

CONSENSUS

by

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LANGUAGE

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Chapter 1

In The Beginning

1.1 Consensus

Narrator

Hello Reader.

There are certain rules, that everyone seems to know, about how the world works. Electricity moves in circuits. There's no way to show someone else an exact image of what you see inside your head. You can believe with all your heart that you can fly, but when you step off the cliff, that won't be enough to stop you from plummeting to the ground. This is the Consensus, the universe's general agreement about how reality works.

A few people, though, seem to know differently. They might know that an antenna uses an open circuit to make invisible waves which can be translated into sound. Or that the right

Narrator

drumbeat can let them focus a point behind their eyes into a picture—an exact image—for another to see. Or that there is a secret, forgotten word from the dawn of history that, when spoken as a command, allows you to ignore gravity. They understand a truth that defies the Consensus.

They are known as Mages, as Awakened. They may exist within the Consensus, play by its rules when they must, but always they harbor the knowledge that there is more. That knowledge carries power; the power to shape the very truths of reality. Who can wield such power? What ripples radiate outward from its source?

Would you like to find out?

1.2 Reading This Book

Narrator

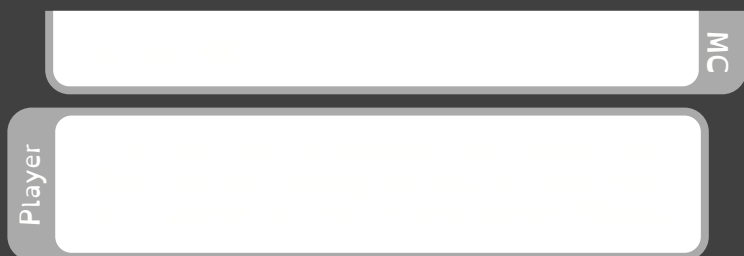
Most of this book will be addressed to you, the player, in one of two roles. The first role is the Master of Ceremonies, or MC, who facilitates conversation and play. This is the player whose job it is to make the moves that keep the conversation flowing, in some games this role would be called the GM. The second role is the player of a Mage in the game, who embodies a particular character. They choose and portray this character's thoughts and actions, contributing to the story primarily from that character's perspective. No matter

Narrator

which role you plan to take, feel free to read anything and everything you see herein. This isn't the kind of game that keeps secrets from one role or the other. That said, the reason we break it out like this, is so that you don't have to read more than you want to.

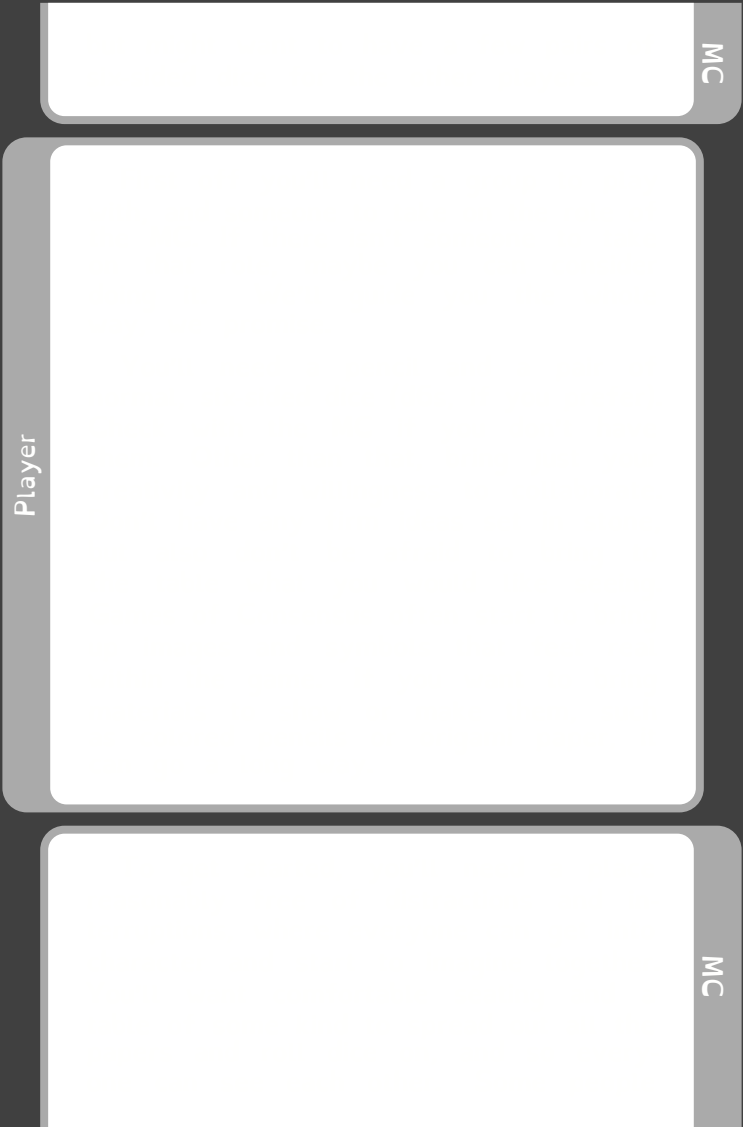
Different people will have different entry points into understanding this game. After you finish chapter 1, here are some places you might skip to:

If you're the kind of person that wants to learn about the flavor of the game, you can continue on to chapter 2, Magic. If you're the kind of person who really needs a character to latch onto before you understand the game, take a look at the Playbooks in Appendix A. If you understand a game best through the actions that it encourages you to take, it's worth taking a look at The Moves chapter. If you want to get an idea of how the game plays out, you can skip to the First Session chapter, but be sure to read on, because it doesn't go into depth about a few important things. If you do take any of these options besides moving right on to chapter 2, there will likely be a lot of terms you don't understand, but that's okay, you can look them up in the glossary, or you can just keep reading the rest of the book where they will be defined.



1.3 Setting Up to Play







MC

1.4 Roleplaying as a Conversation



MC

MC

Player

Player

1.5 Moves and Dice

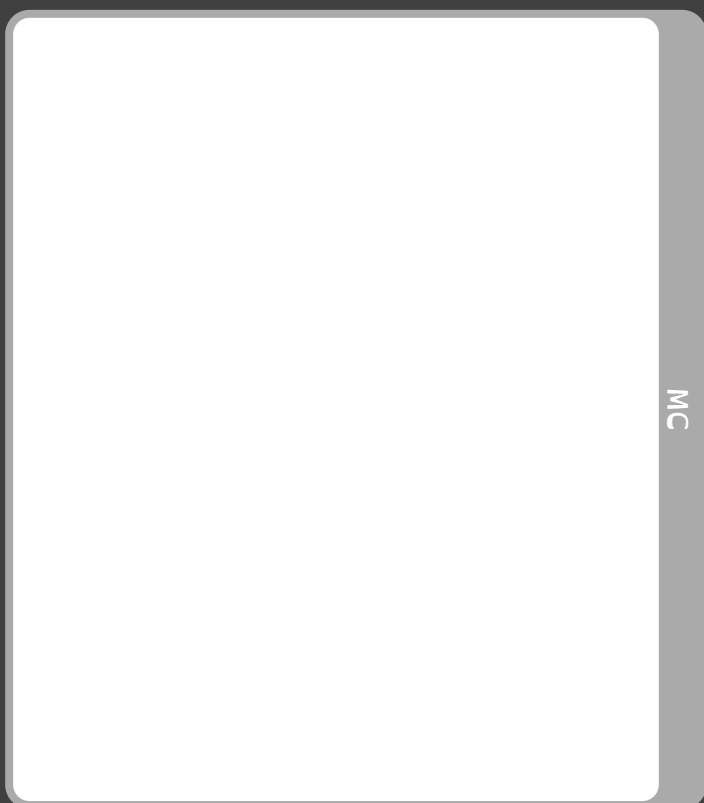
MC

MC

Player

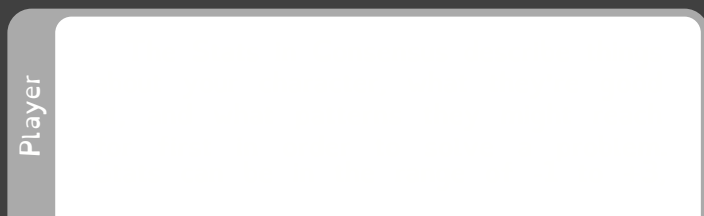
Player	
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Player



MC

1.6 Stats



Player

Player

MC

1.7 The Life of a Mage

Narrator

No matter what role you're taking on, this is some basic information you'll want to be thinking about.

Mages in Consensus are people who have a deep belief about how the world works and

Narrator

how they can fit into it. This belief is strong enough to allow them to do what the game recognizes as magic, though they may deny that, because if the world really works by allowing people to speak words of power to command the elements, then speaking those words of power isn't magic any more than using a computer is. Mages change the world just by existing, whether they like it or not, and these changes form the basis for many of the stories in Consensus.

Paradigm**Narrator**

A Mage's particular beliefs are summed up in their Paradigm. This describes what it is they believe that is different enough from the usual world that when acted on, the Mage produces magic. It suggests what they are generally capable of, what they are particularly good at, and what they think is impossible, whether for just themselves or for anybody. Understanding the depths of their own Paradigm is an important part of the journey for any Mage, and understanding the Paradigms of other Mages around them is key to successfully working together (as well as to not have a disastrous clash of worldviews).

Player

MC

Hardship Breeds Revelation

Narrator

Beliefs can be made stronger by being challenged, just like people. Very few people who lead an easy, charmed, unchallenged life develop the beliefs that are strong enough to transform them into a Mage. But, once they do Awaken, coming to understand their abilities, their story is just getting started. Difficulties remain, whether things they couldn't shake from their past or new problems brought on by magic. The life of a Mage is never an easy one.

To get at this, Playbooks ask three questions: Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized; why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed; and why are you hunted. These can be far-fetched and fantastic, but also can be tied very tightly to real-world issues. Be respectful and careful, but do delve into these if you want. The Safety Rules (page 94) in the First Session chapter can help make sure no-one crosses a boundary they don't want to.

Everyone has trauma from times that they have gone up against reality and lost, in one aspect or another. Mages' histories often mean that this trauma is both acute, and something they have grown around. It is quite possibly what helped lead to the moment of Awakening that now enables their wondrous abilities, but it never truly goes away. Mages will feel driven to keep pushing against reality, and it will keep pushing back. They will often

Narrator

be hurt in the process, whether it is from Backlash or losing a Consensus Shift race. Before they were Awakened, reality might strike back in the form of physical laws, authority figures, or mob mentality. After, the Mage's ability to handle many of these problems will have increased exponentially, but so will the danger: raw forces of reality can tear a Mage asunder, knots of disbelief can be summoned to hound the Mage, and their sense of reality might become temporarily broken so they cannot tell what actually happened. Trauma is never a simple path, and Mages can gain new Restrictions and other complications when it flares back up.

Anchors and Inspirations

Narrator

Mages, just like anyone, are tied to people and things around them. Some of the most significant ties are to Anchors, the answers to the question "Why did you stay?". These nonmagical people, places, and things hold a Mage back from their full potential, but also keep them from becoming lost. They require upkeep, since people have needs, apartments need rent, and traditions must be followed. If not seen to often enough, they will stop anchoring the Mage, leaving them that much closer to true power, and to disconnecting entirely from the world. It is also possible to lose an Anchor in one searing moment, when

Narrator

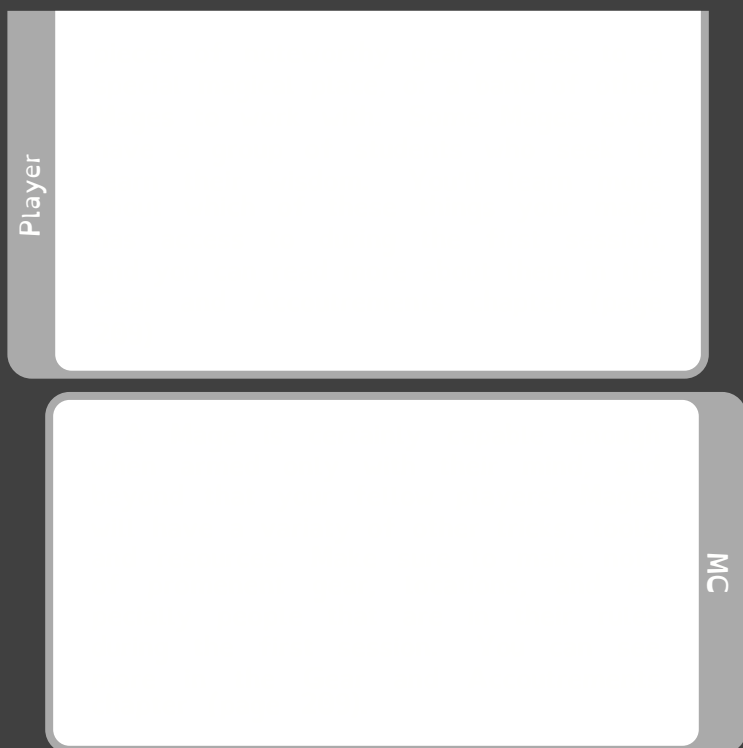
it becomes clear they didn't matter to you like you thought they did (or they die, are broken, or lost).

Inspirations are the people, and occasionally magical beings, who further enlighten a Mage and help them see what might be possible. They act as counterbalances to the restraint from Anchors. An Inspiration doesn't tend to actively inspire for long, but they are easy to reconnect with, which can be very rewarding.

MC

1.8 Gear and Accoutrements

Player



1.9 Status Tracks

Narrator

Consensus measures progress over time for a number of elements of the game, from health to a sinister plot. This is usually done with a Status Track, which is based on the Code system used in some medical transports. Status Tracks start with no Codes marked off,

Narrator

then have Code 50 marked off, Code 40, and so on, down to Code 10 and then Code N, the “newsworthy event.” What this means will depend on what the Status Track is tied to, but Code N is always irrevocable, representing a fundamental change. When a Status Track’s Code 30 is marked off, it starts to “slip”, advancing towards Code N much more quickly. Problems that aren’t addressed early on can become much more difficult to head off.

For more on Status Tracks, see the Status Tracks chapter (page 134).

1.10 Why to Play

Narrator

Maybe you want to feel what it would be like to be able to seize spirits by their names and command them. Maybe you like talking about whether souls exist and what it would mean if they did, and want to try out being someone who knows they do, can act on them, but still stays up late talking about what it means. Maybe you hear power corrupts, but want to play out struggling between that and using power to do good. Maybe Mages sound like the kind of people you want to associate with, and think like, and this seems like a good way to try it out.

Maybe you’ve felt like you realized something true about the world, and you’ve been waiting for something that says it’s real, for a long

Narrator

time.

Chapter 2

Magic

Player

Player	
	MC

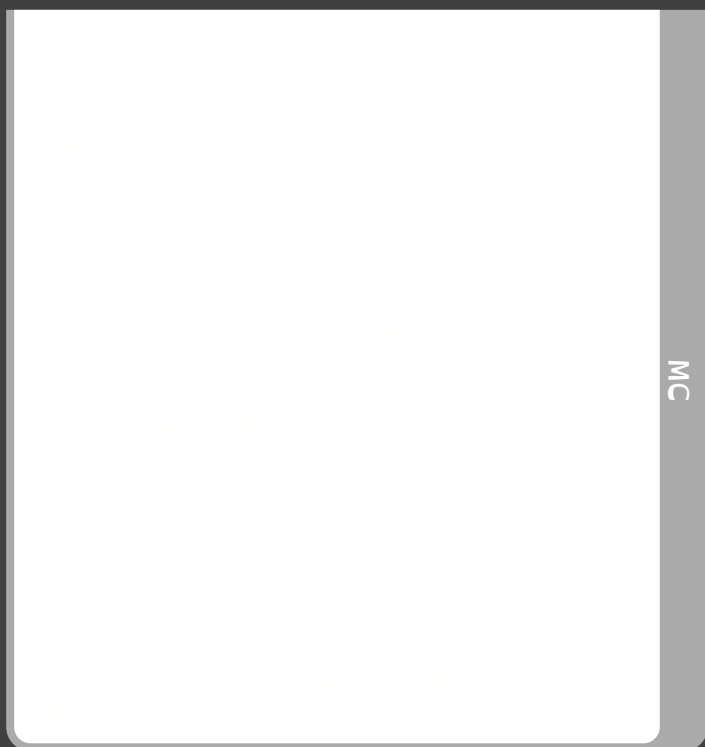
2.1 Paradigm

Player

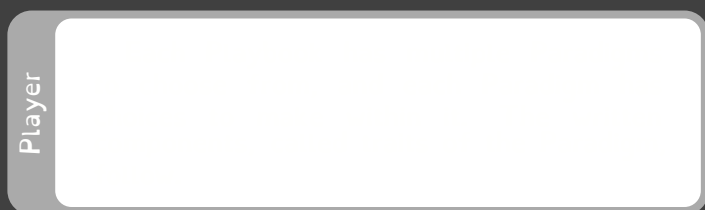
Player

Player

MC



2.2 Paradigm Traits



Title

Player	
--------	--

Aligned

Player	
--------	--

Player

Opposed

Player

Player

Player

Freedoms

Player

Restrictions

Player

Player

2.3 Performing Magic

Narrator

There is no “do magic” roll, or even move, in Consensus. It is too intrinsic to a Mage’s nature, in the same way that there is no move for traveling somewhere. Just as “I travel somewhere” raises innumerable questions that need to be answered, some of which may lead to rolls, while others just can be accepted at face value, like “Are you walking? Biking? Flying?” and “Are you going somewhere particular? What do you want to do?” and “How will you deal with the cold and the snow?”, you need to know

Narrator

more specifics before you know what any given act of magic means.

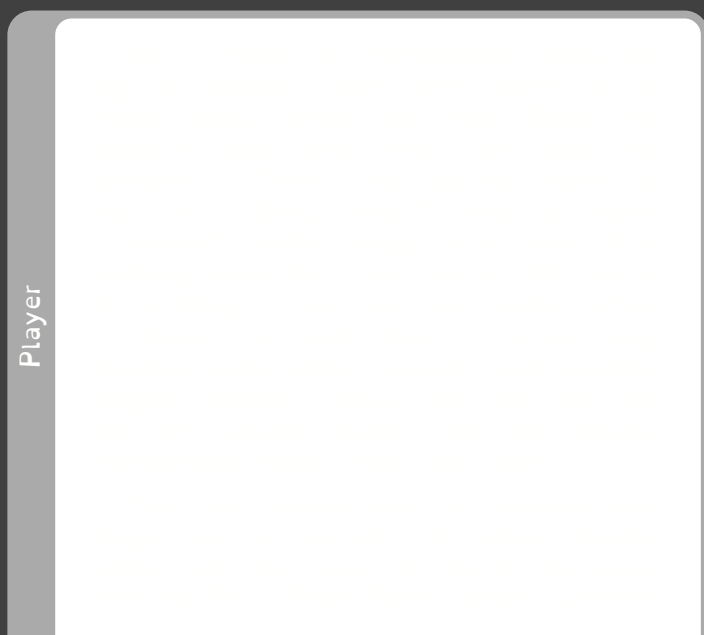
There is a sense of “power” or “strength” within Consensus. By default, most Mages have around the same strength: what matters is how well they can apply their Paradigm, what support and preparations they have, and whether they can exploit the situation to their advantage. That exact power level is not precisely defined and may vary from game to game. Expect to come to a common understanding as you play, and that common understanding may shift over time. After ten sessions, a spell that was very difficult and taxing may have become trivial, and that’s OK.

2.4 Harmonious Magic

Player



Commonplace magic



Player

2.5 Rending Magic

Player

Player

Lookouts

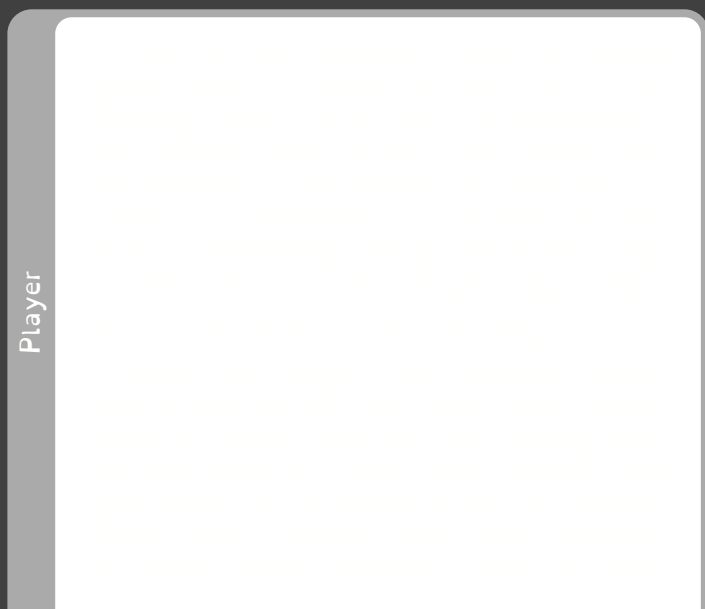
Player

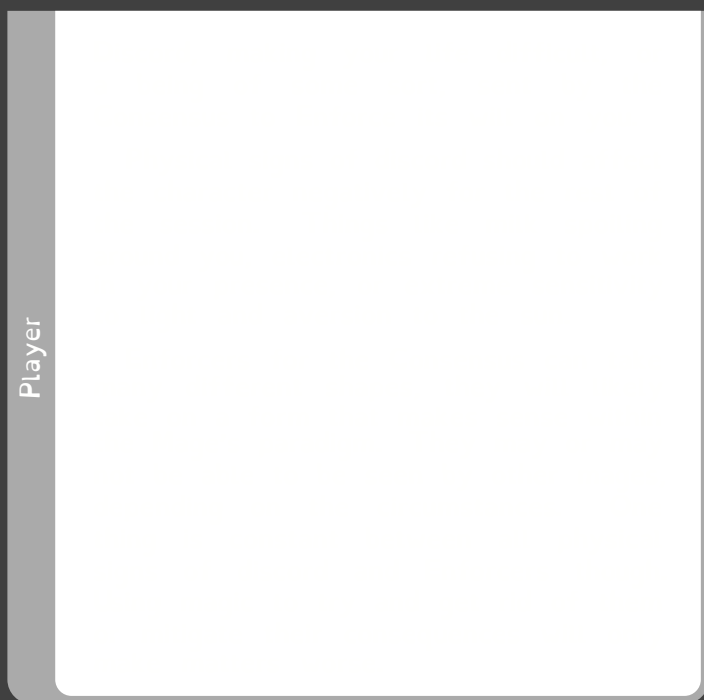
Player

2.6 Discord



2.7 Backlash





2.8 Reality Breaks



Player

Player

MC

	MC
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2.9 Rituals

Player	
--------	--

Planning a Ritual

Player	
--------	--

Player

Performing a Ritual

Player

Player

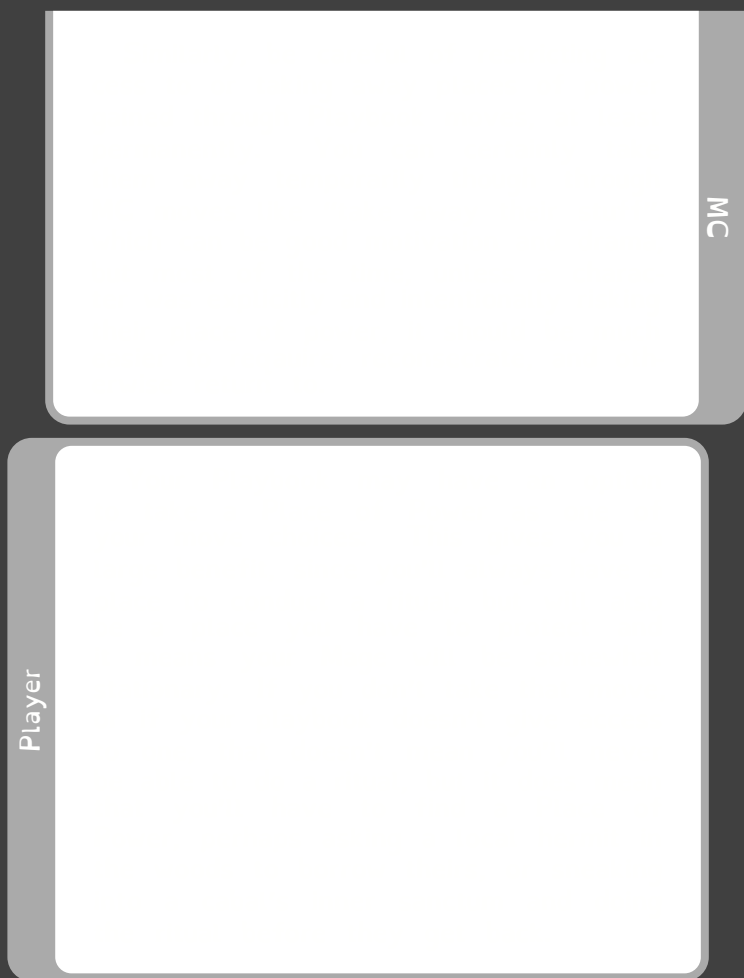
Place of Power

Narrator

Places of power are locations with a high concentration of magic, for one reason or another. These tend to be naturally occurring,

Narrator

like ley-line nodes, which are jealously guarded secrets, or else constructed with a copious amount of time and energy from many Mages. Places of magic like this are paramount when putting together rituals of great power, so they are coveted by groups of Mages wishing to work large magics, or singular Mages who need to draw on great amounts of power.



Chapter 3

The Master of Ceremonies





3.1 Agenda

The Agenda is your most abstract, highest order, set of rules. These are your objectives during the game. If you succeed at all of these agendas during a given session, you will find that the story naturally follows.

Provide the characters with strife both within and without.

Mages do not lead boring lives. When they talk with friends and allies, they have deep, weighty conversations that reshape views of reality, or prepare to reshape actual reality. Give them scenes where their beliefs are challenged or they have an

CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 58

opportunity to teach. When they venture out to thwart the plans of insidious forces, the balance can swing on their wits and on the weight of their convictions. Give them scenes where the danger is real and immediate. When they seek a moment's respite, they forge connections that can guide them like starlight, if they haven't already turned away. Give them scenes where they can show that they care.

Play to find out what happens.

This means that you don't have a story planned out that you're running the players through. It means that even though you might have some inklings of what's going to happen next, quite often you'll find out you're wrong, because the players come up with an idea that just fits, or a move forces your hand. It may seem odd at first if you're used to a more preparation-heavy style of running a game, but trust us, the fun you have finding out what happens next right along with the players is worth it.

Ask what it means to be human.

Consensus is a game about people who are everything humans can be, want to be, strive to be. But it's also about how these people still can fail, whether by not being true enough to themselves or by going too far. As you ask leading questions, make moves, and write Forces, focus on making yourself and the other players think about the nature of humanity, theirselves' and others'. In this game, a scene about a character drowning their sorrows in a bar can be just as important, if not moreso, as a knock-down drag-out fight. Sorrows make us human, while any beast can do battle.

Make the Consensus come to life.

Your job is to play the world and the other

people in it as if they were real. No person exists just to give the characters some information and then be ignored, think about what would happen if the characters met someone and demanded something from them, and then needed their help later. In this way, you make the world feel real, like a living, breathing world, one that is exciting to explore.

3.2 Always Say

When the other players look to you to see what happens, you have to say something. Make sure the things you say follow these rules.

What the principles demand

Your principles, below, address how you speak to the table, and what you say. Don't contradict any of your principles when you address the table.

What the rules demand

This is both your rules detailed here, and the rest of the rules of play, such as the basic moves, and the playbook moves. Sometimes these will tell you what to say depending on the outcome of a roll.

What your prep demands

When we said above that you can't make any kind of preparation, we were stretching the truth a little. The game will tell you to make Forces after the first session, and you should always look to these when you don't know what to say, they will tell you what to say.

What honesty demands

Your job isn't to lie to the players, or trick them, or make them guess what you're thinking. Some

CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 60

games are about that, this one isn't. So when a player asks a question, answer it honestly, and be generous with the truth. If the player's character enters a room, you should describe it, set the scene, and don't leave out important details waiting for them to ask the right question.

3.3 The Principles

Riddle the world with hidden magic, unexpected connections, and unrecognized potential

Save up those images that speak to you from your favorite media about magic. Don't just describe a bookstore, talk about the dust laying thick on a stack of books in the back, talk about a ghostly light shining through the motes of dust like a sunbeam normally would. Make the world feel like there's magic in it, but also that it's hidden, buried, or unseen.

Create Ephemera

During the game things will come up that need a visual, tactile, or written aid. Draw maps of the cities, write the Mages letters from their mentors on aging parchment, write down the steps of a ritual to be included in a grimoire many years down the road. Play music or ambient sound if it fits the mood. Sketch characters, make props, bring the magic to our world just a little bit. Sometimes, when you would demand an evocative answer, offer materials to them instead. "Can you draw the park's layout, if you have an idea?" or "Give us a sense of your lab, and use that paper if you feel like it."

Use Character Names

When you're speaking to the players, make sure

CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 61

to speak at the character they're playing, use their Mage's name when you ask them leading questions, or when you ask them what they do next. Speak in first person as the characters you play, engage the Mages in conversation.

Stay in the Narrative

You have a lot of Agendas, Principles, and Moves, and they're great. They're wonderful. They're your rules. But just like a baseball game would be boring if the pitcher stood still and yelled "fastball," while the batter also stood still and yelled "single," instead of actually playing the game, you also shouldn't just say what move you're making when the players look to you, you should weave that move into the narrative, tell them what it looks like, what their characters can sense about it, tell them what actually happens in the fictional world.

Make Everyone Vulnerable

This principle has a few layers of meaning. First, remember that none of the characters that you make up to interact with the mages, no matter how much you like them, is invincible. Characters can get hurt, captured, or worse, and you shouldn't be afraid to let that happen to even your favorite character, if that's what happens in the fiction. Second, remember that everyone has weaknesses, and irrational like or dislike of certain things. Even if they put on a tough face, let your characters be vulnerable. Third, following that, let your characters show emotion, let them connect with the Mages and share those moments of vulnerability.

Give Everyone Names and Desires

All of your characters should have names, lives, and motivations. There's no faceless bartender, no shopkeep who only exists to buy and sell from.

CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 62

Everyone in your world should feel real, and three dimensional. When you make characters for the Mages to interact with, give them a goal, whatever they're striving towards. This may be the same as their Forces goal (see the Forces chapter) but most likely it's smaller and more personal. Whenever you don't know how that character would act or react, refer back to their goal.

Demand Evocative Answers, then Follow Through

Sometimes you're going to be asking leading, provocative, and personal questions about the Mages. You can even do so with questions that assert a truth in the question itself, like asking a Mage who they screwed over in the past. This is part of how you build the world collaboratively with the other players. Don't let them off the hook with simple, safe answers, press for more, get them into the details. And once you've got that, make sure to (as they say in improv) "yes, and" their answer and build on it in fun and interesting ways.

Sometimes, Give Them Exactly What They're Asking For

Often times, because Mages lives aren't boring, there's challenges and hurdles in the way of getting what they want. But if every little step of the way has a hurdle, suddenly no one can move. Sometimes you should give characters exactly what they're asking for, because otherwise their lives become predictable (and therefore boring). Other times, you should also give them exactly what they ask for, and have them realize why it's a monkey's paw just a little too late.

Root for the Mages

You and the other players are on the same team,

CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 63

so it only makes sense to root for the Mages. That doesn't mean you want their lives to be easy (boring), but you also want to see them overcome their struggles, talk about things that matter to them, and do cool things. Conversely, it's okay for the Mages to fail, and if it happens you should let it happen and not try to save them, because you're rooting for them, not trying to play for them. Cheer them on when they do something great, and wince and cover your eyes when they make mistakes, just like you might for your favorite characters on a tv show.

Think About the Bigger Picture

Sometimes something will happen in a scene that has a far-reaching effect, outside of just the limited scene that's currently on screen. Think about how big things can affect your Forces, even the ones who aren't present at the moment. Also, sometimes a Mage will roll a 6-, or the table will look to you to see what happens, and none of your moves make sense to have happen right then in that scene. Make a move off-screen, describe what's happening to the players, and what, if anything, their characters notice about it.

Take Some Decisions Out Of Your Own Hands

Sometimes you just don't have an answer, or you don't want to be responsible for the outcome of something. You're allowed to pass the buck occasionally, by doing one of a few things. You can turn the question back on one of the players. "I don't know Vince, do you have a secret stash of highly dangerous alchemical components in your apartment?" You can look to the outcome of a move, if one applies. You can look to the relevant character's goal, or you can look to the relevant

CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 64

Force's status track. Those might already have the decision made for you.

Don't Be Afraid to be Obvious

It can be so easy to get wrapped up in trying to think of something cool and unique, and sometimes that's fun, but this game works very well if you sometimes just do or say the obvious thing. Tropes are tropes for a reason, and actions have logical consequences, so when a Mage is trying to **Outwit**, **Outpace**, or **Outfox** a pursuer by climbing up a tall building, and they roll a 6-, you can go ahead and have the obvious thing happen. They fall flat on their back and hurt themselves (**Deal Damage**).

Being obvious can let the players feel good that they predicted something. It's boring if that happens too often, but getting it right from time to time can be rewarding and satisfying. Plus, if everyone knows what is obviously coming up and seems into it, then you already know that if you make it happen, the players will like it.

Additionally, since everyone is different, sometimes what is obvious to you isn't at all obvious to the other players. In our experience, you can just keep saying what's obvious, and the players will keep thinking the story is full of creative twists and turns.

3.4 Your Moves

Your moves behave differently from other moves in the game. While most moves trigger when a character not controlled by you takes an action in the fiction, your moves are a set of options to choose from when the others at the table look to

CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 65

you. The move gives you the general framework of what happens, and then it's up to you to describe the actual events in the narrative. Everyone at the table looking at you will usually happen when nothing else is happening, when one of their moves prompts a response or interpretation from you, or when they are asking a question about the world. You will privately pick a move, come up with how it works in, and then make it real.

Your moves are short phrases like "Make them Conjure or Buy" or "Imprison someone." Other than in-game concepts like Discord, they don't carry special meaning. "Raise the Stakes" really does literally mean do that. Moves must always follow from the fiction, and likely will not look the same twice. In one scene, you might choose to Raise the Stakes by having a tense conversation about which bedroom a guest will stay in suddenly become about whether to remain roommates at all. In another, Raising the Stakes might be knives coming out at a fistfight. Whatever happens, describe it in the context of the fiction, not the game rules. It shouldn't actually matter to the other players that you are using Invent a Predicament for Someone. What matters is that a Lookout saunters into the alley for a smoke break just as they're about to step through their dimensional door.

When you make a move, it can be broadly categorized as "hard" or "soft". Hard moves have consequences that are immediate and irrevocable. They should inspire further action, but will not simply be undone or blocked. A secret coming out, an item breaking, an injury. Soft moves advance the action, in particular by setting up hard moves that will come to pass if the Mages don't intercede. Someone coming home but not yet seeing a Mage in

CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 66

a compromising position could be a soft move, and if the Mage doesn't work to hide or explain things, then soon the secret will come out, as a hard move. Most moves can be hard or soft, depending on the circumstances, but some are easier to use one way or the other. We have arranged them from generally softer to generally harder, but that's just for convenience, and for when you're looking for inspiration.

When you need to choose a move, choose one that can follow logically from the game's fiction. It might not be the only one, but it should be plausible. Remember it's OK to be obvious, so if something from a moment ago could demand a response, then find a move that fits it and say that. However, also remember your Principle to Think about the Bigger Picture. Things you have set up in the past can suddenly make an appearance and still be following from the fiction.

Most of the time, you'll be making soft moves. These let the action keep advancing, but keep giving the other players the ability to respond to things. Remember that soft moves should suggest hard moves that could occur if nothing happens. It can even be as direct as "With a crack, the branch breaks. You're right underneath it! What will you do?" and if they say "I keep standing there", then go ahead and use a hard move to deal damage.

You are empowered to make a hard move when they hand you a perfect opportunity on a silver platter. This can be because the character explicitly ignores a soft move that was already in play. It can also be because a character tries something that will clearly go poorly for them, and you respond with the soft move that is Tell them the possible consequences and ask, and they follow through with

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it anyway. If something that you have been setting up, through one or more soft moves, comes to pass, that's a time to make a hard move. This won't be a surprise because of the principle to be generous with the truth, but can represent the Mages running out of time, or the dramatic irony of the Mages not noticing something that the players are aware of. In addition, if someone rolls a 6-, you make a hard move. It may be mostly dictated by a "on a 6-" clause in the player's move if present, but most of the time you're on your own, and have to follow the fiction to come up with an outcome.

One very flexible soft move is Set up a Future Problem, which can stretch to anything from the extreme short term, like "The car swerves and is coming right at you!" to a more far-off "As you shake the Dean's hand, you see a camera flash. This will definitely be in the papers tomorrow..."

Another flexible move is Declare Something Bad has Happened Elsewhere. "Something bad" is quite broad, and the thing about Mages is that today's "elsewhere" is often tomorrow's "here."

After you make a move, always turn it back to the other players. Ask them, "what do you do?"

Softer Moves

Tell them the possible consequences and ask

This is a handy move to use for when a Mage gets stuck with a hard choice. It's also good for times when they ask if it's possible for their character to do something. Also for times when they say something like "I jump out of the airplane." Tell them the possible consequences of getting what they want, and ask "do you do it?" For example:

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"So Piper, you're trying to prove that you're someone these spirits should listen to. You can do it, but you're going to have to bring your people in line and snap at one of them. They're going to feel hurt. What do you do?"

Offer an opportunity, with or without a cost

Another very handy move, especially when the table stalls a little bit. You can use this for anything from telling the Mages about a great sale on herbs, to letting them eavesdrop on someone important. For example:

"Yes, you can get closer and hear exactly what they're saying, but if you want to stay hidden you're going to have to step directly on a pile of rare books. What do you do?"

Set Up a Future Problem

One of your most versatile moves, this is one of your best ways to set up a future hard move. In particular this should give the Mages information which, if they don't act on, will result in a hard move. This could be far in the future, for example:

"You get the ritual off in time, and as the final energy flashes out from your circle, you realize that some of it got siphoned off into a battery on the other side of town. Someone must be trying to power some really big magic. What do you do?"

This can also be very near in the future, even just a moment in the future. For example:

"They activate a runic circle drawn on the ground in front of them, and you see an electrical wire break off the telephone pole, it's headed straight for Piper. What do you do?"

Give Them an Answer They Won't Like

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Sometimes Mages are trying to gather information, or ask a question about the world. This move is where you can let them succeed on gathering that information, or let them notice the thing about the world they're asking about, but when they do they find out it's not what they were hoping for. For example:

"Your research on the ancient faeries is actually quite fruitful, you learn that they were much more powerful, well respected, and given a wide berth if possible. They don't share the modern faeries weakness to iron, music, or fire. And worst of all, you learn that they feed off mortal magic. What do you do?"

Pit their Desires Against Each Other

This can mean either pitting one Mage's desire against another's, or it can mean making a single Mage's desires conflict in that moment. For example:

"The ice princess is willing to give you what you need to rescue your friend, a scepter made of pure unmelting ice, but if she does so, she warns that she won't be able to hold off the ghosts that have been threatening you any more. What do you do?"

Demand Upkeep from an Anchor

Anchors are real people, or places, or things that need attention paid to them. That's how they ground the Mage. So a window being broken in your apartment, or a call from your mother asking you to stop by for a family party since she hasn't seen you in forever. These are particularly useful to set up later scenes focusing on that Anchor, because the Mage either needs to go upkeep that relationship, or risk losing their tether to reality.

"You finish reading that tome and the possibilities

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are running through your head, there's so much you can do now that you never could before. But before you get a chance to test any of it, your phone rings. It's your aunt calling to remind you that you promised to mow the lawn yesterday, and it's going to rain tomorrow, so you really need to get over there and do it. What do you do?"

Slip a Status

Status tracks are divided into two sections, which amount to basically "Stable" or "Slipping." If a status track has hit code 30 or below, it's slipping, and will keep getting worse faster and faster. Mechanically, this happens quickly because it is a soft move. This move describes it getting worse. For example:

"Yeah, you run and catch up with them, but that cracked rib from earlier just isn't putting up well with the exertion, and suddenly you feel a stabbing pain in your right side, and it's harder to breathe. Slip your health status track down to Code 20, punctured lung. What do you do?"

Make them Conjure or Buy

Sometimes a player will ask you if their Mage has a certain item, and you're not sure. One thing to do is to tell them that they don't, but they know where they can buy it. Or since they're Mages, if they can figure out a way to conjure it, they're welcome to have it.

"You don't have any Black Cohosh for that healing potion on hand, it's endangered in fact. But you think Ashley at the local herb shop might have some tucked away in the locked display case. You remember it being pretty expensive though. What do you do?"

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Show them the Downsides of their Paradigm

This is a way to make the Mages think about their magic. Put them in a situation where their Paradigm, their way of seeing the world, is more hindrance than it is a help, as opposed to normal, where it is likely a source of freedom and agency. Consider in particular that most Paradigms have some form of “build-up” that happens from doing the same kind of thing over and over. The generic term for this is Resonance, but for a given Mage it could be lingering manifestations, an electric charge, or simply specific vibes. Maybe doing all that fire magic becomes a problem when traveling in a forest.

“So you’ve been preparing for this meeting for a while now, and to make sure you’re suitably prepared, were going to connect with your Source. So you do a line of coke, and you know how it lets you see the true nature of things? You realize you’re starting to see everyone’s personal demons. There are so many, it’s getting hard to see, or focus. Some of them make it hard to keep it together. What do you do?”

Invent a Predicament for Someone

Players will put their Mages in all sorts of predicaments anyway, but sometimes it’s good to throw an unexpected one at them, and put the Mage (not necessarily the player) on the spot.

“Remember how we talked about what would happen if your sister showed up? Just as you complete the spirit binding and the gears begin to turn on their own, you hear a pounding at the door and a familiar voice. ‘River! I know you’re home!’ What do you do?”

Raise the Stakes

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This means raising the tension, putting more on the line, or otherwise upping the amount of investment the Mages have in the outcome of a given situation. For example:

“Your ritual goes off wonderfully, and you’re just about to close down the circle when a sinister presence steps through the gate in the fence. They look at you and say in a deep, rumbling voice ‘You’ve stopped us from possessing any of you, true, but now we’re going to possess the entire city, and there aren’t enough of you to stop that.’ What do you do?”

Introduce a Lookout

Oftentimes, Mages try to set up circumstances so that they can make free use of their magic, without anyone “spying” on them for the Consensus. They’ll meet up with other Mages in secret basements, summon spirits deep in the woods, or they set up a distraction for everyone else in the area. So it can provide some complications when a Lookout shows up out of nowhere. If they’re about to do Rending magic, they’ll either have to stop, or trigger the move. And if they’re about to do “questionably” harmonious magic, a lookout being there will likely make them have to Sell a Lie to keep it from being Rending.

“The two of you have just finished lining the doorway in chalk runes, but before you can activate the portal, a patron comes in from the other side. ‘Excuse me, is this the reference section?’ What do you do?”

Threaten an Anchor

Much like the Demand Upkeep from an Anchor move, this one is a little bit more immediate. Capture their cousin, or slap a foreclosure sign on

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their house. Remember, they have to go deal with it, or will lose it.

"You get home, eager to tune up your motorcycle and maybe go for a spin...and instead find a ticket with the number of a tow truck company! What do you do?"

Soft or Hard Moves

Hit them with the static realities of their world

Mages often wish they lived in a full fantasy world, but sadly they do not. The Consensus holds sway, and is strong. Use this move when they come face-to-face with the limitations that even Mages find.

"The building is oppressive, and you can feel the weight of disbelief. Try as you might, you can't find the kind of convenient, shadowed corner you need to hide a transformation. Fluorescent light bathes every inch. What do you do?"

Isolate Them

Mages are most powerful when they are together, even if their personalities may clash. Use this when you want to separate one or two from others they expected to be with.

"You suddenly notice that while you were talking, the sun has set, and now you're not sure where the rest of the cabal is. You hear sirens in the distance. What do you do?"

Use one of your Force Moves

Forces have moves of their own, dictated by the Stressor the Force relates to. You should have the moves written on your Forces sheets, and can use one of them just like any other MC move.

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Consider a game with a Force of rationality-focused Mages who seek to stamp out mystery, wonder, and creativity. They exhibit the Stressor Control, and have the move "Blackmail them".

"When you check your mail, you find an envelope with no return address or postmark. Inside is a picture of your house, and a letter that just says: 'We know you're behind the blackouts. Don't even think about showing your face tomorrow.' What do you do?"

Declare Something Bad has Happened Elsewhere

You have a Principle to Think about the Bigger Picture, and this is a direct expression of that. "Elsewhere" should be somewhat relevant, whether somewhere that you know the Mages will be back to, or whatever happened there is now coming here.

"With a start you realize... if all of you are here, who's watching Amanda!? You hear a deep mocking laugh from the other side of the building."

"You hear the sound of sirens off in the distance. They could be headed this way, or it could be a coincidence, but do you want to take that risk?"

Make their Move Backfire

Many moves have clear ways they can go wrong. Attacks misfire, plans play into an enemy's hands, intimate moments sour. You can show the worst possible outcome for a move, or can show someone else do it better.

"You cast around looking for Any Port in this raging Storm of magical energy, and you realize there's only one spot. The eye of the storm, which is occupied by the beast itself."

"You begin to speak with the full authority of the Winter Court, to tell these upstarts their place,

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when the Winter Princess herself steps out from behind a tree and says 'Actually...'"

Harder Moves

Change the Battlefield

Use this when you want to throw the Mages' control of a situation into question. This can be like Raise the Stakes, but encompasses things that are more out of left field as well. Changing the "battlefield" (even if it's actually just a parlour filled with relatives) can mean new Forces arrive, an environmental effect, or revealing a dramatic complication.

"So you Step Sideways, planning to phase out and phase back in, but while you're on the Other Side you see this vast space with creepy floating creatures, and they're fighting to get in. It looks like this battle is taking place on more planes than you knew."

"Everyone's fighting, you feel like you have a good handle on things - and then the ghost pirate ship appears, with Gordon dangling in a cage off the bow. They're rowdy and their cannons are armed."

Take away things they expect to have

Most of the time, you can assume the Mages have what they need for what they want to do. A cell phone, a bottle of water, batteries. This extends to more rare items, once a Mage has acquired it and makes a point of keeping it around. When you use this move, suddenly all those assumptions go out the window. It can be direct and in the moment, like having a business card snatched away, or it could be retrospective and only now realized,

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like a wand not being where it was last put down.

"So you shoot the harpoon gun, but you aren't braced and the gun flies out of your hands, backwards! Your target falls, but another guy sees that you're unarmed and jumps at you."

"Something has gone mysteriously missing? How about the gas for your boat. Not that you'd notice right away, of course."

Imprison Someone

Mages' lives involve the fundamental freedom to do what they believe, and so imprisonment is a particularly stark action. It doesn't have to be to a Mage in particular, but if it involves anyone they care about, it can dramatically shape their reactions. In a world full of police, gangsters, manipulative relatives, and magical binding circles, "imprisonment" can take many forms.

"As you look around the ballroom, you notice what are clearly ensorcelled humans serving drinks, and wait, that's the man you saved from drowning! As dead-eyed as the rest of them."

"Allison opens the door to get into the taxi, and the driver looks you in the eye, and as you recognize him, says 'My Lady sends her regards,' and drives off before you can react"

Adjust a Status Track

Sometimes a mage's actions (or inactions) should have a clear and obvious impact on a status track, but that status track isn't yet slipping; or maybe increasing its status isn't what makes sense. Adjust it as you see fit: advance an Anchor upkeep track, de-escalate a Force track, or even reduce the severity of a mage's health status.

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"As you finish your impassioned speech and look out over the crowd, you realize it's falling flat; they aren't buying it. And then they start jeering, and you see your credibility slipping away. Set your Consensus Shift status track back to 40."

"It's been a busy time for you all, hasn't it? Police called because of the fraternity twice, position as a social hub has been falling because the coolest kids are going everywhere but to you for their parties, and now that Piper's staying there things are getting tense. You get a letter from the administration, the fraternity is officially on probation." While you mark off another code on the Internal Forces Status Track.

"Sure, your magic centers around the Breath of Life. As you speak soothing words, he breathes easier. Lazarus, heal 1 Harm."

Add a Restriction to a Mage's Paradigm

A mage's paradigm is inherent and intuitive, and sometimes it might take some exploration to understand the full extent of it. Sometimes that exploration re-categorizes certain things from 'we might be able to finagle a way to do that' to 'that's flat-out impossible and I can't believe we ever thought otherwise.' When a mage attempts an edge-case use of magic and it doesn't go in their favor, that's a good time to add a restriction to their paradigm to reflect that update to their magical approach.

"So his fist is coming for your head, and as your self-protective instincts take over, you try to yank at his life-thread to throw him off balance. But you can't get a grip on it, and he keeps coming. It occurs to you as your head rings from the impact that there never has been room in your paradigm

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for selfish acts. Add a restriction to your paradigm: self-defense is considered selfish."

"So you reach out for ghosts under the sea - and get nothing at all. Maybe this is why ghost pirates always have a ship. Add this restriction: The Sea's Vastness Outdoes Mortal Magic."

"You try to speak across boundaries to him, but it's like his mind is a mirrored sphere. You can't reach him, and add the restriction, 'The close-minded hears only themselves.'"

Assign Discord

Discord is what happens when reality bends around a Mage like a spring. It hasn't given yet, but something is probably going to happen. Rending magic that affects a Lookout always produces some, but sometimes other sources of Discord will follow from the fiction.

"You're used to having that little harmonious spell that keeps your garden pest-free going, but just as Jack, your new neighbor, comes over, and their eyes glance over the perfectly-formed leaves, you feel a sudden lurch. Take 1 Discord. 'I'm looking forwards so much to getting to know you,' says Jack, eyes gleaming unpleasantly. What do you do?"

"You're not working at all within the local expectations. Your camera flashlight can work to illuminate Glamour, but take 2 Discord."

"The ritual is being resisted by something with a deep hold over this place. You all take 1 Discord, and at this rate it's going to get worse."

Deal Damage

The life of a mage is dangerous, and danger often involves pain. When they fall, when they're struck,

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when they deign to tinker with untested equipment while not wearing PPE, deal damage and have them roll to Suffer Harm.

Remember that if they have not yet expended their Preparations, now is the time, as long as there's any Harmonious way to explain how they can escape unscathed. Also remember that Preparations make Mages a lot tougher than they would otherwise be, so don't be afraid to use this move.

"Even as you tug haphazardly at the tangle of wires, you realize the moment when 'down to the wire' becomes 'too late,' and you aren't going to defuse the bomb in time. You scramble backwards as it ticks down to zero, and are thrown back with the force of the explosion. Take four harm."

"So there's this big boom from out on the water, and huge droplets spill down on you - and hand-sized swordfish. One gets you right in the shoulder. Take 2 Harm."

"It's trident against trident, and you stab him good, but he got you, too, with a glancing blow. 1 Harm."

Make them Backlash

Magic in a Consensus that denies its existence carries its own inherent risk. That risk most often manifests in the form of backlash. Use this move when a spell goes sideways, a spirit gets away from them, or a Mage reaches too far.

"It's the first time you've tried using magic to change your own appearance, and you're wrestling with your own mind as it clings to your established self-image. It takes all your willpower to silence that internal dissent, but you're on the verge of succeeding-until you catch a glimpse of your distorted reflection on the window. The unfinished spell

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shatters and turns against you. Roll backlash.”

“As you and George lock eyes, you feel all that Discord bouncing around inside you trying to get out, and suddenly - it does.”

3.5 Running a Session

A session of Consensus is a self-contained advance of the story. It will build on what came before and set up new directions for the future, but it has a beginning, middle, and end, and should always change the game world in ways not easily undone.

Starting a Session

Your MC sheet has a list of steps to guide you through the beginning of the session.

Gather The MC sheet, PC summary sheet, Forces, Flags, and Portents

These cover all the essential information you need to make sure the table has available.

Distribute and resolve “love letters”

Mages have lots going on. As one way to reflect this, you might want to prepare for a session by writing short, personalized notes to some or all of the players’ characters. These are traditionally and ironically called “love letters.” These are particularly useful for updating what has happened if there was a time skip, or if there are specific aspects of a character’s state of mind you want to explore. A

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love letter may include a custom move, such as a choice of options or even a roll, and may have lasting consequences for the session. The results shouldn't move straight into the action, because there is still more session start to perform, but distribute them early so the players can start reading them, thinking about their implications, and setting up what elements will come up in their first scenes.

Look over and read out Flags, note which ones can be changed

Flags are one of the main methods that allow Mages to mark experience, so everyone should be reminded of them and be able to reference them. In addition, Flags which have been hit at least once are available to be changed if the player wishes, so remind them of that.

Mark one Code off every Portent Status Track

Portents have a fairly short lifespan, so that they will be brought up again before they fade out of memory. If you mark off Code N of the Portent, it should come up fairly early in the session.

Mark one Code off every Anchor Status Track

Anchors require maintenance. The Status Tracks advancing represent this.

Note all slipping Status Tracks

Status Tracks which are slipping are very relevant during this session. They should feel like whatever

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they are connected to is beginning to spiral out of control, or fall out of reach, or come to an inexorable conclusion. Advancing a slipping Status Track is a soft move, so you can do it almost any time it makes sense, and going over them at the start of the session will help you think of it. Write the slipping Status Tracks on your MC sheet.

Review any effects that last session were decided to be extended into this one

Some game effects last “for the rest of the session”, but might come up near the end of one. This lets you extend things that seem worth it, like a bonus or penalty that hasn’t come into play yet.

Perform moves triggered at start of session

Remind the players to perform moves on their sheets which are triggered at the start of the session. Much like love letters, these won’t start the action exactly, even on a 6-, but they do prepare things.

Frame a scene and make a soft move

Now, you have seen all of the pieces you have to work with. Fairly abstractly, there are the Mages with their hopes and desires, and the Forces relevant to their world. More urgently, there are Portents, Anchors, and other Status Tracks that are demanding attention, and you may have already been told to make moves. Now, frame a scene according to the rules below, and open the action with a soft move, to require a response, and you’re off.

Scene Framing and Spotlight

Consensus is played out in scenes. Each one should go as long as it needs to but no longer. This usually means about 15-30 minutes, but you will find what rhythms work for your table.

A scene involves one or more of the Mages. One of your jobs is to manage the “spotlight”, making sure that everyone gets some time with scenes focused on them and doesn’t go too long away from the action. Some sessions may have most or all of the Mages together in the same scenes, but often the Mages will want to go their own separate ways. Look out for opportunities to show them together in twos or threes, but don’t neglect individual scenes when they fit. When you are deciding on a new scene, think about who hasn’t been central recently, and see if you can frame one around them.

All scenes should fall into at least one of three categories: “Anchor scenes”, “Inspiration scenes”, and “Force scenes”. The categories serve different purposes, for the Mages’ goals and the advancement of the story. If you know which Mages are going to be in a new scene, their last known positions or their goals may dictate or inspire what category the scene should be. Or, you may know what category of scene comes next, and then figure out what would be going on and so what Mages would be involved. If you only know what’s going on, not who is involved or which category it should be, think about the category first, and then set the scene with mages who inspire that kind of scene. We find the game feels best when you keep a balance between the types of scenes, roughly 1/3 of each in a given session. Of course some sessions will

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involve a lot more paradigm discussion than anything else, and that's okay, but when you're guiding the scenes, keep the 1/3 rule in the back of your mind.

Anchor Scenes

One of the central tensions of a Mage's life is feeling like they have one foot in each of two worlds. Sometimes they're probably late to work because a spell took longer than expected. Sometimes they miss the midnight full moon ritual time because their parent is sick in the hospital. Sometimes their Aunt June wants them to go to a craft fair on Sunday because they haven't had quality time in forever, but there's a spirit killing people on the loose, and Sunday is the only time the rest of your Cabal can get together to stop it.

Anchor scenes are about what keeps our Mages human, and tethered to the human world. An example might be a scene spending time with their Connection Anchor (Aunt June) doing something that they both enjoy (going to a craft fair). Another might be a scene of scrounging and doing odd jobs in order to afford rent on their Shelter Anchor. These can take many forms, but in general they are the most grounded scenes in Consensus. During an Anchor scene is also when a Mage can refresh their preparations, so long as the Anchor that the scene is based on isn't slipping. Often an anchor scene will be about upkeeping the anchor or relationship with the anchor, and thus will clear that anchor's status track.

If the Anchor is slipping, then there will be something key going on that, if not addressed, will cause the Mage to lose the Anchor. This might have

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been understood before the scene, if events have made it clear, or it might need to be determined as the scene begins. Whatever it is, this makes the scene more urgent, even if the Mage is trying to stay cool. In this case, focus on the real importance of the Mage's choices, and how they still can keep the Anchor, if they're willing to work at it. If the Mage is successful at reconnecting with their Anchor, clear the Status Track. They have a reprieve, for now. If they aren't... refer to slipping status tracks and the move **Lose an Anchor**.

Inspiration Scenes

Many Mages have big, sweeping ideas about the world, the Universe, and their place in it. Mages who don't still tend to find themselves brushing up against questions about these things, whether they like it or not. Inspiration scenes focus in on this aspect of their lives, seeing what happens when Mages get talking.

They are called Inspiration scenes because a Mages' Inspirations, or potential Inspirations, are very common sources of these events. Two Mages having a long discussion about not only their Paradigms but what the differences mean to how they accomplish things in the world and how they feel about the people around them will probably become Inspirations for each other. This also covers more esoteric scenes like a Mage deciding to really get to know the spirit that lives in their wand.

Inspiration scenes can be tricky because they're a less-common type of scene to see in a roleplaying game. However, players often really do enjoy them. Look out for when it seems like a Mage could have a good time teaching, learning, or just talking, and

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give them Inspiration scenes to play it out.

Don't forget your moves at these times! There is tension even in a conversation. Use the moves to guide you and bring up complications whenever the conversation slows and everybody looks at you. Use Show Them the Downsides of their Paradigm to ask how a contradiction brought up by someone else sits with a Mage. Pit Their Desires Against Each Other by pointing out that they've just implied they both want the last enchanted feather. Set Up a Future Problem by saying "Speaking of ghosts, you realize that the spirit lamp in the corner has been blinking while you talked."

Force Scenes

A Force scene is a goal-seeking scene. Either a force is working towards their goals, and the Mages either help or hinder, or the Mages have a goal, which various Forces will help or hinder.

As the scene starts, if the Mages involved already have a clear goal, your moves present interesting choices and challenges. If they do not and are being more reactive to a Force, then start with a soft move that gives the Mages something to react to, and therefore a goal.

Continue until it's clear what the outcome is going to be. If there's a conflict and it becomes clear the Mages have the upper hand, go ahead and wrap up and move to the next scene. If no clarity is coming, that tells you that instead of a resolution, further scenes will be needed to see more sides of these events. Wrap it up so that it doesn't drag on, and start later scenes reacting to the ongoing status.

Ending a Session

At some point, it will be the right time to end the session. Maybe the players will have time constraints, or a significant climax was reached in the story and everyone will need some time to process, or maybe everyone is just getting antsy. This is often around 3 hours, but really does vary hugely by table. When it is time, after the scene wraps up, announce it is the end of the session, and read out the move:

At the end of session: note any effects that lasted “until end of session,” but should continue into the next. Then, ask yourselves these questions as a group. For every one you answer “yes” to, everyone marks experience.

- Did you show the lengths you were willing to go to in order to maintain an Anchor?
- Did you uncover a secret?
- Did you learn something that puts your paradigms in perspective, or caused you to question them?
- Did you expose the depths of your humanity, to yourself or to someone else?
- Did you witness loss, selfishness, or pain born of magic?

Effects that last “until end of session” but might continue into the next include things like the physical representation of Discord in the Backlash move. If it happened in the last scene, for example, its full weight probably won’t have been felt, so it would definitely be worth extending into the next session. However, don’t feel obligated, if something

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already seems played out, or is otherwise no longer interesting.

3.6 Your Sheets

These sheets help you organize your thoughts and are more tools for keeping the game running.

The MC

This sheet should be front-and-center. It reminds you of your agenda and principles, and lists all of your moves, arranged from hard moves to soft moves to help prompt you when it's time to make one. It also has a place to list all the currently-slipping Status Tracks, so that they are never far from your mind (and never far from the Slip a Status Track move).

PC Summaries

This sheet collapses the essential details of the Mages down to the size of cards. Especially early in the campaign, it can help you refer to the Mages by their names, and means you don't constantly have to ask "What are your Opposed Aspects again? And what's your mother's name?". You don't need to obsessively track every single detail of the characters here, but keep the broad strokes.

Forces

Forces are your main organizational tool for notable elements in the world, and the sheets collect all

the relevant information about them. Keeping them close at hand will help you make Force moves, or realize what Force to bring in when you think about the bigger picture. Do keep them updated, as their Status Tracks change, as cast members come and go, and as you associate custom moves and other details with them.

It's OK to write some speculation on Force sheets, but remember not to actually plan anything. As such, it should be fine for a player to see one, since you shouldn't have any deep dark secrets you are scheming to unveil at the worst possible moment.

3.7 Sundries

Some things to remember.

When you're trying to figure out what to say, and picking a Move, remember that the game's rules will influence what you're going to say. For example, when a mage rolls the Suffer Harm move, on a 7-9, the MC chooses an option. So you choose one of those options, and since the Principles say to Stay in the Narrative, you describe what happens to the Mage based on which option you choose.

Your Forces will also inform what you say. Not only from their Force moves, but for example, when a ritual draws unwanted attention, you should look at your forces to see which ones might count as "unwanted attention" for that particular ritual.

Like we mentioned above, sometimes you'll want to turn questions back on the person who asked them, or turn them over to the group at large. "That's a good question, who are the Frat House's biggest rivals?"

CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 90

Sometimes you'll want to let your narration wander a little bit. Imagine looking idly at the scene, like you've paused a movie, and notice some detail, something not at all relevant or material to the scene, and describe it. For example, "There's no heater in this basement, but there is an intricate symbol etched into the wall. It looks faded now, but you can just catch a sense of heat, and looking deeper into it the lines curve in on themselves like licking tongues of flame..."

Zoom in and out of scenes sometimes. Sometimes you'll want to plan out a ritual in exacting detail, and describe everyone's every motion as they contribute to it, but then partway through the ritual, say "And the rest of it goes off without a hitch." Same goes for between sessions. Sometimes you'll want to pick up moments after the last session finished, other times you can make it days or weeks later. Use your judgement, and do what's fun for you and the rest of the table.

Sometimes you'll want to zoom in on a move too, Outmaneuvering someone might mean parkour over a wall and crossing 10 feet of distance. It might also mean staying ahead of their search teams for the next week. You can use moves to find out what happens in very zoomed in scenes, and very zoomed out ones as well.

Take breaks when you feel like it. The game taking place in scenes gives you a lot of stopping points, and though sometimes you'll want to continue straight on to the next one, sometimes it will feel better to take a little while to stretch, refill drinks, and so on. Pay attention to when the energy at the table is flagging and it might be worth everyone clearing their heads. You'll be surprised with a little physical motion can do for your energy. Conversely,

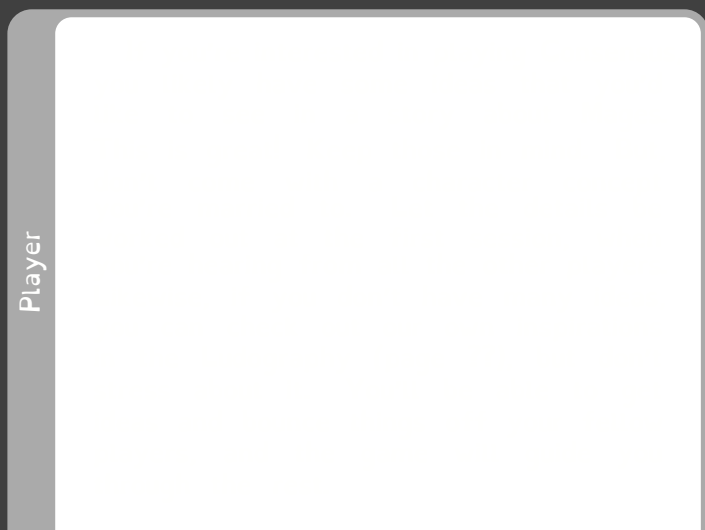
CHAPTER 3. THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES 91

a short break at a cliffhanger can help make things more intense. I usually find that about three breaks during a three to four hour session feels right, two short and one long.

Chapter 4

The First Session

4.1 Before the First Session



Player	
	MC

4.2 Character Creation

Initial Expectations and Safety Rules

Narrator

This is a game centered around humans with magical abilities, called Mages. It is set in modern, or at least semi-modern, times, in a world that looks more or less like our own, at least to ordinary people. It is meant to explore questions of humanity. It will not glorify violence, having power over your fellow humans, or exclusionary rhetoric. We get enough of that in the default reality, and Mages are drawn from marginalized communities as a general rule, not from those who already have the most power.

Roleplaying involves vulnerability, and any game set in familiar times and dealing with philosophical questions can easily bring up topics that may make some people uncomfortable or even unwelcome. We very much want to support the use of the game to explore personal issues and growth, but never at the expense of the players' wellbeing. Thus, before even looking at the characters, here are some rules to follow throughout the game to help everyone push themselves exactly as far as they want to go, but no farther.

Discuss and Align Themes

MC

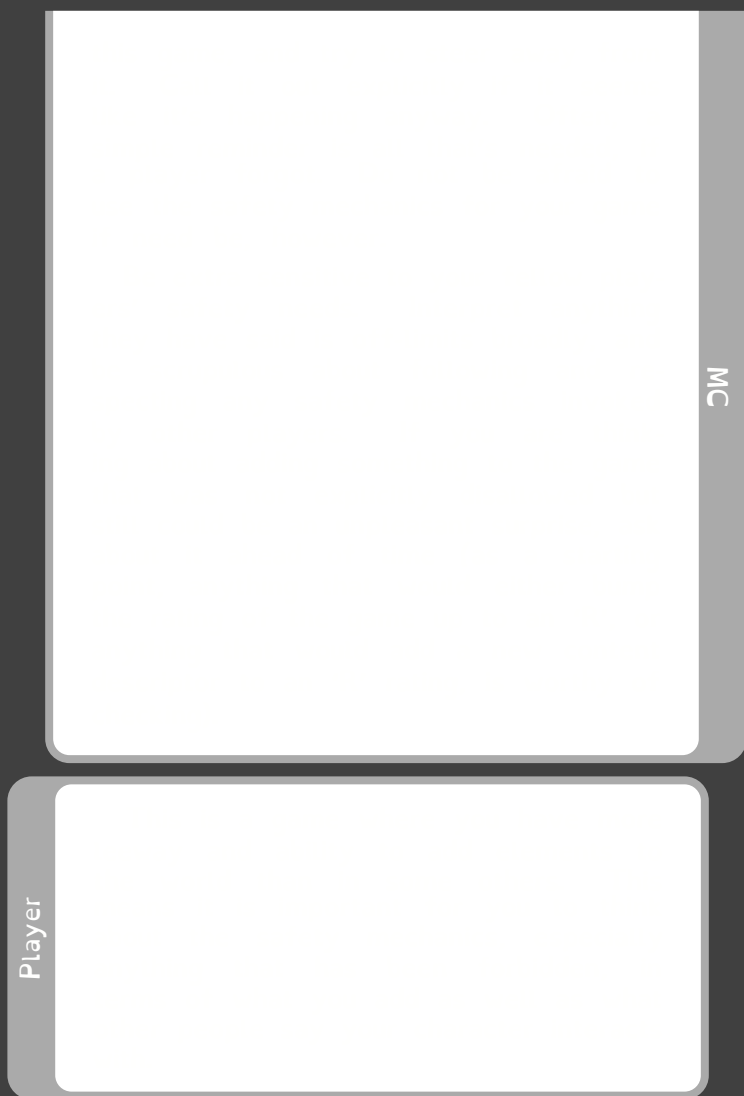
Player

Explicit Safety Mechanics

Narrator

Because of the vulnerability inherent in roleplaying, and roleplaying potentially difficult themes, it is important that you use some form of explicit safety mechanic at your table. There are many available, and we have included a sample of them here, ones that we've found work well for Consensus. If you have a favorite safety mechanic, we highly encourage you to bring it with you to this game.

MC



The X Card

Narrator

Credit for this mechanic goes to John Stavropoulos

Give every player an index card with a large, clear 'X' on it. Explain that at any time, any player may raise or clearly tap their X card. If this happens, we immediately edit out whatever was X-carded. No explanation of why is necessary, or should be requested. If there is an issue, anyone can call for a break to discuss it privately.

This ensures that everyone at the table remains in control of what they will be exposed to, without having to figure out and list hard lines ahead of time.

Narrator

Dial It Up/Dial it Down

[This is a mechanic for recalibrating in the middle of a scene, to help stop them from going too far, and help stop them from not going far enough.]

Magic Defaults

Narrator

Consensus is fairly flexible in the type of magic it showcases, but there are some starting points to know so you're all on the same page. Small, subtle magic is easily accessible to most Mages. Magic does not inherently carry a cost, we don't track a mana pool that determines what spells we can cast, and so effects which are likely only noticed by the Mage in question may be produced at almost any time. Larger effects, more in line with advanced but still modern technology, are achievable with effort and help, or with practice. Technically, there is no true limit to what a determined Mage can achieve, but their achievement may be tempered by a great many caveats. Reality has ways of reigning in obvious magic, such that this is not a game where you can expect to see Mages casually flying through the air, being pointed up at by curious bystanders. But, a Mage's life will be full of magic, both their own and other people's, and it will be enough to help them with their problems, cause some other problems, but never truly make them all go away.

Lusus Naturae

Narrator

While not truly required, a great many stories with magic of the style seen in *Consensus* include some sorts of magical beings with intelligences that are different from Mages. Here you might find vampires, werewolves, ghosts, demons, faeries, spirits, talking mirrors, familiars, and so on. Because they are common enough, there are a few moves that tell you how Mages can interact with them.

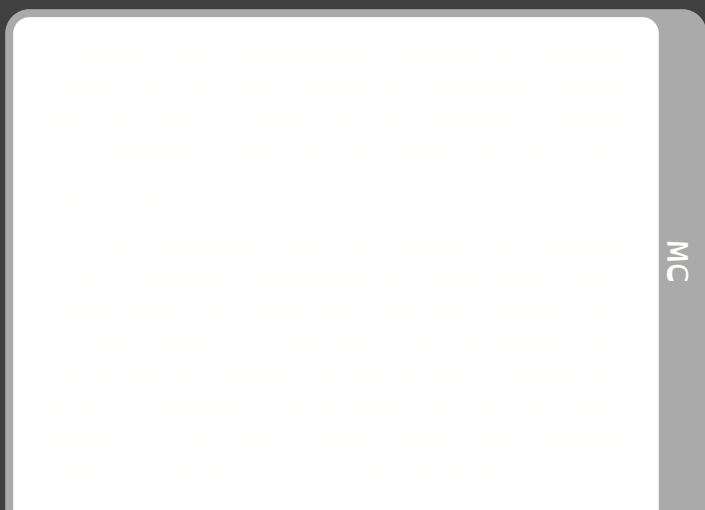
All players should feel welcome to bring up *lusus naturae* that they do or do not want to see. Many of them can be extremely overdone, but a lot of people really enjoy taking a break from purely Mage politics to go chat with a spirit court, for example.

Player

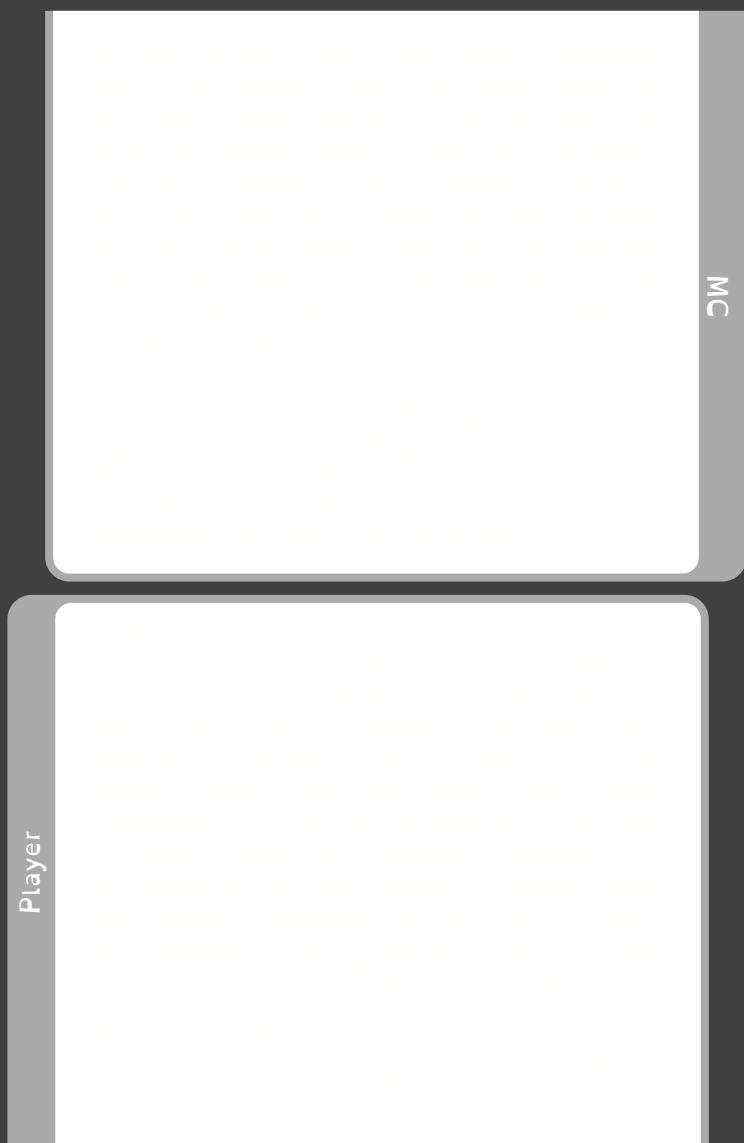


MC

Introduce Playbooks



MC



Player

Player

Player

Stats

Narrator

The stats are:

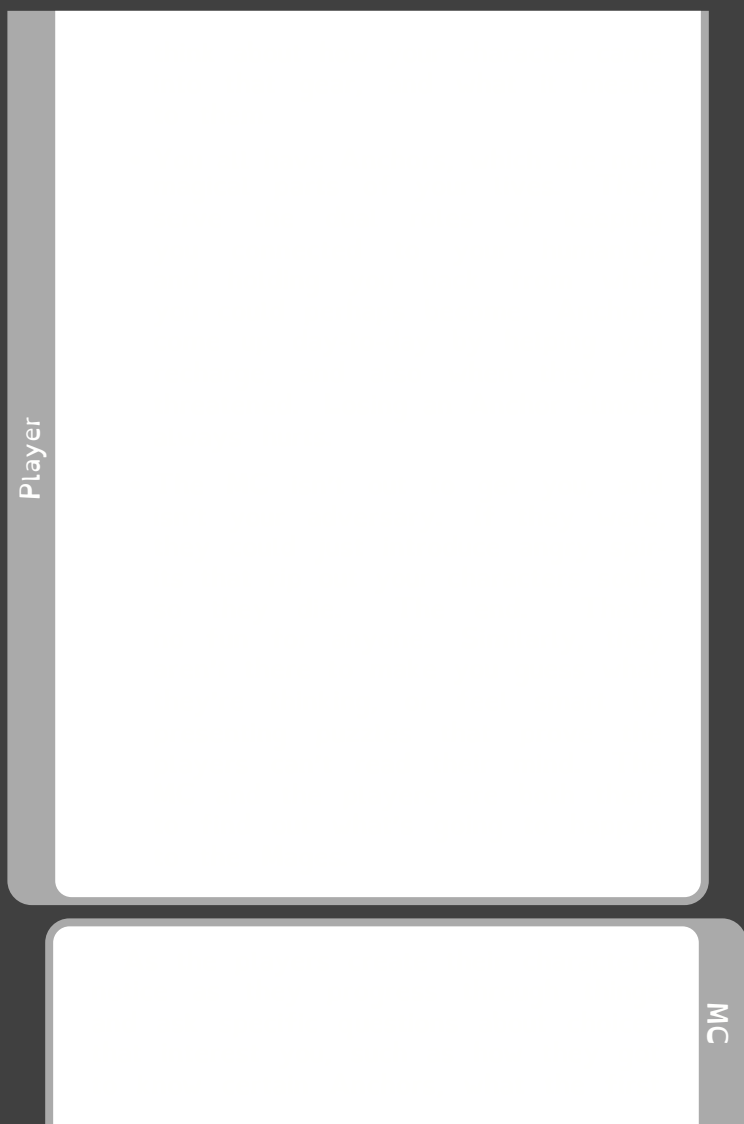
- **Static:** as in unmovable, steady, set in your ways, and conservative.
- **Dynamic:** as in creative, free-flowing, adaptable, easily moved, and inventive.
- **Entropic:** as in direct, active, unstoppable, forward, and destructive.
- **Within:** referring to the internal self, controlled reactions, ability to introspect, and know yourself.
- **Without:** referring to the external world, connections, empathy and understanding.

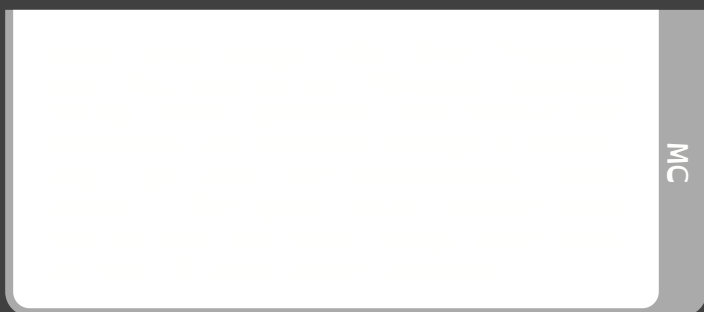
Stats can never be higher than +3, and most will range from -1 to +2.

Setting Expectations

Player

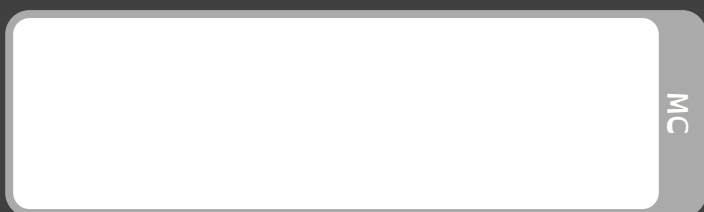
Player





MC

Introductions



MC

Narrator

As everyone introduces their characters, people will likely start to suggest ideas about how they could be connected, or involved with pieces of the world that are brought up. That's great! Try not to get too bogged down with it, but these connections help build the world the characters will inhabit.

Paradigm

Player	
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Looks

Player	
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Pertinent Details

Player	
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Player	
	MC

Preparations

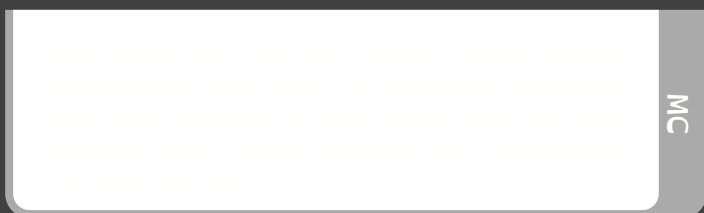
Player	
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Player

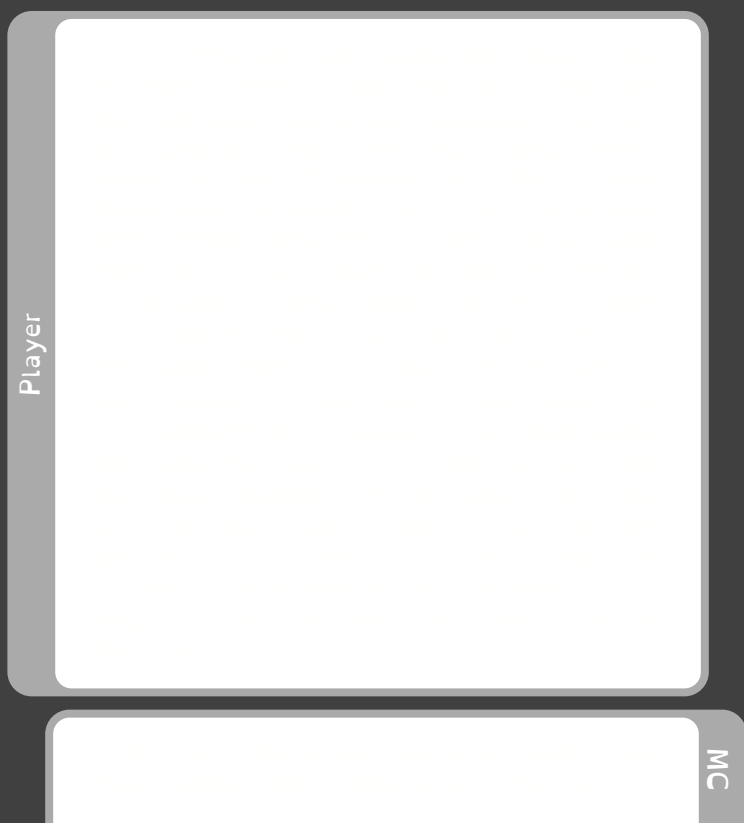
The Three Questions

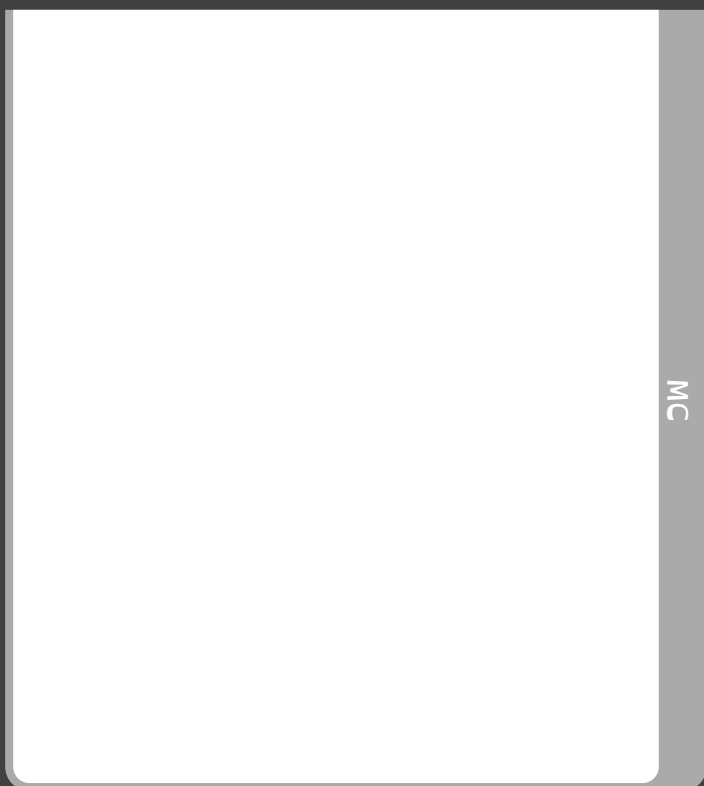
Player

MC



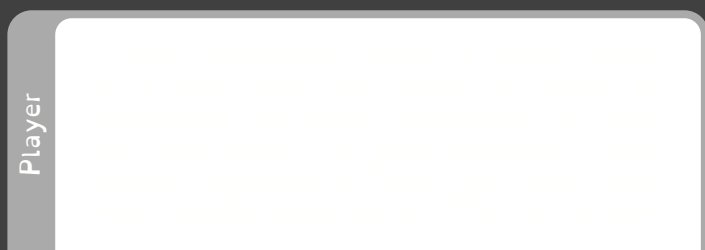
Anchors



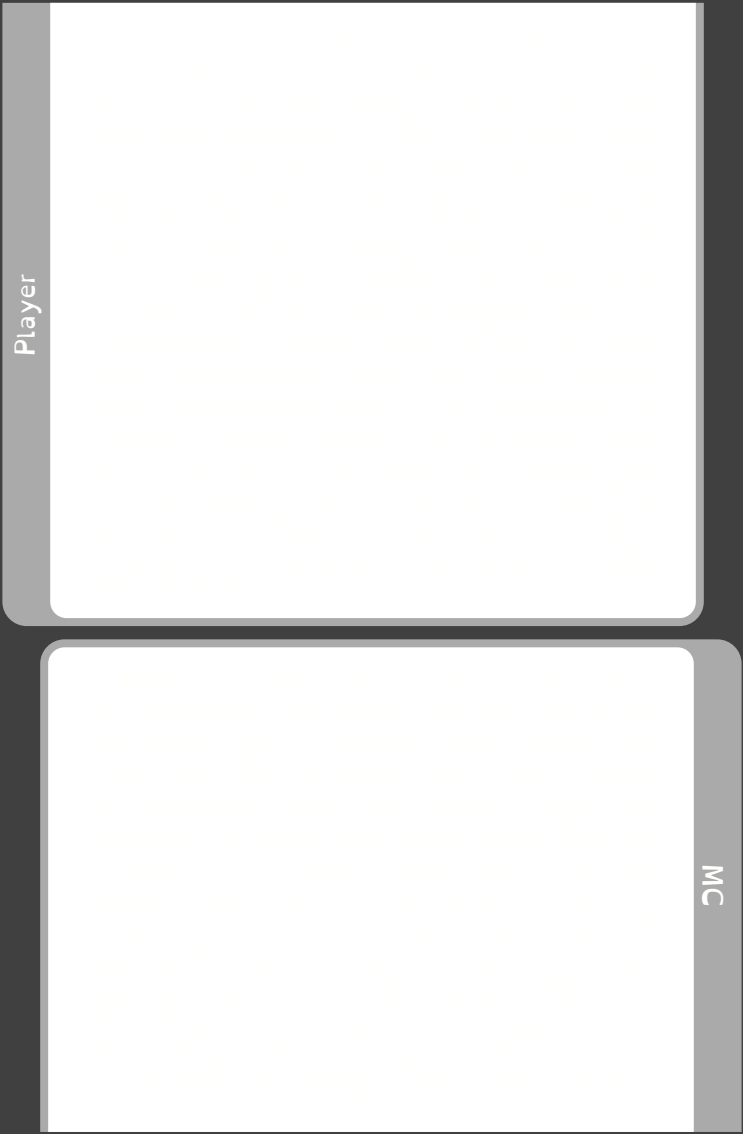


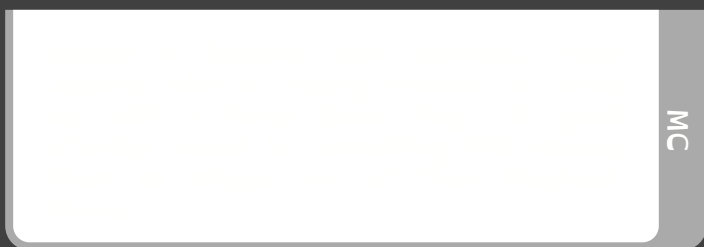
MC

Flags

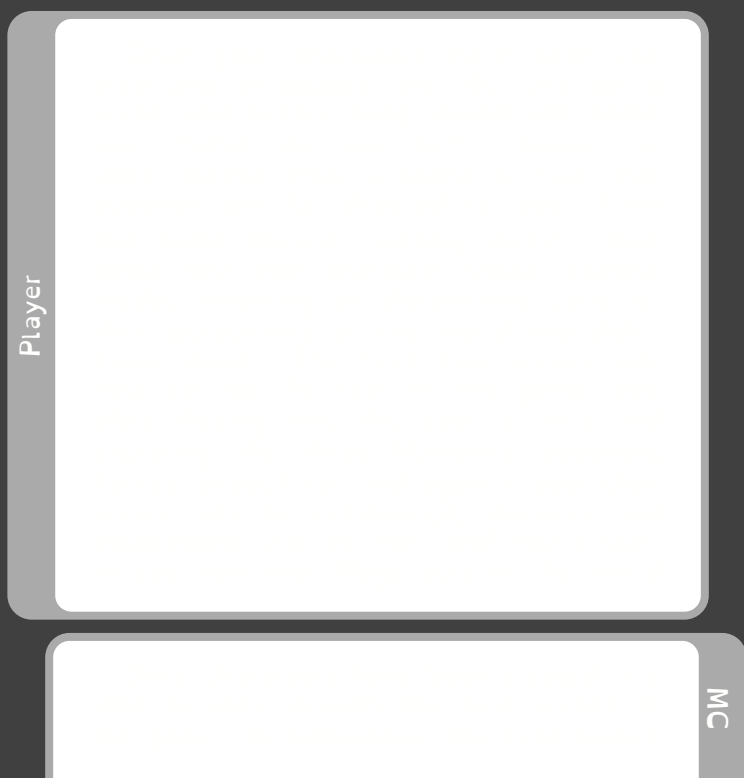


Player



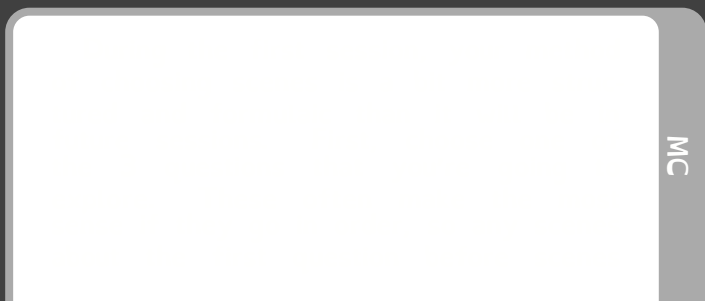


4.3 First Scenes





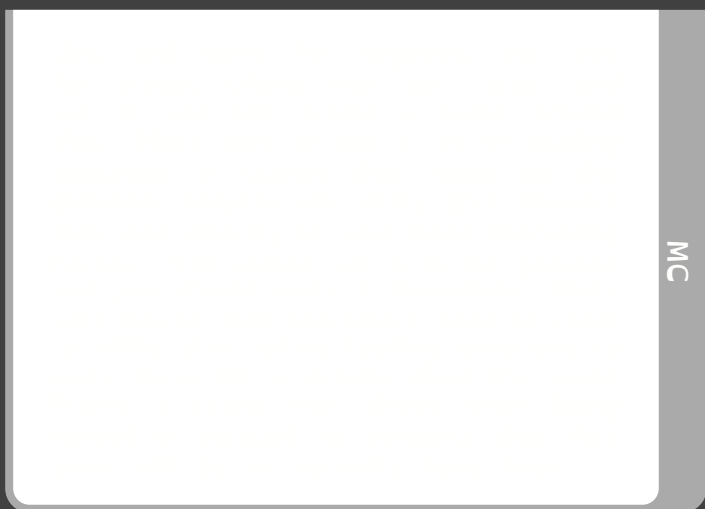
Framing a Scene



MC

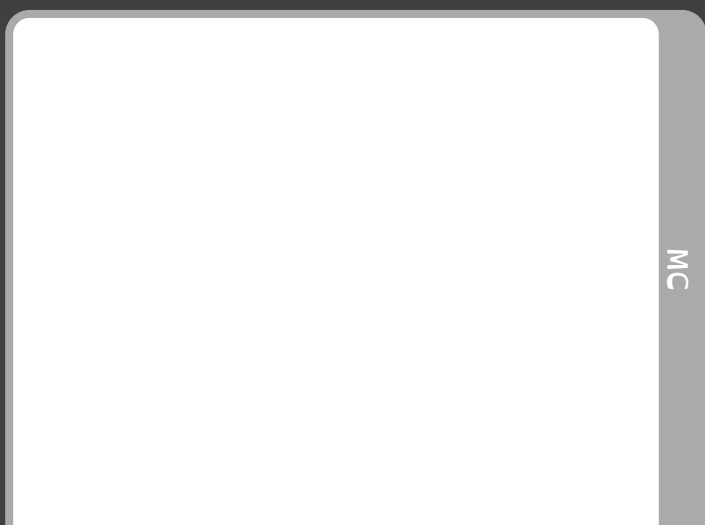
Turning the Three Questions into Scenes

MC

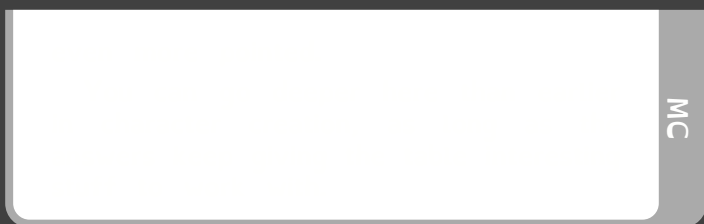


MC

Ask Leading Questions

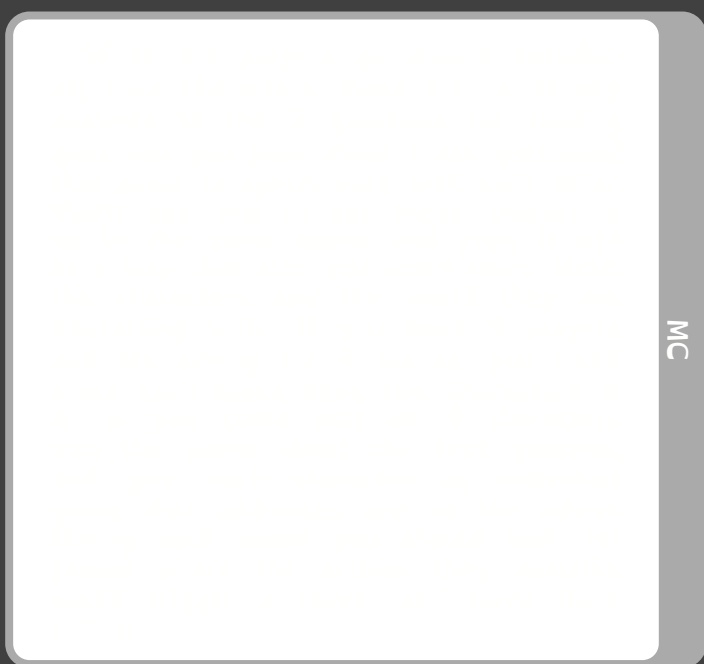


MC



MC

Pulling in Multiple Characters



MC

Identifying the Stressor



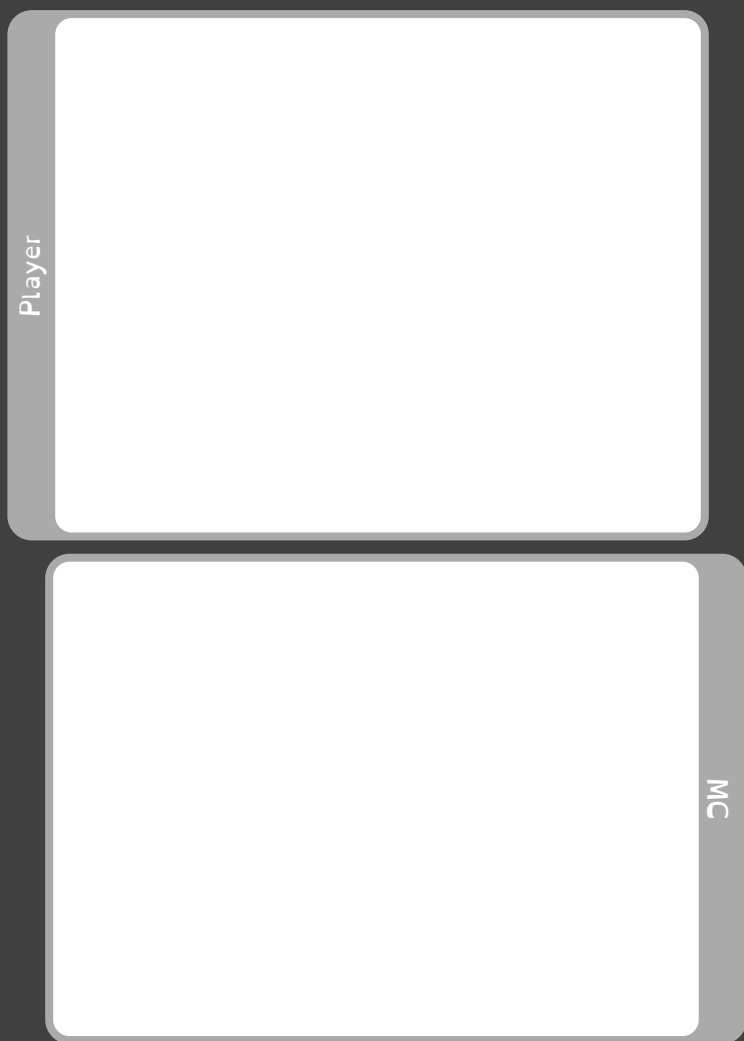
MC

Number of Scenes



MC

4.4 Ending a Session



4.5 After the First Session

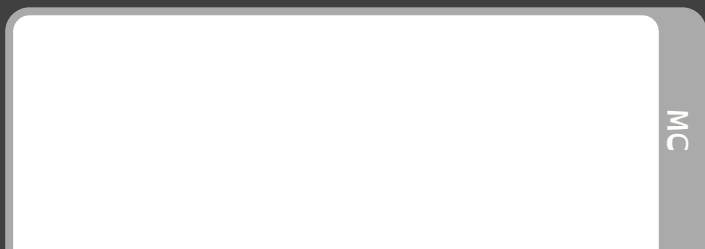


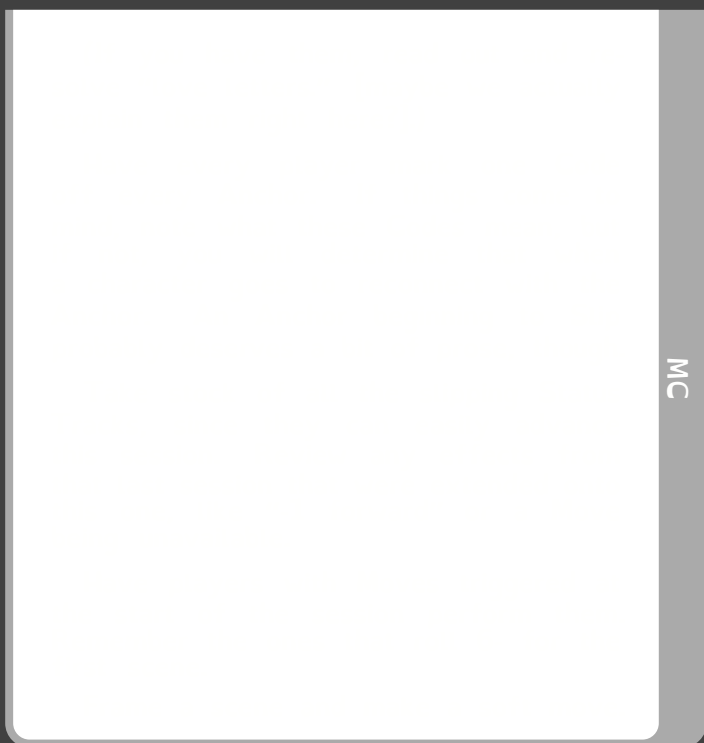


4.6 The Second Session and Beyond

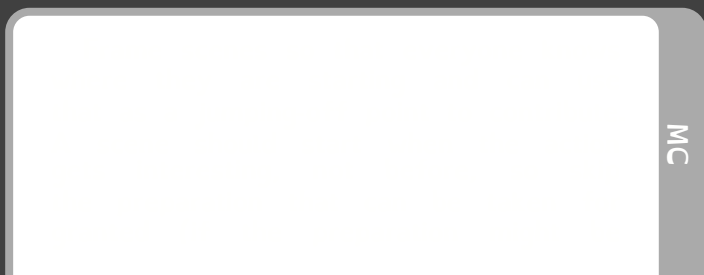


Starting a Session





Framing Scenes



MC

Chapter 5

Status Tracks

Narrator

Many things in Consensus have a sort of progression. Even if individual events aren't precisely connected, one layers on top of another, getting more and more intense until reaching a breaking point.

To represent this, Consensus uses Status Codes similar to those used in medical transport, ranging from Code 50 down to Code N. They're described here first, and other Status Tracks are shaped by these standards.

5.1 Harm and Healing

Narrator

Every playbook has a section labeled “Health,” which is the primary status track each Mage’s player will keep track of. These are directly based off the medical transport codes listed below:

- Code 50 Basic transport (not serious)
- Code 40 Serious case (IV started)
- Code 30 Trauma case
- Code 20 Acute Trauma case
- Code 10 Critical Trauma case
- Code N Newsworthy event

No matter how injured you are, if you physically push yourself while injured, the injuries may get worse. Being strenuous with a cracked rib is just asking to end up with a punctured lung after all. This is especially true when a status track has hit (crossed off) Code 30 or below. We call this state “slipping.” When a status track is slipping, the MC may advance that track as a soft move, in response to the normal course of play, where otherwise advancing a status track that is not slipping is usually a hard move. For the health track this represents injuries that will kill without medical attention. A punctured lung, a cracked skull, the type of things if you just try to rest and recuperate will end up killing you. Note how this means

Narrator

the more someone is injured, the faster they slip towards Code N.

Code N, as noted above is a Newsworthy Event, which means something large enough to make headlines (at least for the newspaper of a character's life) has happened, and is almost always irrevocable. In the case of the health status track, this often means death. If a player's character takes harm that would put them at Code N for their health track, the player rolls the Death Move.

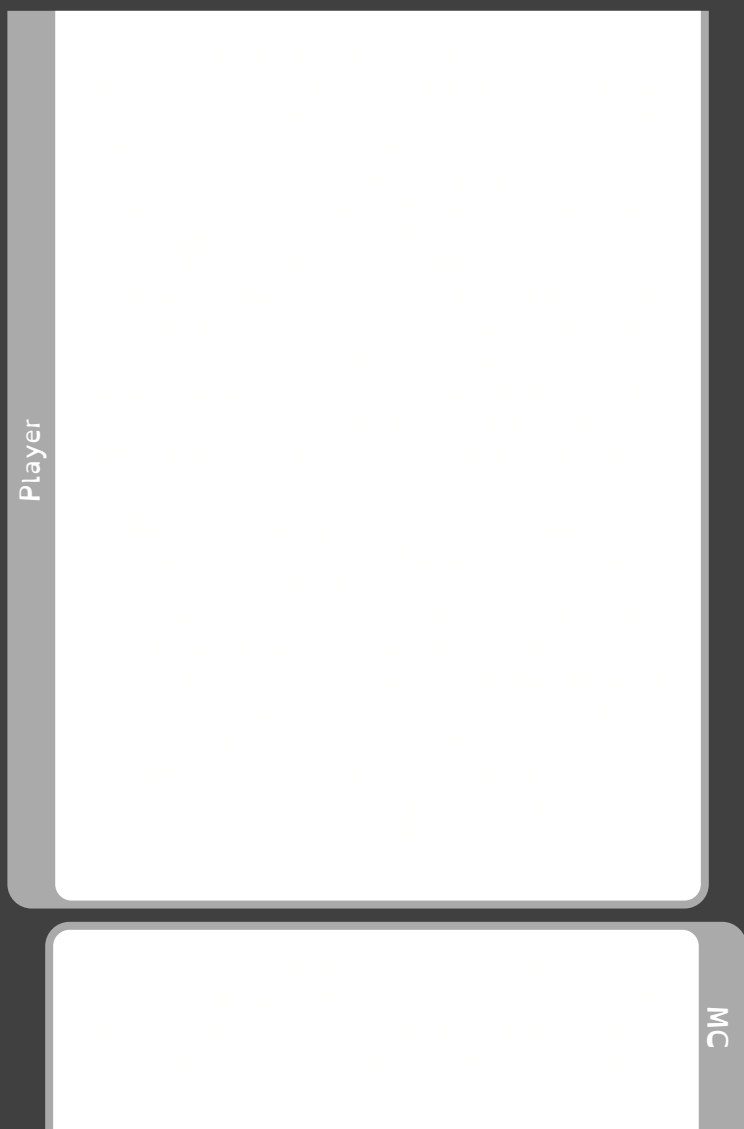
Player

MC



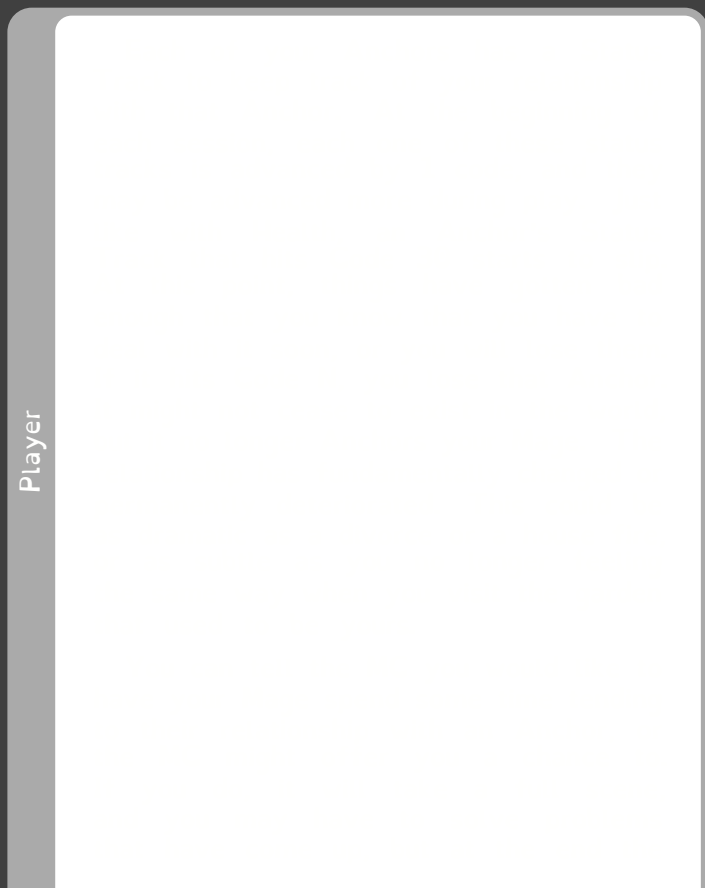
Healing







5.2 Anchor Status Tracks



Player

MC

5.3 Portents

Narrator

From time to time, things will happen in game that feel like they deserve to be followed up on, but aren't tied to any obvious way to track them. Maybe a friend felt snubbed about something, maybe a character made a deal and it's unclear when the debt will be called in, maybe a character or player had an idea that was too juicy to just forget about. They can be large or small. It can even just be that something feels like it Matters, like the time I saw a character reach into their sister's mind and wipe away a memory. We knew a line had been crossed, and this should come back in the story.



MC

5.4 Reality Breaks

Narrator

Sometimes, Reality fights back. When a Mage Backlashes, if they are unlucky, they may find themselves in a reality break, a way the Consensus protects itself. Reality Breaks have two Status Tracks, which race each other.

Player



Player

MC

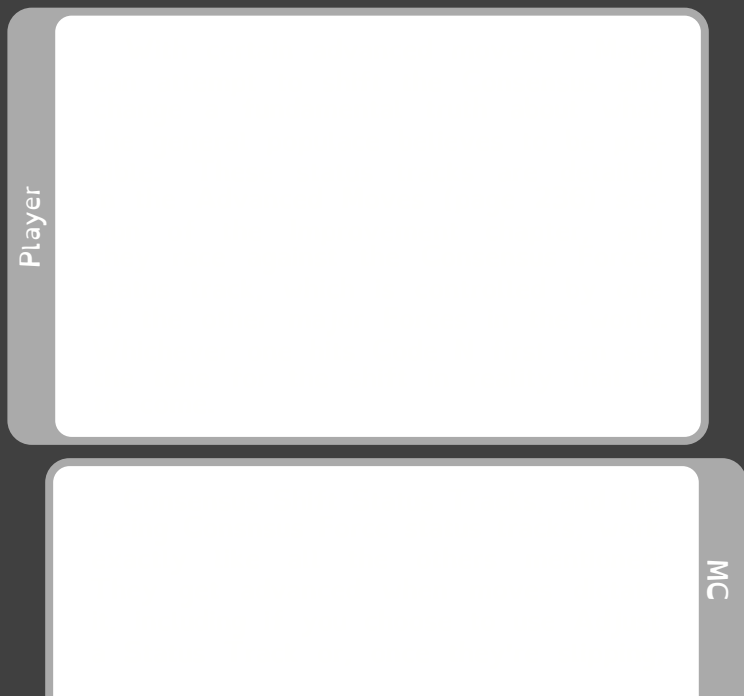


5.5 Forces





5.6 Consensus Shift



MC

Chapter 6

The Moves



6.1 The Basic Moves

Player

Player

Player

Player

Player

Player

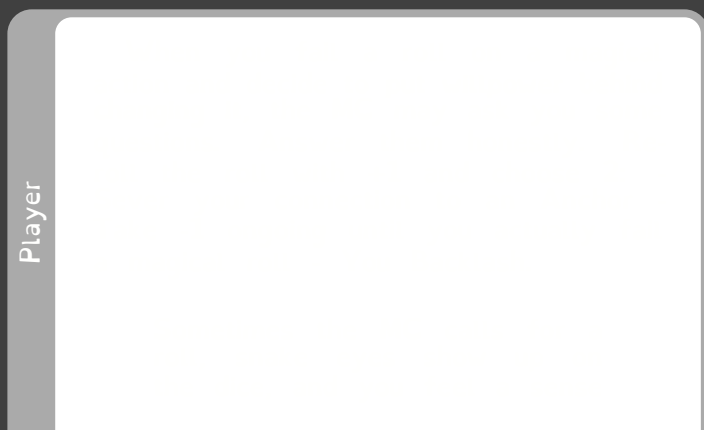
Player

Player

Player	
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6.2 The Extended Moves



Player

Player

Player

Player

Player

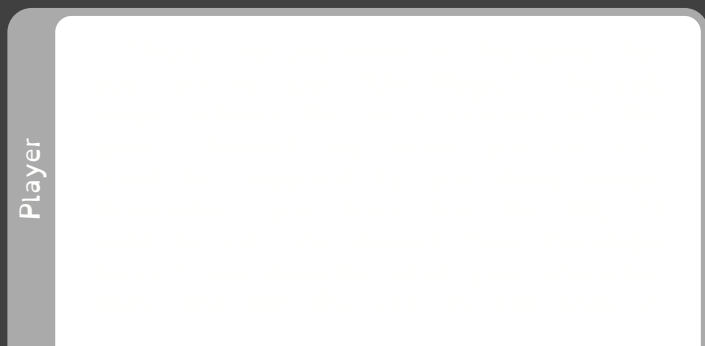
Player

Player

Player



6.3 Magic and Moves



Player

MC

Narrator

Let's look at some examples of moves, and how they can be both mundane and magical.

Tobias is cornered, and really needs a distraction to get out of there. Because they work with electricity as a major part of their magic, their eye catches on a telephone pole and a transformer right nearby. Tobias' player tells the MC that Tobias is going to redirect the flow of power briefly to overload the transformer and cause a very distracting py-

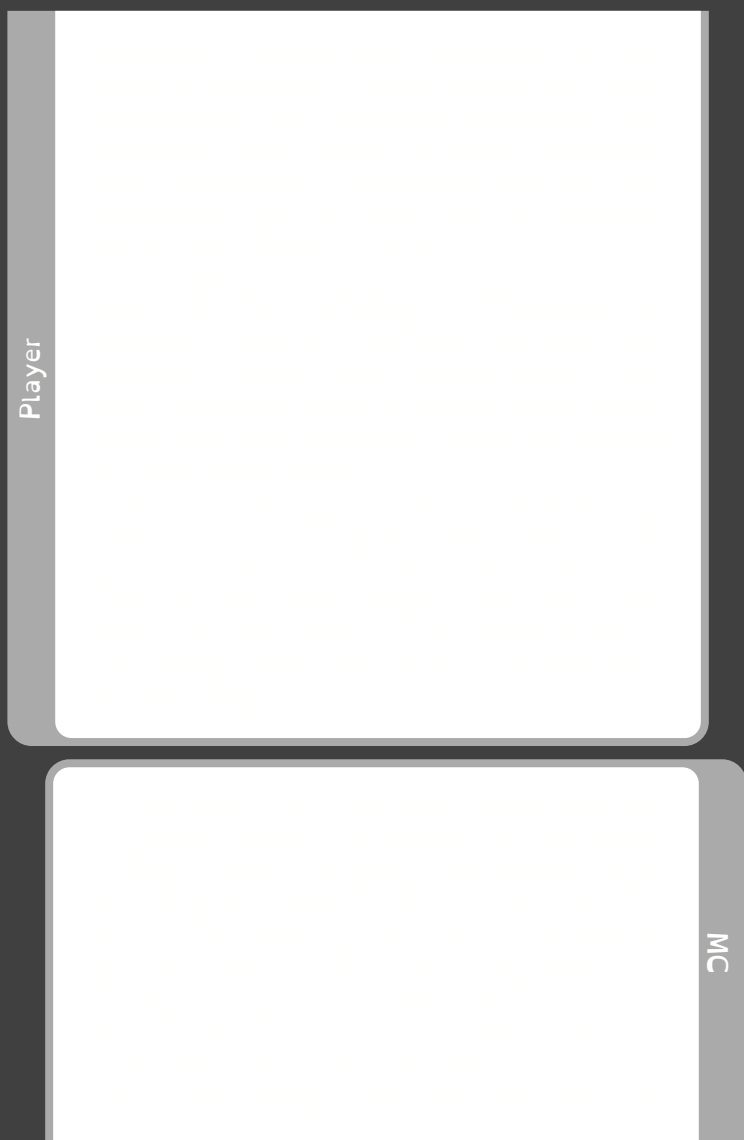
Narrator

rotechnic display. The MC responds that this seems like the very definition of enacting a sudden or unexpected change on the physical world. Tobias' player agrees, and so rolls the move.

Dove, on the other hand, is also cornered, but doesn't want to use magic to get out of the situation, because they've been too recently reminded by the Consensus that magic doesn't fix everything. So Dove's player describes Dove throwing a rock at a dilapidated wall nearby, to bring it down on their pursuers and distract them long enough for Dove to get away. This is also enacting sudden (violent) and unexpected change on the world, even though there was no magic involved.

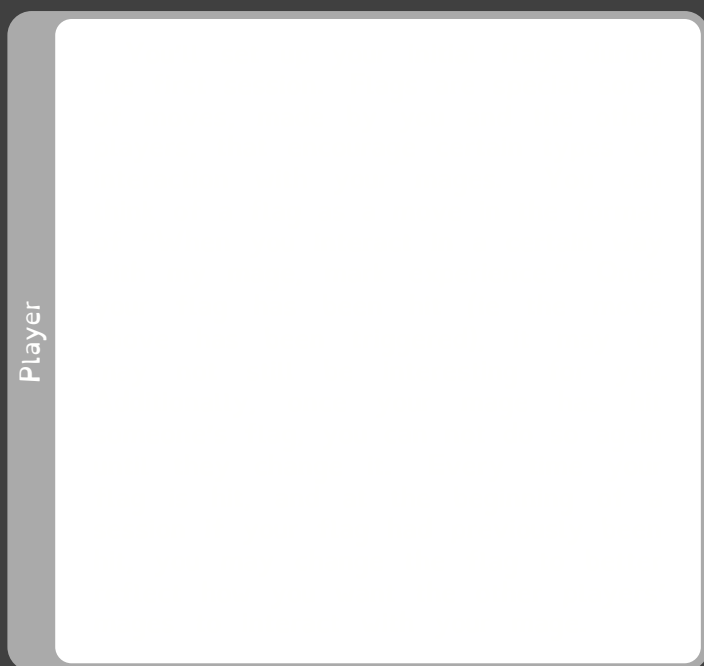
6.4 Exchanging a Moment of Humanity

Player





6.5 Changing Flags



6.6 Improvement

Player

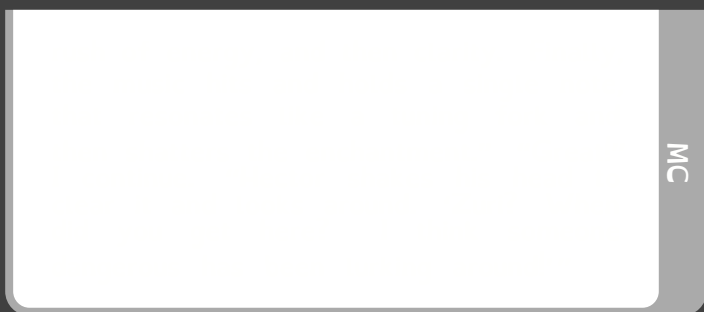
Chapter 7

Ongoing Play

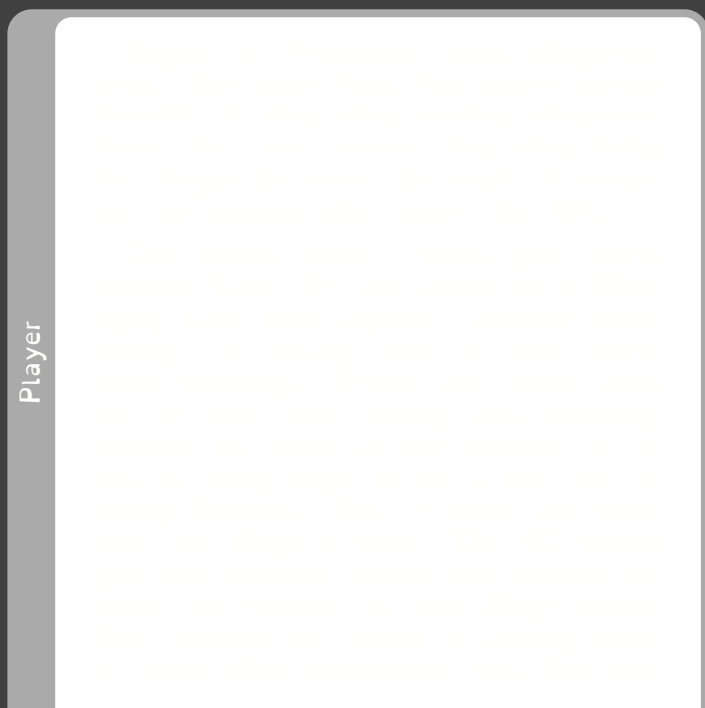
7.1 Stacking Moves



MC



7.2 Losing Characters



Player

Player

Player

MC

Chapter 8

Anchors and Inspirations

8.1 Anchors

Player

Player	
	MC
Player	

Player

Player

Player

Player

Player

Player

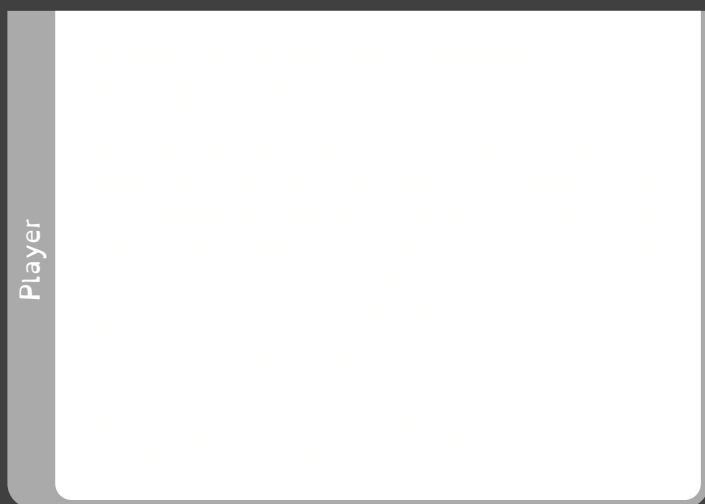
Player

Player

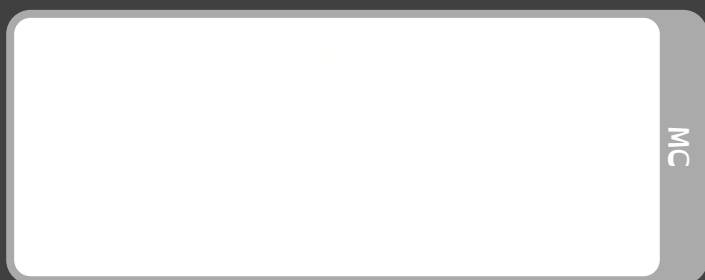
MC

Player

Player



Non Player Character Mages



8.2 Inspirations

Player

Player

Player

Player

Player

Player

Player

Player

8.4 In the World

Narrator

Mages are aware of Anchors and Inspirations, even if they should not be imagined to think in terms of such a regimented system. Any game with Mages who understand each other and how they work will recognize that having some tethers to mundane reality is powerfully grounding and allows certain kinds of magic to be recovered, but is a constant toll on the Mage's time and energy. Similarly, the phenomenon of Inspirations, in which Mages and other important magical heighten an individual Mage's sense of self and ability to practice, would be well-documented.

Don't be afraid to mention these within the fiction, for example, acknowledging that a Mage need to go visit their sister because she is an Anchor, not "just" family. At the same time,

CHAPTER 8. ANCHORS AND INSPIRATIONS 208

Narrator

don't be limited to game rules or terminology. Perhaps the Mage refers to Anchors and Sails instead of Anchors and Inspirations, or just talks about tethers above and tethers below.

Chapter 9

Gear and Accoutrements

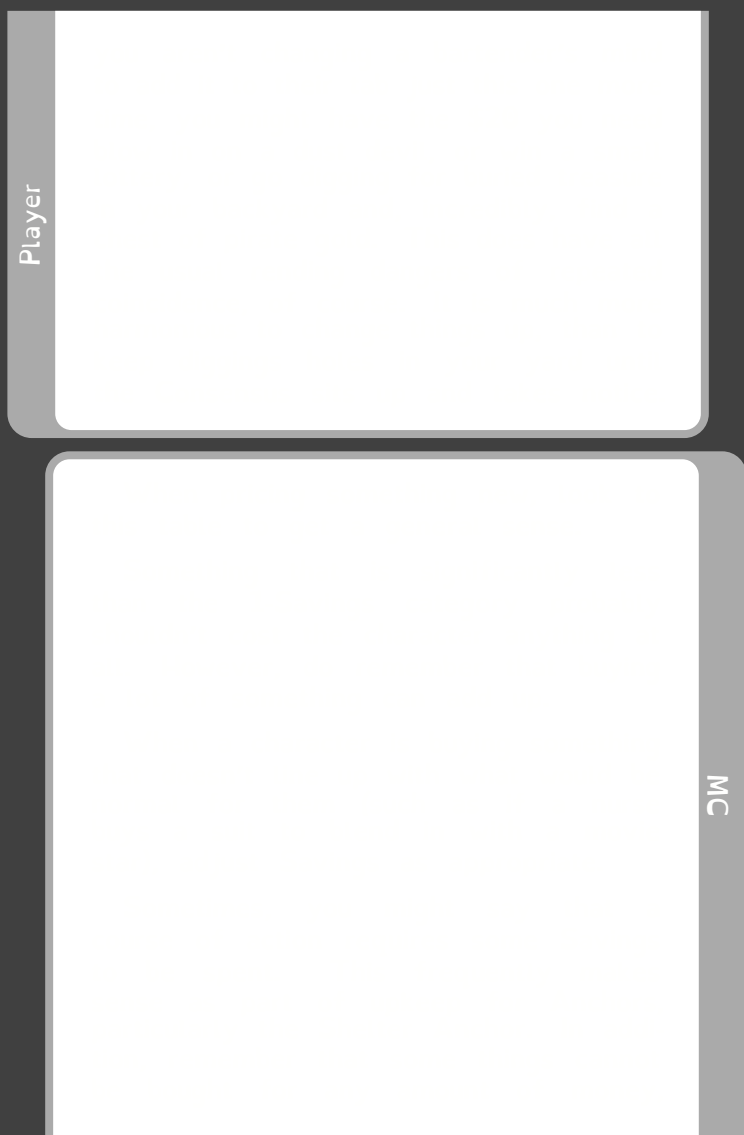
9.1 Gear

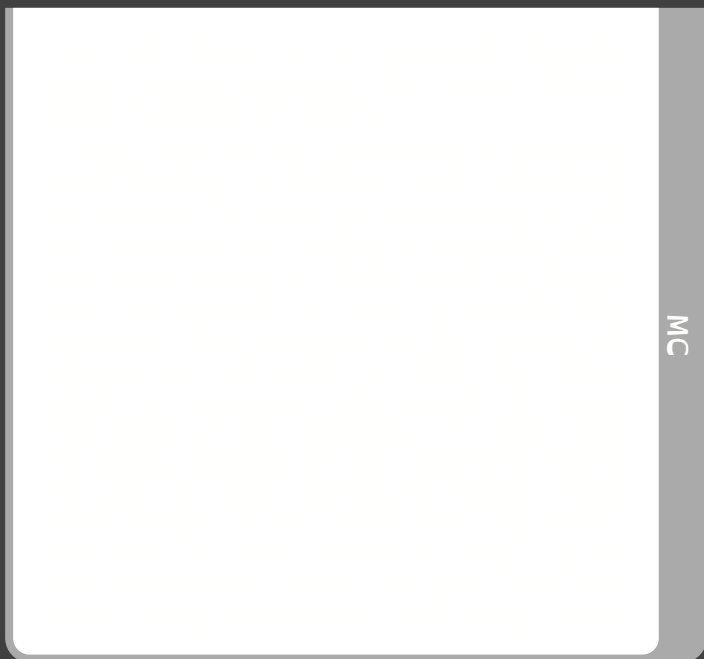
Player

Player

Player

Player





9.2 Accoutrements



Player

Player

Player

Player

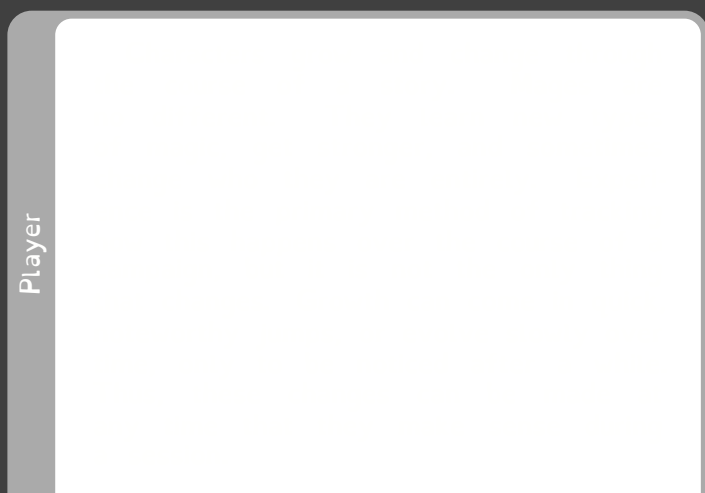
Player

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Chapter 10

Improvement



Player

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Player

10.5 Endgame

Narrator

Consensus is structured around 6-12 sessions for a “complete” game, most of the time. By the end, a character can certainly amass

Narrator

a large amount of mechanical power: Get a couple Advanced Moves, change playbooks and keep some of the old one, and a character can easily become far more powerful than they started, and possibly more powerful than others at the table who didn't try to exploit the system in this way. We believe that in the limited number of sessions, no character will be able to become so powerful that they can simply solve all of the problems in front of everybody. After all, they still have to balance their Anchors and Inspirations, still have to exist in a community, and as they attract more attention, new Forces can come their way. The MC and other players should always think about what it means when someone tries to solve everything with magic, and keep focusing on unstable points, as always.

If the game turns into a story in which everything is finally fixed for real, and everyone can live happily ever after, it is probably time to wrap up. Hopefully it was inspiring. Maybe some of the lessons can be brought out into the rest of your lives. And if they don't work as well there, maybe there was more that could have been brought in to challenge the Mages after all.

There is also always the option to continuing the game by customizing it ever farther. We will not be able to predict what your table needs, but see the Hacking Chapter (page ??) for some of the tools you can use.

Chapter 11

Forces

Player

Forces are one of the main organizational structures used in MCing Consensus. They give you a way to keep track of what powers are in the world, and how far along they are in their goals. You make Forces between sessions, collating what you know about the story and where you imagine it may go.

A Force can be many things: It might be an ambitious organization, some *lusus naturae* from Elsewhere, or even a collection of cursed items, each with their own motivation. The point is to gather them together for your own records, and know what happens when they act. That's where the name Force comes from: they are things which will act, and make changes in the world.

Note that Forces can be allies or enemies to the Mages, or neither. They may have their own agendas, but at times, some Mages may realize that they do not want to impede a Force, and indeed wish to help it along. In addition, what is a positive Force to one Mage might be a negative Force to another. Forces are complex. No Force should simply exist to be defeated.

Finally, Forces should not have perfectly aligned goals. If they do, then it is really one Force being described. They do not have to be active enemies of each other, but even very positive Forces in the world can find themselves pushing in different directions.

11.1 Parts of a Force

Forces are tracked on the Force Sheets, so that you can easily reference them while playing. They should put the information you need front and center so you can quickly make decisions, reference established facts, and record important changes.

Forces have a name and a brief description, so that you can keep reminding yourself of what they are. A Force that hasn't been seen in a little while might have slipped your mind, especially if it's a long time between games, so err on the side of being descriptive. "Ghost Pirates!" is a lot better than "What Comes from the Mists", even if it's more trite.

Sidebar: Uncertainty and Prescription

Don't actually feel locked into what you write down. In fact, in several places where you would put

something concrete, you will have space to write down two possibilities. Take advantage of that! Write details with question marks where you aren't sure.

This is mostly to remind you that you should always follow your Agenda and Principles, and if you find out something isn't working, or realize something that could work better, you can change it!

This is also why, even though it may be against your instincts, you don't need to treat your Forces sheets as top secret documents that must be hidden from the other players. Let them see you take notes on them, get ideas, add possibilities. Ask them for a detail and then note it on the appropriate Forces sheet! Sometimes you may be more certain, but secrets tend to come out quickly around Mages, so be ready for that happening anyway. It's better to write down the possibilities, but leave it clear that they are just possibilities, and let a player see them and say "Oh, I was thinking the artifact would actually be like this..." than to spend many sessions building up a grand reveal that falls flat.

Stressor

Each Force is based on a Stressor, which itself comes from key aspects of one or more characters. A Stressor is a feeling or outlook which is taken too far, such as Fear, Control, or Guilt. The Stressor gives a little bit of an overarching theme for the Force, and Stressors have Force Moves associated with them, which you choose from when creating the Force.

The available Stressors are:

- Control

- Fear
- Guilt
- Anger
- Distrust
- Extremism
- Isolation
- Envy
- Obsession

Type

Each force falls into a broad category of types. Each type has a subtype, which gives an impulse, which describes its Code N outcome. This will necessarily be a broad statement, so while it guides you to what that Force's Code N outcome will be, it won't tell you directly what to write on the sheet, just give you guidance.

The available types are:

- Tradition
- Outsider
- Aspirant
- Place of Power
- Artifact

Force Moves

Every Force has up to three moves associated with it, chosen from a list given by its Stressor. These

moves are available to you at all times, and can be used just like any other MC move. Like most MC moves, they can be hard or soft, depending on how exactly you use them. Sometimes, the Force is already active in the scene, and so their move is a natural step. If a Mage is dealing with a mysterious star who grants them powers, and the Force representing the star has the move “Dredge up the Past”, then when they roll a 6- or look to you for what happens next, it makes perfect sense to reveal that an old family friend has come looking for you with ill intentions. At other times, you might use a Force move to introduce the Force to the scene. This is particularly useful when you really don’t know what is going to happen next: pick a move from a Force not currently in play, and let that direct what they are doing and so what the characters need to react to.

Cast

Here is where you can list NPCs who are connected with this Force. This does not have to mean that they are a part of the organization it represents, or even allied with it, just that they are most associated. So for a Force that is the Winter Court, the Faerie Queen surely belongs in its Cast. But so too might the Special Detective from the Big City who’s investigating the mysterious disappearances, the ones that the mages know are caused by the Winter Court.

Note characters down here aggressively. It is very useful to have an established cast to draw on, already with names and maybe a word or two of description, when you need to help make a Force feel alive and active.

Force Status Tracks

Part of Forces being an active part of the fiction is that if they are left unchecked, they will result in some material change to the world around them. In the simplest case, the Force represents a group or individual and the change is something they are actively working towards. However, it can also be a kind of natural outcome of each part of the Force acting, without being concerted effort.

The Force's Status Track keeps track of the progress. There is space for description at Code 40, Code 20, and Code N. At each space, write something clear and recognizable that occurs. When you mark off the Code before it, make clear how the next step is approaching. When you mark off a code with a description, make clear what has happened and how the mages know about it. Like other Status Tracks, the Force's is both prescriptive and descriptive. As a result, if you notice that the event listed on the Status Track has occurred, mark the corresponding Code or Codes off. This may advance the Status Track to be Slipping, just like any other. If a major setback occurs, you may even erase codes from the Force to represent the work being undone or plans foiled.

If you advance a Force's Status Track as part of a move, be sure to make the effect clear and visible. They are not meant to sneak up on the other players.

Code N Outcome

When a Force reaches Code N, it means a material, irrevocable chance has occurred in the fiction. The Force has achieved their current goal, or has

otherwise manifested in a dramatic and meaningful way. This should not be world-ending, but it might be world-upending.

The Code N outcome starts based on the impulse of the Type. These are broad categories, that can help give a sense of direction to the entire Force.

If Code N is reached, take some time to figure out how the world has changed, and be sure to feature those elements in following scenes. In addition, update the Force. Some Cast members may have changed, some Moves may change, and the Status Track and Code N Outcome should get a whole new set. After all, the Force has gotten one of their desires, and so why would they stop now? In some cases the Force might have come to its natural conclusion when Code N is reached, and you find there's nothing more to be done with it. See the section below on removing a Force.

11.2 The Three Questions

During character creation, each player will answer 3 questions about their character, roughly corresponding to past, present, and future. These 3 questions will be the basis on which you build your Forces, so make sure you take some time with each player to explore these questions during the first session.

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized?

People who live perfect lives never quite find the need to reach out beyond the realm of everyday life to improve their existence, or merely to survive.

Mages typically awaken due to a combination of factors, but one of the major factors is having their humanity denied or trivialized. This could be in the form of bullying, isolation, violence, or many other things. Many Mages have a particular moment they can point to that made everything so clear and awakened their new Paradigm. Seldom are these moments caused by pleasant interaction. The answer to this question will tell you about the Mage's past circumstances.

Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed?

Despite how it may seem, expanding your consciousness to include the ability to alter reality at your whim doesn't solve all of your problems. From juggling the balance between your mundane job, bills, and relationships with the wonder of the magical world, to much of the same bigotry and discrimination that mundane people experience, there are things that magic just can't completely solve for you. That doesn't mean that you won't try.

Why are you hunted?

There's an old adage that everyone is either running to something or running from something. That may not hold true for everyone, but there are reasons that each and every Mage might be hunted. From the relatively obvious and sinister, that someone who can do magic challenges the existing power structure of the world, to the more benign that you have talents that people might want to learn about or exploit, to the weird like intentionally needling dangerous people because you find it fun to be hunted.

11.3 Stressors

During the first session, as you explore the three questions, you will find a main stressor that motivates the scene, write them down. After the first session is over, you will use these stressors to create the Forces for the game, and bring them to life. Make sure to have a conversation with players during or before the first session to make sure they can express any stressors or themes they do not want to explore for any reason. Here are the stressors that might come up.

Control

Is someone trying to manipulate, gain power over, or otherwise control someone else?

Fear

Is someone afraid of a threat, real or imagined, or is someone acting out of fear?

Guilt

Is someone primarily motivated by an internal guilt, either for something they did or something they are or were?

Anger

Is someone angry, either the hot rage that threatens to boil over, or the cold anger that motivates them to seek vengeance?

Distrust

Is someone mistrustful of others, maybe strangers or even friends? This can be justified or imagined, distrust breeds distrust.

Extremism

Has someone taken a nominally acceptable opinion and gone so far with it that they are causing harm to others?

Isolation

Is someone or is a group isolating themselves or being forcibly isolated?

Envy

Is someone feeling a deep desire for something that someone else has, like an object, relationship, or knowledge?

Obsession

Is someone preoccupied or engrossed with a person, object, action or etc to the degree that it is intrusive?

11.4 Types

Sometimes you'll know right away what a Force is going to be, either because of an answer that a

player gave to your leading question, or because something comes about synchronously. Other times you'll only have a stressor to start with, so Types will help you narrow down the Force and really understand what it is. Here's a list of the types.

Organization

A group with some amount of power, tradition, and goals.

Outsider

An entity or group of entities that aren't part of the normal mundane/human world, or are otherwise outside of the norms of the setting. Usually, this means they are *lusus naturae*.

Aspirant

A person or small group with great ambition and the will to see it through.

Place of Power

A magical or significant place that can pull at the threads of reality.

Artifact

A magical or powerful item that may warp reality around it.

11.5 As Above So Below, As Within So Without

The three questions become stressors. Stressors will then become Forces. The internal and personal struggles of the mages are reflected in the world around them, and the threats, challenges, allies, and opportunities they might find. After the first session, sit down with your list of stressors. Think about any groups, individuals or powers that came up during the first session, and make sure to include any interesting ones in your Forces.

11.6 How to Make a Force out of A Stressor

Step one:

Sit down with your list of stressors from the first session. Pick one of them. Then, pick a force type that compliments it.

Step two:

Write down anything you already know about this Force. For example, you might know some of its cast because they were named in the first session. You might know the name of the Force if that came up. The only things you absolutely should not fill in during this step are the Moves and the Countdown Steps. These will come during later steps.

Step three:

Choose one of the subtypes from the list below for the force type you selected.

Organization

- Dogmatic (impulse: enforce some truth on the local area)
- Expansionist (Impulse: grow and gain members)
- Acquisitive (impulse: gain resources or knowledge)
- Vigilant (impulse: stand together and defend each other)

Outsider

- Wild (impulse: to return something to its natural state)
- Tricky (impulse: to beguile, lure in, and toy with victims)
- Corrupting (impulse: to invert a being's desires)
- Ephemeral (impulse: to become more real)
- Destructive (impulse: to consume, raze, and damage)

Aspirant

- Power (impulse: to steal power from those who have it)
- Secrets (impulse: to learn a dangerous secret)
- Taboo (impulse: to do something no one would do)
- Revenge (impulse: to exact revenge on someone who has wronged them)
- Entropy (impulse: to return things to lower states of energy)

Place of Power

- Cursed (impulse: to draw in new victims)
- Wild (impulse: to grow)
- Dedicated (impulse: to reduce control)
- Convergent (impulse: to be used)
- Hidden (impulse: to be found)

Artifact

- Powerful (impulse: to overwhelm the user)
- Destructive (impulse: to cause collateral damage)
- Knowledgable (impulse: to reveal something better left hidden)
- Cursed (impulse: to spread the curse)
- Broken (impulse: to be repaired)

Step four:

Choose up to three Force moves from the stressor that this Force is based on. The Force Moves are listed below.

Control:

- Seize something dear to them
- Blackmail them
- Introduce a new enemy agent
- Spring an elaborate trap
- Manipulate an Ally
- Demonstrate Power
- Appear More Reasonable
- Lookout for (even) non-Rending magic
- Enforce Dominant Paradigm

Fear:

- Show an Ally to be Untrustworthy
- Reveal a new enemy cell or sect
- Track down a Mark
- Resist Magical Effects
- Torture Someone
- Uncover and Exploit a Weakness
- Avoid Consequences

Guilt:

- Deprive them of Resources • Cover Up an Atrocity • Take Advantage of a Weak Link • Press an Advantage • Cause Collateral Damage

Anger:

- Destroy something irreplaceable • Provoke an Overreaction • Damage Infrastructure • Drain Energy • Lash out Chaotically • Enact a Cold-Blooded Plan

Distrust:

- Manipulate Public Opinion • Hide in Plain Sight • Circulate False Information • Turn Friend on Friend • Flaunt their Secure Positioning • Introduce Self-Doubt

Extremism:

- Convert an Ally • Enforce Emotional barriers • Respond Disproportionally

Isolation:

- Rationalize Evil for the Greater Good • Miscalculate Emotional Response • Be Unshakable in Convictions • Brainwash Agents • Break a supply line • Cause a boundary to be crossed

Envy:

- Enchant Someone • Conceal Weakness • Simulate Expertise • Use Their Tricks Against Them • Bring Them to Your Level • Sabotage Their Strengths

Obsession:

- Seduce someone • Stalk • Lock something or someone away

Insecurity:

- Overcompensate • Goad Someone into Overreacting • Grind to a Halt • Undermine Someone

Step five:

If you have not named the Force, do so now. Likewise fill in any cast that are likely to come up right away. Write a brief description of the Force, and how it interacts with the world (ie the player's characters and the other Forces)

Step six:

Look at the impulse from the type this Force is based on, and write down a Code N outcome for the Force. These are broad categories, so narrow it down and make it specific to the Force you've built. This represents what happens when the Force progresses its goals or is left unchecked, and the effect it will have on the world. Since this is Code N on a status track, make sure it is a Newsworthy Event. It doesn't have to be front page above the fold, but it should at least warrant a story in the local media.

Step seven:

Write in the Code 40 and Code 20 Outcomes on the Force sheet. The Code 20 effect should be a measurable step towards the Code N Outcome, and something that would be noticed by the world (and likely the players' characters). The Code 40 effect should either be a measurable step towards the Code N Outcome, or a measurable step towards the Code 20 Outcome. This should also be something noticed by the world, and will likely be the characters first hints at the Force's Outcome.

Step eight:

If you have used up each Stressor from your initial list, you're done! Otherwise, return to step 1

Example Forces

Society of the Dragon

Step 1: This Force will be based off of Envy, which came up in three scenes in the first session. I choose Organization, and I'm thinking about a secret society that is sure they have the one right way to be a Mage.

Step 2: I'm not sure what to call this yet, but in one of the scenes about a Mage being hunted, we saw someone named Nimoy, who I will add to the Cast as one of the society's contractors, if not a member. I think they might want to collect magical items and places of power, because riches can show, to their minds, proof of their own correctness.

Step 3: They will be an Acquisitive Organization, with the impulse "gain resources or knowledge." They aren't looking to rule per se, they don't want many more members, and it seems interesting to leave open the possibility of turning some of them against their fellows, so none of the others fit as well.

Step 4: Given the stressor "Envy", and the impulse "gain resources or knowledge", the interesting moves seem like:

- Conceal Weakness (because it's easier to cause envy if you have hidden your imperfections)
- Use Their Tricks Against Them (because these are other Mages, capable of a lot)
- Sabotage Their Strengths (this will reflect the Society's collected powers already, good at undermining Mages)

Step 5: I make up the name "Society of the Dragon," because it makes the fact this is an

Organization clear to me, and dragons are associated with magic, and, to a lesser extent, with colonization.

I add some relevant members to the cast:

- The current leader who can be referenced as a shadowy figure: Magus Helena, who is probably something like a Cabalist.
- The kind of low-level lieutenant likely to be the first “face” of the group the Mages interact with: Mx. Vassen, about on the same level as starting Mages but with a history in the group.
- And I already have Nimoy, the hunter, who is sent out on special missions.

This Force will likely work best with other Forces that they can attempt to capture or otherwise gain power over, so I will keep that in mind as I write the others.

Step 6: This group could go in a lot of directions, so I’m going to write a few possibilities as a starting point. For Code N I put “Steals something too big for them to control? / Achieves control over what gets into and leaves the city?”

I’ll narrow it down once I’ve seen some scenes with this group.

Step 7: I think Code 20 and Code 40 are simpler, as they are just making progress.

- Code 40: The Society steals a magic item
- Code 20: The Society gains another place of power

This indicates magic items are rare enough that it matters when they steal one, and that with another place of power they will really begin to start enacting larger plans.

Fated to Die

Step 1: One of the players told me they wanted a character who had a destiny to die, soon (as opposed to peacefully at the end of a long life.) Sure, I can write that up. Their character didn't exhibit the Stressor Control, but several others did, and it seems like a good one here. Fate or destiny or whatever falls under the type "Outsider".

Step 2: What I know is from the first session is that fate exists enough for it to be relevant that a Mage has a destiny prophecizing their death. Mages have a lot of agency, and Consensus isn't really structured to support inevitable outcomes. So, fate should be something that can be struggled against. It probably should be difficult to beat, and take advanced fate-changing magic, but be possible.

If the one character is fated, what are the fates of the other characters?

Will it make sense to have "agents of fate" as characters to struggle against? That could fit, depending on how the Mages deal with fate.

Step 3: One of the Outsider subtypes has the impulse "to become more real", which sounds exactly right for a fate that has not come to pass yet. That one is "Ephemeral" so that's what I'll go with.

Step 4: Control has several moves which seem extremely relevant for fate:

- Enforce Dominant Paradigm (death being one of the constants in life makes it pretty dominant)
- Spring an elaborate trap (this is what it can feel like when fate closes in on you)
- Demonstrate Power (this will come into play when the Mages try to change fate)

And potentially, I will also add “Introduce a new enemy agent” if “agents of fate” becomes a part of this.

Step 5: I’ll just call this “Fated to Die.” No cast is likely to come up for now, and the point is that one of the Mages is going to die in some hopefully-heroic situation. This means proper buildup would involve the risk increasing, signs on the horizon of sacrifices being necessary, and maybe some near misses. These are all pretty standard tropes for Consensus anyway, but it’s good to keep in mind.

This Force can also justify anything getting worse caused by any other Forces in the game, since it’s not like Fate should manifest itself to act in the world.

Step 6: Code N is obvious: the character dies.

Step 7: The other Codes are a little harder, but, thinking thematically, a reasonable pair of guesses are:

- Code 40: A vision of the character’s death?
- Code 20: A difference Force hits Code 10

This accounts for some more foreshadowing and the idea of the character’s death gaining strength in the consensual reality of the game, and things with another Force heating up such that things are desperate.

11.7 Special Forces

There are two other types of Forces for the MC to keep track of, and they represent other crucial parts of the world. They also have fewer parts to them than the other Forces and should be easier

to keep track of. The Internal Forces contains any relationships that don't belong in other forces, like many Anchors, members of a Cabal, or Students. This isn't to say that those characters might not find a home with another Force though, which could lead to interesting choices for any mages that they're close to. The Consensus Force represents force being exerted on the local Consensus, and is almost always in control of one of the other Forces.

The Internal Forces

The Internal Forces sheet has space for cast and a status track with no labels. This track advances just like any others, when interacting with (or perhaps not interacting with) important people in a player character's internal life. When this Force's status track reaches Code N, the newsworthy event doesn't need to make local news, but it should be a Big Deal to at least one of the player characters. Which one will depend entirely on the fiction at the time.

The Consensus Force

The Consensus Force sheet has space for the Force(s) currently in control, a status track, and a space for listing the Consensus Shift that the Force in control will make if the status track reaches Code N. This can be a small change such as believing that snow in late Spring is entirely seasonal. It could also be a larger change, such as believing that long pointy ears are entirely normal for humans.

11.8 Revealing, Retiring, and Adapting Forces

Consensus' rules give you an initial set of Forces that should be tied into the players' characters in interesting ways. However, games shift and adapt over time. Sometimes a Force will simply seem to be less interesting than expected, and come up less and less. That's just fine. You can let it fade from view, maybe to bring back up if it seems relevant later, or let it disappear entirely.

Forces can also sometimes become resolved. Maybe their Code N Outcome was reached and there really is no direct followup. If a Force concerns an anti-magic storm coming into being over the city, then at Code N it has hit, left an anti-magic shell, and the storm itself abates. Or, maybe the players' characters struck such a major blow against a Force that they fully withdraw for a while. Keep them in mind in case it makes sense to come back, especially if members of the Cast are still around and alive, but it's perfectly reasonable to stop choosing them as elements of scenes and sources of moves.

You may wish to add Forces as the game progresses. This can be because something new is recognized in the world. Maybe the players keep referencing an abandoned house that they think is haunted. Sure, if the game isn't too busy, write it up as a Force. Choose a Stressor to base it off of that you think could use more exploring. It also can happen if you resolve one or more Forces and are starting to find that the game is getting a bit thin. In that case, you can develop a new Force to bring into play based on characters' Stressors that aren't getting to be seen much, and on world details that are already established. This is a great

place to have a rival sect of Mages roll into town, or have a hitherto-unnoticed secret society reveal itself, or have a character wander in not knowing what they have unleashed. For any of these, build the Force similarly to how you did the initial ones, but now you will have much more familiarity with the characters and the fiction to fit them in. Don't forget to make their goals at cross purposes with other Forces, where applicable.

Finally, it is reasonable to change details of a Force from time to time. Changing truly core elements like the name or Stressor probably represent retiring the Force and bringing in a new one at the same time, but other aspects can change with play. In particular, the Status Track's labeled Codes may alter as you learn more about the Force, the fiction, and the characters. Perhaps your initial idea seems less interesting once you see what kind of game is actually being played. Or, perhaps the players' characters themselves actually have a big enough impact on the Force to change their goals. A Force seeking to restrict knowledge of magic used for time travel which is made aware that there are a nearby sect of time travellers casually visiting the distant past on a regular basis might completely shift their goals to containing and neutralizing the threat to the timeline, and so update their Status Track accordingly. Conversely, a Force may take such a blow that they have to completely change tactics, which also can mean a major rewrite.

The Cast of a Force can constantly be in flux, as new characters who are members are established, and as old ones may leave the area, change allegiances, or even be rendered permanently ineffectual.

Moves usually shouldn't change, since they are core to the Force. You might add more from the

appropriate Stressor's list, if you have less than three written down and discover a new one that makes sense. The moves also might change during a major event, such as the Force hitting Code N. In the reconfiguring that happens as a new goal is selected, old capabilities may be abandoned or made irrelevant, and they may seek or discover new methods.

Changing Sides

One of the most meaningful reasons you might change a Force is because the other players took it in a wildly different direction than you expected. Maybe something you thought would be a small side story actually becomes much more significant than you imagined, and the players keep building it up and making it scarier than you expected. Go ahead and run with this! They will feel good that they predicted something, and will have told you exactly what would hit hardest.

Mages might try to get along with a Force that you expected to be an enemy. Maybe they try to talk to the cast of that Force instead of fighting them, or maybe they decide they overall agree with the Force's direction. Be open to this, and think carefully about what changes this might mean the Status Track needs. In some cases, it won't change: the faerie court is going to enchant people to believe in magic whether the Mages are opposing them, or helping, and the Code N outcome in which the town becomes a new haven for monsters is just more likely now. The next step may change, however, whether the Mages are now fighting against the new force of monsters, or are on the side of the monsters, defending them from incoming national

guard. In other cases, you might want to change or completely rewrite the status track. Maybe the Force itself had a change of heart and now wants something new. Keep it dramatic and liable to change the world, whether it's supported by the Mages or not.

Chapter 12

Hacking

This final chapter will contain information on making the game your own, from writing new moves (and how that can be a part of Advancement, if you feel like it), to new Paradigms, to new Playbooks, to bigger changes like the dice/stats system (d10s!) or running in alternate worlds. Also how and if to play if someone can't make it/drop in drop out ability of this game

Narrator

TBD

Chapter 13

The Characters (Appendix A)

13.1 The Cabalist

In a world where mages are solitary islands of power, shaping reality in loneliness, you have a group of people who understand you.

Name: Lou, Mr. Norrell, Agatha, Lady Corrington, Phan, Lisa, Gordon, Alice, Joan, Rainbow, Norrie, Ms. Siltane

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized? Because of my beliefs, because I was sick, because of my obsession

Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed? Because of my obsessions, because I can't keep my mouth shut, because of my friends

Why are you hunted? For my beliefs, because I antagonize, for my family ties

Looks:

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- (choose at least one) ambiguous presentation, androgynous presentation, butch presentation, concealed presentation, femme presentation, fluid presentation, transgressing presentation
- bright eyes, shifty eyes, blue eyes, wary eyes, knowing eyes, quick eyes
- blustery face, youthful face, calm face, hidden face, mysterious face
- rigid body, slight body, tattooed body, plain body, angled body, musty body
- formal clothes, billowy clothes, modest clothes, roomy clothes
- self-important aura, tight aura, foggy aura, woven aura, silver aura, austere aura

Paradigms

True Names Give Command

Aligned: (choose one) Command, Binding, Summonings

Opposed: (choose one) Inanimate mundane objects, Creation, Silent Magic

Targets who have not been given a True Name, I must know my targets' names

Ancient Languages Hold Secret Power

Aligned: (choose one) Cantrips, Enchantment, Written Magic

Opposed: (choose one) Reactive Magic, Emotional Manipulation, Magic with concepts newer than my language Magic without words (spoken, written, or thought), I must speak my magic aloud

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Moves

The Cabalist gets the Gossamer Threads move, and 2 other moves of your choice.

Gossamer Threads: (You have this move by default) When you try to **Sway** the Cabal to your chosen course of action, roll +**Without**. On a 10+, they do what you want, on a 7-9, you have to give them something they want.

Sanctum: Your Cabal has a Place of Power at which they meet and which they are charged with protecting.

Research: When you spend time researching a piece of the world, roll +**Static**. On a 10+ you may tell the MC something you learned, and how it might be immediately useful. On a 7-9, the MC will tell you something you learned, it's up to you to make it useful.

Speak Beyond the Veil: When you attempt to contact the spirit of one who has passed on, roll +**Entropic**. On a 10+ choose 2, on a 7-9 choose 1:
- The spirit is the one you meant to contact - The spirit can stay for longer than a single utterance or action - The spirit is of the disposition you expect

We're Not So Different: When you explain your paradigm to another mage in order to aid them in doing magic that is **Opposed** to their paradigm, roll +**Within**. On a hit, the magic is not **Opposed**, this time. On a 10+, you both mark experience.

You also have this move:

When you and another character exchange a moment of humanity, roll +**Without**. On a 10+ you may each immediately give a freedom to each other. On a 7-9, each hold 1. They may spend their hold 1

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for 1 to attempt to Sway Your Cabal (as per your move Gossamer Threads). You may spend your hold 1 for 1 to attempt to Sway them as if they were part of your cabal. On a 6-, they hold 2, you hold 0.

Stats

Arrange +2, +1, +0, +0, -1

Anchors

Humans need shelter, a place to live, and a home to come back to. My **Shelter Anchor** is: (pick one) My creaky old house with my painted family portrait; My first floor flat in the city

Humans need connection, people they care about, or that care about them. My **Connection Anchor** is: (pick one) Eilian, my oldest stepchild; My black cat, Shadow

Humans need emotion, memories that tie to the past and dreams of the future. My **Emotional Anchor** is: (pick one) My estranged brother's dream journal; My father's service pistol; My little brother's baby blanket

Starting Gear

- 1 Savings
- Choose a method of communicating with your cabal: A fresh batch of pre-programmed burner phones, with important numbers on speed dial; A stone that glows and heats up when you're being summoned; A heavy crystal ball.

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- Choose a source of information: An ancient spellbook, passed down through the cabal; A library of broad strokes esoterica; Accounts on the leading magical webforums, such as they are.
- Choose a tool you hope to never have to use: A well-maintained firearm; A well-stocked first aid kit; Nonperishable food to last one person two months; The personal number of the best defense lawyer in town.

Your Cabal

By default there are about 5 in the Cabal, you don't control them and they don't control you. You're pretty close in your outlooks on the world, but not everything lines up completely. This is a small cabal, with weak magic.

Pick up to two of these:

- You actually are in charge, or at least you founded it. Strength: +loyal
- There's more than just a couple of you, maybe 10 or more. Medium cabal.
- You're part of a larger system, you're just one node in the leylines. Strength: +support
- Your cabal is strong of will. Drop weak magic
- Your cabal is very close. Strength: +family

And pick one of these:

- Your cabal doesn't keep a super low profile. Vulnerable: Target
- Your cabal owes something to someone, money, allegiance, an artifact, or the like. Vulnerable: Obligation

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- Your cabal is anonymous and guarded about their identities. Vulnerable: Infiltration

Place of Power

You have this if you take the Sanctum move.

First, pick a facade:

- Library
- Fraternity/Sorority House
- Shop Basement
- Old Manor House
- Civic Building

Then pick up to 1 Strength: +respected, +private, +large, +guarded.

Pick at least 1 Weakness: +inaccessible, +obvious, +public, +tainted, +exposed, +business hours, +cramped.

A Ritual performed here will never (choose 1):

- Need more information
- Draw unwanted attention
- Take longer than expected

Advancements

- Get +1 Without (Max Without +3)
- Get +1 Within (Max Within +2)
- Get +1 Dynamic (Max Dynamic +3)
- Get +1 Static (Max Static +3)
- Pick a new option for your Place of Power
- Pick a new option for your Cabal
- Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- (*) Give a Freedom to another Mage's Paradigm
- (*) Gain an Anchor (2 Anchors max)

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(Choose only after 5 from the first section)

- Retire to safety
- Switch playbooks
- Start a second character

(Choose only after 5 from the first section and if not Tethered)

- (*) Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- Pick a new option for your Place of Power
- Get a new Cabalist Move
- Get a new Cabalist Move
- Get a playbook move from another book
- Get an Advanced Cabalist Move
- Remove a weakness from your Place of Power

13.2 The Hedge Mage

"Once Upon a Time, Humans could move mountains with their will. Now, it is upon us to carry on the ancient traditions, and master as many types of magic as we can."

Name: Merle, Freya, Orenna, Benjamin, Liro, Norfeld, Wood, Sherand, Lilith, Melinda, Corin, Wilhelm, Byecross

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized? Because of my attitude, because I was neurodivergent, because I couldn't keep up

Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed? Because of my detachment, because I don't want to fit in, because I screwed up

Why are you hunted? For fun, for my Talents, because I disturb people

Looks:

- (choose at least one) ambiguous presentation, androgynous presentation, butch presentation, concealed presentation, femme presentation, fluid presentation, transgressing presentation
- distracted eyes, glittering eyes, faraway eyes, inscrutable eyes, determined eyes
- wizened face, deadpan face, vivacious face, brisk face, chipper face, sharp face
- spindly body, angular body, aggressive body, thickset body, dexterous body
- rustic clothes, embellished clothes, coarse clothes, domestic clothes
- sprightly aura, stalwart aura, agile aura, musical aura, flashy aura, unrefined aura

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Paradigms

A Thousand Arcane Secrets

Aligned: (choose one) Cantrips, Ritual Magic

Opposed: (choose one) Large-reaching effects, immediate effects, I can't do the same thing twice

(choose one) Planning magic, magic from rote

Double, Double, Toil and Trouble

Aligned: All possible magic

Opposed: Magic that doesn't require preparation

Magic that doesn't require physical components

Moves

The Hedge Mage gets the **Exactly When I Mean To** move, and 2 other moves of your choice.

Exactly When I Mean To: (You have this move by default) At the beginning of the session, roll +Entropic. On a 10+, hold 2. On a 7-9, hold 1. At any time, either you or the MC can spend your hold to have you arrive in a scene, with the proper tools and knowledge, with or without any clear explanation why. Take +1 forward when you do so. On a miss, the MC holds 1, and can spend it to have you arrive, but somehow pinned, caught or trapped.

Call Through Shadow: When you call a mundane or common object to yourself, roll +Dynamic. On a hit, you have successfully summoned it to you. On a 10+ you're in the clear. On a 7-9 choose 1:

- It comes out of an intense nearby situation

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- It comes with strings attached
- It can be traced back to you.

Scrying Bowl: When you have an object related to a person and use it to gaze upon their current situation, roll +Without. On a 10+ all 3, on a 7-9 choose 1:

- They don't know they're being watched
- You can identify where they are
- You can discern what they are doing.

If You Ask Me: When you offer an alternative perspective on someone's Paradigm, roll +Without. On a hit, they gain experience. On a 10+, give them a new Aligned related to what you told them until the end of session.

Magical Experimentation: When you collaborate with other Mages to push your magic past its current boundaries in a controlled setting, roll +Dynamic. On a 10+ all 3, on a 7-9 choose 1:

- It works pretty much as intended
- It doesn't cause a scene, draw extra attention, or harm you
- It was controlled enough that you can repeat it.

This One Is Mine: When you call out another magical being, so long as your companions don't interfere, others will give you enough space to finish it, come what may.

You also have this move:

When you and another character exchange a moment of humanity, they gain one hold, which they can spend to cause you to appear as if by Exactly When I Mean To.

Stats

Arrange +2, +1, +0, +0, -1

Anchors

Humans need shelter, a place to live, and a home to come back to. My **Shelter Anchor** is: (pick one) The Ancestral Family Home; My cottage with a small garden out back; My penthouse apartment that I barely afford

Humans need connection, people they care about, or that care about them. My **Connection Anchor** is: (pick one) Lazarus, the man I saved from drowning; My well-meaning mother; Chance, my favorite nibbling

Humans need emotion, memories that tie to the past and dreams of the future. My **Emotional Anchor** is: (pick one) My grandfather's old chipped pipe; My compass that doesn't point north; A leaf from the forests I knew from -----

Starting Gear

- 1 Savings
- Choose a symbol of hospitality: A set of fine china; A spare bedroom; A large cast-iron oven; The latest in home entertainment systems; A well stocked bar.
- Choose a tool: A tablesaw and misc. woodworking equipment; A glassblowing oven; A well-used set of gardening implements; An emergency shotgun, loaded with rock-salt.

Advancements

- Gain +1 Without (max Without +2)
- Gain +1 Within (max Within +2)
- Gain +1 Entropy (max Entropy +2)
- Pick a new Hedge Mage move
- Pick a playbook move from another playbook
- Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- (*) Give a Freedom to another Mage's Paradigm
- (*) Gain an Anchor (2 Anchors max)

(Choose only after 5 from the first section)

- Retire to safety
- Switch playbooks
- Start a second character

(Choose only after 5 from the first section and if not Tethered)

- (*) Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- Pick a new Hedge Mage move
- Pick a new Hedge Mage move
- Pick a playbook move from another playbook
- Pick a playbook move from another playbook
- Gain +1 Dynamic (max Dynamic +3)
- Get an Advanced Hedge Mage Move

13.3 The Inspired

Many people wonder where inspiration comes from. That question is boring to you, you know the answer. The right question is, how much can you do with that inspiration?

Name: Esin, Tobias, Tafari, Sameal, Mab, Fiona, Kai, Kendall, Flower, Ida

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized? Because they thought I was broken, because I was uneducated, because of my looks

Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed? Because of my obsessions, because I'm too different, because who I am hasn't changed

Why are you hunted? Because I'm misunderstood, because I break the Rules, for my insight

Looks:

- (choose at least one) ambiguous presentation, androgynous presentation, butch presentation, concealed presentation, femme presentation, fluid presentation, transgressing presentation
- Burning eyes, dull eyes, hungry eyes, bloodshot eyes
- Slack face, haggard face, shining face, stubborn face, yearning face
- Wiry body, full body, misshapen body
- Flowing clothes, fancy clothes, rags, hip clothes, active clothes
- Expansive aura, sucking aura, insinuating aura, kaleidoscope aura, tantalizing aura

Paradigms

I Bend the Rules through my Source

Aligned: (choose one) Mental magic, Time-affecting magic

Opposed: (choose one) Magic that reenforces the status quo, magic that doesn't protect my Source, time-affecting magic

(choose one) Magic without my Source, I must share my Source to do magic

My Source Lets me See the True Nature of Things

Aligned: (choose one) Divinations, Transmutations

Opposed: (choose one) Obscuring magic, changing things that are Static, My magic must cause a transformation

(choose one) Magic without my Source, Magic without understanding

Moves

The Inspired gets the **Source** move, and 2 other moves of your choice.

Source: (You have this move by default) You've identified the source of your inspiration. When your **Source** first becomes present in a scene, hold 3. At any time that your source is present for the rest of the scene, spend your Hold 1-for-1 to:

- Draw attention to your Source
- Give someone (including yourself) +1 to a roll they just made if it would change the result, describing how your Source helps them do it

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- Bring your positive tag into play, narrating what it means for the moment

Whether it is present in a scene or not, your Source always counts as an active Inspiration for you.

Just When I Think You're Gone: When you pass up an opportunity to interact with your Source, or remove it from a scene, roll +Within. On a hit, hold 1. On a 10+ you may spend your hold 1-for-1 to have your source appear in the scene with no explanation needed. On a 7-9 you may spend your hold for the same, but your Source is threatened, captured, or in peril.

Open Their Mind: When you introduce an individual to your Source to open their mind, roll +Entropic. On a 10+, they are not a Lookout the next time they would be for your magic. On a 7-9, they are drawn to your Source (if a PC, they mark experience next time they interact with your Source). On a 6-, in addition to whatever else the MC says, choose one:

- They find they have a strong aversion to your Source
- They wish to take your Source away from you.

Opiate for the Masses: When you bring your Source to a mob, roll +Without. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 1. Spend your hold 1-for-1 to:

- Discover a truth that they know
- Obtain something of value or use
- Get them to believe a truth
- Learn their potential
- Placate them and return them to their mundane lives.

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Visions of Fate: When you dive into the chaos surging around you to see visions of what could come to be, roll +Entropic. On a 10+, pick one person who keeps their standing, and one who doesn't. On a 7-9, pick one or the other. Don't name a PC; name NPCs only. The MC will make your prediction come true, if it's even remotely possible. On a miss, take -1 ongoing until the chaos subsides.

You also have this move:

When you and another character exchange a moment of humanity, roll +Entropic. On a hit you count as having Opened Their Mind, as if you'd rolled a 10+. On a 7-9 they hold 1, and can spend that hold to have your Source show up in a scene, or deny it from you for a scene. On a 6-, if they are aware of the magical world, they gain a Restriction against magic with your Source.

Stats

Arrange +2, +1, +0, +0, -1

Anchors

Humans need shelter, a place to live, and a home to come back to. My **Shelter Anchor** is: (pick one) 617 Arbor St. Rear; The couches and guest rooms of my friends (I always pay, in cash or chores); The "Beach House" that I live in, even in the off season

Humans need connection, people they care about, or that care about them. My **Connection Anchor** is: (pick one) Neon and Crystal, some kids I hang out with on the weekend; Leslie, who cares about me

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but just doesn't understand; _____, my greatest confidante

Humans need emotion, memories that tie to the past and dreams of the future. My Emotional Anchor is: (pick one) My last gift from _____ before they left; The diamond necklace from _____; The well-worn T-shirt I always sleep in

Starting Gear

- 3 Savings
- Choose something to fall back on: A hidden cache of valuables worth about 2 savings; A safehouse that's really more of a safe-shack; Airline miles enough for a one-way ticket to just about anywhere; Two good fake IDs; A holdout pistol with a single shot.

Your Source

First pick your Source's form: a person, an object, a substance, an abstract concept, an action, an emotion

Next choose one of these: - Your source can be concealed, protected, or otherwise removed from a dangerous situation (+safe) - Your source gives you heightened senses (+alert) - Your source lets you understand magic as its caster understands it (+sense) - Your source makes you feel more alive, it gives you a rush (+invigorating) - Your source helps you get people to go along with what you want (+social)

And choose two of these: - Your source is dangerous, socially unacceptable, or otherwise something you must hide or face consequences. (+forbidden) - Your source is rare or hard to find. (+rare) -

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Your source is immobile, unportable, or otherwise impossible to bring with you (+immobile) - You crave more and more of the source, you suffer without it (+addictive) - Your source is short-lived, and its magical enhancements last but a moment (+quick) - Your source often harms you, physically or otherwise (+dangerous) - Your source makes your magic more unpredictable, you can't always control it or its effects (+chaotic)

Advancements

- Gain +1 Without (max Without +2)
- Gain +1 Within (max Within +2)
- Gain +1 Entropic (max Entropic +2)
- Pick a new Inspired move
- Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- (*) Give a Freedom to another Mage's Paradigm
- (*) Gain an Anchor (2 Anchors max)

(Choose only after 5 from the first section)

- Retire to safety
- Switch playbooks
- Start a second character

(Choose only after 5 from the first section and if not Tethered)

- (*) Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- Pick a new Inspired move
- Pick a playbook move from another playbook
- Gain +1 Without (max Without +3)
- Gain +1 Within (max Within +3)
- Get an Advanced Inspired Move

13.4 The Mentor

The secrets of the Universe are yours, but you don't guard them jealously. You share the wisdom with the precious few who will listen, taking on pupils who will one day surpass you.

Name: Johan, Master Lu, Mina, Zoe, Indra, Roy, Puteri, Madame Leena, Marshki, Luce, Goswami, Sena

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized? Because I was poor, because I was neurodivergent, because of my transgressions

Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed? Because I see things as they really are, because I make my own path, because people started noticing me

Why are you hunted? Because I'm famous, for my forbidden knowledge, so my students are not

Looks:

- (choose at least one) ambiguous presentation, androgynous presentation, butch presentation, concealed presentation, femme presentation, fluid presentation, transgressing presentation
- shining eyes, sunken eyes, alert eyes, glowing eyes
- weathered face, gaunt face, wrinkled face, caring face, creased face
- wiry body, ripped body, lanky body
- street clothes, flowing clothes, concealing clothes
- menacing aura, peaceful aura, green aura, golden aura, fading aura, grounded aura, rippling aura

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Paradigms

Your Focus Determines Your Reality

Aligned: (choose one) Calming Magic, Projecting Power, Perfect Positioning

Opposed: (choose one) Breaking cycles, My magic must remain internal

(choose one) Technomagic, Magic while distracted

I am the Platonic Ideal of Myself

Aligned: (choose one) Static Magic, Convergence, Reflexive Magic

Opposed: (choose one) Fragmenting magic, creation, my magic cannot hide me

(choose one) Cynical magic, magic without conviction

Moves

The Mentor gets the Pupils move, and 2 other moves of your choice.

Pupils: (You have this move by default) You have a number of students who follow your paradigmatic teachings. At the beginning of the session, roll +learning to determine how their studies are progressing. On a 10+ they have a surplus. On a 7-9, both a surplus and a want. On a 6-, they will do everything in their power to satisfy all their wants.

Meditation: When you meditate on the best course of action for considerable time, roll +Dynamic. On a 10+ hold 3, on a 7-9 hold 1. You may spend this hold 1-for-1 at any time to ask the MC a question from this list, the MC will answer truthfully.

You take +1 forward when acting on this information.

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- What's my escape route?
- What are the unknowable risks?
- Where can the Consensus be bent in my favor?
- Who is favorable towards my plan?

Academe: You have a Place of Power where you train your students. While you are within your Place of Power, take +1 forward to any Static rolls you make.

Matter over Mind: You may roll +Static instead of +Without when impressing a *lusus naturae* in order to sway them.

What you Need, not what you Want: When another character comes to you for advice and you tell them honestly what you think the best course of action is, they take +1 ongoing while following your advice, and you mark experience.

You also have this move:

When you and another character exchange a moment of humanity, they may immediately gain an Anchor (They still may not have more anchors than their playbook started with this way).

Stats

Arrange +2, +1, +0, +0, -1

Anchors

Humans need shelter, a place to live, and a home to come back to. My Shelter Anchor is: (pick one) The apartment I share with a few roommates; My small but immaculate house downtown; A single room at the back of my place of work

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Humans need connection, people they care about, or that care about them. **My Connection Anchor** is: (pick one) My best friend Ayah; Devon, my oldest rival; Zorrah, my forbidden love

Humans need emotion, memories that tie to the past and dreams of the future. **My Emotional Anchor** is: (pick one) A portrait of my own long-dead mentor; The gold necklace given to me by _____; A coal to remind me of _____

Starting Gear

No major possessions to speak of, but 3 Savings tucked away for a rainy day.

Your Students

By default you have about 10 students, they are moderately studious sleepers and they respect you, though they're not fully loyal. They have their own lives apart from you, family and friends in the area. (learning +1. surplus: time. want: departure.)

Pick up to two of these:

- Your students are competitive (replace want: departure with want: competition)
- Your students are driven (replace surplus: time with surplus: dedication)
- Your students are enthusiastic (replace surplus: time with surplus: energy)
- Your students are lazy (replace want: departure with want: sloth)

And one of these:

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- Your school is famous (add surplus: growth and want: infamy)
- Your school is large (default students 20)
- Your students are quick learners (+1 learning)
- You have a protege; your most advanced student is Awakened
- Your students are rowdy (add want: violence and surplus: intimidation)

Place of Power

You have this if you take the Academe move.

First, pick a facade:

- Dojo
- Dance Studio
- Abandoned warehouse
- Stunt filming location
- Lecture hall

Then pick up to 1 Strength: +hidden, +famous, +easily defended, +inconspicuous, +free

Pick at least 1 Weakness: +cramped, +dangerous, +temporary, +infamous, +weak

A Ritual performed here will never (choose 1):

- Need help from an outside source
- Take longer than expected
- Have greater than intended effect

Advancements

- Gain +1 Entropic (Maximum Entropic +3)
- Gain +1 Within (Maximum Within +3)
- Gain +1 Static (Maximum Static +2)

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- Gain +1 Dynamic (Maximum Dynamic +2)
- Get a new Mentor move
- Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- (*) Give a Freedom to another Mage's Paradigm
- (*) Gain an Anchor (3 Anchors max)

(Choose only after 5 from the first section)

- Retire to safety
- Switch playbooks
- Start a second character

(Choose only after 5 from the first section and if not Tethered)

- (*) Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- Get a new Mentor move
- Choose a new option for your Students
- Choose a new option for your Students
- Choose a new option for your Place of Power
- Get a playbook move from another book
- Get a playbook move from another book
- Get an Advanced Mentor Move

13.5 The Pious

You know the true meaning of sacrifice. It isn't something dramatic or grandiose, sometimes it just means going without sleep so you can stake out the fields that cows keep disappearing from. There's Something larger than just you, and choosing that over your own needs, that's sacrifice.

Name: Joan, Ether, Miranda, Brother Wilhelm, Francis, Emira, Marja, Ingrid, Bernard, Rishi, Sister Eliza

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized? Because of my beliefs, because of my family ties, because I couldn't keep up

Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed? Because I keep screwing up, because I can't keep my mouth shut, because of my anger

Why are you hunted? Because I break the Rules, for my beliefs, for the Truth

Looks:

- (choose at least one) ambiguous presentation, androgynous presentation, butch presentation, concealed presentation, femme presentation, fluid presentation, transgressing presentation
- caring eyes, quiet eyes, intense eyes, small eyes, inspired eyes, hard eyes
- youthful face, lined face, sharp face, round face, marred face, open face
- hard body, sallow body, frail body, large body
- orderly clothes, homespun clothes, conservative clothes, starched clothes
- peaceful aura, driven aura, flowing aura, tight-fitting aura, hidden aura

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Paradigms

All is One and the One is All

Aligned: (choose one) Pattern magic, cooperative magic

Opposed: (choose one) Selfish magic, magic that divides, my magic must be wholly of the physical world

(choose one) Magic without Faith, magic that doesn't involve people

I am the New Prophet

Aligned: (choose one) Visions of the Future, Forging a Destiny

Opposed: (choose one) Things at rest, Negating other magic

(choose one) Changing the Future you Know, Hiding the Truth

Moves

The Pious gets the **Vows** move, and 2 other moves of your choice.

Vows: (You have this move by default) When you **Eschew Mortal Comfort** in favor of aiding someone else, roll +Static. On a 10+ hold 3, on a 7-9 hold 1. Spend your hold 1-for-1 to declare someone involved in a situation owes you a small favor for past help.

Listen to the Celestial Chorus: When you tune in to the voices of the universe, sometimes they will have something helpful to say. Roll +Static. On a hit you may ask questions from the below list, the

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MC will answer truthfully. On a 10+ ask 3, on a 7-9 ask 1.

- Who here has the most potential?
- Who can I trust?
- What am I not seeing?
- Who is telling the truth?

Sanctuary: You have access to a Place of Power, a safe haven against things that would harm servants of your Path.

Clarity of Purpose: When you talk someone through a Restriction on their Paradigm, they remove that Restriction.

Exorcism: When you banish an inhabiting spirit roll +Dynamic. On a 10+ choose 1, on a 7-9 choose 2:

- You expose yourself to possession
- The spirit is ill-disposed towards you
- The inhabited subject is harmed.

Holy Avenger: You have a weapon, enchanted and attuned to your beliefs. When you use it to bring death, justify why this is necessary, and roll +Entropic. On a hit, you may incapacitate or kill any one opponent on the battlefield. On a 7-9, they have a chance to react first, but can't stop you. On a 6-, they were prepared. Sucks to be you.

You also have this move:

When you and another character exchange a moment of humanity, roll +nothing. On a 10+, either you or they lose one Discord, their choice. On a 7-9, they choose whether to transfer one Discord from you to them or from them to you.

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Stats

Arrange +2, +1, +0, +0, -1

Anchors

Humans need shelter, a place to live, and a home to come back to. **My Shelter Anchor** is: (pick one) The alley behind the best Chilean restaurant in the city; My cramped apartment downtown; My cared-for house with a welcome mat out front

Humans need connection, people they care about, or that care about them. **My Connection Anchor** is: (pick one) Kell, my heart's delight; My widowed sister-in-law

Humans need emotion, memories that tie to the past and dreams of the future. **My Emotional Anchor** is: (pick one) My wooden rose, a gift from my first love; My dog-eared holy text

Starting Gear

- **1 Savings**
- **Choose a way of strengthening bonds:** An altar, complete with spiritual accoutrements; A branch from the Oath Tree; A table at the best restaurant in this half of the city; A hand-woven prayer mat.
- **Choose a ritual supply that you have a small stock of:** Holy Water; Incense from a far-away place; Rare herbs; Preserved animal bones; Graveyard dirt; Specially prepared ink and paper
- **Choose a creature comfort:** A hotel of the month club membership; A bottle of 18 year Macallan; A luxurious bathrobe and slippers; A set of high-end noise-cancelling headphones

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Place of Power

You have this if you take the Sanctuary move.

First, pick a facade:

- Place of Worship
- Forested Grove
- Basement Laboratory
- Old Log Cabin
- Wishing Well
- Ancestral Mausoleum
- Natural Spring

Then pick up to 1 Strength: +warded, +accorded ground, +famous, +private, +unique, +awakened spirit

Pick at least 1 Weakness: +inaccessible, +obvious, +public, +tainted +exposed, +business hours, +cramped

A Ritual performed here will never (choose 1):

- Need a certain object
- Cause everyone involved to Backlash
- Need extra time

Advancements

- Gain +1 Without (Maximum Without +3)
- Gain +1 Within (Maximum Within +2)
- Gain +1 Static (Maximum Static +2)
- Gain +1 Dynamic (Maximum Dynamic +2)
- Get a new Pious move
- Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- (*) Give a Freedom to another Mage's Paradigm
- (*) Gain an Anchor (2 Anchors max)

(Choose only after 5 from the first section)

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- Retire to safety
- Switch playbooks
- Start a second character

(Choose only after 5 from the first section and if not Tethered)

- (*) Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- Get a new Pious move
- Get a new Pious move
- Choose a new option for your Place of Power
- Choose a new option for your Place of Power
- Get a playbook move from another book
- Get a playbook move from another book
- Get an Advanced Pious Move

13.6 The Primordial

You don't need fancy rituals, long drawn-out methods, or anything like that when you're working with the raw forces that shaped the Universe. That's what magic is really about.

Name: Markus, Zakiel, Kassandra, The Hooded One, Crystal, Zuri, Malaki, Jeyde, Andrzej, Kolden, Sheth

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized? Because of my anger, because the world isn't accessible, because of my fear **Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed?** Because I'm too different, because I can't stay still, because I'm afraid

Why are you hunted? Because I hurt people, for my wealth, because I want to be

Looks:

- (choose at least one) ambiguous presentation, androgynous presentation, butch presentation, concealed presentation, femme presentation, fluid presentation, transgressing presentation
- burning eyes, dead eyes, piercing eyes, hungry eyes, hopeful eyes, white eyes
- scarred face, drawn face, sallow face, eager face, tired face, weathered face
- imposing body, sinewy body, impish body, emaciated body, thickset body
- concealing clothes, goth clothes, simple clothes, worn clothes, grubby clothes
- fiery aura, dark aura, shifting aura, grey aura, brilliant aura, mossy aura

CHAPTER 13. THE CHARACTERS (APPENDIX 307)

Paradigms

Blood is the Strongest Sympathy

Aligned: (choose one) Healing, Curses, Sympathy

Opposed: (choose one) Restoration, Mind-affecting magic

(choose one) Magic that doesn't require sacrifice, magic that doesn't require sympathy

The World's Energy is Wrapped in Crude Matter

Aligned: (choose one) Transformations and Transmutations, Energy Manipulation

Opposed: (choose one) Destruction, Creation
(choose one) Subtle magic, finesse magic

I See, Hear, and Command the Spirits

Aligned: (choose one) Elemental magic, Summoning

Opposed: (choose one) Man-made things, Transmutation

(choose one) Magic that disrespects the spirit world, my magic must incorporate spirits

Moves

The Primordial gets the **Strong Avatar** and **What Doesn't Kill You** moves, and 1 other move of your choice.

Strong Avatar: (You have this move by default) When you assert your **Paradigm's** truth to another **Mage**, roll +Static. On a hit, replace one of their **Opposed** with one of your own for the rest of the scene. On a 10+, both mark experience.

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What Doesn't Kill You: (You have this move by default) The first time during a session your Health hits Code 30, mark experience.

Harvest: When you Rip the Power from a Being, describe what power and roll +Entropic. On a 10+ choose 3, on a 7-9 choose 1.

- It dies then and there.
- You are empowered, take +1 ongoing until you fail a roll.
- The power is not tainted.
- You don't draw excessive attention.

Hunter: When you track your Prey's magical trail roll +Without. On a 10+ you find them, and they're close. On a 7-9, choose 1:

- You're in for a trek, but at least the trail is strong
- They're close by, but the trail went cold

Serendipity: Once per session, when you Use Magic to Fix it, you may choose none of the options.

You also have this move:

When you and another character exchange a moment of humanity, you each hold 1. You can each spend that hold at any time to Help or Hinder each other, no matter the barriers or distance between you.

Stats

Arrange +2, +1, +0, +0, -1

Anchors

Only pick Anchors from two of the categories below.

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Humans need shelter, a place to live, and a home to come back to. **My Shelter Anchor** is: (pick one) A small tent down under the East Side Bridge; My small house, where my pets live; An apartment roughly the size of a closet

Humans need connection, people they care about, or that care about them. **My Connection Anchor** is: (pick one) Agnes, my faltering grandmother; Red, my oddball neighbor

Humans need emotion, memories that tie to the past and dreams of the future. **My Emotional Anchor** is: (pick one) _____ from my childhood home; The engraved knife I found in _____; The yellowed love letters my parents exchanged

Starting Gear

2 Savings

- Choose a prize that you won: An always-sharp knife; A large rainstick that sometimes works; A gold-plated hip-flask; A once-used guitar; An embellished leather jacket; A bleached animal skull.
- Choose an impracticality: A large ornate mirror; Two sets black-tie attire; A high-powered telescope; A timeshare in the Hamptons; A 96" plasma TV; A marble bust of your head.

Advancements

- Gain +1 Without (Maximum Without +1)
- Gain +1 Within (Maximum Within +2)
- Gain +1 Static (Maximum Static +3)
- Gain +1 Dynamic (Maximum Dynamic +2)
- Get a new Primordial move

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- Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- (*) Give a Freedom to another Mage's Paradigm
- (*) Gain an Anchor (2 Anchors max)

(Choose only after 5 from the first section)

- Retire to safety
- Switch playbooks
- Start a second character

(Choose only after 5 from the first section and if not Tethered)

- (*) Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- Get a new Primordial move
- Get a second use of Serendipity
- Get a playbook move from another book
- Get a playbook move from another book
- Get an Advanced Primordial move

13.7 The Tech Adept

Most people think magic and technology are incompatible, but you know better. You prefer to think of them as peanut butter and chocolate. And you're the sweet sweet mix.

Name: Jeremy, Kix, Sonya, B3ll, Doran, Starter, TK, Foto, Liza, The Law, Dodge, Ophelia, Tarvek, Fr0st, Amanda

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized? Because of my obsession, because of my transgressions, because I was uneducated

Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed? Because I'm holding back, because I don't care, because I don't know how to fit in

Why are you hunted? For my talents, because I get framed, because I antagonize

Looks:

- (choose at least one) ambiguous presentation, androgynous presentation, butch presentation, concealed presentation, femme presentation, fluid presentation, transgressing presentation
- cocky eyes, darting eyes, vacant eyes, lively eyes, emotionless eyes
- driven face, stony face, fervent face, steady face, broad face, impassive face
- jumpy body, gangling body, striking body, burly body, awkward body
- tailored clothes, lusterless clothes, futuristic clothes, dingy clothes, protective clothes
- kinetic aura, obscure aura, crackling aura, luminous aura, twisting aura, drab aura

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Paradigms

Reality has an API

Aligned: (choose one) Changing a single variable, magic done from a terminal

Opposed: (choose one) Living things, magic that affects only part of an object, I can only change a single variable at a time

(choose one) Unplanned magic, magic not done from a terminal, my magic must be expressed as if/then conditions

My Own Theory of Everything

Aligned: (choose one) The physical world, repeated magic **Opposed:** (choose one) Magic not of the physical world, magic that violates the Law of Entropy, my magic may not involve living things

(choose this one) Magic without technological accoutrements

Moves

The Tech Adept gets the **Universal Programmer** move, and 2 other moves of your choice.

Universal Programmer: (You have this move by default) When you make a new piece of equipment, roll +Dynamic. On a hit you make it. On a 10+, it works and keeps working. On a 7-9, it will only last for the scene. In either case, choose a quirk:

- The device works much more slowly than expected

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- The device requires more of a resource than expected
- The device has a side effect when used

Read the Web of Fate: When you enter the virtual world to Read the Web of Fate, roll +Without. On a hit, you can determine the degrees of separation between two objects or people. On a 10+, you can also get a general idea of the path between them.

Ghost in the Machine: When you enter the Virtual World physically, you may bring other willing Mages along, and exit at any terminal you can find.

Things Speak: When you examine an interesting technological or magical object, roll +Without. On a 10+, you may ask up to 3 of the following questions, on a 7-9, ask 1.

- What strong emotions have been most recently associated with this?
- What's wrong with this, and how might I fix it?
- How frequently has this been handled?
- Where did this come from?
- How might this be dangerous?
- Who designed this?

Percussive Maintenance: When you impose your will on a machine, roll +Entropic. It works better. On a 10+, tell the MC how. On a 7-9, the MC will tell you how. On a 6-, the MC will tell you how, and why this is terrible for you.

You also have this move:

When you and another character exchange a moment of humanity, they speak to you as if they were an interesting technological or magical object (whether or not you have the move). Treat it as rolling a

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10+ and ask up to 3 questions from the list. If you ask more than 1 question, you speak back to them in the same way, and they may ask up to 3 questions of the same list.

Stats

Arrange +2, +1, +0, +0, -1

Anchors

Humans need shelter, a place to live, and a home to come back to. **My Shelter Anchor** is: (pick one) A squat without running water; My nicely decorated apartment, walking distance from public transit; A room-share start-up pilot program

Humans need connection, people they care about, or that care about them. **My Connection Anchor** is: (pick one) My only uncle, Avi; Zeke, from my virtual community

Humans need emotion, memories that tie to the past and dreams of the future. **My Emotional Anchor** is: (pick one) The tree-house I built with _____; My first hand-held console; My mint copy of _____; My High School Diploma, which I almost had to forge

Starting Gear

- 2 Savings
- Choose a signature toolset: My souped-up computer; a set of scripts and daemons that I can reach from anywhere with an internet connection; All the meters, connectors, and components I could need.

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- Choose something you've made: A full home automation system; An Internet watchdog to keep you informed; A weapon using Consensus-defying energies.

Advancements

- Gain +1 Without (Max Without +2)
- Gain +1 Within (Max Within +2)
- Gain +1 Entropic (Max Entropic +2)
- Gain a new Tech-Adept move
- Gain a new Tech-Adept move
- Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- (*) Give a Freedom to another Mage's Paradigm
- (*) Gain an Anchor (2 Anchors max)

(Choose only after 5 from the first section)

- Retire to safety
- Switch playbooks
- Start a second character

(Choose only after 5 from the first section and if not Tethered)

- (*) Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- Gain +1 Static (Max Static +2)
- Gain a new Tech-Adept move
- Pick a playbook move from another playbook
- Get an Advanced Tech-Adept Move
- Get an Advanced Tech-Adept Move

13.8 The Voiced

I am the voice of the past that will always be
I am the voice of your hunger and pain
I am the voice of the future
I am the voice, I will remain

Name: Arin, Malak, Liron, Shir, Piper, Lark, Jaron, Calliope, Diona, Zamira, Kousan, Prudence, Orpheus, Sophie

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized? Because I spoke differently, because they thought I was broken, because of my looks

Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed? Because I don't want to fit in, because I can't stay still, because of my friends **Why are you hunted?** For my talents, because I'm famous, because I appear broken

Looks:

- (choose at least one) ambiguous presentation, androgynous presentation, butch presentation, concealed presentation, femme presentation, fluid presentation, transgressing presentation
- glimmering eyes, vibrant eyes, piercing eyes, innocent eyes
- open face, laughing face, pained face, serene face, fake face
- young body, burly body, tantalizing body, inconspicuous body, flashy body
- crisp clothes, respectable clothes, stylish clothes, custom clothes, ill-fitting clothes
- forbidden aura, enticing aura, waifish aura, vivid aura, purple aura

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Paradigms

I am a Voice in the Chorus

Aligned: (choose one) Words spoken which become Truth, divine insight

Opposed: (choose one) Harmful magic, dissonant magic

(choose one) silent magic, magic done alone

Spirit Whisperer

Aligned: (choose one) The breath of life, soothing magic, transcending barriers

Opposed: (choose one) Loud magic, wards, entropic magic

(choose one) Magic without spirits, silent magic, my magic must be expressed as a request, my magic depends on a willing spirit

Music is the language of the Universe

Aligned: (choose one) Regular rhythms, variations on a theme, harmonious magic, cosmic vibrations

Opposed: (choose one) Chaotic magic, counter magic, singular effects

(choose one) Soundless magic, emotionless magic, my magic must be a song

Moves

The Voiced gets the **Charming Voice** move, and 2 other moves of your choice.

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Charming Voice: (You have this move by default) When you **Sell a Lie** using your voice to do so, you may roll **+Without** instead of **+Dynamic**

Voice in the Wind: When you speak across boundaries that would otherwise make communication impossible, you are heard.

Power Vested in Me: When you speak as the voice of a significant or powerful group, and with their full weight and authority, roll **+Static**. On a **10+** those you are speaking to will take you at your word, on a **7-9**, they will need some proof or assurances first.

Arresting Voice: When you use your voice to deliver a message that is both powerful and captivating, roll **+Without**. On a **10+**, your audience is frozen, unable to do anything other than to continue listening until you finish. On a **7-9**, they are likewise frozen, but you must not take any action other than to continue delivering your message, or the spell will be broken.

The Voice of Experience: When you have been here before, give advice on a course of action and roll **+Dynamic**, **-1** if Tethered. On a **7-9**, take **+1** forward when following the plan. On a **10+**, additionally everyone who follows the plan marks experience.

You also have this move:

When you and another character exchange a moment of humanity, you may tell them a secret about yourself. If you do, they will respond with a secret about themselves.

Stats

Arrange **+2**, **+1**, **+0**, **+0**, **-1**

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Anchors

Humans need shelter, a place to live, and a home to come back to. **My Shelter Anchor** is: (pick one) A studio in the nice part of town that I sweet-talked my way into; My spotless but lived-in condo; A nice house in the bad part of town

Humans need connection, people they care about, or that care about them. **My Connection Anchor** is: (pick one) _____ who is always there for me; Allison, who taught me how to live; _____, who finishes my duets

Humans need emotion, memories that tie to the past and dreams of the future. **My Emotional Anchor** is: (pick one) The long-dead bouquet of flowers I was given for _____; The headphones that _____ got for me; The _____ my mother brought back from a business trip.

Starting Gear

- 1 Savings
- An old police scanner to stay informed.
- Choose a method of expression: A well-cared for musical instrument; A high end camera; A reliable sewing machine; A potter's wheel and kiln; A small leased art studio; A waterproof notebook; A pirate radio station with a range of a mile or two.
- Choose a way of protecting your voice: A large supply of herbal teas and tinctures; A small switchblade; A tube of pepper spray; A bullhorn.

Advancements

- Get +1 Static (Max Static +2)

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- Get +1 Dynamic (Max Dynamic +2)
- Get +1 Within (Max Within +2)
- Get +1 Entropic (Max Entropic +2)
- Get a new Voiced move
- Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- (*) Give a Freedom to another Mage's Paradigm
- (*) Gain an Anchor (2 Anchors max)

(Choose only after 5 from the first section)

- Retire to safety
- Switch playbooks
- Start a second character

(Choose only after 5 from the first section and if not Tethered)

- (*) Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- Get +1 Without (Max Without +3)
- Get +1 Static (Max Static +3)
- Get a new Voiced move
- Get a move from another playbook
- Get an Advanced Voiced move

13.9 The Wayfarer

There are many who travel the world in this day and age, and many fewer who travel where you do. The journey of a thousand miles begins with you.

Name: Roland, Isobel, Amelia, Karma, Daniel, Celina, Jamie, Gabriel, Christopher, Morgan, Laurie, David, Cara, Trina, Corwin

Why were you overlooked, downtrodden, or trivialized? Because I couldn't keep up, because of my attitude, because the world isn't accessible **Why are you ignored, oppressed, or dismissed?** Because I don't care, because people started noticing me, Because I see things as they really are

Why are you hunted? Because I run, because I break the Rules, for what I know

Looks:

- (choose at least one) ambiguous presentation, androgynous presentation, butch presentation, concealed presentation, femme presentation, fluid presentation, transgressing presentation
- spirited eyes, tender eyes, distant eyes, daring eyes, wandering eyes, secretive eyes
- stolid face, eager face, weathered face, angular face, weary face, covered face
- vibrant body, waifish body, hardened body, fluid body, mousy body, weird body
- tattered clothes, soiled clothes, crisp clothes, foreign clothes, comfortable clothes, tough clothes
- tireless aura, vital aura, capricious aura, eccentric aura, boisterous aura, nondescript aura

CHAPTER 13. THE CHARACTERS (APPENDIX 324)

Paradigms

All people are connected, all people affect one another

Aligned: (choose one) Sympathy magic, travel magic

Opposed: (choose one) Creation, permanent effects, my magic can only affect living things

(choose one) Binding magic, magic that prevents movement

I have one foot in the spirit world

Aligned: (choose one) Travel between worlds, opening things, spirit magic

Opposed: (choose one) Static magic, abstract magic

(choose one) My magic must not be wholly of the physical or spirit world, stationary magic, my magic requires a reflection

Moves

The Wayfarer gets the **Step Sideways** move, and 2 other moves of your choice.

Step Sideways: (You have this move by default) When you seek a path to step sideways and travel to someplace new, roll +Entropic. On a 10+ choose 4, on a 7-9 choose 2.

- You get where you meant to go, no funny business.
- You arrive promptly.
- You arrive unharmed.
- You remember the path, so you can travel it again.
- You can safely and easily return.

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Chance Meetings: When you meet an important stranger (your choice) in your travels, roll +Dynamic. On a 10+ choose one, on a 7-9 the MC will choose one.

- They tell you something useful and true.
- They give you something that is potentially useful.
- They have something of great value to you.
- You have something of great value to them, and you know it.

Sixth Sense: When you travel along a path before it happens, roll +Within, and see a vision of possible futures. On a 10+, tell the MC what you sense, they may add to it. On a 7-9, the MC will tell you what you sense, and two possible interpretations.

Parkour: When you Outfox in an urban jungle, on a 12+ you additionally hold 3. You can spend your hold one for one to:

- Take +1 forward on an additional Outfox roll
- Take +1 forward to keeping your head down
- Treat your skills as something a sleeper wants for Use a Sleeper

Any Port in a Storm: When you find yourself in an unwelcoming situation, roll +Dynamic. On a 10+, tell the MC what you recognize as familiar and how that helps you. On a 7-9, the MC will tell you.

The Soul of an Explorer: When you seek out or find an entirely new experience, roll +Dynamic. On a hit, you learn something, mark experience. On a 10+, you find something that makes it easier, safer, or more enjoyable, the MC will tell you what.

You also have this move:

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When you and another character exchange a moment of humanity, roll +Within. On a 10+, once, you can step sideways to this person as if they were a place you've never been before. On a 7-9, you see each other in a new light, you each pick one from the Chance Meetings list for the other. On a 6-, take -1 ongoing until you prove they haven't chained you down or anything.

Stats

Arrange +2, +1, +0, +0, -1

Anchors

Humans need shelter, a place to live, and a home to come back to. My **Shelter Anchor** is: (pick one) My well-maintained but tempermental conversion van; My house that always seems to need repair; A well-used tent and backpacking gear

Humans need connection, people they care about, or that care about them. My **Connection Anchor** is: (pick one) Iris, who will be my legacy; My family; Devin, my childhood chaplin

Humans need emotion, memories that tie to the past and dreams of the future. My **Emotional Anchor** is: (pick one) My well-polished Harley; My tattered, empty diary; My collection of smoothed stones

Starting Gear

- No Savings
- Choose a means of getting around: My well-cared-for motorcycle; A walking staff and good

CHAPTER 13. THE CHARACTERS (APPENDIX 325)

- pair of boots; The latest in a long series of cars, not yet on its last legs.
- Choose a way of protecting yourself: A pet dog, your loyal traveling companion; Enough hidden knives to arm a small gang; A pistol with a hidden holster
- Choose a curiosity: A map to somewhere you'll need to go again; A spirit totem that isn't sure it accepts you as its owner; The latest in amateur radio technology

Advancements

- Pick a new Wayfarer Move
- Gain +1 Static (Max Static +1)
- Gain +1 Without (max Without +3)
- Gain +1 Within (max Within +3)
- Gain +1 Entropic (max Entropic +2)
- Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- (*) Give a Freedom to another Mage's Paradigm
- (*) Gain an Anchor (2 Anchors max)

(Choose only after 5 from the first section)

- Retire to safety
- Switch playbooks
- Start a second character

(Choose only after 5 from the first section and if not Tethered)

- (*) Remove a Restriction from your Paradigm
- Pick a new Wayfarer move
- When using Step Sideways, always choose +1 option, even on a miss
- Pick a playbook move from another playbook
- Pick a playbook move from another playbook

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- Gain +1 Dynamic (max Dynamic +3)
- Get an Advanced Wayfarer Move