of transformation in our world. Other animals are intelligent and aware – perhaps on certain levels even more intelligent and aware than we are. But humans – Awakened and "sleeping" – change our world in ways that few other creatures can fathom, and that none we are aware of can duplicate or surpass.

It's our responsibility, then, to change our world for the better – because there are certainly enough folks out there already transforming it for the worse.

Elemental Mastery

Ogou travay o, Ogou pa manje!

Ogou travay o, Ogou pa manje!

Ogou works, he doesn't eat.

Ogou works, he doesn't eat.

I work also, and I rarely sleep. And while I am not planning to buy a nice new suit to impress the ladies, I am working at my forge and it's been a long time since I have eaten. The heat is a physical presence in the room, like the spirit of the Iron-Forger himself, invisible yet undeniable. Sweat drips from the red cloth tied around my right arm. Fine tobacco curls from the hot red end of my cigar. Beneath my hammer, a machete forms: strong, potent, shaped from iron and fire and sweat. With it, I will call Ogou Chango, who will arrive in the iron of my blood on the edge of that blade. And with his help, I will split the heavens wide and bring down the storm...

Substances and Energies

The Arts of the Elements provide the building blocks of human civilization. Without them, we'd have no cars, no engines, no electric light. The human understanding of primal substances and energies makes all other feats possible. Until humans mastered materials and fire, our ancestors lived and died by the whims of Nature. And while no human – mage or otherwise – truly "masters" Nature, potent forms of wizardry and tech provide fantastic degrees of control.

The Pattern Arts

Combined with Life, the elemental Spheres of Forces and Matter make up what's often called the ***Pattern Arts*** (see **Mage 20, p. 67 and 511**): principles that allow a mage to construct, transform, animate, energize, enchant, or destroy physical objects and forces. For while Correspondence deals with spatial dimensions, Entropy with probabilities, Mind with consciousness, Prime with raw energy, and Time with temporal phenomena, the Pattern Arts allow mages to literally get their hands around their magicks. Spirit could also be considered a quasi-Pattern Art, dealing with the forms and principles of extra-physical realities. The "formal" Pattern Arts, however, grant influence over Earthly bodies – things you can easily touch, measure, and otherwise sense even if you're not a mage. And so, the Pattern Arts form the "building blocks" of magickal understanding within the physical world, the Spheres that let a person construct, alter, or annihilate his world at will.

Generally speaking, elemental magick takes five different yet related forms:

- Manipulating an element that's already present – spreading a fire, warping metal, directing a wind, shaping water into a wall, dropping the temperature in a room, and so forth.

- Shifting a collection of simple elements into a complex combination of them – turning dirt into bread, morphing stone into a computer, making a carriage out of a pumpkin, and the like.

- Mutating one element into another – changing water into stone, igniting ice into fire, shifting flesh into metal, and other related tricks.

- Conjuring an element that was not already present – throwing a lightning bolt, creating a wall, summoning a flood, creating fire in the palm of your hands, and similar phenomena.

- Creating an elemental substance that did not exist before – water-diamonds, glassine wood, unique alloys or plastics, and other unique substances.

A mage may combine these applications too. Given time and materials, Chopper could electrify a bowl of water until it burns (manipulation and mutation, possibly with conjuration involved as well).

As detailed in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten**, extensive alterations and/ or complex transformation may require higher Sphere Ranks than small and simple ones. Manipulating a breeze would demand Forces 2, while manipulating a hurricane would demand Forces 5. Tuning rocks into steel is easy (Matter 2), but

Elements and Spheres

Which Spheres command which elements? Although that question gets answered in the various Sphere descriptions within **Mage 20**, it's worth repeating that information here for clarity:

Sphere	Elements
Forces	Fire, Wind, Electricity, Light, Darkness, Heat, Cold, Radiation, Nuclear Energies
Life	Wood and other plants (while alive)
Matter	Earth, Water, Metal, Glass, Plastics, Alloys, Wood and plant-matter (when dead), Air (molecules, when in a vacuum; also requires Prime 2 to conjure them where no air is present)
Spirit	Ephemera (aka the element of Spirit)

When morphing or combining elements from different Spheres (for example, turning glass into fire), those Spheres must be employed at their respective Ranks for the task in question. Forces 2/ Matter 1 will not change glass into fire, as that task demands Forces 3 (or higher)/ Matter 2 (or higher).

turning them into cars is not (Matter 4, plus Forces 3/ Prime 2 if you want that car to run). See the individual Sphere entries for the details pertaining to each Sphere and its capabilities.

The Basics

All elemental magicks employ the appropriate Spheres for the elements in question, and at the appropriate Ranks for the size of that Effect.

- To perceive the flow of elemental energies, use Forces 1. To perceive details about elemental substances, use Matter 1. For further details, see **Enhanced Perceptions**, **pp. 52-56**.

- To manipulate an element that's already present, use the Sphere that governs that element, at the Rank that allows for that level of manipulation:

  - Rank 1: Perception only

  - Rank 2: Basic manipulation

  - Rank 3: Conjuration/ significant manipulation

  - Rank 4: Drastic transformation

  - Rank 5: Mastery of the elements

- To transform one element into another element, again use the appropriate Sphere(s) for the element(s) in question. For details about transformation, see **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification**, **pp. 18-25**.

- To conjure elements from apparent "nothing," use the appropriate Sphere 3+/ Prime 2. Again, see **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification** for more extensive details.

- To secure a self-sustaining Effect into a material object (making a steel car burn without heat or damage, for example), add Matter 3+ to that Effect.

- To change elemental compounds within a living organism, add Life 3 or higher.

- To control elements with psychic power, add Mind 3.

- To turn material forces into spiritual ephemera (or vice versa), add Spirit 3.

- To conjure elemental entities, use Spirit 2 and a large quantity of the element in question. (Large elementals need correspondingly huge amounts of the element.) For details, see **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding**, **pp. 90-106**.

- If a mage wants to create a working thing that demands several elements from different Spheres all acting together (a car, computer, an airplane, etc.), then she needs to use all of the Spheres that govern the elements in question.

- Solid elemental materials that radiate and/ or detonate into powerful energies (radioactive isotopes, for example, or guided missiles, or exploding meteorites) would demand the necessary Ranks of both Matter *and* Forces.

- Vast, pure, and/ or complex Effects require more successes than small and simple ones. See the **Magickal Feats chart** in **Mage 20** for guidance.

- Radical transformations typically require high-Ranking Spheres. Turning water into honey, for example, would be **Basic Transmutation** (Matter 2), while turning water into Prozac tablets would require Matter 4 and probably a knowledge of chemistry as well. (See the sidebar **Dude, Do You EVEN Know What You're Doing?**)

- Unless they've been set up otherwise (with Time triggers, additional successes, and so forth), elemental Effects last for the usual Duration, as per **Mage 20**'s ***Base Damage or Duration chart***.

- For the effects of various elemental phenomena on living things, see ***Environmental Hazards*** in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine, pp. 435-441**.

Elemental Kinetics

Beyond the basic elemental perceptions (again see the ***Enhanced Perceptions*** section), the Arts of manipulating the elements presents a simple yet effective form of magickal discipline. Although common misconception insists that the first two Ranks of a Sphere are essentially worthless, any mage who has turned a candle into a wildfire can tell you that it's not about how much *power* you have over the elements but how much *imagination* you apply to them that determines the true effectiveness of elemental control.

Elemental kinetics is a clinical yet appropriate term for making the elements dance to your tune. Rooted in the Greek word *kinetos* ("moving"), kinetic feats deal with moving elements around. Because the material world is made up of those elements, a person who can shift them in unexpected ways has a powerful edge over people who cannot. Working with elemental forces and substances that are already present, such feats allow a mage to manipulate shadows, temperatures, fire, stone, plastics, and other elemental manifestations. And because kinetic feats – unlike the classic fireball – deal with things that are already present, such Effects tend to be coincidental unless the mage decides to be a showboat about them.

The applications of elemental manipulation are theoretically endless. The mage could direct a breeze to blow dirt into someone's eyes or send her scent downwind; she might shift the tumblers in a metal lock, or adjust the thickness of a door so that it sticks or opens easily. Temperatures may rise or fall, fires might gutter or flare, and fluids could ebb, flow, or go impossibly still. On a more esoteric level, the mage could alter gravity, velocity, weight, friction, momentum, and other physical forces in order to "adjust" their relationship to a target. And so long as those adjustments aren't obvious to the unAwakened eye, such kinetic feats look like the proverbial "coincidence" – the slipped grasp, the fumbled step, the gunshot that looked accurate but somehow missed its mark.

Small feats of elemental manipulation require only Forces or Matter 2. At that level, your mage could deflect projectiles, change temperatures, and commit other minor kinks of physics in her immediate vicinity. Larger acts – like, say, flipping a speeding truck the way Zavulon does in the movie *Night Watch* – require Forces 3 or higher. And to manipulate the most catastrophic elemental manifestations – tornados, blizzards, whirlpools, earthquakes, and the like – a mage needs Forces 5, Matter 5, or (as with things like earthquakes and hurricanes) both.

Successes Needed

As always, simple feats require one to three successes, while large ones demand five, 10, or more. The scale of the feat determines the rough number of successes involved.

Very simple *non-combat* actions, like lighting or extinguishing a candle with a wave, may – at the Storyteller's discretion – be considered automatic successes (as described in the section of that name in **Mage 20, Chapter Eight, pp. 394-395**) if they're performed in the mage's home or Sanctum. After all, it's rather silly to demand a roll if the character's making a soup stir itself in her own kitchen! If that "simple" action would have a dramatic effect on the story, however – like a conjured flame that ignites a gas station – then of course the Storyteller can demand a roll, possibly against the difficulty of a vulgar Effect.

Area and Duration

Normally, these "bent physics" apply to a single character, or to a roughly 10' (three meter) area – a car, a door, a small

section of wall or stairway, and so on. To apply them to larger areas or multiple characters, see **Mage 20**'s *Optional Dividing Successes Rule chart*, **p. 504**.

Likewise, the Duration of such Effects lasts for the normal length of time, as shown on the **Base Damage or Duration chart**, unless it's affecting a single, specific, instantaneous act (a punch, a flare of candles, etc.).

The Effect, however, *does not travel from the place of its original casting* unless that Effect has been "locked" by an additional effect, as described below under **"Locked" Quirks of Physics**.
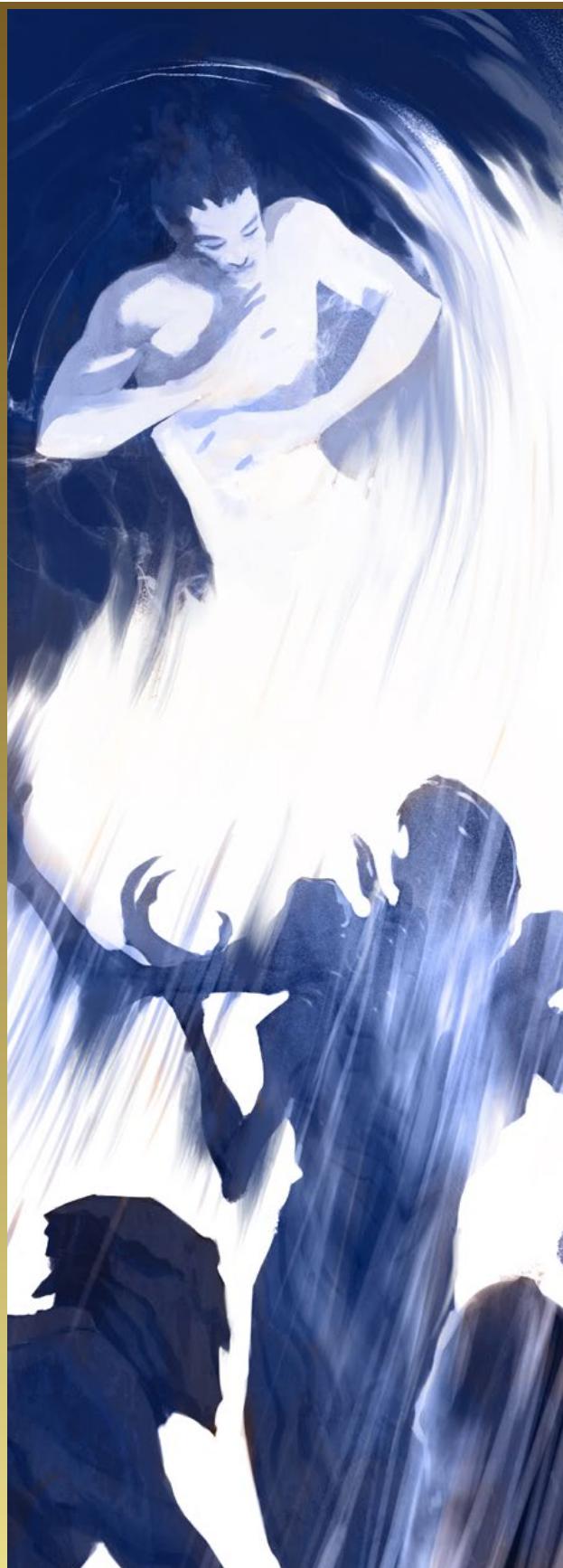
Mystic Physics

Forces-savvy mages can do scary things with physics. Clever tweaks of gravity, friction, and so on can have devastating results. Imagine that Khan Salvatore has used Forces 2 to reduce friction or increase gravity at the entrance to the Bridge Trolls' latest squat. Sure, *the Trolls* know how to avoid the trap, but any stranger who steps on the wrong step could find herself flat on her face thanks to the lack of friction on that step or the "quirky" gravity that sends her ass-over-teakettle when she's trying to be quiet.

Similar quirks of temperature, light, and magnetism can create cold or hot spots, distort sound-waves, disrupt cell phone signals, erase video recordings, render areas or objects semi- or totally invisible, and perform other significant yet essentially invisible acts of environmental alteration.

In game terms, these sorts of things tend to involve Storyteller judgment-calls. It's impossible to chart out all the potential ramifications of altered physics. That said, most circumstances can be played out with narration, modifiers to certain rolls (see below), and/ or certain amounts of damage that get dished out by things like freezing temperatures, sudden falls, and the like. (Again, see below.)

The entries below cover generalized applications of Forces-bent physics. For specific sorts of tricks, see **Classic Tricks of Mystic Physics**, below.

Modifiers Out of Combat

In many cases, twisted physics can adjust the roll that's made to reflect a character's activities. If a trespasser crosses the threshold of Khan's anti-friction trap, for example, the Storyteller might make a Dexterity + Athletics roll on that character's behalf to keep him from falling and busting his face. And because Khan's spell messes with the usual physics within that area, the trespasser's roll may lose one success for each success that Khan got when casting that Effect. If Khan's player rolled three successes, then, the trespasser would need at least four successes in order to keep his balance.

Non-Combat Incidental Damage

How much damage does that falling character take? Ultimately, that's a Storyteller call, with specifics that depend upon the situation. (A guy falling down a stairway, for instance, may suffer more harm than one falling on the floor.)

As a general rule, though, assume that a character who takes incidental damage from a quirk of physics will typically suffer one health level of bashing damage for each success rolled by the mage who cast the Effect. And so, as an example, the victim of Khan's trap must try to soak three health levels of bashing damage after he slips and falls.

Obviously, large falls may call for double or triple that amount. If Khan tweaks the physics at the top of a staircase, his victim may need to try soaking six health levels of damage instead of the usual three.

Modifiers in Combat

Combat physics could be bent in one of three ways:

- To increase or decrease *the odds of hitting the target*;

- To increase or reduce *the damage inflicted by that blow*; or...

- To *change the elemental nature of the attack itself.*

In the first case, the mage adjusts kinetic physics related to targeting – blurring the target, deflecting the weapon, "bending" the path of the assault, and so on.

In the second case, the mage drops a "pinpoint physics adjustment" that intensifies or decreases the kinetic force of the blow.

In the third case, the mage removes the heat from fire, grounds the charge of electricity, and so forth. Depending upon the attack and the defense, this could become vulgar magick.

Here's how those tactics play out in game terms:

Targeting Physics

- If the mage uses Forces 2 to enhance or redirect a weapon's strike, then the usual "Arete successes reduce difficulty" rule applies, adding to or subtracting from the difficulty of the shot. (See *Magick Enhances Violence* in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine**, p. 414.)

- Because especially successful attacks score more damage than marginally successful ones, the decreased or increased difficulty might also affect the damage that a given blow inflicts. (For details, see *Phase Three: Damage* in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine**, p. 412-413.)

Elemental Impact

- A mage who casts a Forces 2 Effect to intensify or reduce the kinetics of impact can either add or subtract one success from the normal impact damage of that blow.

- If the blow would normally inflict bashing damage, and the Forces Effects *adds* to that damage, then the damage also becomes lethal instead of bashing because it hits so much harder. If, for example, Khan bends physics to intensify a kick, and his player rolls four successes for that kick, then the opponent must try and soak five successes' worth of lethal damage... if she can!

- If the blow would normally inflict lethal damage, then the *reduced* impact turns it into bashing damage instead.

- Neither of these feats alters the damage of an aggravated attack, unless the tweaked physics gets used to alter the nature of the attack itself, as described below.

Altering the Element

- Forces 2 *cannot* transform one form of elemental energy into another. Turning fire into wind, for example, would be Forces 3 (*Transmute Minor Forces*) or higher. And it's vulgar too – see *Earthly Foundations* in the *Reality Zones* section of **Mage 20, p. 612-613**.

- If the mage uses Forces to rob an elemental assault of its properties – taking the heat out of fire, for example, or redirecting an electrical attack so that its energy goes elsewhere – he must at roll at least one success for every success rolled by the attacker.

- If there *is* no specific attacker (as in, perhaps, a wildfire), then the number of successes depends upon the size of the force in question. For suggestions, see **Mage 20's** *Magickal Feats chart*.

- If the mage succeeds, then the attack inflicts no damage upon the protected object or character.

As any elementalist understands, that energy still needs to go *somewhere*. And so, the mage has to figure out where and how he plans to disperse that energy.

- If he has Forces 3 or better, he could transmute it into another form of energy, as mentioned above.

- If he's got Prime 4 or higher, he could transmute it into Quintessence, getting one point of Quintessence for each health level of damage.

- And if he has neither, or has no chance to change the energy into something else, then the energy gets dispersed into the surroundings, which is why wizard duels tend to feature plenty of collateral damage.

Whether or not these various stunts are coincidental or vulgar depends upon what the willworker wants to do. "Adjusting" circumstances so that a flying beer-mug hits somebody really hard is easily within the bounds of possibility; stopping a speeding car with a wave of your hand is clearly not.

For other applications of bent physics in combat, see *Classic Tricks of Mystic Physics*, below.

"Locked" Quirks of Physics

"Quirk of physics" Effects warp the localized environment; a spot of cold, for example, stays in the place where it was originally cast. If you want that Effect to travel around afterward – by, say, putting a Forces 2 deflection Effect on a jacket that may repel attacks – then that Effect must be "locked" into the Pattern of that Effect's target. (See **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, **pp. 511-512**, under the entry *Locking an Effect*.)

Essentially, this allows the physical Pattern to "carry" a slightly warped field of physics around with it. The heavy chest might weigh nothing, the car might repel rainwater, the set of brass knuckles might hit harder than usual, all thanks to a short-term field of Forces-bent physics.

A *permanently* enchanted character or item must essentially be turned into a *Wonder*, as per the rules given in **Mage 20** and **The Book of Secrets**. A *temporary* field of bent physics, however, may be "locked" into a Pattern by using the appropriate Rank of that Pattern's Sphere. Locking a Forces Effect onto a person, for instance, would also demand Life 4, while investing it into a jacket would also require Matter 2 or higher. (Yes, living creatures are more complex than inanimate objects.) That way, the creature or object in question can carry the warped physics around to other locations.

Even when "locked," *this Effect ends when the Duration expires*. Again, a permanently enchanted item becomes a Wonder, and requires a more extensive creation process – see "Crafting Wonders" on Mage 20's *Common Magickal Effects chart*, *The Toybox* in that book's **Appendix II**, and the *optional* expanded Wonder rules in **The Book of Secrets**.

Remember, too, that a small field of unusual physics will be both weird and noticeable… and probably inconvenient, as well. Sure, that deflection field on your jacket may be really useful in a fight, but it's gonna look really damned strange when you take your jacket off and it starts to slide around because it's being deflected from every other surface that isn't you! Oh, and that jacket will deflect other things too – your boyfriend's hand, the seat you try to sit down on, the gun you try to shove in the jacket's pocket…

Classic Tricks of Mystic Physics

Certain "classic" stunts involve quirks of elemental physics. And so, although the following feats essentially use the same systems as the ones outlined above, these tricks are common among elementalist mages, especially those who are used to having to kick a little ass to get what they need.

Blackout!

One of the most obvious applications of elemental mastery in the modern world involves blacking out electrical systems. For small areas, this simply requires a few successes with Forces 2. Larger systems and power-grids demand more successes and higher Ranks; blacking out a city, for example, would demand Forces 5 and a fair number of successes, not only because of the vast scope of the blackout but also because the mage has to overcome the many levels of redundancies built into any major power-grid.

Unless the mage is in close proximity of the generators for the system in question, a blackout may also demand Correspondence (to reach to the heart of the system), Matter (to demolish essential machines), or both. Yes, the Data Sphere works just as well as normal Correspondence when you're trying to crash a system. For details about overcoming networks and security measures, see the *Computer Systems* optional rules in **The Book of Secrets**, **Chapter Two**.

Duration-wise, the blackout lasts until someone can repair the problem or kick in backup systems to compensate for the damage. A backup generator, for instance, might turn itself on automatically if the main power-source goes down, while a large and majorly FUBARed system requires skilled technicians and several hours' (or days') worth of work to fix.

Concocting Chemical Compounds

A specialty of science-minded mages everywhere (most especially the Progenitors and the various factions who call themselves the Solificati), this application of Matter allows a character to transform one chemical into another one. With the proper knowledge (see below), that mage could turn salt into cyanide, water into sulfuric acid, dirt into Prozac, or oregano into pot and vice versa.

In small, simple quantities, this trick employs Matter 2 or perhaps 3. As the *Matter Sphere entry* in **Mage 20** points out, seriously complex transmutations require Matter 4 or 5. For the most part, this is a simple process, requiring one to three successes unless there are complicated formulations required on the molecular level.

Understanding the Elements

That whole "molecular level" element brings up an important point: A character cannot perform this trick effectively unless she has at least three dots in an Ability and specialty related to the chemical transformation in question. (Esoterica:

Alchemy, Pharmacopeia/ Poisons, Science: Chemistry or Biochemistry, and so forth.) Without such knowledge, the mage might know that such transformations are possible, yet lack the knowledge to properly connect the dots (or the molecules) involved.

Brief Familiarity

If the mage has a sample of an unfamiliar material, and takes at least a minute (for simple materials) to an hour (complex ones) to study its properties with Matter 1 perception, she may be considered to have the requisite three dots with that particular material *on a temporary basis only*. For a day or two, the mage could be considered a "minor expert" on the material she's had a chance to study. That knowledge is no substitute for a comprehensive understanding of the subject at hand, but such "cramming" can help the mage make do in a pinch.

Chemistry Inside Living Organisms

On a related note, *the mage M-U-S-T employ Life 3 or higher in order to change chemistry within a living organism*. Mere Matter alone *will NOT* change chemicals within a working body. We emphasize this point because the question comes up so often on **Mage** forums. Yes, Chopper could synthesize sugar into cocaine if she has the proper chemical expertise; if she wants to change that sugar into coke once it's in someone's system, though, then she *must* have Life Rank 3 or higher. Otherwise, the complex biological systems involved in the interactions between Patterns render that attempt at transmutation useless.

For more details, see the sidebar ***Dude, Do You Even Know What You're Doing?*** and the **Mage 20** entries ***Drugs, Poisons, and Disease*** (**Chapter Nine, pps, 441-444**), and ***Conjunctional (Combined) Sphere-Effects*** (**Chapter Ten, p. 511**).

Conjuring or Purifying Nourishment

As shown in the ***Starvation and Thirst*** entry in **Chapter Nine** of **Mage 20**, safe sources of nourishment are essential parts of a magickal breakfast. And because supermarkets tend to be a developed-nations luxury, mages throughout time have specialized in purifying fouled food and water, transmuting inedible objects into food, or conjuring food and drink from nowhere.

Magick-wise...

- Matter 2 can purify inorganic toxins out of food or water.

- Life 2 can purge food of microorganisms, and restore food to an edible status from the early stages of rot.

- Life 3/ Matter 3/ Prime 2 can conjure edible food or water from the proverbial thin air.

- A street-mage might be able to retrieve crappy leftovers or "edible" fast food by combining a Dumpster-diving Urban Survival roll with Life 2/ Matter 2/ Prime 2.

Whether or not such food is *palatable* depends on the mage; conjured food probably tastes bloody awful unless the mage already knows something about food-preparation, which is where Crafts specialties like Cooking or Farming come in handy.

To a point, Life 2 magick or the Esoterica specialty of Body Control can limit the effects of hunger for the mage, and Life 3 can limit them for another character. Assume that a character with such resources can go an additional day without water and one additional week without food for each success rolled with the Effect or Ability. Eventually, though, even an enchanted body starts to break down without nourishment. After the initial roll, no other rolls are possible. Once those successes have been exhausted, the character's body craves new energy and begins to starve.

To recover from thirst and starvation damage, the character has to drink and eat. Assuming a regular supply of nourishment, he can recover normally; if that supply goes away, however, that recovery period ends and the character begins taking damage again the next day.

Creating Light

The time-honored trick of conjuring light in darkness is simple:

- If there's light present that can be enhanced, Forces 2 may brighten that existing light.

- If the area is completely dark, or if the new light must be strong and sudden, then Forces 3/ Prime 2 will do the trick.

Conjuring Sunlight

Note that *such light is not true sunlight*. It *will not* harm vampires, as their curse is tied to the actual sun, not to strong sources of illumination. A powerful mage, however, can pursue a number of options:

- Correspondence 4/ Forces 4 may open a gate between a location where sunlight *is* and one where sunlight is *not*. This, of course, is vulgar magick, but the sunlight in question is totally real. (If all someone needs to do is break a window, then just break the goddamned window and don't worry about using magick.)

- Forces 4/ Prime 2 can generate high-intensity blasts of light that inflict lethal damage. By adding Life 3/ Matter 2, the mage can make that light burn vampires for aggravated damage.

- *At the Storyteller's option,* a scientific approach to magick could deploy Forces 5/ Prime 4 to reproduce sunlight in every respect. This option depends upon whether or not the Storyteller views sunlight as a purely physical phenomenon, or as a manifestation of divine grace. Theoretically, a spiritual mage could add Spirit 5 to that Effect and then channel the spiritual essence of sunlight

as well as its physical properties. In all three cases – and again, *at the Storyteller's option* – such conjured sunlight might act as true sunlight with regards to the undead.

For the effects of sunlight on vampiric characters, see **Vampire: The Masquerade** and its related sourcebooks.

Deflecting Missiles

Forces 2 can help a mage deflect incoming projectiles or energy-beams. If the mage wants to make that Effect look like a coincidence, then the Arete roll acts like a dodge, with each success removing one success from the attacker's roll.

If the deflection attempt gets more successes than the attack, then the bullets or beam go elsewhere, probably hitting something (or some*one*) else; if the mage scores twice as many successes as the attacker did, then the projectile or beam rebounds on the attacker, inflicting its base damage on her instead.

Unlike other, more "simple" physics-warping Effects, this trick works only on individual shots. Such deliberate deflection tricks are based upon redirecting a single shot, not upon creating a "field" that may or may not work as effectively.

Alternately, the mage could just pull a Neo, decide to use vulgar magick, and stop all the bullets in midair with a successful Arete roll. This really *is* vulgar as hell, but it's quite impressive too – see **The Neo** in the **Martial Arts** section, .

Disrupting Bodily Functions

Organisms employ electrical charges and chemical reactions. And so, it stands to reason that *a mage whose paradigm accepts and understands this fact* could disrupt bodily functions with Forces, Matter, or both. Someone who knows little or nothing about bioelectrical impulses, on the other hand, couldn't do the same thing until he understood that such a thing is possible; see the sidebar **Dude, Do You EVEN Know What You're Doing?** After all, simply knowing that a car-engine operates through an internal combustion process doesn't instantly allow you to fix your car without the proper training and tools.

In theory, this sort of disruption could simply require Forces 2 (to alter electrical impulses) or Matter 2 (to change minerals or chemicals within the body). In actually, it also demands Life 3 in order to significantly impair a functioning organism. Those minerals and impulses are still part of a larger whole within a complex Pattern, and so Forces or Matter alone will not do the job.

That said, a mage who *does* understand the mechanical functions of a body could use Life 3/ Forces 2 as a way to inflict aggravated damage on a living opponent. In this case, the attack deals out the normal amount of damage, plus one success for using Forces. Unlike direct Life 3 aggravated attacks, this assault is coincidental because no one can see the target's internal processes misfire. That damage, in this case,

involves stopped organs, blot-clots, locked muscles, potential brain damage, and so on. The specifics involve the Storyteller's judgment, but they're pretty bad.

Meanwhile, a Life 3/ Matter 2 Effect could make the target intoxicated, throw off her body chemistry, and/ or possibly suffer sensory and psychological impairment from the chemical alterations within her body. In this case, the damage is either bashing or lethal, depending upon what the mage is doing.

Alternately, the mage could decide to use a limited amount of electrical or chemical influence to produce an immediate, involuntary impulse – vomiting, spasming, suffering momentary disorientation or blindness, and so forth – rather than damage. In this case, the Effect could work as a one- or two-turn bout of "mind control," similar to a short Mind 4 Effect. In this case, though, the attack doesn't go against the target's Willpower, as the mage is attacking her bodily functions, nor her mind.

Whether or not such attacks are coincidental or vulgar depends a lot on the mage, the target, the situation, and the Storyteller's decision. A mage whose rival suddenly suffers a momentary bout of confusion or a brain aneurism is probably okay, but a dude who walks around dealing out "coincidental" deaths to everyone in his vicinity will soon arouse suspicions, if not necessarily Paradox.

Invisibility or Silence

A successful Arete roll (typically for a *vulgar-magick Effect*) with Forces 2 or higher allows the mage to either bend light around himself, and thus turn himself invisible, or else do the same thing with sound and render himself silent.

Another character can try to sense the hidden one with a Perception + Alertness or Perception + Awareness roll (whichever is higher). That won't be *easy*, however, as each success by the mage adds +1 to the difficulty of that Perception roll, up to the usual modifier of +3.

If the hidden character still wants to still be able to *see or hear*, he'll also need Correspondence 1 so that he can either sense his way around while blinded, or else hear his way around while in silence. For details about the effects of sensory disruption, see *Blinded, Knocked Down, Immobilized or Stunned* (**Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**, **p. 416**) for the alternative.

As always, larger areas of invisibility and/ or silence demand higher Ranks with the Forces Sphere. Turning yourself invisible is pretty easy (Forces 2), but cloaking a helicopter with invisibility and silence demands Forces 4, plus a Matter 4 Effect that "locks" the cloak into place. (See *"Locked" Quirks of Physics*, above.)

Shadowplay

Although the manipulation of shadows is generally attributed more to vampires than to wizards, this trick banishes light and makes the darkness dance. In terms of physics, the mage employs the Forces Sphere to distort light-waves. The mage in question might not view what she's doing as "manipulation of light-waves," of course; descriptions of many classic spells refer to "summoning darkness," not of distorting *light*.

Game-wise, this is a simple application of Forces 2 or higher. The lowest Rank manipulates light and darkness within small areas (10' or so), while the highest Ranks let the mage command light and shadows over areas of a mile or possibly more.

With a successful Manipulation + Expression roll, a mage could enact "shadowplays": patterns of light and shadow that mimic other things. People, animals, horrible shapes that suggest far worse... such minor illusions can distract, entertain, terrify or otherwise influence people who see them.

The same Ranks of Forces can also manipulate sounds the same, way, and may enact more detailed forms of illusion, as detailed under **Arts of Illusion** in the **Uncanny Influence** section, .

Note that light cannot be manipulated this way if there's no light present in the first place. To generate light in a lightless area, see *Creating Light*, above.

Shooting Around Corners

An infamous trick for mages with Correspondence 2 and Matter 2 involves shooting at one place and having the bullet come out elsewhere. On a similar note, a willworker with Forces 2 can "bend" the forces of gravity and momentum in order to send projectiles around obstacles. Either application is, of course, vulgar; shitty movies to the contrary, people know you can't *really* "swing" the trajectory of bullets around... can you?

Assume that an Awakened gunfighter who takes the time to cast the proper Effect (or use a ritual-focus gun and bullets, bow, or what-have-you) can shoot around corners by adding +3 to her Dexterity + Firearms difficulty. This trick works *only* with projectile weapons, however. A beam of energy needs to travel in a straight line, although a reflective surface might allow you to bounce a shot or two off of its reflection if the target's visible in that reflection as well. Chances are good, though, that blasts of concentrated energy will turn such mirrors to slag after the first or second shot, so this stunt has very limited utility.

Like **Deflecting Missiles**, the "shoot around corners" trick works only on a turn-by-turn basis. Khan could fire off a single burst of bullets that "bend" in theoretically impossible ways, but he can't pull that trick throughout an entire gunfight unless he keeps employing the forces Effect with each shot or single burst of bullets.

Synthesizing Materials

Matter is *the* elemental-synthesis Sphere. Any imaginable material transmutation is possible with an understanding of Matter and other Spheres (Forces, Matter and/ or Spirit) related to the synthesis in question. Pasta may be transformed into armor, light into steel, and sand into computer chips, so long as the mage in question knows what she's doing.

As detailed throughout this section, the **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification** section, and in the various Sphere entries in **Mage 20**, the most complex transmutations and newly-created materials demand higher

Ranks than simple ones. And again, supposedly "mundane" Abilities like Crafts, Technology, and so on make all the difference when you're trying to shape raw materials into a novel new material and/ or turn that material into something useful. Sure, it's easy to create a rough wood table out of sand with Matter 2 alone; if you want that table to feature tiger-eye inlays, smooth polish, and an elegant design, however, then you'd better know a lot about woodworking… otherwise, that table's gonna look like some freshman shop-student's first project!

Also, remember that unless the transmutation is made permanent, things will revert to their original state when the Effect expires. The **Base Damage and Duration chart** (and its related **Optional Dividing Successes Rule**) provides the necessary details. If that new material combined elements from other Spheres (say, like mice and fire), then those components will go their separate ways once the Effect ends… perhaps, if a living thing was melded into the element, a bit worse for wear. (Storyteller's option, based upon what happened to whom, and how.)

In our technological world, new materials are being synthesized all the time. And so, while obviously "impossible" transmutations remain vulgar (turning light into steel, for example), a "new material" could easily become part of Consensus reality if and when the mage involved makes an effort to publicize the discovery and refinement process of that new material. For details, see the sidebar **SCIENCE!!!** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Six, p. 290**.

Temperature Fluctuations

Heat and its absence are likewise controlled by the Forces Sphere. And as **Mage 20**'s **Environmental Hazards** section attests, significant fluctuations of temperature extremes may be dangerous in their own right.

As a general rule, assume that Forces 2 allows the mage to raise or lower temperatures within a spectrum of comfort and discomfort, while Forces 3 and higher creates temperature extremes that are severe enough to cause damage. As shown in the **Harsh Weather and Environments** entry of the **Environmental Hazards** section, that damage tends to be bashing, although elements *that have been heated* by Forces – like hot metal or boiling water – may deal out lethal or (in the case of molten metal) aggravated harm instead.

Extreme degrees of cold – the type of cold that freezes matter or living tissue solid – may inflict lethal or aggravated damage too, especially if someone follows up that freezing with a physical attack that shatters the frozen material. (See the film *Snowpiercer* for a literally chilling example.) Assume that this level of cold demands Forces 4 or 5, while the same Ranks are essential when a mage wishes to turn metal into molten slag.

For further details about attacks against material objects, see the **Optional Rule: Bustin' Stuff** in **Mage 20**'s **Environmental Hazards** section, **pp. 439-441**.

Psychic and Spiritual Elementalism

Elemental mastery tends to be associated with physical control. Certain practices, however, apply mental discipline to those physical phenomena. In game-terms, such psychic command adds the Mind Sphere to the usual Pattern Spheres, and generally demands concentrated focus from the character in question.

A variation on this discipline adds spiritual connection to the mix. Essentially, the mage bonds with the element's metaphysical aspects as well as with its physical properties. The "bending" Arts from the animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *The Legend of Korrah* show such disciplines in action. (Yeah, there's a live-action *Airbender* movie too; it's fucking dreadful – don't waste your time.) In story terms, the mage pursues spiritual refinement that allows her to join her soul with the soul of that element, and so this sort of magick concentrates on a single element – Fire, Air, Wood, etc. – instead of on all the elements as a whole. The mage dresses to favor that element, spends most of her time with it, and channels a Resonance related to that bonded element.

Game-wise, psychic and/ or spiritual connection to the elements works like this:

- A purely psychic connection adds Mind 3 (**Mental Link**) to the usual Pattern Spheres.

- A spiritual bond adds Spirit 2 (**Touch Spirit**) or higher, as described in the sidebar **A Bit of Spirit?** (**p. 16**). The power to actually transmute physical elements into ephemera, or vice versa, begins at Spirit 3 and grows from there onward.

- The mage may be able to add one automatic success to the Arete roll if he spends a temporary Willpower point. This choice remains limited by the usual rule of spending only one Willpower point per turn, although he could spend several Willpower points over several turns in order to perform a "psychic elemental ritual" with an extended roll.

In an exception to the usual rule, the Dimensional Science Sphere *cannot be used in this fashion*. Such Technocratic approaches deny the intrinsically spiritual nature of the connection, and thus can't bridge a person's soul to an element because Dimensional Science does not acknowledge the divine essence of either side of that transaction.

Telekinesis

Focusing mental concentration on a material object, a psychokinetic mage can move things without touching them.

Game-wise, this feat combines Mind 3 with Forces 2 or higher. The **Forces and Weight chart** on **p. 29** shows what

different Ranks of Forces can move. So long as the mage in question is able to concentrate on the feat, she can levitate or manipulate objects accordingly.

The Storyteller may – as an *optional rule* – require that the player spends a temporary Willpower point when her mage moves an especially large and/ or heavy target.

The player should, in any case, make a successful Willpower roll in addition to the Arete roll because, after all, the mage is commanding the element through sheer force of will.

Is this vulgar? Often, yes. Obviously, lifting things up into thin air is, at best, highly unusual. Whether or not the feat shades into vulgar magick depends upon how big the object is, how obvious the mage is being about lifting it, and whether she's using some apparently believable technology (electromagnets, repulser-field hypertech, etc.) in order to do so. Sure, a mage might be able to pass a levitating pencil off as potential psychic phenomena; a levitating bus, on the other hand? Um, no.

Pyrokenesis

Although the term itself was coined by Stephen King for his novel *Firestarter*, the concept of generating fire through mystic or psychic force is relatively ancient. In this feat of psycho-elemental kinetics, the mage could will fire into existence, command fire that already exists, and ignite things that should remain unburnt otherwise.

Story-wise, again, the character must focus her concentration and make a Willpower roll in order to control the fire with her mind. The Storyteller is well within his rights to demand a point of Willpower, especially in the case of especially large or difficult (such as setting metal on fire) conflagrations.

Rules-wise, the Spheres involved are as follows:

- Mind 3/ Forces 2 + to control existing flames.

- Mind 3/ Forces 3+/ Prime 2 to ignite fire where no fire was before, or to expand the *amount* of fire in an already burning source (turning a candle into a blowtorch, for example).

- Mind 3/ Forces 3+/ Prime 2/ (appropriate Spheres) to ignite things that shouldn't normally be able to burn, like flame-resistant materials (Matter 2+), living organisms (Life 3+), or Umbral ephemera (Spirit 3+).

Despite Mr. King's book and the related film, pyrokenesis counts as vulgar magick if and when the mage is clearly bringing fire from someplace that should not be burning, or commanding it in supposedly impossible ways. That mage could write off minor manipulations as coincidences ("*Did you feel a breeze?*"), but the Charlie McGee approach is still a no-no in Consensus reality until and unless the X-Men suddenly become part of the everyday world.

Psychomanifestation

The concept of people manifesting raw elements from mental focus is pretty unusual. Nevertheless, certain paradigms connected to psychic phenomena insist that all things are energy waiting to be formed by significant consciousness. And so, the rare discipline of elemental psychomanifestation could be considered an outgrowth of paradigms like *Everything is Data*, *Everything's an Illusion*, or even an extreme example of *Might is Right*. (As detailed in the **Common Mage Paradigms** section of **Mage 20, Chapter Ten**.)

Game-wise, the manifestation of other elements works just like the **Pyrokenesis** described above, with the Matter Sphere replacing Forces when appropriate. The Storyteller is advised to require a Willpower point from the player if a mage creates sold materials from thin air through an effort of determined

Summoning Elemental Entities

Old-school elementalists realize that the elements are, in many senses, alive. And although modern science denies such a thing, the ancient High Ritual Arts (and certain primal ones as well) contain rites which focus the living aspects of the elements into elemental entities: materialized spirits who embody an elemental form.

Although the **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding** section details the many steps and systems involved in summoning such beings, it's worth mentioning that a would-be summoner needs to have copious amounts of the element close at hand when he calls an elemental forth. Earth elements must be called up from earth, plant-spirits from among plants, and so forth. The larger the elemental, the more material it requires in order to manifest. Yes, a mage could open a gate with Spirit and/ or Correspondence and bring an elemental in from somewhere else. Most often, however, the summoner gathers a large source of the desired element, prepares it in ways that suit his focus, and then calls the spirit into the element.

Once manifested, the elemental can do whatever it wants. As with any other sort of elemental manifestation, though, that entity will affect its surroundings. A fire-spirit will set fires, a glass one will leave shards everywhere, and so on and so on. If you wish to call up such an entity, then be prepared for it to make a mess.

Appendix I of the **Mage 20** rulebook contains an array of "average" elementals. As that section says, such entities can be much stronger than the beings presented in that Appendix. Other elemental entities can be found in the **Mage** sourcebooks **Gods, Monsters & Familiar Strangers**, **Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade**, and **The Sorcerers Crusade Companion**.

will. After all, forming a block of stone through sheer mental concentration is pretty damned demanding!

In many regards, it's simpler to just use Forces or Matter combined with Prime when conjuring elements from "no-where." Still, certain practices emphasize the psychic element over supposedly "supernatural" ones, and while an esoteric technomancer might scoff at "silly wizard tricks," he could well rationalize psychomanifestations and other forms of mind-focused elementalism as perfectly scientific technologies, as opposed to primitive superstitions. And while that viewpoint would not suddenly make thin-air conjuration of solid stone or water into a "coincidence," a suitably charismatic and accomplished Etherite or transhumanist Adept could conceivably adjust Consensus reality toward the acceptance of some pretty wild acts of psychic phenomena...

Elemental Assault and Defense

From *Frozen* to Greek fire, the most dramatic manifestation of mystic Arts and hypertech accomplishment involves turning the elements into devastating attacks and potent defenses. Walls of flame, shards of ice, tornados from one's fingertips – such elementalism tends to be vulgar unless it's wedded to high-tech devices, but its awesome effects can't be denied.

As detailed in **Mage 20** and **The Basics**, and under **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification**, the systems involved in elemental weaponry are simple:

- Forces 2+, Life 2+, or Matter 2+ to turn existing elements into attacks or defenses.

- Forces 3+/ Prime 2 to conjure elemental energies.

- Life 3/ Prime 2 to conjure wood or living plants.

- Matter 3+/ Prime 2 to conjure solid materials.

- The Forces Sphere adds one additional success to damage.

- Blunt-force damage inflicts bashing damage.

- Sharp attacks inflict lethal damage.

- "Hot" elements – fire, electricity, intense heat, molten materials, boiling water or steam – inflict lethal or aggravated damage.

- Specific attacks (lightning, plasma bolts, etc.) must hit their target, as detailed in **Mage 20**'s **Combat** section.

- Area-effect attacks create **Environmental Hazards**, as detailed in the section of that name in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine**.

The long-term "special effects" of elemental attacks and defenses are subject to the Storyteller's whims. Fire-blasts may ignite flammable surroundings, wind-walls could sweep up debris, ice-weapons will certainly drop the local temperature, and so forth.

Remember that elements affect the area around them, too. Fire consumes oxygen. Stone is heavy. Water floods into everything a liquid substance can reach. And so, those long-term effects can be far more destructive than the mage intended them to be. The elements are not toys, and a mage who doesn't learn that fact early on rarely lives long enough to achieve real power.

Fireballs, Lightning, Windstorms, and so Forth

Sudden blasts of elemental power are more or less instantaneous. Once cast, they manifest, blow shit up, and disappear, leaving the appropriate sorts of damage in their wake. If Chopper nails a rival gang member with a bolt of electricity, then that bolt crackles into existence, does its thing, and then grounds out. If she wants to do it again, Chopper needs to conjure (that is, roll up) another attack.

Elemental Armor

The systems and other details involving a mage who manifests protective elements such as iron skin or stone-fist punches can be found in the **Martial Arts** section under **Elemental Armor**, p. 67.

Walls, Floods, Force-Fields, Etc.

When creating a lasting elemental weapon – a wall of thorns or metal, a cascade of water, a force-field of plasma, and so forth, the player and Storyteller check the **Base Damage and Duration chart**, figure out how many successes it takes to get the Damage and Duration the mage desires, add them up, and then have the player roll that number of successes.

If, for example, Chopper wants to set up a super-cold wall of ice that lasts one day and inflicts six levels of damage to anyone who touches it, her player would need to roll a total of six successes: three for the Duration, three for the Damage.

Remember that the Forces Sphere *automatically* adds one success to the Damage. If Chopper decides to make that wall of plasma-energy (Forces) rather than ice (Matter), she needs only *five* successes because one success is already taken care of by the Forces Sphere.

How Long Does it Last?

Once created, the elemental manifestation exists for the Duration of the Effect unless one of the following things occurs:

- The caster dispels the Effect.

- Another mage uses successful countermagick to bring it down.

- A successful assault destroys the element.

- The fuel for an energy-force runs out.

In the case of "successful assaults," another character may use magic or other forms of force to eliminate the troublesome element. Ice-walls may be melted, tangles of wood may be burnt, flood-waters may be sucked up or otherwise dispersed, and so on. For details about destroying such manifestations, see ***Bustin' Stuff*** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**.

Fuelling the Fire

That "fuel running out" thing is important too. Especially in the case of fire, lightning, lasers, and so forth, the element needs a source of energy in order sustain itself.

- If the element draws from a mundane source (coal, paper, batteries, an electrical grid, etc.), then there must be enough fuel to sustain the energy... otherwise, it consumes that fuel and disappears.

- If the mage has Prime 3 or higher, then she could channel more Quintessence into the element in order to fuel its Pattern. Generally, this uses between one and five points of Quintessence per turn, depending upon the intensity of the energy involved (Storyteller's call).

Let's say, for example, that Synder uses her limited command of Forces to weave a net of flames with her fire-gear. With two dots in Forces, and only one in Prime, Synder cannot create a self-sustaining elemental force – she's gotta work with what she has. Laying out her entire fuel supply, she takes up her fire-poi and spins an elaborate mesh of flames. Three successes later, she's got a flaming web that lasts for one scene (two successes) and inflicts two levels of aggravated damage (one success + one success for Forces) to anyone who touches it. That web, however, will consume all of Synder's fuel. If she wants to make a long-lasting web, or one that burns hotter, then she'll need to either use more gas or learn another two Ranks in the Prime Sphere so she can channel Quintessence into that fire.

Again, elemental manifestations affect their environment, and that environment affects them in return. A wall of ice will be really heavy, and harder to sustain in bright sun than in chilly darkness. A wall of fire quickly consumes all the oxygen in an area, and may go out if there's nothing left to sustain its voracious heat. Whichever elements your mage employs, those elements are not static things existing in a vacuum. Elemental magick recognizes the principle of interconnection: *That which affects one thing affects all things in its vicinity, and nothing happens without consequences.*

Weather-Witching

Few forms of magick reflect that principle than the Arts of weather-witching. Because while the highest levels of Forces and Matter allow a mage to mess with the climate and larger

Raining on Someone Else's Parade

The default forms of weather-witching alter the climate in the mage's vicinity. To alter the weather somewhere else, add an appropriate Rank of Correspondence to the weather-witching feat.

Remember that the Correspondence Effect must be the same Rank as the Forces Effect. If Master Sophia wants to make it rain in, say, Greece when she's in New York, she'll need to employ Correspondence 5 in addition to Forces 5. If she doesn't *have* Correspondence 5, then she's stuck with making it rain on her own parade until she achieves the necessary Rank in the distance-spanning Sphere.

environment, said "messing with" affects everything for miles around. To paraphrase Boromir, one does not simply brew up a storm; the weather-patterns of that storm will change the weather patterns throughout the region. And so, although powerful wizards and technomancers can call down thunder and make the earth tremble, they also know better than to do so carelessly.

Certain Abilities and specialties may help the mage perform such feats. Depending upon his culture, paradigm and practice, a weather-shifting mage could employ Esoterica (Weathercraft), Occult (Weather-Spells), Science (Meteorology, Tectonics or Climatology), Survival (Weather-Eye), Technology (Cloudbursting), or perhaps other, more unusual applications of environmental understanding. Such Abilities could be used to lower the difficulty of a weather-witching feat, as described in **Mage 20**'s ***Abilities Enhancing Magick*** section. In any case, the term, "weather-witching" is a generic place-holder in this section. Any technomancer with suitable gear and knowledge can do the same things, minus all that mystic claptrap.

All forms of weather magick demand large numbers of successes – no fewer than five, and often more than 10. The exact number of successes is a Storyteller call, based upon the weather at the time of the spell, the surrounding climate, and the level of change the mage wants to achieve. Something small (making it snow on a cold, cloudy day) should be simple – five successes or so. Larger alterations (conjuring snow on a cloudless day) are more difficult – at least 10 successes – while theoretically impossible ones (conjuring a blizzard in July) – require 20 successes or more. As with most such situations, check the ***Magickal Feats chart*** and determine the number of successes accordingly.

Weather also tends to take its time. Weather patterns form slowly unless they're tossed around by high-Rank vulgar Forces Effects. And so, even with magickal "help," drastic meteorological changes take hours to manifest. A powerful wizard *could* go all Stephen Spielberg on the weather and make such changes happen within minutes or even turns. That level of witchery, though, gets vulgar because it so radically alters the course of natural events.

Is weather-magick vulgar by default? That depends upon how likely the new weather-pattern is to form without "assistance," and what *sort* of "assistance" the mage provides. A technomancer who points a Cloudbuster Mk VII at a stormy sky to summon a tempest is less likely to offend Consensus Reality than a ragged dude who points a bone at a clear sky and brings down thunderbolts. Local culture matters too; a medicine-man who chants up a rainstorm near a Navajo community could be considered coincidental, while one who does so in Times Square would certainly seem, at the very least, bizarre. (Then again, it *is* Times Square, so "bizarre" is relative...) An utterly impossible alteration is, of course, vulgar. Hermetic Master Iyeoka Sophia *bani* Shaea knows better than to conjure a snowstorm inside a house near the end of July unless she wants to deal with some serious Paradox!

The Storm-Cocoon

A mage who whips up a serious storm-front may want some protection. And so, it's often a good idea to forge a "storm cocoon" around yourself if you've got tempests on your mind.

A traditional cocoon employs Forces 3/ Entropy 2/ Prime 2: Forces to shield the mage with elemental power; Entropy to adjust the probability of harm from random elements (falling roofs, flying debris, arcing electricity, and so forth); and Prime to fuel that shield and keep it in place while the mage concentrates on other things.

Generally, a five-success cocoon protects the mage and/ or her companions within a roughly 10' circle, for the duration of the storm. Additional successes are required to protect larger areas – say, one additional success for every additional 10' of protected space.

Unless the cocoon forms an obvious bubble of protection (like a glowing force-field or an air-filled bubble underwater), the cocoon remains coincidental. Under certain circumstances (such as a technician setting up a hypertech protection field), it may be coincidental even when its effects *are* obvious to the average observer.

Drawing Upon the Weather

It's always easier to work with something that's already there. And so the forces (and Forces) involved in manipulating existing weather patterns are simpler than the ones that enact drastic changes upon the local climate. Even so, your mage needs Forces 4 or higher in order to alter the weather in any meaningful way.

System-wise, your mage could alter the existing weather in several different ways:

- Correspondence 3/ Forces 3/ Entropy 2 might let the mage make minor tweaks to the climate by affecting the probability that a given weather-pattern will form. Correspondence helps the mage reach further than Forces 3 alone would allow him to reach. This sort of weather-witching takes time, and it follows its own course, not the mage's demands – after all, he's merely suggesting what the weather *might* do, not bending it to do what he *wants* it to do.

- Forces 4/ Entropy 3 gives a stronger "suggestion," altering probability so that the storm-front comes together quickly and follows the mage's design.

- Forces 4 or 5 simply reaches out and yanks the elements into alignment.

In all cases, the weather follows the natural tendencies of the existing climate. You could make it snow on a cold November evening, but not on a bright and sunny day in July.

Summoning Storms

Large-scale tempests and devastating storms demand significant amounts of energy and personal power. A mage who harnesses such elements had better have a strong will and a firm grasp of the Arts, because unless she forges a "cocoon" from that storm (see above), she'll be as subject to its rage as anyone else would be.

Your mage has several options when calling upon the elements to create a major storm:

- Forces 5 pulls existing weather into the desired form. Assuming the conditions are right, winds may be summoned, clouds may be called, and rain and lightning may be drawn from the sky. Such manipulation still takes time, but requires far less time than the previous forms of witchery.

- Forces 5/ Prime 3/ Matter 2 pushes and pulls the elements into most dangerous and powerful configurations: blizzards, thunderstorms, floods and so on. In this case, the storm sets up **Environmental Hazards**, as described in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**.

- Forces 5/ Prime 4/ Entropy 3/ Matter 3 allows the mage conjure drastic and supposedly impossible changes in the weather: blizzards in the summer, tornados from clear skies, far-reaching hurricanes, and so forth. For miles around, the region experiences various hazardous conditions, most of which remain beyond the mage's control. Even so, that mage can cast deliberate elemental attacks (lightning bolts, waves, blasts of frost, etc.) with additional Effects, as described above under **Elemental Assault and Defense**. This level of command is vulgar because it upends the natural order and subjects it to the whims of the mage.

- Creating a storm out of calm conditions, or whipping one up in a place where extreme weather is essentially impossible (as in a climate-controlled space) demands one Quintessence point for every dot in every Sphere involved. A Forces 5 storm, for instance, would demand five Quintessence, while a Forces 5/ Prime 4/ Entropy 3/ Matter 3 tempest would require 15 Quintessence. Such storms demand lots of energy, y'know, and that energy must come from *somewhere*...

Banishing the Tempest

Once summoned, a large storm follows its own course. Dispelling such tempests requires another new ritual – one which demands at least five more successes than had been used to create the storm, since so many elemental forces have been gathered toward such implacable inertia.

Forces and Will

In all cases, the mage needs to make Willpower rolls to continue shaping the elemental magnitude of a full-fledged storm. That mage is, after all, riding herd on the most powerful energies on Earth, and such deeds require force of will.

Assume that a mage who's calling up or otherwise trying to command a large, destructive weather front needs to make a Willpower roll as the elements converge; if she fails, then the elements slip free and do whatever the Storyteller wants them to do.

Assuming she succeeds on the initial roll, the player ought to make a new roll every hour or so in game-time; if the story goes to a new scene, then that scene requires a fresh Willpower roll. This goes on for as long as the storm lasts... and if the mage fails, then the elements escape from her command as mentioned above.

The difficulty for this roll depends upon the strength of the storm in question. A simple rain-shower should be difficulty 5; a powerful thunderstorm, difficulty 7; and a full-bore tornado difficulty 9.

What happens if the mage *doesn't* make the roll? Bad things. Very bad things. The specifics should depend upon the situation, especially if the player botches that roll. But again, a mage in this position is playing with the most ruinous forces on Earth, and not all of the reasons behind the expression "*Do not call up what you cannot put down*" apply to Umbral entities.

Shaking the Earth

One especially frightening application of elemental magick has nothing to do with meteorology. Instead, it shakes the surroundings with inescapable kinetic force. Although such feats depend more upon solid Matter than upon energetic Forces, "earthquake magick" demands both Spheres at the highest levels of their capacity. The results, however, are horrifically potent.

To literally make the earth tremble (or the house, or the castle, or the skyscraper...), the mage employs Forces 5/ Matter 5/ Entropy 3. The usual damage applies, including the extra success for using Forces.

Instead of damaging *characters*, however, the damage harms structures within the area of the quake: buildings, trees, anything that could be shaken apart by an elemental shrug. (See **Bustin' Stuff** in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine, pp. 439-440**.) The resulting collapses could very well harm characters and other objects, and the surroundings might break apart under the strain, creating sinkholes, cracks, pits, crevices, and other dangerous terrain.

Generally, such quake-spells affect an area of roughly 100' in diameter for each success rolled. The exact area, however, is a Storyteller call, based upon the surface, its general integrity, and its relationship to other surfaces nearby. It's much easier to shake a small house apart than it is to tear up an acre of forest or a mile of desert sand, and so the Storyteller should let dramatic effect determine just how much damage a quake-spell inflicts on its surroundings and how badly that affects everything nearby.

Creating a Realm

The mightiest form of elemental magick, however, creates whole new worlds – *Realms* – in which a mage may shape reality to fit his desires. Such feats are rarely performed by a single mage of any kind; the tremendous concentration and power involved generally requires a group of mages working together to craft the Realm and channel its energies in the proper ways.

Generally, the creation of a Realm ought to be a major event in a chronicle. Weeks, months, or even years could be spent planning the particulars of the Realm, its configuration, its climate, residents, and so on. The larger the Realm, the longer and more elaborate its preparations must be. Various Abilities can come into play during this creation-process; the most important elements in that process, however, aren't Traits and dice-rolls, but planning and time.

A new Realm must have at least one associated Node to supply the energy for its creation and sustenance. If there's not already a fairly potent Node (in Background-Trait terms, a Node worth at least five dots) present and available, the Realm's would-be architects need to make one first. For that procedure, see **Opening a Node/ Conflux** in the **Energy-Work** section, **p. 44**. Once that Node is established, the construction may begin.

In game-terms, the process for opening a Realm in the Horizon involves the following Spheres:

- Correspondence 5, to rip through the fabric of dimensional space.

- Entropy 3, to direct the way things fall into place.

- Forces 5, to set the necessary elements in motion.

- Life 5 to establish a functioning ecosystem.

- Matter 5, to craft the complex weave of material substances.

- Mind 3, to impose the vision and will of the creators upon that space.

- Prime 5, to channel and fuel the energies of creation and substance.

- Spirit 5, to carve a new space among the Otherworlds.

- Time 4, to establish a functional time-flow within that space.

- Higher Ranks of Entropy, Mind, and Time may be used to create more significant elements of probability, vision, or temporal fluctuation within that Realm.

Obviously, this is no easy feat.

To carve a Realm out of the fabric of time and space, you need a lot of successes; shaping that Realm into something both habitable and pleasing could require 100 successes or more. This sort of thing demands more than one *Great Work*-Style ritual, as detailed in **Mage 20** under the entry *Optional Rule: Rite, Ceremony, and Great Work* in the section called *Rituals, Rolls, and Extended Successes* (**Chapter Ten, pp. 541-542**). Again, it takes several powerful mages and their helpers a *very* long time to fully construct a Horizon Realm – months at least, usually years, sometimes centuries.

And this, of course, assumes that the Avatar Storm is no longer in force. If that metaplot element continues to raise hell for Umbral travelers, then this process probably won't work at all... or, if it *does* work, it'll involve devastating and probably lethal obstacles for the would-be architects.

All that said, the construction of your own personal Realm may be the most rewarding feat a magus could perform. Compared to such miracles, no other elemental trick comes close.

Command Over Earth and Sky and Sea

When the Masters of Art and Crafts sought answers among the raw materials around them, those human artisans – Awakened and otherwise – elevated us above the naked beasts we had been. It's been said that the shards of godhood lie within each set of human hands, and whether or not that's true... or, honestly, whether or not it's a good thing in the long run... the Elemental Arts have given us a closer look at the world we might construct and the wonders we may achieve.

The real trick, now, is to be worthy of them. Because with the elements at your apparent command, it's easy to fall into pride and destroy everything you had struggled to create.

Energy-Work

There's no such thing as "nothing." That's a figment of our lack of imagination. Every bit of space – at least in the material world – is occupied by particles. Those things we perceive as "solid matter" are simply particles that we decide to recognize as forms... or maybe even that DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES to become forms. Everything else is unshaped energy. Potential. The uncoded ciphers of the universe.

Call it what you want: Quintessence. Chi. Energy. Primal Essence. Those are just names for things that haven't happened yet, or that HAD happened before they were set free to become something else. Whatever you want to call that energy, it's there. Just waiting to be shaped into something magickal...

Essential Energies

The sublime yet superluminal energies commanded by the Prime Sphere have a wide variety of potential applications. And although most of those applications get covered in the **Prime Sphere** entry, the **Primal Utility Sphere** entry, and the **Energy** instrument entry in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, several of them are worth examining in more detail.

Is Energy-Work Coincidental or Vulgar?

Typically, the Masses cannot see Quintessential energies unless those energies are especially strong. A person with the Awareness Talent might sense the flow of energies, or "taste" the Resonance involved, but the average person remains more or less blind to it. People and other living things can perceive vague "ripples" of sensation around strong sources of Primal energies – "good vibes," "bad feelings," "the right smell," that sort of thing. Conventional technology cannot measure Quintessence or Resonance, however, and so as far as the Masses are concerned, such energies do not exist. (Whether or not this technological blind-spot is a Technocracy tactic is for the Storyteller to know and the players to find out.)

As a result, low-energy Quintessence-work – that is, Effects under 10 points of Quintessence per turn – remain coincidental unless they involve some physical aftershocks, like a person or object withering or glowing thanks to a vulgar Prime Effect. (See below.)

Significant fluctuations, however, are another story. In game terms, a flow of 10 points of Quintessence or more within a single turn generates spectacular effects: bands of light, pulsating colors, crackling bolts of force, blasts of white light, and so forth. At that point, Prime Effects tend to become vulgar. Essentially, if the average person can see or otherwise sense the Effect, and the Effect looks like some sort of freaky lightshow, than that Effect is probably vulgar.

(Exceptions can be made, of course, for Prime Effects that *involve* freaky lightshows... which explains a lot of about rave culture, wild pyrotechnics, aurora lights, and those harnessed-lightning labs you see in Frankenstein flicks or the "exploding base" climax of most James Bond movies...)

"Invisible" Quintessence

Quintessential energies don't have to be visible to the eyes. A strong flux of Primal energies can also feel like a wind, vibrate in a person's bones, generate a noisy whine, shriek or humming sound, or cause any number of other environmental phenomena. The low vibration of Tibetan singing bowls, the clear ring of chimes, the soar of a singer's voice, a buzz like a locust horde... all of them could reflect a strong flow of Quintessence energies. The clear tones of Celestial Chorus songs or the guttural thrum of Tuvin throat-singing all channel Quintessence through sonic vibrations that feel wondrous even to Sleeper ears.

The Basics

The Prime Sphere allows a mage to employ a variety of energy-driven feats, which are described in detail below. All of them, though, are linked by the idea of tapping into the essential energies of Creation and shaping them in accordance with a mage's Enlightened Will.

- To spot the flow of Quintessence, read energy signatures, and infuse your character's Pattern with Quintessence beyond his Avatar Trait (as detailed under **Game Effects of Quintessence** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Six, p. 332**), use Prime 1.

- To channel Quintessential energy into existing Patterns (and thus energize or reinforce them) or new ones (in order to create something out of "nothing"), employ Prime 2.

- To employ the wider range of feats and Effects, see below.

Unless stated otherwise, the optional *Primal Utility Sphere* (see **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, **pp. 526-527**) functions in all ways like the Prime Sphere as described below.

Channeling Quintessence

The basic act of channeling Quintessence from a source to its recipient involves either touch (as in the instrument *Bodywork*, described in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**), concentration (as in the instrument *Energy*), and/ or meditation (as detailed in that same book, under the *Avatar* Background Trait, **Chapter Six, p. 305**). Using the *Primal Utility Sphere*, it takes an act of investment to tap that source of energy – the focus of commerce and exchange, and an awareness of what that exchange really entails. Either way, the mage concentrates on the energy... and that concentration, in turn, allows her to employ it for her purposes, whatever those purposes might be.

Amount of Quintessence Used

Game-wise, a mage must have at least three dots in either the Prime or Primal Utility Spheres if she wants to use "more than her share" of energy. Any mage with an Avatar Background can absorb that Background's worth of Quintessence from a Node or Tass, or use the points of Quintessence in the Quintessence wheel on her character sheet. In order to use more points of Quintessence than she has in her Avatar Background rating, however, and in order to use Quintessence from other sources, she must have at least Rank 3 in the Prime or Primal Utility Spheres. As an example, Jinx (Avatar 5) can use up to five points of Quintessence per turn, while Sabra, (Avatar 1) may use only one point of Quintessence per turn until he achieves Prime 3.

As the *Base Damage and Duration chart* explains, the amount of Quintessence a mage with Prime 3 or higher mage can employ within a single Effect is based upon the number of successes rolled. If Penny Dreadful's player, for example, rolls three successes, then Penny can employ up to six points of Quintessence with that Effect; if she rolls five, then Penny can use up to 10 points that Effect. This, of course, assumes that Penny Dreadful has Prime 3 or higher; considering that Penny's been around for a while, though, that's a pretty safe assumption. If Penny *doesn't* have Prime 3, though, then Penny is stuck using her Avatar rating's worth of Quintessence, period.

Tapping a Wellspring

The obvious sources of Quintessence include Nodes, Tass, living things, and – at the higher levels – objects and events. Those events, described throughout **Mage 20** as *Wellsprings*, generate life-energy that a mage can tap if she's got enough expertise to do so. A Primal Utility specialist understands the energetic potential of events and effort, and therefore can tap into Ventures and opportunities in order to exploit that knowledge. Either way, the mage draws energy out of "thin air" in spaces where that "air" has been charged with excitement-generated Quintessence.

Optional Rule: Sleepers and Energy-Work

Many mystics speak of "raising power" or "shifting the energy." Especially with practices like **Martial Arts** and **Medicine-Work**, the idea of shifting life-force plays an important role. And yet, non-mages do this sort of thing too. Clearly, it's tied into Quintessence... but if so, then how do unAwakened characters work intentionally with the life-force? If they're not using the Prime Sphere, then what *are* they doing?

Beyond that question, there's also the issue of energy signatures; in many cases, there isn't a scientifically measurable way to trace the "energy" that gets raised by Tantra or t'ai chi. Without quantifiable proof that it exists, scientists claim that such energy *doesn't* exist. And yet, people *do* notice differences when a skilled person works with energy, even if that person is not a mage. Clearly, *something's* going on here. So what is it?

As an *optional rule*, a **Mage** Storyteller may assume that a character with at least three dots in Awareness, an Esoterica practice based around energy (reiki, t'ai chi, Tantra, yoga, etc.), or both may "work with energy" even if he doesn't have Arete or the Prime Sphere. In this case, the character's not actually shunting around Quintessence the way a mage does, but instead *adjusting his consciousness* in order to perceive and manipulate Resonance. The character's actions are literally meta-physical – he's doing things because he has shifted his mindset, and possibly the mindset of a partner, to a point where he can feel what he's doing. Although that character cannot perform the major alterations of Prime-Sphere magick, he can still inspire a person to feel better, catch a buzz off of her energy, tap into the essence of his surroundings, or otherwise flavor or share a bit of Resonance and perhaps a point or two of Quintessence.

A mage with Prime magick, of course, can still perform all the usual Effects. That energy-worker can't compete with that level of expertise. Still, this option reflects the very real effects that reiki and similar disciplines have within the world we know, giving unAwakened practitioners a bit of influence with the energies of life.

Rules-wise, a mage with Prime 4 or higher, who finds an area where strong emotions create helpful Resonance, can then tap into that free-flowing Quintessence and "empower" herself with it. Game-wise, this involves absorbing the Quintessence through Prime (or Primal Utility) 4.

Here's the catch: *The Resonance of that Wellspring has to match the Resonance of the mage and his purpose.* A peaceful mage cannot tap the energy of a battle unless he wants to kick somebody's ass; a Furious Black Suit won't find much helpful energy in a Wellspring of Calm. And so, most Prime-savvy mages stir up the appropriate kinds of energy. Lee Ann might start a sacred orgy, while Voormas might kick off a massacre. When you think about it, this explains volumes about rock stars, healers, political agitators, and media pundits: Their actions stimulate the energy they want to employ.

Makes you kinda wonder about the sorts of people behind the 24/7 fear-fest on most TV networks, doesn't it?

Opening a Node/ Conflux

A Master of Prime Arts can create a Node where one had not existed before. Pulling together the strands or whorls of energy in his surroundings, he can draw them to a single place and get them to erupt and flow into a lasting and consistent "knot" of life-force. Game-wise, this demands Prime 5 and roughly 10 successes per dot in the **Node** Background that gets created by that ritual. (The exact numbers of successes is a Storyteller's prerogative; opening a Node in an area of thick Resonance is often easier than opening one in a place with very little "energy flow" to speak of.)

Technocrats skilled in Primal Utility can use the same technique to generate a *Conflux* – that is, a Technocratic Node whose energies concentrate the raw force of quantum energy into usable form. Again, this requires Primal Utility 5, plus the appropriate rolled successes. Story-wise, this effort usually involves founding a business, staging a concert, tapping a source of precious materials (oil, gold, diamonds, etc.), and then setting up a method to exploit the resources that emerge.

Because Sleepers can't usually see Quintessential energies, this Effect tends to be coincidental unless it involves fluxes of 10 Quintessence or more per turn. (See **Is Energy-Work Coincidental or Vulgar?** above.)

Creating and Using Tass/ Currency

Generally, the materialized energy known as *Tass* (in Technocratic terms, *Currency*) occurs naturally. A skillful mage, however, can use Prime 4 to create Tass from free-flowing Quintessential energy. In story terms, she draws that energy toward herself and then shapes it through her focus. A faith-using mage, for instance, could pray the energy into a bowl of holy water, while a Syndicate rep counts her money, "instilling value" into it as she runs her gaze and fingers across the bills.

Tass gets depleted as its energy gets used. That holy water, for example would evaporate when the Quintessence is gone. Those energized $100 bills would crumble or tear, becoming worthless as their "value" is spent. Once the energy has been sapped from Tass, the material form ceases to exist.

Employing a Periapt/ Matrix

Permanent vessels for Quintessence – that is, ones that don't disintegrate when their essence gets used – are called *Periapts* (for Technocrats, *Matrices*). Essentially, those batteries work like Tass, but they're composed of materials that don't disappear when the energy gets used.

To employ the energy within such batteries, a mage with Prime 3 shifts Quintessence into, or out of, an object that has been prepared to accept and store that energy.

Accessing Tass or Periapt Quintessence

Under normal circumstances, a mage with Tass, a Periapt, or a Matrix on his person can access that battery's Quintessence reflexively – that is, without using an additional Effect. If that battery is within reach but not touching the character, he can use a Prime 2 Effect to get the energy. And if the battery is some distance away, he can use Correspondence 2/ Prime 2 in order to draw upon the energy within the Periapt.

The amount of Quintessence your mage can use reflexively depends upon that mage's Avatar rating; a character with Avatar 3, for instance, can use three points of Quintessence in a single turn without resorting to an additional Prime Effect, while one with Avatar 1 could access only one point per turn.

If your mage uses an additional Prime Effect, he can drain energy (or add it) in the usual successes-based amounts; three successes, for instance, would let him shunt up to six Quintessence into or out of the battery. At Prime 4, he can recharge the Periapt anytime, anyplace, anywhere.

For more rules about Periapts, see the optional expanded Wonder rules in **The Book of Secrets**, **Chapter Two**.

Paradox Nullification

Mastery of the Prime Sphere also allows you to counter certain amounts of Paradox energy. For details, see **Nullifying Paradox** in **The Paradox Effect** section of **Mage 20, p. 549**.

Aura Alteration

Using an Effect similar to the **Body of Light** described in **Mage 20 (Chapters Nine** and **Ten)**, your mage can also use Prime 2 to alter his *aura*: the corona of life-energy that reveals his true nature. Depending on his wishes, that character could either dampen the aura, enhance it, or shift the aura's color and/ or texture to suit your mage's preference.

Each success on the Arete roll removes one success from anyone who's trying to scan the character's aura, or from anyone who might try to do so. If the mage wants to deceive an observer, those successes might apply against her, working to convince that observer that she's seeing what the mage wants her to see.

Mind 1 can also have the same Effect, thanks to the mental-shielding techniques that form part of basic Mind-magick training. And because the Masses cannot detect auras (much less note it if the colors change), aura alteration is always coincidental. An additional roll of Charisma + Subterfuge can lower the difficulty for an aura-alteration roll, but since the Effect is coincidental to begin with, that roll just provides icing on the cake. (The minimum difficulty is still 3.)

For more information about auras, see the **Perceiving Auras** entry under **Enhanced Perceptions**, following this section, pp. 53-54.

Enchanting Objects

A miraculous benefit of manipulating the essential energies of Creation involves energizing objects and organisms so that they're more "real" than they had been before. On the flipside, a mage who can do such things may also withdraw those energies and make her target even *less* real than it had been before. The latter approach inflicts aggravated damage, as shown on the **Base Damage and Duration chart**; the former allows the mage to perform a number of fantastic Effects:

Conjuring Material Forms

As detailed in the section **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification**, Prime 2, combined with a Pattern Sphere, allows a mage to create new forces, materials or organisms. Essentially, the mage fills "empty space" with focused energy, and then uses that energy to construct a new physical Pattern out of metaphysical essence.

For obvious reasons, this sort of thing tends to be vulgar magick, although a sufficient level of concealment can make it seem coincidental. (For details, see the sidebar **Axis of Coincidence** in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, pp. 533-534**.) Technological instruments can make such feats acceptable to the Consensus too; a laser-weapon, for example, can focus a combination of Forces and Prime into a devastating attack that seems perfectly "natural" in a tech-based world.

Conjuring Immaterial Mind and Spirit Forms

By combining Prime 2 with Mind 3, a mage can spin mental phantasms into semi-material form, crafting illusions, mental projections, dreamscapes and so forth that other people can see. As above, such things tend to be vulgar magick unless there's a technological device (TV screen, holographic projector, mental-impulse monitor, etc.) involved in the Effect. For more details, see the section about the **Arts of Illusion**, p. 129-131.

A related application of with Matter 3/ Spirit 3/ Prime 2 allows a character to craft ephemeral items: spirit-swords, spiritual armor, ephemeral tools, and so forth. Because those items have a thin sort of substance, that conjuration works the same way as material or mental conjurations. In the material world, those conjured items look and feel ghostly, glowing with a luminescence that betrays their innate Resonance; in the Otherworlds, those items are essentially solid, although they still might glow or echo with the appropriate flavor of Resonance.

At Prime 4/ Spirit 4, the mage to invest a spirit-entity with enough Quintessence to turn it into a solid, materialized form. That "solid spirit" has two health levels for every success

rolled after the first one; a creature invested with three successes, then, would have six health levels. When those levels get dispersed, the spirit returns to its ephemeral form – still intact as a spirit, but no longer possessing a solid body. In certain forms of **Necromancy** or **Summoning** (see those sections in this chapter), a mage can weave a body for the spirit she's dealing with... either as a treat, or as a threat.

As mentioned elsewhere, conjured items last for the duration of the Effect unless the caster wants to dispel them before then.

Consecrating and Energizing Items

As mentioned earlier under **Shapeshifting and Consecrating Possessions** (p. 20), a simple Prime 1 Effect can consecrate an object to a mage's Pattern, allowing her to take it with her into the Otherworlds or have it change shape whenever she does. That process involves certain liabilities (also described above), but makes things far more convenient for travelers and shapeshifters than they might be otherwise.

Using Prime 2, the mage can "energize" the reality of an object so that it can inflict or soak aggravated damage. Working that Effect into weapons allows them to harm spirits or dish out serious hurt against vampires, werewolves, and other rough beasts. The "holy weapons" and "sacred armor" of religious mages and their favored allies comes from this Effect, and although that power tends to fade after the spell's duration ends (unless the player enchants that item permanently), that power gives Awakened characters a much-needed edge when they're dealing with the Night-Folk.

- At Prime 2, the mage can create **Trinkets** and simple **Charms**;

- At Prime 3, she can craft **Artifacts**, **Periapts**, *temporary* **Talismans**, and similar Wonders;

- And at Prime 4, she can create *permanent* Talismans and also (by adding Life 3) turn living things into **Charms**.

For details, see **Crafting Wonders** in **The Toybox**, **Mage 20**, **Appendix II**, **pp. 652-653**. And for more information about Charms and Artifacts – which are not detailed in the **Mage 20** rulebook – see the *optional rules* for **Wonders: Objects of Enchantment** in **Chapter Two** of **The Book of Secrets**.

Quintessential Bolts and Weapons

With blasts of sheer focused Quintessence, a Prime-savvy mage can throw bolts or punches imbued with pure metaphysical

force. Conjured through Prime 3, this power allows him to visualize, and then employ, a "sword of light," "plasma hammer," or some other form of blazing energetic weaponry.

These blasts or weapons or raw Quintessence inflict aggravated damage. They do *not*, however, employ heat unless the mage also adds Forces 3 to the Effect. The energy is essentially a "cold fire" of channeled metaphysical force, and although it does "burn" on contact, it does not ignite flammable substances.

Each application of such energy uses one Quintessence point per turn, *whether or not the attack is successful*. Sure, you can swing your Prime-saber around without hitting anything, but the energy involved still comes from your mage's Pattern. Thus, such raw displays of Quintessential might tend to be surprise attacks or last-ditch efforts – they're simply too energy-intensive to last for long.

Game-wise, this sort of thing tends to be vulgar unless it's crafted with technology (like a certain trademarked space-opera energy-sword), or else conjured among the faithful in a place that accepts miracles as part of the metaphysical landscape. (See *Reality Zones* in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, **pp. 611-617**.)

Altering Properties

Because Quintessence provides the essential energy for physical existence, a mage can alter certain aspects of that existence by altering the flow of Quintessence within an object. While that's a pretty high-level feat (Prime 4, to be exact), a Prime Adept can combine that Sphere with the Forces and Matter Spheres in order to change qualities of a substance or force.

With Rank 4 expertise in the Spheres involved, an aspiring Master can change magnetic polarities (Forces 4/ Matter 4/ Prime 4); remove a chemical's ability to form chemical bonds with other chemicals, and thus alter or remove that chemical's usual effects (Matter 4/ Prime 4); turn a "solid" object insubstantial (again, Matter 4/ Prime 4); extract the "shocking" qualities from electricity; create fire that does not generate heat or consume its fuel (Forces 4/ Prime 4); or perform other strange acts of physics. Although Forces and Matter alone can perform such feats at various Ranks – as described under *Mystic Physics* in the *Elemental Mastery* section, **pp. 26-32** – the Prime Sphere allows a skillful magus to alter those properties through energetic manipulation, not sheer elemental might. In obvious cases, such alterations are vulgar magick, especially when performed on a large scale. (See *Earthly Foundations* under the *Reality Zones* section in **Mage 20**, **pp. 612-613**.) However, because many alterations remain invisible unless something reveals them (holding one's hand, for example, in a fire that does not burn), the alteration may remain coincidental if nothing exposes that altered state. And although Paradox doesn't usually work retroactively, other parties may find such phenomena interesting enough for further examination... and potentially for *investigation* too!

Energizing Organisms

Objects aren't the only things that a Prime-skilled mage can energize...

- Enchanted with Prime 3, an organic creature can inflict aggravated damage, or soak that same type of injury.

- With Prime 4 and higher (plus Life 3), the mage can energize the Pattern of a living thing, turning it into a mobile Charm, as described below.

- At Prime 5 (with Life 5), a Master can turn a living thing into an organic Periapt – a walking Quintessence battery who can absorb or "dispense" Prime energy at the mage's will.

Living Charms

Combined with the powers of other Spheres, Prime 4 allows the mage to invest a magickal Effect into a living vessel; thus enchanted, that creature can retain one single-use Sphere-based power until the Effect's Duration runs out or the mage sees fit to trigger that Effect. (Time 4 is essential to "setting a trigger" that extends beyond the Effect's usual Duration.) Such "living Charms" contain – at least for a short time – the essence of magick within them. Prime 4/ Forces 3/ Life 3 can let a tree burst into flame without burning itself, while Prime 4/ Matter 3/ Life 2 could make it blossom into ice. Prime 4/ Life 3/ Entropy 2 could turn a child into a vector of good or bad luck. The living bomb – crafted from Life 4/ Prime 4/ Time 4/ Forces 3 – has become an awful weapon in our Age of Terror. Such living Charms tend to be rather vulgar when they manifest obvious magick, but so long as they're far away when the backlash hits, unscrupulous mages really don't care.

Such investment demands one point of Quintessence for the highest Sphere involved in the Effect. The aforementioned living bomb requires four points of Quintessence from the mage nasty enough to create it.

It's worth noting that such one-use infusions of magick do not radically alter the Pattern of the creature in question. Instead, they infuse a limited amount of energy in a short-term expenditure of metaphysical energy. That's why the Life-Sphere requirement is lower than what would be required when actually altering that creature's Pattern. It's a small distinction in terms of the single use of magick, but a significant one in terms of the poor critter who's being used this way. Once the Effect goes off, the creature – assuming he hasn't been harmed – becomes essentially "normal" again.

Shapechanged creatures may be "energized" with certain Effects during the creation process; this feat of Pattern transformation, however, isn't quite the same thing as crafting an organic Charm. For details, see *Additional Abilities* in the section *Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification*, **pp. 19-20**.

Upgrades

The Prime-wielding mage can also use Quintessence to fuse living and inert matter together (a combined Life 4/ Matter 4/ Prime 4 Effect), installing cybernetics or other "improvements" on a complex organism. And although mad scientists of all persuasions love to play at being God this way, the techniques of fusing matter and living tissue into a functioning whole is also an old staple of Enlightened artisanship and certain forms of witchcraft or miracle-work.

For more details about different sorts of alterations – ones conducted through raw Pattern-binding rather than through infusions of energy – see *Body Modifications*, under *Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification*.

What You Thought This Section Said

Yes, it's true – Ecstatics and other mages who use *bodywork* and *sex and sensuality* as instruments can also energize *orgasms*. Life 2 and/ or Mind 2 (with or without a skillful touch) can bring the orgasm about easily enough; Time 3 can prolong the ecstasy. By combining Prime 1 or higher with other forms of stimulation, the mage can blend her energy with her lover's own, boost it, drain it, intensify the Quintessence surge to an incredible degree, or otherwise employ magnificent powers of energetic bliss.

By the way, blasting an unwilling partner with orgasmic magick has another, less blissful name: *rape*.

Ethical mages – Ecstatic or otherwise – do not go there. For more about that subject, see *Questions of Consent* under the *Uncanny Influence* section, pp. 119-120.

Rubbing the Bones

And speaking of intense sensations...

Even at the lower levels of Prime expertise, a mage with Prime 2 can "rub someone's bones" by causing the victim's internal Quintessence to fluctuate. Although this attack inflicts bashing damage only (as per the normal **Base Damage or Duration chart**), it *hurts*. A *lot*.

A victim of this Effect needs to make a Willpower roll, with the difficulty being the number of health levels, *pre-soak*, that he has taken. If he succeeds, then he can still act; if not, then he's paralyzed with agony. People who see this vulgar Effect in action notice that the victim seems to fade in and out, going from his normal physical presence to a ghostly flickering shadow of himself. Again, the attack is vulgar, but highly effective... especially for mages who haven't yet mastered the truly destructive capabilities of magick.

Creating Soulgems, Soulflowers, and Assets

Infusing an object with his personal Quintessence, a skilled mage can use Matter 4/ Prime 4 to create a *Soulgem*: a Periapt filled with the dominant Resonance of the mage who created it. Essentially, this Soulgem carries the mage's dominant Resonance **signature** (explained in **Mage 20** and **The Book of Secrets**); holds Quintessence for him like a Periapt; and functions as an inanimate extension of that mage, as if it had been consecrated by the Prime 1 Effect of that name.

Especially when such powers have been invested into a unique personal instrument, the Soulgem Effect allows a mage to carry his source of power with him into other worlds or forms. Enchanted canes, swords, armor, clothing, iPods, computers, guns, or even cars may provide a powerful instrument for the mage's Will. Of course, such Soulgems also provide a massive liability to the mage in question; an enchanted Soulgem guitar might be a fantastic instrument for mystic songcraft... but what if somebody *steals* it...?

With Life 5/ Prime 5, the mage can do the same thing with a complex organism, turning his favorite companion into a *Soulflower*. Despite the poetic name, it's a fairly creepy process, one which turns a living creature into an extension of the mage who made it. A Soulflower, of course, is harder to steal than a Soulgem, but tends to have its own mind and personality. Although a possessive mage could bind that creature to his will using Mind magick, the moral repercussions – especially in the modern age – can make this a traditional yet problematic spell.

In a Technocratic sense, such creations are simply *assets*; there's nothing "mystical" about them, for crying out loud – they're simply valuable investments that remain near and dear to a Syndicate agent's heart. In gamespeak, of course, they're still Technocratic "gems" and "flowers"; a hypereconomist simply lacks the sentimentality that other mages might feel about such precious items or organisms.

For information about Resonance signatures, see the *Resonance* sections in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten,** and **The Book of Secrets**, **Chapter Two**. For details about unique personal instruments of magick, see *Focus and the Arts* and the *Magickal Difficulty Modifiers chart* in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**. For details about possession and mind-control, see the *Uncanny Influence* section later in this chapter. And for more about Soulflowers, see the sourcebook **Gods, Monsters & Familiar Strangers**.

Quintessential Blessings

By "filling a person full of life," a Master of Prime can essentially bless that person with robust vitality. Game-wise, this instantly fills a fellow mage's Quintessence wheel with Quintessence (as usual, the amount is based on successes; four successes would grant eight points of Quintessence), and grants any living creature a blazing aura combined with a sense of intense energy. Throughout the Effect's duration, that character can ignore wound-based penalties – she simply feels too *alive* to hurt!

Combined with Entropy 2, this blessing also gives the recipient some story-based good fortune. Although there's no game-based modifier connected to this blessing, things ought to go well for that character... at least until the spell wears off.

Added Life-Force (Health Levels)

By combining this blessing with advanced Life Arts, the mage can add temporary health levels to himself (Prime 5/ Life 3) or to the character of his choice (Prime 5/ Life 4). Again, the number of health levels added is based upon the successes rolled, as if those health levels were damage, and they last for the usual Duration of the Effect, or until damage takes them away. (For details, see **Mage 20**'s **Base Damage or Duration chart**.)

If the recipient suffers damage before the Effect runs out, those new health levels absorb the damage, leaving only "minor flesh wounds" that hurt but do not hinder the character. Damage that exceeds those health levels, of course, affects the character normally.

As an example, let's say that Amanda has been gifted with eight temporary health levels by her mentor Senex. (Four successes rolled by Senex equal eight health levels for Amanda.) In the course of a fight, Amanda takes six health levels; the added vitality absorbs the injuries, though, so while Amanda winds up bleeding and annoyed, she's still essentially healthy despite that damage. If she suffers three more health levels in damage, however, she takes that final level as real injury; when the spell wears off, Amanda will be down just one health level despite the hits she's taken.

Because they come from a reinforced Pattern laced with life-force, those added health levels can absorb bashing, lethal or aggravated damage. Generally, this sort of blessing is co-incidental. However, each level of damage that the character absorbs *that a normal human being could not possibly survive* (being set on fire, for example, or having a falling safe drop on her head) gives that character one point of Paradox. Even after the blessing Effect ends, the Paradox remains until a backlash discharges that energy.

For other acts of good fortune (and bad fortune, too), see **Blessings and Curses** in the **Uncanny Influence** section, .

Energy Vampirism

Turning the Prime blessings in another direction, a mage can drain energy from his companions, typically without them noticing that he's doing it. Although they begin to feel worn-out and achy, the "vampirized" characters probably don't realize what's being done to them unless they possess the Awareness Talent or can see the flow of Prime energy being drawn from them by the mage. In short, then, energy vampirism remains coincidental unless the mage gets greedy and drains his victims to – or *beyond* – the point of death.

Willing characters can be "vampirized" with Prime 3; in this case, the mage either convinces them to give him some energy, or else disguises his predation with affection (sex, sensuality, excitement, or other forms of closeness). For details, see **Bond of Blood**, below... possibly enhanced with the orgasmic effects described above.

Using Prime 5, a dishonest mage could draw out energy from *unwilling* characters who don't even realize what's happening until they collapse from exhaustion. A sociopathic sorcerer could essentially "rape the energy" from a living vessel with Prime 3, although at that point the victim knows that something awful's going on. In both cases, such violations have dire consequences for all parties involved – see **The Lady Macbeth Effect**, below.

Primal Utility specialists excel at this sort of thing, either by seducing their "human resources" into "giving their all" or by working people until they drop. Explains a lot about your boss, doesn't it?

Disintegrating Things/ Liquidating Assets

The ultimate power of Prime magick allows your mage to disintegrate objects (Prime 4) or organisms (Prime 5) by withdrawing the Quintessence from their Patterns. In Technocracy terms, a Primal Utility specialist "liquidates assets" by "wiping them off the ledgers" for good.

As mentioned elsewhere, this Effect inflicts aggravated damage upon the target, at the usual successes-based rate. That mage simply disperses his target's Quintessence back into the world. When a target has lost all of its health levels (or, for inanimate objects, when it has lost all of its **Durability and Structure**; see **Bustin' Stuff** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**, **pp. 439-440**), then that target literally creases to exist.

For obvious reasons, this trick is almost always vulgar unless the mage uses some believable method – fire, acid, cremation, etc. – to annihilate the target. For the most part, "disintegrator beams" are still vulgar technomagick throughout most of the world; certain situations or settings, however, might accept such technology as coincidental... if rather alarming in its implications. (See **Technocratic Reality** in **Mage 20**'s **Reality Zones** section for details.)

Optional Rule: Harvesting Quintessence Through Sacrifice

By tapping into the energies of life, Prime-Sphere Effects can channel Quintessence from one "vessel" to another. A mage can then use that Quintessence to recharge his Quintessence Trait, energize a Wonder, or power new Effects. Ah, but the morality of taking life-force from one living thing so you can benefit yourself creates an ethical dilemma... especially in a Storytelling game, where players can simply say, "*But it's not like I REALLY killed that busload of children in order to get their Quintessence!*" And so, although such uses of the Prime Sphere are technically "official," the ability to do so in your game becomes an *optional rule*. If the Storyteller doesn't want her players sacrificing characters in order to get more power, then she can simply say, "*No, that doesn't work in my chronicle.*"

For typical amounts of Quintessence per subject, see the chart below.

Heart's Blood

Self-sacrifice allows a mage to use Prime 1 in order to draw upon his personal life-force; by cutting himself, pushing the limits of his endurance, working himself to exhaustion, or otherwise inflicting damage upon himself in order to draw upon his life-force, that character can "give till it hurts." Each success on the Arete roll moves one point of Quintessence from the mage's Pattern into the task at hand, lowering his difficulty at that task by -1 per point. (At the Storyteller's discretion, this feat might allow the player to bend the usual -3 modifier limit; the usual limits on magick-roll difficulties, however, still apply.)

In game terms, a mage has 10 points of Quintessence in addition to that character's Avatar Background and/ or his current Quintessence rating. Each of those Quintessence points translates to one health level, with the last three taking that mage below Incapacitated. If he uses those points, then he dies.

Damage inflicted by "heart's blood" self-sacrifice can be healed *only* by time and rest, not by magick. And so, you probably won't want to go beyond the Bruised level unless your mage is desperate enough to do whatever must be done.

Burnt Offerings

By using Prime 2, a mage can pull a single point of Quintessence from an object that's being ritually destroyed as part of a sacrifice. Despite the phrase "burnt offerings," that object could also be broken (like a glass smashed underfoot at a Jewish wedding); dissolved in acid; dropped in the sea; scattered into the wind as ashes or dust; buried without intentions of digging it back up; or otherwise surrendered to the act of sacrifice.

By combining Matter 2 with Prime 2, you could draw out one Quintessence point per success on your Arete roll. In either case, the Effect is coincidental – people can't see the Quintessential energy unless they have the Prime Sphere, although someone might sense the energy-transfer if she's got Awareness. In either case, the act of giving up that object is an essential part of the spell. No sacrifice, no Quintessence.

Bond of Blood

A *voluntary* sacrifice allows a mage to use Prime 3 in order to either receive Quintessence from a willing donor, or else gift Quintessence to someone else. In either case, use the success-based rules from the ***Base Damage and Duration chart***. Story-wise, the characters seal the exchange with some act of surrender – a kiss, a blessing, an orgasm or, of course, blood.

Lambs to the Slaughter

Through the fearsome act of *un*willing sacrifice, the mage can use Prime 3 to pull Quintessence out of a living creature's Pattern, usually in the process of doing something horrible to it. The "best" kinds of live sacrifices use quick, humane methods to dispatch the offering with minimal suffering; awful variants stretch the pain and anguish out for hours, days or even weeks, drawing energy from prolonged suffering. For obvious reasons, this isn't something characters should do without invoking equally awful consequences.

Human-sized characters carry 10 points of Quintessence; smaller creatures have between three and five points, and much larger creatures may have 15 points or more... which explains why tigers and elephants are endangered species. All living sacrifices – *especially* unwilling ones – transfer the Resonance of that act onto the person who receives the Quintessence. As described below, that can have powerful results.

Disintegration/ Purifying Flames

With Prime 4, a mage can disintegrate a sacrificial object; with Prime 5, he can do the same thing to a living being. In both cases, the character disperses the Quintessence within her target – not draining it (which can be done at the lower levels described above) but sending that energy back into the world by igniting it, decaying it, or otherwise rendering it nonexistent.

If she chooses to draw that energy into herself, of course, she can still use the **Bond of Blood** or **Lambs to the Slaughter** Effects in order to take that "free" Quintessence into her own Pattern. Generally, though, an offering sacrificed by disintegration is given up to Creation at large – possibly in the name of a god or principle, but not often for the mage's direct gain.

Resonance and Repercussions: The Lady Macbeth Effect

By offering up a sacrifice, you also take on the energy of that sacrifice. An offering of love conveys loving Resonance; a terrified sacrifice yields violated Resonance. As the section that deals with *Prime Magick and Resonance* explains, the energy of an Effect that employs the Prime Sphere gets especially potent Resonance. And so, for reasons that should be clear, messy sacrifices have messy energy that "sticks" to a person long after the blood itself has been washed away. This "Lady Macbeth effect" taints mages who employ living sacrifices; even folks who can't normally perceive Quintessence notice something "wrong" about people who steal life-force from other beings.

In addition to the metaphysical effects of unwilling sacrifices, such offerings tend to have *physical* consequences too. Corpses smell bad, and disposing of remains (especially those from large sacrifices) gets really problematic. Cops take interest when folks start disappearing, especially if corpses turn up bearing marks of sacrifice. Angry neighbors and vengeful loved ones, persistent ghosts, malignant spirits... live offerings bring notorious repercussions, and so despite the traditional practices involved with such sacrifices, such "gifts" are never taken without cost.

Quintessence Amounts

Subject	Quintessence Points per Body
Small animal (bird, cat, fox)	5
Large animal (wolf, horse, human)	10
Powerful animal (tiger, elephant, whale)	15-25
Changeling	20-30
Mage	10-30 (depending on Quintessence Trait)
Spirit	Essence Trait
Vampire	10+ Blood Pool Trait
Werecreature	20+ Gnosis Trait

Essence of Eternity

Everything is energy. The tangible illusions of material reality simply forge the essence of the universe into quantifiable properties and dimensions. At the core of those Patterns of form and function, that invisible eternal energy crackles and coils. To the mage who understands them, such energies present the true face of Creation: not people nor places nor even empty space, but a cauldron of sublime essence from which all things are drawn and to which all things inevitably return.

Enhanced Perceptions

Take my hand.

No.

What are you afraid of?

Nothing.

There's no reason to be afraid then, is there?

I guess not.

Here... Now close your eyes.

Okay.

Now open them.

ohmygod...

See what I mean?

I never thought it could be like THIS before...

Sensing Beyond the Obvious

Crystal balls. Tarot cards. Aura vision. Night-sight binoculars. Heat-scans. Clairvoyance. Prophecy. Seeing through someone else's eyes. Magick opens up vast new possibilities when your mage begins studying a Sphere. For the Awakened, the usual "five senses" are simply the beginning of a much broader spectrum of enhanced perceptiveness...

Sensory Effects offer excellent opportunities for vivid narration and imaginative roleplaying. Rather than simply going "*I turn on my Matter 1 sight, so what do I see?*" you could describe what your character's doing in order to boost her awareness of the world (putting on ethergoggles, taking deep breaths, praying to Allah for guidance, and so forth), and then describe the world as your character perceives it now – the altered sights, sublime sounds, and rich tactile sensations that come with a heightened perception of your world.

The Storyteller, meanwhile, can go wild describing the new sensory experience. With magick, everything looks brighter, or darker, or more vivid and surreal than usual. Check out the descriptions in **Mage 20 Chapters Three** and **Four**, plus the **Preludes** for **Mage 20** and this book, to catch some hints about the "altered state" of a mage's perceptions... and, if you're the Storyteller, describe them to your players with as much imagination as you can spare.

(Films like *The Fountain*, *Koyaanisqatsi*, *Under the Skin*, *π*, *Antichrist*, the Guy Ritchie/ Robert Downey jr Sherlock Holmes films, and especially *Lucy* also offer fantastic examples of magickally boosted perceptions, and we highly recommend those movies to **Mage** players and Storyteller... although we also offer *VERY* strong trigger-warnings for *Under the Skin* and *Antichrist*, which are not, shall we say, suitable for all viewers.)

Story-wise, these perceptions *can* be, but do not *have* to be, visual. If Jinx chooses to use her Entropic perceptions, then she might see currents of potential, or spot cracks and flaws that no other person would notice. Perhaps, however, she perceives them differently; maybe she hears whispers of potential events, notes a crackling sound near flawed surfaces, or catches the tremble of possibility just before something significant occurs. Rank 1 perceptions can affect *any* sense, and the way your character perceives them will depend upon your character, her perspective, and the ways in which she views her connections between magick and her world.

Most sensory Effects take only one turn to "activate." Once on, they tend to last the duration of the scene... or, if you're going for the long haul, the duration of the Effect, according to the **Base Damage or Duration chart**. Either way, a mage can "turn off" her perceptions at any point... although, in some cases, that might not be fast enough to *un*-see something that she's seen.

The Basics

- Each Sphere, at Rank 1, allows the mage to perceive the core elements of the Sphere in question.

- Those perceptions often extend beyond mere sight, allowing the mage to (if possible) smell a person's state of health, feel the flow of probability as a tactile sensation, or otherwise note appropriate phenomena if the sensation fits the mage and his personal focus. You can't, for example, smell a spirit's presence if your hypertech Ectoplasmic Signature Scanner has only a

visual sensor array, although you might well be able to do so if you're a shaman skilled in the Old Ways.

- To look through time, view auras, and use other arcane methods of perception, see the entries below.

Muddled Perceptions and Sensory Overload

Generally, a mage can keep track of one set of perceptions at a time. A single Effect can combine several different perceptions (say, like using a conjunctional Entropy/ Life Effect in order to spot a potential disease) without complications.

If, however, the mage tries to pile on additional sensory Effects at once, those perceptions will probably get muddled. In game terms, each Rank 1 Sphere Effect in play adds a +1 difficulty to that character's Perception-based rolls (+1 for one Effect, +2 for two Effects, and so on), assuming that the character's trying to run more than one Effect at a time. If, for instance, Kyle tries to scan an area with his Correspondence, there's no penalty. If he tries to scan with Correspondence while also adding new Effects to scan for Life, Prime *and* Time, however, then he adds +4 to his Perception rolls due to sensory overload.

Enhanced perceptions could also make your character vulnerable to overwhelming sensory input. Jinx, for example, would probably score a pretty nasty headache if she boosted her hearing and tactile perceptions during a riot. The exact effects of sensory overload fall under the Storyteller's discretion, but could range from increased difficulties (as above) to sudden blindness, deafness, or panic if the mage gets nailed with more sensations than she can process at once.

Basic Perceptions

"*Man, you can't do ANYTHING with Rank 1 Spheres!*" That's not even remotely true. Although those enhanced perceptions lack the devastating power of higher-level Effects, the ability to perceive things that few mortals even understand – and thus, to be able to exploit opportunities that usually escape notice – can be an incredible advantage for a clever mage.

As each of the Sphere entries reveal, the first step toward learning a new set of reality-principles involves perceiving them on a metaphysical level. Entropy teaches a person to see probabilities and flaws; Matter lets her notice the underlying structure of inert objects. Time-sense helps you get a handle on the slippery passage of temporal flow, while Life-sense shows the current state of health in the living things around you. On their own, each of these perceptions can present a formidable edge; imagine being able to spot a lie (Entropy or Mind), Resonance (Prime), or that person sneaking up behind you (Correspondence). Combined, however, these "simple" perceptions bestow a wide range of potential insights.

Game-wise, a Rank 1 Effect allows the character to "turn on" a sense beyond the human range. Unless she's obviously seeing through a wall or something like that, this sort of thing is almost always

Aura Colors and Textures

Emotional State	Color
Bitterness	Brown
Calm, Devotion	Blue
Change, Transformation	Violet
Compassion, Affection	Pink
Empathy, Sensitivity	Green
Enthusiastic, Idealistic	Yellow
Fear	Orange
Fury	Dark Red
Pain, Hatred	Black
Passion, Anger	Red
Sadness	Silver
Uncertainty, Depression	Gray

Condition	Texture
Arousal	Bright
Corruption	Pulsating
Dementia, Quiet	Flickering
Excitement	Crackling
Faerie	Rainbow highlights Marauder
Fanatical	Intense colors
Ghost	Weak, faded
Magic/ Mage	Sparkling
Nephandus	Usually different from its true nature
Sickness, Dying	Fading
Spirituality, Awareness	Gold
Truth, Purity, Faith	White
Vampire	Pale
Werecreature	Bright, vibrant

coincidental, and may even receive the *Automatic Success* option described in **Mage 20, Chapter Eight, pp. 394-395**. Once activated, this sense allows the player to make Perception + Awareness rolls to notice things that would normally remain hidden; if successful, the character can then react appropriately to what she perceives.

Perceiving Auras

Through Mind 1, Spirit 1, or the Awareness Talent, or a combination of Life 1/ Prime 1, a mage can try to discern and read the aura – the life-energy halo that surrounds living and semi-living things. For a possible +1 on the difficulty, the character could try to read the auras of spirits or the undead as well.

Prime 1 may allow a mage to read a character's Resonance and/ or Synergy signatures. For more about those energies and their manifestations, see the optional Resonance and Synergy rules in **The Book of Secrets, Chapter Two**.

As usual, such insights require a Perception + Awareness roll, although adding the Effect to a Perception + Awareness roll may lower the difficulty of that roll. (See *Magick Enhancing Abilities*, **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, pp. 533-535**.) If the character succeeds, he can glimpse the corona of energy around his target; the stronger its life-force or Resonance, the brighter that aura will be. See the chart nearby for the colors and textures most typically associated with auras.

As explained in the **Energy-Work** section, under *Aura Alteration*, a mage with Mind 1 or Prime 2 can dampen or shift the colors of her aura – a useful skill if you don't want people to know who or what you really are...

Sensing Magick

Given their affinity to magick, mages can usually sense it when it's been used in their vicinity. That's especially true if that magick contains strong Resonance signatures, as described in the previous section. Depending on the mages and the magick involved, those impressions might possess a distinct smell, leave a tingling sensation in the air, or perhaps even smear the area with a greasy metaphysical residue.

In game terms, a Perception + Awareness roll can help a mage spot magickal energies within roughly 100 feet of her. Generally, the difficulty is 6, although really large Effects or strong Resonance might lower that difficulty as low as 4, while subtle ones could raise it as high as 9.

Spotting the Afterglow

A Prime 1 Effect can help that mage sense the residue of magick that has been used within the area. The "afterglow" of small spells fades quickly – within five minutes or so. Larger Effects, however, can linger for quite a while – hours or even days, if the results were dramatic enough, and most especially if Paradox was involved. Once those traces have begun to fade, the difficulty for a roll to detect that afterglow begins to rise. Again, the nature of the mages and activities in question will determine whether or not the magickal "detective" can spot lingering traces of the spell, and decide what those traces will feel like if she's able to do so.

Sharing Perceptions

Under normal circumstances, the mage who evokes those enhanced perceptions is the only one who can experience them. With a little extra work, however, the mage can share her enhanced perceptions with someone else, "jacking in" another character to the sensations she perceives.

A character can share perceptions in several ways:

- By remaining in physical touch with another character who wants to share those perceptions, the mage can simply extend her perceptions to that other character through that "bridge" of touch. Ecstasy Cultists do this sort of thing all the time.

- To extend that bond to a *willing* character who's within a yard or two, the mage adds Mind 2. To do across a greater distance, she adds Correspondence 2 as well.

- Blasting those perceptions into the head of an *unwilling* character who's within that same distance takes Mind 3 instead, with Correspondence 3 to do so across a greater distance. Such insights may prove... *interesting*... to the character on the receiving end – see *Psychic Assault* and *Overload* in the *Uncanny Influence* section, **pp. 121-122**.

- In game-terms, each new character requires one additional success on the casting roll. If Jinx, for example, wants to share her perceptions with Synder, then Camille needs to roll at least two successes; if she shares with Synder *and* Khan, then Camille needs no fewer than three successes, and so on. Yes, when sharing perceptions, the player *should* have to make that roll. The automatic success option does not extend to magicks that dramatically affect other characters.

Coincidental or Vulgar?

Are shared perceptions coincidental or vulgar? That depends on how the mage is sharing them, and who she's sharing them with. Jinx sharing visions with Khan and Synder is no big deal – they're all mages, and used to that sort of thing. If Jinx slips some acid to an unAwakened playmate, then the resulting vision is probably still coincidental... the "unnatural" sight can be passed off as good drugs or an expanded consciousness. If, however, she simply opens the perceptual floodgates for some unAwakened person who's not ready for them, and who has no reason to expect that he could suddenly view auras or see through walls, then the Effect is vulgar. In such situations, you're rocking someone else's reality in ways they can't explain, and that opens the door to Paradox.

In most cases, it takes a physical touch to convey the expanded perceptions. Exceptions can be made, however, for Effects that get channeled through music, meditation, light-shows, second-hand psychotropic smoke, or other instruments that can open a person's eyes and mind from a distance.

Projecting Images and Impressions

By combining Forces 3/ Mind 2/ Prime 2 with a perception-based Effect, the mage could conjure or project images or impressions of the observed subject – perhaps showing them on a screen, revealing them in clouds of smoke, capturing them in a mirror, or otherwise creating a visible and/ or audible image of the area that's being observed. This way, other characters can perceptive them as well.

Whether or not this sort of trick is vulgar depends again upon the people and processes involved. A holographic image projected on a wall of smoke is perfectly acceptable at a rave,

while a sudden ability to touch strangers from a distance on the street definitely is not.

As with any Effect that's not specifically rigged (with Time 4) or rolled (with many successes) to last longer, projections and other shared visions last for the usual Duration of an Effect. The caster can cut them off before that Duration ends, of course, but the visions last until their time runs out.

For more details about projected images, see *Arts of Illusion* in the *Uncanny Influence* section, **p. 129**.

Scrying, Clairvoyance, and Other Remote Perceptions

Once upon a time, a mage needed a crystal ball, mirror, or scrying pool in order to watch someone or something from a distance. These days, all she needs is a surveillance device, webcam, satellite connection, Closed Circuit TV, GPS, Googlemaps, or any one of the many ways in which 21st century technology allows us to keep tabs on one another. Some mages, of course, still favor the Old Ways. Whatever method she prefers, the game-systems for magickal scrying remain the same.

Perceiving From a Distance

By adding Correspondence 2 or higher to a Sphere-based perception Effect, your mage can observe a distant place or subject through the **Correspondence Sphere Ranges chart**. Correspondence 2 alone can observe a given target or location. The optional **Technocratic Sphere of Data** is extremely effective for this sort of thing, and it uses its own **Data Connections chart (p. 524)**.

In either case, it's easier if the scrying character has some sort of tie to the subject of her observations – a lock of hair, police records, monitoring device inside his house, and so forth. Such connections not only act as instruments through which to focus the Effect, but also provide a path to connection. As both the **Data** and **Correspondence charts** reveal, a close connection makes surveillance much easier.

(Remember that a long-distance Effect is limited to the character's total dots in Correspondence. You can use Correspondence 2/ Life 1 to monitor distant lifeforms, but cannot use Mind 3/ Correspondence 2 to command them from a distance – you need at least three dots in Correspondence in order to do so.)

Again, long-distance perception isn't limited to sight. You can watch, listen to, smell, hear, or even taste a target from a distance, so long as the desired Effect fits your mage's focus. A psychic connection, for example, would allow the mage to feel other sensations, while monitoring a subject on CCTV would not.

Prophecy and Hindsight

What do mages see when they look through time? After all, the Time Sphere allows your characters to see backwards and forwards through history by using a simple Time 2 spell. (See *Time Distortion and Travel*, **p. 107**.) How, then, should the Storyteller handle such situations? By sticking to a simple truth: *history is never simple*.

The Rashomon Effect on Time

As revealed by the *Awakened History* in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Five**, the threads and flow of events are extremely subjective. What looks like a fact from one perspective becomes a myth from another. *The Rashomon Effect* (explained throughout **Mage 20**) throws even the most apparently obvious things into question. And so, although a mage might be able to see *a* past or *a* future, it doesn't mean that he sees *the* past or *the* future. In short, Time magick is not perfectly reliable, nor does it grant more information than a Storyteller wants to give.

Magick doesn't give clear or perfect answers, either; instead, it shows glimpses of what *might* happen or what *could* have been – usually wrapped in metaphor, symbolism, and limited perspectives. Prophecy and hindsight are imperfect media at best, especially when they rely either upon data-based predictions (the sort that technomancers often use) or uncanny visions (the sort favored by mystic seers). Instead of seeing an objective flow of information about a moment in time, the mage catches an enigmatic glimpse of something that may leave more questions than answers. A man runs down the street, pursued by silver ravens. What does it mean? Who's the guy? What are the ravens? Did this actually occur, or does the mage see a symbolic representation of an actual event? By leaving the visions ambiguous, the Storyteller keeps the full information open to interpretation.

Even if the mage sees something that he was present for personally, the perspective may be different. Did you ever see a video of yourself and wonder who that person was? Hear a recording and think "*But that doesn't sound like ME*"? Our minds are neither objective nor reliable, and the same holds true for the minds of our imaginary characters. Events might not have occurred the way the character remembers them; after all, if you were to see a video of an event from your own past, even an event you recall vividly, it would not match the image of that same occurrence in your head. And so, a Storyteller can keep things uncertain simply by utilizing the very real tricks that memory and perception play upon us all.

Pre- and Postcognition

By using Time sight on places or objects (occasionally even on living things), a mage can try to spy upon the subject's past or future. Such *precognition* allows the seer to spot what might happen, while *postcognition* allows her to witness what has already occurred.

Especially in mysterious situations, pre- and postcognition can become powerful tools and apparent story-wreckers. A mage who's trying to identify a murderer, for instance, could hold the apparent murder weapon and figure out the mystery. End of story, right? Not exactly. A place or object, after all,

"witnesses" things only from a certain perspective. You can't "change the camera angle" to better see the details you're trying to discern. Let's say that Malcolm Jamal Leonard wants to see who used a computer and what that person used it for; he works his rituals, lays his fingers on the keyboard, and senses… um, fingertaps. Keyboards don't have *eyes*, after all, and so although he *is* sensing the past "experiences" of that keyboard, it's not information Malcolm can use unless he's clever about it – trying, for example, to figure out whether the fingertaps come from a man or woman, whether that person could type rapidly, whether only certain people would have access to the keyboard during the appropriate time, and so on…

Time magick, then, does not force the Storyteller to reveal anything she doesn't *want* to reveal… only what she *chooses* to reveal.

Storyteller Hints for Time-Spanning Visions

A player whose mage looks backwards or forwards through time uses the **Time-Sphere Timelines chart** to figure out the number of successes he needs in order to view certain temporal zones. Additional hints for players and Storytellers using time-vision include:

- Use symbolism rather than objective "facts."

- Leave the visions ambiguous and open to interpretation.

- Describe an event that *might* happen, and then plant clues that point to the pending event and give your players a chance to change the future.

- Let *the Storyteller* roll the Arete dice and then describe the visions, leaving the "truth" behind them as a mystery. This way, the player has no idea how many successes she actually got, and thus she remains uncertain about the accuracy of those perceptions.

Prophecy and Perception

As **Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade** points out, prophecies are notoriously vague. It's the prophet's job to puzzle the truth from fiction. In the real world, people make predictions all the time, based upon what they consider irrefutable information. And yet – from Y2K to the often-forecasted Apocalypse – we're all still here, with those prophecies now a part of our own past.

Martial Arts

It's easy to get in trouble where I grew up. So Mama signed me up for karate classes when I was five. She told me I would need the discipline and confidence, and she was right. It didn't hurt that I learned how to kick people's ass hard too, when I needed to. It was helpful, so I kept up with it when I got older. Kickboxing. Aikido. Kung fu. I became the Tiger, the Monkey, the Snake. So when I became Magic too, those skills became the bones of who I am.

I don't look like none of those kung-fu heroes. I don't break boards or shave my head. I like my beer like I like my men: hard and rough and strong. But if you choose to mess with me, do not expect to walk away from it in one piece. I have been training hard and using that practice for a very long time. I do not look for trouble, but I don't turn my back on it either. I am the Snake. I am the Tiger. I am the often-drunken Monkey, and that shit you see in movies is just the beginning of what I can do…

Arts of Supreme Mastery

Lacking claws, fangs, and natural armor, the human animal has spent millennia refining techniques that allow a man or woman to fight more effectively… and, when possible, to avoid fighting through supreme confidence and the ability to kick the living shit out of an opponent when need be. Such "martial" arts can be found in almost every human culture; although the popular imagination links such arts to Asia, you can find esoteric fighting arts among African, European, and American civilizations too.

On the surface, martial arts help a person fight more effectively. At the higher levels of accomplishment, however, such skills refine human potential beyond mere physical combat. A dedicated practitioner begins to understand tactics, philosophy, technologies and arts. He unlocks the vital energies that course through all things, and comprehends the inner potential that few people achieve. In legend, media, and even real life, such understanding brings that person beyond the normal human limits. A disciple of the esoteric arts grows past "the art of punching and kicking" and enters a realm of superhuman ability.

As **Mage 20** points out, mages of all kinds focus their Arts through belief, practice, and instruments. Mastery of the practice – backed up by that belief and performed with appropriate instruments – allows the mage to do what he does. The mage, in this case, uses esoteric refinements of his martial disciplines in order to bend the apparent laws of reality. This category, then, is dedicated to metaphysical feats focused through the practice of martial arts, as described in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, **p. 580**.

The Basics

- To spot the flaws in a target's Pattern, use an Entropy 1, Life 1, or Matter 1 Effect to find them. This allows the attacker to reduce the difficulty of a mundane attack, through the *Magick Enhancing Abilities* rule, up to a total reduction of -3. Such insight generally lasts for a single blow, although a solid and immobile target (like a wall) may be attacked several times at the same difficulty, until damage shifts the matrix of those flaws.

- To increase the amount of damage from a strike, use Forces 2 to increase the physical velocity of impact, which also adds one automatic success to that damage, thanks to the Forces Sphere. This also inflicts lethal damage, not bashing damage. For details, see *Elemental Impact* in the *Elemental Mastery* section, **p. 30**.

- To make a strike inflict aggravated damage, add either Prime 2, plus one point of Quintessence per strike (to supercharge the energy within the martial artist's body); a vulgar Life 3 Effect (to shatter the target's Pattern on a metaphysical level); or Entropy 4 (to spot flaws in the target's body and break through them). All three Spheres simply make the damage aggravated; alone, they do not inflict extra damage, although those Spheres could be added to, say, Forces 2, in order to deal out extra damage *and* make it aggravated.

- Certain Night-Folk may require different Spheres (Spirit, Matter, etc.) if you wish to inflict magickal damage on them. See the **Body Magick** entry on the **Common Magickal Effects chart** in **Mage 20**.

- To soak lethal and aggravated damage, use Life 3.

- Boosting your character's body-based Attributes also uses Life 3. For details, see **Body Modifications** under the section **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification, p. 21**.

- A Life 3 Effect also helps you withstand incredible extremes of weather, temperature, pain, and other privations. See **Environmental Hazards** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine, pp. 435-441**.

- To use other legendary martial-arts feats, see below.

- Most martial-arts feats get channeled through strikes (with or without weapons), shouts, leaps, and other activities. See the rules for **Magick and Violence** in the **Combat** section of **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine (pp. 413-416)**, and for **Mundane Skills and Magickal Effects** in **Chapter Ten (pp. 532-535)**.

- A mage who uses martial arts as her practice isn't considered to be "fast-casting" when she uses Sphere Effects focused through her martial techniques and paradigm. For details, see **Fast-Casting in a Fight**, **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine, p. 415**.

A Matter of Practice

Martial arts aren't merely vehicles for kicking and punching techniques. Certain arts, like European fencing, employ sophisticated mathematics and intricate philosophies that compliment and inform the fighting arts. Many teach the student how to wield, counter, and even manufacture weapons, and almost all of them stress the personal reflection and restraint that helps the artist *resist* fighting unless absolutely necessary. This last element is simple self-preservation, because a skilled martial artist who can't control himself is a hazard to everyone and everything in reach.

Chapter Nine of the **Mage 20** rulebook features an extensive treatment of "standard" martial arts, Kuei Lung Chen, and the Akashic Art of Do. (See **pp. 423-430**.) That treatment, though, mostly covers the *physical* applications of martial-arts training. Mages who specialize in martial arts as a practice, however, explore the *meta*physical side of those arts, too. Through such arcane techniques, they can catch arrows, shrug off damage, throw bolts of energy, fly, and far more. Game-wise, those characters use martial arts as a practice that focuses their Arete and Sphere-magick. Martial expertise bends Reality to their Will.

Despite the Akashic Tradition's long association with martial arts, any mage with the background and discipline to pursue those arts can use them as a practice. By the 21st century, the Technocratic Union has adopted esoteric martial arts into its toolkit – such arts are, of course, *technologies* at heart. Black Suits and other field operatives receive intense training in such disciplines, and although they don't do silly things like fly through the air on chi power (that's *absurd*, citizen!), the best of them can shatter walls and shrug off bullets in the grand martial-arts tradition.

Most Awakened characters pursue more than one practice, and build their focus from a combination of practices and instruments that suit the character's *paradigm* – that is, his belief about the way the world works. It's totally appropriate for a **Mage** character to use a fusion of reality-hacking, hypertech, and martial arts, so long as he's not hacking the NSA with a well-placed kick. A combination of practices makes for a very flexible character; that way, he can crack servers or spines with different sorts of attacks. Oh, and in the 21st century, many martial artists also practice yoga – a foundational practice for centuries within many Indian, Tibetan, and South Asian martial arts.

Martial Abilities and Specialties

Unless otherwise noted, the following feats aren't bound to any particular martial-arts form. The mage in question could be using Do, boxing, pankration, than vo dao, Muay Thai, lua, Shaolin dragon style, or whatever other real or fictional practice your character pursues. Most martial artists employ a mixture of practices and techniques, reflected in gamespeak by the specialties of the Martial Arts Ability. (See **Mage 20**, **Chapter Six, p. 281**.) In all cases, though, the martial-arts mage employs an esoteric level of the art – the arcane secret techniques that few people know about and fewer still can use.

Because those refined techniques are forms of technology, mere Brawl-ers cannot use many of them. As noted in the various entries below, certain techniques may be used *only* by characters with the Do or Martial Arts Abilities, not with Brawl, Melee, or other fighting Abilities. That said, many of these feats may be used with weapons as well as without them, assuming that the character has a weapon-based specialty, is using a weapons-based martial art like fencing, or – as with arts like kyuudou archery, kenjutsu, and so on – has a refined specialty in Melee or Archery.

The following section deals only with game systems related to magickal feats. If you're running a martial-artist mage, we highly recommend that you study actual martial-art practices, and then define your character's abilities through real-world legends and techniques. Authentic knowledge provides a cool foundation for imaginary magicks.

I Know Kung Fu!

Martial-arts expertise combines intellectual study, physical conditioning, practical experience, and mental concentration on the chosen discipline. As anyone who's been in a real-life fight understands, physical reflexes matter more than intellectual strategy once blows start flying. And so, although *Matrix*-style "download-fu" makes for a cool fantasy (and might possibly work in the Digital Web), a character cannot "learn" practical martial arts through mental impressions alone.

This doesn't keep people from *trying* to make it work; the Technocracy, Adepts, and other technomancers strive to perfect a functional "download technology" for martial mastery. The physical component, though, remains essential, at least in Meatspace environments. As Kade Lane learns – the hard way, repeatedly – in Ramez Naam's novel *Nexus*, the "Bruce Lee" fighting program is worthless when he gets into real fights.

Deep Techniques

You cannot learn the following techniques at the local YWCA. All of the following feats are considered to be "deep-practice techniques" – that is, secrets that you learn only through discipline and devotion to the practice in question. And so, in game-terms, a character cannot employ these feats until he has at least three dots in either Martial Arts or Do. He might have the Arete and Spheres to perform the technique from a magickal perspective, but lacks the skill to channel them through his martial-arts practice.

The most potent forms of esoteric martial-arts cannot be performed unless the practitioner has reached the highest levels of accomplishment. As a rule, then, assume that a mage cannot perform a magickal martial-arts feat if the highest Sphere Rank is higher than his Martial Arts Ability. If Marcus C, for example, has three dots in Martial Arts, he can't use a technique of Sphere Rank 4 or 5, even if he's got the Arete and Spheres to pull it off. This way, in game terms, a player must advance his character's martial-arts prowess in order to refine his magickal power. For more details, see the sidebar **Optional Rule: Minimum Abilities** in **Mage 20, Chapter Six, p. 276**. In this case, however, we suggest that the "optional rule" be a *definitive* rule. These feats are simply not accessible to amateurs.

That rule, of course, does not apply to Sphere Effects that get focused through something *other* than martial arts. Marcus could totally use a Rank 4 Effect through his reality-hacking practice if he's got the Arete and Spheres to do so – he simply wouldn't be able to use an advanced martial-arts technique until he'd reached a sufficient level of skill.

A Matter of Honor

Many of the following feats are appallingly powerful, especially when combined with the advanced martial-arts options detailed in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine**. A mage who knows such arts is a truly dangerous character, which seriously ramps up the threat-level of Akashayana, Black Suits, Wu Lung, and other combatants who are skilled in both physical and metaphysical war-techniques.

There's a reason that martial-arts teaching stresses honor, restraint, and discipline... and why most martial artists despise rivals who show little inclination toward those things. A martial artist with lots of expertise but little honor can be a true monster – an abomination to the arts he has learned. The horrific potential of a Nephandic Akashayana with such arts at her beck and call, or of a skilled Chakravat who lives up to that group's murderous reputation, should be obvious when you look at feats like **Elemental Fury Chi** or **The Delayed-Death Touch**.

Martial-Art Abilities

Although certain arts (boxing, krav maga) are more utilitarian than others (t'ai chi, kung fu), most – if not all – martial-art practices feature other skills that enhance not only the power of the strikes but the wholeness of the practitioner.

In game-terms, then, a skilled martial-arts disciple should take a several dots in the appropriate Abilities. Some real-life homework about your mage's practice will tell you which Abilities suit her martial training.

Common Abilities

Acrobatics

Athletics

Awareness

Enigmas

Esoterica (all kinds)

Intimidation

Medicine

Meditation

Melee

Specialized Abilities

Academics (History, Philosophy, Tactics, etc.)

Archery

Art (Acting, Dance, Calligraphy, etc.)

Crafts (Weaponsmith)

Cryptography

Empathy

Expression

Etiquette

Pharmacopeia/ Poisons

Science (Biology, Mathematics, Physics, etc.)

Seduction

Stealth

Subterfuge

Survival

Torture

As shown in countless sagas, a martial artist *with* honor cannot stand the presence of one *without* it. And so, a character who uses the following feats carelessly will become a target for other characters with similar (and probably superior) techniques.

High-powered martial-arts mages are among the most deadly Awakened folks around, especially if their mastery combines elemental command, energy-work, and physical prowess. And so, it's essential to stress the rigid codes of honor wrapped

around these arts, not only for the sake of a sane chronicle but also because those codes are as integral to martial-arts legendry as the impressive feats themselves.

Before a Blow is Struck

Violence is serious business. Even the finest martial artist can lose a fight, and so many practices emphasize *avoiding* a scrap if possible, and preparing an edge in that fight if not.

Calming Glance and the Predator's Eye

Stopping a fight before it begins, a Mind-savvy martial artist can instill calm or terror in his would-be opponent:

- Channeled through soft words, a serene demeanor, or other placating gestures, the "calming gaze" feat uses a coincidental Mind 2 Effect to discourage antagonists from fighting. Essentially, that mage sends out an empathic impulse that – if successful – gets the target to chill the fuck out already.

- A similar impulse can send the would-be opponent into trembling fear, screaming terror, reckless fury, and other convenient emotions. This "predator's eye" pushes the antagonist to an emotional state that hinders her effectiveness while giving the martial artist an edge. While the opponent behaves irrationally (which tends to mess with tactical planning or focused techniques), the martial artist takes advantage of that disruption.

Both techniques use the same Mind 2 Effect, and are coincidental unless the mage is being stupidly obvious about his magick. The difference comes from the emotions, not the magick, involved.

Difficulties

- The difficulty for this feat – as detailed in the ***Uncanny Influence*** section, **p. 116** – is that opponent's Willpower Trait, if the opponent is a normal human being, Willpower + 3 if the opponent is a mage or other Night-Folk critter (vampire, werebeast, etc.). Hence, it's easier to influence normal people than it is to have the same effect on Black Suits, vampires, and other unusual antagonists.

- If he's trying to discourage or enrage several normal human beings, then the difficulty is based upon the usual *coincidental*, *vulgar*, or *vulgar without witnesses*. Generally, this is a coincidental feat, especially if it's backed up by some impressively badass glare.

- If he's trying to discourage or enrage a bunch of Night-Folk or mages, then the difficulty is the highest Willpower within that group (or a default of 5, if no one in that group has a Willpower of 5) + 5. As detailed under ***Uncanny Influence***, that strong-willed leader dictates the reaction within her "pack."

Ideally, the mage can simply stop a "casual opponent" – that is, someone who's not seriously intent on violence – before things get out of hand. One or two successes will most likely have the desired effect.

For details about overcoming a seriously dedicated opponent, again see **The Basics** of the **Uncanny Influence** section.

Social Rolls

The martial artist can also either use mundane Abilities to reduce the difficulty of this feat by up to -3, or else use the Mind Effect to reduce the difficulty of an Attribute + Ability roll by up to -3. The player for Marcus C, for example, could use a successful Mind Effect to reduce the difficulty of a Charisma + Empathy roll, or else use Charisma + Empathy to reduce the difficulty of that Mind Effect.

In both cases, the player has to roll for both the Effect and the social feat. Obviously, a successful social roll will make this feat almost effortless if the mage is trying to influence a casual opponent. Mind-savvy martial artists, then, can psyche out the average opponent before a fight begins.

Victory in the Mind

As many martial arts have emphasized, the warrior who wins in her mind before the fight begins has often won without striking a blow. Focusing her determination – often through a war-cry, kata, prayer, or Glare of Death – the mage either unnerves her opponent or else assures herself of victory.

Story-wise, the difference between this technique and the previous feats comes through the approach. A calming gaze or predator's eye is *external*, acting upon the opponent; this "victory in the mind" is *internal*, acting upon the mage.

In game terms, the player rolls a coincidental Mind 2 (emotional surge) or 3 (mental push) Effect, and then reduces the difficulty of her next roll by -1 per success (maximum -3). If she chooses to psych her opponent out, then that next roll is a **Facedown** (see **Dramatic Feats**, **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**, **p. 404**); if it's to psych herself up, then that roll is her next initiative, attack, or defense roll. A five-success roll on the psych-out option may compel the opponent to surrender without a fight... which explains a lot about the persuasive prowess of Black Suits and Akashayana.

Psychic Dueling

An advanced mental-combat technique involves the combatants casting their psychic essence into a "battlefield of the mind." Each duelist projects their astral self into the High Umbra – generally in a temporary arena forged from their imagination – using the Mind 4 **Astral Projection** feat. There, they fight it out until one or both parties have been satisfied.

The details of astral combat go beyond the scope of this book, but can be found in the **Astral Travel** entry of **The Otherworlds** section of **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**, **pp. 476-478**. For a magnificent example of this sort of duel, see the movie *Hero* and its rainy chess-yard sequence.

The War Dance

A time-honored art of warrior cultures involves staging a brief ritual – a song, a dance, a St. Crispin's Day speech, and so forth – that gets your allies ready to pound other people into pulp. In this case, the martial artist in question uses Mind 2 and social rolls to inspire war-lust and bravery in allied characters. This isn't mind-control per se, but rather a raw-emotion call to bloodlust.

To conduct a successful war-dance, the mage's player needs to gather a certain number of successes – based upon the number of her allies – plus one success for each turn the effects are supposed to last.

The difficulty is either 7, or the highest Willpower among the members of the allied group, whichever is highest. Social-rolls and other circumstances (like nationalist fervor, or the enemy really pissing off the crowd) can lower that difficulty, as far down as the maximum modifier of -3.

The number of required successes is as seen on the War-Dance Allies chart.

Under the war-dance's influence, those characters enjoy a surge of battle-lust, near-total courage, dedication to the cause, and a willingness to follow the caster's orders unless those orders verge into suicide or atrocity... and perhaps (Storyteller's discretion) even then.

War-Dance Allies

Successes	Allies
Three	Up to five close allies (friends, Background-based characters, etc. - see **pp. 117-118**).
Five	Up to five like-minded individuals (co-workers, sympathetic mob, etc).
Seven	Up to 20 allied characters, or 10 like-minded ones.
Ten	Up to 50 allies, or 20 like-minded individuals.
Thirteen	Up to 75 allies, or 50 like-minded folks.
Fifteen	Up to 100 allies, or a 75 like-minded characters.
Seventeen	Up to 150 allies, or 100 like-minded people.
Twenty	A fair-sized mob under your influence.

Obviously, this sort of thing requires an extended roll, as described under *Rituals, Rolls, and Extended Successes* in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, p. 539**. Unless the mage is using obvious magick, however, the feat remains coincidental.

Ghost-Dances

An especially potent war-dance could also use Life 4 to make the allies nearly impervious to harm. This major rite

demands at least three successes, per character, in order to make them able to soak lethal damage; five successes per character to make them able to soak aggravated damage; and two *additional* successes – per ally – to raise each ally's Stamina Trait by one dot. This also demands one Quintessence point for each protected character.

Shamanic warriors could also add Spirit 2 to this ritual. Calling in friendly entities, such war-leaders instill spiritual power in this potent rite. For details, see *A Bit of Spirit?*, p. 16.

With or without the spiritual element, this "Ghost-Dance" feat lasts for the usual one turn per additional success, but cannot benefit more than 10 people at a time. Clearly, the sort of ritual that can render almost a dozen people impervious to harm while also inspiring them into a loyal battle-fury demands a lot of time, success, and determination. As long as the mob isn't glowing with holy fire or something like that – and isn't shrugging off bullets with impunity – this is a coincidental rite when performed upon one's own people (that is, upon cultural believers, not skeptical strangers), which makes it a powerful weapon for martial mages with deep cultural connections. The legendary battle-rites of Celtic, Norse, African, and Native American people were built upon such feats.

Battlefield Sense

Warriors often wish they had eyes everywhere. A mage with Correspondence 1 or better, though, actually *can* see the battleground's Big Picture. By harnessing the *Spatial Perceptions* Effect of first-rank Correspondence Arts (described in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten**), an Enlightened combatant can get a sense of the various parties, obstacles, weapons, and other factors of a given fight.

This feat requires a normal Arete roll, focused through the appropriate tools and activities: a viewscreen, a brief meditation, a battlefield "Hail Mary," or whatever other tactic suits the mage and his practice. Each success on the roll (typically a coincidental Effect) lowers the difficulty of a related Perception roll by -1 per success (-3 maximum).

That Perception roll maps out the battlefield in the mage's mind, showing him who's where and what's around them. If the mage has an Academics specialty of Strategy or Tactics, or the Leadership Talent, he can add that Ability onto the Perception roll and then issue orders to his associates. A Mind-Sphere link – like that shared by most Black Suit operatives – lets them see what he can see... which says volumes about the eerie way in which Black Suits always seem to know what's going on before their enemies do.

Remote Command

A similar tactic uses Mind 3 to see the battlefield through *someone else's* eyes. In this case, though, the mage needs to either establish a mental link with a willing party, or else override the viewer's own Willpower. (See *Sharing Perceptions* in the *Enhanced Perceptions* section, p. 54.) For obvious reasons, the Correspondence-based battlefield sense is far easier to employ.

Combining Mind 3 and Correspondence 1 allows the mage to see the area, receive input, and issue orders from a squad of allies. This demands one extra success per allied character within the "remote command network." Assuming that all of those allies are willing participants, and that the link is either invisible and/ or conducted through tactical display and communications technology (like the feeds used by technologically advanced armies), this feat remains coincidental. That said, it's often challenging to see clearly through many different feeds (again, see *Sharing Perceptions*), and the commander still perceives only what his troops perceive.

Reading an Opponent

Battle-savvy mages can also use their Arts to "read" a struggle as they fight. A mage with at least two dots in Wits and two dots in either Brawl, Do, Melee, or Martial Arts may use one of the following Spheres to enhance his combat abilities: Correspondence, Mind, or Time. Due to the confusing nature of "piled on" perceptions –especially in a fast-moving fight – a wise mage uses only one Sphere at a time when reading an opponent – see *Muddled Perceptions and Sensory Overload* in the *Enhanced Perceptions* section, p. 53.

In either case, the mage *must* be running a sensory Effect from the Sphere in question; knowing about Time won't help you if you're not using that knowledge during the fight. Assuming that he's using the Sphere in question as an ongoing sensory spell, then he can either discern the spatial positions of his assailants (Correspondence 1); read their intentions before they move (Mind 2); or fluctuate his perceptions of time just enough to sense where and when everyone in that fight will be on a second-by-second basis (Time 2).

To "read" details from a fight, that mage must first take a full action to cast the Effect; this could involve focusing her mind; taking a bong-hit, adjusting his mirrorshade sunglasses, hitting a special stance – whatever action suits the mage's focus. The player rolls that mage's Arete (difficulty 4 or 5, depending upon the Sphere Rank involved), and then uses his successes to reduce the difficulties of his next few attack *or* defense rolls (only one type per turn) by -1 for one action per success. Three successes, then, would let him reduce the difficulty of one type of attack or defense roll for -1 for her next three actions.

By "one type," we mean one particular Attribute + Ability roll. Marcus could use his insight to reduce the difficulty of his Dexterity + Martial Arts rolls for his three actions, but not reduce the difficulty of his Dexterity + Athletics roll one action, his Dexterity + Melee roll one action, and his Perception + Martial Arts roll for the third action.

For obvious reasons, the combat Trait must be the one that's getting used in the fight; two dots in Brawling won't help you shoot someone. This trick does not work at range unless the mage has Correspondence magick or a telescopic sight on the gun he's using in that fight. *This tactic CANNOT be used to reduce Arete rolls for magickal Effects*, as it reflects insights into physical situations, not metaphysical potential.

Strikes

The most direct applications of martial-arts magick put a magickal kick behind the more mundane (and typically coincidental) method of belting someone in the chops. Given the near-unlimited number of potential strikes (several of which are covered in **Mage 20**'s **Chapter Nine** *Combat* section), we'll just focus here on techniques that add Awakened power to mortal violence.

As mentioned above under **The Basics**, a simple addition of Forces, Life, Matter, Mind, Prime, or sometimes Entropy, Spirit, and/ or Time can enhance the effects of an apparently simple blow:

- Entropy spots flaws (Entropy 1) in order to reduce the difficulty of a normal attack, or lets a mage exploit them in order to inflict aggravated damage (Entropy 4).

- Forces bends the physics of a strike (Forces 2), or adds raw elemental power to a blow, as described above under **The Basics**.

- Matter helps the blow violate the integrity of inanimate (Matter 2) or undead (Life 3/ Matter 2) targets. This combination inflicts aggravated damage upon the undead. Matter does *not* allow a mage to ignore the effects of armor, though he could *damage* that armor if he targets the armor rather than the character inside it. (See the **Bustin' Stuff** section of **Mage 20, Chapter Nine**.)

- Life affects the physical integrity of living beings (Life 3) or werecreatures (Life 3/ Spirit 2), which lets the mage inflict aggravated damage. In the second case, a martial artist can still punch the crap out of a werewolf with Forces 2 or the other combinations; using the aggravated-damage disruption power of the Life Sphere on that werewolf, however, also demands Spirit 2, thanks to the potent spiritual nature of such creatures.

- The same holds true for using Life 3/ Mind 3 magick to harm faerie entities (changlings, True Fae, and so on). A martial artist can pound on a faerie creature easily enough using raw physical might, but using the Life Sphere effectively on one demands Mind 3 as well.

- Mind 2 or 3 can also infuse a physical blow with a psychic attack – see **The Mind-Altering Punch**, below.

- Prime allows the martial artist to infuse her vital energy into a blow (Prime 2); drain an opponent's life-energies on contract (Prime 3); or annihilate that opponent through energetic consumption (Prime 5). All three techniques are detailed below under **The Chi-Fire Punch** and **The Chi-Vampire Strike**.

- Spirit 2 lets a mortal touch ghosts and other spirit entities long enough to strike a single blow. Life, Prime, and Entropy give the attacker a few more options – see **The Spirit-Strike**, below.

- Time 3 lets the martial artist speed himself up, or slow his opponent down. Time 4 lets him strike delayed-action blows, as detailed below under **The Delayed-Death Touch**.

As mentioned elsewhere, a magick-assisted strike is coincidental if the average witness in that time and place would look at the results and say "*Yeah, a skilled martial artist could totally do that!*" Flaming fists, literally explosive kicks, and so on are typically vulgar magick.

The Mind-Altering Punch

Violence has a visceral effect on living things. Most organisms have an instinctive aversion to being hurt… and often, to hurting some other living things without a good reason to do so; on the flipside, violence can also send a creature into instant fury. And so, by adding a mental-emotional "push" to a physical blow, a martial artist can discourage his opponent, infuriate her, stun her, or – in advanced situations – even hit her so hard that she forgets who she is.

"Stay *DOWN!*"

In game terms, Mind 2 sends an emotional impulse to the opponent. Essentially, this works like the **Predator's Eye** feat, added to the damage of a physical blow. To resist that impulse, the target needs to make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) and gain more successes than the mage who hit her has rolled. Since violence often makes folks rethink their priorities, this feat is generally coincidental unless the mage is absurdly showy about what he's doing ("*Feel my mighty mind-prowess destroy your will to fight, puny mortal!!!*")

Heartbreak Slap

Mind 3 can deck the opponent with a **Psychic Blast**, as in the feat of that name detailed in the **Uncanny Influence** section, **p. 122**. Life 3/ Mind 3 can turn that into a **Psychic Shatter**, as described in the same section. The Mind 2 variation is generally coincidental, but the brain-shredding "shatter" is distinctly not.

In this feat, the real damage comes from the psychic attack, not from the physical blow – see **Violence as a Focus** in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine, p. 413**. Story-wise, this could be the proverbial "heartbreak slap" that hurts more on the inside than on the outside.

Stunning Nerve-Pinch

This same feat could reflect a "nerve-pinch" that turns a tiny amount of physical contact to a stunning amount of pain. If the martial artist decides not to inflict damage, a similar application of Mind 3 could simply command the opponent to be stunned. Unless she makes a successful Willpower roll, as described above, she obeys the mental commands and goes limp.

Knocking Sense Into (or Out of) Someone

Mind 4 can literally alter the opponent's mind, nailing her with madness, hallucinations, amnesia, and other dirty

tricks. This doesn't add to the *physical* damage of the blow, but scrambles the target's head if that blow lands. For details, see the entries **Instant Madness/ Sanity**, **Puppetry** and **Forging Memories** in the *Uncanny Influence* section. This sort of thing is not normally coincidental, although a really clever fighter could make the influence fit the situation (*"See, when I said I could knock you silly, I wasn't kidding..."*), or pass the effects off as brain damage. Considering the legal repercussions of that second choice, though, such claims are not really a good idea. Paradox hurts less than prison and a lawsuit.

Naturally, this "punch" doesn't have to be a *punch*. Any kind of touch will do, so long as the effects match the focus of the mage in question. According to certain legends and films, a martial-arts master could inflict pain, stunning, forgetfulness, or insanity with a mere finger-stroke in the correct location. That sort of refinement goes beyond mere brawling, although a character with the Brawl Ability *could* hit someone hard enough to make them reconsider their choice of activities.

The Delayed-Death Touch

One of the most infamous secrets of martial-art mastery features the ability to touch a target in such a way that she dies some time after contact. This feat might be defined as a disruption of chi flow, an overloaded nervous system, a ruptured heart, a poisoned touch, or any other sort of legendary time-lapse martial-arts murder technique.

Game-wise, the delayed-death touch requires Time 4 to set the "trigger" for death. That trigger could be six steps, 13 heartbeats, one hour, or whatever other method suits the practitioner's martial practice.

The damage itself comes from Life 3 aggravated damage, possibly intensified with an extended-roll ritual ("the killing-blow kata," a certain combination of strikes, etc.) that lets the player gathers a large number of successes than she'd get from a single Arete roll.

If the character uses chi as part of the killing-blow, then add Prime 2 to the attack, and spend one Quintessence point to reflect the energy involved. (See below.) This doesn't increase the damage, but *does* fit the concept of rearranging chi in order to inflict harm.

Feats of Focused Chi

Vital energies – and the manipulation of same – play a significant role in many martial arts, especially the Asian and Asian-American forms based upon Hindu, Taoist, and Buddhist metaphysics. By channeling such energies, the martial artist can open up the deeper potential that's so often hidden within the illusion of physical matter, and may therefore perform apparently impossible feats.

Although the following entries refer to those vital energies as "chi," please note that we're using that word as generic martial-arts shorthand for Quintessence. The actual concept of chi is more complex, and – as *chi* is a Chinese term – many practices use different terms (*ki*, *prana*, *emanations*, etc.) to refer

to this vital energy. In game terms, they're all essentially the same thing. In real-life metaphysics, however, there's quite a bit of difference between these concepts and their applications.

As a rule, these refined techniques are beyond the reach of merely *physical* warriors. They require dedicated study, practice, and belief in their effects. In game-terms, then, assume that characters who haven't pursued a serious martial-arts discipline – that is, who do not have Do, Martial Arts, Esoterica, or other Abilities – cannot focus the following feats through their fighting arts. This doesn't mean that a mage with the proper Spheres cannot use similar Effects, but it means that Brawl, Melee, and other fighting Abilities are not refined enough to unlock these "special moves" from the martial-arts arsenal.

(It also means that the average Technocrat isn't going to use these techniques. Chi, after all, is one of those silly superstitionist beliefs that Reality Deviants use to fool themselves. Rare open-minded technomancers and Technocracy operatives might accept the link between vital energy and martial arts; even then, though, a good Technocrat will avoid the showier manifestations of such energy, like **Elemental Fury Chi** or **Chi Flight**, if only to avoid becoming Deviant themselves.)

As another rule, assume that all chi-focusing feats demand at least two dots in Prime, and generally cost at least one point of Quintessence per application. The practitioner, after all, is focusing energy, and so must understand how to use that energy – and then actually *do* use it – before she can employ these techniques. A mage could use an energy-draining weapon, of course, and focus the Sphere Effect Melee and weaponry. A simply physical fighter, though, can't do things like this with chi.

For further details about the applications of vital energy, see the **Energy-Work** section earlier in this chapter.

The Chi-Field Push

You know that YouTube video where the "chi-master" supposedly makes guys flip and fly all over the place until some no-bullshit Marine coldcocks the dude with one punch? Well, a skillfully Awakened martial-artist actually *can* do that sort of thing. Employing a field of harnessed chi, the master can send objects and organisms flying without actually touching them.

System-wise, this is actually a fairly simple feat – Forces 2/ Prime 2, to be exact. Forces alters the physics of gravity and inertia in order to push the targets and redirect their trajectories. Prime creates the "wall of chi" that manifests this Effect.

The field requires one Quintessence point per turn, and a character who's trying to attack the martial artists (or who's otherwise being pushed around by him) goes flying unless she makes a Strength or Dexterity roll (difficulty 6) and scores more successes than the mage does with his Arete roll. Strength reflects a character who's trying to use brute force to keep going, while Dexterity reflects a character who's trying to use innate grace in order to "ride the push."

The chi-field push inflicts the normal Forces-based damage. Because the martial artist is simply throwing the person

around with chi, that damage is bashing, not lethal, when the target lands. Even so, a good Arete roll could snap someone's neck on impact, and so this push, while, more merciful than blades, is not exactly harmless.

A similar feat employs chi to direct winds around the martial artist, confusing opponents and whipping up distractions. Shown to great effect in the "red leaves" sequence of *Hero*, this feat uses the same Spheres but does not inflict damage.

Aside from realms where strong martial-arts paradigms hold sway over reality, this feat is vulgar if the practitioner is knocking folks around without touching them. Perhaps that explains why the Marine was able to deck the so-called "master" with a single punch: Paradox was having the last laugh after all.

The Chi-Fire Punch

Focusing his chi with Prime 2, a skilled martial artist can dish out aggravated damage with his punches, strikes and kicks. As mentioned above under **The Basics**, this feat costs one point of Quintessence per blow.

So long as the practitioner isn't glowing, burning, or manifesting some other paranormal display, this feat remains coincidental. For a far more impressive and vulgar display of chi-mastery, see **Elemental Fury Chi**, below.

Chi Flight

According to Asian martial-arts lore, comics, and films, almost anything is possible with sufficient mastery of life-force energies. And in the modern era, at least, such expertise supposedly allows an advanced practitioner to resist the effects of gravity, if only for a short time. Most famous, perhaps, from the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, this "chi flight" technique lets a martial artist skip lightly across impossibly precarious surfaces, fly short distances, and do things like swordfight in trees or (as in the movie *Hero*) skim the surface of water as if it were a more or less solid surface.

Sphere-wise, this is a pretty simple feat: Forces 2 adjusts the power of localized gravity and inertia; Life 2 adjusts the caster's weight in relation to those forces, and binds the spell to his Pattern so that it moves with him; and Prime 2 channels the chi force (Quintessence) to power the whole Effect. The full feat, then, is Forces 2/ Life 2/ Prime 2, costs one Quintessence point, and it lasts for the usual roll-based Duration.

Technically, a mage doesn't need the Life 2 and Prime 2 components in order to fly. He could simply use Forces 2 to suspend gravity in his vicinity, or to get strong winds to carry him around. (See **Mystic Travel**, below.) According to martial-arts lore, however, such feats demand a mastery of chi, and so the Prime component is essential to this feat. And since the martial artist isn't suspending gravity in general, the Life component is essential as well. Yes, it's a more complicated way of performing a mystic feat. To an esoteric martial artist, however, it's more important to perform something *right* than it is to perform it *easily*.

Chi Healing

Life-energies, obviously, can heal wounds. And so – using Life 2 for himself and Life 3 for other characters – a skilled chi-based martial artist may use those energies to repair injuries and cure illness.

Story-wise, this feat uses special techniques (massage, concentration, advanced acupuncture, and so forth) to redirect the chi flow and heal the injured party. System-wise, this is a basic healing Effect – Life 2 to heal one's self, Life 3 to heal others, and so on; see **Body Magick** on the **Common Magickal Effects chart** for details. Because this feat employs chi, the healer must add Prime 2 in order to infuse the wounded character with energy and then direct that energy in ways that do the most good.

In order to heal bashing or lethal damage, the healer must spend one Quintessence point per healing attempt. As described in the **Magickal Healing** entry of the **Health and Injury** section of **Mage 20 (Chapter Nine, p. 409)**, it costs one Quintessence point per health level in order to repair aggravated damage.

If the healing is essentially invisible, this technique remains coincidental. If the practitioner uses a few touches or needles to cure cancer or close up gaping wounds, the feat becomes vulgar outside of places whose reality accepts that sort of thing.

The Spirit-Strike

Sufficient expertise with the spirit-realm allows a martial artist to strike ghosts and other entities. Story-wise, this feat channels chi through the practitioner's living body, transcending the limits of physical existence in order to punch out a spirit's lights.

Game-wise, Spirit 2 lets a mortal touch an ephemeral entity long enough to land a physical blow. Spirit 3 lets a physical mage harm spirits as if he was using Life-Sphere magick, and Entropy 3/ Prime 2 lets a mage affect ghosts (but not other Umbral entities) as if she was using Life-Sphere magick.

Given the element of chi energy involved, these feats require the Prime 2 component, and so the spirit-strike employs either Spirit 2/ Prime 2, Spirit 3/ Prime 2, or Entropy 3/ Prime 2. If you're using the latter feat, though, don't forget about the nasty effects that Entropy has upon ghosts... (See **Spirit Combatants** in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine, p. 418**.)

The War-Power Chi Shout

Another famous martial-art technique involves channeling chi energy into a potent cry that unnerves opponents and intensifies the martial artist's strength. A variation on the **Kiaijutsu Iron Shout** technique described in **Mage 20 (Chapter Nine, p. 429)**, this feat combines Life 3/ Mind 2/ Prime 2 into a literally awe-ful display of martial might.

- Life 3 boosts a selection of the practitioner's Traits by one dot per success, as detailed under **Altering Characteristics** in the section **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification**.

- Mind 2 terrifies opponents, as described on **p.60**.

- Prime 2 suffuses the martial artist's body with chi, allowing him to inflict aggravated damage for a cost of one Quintessence point per strike.

This feat lasts for the usual Duration time, and makes for a seriously formidable warrior.

The *Fist of the North Star* series does a marvelous job of showing what this feat looks like in action. Although the Mind element is coincidental, the Life and Prime elements are vulgar except, perhaps, in regions where people expect freaky-ass martial-art powers.

The Chi-Vampire Strike

Advanced mastery of chi allows a martial artist to sap the vital energy from his opponent. This feat demands Prime 3, and pulls out Quintessence instead of inflicting damage. A true Master can use Prime 5 to utterly annihilate an opponent. This sort of thing is bad juju, but such feats are authentic parts of martial-arts lore.

Because energy is essentially invisible, the Prime 3 variant remains coincidental; the victim feels weak, but remains physically unharmed. The Prime 5 version, however, is pretty damn vulgar, as it causes the victim to explode, disintegrate, or suffer some other horrific fate.

For details about draining Quintessence from living organisms, see the ***Lambs to the Slaughter*** entry under ***Optional Rule: Harvesting Quintessence Through Sacrifice*** in the ***Energy-Work*** section, **pp. 49-50**.

Elemental Fury Chi

A staple of anime and chop-socky films, this feat channels chi into elemental manifestations: flaming hands, stone skin, metal spikes, and so forth.

In all cases, the mage employs a combination of Life 3, Prime 3, and Forces or Matter 3. Life alters the martial-artist's physical form. Prime combines the free-flowing essential chi (Quintessence) with the chi in the mage's body, energizing the whole so that he inflicts and resists aggravated damage. Forces invokes fire, electricity or air, while Matter invokes wood, metal or stone, and the third Rank of the appropriate Spheres allows them to "collaborate" with one another.

Damage, from elemental chi-fury attacks, depends upon the element in question. Most elements also affect their local environment, and might start fires, shake the ground, or cause other devastating consequences. For details, see ***Environmental Hazards*** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**.

This "elemental fury" demands one point of Quintessence per turn in order to sustain its power. That Quintessence may

come from the mage himself, from a Periapt or other battery source, Tass, or some other fount of accessible Quintessence. Drawing it from one's opponents is dirty but possible – see **The Chi-Vampire Strike**, above.

Such tricks are vulgar as fuck except in realms where legendary martial-arts powers forge the consensus of reality. See the film *The Man With the Iron Fists* for a few sweet examples of this feat in action.

Defense

A clever martial artist can use many of the previous techniques for defense as well as offense. Still, a few significant feats concentrate on *deflecting* harm rather than on *inflicting* it. These techniques don't demand certain Abilities or training. Any Awakened character with combat experience and the proper Spheres can use them.

Slipstream

Warping the elements of light, distance or perception, the mage simply appears to be a few hairs away from where she actually is. Story-wise, this trick allows an Awakened combatant to avoid her opponent's attacks. Game-wise, it employs either Correspondence 1 or 2 (to dodge by micrometers, or to appear slightly elsewhere); Entropy 2 (to control the chances of the blow hitting her); Forces 2 (to bend light or gravity just enough to get the attacker to miss); or Time 1 (to calculate the microsecond of impact, and thus avoid it). The Arete roll adds +1 to the opponent's difficulty for each success rolled; by putting extra successes into Duration, the mage could make this "slipstream" last for several turns. (See **Duration**, **Chapter Ten**, **p. 538**.)

So long as the mage doesn't overdo it, this Effect remains coincidental. To observers and opponents, it simply looks as though the mage is exceptionally good at dodging... or the attacker is unusually bad at hitting his antagonist.

The Pain-Shrug

Martial artists learn to shrug off pain. And so, a common Life 3 Effect lets a practitioner soak lethal or aggravated damage for the normal Duration of that Effect.

Meanwhile, a similar Mind 3 Effect lets a combatant shrug off the *pain* of injury – though not its physical consequences – through iron-willed determination. ("*Ain't got TIME to bleed!*") Game-wise, this feat allows the player to ignore the wound-based penalties of any injury short of death. *The character's still injured*, but those injuries won't hinder her until her body stops working completely.

Life 3 also allows a mage to increase her Physical Attributes – in this case, Stamina – as mentioned above under **The Basics** at the beginning of this section.

All three feats could be combined with **Chi Healing** in order to quickly repair the damage.

If the player wants to pile on several Life 3 Effects – as with, say, adding the ability to soak killing damage on to a magickally enhanced Stamina Trait – that feat would require several successes:

- Two successes to soak lethal damage;

- Three successes to soak aggravated damage; plus...

- One success per dot of raised Stamina, up to a maximum of five dots, and two successes per dot above that. If Synder, for example, uses her Stamina 4 to soak aggravated damage, then her player would need three successes; if she also increases her Stamina to 6, then her player needs a total of six successes – three for her normal Stamina + one for Stamina 5 + two for Stamina 6.

- As mentioned earlier, it costs one Quintessence point per health level to heal aggravated damage. (Healing rates are as defined on the **Base Damage or Duration chart** in **Mage 20**.)

These "pain-shrugging" techniques allow a martial artist to withstand damage from injury, sickness, hostile weather, and starvation (as detailed under **Environmental Hazards** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**), and other causes. Any fight-hardened mage can employ these techniques.

To witnesses, most manifestation of this feat simply make the mage look incredibly badass. If she suddenly swells with inhuman levels of stamina, though, soaks up gunfire, or heals serious injuries in clear view of bystanders, then this technique veers into vulgar-magick territory.

Elemental Armor

A legendary – and typically vulgar – feat of martial mastery allows a practitioner to channel elemental power into protective armor: searing flesh, buffeting winds, stony, wood or metallic skin, or other similar manifestations of power.

Story-wise, the martial artist focuses her practice through a certain type of elemental affinity that becomes, by extension, an integral part of her identity. This demands a fair amount of disciplined dedication; few martial artists master more than one form of element, and "casual" ones (brawlers and merely physical fighters) cannot use such elemental gifts at all.

System-wise, the mechanics have already been covered above in **Elemental Fury Chi**, **Slipstream**, and **The Pain-Shrug**. Simply choose the Spheres and Effects that best suit the element in question. The elemental manifestation lasts for the Effect's duration.

This stunt reflects a protective sort of feat, rather than an offensive one. A single elemental martial artist can, of course, use both the offensive *and* defensive applications. And yeah – outside of regions governed by elemental and wild martial-art paradigms, this sort of thing is pretty vulgar.

The Neo

Sure, *lots* of wild martial-arts effects could be referred to as "the Neo." That moment, though, when he holds up his hand and

stops a hail of bullets in mid-air is especially iconic. And so, this phrase reflects the feat of stopping or deflecting a rain of incoming projectiles: arrows, bullets, thrown beer bottles, and so forth.

As with *The Chi-Field Push*, this technique uses Forces 2 as an invisible "shield" that disrupts the kinetic energy of incoming attacks. In this case, though, it doesn't necessarily require chi, although that same feat could be used this way. As long as the caster rolls enough successes, the field stops or knocks aside any projectiles within the reach of the martial artist. Since this is defined as a martial-arts technique, the field extends *only* within her reach unless she's using some thrown object to deflect a more distant attack.

As a rough guide, assume that one success will stop an arrow; two successes will stop a gun-blast; three successes will stop a rain of arrows or bullets; and five successes will stop anything that the character could reasonably be expected to stop with her martial arts.

Forces 2 could also let the martial artist deflect blasts of energy. That's pretty vulgar, but it's a classic staple of wild martial-arts legends.

Depending upon the mage and practice in question, this "deflection shield" could manifest as Wonder Woman-style bracers, Daredevil-style reflexes, or Wolverine-style attitude; it might be focused through spinning staves, blur-fast swordwork, silk sleeves (an old favorite in Chinese *wuxtra* films) or capes (an actual form of armor used by samurai), amazing perceptions, disruption fields, raw stupid luck, or any other instrument that seems appropriate for the character and her practice.

Because "the Neo" demands concentration, this field must either be re-cast each turn, or else maintained by spending one success per additional turn beyond the one in which the Effect is originally cast. Unless it uses chi, however, this field costs no Quintessence to maintain.

Any sufficiently skilled martial artist can use this feat. To a degree, "dodging" projectiles can be coincidental (action heroes do it all the time), but outright stopping them, Neo-style, in mid-air is definitely vulgar.

Other Martial Magicks

As the *Combat* section of **Mage 20** points out, mages don't tend to throw down hand-to-hand if they can avoid it. If nothing else, close-up violence is dangerous, with outcomes that are even less predictable than usual. Still, willworkers with a propensity for face-offs have a few tricks up their sleeves, including these (in)famous gambits:

The Velocity Boost

As shown in the *Mystic Physics* section of the *elemental Mastery* section, a mage with Forces 2 can increase the velocity and accuracy of a thrown object... or of *any* projectile weapon, for that matter... with a simple coincidental application (Arete roll, difficulty 5) of gravity and momentum.

Each success lowers the difficulty of the throw or shot by -1, to a maximum reduction of -3. This, in turn, makes the attack more likely to score successes... which, in turn, translates into

more damage. (See *Phase Three: Damage* in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**, **p. 412**.) The Forces Sphere itself adds one automatic success to damage rolls, and so obviously, this trick makes a Forces-trained mage deadly in ranged combat, especially if she's studied knife-throwing, kyuudou archery, or some other distance-weapon martial art.

The Chow Yun Fat

Awakened gunfighters who want to be both flashy and potentially suicidal can try the famous Chow Yun Fat maneuver, leaping through the air with guns blazing. In this case, a coincidental Entropy 2 or Forces 2 Effect helps the character fly through the air while firing in a halfway accurate fashion.

Assuming a successful Dexterity + Firearms roll (this one at difficulty 8), the mage can hit one opponent for each success he rolls. A successful Arete roll reduces the difficulty for that Dexterity + Firearms roll by -1 per success, to a maximum of -3. Each target hit, however, suffers only the gun's base damage – no extra bonuses for successes. Only pistols or small submachine guns can perform this trick, though – larger guns are too heavy, bulky, and difficult to control once they start firing.

Time Dilation/ Bullet Time

One of the most useful tricks in a mage's combat footlocker involves using Time 3 to either speed himself up or slow his opponent down. Working with the phenomenon that twists time-perception during stress, the mage dilates temporal forces in his proximity. Story-wise, this comes across as the "bullet-time" effect made (in)famous by *The Matrix* and its many imitators. Game-wise, it involves extra actions for the mage – one extra action for every two successes rolled.

Reversed (and "attached" to the target through either Correspondence 2 or Life 3), the Time Dilation can remove actions from an opponent at the same rate. Without the "attachment" element, the mage can simply speed or slow time down in the entire area – hence invoking "bullet time."

If the mage speeds or slows time by more than three actions per turn (or three turns per action), all of these Effects become vulgar magick. Still, when you need to get an edge – and can wrap your head around the mysteries of Time – this is an edge that works.

For other related feats of temporal magick, see *Time Distortion and Travel*, .

Battle Fury

Uncaging the beast inside man's heart, this timeless martial art instills bloodlust in the warrior's bosom. Story-wise, the character works herself into a frenzy through whatever methods suit her practice (drugs, self-mutilation, prayers to the war-gods, meditations upon death, and so forth). Once the ritual's effects take hold, the warrior launches herself into action, stopping only when the magick wears off, the warrior dies, or some other force prevents her from killing again.

System-wise, this technique combines Life 3, Mind 3, and possibly some other elements as well:

- Life 3 boosts the warrior's Physical Attributes, as described earlier in this section, and enables her to soak both lethal and aggravated damage. This requires one success per dot in the boosted Trait, up to the maximum of 5, and two successes per dot above 5.

- Mind 3 sustains her berserker state, allows her to shrug off wound penalties, and drives all fear from her mind. For details, see **The War-Dance** and **The Pain-Shrug**, above, as well as the **Berserker/ Stress Atavism** Merit/ Flaw in **Mage 20**, **Appendix II**. This requires three additional successes, total.

- An additional Life 3 Effect lets her grow claws and sharp teeth, so as to use the **Bite** and **Claw** combat maneuvers described in **Mage 20**'s **Combat** section. This demands one additional success.

- Yet another Life 3 Effect helps her heal whatever damage she suffers in combat. This works as detailed under **Magickal Healing** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**, **p. 409**.

- Prime 2 lets her focus chi in order to sustain her rage, and allows her to inflict aggravated damage (one Quintessence per successful blow) when she hits someone.

- Spirit 2 allows her to harm spirit-entities. This demands an additional success.

- Time 3 lets her move faster than usual. This requires the usual two successes per additional action.

Other Spheres could help her find weak-spots (Entropy 1), shatter solid materials easily (Matter 2), or perform other feats of warlike dementia. The appropriate systems have been described earlier in this section.

Every turn of the battle fury requires one additional success.

It takes time and effort to work up a truly effective battle-fit. And so the martial artist often undertakes an extended-roll ritual in order to rack up a lot of successes.

In most cases – unless the warrior goes totally Cuchulainn, swells up, and starts shooting blood out of her head or something – this battle fury remains coincidental... though *really* fucking dangerous to everyone nearby.

And that's why this feat gets used only in extreme circumstances: Once frothing, the mage does her level best to kill *every living thing* within reach. She cannot use magick or clever tactics, can't tell the innocent from the damned, and really doesn't give a shit about anything other than pure naked slaughter. Only death, total incapacitation, or a Mind 4 or 5 Effect that successfully overcomes the person's rage will end the fury before the spell expires.

For what should be obvious reasons, good Technocrats *never* practice this sort of martial technique. In this state, a warrior becomes everything the Technocracy has sworn to destroy. Most Tradition mages aren't too keen about it either, although the Verbenae have a long and bloody history with its applications. Akashayana consider such undisciplined impulses to be anathema to the Way; certain Ecstatics and Thanatoics, however, consider them to be a dark yet valid path to enlightenment.

In the Blood

An inescapable element of life and magick, violence has an ancient pedigree in the Awakened world. Yet despite the brutal efficiency of such Arts... really, in part, *because* of it... warrior mages often prefer to focus their devotion upon *avoiding* violence except when it's absolutely necessary.

"Necessary," of course, is such a subjective word. Not long ago, American mass media had many citizens convinced that torture, war, and other atrocities were utterly necessary in order "win the war for peace." Even now, cops turn military hardware against incidents of citizen unrest or "undesirable activity." Almost every culture on Earth – certainly every nation and empire – has been built upon such "necessities," and as much as the Awakened would like to think that they're more... um, enlightened... than the Masses, the truth is that mages have a long way to go when it comes to balancing extreme force with Ascended humanity.

The Shiva/ Kali Murder Machine

A horrific (and horribly *vulgar*) version of the battle fury uses Life 4/ Spirit 4/ Mind 3/ Time 3/ Matter 2/ Prime 2/ Spirit 2/ Entropy 1 to transform the mage into a towering incarnation of war. Hindu and Buddhist warriors embrace the many-armed fashion of certain deities, growing six arms, eight arms, or even more.

This titanic avatar of atrocity...

- Manifests *all* of the powers described above (Strength 8, Dexterity 5, Stamina 8);
- Stands over a dozen feet high and weighs well over a ton;
- Requires at least 30 successes to manifest; and...
- Is about as vulgar as magick can get, short of turning back time or superimposing several locations on top of one another.

Nevertheless, certain mages perfect such forms, if only because they care so little about the consequences. The infamous Grand Harvester Voormas embodied this sort of creature, and used it quite effectively... for a while, anyway.

Mystic Travel

Have you ever tried riding on a broom? It's really fucking uncomfortable. Try putting all your weight on the taint between your junk and your ass, then grabbing on to a hard small cylinder and hanging on for dear life while gravity and inertia ram the whole mess up your colon. NOT fun! Harry Potter would be singing soprano for a week after one game of Quiddich, and no boy in Hogwarts would ever have his balls function in any meaningful way. The girls, though... hmmmm... yeah, a hard vibrating pole mashed into your clit for hours on end, every day or two? It's a wonder Hermione ever had enough focus left to open a book, much less study one.

When you think about it, Quiddich could be considered a preemptive form of birth-control. That'd certainly explain a lot about the wizards and witches of that world.

Sure, I tried the traditional route. Got me a rowan branch. Sanded it down to where I wouldn't be getting knots and splinters shoved up sensitive places. Carved Futhark runes and all that old shit in the wood. Blooded the runes. Buried the rod under the roots of an oak tree, dug it up at midnight under a full moon, bathed it in the light of that moon, blah-blah-fucking-blah. The old stories can kiss my ass. Sure, I did fly on the broom, but the damn thing drove the seam of my jeans straight into places where nothing's supposed to go without my enthusiastic consent. So no – I may be a witch, but I don't fly on no broom.

This cape, though, is fucking awesome.

Just stay away from turbines, if you know what I mean.

From Here to There

We take travel for granted nowadays. It's so easy to hop in the car or catch a plane that we often forget how hard it was to get from place to place throughout most of human history. The distance-spanning innovations that make our world seem so small – phones, vehicles, the Internet, and more – were unknown to most of our ancestors. Until recently, the only ways to travel involved walking, riding animals, beast-drawn carts, or magick. And when you consider that cars and airplanes have existed only for the last century or so (and that trains and even ships are not really that much older), it's not surprising that

things that made travel faster, easier, and above all *safer* would hold a high priority on any wizard's or artisan's list.

Throughout most of history, walking was the only available option for the average person. Foot-travel, however, is slow, often tiring, and sometimes dangerous – especially in regions with natural and man-made hazards for the unlucky pedestrian. Animals require upkeep, and a fair amount of money unless someone else takes care of their daily needs. Boats demand water and expertise, and still pose many risks to the traveler. Other long-distance methods didn't exist until the 1800s, and the concept of crossing distances with spoken words or keystrokes would have been inconceivable outside the realm of miracles.

And so, mages of all kinds bent their wills and imaginations to that realm of miracles.

The following section covers many time-tested travel-methods of Awakened folk throughout history – the portals, brooms, seven-league steps, and so forth that mages of various kinds have used to span distance quickly. A handful of these methods are more recent; most, though, have venerable (if not always *respectable*) pedigrees. And although cars, planes and other methods have supplanted many of the Old Ways – sometimes rendering them outright vulgar – mages still use them when no other means works as quickly or as well.

The Basics

- Correspondence 2 lets a mage pull small things from one place to another. Correspondence 3 helps her step from one place to another. Correspondence 4 opens up gates between locations, and Correspondence 5 gathers several places into a single location. Yes, that last one is really vulgar. Really, *really* vulgar.

- Forces 2 allows a mage to manipulate the relationship between gravity, inertia, momentum, and a small solid body. Forces 3, 4, and 5 let that mage move larger things in more dramatic ways. With regards to travel, this power has all kinds of applications.

Correspondence and Data

The optional **Data Sphere** (see **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, **pp. 524-525.**) functions as Correspondence does, with regards to wards, portals, moving things from place to place, and so forth. There are, however, two exceptions:

• Data cannot move a subject to or from someplace that's off the technological grid, and although places like that are rare in the 21ˢᵗ century, they do still exist. Assume that an area that's out of cell phone, satellite, and/ or Internet range is outside the reach of the Data Sphere.

• Also, Data isn't "*magic*," you silly Superstitionist! Sure, it might look that way to Masses who do not understand the higher applications of advanced technology, but it *is* still technology, with all the proper parameters that such technology demands. (Translation from Sarcasm-ese: You can't use the Data Sphere without a suitable tech-based focus – that is, a paradigm, practice, and the instruments to direct them in technological ways.)

• Remember that a Correspondence Effect cannot be combined with a higher-Ranking Sphere Effect unless the mage has an equal or higher Rank in the Correspondence Sphere. If Kyle wants to use Forces 3 with a Correspondence Effect, for example, he'll need to have Correspondence 3 or better. See the **Correspondence Sphere** entry in **Mage 20** for details.

• Unless otherwise specified, a movement-based Effect lasts for the usual Duration. One-use Effects, however – like stepping from one location to another – end once they have occurred.

• "Attaching" a Forces or Correspondence Effect to a particular object or entity, so that the Effect goes wherever the subject of that Effect goes, requires an associated Effect of Matter 2 (to "link" material objects); Life 3 (to attach it to simple organisms, or to yourself); Life 4 (to manipulate other complex organisms); or Spirit 4 (to bind that Effect to ephemeral essence). Grafting that Effect onto a being who exists on multiple levels of reality – like a werewolf, changeling or vampire – demands all of the necessary Spheres (Life + Spirit for werecreatures, Life + Matter for vampires, etc.). For details, see **Body Magick** on the **Common Magickal Effects chart**. Without that "attachment," the Forces or Correspondence Effect may move the target once, but won't *keep* moving it around afterward without further effort from the mage.

• For details about creating magickal objects or vehicles, see **The Toybox** in **Mage 20**, **Appendix II**, and the expanded Wonder rules in **The Book of Secrets**, **Chapter Two**.

Beyond the Gauntlet?

Aside from a few brief notes, this section does not deal with travel in the Otherworlds. That subject gets covered in depth throughout **Mage 20**, particularity in **Chapters Four** and **Nine**. Vehicles, too, can be found in that same **Chapter Nine**, along with the rules for building, repairing, and altering them.

Speed

The simplest way to get from one place to another place more quickly is to move *faster*. Given a little "push" with Forces 2, that's an easy feat for the average mage... though not one without potential consequences.

How Fast Are You Going?

Assume that every two successes with a Forces 2 "push" doubles the speed of the object being pushed. A person running at 10 Miles Per Hour hits 15 MPH with one success, 20 MPH with two, 30 MPH with three, 40 MPH with four, and so on.

Can You Go That Fast?

As is probably obvious, an object or organism that's not built for that level of speed is going to start falling apart pretty quickly unless it has been reinforced with some sort of Life or Matter Effect that allows it to withstand the stresses of increased velocity. This "speed-stress damage" rule *does not apply* to Time 3-related speed, because the Time Sphere is essentially rearranging time around the body, not pushing the body faster and harder than it has been built to go.

Living Creatures

Assume that a running body that exceeds its normal maximum velocity suffers physical stress at one-and-a-half times that speed, and starts taking damage at twice that speed. That "maximum velocity" thing is pretty subjective when it comes to living beings, but assume that a living (or undead) thing who's moving at twice its maximum running speed is starting to hurt.

Each success above the second one inflicts one lethal health level, per turn, on the poor critter unless that critter has been "enhanced" with Life 3 or 4 beforehand. (Life 3 if the mage is enhancing himself, Life 4 if he's enhancing someone else.) This strain applies only to creatures who are moving under their own power – running, swimming, flying or whatever past their normal capacity. A spell that picks someone up and flies her down the street at 100 MPH won't inflict that kind of stress on her, although *hitting* something at 100 MPH will probably rather suck – see below.

With regards to that Life-Sphere enhancement, the usual mixed-Sphere rules apply to vampires, werewolves and so forth. Note that vampires with the Celerity Discipline, or werewolves who are using Rage to move faster, are not affected by this damage, as they're already sort of "built for speed" and can tough it out.

Vehicles

As for inanimate things that have been designed to move, use the **Max Speed** listed in the **Vehicle Systems** in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine, pp. 460-462** to determine how fast a given vehicle can move before it starts to fall apart.

Above that Max Speed, the vehicle can withstand one success for each point of Durability it has. A dirt bike with Durability 4, for example, can withstand up to four successes (four times its Max Speed) before it begins to break.

Above that limit, the vehicle loses one point of Structure per turn. Once that Structure is gone, say *buh-bye* to the vehicle and anyone who's unfortunate enough to be in it.

Please note – these stress-rules are based upon drama and simplicity, not real-life physics. Actual bodies and vehicles fall apart a *lot* more easily under intense motion-stress.

What Happens When You Stop?

A body in motion tends to stay in motion. If something abruptly stops that motion, the result tends to be unpleasant.

- To find the effects of a body hitting a sudden stop, check the section **Ramming and Slamming** in **Mage 20**'s *Environmental Hazards* section, **Chapter Nine, p. 439.**

- To find the effects of a vehicle under the same circumstances, see **Ramming and Collisions**, **Chapter Nine, p. 459.**

- To save time and complications, the Storyteller could just yell "*CRASH!!!*" and inflict an appropriately awful handful of dice on the unfortunate parties involved. (Speaking personally, that's what I would do.)

Traveler's Tricks

Today's traveler faces obstacles his ancestors never dreamed of, especially in airports and at border checkpoints where the authorities use real and imaginary threats as excuses to learn as much as possible from folks "just passing through."

Although the old "*These aren't the droids you're looking for*" trick (see below) used to handle most impediments, today's authorities employ computerized scanners to verify information even in a mundane traffic-stop. Mind magick won't trick *those* damned things, so a modern mage must be proactive about countering such technologies.

In today's world, the well-prepared traveling mage carries a "bafflejack" (see **The Toybox** in **Mage 20, Appendix II**); employs some variation on the **Black Card/ Little Black Box**

Adjustment (**Mage 20, Chapter Ten, p. 601**); makes good use of her *Arcane* Background; and turns whatever other measures she can use to her best advantage. A clever mage can also use probability to shift the ebb and flow of traffic, produce fake identification that passes muster at computerized checkpoints, and manipulate human nature in order to travel more freely than "normal" people can. Yes, it can be a pain to get around, especially when rival mages use the same tricks you do. Still, the 21st-century willworker needs a few surprises up her sleeve if she wants to travel with relative freedom.

The Old Mind-Push

When confronted with an authority figure, the oldest trick in a mage's book involves convincing him that you're not whoever it is that he's looking for, or that you're exactly who you should be in order to get past him. Either way, the infamous "not the droids" trick involves the Mind Sphere. The Rank required to get the desired effect (and Effect) depends on how determined that authority figure is, and how dedicated he is to his job:

- Mind 2 provides a simple "push" that discourages casual inquiry.

- Mind 3 steers the authority figure's thoughts in the direction you want them to go.

- Mind 4 overrides determined scrutiny by implanting the desired thoughts in the authority figure's head.

Difficulty

As the **Uncanny Influence** section points out, the difficulty for a typical mental-influence Effect uses that target's Willpower as a difficulty; if that Willpower is below 4, then that difficulty is simply 4.

If it's directed against *several* characters, then that difficulty depends upon the usual *coincidental*, *vulgar*, or *vulgar with witnesses* situations. Thanks to the "mob mentality," crowds tend to be more easily controlled than individuals.

An influence-based Effect that's used against another mage has an automatic difficulty of the target's Willpower + 3. The same holds true for Night-Folk, some of whom might have a difficulty of Willpower +5 instead.

For more details, see **Influence-Magick Difficulties**, **p. 116.**

Resistance

A bored, distracted, or unmotivated authority figure can be fooled easily. A loyal or determined one, however, or one who's confronting an obviously dangerous character (like some weirdo who just ran all the stoplights and led the cops on a not-so-merry chase) will be *extremely* resistant to the idea of letting someone go their way.

As also detailed in the **Uncanny Influence** section, a resisting character can roll his Willpower, difficulty 6, in order to shrug off that influence. If the target manages to roll more

successes than the mage did, then she retains her proper state of mind. If the mage wins, though, then the target endures the desired Effect for the Duration of that Effect. For more details, see **Resistance, Recognition, and Duration**, .

Instant Fake IDs

Anyone with the right tools and know-how – which, granted, are *much* harder to obtain in this age of magnetic strips and instant-access data – can craft a fake ID without using magick. Such mundane IDs will pass most forms of casual observation, especially if the mage adds a mental push to the transaction. A mage who wants to be *sure* about getting through, however, or one who needs to ghost up some fake credentials on the spot, needs a little extra mojo...

- A simple Entropy or Forces 2 Effect will keep the ID card from scanning. While this won't let a person get past security in itself, a mage could then add a mental "push" to convince a guard to just let her pass through. ("*Stupid scanner's on the fritz again... go on ahead!*") This won't grant access to high-security areas, but might let her pass though the first line of bank, club or airport security.

- A Data 2/ Forces 2 Effect can fool most ID-scanning equipment if enough successes get rolled by the mage who's trying to bypass security. *This trick will NOT work with the Correspondence Sphere*; only Data will do, as that Sphere works directly with the principles and contents of computerized information.

- An Entropy 3/ Forces 2 Effect can alter probability so that the ID card *reads* right even when it's not supplying the correct information. A failed roll, however, rejects the ID, and a botch probably wrecks the ID and disrupts the system itself... which is bound to set off alarms.

- The *Black Card/ Little Black Box* Adjustment (referred to above) allows a mage to hack the system itself. This tactic, though, generally takes more time than a simple ID scan, and may go horribly wrong.

Unless the mage is being a complete idiot (like trying to use a paper card instead of a magnetized plastic one), these tricks are essentially coincidental.

Most mundane security scanners (used at banks, airports, clubs, and police traffic-stop checks) can be fooled with three successes or more. Special security scanners (like those used in restricted-access facilities or Technocratic installations) demand five successes or more. This, of course, assumes that the mage has the right *kind* of ID – a bank-card won't function as a fingerprint-based ID badge.

A failed roll rejects the ID, and a botched roll sets off an alarm. Certain places, like Technocratic installations, will have alarms go off if *anything* fails to pass the ID scan... in which case, the would-be trespasser is kinda screwed.

Tricking Those Damn Scanners

Full-body scans. X-ray machines. Breathalizer tests. Hand- or retinal-scanning technology. We never had to put up with such nonsense in *the Old Days*, dad-gum it, but now it's simply *everywhere!* How, then, can an innocent (or not-so-innocent) mage simply go about his business without interference from those infernal gadgets?

In game-terms...

• Entropy 2, Forces 2, or a combination of both can toss glitches into the equipment. Thus disrupted, the gear gives a false reading which may – with three successes or more – give the mage the result she wants and let her get through the scan without incident. This won't wash if the scan leads to a high-security area, but it's enough to get a person past the average security scanner. A failed roll or inadequate success, however, will lead the guards to check the mage out more closely, while a botched roll sets off every alarm in the place.

• The Data 2/ Forces 2 trick mentioned above will (if successful) give the desired false reading.

• Three successes or more that get rolled with a character's Arcane Background may screw the scanners up so badly

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The Technocratic Eye

Obviously, the Technocracy understands every tech-based trick in the book. The Order invented most of them before those Superstitionists had even figured out how to turn a computer on, and while Technocratic security systems *can* be fooled, doing so is not easy.

In mundane locations (as opposed to Technocratic facilities), the Union keeps a relatively tight watch on key airports, border-crossings, lab facilities, and major financial centers. Anything that gets videoed in those facilities will be recorded and accessible by the Technocracy as well. An event that sets off alarms will alert local Technocracy agents too – and since such locations usually have a few NWO field operatives on hand, if nothing else, an attempt to smash one's way through security is a terrible idea.

The Technocracy does not have advanced security systems everywhere. Although the paranoia about them is both useful and justified – and perhaps even enhanced with MEGs that have been set up in handy locations – the Union saves such expensive measures for high-risk areas: major airports, warzone checkpoints, high-tech facilities and, of course, its own installations and offices.

Such vital locations may have any or all of the following measures:

• **Mood-Enhancement Generators (MEGs):** Enlightenment 4. Projects a constant Mind 2 Effect that inspires the desired emotional climate (calm, industriousness, loyalty, paranoia, and so forth).

• **RD Recognition & Identification Profile-Search Capacity (R-DRIPs):** Enlightenment 4. Video-scanning software that recognizes known Reality Deviants and other figures who are wanted by law-enforcement authorities. Functions as a constant Data 2/ Forces 2/ Entropy 1 Effect that processes the features and body-language of anyone recorded by the local scanning technology. Works as a four-die Wits + Perception roll to access database profiles and recognize known Reality Deviants. Disguise or Arcane is handled with a resisted roll, as per the *Spotting Sneak* feat on the *Dramatic Feats chart*, **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**, **p. 404**.

• **Counter-Reality Detection Monitors (CRDMs):** Enlightenment 5. Scanners that project a constant Life 1/ Matter 1/ Dimensional Science 1 effect to spot vampires, werecreatures, alien incursions, and the like. Works like a more powerful R-DRIP.

• **Counter-Incursion Security Portals (CISPs):** Heavy-duty doors that quickly shut when alarms are triggered. Typically made of metal, plastic or glass that's been reinforced with Matter Adjustments, CISPs are treated as *Vault Doors* on the *Sample Objects and Surfaces chart* in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**, even though they might appear to be simple Plexiglass partitions or normal glass, wood, or metal doors.

• **Reality-Disruption Neutralization Fields (RDNFs):** Enlightenment 4-6. When triggered, projects four to six dice of countermagick at magickal Effects cast by Superstitionist mages within the protected area. Available only at high-security areas.

Storytellers may assume that a modern Technocracy-run facility (office, bank, armory, lab, barracks, front, Construct, etc.) will have dedicated security guards, hair-trigger alarms, reliable cameras, hidden monitors, R-DRIPs, CRCMs, CISPs, and possibly some RDNF units in place. Although Primium is too precious and expensive to use in mundane construction, deeply secure locations may have some of that on hand as well.

Technocracy operatives, of course, know how to counteract most standard security measures. Every Construct, though, has measures that only the highest-ranking personnel know about... and probably a few things that not even *they* are aware of...

that the mage gives a false positive reading, or perhaps doesn't register on the gear at all. That second result, though, might not be a good thing if the security guards take their jobs seriously.

The All-Access Pass

Important people can often get away with things that mere mortals cannot do. And so, ballsy mages sometimes employ the "all-access pass" trick: a combination of false ID and a strong mental suggestion that they're just too important to mess with formalities. Technocratic field-ops use this trick all the time – and for them, it's not really a trick, but a display of their true importance in a technocratic world.

Game-wise, the "all-access pass" combines **The Old Mind-Push**; a **Fake ID** feat (usually with an Entropy 3/ Forces 2 ID credential that has been prepared in advance); a commanding personality (probably backed up with clothes, body-language, and other props); and possibly a Background like **Fame, Rank, Resources**, or a combination of them all. Unless the traveler faces heavy security or serious resistance, that combination may allow her to simply bull her way past security without making a single roll.

Flipping Traffic Lights

Given the inconvenience of traffic lights, the old "flip the signals" trick has been around for decades. A simple flick of one's focus – channeling a surge of Entropy 2, Forces 2, or both, possibly with Time 1 in order to spot the best timing for that surge – turns the signal in the mage's favor. This doesn't mean, of course, that the other cars will react to the new signal quite so easily. The mage who uses this feat risks causing an accident as the other drivers respond to the signal-change... possibly by barreling through the light at a deeply inconvenient time.

Given the number of people who do the "talk to or yell at the traffic light" thing, this feat is coincidental unless the mage is ridiculously obvious about what he's doing.

Clearing Crowds, and Getting Lost

Traffic can be a nuisance, but it can work in a mage's favor too. By working a successful Entropy 3 Effect, a traveling will-worker may shift the flow of people, animals or vehicles into a pattern that allows for either easy access, a helpful impediment to pursuing characters, or both.

Rules-wise, the difficulty depends upon the thickness of the crowd and its opportunity to go elsewhere. A total-standstill traffic jam, for example, cannot suddenly be redirected to go somewhere else. (For that sort of magick, see **Moving Mountains**, **p. 82**.) Most crowds can be redirected with between two and five successes; thick crowds may demand a few more. Really chaotic crowds, however – like riots or stampedes – are easier to scatter than orderly ones are.

Redirecting an extensive crowd – like a congested free-way or shoulder-to-shoulder protest march – might require

Correspondence 3 as well, so that the redirection affects parties who are too far off to see directly. (Correspondence 3 matches the Rank for that Entropy 3 Effect.)

An additional Mind 2 Effect can add a "*Get the fuck out of my WAY!*" impulse to this feat, or win a mob over so that folks cover for your escape. This sort of thing usually adds three or more successes to the amount necessary to simply redirect the flow of chaos.

Given that crowds and traffic literally *are* moving flows of entropy and stasis, this trick is typically coincidental. A Forces 2 or 3 version could push traffic around too, but if cars and people suddenly go flying, things become vulgar indeed.

Flight

Brooms, wings, jetpacks, superpowers... the list of things that can let a person fly without using a plane or some similar apparatus is as long as the human imagination can make it. Given the right focus and Spheres, a mage could levitate, grow bat-wings, call upon the East Wind, strap on his trusty Etherjet Rocketpack, or use whatever other method his beliefs and instruments allow.

By the way, controlling one's self in flight may demand Dexterity or Wits + Athletics rolls if and when things get rough. Characters who specialize in flying around under their own power may want to get the **Flying** and/ or **Jetpack** Abilities described in the **Secondary Abilities** section of **Mage 20, Chapter Six**.

Levitation

Shifting the forces of gravity and inertia in order to lift someone or something off the ground, and then move them around a bit, is a simple Forces Effect.

For the approximate amounts that a given Forces Rank Effect can lift, see the **Forces and Weight** sidebar in the **Elemental Command** section, **p. 29**.

Certain practitioners might also combine Forces with Mind 3 and/ or Life 2/ Prime 2 in order to use their mental power (Mind) or vital energies (Life/ Prime) in order to "lock" levitation Effects onto people and things. Levitating living things is, as usual, trickier than levitating solid objects; the mage would need Life 2 to levitate herself, but Life 3 in order to levitate some other being. For more details, see **Telekinesis** under **Elemental Command**, and **Chi Flight** under **Martial Arts** (**p. 65**).

Objects in Flight

The same rules apply when a mage wants to fly a broom, a car, a carpet, or some other object that isn't usually meant to be used as an aerial transportation device. In this case, however, the mage will probably also want to add Matter 2 to that Forces Effect, in order to connect the Effect with the object in question; that way, the object doesn't depend upon the mage in order to stay aloft.

The speed of a flying object depends upon the Storyteller's discretion and the needs of the story. For simplicity's sake, you could say that a flying object travels at 20 MPH for every success spent on making it fly. If Dr. Hans von Roth wants to make his Aston Martin Vanquish soar at 100 MPH, then his player would need to spend five successes on making it go. For details about spending successes, see the **Dividing Successes Option** in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, p. 538**.

Incidentally, flying brooms and carpets don't usually come with straps or seat belts. If your mage wants to make something fly *fast*, he ought to make sure he can hang on tight for the duration of the trip...

For special gates that help the travel cover great distances, see **The Warp-Gate** feat, below.

Fly Like an Eagle

Wings provide a time-honored method of uncanny travel. For biological wings, a Life 3 Effect (Life 4 when cast upon another creature), combined with Forces 2, will do the trick.

Jury-rigged mechanical wings (that is, wings that aren't defined as a hypertech Wonder) use Matter 2, combined with Forces 2. If the device has a power-source other than the mage's muscle-power or a conventional fuel engine, then add a Prime 2 battery and enough Quintessence to get where you're going.

Flight Speed and Fatigue

Muscle-powered wings generally let a character move at up to 20 yards per action. A character can fly for three actions per dot in that character's Stamina Trait before she starts getting fatigued. Under duress, she can fly at half that speed for another three actions per dot, assuming she makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) in order to push herself. A second Willpower roll will let her keep going at that same speed, but at the cost of one bashing health level per action. If/ when she runs out of bashing health levels, and still needs to keep going, she can make more Willpower rolls and then burn lethal health levels instead. A desperate character, then, could fly herself to death until and unless she stops to take a break.

Teleportation

As mentioned under **The Basics**, Correspondence magick allows a mage to cross spatial dimensions without physically moving through them. The bigger the distance, the more successes she'll need in order to cross from one place to another. Visible or familiar locations are easier to reach than unseen or unknown ones. For guidance, see the **Correspondence Sphere Ranges chart** in **Mage 20**, or the **Teleportation Locations chart** nearby. (Hint: They're essentially the same chart with different wording. We included that new chart here for easy reference.)

Witness the Coincidence

Despite common misconception (and some very early examples), a mage cannot simply use Correspondence to teleport somewhere and then define it as a "coincidental" taxi that sprang up out of thin air. She could combine Correspondence and Mind in order to *call* a cab, or Entropy and Correspondence to *catch* a cab at just the right time, or deploy human resources in order to make someone *fetch* her a cab. (See the optional instrument **Management and Human Resources** in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, p. 595**.) Simply using Correspondence 3 and defining it as a coincidental cab, however, is not gonna work.

On a similar note, a character who teleports from one place where a witness can't see her to another place where a witness can't see her is still using *vulgar magick without witnesses*. Principles of time and space have enough metaphysical "weight" behind them that teleportation creates a sort of vacuum of displaced reality, and so popping from one place to another creates a notable ripple in reality. The mage who teleports in the woods is *still* teleporting through the woods. Unless you're totally cloaked in darkness (see **The Batman**, below), teleportation is vulgar magick... even if you have blue fur.

For a more detailed breakdown about the interplay between witnesses and magick, see the **Axis of Coincidence** section of **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, pp. 533-534**.

Doors, Booths, and Windows

A common teleportation stunt involves ducking through a door, into a booth, or out a window. This way, the mage seems to be leaving through a perfectly reasonable exit, or pulling the old "vanishing lady" trick.

Is this coincidental or not? As a general rule, assume that...

- If a witness watches the mage vanish, and has no reason to believe that she *could* vanish, then it probably *vulgar with witnesses*.

- If the mage disappears into darkness (see **The Batman**, below), and the witness would have reason to believe she could have gone *somewhere else*, then it's probably *coincidental*.

- And if the mage goes somewhere and then vanishes, but nobody *sees* her vanish, then it's probably *vulgar without witnesses*.

Teleportation Locations

Successes	Range
One	Within immediate perception.
Two	Very familiar place (home, Sanctum, etc.).
Three	Familiar/ Just saw it recently/ Possess intimate computer data.
Four	Visited briefly/ Possess IP address/ See location online.
Five	Heard or saw it described/ Hold data coordinates.
Six+	Teleporting totally blind.

As an example, we'll say that Nix is pulling three types of disappearing act:

- Nix vanishes right in front of people = *vulgar with witnesses*.

- Nix ducks into the darkness and disappears = *coincidental*.

- Nix jumps out a window in broad daylight; no one sees Nix on the other side of that window, but if someone *did*, then they'd see Nix vanish = *vulgar without witnesses*.

There's a confounding amount of wiggle-room in such situations, and the Storyteller has the ultimate right to decide where vulgar magick ends and coincidence begins.

Now you see why teleportation devices and magician's-cabinet "illusions" have held such high priorities among the Awakened throughout the centuries.

Spotting the New Location

No smart teleporter goes somewhere he cannot see. Taking a turn to use Correspondence 1 or 2, the mage gets an impression of the new location with a successful Intelligence + Awareness roll. The difficulty of this roll is usually 6, although certain circumstances (darkness, storms, stress, etc.) might raise it and others (bright sunlight, clear concentration) may lower it.

If that roll succeeds, then the new location counts as being **Within immediate perception** on the **Teleportation Locations chart**. If not, then the mage is going in blind…

Teleporting Into Occupied Space

A failed teleportation roll simply fizzles; the mage goes nowhere. A botched roll, however, has far worse consequences.

Consider a botched roll while using Correspondence teleportation to be an immediate physical Paradox backlash, as described under **Physical Backlash, aka "the Burn"** (**Mage 20**, Chapter Ten, **pp. 551-552**).

Story-wise, the mage manifests inside a space that's already occupied by something (or some*one*) else. A small amount of bashing damage reflects a "bump" between those competing physical objects. Lethal damage reflects a severe "crash," and aggravated damage manifests the traveler *inside* of an unfortunate object or character, who probably takes that damage as well! In all cases, the Paradox Flaw represents skewed perceptions that got hammered by being in the same location as something else. For an appropriate length of time, the rattled teleporter will be adding a +3 modifier onto her spotting difficulties (see above), and may suffer nightmares or phobias related to her teleportation accident.

The Blink

Most folks use Correspondence 3 in order to step between locations and then stay there. The "blink" feat, however, lets a mage skip between several locations in quick succession.

System-wise, the player checks the **Teleport Locations chart** to figure out how many successes she needs to get from one place to another. After that, she then adds one success to that total for each "blink" she wants to use. The total number of successes is the number she needs to roll up in order to pull off this trick.

Let's say that Nix is "blinking" across three locations that are all within sight; that's three successes for the three locations **Within Immediate Perception** (one success each). Now the player adds three more successes – one for each "blink" – for a total on six successes.

Each "blink" counts as an action. If the character wants to blink and then act within the same turn, then her player will need to use either her Arete Trait, or the usual dice pool for that action, as her dice pool – *whichever is lowest*. (For details, see **Multiple Actions** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Eight, p. 388**.)

If, for example, Nix wants to blink in and then yank something out of a dude's hands (a Dexterity + Brawl roll), then Nix's player uses the lowest dice pool. Say Nix's Dexterity + Brawl dice pool is six dice, and Nix's Arete is 5; the player, then, would roll five dice when trying to grab that object out of the dude's hands.

A blinking character certainly has the element of surprise. If the "blink" Effect has been cast ahead of time, then the mage may also fast-cast a new spell between blinks. (See **Fast-Casting and Working Without Usual Instriments**, **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten, p. 503**.) And yes – blinking is vulgar magick.

The Batman

A favorite of tricksters, ninja, and Awakened vigilantes everywhere, this stunt draws a cloak of smoke or darkness around the mage. When it fades, he's gone. How does he keep *DOING* that?

In game-terms, a Forces 2 Effect deepens shadows, smoke, or other forms of camouflage while also muffling (or intensifying) sounds in order to totally conceal the character. Correspondence does its usual teleportation thing. An optional Mind 2 Effect can also add an uneasy chill to the stunt, combining a disconcerted shiver with the surety that had to be some really marvelous trick. If only they could figure out how it's done…

A variation on this feat lets the practitioner "skip" from place to place under the cover of smoke and shadow, again using Correspondence 3/ Forces 2. This way, the mysterious figure pops in and out of concealment, kicks someone's ass, and then reappears somewhere else. So long as no one could actually witness him disappearing in some impossible way, or moving from one place to another in a fashion that cannot be explained by conventional physics (like appearing at the other side of a bridge without crossing through the intervening space), this trick may remain coincidental.

For more details about using Forces 2 to create concealment, see **Shadowplay** under **Elemental Command**, p. 34.

Pulling Goodies From Elsewhere

Rabbits, cards, guns, flowers… magicians have a long history with pulling out "that thing that wasn't there before." Especially for mages who wind up in captivity, this sort of trick is very handy in all sorts of situations.

Story-wise, a mage needs to have some method that fits his focus and allows him to pull things out of apparently thin air. It's not just a matter of "fooling the audience" into accepting the trick (although slight-of-hand is certainly a valid instrument of focus), but a matter of doing something within the mage's own belief system. A "time and space are delusions" mystic might be able to reach back to her apartment in a different city in order to retrieve her favorite jacket, but a hard-headed scientist could not accept such nonsense. Therefore, story-wise, the character must have a way of moving things around which suits his paradigm. That same scientist could have a hand-held Dimensional Compression Accesses System as his instrument of focus, and that device would allow him to employ the exact same Effect; take that instrument away from him, though, and he's kinda screwed.

Game-wise...

- Correspondence 2-5 allows a mage to move things around, as described above under **The Basics**.

- Rules for making something appear that had not existed until that moment can be found under **The Basics** in the **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification** section, **p. 18**.

Forging a Tether

A mage who wants to forge a "tether" between an object and herself – which allows her to use Correspondence to pull that object to her from across a distance, wherever it might be – needs to use Life, Matter, or both to connect that object to her:

- Matter 2 allows the mage to craft a tether between herself and an inanimate object.

- Life 4 lets her create a tether between herself and a complex organic being (a cat or person, as opposed to a bacterium or a rose).

- The usual combinations of Life and Matter, Spirit or Mind allow her to bond a tether between the mage and a vampire, werecreature, changeling, or whatever. (See **Body Magick** on the **Common Effects chart**.)

- Once tethered, the object is considered to be **Within Immediate Perception** on the **Teleportation Locations chart**, nearby.

- *The mage must have at least one dot in Correspondence for every dot in the other Spheres involved. Kyle, for example, would need to have at least four dots in Correspondence before he could use Life 4 to create a tether to his human ally Lee Ann.*

That tether lasts for the usual Duration unless the mage makes the tethering Effect permanent; see **Permanent Changes** in the **Conjuration, Transformation, Shapechanging, and Modification** section, pp. 21-22.

Everywhere at Once

An impressive act of transportation involves being in several different locations at once. The mage co-locates himself to various places, and – although it takes a bit of extra magick to do so – he'll generally be able to act independently in each place once he gets there.

- As described in the Correspondence Sphere entry, co-location demands Correspondence 4. Assume that each "self" requires one success added to the successes listed on the **Teleportation Locations chart**.

- The base successes needed come from the *most unfamiliar location* that a "self" is being sent to. If, for example, Kyle sends out three "selves" – one to his home, one to his office, and one to a place that Lee Ann described to him – then the player adds three successes (one for each self) to a base of five successes (**Heard or Saw it Described**), for a total of eight successes needed.

- The Correspondence-only Effect leaves all of the "selves" acting the same way at the same time; essentially, they're mirror-images of the original mage.

- Their perceptions can get really scrambled unless the mage also adds a Mind 1 Effect. Because they're all the same person, though, only one success is necessary.

- To have each "self" act independently and react to its own location, add Life 3 to that Effect. Each "self" requires another success, though, because each one is responding to different circumstances and the original mage has to keep track of all of them. Kyle, then, would need a total of 12 successes: three for the three "selves," five for the location, one for the Mind-based coordination Effect, and three to allow each "self" to act independently.

- Although each manifested "self" has its own physical integrity, all "selves" return to the original mage when the spell's Duration ends. Each "self" takes damage normally, as if each copy was a character in its own right.

- If *several* selves take damage, this might be fatal if and when all that damage gets added up in the original mage's Pattern. Game-wise, every level of damage taken by a "self" winds up on the mage's Health track if the mage re-integrates while several "selves" are hurt.

- That said, only the death of the original "self" will kill all the duplicates. Individual duplicates can die, and although their injuries no longer get added to the original character's Health track, each "duplicate death" inflicts one aggravated health level of damage on the original character. This damage can't be healed until all of the "selves" have been reunited into the original mage. And so, it's in his best interest to keep them all alive. If the mage has eight duplicates, and all eight of them are killed, that mage immediately dies.

- There might be several "selves," but only one Avatar. That guiding entity remains within the original mage.

Yeah, this is vulgar magick, which is why "pulling a Doc Manhattan" is a pretty rare feat.

In **Mage 20**, the Marauder **Hive** exists in a perpetual state of co-location. Few mages can accomplish such feats... but then, Marauders don't often follow the usual rules. For details about Hive, see **Mage 20**, **Appendix I**.

Gates and Portals

When someone needs to get other characters or objects from one place to another, establish a reliable method of travel, craft a doorway from one location to a different one, or otherwise fold space up in a ball and shoot hoops with it, a portal or gate is usually the best way to get things done.

Generally speaking, a *gate* creates a temporary passageway between locations, and a *portal* is more or less permanent. Dr. Hans von Roth might open a trajectory warp-gate for his car to pass through, and build a multiple-access trans-space portal in his lab. Those terms aren't ironclad, though, and they're certainly not universal. A permanent rift between spaces could still be called a warp-gate, while a one-trip doorway could still be considered a portal.

- As mentioned above under **The Basics**, Correspondence 3 creates a short-lived one-party gate; to craft a large and/ or lasting gate or portal, use Correspondence 4.

- As stated in the **Correspondence Sphere entry** from **Mage 20**, a permanent passageway demands 10 successes or more. The larger the gate, and the more involved its safeguards (see **Warding a Passageway**, below), the more successes it'll take to make that passage permanent.

- An additional Spirit 4 Effect allows that passageway to reach into the Umbra and connect with a given Realm.

- An additional Mind 5/ Spirit 4 Effect lets the mage establish a gate between the mortal world and a personalized Astral Realm – a dreamworld, a Demesne Background, or some other place that's outside of the Consensus and a bit beyond the reach of mere Spirit-travel. Because this feat demands Mind 5, the mage must have Correspondence 5 as well. Thus, this sort of portal is a rare and powerful accomplishment.

Because they rip holes in the Tapestry, gates and portals are vulgar magick unless (as in an appropriate Sanctum) they're set up in a place where the local reality allows such things to happen.

If the gate goes from one location where it's coincidental, into another one where it is *not*, then the entire feat is vulgar magick.

The Warp-Gate

Used mostly to shorten distances during travel, a "warp-gate" feat opens a small hole in space and lets the mage pass through. Generally, a warp-gate lasts a turn or two – long enough to enter – and then closes up again.

Depending on the size of the warp-gate, this might be a Correspondence 3 or 4 Effect. Given the temporary nature of such gates, a mage's player generally needs to roll only the number of successes noted on the **Teleportation Locations chart** in order to establish that gate. A warp-gate that gets you back home? Two successes. One that gets you to a place you saw on the Internet? Five successes… and by all the gods, *don't botch!*

For obvious reasons, it's a good idea to use the **Spotting a New Location** feat before opening this sort of passageway.

The Location Portal

When setting up an essentially permanent portal between locations, a wise mage prepares those locations to accept a powerful, vulgar act of magick. Whenever possible, he sets them up as Sanctum or Chantry Background spaces, so that the ensuing Effects aren't *too* vulgar.

As mentioned elsewhere, we're using the word "magick" generically. Portals between Technocratic Constructs use the same game-systems as portals between mystic fortresses; the *focuses* are different but the *rules* are the same. Remember, though, that a mystic portal into a Technocratic lab is as vulgar as a Dimensional Science/ Data-based portal into a mystic grove would be.

Consider that the basic 10 successes establish the permanent gateway. Beyond that, the player needs to add the necessary successes from the **Teleportation Locations chart**. Making a portal to a very familiar location, then, is easy (two additional successes); making one to a place you've only heard about (five additional successes) is much, much harder.

Story-wise, a portal could be an elaborately crafted passageway, shaped from stones and encrusted with runes. Conversely, it could also be utterly innocuous – a normal door or window that leads somewhere other than where you might think it *should* lead.

Most portals feature built-in wards. For details, see the **Warding** section, under **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding**, **pp. 95-104**.

Bringing "There" to "Here"

In perhaps the ultimate feat of transportation, a Master-level mage can bring her destination to her present location. This is mighty vulgar juju, disrupting the very fabric of time and space. Still, if time and space seem like illusions to a mage, then such disruption is more a matter of logistics than of possibility.

Although one of the cornerstones of Correspondence theory suggests that all places are one place, and one of the key elements of reality-hacking (see **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, **p. 581**) maintains that *everything* is data – and thus subject to change – overt demonstrations of those theories remain *highly* vulgar. Moving a mountain to Mohammad is a miracle that defies all conventional laws of physics, and while such deeds *are* possible, there's a cost:

- With the one exception described below, *all* of the following feats are vulgar, and they usually involve witnesses too. The minimum difficulty for such miracles is 6 (Sphere Rank 5 + 4 if there are no witnesses, -3 if every possible modifier gets used), and is most likely to be 7 or more.

- For such feats, Paradox inflicts five points under the best circumstances. A botched roll inflicts at least six points, perhaps even double that amount. For especially vivid distortions of space-time physics, like the folding cityscape in the film *Inception*, the Storyteller might double the usual amount of Paradox, if only because reality has shifted so radically for so many people at once. A mage who attempts to twist physics to this extreme will have a lot to answer for, and so – Marauders aside – very few mages even try.

- According to **Mage 20**'s **Magickal Feats chart**, the following acts count as **Outlandish** or **Godlike** feats – 10 successes or more required. Rituals, then, are usually essential. A mage who can "bend" the distance between Hong Kong and Hollywood is a formidable character. Mages who've lived long enough to perform such deeds, however, are usually smart enough to do them only in complete secrecy.

- Unlike many other feats, large spatial-distortion spells are *not* considered coincidental within a Sanctum because they usually reach beyond that Sanctum's protected space. The aforementioned exception would involve turning your Sanctum into your own private Escher print, limiting the warped physics to a self-confined area.

- As per the usual rules, a permanent warp in space requires at least 10 successes. The Storyteller may decide that a really gross one – like sticking the Washington Monument in the middle of Dubai – would require 20 successes or more, with a walloping amount of Paradox to boot.

Spatial Mutation

The "simpler" application of Correspondence 5 travel involves shrinking or expanding the spatial dimensions between areas. A short hallway, then, could stretch for miles, while a path in one forest could lead a traveler into the clearing of a different woodland on the other side of the world.

Game-wise, the Storyteller could handle this sort of thing one of two ways:

Bridging Similar Locations

If the mage wants to bridge two similar locations with a simple "bend" of space, then give the feat a base of five required successes. For each level of Range on the *Teleportation Locations chart*, add one more success to the number of successes the player needs to roll before the feat is completed. The more familiar the locations, the easier it is to make that connection.

As an example, assume that Dante wants to bridge his hotel room in Amsterdam with his favorite nightclub in Detroit. To do so, his player would need to get at least seven successes: five + two more for *Very Familiar Place*. If he wanted to step through that hotel-room door and into a Sao Paulo alley he'd only heard about before, however, then the player would need 10 successes: five + five more for *Heard or Saw it Described*.

Indefinite Mutations

If the mage wants to warp space in an indefinite manner – like making a hallway stretch for miles – then base the feat's successes upon the *Magickal Feats chart*. The Storyteller has final judgment over the number of successes that player needs in order to complete that warp, and the bigger the warp, the more successes it demands.

Going back to our example, let's say that Dante wants to warp the distance between downtown Seattle and Mount Rainer; that task would probably take six successes. If he tries to compress a trip from Seattle to the suburbs of Berlin, though, then the feat would probably demand 10 successes or more.

Story-wise, these warps range from subtle twists that could pass unnoticed by a casual participant (folks walking up a path in Virginia emerge from that path in Maine), to grand distortions of spatial coherence straight out of the film *Dark City*. Onlookers might see a brief blur as the mage and her companions slip outside of conventional time-space, or could witness an apparently impossible dreamscape of Escherian physics. The former might be passed off as a trick of light and perceptions ("*I could have SWORN I just saw her right there…*"), and could thus be considered coincidental. The latter is obviously vulgar, and would have major repercussions on the chronicle. Beyond the Paradox involved, there would also be a lot of powerful parties interested in finding out *what* happened, and *why*, and just *who* was responsible for it happening…

Bending Material Physics

Returning to Escher's non-Euclidian drawing-board, a mage might elect to mangle localized physics in order to sculpt his surroundings into something that would make Giger's corpse sit up and applaud. Although such feats are vulgar as a mile-high space-god, their effects (and Effects) get confined to a small area rather than stretched out from horizon to horizon. And so, within Sanctums and Realms that fit the caster's sense of reality, these bizarre physics are… well, not exactly "coincidental," but more or less normal for that location.

The game-systems for such redecoration projects are simple, even if the feats themselves are not:

- Correspondence 5, combined with Matter 4 (complex and radical transformations), allows the mage to craft her surroundings into temporary or – with no less than 10 additional successes – permanent landscapes that defy conventional dimensional physics. Permanent changes also require investments of Quintessence – one or two points for small alterations, five points or more for abstract artwork that manages to remain intact.

- Correspondence 5/ Forces 4/ Matter 4/ Prime 2 allows the mage to set up locations where the elements and energies work in normally impossible ways: sculptures of fire, steps of light, water that flows upwards, pockets of lessened gravity or perpetual shadow, and so forth. Again, such creativity demands Quintessence if its artistry is built to last.

- Adding Life 5 to the previous feat allows the mage to go Giger on that landscape, adding trees of flesh, talking hills, or other bizarre accents to the surroundings. This Effect also adjusts the physical properties of local lifeforms so that they adapt to the crazy-ass laws of custom-built reality.

In all cases, the Storyteller should use the *Magickal Feats chart* to determine the number of successes involved with such undertakings. Hint: This sort of architecture demands *many* successes!

Once complete, the physics-warping landscape will function more or less normally with regards to the people inside it, allowing people to walk upside-down on Escherian stairways without falling off or disappearing at the border-point. Life 5 will still be essential for living things that want to swim in oceans of fire or breathe concentrated sunlight; the strange dimensional properties, however, won't affect the functional stability of those mathematically disjointed areas, or keep living things from using them as they might otherwise if those structures weren't so damned improbable.

Transposing Locations

Mages who can't be bothered with physics, Paradox, or the larger implication of their actions might use Correspondence 5 to *transpose*, or "co-locate," several places right on top of one another. Although this is theoretically possible with the optional Data Sphere as well, no Technocrat could perform such an action without serious consequences from the Men Upstairs. Transposition literally folds, spindles, and mutilates the principles of spatial integrity. It is *ALWAYS* vulgar, and dangerous as hell. Such things make Storytellers (and game designers) seek out other lines of work. Still, there *are* ways to bring these absurd feats to your gaming table without going stark raving buggo.

Story-wise, a successful transposition drops two or more locations into the same spot. Elements of those landscapes

– trees, buildings, people, and so on – superimpose themselves in layers, like a multidimensional Photoshop file. Although an object or organism can move from one layer to the next, objects that occupy the same space pass through one another harmlessly. (See Co-Occupation in the **Warding** portion of the **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding** section, **p. 100**.) In practical terms, a car driving down a road in San Francisco could turn off onto a road in Norwich, and it's best not to think too hard about how that could be possible.

Metaphysically speaking, this Effect bends the physical dimensions of the world. Places in between transposed locations don't change, but the visible borders around the locations themselves appear to blur and fade. GoogleEarth and other long-distance monitoring systems go haywire, providing pictures that look as though they've been twisted with CGI programs, or fuzzing such systems out completely for the duration of the Effect. In the 21st century, people *WILL* notice such phenomena, and there will be questions asked of all parties who might in any way be connected to that disturbance. Said questions will not be asked nicely, either.

System-wise, here's how it breaks down:

- Correspondence 5 exploits theoretical physics to layer locations on top of one another.

- Each layer transposed this way demands a base of 10 successes, plus 10 more for each "layer" involved. "Layering" a piece of San Antonio into the Sahara desert, for instance, demands at least 20 successes.

- Each "piece" transposed is relatively small – roughly a quarter-mile square, or smaller, in total area. Larger "pieces" demand even more successes – 10 more, per piece, for each approximately quarter-mile square involved. Transposing a two-square-mile chunk of San Antonio and the Sahara, for instance, would cost 70 successes. (Good luck with that...)

- Because this feat goes against the fundamental laws of Earthly geography, no modifiers are allowed. Even with the best tools and the most optimal circumstances, this feat is difficulty 9 if no witnesses are present, and difficulty 10 if some are.

- Each 10 minutes of Duration must be "purchased" with additional successes. Having part of San Antonio reside in the Sahara for 10 minutes requires at least 21 success; having it linger there for 30 minutes costs at least 23

- Even when successful, such feats generate at least five Paradox points per 10-minute interval. That San Antonio/ Sahara transposition, for example, racks up a minimum of five Paradox points every 10 minutes; a 30-minute stay, then, would involve no less than 15 Paradox, and probably a good deal more.

- Also because this feat curbstomps the laws of Earthly reality and feeds the bloody remains into a shredder, such transposition cannot be made permanent, *PERIOD*.

- Meteorological conditions from each "layer" bleed into one another. This could mean that the sunlight from one location lights up the night of another. Weather and temperature will fluctuate wildly while the layers remain in contact, and will go utterly batshit once the "pieces" flow back into their original locations.

- Any object or living thing that moves from one location to another is left where it wound up when the Effect's Duration ends. If that San Francisco car is still driving through Norwich when the spell concludes, the driver and passengers are in for a very rude surprise. This, in turn, can have all kinds of repercussions in the chronicle as a whole: stranded parties, invasive species, diplomatic incidents, and *seriously* hacked-off Technocrats.

Among the many godlike applications of the Spheres, this one may be the most overt. Use it with caution and consequences if it gets used at all.

Moving Mountains

A slightly less outrageous application of high-Rank Spherework allows a mage to tear one location from its original spot and drop it into another area. This leaves a gaping hole, an empty space, or sometimes an impossibly polished blank surface where the original location had been. Rooms, buildings, and "huge tracts of land" can be lifted from one area and dropped into another.

In terms of game and story, such feats use all of the rules and consequences involved in **Transposing Locations**, with the following differences:

- Simply shifting one location to another demands Correspondence 5/ Forces 5/ Matter 5/ Prime 4.

- If there are living things (and there probably are) that need to be transplanted or otherwise adapted from their original location into the new one, the mage should add Life 4 if he doesn't want them to die, and Mind 4 if he wants those organisms to not freak out when their surroundings suddenly transform.

- Without an additional Spirit 4 component, the Umbrascape in both locations will be badly scrambled, resulting in an area that "feels dead" or "holds an uneasy spirit."

- The Effect lasts for the normal Duration given on the **Base Damage or Duration chart**.

- The base number of successes depends upon the size of the location that's being moved, as per the **Moving Mountains chart**. All other necessary successes get added onto that amount.

- Again, this Effect generates at least five Paradox even when successful, and - as per the usual rules - far more than that if not.

- Unlike transposed locations, transplanted ones can be moved permanently. This requires the usual 10 successes and a vast amount of Quintessence (Storyteller's option, but no less than 10); otherwise, the transplanted location begins to crumble and fall apart at the end of the spell's Duration, because it has been removed from its rightful place in the Tapestry.

- The climate of the new location becomes the climate for the transplanted one. This, in turn, will probably have major effects upon that transplanted area. The new location will probably suffer side-effects from that shift as well: invasive species, altered weather, people wondering why the hell there's suddenly a new feature on the landscape, and so forth.
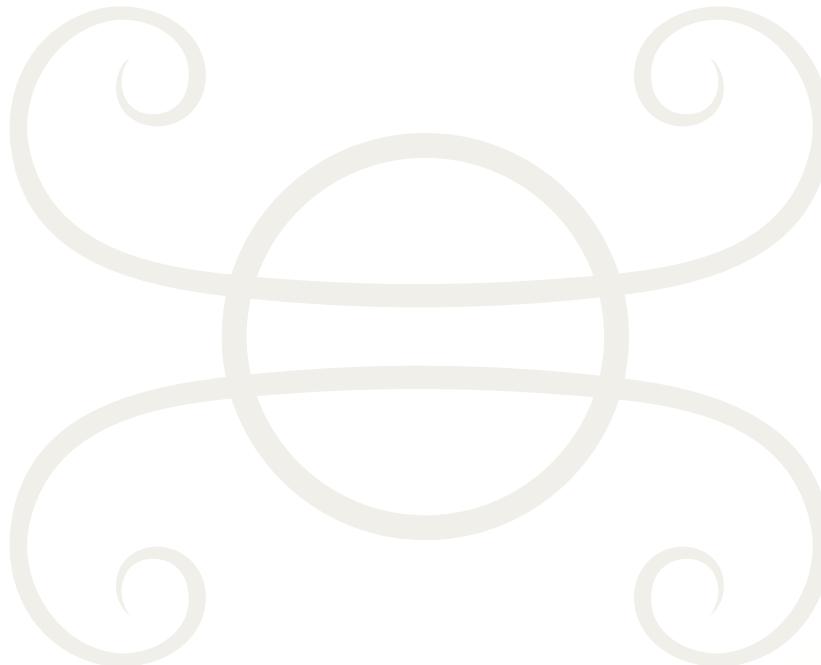
I Get Around

Magick puts the world at your fingertips, especially in this new millennium where so many possibilities appear to be within easy reach. Mages tend to be a restless lot, and although the most potent travel-Arts are difficult to master, it's fairly easy to boost the capacity of modern travel methods – the planes, trains and automobiles that reflect the Technocratic legacy even when a mystic mage sits behind the wheel.

Moving Mountains

Successes	Size of Location
Three	Tiny (car, tent, shed, outhouse, large box, average tree)
Five	Small (van, RV, hut, single-wide trailer, shrine, large tree)
Seven	Noticeable (small house, yurt, double-wide trailer, small garden, copse of trees)
10	Medium (suburban home, small shop, large garden, forest clearing)
13	Sizable (mansion, store, stone tower, city park, parking lot, forest grove)
15	Large (estate, shopping center, small castle, field, small hill)
17	Huge (office building, city block, shopping mall, square mile of wilderness)
20+	Vast (skyscraper, national landmark, mountain, five miles or more of wilderness)

Regardless of his paradigm or practice, a 21st-century mage has many ways to get from here to there. Though he might prefer the timeless art of wandering, make like Harry on a magic broom, blast his car through warp-gates, or drop his home wherever he plans to settle next, such a person is not bound by the physical laws that tie the Masses to traffic jams and airports. In an interconnected world, he gets around. Now more than ever, Awakening is a global achievement. A smart mage, these days, can go anywhere.

Necromancy

She didn't make it.

There's no corpse, no body, nothing but a single faint footprint in the mud. Still, I can sense the truth. It lingers in the nearby trees, those witnesses to her final moments. Closing my eyes, I can feel the warmth of her last steps, the echo of her voice in the bark of the trees, those pulsing moments of panic when the reality of death moved in and took her away.

She was alone. No other person saw or touched her. No cougars, no bears, not even a coyote. She was here, and then she died, and the only living witnesses were trees.

I hate this job sometimes.

With a last look around, and a great big sigh, I unpack my tools and get to work.

Seeing the Road to Awe

Death and magick: a frightful yet common combination. The most ominous Arts, however, use magick to bridge the gap *between* death and life. As a result, *necromancy* ("to view through death") remains among the most forbidden mystic Arts... which does *not*, however, keep it from being practiced by mages who refuse to let such things stop them.

Although the name originally referred to spells that commune with ghosts, necromancy as an Art takes several different but related forms: journeys into the Dead Realms, communion with the dead, reanimating dead tissue, resurrecting the dead, and the most awful power of them all: *necrosynthesis:* channeling the power of Death itself through living flesh. All forms of necromancy defy taboos... and yet, all forms also have long and even somewhat respectable (if not often respec*ted*) practices associated with them. From ghost-calling shamans to Thanatoic magi, corrupted sorcerers and the heirs of Frankenstein, the Awakened and Enlightened folks who deal with death are legion. And while most of them suffer from the taint of death, neither mortal fear nor immortal fury can discourage them for long. As the high priest says in Darren Aronofsky's masterpiece *The Fountain*, "Death is the road to awe."

The Basics

There are no "basics" when it comes to magick and the dead.

Morbidity and Jhor

Death's "sting," as the Bible put it, comes through as the lingering touch of mortality: the Quiet fascination called *Morbidity* (see **Mage 20, p. 558**), and the Elemental Resonance called *Jhor* (**p. 25**). Both spread the influence of death into the life of a mage, and each can corrupt someone who's not careful about them. Essentially, Morbidity and Jhor are aspects of the same thing – a collective metaphysical obsession with death. Story-wise, Morbidity and Jhor afflict a character with awful obsessions and tainted energies; game-wise, they inflict penalties that reflect the darkest side of necromancy.

In game terms, Morbidity and Jhor begin to affect a mage who...

- Relies too heavily upon magicks that involve death and decay;

- Kills too frequently or callously (especially with Entropy and/ or Spirit magick);

- Suffers extreme traumas that involve the threat and reality of death (torture, the loss of loved ones, repression of deathly urges, the damnation of a friend, and so forth);

- Spends unhealthy amounts of time around corpses, ghosts, and the trappings and essence of mortality;

- Continually botches death-related spells, or suffers a Paradox backlash of more than five points while performing a necromantic Effect.

The *Resonance* and *Quiet* sections of **Mage 20** deal with the accumulation and effects of Morbidity and Jhor in game terms. From a story standpoint, a character who suffers from one or both of these effects soon becomes a deeply disturbing... and disturbed... person – the archetypical necromancer.

It's worth mentioning, however, that neither Morbidity nor Jhor is inevitable. Some necromancers manage keep a balanced view of death. In that perspective, death is merely an aspect of life – not a subject for dreadful fascination but simply an inevitable part of the Cycle. Ideally, the Euthanatoi/ Chakravanti nurture that balance through their practices. Still, both in both dramatic and systematic terms, necromancy is a perilous craft. Mages who pursue it cannot remain unchanged by such experience.

The Vidare Mortem

Almost by default, a necromancer views the Otherworld through the *Vidare Mortem* described in **Mage 20**, **Chapters Three** and **Four, pp. 82 and 99**. This "mortal sight" reveals the Penumbra as a vision of pervasive decay. For obvious reason, this perspective fuels Jhor – it's hard, after all, to remain a sunny disposition when all you see is the eternal truth of death.

Generally, the Vidare Mortem applies only to the Otherworlds; a character suffering from Jhor and Morbidity, however, will eventually start seeing the entire world as a dying mess. At that point, she may think seriously about pursuing a new line of work before the necromantic Arts destroy her.

Necromantic Travel

Some of the most awful secrets of necromancy involve traveling into the Dark Umbra while the mage is still alive. For details about these dreaded *agama journeys* into the Lands of the Dead, see **The Agama Sojourn** in **The Otherworlds** section of **Mage 20, Chapter Nine, pp. 478-481**.
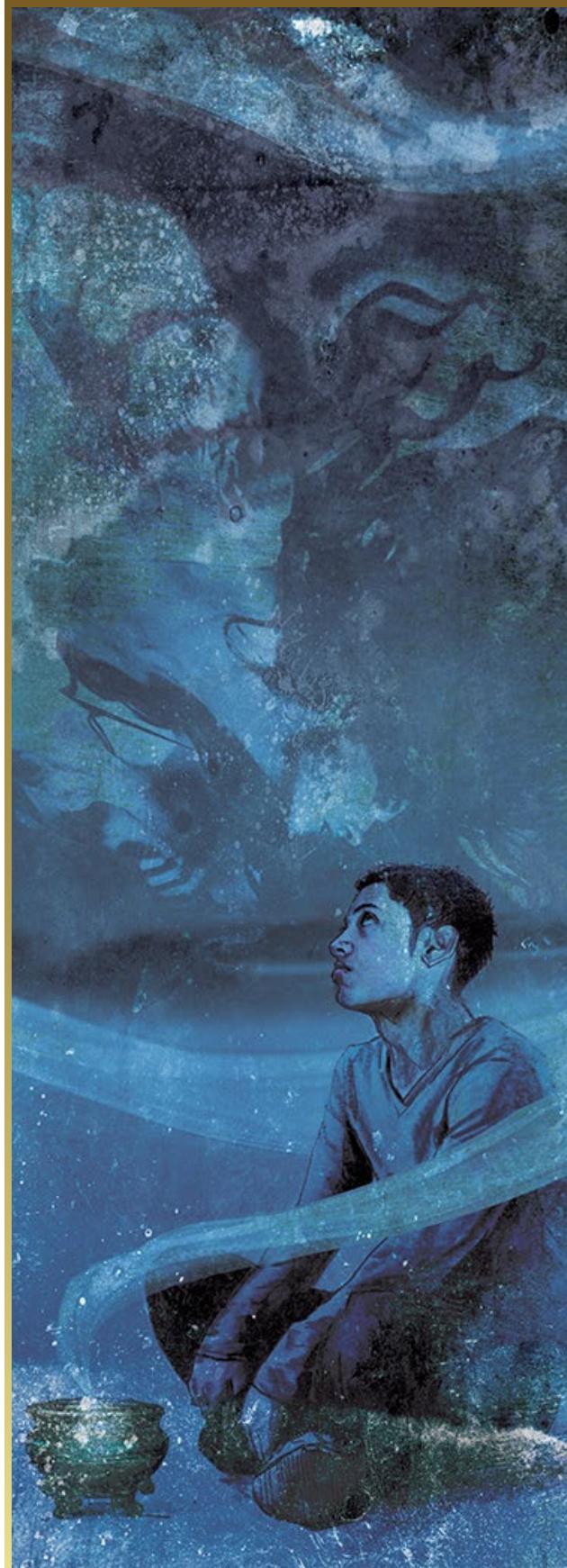
Ghost-Calling

The next best thing to going there involves calling up the spirits of the dead and letting them tell their own stories. Although such stories are not necessarily reliable (the dead are no more honest or omniscient than anybody else), the perspective of ghosts can be extremely helpful in certain situations.

The "lighter" end of ghost-calling involves a medium getting in touch with "the dearly departed" in order to lend comfort, contact, or closure. On a more sinister end, the necromancer might summon a ghost to demand information, favors, or other tasks... possibly with the threat of punishment if the ghost does not comply.

From a system standpoint, the various **Spirit Powers** described on **Mage 20**'s **Common Magickal Effects table** can all apply to necromancy. Although the feats get more difficult (and interesting) if you incorporate the rules and characters from **Wraith: The Oblivion**, a mage can see, touch, trap, speak to, or bind a ghost by using the Effects described there.

It's not always possible to deal with the ghost of a specific dead person. Most folks who die pass on beyond reach, either to some Afterworld or Underworld, or into the Cycle to which all things eventually return. That's especially true if the Avatar Storm occurred, even more so if the Storm continues even now. Of course, a spirit

can always *claim* to be the ghost-of-so-and-so. As noted elsewhere, spirits aren't necessarily any more honest or good-natured than anyone else... and they have plenty of reasons to be less so.

For ghostly characters, see **Gods, Monsters & Familiar Strangers**.

Fetters and Remains

From a story standpoint, the necromancer typically gathers remains from the dead person's body, "fetters" from its old life, or possibly people, locations, or items involved in its death. In **Wraith: The Oblivion**, these fetters link the ghost to its previous existence, and give it a tie to the living world. In **Mage** terms, such artifacts count as "personal items" on the *Magickal Difficulty Modifiers chart*. Regardless of the system involved, those fetters give the mage some power over the ghost. And while a sympathetic mystic could offer to protect or preserve the fetter, a ruthless one might threaten to destroy it unless the spirit does what she wants.

Wracking the Spirit

Another ruthless tactic – described in more detail later in this chapter, under **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding** (pp. 104-106) – involves torturing the ghost, or at least threatening to do so. This is a pretty rotten thing to do, but it *is* a traditional part of many necromantic practices. Story-wise, such "wracking of the spirit" involves trapping the ghost and then using Spirit magick to hurt it.

Game-wise, such torment involves Spirit 4 to compel the ghost to appear and then trap it in place. Spirit 3 can inflict pain, Spirit 4 can bind the ghost into an object, and Spirit 5 may destroy the ghost entirely. None of these options will exactly win friends and influence people to be anything but hostile. Still, necromancers tend to do this sort of thing, if only as a tactic of intimidation when dealing with a hostile ghost.

Mystics, incidentally, aren't the only "necromancers" who do this sort of thing. The Border Corps Division from the Void Engineers uses such tactics on the Restless Dead, and a certain group of '80s-movie heroes built their business model around grabbing ghosts and trapping them in containment-field technology. (Just don't cross the streams...)

Warding Against the Dead

Any sensible necromancer knows to ward herself against ghostly attacks. Typically, this involves a Spirit 2 Effect to thicken the Gauntlet within a given area that's defined by the focus-instruments employed – a circle of salt, Hermetic pentacle, Ectoplasmic Shield-Grid, and so forth. As the *Spirit Sphere entry* in **Mage 20** states, each success raises the Gauntlet rating by +1, for the duration of the Effect. A Correspondence 4/ Spirit 3/ Entropy 2 Effect can also ward an area from the influences of ghostly powers. Although this sort of ward doesn't alter the spiritual environment, it prevents a ghost from using its Entropic powers against protected people. Each success after the first two (which secure the protection) subtracts one success from any ghostly attack that has been directed against the protected parties. As an option, the player can also decide to spend one additional success per character so that she can ward more than one person from ghostly attacks.

A powerful mage can also use Spirit 4 or 5 to create ephemeral walls, banish spirits, exorcise ghosts, and seal them up in enchanted objects. Such actions aren't exactly friendly, but in the case of certain ghosts – especially the evil-tempered spectres – it's always good to have several options to choose from. For rules about **Exorcism**, see that entry in the *Uncanny Influence* section, p. 125.

Various other types of wards can be found in the section called **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding**. As mentioned under the *Penetrating Wards* entry in that section, a ghost run under the **Wraith: The Oblivion** rules can gain extra dice when countering a ward if that ward stands between the wraith and the object of his Fetter Trait. Each dot in a Fetter Trait provides one die to the wraith's dice pool. If that

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The Song of Flies

Necromancy doesn't always deal directly with the dead themselves. Using other Spheres to scan the site of a murder or burial, you could discern clues about the cause of death, the people involved, the circumstances of the demise, and other relevant details. And while those clues tend to be useful in criminal investigations, they could also help you unravel mysteries about disease, archeology, missing persons, or other circumstances tied to death.

Using a combination of Mind 2 and Prime 1, an investigating mage can read the local Resonance for clues about the death – a task that's far easier if that death has had a major effect upon that Resonance. Battlefields, murder scenes, concentration camps, dump-sites, and storage areas for human remains tend to echo the passions of killer and victims alike, and those echoes can be helpful (if deeply disturbing) for mages who want to learn the truth about those events.

A similar combination of Time 2 and Matter 1 can use *postcognition* (see **Enhanced Perceptions: Prophecy and Hindsight**, pp. 55-56) to find and decipher similar clues, either from the scene, the corpse, objects involved, or other elements. In this case, the mage strives to look back through time – or perhaps forward to future events – to see what she can see.

In both cases, the results can leave nasty psychic scars, especially when there's gruesome death involved. For potential repercussions, see **Things Man Was Not Meant to Know** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**, **p. 407**.

fetter has been integrated *into* that ward, though, then those dots in Fetter get *subtracted* from the ghost's dice pool instead. See the *Penetrating Wards* , **p. 103**, entry for further details.

Channeling the Dead

An essential element of Voudoun and mediumship involves letting a spirit enter and "ride" a living host. And while most mediums prefer to channel the dead themselves, a mage can also draw the ghost into a different person, an animal, or even an item – like a robot, statue, or talking skull – that allows the spirit some sort of interaction with the living world. (Whether or not the parties involved appreciate being used this way is a matter for all kinds of dramatic speculations...)

Self-Possession

Also described under *Possession* in the *Uncanny Influence* section (see **pp. 123-125**), the Art of self-possession opens the mage to spiritual inhabitation. A specialty of mediums, Vodou practitioners, Ecstatics, shamans, Infernalists, and even the occasional Christian mystic, this risky offer turns the mage into a willing vessel for ghostly powers.

In game terms, magickal self-possession allows the medium to retain a certain degree of control over the possession. Spirit 4 turns that character into a living capital-F spirit-Fetish while benefitting from the situation. In return for playing "horse" with a ghost, that mystic temporarily obtains whichever Abilities – barring Arcanoi and Charms – that the spirit might care to share with the mortal "host," as described under the *Possession* section. In exchange, the ghost has an opportunity to run around in a living body for a while... typically a rather exciting adventure for everyone involved.

Willpower and Control

Essentially, the mage provides a voice and body for the inhabiting spirit. Both the mage and the ghost share an extended and resisted Willpower roll, as detailed under *Fighting Back Against Possession* on **p. 124**. Each party uses the opponent's Willpower as a difficulty, and the first one to score 10 successes or more wins the contest for control over the host's physical body.

After self-possession, a medium usually needs to rest for a day or more... possibly as long as a week or two if the ghost was especially vigorous. Beyond that, the ghost leaves a bit of itself inside the mage's Pattern – a dot or two of Resonance (or Synergy) appropriate to that ghost's nature and personality. In **Wraith** terms, the medium also becomes a one-dot *Fetter* for the spirit; in **Mage** terms, she no longer needs a "personal item" to get a bonus when dealing with that phantom – she becomes that "personal item" herself!

Obvious self-possession tends to be vulgar magick, although certain localized-reality zones – New Orleans, for example – may accept such feats from the appropriate people. For further details, see the ***Friendly Ghosts?*** section in the sidebar nearby, and the sidebar called ***The Spirit's Mark*** on **p. 126**. And for details about spirit-Fetishes, see ***The Toybox*** in **Mage 20**, **Appendix II**.

Possessing Someone Else

A ghastly variation on self-possession allows the mage to turn some other living thing into a Fetish. Binding a ghost into the living skin of that creature, the medium can either influence the victim's moods (a Spirit 4/ Mind 2 Effect); command his body (Mind 4/ Spirit 4); plop the ghost into the target's skin and let them fight it out for dominance (Spirit 4 alone); or simply let the ghost tear him apart from the inside out (Spirit 4/ Life 3 – an attack that inflicts aggravated damage). All forms of this sort of possession are vulgar magick... very *nasty* vulgar magick too, unless both the ghost and the target are willing participants.

Animating the Dead

Mages shouldn't play with dead things, but necromancers often do anyway. In game terms, a would-be Herbert West uses Life 2/ Prime 2 to animate recently deceased tissue (limbs, heads, bodies, etc.); Matter 2/ Prime 2 to do the same thing to bones; and an additional Spirit Effect to either invite (Spirit 2) or lock (Spirit 4) a ghost into such gruesome toys.

All animated dead remains continue to rot unless the mage adds an Entropy 3 or Time 3 Effect to slow that process down. Sooner or later, though, those mortal remains surrender to mortality and eventually fall apart; those Effects *slow* the decay,

but don't keep it from happening. (Insects and scavengers, we should note, love feasting on animated remains.)

Pieces

Parts are easier to animate than whole bodies. As a guideline, assume that a necromancer needs one success to animate a small "sample" (finger, heart); two to animate a complex part (hand, foot); three to manipulate a larger piece (head, arm); four to reanimate a collection of parts (limbs and torso); and five to make a dead body walk again.

Note that these Effects merely *animate* the remains – they don't grant consciousness, or bestow any semblance of life.

Zombies!

The ever-popular zombie comes into being through one of four methods... none of which is especially pleasant:

- A mage can displace a living person's mind and soul with a ghost (Mind 5/ Spirit 4); or...

- Turn a corpse into a living Fetish driven by a ghost (Spirit 4/ Matter 2/ Prime 2); or...

- Kill the person, lock her mind inside the corpse, and command the body till it falls apart (Mind 5/ Life 4/ Matter 2/ Prime 2); or...

- Destroy the living person's soul and then invite a ghost to take up residence (Spirit 5/ Life 4/ Prime 2).

Unless the necromancer makes such Effects permanent, the zombie collapses and "expires" at the end of the feat's Duration.

In all cases, the walking dead thing is subject to rot as described above, and makes a lousy dinner companion.

Frankencritters

Technological solutions to mortal dilemmas can be found in the work of Dr. Frankenstein and his many imitators. Progenitors, Iterators, Etherites, and other technomancers employ formulae, surgery, electricity, and assorted instruments in order to craft "living" things out of dead ones. And while such visionaries rarely consider themselves to be "necromancers," the rule-systems tend to be the same ones used in the *Zombies!* entry above, with a few potential variations:

- Forces 4/ Life 4/ Matter 2/ Prime 2, to galvanize the remains with channeled physics and Prime energy. Such critters, though, are spasmodic, short-lived things operating on pure reflexes.

- Mind 5/ Life 4/ Matter 2/ Prime 2, to give a functioning mind to a reanimated corpse. In this case, the critter has its own sense of volition... which may or may not accept commands from the mage!

- Life 4/ Mind 4/ Time 4/ Prime 2, to freeze time within a dying person's body while Prime energy allows his mind and vital functions to continue working.

For what should be obvious reasons, all these Effects are extremely vulgar. Zombies may be fixtures of popular culture, but reanimating dead folks still violates Consensus Reality.

For zombie templates and Frankencritters, see the **Mage 20** sourcebook **Gods, Monsters & Familiar Strangers**.

Reviving and Resurrection

Necromancers of various types have occasionally been called "resurrection men." And although the actual restoration of life runs a bit outside the typical practice of necromancy, certain Euthanatoi (and other "death-mages") *do* strive to return life to a person or animal whose death came far too soon.

- If the death has just occurred within the last five minutes or so, then the dead person simply needs to be *revived*, not *resurrected*. As the **Common Magickal Effects chart** in **Mage 20** points out, this feat is easier than full resurrection. Life 4 restores vital systems and heals the harm that killed the body; Spirit 4 keeps the dying soul "in its place"; and Prime 3 "kickstarts" the body and fuels the reconstruction of dead or dying tissues.

- *Raising* the dead, on the other hand, is no simple thing. If the corpse is still fresh, the Effect might "only" require Life 5/ Mind 5/ Spirit 5/ Prime 3 in order to keep the various elements of mind, body, spirit, and vital energies intact. Life 5 "transforms" the dead body back into a living one, while Mind 5 restores the dead person's consciousness and Spirit 5 retrieves the departed spirit... though perhaps not easily – see below.

- If the corpse has been dead for some time, then Matter 2 or even 4 (depending on the state of decay) would also be necessary in addition to the other Spheres involved.

Long-dead souls and consciousness may be difficult to find. Chances are good that the person has either passed on to the afterlife, has been "recycled" in the Great Unmaking, or has assumed the tormented identity of a wraith. And so, a necromancer who wants to resurrect a person who perished some time ago may have to go "digging," as it were, in the Underworld or the various afterlife Realms. What that mage eventually *finds* (assuming she finds anything at all) is up to the Storyteller's wicked imagination; it may well be that the spirit who comes "back" to inhabit that corpse is not actually the person who originally died... and that the necromancer might not know the difference anyway.

An additional Time 4 Effect could "reboot" the resurrected person, returning his consciousness and flesh to a "save point" just before he died. The challenges involved in such magicks, however, make it *extremely* hard to perform that feat. (See *The Difficulties of Going Back in Time*, under the *Time Distortion and Travel* section, **p. 111**.) And again, such actions are totally vulgar unless the subject has been dead for a few minutes at most.

Even if that person *has* been dead for a few minutes, a clearly impossible resuscitation (that is, one for which the person was decapitated, blown to bits, burned to toast, and so forth) would still be vulgar. Sure, the average bystander could accept a typical Hollywood "CPR treatment" that revives a drowning man or defies a heart attack. If the dead dude has been cooked by a flamethrower, though, ain't *no* amount of pounding on his chest gonna help that guy come back to life!

Necrosynthesis

The darkest of Dark Arts sends necrotic energies pulsating through living flesh. System-wise, this incredibly vulgar assault combines Entropy 4 and Life 3 to inflict aggravated damage. Story-wise, necrosynthesis rots the victim's body with leprosy-like corruption... possibly even (with an addition of Prime 2) breeding maggots to devour the victim from within! Painful, horrific, and indisputably vulgar, this is one of the most terrible things a mage can do... especially if it's combined with Spirit 5 Gilgul as well.

Using such spells is a sure road to Jhor. A mage who employs necrosynthesis automatically receives one dot in either **Elemental** Resonance (Jhor) or **Entropic** Synergy, depending on the Storyteller's wishes, and will probably fall into **Morbidity** Quiet the next time Paradox comes calling for that character.

Lichedom: The Living Death?

Arcane rumors also speak of an especially damned rite that creates a state of living death for the necromancer herself. The secrets of such *lichedom* originated in obscene practices of Egypt and Rome, refined through renegade Hermetic Arts to produce an aberration who's neither mage nor mortal nor corpse nor spirit, but some unholy fusion of them all.

What does a necromancer know that most other mages do not? As evidenced by the rumors of these uncanny creatures (described in **Dead Magic**, pp. 109-112), the revelations of mortality and the attendant horrors beyond it continue to fascinate the Awakened... especially those mystics and scientists who refuse to consider death to be the ultimate end for their Path.

Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding

"'This is the bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. And they two were one flesh.'"

"Do you think that's wise?"

The voice hovers like spectral velvet in the darkness, feminine but with an ambiguous undertone. The Fourth Pentacle of Venus glows, its etched lines luminous in the candle-lit room. Those dim flames flicker, yet the speaker remains unseen. "Show yourself," I tell the darkness.

"Who says so?"

"Brigandine Charles, Adeptus, bani Jerbiton, Scholar of the Sixth Degree, Holder of Five Keys, three Strands, and the Fourth Pentacle of Venus." I hope the tremor in my voice doesn't show.

"Indeed, Charles, I DO know thee..." The voice slides in from all corners of the room at once. That shouldn't happen. I've drawn the Pentacle well. "I know thee very well indeed. And indeed, I know those things which you wish no one DID know about you. All those shameful things..."

My bones feel cold and seem to tumble through endless space as the voice recites the sacred warning.

"'It will be necessary,' says the voice, 'for the Disciple to abstain from ALL THINGS UNLAWFUL, and from EVERY KIND of impiety.'" A brief snort, then, just beside my face. "Such a shame. For one so gifted with artistic inclinations and mathematical precision..."

The darkness takes form, and I rather wish it had not.

"...and yet," she purrs, "so VERY bad about following directions..."

The Wizard's Calling-Card

An elaborate circle carved in stone, arcane designs inscribed around its edge. Fasting. Chants. Elaborate bargains. Enochian commands shouted to the eldritch night. Blasphemous beings trapped within a wizard's pentacle. Classic images of Awakened power portray brave and foolish mages who dare to bind the entities of the Outer Realms. How, in game terms, does a magus do such things? *Carefully*, of course... for the consequences of failure are awful to contemplate.

For suggestions that might help when you're Storytelling a summoning episode, see **Mage 20**, **Chapter Seven**, and the sections called **Characters**, **Atmosphere, and Description**, **The Deeper Level**, and **Running With Magick**.

For collections of potentially summoned entities, see **Mage 20**, **Appendix I**, the two versions of **The Book of Madness**, **Infernalism: The Path of Screams,** and **Gods, Monsters & Familiar Strangers**, among other **Mage** and **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** sourcebooks.

The Basics

The word "basic" isn't really appropriate with such Arts. Still, certain feats call for certain combinations of Spheres:

- To call forth a living creature from another spot in the material world, use Correspondence 4, possibly with Life 2 or Mind 2 to get that creature on your side as quickly as possible. A small creature (housecat-sized or tinier) could be pulled through with Correspondence 2.

- To call for a spirit entity, use Spirit 2; to bring it through the Gauntlet, use Spirit 3; to bring several of them through, use Spirit 4.

- To summon a ghost, use a Fetter from that ghost's life (see *Necromancy*, above) and Spirit 2.

- To bring forth a major entity – a demon, an angel, a large Bygone or massive alien – use Spirit 4 to open up a gateway, and some enchanted item and/ or True Name in order to connect that entity to the material world.

- To create a physical body for that spirit to inhabit, either use Life 5/ Prime 2 to craft that body; or else cast out the original mind, soul or life-force from that body, using either Mind 5, Spirit 5, both Spheres, or a near-death experience. (Note: That's some pretty dark magick there, fella...)

- To create a physical body for an elemental spirit, simply provide a substantial amount of the element in question (water, fire, etc.), and then use Spirit 2 to call up a spirit

of the element in question. The elemental can use its own power to manifest within that material.

- To craft a body for a golem, use Spirit 4/ Matter 3/ Prime 2. Spirit binds the entity into the material, Matter shapes the material, and Prime energizes that material with a semblance of "life." Every two successes with this Effect give the golem one point of Durability and one point of Structure – see *Bustin' Stuff* in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine, pp. 439-440**. If attacks reduce those Traits to zero, then the golem shatters and the spirit escapes.

Summoning is almost always vulgar magick. Exceptions might be made for minor spirits, or under very special conditions ("*when the stars are right*"), but that's ultimately a Storyteller's call.

Successes Needed

- Conjuring an Earthly being demands between two and 10 successes, depending upon the size of the creature and the distance involved.

- Bringing a spirit through the Gauntlet depends on the power of that entity, and the proximity of that spirit to the place of conjuration. It's easy to call forth a nature-spirit in its home element – just open the Gauntlet and let it pass through. A major entity, however, must be called in from its home Realm, a process that may take 10-15 successes... perhaps, for a major Umbrood, even more.

- Powerful entities must be brought in from distant planes, a task that demands no less than 15 successes and possibly a good deal more. Add +10 successes if the Avatar Storm is still in effect.

- Such Effects typically demand a prepared area and many special protocols – see below for details. And again, they're almost always vulgar magick.

The Bargaining Process

Calling up Otherworldly entities isn't simply a matter of rolling Arete and getting a weird servant. A character must bargain with the entity, winning it over with kindness, threats, promises, force of personality, or a combination of the above. That exchange plays out through a bargaining process, and although most of that process comes across in roleplaying and Storytelling, it's worth describing what goes on between those characters.

Preparation

Before calling upon Otherworldly aid, a magus must prepare himself to greet that very special guest. In traditional mystic practices, this involves fasting, meditation and prayer, a purification process (usually involving ritual baths and exercises, sometimes a visionquest, and usually some sort of sacrifice of goods or blood), and the preparation of ritual space. Technomagickal practices involve calibrating instruments,

Essential Abilities

No mage with a lick of self-preservations attempts to summon an Otherworldly entity without some serious knowledge and preparation. Dramatically speaking, a would-be summoner spends years perfecting his craft before trying his hand at the real deal. From Hermetic magi to djinn-binding Taftani, rustic shamans, or technomancers, the characters who aspire to summon, bind, and ward against the Umbral entities learn the ins and outs of their preferred Arts. The methods and instruments vary from practice to practice (see *Focus and the Arts* in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten**), but the skills are essential. Without proper protocols, a would-be summoner may be consumed, possessed, or destroyed by the entity he sought to command.

Trait-wise, a character who wants to call up and deal with Otherworldly entities ought to have at least two dots in at least three of the following Abilities, plus at least three of the listed specialties, all of which are detailed in **Mage 20, Chapter Six**:

- **Cosmology/ Subdimensions** (*specialties*: Otherworldly Etiquette, Courts, Threat-Factors)
- **Esoterica** (*specialties*: Umbrood Protocols, Umbral Hierarchies, Enochian, Celestiography, Demonology, Arcane Symbology, High Ritual, Goetia, Voodoo, Ritual Pentacles, Ritual Names)
- **Intimidation** (*specialties*: Brutal Threats, Cold Stare, Topping From Below)
- **Leadership** (*specialties*: Regal, Harsh, Soft-Voiced Command)
- **Lore: Spirits** (specialties: Totems, Loa, Demons, Angels, Aliens, Ghosts, Bargaining, Honorifics, Offerings, Protections, Spirit Hierarchies)
- **Science** (*specialties*: Extra-Dimensional Entities, Hypermathematics, Paraphysics, Psychodynamics)
- **Subterfuge** (*specialties*: Con Games, Sensing Deceptions, Spotting Weakness, Undermining Opposition)

Given the dynamics of the other steps involved in summoning, binding, bargaining, and warding (not to mention pacts), a character without such skills can certainly *try* to summon and bargain with the Umbral forces, but probably won't survive the experience.

securing a safe location, calculating probable outcomes, and preparing countermeasures in case the "alien" gets frisky. No mage of any type summons Otherworldly creatures without some sort of advance preparations... not if he wants to live through the process, anyway. In game terms, a Storyteller may feel free to impose drastic penalties – difficulty modifiers for the rolls, and horrendous consequences for failure – for a mage who simply "calls up what he can't put down." At best, that mage ought to get the cosmic equivalent of a busy signal and no response at all. The mortal who summons spirit-entities without advance prep is asking for all kinds of trouble.

(In game terms, the character should, at the very least, set up a ward or two – see below for details. A mage who doesn't take protective measures in advance is essentially smearing meat on himself before jumping into a tiger-cage.)

Setting the Space

Old-school ritual preparations involve laying out a space – either a permanently established ritual area (shrine, sacred space, summoning circle, wizard's lab, and so forth), or a temporary space that has been sanctified for the spirit's presence. Technomagickal practices involve setting up containment grids, extradimensional portals, trans-dimensional fluctuation chambers, and other methods that bridge the space between Consensus Reality and the weird regions of the alien visitors.

For obvious reasons, advance prep also contains protective measures: wards, sigils, powerful allies, prisons for the entity if it happens to get out of hand. High Ritual practices – the ones most traditionally connected to such matters – feature elaborate diagrams that must be inscribed with mathematical precision and ritual intent. Shamanic practices involve simpler measures, but depend heavily upon the personal power of the shaman himself.

Game-wise, the Storyteller may have the player make a series of rolls to prepare the space properly... or might even make those rolls herself, in order to keep the final condition of the space a secret from the player. The exact rolls and Traits will depend upon the mage's practice and the sort of space involved, but generally involve the knowledge to set up ritual or technological space properly. A failed roll... or worse, a botched one... can have nasty consequences down the line. If you're summoning one of the Veiled Sentinels of the Onyx Causeway, after all, you're not going to want to screw up the incantation or forget to seal the pentacle...

Offerings

Bribes, gifts, and sacrifices are intrinsic parts of the process, and although the "sacrifice" in question doesn't need to be a living thing (many practices forbid such offerings, although others demand them), it must be something that the summoned creature would consider valuable.

Traditional offerings include food, drinks, tobacco, Tass, blood (from either the summoner or from someone else), live animals, precious materials, mementos, services, or odd things

Offerings of Emotion

As beings of pure essence, spirit entities – most notably ghosts or the half-elemental spirits known as *djinn* – crave the vitality of human emotions. A mage, then, can make a deal with an entity who simply wants a few points of Quintessence, flavored with some powerful emotions. Such deals may be especially tempting when the summoner has three dots or more in a particular Resonance, assuming that the "flavor" and signature agrees with the summoned entity. An angel, for instance, won't be terribly fond of Selfish Resonance or Infernal Synergy... although a *fallen* angel probably would be.

Generally, a spirit-entity that wants to sample the mage's emotions will also want to share a significantly emotional experience with the summoner. Fear, lust, despair, joy, crushing sadness, or ecstatic fury... the spirits who enjoy such passions want *STRONG* emotions, and may go out of their way to provoke them simply for the sweet taste of human energy.

Game-wise, the entity may request sensation-flavored Quintessence from the mage's personal supply – preferably channeled to the entity through some sort of bonding ritual that could be anything from combat or sex to a nighttime baseball game. Djinn, in particular, have long histories of carnal "exchanges" with their supplicants and masters, while ghosts absorb the energies of life through vicarious congress with mages and their companions. Whatever connection the mage and spirit share, each point of Quintessence grants a point of Essence to the spirit. If you're doing a crossover with **Wraith: The Oblivion**, then ghostly characters get a point of Pathos for each point of Quintessence given to them by a mage; that Pathos, however, is flavored by the mage's Resonance, and could contribute to a wraith's Passions or Angst.

No mage with a lick of sense shares her emotional energies carelessly. Even Ecstatic characters, when dealing with spirits, will be fairly careful what sorts of energy they offer to whom. For unAwakened mortals, however, passions may be all they have to offer... and while such people lack the mystic powers of summoning, binding, bargaining, and warding, they're still able to make deals with spirits if the entity in question wants to score some sweet life-force with very little risk...

that apparently mean little to mortals but mean plenty to the spirits. In all cases, though, the spirit will want *something* for its trouble. In traditional practices, that offering – if nothing else – displays respect for the summoned entity.

Sadly, technomagick often neglect's this stage of protocol. Science, being more "objective," tends to leave out the offerings... an omission that might annoy an entity if and when it appears. ("*Nothing for me? Humans have forgotten their manners of late. Perhaps I should give you a reminder of what the Old Ways demand...*")

Initial Contact

The initial contact between the summoner and the summoned depends a great deal upon the relationship they expect to share. A newbie magician calling up his very first spirit will probably find himself dealing with an amused creature who's eager to test the amateur's skill; an experienced shaman will receive a degree of respect from the entity; and a skilled magus may earn fearful homage from a spirit who has heard of his prowess from other entities. Reputation means a lot in this sort of thing, and the mage with a few successful summoning and bargains under his belt will have an easier time than one who's new to this sort of thing. (See the **Spirit Bargaining chart** for potential modifiers.)

Protocols

Otherworldly visitors are big on protocols: elaborate greetings and banishings, ritualistic incantations, invocation of sacred names, recognition of abilities, reciting of titles on both sides, that sort of thing. Just as powerful people tend to acknowledge one another through honorifics and code-phrases, the mages, shamans, and even scientists who deal with Otherworldly entities

tend to do the same thing with their "guests." The Umbrood, for their part, reveal how much they know about the summoner... which, in most cases, tends to be more than a mage really *wants* someone else to know. (For an example, see the flavor text at the beginning of this section.) Traditionally, a summoned entity greets its "host" by dropping a secret about the mage and then seeing how that mage reacts to the knowledge. That game of one-upmanship is as old as time itself.

Here's where Traits like Lore: Spirits, Umbrood Protocols, Ritual Names, Umbral Hierarchies, and so on really come into play. A character who has such Abilities can use them to establish a respectful (if contentious) relationship with the spirit, letting that entity know that he's a person worth respecting; someone *without* those Traits, on the other hand, places herself at a profound disadvantage. Essentially, that person announces herself as a rank amateur before the game even begins, and will have a *very* hard time gaining the spirit's respect after that.

Challenges and Bluster

In order to get anything out of a summoned entity, the mage needs to impress that creature with his importance. Depending upon the mage, the spirit, the practice and the situation, this could involve anything from compassionate gratitude for the spirit's cooperation, to a full-scale mystic pissing contest in which the spirit and the mage wave their metaphysical dicks in one another's faces until someone gives up. Generally, benevolent spirits will cooperate with anyone who seems worthy of their aid, while belligerent ones need to be forced into submission.

The "challenge phase" of a summoning might include whispered threats, subtle wordplay, tests of knowledge, staring contests, baroque insults, alluring temptations, challenges of

will, the invocation of ancient oaths (with proof that the mage has a right to call upon those oaths), or pyrotechnic displays of might. The latter – a hallmark of Hermetic and Infernal Arts – involves both parties showing just how much damage they can do to one another. Although it's considered bad form to actually *attack* the rival party (unless, of course, the target is some stupid mage who was way out of his depth to begin with...), the summoner and his would-be servant may inflict significant collateral damage on the area before they come to an agreement. (For an awesome example of this process, see Harlan Ellison's short story "Djinn, No Chaser.")

In game terms, a challenge ought to be roleplayed out, with a handful of resisted rolls that reflect that nature of the challenge. Generally, this involves combining Social Attributes with Abilities like Esoterica, Etiquette, Intimidation, Leadership, and/or various Knowledge-based Traits. In an odd way, the challenge phase reflects a bond of understanding between the spirit and the mage, with each party acknowledging the other party as someone worth respecting, while also earning the *right* to be respected. As in high-stakes poker, each "player" needs to ante up and throw in if he wants to be involved at all.

Failed and Botched Rolls

If, at any point, the player fails a roll – that is, he gets no successes at all – the spirit can make a Willpower roll to end the contest. The difficulty for that roll is the mage's Spirit-Sphere Rank +5. If the entity succeeds, it may either leave the area (noting the foolishness of the mage who dared to call upon that spirit without being worthy to do so) or else attack the summoner (which is where the wards come in handy...).

- A mage who botches the roll gets attacked automatically by the insulted spirit, whose wrath may be defected only by the strength of the mage's protective wards.

- A spirit, on the other hand, who fails or botches during the challenge process immediately defers to the mage's commands.

A mage with significant experience, or who's got an established relationship with the entity in question, can usually forgo the challenge process. If the mage and the spirit are friendly with one another – like a totem or an old ally – then no challenge is necessary.

The Contest of Wills/ The Pact

Ultimately, both parties want to get something from one another without giving up too much themselves. The magus craves a service, and the spirit craves a boon. To that end, both sides strive to make a *Pact*: an agreement in which both parties get what they want and offer some payment in return. The bigger the service, and the more powerful the parties involved, the higher the prices on each side will be.

For all intents and purposes, the mage and spirit haggle over the service and its price. Again, this involves creative

Spirit Bargaining

Difficulty	Circumstance
No modifiers	Mage requests a task involving some amount of effort (for example, leading the mage to a distant hidden object)
+3 mage's difficulty	Mage has Otherworldly enemies/ doesn't know proper protocols
+2 mage's difficulty	Hasty preparations/ mage is extremely inexperienced
+1 mage's difficulty	Mage is inexperienced
-1 mage's difficulty	Mage offers a minor sacrifice and/ or requests minor task (location of a valuable treasure)
-2 mage's difficulty	Mage offers a significant sacrifice and/ or requests very simple service (simply giving the location of that hidden item)
-3 mage's difficulty	Experienced mage dealing with an established ally
-1 spirit's difficulty	Mage requests a difficult task (help the mage procure the treasure)
-2 spirit's difficulty	Mage requests a major task (get the treasure for the mage)
-3 spirit's difficulty	Mage requests an extend favor (enter a Fetish that will be used for treasure-hunting)

roleplaying and possibly a few rolls. Unless someone botches a roll, each party must give something to the other. The deciding factor, however, is the *Contest of Wills*.

Story-wise, a Contest of Wills pits the magus against his would-be servant in order to see who's commanding what from whom.

Game-wise, the player and Storyteller share a resisted Willpower roll; the difficulty of each roll is the opponent's permanent Willpower, with each party trying to roll at least one success for each dot in the opponent's Willpower Trait. If, for example, the Hermetic magus Iyeoka Sophia, *bani* Shaea, wants to forge a Pact with an astral servitor whose Willpower is 6, then she needs to get at least six successes at difficulty 6 before that spirit manages to equal or exceed Iyeoka's Willpower Trait with his own Willpower rolls. For modifiers on this roll, see the **Spirit Bargaining chart**.

- If the mage wins, then the spirit agrees and the Pact is made to the mutual benefit of both parties.

- If the spirit wins, then it may leave... and probably will.

- If the spirit botches, then it submits to the wizard's demands. The magus gets whatever he wants, though at the cost of a grudge from the humiliated spirit.

- If the mage botches, then run. The summoner has made a deadly mistake. Those wards will not help the magus

then, and anyone nearby is fair game for the angry spirit. (*Another* character could have set effective wards, however – see the *Warding* section for details.)

Promises Made

Assuming that the spirit and summoner come to some agreement, each side will have an obligation to fulfill that Pact. Depending on the nature of the magus and the spirit (as well as the relationship they've formed), that obligation may be a shared deal between friends; a mutual understanding; a legalistic contract that both sides strive to exploit; or a tricky compact that one or both sides will break as soon as possible; or a grudging servitude with lasting ill-will. The difference between them relies heavily on who the magus asks, what he asks for, the way that he asks for it, and the terms he sets down and accepts. Asked nicely and rewarded well, a friendly spirit will fulfill a minor duty without trouble; a raging demon compelled into service by a haughty sorcerer, on the other hand, will not, shall we say, be faithful or reliable for long...

And that's what wards are for.

Warding

As mentioned earlier, a would-be summoner prepares herself and lays out the designated area before any summoning occurs. A mage who simply opens a gate and issues orders to whatever steps through it... well, that person isn't long for this world.

Although traditional Hermetic Arts feature an array of complex pentacles (each with its particular uses and entities), other forms of summoning are less formal than that. Even so, such procedures are never taken lightly... at least not by mages who wish to survive a summoning experience. And so, as the summoner lays out a prepared space as noted above, she ought to set up a few protective wards as well.

Wards come in a wide variety of styles and purposes. As mentioned under the *Mystic Travel* section, passageways can be warded. Mages could also place wards over areas, objects, and living things. Whether or not she's invoking spirit-beings, a mage could employ wards against unwanted intruders, impeding or barring certain creatures, materials, energies, or even paradigms.

In game-terms:

Costs

- Each ward costs a minimum of one point of Quintessence, *plus* one additional point for each *objective* – see **Warding Against Objectives**, below.

- Permanent wards cost the usual amount *plus* one point of Quintessence for every Sphere involved. A temporary ward against three objectives, then, costs four Quintessence; a permanent one costs that much plus one additional Quintessence for each Sphere involved in that ward.

Ward Types

- Correspondence 2 simply establishes a mage's influence within a small area. As described under the **Correspondence Sphere** entry in **Mage 20**, this **Minor Ward** Effect "thickens" the space, and – when combined with other Spheres as described below – allows that mage to influence "*objectives*" within that area. While that won't actually block anyone from entering or leaving the area, it affects their ability to work within it. (See **Warding Against Objectives** and **Minor Wards**, below.)

- Correspondence 4 establishes an actual ward; that ward however, *must be combined with other Spheres* in order to effectively "set the bars" against the objective of that ward. Forces wards against elemental energies, Life wards against living organisms, and so on as described below under **Major Wards**.

- The mage sets the ward onto either a *threshold* or a *surface*. A threshold provides the line beyond which "*You shall not pass*," while a surface involves a given thing (a rock, a step, a fog, and so forth) that bears the ward. *You cannot set a ward onto both a threshold and a surface* – it must be one or the other. In both cases, the ward begins at the line of the threshold (like the outer edge of a pentacle) or the edge of that surface (like the surface of a pool, a wall, or a protected dog's fur).

Remember that any spell that combines Correspondence with other Spheres must employ at least one dot in Correspondence for every dot in the highest other Sphere involved. Correspondence 4/ Forces 4, *si*; Correspondence 2/ Forces 4, *no*.

Locking the Ward

Wards are often "locked" into a given object, being, or area. This process integrates the ward into the Pattern of that protected thing:

- Forces 3 allows the ward to "transmute" the elemental energies enough so that the mage may integrate a ward into sources of fire and electricity, and into gadgets that employ those energies. Given the ephemeral nature of certain elements, however, *wards cannot be "set" into air, light, radiation, temperature, and so forth* – there's simply not enough "solidity" to lock such elements into something as "fixed" as a ward. (Shadows and darkness, being the *absence* of light, hold a weird sort of middle-ground in that equation; darkness is not an "element" in itself, but shadows and darkness hold long traditional associations with demarcation, and so wards "stick" to them even though they really shouldn't be able to do so.) Vast areas require Forces 4 or 5 – see the **Elemental Mastery** section for details.

- Matter 2 sets that ward into a particular item, a substance, or a material (like floorboards or a door) that can secure that ward to an area. Matter 3+ can integrate it into a complex material objects (computer, car, TV, etc.).

- Life 4 can integrate that ward into a living being, so that it travels with that creature. In the latter case, the forbidden subject cannot touch the protected creature until it overcomes the ward.

- If the ward is supposed to be able to travel around and retain its protective properties, then it also requires Prime 2 and costs one *additional* point of Quintessence.

For details, see **Traveling Wards** and **Overcoming Wards**, below. And for information about combining Spheres into lasting Effects, see **Locking an Effect** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, **pp. 511-512**.

Warding Against Objectives

By adding various Spheres to Correspondence, the mage impedes certain energies, forces, or beings when they cross the border of the ward and enter the protected space. In game-terms, we'll call those targets *objectives*: things that the ward is meant to impede. Think of it this way: *When you set a ward against a given thing, then impeding that thing within the protected space is the objective of your ward.* (From the Latin *obiectum*, "thing put before the mind.")

Each individual objective costs one success and point of Quintessence, per objective, to block. A ward, then, that blocks out steel, insects, and ghosts would demand three successes and three points of Quintessence in order to ward against the three objectives. For details, see **Ward Duration and Expanse**, below.

Every type of thing that a ward is constructed to block is a separate objective. Steel would be one objective, insects would be one objective, and ghosts would be one objective. A single character would be an objective if that ward is meant to keep him out. Assuming that Dante set up a ward against Black Suits, Black Suits would be the objective of his ward; if Dante wants to block John Courage only, then John Courage would be the objective of that ward.

Various Spheres impede various objectives:

- Entropy 2 or 3, when integrated into a ward, can shift probability in the mage's favor within the warded area, essentially by blocking out the odds toward misfortune. For details, see **The Luck Ward**, below.

- Forces 3 sets the ward to block certain types of elemental energy: fire, air, electricity, light and sound spectrums, and so forth. Wards against really potent elements, like intense radiation and explosive nuclear forces, require Forces 5. Warding a place against a nuclear blast would demand Correspondence 5/ Forces 5/ Matter 5, thanks to the titanic energies unleashed. Still, Forces 3 can make a ward airtight, which comes in especially handy when

that portal's on one side of a hard vacuum or (when combined with Matter 2) water.

- Life 3 blocks a certain class of living thing: mammals, insects, fish, human beings, etc. Life 4/ Mind 4 allows the ward to discern *types* of people within a given class (Mormons, liberals, Black Suits, etc.). Life 4 sets the ward against a *specific* living individual. To do the latter, though, the warding mage needs a sample of the forbidden character's Pattern: a lock of hair, drop of blood, DNA sample, whatever suits the mage and his warding spell. For details, see **The Ban**, below.

- Matter 2 can block simple homogenous substances (steel, glass, marble, water, etc.). Matter 3 can block most complex material objects (guns, cars, etc.); and Matter 4 blocks complicated artificial materials (robots, computers, etc.). By combining the Matter 4 version with Prime 4, Tradition mages are able to ward against the Technocratic material Primium. That ward's not 100% effective (see **Penetrating a Ward**, below)... but if nothing else, it *does* tend to slow down an invading force.

- Mind 2 can send "bad vibes" to trespassers, while Mind 3 or Life 3/ Mind 3 can give them a psychic shock if they try to pass the ward. Mind 4 allows the ward to "choose" certain individuals, mindsets, moods, or belief-systems, and then impede people with those mental constructs if and when they pass into the ward's protected space. For details, see **The Psychic Ward**, below.

- Prime 4 (expelling energy) *might* be able to ward against certain types of Resonance and/ or Synergy. A holy ward, for example, could block Infernal essence from passing over the threshold. Because this sort of thing could become inexpressibly complex, however, this type of ward is an *optional rule*. For details about Resonance and Synergy, see **The Book of Secrets**, **Chapter Two**.

- Spirit 4 sets the ward to block ephemeral entities. Again, see **The Ban**.

- Time 5 may be used to redirect the flow of time on one side of the ward. See **The Time Ward** for details.

Wards CANNOT be set to block whole Spheres. Whole Spheres cannot be objectives of a ward. You could set a ward to block stone, for example, but could not use it to block the Matter Sphere.

On a related note, *wards cannot be set against Paradox, either.* In fact, using one's own personal reality to set up a ward against reality is a Paradox in itself. Every ward, to some degree, manifests this type of paradox; sealing an area against the cosmic *principle* of Paradox, however, is not something a human mage can do. (It could be argued that Marauders possess a traveling ward against Paradox, but that's an uncertain debate. And as **Mage 20** points out in **Chapter Five**, Marauders are not actually

immune to Paradox so much as they're affected in different ways than other mages are.)

For details about wards that affect dead people, see the *Necromancy* section called **Warding Against the Dead**, **p. 86**.

Ward Duration and Expanse

Wards can be *temporary*, *permanent*, or *circumstantial*:

- A temporary ward – that is, a ward that lasts for the usual Duration of an Effect – requires the usual Arete roll for an Effect of the appropriate Rank. To find that Duration, check the nearby **Setting a Ward chart**. Again, this ward costs one point of Quintessence, plus one additional point per objective.

- A permanent ward takes 10 successes, plus the usual one success per objective. It also requires one point of Quintessence for the ward, one point per objective, *and* one Quintessence point per Sphere involved in the ward. A permanent ward that locks out fire, steel, and insects, for example, would demand 13 successes and eight Quintessence points (one point for the ward, plus one point each for fire, steel, insects, Correspondence, Forces, Life, and Matter).

- A circumstantial ward adds Time 4, plus an event that will trigger the activation of the ward. This sort of ward *works only once*, but it endures until that event comes to pass. Trigger-event examples include *When a red-haired girl opens this door*, *When the ghost of my father-in-law appears*, or *When the demon Moliax tries to grab my ass*. This type of ward costs only one point of Quintessence, plus one point per objective.

Expanse and Distance

By adding three *additional* successes to the ward, the mage may add one yard to the distance between the warded surface and the substance it has been warded against. At that point, the protection extends about three feet from the ward itself. Each three additional successes adds another three feet to that distance.

Pressing the Ward

A character who "presses" his ward against something it's supposed to ward against, until there's no place left for that "something" to go, is voluntarily negating his own ward. If Joshua Minh wards his shirt against metal and then presses a dagger into his chest, then the dagger goes past the ward and stabs him.

If the character "pressing the ward" isn't the mage who cast the spell, then the ward has its normal effect. If this involves pushing the character and the ward apart, as two opposing magnets push one another away, then that's what happens.

Traveling Wards

Normally, a ward protects the threshold of a passageway – a door, gate, window, tunnel, etc. A *traveling ward*,

Setting a Ward

Successes	Duration of Ward
One	One turn
Two	One scene
Three	One day
Four	One story
Five	Six months
10	Permanent

Costs of Wards

Each objective costs one success + one point of Quintessence.

Each yard/ meter of extent costs three additional points of Quintessence.

Basic wards cost one Quintessence point + one Quintessence per objective.

Traveling wards cost one additional Quintessence point.

Permanent wards cost the usual costs + one additional Quintessence point per Sphere involved.

Major Wards cost the usual cost + one additional Quintessence point per Sphere involved. Permanent major wards cost the usual cost + two Quintessence points for each Sphere involved.

Paradigm wards cost the usual costs + three successes and three Quintessence points for each paradigm or practice forbidden by that ward.

though, is something portable – a force-field generator or literal guard-dog, for example – that has a ward placed upon it. Rather than keeping opponents from crossing a border, though, a traveling ward deflects them from its surface. *Where* and *how* those ward-objectives get deflected is up to the Storyteller's whim.

- Investing a temporary traveling ward into the Pattern of an object or entity requires Prime 2, plus the appropriate Spheres (see **Locking the Ward**, above), and one additional point of Quintessence to seal the ward and keep it "fresh" as it moves around. A permanent traveling ward becomes a Wonder – a Talisman or Device whose creation demands Prime 4, not Prime 2.

- A "basic" traveling ward still expires at the end of its Duration. If that traveling ward is made permanent, then it requires Prime 4 and the cost of making it permanent is added to the cost of making the ward travel. Yes, this can get expensive. For details about Wonders, see **Crafting Wonders** on the **Common Magickal Effects chart** in **Mage 20**, **The Toybox** in that book's **Appendix II**, and the optional expanded Wonder rules in **The Book of Secrets**.

- A basic traveling ward prevents the warded substance from touching the protected object or creature. A warded diamond, for instance, could be warded so that a person

could never touch it, while a person could be warded (in a godlike act of cruelty) so that he could never touch food. That "protection" travels with the warded individual until it gets dispelled, is unwoven, or otherwise expires.

- The usual "three additional successes = one yard of distance" rule described above applies to traveling wards as well.

A warded item's protection extends only to the edges of the ward. If Nix wards a jacket against bullets, as an example, then Nix could still get shot in the legs. The aforementioned victim of an anti-food ward could not touch food, but if he could knock a fruit down from a tree with a stick and then use a straw to puncture the fruit, he could still draw nourishment through the unwarded straw. Traveling wards are tricky things, warping physical and metaphysical laws in often-unpredictable ways.

Wards and Paradox

A few important notes about the interplay of wards and the Paradox Effect:

- Although a *Minor Ward* may be regarded as a believable "coincidence," casting a *Major Ward* is considered vulgar magick unless it's being set up in a Sanctum or Realm based around the magick of the mage who casts the ward. If Nix established a ward on the street, for instance, then Nix gets the Paradox for establishing that Effect. If Nix sets it up in their Sanctum, however, then it's essentially coincidental.

- *Unless the mage botches the casting process*, a ward does not trigger a backlash. Instead, the points earned from that Effect get added directly onto the mage's *Quintessence/ Paradox Wheel*. (See **Mage 20**, **Chapter Six**, and the **Mage** character sheet.) Thus, they count toward the total when a backlash eventually comes around.

- The Paradox involved depends upon whether or not a witness saw the mage setting up that ward. If not, then add one point of Paradox for each dot in the highest Sphere involved. (A ward of Correspondence 4/ Life 4/ Prime 2, for example, would earn four points of Paradox.) If so, then add one more point of Paradox to that amount. (That same ward now earns five Paradox.)

- Once cast, *the ward does not trigger additional Paradox*. A person can walk into a warded area and get blocked long after the ward has been set, but the mage does not incur extra Paradox. That won't, however, stop that person from wondering what the fuck just stopped him from entering that space... and that wondering might lead to other unforeseeable events.

In all cases, wards constitute fairly powerful magick. Certain wards – like those used at the thresholds of powerful Realms – may simply be considered story-elements, outside the usual rules for mage-built wards. For the most part, though, Correspondence magick allows the Awakened folk to build strong protections into prized objects, creations, and locations.

Minor Wards

A very basic precaution, the *minor ward* requires Correspondence 2 and Prime 2, with either Life 2 (to hinder living things) or Spirit 2 (to hinder spirits). Like all wards, the minor ward costs one point of Quintessence to establish the

Dante's Laptop

As an example, let's say that Dante wants to set a ward on his laptop in order to keep Black Suits from getting hold of it. Why someone as elite as Dante would need a laptop in the first place is a question for the ages, but let's just run with that idea for now.

Game-wise, this works out in the following ways:

- **Basic ward, one objective (Black Suits):** Correspondence 4 (to set the ward)/ Forces 3 (to integrate that ward into the electrical forces of the laptop)/ Life 4 (to block a class of living things)/ Matter 4 (to integrate the ward into the computer's complex materials)/ Mind 4 (to discern the difference between Black Suits and other people)/ Prime 2 or 4 (to invest the ward into the materials and energies of the computer; Prime 2 creates a temporary ward, while Prime 4 makes it permanent).

- Requires a minimum of two successes to ward the laptop for one turn, and more successes to ward it for longer periods of time.

  - A temporary ward costs two points of Quintessence – one for the ward, one for the objective.

  - A permanent ward costs a total of six Quintessence – two for the ward, and one for each of the four Spheres involved.

  - A traveling ward (as that one installed into the laptop) costs one additional point of Quintessence.

If Dante wants to add other Effects on to that basic "framework," those additional **Major Wards** would be "built on" to the basic ward described above.

protection, and one point of Quintessence for each objective that gets hindered by that ward.

This spell impedes its target in small ways, and although the entity won't be blocked or harmed directly, its ability to act against the mage is severely limited. For the duration of the Effect, each success from the mage subtracts one success from anything the entity does to affect that mage.

Most summoners cast this Effect upon a pentacle, a circle, the entrances to a room, or (by adding Matter 2) a piece of jewelry or clothing that the mage wears throughout the ritual. Some mages enchant an object to carry this Effect with them all the time, although such *Traveling Wards* (see above) tend to carry unintended side-effects that interfere with (or can be used against) a summoned spirit's agreement with the mage. In all cases, the ward offers minor protection against direct activities, but do not actually prevent the protected mage or area from being touched.

Minor Area Wards

A *minor area ward* uses Correspondence 2, Mind 2, Prime 2, plus perhaps Entropy 2 (to shift probabilities); Life 2 (to deter living things); Matter 2 (to deter non-living invaders); Spirit 2 (to discourage Umbral intrusion); Time 2 (to guard against temporal trespassing); or a combination of them all. The mage casts this on a specific location, in order to drive trespassers away or inspire "residents" to stay put.

As with the *Minor Ward* described above, each success subtracts one success from an intruder's dice rolls within the area of the ward. Meanwhile, a Mind-based impulse (fueled with Prime) radiates a *KEEP OUT* (or *STAY IN*) command. Although this impulse isn't strong enough to be actual mind-control (it can be *made* that strong, however, by using Correspondence 4/ Mind 4), and the ward doesn't actually *block* anything from entering or leaving, it discourages intruders from coming in, or trapped parties from wanting out. The NWO, in particular, uses this sort of ward to discourage unwanted persons and repel casual inquiries within the protected zone.

Major Wards

A variety of *major wards* allow powerful mages to influence, protect, or seal areas and entities for long periods of time, invoking a number of potent Effects upon those who trespass against the borders of the ward in question. Again, these wards are vulgar in their Effects – the ward itself might not be obviously "impossible," but its results defy conventional concepts of "rational reality."

The particulars of each type of major ward can be found below. Some last for the usual Duration of the Effect, but others endure until their implanted energy has been expended. For details, see each entry below.

Each type of major ward costs the usual cost for a ward, *plus* one additional Quintessence point per Sphere involved.

A permanent major ward costs the usual cost, plus *two* Quintessence points for each Sphere involved. (That's two points *total*, not two points + the initial point.) If Nix sets up a major ward that features two objectives and three Spheres, then Nix needs to invest a total of at least three successes (one to establish the ward + two for the objectives), and six Quintessence (one for the ward + two for those two objectives + three for those three Spheres).

In all respects that are not specified below, major wards function by the systems and costs detailed above under *Warding*.

The Ban

The most basic form of major ward, a *Ban* demands Correspondence 4, plus Life 3 or 4 (to ban living things, as described above); Prime 2 or 4 (to invest the energy into the ward); and/ or Spirit 4 (Umbral entities); plus at least five successes on a *vulgar magick* roll (with or without witnesses, depending upon who's present at the time).

If she also wants to Ban a particular spirit-entity (the demon Bufonite, for instance, as opposed to all demons), then the magus also needs a True Name or some other artifact of the summoned entity (a Fetter, a sigil, an object or creature associated with that spirit, etc.) that she uses to "bind" the spirit's power.

If that individual is a mortal (like John Courage, as opposed to all human beings), then the mage still needs at least one item from that person's personal life, plus the addition of Mind 4 in order to discern that person from among all other people. Spirits, being composed of unique spiritual essence, need no such distinction – Spirit 4 alone is enough to discern one entity from another.

Throughout the Duration of that spell, the Ban prevents the entity from touching the summoner, and from using its powers or weapons against her *directly*. An angry spirit could not shoot the mage, but may control someone or something *else* to attack the summoner – the Ban won't protect against indirect, third-party assaults. Under the Ban, however, the spirit cannot attack the mage unless that mage botches a *Contest of Wills* (above), thus dropping her defenses at the worst possible time.

Binding and the Gauntlet Cage

A *Binding* locks a spirit to a certain place or object, or else pushes it away; a *Gauntlet Cage* "binds" the Gauntlet within the prepared space, which is essentially the opposite of "rending" it. Requiring Prime 4/ Spirit 4, the "cage" Effect raises the Gauntlet rating to 10, while the "binding" Effect traps the spirit within the designated area until either the mage dispels the cage, or the Effect's Duration ends. Both Effects, in game terms, either prevent the spirit from leaving the warded area, or else lock it outside of the warded area. Each success that the player rolls subtracts one success from the spirit's attempts to break free.

That Cage and/ or Binding can serve several purposes:

- It can trap the spirit within an object (a globe, a trinket, a mirror, etc.), with an addition of Matter 4; or...

- Create a Fetish with that spirit; or...

- Banish the spirit from the area; or...

- Drive that spirit from a person, animal, or object that the entity has possessed (as described in the *Exorcism* entry, under *Uncanny Influence*, **p. 125**); or...

- Force the spirit into a material body (see *The Basics*, **p. 90**); or...

- Bind the spirit to a particular location until the mage decides to release that entity; or...

- Bind that spirit in place while the mage wracks it with pain (see below).

To perform a Cage or Binding upon an unwilling spirit, the player rolls the Effect while the Storyteller rolls the spirit's Willpower. The player's difficulty is the spirit's Willpower, while the Storyteller's difficulty is the mage's Willpower. If the player wins, then the spirit is bound for the duration of the spell; if there's a tie, then both parties roll again; if the Storyteller wins, then the mage is probably in trouble...

Co-Occupational Wards

Most often, wards either give off a "repulsor field" that deflects the objective, or else inflicts an impediment upon the objective as described throughout the various *Major Wards* entries. A Master mage, however, could use Correspondence 5 instead of 4, and then define that ward so that the warded object and its objective occupy different "levels" of the same space, *passing through* one another without *affecting* one another, as objects do when co-located by Correspondence 5. (See *Transposing Locations* under *Mystic Travel*, pp. 81-82.)

Yes, this looks suspicious as hell, and yes it's vulgar. If Dante chooses to make his laptop co-occupational, and a Black Suit tries to grab it, then the Black Suit's hand passes right through the computer. Until and unless that Man in Black manages to counter the ward, he can snatch at the laptop but never truly touch it. Everything else, however, interacts with the laptop normally. Gee, how *frustrating* such a ward must be...

The Luck Ward

An Entropy-based "luck ward" discourages misfortune and counters Entropy-based magick from hostile parties. This sort of thing is popular in casinos, both as a safeguard against gambling mages and as a "good luck charm" carried by those mages when they go to test their fortune.

Banished Misfortune

In game terms, a ward set with Entropy 2 or higher allows the warding mage to roll his Arete when a given *non-combat* event could result in good or bad luck within the protected area. Because the ward essentially "banishes misfortune" (or else invites it in for tea), this counts as an automatic action and

does not require the mage to consciously act or cast the Effect in order to influence his luck. That automatic "luck block," however, *does* have three large limitations:

- It does not affect combat-based rolls in any way.

- It works *at the Storyteller's discretion*, not in every event that could possibly be considered good or bad luck. The player may ask, "*Does this count as a potential misfortune?*" but the Storyteller has the ultimate *Yes* or *No* decision.

- It works *only once for each point of Quintessence spent upon the ward*. A five-Quintessence ward, for instance, would allow for only five events of "altered fortune." After that, the effect is essentially used up, and won't protect the mage any further until an entirely new luck-ward is cast.

- Extra points of Quintessence may be spent to "purchase" more events of altered fortune. Each additional "event" costs one point of Quintessence.

For more details, see **Fate and Fortune** in the **Uncanny Influence** section, **p. 132-136**.

The Psychic Ward

By incorporating the Mind Sphere into a ward, a mage can send out disconcerting emotions and subconscious impulses; blast trespassers with painful shocks; muddle the thinking of hostile parties; and even "change the mind" of someone within the presence of that ward.

- Each of the following psychic-ward feats counts as a **Psychic Assault**, as detailed in the **Uncanny Influence** section, **p. 122-123**. Aside from **Psychic Pain**, a character can try to resist these Effects with a Willpower roll, difficulty 6. If she rolls more successes than the caster had rolled when setting up the ward, then she can shake off the mood. A permanent ward, however, has at least 10 successes invested into its existence, and so it's rather hard to overcome that level of suggestion.

- Night-Folk, and Mages are more resistant to this sort of thing than most people are. For details, see **Influence-Magick Difficulties** under the **Uncanny Influence** section, **p. 116**.

- Although the **Suggestion of Unease** is subtle and pervasive enough to linger for as long as the ward remains intact, the more overt attacks are limited – like the **Luck Ward**, above – to one assault for each point of Quintessence spent upon the ward. A five-Quintessence ward, then, would blast trespassers up to five times before that element of the ward burns out.

- Unless secured with Time 4, or otherwise made permanent, any psychic ward lasts for the normal Duration of the Effect.

Suggestion of Unease

As mentioned earlier, Mind 2 implants a vague mood of discomfort, or simply pushes a suggestion that *There's nothing here to see – move along now.* Most people, when faced with such impulses, avoid the area under protection from the ward.

For more details, see **Emotional Surge/ Sudden Chill** under the **Psychic Assault** entry.

Psychic Pain

Mind 3, when connected to a ward, can stab the offending party with an invisible knife of psychic pain. If and when the trespasser crosses into the area of the ward, she suffers an immediate bashing-damage attack, as described under **Psychic Blast** in the **Uncanny Influence** section. The caster's Arete provides the dice pool for this attack, and 6 – or the target's Willpower, whichever is highest – is the difficulty.

Technically, this sort of thing is a vulgar-magick attack, so the difficulty should be a minimum of 7 if the target doesn't count as a *witness*, and 8 if she does. This attack, however, is set into the ward and thus remains invisible when it goes off. No one can tell that there's a mage casting the attack, so the target's Willpower provides the difficulty for this attack. As mentioned under **Wards and Paradox**, above, this doesn't earn more Paradox for the mage. That said, the target will probably wonder why she's suddenly got a massive headache...

An especially ugly ward could add Life 3/ Mind 3 to the ward, dishing out an aggravated-damage **Psychic Shatter**. Again, this attack gets detailed under the entry of that name in the **Uncanny Influence** section... and if someone's brains suddenly start leaking out his ears, people are certainly gonna wonder what's what.

Sensory Stunning

A far more subtle psychic ward uses Mind 3 to scramble the thoughts of trespassing characters. As described under **Overload** in the **Uncanny Influence** section, the ward floods the trespasser with a literally stunning rush of conflicting sensations and impressions. Many mages use such safeguards to protect their homes and strongholds, and then take advantage of the stunning effect by hitting the trespasser when he's down.

Change of Mind

A potent psychic ward can incorporate Mind 4 in order to turn people's minds around when they pass into the protected space. The details are too elaborate to go into right here, but can be found under **Puppetry** and **Forging Memories** in the **Uncanny Influence** section, **p. 122-123**. In this case, however, the trespasser simply suffers an Effect that was built into the ward during its creation; the mage who created the ward *cannot control the trespasser from a distance*, but merely determines what a trespasser will think when he enters the protected space.

Let's say, as an example, that Jodi Blake has cast this powerful ward on her favorite hideout. A trespassing character who falls under the ward's influence sees an empty room instead of the furniture that's actually present... or suddenly starts thinking

that mass murder is a great idea... or takes his clothes off and starts dancing madly in the center of the room... or... or... or...

Again, an affected character can try to resist the influence of this ward. A mage who's powerful enough to establish such protections, though, is going to be pretty hard to resist.

Mind-Barring

A similar Mind 4 variation allows the mage to forbid individual minds from crossing the ward. Essentially, the mage sets the ward to bar certain people, based upon that person's mental imprint.

Each barred individual, however, counts as a separate objective; if Dante wants to ban Jinx, Nix, and John Courage, then Dante must spend three points of Quintessence to ban those three individuals from his space.

If the mage has never read a given person's mind before the ward is set, then she cannot bar that person from entering. If she *has* read it before then, however, then she "programs" that mental "fingerprint" into the ward. If the person matching that imprint encounters the ward, then the Mind Effect reads his mind, sends out a strong mental impulse, and "deflects" his mind from entering that warded space. The trespasser can try to resist that compulsion, as described above, but if he doesn't manage to do so, then he will not enter that protected space.

A mage whose concept of "identity" is more based on spiritual inclinations than on mental consciousness could use Spirit 4 instead of, or in addition to, Mind 4. If she's trying to ward the space against intensely and intrinsically spiritual beings (werecreatures, Umbral entities, and so forth), then the Spirit Sphere component would be essential. And yes, the Dimensional Science Sphere would work the same way when barring "alien entities" with deep ties to the Otherworlds.

Mood-Barring

A related ward, also based upon Mind 4, impedes people based upon a given "state of mind": sadness, grief, joy, lust, and so on. Essentially, the ward pushes away people who don't have the right state of mind to enter the space.

This ward could be set either to deflect people who *do* have the state of mind in questions, or else to deflect everyone who does *not* have it. A temple, for example, could be warded to drive away skeptics, or to allow only people with the proper amount of reverence for that temples and its gods.

Like the **Mind-Barring** ward above, this ward could incorporate Spirit 4 in addition to, or as well as, Mind 4. Also like that ward, this one lasts the normal Duration of time unless Time 4 has been added or the ward has been made permanent.

The Paradigm Ward

In one of the most esoteric applications of warding, Correspondence 5/ Entropy 5/ Life 4/ Mind 4/ Prime 4 allows a mage to seal out people who follow forbidden paradigms and practices.

Once this ward is established, magickal Effects cast through that hostile paradigm are considered to be *vulgar with witnesses* on the warded side of the gate. This way, mages from competing factions can shut out enemies, or at least cripple their powers, if enemy mages come through the ward. This effect lasts for the Duration of the ward.

Game-wise, it costs additional three successes and three additional Quintessence points for each paradigm or practice that gets shut out by the ward. Warding against three paradigms, then, would require nine successes and nine Quintessence points in addition to the successes and Quintessence that are necessary to build the ward in the first place. This is high-end magick, which takes plenty of time, energy, and effort to perform.

Because the paradigms and practices *are* the objectives of this sort of a ward, *you do not need to also spend successes and Quintessence upon objectives,* unless you wish to also bar *different types of creatures or entities* that hold the forbidden beliefs; this sort of thing, though, could get ridiculously complicated – barring people but not demons who pursue maleficia, for example – and so we recommend leaving things simple and just using the paradigms and practices as objectives for this sort of ward.

As an example of a paradigm ward, imagine that Jennifer Rollins had the power to construct such a ward on a gate into her sanctuary. Being a primal witch whose practices favor artwork and whose beliefs tend toward the paradigm *Creation's Divine and Alive*, she wants to seal out folks who believe that *Tech Holds All Answers*, feel that *Might is Right*, and pursue the hypertech practice. That takes nine successes and nine points of Quintessence in addition to the five points of Quintessence it takes to establish the paradigm ward, plus however many successes and Quintessence points she used to set up the ward itself. If characters with those belief-systems and/ or practices try to enter, they wind up with headaches and discover that their magicks are always vulgar in Jennifer's sanctuary.

A player could also choose certain forms of a practice to allow while warding against another. Joshua Minh, for example, could ward against *European* alchemy while allowing *Taoist* alchemy. This sort of "sub-setting" costs the usual three successes for each type of practice blocked by the ward.

At the Storyteller's option, Awakened characters with an Arete lower than that of the character who set the ward might not be able to use their Spheres at all. Poor Sabra (Arete 2) may not be able to access his magick at all if he stepped over a hostile paradigm ward and into a Realm where Sabra's urban-shamanic practice is forbidden by the vastly superior Dr. Hans von Roth (Arete 6). Again, this is an *optional rule* that might place lower-level mages at a supreme disadvantage.

Pain Unto the Unbelievers!

An expensive optional addition to this ward inflicts pain upon trespassing characters.

Characters with prohibited belief-systems may *enter* the space, but will suffer:

- A *Psychic Blast* attack (again, see **p. 122**) upon entering; or...

- Have their beliefs challenged by a *conceptual Entropy* assault (**pp. 134-136**); or...

- Both.

These options require five additional Quintessence points each; getting both of them would require 10 additional Quintessence points.

Again, the ward inflicts one attack per Quintessence point spent upon that ward; if it's got 10 Quintessence invested into it, then the ward will blast trespassers up to 10 times before the ward needs to be refueled with more Primal Energy.

For details about paradigms and their associated practices, see *Focus and the Arts* in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**, **pp. 567-572**.

The Time Ward

Perhaps the most esoteric ward of all seals out time itself. On one side of the portal, time moves normally; on the other, time moves differently with regards to a traveler until that character passes through the portal again. This phenomenon – in game-terms, a vulgar Correspondence 5/Time 5 Effect – "holds time" until the traveler steps back across the threshold of the gate. While he's on one side, he continues to move normally in relation to the time-flow on that side, and the other side seems to stop; when he crosses over, the original destination at least *appears* to be in more or less the same moment he left behind.

As the *Time Travel and Distortion* section makes clear (see **pp. 107-108**), time-based Effects are notoriously tricky. Depending upon the Storyteller's wishes, they may only *seem* to work until you realize that you're in the wrong timestream, could drop you into an entirely different existence, and might not return you to where you thought you should be. For details about that situation, see *Time Immunity*, **pp. 112-113**.

Penetrating a Ward

Wards are meant to keep things out, or at least away from the warded object or creature. For the most part, they fulfill that function admirably – after all, the Correspondence Sphere literally places the forbidden element "at a distance" from the ward. Even so, certain things can get past those wards if they have sufficient metaphysical power behind them.

Unweaving and Anti-Magick

As explained in **Mage 20**'s *Countermagick* section (**Chapter Ten**, **pp. 545-547**), a mage could use various forms of countermagick to resist or unweave a ward's Sphere Effects. The full process of countermagick can be found in that section; the basics, however, involve the following requirements:

- The mage countering the ward must have at least one dot in each of the Spheres involved in the creation of that ward.

- That mage then makes an Arete roll. The normal difficulty is 7, although the Reckoning metaplot (described throughout **Mage 20**) sets that difficulty at 8.

- The mage in question must also spend one point of Quintessence for every point spent in the ward's construction. A ward built with five points of Quintessence, for instance, cost five points of Quintessence to unweave.

- Each success rolled negates one success from the successes that were originally used to construct the ward. Getting past that ward, then, requires one more success beyond the original amount. It would take 16 successes, for example, to counter a 15-success ward.

- Once countered by unweaving or antimagick, the ward is gone. A character with sufficient innate power (see below) could pass through the ward without bringing it down.

In many cases, characters may encounter a ward whose casting had not been played out in the chronicle. In those situations, the Storyteller should simply decide which Spheres were involved and how many successes the characters need in order to overcome the ward, and then play out the unweaving process. Let's say that John Courage is trying to overcome an old mystic ward; assuming that Courage has all the right Spheres (and probably does), the Storyteller has the player roll a total of 18 successes in order to defeat the ward.

Innate Paranormal Power

Certain critters can work their way past such protections. Although such beings tend to be rather godlike (and thus subject to the glorious tradition of "*Because the Storyteller says so*"), other Night-Folk still get a chance to penetrate wards so that the rest of the World of Darkness does not become subject to the will of a few Correspondence-savvy mages:

- Vampires, werewolves, and so forth who understand mystic principles may use their Wits + Occult dice pool as countermagick. As described in the *Night-Folk Counterspelling* sidebar of **Mage 20**'s *Countermagick* section, *that dice pool cannot exceed* the Gnosis or Rage (whichever is higher, for werecreatures), Willpower (vampires, wraiths, demons, hunters, and hedge-wizards), Glamour (changelings and other fae), Mystic Shield (Bygones) or True Faith (faithful humans) Trait of the Night-Folk character in question. A vampire, for example, with a Willpower of 5 and a total of seven dice for her Wits + Occult dice pool, is limited to five dice, not seven, when trying to counter a ward.

- A vampire or other critter who does *not* understand mystic principles (that is, who doesn't possess the Occult Trait) is pretty much SOL. A Storyteller who integrates other World of Darkness games into his chronicle, however, might rule that certain Gifts, Disciplines, Arcanoi, and

so forth either give a character the ability to counteract a mage's ward (like a Wits + Occult dice pool), or else allow the Night-Folk critter to pass through that ward completely. That second option, however, ought to be rare; if wards are easy to pass through, after all, then they really aren't terribly effective.

- A ghost run under the **Wraith: The Oblivion** rules might gain extra dice when countering a ward if that ward is preventing her from reaching a Fetter. In this case, the wraith can try to counter the ward even if she doesn't have the Occult Trait. Each dot in a Fetter Trait provides one die to the dice pool. If the Fetter has been used as part of the ward, however, then those dots in Fetter get *subtracted* from the ghost's dice pool instead. For details about Fetters, see **Wraith: The Oblivion**.

- Umbrood characters who wish to try and break a ward can use their Rage Trait as a countermagick dice pool. A wizard who wants to ward against demons, for instance, needs to put a *lot* of successes behind that ward, seeing as how demons tend to have plenty of Rage!

Wracking the Spirit

The boldest and most dangerous act of summoning magick involves threatening a Bound or warded entity with punishment. To back up such threats, the mage can invoke forbidden Arts in order to harm the spirit, a process often called *wracking the spirit*. If and when the summoner calls upon those Arts, shattering pain or other awe-inspiring agonies are visited upon the recalcitrant entity until and unless the mage decides to end the torture. Generally, this sort of thing is a *very* last resort, as it inevitably makes an immortal enemy for the mage in question.

Story-wise, the character calls upon the most potent forces she knows: a patron deity, cosmic principles, the godlike superiors of the summoned entity, titanic eldritch spells, the conditions of ancient Pacts, the Holy Names of angels or the *Un*holy Names of demonic entities, the implacable might of hypertech achievement, possibly even the personal power of the mage herself. Sometimes the mere suggestion that the mage can wield such force is enough to cow the entity. If not... well, a demonstration may be in order.

Rules-wise, the following Effects can be used to harm the entity. For specific details about fighting such entities, see **Spirit Combatants** in the **Combat** section of **Mage 20**, and the **Umbrood Spirit Entities** section of that same book. Both sections can be found in **Chapter Nine**.

Outside Aid

To invoke an outside power, the mage simply needs to make an appeal to that power and hope that the power (and the Storyteller) is in a generous mood. Although the *True*

Faith Merit may help in this regard – especially if the character has four or five dots in that Trait – this is not a terribly safe or reliable method for punishing a spirit.

Spiritual Damage

Spirit 3 inflicts the usual amount of harm. If the mage is especially powerful, this might cause quite a bit of pain. Spirit 5 can warp a spirit's body, reshape its essential form, and rip it to shreds. This assault also inflicts the usual amount of damage, which the entity can heal at the usual rate. A mage with Spirit 5 can probably dish out quite a bit of damage with this Effect alone. Wracking a spirit, though, usually involves more than simple damage.

Ephemeral Mutation

A related form of torment, inflicted with Spirit 4/ Prime 2 or Spirit 5/ Prime 2, can reshape a spirit the way that Life 4 or 5 can reshape a human being. Beyond the damage inflicted by the attack, this variation on the spirit-wrack lets the mage do horrible things to the entity.

Most spirits can reform themselves with little difficulty; even so, these "ephemeral mutations" can be painful, humiliating, and possibly – if the mage manages to make the spirit look like something else – dangerous to that spirit if it appears to be prey to other entities. (Reshaping, for example, a demon to look like a fresh damned soul and then dropping it into a hell for other demons to hunt.)

Psychic Agony

By combining Mind 3, Spirit 3, and Prime 2, the mage can assault the entity's psychic essence, as described under the *Uncanny Influence* entry called *The Psychic Shatter* (p. 122). This doesn't reshape the creature's ephemeral form, but tears into its consciousness, causing agony without inflicting injury. Because a spirit is more or less immortal, this psychic pain will not dispel its ephemeral form – the harm it causes is tied to the spirit's *animating essence*, not its *essential form*. (Yes, that's a pretty esoteric difference, but canny spirit-mages would understand what it means.)

Story-wise, this form of spirit-wrack usually involves calling upon holy and/ or unholy powers, ancient pacts, or other sources that attack the spirit's sense of self. In extreme cases (with *lots* of successes), it may even drive a spirit insane... that is, if you really *want* an insane spirit who's also angry at you afterward! Such spirit-wrack techniques sidestep the usual rule about mental attacks and spirit-beings, because such rituals have been specially formulated to work against those entities.

Primal Disruption

Combining Prime 2 with Spirit 4 – the Rank needed in order to force spirit-stuff to obey human commands – a mage could "rub the bones" of an entity by disrupting its Quintessential energies. (See *Rubbing the Bones*, under *Energy-Work*, p. 48.)

By combining Spirit 5 with Prime 5, she could disintegrate that spirit's Quintessential form and disperse it across the landscape; that spirit could heal from such an attack, but that would take far longer than usual. (Storyteller's discretion, based upon the power of that spirit and the successes scored by the mage.) Either way, this hurts. A *LOT*.

Entropic Dispersal

By turning the force of cosmic entropy against an entity, a Master of that Sphere can disrupt the concept behind a spirit's existence. In this case, the wracking demands Entropy 5 (the Rank that degrades ideas) and Spirit 5 (the Rank that allows a mage to reshape ephemera). In addition to the usual damage inflicted by the attack, the mage could scatter the spirit's conceptual foundation... usually for a while, possibly forever.

In most cases, a spirit can reform its conceptual essence of self in a few months. A really minor spirit – that is, one with 10 Essence or less – doesn't contain enough "sense of self" to reform at all. A truly potent entity, however, may reform its concept of self much faster... possibly, if you're talking about an entity with a powerful hold upon the human imagination (Cupid, Pan, Cthulhu), within minutes, thanks to the force of that belief.

Minor entities (servitors, elementals, etc.) may be scattered when their Essence Trait reaches 0. A powerful entity may require two or three times its Essence Trait before its conceptual self gets dispersed; an aspect of the totem-spirit Owl, for example, could have 40 Essence and require the equivalent of 80 health levels worth of damage before its conceptual self is dispelled! Meanwhile, a spirit who occupies a prominent place in the human imagination probably cannot be dispelled at all... or not for any length of time, at least. Sure, a powerful magus could probably disrupt the concept of, say, the minor demon Moliax; dispelling the concept of Satan, however, is just not possible.

(Any mage stupid enough to try using Entropic dispersal against a wraith would deserve the spectre-inflicted beating she'd receive; see the note *Entropy Does Bad Things to Ghosts* under the *Spirit Combatants* entry in **Mage 20.**)

Spiritual Imprisonment

A Master of Correspondence, Prime, and Spirit could use Correspondence 5/ Prime 5/ Spirit 5 to craft an extradimensional ephemeral Realm as a prison, Bind the spirit to that Realm, and send it away. Until and unless the spirit manages to break the Gauntlet Cage connecting it to the Realm, that entity remains trapped there until the Realm collapses or the mage sets it free.

An especially malignant mage could combine this imprisonment with one of the tortures described above and the *Prolonged Agony* below. Such behavior, obviously, marks that mage as the most brutal kind of wizard, staining his aura (and probably Resonance) while making enemies whose hatred outlasts whole planets.

Prolonged Agony

In the most severe and esoteric form of spirit-torture, the mage could add Time 3 or 4 to any or all of the attacks above. Time 3 allows the mage to make multiple attacks by giving him extra actions with which to attack; Time 4 locks the spirit in a "bubble of time" where the pain continues until the mage makes it stop or the trigger event occurs. (See **Time Distortion and Travel**, p. 113.) Again, this is the sort of treatment that tends to forge eternal enmities and bite the mage in ways that no magick can undo.

Although the highest levels of faith, High Ritual, shamanic, necromantic, and Dimensional Science practices contain the secrets of spirit-wracking, a mortal must be *VERY* certain of his ability to endure the consequences of using them. Such punishment – especially at the hands of some puny *human!* – creates a lasting grudge. The entity and its allies or underlings will remember such treatment for millennia, and may well serve up some very cold (or devilishly hot) revenge when the mage can least afford such refreshment.

A Question of Right

"*Who summons me?*" That customary question highlights the most important element of the Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding process. An entity who answers a mage's summons wants to know who and what it's dealing with. Even if the spirit already knows the answer, that ritual question forces the mage to think carefully before she answers, because the subtext to that question is simple yet important: *Do you have the RIGHT to do what you have done?*

No one likes to be ordered around... and on a lot of levels, that's what summoning, binding, bargaining, and warding do. These Arts – whatever form they take – essentially issue commands to other characters. Considering just how powerful those characters can be, such commands demand a lot of balls, nerve, power, belief, and Will. And so, regardless of the nature of that summoned entity, the mage had better believe that her answer to that question is *YES*.

Time Distortion and Travel

I used to think I'd been born into the wrong decade until I actually saw the Summer of Love.

Or, more to the point, before I'd smelled it.

Oh, sure – it's kinda cool to see vintage Bill Griffith posters slapped to the window of a head-shop, their fresh inks brighter than any recreation. And yeah, there's a certain fission to hearing the buzz of bygone revolutions in the air, humming from the lips of passers-by and the tinny speakers of passing cars.

But then there's the stink of unwashed bodies and clothes that haven't been touched by soap for months. The clingy rankness of old stale pot, and the fresh dump some asshole took in the alley right behind me. The real Summer of Love stinks of smacked-out runaways and psychotropic desperation and revolt staged for the sake of a wallet in some New York executive's pocket half the world away.

As the haze of my buzz from 2014 starts to ease off, I find myself drawing back from the sights and smells of 1967, that High Mythic Age when we've been told everything was possible but I can see now it clearly wasn't, even then.

The bare-chested dude with lice in his hair moans and teeters on the pavement, his damp jeans smelling of the control he threw away for an armload of junk and a headful of someone else's dreams.

Fuck this "summer of love" shit – I'm going home when I belong.

Redirecting the Flow

Past and future are not ironclad. The Arts of Time allow a mage to disrupt the temporal flow, committing a variety of strange offenses against what people perceive as the linear flow of events. In game-terms, however, such Effects are extremely problematic. How, then, do they work, and how can a Storyteller admit such feats without either demolishing his chronicle or else restricting a player with the Time Sphere to an endless litany of "*You can't DO that*"?

The Basics

Few applications of the Time Sphere could really be considered "basic." It's a weird field of expertise, which explains why the bizarre Ecstasy Cultists are its foremost practitioners.

In order to use Time magick effectively, a person needs to be able to unscrew her preconceptions about how the world works, and then replace them with a perspective that defies apparent "common sense" and embraces a more esoteric view of reality. That observation is as true for players and Storytellers as it is for the characters within your chronicle. And because Time magick messes so badly with most assumptions of gameplay (and, for that matter, of game *design*), a Storyteller may decide that certain applications of this Sphere are off-limits to his players and their characters.

- To spot temporal distortions, or to maintain an absolute sense of what time it is, use Time 1.

- To begin to see forward or backward into the unreliable streams of time, use Time 2. For details, check out the entry **Prophecy and Hindsight** in the **Enhanced Perceptions** section, **pp. 55-56**.

- To gain extra actions, or to slow other characters down, use Time 3. Every *additional* action (or each action "subtracted" from another character's ability to act) demands two successes. One or two extra actions may be passed off as coincidental bursts of speed; three or more extra actions per turn move the mage into vulgar magick territory.

- Time 4 and 5 allow the mage to commit some truly bizarre acts of chronological fuckery. For details, see below.

The Unpredictable Nature of Time

To start with, treat time as an imprecise series of events whose results cannot be accurately understood. Every change to an event results in other changes to related events. And so, when a player uses Time magick to look backward, rewind time, or otherwise alter the timestream, the Storyteller can also use those events to retcon events in unpredictable ways. Sure, that Ecstatic weirdo thinks she can simply sidestep time to prevent a bullet from hitting her... and she can even succeed. When the

events replay themselves, however, her would-be shooter picks another target instead, with results that she had not expected when she rewound time.

Although the Storyteller should play fair with such variations, there's no reason that time should hop to the tune of a single character. Events and people, after all, are unpredictable, and not even a full Master of Time can accurately control what *will* happen, only assume what *might* happen.

Temporal Disturbances

All of the Effects described below leave temporal disturbances in their wake; the bigger the Effects, the bigger the disturbance. Other Time-savvy characters can sense those disturbances (typically with a Perception + Awareness roll), and may be waiting to see what happens if and when a time-traveling character emerges from the temporal stream.

Generally, a temporal disruption looks like a ripple or wave in the "fabric" of time and space. Such ripples and analogies may have inspired the Tapestry metaphor as a model for Creation. Some mages detect temporal fluxes as "ghost-sounds" from other times, as ticking clocks, or as the sensory echo of things that either *have* occurred in the past, or are likely *to* occur in the future. *Matrix*-style "bullet-time" could mark areas where time either speeds up or slows down for a few seconds, while a feeling of *déjà vu* creeps in around smaller or more subtle disruptions. Really massive, vulgar fluctuations may cause stutters, freezes, and other supposedly impossible alterations to the local reality; in such cases, a Paradox backlash is almost certain to occur, and may already be in progress...

Vulgarity and "Stacked" Paradox

Time has its own momentum; some metaphysicians even postulate that it has a sense of consciousness. Disrupting the timeflow, therefore, is almost always vulgar magick, and moving it backwards *is* always vulgar, even in Sanctums or solitude. Yes, a Time-mage can perceive temporal flows without disrupting the timestream; once she chooses to mess with it, however, then Time itself reacts accordingly.

As noted in the **Time Sphere entry**, Paradox stacks up when a character goes backwards in time. Each successive increment of time compounds the Paradox involved:

- **Turns:** A character who rewinds time by turns adds one "layer" of Paradox per turn; if you go back three turns, then you incur three times the usual Paradox.

- **Intervals:** A mage who travels back according to the **Time-Sphere Timelines chart** gets two layers of Paradox for each interval on that chart; if you go back 50 years (or four intervals), then you get *eight times* the usual amount of Paradox.

Yes, that's a catastrophic amount of Paradox. This is why so few mages even *attempt* such feats, even fewer succeed, and none perform them without great cost.

In many cases, a Paradox backlash linked to time-travel strands the mage in an alternate future or past... a trap from which she might not ever escape. Other backlashes could involve reverse aging (as Merlin is said to have aged); time-freezes; visits from Old Man Wrinkle or similar Paradox entities, as described in **Mage 20**, **Appendix I**; or the absolute erasure of the time-traveler from reality. A Storyteller for time-hopping mages is advised to keep a *Back to the Future*-type scenario handy for the inevitable screw-up, to get creative with the potential repercussions of Time-based Paradox, and to occasionally just say, *"No, that didn't work... or at least it didn't work as far as you can TELL..."*

Repeated Time Effects

Altering time is infinitely recursive; the more you do it, the harder it is to do. Thus, each successive Time-based Effect within a single scene must beat the number of successes rolled by the pervious Time-based Effect. If you rolled three successes with a previous Effect, then it takes at least four successes to perform a second Effect; if you rolled six successes with that next Effect, then your need at least seven successes to perform a third Effect, and so on, and so on...

The exceptions to this rule are simple **Prophecy and Hindsight** Effects (described under **Enhanced Perceptions**), or the time-distortion Effects that let a mage speed himself up in order to gain further actions. Any other Time-based alteration of the environment – time loops, reboots, triggered Effects, and so on – must beat the successes rolled in previous Time-based effects.

This rule does not apply to multiple characters who use Time-Sphere magick in the same scene, only to a mage who continues to use different feats of time within that scene. That said, the Storyteller may choose to raise the difficulty for Time-based Effects by +1 for each character who's using the Time Sphere within that scene. "Time-dueling," then, becomes like a game of jenga, with the Paradox falling on the mage who's unfortunate enough to botch a roll.

Magickal Feats of Time

When a player wants to radically alter the flow of time – when she sets up time loops, isolates people from time, and generally does something bigger than using **Past & Future Sight**, speeding herself up or slowing herself down, then use the **Feats of Time Magick chart** to find out the numbers of successes she needs to score.

From there, add more successes to cover the length of time involved, as per the **Dilating Time** entry below. Moving another character three turns through time, for example, would require 10 successes (four for the feat + six to move him three turns)... possibly at +3 to the usual difficulty and three times the usual amount of Paradox if she's able to move him backwards through time. (See the sidebar **The Difficulties of Going Back in Time** p. 111.)

Time-Sphere Timelines

Successes	Effect Time-span
One	Within a year
Two	Five years
Three	20 years
Four	50 years
Five	100 years
Six +	500 years
10+	1000 years or more

Notes

Time-span limits apply only to looking or reaching through time, not to the duration of a given Effect.

Feats of Time Magick

Successes	Feat
Three	Step out of time/ minor aging (Difficult feat).
Four	Take one other character out of time/ noticeable aging (Impressive feat).
Five	Take several characters, or a roughly 10' x 10' area, out of time/ severe aging (Mighty feat).
Eight	Take larger area (25' x 25') out of time/ age to decrepitude (Mighty feat).
10-20	Take an even larger area out of time/ age to brink of destruction (Outlandish feat).
20+	Freeze or isolate very large and dynamic area or event/ age out of existence (Godlike feat).

Notes

Feats that "rewind" time add +3 to the difficulty.

The Perfect Moment

Timing, goes the old saying, is everything. And so, a mage with a sense of "perfect timing" can reduce the difficulty of certain tasks, and thus give herself a better chance of succeeding simply because she understands the best moment to act.

As detailed in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten**, under the heading *Magick Enhancing Abilities* (p. 533), a successful Arete roll, when using the *Perfect Moment* feat, lowers the difficulty of an Attribute + Ability roll, by a factor of -1 difficulty for each success rolled with the Arete dice pool, up to a maximum reduction of -3. Three successes, then, would lower the difficulty of a mundane activity roll by -3. If Lee Ann, for example, were to use her sense of timing in order to make a dramatic entrance, her player could lower the difficulty of a Charisma + Etiquette roll; three successes lowers that difficulty by -3, thus giving Lee Ann an insight into *just the right moment* in order to score the best impression upon her audience.

Simple and Complicated Moments

For simple tasks – like making an entrance, speaking a timely remark, juggling objects, and so forth – this sense of timing simply requires Time 1.

More complex or insightful tasks – that is, tasks that require a deeper understanding of complex interactions before that perfect moment becomes obvious – may also include:

- Correspondence 1 (to spot "the right place at the right time") or 3 to *be there* at "just the right place and time"; or...

- Entropy 1 (in order to note probabilities) or 2 (to shift those probabilities to that perfect moment); or...

- Forces 1 (to time one's actions to the flow of energies) or 2 (to manipulate those energies to match the timing); or...

- Life 1 (to sense the presence of other beings, and to note their overall state of health and openness to "the right move"); or...

- Mind 2 (in order to "read" another being's moods) or 3 (to read their thoughts, and thus sense when the audience is most open to "the perfect thing at the perfect time"); or...

- Matter 1 (to spot flaws in a material object); or...

- Prime 1 (to "catch the flow" of sublime energy currents) or 3 (to steer them toward that perfect moment); or...

- Spirit 1 (to note the "spirit of the time" in order to address it best).

Casting Magick to Find "That Perfect Moment"
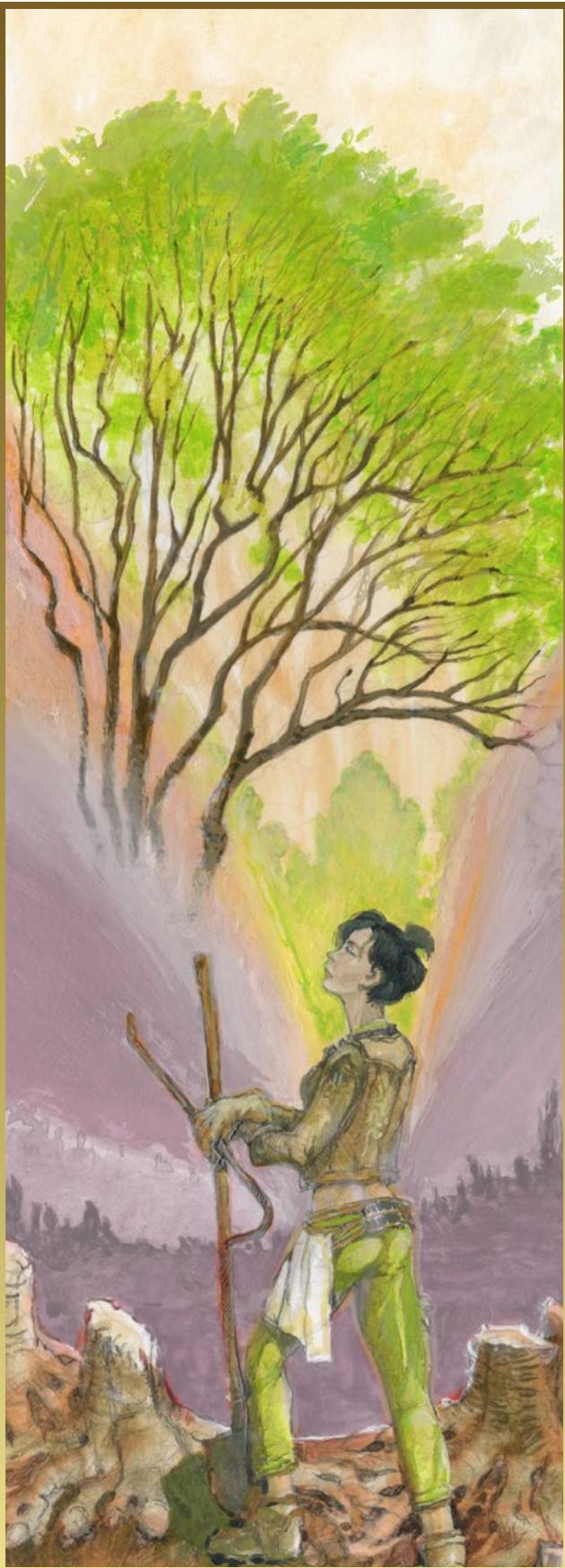
In all cases, *the mage must first successfully perform the Effect* – using her typical focus – before the difficulty can be reduced. And so, the speed at which the mage can spot that opportunity will depend a lot on what she needs to do in order to use that magick. A faith-practicing mage could speak a brief prayer to her patron deity before she acts, while a temporal technician needs to feed data into her computer and run a program before the correct moment becomes obvious to her.

Because it would require casting two magickal Effects at once, the *Perfect Moment* feat CANNOT *be used to lower the difficulty of spellcasting Arete rolls* – ONLY for the timing of mundane activities. It may, however, be used to lower the difficulty of a ritual if and when the feat gets used to prepare the rite ahead of time. (See *Rituals, Rolls, and Extended Successes* in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, pp. 538-542**.) Even then, however, an Arete-roll difficulty can be reduced *only* to -3, never below that level.

This "perfect timing" knack is generally coincidental. Obviously, this feat works best when the mage has time to do it right. A mage who needs to run probabilities on his laptop before throwing a punch isn't much use in a brawl.

Total Recall

Memory is such a tricky thing. The further you get from an event in time, the more your memory tends to distort it or else wipe it away completely. A blended feat of time and memory,

however, can help a character recall a past event with vivid clarity. Although such memories will still bear the perspective and prejudices of the person who experienced them, the mage (or his subject) may tap into those memories and bring them back with real-time clarity.

By combining Time 2 with Mind 3 (for one's self) or 4 (for someone else), the mage can pull up the full-sensory spectrum memories of an event in the subject's past experience. The more successful the roll, the more vivid and accurate the memories will be. Again, those memories will be *extremely* subjective, perceived through the physical and emotional state of the person at that time; the mage (or the target) won't be able to sense anything that the person could not sense back during the original event, though he might notice things about it that he had not seen before. Depending upon the memory, person, and event in question, these visions could be joyful, painful, harrowing, glorious, or otherwise emotional. Essentially, the target of the spell "goes mentally back in time" to that moment, with all the appropriate freight intact.

For details about viewing through time, see **Prophecy and Hindsight** in the **Enhanced Perceptions** section, **pp. 55-56**. As to whether or not this feat can bring up "memories" of things that have not happened yet, we leave that decision to the Storyteller, but suggest that all of the usual caveats about traveling or viewing into the future remain in force.

Thickening the Walls of Time

To make it more difficult for other mages to use Time Effects in a mage's vicinity, Time 2 can also "thicken the walls of time." In this case, each success scored by the caster subtracts one success from the other mage's attempts.

Unlike most uses of the time Sphere, this Effect is coincidental for the first five successes; after that, however, the "thickened" flow of local chronology starts creating weird localized quirks in the timestream: clocks stutter, a sense of "slow motion" creeps into localized activities (slurring words, slowing movement, and so on), and a feeling of heaviness falls over everyone in the area. Such quirks are easy to miss in isolated areas or wilderness where "time seems to stand still." Around "fast-paced" localities, however (cities, parties, highways, etc.), this phenomenon can be spotted by the average person. Combined with the feat's distortion of the normal flow of time, these quirks render the "thickening" effect vulgar after the first five successes.

Dilating Time

As the **Time Sphere entry** points out, it takes two successes to move time either forward or backward one turn. Every two successes beyond that point add one additional turn; to shift time for three turns, then, would demand six successes.

If a mage wants to go far back or forward in time, then she needs to be out of combat or other turn-by-turn activities. Using the **Time-Sphere Timeline chart**, the player then decides how far she wants to go and then rolls *two* successes for each

success listed on the chart. Going back 50 years, as mentioned earlier, would demand at least eight successes, at eight times the usual amount of Paradox.

Yeah, that's why people who try such things are seldom seen again…

Rewinding Time

Using Time 3, a character can invoke a "time warp"-style Effect and either "loop" time within a given area, or else remove herself from the normal flow of time and get a *Run Lola Run*-style **Reboot** for a certain number of actions.

Time Loop

In this case, the mage turns time back upon itself within a certain area of effect. Story-wise, you might see Lee Ann cut a complex glyph in the air with her lotus sword; everything within the room stops moving except for Lee Ann herself, and then it all "rewinds" to a given point in time while Lee Ann changes the actions she would have taken otherwise.

In game terms, time loops count as **Magickal Feats of Time**, with bigger reversals becoming bigger feats. Repeated time-loops suffer the **Repeated Time Effects** penalty described above.

Reboot

By adding Life 3 and Mind 1 to the Time 3 **Time Warp**, the mage can send herself back a few turns (or other increments of time) with full memories of what had happened before. In this case, the rest of the world moves exactly as it had moved before until and unless the mage changes the course of its actions. If, for example, Lee Ann goes back to stab a cultist before he fires at her friend Kyle, then the cultist (and Kyle) respond to her "rebooted" actions.

Rebooting other human beings or other sophisticated life-forms requires Life 5/ Mind 4/ Time 3, due to the intricacies of working with Patterns and consciousness outside of the mage's own self. Can a mage "reboot" a vampire to her non-vampiric state? No – the Curse of Caine is far more powerful than the paltry whims of human mages. (See *Aging the Night-Folk*, below.)

As a general rule, assuming that each "rebooted" character other than the caster herself requires at least three successes in addition to the usual number of successes necessary (see *Dilating Time*). Yeah, this is a hard and vulgar trick, and one that's very rarely performed successfully.

The Storyteller may declare that it's just not possible to reboot a character more than five turns into the past. Alternately, he could simply say, "*Sure, you think you remember something about things having gone differently before, but everybody else remembers them going the way they're going now… so perhaps you DID go back in time, but this present is the result of your actions back then.*"

Accelerated Youth or Decay

One of the nastier applications of Time magick – combined with the Life, Matter, or Entropy Spheres – involves rapid aging or decay. Reversed, that same Effect can make "de-age" items or organisms. In all cases, Time 3 – combined with Life 3, Matter 3, or Entropy 3 (for objects) or 4 (for organisms) – can either accelerate aging or else reverse its effects.

For obvious reasons, this Effect is always vulgar. And since different substances and beings age at different rates, the successes necessary come from the *amount* of aging, not from the years involved. Using the **Feats of Time Magick**, p. 109, select the amount of aging – in either direction – that the mage wants to inflict.

Optional Rule: The Difficulties of Going Back in Time

In older editions of **Mage**, a character could not go backward in time at all. **Mage Revised** changed that rule, however, and so now – as an *optional rule* – it might be possible to move time backwards… doing so is just very, *very* difficult.

If and when the Storyteller allows a player to "rewind" time as described on the **Time Sphere entry** of Mage 20, that player adds to the difficulty of his casting rolls when he's trying to have his character reverse time. Any Effect, other than **Past & Future Sight**, that moves time backwards adds +3 to the normal difficulty of the Effect. A *vulgar without witnesses* Time 3 Effect, then, would be difficulty 10, not difficulty 7.

If the difficulty goes above 9, then the Storyteller could choose to employ the optional **Thresholds** rule (**Mage 20**, **Chapter Eight p. 387**), adding one additional success for each +1 modifier over difficulty 9. In the example above, the player would need to roll at least two successes against difficulty 9 in order to succeed at all.

As mentioned nearby, each increment of time "stacks" the Paradox involved. Going back four turns in time invokes four times the usual amount of Paradox. That Time 3 Effect, then, going back four turns, nets the mage between four and 13 points of Paradox, depending upon whether or not your group uses Reckoning metaplot rules for Paradox, and whether or not your mage failed or succeeded in her attempt.

That's why you don't see many mages turning back time – because it's too damned hard to succeed at such a feat… and if you do, then you still have to contend with extra Paradox. And remember: *Moving time backward is ALWAYS vulgar magick*.

The entries in this section assume that this *optional rule* is in effect. Your Storyteller, though, has the right to declare otherwise.

Note also that such spells affect the *whole*, not the *parts*, of the subject in question. You could age a person, but not cause his heart to beat at a different rate than his other bodily functions. It's comparatively easy for a mage to use Life 3/ Time 3 to disrupt the rhythm of a person's heartbeat, but it's impossible to put his heart and other organs into different time-zones.

Aging the Night-Folk

Night-Folk, however, cannot be aged so easily – otherwise, an alliance of Hermetic wizards and Cultists of Ecstasy would have wiped out vampirism ages ago. Beyond the normal protections that such creatures possess (see **Night-Folk Counterspelling** in **Mage 20**), and the Sphere-combinations required to harm them in the first place (Matter and Life for vampires, Life and Spirit for werecreatures, Life and Mind for changelings), the self-restorative nature of such beings counters the effects of accelerated aging.

Such spells *do* have an effect, but that effect is minor, temporary, and bound to piss off the creature in question. Vampires, werecreatures, mummies, and the fae suffer the usual success-based amount of lethal damage from accelerated aging, and may – in the case of changelings and werecreatures – even age cosmetically for a few moments. On an essential level, however, these entities *cannot* be aged out of existence by mere human magicks; vampires suffer a divine curse, werecreatures are half-spirit, mummies exist outside conventional mortality, and changelings share the immortal essence of the Greater Fae.

When hit by aging spells, vampires and mummies remain essentially unmoved in time, while werecreatures and the fae mystically "heal" their lost years in moments. Spirits, meanwhile, remain immune to such spells. Years mean nothing to a ghost or other entity, and so attempts to "age" them have no effect at all.

Time Immunity

In one of the most confounding applications of Time-Sphere magick, a mage can remove himself – or other characters or objects – from the passage of time. How, exactly, does that work?

Vulgarity and Paradox

For starters, assume that all of the following Effects are vulgar; with or without Sleeper witnesses, they contradict the normal timestream. Again, each increment of time compounds the Paradox involved; thus, taking a person out of time for three turns triples the normal amount of Paradox, while taking him out for 20 years inflicts six times the usual Paradox.

Beyond that, the various "time-immunity" Effects work as follows:

Anchor Points

Smart time-steppers employ an *Anchor Point*: a Time 4 Effect that allows the temporal traveler to return to her original place in time. Without an anchor point, any trip in time is a one-way trip, ending wherever the Storyteller chooses to place the wandering mage.

The nature of that anchor point will depend, of course, upon the mage and her particular focus. Many time-travelers employ clocks, timers, and other sorts of alarms, setting them to establish the anchor point. Others chant mantras, meditate upon icons or situations, concentrate their intentions upon objects or locations, stage events (songs, theatrical events, or other memorable occurrences) that they can look back on to forward to, and so on. Regardless of the anchor point, the mage who sets it up can – again, with Time 4 – return to that place in time, assuming it still exists and that the mage can reach it.

As an adjunct to the **Anchor Point** Effect, a sufficiently skilled mage can add Correspondence 4 to the spell, allowing her to return to it from across great distances of physical space. It's vulgar, of course, to step in and out of time and space. If the anchor has been set up in a secluded place, a Sanctum, or some similarly secluded area, the effects of Paradox are less likely to boot that magus in the teeth when she steps back to the established anchor point.

Like all other forms of temporal disruption, an anchor point may be spotted by a mage with Time 1 or better. Smart travelers, then, make an effort to hide their anchor points from Time-savvy rivals.

Freezing Time

With Time 4 alone, the mage could freeze a single moment of time – a falling glass, gunshot, car crash, etc. – for several turns, as described above. If an outside party (that is, someone other than the mage who cast the spell) interacts with the subject of that "moment," then it ends immediately. Once the Effect's Duration expires, the participants in that moment continue on whatever path they'd been headed when they were frozen. If the mage acts to change their trajectories – hauling one car's steering wheel hard to the right, for example – then they follow the new path of action.

The base number of successes required to successfully perform that action depends upon the size of the action frozen, as determined by the *Feats of Time Magick chart*; suspending a falling teacup would be a Simple feat (one success), while freezing an impending trainwreck would be Mighty (five to 10 successes) or even Outlandish (more than 10 successes).

From there, check the *Optional Dividing Successes Rule chart* (**Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**) and then add more successes to set the Duration of the freeze. Suspending time for one day, for example, would require two successes above the base, while suspending it for six months would require five successes above the base. (Freezing the Outlandish trainwreck for six months, then, would require 15 successes.) In the meantime, any outside force that acts upon the frozen situation immediately breaks the spell; if someone touches that teacup, for example, then the cup falls to the floor. The caster, of course, can dispel the magick at any point; if she wishes to end that suspension, then it ends.

Temporal Suspension

A variation of the time-freeze phenomenon adds an additional Sphere to the usual Time 4 Effect, in order to put a single subject into a state of suspension. This way, a mage could "stop time" for a person, freezing his biological processes as well as his activity (Life 3 to freeze time for the caster, Life 4 to freeze someone else); or a solid object or material element (with Matter 4); or an elemental energy (Forces 4); bind a location into stasis (Correspondence 4); halt decay within a single place, object, or body (Entropy 4, plus the appropriate Sphere); lock a spirit entity into a timeless state (Spirit 5); or possibly even "hold that thought" for an emotional impulse (Mind 2), a memory, a concept or state of sanity (Mind 4), or even the deepest levels of subconscious thought (Mind 5).

In all cases, this temporal suspension lasts for the usual Duration. A caster who wants to extend that Duration needs to use the **Optional Dividing Success Rule** as described above. The bigger the object, the more successes you need in order to suspend it in time; freezing a mouse would be easy enough (one success, maybe two), while freezing a large and/ or complex subject (a tank, or a series of memories) would be far more challenging (five successes or more).

Contingency Trigger Effects

Combining Time 4 with Entropy 3 (for objects or events), 4 (for living things), or 5 (for ideas), the mage can "hang" an Effect until some event, activity, or meme comes to pass. Again, the base number of successes depends upon the scale of the Effect, as seen on the **Feats of Time Magick chart**. In this case, the duration is "until the circumstance occurs" – until the princess kisses her True Love, until a gray cat crosses the threshold, until the Stones finally break up, and so forth. At that time, the suspended Effect bides its time, hovering in a temporal ripple that other Time mages might notice... and, with countermagick, possibly dispel. (See **Temporal Disturbances**, above.)

If that Effect is tied to a particular object or living thing, then the mage also needs to tie in Matter or Life to "set" that spell into the Pattern of its intended target.

Time Bubble

By adding Correspondence 4 to the **Time Freeze** feat described above, our mage could create a metaphysical "bubble" outside of the time/ space continuum. By adding another Sphere to that feat, she could isolate a creature (Life 4), energy (Forces 4), object (Matter 4) or spirit (Spirit 5) within that bubble. (Yes, it's more difficult to do this sort of thing to a spirit – see **Spiritual Imprisonment** under the **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding** section above.)

This spell counts as a Godlike feat, requiring 20 successes or more, plus two more success for each increment of time on the **Time-Sphere Timelines chart**; imprisoning someone outside of time-space for 50 years, then, would demand at least 24 successes, *and* garner eight times the usual Paradox for the mage responsible for that bubble.

Sidestepping Time

Using Time 5, the Time Master can step laterally outside the timestream, essentially immunizing herself to any external phenomenon. Things going on *inside* of her (poison, disease, injury, etc.) continue to occur at their usual rate, but the world outside her touch does not affect her unless she chooses to interact with it... and even then, it doesn't experience the effects of her touch until the Effect's duration ends. Lee Ann, for example, could walk up to someone, punch him in the gut, and walk away; her victim, meanwhile, feels a sudden blow to the gut, but never sees Lee Ann coming or going.

As a rule, you can sidestep time only on a turn-by-turn basis. Long-term time-travel is handled below. For an additional two successes and an additional Paradox point per person, the Master can bring another character along with her.

Mages in "sidestep mode" *cannot use magick*. Although the characters may affect anything they physically touch, the powers of the universe move at their own speed, not at the speed of a mage outside of time.

Time Travel

The ultimate temporal immunity allows a mage to go her own way in the timestream. All of the rules above apply. In story terms, the character simply steps into one place at one time, and then – assuming she has set an anchor point – steps back out at the exact same place if and when she returns. Note that if there's something else in that place at that time, then things could get messy...

Gone Beyond the Hours

What happens, in game terms, when a character steps far out of the timestream? Once might assume that, at that point, she essentially stops existing in the same chronicle as her former companions. The various deeds she performs while in "othertime" change her nature in relationship to her previous life. Traveling far in time divorces her from the person she once was and sets her into a new path of life. "*It's not so much that you change the WORLD when you travel through time,*" it has been said, "*so much as it's that you change YOURSELF.*"

The ultimate answer, then, rests in the hands of each individual Storyteller. And so, whatever that answer might be, it's probably not going to be what you expect.

Uncanny Influence

I've never been one for following orders. Pretty much the opposite. But when Stephen spoke, I listened. Even now, I'm not sure why. His eyes probably had something to do with it – he has AMAZING eyes, and I'm not normally someone who spends time looking other dudes in the eyes, much less following them around like a puppy dog. Something about the quality of his voice, too – hypnotic, almost, like a doctor or a preacher. Confident. He didn't need to show off – he just WAS. I don't know how to explain it other than that.

I don't know how long we lived there. The five of us – Barry, Jennifer, Ashley, Stephen, and me. We... hell, it's all kind of fuzzy now. We did some kinda screwed-up shit, I know that much. And I'm sorry about it, really. It's like that wasn't ME, if that makes any sense. It wasn't any of us. That sounds like a cop-out – no offense – but it's true. It was just Stephen. Like we were ALL Stephen, and nothing else but that.

So I can't deny it, really, but I don't remember doing it. Not even now. I'm blank on the last few weeks. So yes – I'm SORRY. I don't know what I was doing. It wasn't me.

So, has anyone heard from my lawyer yet? Because I really shouldn't be saying any of this until she gets here. It's just like I can't help myself. I want to shut up, but really... I just can't.

If you guys could find Stephen, maybe HE could explain it. 'Cause I'm at a loss here.

Can we at least loosen the handcuffs? They're really killing my wrists...

How Charming . . .

Mages are extremely persuasive people. Even before you take the Mind Sphere into account, the Awakened exert a strange influence over the people all around them. Given their literally charming nature ("charm" comes from Latin *carmen*, meaning "incantation"), mages have a way of "working" their "wills" wherever they go. And so, although such magick isn't particularly theatrical, it's among the most effective tools a mage can possess.

The infamous powers of Awakened influence go beyond Mind magick, though. The most potent of them combine Mind and Spirit, sometimes with Life and Time as well. In all but the most blatant cases, however, such influence remains coincidental. Although outright psychic attacks are possible, most mages find such measures... *unsubtle*, useful only in the most desperate circumstances. Any practice may employ uncanny influence; however, certain practices (dominion, the Art of Desire) depend upon it, while others (faith, High Ritual, Vodou, witchcraft) use it rather extensively.

For the most part, a target of uncanny influence has no idea what's going on. He might change his moods, opinions, even his deepest personality traits, and yet remain oblivious to the source of his convictions. Such influence may explain volumes about the state of the world, because if old-school witches could bend a person to their will, what sorts of things could an enchanter with his own TV show do...?
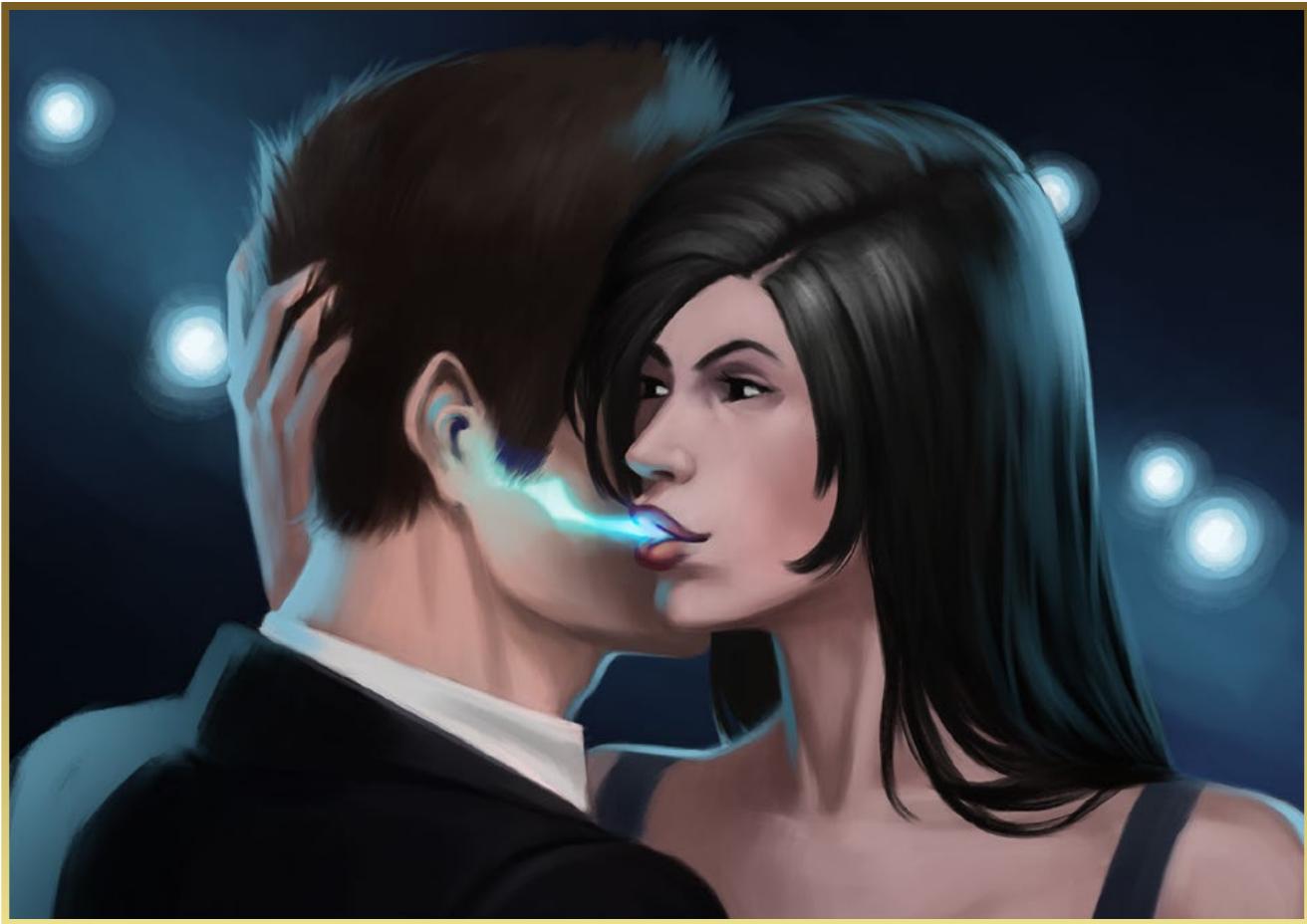
Such influence is more than a little bit sketchy. Wrestling a person's will away from him is one of the most intimate forms of violation imaginable. Despite their long pedigree among the mystic Arts, "love"/ lust charms and other forms of invasive influence are creepy, rapey, and ethically questionable. It's frighteningly simple to conjure unconsensual passions in a person when you know what you're doing; whether you *should* do so just because you *can* do so is a question every mage must face when she uses such techniques on people who would rather make decisions for themselves.

The Basics

Influence-based magick has a wide range of related feats:

Subtle Influence

- Mind 1 or Spirit 1 allows you to "read" someone else's emotional state.

- Mind 2, Life 3, or a combination of them allows you to influence another character's mood, either by altering their mental currents (Mind), their body chemistry (Life), or both.

- Mind 2 also allows a mage to read another character's surface thoughts.

- Life 1 allows a mage to read an organism for biological cues, while Life 3 can perform subtle manipulations of chemistry that mimic those cues and, by extension, manipulate the organism too. For details see **Tweaking Chemistry**, below.

Invasive Influence

- Mind 3 lets you invade another character's thoughts, enter her dreams, trick her with mental illusions, or blast her with psychic overload.

- Mind 4 grants extensive power over another character's mind, as described in **Mage 20**'s **Mind Sphere entry**. At this level, a mage can control another person's actions, thoughts, impressions, memories, passions, and impulses. For details, see **Puppetry and Possession**, below.

- Mind 5 allows for immediate mass-effect mind control, as well as the total alteration, eradication, or even creation of a person's consciousness. (Again, see below.)

Sleep Spells

- Mind 2 can strongly suggest a nap to a tired person. Mind 3 can lull a person toward sleep, and Mind 4 can drop her mind into instant slumber.

- Life 3 can alter another person's body chemistry and make that person drowsy (see **Tweaking Chemistry**, below), while Life 4 can "transform" someone who's awake into someone who's asleep.

- All of those Effects could be combined as well, and may be applied to several living things at once.

Illusions and Hallucinations

- As mentioned above, Mind 3 and higher can commit mental acts of deception.

- Forces 2 and higher, combined with Prime 2 or higher, can conjuredeceptive visions - see **Arts of Illusion**, **pp. 129-131**.

Entropic Influence

- Entropy 1 allows the mage to sense quirks of behavior that may indicate *what the TARGET views as a deliberate falsehood*. The distinction here is vital, because the target might tell half-truths or lies without realizing he's done so. See **Truth and Deception**, below.

- Entropy 2 lets a mage direct the flow of luck and misfortune in small but potentially meaningful ways. Entropy

3 allows her to control such probabilities with more precision. Check out **Fate and Fortune**, **pp. 132-133**.

- Entropy 4 lets that mage bestow immediate blessings or curses upon people by manipulating their relationship to probability. Entropy 4/ Life 4 lets her alter that relationship even when the target leaves her presence. For details, see **Blessings and Curses**, **p. 133**.

- Entropy 5 can alter a person's perceptions and synaptic reflexes, literally scattering or focusing his thoughts through control of connections and probabilities. The **Conceptual Entropy** entry has more details.

- This Rank also lets a mage bind the target with oaths, destroy his conceptual frameworks, or reinforce them in subtle yet potent ways – see **Binding Oaths** and **Conceptual Entropy**, **pp. 133-136**.

Influence From a Distance

Bewitching someone from a distance usually requires Correspondence 2 or higher...

- The exception to this rule involves focusing an Effect through either **Mass Media** or **Virtual Communications Technology**, as described below. The Technocratic Data Sphere allows for long-distance influence as well. Remember that a Correspondence Effect is limited to your Rank in Correspondence – you can't use Mind 4 with Correspondence unless you have at least four dots in Correspondence.

- Connecting several different parties together across a distance (as in a love-spell or group psychic bond) demands Correspondence 3/ Mind 3. Again, the Data Sphere works just like normal Correspondence for this sort of influence.

- Affecting large numbers of people demands a large number of successes – see the **Magickal Feats chart** for suggestions.

Influence-Magick Difficulties

Rather than roll against the usual *coincidental*, *vulgar without witnesses*, or *vulgar with witnesses* difficulties, you often roll against the Willpower Trait for simple influence Effects, and the Willpower + 3 for ones that compel a person to do something he does not want to do. If Nix, for instance, wants to read the surface thoughts of a dude with Willpower 3, then Nix's difficulty is only 4; if Nix decides to make that person yank off his pants and squawk like a chicken, however, then Nix's difficulty becomes 6.

Generally, Mind-based Effects are coincidental. If a witch suddenly bellows "*DANCE, MY PUPPETS, DANCE!!!*" and people start dancing, then it *could* become a vulgar Effect,

although with flash-mobs these days, even *that* circumstance is open to debate.

The difficulties for influence-based Effects are as follows:

- *When directed against a single character*, a Mind-based Effect uses that target's Willpower as a difficulty; if that Willpower is below 4, then use 4 as the difficulty instead.

- *When directed against several characters*, the difficulty for a Mind-based Effect depends upon the usual *coincidental*, *vulgar*, or *vulgar with witnesses* situations. As noted earlier in the **Mystic Travel** section, it tends to be easier to shepherd groups than it is to command individuals.

Mind-Mages and Night-Folk

- A mage who's using Mind to attack another mage has an automatic difficulty of that target's Willpower + 3, thanks to the mental shielding techniques that mages learn as part of their training.

- The Storyteller may assume that the same rule holds true for Night-Folk, certain of whom – like elder creatures, or vampires with the Dominate Discipline – may have a difficulty of Willpower + 5 instead.

- A roll to influence *several* mages or Night-Folk at once is difficulty 8 (Willpower 5 + 3) if the caster is being clever and sneaky about his influence, and difficulty 10 (Willpower 5 + 5) if he's being blatant about it.

- If one target in that group has a Willpower that's *higher* than 5, then the difficulty is that character's Willpower + 3 or + 5. And if that takes the difficulty over 10, then the **Optional Rule of Thresholds** takes over. (See **Mage 20, Chapter Eight, p. 387**.) Essentially, that dominant character exerts his influence over the "pack," making it harder for the mage to influence them all. Yes, this all makes it pretty damned hard to influence a pack of vampires with the Mind Sphere, especially if their leader is especially Will-full, understands Dominate, or both.

- If the caster is trying to use magickal Mind-force to compel Night-Folk to do things they do not want to do (as in being an "Unwilling Target" to **Puppetry**, as described below), then the difficulty gets the usual +3 modifier *in addition to the other difficulty modifiers* – that is, +6, +8, or highest Willpower + 6 or + 8. Yes, this supersedes the usual limits on difficulty modifiers, and yes it makes it *very* hard to force Night-Folk to perform acts they are not willing to perform. Sorry, but Count Dracula is not your bitch.

Smart mages know enough to try and *trick* or *seduce* Night-Folk, rather than to try and *compel* them. The latter approach rarely goes well for the mage in question.

Resistance, Recognition, and Duration

- A person who wants to resist a mental intrusion can roll his Willpower, difficulty 6, in order to overcome that intrusion.

- If the target manages to roll more successes than the mage, then he can shrug off the attack. If the mage wins, then the target endures the desired Effect for the Duration of that Effect.

- A mage with the Mind Sphere can try to unweave another character's influence (see *Countermagick* in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, p. 545**), or simply remove it using Mind 4. In both cases, that mage needs to roll more successes than the ones that the original caster rolled.

- A Mind 1 perception Effect can also "read" another mage's Mind-based spells. If, say, Malcolm Leonard notices the pantless dude squawking like a chicken, then he'd probably be able to spot Nix's mind-control Effect if he uses the Mind Sphere to look for it. Thanks to Resonance, it's often easy to recognize a mage's signature on a mind-control Effect, and to spot that mage's influence upon another character.

Expiration, Conditioning, and Inclinations

Influence Effects usually erode when the spell's Duration ends. Long-term conditioning, however, can convince the target that the spell truly *is* his reality. (See the *Social Conditioning* section in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, pp. 605-607**).

That's especially true if the Effect fits his existing beliefs or personality. Influence that suits the subject's usual inclinations is far more effective – and lasts much longer – than influence that runs against the subject's grain. Mind-controlling a pacifist to kill, for instance, would go against her beliefs (and would thus wear off quickly), while casting the same Effect upon an angry sociopath would simply influence her to do things she might do anyway (and so might not wear off at all). A smart mage, then, picks targets who would be inclined to go along with his plans for them whether he was using magick to influence them or not.

Trigger-Conditioning

By adding Time 4 to any of the Mind Effects listed above, a mage can "install" a mental trigger: a phrase, a sensation, a code word, an activity, or simply a specific time at which the Effect "activates." At that point, the "implanted" character makes a Willpower roll, difficulty 8, to see if she can break the conditioning. If so, then she resists the implanted command; if not, then she fulfills whatever Effects the other character had instilled.

The Social Element

Influence tends to be a social thing. As shown by most of the instruments described below, influence-based magick works best when the spellcaster uses social savvy to get her point across. The various *Social Occasions and Intrigue* options featured in the *Dramatic Feats* section of **Mage 20, Chapter Nine (p. 404)** all provide excellent venues for influence-based Effects. By using some social finesse, a mage could prepare her audience for a message, and thus overcome the resistance they might feel to that message otherwise.

Let's say that Malcolm needs to convince a number of security guards and receptionists to look the other way while he "retrieves some papers" from his manager's office. Rather than simply casting a powerful compulsion to get them all to do something they wouldn't normally do, he gradually wins them over by being a cool guy. A few successful "social occasion" rolls get those people to accept Malcolm's word. Later, when Malcolm needs to rifle through his boss's office, a simple "trust me" nudge will probably overcome whatever resistance they might have left. The staffers trust him to begin with, and so there's no mind-control involved.

A subtle and coincidental Mind Effect can also lower the difficulty of social-activity rolls. (See *Magick Enhancing Abilities*, **p. 533** for details.) By working back and forth between subtle Effects, social feats, and more subtle Effects, a mage can be amazingly influential without ever appearing to use "magic" at all.

Backgrounds and Influence

It's easy to influence people who're already inclined to follow you. And so, certain Background Traits allow the mage to use influence-based feats more easily on her followers than she could on strangers, peers or enemies.

In game terms, figure that a "character under the influence" can be easily swayed by minor feats – perhaps at a -3 to the usual difficulty, or maybe even with no roll at all. Major acts of influence (oaths, benign possession, conceptual entropy, etc.) would be at their normal difficulty, and traumatic ones (psychic assault, malicious possession, and so forth) actually add +3 to the difficulty, thanks to the sense of betrayal involved in the act.

Naturally, a smart leader will phrase her influence in ways that the followers are inclined to go along with her, not to oppose her. And if they're already inclined toward violence, hate, ignorance and fanaticism, those followers could be convinced to do some pretty horrific things...

The following Backgrounds reflect a certain amount of preexisting influence:

- A mage with the Backgrounds *Cult*, *Retainers*, and *Spies* could consider the characters who are covered by that Background to be under the mage's influence to begin with.

- A player whose mage has **Fame**, **Influence**, **Rank**, or **Resources** could roll the Background as a dice pool, with each success reflecting a number of people who are under that character's influence by default. The exact number will depend a lot upon who the mage is, what she's doing, how she's doing it, and to whom she's exerting that influence. Certain leaders or celebrities command loyalty from thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people, while others are lucky to make a single Twitter post without being heckled off the Internet.

- The **Allies**, **Backup**, **Familiar**, **Mentor**, **Patron**, and **Totem** Backgrounds do *not* count as "characters under the influence," as such characters tend to have their own ideas about their relationship to the mage in question.

A player cannot "stack" Backgrounds in order to get the most dice possible. If that mage has several applicable Backgrounds, then use the one that gives her the greatest advantage.

Be advised that mages who abuse their Background-based characters tend to lose those Backgrounds pretty quickly. Sure, that Cult may accept their leader's word at face value; if their "Chosen One" keeps getting them in hot water, though, those folks are gonna start jumping ship.

Instruments of Influence

In story terms, a character can exert magickal influence through several sources; for details about how they work, see the appropriate entries in the **Instruments** section of **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, pp. 586-600.**

- **Charms:** Old-school charms, crafted to snare a person's attention, hold a place of honor in the mage's bag of tricks. Amulets, rings, bracelets woven from a person's hair... sure, they're corny, but they *work*. Such instruments – generally connected with traditional witchcraft and other mystic practices – forge a bond between the target, the caster, and the intended results.

- **Clothing and Cosmetics:** Between the symbolic power of significant fashions, and the chemical and aesthetic properties of certain cosmetics, a person can influence other folks simply by dressing right, looking sharp, and smelling good to the people he encounters.

- **Conditioning:** Often known by the more pejorative term *brainwashing*, conditioning uses a battery of techniques to break down someone's resistance and then bring her around to your way of thinking.

  On the brutal end of the spectrum, conditioning involves isolation, deprivation, hardship, and psychological, emotional, and sometimes physical torture, all of which undermine the subject's will to resist. The "softer" side involves peer pressure, isolation from outside contact, constant reinforcement of the conditioned ideas, and rewards like acceptance, status, and "a place among the Chosen People." All the while, the conditioning reinforces a particular point of view. Eventually – or so the theory goes – the subject breaks and the conditioning takes over.

  In real life, this sort of thing tends to produce more *trauma* than *conversion*; mages, however, can bring Mind and Life magick into the process, making for a more effective conditioning process. And although most Awakened folks associate conditioning with the NWO and Nephandi, its techniques appear in social groups, professional associations, military training, "treatment centers," "therapy groups," religious orders, and cults of all descriptions.

- **Drugs, Potions, Ordeals, and Sex:** Alter the brain, and you alter the consciousness. And so, many mages employ mind-altering chemicals and activities as instruments for influence.

- **Emotional Technologies:** "Manipulation" is such an ugly word. Let's instead call it *effective communication techniques*, *neuro-linguistic programming*, *non-violent communication*, or other neologisms for the social sciences that get people to shift their point of view in your favor.

- **Gaze and Conversation:** Plenty of uncannily influential people simply *talk* to their intended targets. Through persuasive conversation, social-behavior techniques, and sometimes mere eye-contact, a mage can focus Mind-Sphere influence through normal human interactions.

- **Mass Media:** The most pervasive medium of our age, mass-media technologies allow a person to influence hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people at a time. Naturally, large numbers dilute the power of that influence – it's easier to lead a small cult than it is to command thousands of strangers. Still, emotional appeals (see below) that connect with a like-minded audience can have *very* persuasive effects.

  Game-wise, an Effect focused through mass-media tends to require a lot of successes – at least 10, and possibly 30 or more; the more extreme the influence, and the more diffuse the medium, the more successes you need. Immediate media – TV, radio, the Internet – tend to have more dramatic effects than indirect media like books, newspapers or films. Large-scale media influence also attracts attention, and so the would-be motivator is better off pushing a subtle and defensible concept ("*British boy-wizards are cool!*") than a dramatic command ("*Go forth now, my children, and KILL!*")

Mass-media Effects also demand time and patience before the Effect settles in. Especially in the new millennium, people tend to be skeptical of media messages, and take immediate action only when that message reinforces something they already believed in, or wanted to do, before the message hit them.

- **Mind-Control Machines:** And then there are the traditional "*flip this switch and change their minds*" sorts of technologies: personality-alteration machines, brain transplants, consciousness-inversion chambers, sleepteachers, and other artifacts of cognition science. The Technocracy and Etherites use such devices on both an experimental and occasionally practical basis, and although the results don't often last for long, the sudden changes (which may verge into vulgar magick if they're extreme enough) might make up for extravagantly sloppy procedures.

- **Performance:** Art and entertainment provide masterful platforms for influence. People *want* to be inspired by performers, and so we're generally more inclined to be influenced by artists and other celebrities. Art-based performances – songs, plays, concerts, movies, and so forth – are essentially the temples of our media-driven world, and their stars can be incredibly persuasive simply because of what they do. Meanwhile, religion and politics employ the same bags of tricks as art does, and with similar results; if that wasn't the case, then why would anyone give a shit about what Pat Robertson or Bill Clinton says?

- **Virtual Communications Technology:** Not long ago, a mage needed a crystal ball, magic mirror, or some other connective portal (plus the Correspondence Sphere) if he wanted to influence someone from across a distance. These days, all he needs is a laptop or phone. Assuming that you've already got an existing connection to someone (professional contact, family ties, relationship, etc.), you could skip the Correspondence Sphere element and simply cast the Effect through a text, email, Instant Message, blog post, and so on.

As a rule, assume that virtual communications technology affects one person, while mass media affects masses of people. A single phone-call may shatter the person on the other end, but that same phone-call won't have the same effect on everyone else in her neighborhood unless she then acts on the influence in ways that change their lives.

Questions of Consent

Is it *ethical* to use such deep-seated influence on people without their knowledge and consent? That's an interesting question, especially in the 21ˢᵗ century, when issues of ethics, consent, and domination become more important than, perhaps, they have ever been before. The recognition of social power and its abuse is a vital debate in this new millennium, for while previous generations simply took what they wanted from other people (and from other living beings and entities as well), those "others" have a stronger voice in the era of democracy, mass communication, and the Internet. As a result, the harm caused by exploitation has come under greater scrutiny... and greater *criticism*, too. A person – mage or otherwise – can't simply "work his will" without consequences, and although such consequences have always existed, the ability to abuse

"My Character's Better at This Than I Am"

Roleplaying games excel at wish-fulfillment. Our characters tend to be cooler, smarter, better-looking, and more physically adept than we are in real life. The physical and metaphysical elements of their adventures are easy enough to deal with: roll your Traits and see what happens. *Social* interactions, though, are harder to fake, especially since roleplaying is, by definition, a social activity. How do you play it, then, when your mage is savvier, sexier, more street-smart than you are?

The obvious answer is to simply let the dice and Traits determine a character's social acumen. That solution, though, can be problematic, especially if the player has nowhere near the kind of social prowess that her character displays. Ideally, roleplaying should encourage people to stretch their acting abilities. Simply going, "*I seduce the princess*" while rolling a handful of dice feels rather lame and potentially creepy, especially if the player has her character doing ethnically questionable things with her social abilities.

Certain roleplaying troupes – especially live-action ones – insist upon roleplaying out each character's social interactions; if you can't act it, then you can't do it. But although we're totally in favor of boosting your acting chops (this author, after all, started off as an actor), that's not always a fair call when you're playing characters with godlike charisma and mind-altering spells. And so, we suggest a middle-ground: Roleplay as many of your character's social interactions as possible, and *then* let the Dire Dice of Destiny secure the outcome. And even when the dice are speaking on your behalf, narrate out *why* the character is so persuasive: What's she doing? How is she enhancing her natural abilities with magick? Which instruments is she employing in her attempt to influence her surroundings, and why should they be working?

The Storyteller may feel free to apply bonuses for really clever roleplaying (within the usual modifier boundaries, of course), and impose penalties for lame or nonexistent roleplaying. In short, the player ought to stretch her social imagination in order to make things happen, even when the "things" in question go way beyond her human social limits.

other beings and then walk away with clean hands and an intact conscience is not, shall we say, what it used to be.

There are reasons why words like *bewitched*, *enchanted*, *fascination*, and *irresistible* bear sinister connotations. All of them refer to having one's "right mind" stolen away by uncanny powers. Under such influence, a person does things he or she would supposedly never do otherwise. As a result, people rather justifiably fear a "beguiling" individual, even if they secretly long for the excuse to set their hidden desires free. Uncanny influence has great power, and such powers and their targets are very easily abused.

Old-fashioned mystics and technomancers don't care. "Love" charms and mental compulsions have long histories in the Awakened world, and so plenty of the more "conservative" elements among various factions use them without a second thought. The Mad and Fallen, of course, employ whichever tools seem most appropriate to the circumstances, with the Fallen taking great delight in the emotional ruin caused by coercive influence. Other mages, though, question the morality and long-term consequences of coercive magicks; sure, such tactics are useful... but are they *right*, and do they *cause* more problems than they *resolve*?

Regardless of a mage's personal stance on the subject, coercive influence *does* have lasting effects upon the people who've been influenced... and usually on the folks around those people as well. A guy who's been seduced (sexually or otherwise) by a mage gets stuck with the social and emotional aftermath of that seduction. Maybe he betrayed his marriage... or his oaths... or his ideals. He could lose his job, his family, his faith, perhaps even his mind; worse still, he might not even know *why* he has lost them. Because metaphysical influence tends to be more or less invisible, that guy may spend the rest of his life wondering what came over him.

Beyond the social and legal questions of uncanny influence, it's worth recognizing that such Effects violate the target on perhaps the most intimate level imaginable. Mental coercion and spiritual possession literally rape a person's mind and soul; the word *rape* comes from the Latin root *rapere*: "to seize," "to take," "to steal." And that's just what a mage who uses such influence does – she takes what she wants from another character, stealing their free will and their ability to resist. Such actions might not be any big deal to the mage, but will probably leave deep scars on her target. Uncanny influence is metaphysical predation, and so – to certain mages (and **Mage** players) – such spells are morally questionable and ethically problematic.

Justifications for this sort of thing can and will be made. Ranging from pragmatism ("*It's better than killing him*") to idealism ("*I'm just setting his innermost desires free*") to ideology ("*Power is meant to be used by the powerful*") to dismissal ("*Stop being so politically correct*"), those justifications carry a certain amount of weight. The amount of weight they carry depends a great deal upon circumstances, social affiliations, and the mage's personal ideals. A spell that's anathema to one mage will seem perfectly reasonable to another. As for the long-term effects of coercive magicks on the *targets* of those spells, such considerations are vital to certain mages and irrelevant as far as others are concerned.

Ultimately, the questions of consent – *Is it right to take away another being's free will? What harm will it bring to that being if I do? Is that being's consent important to me? And what do such deeds say about me on a deeper level?* – are yours to answer. And although other fantasy games leave such questions more or less unasked, **Mage** is ultimately about changing the world, and so the long-term consequences of mystic influence – even on "background characters" that the players never see again – can be more important than they might seem at the time.

Tweaking Chemistry

Tiny adjustments of physical chemistry can trigger emotional reactions, both from the chemical triggers and from the conscious reactions to those triggers. ("*Hey, I feel scared. WHY do I feel scared? There must be something scary around here that I haven't noticed yet...*") Although such adjustments can't actually control a person's mind the way that Mind-Sphere magick can do, it's still a form of influence that a Life-trained mages can perform.

A related form of Life magick lets the mage control *his own* physical chemistry in ways that might influence other organisms: boosting pheromone production so that he "smells right," augmenting his endorphins or testosterone in order to ward off pain or radiate aggressive strength, and so on.

In game terms, both techniques use Life as a coincidental modifier for mundane die-rolls. As detailed under **Magick Enhancing Abilities**, this allows the player to adjust the difficulty of a related die-roll by -1 to -3. Unless he's trying to do something that's hard enough to demand a high difficulty, this adjustment *M-I-G-H-T* (Storyteller's option) let the character succeed automatically. A guy who enhances his testosterone just before a big meeting, for instance, could simply dominate lesser characters by default.

Adjusting your own physical chemistry requires Life 2. Tweaking the chemistry of other people requires Life 3. Unless the mage is stupidly obvious about using magick to invoke drastic results, this feat tends to be coincidental.

For related details, see **Concocting Chemical Compounds** under the **Elemental Mastery** section, .

Paradigms and Science

One important note: *Physical-chemistry adjustments MUST fit the paradigm of the mage who's attempting to use them.* A faith-driven priest, for example, probably won't pray for Jesus to adjust his testosterone! And so, the mage who uses this technique must have a world-view that includes an effective knowledge of body-chemistry and its possibilities.

There's also a big difference between knowing that you *can* adjust your pheromones and knowing *how* to do so in the desired manner. And so, a perfectly fair *optional rule* would require a

character to have at least three dots in Science with a biochemistry specialty before he could tweak body chemistry with such influential results. A mage could *try* to perform this feat without the proper knowledge, but he might not get results he had hoped for...

Psychic Assault

And then, there's simple blunt trauma – the flood of psychic energy that sends the target into agonized spasms. That mental assault could involve intense emotion, sensory or energetic overload, sudden madness, psychological pain, or an all-out skull-rupturing blast of deadly psychic force.

Emotional Surge/ Sudden Chill

A potent Mind 2 attack can unbalance its target through an overwhelming surge of passion. Depending upon the attacker's wishes, this might involve a sudden depression, euphoria, lust, fury, or any other intense emotion that sends its recipient into staggering irrationality or immediate breakdown.

Story-wise, the emotional surge overwhelms a target's judgment and determination. In game terms, each success scored by the attacker lowers the target's temporary Willpower by one. If the attacker scores more successes than the defender has points in his Willpower Trait, then those emotions take over and send the target into an irrational state of passion. Ecstatics, Nephandi, and Marauders love to use this sort of attack despite its long-term consequences and ethical problems – see above.

As an alternative, the "attacker" could simply project a *CHILL OUT* impulse, *calming* passions instead of exciting them. In this case, the target simply descends into an intense state of tranquility. Choristers, Akashayana, and other temperate mages prefer this option over the passionate assault.

In both cases, the difficulty for the Effect is the target's Willpower. It might rise between +1 and +3 if the passions go *against* the target's current emotional state, and may drop between -1 and -3 if they *reinforce* that current emotional state.

(A Life 3 Effect can do similar things by flooding the body with an intense burst of chemicals that excite, depress, infuriate, or soothe the target. In this case, however, the difficulty is based on the target's Stamina + 3 because its effects come from physical causes, not psychological ones.)

Overload

With a rush of sensory impressions, conflicting information, or other mind-scrambling stimulations, the mage can stun his opponent with sheer mental overload. This assault works like the previous attack, except that it requires Mind 3, uses the defender's Willpower as the difficulty, and stuns the target if the number of successes equals or exceeds her Willpower.

Each success over the target's Willpower stuns that character for one turn. The afflicted character can move if attacked, but loses one dice for each success. Once the stunning effect ends, the target can act normally again... though probably with one hell of a headache.

An Entropy 4 Mind 2 Effect can have the same results, going against the same difficulties. With Life 3/ Correspondence 3, the mage could temporarily shut down or overload the nerves or sensory processing centers; in this case, the effects remain the same, but the difficulty – as above – is Stamina + 3.

All forms of this overload Effect become vulgar magick unless the attacker uses a fairly convincing instrument (loud music, flashing lights, an Epilepsy Reflex Cannon) that ties into the sudden blast of sensory impressions.

Instant Madness/ Sanity

Like the emotional attack above, this sudden burst of madness overwhelms the senses and drives the target to irrational extremes. In this case, though, a powerful (and possibly vulgar) Mind 4 assault blows the doors off the victim's sense of reality. Hallucinations, impulses, sudden disconnection from reality – this is the Marauder's curse, and it's one that sufficiently skilled Mad Ones and Fallen mages employ with great enthusiasm.

Reversed, the attack can suddenly restore sanity to *normally* insane characters; *metaphysically* demented ones, however – like Marauders, or Malkavian vampires – remain immune, even to Masters of the Mind Sphere.

Instant bursts of sanity or madness involve vulgar magick; a clever mage, however, could slowly drive a character (in)sane through perfectly plausible means.

For various forms of insanity and other long-term traumas, see the *Derangements* section of **Mage 20**, **Appendix II**, **pp. 649-650**, and *Things Man Was Not Meant to Know* in **Chapter Nine**, **p. 407**.

Psychic Blast

Another Mind 3 attack sends a surge of focused psychic energy directly into the target's mind. In game-terms, it's a straight-up attack, with the opponent's Willpower as the difficulty. This blast inflicts bashing damage as per the ***Base Damage or Duration chart***. (Night-Folks or mages are Willpower +3; vampires with Dominate are Willpower +5.)

Unlike most Mind-based Effects, this attack is vulgar magick, and incurs the usual amount of Paradox.

The Psychic Shatter

Here's an attack right out of the movie *Scanners*: With a combined – and *extremely* vulgar – assault of Life 3/ Mind 3 (or Mind 3/ Prime 2), the psychic assailant blasts her opponent with aggravated damage. Again, the difficulty is the target's Willpower (or that Trait + 3/ + 5). In this case, however, the injuries tear straight into the Pattern of the target's brain, inflicting an attack that cannot be soaked except perhaps by a Mind-Effect psychic shield or some other form of *internal* protection around the brain. (Armor or tough skin, after all, cannot protect you from the inside...)

Even if the target survives, she might have to make a Willpower roll or else suffer from ***Things Man Was Not Meant***

to Know. The difficulty, in this case, would be the number of health levels she suffered from the attack. And even if she *does* avoid its worst effects, the psychological scars from such attacks can last a lifetime.

Puppetry and Possession

Although it's not an easy feat, a powerfully psychic mage *can* control other people's minds. Replacing their will with her own, she may "possess" them in ways that few people would find possible. Meanwhile, a potent Spirit-mage can summon entities from beyond the Gauntlet, or awaken the slumbering spiritual essence within supposedly "inanimate" objects. The various forms of possession, then, take influence to a whole new level. As powerful as the Arts of social influence can be, the grandest forms of influence involve some form of mental or spiritual possession.

Dramatically speaking, a mage uses her practices and instruments to craft the mental or spiritual bond. A Vodou priest might employ charms, goofer dust, or a conjured spirit, while a mad scientist straps the victim into his Psychic Inversion Chamber and flips the switch. Certain practices – like dominion, faith, or the Art of Desire – use social skills to establish command; others – like witchcraft, hypertech or High Ritual – require specialized charms, gadgets or processes before the Effect takes hold.

Puppetry

The fearsome techniques of mind-control overthrow the subject's will, turning him into a veritable puppet on the "strings" of the Mind Sphere.

Taking control of another character requires Mind 4. Rewriting him completely requires Mind 5. As usual, the attack goes against the target's Willpower Trait:

- **Willing Subject:** If you're trying to get someone to do something he already wants to do, or if he willingly submits to your domination, then the difficulty is that character's *current* Willpower Trait.

- **Unwilling Target:** If you're trying to get someone to go against his wishes or beliefs, or if he's *not* willing to submit to domination, then the difficulty is that character's current Willpower +3. (Mages and Night-Folk, as noted above, are automatically Willpower +3 or +5.)

- **Nudges:** To "nudge" someone to follow an urge he might have already inclined to follow, you might need only two or three successes, total.

- **Force:** To force someone to do something he *wouldn't* have done on his own, you need at least one success for each point of Willpower.

- **Total Command:** To override all objections and take over his personality so that he won't even remember what happened afterward, you need at least 10 successes, or two successes per point of Willpower if he has Willpower 6 or higher.

- **Resistance:** If the subject resists, see **Resistance, Recognition, and Duration**, above.

Successful social feats, as described in **Chapter Nine**, can lower that difficulty; see **The Social Element**, above. Seducing someone into your control is coincidental, but suddenly yanking the puppet-strings becomes vulgar.

Forging Memories

"*I cannot recall.*" While that familiar dodge tends to be a lie, some folks really *can't* recall what they've done while under the influence of a psychic mage. Maybe the hypnotist snapped his fingers and the person in a trance forget what he'd been told to do; the Black Suit flashed a strange gadget in the person's eyes, and suddenly his entire memory of an event had changed or disappeared.

In story terms, powerful mages can make people forget things, remember things that never happened, or recall them differently than they would have otherwise. Such "memory-forging" techniques might rely upon hypnosis, conditioning, potent suggestions, or technological alteration. Whatever method you prefer, the mage changes someone's memories – maybe *replacing* them, maybe *erasing* them.

Game-wise, memory-forging requires Mind 4 or higher. Simple alterations demand Mind 4, while extensive ones demand Mind 5. *At the Storyteller's option*, a Mind 3 Effect might allow a mage to say something like "*Forget the next hour*" and then "fog" a brief event in a mental haze; this, however, is not a hard-and-fast rule.

As noted earlier, a willing or unwitting subject uses his Willpower as the difficulty, while an unwilling subject uses Willpower + 3 and can try to resist the process.

Simple memory alterations are pretty easy; making someone forget a single, unremarkable impression ("*Remember – I was never here*") requires only a success or two. Extensive wipes or overlays, however, demand five successes or more, and may – as in movies like *Total Recall* or *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* – become quite traumatic and confusing.

Awakening Spirits

A Spirit-savvy mage can rouse the slumbering entities within material objects. As described in certain sections of **Mage 20, Chapter Nine** (*Awakening Substances*, **p. 443**), such "awakening" gives the object a little extra edge. An awakened car might warm up faster and drive more easily; an awakened knife would never get dull, and an awakened toaster would always produce the perfect pieces of toast. Such edges aren't really significant (for that, you need a Fetish – see **The Toybox** in **Mage 20**, **Appendix II**), but they can be helpful in tiny, story-based ways.

Unlike many material objects, an awakened item exists in both the material world and the spiritual realm. That awakened toaster could be taken into the Otherworlds, and that awakened knife could be used against ephemeral opponents. Objects with roused spirits inside them feel more real and aware than most material objects do, and may hold unusual amounts of Resonance… perhaps even a personality of sorts.

Story-wise, a mage who wants to rouse spirits first needs an *animistic paradigm* – that is, she must believe that things *do* have spirits, and that those spirits are conscious entities in their own right. A scientific materialist cannot rouse spirits because she doesn't believe that such things exist. ("*Oh, sure – ALIENS exist, but my toaster does not have its own personal alien.*") A technoshaman could rouse the spirit in the toaster, but a Progenitor could not. That's just one of the quirks of belief.

From there, the shaman must get the spirit on her good side: make an offering, sing to the spirit, say "*Thank you*" when she uses the object in question, that sort of thing.

Game-wise, it takes Spirit 3 to rouse the spirit of a material object, or Spirit 3/ Life 2 to rouse the "spirit" within microbes or viruses. Complex lifeforms are awakened, in this sense, to begin with; you can rouse bacteria, but your cat's already awake.

Invoking Spirit Possession

An especially skillful, cruel or courageous mage can get spirits to enter objects, creatures, or even his own body. Detailed earlier in this chapter under the sections **Necromancy** and **Summoning, Binding, Bargaining, and Warding**, such invocations bring spirits into the material world and then provide them with willing or unwilling hosts.

Although certain spirits are perfectly capable of possessing objects, elements, and organisms under their own power (see the various Charms listed in the **Umbrood Spirit Entities** section of **Mage 20**, **Chapter Nine**), a mage with Spirit 4 may "invite" them to take up residence in a physical body whether they want to or not. In such cases, the mage "influences" his targets by getting *something else* to possess them, and also influences the spirit to do things on his behalf. Although this sort of thing is morally questionable, many mystic practices feature spirit-possession techniques among their darker secrets.

For other details about possession – specifically possession by the spirits of the dead – see the entry called **Channeling the Dead**, in the **Necromancy** section, .

Fighting Back Against Possession

Once a body is under the influence of the possessing spirit, that spirit usually runs the show. The "host" can try to fight back, but most mortals (that is, Sleepers with Willpower Traits of 5 or lower) are stuck with their unwanted "guest" until it departs or is ejected (see *Exorcism*, below).

High-Will individuals, mages, or other Night-Folk can try to throw out the possessing entity with the usual extended and resisted Willpower roll. (See *Resistance, Recognition, and Duration*, above.) In this case, however, the possessor and possessed must accumulate 10 successes. Each party uses the opponent's Willpower as a difficulty, which tilts the struggle in favor of the character with the most Willpower. Thus, a strong-willed operative (Willpower 8) has a better chance of beating a minor demon (Willpower 7) than a dazed hippie (Willpower 3) would have, while that same operative is in trouble if he's fighting off Papa Legba (Willpower 10).

How Often Can You Fight Back?

Generally, a character gets one chance per day to fight back against a spirit's possession. Extreme circumstances (like the spirit forcing the "host" to attack his daughter) would allow the possessed character to take another shot at it, at the Storyteller's option.

Possession as a Magickal Focus

In general, this spiritual possession could be used as an instrument of focus and/ or the source of a related magickal Effect. The example of the fang-growing Wolf-shaman described in the sidebar *A Bit of Spirit?* (see p. 16) features this sort of possession-related Effect, with the mage growing fangs by way of her bond with the totem Wolf. Other Effects could involve furry skin (Life 2), boosted reflexes (Life 3), or even full shapechanging into a lupine form (Life 4), all channeled through the "instrument" of Wolf's spirit entering the shaman's physical form.

Certain magickal practices depend heavily upon such bonds – element-bonding and mediumship (described in **The Book of Secrets**), shamanism, Voudoun, and certain forms of faith, medicine-work, and maleficia all feature rituals wherein the caster opens himself to spiritual possession and allows that spirit to work miracles through his mortal form. Rules-wise, these practices focus the mage's Effects through the spirit-bond and a limited form of possession.

Kicking the spirit *out* again may be another story. If the mage and his ally have a good and trusting relationship, he could simply say (or think) "*Okay, thanks – that's enough,*" and have the Umbral ally leave the premises. Spirits, though, tend to have their own agendas; even a friendly one might take some "persuading" before it scoots back to its usual haunts. In this case, the mage and the spirit share a resisted-action roll, Willpower verses Willpower. The one with the most successes wins – the mage ejects the spirit, or the spirit remains "in possession," so to speak, of the mage.

The Possession Charm

If the spirit has the *Possession* Charm (detailed in **Mage 20**, under *Umbrood Spirit Entities*), then that entity can try to take over the character and use its Charms to influence that host. The systems involved are detailed in **Mage 20**, under the *Possession* entry on **pp. 493-494**. Unless the Storyteller decides otherwise, that entity cannot use its Charms through the human character... and, more importantly, the character cannot access the Charms. A Storyteller may make exceptions in certain limited cases (like a wind-demon summoning storms through a possessed human character), but in general we recommend against it.

Optional Rule: Allies, Totems, and Self-Possession

A mage with the Backgrounds: *Allies* or *Totem* may – if that Background reflects an allied spirit – decide to allow that spirit to possess him. In this case, there's no Willpower roll necessary; the mage opens himself to the spirit's influence, and the spirit "sets up shop" within the mage's physical form, usually for a specific period of time.

A spirit-bonded character can draw upon that spirit's knowledge (in gamespeak, its Abilities), so long as the spirit agrees to share its secrets, the spirit remains "housed" within the mage's body, and the mage is physically capable of using those Abilities and/ or has at least one dot in them. The mage could not, for example, fly without the proper magickal Spheres, and would not be able to use the spirit's Stealth Skill unless he already has at least one dot in Stealth to begin with. The Abilities fade, of course, when the spirit leaves the mortal's body. And although a human host could employ languages (as in the Merit of that name) he does not already know while the spirit's inside of him, he would not generally receive the spirit character's other Traits (Charms and so forth).

Yes, a non-mage character could use this *optional rule* if she has the appropriate Background Traits and the Storyteller allows it. We advise caution, though, in this regard; a "shamanic" vampire with the Totem Background and the ability to share power with a spirit could easily become a game-breaker. *Werecreatures cannot employ self-possession this way*, seeing as how they're already half-spirit to begin with, and they share a sacred bond with their pack or tribal totems. As for wraiths, see the *Friendly Ghosts?* sidebar in the *Necromancy* section, *p. 87*.

Conflicting and Compatible Natures

Spiritual possession works better when that spirit suits the host's inner nature, and gets harder if the spirit clashes with the host's soul. As an *optional rule*, the Storyteller may lower the difficulty of a possession attack roll if the spirit suits the host, and raise it if the host and spirit have fundamental conflicts, as per the *optional* **Spirit Possession Compatibility chart**.

Because spirits interact with a person's inner nature, the similarity or difference depends upon the host's actual desires, passions, and so forth – not what he *acts like*, but what he *is*. Thus, a corrupting spirit will find it easier to possess a hateful hypocrite than an honest saint. That's why the Possession Charm is so powerful – it seeks out inner corruption, latches onto it, and blends into the nastiness that was already there. Because almost everyone has dirty little secrets, it's hard to resist a spirit of corruption; still, some folks hold deep purity, and those people are harder to possess.

Spiritual affinity or difference could also be seen as alignment with a host's personality (fire spirits connect with anger or lust, wilderness spirits connect to woods-lovers, cat-spirits connect with cat-lovers, and so forth); Nature Trait (trickster-spirits align better with Tricksters and Rogues than with Conformists or Directors); Essence Traits (a "flighty" spirit aligning with a Questing-Essence host); or Resonance (an angel reinforcing a person with Steadfast or Sacred Resonance).

Because this sort of thing could get *VERY* complicated, we suggest using this *optional rule* only for situations with extreme conflict or compatibility between the host and spirit.

Spirit Possession Compatibility

Difficulty	Spirit and Host are...
-1	Deeply Compatible
0	Essentially Aligned
+1	Obviously Conflicted

Exorcism

On the flipside, spirit-based practices also feature techniques for driving possessing spirits *out* of their material hosts. Faith, god-bonding, High Ritual, medicine-work, shamanism, Voudoun, and witchcraft all contain exorcism rituals, while certain approaches to hypertech and weird science help an Enlightened scientist purge unwanted paranormal manifestations from the Earthly dimension. Although the tools of exorcism can range from holy water and prayer to Ectoplasmic Disbonding Theory (backed up by some nasty technology!), any mage with the proper viewpoint and Spheres can at least *try* to drive an Umbral entity back to wherever the hell it came from.

The Battle

- **Spheres:** Just as Spirit 4 can draw a spirit into a body or object, that same Rank can drive it back out again.

- Prime 3 can also offer a "bribe" to the spirit. In this case, the mage channels her personal Quintessence to the spirit, and each point subtracts -1 from that mage's exorcism difficulty. Of course, the exorcist is then offering part of her essential self up to the possessing spirit – an *extremely* dangerous (although often traditional) exorcism tactic. (The usual -3 limit applies.)

- **Rolls:** System-wise, the mage and the spirit enter an extended and resisted roll, pitting the exorcist's Willpower against the spirit's Willpower. Each party rolls against difficulty 8, and each roll reflects one hour's worth of struggle.

- **Spirit Victory:** The spirit needs to accumulate at least one success for each point of the mage's Willpower + Avatar. To defeat, for example, an exorcist with Willpower 6 and Avatar 4, the spirit would need to score at least 10 successes.

- **Exorcist Victory:** An exorcist needs to overcome the overall power of the entity. A minor spirit would require 10 successes to defeat; a stronger one would take 15; a major Umbrood would require 20 or more; and a mighty one would take 30 successes or more before it was banished.

- **Botching:** A botched roll on the spirit's behalf drives that entity out of its host immediately. A botched roll by the exorcist allows the spirit to take control of her instead, typically with the *Possession* Charm (see above).

Both parties can also throw other spells and Charms at one another throughout the exorcism. As a result, exorcisms tend to leave serious physical and metaphysical carnage behind.

True Faith

A character with the **True Faith Merit** (described in **Mage 20, Appendix II**) can try to exorcise spirits even if she's not a mage, or if she's a mage who's not normally strong enough to do such things. Essentially, the Merit acts as Spirit 4 if that character tries to drive out an enemy of her faith. For an un-Awakened exorcist, every dot in True Faith acts as two points of Arete (exorcisms only); for a Faith-full mage, each dot adds two dice to her Willpower pool as she strives to defeat the entity.

A spirit that's opposed to the character's Faith must also overwhelm that Trait. For each dot in True Faith, the spirit needs two additional successes before the exorcist loses the fight. An exorcist with three dots in the Merit, for instance, would take six more successes to defeat than an opponent who had no Faith at all.

True Faith also adds its rating to an attempt to resist spirit possession. (Described in **Fighting Back Against Possession**, above.) Each dot in True Faith adds two dice to the character's dice pool when rolling to resist possession.

Note that True Faith *is not the same thing* as the practice called *Faith* (Described in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, p. 577**), and that an "enemy of the faith" is a spirit whose nature is anathema to the character's beliefs. A Shinto priest, for instance, could try to drive out a malicious *neko-mata* but not a gentle *zashiki warashi*.

Truth and Deception

Knowing truth from falsehood provides a monumental lever when you're trying to influence people. And so, skilled manipulators learn how to tell one from the other while also perfecting their own techniques of deception.

Characters who understand the subtleties of deception generally have the **Subterfuge** Talent whether or not they understand magick as well. As shown on the *Social Occasions and Intrigue* entry of the *Dramatic Feats chart* in **Mage 20**, deception typically involves a resisted roll between the target and the would-be liar.

Lie-based magicks reduce the difficulty of the liar's roll by the usual modifiers mentioned throughout this book when dealing with *Magick Enhancing Abilities*. And if the spellcaster is trying to *expose* a liar, then the spell reduces the difficulties for the person who's trying to catch that liar in deception.

The deliberate nature of an intentional lie, and the associated guilt and/or fear of discovery involved with lying, provide essential elements of the following techniques. A character who's *unaware* that she's lying, who's deluded into thinking that what she says is the truth, or who has no fear of consequences (or moral compass to register deceit) isn't likely to come across as a liar. At the storyteller's option, such a character may add +3 to the difficulty of a mage who's who trying to "read her for lies," or will simply come across as telling the truth even when she's lying. If that character really *does* believe she's telling the truth, then she won't read as a liar no matter what happens.

For details about sociopathy and other altered mental states, see **Mage 20, Appendix II**, and the *Dark Triad* Merit, the *Deranged* Flaw, and the associated section of *Derangements* in that chapter.

Spheres and Deceptions

When it comes to using magick to tell or expose lies, the mage has two key alternatives:

- Mind magick allows the mage to influence moods or command a person's mind, as detailed elsewhere in this section. With it, a mage can spot "mental stutters" surrounding lies (Mind 1), trick the target into revealing her lies (Mind 2), or force her to speak the truth against her will (Mind 3 or 4).

- Entropy magick lets the mage manipulate the little tics that people reveal when they're telling things that they know

The Spirit's Mark

Umbral entities leave weird "marks" when they set up shop within a mortal host. Rarely "marks" in the physical sense, these telltale clues to spiritual possession influence the host's body and soul, and occasionally her mind as well. The nature of those changes will depend a great deal upon the spirit and its relationship with the mage; the generally benevolent Loa Papa Legba might twist the host's leg and give her an uncharacteristic taste for cigars, while the demon Andras could turn his host's eyes raven-black and give her a propensity for telling especially toxic lies.

The spirit-marks from temporary possessions last only as long as the possession itself. A short-term visit from Legba won't leave his host permanently lame. Still, certain powerful and/or virulent entities inflict long-term changes even after short-term visits. A person possessed (willingly or otherwise) by the arch-devil Beelzebub will probably carry the devil's mark for life.

Whatever its nature might be, a spirit who spends a lot of time possessing a mortal host leaves a permanent mark upon that host. The Wolf-shaman will seem feral even when she's not possessed; the Legba-friend will develop a limp, while the Andras-ally will tell lies and leave raven-feathers everywhere she goes. People who understand spirits will recognize such "marks," and may respect the character, pity her, or dislike her intensely, depending upon the spirit and the person who recognizes its mark.

Spirit-marks generally "flavor" the essence and/or Resonance of a being or object. Strong marks leave physical traces too. Malignant entities instill sinister marks, while benevolent forces bless their allies with light and tranquility. Many spirits, especially the more primal ones, leave morally neutral marks – evocative scents, elemental residue, animal features, and the like. As **Mage 20** points out, spirits "are what they are," and so their marks provide extensions of the spirit's essential nature.

Generally, a character with Spirit 1 or higher can spot a spirit-mark; a successful Perception + Awareness roll will notice one even if the witness doesn't have the Spirit Sphere or understand magick in general. (That roll's difficulty depends upon the strength of the spirit in question.) An appropriate *Lore* roll (Spirits, Demons, Totems, Loa, etc.), combined with Intelligence or Perception, may identify the spirit who left the mark, or at least give the viewer a clue about that spirit's general nature. ("*You been kissed by the Dark Ones, child...*") In extreme cases, the character might even pick up Merits and/or Flaws based upon the long-term effects of the spirit's mark – see the *Spirit's Mark* Flaw in **The Book of Secrets**. Such entities and their allies have deep pedigrees in supernatural folklore and spiritual myth.

to be untrue. Entropy 1 allows the mage to read the cues; Entropy 2 and 3 sway the probability of telling the truth; and Entropy 5 wrecks the liar's concentration until the truth breaks free. See *Tell-Tale Heart Syndrome*, below.

Other Spheres might be creatively applied too; Spirit could call in Umbral entities for a "second opinion," Time could replay events, Life could manipulate the biological actions and reactions involved with deception, and so on. The rules surroundings those tactics can be found in other sections. When it comes to telling truth from falsehood, though, these two Spheres generally provide the most effective tools.

Base Difficulties for Lies

The Storyteller can run a truth-finding session one of two ways:

The Simple-Truth Method

For uncovering simple deceptions, or disposing of minor lies from minor characters, the Storyteller could just have the mage's player make a roll and say "*Yep, she's lying*" if he succeeds.

In this case, the difficulty is the target's Willpower. The average person (Willpower 2-4) will be easy to read, while a determined liar (Willpower 5 or more) would present more of a challenge.

The Resisted-Roll Method

A high-stake deception may demand a more complex solution. In this case, the liar and the truth-seeker perform a resisted roll, and the winner gets the desired result.

Generally, a believable lie is far easier to accept than one that taxes the target's suspension of disbelief. And so, a liar who's telling a subtle falsehood will have a lower base difficulty than one who's pushing the envelope. The credible lie ("*The NSA has a thick file on your activities*") will have a base difficulty of 4 or 5, while an *incredible* one ("*Oprah Winfrey is a Satanic clone assassin*") would be more like difficulty 8, 9, or even 10. The Subterfuge rolls and their magickal enhancements get applied to this base difficulty. And so, the liar is better off telling something that's easy to believe than she is when she's trying to use magick to push a real whopper.

For the truth-seeker, the difficulty of penetrating the liar's deception is, once again, that liar's Willpower Trait.

In either case, the lie-detection Effect is coincidental unless the mage is painfully obvious about using magick in order to penetrate the lie. Gazing deeply into the liar's eyes before coming to a conclusion is coincidental; conjuring Beelzebub, the demon prince of lies, in order to get the results would be vulgar.

Tell-Tale Heart Syndrome/ The Perry Mason Trick

Ideally, a liar will reveal herself through a trick of conscience or a slip of the tongue. One venerable trick, named for Edgar Allen Poe's famous tale, involves planting subtle mental impulses that drive the liar to confess the truth.

Game-wise, this trick involves a combination of Life 3/ Entropy 2/ Mind 2. Life heightens the target's anxiety (see *Tweaking Chemistry*, above), Entropy manipulates circumstances to put subtle pressure on the target, and Mind plants a rising sense of guilt. The trick can work without any one of those Spheres, but it needs at least two of them in order to be truly effective.

The usual truth-seeking systems apply. If the mage succeeds, however, then the liar spills the truth herself, usually in a dramatic emotional fit. Also referred to as "the old Perry Mason trick," this feat tends to wreck both the credibility and the emotional health of the liar in question. That said, there *is* one problem with the technique: As interrogators throughout history have learned, some people who *aren't* lying will confess to something they didn't do in order to escape the pressures of interrogation. And so, the Tell-Tale Heart Syndrome sometimes pulls a "false positive" when there's actually no lie to reveal, and traps a person who's not actually guilty... or who may be guilty of something else entirely...

False Positives and Slippery Truth

In certain situations, the Storyteller may want to leave her players guessing. Did John Courage actually learn the truth, or did his attempt to penetrate a lie lead to a false conclusion? And so, the Storyteller should use leading descriptions like "*You THINK she's telling the truth,*" or "*She seems to be telling the truth as she understands it.*" This way, the players aren't entirely certain about the results of an interrogation. Even if their die-rolls succeed, there might be factors they didn't know about which change the relationship between "truth" and "invention."

Remember too that "truth" is a slippery concept, especially in the world of a mage. Two people can remain utterly convinced that their perception of events is "true" even if an objective third party disagrees with them both. In the movie *Rashomon*, each party apparently believes that he or she is telling the truth about the events in question. Even so, their views of "truth" are radically different, and what actually happened might not be what any one of them recalls. Truth-seeking magick, then, is not an exact science. Even masters of its techniques realize that they're getting only part of the larger whole.

Sleep Spells

Everybody has to sleep sometime. And so, a traditional form of influence involves getting someone to give in to his desire to sleep. Depending upon the mage's approach, that influence could be as subtle as an emotional and/ or physical push toward slumber, or a sudden *Thud!* of induced unconsciousness. Subtle tactics remain coincidental, while the instant knockout variety tends to be vulgar unless it's focused through a technology like sleep-gas or the proverbial knockout blow.

As shown in **The Basics** for this section, sleep-based Effects use Life, Mind, or both:

The Subtle Approach

A mage who wants to lull his target to sleep can use Mind 2 or 3 to urge his target toward slumber. Mind 2 sends a gentle surge of sleepiness, while Mind 3 presents a strong suggestion along the lines of *It's time to go to sleep now*. Both Ranks can soothe an already-tired character toward a natural slumber, but neither one actually compels that character to fall asleep *NOW*. That character takes her own time falling asleep, and can resist that slumber for a while if need be.

A similar approach employs Life 3 to induce sleepiness through an alteration in the target's body chemistry. Generally, this takes the form of encroaching weariness, although the Hollywood-style rap on the noggin might have the same effect without dishing out the brain-trauma that a real blow to the head inflicts upon a living target. In this case, too, the target can resist sleep with successful Willpower rolls, and it may take a while before the slumber finally kicks in.

The Sudden Approach

For the mage who wants to knock her target out immediately, Life 4 can drop a target pretty much in his tracks by essentially transforming him from a *conscious* character into an *unconscious* character. That character's physical Pattern isn't changed, of course, but his vital systems are switched into "sleep mode" for the duration of the Effect.

A similar application of Mind 4 sends a powerful "*SLEEP NOW!*" command to the target. Unless he manages to resist that command, he falls immediately into slumber for the duration of the Effect.

Duration and Resistance

All in cases, the induced slumber lasts for the usual Duration unless the mage wakes the character up sooner. The "subtle" applications of sleep-magick can be shaken off by other characters who try to rouse the sleeping person, but the Life 4 and Mind 4 variations tend to leave that character unconscious until the spell wears off. (Storyteller's option, based upon circumstances.)

If he wants to resist the effects of these sleep-spells, the targeted character can employ the usual forms of resistance described above. A Stamina roll might also come in handy if that character uses raw physical prowess to remain awake – see the **Resisting** entry under **Physical Feats** on the **Dramatic Feats chart** in **Mage 20, Chapter Nine, p. 403.**

Range and Targets

The usual rules apply to sleep-spells cast across a distance and/ or cast on several characters at once. Range will depend

upon the method the mage employs (gas, hypnotism, blow to the head, and so forth), although the normal "range of perception" and Correspondence Sphere systems set the actual limits of the Effect and its range.

The player can use extra successes to send several characters to sleep, or else employ the **Magickal Feats chart** to determine how many successes she needs to knock out a number of targets at once. The second option, honestly, is easier to use, and it better suits the archetypal image of the sorcerer whispering "*Sleep now, my friends*" as a bunch of dudes keel over and begin to snore.

Arts of Illusion

For mages who wish to use their Arts to deceive other characters, the Mind and Forces Spheres provide an array of potential deceptions. As an overall rule, Mind-based illusions tend to be internal (that is, unaffected parties cannot perceive them), while Forces-based illusions (fueled by Prime-Sphere energies) create physical phenomena that anyone in the area can perceive.

The entries below provide information about different sorts of illusions and the permutations involved with them. As always, the scope and complexity of the feat determines the number of successes involved. A false echo of a child's cry would require a success or two, while a fully realistic Chieftain tank would demand 20 successes or more. For examples, see the nearby **Feats of Illusion chart**.

Mental and Physical Hallucinations

As detailed above, Mind-based Effects can plant visions, auditory hallucinations, and other quirks of perception. Only the affected character perceives such "delusions," though, and so she may be considered a little bit batty – perhaps even certifiable – by people who haven't been targeted by those mental illusions.

Meanwhile, the Life Sphere can trigger deceptive phenomena across the entire range of senses simply by adjusting the body chemistry and electrical impulses associated with those senses; in this case, though, the mage has got to know what he's doing if he wants those delusions to have the desired effect. (See *Tweaking Chemistry*, pp. 120-121.)

"Physical" Illusions

By manipulating elemental forces – light, sound-waves, gravity, inertia, weight, and so forth – a mage can use the Forces Sphere to conjure illusions that every present character can perceive. The Prime Sphere, meanwhile, provides energy to craft that illusion and keep it running.

As with all Forces-based Effects, the Sphere-Rank depends upon the size and scope of the illusion. A small quirk of light or sound would be Forces 2/ Prime 2, while a large and elaborate matrix of physical sensations would demand Forces 4 or 5, and Prime 3 or above in order to maintain the proper interplay of those elements.

Feats of Illusion

Successes	Illusion
One	Simple, one sensation (sight, sound, scent, etc.)
Two	Simple and moving, one sensation
Three	Complex and stationary, or simple and moving (two sensations)
Four	Complex and moving (several sensations)
Five	Complex and reflexive (multiple sensations)
Six+	Complex and interactive (full sensations)

Default Duration is one scene. Additional levels of Duration, or "damage levels" of two dice of damage, may be purchased for one additional success, each level, above the Base. One day + two dice of damage, for example, would require two additional successes.

"I Disbelieve!"

Believability	Difficulty
No fucking way!	3
Hard to swallow	4
Implausible	5
Possible	6
Probable	7
Likely	8
Too damned likely!	9

Witnesses and Recording Devices

Generally, an illusion appears either to the target only (as with a mental illusion), or else to the people who could normally expected to perceive it (as with the "physical" illusion). Being made by human mages, they're almost always tailored to conform to human sensory perceptions. As a result, *non*-human characters, or mages using Rank 1 perception Effects, who witness an illusion usually peg that illusion for what it is. Sure, it might look real to *you*, but Fido here can see right through it!

The Storyteller may decide to offer a Perception + Alertness or Perception + Awareness roll to characters who witness an illusion; then again, she might *not* offer it unless the players ask for such a roll. (See *"I Disbelieve in the Illusion!"* below.) It's the Storyteller's option to conceal the nature of an illusion from her players – that usually *is* the purpose of an illusion, after all! If she's feeling generous, she could drop hints about the illusion ("*The texture of the wood seems really odd…*") and then let the players draw their own conclusions.

Technological recording and analysis devices are rarely fooled by illusions unless those illusions have been specifically crafted to deceive the technology. The image or sound might register, but it won't read as "real" unless it's incredibly simply and fleeting – the sound of a shout, for example, or a shadow moving across a wall. To truly fool a

video camera with a more complex illusion, the mage would have to specifically whip up that illusion to suit the video recording technology involved – a Forces 3/ Prime 2 Effect at the very least, with a successful roll involving several dots in the appropriate Technology Skill. For more details about fooling technology, see **Computer Systems** in **The Book of Secrets, Chapter Two**.

Sensations and Illusions

Many illusions affect only one sensory range, maybe two. Fully sensory illusions are complicated as hell, and the mage has to actively *think* about evoking a fully realistic illusion. People who examine illusions closely notice that something seems "off" about most of them: the textures are wrong, light warps in unnatural ways, there's no scent attached to the thing, and so forth. A fully realistic and sensually immersive illusion demands at least five successes and quite possibly more, especially if it's also interactive.

Reflexivity, Interactivity, and Immersivity

The "average" illusion (if there *is* such a thing) remains essentially stationary, and does not react much – if at all – to activities beyond those for which it was initially set up to respond. Let's say that Chopper sets up a holographic illusion of a door; the basic illusion just sits there, and if someone knocks at it, that person's hand passes right through.

Several levels of response, however, can be built into the illusion if the mage gathers enough successes (and in some cases, employs the proper Spheres) in order to invoke them:

- A *reflexive* illusion can respond in a very limited and pre-programmed way. If Chopper's door resists a visitor's fist with a wood-like firmness, and offers up a "knocked-on" sound, then the illusion has become reflexive. It still won't open, but it holds an extra level of realism above the simple illusion.

- At the next level, an *interactive* illusion can respond to new stimuli in an appropriate way. Perhaps that illusionary door responds with a knocked-on sound, and then swings open to admit the "visitor" to an empty room. As the visitor steps through, the false "room" reveals itself through realistic sensations, interacting with the person who's encountering that illusion. Obviously, such illusions are correspondingly more difficult than simple ones. And although they appear to react to the presence of their "audience," they still lack any form of solid existence.

- The highest level – the *immersive* illusion – performs complex and spontaneous interactivity. Call this one "the Holodeck level" because that's essentially what it is. Such illusions are as realistic as real life, down to the ability to cause physical sensations and react to physical activity. Unless such illusions are mental ones, however, the mage who creates them must use a combination of Forces 4 or 5 (to command the complex interplay of energies), Mind 4 (to reinforce the sensations and the sense of belief), and Prime 4 or 5 (to control the enormous amounts of energy such a feat demands). Lesser Sphere-Ranks simply cannot craft this level of reality, regardless of the successes involved in the illusion's creation. And even then, the illusion is still just that: an *illusion*, not the real thing.

Do Illusions Inflict Damage?

Generally, a simple illusion misleads the senses and leads a character to mistaken impressions. That said, that illusion *could* indirectly draw a person into danger by inspiring him to step into traffic, confront a cop, attack a friend, fall off a roof, or commit some other act of potentially grievous bodily harm. It's not actually the *illusion* that's sending that character to the ER or the morgue; without its influence, however, he'd probably be enjoying a healthy evening somewhere that didn't involve broken bones or worse.

Certain illusions, however, *can* inflict damage if that "feature" is built into the Effect. A mental illusion wedded to a psychic assault, for example, could hurt the victim through a combination of mental delusion and crippling pain. The source of that pain may not be obvious to the victim, of course – she might see herself being slashed by a phantasmal claw instead of being blasted by a **Psychic Shatter** feat. And so, given the quirks of human consciousness and biology, the aggravated damage from that psychic assault could manifest as Freddy Kruger-style slashes across skin that hasn't been touched by a physical blade.

In rules-terms, a mental illusion that inflicts bashing physical damage works as a Mind 3 Effect. Aggravated damage would require Mind 3/ Life 3. The nature of those injuries gets determined by the caster. That illusion could slash the skin, stop the heart, cause hemorrhages inside the brain, or deal out whatever sorts of gruesome (or invisible) carnage the mage desires.

A *physical* illusion could use elemental energies to hurt someone too. In this case, the "illusion" has been backed up by standard-issue Forces-Sphere damage – usually blunt trauma (bashing damage) from buffeting winds or solidified air, but possibly lethal or aggravated injuries from radiation, superheated steam, or other sources of elemental ouch.

Forces-related illusions may have other physical effects as well. A person could step into the arms of an illusionary robot and fly through the air if that "robot" also includes the Forces elements necessary to pick that person up and carry her away. (For details about the Rank of Forces necessary to lift physical objects, see the **Forces and Weight chart** in the **Elemental Mastery** section, .)

Whatever the effects might be, an illusion that inflicts damage or employs some other form of physical phenomena *requires additional successes* on top of the base successes mentioned on the **Feats of Illusion chart**. Each additional success beyond that base inflicts two additional levels of damage, as shown on **Mage 20**'s *Optional Dividing Successes Rule chart*.

"I Disbelieve in the Illusion!"

Faced with a potential illusion, a mage (and player) might try to invoke the force of disbelief. This sort of thing works *only* with mental illusions, though; "physical" illusions employ elemental forces, and although they might not be "real," mere skepticism cannot counter their effects.

- In order to counter a mental illusion, the player rolls the character's Willpower on the **"I Disbelieve!" chart**. The difficulty depends upon the believability of that illusion; a velociraptior running down Park Avenue is easy to dismiss (**No Fucking Way!),** while the sound of your frequently unfaithful partner whispering sweet nothings to someone else in the other room is **Too Damn Likely**. The player needs to roll at least one success for every success that was rolled while casting the original illusion. If that illusion was cast "offstage" by another character, just assume three to five successes as the goal to overcome.

- If the character's trying to spot flaws in either a mental or "physical" illusion, then use Perception + Alertness instead of Willpower when trying to penetrate the illusion. This sort of scrutiny *can* be used against Forces-based illusions, as it reflects a person noting imperfections in the illusion, as opposed to someone who's trying not to believe that it's real.

Are Illusions Coincidental?

We live in an age *saturated* with illusions. From special effects to holographic projectors, sensory quirks and intentional deceptions, illusions are part of our daily lives. And so, in many cases, the act of casting an illusion is generally coincidental, *so long as the focus suits the locally established sense of reality*.

What does that *mean*, exactly? It means that *if* people are expecting someone to conjure something that will fool them, and *if* that person possesses the necessarily skills and/ or technology to fool them, then they'll expect to be fooled and accept that illusion as "normal"... and thus, as coincidental magick. An FX expert who waves around his holographic projector while someone shouts "*ACTION!*" can get away with some pretty impressive illusions. (If the "illusion" starts eating people, though, then all bets and coincidences are off! See *Illusions and Paradox*, below.)

On a related note, an illusion that looks like something people could accept as real, and that doesn't come from someone chanting "*Ooga-booga, I cast an illusion!*" is probably coincidental. The sound of sudden footsteps and an ominous shadow on the wall won't look like an obvious act of magick, and so it would remain coincidental; the sudden inexplicable appearance of a phantasmal angel, on the other hand, *won't* look like part of conventional reality (no, not even in a church), and so it might be a vulgar Effect even though it's an illusion.
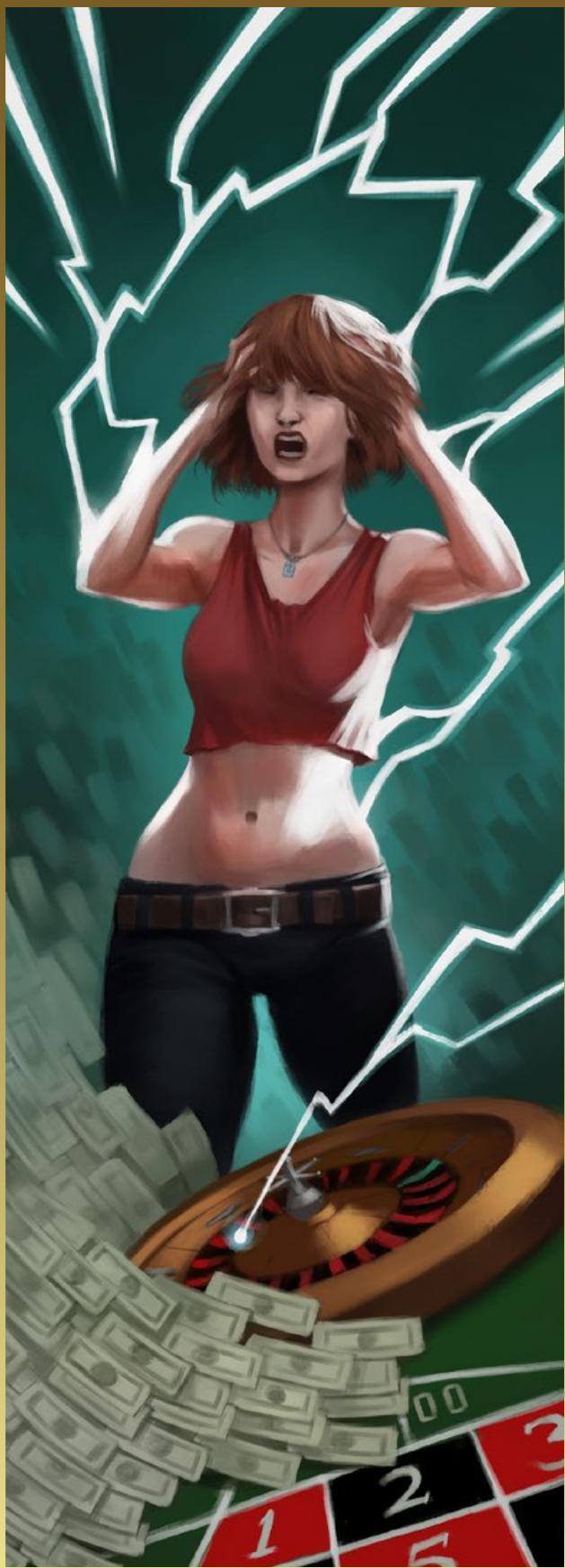
Mental illusions are coincidental by default, with one exception: *If some weirdo looks you in the eye and you suddenly start seeing things, then said weirdo has committed a vulgar act of magick*. Any mage with a glimmer of intelligence, then, casts her mental illusions by dosing her target with drugs, hypnotizing him, or giving him some other reason to doubt his sanity and perceptions. A mage who's blatant enough to show off her mental powers deserves her inevitable doom.

Illusions and Paradox

Normally, Paradox does not strike after a spell has been successfully cast; if Paradox *was* retroactive, after all, then all mages would probably be dead. However, the force of **Unbelief** (described in **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, p. 553**) hovers over illusions, thanks to their complex metaphysical relationship to human consciousness and the Consensus of reality. As a result of that relationship, an illusion that remains apparently believable also remains coincidental. One that *breaks* that apparent believability invokes Paradox. And if that happens, then one of two things (Storyteller's option) occurs:

- The illusion essentially disintegrates under the force of Unbelief. Flaws become apparent, the illusion wavers, and the Effect breaks down and disappears, usually within seconds; or...

- The mage takes Paradox as if she had cast a *vulgar with witnesses* Effect. The illusion continues to exist, but the Paradox points get added to the mage's wheel. Essentially, the force of Unbelief settles into the mage herself, and while this won't trigger an immediate backlash (yet...), those points *will* get counted and make that mage's life difficult the next time she *does* suffer a Paradox backlash.

Whatever their nature, illusions deal intimately with matters of truth and deception. They *are*, after all, created to deceive, and they spread their influence by manipulating the audience's relationship with reality. And so, even in our age of creative deception, illusions are tricky for everyone involved – for the witnesses because they cannot be trusted, and for the mage because you never quite know what will happen if and when people see through the things she has created to deceive them.

Fate and Fortune

Even more slippery than matters of truth, the command of probability – or, as it's often known, the Art of Fate and Fortune – presents a mage with subtle powers of influence. Such arts make the Chakravanti and Syndicate incredibly powerful in ways that few people even recognize. Sure, a Hermetic wizard can throw lightning at your ass... but could he score five million dollars on a whim of the stock market... and *which* form of power, in the long run, is most effective in the world at large?

Story-wise, a mage could nudge probability in theoretically infinite ways. He might enter a room at precisely the *right* dramatic moment, arrange the fall of dice without ever touching them, conjure a distracting phone-call at a convenient time, prop an obstacle into the path of a fleeing enemy, arrange for a gun to run out of ammunition (or have one shot left) in the middle of a gunfight, delay a bus or hail a cab, provoke an actual coincidental event, or even (as shown by Jacob in the movie *Ink*) steer several unconnected elements into a collision that suits the mage in question.

All of these methods, however, have a vital element in common – an element that both players and Storyteller should always keep in mind: *They work with things that are already present*. Entropic influence will not create a taxi out of thin air, or draw one from across a vast distance at "just the right moment." A quirk of fate must be *something that actually stands a chance of happening under the given circumstances*. And while it's easy to accept a winning hand at the poker table, the odds of money flying out of a passing airplane are ridiculously small.

As a general guideline, assume that acts of Fate and Fortune that tweak existing events in small yet convenient ways are coincidental Effects that require very few successes. Events that strain the fabric of credibility – that bend probability in absurd directions in order to get incredible results – become vulgar and typically require large numbers of successes.

If, for example, Jinx wants to get an enemy to trip on a crack in the sidewalk, that's an easy and very probable feat (coincidental magick, difficulty 5, one or two successes). If she wants that enemy to suffer a sudden heart attack, though, that's a lot harder; even if he's got a heart-condition, it's not likely that he'll keel over at just the right moment (vulgar magick, five or more successes required). And if she wants him to get beaned by a falling piece of space debris, the probability of such a "coincidence" is pretty much nonexistent even for Masters of Entropy.

Vulgar Control and Coincidental Influence

Unless she wants to risk using vulgar magick, the exact results of Fate and Fortune remain beyond a mage's control. She can nudge things, arrange things, adjust the probability of things happening, and so forth. Unless she is actually wrenching things in her favor with vulgar magick, however – like using

vulgar Entropy 4 to make a floor collapse – *the exact results of the probability twist are under the Storyteller's control*, not the player's command.

Let's say that Jinx wants to make like Lola at the roulette table in the movie *Run Lola Run*. She needs money, and the casino seems like a good place to score some. A coincidental probability Effect may allow her to win the money, but the *way* in which she wins that money is the Storyteller's call. If the player wants to determine the exact method that Fate and Fortune give her that money, then the Storyteller is within his rights to tell the player that it's a vulgar Effect because she's pushing hard against the normal tides of probability. He *might* still decide that letting the roulette ball fall in the right place at the right time to score the right amount of money is a coincidence, *but it's still the Storyteller's decision*, and that is one hell of a "coincidence."

(You *could*, if were so inclined, view the shattering glass in the casino as a Paradox backlash for Lola pulling a vulgar Entropic Effect in order to win the money at roulette. This might be overthinking a cinematic example, although it could also lead to an interesting discussion on somebody's Facebook page… and if that discussion gets more folks to watch *Run Lola Run*, so much the better!)

Dangerous Quirks of Misfortune

Up until Rank 4, the Entropy Sphere does not inflict damage. It can, however, lead to hazardous coincidences: a speeding car, a weakened floorboard, a falling candle, and so forth. Again, *the circumstances must be present in order for them to be manipulated this way* – a falling candle won't fall and start a fire if there hadn't been a candle there in the first place.

Once again, the nature of the hazard and the damage it inflicts remain under the control of the Storyteller unless the player wants to invoke vulgar magick. Leading an enemy into speeding traffic so that he *might* get hit by a car involves the powers of coincidence, but yanking a car out of its way so that *this particular car WILL hit* the enemy is vulgar magick. And again, a very likely hazard (like a speeding car on a street) requires fewer successes than a very *un*likely one (a lump of frozen poop falling from an airplane).

For the amounts of damage caused by various dangerous things, see the **Environmental Hazards** section of **Mage 20, Chapter Nine**.

Blessings and Curses

Entropy-savvy mages can also influence probability to favor (or condemn) a given person, place, or situation. Starting at Rank 3, such blessings and curses direct the flow of events toward a positive or negative conclusion.

As above, the exact chain of events – and the nature of fortune or misfortune – must be rooted in existing circumstances. Likewise, the results must remain under the Storyteller's control if the player wants to use coincidental magick rather than vulgar magick. Jinx could (when she reaches Rank 3 in Entropy) wish someone well, and thus make it likely that something good will happen to him. If she wants to arrange for that person to ace his next job interview, however, then she's gotta get vulgar with her control of probability.

Also as above, a simple blessing or curse ("*May you have a very good day*") is easy and requires very few successes. An involved one ("*May today profoundly enrich you and everyone you know*") would require more successes because it's essentially asking more from the universe's sense of probability.

Long-Term Blessings or Curses

As mentioned under **Resistance, Recognition, and Duration**, above, blessings and curses generally last for the Duration of the Effect, and affect targets that are the vicinity of the mage. Because mages don't usually bless or curse nearby people and then stick around to see the results, however, a player can add certain elements to the basic probability twist:

- Cursing a given place or entity for an extended length of time ("*May this corner remain forever unfortunate*") requires the appropriate Spheres in addition to Entropy. While Entropy alone might give a certain car a bumpy ride for a while, the act of inflicting a lasting curse upon that car would also demand Matter 4 so that the curse was literally worked into the Pattern of that car.

- If that blessing or curse involves a trigger event, then the spell would involve Time 4 as well – see **Contingency Trigger Effects** under **Time Distortion and Travel**, p. 113.

A Prime-skilled mage could also bless a person with the power of vital energies. See **Quintessential Blessings** in the **Energy-Work** section, pp. 48-49.

Binding Oaths

The highest level of Entropic blessing and curses involves binding oaths that chain a person's fate to his obedience to that oath. This chain comes from within the mind of the target himself, and so neither Time nor Life nor Mind is necessary. Rather than using the Mind Sphere to enforce compulsion, the mage wraps probability *into the target's own awareness of Fate and Fortune*; this, in turn, makes the target into the instrument of his own destiny. If he breaks his oath, then his misfortune becomes a literally self-fulfilling prophecy.

Game-wise, this feat demands a conversation between the mage and her target. In the course of that conversation, the target must agree to take the oath *under his own free and unforced will*. An attempt to force the oath upon an unconsenting target, or to bind it into his mind through Mind-Sphere magick, *will fail*. Oh, the mage can *convince* the target to taking the oath; she may seduce him, manipulate him, trick him, or use other

non-magickal methods to entice him into entering the agreement. But in order for the binding to work, the target *MUST* agree – and be *conscious* about agreeing – to the promise. A binding made without the willful consent of the target doesn't contain the most essential element of the oath: the target's own acknowledgement of that deal.

Once connected to the character who swears the oath, the tides of probability remain locked up within that person's consciousness. If he *willingly* breaks that oath (magickal compulsion to break it, or breaking the oath while demented, does not count), then the character suffers from a nasty curse, as described above:

- A vague wish for bad luck remains coincidental, and the "bad luck" in question is up to the Storyteller's whims. (Again, see above.)

- A specific doom is vulgar magick, but will occur as promised.

Also as described earlier, a simple fate ("*You will suffer grave misfortune!*") will be easy to invoke (one to three successes), while an unlikely and involved one ("*You will be consumed by the ghosts of 10,000 weasels!*") would demand a commensurate number of successes (10 or more).

Those chained tides of probability may be spotted with a successful Perception + Awareness roll from a character who uses Entropy 1 or higher to perceive it. A *broken* oath will remain visible to such people, and they won't think well of someone who undertakes and then forswears such a powerful promise.

Unless the caster decides to withdraw the oath, this Effect is permanent until either: A. the oath is broken (and the doom falls); or B: the character obeys the oath to his final breath.

Conceptual Entropy

The most arcane application of Entropy-based influence involves crafting or breaking down the substance of ideas. Essentially, the mage applies the metaphysics of entropic principles to disintegrate or reinforce intellectual concepts. *Why* this works is a matter for long philosophical debate. *How* it works involves treating an idea like any other character: an imaginative construct that can be altered, beefed up, or taken apart by game-rule systems.

Literally speaking, *everything* in a roleplaying game is an idea. Each concept begins as an imaginative spark that gets reinforced by a supporting structure. The more elaborate the structure, the more work it takes to build it up or tear it down. And so, within **Mage**, simple ideas can be crafted or dismantled with a few successes, while elaborate ones demand more successes and a lot more effort.

As with the *Binding Oath* described above, the key to this entropic influence feat rests within the head of the person who's on the receiving end of the spell. The mage is not using Mind-Sphere magick to compel belief or disbelief, even though he *could* do something similar. (See the earlier entries on **Puppetry and Possession**.) Instead, the Entropy-using willworker takes an imaginative spark in another character's head and then either adds to the framework (reinforcing the idea) or takes it away (dismembering the idea). The power of Entropy aids in the process, but the heavy lifting comes from *the human consciousness behind the idea*, not from the application of magickal force.

In story-terms, the mage must approach the target(s), establish a certain level of influence so that they'll listen to what she has to say, and then take time to inspire or undermine the ideas within their heads. Generally, this involves social rolls (Charisma + Expression, Appearance + Art, and so forth) that suit the mage's approach to that influence. If that mage already holds a certain degree of status within a group, then those people will be inclined to give her words an unusual amount of weight. (See the *Backgrounds and Influence* pp. 117-118.) Playing to circumstances can make it pretty easy to establish or demolish an idea, especially within mass-media venues like movies, news outlets, and so forth. After all, concepts like *Red State/ Blue State*, *enhanced interrogation*, and *drill, baby, drill* are fairly recent memes that didn't involve some wizard blathering nonsense in our collective face... although certain pundits and politicians may be more Enlightened than we generally give them credit for being...

In game-terms, the following rules apply to acts of conceptual entropy:

- Conceptual entropy demands Entropy 5. *Anyone* can seed or dismantle ideas, but doing so on a metaphysical level demands high-Ranking juju.

- As detailed in the **Mage 20** *Entropy Sphere entry*, attempts to alter ideas get rolled against a difficulty of the Willpower + 3. A weak-willed person (Willpower 3, for instance) is easily influenced, while a stubborn person (Willpower 7 or more) is pretty hard to sway. Night-Folk and other mages are Willpower + 5 in this regard, as they're rather dedicated to their convictions.

- The number of successes involved depends upon the strength and complexity of the idea in question. Inspiring or dismissing a whim requires one or two successes; doing so with a simple concept take two or three; a complex idea or deep conviction requires four or five; and working with obsessions, philosophies, or fanatical beliefs demands five successes or more.

- Like the *Binding Oath*, this feat requires some level of interaction between the mage and her target. She can't simply make his ideas disappear. (Well, she *could* do it, but that deed would involve a vulgar act of Mind 5, not a coincidental act of Entropy 5.) That said, a mage *can*

Losing My Religion

Conceptual entropy's cruelest use involves destroying a person's faith. In a world where so much depends upon belief, such attacks can be shattering, and may force a person to question his reason for being, his place in the universe, and the essence of what he had believed about himself.

Game-wise, this application *cannot* be used against a large audience. Belief is a personal thing, and so this attack may be used *only* upon an individual character. The roll is for *vulgar magick without witnesses* – a base difficulty of 9. Each success rolled in the attack subtracts one point of temporary Willpower from the target; if and when the target reaches 0 Willpower, his faith (and his will) have been broken.

The difficulty of such an assault is the target's Willpower; if that target has the **True Faith** Merit, then each dot adds +1 to that difficulty, and two additional successes to the necessary number of successes. For mages and Night-Folk, that difficulty is Willpower + 5, and the results of full success can be awful: frenzy and despair for vampires, frenzy and *Horano* for werecreatures, a *Harrowing* for wraiths, loss of all Glamour plus 10 points of Banality for changelings, and similar related effects for other creatures of the night.

A powerful mage can also use conceptual entropy to attack another mage's paradigm. If the targeted mage successfully has his paradigm dismissed by the conceptual entropy assault (no less than 10 successes, with the difficulty being that mage's Willpower + 5), then his magick becomes *vulgar with witnesses* until he manages to find his faith in that paradigm again. Essentially, he becomes the "witness" in question, and his faith in that magick has been shaken so badly that he feels unable to use it in good conscience.

Generally, this crisis of faith lasts until the character has restored his full Willpower Trait. However, if it's combined with powerful Mind-Sphere assaults, torture, or other will-breaking torments (again, see **Things Man Was Not Meant to Know**), then the loss of faith may become more or less permanent. In order to regain his ability to use the Awakened Arts without destroying himself in the process, that mage might need to undertake a quest, rededicate himself to his old Path, or even find another one whose tenets have not been destroyed. (See **Changing Focus and Allegiance** in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Six**, **p. 339**.) Such challenges reveal the vast dangerous of the Awakened Path, and may present some of the greatest obstacles a mage could possibly face.

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use Entropy 5 to "wave away" ideas with a gesture or a glance. This, however, is deeply vulgar magick. A smart mage uses arguments instead of force.

- Also like the **Oath**, this act of entropic influence may be coincidental if the target is left to draw his own conclusions, and vulgar if the mage suddenly makes the target's mind go haywire.

- *Un*like the **Oath**, the **Conceptual Entropy** feat can be used on many targets at once. If the mage establishes a position of influence over a group of people, she can try to sway them to her ideas or demolish their own. Pundits, professors, politicians, and philosophers excel at this sort of thing even when they don't use Awakened magick to get the job done. (For system details, see **Influence From a Distance**, **The Social Element**, and **Backgrounds and Influence**, above.)

- A "broken" idea is not so much *destroyed* as it is *discredited*. As explained below, the concept still *exists*, especially if it has become part of common consciousness. To the affected individuals, though, that idea has been dismantled by the mage; for at least a short time, they lose their faith in the idea. (For extreme cases, see the sidebar **Losing My Religion.**)

- A "planted" idea doesn't become an instant article of faith. It *does*, however, gain a certain amount of traction in the minds of affected people. From there, it can spread beyond the mage's influence, and what happens after *that* is a matter for the storyteller to decide. A truly successful idea, though, may have dramatic effects upon a chronicle.

- If the mage employs conceptual entropy to plant or demolish an idea on a large scale, some people will have exactly the *opposite* reaction to her attempt. People are ornery critters, and so anyone who tries to force a particular point of view upon the public generates a rabid counter-response on general principle. Crackdowns create martyrs, revolutions breed counter-revolutions, and fanaticism instills a sense of disbelief. No amount of magick can stop this backlash – it's a fundamental element of human nature... probably of the Consensus itself.

Used cleverly, conceptual entropy may shift the borders of those **Reality Zones** described in **Mage 20**, **Chapter Ten**. The Technocracy, after all, has crafted many impressive paradigms while discrediting other concepts among large segments of the Masses. While this sort of thing is more a matter of long-term Storytelling than of a few good dice-rolls from an Arete 5 character, we recommend that powerful mages *can* make changes in the Consensus, if and when the players do the hard work of offering something better than the current version of reality.

(For details about that sort of transformation, see **Common Mage Paradigms** and **Shifting the Zone**, **Mage 20, Chapter Ten, p. 567-572 and 615-617.**)

Not even the greatest Masters of Entropy, however, can destroy popular ideas once they reach into the Consensus. If such things were possible, then the Ascension War would have ended before it began. The human imagination holds endless possibilities, and although the tides of probability and logic can break down a simple concept in its infancy, that boundless possibility nurtures ideas once they start to spread. Concepts like freedom, anarchy, Communism, and so forth may be suppressed and countered, but never truly destroyed. Like organisms, ideas adapt and change to fit their circumstances; even in death, however, they give rise to new and enduring life.

A Question of Enchantment

We are creatures of emotion wrapped in consciousness – passions driven by thought and memory. It's no surprise, then, that we associate extreme influence with magic. Folks who get under our skins are *charming*, *bewitching*, *possessive*, *enchanting*. They put a spell on you, wrap you around their finger, and own you body and soul. When we combine such influence with Awakened magick, then, it's no surprise that such mages are among the most powerful of their kind. What better weapon could you *ask* for, really, if you want to change the world?

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