CHAPTER THREE:
SUPERNAL LORE

I've been trying to remember things, CLEARLY remember things, from my past, but the more I try to think back, the more it all starts to unravel. None of it seems real. It's like I've just been dreaming this life, and when I finally wake up, I'll be somebody else.
— Walenski, Dark City

In **Mage: The Awakening**, mages are essentially human, with one major difference; they can choose to wield magic. The following rules show how to create your **Mage** characters, and some of the few differences between mages and Sleepers.

Character Creation

Your characters in **Mage: The Awakening** engage with the Fallen World using the Storytelling system game mechanics. To determine how they fit into the world mechanically, you create those characters using the following systems. Every player should have a copy of the character sheet in the back of this book. The character sheet is your map to your Awakened character.

Usually, all players should make their characters together. You're building a story together; it stands to reason that the characters should at least nominally fit together. Even if the Storyteller plans to bring everyone together in the first game session, it's good to consider the dramatic appropriateness of the characters as a group. While enough finagling can bring any group of people together, some combinations may be more trouble than they're worth.

Step One: Character Concept

If the character sheet is the map to your character, character concept is the legend. Character concept is a couple of words that describe your character in a dramatic, literary sense. Is your character a Puckish Rogue? Is she an Itinerant Researcher? Is she a Celebrant Technoshaman?

As you've read through the previous sections, perhaps the Path, Order, or other setting snippets sparked a basic character idea. That idea is a concept.

Next, you'll need three Aspirations. Aspirations are your goals for your character. Note that they might not be goals your character personally holds, but they're goals you have for your character. For example, you might want to see your character lose a friend in the scope of the story. No reasonable person would want to lose a friend, but it's a valid Aspiration because it's something you want to see happen in your character's story.

When choosing Aspirations, look to two short-term Aspirations, and one long-term Aspiration. Short-term in this case means something that could happen to your character in a single game session, and long-term Aspirations are things that take a greater, extended effort to accomplish. Phrase Aspirations in a few words, but no more than a sentence. Keep them on the general and vague side, since more specificity means they're less likely to be fulfilled.

As a Storyteller, you should write down all these Aspirations. Aspirations are a way for players to tell you the kinds of things they want to see happen in your game. Be sure to engage these Aspirations, and give players plenty of chances to bring them into play.

Last, choose a Virtue and a Vice. These traits (explained on p. 211) reflect your character's personality and provide a means to regain Willpower.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Every Chronicles of Darkness character possesses nine basic Attributes. These Attributes cover a character's inherent capabilities. They come in three categories, Mental, Social, and Physical. Each

category possesses three Attributes. You can find more about these Attributes on p. 207, including what various dot levels represent. At this stage in character creation, each Attribute receives one free dot (as noted on the character sheet). Then, prioritize categories. Choose which grouping is most important to your character, then second most important, and last. The top category receives five dots to distribute, the second receives four, and the last receives three. You may divide these however you see fit, but no Attribute can go above five dots in total.

Step Three: Select Skills

Next, select Skills. There are 24 Skills, divided into Mental, Physical, and Social categories just like Attributes. Unlike Attributes, Skills receive no free dots. Prioritize categories the same way you did with Attributes, dividing eleven among the top category, seven to the secondary, and four to the final category. You can find more on Skills, including a detailed list of each and actions they contribute to on p.208.

Step Four: Determine Skill Specialties

Now that you have Skills for your character, you get to refine three of them with Specialties. Specialties are single word or short-phrase descriptors that help to narrow down your character's particular area of expertise. For example, your character might have Occult (Witchcraft), Occult (Herbalism), or Occult (Ghosts). Choose three Specialties. You can find examples in the Skill descriptions starting on p. 208.

When choosing Skill Specialties, you can look at them in three major ways. First, you can supplement inferior Skills that you still want your character to use. For example, your character might only have a single dot of Investigation, but if you take the Specialty "Crime Scenes," your character becomes much more effective in that specific field. Second, you can maximize efficiency with a mastered Skill. For example, if you took four dots of Firearms, selecting a "Rifles" Specialty makes your character remarkable with a rifle, and beyond other characters with just four dots. Lastly, you can use Specialties to give your character a little personal flare and flavor. For example, your character might have a Crafts Specialty in "Model Kits." This might not benefit your character directly in the game, but it says something about your character and her priorities.

Step Five: Add Mage Template

Now, add the Mage template in order to take your character from a Sleeper to one of the Awakened. This requires a few sub-steps.

Path

Choose your character's Path: Acanthus, Mastigos, Moros, Obrimos, or Thyrsus. Note your character's two Ruling and one Inferior Arcanum from this choice. You can find detailed explanations of each Path starting on p. 19.

Order

Choose your character's Order. Most characters will be in a Pentacle Order, but your Storyteller might allow Nameless or

Seer of the Throne characters. Look to the chart on p. 82 to determine her three Rote Skills. Assuming your character has an Order, she receives a free dot in the Order Status Merit, a dot of Occult, and the High Speech Merit.

Nimbus

Describe your character's Nimbus. Use the descriptions on p. 89 and your character's Path to help flavor it. Remember that a Nimbus is subtle for characters with a starting level of Gnosis.

Dedicated Magical Tool

Determine your character's Dedicated Magical Tool. Her Path and Order determine possible magical tools. See p. 121 for descriptions of various tools.

Arcana

Next, determine your character's starting Arcana. Your character starts with six total dots in Arcana. She may only have one Arcanum at three dots at this time. Three to five of her starting dots must be in her Ruling Arcana, and both Ruling Arcana must have at least one dot. None of her starting dots can go to her Inferior Arcana.

The possible combinations are as follows:

Specialist: 3, 2, 1 or 3, 1, 1, 1

Balanced: 2, 2, 2 or 2, 2, 1, 1

Generalist: 2, 1, 1, 1, 1

Rotes

Your character starts play with three rotes. She can only have rotes which she can cast with her Arcana. Look to the Arcana descriptions starting on p. 128 for example rotes.

Gnosis

By default, your character starts with a single dot of Gnosis. For five of her starting Merit dots, your character can start with Gnosis 2. For all ten of her starting Merit dots, she may start with Gnosis 3.

Mana

Your character starts the chronicle with a full Mana pool, as derived from Gnosis.

Obsessions

Obsessions are like long-term Aspirations, but grant Arcane Beats and Mana when you resolve and make major progress toward them. Characters with Gnosis 1 and 2 may have one Obsession. Those with Gnosis 3 may have two.

Praxes

Your character has one Praxis per dot of Gnosis. Look to the Arcana descriptions again and choose spells to be your initial Praxes.

Resistance Attribute

The Awakening is tough on the mind, body, and soul. Every Awakened character begins play with one additional dot of Composure, Resolve, or Stamina, which may not raise the Attribute chosen above five dots. Add this to your character sheet at this time.

Step Six: Choose Merits

Every character begins play with ten Merit dots, unless some of those points were spent on Gnosis (see above). You may choose any combination of Merits from the Awakened list starting on or the general list starting on Your character must meet all given prerequisites to purchase a Merit. These Merits may affect other traits on the character sheet; be aware of these when calculating Advantages in the next step.

Step Seven: Determine Advantages

All characters have certain derived traits, which depend on their Attributes, Skills, and Merits. Determine the following Advantages and note them on your character sheet. We include basic calculations here. If a Merit modifies your character's Advantages, it'll be noted in the specific Merit.

- **Size:** Characters start at Size 5.

- **Health:** Characters start with Size + Stamina in Health dots.

- **Speed:** 5 + Strength + Dexterity

- **Willpower:** Resolve + Composure

- **Wisdom:** 7

- **Initiative:** Dexterity + Composure

- **Defense:** (Lower of Wits or Dexterity) + Athletics

The Awakening

This section gives rules specific to Awakened characters. Note that outside of Awakened magic, mages are mostly just normal humans. When not actively using magic, they don't use significantly different rules from the average Chronicles of Darkness character.

Character Advancement

Characters in **Mage: The Awakening** advance through a system of "Experiences." Experiences are spent to increase and buy new character traits. Experiences are earned by accruing "Beats," which are small elements of drama in the plot. These Beats come through fulfilling Aspirations, through good and bad things happening to characters, and resolving minor plot hurdles called Conditions.

Beats

Beats are measures of drama in the Storytelling system. Five Beats become one Experience, one significant moment able to advance your character. You receive Beats for multiple things in the course of the story. Aspirations and Conditions are the most common ways to achieve Beats, but numerous others exist. Here are the main ways this occurs:

- Any time you resolve or make significant headway toward an Aspiration, take a Beat.

- At the end of every chapter (game session), take a Beat.

- Any time you resolve a Condition, take a Beat.

- When you fail a roll, you can opt to make it a dramatic failure and take a Beat.

- Any major dramatic event the Storyteller deems appropriate can award a Beat.

You can only receive one Beat from a given category in a given scene. If you resolve three Conditions in a scene, for example, you only receive one Beat. However, if the moment is particularly dramatic, or you've made significant sacrifice to trigger multiple Beats, the Storyteller can rule that multiple Beats are acquired.

Aspirations

When making your character, you choose three Aspirations. These are goals you wish to tackle in your character's story. Primarily, they exist as a way to measure and express advancement. Any time you fulfill an Aspiration, you take a Beat. Any time you make major headway into or change the direction of a long-term Aspiration, you take a Beat.

For this reason, Aspirations should stay general and somewhat vague whenever possible. The more specific they are, the less likely you are to actually fulfill them. As a Storyteller, when it comes to the question of whether or not a player fulfilled an Aspiration, always lean towards allowing it.

Character Creation Quick Reference

Step One: Character Concept

Come up with Concept, Virtue, Vice, and three Aspirations

Step Two: Select Attributes

Prioritize Attributes, distribute 5/4/3 dots

Step Three: Select Skills

Prioritize Skills, distribute 11/7/4 dots

Step Four: Determine Skill Specialties

Choose three Skill Specialties

Step Five: Add Mage template

Choose Path, Order, describe Nimbus, choose a Dedicated Magical Tool

Determine Arcana by Path, six dots, according to rules on **p.80**

Choose three rotes

Determine Gnosis, one dot plus one per five Merit dots spent

Determine Obsessions

Choose a Praxis per dot of Gnosis

Determine free Resistance Attribute Dot: Composure, Resolve, or Stamina

If in an Order, add a dot of Occult

Step Six: Merits

Distribute ten Merit dots, less any spent on Gnosis; characters in an Order receive Order Status • and High Speech for free.

Step Seven: Determine Advantages

Calculate the following Advantages:

Size: 5

Health: Stamina + Size

Speed: 5 + Strength + Dexterity

Willpower: Resolve + Composure

Wisdom: 7

Initiative: Dexterity + Composure

Defense: (Lower of Dexterity or Wits) + Athletics

Path Arcana

Path	Ruling Arcana	Inferior Arcanum
Acanthus	Time and Fate	Forces
Mastigos	Space and Mind	Matter
Moros	Matter and Death	Spirit
Obrimos	Forces and Prime	Death
Thyrsus	Life and Spirit	Mind

Order Rote Skills

Adamantine Arrow	Athletics, Intimidation, Medicine
Free Council	Crafts, Persuasion, Science
Guardians of the Veil	Investigation, Stealth, Subterfuge
Mysterium	Investigation, Occult, Survival
Silver Ladder	Expression, Persuasion, Subterfuge
Seers of the Throne	Investigation, Occult, Persuasion OR by Ministry:
Hegemony	Politics, Persuasion, Empathy
Panopticon	Investigation, Stealth, Subterfuge
Paternoster	Academics, Occult, Expression
Praetorian	Athletics, Larceny, Intimidation