

Being a Condensed Version of Phantasm,
a Role-Playing Game of Magic in the Modern World,
featuring a Highly Refined and Yet Still Preliminary Version of
the December Alpha 2.0 Role-Playing Game System
by Lamar Henderson

Phantasmal Lights

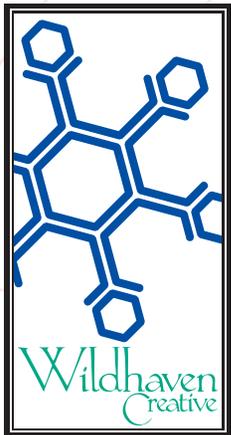
There . . . Do you *see* it?

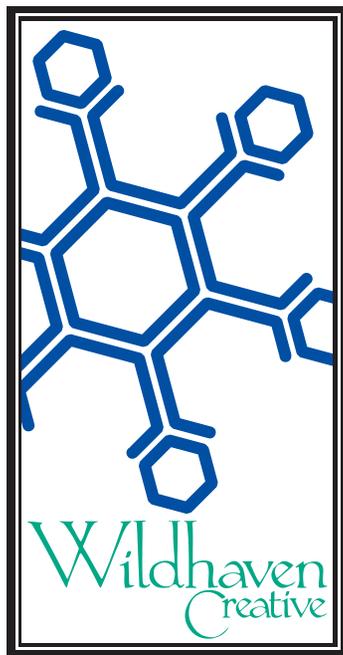
It floats in the *Darkness*
like a memory of smoke.

It turns with no *Reference*,
none but itself.

It waits with supreme silence,
and surrounds you like *Liquid*.

See the *Light*.





Phantasmal Lights

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Dedicated to all those folks out there who enjoy the fine hobby of role-playing games, and to the friends and families who put up with our strange pastimes.

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The Illumination of Thomas Dancer

Part 1

The world exploded around him with green lightning.

Thomas Dancer huddled in the shadow of the smoking wreckage of what had until moments ago been a late-model Cadillac, trying to curl himself into as small a target as possible. Down the street—a whole world away—the pop and rattle of small-arms fire was met suddenly with a sharp crack carried on a flash of green light that burned through even Thomas’ tightly clenched eyelids. A wave of force rolled through him, carrying a rolling roar like a train. Thomas felt his ears pop hard enough that he expected blood to flow from them. After a second, though, the ringing started to fade, and his hearing returned. The guns were quiet, at least for a moment, before they started up again from somewhere else.

Thomas’ day was getting weirder by the moment. It had started normally enough, with Thomas being awakened by his cat, Hairball, who had taken to jumping on his sleeping form from the windowsill above his bed, her way of saying, “Get up and feed me, damn it.” After stumbling about, spilling cat food and grabbing a quick shower, Thomas took off for work. It was a nice day for February, even for San Francisco, a promise of what might come with spring.

Thomas trotted down to the parking lot, his brain slowly coming awake enough to think about the projects he would work on that day.

Thomas dug his keys out of his jacket pocket and started to unlock his car. When the key came within a few hairs of the lock, however, there was a sudden arch of static electricity discharging, a small pop, and enough of a jolt ran up the key to make Thomas jump back, dropping his keys. It was when he bent down to retrieve his keys that Thomas first noticed the men standing behind him. He jerked up quickly, startled; the men just stood there, motionless.

“Mr. Dancer?” the first one said—there were three of them, all dressed in dark suits, all wearing dark glasses, looking—of all things—like Secret Service agents. “Mr. Thomas Dancer?”

How had these three guys managed to sneak up behind him without him hearing or seeing them? “Yes,” Thomas answered suspiciously. “Can I help you?”

From inside his jacket, the speaker pulled out a small wallet holding a badge and identification. “Mr. Dancer,” he said. “My name is Special Agent Brown. This is Special Agent White and Special Agent Black.” He motioned to the men behind him, but

Thomas was not sure which one was supposed to be which. “We’re with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. We have reason to believe that your life is in danger. Would you come with us, please?”

“My life is in danger?” Thomas felt a sudden rush run through him. “What are you talking about? You must have made some mistake. I’m just a graphic artist—”

“Please, Mr. Dancer,” Brown continued. “Time is short. We’ll explain on the way to our office. If you’ll just come this way—”

“Now, wait just a minute.” The rush Thomas had felt had turned into a steady buzz running all the way through his body. Something was definitely not right here. “I don’t think I want to go anywhere until I get some explanations.”

Suddenly, Agents White and Black jumped forward, grabbing Thomas roughly and pressing a gag to his mouth. Brown turned on his heel and began to trot to a black, late-model Cadillac parked in the middle of the parking lot. He snapped open the back door, and the two agents drug up Thomas, who struggled vainly against them, and tossed him into the back. Brown followed Thomas in, and the others climbed into the front.

“What the hell—?” Thomas started to thrash, trying to get into position to punch Brown and jump out the door, but before he could do much of anything, Brown had him pinned to the back seat with one hand against Thomas’ chest, and a black automatic pointed at his head.

“Drive!” Brown snapped without looking away from Thomas; the tires squealed as White (or was it Black?) pulled out into traffic without even looking. Thomas heard an angry horn blaze and the sudden crash of metal on metal, but he was concentrating more on the metal pointed at his temple, and his own shocked reflections in the lenses of Agent Brown’s sunglasses.

“Please, Mr. Dancer,” Brown said, his voice amazingly calm. “We really do not have time for this. This is for your own good, sir, but we must have your cooperation. Do you understand?”

“I don’t understand anything,” Thomas said, trying hard not to move. “You guys aren’t FBI—I’m not as stupid as I look. What do you want from me?”

“Please relax, Mr. Dancer,” Brown said, showing no signs of doing so himself. “All will be explained to you in time.”

Black—or perhaps White—whoever was in the passenger seat—glanced into the back. Thomas saw for the first time a thin wire that ran from the arm of his sunglasses down his neck under the collar of his jacket. “Trouble ahead,” he said, no expression in his voice.

“MacGregor?” Brown asked, for the first time turning away from Thomas, though his gun did not. Perhaps it was wishful thinking, but Thomas was certain he heard a of what could be called worry in Brown’s voice.

“Affirmative,” Black answered. From under his jacket, he pulled out a machine pistol far larger than Thomas thought would have fit there unnoticed, and pulled back the bolt.

Brown seemed about to issue an order of some sort, but he was cut off by a brilliant flash of green light, and a sudden jerking of the car as if it had been hit from above. The car spun around, tossing Brown and Thomas about in the back seat. Before the car came to a stop, it was hit again by another blast of green light, knocking the vehicle around, almost turning it on its side.

Without a word, even before the car stopped moving, Black shoved open his door, almost ripping it off its hinges, and leaped

out, weapon blazing at some unknown target. White, pulling out a similar weapon, soon followed.

“Stay here,” Brown snarled as he reached for his own door. The jostling he had received had cocked his sunglasses on his face, and for the first time Thomas got a look at the man’s eyes. Thomas felt the buzz running through him snap when he saw that Brown’s eyes glowed with a lurid red light. Before Thomas could move, Brown adjusted his glasses and jumped out the door.

Another blast of green light rocked the car; long arcs of greenish electricity seemed to ride along the interior. Thomas fumbled frantically for the door handle, kicking himself out of the car onto the pavement.

Only a few paces from him, having taken cover behind a postal box, Black (or perhaps White) fired down the street at a target Thomas could not see. Suddenly, a crack of lightning erupted from the perfectly clear sky, and Black seemed to explode, bits of flesh and blazing cloth splattering the area.

A spray of blood and seared flesh coated Thomas, and immediately began to burn like weak acid. He screamed (at least, he

assumed it was just him) and began to wipe what blood he could off his face on the inside of his jacket.

Once again, Thomas heard the pop and rattle of weapons, closely followed by another crack of green lightning. The weapons fire seemed to be moving away, as if Brown and White were trying to get closer to their target. After a moment of relative quiet, Thomas heard another volley of fire, and another crack of a lightning.

Things grew relatively quiet for a moment. In the distance, Thomas heard the whine of sirens overlaid with the cries of people who must have been caught in the sudden eruption of violence. Thomas did not dare open his eyes, clenching them hard still, waiting for the next sounds of violence to carry to him.

The hand on his shoulder made him jump, his arms thrashing about, a scream breaking from the back of his throat. It took Thomas a moment to realize the man standing over him was not one of the bogus FBI agents.

“Hold on, son,” the man said. He was somewhat older than Thomas, pushing forty, with long brown hair streaked with gray and matching beard. His eyes were a shockingly pale blue rimmed in

rings of dark blue. Thomas realized there was blood running down the man's shirt, soaking through his tan sweater vest.

"Jesus," Thomas exclaimed. "You've been shot."

"It's nothing," the fellow said, although he was obviously in pain. "We have to get you out of here, Thomas."

Thomas jumped to his feet, steadying himself on the ruined car; the metal felt uncomfortably hot to his touch. "Wait a minute-how do you know my name?" A thought suddenly came to Thomas. "Are you MacGregor?"

"Dunstan MacGregor, at your service, sir." If the man wasn't wounded, Thomas thought, he might have given a sweeping bow. "Now, quickly, we have to go before the police arrive."

"No way, man," Thomas snapped. "The police are exactly who I'm waiting for. I'm not going with you or anyone until-"

In a sudden move Thomas would have thought the wounded man incapable of, MacGregor jumped forward and drug Thomas down to the pavement. Before he could move or speak, a volley of machine pistol fire peppered the ruined Cadillac.

“You’re too late, MacGregor!” It was Brown, Thomas could tell, yelling from across the street. “The Master has already marked the boy! He has been claimed, and he will serve or die.”

“Rubbish,” MacGregor called back, though he seemed only half listening to Brown. “A novice must come of his own free will, not be drug off like a slave.” As Thomas watched, MacGregor seemed to writhe in pain, his hands following some pattern of movement too complex for Thomas to make out. Suddenly, in the palm of one hand, sparked to life a small, glowing, green sphere.

“Get ready to run,” MacGregor whispered to Thomas, who stared at the light in silent amazement.

“You cannot stop us, MacGregor,” Brown called again, this time from the middle of the street just beyond the car; apparently, he was heading their way. “The ways of your kind are fading, and the strong are rising to their rightful place in the world. You are the past, MacGregor, and we are the future.”

MacGregor braced himself on the car and painfully stood.

“What future?” he said, half to himself, as he opened his hand with the glowing sphere. It burst into a bolt of green lightning, as

thick as the man's arm, a rip in the world that burned into Thomas' eyes just as the crack hit him with a concussion that nearly sent him rolling down the street.

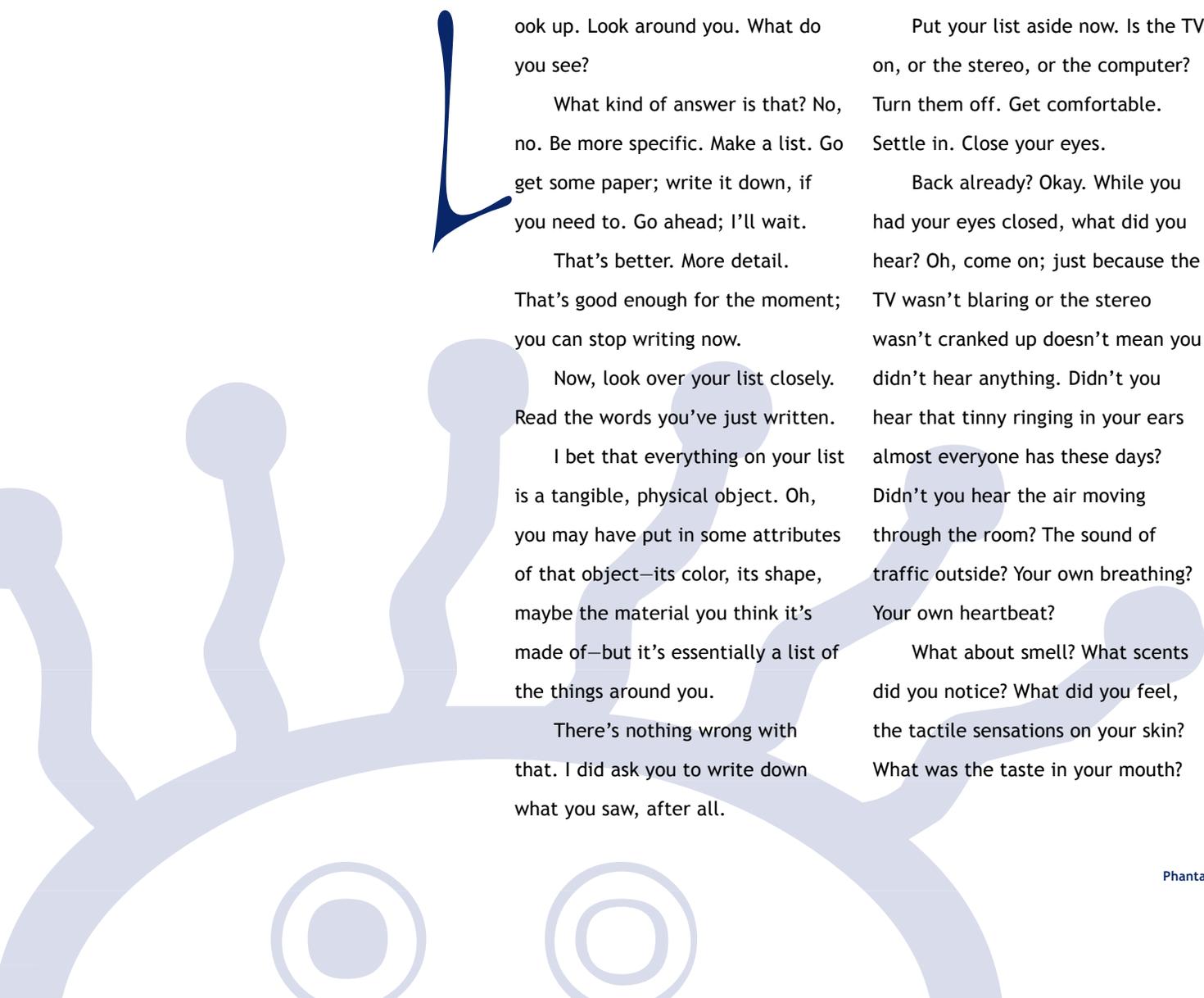
By the time his vision cleared, MacGregor was pulling on his arm; the wails of sirens were only blocks away now. In the middle of the street, sprawled on the pavement, was the smoking ruins of what Thomas assumed to be Brown, a skeleton clutching a melted weapon, all burning with flashes of green fire.

"Quickly, Thomas," MacGregor whispered. "I promise you, all your questions will be answered, all will be revealed to you."

"I don't understand at all," Thomas said; the buzz that had run through him was mostly gone, a vague tingle that was almost a memory. He felt weak in the legs, and thought he might collapse. "What have I just seen?"

MacGregor held him, half holding up Thomas, half holding up himself. "The light that blinds, son," he said quietly. "You've just seen the light that blinds."

Carefully, as quickly as he could, MacGregor drug Thomas off toward a darkened alley, away from the green flames on the street.



Look up. Look around you. What do you see?

What kind of answer is that? No, no. Be more specific. Make a list. Go get some paper; write it down, if you need to. Go ahead; I'll wait.

That's better. More detail. That's good enough for the moment; you can stop writing now.

Now, look over your list closely. Read the words you've just written.

I bet that everything on your list is a tangible, physical object. Oh, you may have put in some attributes of that object—its color, its shape, maybe the material you think it's made of—but it's essentially a list of the things around you.

There's nothing wrong with that. I did ask you to write down what you saw, after all.

Put your list aside now. Is the TV on, or the stereo, or the computer? Turn them off. Get comfortable. Settle in. Close your eyes.

Back already? Okay. While you had your eyes closed, what did you hear? Oh, come on; just because the TV wasn't blaring or the stereo wasn't cranked up doesn't mean you didn't hear anything. Didn't you hear that tinny ringing in your ears almost everyone has these days? Didn't you hear the air moving through the room? The sound of traffic outside? Your own breathing? Your own heartbeat?

What about smell? What scents did you notice? What did you feel, the tactile sensations on your skin? What was the taste in your mouth?

None of these things are on the list you made, are they? When you made your list, you put down things you could see, partly because that's what I asked you to do, but partly because, like most people, you rely on your vision more than any of your other senses. You think visually first, aurally second. Smell, touch and taste usually only get mixed in if there is something exceptional about them.

Because the sounds around you, the smells, tastes and sensations didn't get on your list, does that mean that they don't exist? Does that mean that existence is confined only to those things you can see?

Not quite.

Getting Down with the Aware

Imagine

Imagine that the world you know is exactly as you see it everyday, with one exception; what you see is only part of a greater whole. Imagine that the material universe we can see and smell and hear and touch coexisted with another universe, one consisting of spirit. Imagine that each universe is just the reverse of the same coin, two halves inseparably linked to form a whole. Imagine that there were people out there who know the full nature of these intertwined universes, and a few who even know the complex rules that govern them—and how to bend those rules to their will.

Imagine such a world, and you will have a grasp of the setting of **Phantasmal Lights**. **Phantasmal Lights** is a somewhat simplified version of **Phantasm**, a role-playing game set in a world similar to our own, but with a twist—magic is real, and the characters in the game know how to use it. In **Phantasmal Lights**, players take on the roles of modern magicians, magic-users who use their abilities to warp the fabric of reality to achieve their goals. For some, those goals may be benevolent, such as protecting the mundane world from powers it does not even know exist, or sinister, such as using magic to gain control of the mundane and magical worlds, and herding Humanity toward a dark, apocalyptic fate.

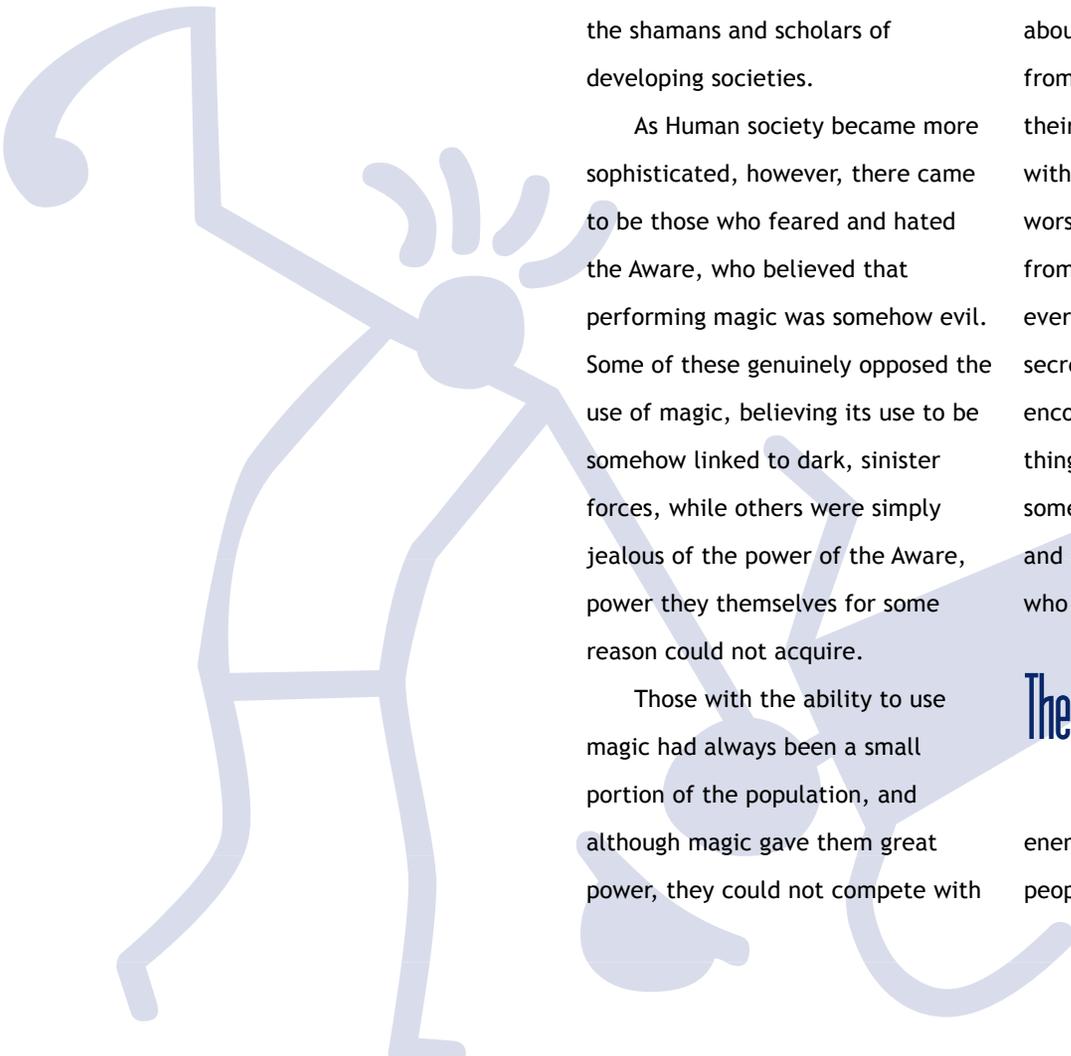
The Mundane World

The mundane world is the world with which you are most familiar. It is a world of school and work, family and friends, community and home. It is, in spite of its flaws, a relatively comfortable place; most of the people who live in the world catch only a glimpse of something beyond, and many would deny that there is anything beyond. The mundane world exists firmly in the Material Realm and the physical reality controlling the path life follows here. Unknown to most, however, is that the mundane world is only one part of a greater reality of which they are only vaguely aware, if that.

The Magical World

Hiding in the shadows of the mundane world is the magical world. The magical world is populated by the Aware, people who have the ability to interact with reality on a more intimate level than most. Among the Aware are magicians, scholars of the arcane arts who have learned a fundamental secret of nature; reality is not so tightly woven as those of the mundane world believe, and Humans have the ability to alter the pattern of that weave.

For millennia, as long as Humans have been capable of rational thought, there have been those who have learned the skills necessary to perform magic. Although most people did not perform magic



themselves, they knew of it and respected its power; magicians were the shamans and scholars of developing societies.

As Human society became more sophisticated, however, there came to be those who feared and hated the Aware, who believed that performing magic was somehow evil. Some of these genuinely opposed the use of magic, believing its use to be somehow linked to dark, sinister forces, while others were simply jealous of the power of the Aware, power they themselves for some reason could not acquire.

Those with the ability to use magic had always been a small portion of the population, and although magic gave them great power, they could not compete with

the sheer numbers of their enemies.

So, most of the Aware kept quiet about their abilities, withdrawing from the mundane world to continue their studies in private. This withdrawal, however, served only to worsen the situation. Magic changed from something normal, a part of everyday life, to something hidden, secret, something mundanes encountered only in legends. Few things are more feared than something which cannot be seen, and so it was with magic and those who wove it.

The Rise of the Church

With fears enflamed by its enemies, many of the mundane peoples of the world came to reject

magic. So it was in Europe after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. After the Empire fell, the greatest authority in the land was the Roman Catholic Church. Even so, that authority was rather tenuous; only a relatively small area around the Mediterranean was under the influence of the Church, and that influence was far from absolute. To strengthen its position, the Church began an active campaign to spread its power into the pagan lands of Europe by either co-opting the religions of these peoples—or destroying them. The practitioners of magic represented a form of supernatural power outside the control of the Church, and so those practitioners had to be eliminated.

“ Over time, the Magisterium was not only able to convince most of the mundane world that magic had been all but eradicated, but that it did not and had never existed. ”

For the better part of a millennium, the Church expanded its power base, spreading its influence to the farthest reaches of Europe, and wherever that influence went, users of magic were driven from the mundane world. The height of the persecution came in the thirteenth century with the formation of the Holy Inquisition. For the first time, the Church had an organized arm dedicated to the destruction of its enemies; many of those enemies were among the Aware.

The Formation of the Magisterium

Finally, in the year 1420, a group of magicians gathered in Paris,

meeting in utmost secrecy. This group concluded that the best way to protect what remained of the magical world was to convince its enemies that they had succeeded in destroying it. Thus was formed the Magisterium, a body dedicated to the protection of the magical world. Quickly, the members of the Magisterium spread throughout Europe, for the first time organizing the magically Aware, mostly magicians. Their purpose was clear—to hide the existence of the Aware from mundane society, especially the Church. The consequence of failure would be annihilation.

This plan, called the Quieting, proved to be a success, so successful, in fact, that the Magisterium sent agents to other parts of the world to

encourage the Aware of the rest of the world to hide themselves completely from the mundane. Over time, the Magisterium was not only able to convince most of the mundane world that magic had been all but eradicated, but that it did not and had never existed. Magical society was, for the moment, relatively safe.

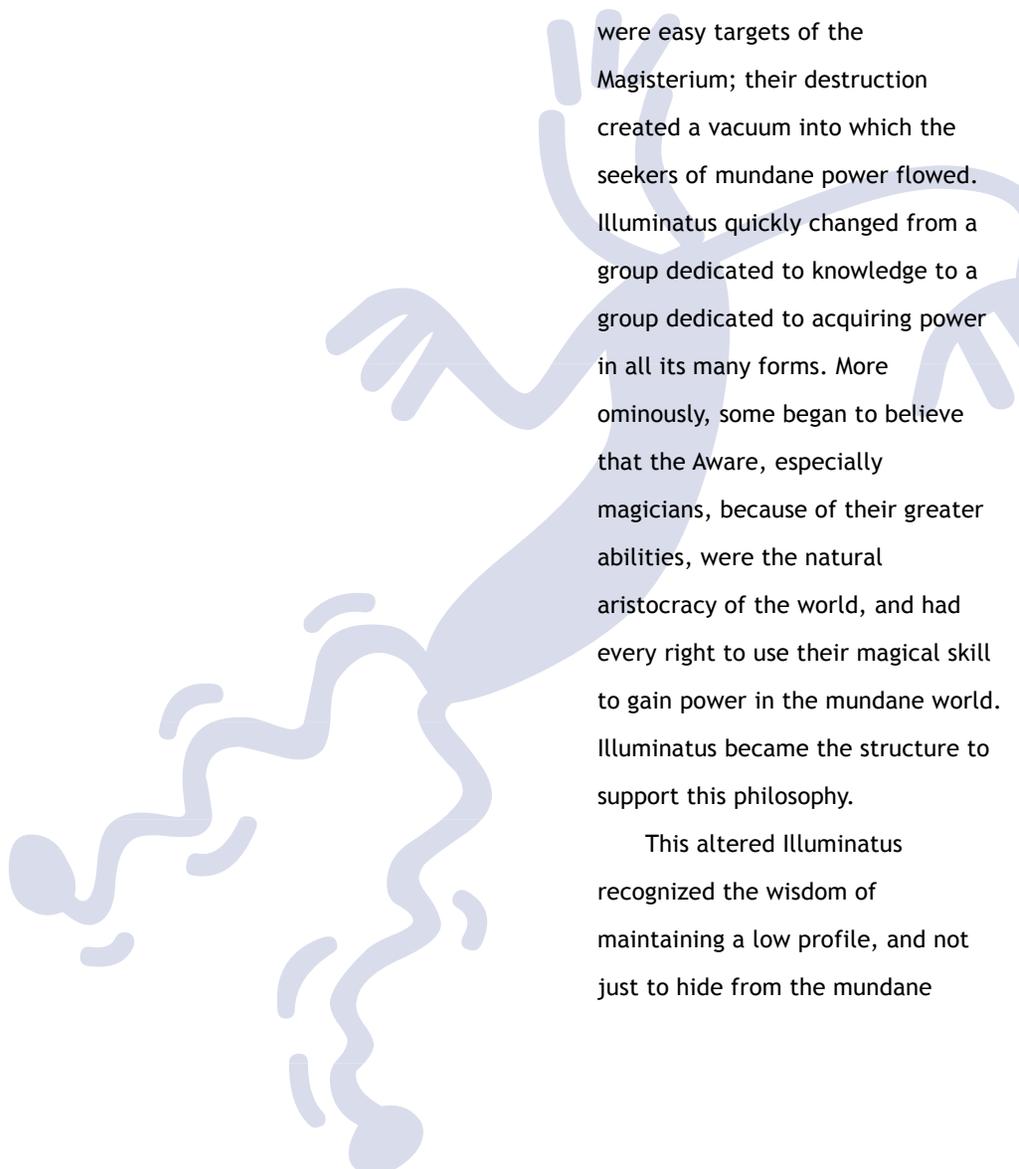
Rebirth and Enlightenment

Although the philosophies were developed mostly by mundanes, the Magisterium had a significant role in encouraging the development of the scientific method. The spread of this new view of the world not only gave the magical world a curtain behind which it could hide, but also brought

about a rebirth of intellectual society. The Renaissance came about in no small part due to the influence of the Magisterium.

After several centuries, the structure of the Magisterium which exists to this day had been put into place, and as it is with any society, there come those who rebelled against it. Inspired by the philosophies of the Enlightenment, some magicians began to question the motives and purpose of the Magisterium. Surely, they argued, in an Enlightened age, the mundane world would be ready to accept magic. This group became known as Illuminatus, and eventually broke from the Magisterium.

By their very nature, the more idealistic of the early Illuminati



were easy targets of the Magisterium; their destruction created a vacuum into which the seekers of mundane power flowed. *Illuminatus* quickly changed from a group dedicated to knowledge to a group dedicated to acquiring power in all its many forms. More ominously, some began to believe that the Aware, especially magicians, because of their greater abilities, were the natural aristocracy of the world, and had every right to use their magical skill to gain power in the mundane world. *Illuminatus* became the structure to support this philosophy.

This altered *Illuminatus* recognized the wisdom of maintaining a low profile, and not just to hide from the mundane

world. The Magisterium was focusing its not inconsiderable power to eliminate what it considered a threat to its purpose, and *Illuminatus* was in no position to go head to head with the older group. So, *Illuminatus* withdrew even deeper from prying eyes, slowly but surely nurturing its power base until it could challenge the status quo.

Dancing in the Shadows

Thus began the Shadow War, an ongoing conflict between the various factions within magical society, held in check only by the need for the combatants to remain hidden from the mundane world. The Magisterium and *Illuminatus* remain the superpowers in this magical cold

war, but are no longer the only participants.

The *Magisterium* claims dominion over not only all magicians, but all magically Aware beings in the world, and works to protect magical society by keeping it hidden from mundane view, and to protect mundane society by keeping the magical from interfering.

Illuminatus also strives to keep magical society hidden, but for its own reasons. This faction works to use its power to control and manipulate mundane society, rejecting the Magisterium's claim that magical and mundane must always remain separate. While its philosophy once sought to reunite the magical and the mundane for the benefit of all, however,

“ Illuminatus now pursues a path of domination, and is governed by the simple concept that power belongs to those strong enough to take it and keep it. ”

Illuminatus now pursues a path of domination, and is governed by the simple concept that power belongs to those strong enough to take it and keep it. Manipulating others from the shadows suits Illuminatus’ plans—for the moment.

A philosophical school that has existed since ancient times, *the Nihil* consists of the magically Aware who believe that the Continuum is fatally flawed, and must be completely eradicated before the True Continuum, the One True Path, can come into existence. In recent centuries, however, this group has moved from philosophy to activism. The Nihil now work to bring about the ultimate collapse of the multiple realities of the Continuum, by any means necessary.

The Ascetics are almost too loosely organized to be called a faction. Their basic philosophy is one of live and let live; you don’t bother me, and I won’t bother you. To achieve this end, the group has (reluctantly) formed to dissuade interference by any of the other groups, especially the Magisterium.

More a collection of organizations than a single group, *Nemesis* has a simple philosophy; all magic is evil, therefore all magic must be destroyed. In the pursuit of that goal, it has become acceptable to some in this movement to use the methods against which it fights. Agents of *Nemesis* are as likely to be self-loathing magicians who use their gifts reluctantly, for the “greater good,” as they are to be heavily

armed terminators. As often as not, however, *Nemesis* prefers its high-tech tools over its magical options.

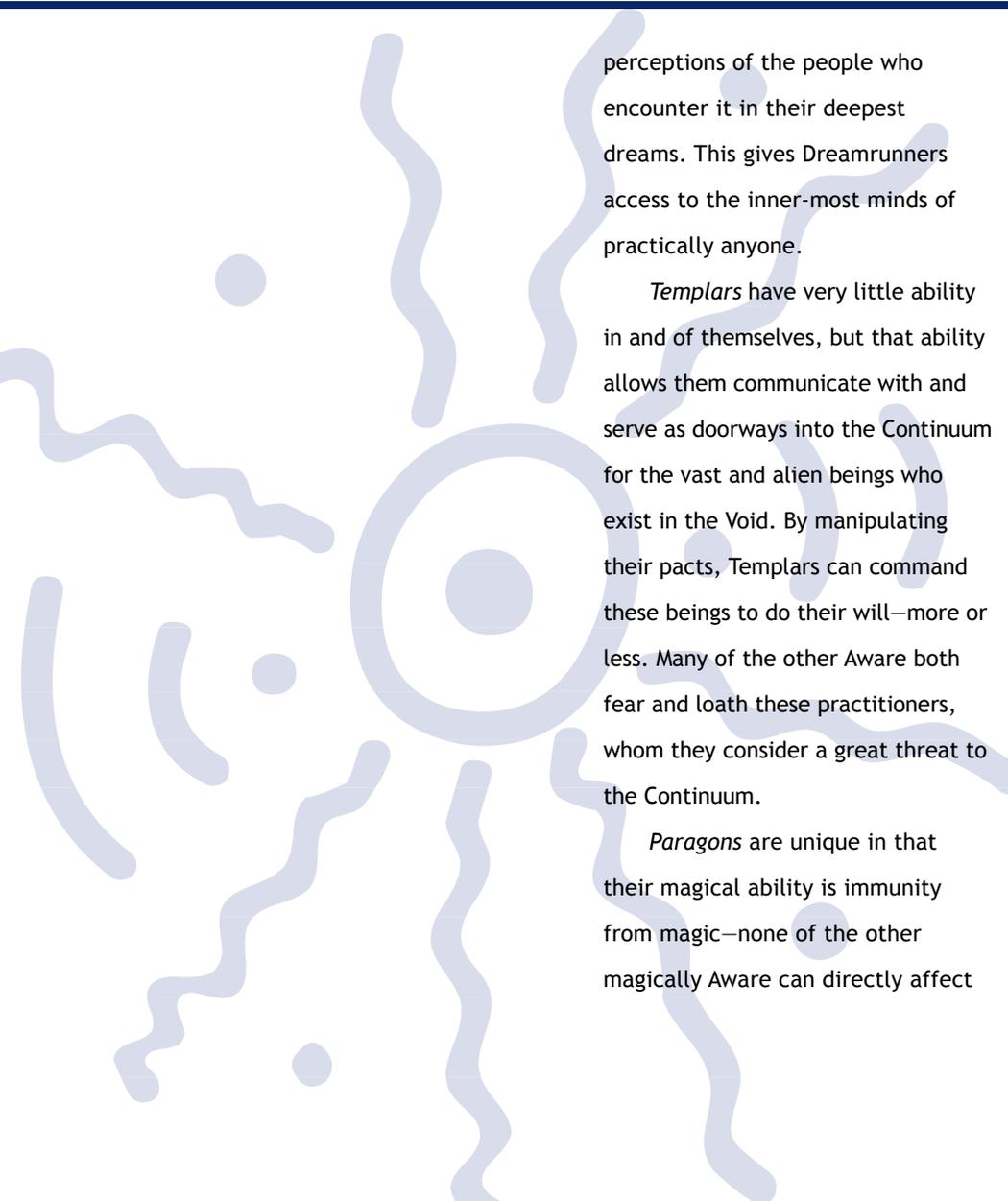
Were the Aware Aware of What They Were Before They Were Aware?

Although there may very well be other types, for the most part the magically Aware can be divided into five categories.

Magicians practice for many years to learn the arcane skills needed to manipulate the aether and remold reality. Their skills, in many ways, make them the most dangerous and powerful of the Aware.

Masques are people who have suffered a near-death experience. As their spirit pulled away from their physical forms, stretched to the breaking point, their bodies were invaded by a Fae, a denizen of the Transcendental Realm seeking to cross over to the Material. Rather than leaving their physical forms, however, the spirit returns, only to find someone squatting in its home. In the conflict that typically follows, one side or the other gains the upper hand, and the presence of both spirits gives the being access to vast powers.

Dreamrunners are able to detach their spirits at will and roam the Transcendental Realm, what they call the Dreamscape. There, they can manipulate the structure of the Dreamscape, and even the



perceptions of the people who encounter it in their deepest dreams. This gives Dreamrunners access to the inner-most minds of practically anyone.

Templars have very little ability in and of themselves, but that ability allows them communicate with and serve as doorways into the Continuum for the vast and alien beings who exist in the Void. By manipulating their pacts, Templars can command these beings to do their will—more or less. Many of the other Aware both fear and loath these practitioners, whom they consider a great threat to the Continuum.

Paragons are unique in that their magical ability is immunity from magic—none of the other magically Aware can directly affect

these beings, almost as if they existed outside the regular structure of the universe. Paragons are also immune from most of the effects of disease and aging, as well as having terrifically high levels of Essence in their systems, which they can use to pump up their physical abilities, making them superhuman. Always in need of sources of Essence, some of the Aware seek out Paragons to serve as living nexi, a fate that most Paragons would rather avoid, thank you very much.

This Continuum Thing Just Seems to Go On Forever

The Continuum is the term mystics use to refer to the Three

Realms—the Material, the Transcendental and the Nether Realms. While there are certain facts known about the nature of the Three Realms and the Continuum in general, there is much, much more that is unknown beyond unsubstantiated speculation.

The Continuum as we know it came into existence about 15 billion years ago, as we measure time now. Cosmologists studying this event within the Material Realm have called it the Big Bang, and there is certainly evidence to support the idea that it was just as big of a bang on the transcendental side. It's thought that the Nether Realm came into existence some time after the other two (perhaps as long as 36×10^{5742} seconds after, but who's counting).

“ Some magicians describe the reality of the Continuum as consisting of an infinite number of potential realities stretching from the beginning of the Continuum to its end. ”

There is some debate about whether there was anything before the Big Bang, both among cosmologists and mystics, but so far no one has even come up with a method that such a question could be answered, let alone a reasonable answer.

The Material Realm is the universe as we know it, a place of matter, energy and space-time.

The Transcendental Realm is a place of spiritual, rational and emotional reality. Compared to the Material Realm, it is a chaotic realm, always in turmoil, nothing in it remaining fixed for very long. Of course, notions of time and space are material concepts, with mutable meanings in the Transcendental Realm. This realm is also the home of a race of beings collectively

called *the Fae*. The Fae are sentient beings, as curious about what lies on the Other Side as Humans are. Sometimes, this curiosity brings Fae and Human into conflict.

The Nether Realm, sometimes called the Inner Reaches, is that place that falls between the Material and the Transcendental. Some mystics like to describe the Nether Realm as the place where the Material and the Transcendental Realms briefly overlap, so that this place has characteristics of both of the other realms while at the same time maintaining a unique existence. The Nether Realm is changeable in a way the Material Realm is not, but at the same time is capable of maintaining areas of stable existence not possible in the

Transcendental Realm. The Nether Realm is also a sort of neutral ground for material and transcendental beings; while neither can exist in the other's realm without great difficulty, both can co-exist in the Nether Realm.

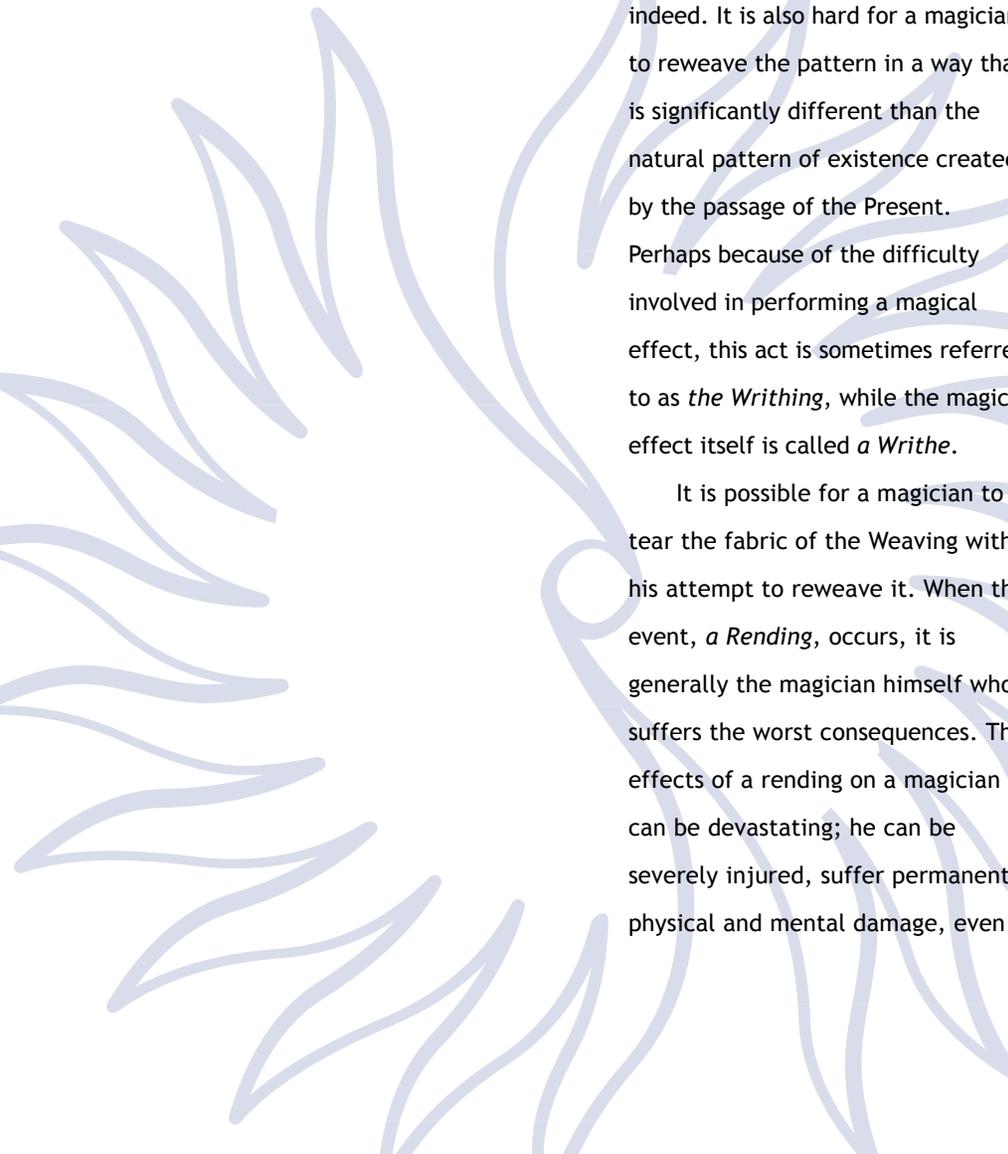
The Strands of Reality

Some magicians describe the reality of the Continuum as consisting of an infinite number of potential realities stretching from the beginning of the Continuum to its end. All these infinite strands of reality, so the hypothesis goes, are woven together at the infinitesimally small period of time called the Present, which means basically that, for the smallest possible unit of

time, all potential realities collapse down to form a single extant reality. It also means that the past is no more fixed than the future; our concept of "history" is an illusion created by the passage of these extant realities, each of which exists for the briefest period possible.

This creation of an extant reality is called *the Weaving*, a term that has come to be applied to all existence, that is, the Continuum itself. In this model of the magician's art, a magician is thought to be reweaving what would have been the natural reality so that the magician's desired reality can have existence, if only for a brief time.

It is extremely difficult for a magician to reweave the pattern of the Weaving for long; a permanent



magical effect is a rare thing, indeed. It is also hard for a magician to reweave the pattern in a way that is significantly different than the natural pattern of existence created by the passage of the Present. Perhaps because of the difficulty involved in performing a magical effect, this act is sometimes referred to as *the Writhing*, while the magical effect itself is called *a Writhe*.

It is possible for a magician to tear the fabric of the Weaving with his attempt to reweave it. When this event, *a Rending*, occurs, it is generally the magician himself who suffers the worst consequences. The effects of a rending on a magician can be devastating; he can be severely injured, suffer permanent physical and mental damage, even

be killed outright. There are even stories of wizards whose pattern within the Weaving itself was plucked out as the result of a rending; of course, in such a case, it's all but impossible for those who remain to know.

Aether/Or

Esoterics have an understanding of existence that goes beyond the current capabilities of any mundane. Because of this, they understand that all reality—material, nether and transcendental—is constructed at its most fundamental level of a substance (for lack of a better word) that they call aether. In the Material Realm, aether combines and structures itself to form quanta,

which further organize themselves to create subatomic particles, as well as being the basis behind the various forces that allow the Material Realm to exist. In the Transcendental Realm, aether is the basis for every meme, monad and method, the transcendental equivalents of forces, quanta and subatomic particles.

Some esoterics believe that all aether originates from a single source, *the Cosminium*. What, where and even whether the Cosminium exists has been a topic of debate among the more academic mystics for many centuries; the rank and file magicians, however, generally consider dealing with the topic to be roughly the equivalent of

“ The Void is said to be the space outside the Continuum, possibly the remnants of a universe that existed before and was destroyed by the Big Bang. ”

arguing over how many angels can dance on the tip of a needle.

In a practical sense, everything in the Continuum exists because it receives a flow of aether, just enough to maintain its existence. In a perfectly efficient universe, all aether would thus be tied up fueling existence. Fortunately, the universe is not especially efficient, meaning that there is a relatively abundant supply of what is called free aether available. Free aether is needed by a magician to, in a sense, fuel whatever magical effect the magician desires to create. A regular source of such free aether is called a nexus, and is a greatly prized commodity among practitioners of the mystical arts.

A Brisk, Refreshing Nexi

A *nexus* (plural, *nexi*, pronounced “neks-ee”) is a point in the Continuum through which a stream of free aether flows. A nexus can take on practically any form, and can exist almost anywhere within the Three Realms. The free aether of a nexus generally comes in a form that is a natural product of the location. These nuggets of aether are called *coynes*, and must be consumed by an Aware to be converted into *Essence* that can be used to fuel magical effects.

Nexi are seldom permanent features, and will eventually fade. Although some nexi last for centuries, most have a much more

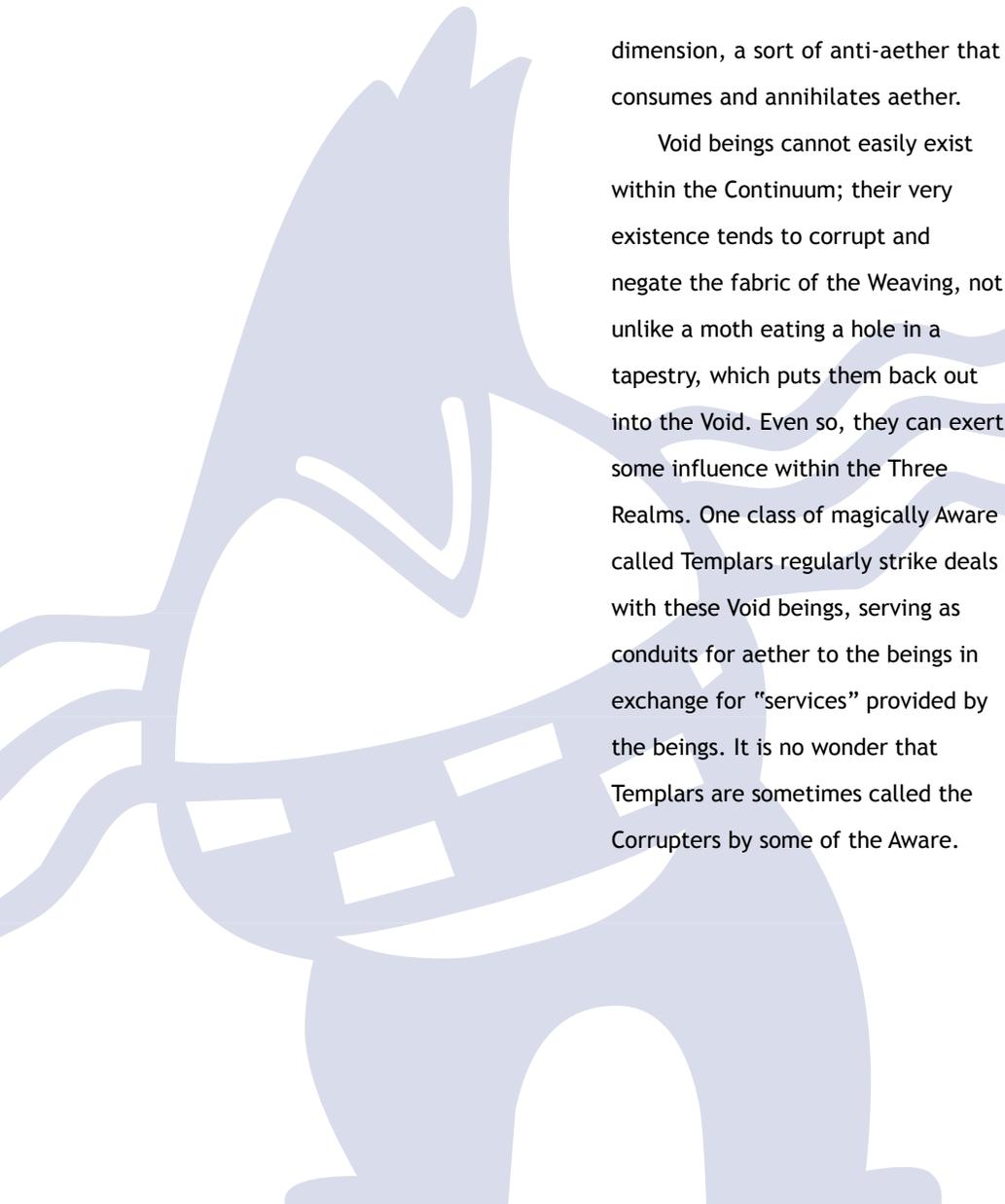
limited lifespan, some last only seconds before their flow of aether is tapped.

As well as serving as wellsprings of power, nexi are also often *gateways*. These gateways form connections between realms or sometimes to different points in the same realm. However, they are even more unstable than the nexi themselves, putting travelers at risk of being trapped a long way from home without an easy way back. An even worse fate is believed to away those who are trapped inside a gateway when it collapses. These poor souls disappear completely; some speculate that a collapsing gateway opens up a hole into the Void.

Void Indigo

While the Continuum contains all that most people would recognize as existence, there is *Somewhere Else*, or so they say. Outside the Continuum lies the Void, a place where non-existence exists, if you can wrap your head around that one.

The Void is said to be the space outside the Continuum, possibly the remnants of a universe that existed before and was destroyed by the Big Bang. It is also said to be home to (for lack of a better word) beings of enormous power. These beings, although they still live in the Void and are at least in part composed of it, hunger for aether, which does not occur naturally in the Void. Indeed, the Void is as much substance as



dimension, a sort of anti-aether that consumes and annihilates aether.

Void beings cannot easily exist within the Continuum; their very existence tends to corrupt and negate the fabric of the Weaving, not unlike a moth eating a hole in a tapestry, which puts them back out into the Void. Even so, they can exert some influence within the Three Realms. One class of magically Aware called Templars regularly strike deals with these Void beings, serving as conduits for aether to the beings in exchange for “services” provided by the beings. It is no wonder that Templars are sometimes called the Corrupters by some of the Aware.

We’re on a Role

Phantasmal Lights is a role-playing game, a somewhat simplified and streamlined version of the game **Phantasm**. (Phantasm Light—**Phantasmal Lights**. Get it? Get it? Uh, yeah. Whatever.) There are two types of players in a game of **Phantasmal Lights**, the regular player, who takes on the role of a player character in the game universe, and the Director, who creates the story and takes on the role of all the non-player, or Director characters in the game. The Director sets up the circumstances the player characters find themselves in, adjudicates the rules of the game and very often just makes up the rules when the players get their

characters into a situation the book doesn’t cover, which only happens 10 or 20 times per game session.

Standards and Practices

There is a certain random element in the real world, and as a role-playing game is a model of the real world, it is important to be able to model that random element. **Phantasmal Lights** uses a ten-sided die for this; these dice are available in most gaming shops, and if you’ve been gaming for any length of time, you’ve probably got a veritable plethora of these dice rolling around. Most ten-sided dice have numbers from 0 to 9 on their faces; the zero is typically read as a ten, which is the case in **Phantasmal Lights**. Some

“ Remember, it’s a game. The purpose of playing a game is to have fun. If the rules get in the way of having fun, throw them out and make up your own. ”

manufacturers produce twenty-sided dice with two sets of 0 to 9; a regular twenty-sided die can be used for this purpose simply by ignoring the tens digit. Each player in the game should have at least one ten-sided die, although it is probably a good idea to have some extras about.

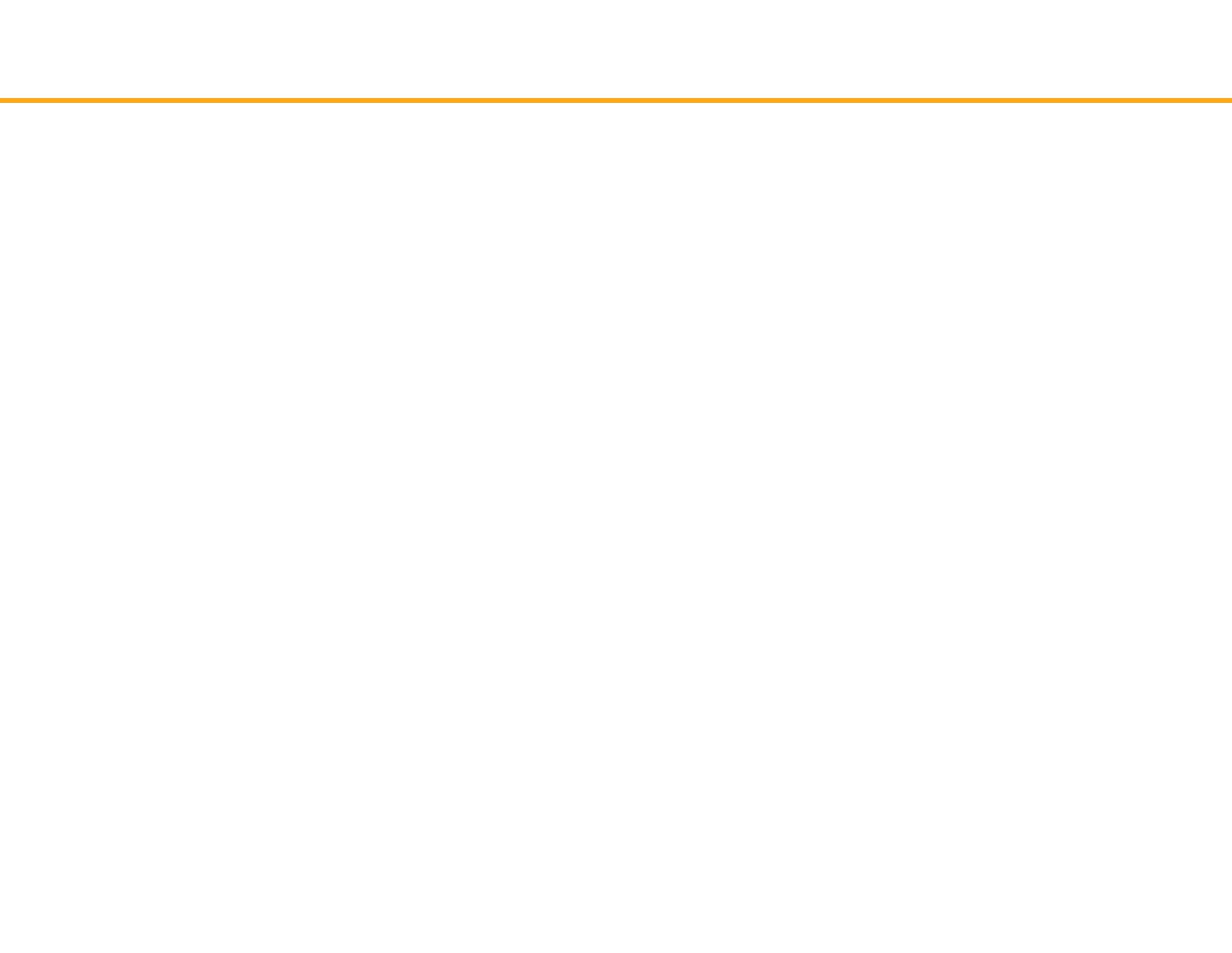
Phantasmal Lights uses the International Metric System—length is measured in meters, weight in grams and so on. For those players not familiar with this system, pull your heads out and get with the program; there is a vast world out there beyond New Jersey.

At least one player, usually the Director, needs to familiarize himself with the **Phantasmal Lights** rules. The better you know the rules, the easier it will be to improvise and violate those rules during play. It might not be a bad idea if the players also get up-close and personal with the rules a bit, too.

(Before I continue, I would like to take a moment to say something about a particular breed of gamer called “a rules lawyer.” A rules lawyer is a player, rarely a Director, whose sole purpose in life is to beat the other players into submission with his “superior” knowledge of the rules of the game. Rules lawyers get

the biggest boners of their existence ruining any possibility that the rest of the group might actually have some fun with the game. They are, quite frankly, the lowest form of life among gamers. If you have one in your group, I suggest that you show him the door before actually starting to play. If you are one, I suggest that you get something resembling a life. Remember, it’s a game. The purpose of playing a game is to have fun. If the rules get in the way of having fun, throw them out and make up your own. A rules lawyer may behave fun, but he always ruins that fun for everyone else.)

Other materials that might aid in play are paper, pencils, grid paper, miniature figures, props and copies of the **Phantasmal Lights** Character Record. Permission is hereby granted to copy the **Phantasmal Lights** Character Record for personal use only, just in case you get the one person at Kinko’s who thinks he knows something about copyright law. Just show him this page, then stick out your tongue, poke your thumbs in your ears and go, “Nyah! Nyah! Nyah! So there, smarty!” Believe me—it’ll improve your level of service.



The Illumination of Thomas Dancer

Part 2

You know, Dunstan,” the woman said as she carefully examined MacGregor’s bloody shoulder. “I think you’re a little old to expect me to mother you all the time.”

“Mother me?” Dunstan exclaimed, the mock offense strong enough to make even Thomas grin. “Mother me, indeed. Here I am on death’s very doorstep—ouch! That hurts!”

The woman, Thomas saw, poked Dunstan hard in the wound, and he suspected that she did not do so for purely medicinal purposes. “Death’s doorstep, indeed. You’re lucky this thing wasn’t a hand’s width to the right, or you’d have a hole in your heart right now.”

“And if it was a hand’s width to the left, it would have missed me entirely. I suppose this is my lucky day.”

The woman grinned ruefully and looked into Dunstan’s face. “You always did have a peculiar definition for ‘luck.’” Carefully, she glanced over toward Thomas, who was trying very hard not to be noticed standing in the corner. “What about your playmate over there? Should I be advising you to go see a doctor, or can we take care of this the old-fashioned way?”

“If I did not trust Mr. Dancer, my dear Heather,” Dunstan replied, “I wouldn’t have brought him here in the first place.”

Brought? Thomas thought. By the time they had made it to Dunstan’s car, the man could barely stand. Thomas had to drive, and was all for staying around for the police to show up, except that he knew they’d listen to his story only long enough to call in the shrinks. Even half-conscious, though, Dunstan had been strangely persuasive, urging and eventually convincing Thomas to leave the city and make their way, at last, here, a small cottage just outside San Rafael.

The woman who had greeted them at the door looked like something out of a promotional piece from Ireland’s department of tourism. She had mane of red-blond hair surrounding a face with the most amazingly subtle set of freckles Thomas had ever seen in his life. She was dressed in a long dress with a loose peasant blouse and a knit shawl draped over her shoulders, looking for all the world like something out of a fairy tale book. And the house, itself, looked remarkably out of place, like a plot of land transplanted from Ireland to Northern California. The place was surrounded by a

grove of oak and maple trees, and boasted an amazing herd of cats—big ones, little ones, dark ones, light ones, young ones, old ones; Thomas stopped counting about the time he reached twenty. Dunstan had had just enough time to introduce her as Heather Manyon before she began ripping at his blood-stained clothing to get at the wound.

“Very well, then,” Heather said at last. “This is going to smart a bit, and it serves you right for sticking your nose in where it didn’t belong.”

“But it did belong there, my love,” Dunstan said; he seemed to be making an attempt to sound nonchalant, but Thomas could sense that he was bracing for something painful. “I’m sure Mr. Dancer would agree to that.”

“Well, actually—” Thomas started to speak, but suddenly a strange green glow came from the center of Heather’s outstretched palm. Apparently, she had taken a handful of leaves from a bag hanging from her belt, and now, for no reason that Thomas could see, the leaves were glowing. Carefully, Heather tilted her hand down, until the glowing green leaves began to flow like some thick fluid, making a small trickle into Dunstan’s wound. He jerked a bit

the moment the fluid touched him, and Thomas was certain that he could just barely hear a sizzle and see a pale cloud of smoke rising from the wound. Dunstan's muscles seemed to knot on themselves for several moments until Heather drew her hand away. Oddly, Thomas realized, rather than holding a handful of leaves, she now held a small, mushroom-shaped piece of dark metal—the bullet from Dunstan's wound.

“Hmmm,” she said appreciatively as she examined the slug. “This looks like a 10 millimeter, full metal jacket, with the remnants of a distinct enchantment. You must have ticked someone off seriously this time.” Dunstan took the slug with his good hand and began to examine it himself as Heather cleaned and bandaged his wound with more mundane materials.

At last, anger and frustration overcame fear and concern, and Thomas stepped forward. “Excuse me, but do you think you might be able to tell me just what the hell has been going on here? Who were those guys with the guns, and what is the deal with all this green lightning?”

For a moment, Thomas thought Heather was going to make some sort of comment, but Dunstan carefully signaled her to stop, and she gathered her things, leaving the room without a word. Dunstan carefully lowered himself from the table on which he had been sitting, and took several tentative steps to a big, overstuffed couch under a plant-filled bay window. Slowly, he eased himself down. Thomas merely shoved his hands in his pockets and waited as patiently as he could.

At last, Dunstan spoke. “So, Thomas, do you believe in magic?”

“Magic?” Thomas wondered if he had heard correctly. “You mean like David Copperfield making the Statue of Liberty disappear?”

Dunstan chuckled and shook his head. “No, no. Not stage magic. Real magic. You know-wizards, warlocks, sorcerers and such. Merlin. Gandalf. That sort of thing.”

Thomas looked at Dunstan suspiciously. “You mean all that new age, crystal-waving stuff?”

Dunstan sighed heavily, which apparently made his wound hurt, for he twinged a bit. “You might as well sit down,” he said. “This is going to take a while.”



Phantasmal Lights uses a task-based game system. What this means is that any significant action a character wishes to attempt for which there is a reasonable chance of failure can be modeled by a single task or series of tasks. The key to determining if a player should make a task check for his character is to decide if the action is important and if the attempt, if failed, would have significant negative effects. Walking across the street, for example, is an action, but in game terms it is not important and the consequences of failure—even the possibility of failure—are negligible. However, if the character is running across the street, fleeing from an assassin bearing down on him in a car, the action and the consequences of failure are quite significant.

Task Asset

When you finally get around to deciding that, yes, your character, Chuck Blochunks, is going to attempt to actually do something in the game, you've decided to attempt a task. The first thing you need to do is to determine what Chuck's task asset is going to be.

A task asset is a number formed by combining an appropriate characteristic bank with an appropriate attribute rating. For example, firing a pistol would require Chuck to use his Dexterity bank (because that's what firing a pistol requires) along with his Direct Fire Combat/Pistol ability rating. In this case, that all adds up to be 13.

Note that you use Chuck's characteristic *bank*, rather than his characteristic *rating*. A characteristic's rating is its maximum value, while its bank is its current value. Often, the bank will equal the rating, but as the bank can fluctuate often during play, it's important to keep the semantics correct to avoid confusion.

Difficulty Rating

The Director assigns the difficulty rating to the task your character is attempting. This is a number ranging from 1 to 10, 1 being very easy and 10 being very hard.

In the case of Chuck Blochunks taking a pot-shot at some poor schmuck, the difficulty rating is equal to the poor schmuck's

Chapter 2: Task Resolution

Physique rating. (That sort of thing is explained in Chapter 5: Game Systems.) That happens to be a 6.

Task Check

The task check is formed by adding the difficulty rating for the task, which is determined by the Director, to the roll of one ten-sided die. In our example, the difficulty rating is 6, which is added to a die roll of 4, giving us a task check of 10.

Comparing the Task Asset and Task Check

You now have to compare your character's task check to his task

asset. If the task check is greater than the task asset, the character fails at the task. The difference between the task check and the task asset is the number of failure points the character suffers; the higher the number of points, the worse the degree of failure. If the task check is less than the task asset, the character succeeds at the task. The difference between the task check and the task asset is the number of success points the character achieves; the higher the number of points, the higher the degree of success. If the task check is equal to the task asset, however, the character has the chance of achieving an extraordinary result, which is explained below.

So, our man Chuck, with his task check of 10 against a task asset of 13, has succeeded at his attempt to shoot the poor bastard who crossed his path and achieved 3 success points doing it. (What that actually would have meant in this case is explained in detail in Chapter 5: Game Systems.) If Chuck's task check had been 16 instead of 10, however, he would have failed the task and suffered 3 failure points for his trouble.

Automatic Success

If, after all the calculations have been made, it is clear that the character cannot fail at the task no matter what the player rolls on the die, the player may elect to take an automatic success. An automatic

success has a value of 1 success point. The player may choose to roll the die, anyway, and take whatever success points are achieved in that way.

Automatic Failure

If, after all the calculations have been made, it is clear that the character cannot succeed at the task no matter what the player rolls on the die, the character suffers an automatic failure. An automatic failure has a value of 1 failure point. If, for some obscure reason, the player wishes to roll the die anyway and take whatever failure points are suffered in that way, he may do so. After all, if you're going to go out, you might as well go out big, right?



Extraordinary Results

If your character's task check is equal to his task asset, then your character has a chance of achieving an extraordinary result, either a triumph or a disaster. Roll the die again. If the result is 10, the character has achieved a triumph, the best possible success available for the task attempted. If the result is 1, however, the character has suffered a disaster, the worst possible failure available for the task attempted. What actually happens, most of the time, is determined by the Director.

In his little shoot-out, if Chuck had achieved a triumph, rather than just inflicting a flesh wound in the guy's right arm, he might have

popped a cap directly in the guy's brain, if he was trying to kill him, or snagged him a good one in the leg, if he was only trying to incapacitate him. On the other hand, if Chuck had suffered a disaster, any number of things might have happened. His gun might have blown up in his face, causing him severe injury. Instead of his target, Chuck might have accidentally wounded or killed a circle-mate, perhaps even an innocent bystander.

Task Modifiers

Variables that can affect the outcome of a task are called task modifiers. Most tasks have a number of task modifiers, which can affect not only whether the task

succeeds or fails, but also how many success or failure points the character gains. In some cases, such as performing magic or engaging in combat, most of the task modifiers are set by the game system. In all cases, however, the Director can assign whatever task modifiers he deems necessary. Task modifiers are applied to the character's task asset only; positive numbers aid the character, while negative numbers penalize him. Very seldom should a task modifier be less than -5 or more than +5.

Preparation

A character can attempt to gain a beneficial task modifier by taking some time to prepare for the task at hand. How long the character has to

“ Most tasks have a number of die modifiers, which can affect not only whether the task succeeds or fails, but also how many success or failure points the character gains. ”

prepare and the degree of the task modifier are determined by the Director. For example, in combat, if a character takes an entire combat round to prepare to attack, he gains a +2 TM.

Likewise, a character can accept a penalizing task modifier in order to act quicker than he normally would. Accepting a -1 TM will bump a character up one spot in the initiative order during a combat round. In situations where events are happening quickly but you aren't using combat rounds, the Director will have to decide the degree of task modifier necessary and what advantage it gives the character.

Essence

A character can choose to spend 1 Essence bank point to purchase a +1 TM per task check.

Minimum Success Point Requirements

The Director may rule that, in order to achieve complete success in a task, the character must achieve a minimum number of success points. Use the following chart as a guideline to determine an appropriate number of success points.

Task Description	Minimum Success Points Required
Simple	1
Basic	3
Difficult	5
Complex	7
Extreme	9

Task Types

There are a variety of tasks beyond the simple, "I'm gonna try to do something now" task. Different types of tasks can be combined as necessary. A conjunctive task, for example, might also be an extended task.

Conflicting Tasks

When multiple characters all want to accomplish something that is mutually exclusive, they are

engaged in a conflicting task.

Determining the outcome of a conflicting task is relatively easy. The Director determines the appropriate task assets, difficulty ratings and task modifiers for each character. Each character then resolves his task. The one with the most success points wins. If none of the characters achieve any success points, no one succeeds at performing his task, and so no one wins the conflict.

If a character achieves a triumph in a conflicting task, he wins no matter how many success points everyone has achieved. Only another character with a triumph has the chance of beating a character with a triumph. These two characters must perform the task

again until one scores more success points than the other.

If a character suffers a disaster in a conflicting task, he not only fails, but fails miserably. Even if his opponent fails his task, his opponent succeeds at the conflicting task, the result of the disaster-suffering character's extreme failure.

Conjunctive Tasks

Sometimes, a group of characters want to work together to achieve a common goal. If this is the case, the Director determines the appropriate task assets, difficulty ratings and task modifiers for everyone involved in a task, and sets the number of success points

that must be achieved in total for the group to succeed.

The total number of failure points suffered by members of the group are subtracted from the total number of success points achieved. If the net number of success points is equal to or greater than the goal set by the Director, the group succeeds at the task.

If one character in the group achieves a triumph, everyone benefits. The task is successful even if the required number of success points are not achieved.

If one character in the group suffers a disaster, however, everyone suffers. The task is a failure no matter how many success points have been achieved.

Extended Tasks

Sometimes, a task is so extensive that it isn't possible to do all at one time. If this is the case, a character can attempt an extended task. The Director assigns a number of success points required to achieve the task. The character may then make as many task checks as required to achieve the necessary number of success points, assuming that he has the time needed to do so.

If the character achieves a triumph anywhere along the way, he immediately (or, at least, as soon as possible) achieves the task even if he hasn't scored enough success points yet.

If the character ever fails one of his tasks, the number of failure

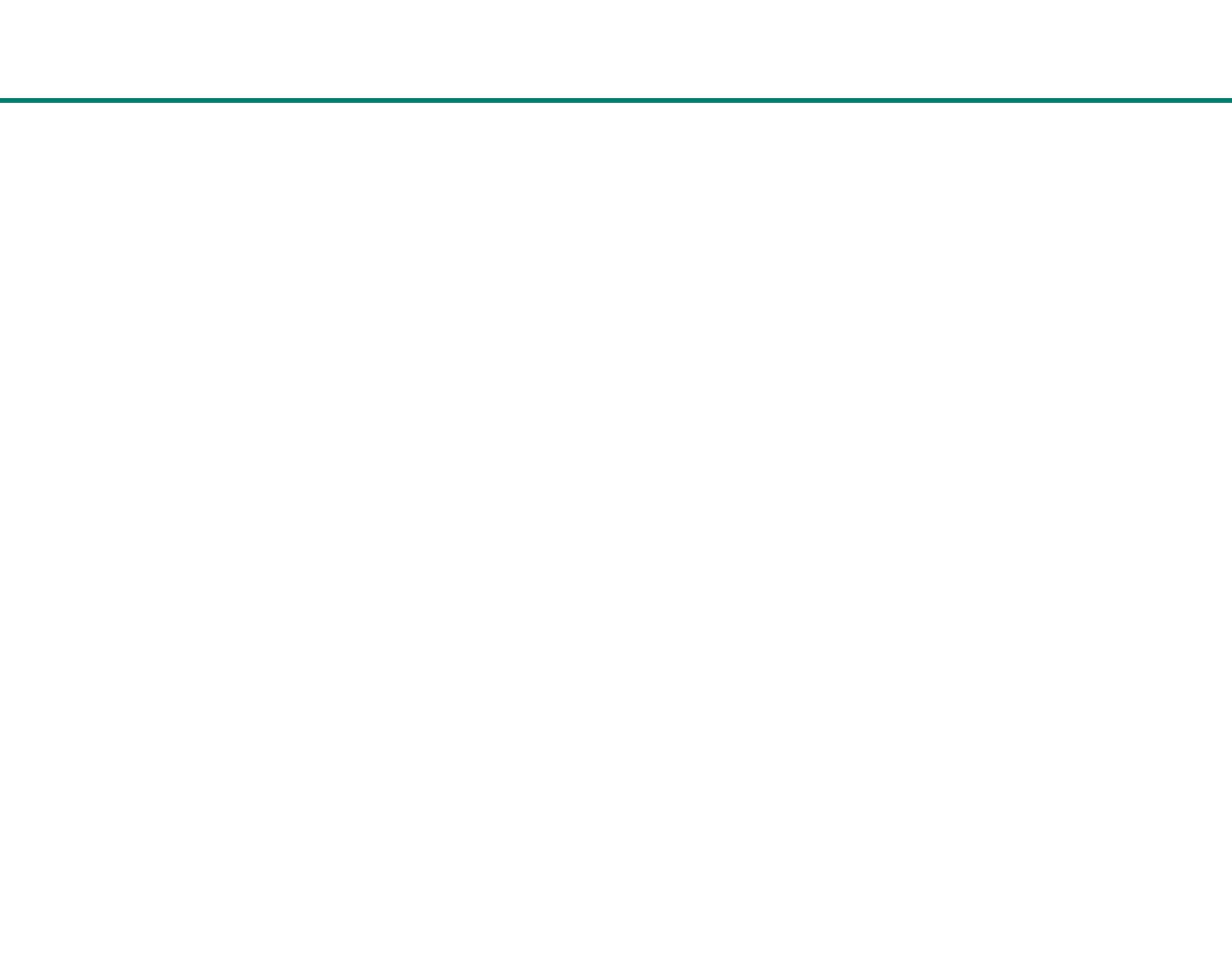
“ If the character suffers a disaster during one of his tasks, however, he not only fails at the task, but cannot even attempt to perform the task again for a period of time specified by the Director. ”

points he suffers are subtracted from the total number of success points achieved up to that point. If the number of success points is reduced to 0 or less in this way, the character must make at least 1 success point on a Determination + Performance/Meditation task with a difficulty rating equal to that set for the extended task in order to have the will to start over again.

If the character suffers a disaster during one of his tasks, however, he not only fails at the task, but cannot even attempt to perform the task again for a period of time specified by the Director. In addition, the character may suffer other bad consequences appropriate to the task at hand.

Unskilled Tasks

Occasionally, a character may need to attempt a task even if he does not have the necessary ability to perform it. In some cases, the Director may allow the character to make the attempt using just the appropriate characteristic bank, to substitute another ability or to attempt the task with a significant task modifier penalty. The Director will have to determine the appropriate course of action based on the specific circumstances.



The Illumination of Thomas Dancer

Part 3

Thomas stared down the elevator shaft into the skeleton of the building. It was a long way before the shaft disappeared into darkness, and he knew it went a long way beyond that point. He turned back to his climbing harness and checked the ropes and clips for the tenth time.

“So,” Thomas said as he climbed up to the next beam. “Tell me again why we’re doing this instead of taking the elevator.”

Next to him, Dunstan grunted as he pulled himself up, as well. “The elevators have cameras, as do the stair-wells, not to mention the fact that the place is buggy with magical wards. If Kojami is the one who came after you, he’ll be able to detect you as soon as you get caught by a camera or trip a ward. And me, well, I am the legendary Dunstan MacGregor.” He grinned that grin of his, and Thomas could see a sparkle in his eye even in the dim light.

“So, the only way up to his penthouse is up the relatively unguarded elevator shaft,” Thomas muttered. He leaned against a vertical beam and rested. “Man, but this is a lot of work just to find out if Kojami is the guy. Couldn’t we just call him on the phone, ask him politely?”

“To which his reply would be, ‘Oh, my, no, Magistrate MacGregor, I wouldn’t dream of forcing a feral into my service, but as long as he’s available, I’m sure you won’t mind if I take over his training-I’m so sure you have a great deal of work to do.’” Dunstan readjusted his harness and prepared to climb to the next level. “Remember, Thomas, that’s rule number one about dealing with magicians-don’t trust ‘em, ‘cause they’re no damn good.”

“I thought rule number one was, ‘Always know where the exits are.’”

“No, no, no. That’s rule number one when dealing with women with jealous husbands.” Dunstan chuckled, and climbed up. At last, the pair reached the top floor, the penthouse suite. Dunstan dug into his pack and pulled out a small toolkit. With a small powered screwdriver, he removed the panel covering the elevator door circuits while Thomas held the light.

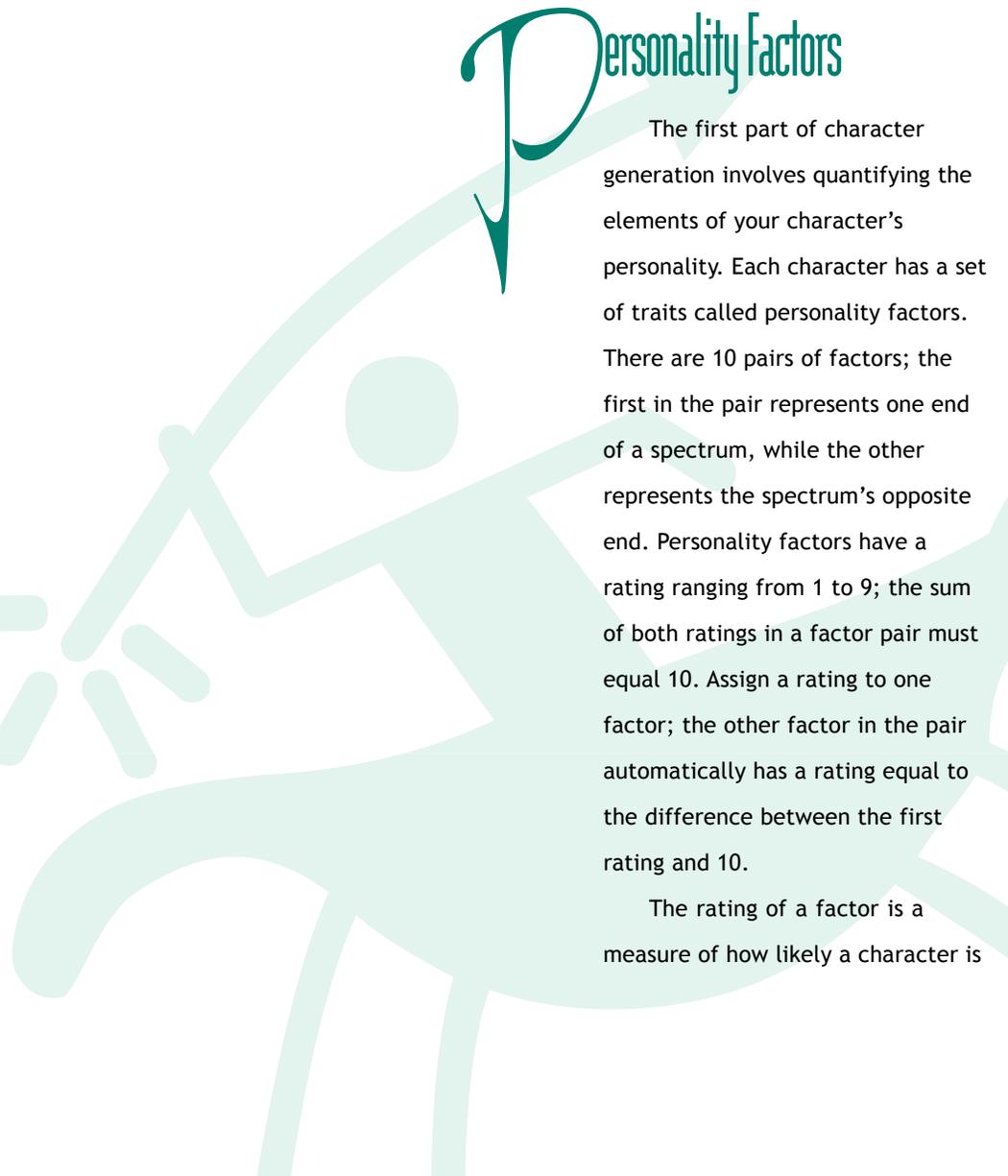
“Dunstan, if magic is so powerful,” Thomas asked, “why do you always do things, well, the mundane way?”

“It’s a simple thing, really,” Dunstan replied, not turning away from his work. His tools clicked against the wire connectors. “Magicians think magic, so they plan magic. That means they

expect anyone coming after them to use magic. Therefore, the best way to go after a magician—” Suddenly, the doors to the elevator shaft opened, and light from the corridor, dim but still brighter than the shaft, flooded in. “—is with mundane tools.”

“Do you think you can teach me that stuff?” Thomas asked as he put away his light and Dunstan crawled out into the corridor.

“Son,” Dunstan replied as he gave Thomas a hand up. “What do you think I’ve been trying to do?”



Personality Factors

The first part of character generation involves quantifying the elements of your character's personality. Each character has a set of traits called personality factors. There are 10 pairs of factors; the first in the pair represents one end of a spectrum, while the other represents the spectrum's opposite end. Personality factors have a rating ranging from 1 to 9; the sum of both ratings in a factor pair must equal 10. Assign a rating to one factor; the other factor in the pair automatically has a rating equal to the difference between the first rating and 10.

The rating of a factor is a measure of how likely a character is

to act in a certain way in a given condition. Personality factors are meant to be a guide for the player, to help him visualize what his character is like. They can change at any time during play. The ratings of a character's personality factors may have an influence on a task that character attempts; this influence will typically be seen as a task modifier assigned by the Director.

- **Brave/Cowardly:** How likely the character is to face personal danger or flee from it.
- **Cautious/Impulsive:** Whether the character is likely to plan his actions carefully, or simply jump in, caution to the wind, with both guns blazing.
- **Energetic/Indolent:** Whether the character is a goal achiever who channels his energy into accomplishing some task or another, or is a rather lazy procrastinator who does not seem to have the desire or energy to accomplish anything.
- **Extrovert/Introvert:** Whether the character is somewhat withdrawn from social interaction or enjoys interacting with other people.
- **Forgiving/Vengeful:** How likely the character is to forgive actions against him or to hold a grudge against the offenders.
- **Gentle/Cruel:** Whether the character is sensitive to the feelings, physical and emotional, of other beings, or

Chapter 3: Character Generation

ignores or purposely acts to violate those feelings.

- **Honest/Deceitful:** How likely the character is to act truthfully as opposed to how likely the character is to attempt to deceive others.
- **Modest/Proud:** Whether the character is self-deprecating or boastful about his accomplishments.
- **Optimist/Pessimist:** Whether the character is likely to look for the positive or negative aspects of any situation.
- **Trusting/Suspicious:** How likely the character is to trust or suspect the motives of other people.

Primary Characteristics

Phantasmal Lights has 10 primary characteristics divided into two sets of five characteristics each, mental and physical. Each characteristic has a rating that ranges from 1 to 10; this is the characteristic's permanent value, and will change only rarely. Each characteristic has a bank that initially equals the characteristic's rating; the value of a characteristic bank may change often during the course of play, some more than others.

Mental Characteristics

- **Determination (Det):** A character's mental fortitude, used to resist attempts by other

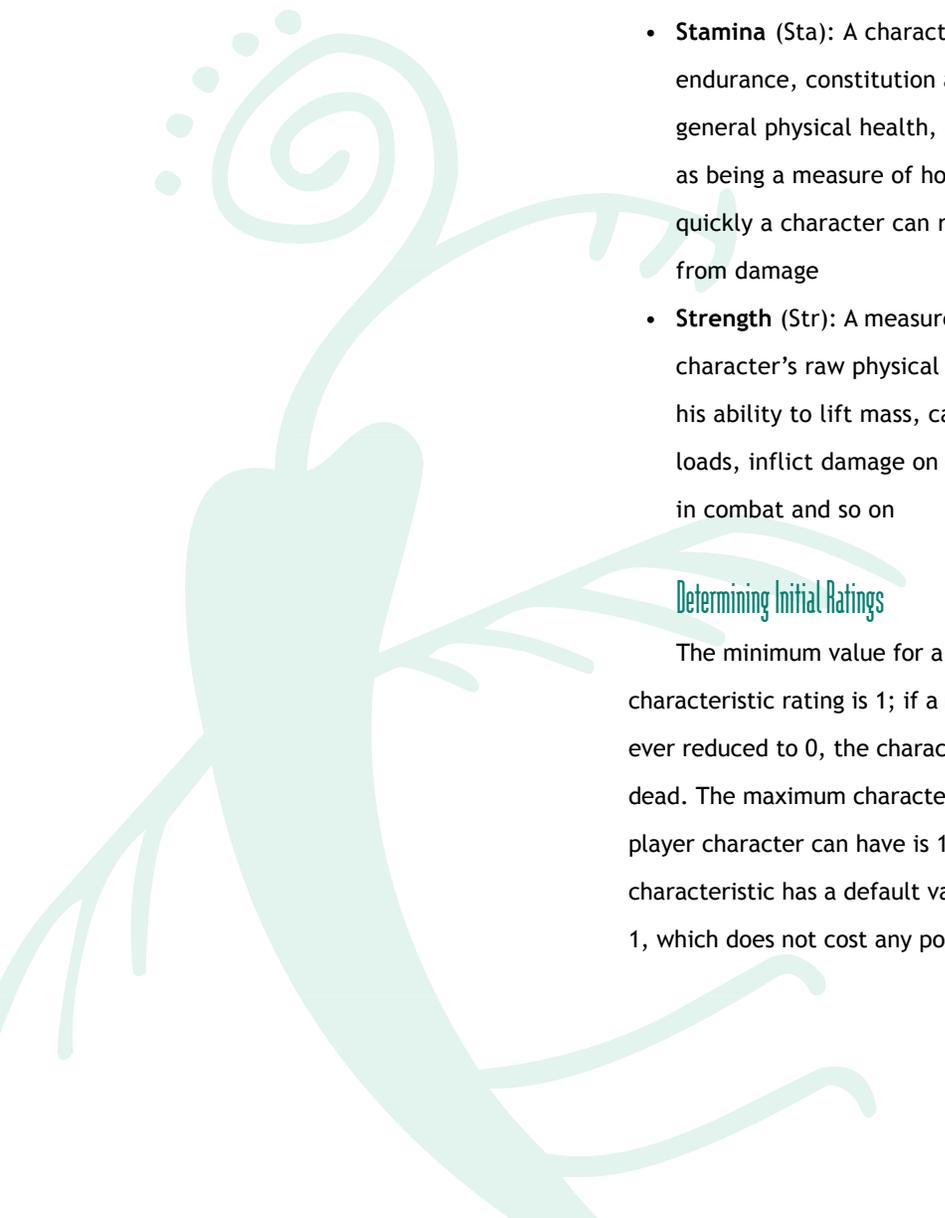
characters to influence or control him in some way

- **Education (Edu):** A combination of the information that a character has acquired in his lifetime through formal training, experience and observation, plus a measure of the character's ability to learn new information
- **Intelligence (Int):** A character's ability to think, to reason and to draw connections among various pieces of information
- **Intuition (Inn):** The ability of a character to unconsciously understand his environment, as well as a measure of the character's creativity

- **Presence (Pre):** A character's ability to influence and affect the people with whom he interacts

Physical Characteristics

- **Dexterity (Dex):** A character's physical coordination, both gross motor control and fine hand-eye coordination
- **Essence (Ess):** A character's ability to channel aether to fuel the effects of magic, or a measure of a character's luck that can be used to alter events in the character's favor
- **Physique (Phy):** A measure of a character's physical size, his height and mass, which is used to determine how much damage the character can soak up without being permanently hurt

- 
- **Stamina (Sta):** A character's endurance, constitution and general physical health, as well as being a measure of how quickly a character can recover from damage
 - **Strength (Str):** A measure of a character's raw physical power, his ability to lift mass, carry loads, inflict damage on others in combat and so on

Determining Initial Ratings

The minimum value for a characteristic rating is 1; if a rating is ever reduced to 0, the character is dead. The maximum characteristic a player character can have is 10. Each characteristic has a default value of 1, which does not cost any points.

When creating a character, the player has 20 points to distribute among the mental and another 20 points to distribute among the physical characteristics. Mental points may not be spent to purchase physical characteristic ratings and vice versa.

Using Primary Characteristics

Primary characteristics are the most important measure of what a character can do in the game. The values of characteristics are used to calculate the character's movement rates, how much he can carry, how fast he recovers from damage, how much damage he can absorb and so on. Characteristics are also used to determine if a character succeeds when he attempts to perform a task.

Typically in game play, the character uses his characteristic bank, as opposed to his characteristic rating. The rating is a measure of the permanent value of a characteristic, while a characteristic's bank is a measure of usability.

Think of it this way. Imagine that you have a large container capable of holding up to 10 liters of liquid. The amount of liquid the container can hold does not change; it will always be able to hold 10 liters. At any given moment, however, the container might have 10, 6, 5, 3 or 0 liters of liquid in it, but you can't put in more liquid than the container can hold. A character's characteristics are very similar; a characteristic's rating is the amount of liquid the container

“ In the game rules, if the instructions say to use a characteristic, that always means to use the current value of that characteristic’s bank. If you need to use the value of the characteristic’s rating, the rules will specifically state that fact. ”

can hold, while its bank is the amount of liquid in the container at any given time.

In the game rules, if the instructions say to use a characteristic, that always means to use the current value of that characteristic’s bank. If you need to use the value of the characteristic’s rating, the rules will specifically state that fact.

Secondary Characteristics

A character’s secondary characteristics are, for the most part, attributes derived from the character’s primary characteristics, the one exception being the character’s age.

Age
A character’s initial age in years ranges from 21 to 65. To play a beginning character either younger or older than this range requires an appropriate attribute and permission from the Director. The higher a character’s age, the more concentration points he receives to distribute among the concentrations of his abilities. However, even the miracles of modern health care cannot completely prevent the deprivations of time. As characters age, they lose primary characteristic points. The point system is detailed on the chart below. The primary characteristic penalties for age are cumulative; the concentration points are not.

Age	Penalty	Points
21-30	0 (0)	5
31-40	-1 (-1)	6
41-50	-2 (-3)	7
51-55	-3 (-6)	8
56-60	-4 (-10)	9
61-65	-5 (-15)	10

Height

A character’s height is measured in centimeters, and is derived from his Physique rating. A character begins with a base height of 125 cm. Each Physique rating point represents 10 cm, which is added to the character’s base height. So, a character with Phy:7 would be 195 cm tall (125 + [7×10]).

A character’s actual height can be modified depending on whether his body type is ectomorphic or

endomorphmic. The formula above represents a normal body type. A person with a ectomorphic body type tends to be taller and lighter framed than normal, while someone with an endomorphmic body type tends to be shorter and stockier. If the character has a ectomorphic body type, each Physique rating point represents 13 cm; if the character has an endomorphmic body type, each Physique rating point represents 7 cm.

A character’s actual height can also be modified by certain attributes.

Initiative

Initiative is a special task asset to determine in what order the character begins his action in



combat, Dexterity + Determination. See Chapter 5: Game Systems for rules on using initiative.

Kick

This characteristic is a measure of how much damage a character can do using his feet or legs in an attack. A character's damage rating with a kick attack is equal to half his Strength bank, rounded down, with a minimum rating of 1.

Lift

Lift is a measure of how much weight a character can normally press, and is equal to 25 times the character's Strength bank in kilograms. As a rule of thumb, a character can lift this weight and

hold it for a number of seconds equal to his Stamina bank.

Load

Load is a measure of how much weight a character can normally carry without suffering any extra fatigue, and is equal to five times the character's Strength bank in kilograms. Normally, a character can carry this load for a number of hours equal to his Stamina bank before suffering the effects of fatigue.

Mass

A character's mass is measured in kilograms, and is derived from his Physique rating. A character begins with a base mass of 25 kg. Each Physique rating point represents 10 kg, which is added to the character's

base mass. So, a character with Phy:7 would mass 95 kg ($25 + [7 \times 10]$).

A character's actual mass can be modified depending on whether his body type is ectomorphic or endomorphic. The formula above represents a normal body type. A person with a ectomorphic body type tends to be less massive than normal, while someone with an endomorphic body type tends to be more massive. If the character has a ectomorphic body type, each Physique rating point represents 7 kg; if the character has an endomorphic body type, each Physique rating point represents 13 kg.

A character's mass can also be modified by certain attributes.

“ Abilities are general groups of skills, talents and knowledge that the character possesses. Abilities have a rating ranging from 1 to 5, and may only be purchased once. ”

Punch

This characteristic is a measure of how much damage a character can do using his hands or arms in an attack. A character's damage rating with a punch attack is equal to one-quarter his Strength bank, rounded down, with a minimum rating of 1.

Speed

Phantasmal Lights characters have three speed ratings: walk, run and sprint. A character can walk up to his Strength bank in meters per combat round, run up to three times his Strength bank in meters per combat round and sprint up to five times his Strength bank in meters per combat round.

The amount of time a character can maintain these speeds depends on his Stamina bank. A character can walk a number of game hours equal to his Stamina bank until he needs to rest or begin to suffer the effects of fatigue. A character can run 10 times his Stamina bank in game minutes before he needs to rest or begin to suffer the effects of fatigue. A character can sprint a number of game seconds equal to his Stamina bank before he needs to rest or begin to suffer the effects of fatigue.

All of these values can be affected by the character's load. If a character is carrying his load rating or less, then the basic speed rules apply. For each multiple of the character's load rating or part thereof in excess of the character's

load rating, the character's speed ratings are cut in half.

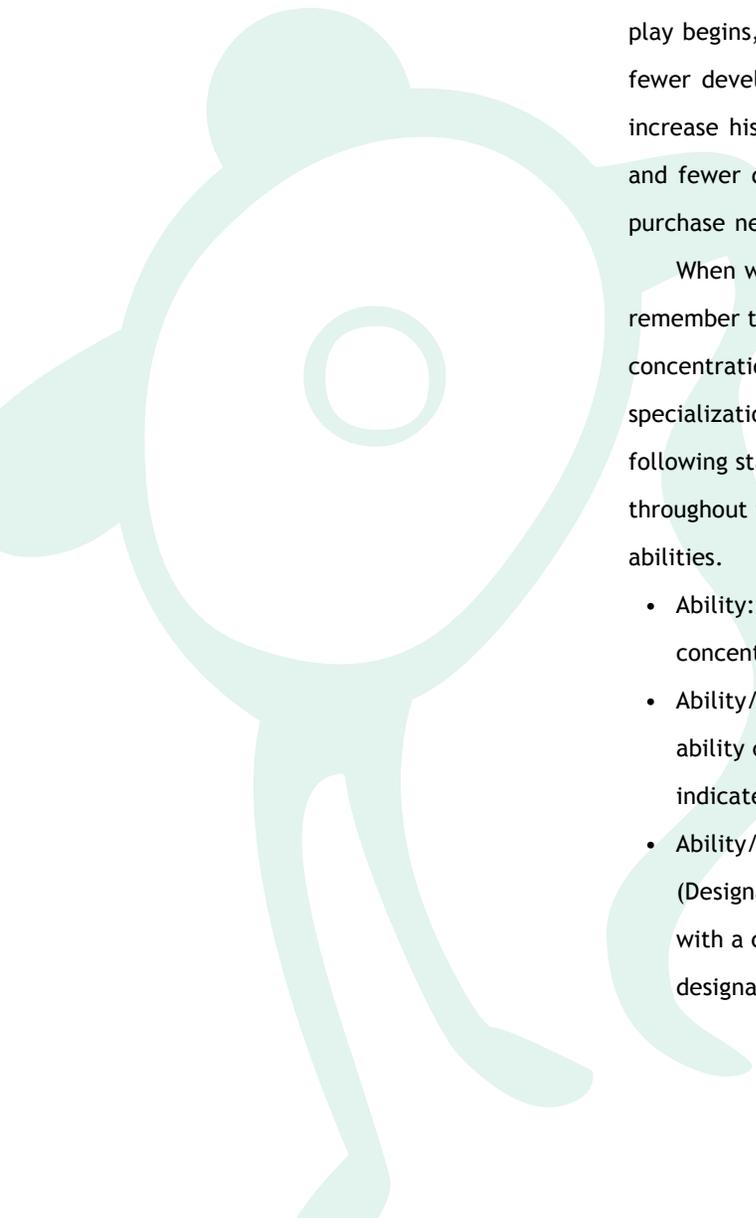
Throw

Throw determines how far the character can throw a 1-kilogram or less object, 10 meters per Strength bank point. The character can throw a 2-kilogram object half as far, a 3-kilogram object a third as far and so on. The Director may also reduce the distance per point if the object thrown is awkward or if other conditions effect the throw. Throw is only a measure of distance, not accuracy; to determine if the character actually hits his target requires a task check using the appropriate task asset, such as Dexterity + Projectile Weapons/Thrown.

Abilities

All characters in **Phantasmal Lights** have at least one ability, and typically more. Abilities are general groups of skills, talents and knowledge that the character possesses. Abilities have a rating ranging from 1 to 5, and may only be purchased once.

Characters have two sets of abilities, career abilities and life abilities. Career abilities relate to what a character has trained to do with his life, even if he isn't doing that at the moment. Life abilities relate to the general sorts of abilities one learns through experience and education. An ability is a career ability or a life ability; it cannot be both. After



play begins, a character will pay fewer development points to increase his career abilities ratings, and fewer development points to purchase new life abilities.

When writing an ability, remember to include the concentrations, designates and specializations used, as well. The following standards are used throughout these rules when writing abilities.

- Ability: The ability only, with no concentration
- Ability/Concentration: The ability combined with the indicated concentration
- Ability/Concentration (Designate): An ability combined with a concentration that has a designate

- Ability/Concentration/Specialization: An ability combined with a concentration that has a specialization
- Ability/Concentration (Designate)/Specialization: An ability combined with a concentration that has a designate and a specialization
- Characteristic + Ability et al.: A task asset defined for use with a specific task.

Ability Points

Characters receive an allotment of ability points to distribute among abilities, 15 points for career abilities and 15 points for life abilities.

Characters are limited in the total number of abilities they can have. For each ability path, Career

and Life, a character can have up to a number of abilities equal to his Education rating.

The character's abilities must have a rating of no less than 1 and no more than 5. The player is free to distribute these points as he desires, so a character with Edu:8 could have eight 1-point abilities; two 4-point abilities; four 2-point abilities; one 4-point, one 3-point and one 1-point ability; and so on.

Concentrations

Each ability has a list of concentrations. Concentrations are specific skills, talents or knowledge that a character has within a given ability. For example, a character might have the ability Social Science. The concentrations for

“ Characters may take a concentration in an ability more than once. For example, it is not uncommon for characters to have the concentration Language, under the ability Culture, several times, indicating that he speaks more than one language. ”

Social Science may be Anthropology, History, Sociology and so on. Each concentration may have a rating from 0 to 5. If a character would like to use a concentration in which he has a rating of 0, then he would use his ability rating alone.

Characters may take a concentration in an ability more than once. For example, it is not uncommon for a character to have the concentration Language, under the ability Culture, several times, indicating that he speaks more than one language. Each instance of a concentration when multiple concentrations are purchased must, of course, have a designate.

Concentration Points

The number of concentration points a character has to distribute for each ability is based on the character’s age. Characters can be any age from 21 to 65. The older the character is, the more concentration points he has per ability, but he also loses primary characteristic points. The point system is detailed on the chart below. The primary characteristic penalties for age are cumulative; the concentration points are not.

Age	Penalty	Points
21-30	0 (0)	5
31-40	-1 (-1)	6
41-50	-2 (-3)	7
51-55	-3 (-6)	8
56-60	-4 (-10)	9
61-65	-5 (-15)	10

The primary characteristic penalty is the number of primary characteristic points that the character loses because of age. This can represent a physical deterioration, the wearing down of one’s mental faculties and so on. The character’s player determines which primary characteristics are penalized.

The concentration points rating is the number of points a character has to distribute among his concentrations in his abilities, both Career and Life paths.

Creating a character either younger or older than the designated range requires an attribute that allows it and permission from the Director.

Specializations

Some concentrations may have specializations available. Specializations are further refinements of a character’s abilities. For example, if a character has the ability Firearms and the concentration Pistols, he might also have the specialization Automatic Pistols. A concentration may have any number of specializations, but each must be purchased separately. A specialization has a rating of 1, and costs 2 concentration points.

Designate

Some concentrations require a designate. A designate is a particular area that the concentration covers. Concentrations that require a designate may be purchased



multiple times and assigned a different designate for each. The most common use for this is the concentration Language. For example, a character might have the concentration Language with the designate English, and the concentration Language with the designate French. Both concentrations are separate, and are developed independently.

Automatic Abilities

Characters receive at least one automatic ability, Culture, and may receive more at the Director's discretion.

Culture is a life ability, and begins with a rating equal to half the character's Education rating, rounded down, with a minimum

rating of 1. The character may then distribute a number of concentration points as determined by his age among Culture's concentrations. Any Culture concentrations taken must have a designate applicable to the character's native culture. Also, the character must take the concentrations Etiquette ([Native Culture]) and Language ([Native Tongue]), even if he takes no others. The character may also take Culture as a regular ability, buying concentrations and specializations in cultures other than his native one at normal costs.

Magical Abilities

Phantasmal Lights is a game of magic in the modern world, so obviously at least some of the characters need to have magical abilities. Because **Phantasmal Lights** is a condensed version of the full game **Phantasm**, players have only two choices for player character types, mundanes and magicians. If you're creating a mundane, you can skip the magical abilities section. If you're creating a magician, it's the most important part of character generation.

The magical abilities of a magician are called principals, while the concentrations for these abilities are called disciplines. Principals deal with the areas of knowledge and

“ A journeyman magician is considered to be trained and experienced enough to practice magic on his own, without the constant supervision of his mentor. ”

understanding a magician uses to perform magical effects. Disciplines deal with the sort of magical effect a magician wants to accomplish with a principal. The details of both principals and disciplines are covered in Chapter 4: Magic.

Beginning magician characters in **Phantasmal Lights** are assumed to be of the rank journeyman, the third rank a magician can attain in magical society. A journeyman magician is considered to be trained and experienced enough to practice magic on his own, without the constant supervision of his mentor. With the Director's permission, a character may take an attribute that allows him to be of lower or even higher rank.

A journeyman magician receives 10 points to distribute among the five principals. He receives the same number of concentration points to distribute among his disciplines for each principal as he received for his abilities, based on his age.

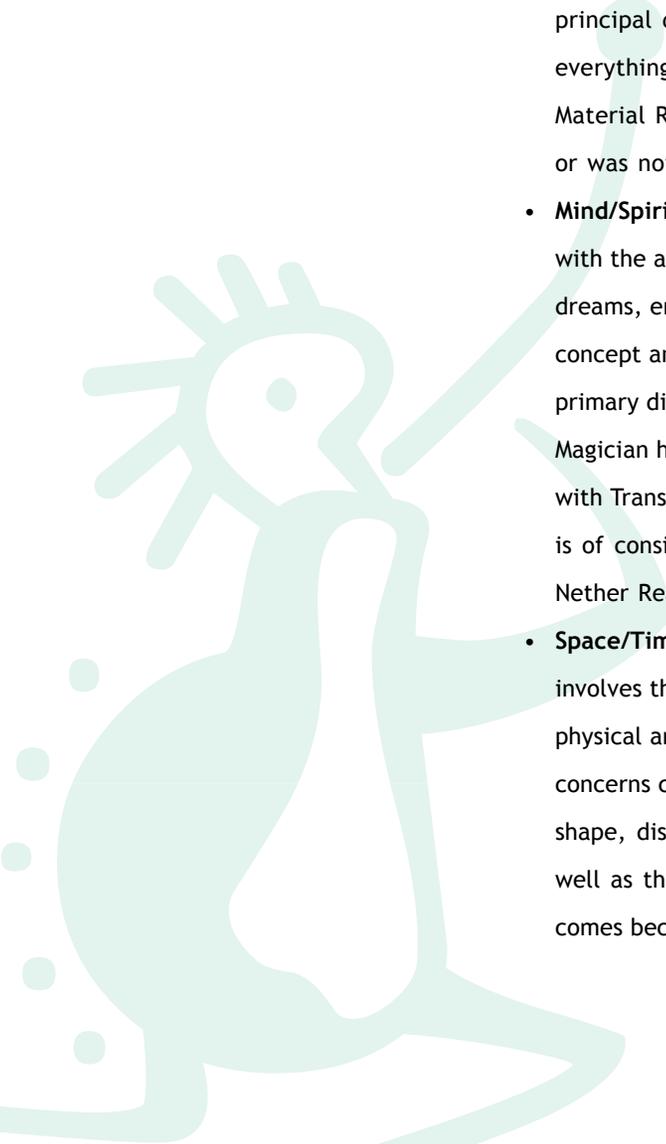
Unlike normal concentrations, however, disciplines must follow the Precession of Disciplines, which states that the rating of a discipline may be no higher than the one preceding it. For example, a character with a rating of 3 in the discipline Perception could have a rating of 3 in the discipline Manipulation, but not a 4 until the rating for Perception was raised to 4. The order of the Precession of Disciplines is Perception,

Manipulation, Destruction, Transformation and Creation.

Each principal has the same disciplines, but the disciplines for each principal are distinct and thus must be developed separately, just like normal concentrations.

Principals

- **Aether/Void:** Aether/Void deals with the fundamental substance of the Continuum and its opposite number. A magician uses this principal when dealing with free aether, as from a nexus, or anything composed of the Void, such as a Void being who has made its way into the Continuum.
- **Death/Life:** Death/Life is used when dealing with living organisms, whether animal, plant or other. This principal can be somewhat difficult to define, just as life can be difficult to define. As a rule of thumb, Death/Life deals with anything that the character could reasonably assume to be alive, or which was very recently alive. The discipline also deals with those areas concerning the end of life, such as decay, disease, poisoning and so on.
- **Energy/Matter:** Energy/Matter concerns the various forces of the material universe, such as electromagnetism, gravity, the strong and weak nuclear forces, heat, light and so on, as well as the material substance of the universe. This



principal deals with essentially everything that exists in the Material Realm that is not now or was not recently alive.

- **Mind/Spirit:** Mind/Spirit deals with the areas of thought, dreams, emotions, abstract concept and so on. It is the primary discipline used when a Magician has any contact at all with Transcendental Realm, and is of considerable use in the Nether Realm.
- **Space/Time:** Space/Time involves the dimensions, both physical and temporal. It concerns concepts of volume, shape, distance, position, as well as the steady change that comes because of time.

Disciplines

Each principal has its own set of disciplines, which must be developed separately, but those disciplines are the same for each principal.

- **Perception:** Perception deals with the ability to perceive the universe using the physical senses—sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. Magically, this involves enhancing the senses so that the magician is capable of perceiving beyond his normal abilities or expanding the abilities so that the magician can perceive at a distance from his physical form.
- **Manipulation:** Manipulation covers the ability to use magic to affect targets at a distance. This ability could be used, for example, to operate a machine from a remote location, or to vibrate the air around someone's ears so that he could hear your voice from a distance.
- **Destruction:** Destruction is the ability to unweave the pattern of an object, releasing its Essence so that the object ceases to exist. Destruction actually allows the user little control in its use; either something is destroyed, or it is not. The Essence released from an object using this ability cannot be absorbed or used by a magician; no one knows what

“ Creation is the greatest and most frightening ability of a magician, allowing him to make a new thing from nothing more than free aether. ”

happens to it, but most believe it is absorbed back into the Weaving.

- **Transformation:** Transformation allows the magician to alter the structure of an object on an atomic, even a quantum, level, altering its structure so that it becomes something that it was not before. This ability allows a magician to change lead into gold, for example, or turn a person into a newt. A magician’s understanding of such things, however, is not perfect, and so a transformed object cannot remain so for long; it will eventually revert to its original state, or if that is not possible, crumble into

dust, evaporate into the air or what have you.

- **Creation:** Creation is the greatest and most frightening ability of a magician, allowing him to make a new thing from nothing more than free aether. If a magician’s understanding of an existing object is imperfect, however, his understanding of what is necessary to create something new is even more so. Therefore, created objects have an extremely short time of existence before they collapse back into the free aether from which they were made.

Attributes

Characters may have some special attributes, advantages or limitations that either enhance a character’s capabilities or detract from them.

Advantages cost development points, and limitations award development points. In this way, a character can earn development points that can be used to enhance the value of other traits before the start of the game. Once the game begins, characters may not gain any new attributes except by decree of the Director. Characters may buy off some limitations with future development points at a cost equal to the number of development points the limitation gave the

characters. However, some limitations may not be bought off at all, and the Director may rule that limitations can only be eliminated through game play, or by a combination of development points and game play.

Allowance

At the beginning of the game, a character is assumed to have a regular income of about \$100 per day, or \$3,000 per month. A beginning character receives a one-time allowance of \$3,000, one month’s salary, to purchase any desired equipment. Anything left over represents the cash the character has on hand. This may be altered if the character takes

either of the attributes Wealth or Poverty.

Background

A character should have a well-developed background to help both the player understand how to perform the character and the Director understand how to officiate the character. The Director may award development points to reward a player for having developed a good background for his character.

Background Development Points

- 0 Points: The player does not present the Director with a background.

- 5 Points: The background is sketchy and basic with little originality.
- 10 Points: The background goes into acceptable detail and shows some spark of life.
- 15 Points: The background has good detail and the character shows signs of life.
- 20 Points: The background has excellent detail and the character is vibrant with life.
- 25 Points: The background has a breathtaking level of detail and the character shows more life than some real people you know.

Character Development

Development Points

Players use development points to increase the value of their characters' characteristics and abilities. Characters can earn development points by taking limitation attributes, or as a reward for participating in the game; the better the participation, the more development points received. Also, characters will be awarded development points based on the character background their players create for them; the better the background, the more points awarded.

“ If you believe that your game needs a specific ability not listed here, or that one of the abilities needs a concentration not listed, then by all means add what you need. This list is far from exhaustive. ”

Development Point Costs

The development point costs for increasing a character’s traits is not 1-to-1; different traits cost a different number of development points, as summarized on the chart below. “Rating” refers to the value being purchased; all ratings points must be purchased sequentially.

Trait	Development Point Cost
Primary Characteristics	Rating * 5
New Ability (Career)	10
New Ability (Life)	5
Old Ability (Career)	Rating × 2
Old Ability (Life)	Rating × 3
New Concentration (Career)	5
New Concentration (Life)	3
Old Concentration (Career)	Rating
Old Concentration (Life)	Rating × 2
Specialization	2
Buying Off a Limitation	DPs Gained

(Limitations may only be bought off with permission of the Director.)

Abilities List

The abilities list gives a broad selection of abilities and some concentrations they may have. If you believe that your game needs a specific ability not listed here, or that one of the abilities needs a concentration not listed, then by all means add what you need. This list is far from exhaustive.

Administration: Operating and functioning within an organization such as a business, government agency and so on

- Bureaucracy: Dealing with the power structure of an

organization to accomplish a desired goal

- Business: Conducting a commercial enterprise
- Finance: How to handle money, typically in large quantities
- Legal: Understanding the law, its functions and applications
- Negotiation: Working out a mutually agreeable deal between multiple parties

Athletics: Ability to use one’s body effectively

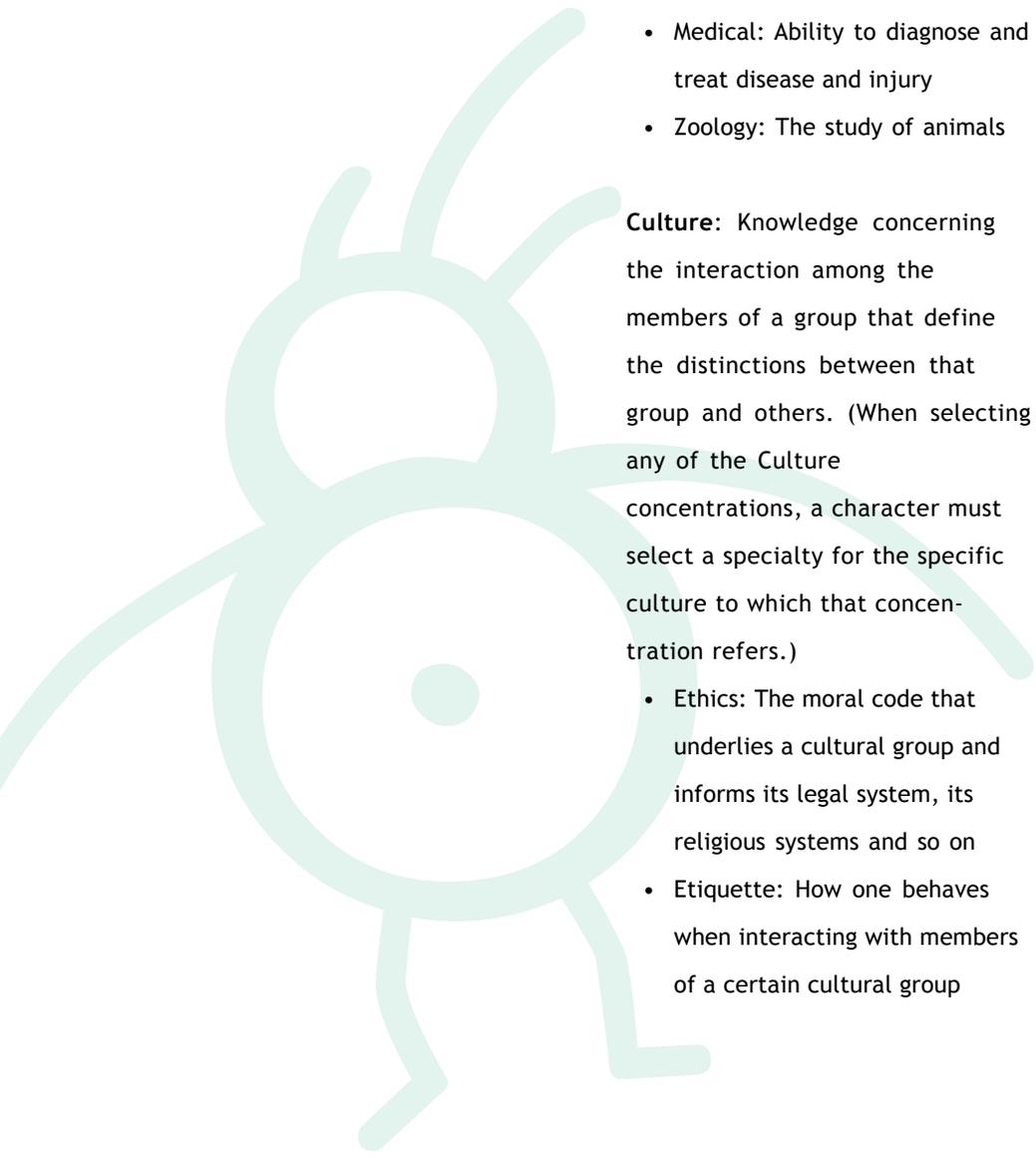
- Acrobatics: Controlling one’s movements, focusing one’s physical power to perform stunts, jumps and so on
- Climbing: Ability to move up and down a vertical surface and the

use of specialized equipment for such a purpose

- Riding: Ability to control the movements of a mounted animal, or to move on a muscle-powered machine such as a bicycle, roller skates or skateboard
- Stealth: Moving while avoiding drawing attention to oneself
- Swimming: Ability to float and move in water

Biological Sciences: The study of life, both animal and plant

- Biology: The branch of knowledge that deals with living matter
- Botany: The study of plants
- Ecology: The study of the relationships between organisms and their environments



- Medical: Ability to diagnose and treat disease and injury
- Zoology: The study of animals

Culture: Knowledge concerning the interaction among the members of a group that define the distinctions between that group and others. (When selecting any of the Culture concentrations, a character must select a specialty for the specific culture to which that concentration refers.)

- Ethics: The moral code that underlies a cultural group and informs its legal system, its religious systems and so on
- Etiquette: How one behaves when interacting with members of a certain cultural group

- Communications: Culturally specific ways of communicating information, usually non-verbal, such as body language, the specific use of certain symbols, jargon and so on
- Language: A distinct set of words and rules that constitute a complete and distinct system for verbal and literary communication
- History: The events of the past that contributed to the formation of a distinct culture

Expression: The creation of a work designed to express a message or an emotional state

- Musical Composition: The ability to write original musical scores

- Drawing/Painting: Creating two-dimensional representations on paper, wood, canvas or some other surface using graphite, crayons, charcoal, paints and other media
- Photography: Using a camera, either still or video, to capture a scene, including the techniques for developing and altering such an image
- Sculpture: Creating three-dimensional forms using clay, ceramics, wood, stone or other media, for purely artistic expression or with practical applications, such as pottery or glassblowing
- Writing: An intelligent, deliberate combination of words designed to express a thought,

“ **Firearms:** The use of weapons designed to engage enemies at range. ”

an emotional state or some other message

Firearms: The use of weapons designed to engage enemies at range

- Grenade Launcher: A hand-held indirect fire weapon designed to shoot small explosive devices
- Pistol: A small-caliber weapon designed to be held in one hand, typically firing one round per pull of the trigger
- Rifle: A long-barreled weapon with a rifled bore designed to impart spin onto the bullet as it passes through, and can be fired a single round at a time, in short, controlled bursts or on automatic

- Shotgun: A long-barreled weapon with a smooth bore designed to shoot either a collection of small pellets or a single, large slug
- Submachinegun: A small-caliber weapon with a rifled bore designed to shoot the same ammunition as a pistol but on automatic

Information Gathering: Knowledge of the techniques used to collect various forms of information

- Computer: Using a computer, databases, information networks and so on (Note: if the character attempts to use a computer with any version of the Microsoft Windows

operating system, his task has an automatic -3 TM)

- Observation: Ability to perceive the details of a scene and interpret their meanings
- Research: Ability to search through libraries, databases and other information repositories to find specific information
- Search: Knowledge of techniques needed to reduce the time needed to find something and to increase the chances of finding whatever's there
- Surveillance: The techniques and procedures for use in monitoring a location or a person, generally over an extended period

Interaction: Ability to maintain and expand a personal relationship between individuals or between an individual and a group of people

- Influence: Ability to convince others to perform actions for one's benefit, sometimes using less than ethical means
- Instruction: Ability to teach others one's own skills
- Interrogation: Knowledge of the techniques for extracting information, often from a recalcitrant or reluctant subject
- Leadership: Ability to convince others to follow one's instructions and inspire them to work toward one's goals
- Psychology: Understanding the Human mind, allowing insight



into someone's mental and emotional processes

Mathematical Sciences: Areas of knowledge involving the relationships between numbers and the logic that arises from understanding those relationships

- **Cryptography:** The practice and study of the techniques of encoding data so that it can only be decoded by specific individuals, and of attempting to decipher encoded information without knowledge of its encoding system
- **Geometry:** The discipline that investigates the relations, properties and measurement of solids, surfaces, lines and angles

- **Mathematics:** The science dealing with the relationship between quantities or magnitudes, including arithmetic, algebra, calculus and other disciplines
- **Programming:** Knowledge of the languages and techniques used to create computer software
- **Statistics:** A branch of mathematics dealing with the collection and classification of data

Melee Combat: The arts and sciences of individual, unarmed physical confrontation

- **Dodge:** Ability to move out of the way of an opponent's melee combat attack

- **Grapple:** Ability to subdue or throw an opponent by gripping him
- **Kick:** Attacking an opponent using one's feet or other parts of the leg
- **Parry:** Ability to deflect an opponent's melee combat attack using one's body, a melee weapon or some other object
- **Punch:** Attacking an opponent using one's hands or other parts of the arm

Melee Weapons: The ability to use hand-held weapons to inflict damage on an opponent

- **Axe:** A weapon with a short blade of metal or stone attached to a handle, designed for chopping

“ **Military:** Skills and knowledge learned for performing in an organized, armed group. ”

- Knife: A short-bladed, short-handled weapon for use in one hand, designed to cut or stab an opponent
- Mace: A club-like weapon designed to bash and crush an opponent
- Staff: A long shaft designed to bash or deflect an opponent
- Sword: A long-bladed weapon designed to cut or stab an opponent

Military: Skills and knowledge learned for performing in an organized, armed group

- Camouflage: Ability to hide equipment, structures or individuals so that they cannot easily be spotted from a distance

- Discipline: Ability to overcome one’s nature, emotional restrictions and physical needs to accomplish a desired goal
- Logistics: Ability to plan and support a large-scale action by setting up supply lines, accounting for transportation and so on
- Strategy: Ability to analyze a situation and to set overall goals
- Tactics: Ability to make detailed plans that anticipate obstacles to achieving a desired goal, and the ability to adapt those plans quickly in reaction to changing situations

Performance: Ability to create a transitory work designed to communicate a message or

emotional state, or to conduct an action that requires a high state of mental discipline

- Acting: Ability to portray a role, pretending to be a person different from oneself
- Dance: Skill at rhythmic movement, generally accompanied by music
- Legerdemain: Ability to perform acts of sleight of hand to deceive onlookers
- Meditation: Ability to keep the mind in a state of contemplation, to clarify one’s mind and control one’s thoughts and emotional state
- Musical Instrument: Ability to make music using a specific

musical instrument (requires a specialty in a specific instrument)

Physical Sciences: Areas of knowledge dealing with inanimate matter or energy

- Astrophysics: A branch of astronomy concerned with the physical and chemical properties of celestial bodies
- Chemistry: The science dealing with the composition of substances, and the changes they undergo because of alterations in the constitution of their molecules
- Forensics: Scientific techniques used to gather evidence for use in a legal proceeding



- **Geology:** The science dealing with the structure and mineral constitution of Earth
- **Physics:** The science dealing with the laws and properties of matter and energy, and the forces acting upon them

Projectile Weapons: Weapons designed to inflict damage by propelling a projectile powered by the attacker or a mechanical device

- **Bow:** A spring-like device designed to shoot an arrow or bolt, including both hand-drawn bows and crossbows
- **Blowgun:** A hollow tube through which the attacker blows a small projectile

- **Sling:** A string or strap designed to hurl small stones or other projectiles
- **Spear:** A long shaft fitted with a narrow blade of stone or metal designed to be thrown or thrust at an opponent
- **Thrown:** A small device designed to inflict damage by being thrown, including such items as darts, throwing knives, shiruken and so on

Social Sciences: Disciplines concerned with the interrelationships of individuals in a social environment including social organizations and institutions

- **Anthropology:** The science of Humanity, the study of

Humanity as an object of natural history, or as an animal

- **Economics:** The social science dealing with the production and distribution and consumption of goods and services and their management
- **Linguistics:** The study of the structure and application of languages
- **Political Science:** The study of governmental and other administrative systems
- **Sociology:** The science dealing with the constitution, phenomena and development of Human society

Technology: The discipline dealing with applying scientific knowledge to practical problems

“ **Transportation:** The skills and knowledge required to operate a machine designed to move one a considerable distance. ”

- **Demolitions:** The controlled use of explosives to demolish a target
 - **Electrical:** Dealing with devices powered and controlled by electricity, as well as its transmission
 - **Electronics:** A branch of physics dealing with the emission and effects of electrons and with the use of electronic devices
 - **Engineering:** The art and science by which the properties of matter and energy are used to create and control physical systems, devices and structures
 - **Mechanical:** Knowledge of the use and the ability to create and repair devices that use purely mechanical, as opposed to electronic, principals to perform their function
- Transportation:** The skills and knowledge required to operate a machine designed to move one a considerable distance
- **Aircraft:** Ability to operate fixed-wing, propeller or jet-driven aircraft, helicopters, pulsecraft and so on.
 - **Automobile:** Ability to operate a wheeled, powered vehicle, including everything from passenger cars to large transport trucks
 - **Motorcycle:** Ability to operate a two-wheeled motorized vehicle
 - **Tracked Vehicles:** Ability to operate a tracked vehicle such as a tank
- **Watercraft:** Ability to operate boats, ships, submarines, hovercraft, jetskis and so on
- Underworld:** Ability to operate on the edges of society and engage in actions typically used to conduct some illegal or illicit activity
- **Deception:** Ability to lie and to take on a role for the purpose of fooling someone into believing something that is not necessarily true
 - **Disguise:** Ability to alter one’s appearance so as to look like someone else or to avoid being recognized
 - **Streetwise:** Knowledge of the culture of the illicit, underworld society existing on the edge of a culture
- **Gambling:** Knowledge of the games and techniques used to wager money
 - **Forgery:** Ability to create fake documents designed to fool observers into believing they are genuine
- Wilderness:** Ability to function in nature away from the systems created by civilization
- **Navigation:** Ability to use natural phenomena, special instruments and maps to determine one’s location and how to travel to a desired location
 - **Scrounging:** Ability to find needed materials, or to create makeshift replacements
 - **Survival:** Ability to maintain one’s life by using materials



found in a specific environment, or to avoid the deleterious effects of a given environment

- **Tracking:** Ability to pursue people or animals by the marks and tracks they leave by their passage
- **First Aid:** Ability to give emergency care to an injured person before regular medical aid can be obtained

Attributes

Advantages

Advantages cost a number of development points.

Contacts: The character knows people who can provide assistance, or has friends who will stick their necks out for the character, if only a little. Each level of Contacts costs 5 points. Characters may ask favors of their contacts at a rate judged reasonable by the Director. This works both ways, as well; contacts may ask the character for favors from time to time, and how the character reacts may influence how that contact reacts when asked for a favor in the future. A character may take as many contacts as he wishes, but must purchase each one separately.

Level 1: The character is acquainted with someone who will do favors that involve little hardship or risk.

Level 2: The character has a friend who will occasionally perform a favor that may involve the risk of a reprimand if caught.

Level 3: The character has a close friend who will occasionally perform a favor that could put her at risk of punishment, and will only perform this favor if there is little risk of being caught.

Level 4: The character has a lifelong friend who will risk severe punishment on occasion, but only if there is little chance of being caught or if the reason for the favor is motivating enough.

Level 5: The character has a friend who is as close to him as

“ **Cipher:** Information about the character, through his own actions, the actions of others or just by chance, is difficult to find. ”

Humanly possible, and is willing to risk personal injury, punishment or financial hardship on occasion.

Cipher: Information about the character, through his own actions, the actions of others or just by chance, is difficult to find. Each level up to level 5 inflicts a -1 TM on anyone attempting to locate information about the character. Each level costs 10 points.

Destiny: The character has a destiny that must be fulfilled sometime in the series. This destiny will protect the character from things like random death (being killed in a random

encounter with street punks, for instance), and will allow the character to receive information and contacts that direct him toward the destiny. The Director should determine exactly what that Destiny will be. This advantage costs 25 points.

Fame: Fame acts as a limited form of Influence and protection. Other public figures may provide some support to or give deference to the character in public, and some people will be more likely to assist the character. Fame is not necessarily a public advantage, however; it may be limited to a given field that the general public has little knowledge of or interest in. Each level of Fame gives the a

character a +1 TM for Presence tasks if it is appropriate to the situation. Fame costs 10 points per level up to level 5.

Familiar: The character has already attracted a magical familiar. Each level of familiar costs 5 points, up to level 5. More information on familiars can be found in Chapter 4: Magic.

Family: The character has an extensive and supportive family that can be relied upon for moral, financial and other sorts of support. This does not necessarily mean that the character gets along with all or any of his family members, but they all seem to work under the principal that blood is thicker than water. Also, it is not necessary for

the family group to actually be related; in this case, the blood is proverbial rather than literal, but the connection is just as strong. Each level of Family costs 10 points up to level 5.

- Level 1: The family has few resources and little influence, but is always available for moral support and advice.
- Level 2: The family has some modest resources and a bit of limited influence.
- Level 3: The family has moderate resources and influence.
- Level 4: The family has significant resources and influence.
- Level 5: The family has major resources and influence.



Focus: The character is capable of concentrating on performing a task so intently that he blocks out all outside distractions. Each level of focus gives the character a +1 TM to any task on which his player indicates the character is focused, up to level 5, and costs 5 points per level.

Higher Rank: The character begins play at a rank higher than journeyman. The character may be an adept for a cost of 25 points, which earns him 15 points to spend on principals, or he could be a master, which costs 50 points and gives him 20 points to spend on principals.

Influence: The character has a certain amount of influence with a specific group. Two factors determine how much this advantage costs—the relative power of the group and how much influence the character has with it, each of which is purchased separately. Each level costs 5 points up to level 5.

Relative Power

Level 1: The group is socially marginal and has little influence outside its own ranks.

Level 2: People familiar with the group will tend to have a slightly favorable attitude toward the group.

Level 3: People familiar with the group will have a significant

level of respect for what the group can do.

Level 4: People familiar with the group, which should be a large portion of the population, will either want to curry favor with the group or do what they can to avoid the group's wrath.

Level 5: Everyone is familiar with the group, and are overwhelmed by the group's power.

Level of Influence

Level 1: The group is familiar with the character and will tend to act favorably to minor requests.

Level 2: The group is very familiar with the character and will

“ **Mentor:** The character has a mentor upon whom he can rely for support, information and magical education. ”

tend to act favorably to most requests.	mentor must be at least a journeyman magician, and must be at least one rank above the character.	him, whether those abilities are acute senses, extra-tough skin or some other enhancement. The cost of a Physical Enhancement is based upon the advantage it gives the character in a task check. Each level of Physical Enhancement purchased, up to level 5, gives the character a +1 task modifier on any task check in which the Physical Enhancement can be said to have a significant impact, and costs 10 points per level.	TM on any task he undertakes that directly impacts his purpose.
Level 3: The group is extremely familiar with the character and will tend to act favorably to major requests.	Each rank the mentor has above the character costs 10 points. Characters who take the limitation Lower Rank must have a mentor, unless they have the limitation Feral.		Sanctum: The character has a sanctum, a safe place in which to practice his magical arts. Just having a sanctum costs no development points, but the specific attributes of the sanctum do. For more information on constructing a sanctum, see the Sanctum section in Chapter 4: Magic.
Level 4: The group is intimately familiar with the character and will act favorably to any request except the most ludicrous.	Natural Aptitude: The character has a certain innate talent with an ability or concentration. Each level up to level 5 gives the character a +1 TM when he uses the ability or concentration in question. Each level costs 20 points for an ability, and 10 points for a concentration.	Purpose: The character has a goal or sense of purpose that fulfills and satisfies him in a profound way, or to which he is absolutely committed. Each level up to level 5 costs 10 points, and gives the character a +1	Wealth: The character has access to significant resources above his regular income. Each level, up to level 5, costs 20 points, and gives the character access to money, equipment and other resources equivalent to \$10,000 per level each month. This wealth does not
Level 5: The group worships the character as a god, trembles in fear of him and will carry out his demands to the letter no matter how extreme.			
Mentor: The character has a mentor upon whom he can rely for support, information and magical education. A	Physical Enhancements: The character has some unique physical abilities that may be of some use to		

necessarily belong to the character, and may be provided by a group, the character's family, a wealthy acquaintance and so on.

Limitations

Limitations award an indicated number of development points.

Dark Secret: The character has something in his past which, if discovered, could cause him to be embarrassed, disadvantaged or even outcast from his society. Each level of Dark Secret gains 5 points.

Level 1: The character would be embarrassed if this secret became known.

Level 2: The character would suffer some social disadvantage if this secret became known.

Level 3: The character might suffer some severe hardship, such as losing his job or his family, if this secret became known.

Level 4: The character could go to prison if this secret became known.

Level 5: The character runs the risk of losing his life if this secret is known.

Dependent: The character has someone who is dependent on him for protection or a livelihood. A partial dependent is someone who is taking care of herself to some degree, but still needs the

character, and is worth 5 points. A complete dependent is, well, completely dependent on the character for all his needs, and is worth 10 points.

Enemy: The character has run afoul of some individual or group that now wants to punish the character to some degree. Each level of enemy gains the character 5 points.

Level 1: They don't know who you are yet, but they have a file on activities that will eventually get your name.

Level 2: They know who you are, and some of the things you've done, and would like you out of the picture.

“ **Evident Strangeness:** The character has something odd about him, even if no one can quite put his finger on it and in spite of how “normal” the character may attempt to act. ”

<p>Level 3: They have a complete file on you; if spotted, they will attempt to capture you.</p>	<p>Each level of Evident Strangeness gains 5 points.</p>	<p>flee or try to attack. Some plants even seem to try to cringe from him.</p>	<p>them with the player. Fate gains the character 25 points.</p>
<p>Level 4: You have been an extensive thorn in their sides. They know almost everything there is to know about you. You are to be terminated on sight.</p>	<p>Level 1: Most animals shy away from the character.</p>	<p>Fate: The character has a fate, and everything in his life pushes him toward it. As one might suspect, that fate is probably not something the character is looking forward to, and may in fact attempt to avoid. However, there is no avoiding fate; the character’s attempts to avoid his fate may, in fact, be the things that bring it on. Fate can have its advantages; like Destiny, a character with Fate will probably avoid dying a senseless death (unless, of course, that is his fate). The exact details need to be determined by the Director, who may or may not share</p>	<p>Feral: The character became magically active without the assistance of a mentor, although he may have one now. Ferals are generally viewed disdainfully by most established magicians, especially higher ranking members of the Magisterium. Any attempt by a feral at social interaction with another magician may be subject to a significant penalty, depending on the rank of the other magician. Also, ferals often suffer from a variety of Natural Ineptitudes on their magical abilities, the result of their lack of early magical training. This limitation gains the character 5 points per level.</p>
<p>Level 5: Your actions have been so detrimental that your enemies have devoted significant resources to finding and eliminating you.</p>	<p>Level 2: Most children shy away from the character, and most animals run in terror.</p>	<p>Level 3: Children run away or are extremely upset around the character, and most adults prefer to avoid him.</p>	
<p>Evident Strangeness: The character has something odd about him, even if no one can quite put his finger on it and in spite of how “normal” the character may attempt to act.</p>	<p>Level 4: Children cannot stand to be in the character’s presence, and most adults require some effort to remain around him long. Some animals may try to attack the character.</p>	<p>Level 5: People flee from the character on sight. Animals</p>	



Level 1: The character's status is a trivial social hindrance, but little more.

Level 2: The character's status is a minor social hindrance, or he suffers a minor natural ineptitude with some aspect of his magic.

Level 3: The character's status is a significant social hindrance, or he suffers a significant natural ineptitude with some aspect of his magic.

Level 4: The character's status is a major social hindrance, or he suffers a major natural ineptitude with some aspect of his magic.

Level 5: Humph! Is this fellow even a magician at all?

Loner: The character has no significant family or friends upon whom he can rely. This does not indicate that the character is alone by choice, or even that he lacks social skills or the desire for companionship. For some reason, he may simply not be able to connect with other people. For each level, up to level 5, the character suffers a -1 TM on all Presence tasks. Each level gains the character 5 points. A character with this limitation may not have the Contacts, Family or Influence advantages.

Lower Rank: The character may begin play at a rank lower than journeyman. The character may be an apprentice, which gains 10 development points, but only allows

the character 5 points for magical abilities, or the character may be a novice, which gains 25 points, but allows the character to begin play with only 1 point for magical abilities. Characters who take Lower Rank must also take the advantage Mentor, unless they take the limitation Feral.

Natural Ineptitude: The character has an innate inability to competently perform an ability or concentration, or magically to a principal or discipline. Each level, up to level 5, inflicts a -1 TM on any task using the ability (principal) or concentration (discipline). Natural Ineptitude for an ability gains the character 10 points per level, and for a concentration gains the

“ **Physical Limitation:** The character is somehow limited by a physical condition. This could be as minor as color blindness or as serious as being a quadriplegic. ”

character 5 points per level. This limitation may only be taken on an ability or concentration that the character actually has.

Reputation: Reputation is the flip-side of Fame; the character is known for something that will cause people to react negatively to him. Like Fame, Reputation may be limited to a specific group or could be with the general public. Each level, up to level five, of Reputation gains the character 5 points.

Physical Limitation: The character is somehow limited by a physical condition. This could be as minor as color blindness or as serious as being a quadriplegic. Each level of

limitation, up to level five, gains the character 5 points.

Level 1: The limitation is fairly easy to hide and is more of an annoyance than anything. Example: Red-Green Color Blindness.

Level 2: The limitation usually only comes into play under reasonably extreme circumstances, but can increase the difficulty or danger of a situation by a small amount. Example: Stuttering under stress.

Level 3: The limitation is reasonably obvious and difficult to hide. It causes day-to-day activities for the character to be

harder than for people without the limitation.

Example: Epilepsy.

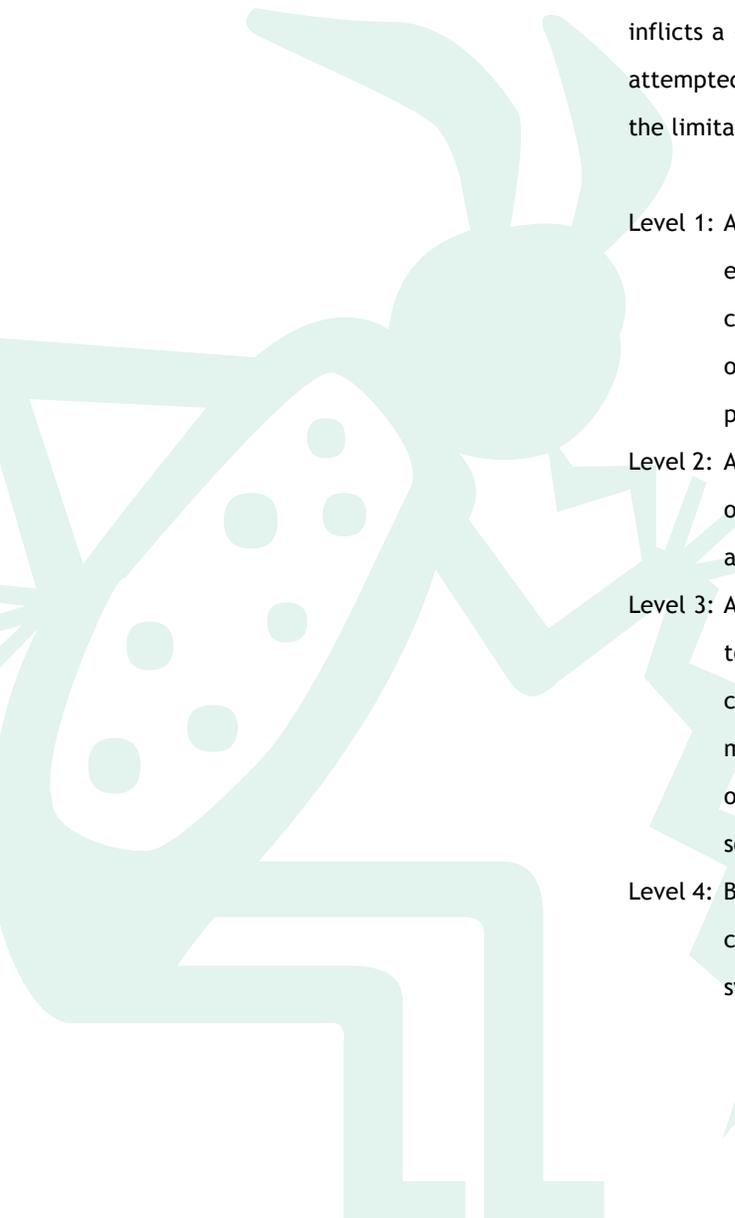
Level 4: The limitation is serious and quite debilitating. Most day-to-day activities are significantly affected and there are some things which the character is simply physically unable to do.

Example: Blindness.

Level 5: The limitation is severe and possibly life-threatening. Most day-to-day activities are extremely difficult, and a significant number of routine physical activities are beyond the character's ability. Example: Complete paralysis.

Poverty: The character is poor. If he isn't homeless, he's one step away from it. Any resources he acquires must be used for the most basic self-preservation. It may be that the character makes enough money, but is forced to expend most of it to service a debt rather than paying his bills and saving. A character with this limitation does not receive the beginning game allowance a normal character receives, and obviously cannot take the Wealth advantage. Poverty gains the character 10 points.

Psychological Limitation: A psychological limitation is some irrational trait that can affect the character's interaction with normal society. Each level, up to level five, gains the character 5 points and



inflicts a -1 TM to any task attempted that could be affected by the limitation.

Level 1: A minor personality trait or eccentricity. This is not crippling, and can be overcome with some preparation or determination.

Level 2: A bias or strong influence on the character that affects his actions.

Level 3: A trait that is strong enough to influence not only the character's actions but also major life choices, such as occupation, residence and so on.

Level 4: Borderline psychosis. The character refuses to be swayed by the most

strenuous logic or convincing evidence.

Level 5: Obsession. The character is completely dominated by the trait, and will spend a majority of his time pursuing or avoiding the situation in question, whichever is appropriate.

Taint: The character is somehow tainted with the Void. For each level of Taint up to level 5, the character subtracts the level number from any batch of aether he attempts to absorb. Any talismans or familiars in close proximity to the character begin to leak away their Essence until they are completely drained. Characters who spend much time around the

character find that they seem to be losing Essence, as well. In time, even mundane objects and people will begin to break down or sicken around the character. Ironically, the character himself is immune to the direct effects of his taint, although he will certainly be affected by its influence on the world around him. The Taint level also serves as a misfortune rating for the character; anytime random chance is a significant factor in a task (more so than just the regular die roll), the character suffers a negative task modifier equal to his Taint level. Each level of Taint gains the character 10 points.

Vengeance: The character has sworn to extract vengeance upon a

“ The character pursues his vengeance fanatically, or the vengeance he must hand out is the ultimate vengeance (extermination of the target’s entire gene pool). ”

person or a group. The gain is based upon how devoted the character is to his vow. Each level gains 5 points.

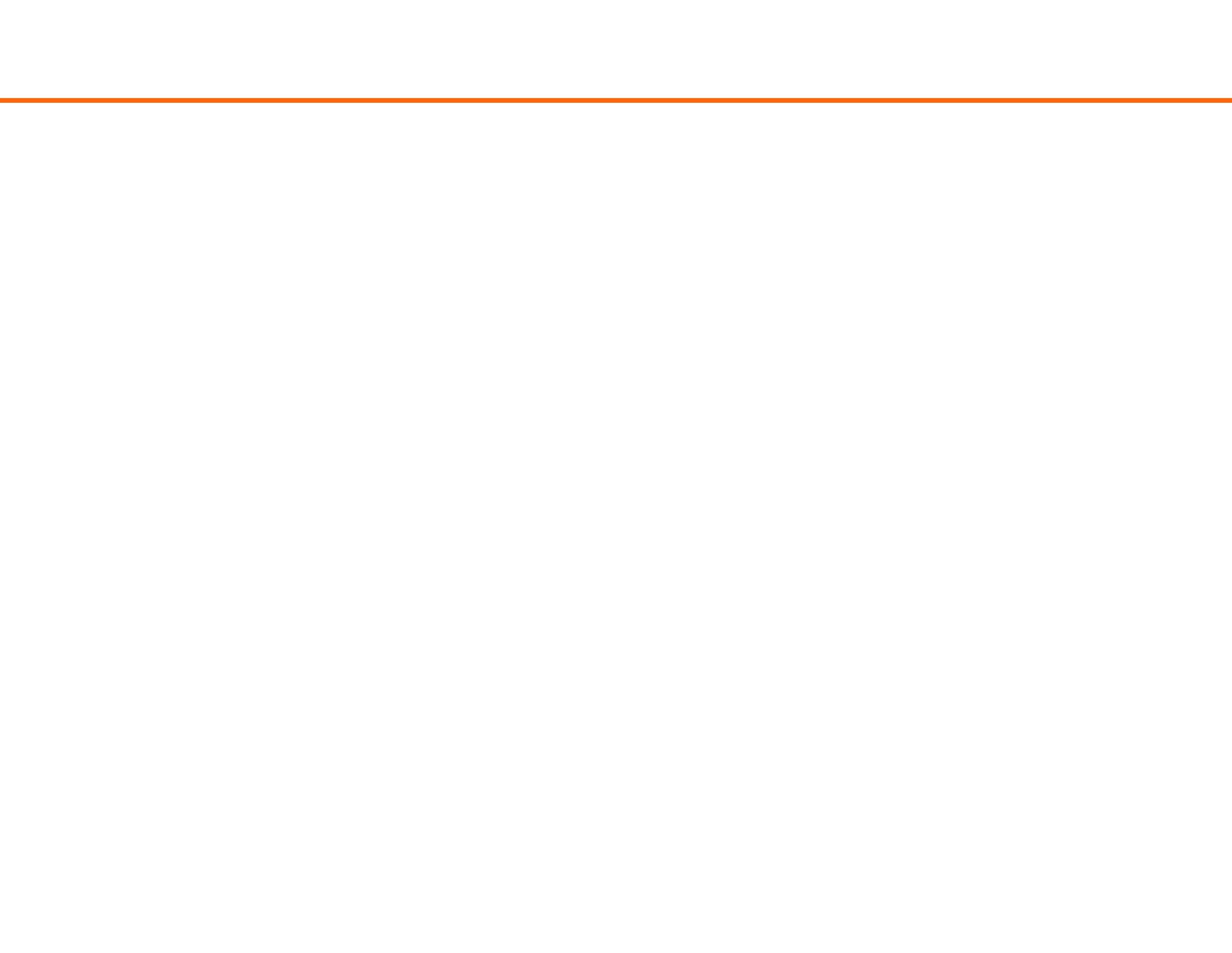
Level 1: The character works upon his vengeance occasionally, or the vengeance he must hand out is minor (a slap in the face).

Level 2: The character puts regular effort into his vengeance, or the vengeance he must hand out is substantial (some financial burden).

Level 3: The character spends a good portion of his time pursuing his vengeance, or the vengeance he must hand out is major (imprisonment).

Level 4: The character spends most of his time pursuing his vengeance, or the vengeance he must hand out is extreme (death).

Level 5: The character pursues his vengeance fanatically, or the vengeance he must hand out is the ultimate vengeance (extermination of the target’s entire gene pool).



The Illumination of Thomas Dancer

Part 4

Thomas was not sure what he expected, but he knew he did not expect what they found. Carefully moving to avoid triggering alarms both technological and magical, he and Dunstan made their way through the dim suite.

The place was modern, stylish and rich. Each office sported cutting-edge computer and communications equipment, not to mention what seemed to Thomas in the dim light, at least a remarkably well-designed environment. Yet, scurrying about as they were, with Dunstan stopping every few steps to point out a laser motion detector or perform some set of complex hand movements (Thomas could almost, but not quite, detect the magic there), and the place lit only with a few dim lights generously spaced, Thomas could not determine what the people who worked here actually did.

At last, after creeping through a maze of corridors running through a suite that seemed far too large for the building it was in, they came to, apparently, what they had come for. At least, that is what Thomas assumed, as they stood before a set of glass doors set between two modern, dark marble columns; from the maze one had

to run to get to this part of the suite, he reasoned, this place must be plenty important.

Dunstan pulled him close and whispered into Thomas' ear, "We're almost there. When we go in the door, stay close behind me and don't touch anything."

"What'll happen if I do?" Thomas asked, more out of nervousness than any real desire to know.

"Well," Dunstan replied as he pulled out another set of tools from his case. "At the very least, you'd set off an alarm."

"And at the very worst?"

"At the very worst, you trip a ward that will suck our souls from our bodies and shred our personalities in the most psychologically painful way imaginable for the next three days."

Thomas smiled meekly, and put his hands in his pockets; if there had been any space between him and Dunstan, he would have moved closer.

Carefully, Dunstan removed several items from his toolkit and turned to the glass doors. Looking over Dunstan's shoulder, Thomas was not sure exactly what sort of tools they were; they

looked more like a collection of small sticks and rocks. Very slowly, Dunstan placed each piece at some point around the doors, one at each corner on the floor, one at each corner near the top of the doors (how they stayed up Thomas could not tell) and finally one on the handle. Dunstan stepped back, almost tripping over Thomas as he did; he pushed the younger man an arm's length away, apparently indicating that his command to stay close was not so literal. Then, he turned back to the door and began another pattern of hand movements, this time accompanied by what seemed to be a careful, fluid dance in place.

This time, Thomas had no trouble at all discerning the colorful glow that shone around the doorway. It looked as if a river of rainbow colors flowed along the edges of the doors. At a point in his dance, Dunstan pulled out another object, a rod carved from wood or perhaps bone in the same style as the pieces he had placed around the door. He then held the rod out in front of him, parallel to and on the same level as the handle to the door. The rod itself soon began to glow with the same rainbow light as the flow around the door.

Dunstan gripped the rod with both hands and very carefully began to pull.

Slowly, the glass door began to move, to swing out until it stood completely open. Dunstan carefully released the rod; as he pulled his hands away, Thomas tensed in anticipation of the drop, but it did not come; the glowing rod hung suspended in midair, as steady and sturdy as if it were bolted to the wall.

Motioning for Thomas to follow, Dunstan slowly made his way through the now-open door. Thomas carefully stepped over the rainbow-colored flow.

Just beyond the doorway was a spacious reception area, including a large and well-equipped desk across from what looked almost like a den, complete with fireplace and bar. This Kojami guy may like to keep people waiting, Thomas thought, but at least he keeps them in comfort. Beyond the secretary's desk stood another set of dark marble columns, these larger than those on the outside, and the doors between them open; in the darkness between the columns, Thomas could see the glow of San Francisco at night shining into a huge darkened space.

Oddly, he could also hear the soft murmur of lapping water.

They passed the marble columns, like passing through the gates of a temple, and slowly Thomas' eyes adjusted to the even dimmer light. The room was large, easily 10 meters by 10 meters and two stories tall. Once in the room, Thomas could see that the sounds of water he had heard came from a wide circle of water surrounding an island in the center of the room. Bridges crossed from the outer rim to the island every 45 degrees. On the island were three platforms, floating like clouds above the island; it took Thomas a moment to see the heavy cables and thin columns supporting the clouds. All were connected by a thin, almost invisible staircase, and on all were the paraphernalia of not just a business office, but the office of an extremely powerful man.

Dunstan scanned the room and started slowly forward, but suddenly stopped. Thomas was about to ask why when he saw, on the highest level of the island, he saw the man. Thomas thought his heart might stop then and there.

The man was standing on the edge of the island, staring down on them. He was backlit by the city's glow shining in through the

two-story matrix of glass, so Thomas could not make out the man's features.

When the man turned and walked away from the edge, Thomas thought, hoping against hope, that perhaps he had not seen them after all. The expression on Dunstan's face, however, killed that idea quickly.

"Well," Dunstan said, making no effort to quiet his voice. "It seems we've been invited to the top."

Thomas, however, still felt the need to whisper. "What makes you think we're invited?"

"Because if we weren't," Dunstan replied, "we'd be dead."



Phantasm

The ability to perform magic is a uniquely Human talent (although the denizens of Arcturus Prime might object to that description). What it means is that a being must have a significant level of self-awareness in order to become magically aware. Self-awareness brings with it the ability of a being to say, "I Was, I Am, I Will Be." It also brings the ability to imagine how things might be different from the way they are.

In most self-aware beings, this imagination of what could be is not in and of itself enough to directly affect the pattern of the Weaving as we know it. Most beings have access

only to enough Essence to continue their own existence. So, their only ability to change reality is mundane. A very few, however, have the ability not only to sense but to the channel and focus any free aether they come across. These beings are, potentially at least, the magically Aware.

The ability to channel free aether, however, is meaningless unless one can focus that channel. That group of magically aware Humans called magicians describe the process in this way: a magician forms in his mind two very detailed images of reality, one the reality that actually exists, and the other the reality that he wishes to exist. This wishful model of reality is

called the Phantasm, and the magician mentally overlays it on his model of manifest reality. With the expenditure of a certain amount of free aether, which he directs through the use of his magical abilities, the magician can, potentially, make his desired reality override the existing manifest reality. Metaphorically speaking, the magician reaches into the bundle of virtual realities that form the thread of manifest reality and yanks to the top that particular virtual reality that he wishes to be dominant, at least within his area of effect.

That, then, is how magic is done, or at least how some perform it.

Principals

Principals are the magical equivalent of abilities.

- **Aether/Void** deals with the fundamental substance of the Continuum and its opposite number. A magician uses this principal when dealing with free aether, as from a nexus, or anything composed of the Void, such as a Void being who has made his way into the Continuum.
- **Death/Life** is used when dealing with living organisms, whether animal, plant or other. This principal can be somewhat difficult to define, just as life can be difficult to define. As a

rule of thumb, Death/Life deals with anything that the character could reasonably assume to be alive, or which was very recently alive. The discipline also deals with those areas concerning the end of life, such as decay, disease, poisoning and so on.

- **Energy/Matter** concerns the various forces of the material universe, such as electromagnetism, gravity, the strong and weak nuclear forces, heat, light and so on, as well as the material substance of the universe. This principal deals with essentially everything that exists in the Material Realm that is not now or was not recently alive.

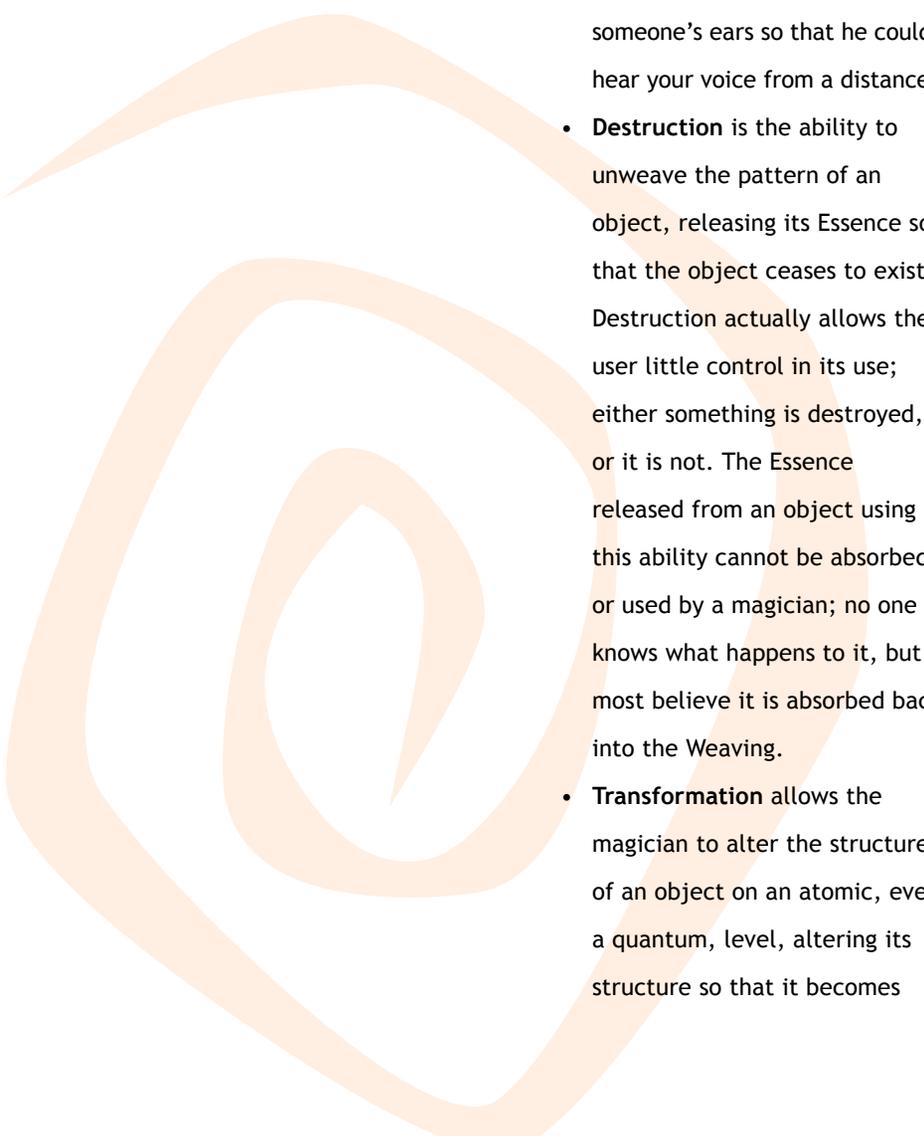
- **Mind/Spirit** deals with the areas of thought, dreams, emotions, abstract concept and so on. It is the primary discipline used when a Magician has any contact at all with Transcendental Realm, and is of considerable use in the Nether Realm.
- **Space/Time** involves the dimensions, both physical and temporal. It concerns concepts of volume, shape, distance, position, as well as the steady change that comes because of time.

Disciplines

Disciplines are the magical equivalent of concentrations. Each principal has the same set of

disciplines, but these are developed and manipulated separately.

- **Perception** deals with the ability to perceive the universe using the physical senses—sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. Magically, this involves enhancing the senses so that the magician is capable of perceiving beyond his normal abilities or expanding the abilities so that the magician can perceive at a distance from his physical form.
- **Manipulation** covers the ability to use magic to affect targets at a distance. This ability could be used, for example, to operate a machine from a remote location, or to vibrate the air around



someone's ears so that he could hear your voice from a distance.

- **Destruction** is the ability to unweave the pattern of an object, releasing its Essence so that the object ceases to exist. Destruction actually allows the user little control in its use; either something is destroyed, or it is not. The Essence released from an object using this ability cannot be absorbed or used by a magician; no one knows what happens to it, but most believe it is absorbed back into the Weaving.
- **Transformation** allows the magician to alter the structure of an object on an atomic, even a quantum, level, altering its structure so that it becomes

something that it was not before. This ability allows a magician to change lead into gold, for example, or turn a person into a newt. A magician's understanding of such things, however, is not perfect, and so a transformed object cannot remain so for long; it will eventually revert to its original state, or if that is not possible, crumble into dust.

- **Creation** is the greatest and most frightening ability of a magician, allowing him to make a new thing from nothing more than free aether. If a Magician's understanding of an existing object is imperfect, however, his understanding of what is necessary to create something

new is even more so. Therefore, created objects have an extremely short time of existence before they collapse back into the free aether from which they were made.

Writhe

The term "writhe" is used by magicians as both a noun and a verb. A writhe is a magical effect, describing either a pre-planned effect (a "spell") or a specific magical event (a "casting"). When a magician performs a magical event, he is said to writhe the magic. The term possibly comes from the exaggerated gestures, body movements and bizarre vocalizations

“ An active magical effect is one in which the magician seeks to impose his desired virtual reality on the manifest reality by brute force, creating an effect that simply does not fit in with the manifest reality. ”

some magicians use to help them focus and direct their magic.

Writhe can be seen as magical tasks, and are thus subject to the same rules governing tasks in Chapter 2: Task Resolution.

Methods

Magicians divide magical effects into two methods, active and passive. An active magical effect is one in which the magician seeks to impose his desired virtual reality on the manifest reality by brute force, creating an effect that simply does not fit in with the manifest reality. A passive magical effect is one in which the magician works as much as possible within the confinements of the manifest reality, creating an

effect that may take on the form of an elaborate, highly unlikely but not impossible series of coincidences.

There are advantages and limitations to both these types of magic.

Active Magic

Active magic, as rule, is actually easier to writhe than passive magic, and is generally faster, as well. It is, however, somewhat harder to actually succeed completely with active magic—its results can be somewhat unexpected, not always what the magician intended—and tends to cost more Essence. The minimum number of success points required for a magical task to succeed completely and the Essence costs calculated assume that the magician is attempting an active

magical effect, so these are used without modification.

Passive Magic

Passive magic, on the other hand, is a bit harder for a magician to perform, but is more likely to be a predictable and complete success, and costs a bit less Essence. When determining the number of success points required, reduce each parameter by 1 level. So, for a passive effect, a target at Short range only requires 1 success point instead of 2 points, effecting a Large mass takes only 2 success points instead of 3, and so on. A passive magical effect, however, receives a -1 TM because it is more difficult to writhe.

Another requirement of passive magic is that the player of the magician describe in a reasonable amount of detail how the magical effect manifests itself. The Director must accept the player's description as being reasonable before having to accept the effect as passive. Having one's enemy getting hit by a falling meteorite as he's crossing the street to kill you really isn't reasonable; sure, I suppose it could happen, but how likely is it, really? Having a police siren sound around the corner, however, distracting your enemy long enough for you to escape, is not unreasonable at all, and thus much more acceptable.

Having your magician perform passive magic requires not only that the numbers stack up in his favor,

but also that you be a creative role-player, something that a good Director will appreciate and reward.

Parameters

Magical effects can have up to five separate parameters—Distance, Mass, Targets, Time and Volume. What a magician can perform with a magical effect depends on how many success points he achieves in his magical task. To determine the necessary number of success points,

select which parameters are significant to the desired magical effect. Next, select which descriptor on the Parameter Chart below best describes the desired degree of influence. The chart uses general descriptors rather than exact measurements, as it's much easier for both the Director and players to visualize a scene in this way than to ask them to compute exact figures. General guidelines for what each descriptor means follow the chart.

or something else that the magician can physically touch.

- Close: More or less within arm's reach, no more than a step or two away.
- Short: Can be reached by walking easily in a single combat round.
- Long: Within visual range, but would require several rounds to reach on foot.
- Extreme: On the edge of visual range, requiring the better part of a scene to reach on foot.

Parameter Chart

Cost	Distance	Mass	Targets	Time	Volume
0	Touch	Tiny	Single	Instant	Point
1	Close	Small	Few	Round	Compact
2	Short	Medium	Group	Scene	Ample
3	Long	Large	Many	Act	Great
4	Extreme	Huge	Myriad	Story	Vast

Parameter Descriptor Definitions

Distance: The range between the magician and the target of his magical effect.

- Touch: The magician's body or item on the body, such as clothing or jewelry, or someone

Mass: The bulk or weight of the target.

- Tiny: The target has an insignificant mass—a feather, a shirt, a cellular telephone.
- Small: The target's mass is noticeable, but not great—a

“ **Targets:** The number of individuals affected by the magical effect. ”

briefcase, a bag of groceries, a house cat.

- **Medium:** The target’s mass is comparable to the magician’s own mass—a person, a lounge chair, a television.
- **Large:** The target’s mass is considerable, certainly more than most people could lift—a refrigerator, a motorcycle, a conference table.
- **Huge:** The target’s mass is far too large for a person to even move more than slightly—a car, a fallen tree, a giant boulder.

Targets: The number of individuals affected by the magical effect.

- **Single:** One target
- **Few:** A handful of targets, no more than about 10 individuals

- **Group:** A significant number of targets, around 100 or so individuals
- **Many:** A considerable number of targets, at least several hundred to 1,000
- **Myriad:** Far too many targets to easily count, several thousand or more

Time: How long a magical effect is expected to last, or how long it takes to perform.

- **Instant:** The magic takes effect immediately, or takes no significant amount of time to perform.
- **Round:** The magic lasts about a combat round, or takes that long to perform—about five seconds game time.

- **Scene:** The magic lasts until the end of the scene in which it is cast, or takes most of the scene to perform. A scene takes place at a single location with no breaks.
- **Act:** The magic lasts until the end of the act in which it is cast, or takes most of the act to perform. An act is a collection of several scenes, allowing short breaks between each scene, rarely lasting for more than a day of game-time.
- **Story:** The magic lasts until the end of the story in which it cast, or takes most of the story to perform. A story is a complete story, including a beginning, a middle and an end. It can last over a considerable period of

time, even years of game-time. A writhe that takes a whole story to perform must be a mighty ritual, indeed.

Volume: The area affected by the magical effect.

- **Point:** A specific point of insignificant volume.
- **Compact:** A person could easily carry a container with this volume—a briefcase, a moving box, a pillowcase.
- **Ample:** A person could move about without being too restricted inside this volume—a car, an office cubicle, a hot tub.
- **Great:** A person could take up residence inside this volume—an office suite, an apartment, a house.

- Vast: If this were any bigger, it would be outside—a dirigible hanger, a warehouse, an office building.

Determining the Number of Success Points Needed

There are two ways of determining the number of success points needed for a magical effect.

The first, and easiest, is for the magician's player to resolve the magical task and see how many success points he has to work with, then spend them to purchase whatever parameters are available.

Technically speaking, you don't need

to know any of the parameters to resolve a magical task.

That being said, however, most magicians have a pretty specific effect in mind when they start to writhe. In that case, determine which parameters are pertinent to the desired effect, then determine which descriptor is appropriate. The number under "Cost" is the number of success points needed to affect a target that falls into that descriptor.

For example, our favorite magician, Becky Sanddancer, is performing for a crowd of appreciative fellows one sultry Friday evening. Becky is a one-woman show, not only dancing but performing all the music magically

as she does so. At one point in the act, Becky wants to hit a large brass gong at the back of the stage.

The Director rules that the two pertinent parameters in this case are Distance and Mass—the distance from Becky to the gong, and being able to hit the mass of the gong hard enough and in the right way to get the sound she wants. The gong is at Short distance from Becky, the Director rules, and has a Small mass. The Short distance requires 2 success points, while the Small mass needs just one, meaning that the lovely and talented Ms. Sanddancer need to achieve 3 success points to bang her gong.

“ Think of the aether as the crude oil pumped from the ground and the Essence as the gasoline made from it. Most engines run a lot better on refined gasoline than crude oil. The same principal applies to magic. ”

Determining the Essence Cost for a Magical Effect

All magic requires Essence in order to become manifest. Essence is raw aether than has been absorbed by a magician; the absorption refines and purifies the aether, allowing the magician to direct and control the flow of Essence with his magical abilities. Think of the aether as the crude oil pumped from the ground and the Essence as the gasoline made from it. Most engines run a lot better on refined gasoline than crude oil. The same principal applies to magic.

The amount of Essence required to fuel a magical effect is based on the number of success points

required to achieve the desired effect. So, in our earlier example, Becky Sanddancer would have to spend 3 Essence points to bang her gong during her dance.

Of course, there are other factors involved. If the magician achieves more success points than required to meet the parameter requirements of the effect, he can spend those extra success points to reduce the Essence cost of the effect. For each extra success point the character spends, he can reduce the Essence cost of the effect by 1 point. Any magic effect, however, costs a minimum of 1 Essence point.

An important factor to take into account is the fact that, while a magician may temporarily hold up to 10 Essence points in his bank,

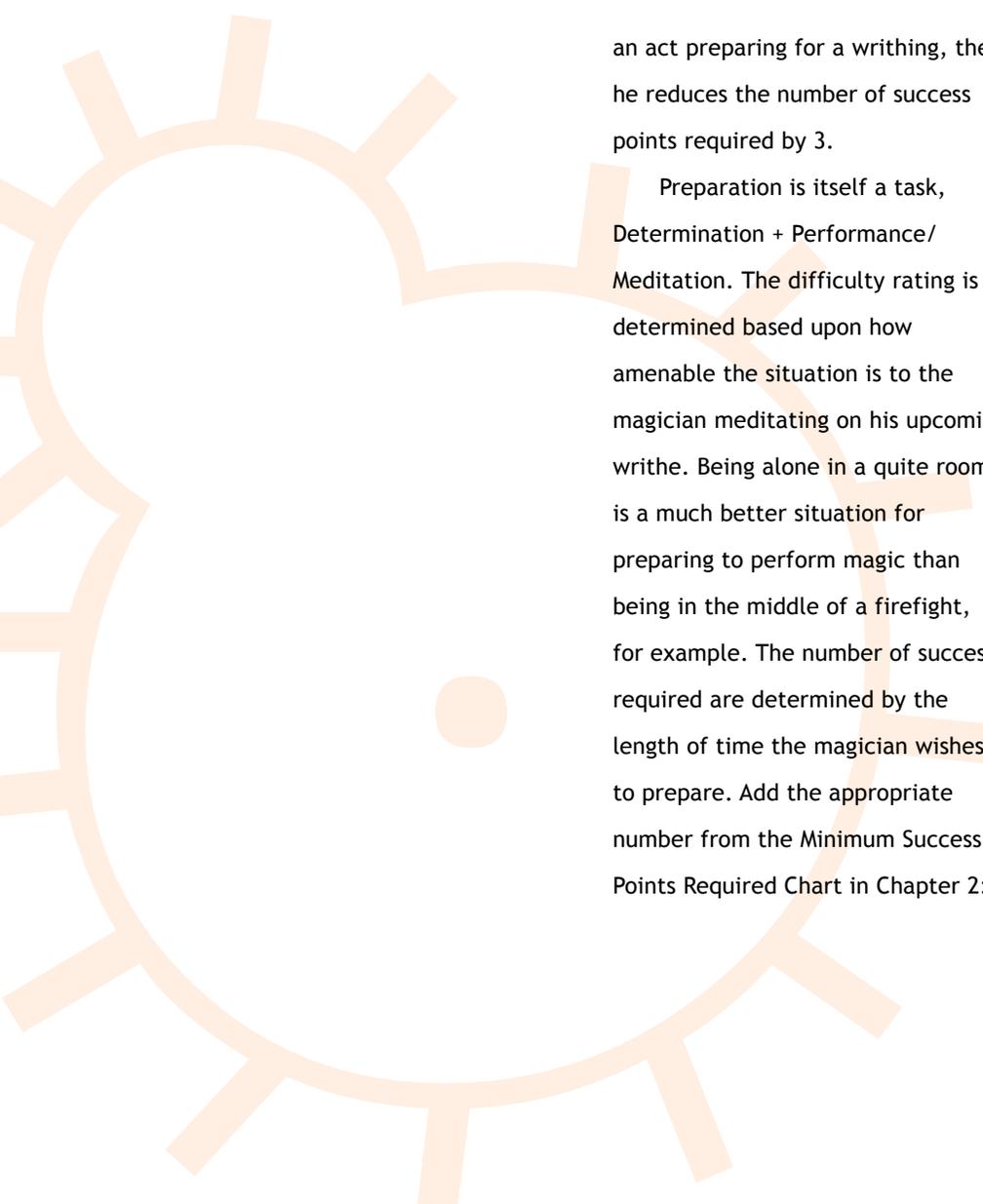
he can only spend a number of Essence points equal to or less than his Essence rating in a single round. Another thing to remember is that, if the magician reduces his Essence bank to 0, he immediately loses consciousness.

In our continuing example, Becky Sanddancer needs 3 success points to achieve her aim of magically banging her gong while she dances. Unfortunately, Becky's Essence rating is only 2. That means she'll have to actually achieve 5 success points to succeed at her task, 3 to bang the gong and another to reduce her Essence point cost down to 1 so she spend the needed Essence without blacking out. Becky's player scores a big 6 success points, which means that Becky

succeeds easily, shelling out a measly 1 Essence point, the minimum payment for any magic.

Preparation

Another way to reduce the number of success points needed for a magical effect is to prepare beforehand for the writhing. The amount of time spent preparing determines by how much the magician can reduce the required success points. Use the Time section of the Parameters Chart for this purpose. An amount of time spent preparing for a writhing equivalent to the time descriptor reduces the success points required by a number equal to the cost for that time descriptor. If your magician spends



an act preparing for a writhing, then he reduces the number of success points required by 3.

Preparation is itself a task, Determination + Performance/ Meditation. The difficulty rating is determined based upon how amenable the situation is to the magician meditating on his upcoming writhe. Being alone in a quiet room is a much better situation for preparing to perform magic than being in the middle of a firefight, for example. The number of success points required are determined by the length of time the magician wishes to prepare. Add the appropriate number from the Minimum Success Points Required Chart in Chapter 2:

Task Resolution to the cost from the Parameters Chart for the time desired to prepare. So, if the Director rules that the preparation is going to be Basic, and the magician wishes to prepare for a scene, the magician will have to achieve 4 success points in order to reduce the number of success points required for his writhing by 2 success points.

While the magician is preparing in this way, he may perform no other significant action. That means that, while the magician is preparing, his player may not have him participating in whatever the rest of the circle is doing. If the magician breaks his concentration by attempting some significant action

while he's supposed to be preparing, the preparation is ruined, and he'll have to start again from scratch.

Also note that, while the rules say that the magician is "meditating," this does not necessarily mean that he has to be sitting with his legs crossed, contemplating his navel and humming to himself. Whatever the magician thinks of as meditating is appropriate, within reason. "Helping my buds do whatever they're doing," is not an allowable form of meditation, for example. Dancing and chanting, performing tai chi, even mowing the lawn may all be acceptable forms of meditation, though.

“ I don’t care how hard you try, but you will never be able to Perceive someone to death. ”

Damage

Magic can be a very effective weapon. If you use it thus, and want to determine how much damage you’ve inflicted on your target, there a number of factors to consider.

First, the magic your magician is using must be able to inflict damage on the target. I don’t care how hard you try, but you will never be able to Perceive someone to death.

Once that obvious little detail is out of the way, let’s get to the numbers. The number of damage points inflicted by a magical attack is the number of extra success points achieved in that attack. Performing a magical attack is just like any other magical effect, and the

number of success points required to succeed at the task are figured the same. Each extra success point achieved—that is, each success point in excess of the minimum required to succeed at the task—counts as one damage point.

One way to pump up the potential number of damage points from a magical attack is to dump Essence points into the effect. Any extra Essence points spent—that is, any Essence points in excess of the number required to fuel the effect—gives the attacking magician a +1 TM for resolving the task.

Another factor to consider when attempting to dish out damage with magic is that any magical effect designed to directly damage a target

is by definition active; it is not and cannot be considered passive. It is possible to use passive magic to indirectly damage a target, but direct damage from a magical effect is always active.

Of course, there are advantages to an active magical attack. In most cases, a magical attack can bypass any mundane armor the target is wearing; the Director will have to rule whether this is the case.

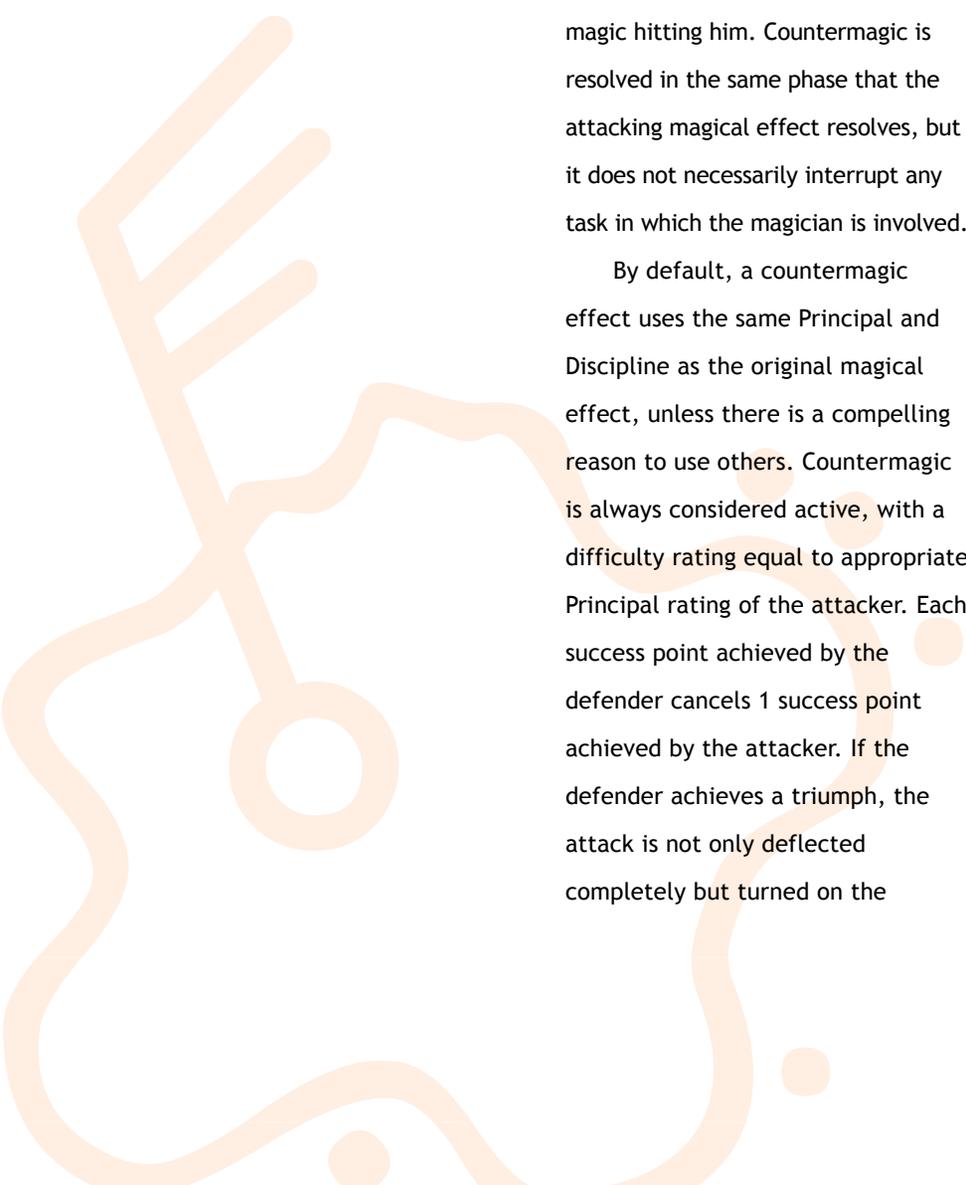
An attack, of course, is not necessarily physical. A magician using a Death/Life effect can target his victim’s Intelligence bank, for example, causing the victim to lose consciousness and thus be more easily dispatched with more conventional methods.

Resisting Magic

It is possible for any character to attempt to resist a magical effect cast directly on him. A magician can use countermagic, while both magician and mundane can use magical resistance.

Countermagic

A magician can resist magic directed at him by performing countermagic. Countermagic uses an appropriate magical writhe to counteract the magical effect intended by the attacking magician. Countermagic has the benefit of being automatic, instantaneous and reflexive; in effect, the target magician writhes an instinctive, panicked magical effect to resist the



magic hitting him. Countermagic is resolved in the same phase that the attacking magical effect resolves, but it does not necessarily interrupt any task in which the magician is involved.

By default, a countermagic effect uses the same Principal and Discipline as the original magical effect, unless there is a compelling reason to use others. Countermagic is always considered active, with a difficulty rating equal to appropriate Principal rating of the attacker. Each success point achieved by the defender cancels 1 success point achieved by the attacker. If the defender achieves a triumph, the attack is not only deflected completely but turned on the

attacker, who must then attempt countermagic against himself.

If the defender suffers a disaster on countermagic, the attacker succeeds as if he had achieved a triumph.

A magician may choose not to perform countermagic against an incoming writhe if he knows that it is coming. If the writhe hits the magician by surprise, however, he performs countermagic by instinct, even if the intent of the writhe is beneficial.

Resistance

Of course, by definition, mundanes have no ability to perform countermagic, and there are times when a magician does not wish to do

so, either. In these cases, the character uses a task asset of Determination + Performance/ Meditation to resist the effects of magic. The difficulty rating is the appropriate Principal/Discipline rating of the attacker. Each success point achieved by the defender negates a success point achieved by the attacker. Resisting magic is a reflexive task, meaning that performing it does not necessarily interrupt whatever task the character may be performing. Mundanes can choose not to resist a magical effect, but only if they know it is coming. If the writhe hits the character by surprise, he attempts to resist automatically, even if the intent of the writhe is beneficial.

“ Sometimes, a magician fails a writhe so badly that he suffers the Rending, a powerful magical backlash. The Rending hits a magician’s primary characteristics, as well as inflicting physical damage. ”

The Rending

Sometimes, a magician fails a writhe so badly that he suffers the Rending, a powerful magical backlash. The Rending hits a magician’s primary characteristics, as well as inflicting physical damage.

If a magician suffers a disaster while attempting a magical effect, he suffers the Rending. The severity of the hit depends on whether the writhe was active or passive.

Obviously, the magician loses all the Essence points he had invested in the writhe, and the desired result does not come about.

If one must suffer a Rending, it is best for the disastrous writhe to be passive. A randomly selected characteristic loses a number of

points from its bank equal to the number of Essence points spent on the writhe. If one bank is reduced to 0, select another bank randomly until all the points are distributed. The banks refresh normally, and the character regains consciousness normally, if applicable.

First, determine if the effect of the writhe was primarily physical or mental, then roll 1d10 on the chart below. Alternately, the Director may assign which bank is hit.

Roll	Physical	Mental
1-2	Dexterity	Determination
3-4	Essence	Intelligence
5-6	Physique	Intuition
7-8	Stamina	Education
9-10	Strength	Presence

If the writhe the magician was performing was active, however, the Magician may suffer some very serious effects. The Rending could even kill him outright. There are several possible results that can come from an active rending, chosen by the player; once one result is selected, it may not be exchanged for another.

Result 1

Each Essence point the magician had invested in the magical effect is applied randomly to the character’s body areas as if they were damage points. Continue to apply damage until all the Essence points are gone. The magician may not apply his armor rating to resist this damage, and because it is not the result of an

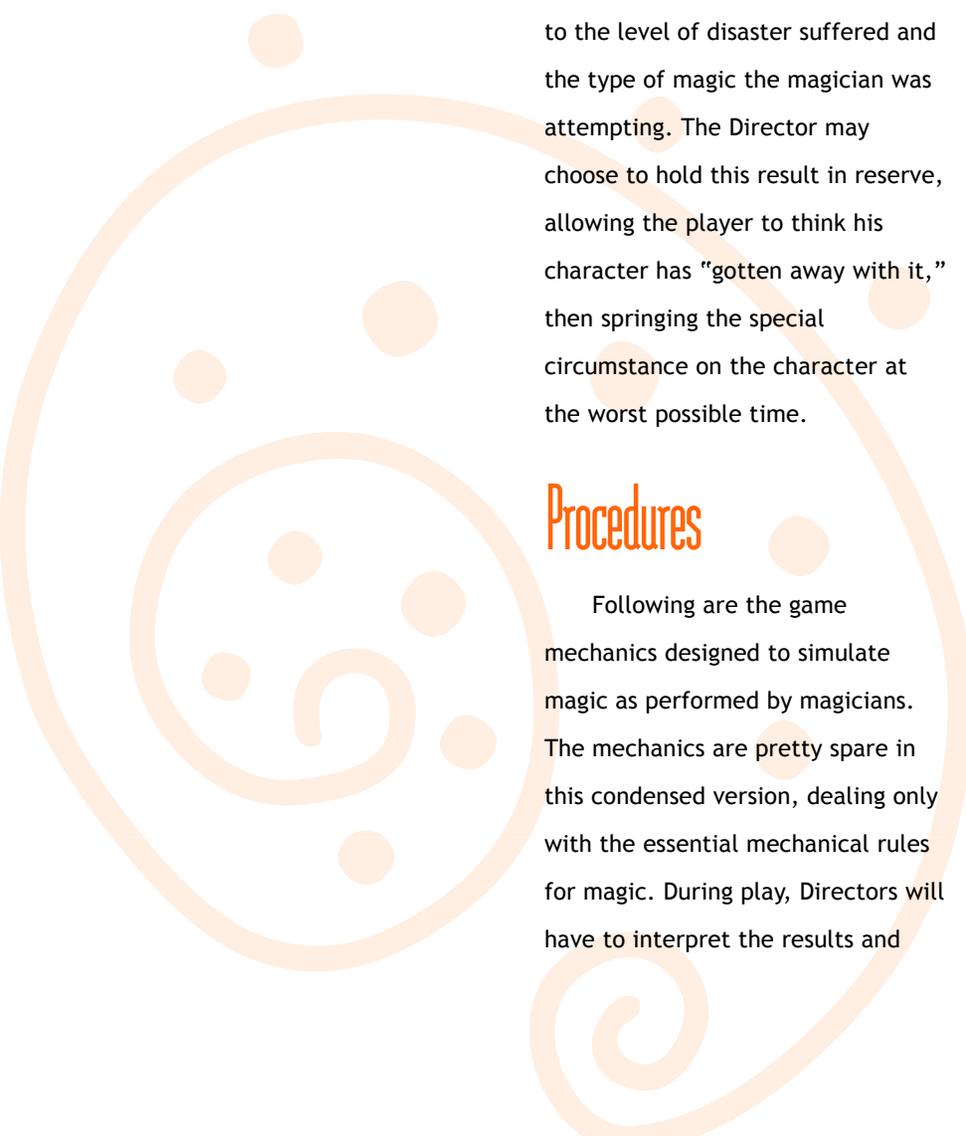
attack task, his Physique or Dexterity banks are not called into play. There is no sucking up or dodging the Rending.

Result 2

As an alternative to blowing up, the character may accept a natural ineptitude limitation to his magic, one level per Essence point invested in the disastrous effect. The specifics of the limitation should be worked out between the player and the Director.

Result 3

The Director may impose a special circumstance on the character. The specifics of this circumstance are determined by the Director, and should be appropriate



to the level of disaster suffered and the type of magic the magician was attempting. The Director may choose to hold this result in reserve, allowing the player to think his character has “gotten away with it,” then springing the special circumstance on the character at the worst possible time.

Procedures

Following are the game mechanics designed to simulate magic as performed by magicians. The mechanics are pretty spare in this condensed version, dealing only with the essential mechanical rules for magic. During play, Directors will have to interpret the results and

describe them for the players with appropriate color. The full version of **Phantasm** will include guidelines to help Directors accomplish this.

Defining the Magical Task

Before a magician can dance his writhe, he has to define with some precision what it is that he wants to do. When deciding what effect he wants to occur, the magician’s player should develop a loose outline of what the magical effect is, then make the specific selections of principal, discipline and so on.

Select Principal

What do you want to do with the writhe? Are you trying to extend your senses to listen in on a

conversation? That requires Death/Life. Are you shooting fireballs at the bad guys? That’s Energy/Matter. In most cases, the principal needed will be fairly obvious.

Select Discipline

Into which category does the writhe fall? Are you trying to read the mind of that fellow across the room? That’s a Perception effect. Are you healing a gunshot wound? That requires at least Manipulation, but could be done with Transformation or perhaps Creation, depending on how you want to heal the wound. Choosing the discipline used can be somewhat more tricky than selecting the principal, but for the most part will not be difficult to determine.

“ If the writhe is active, the magician can just run roughshod over the Weaving (well, he can try, anyway). ”

Select Method

Is the writhe active or passive? If the writhe is active, the magician can just run roughshod over the Weaving (well, he can try, anyway); it's going to cost him a lot of Essence, and maybe a lot more if he screws up the writhing, but he can probably do it pretty fast. If the writhe is passive, the magician has to be subtle (and his player has to be somewhat creative describing what happens to accomplish the desired result). A passive writhe will cost less Essence, probably, but will be more difficult to pull off, and may take a considerable amount of time, which the magician may or may not have. An active writhe uses Intelligence as the characteristic

component of the task asset, while a passive writhe uses Intuition.

Determine Writhe Type

Is the writhe normal, extended, conjunctional or some combination thereof? To some degree, these factors are determined by the situation and by the Director.

Assigning the Difficulty Ratings

Creating a magical effect is a task like any other, and so requires the Director to assign a difficulty rating. The Magical Difficulty chart below lists some guidelines for selecting the difficulty rating for a magical effect; this chart, however, is just a rule of thumb, and the Director may wish to alter the

difficulty rating based on the specific circumstances of the scene.

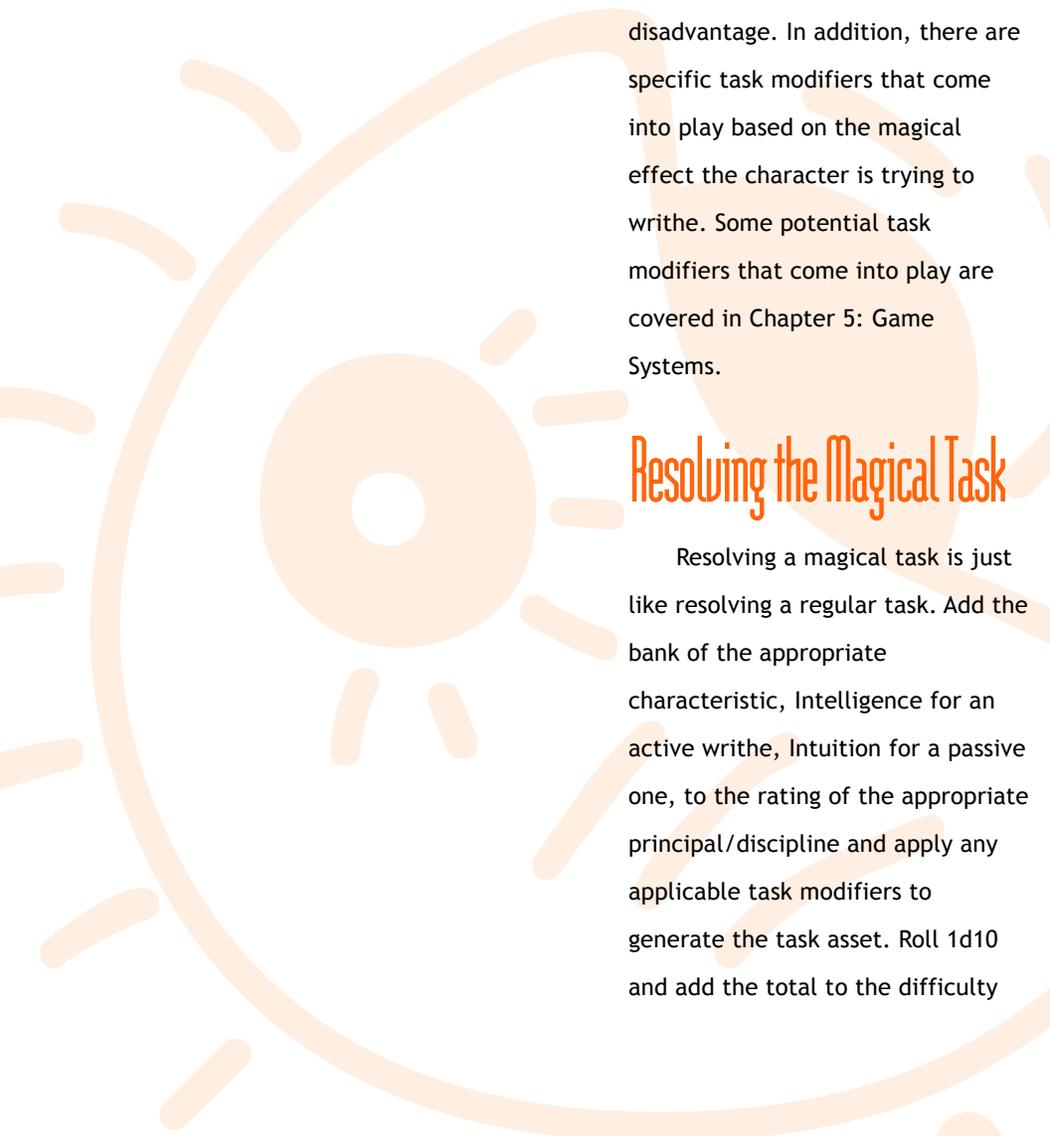
Difficulty Rating/Effect

- 1 The effect would be unlikely to be noticed by even the most perceptive observer.
- 3 The effect could easily be explained away as a freak occurrence, a lucky break or a coincidence.
- 5 The effect would attract wide-spread attention and people would be mystified as to its cause.
- 7 The effect would be significant enough to inspire serious investigations into its cause.
- 9 The effect blatantly and obviously violates known laws of physics and resists any other explanation.

It should be noted here that the effect examples given rely heavily on how ordinary, mundane people would react if witnessing the effect. It does not matter, however, if an effect has any witnesses or not; the difficulty rating for an effect is based on what the effect does, not who sees it happen.

Determining Task Modifiers

Task modifiers are used to either increase or decrease the chances to succeed at a given task. A magician writhing a magical effect is subject to all the environmental factors any other character doing anything else is subject to; a magician trying to perform a writhe in the dark, underwater, with three bullet holes in his chest will be at somewhat of a



disadvantage. In addition, there are specific task modifiers that come into play based on the magical effect the character is trying to write. Some potential task modifiers that come into play are covered in Chapter 5: Game Systems.

Resolving the Magical Task

Resolving a magical task is just like resolving a regular task. Add the bank of the appropriate characteristic, Intelligence for an active write, Intuition for a passive one, to the rating of the appropriate principal/discipline and apply any applicable task modifiers to generate the task asset. Roll 1d10 and add the total to the difficulty

rating assigned to the task to determine the task check. If the task check is greater than the task asset, the attempt has failed; the difference between the two numbers is the number of failure points suffered. If the task check is less than the task asset, the attempt succeeds; the difference between the two numbers is the numbers of success points achieved. If task check equals the task asset and the player rolls a 1 on 1d10, the character has achieved a triumph, succeeding better than he might have hoped. If the die roll is a 10, however, the character has suffered a disaster, and thus is subject to the Rending.

Applying the Results

Does the character achieve a complete success, or just partial success? Is that relevant to the task at hand? Let's say a magician wants to fly across a chasm and the system shows that he needs 3 success points to achieve complete success, but the task check provides only 2 success points. What that means is that the magician starts to fly across the chasm, but doesn't quite make it to the other side. That's a pretty significant problem the magician has now, isn't it?

It is impossible to describe all the possible results of magical task resolution. All the system can do is generate a few numbers. It is up to the Director, then, to use those numbers as an outline for describing

“ Essence is a refined and purified form of aether, the fuel that magic burns, the most fundamental building block of reality. ”

what actually happens to the characters. The specific circumstances of the situation determines the various possibilities that are likely to happen; the numbers generated by task resolution determine which of those possibilities actually can happen. In the end, however, it's up to the Director to determine what happens, and to describe it to the players.

The only advice I can give, really, is to be creative. Describe the results in as much dramatic detail as the scene requires. A magician trying to magically pick a lock is going to succeed or fail; not much description is necessary, unless something unusual happens. In the case of the magician flying over the chasm in the example above,

however, the fact that he only achieved 2 of the 3 success points he needed to make it to the other side would seem to indicate the need for some pretty significant description from the Director.

It is beyond the scope of this draft to give the Director aids in scene description. However, some aids will be included in complete edition of **Phantasm**.

Aether and Essence

Essence is a refined and purified form of aether, the fuel that magic burns, the most fundamental building block of reality. The major difference between magicians and mundanes is that magicians are able to store quantities of excess Essence

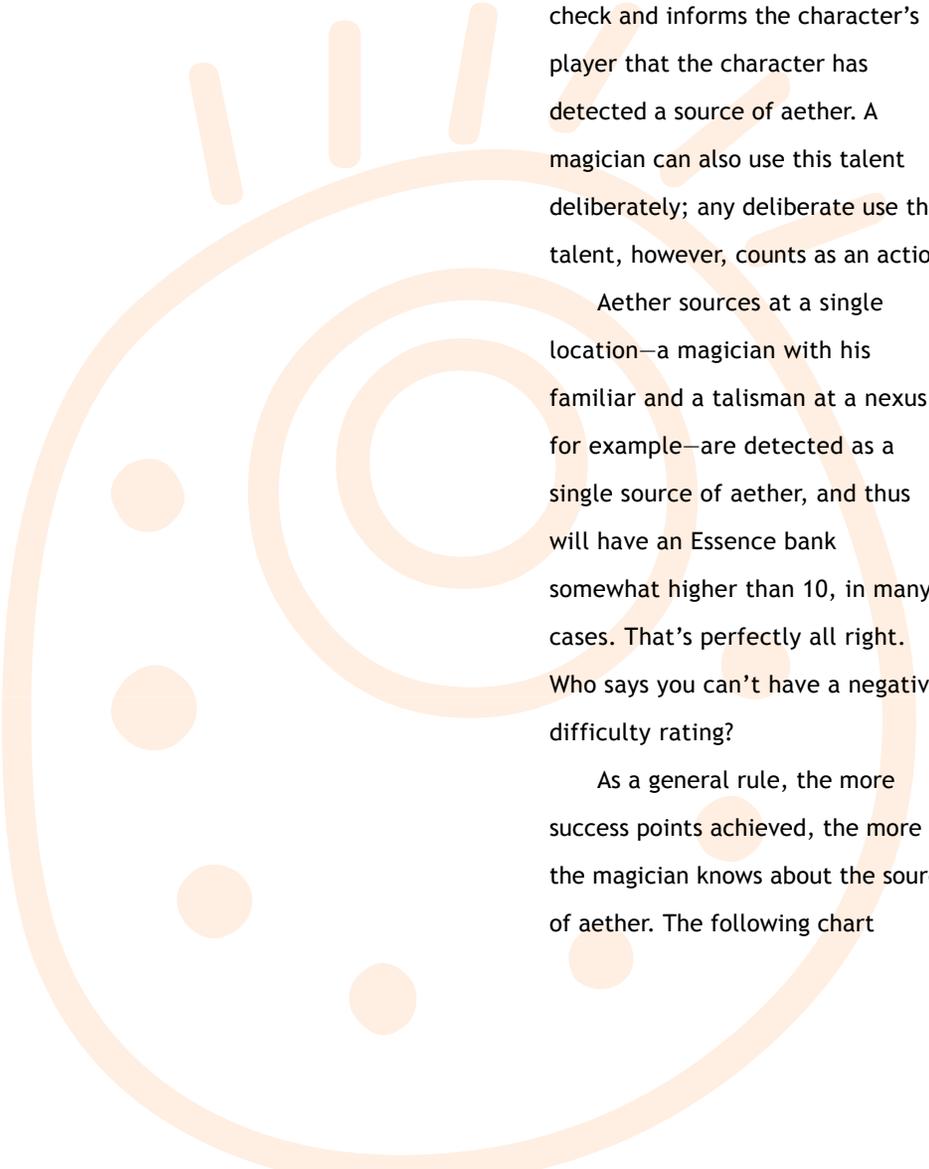
in their bodies, while mundanes can only channel as much Essence as is needed to maintain their patterns. Why this happens is unknown; magicians are commonly born to mundanes and give birth to mundanes, so if the cause is genetic, it's an extremely recessive trait.

Aether is the currency of magical society. Magicians need it to perform magic, so the magician with the most aether has a clear advantage over anyone else. Thus, magicians spend a great deal of their time searching for aether, fighting for aether and struggling to keep the source of their aether once they get it. One of the most beloved legends of magicians is that somewhere out there is a way of creating a direct link to the Cosminium, the source of

all aether in the Continuum. A magician who could do that, essentially create a link to an source of infinite Essence, would go beyond even the most powerful magician and enter the realm of a god.

Detecting Aether

All sources of free aether have an Essence rating of 1 to 10, whether a talisman, a nexus or a magician. Magicians can sense this aether with a minor magical effect, Detect Free Aether, which uses the task asset Intelligence + Aether/Void/Perception. The difficulty rating for this talent is (11 - [the source's Essence bank]). A magician can use this writhe unconsciously, automatically and reflexively; in this case, the Director makes the task



check and informs the character's player that the character has detected a source of aether. A magician can also use this talent deliberately; any deliberate use of the talent, however, counts as an action.

Aether sources at a single location—a magician with his familiar and a talisman at a nexus, for example—are detected as a single source of aether, and thus will have an Essence bank somewhat higher than 10, in many cases. That's perfectly all right. Who says you can't have a negative difficulty rating?

As a general rule, the more success points achieved, the more the magician knows about the source of aether. The following chart

summarizes guidelines for determining this.

Success Points / Knowledge

- 1 An aether source is somewhere in the area
- 2 Approximate direction
- 3 Good direction
Approximate relative altitude
Approximate distance.
- 4 Precise direction
Good relative altitude
Good distance
Approximate Essence rating (Low, Medium, High)
Single or multiple sources
- 5 Precise direction
Precise relative altitude
Precise distance
Essence rating

Source(s) (Human, animal, device, location, other)

Refreshing Essence

Most living creatures, including Humans, refresh 1 point in their Essence bank per hour of rest. A magician may also refresh his Essence bank through Meditation. This is a task using Essence + Performance/Meditation, at DR: (11 - [Magician's Essence bank]). Each success point achieved refreshes his bank 1 Essence point. The magician must spend a full hour meditating per task check, and can continue until his Essence bank is completely refreshed. A triumph indicates that the magician's Essence bank is completely refreshed no matter how many success points are achieved. A

“ Why, then, would a magician want to spend his Essence rating? The answer is simple—to make a magical effect permanent. ”

disaster indicates that the magician’s Essence bank is zapped down to 0, meaning that the magician loses consciousness until his bank refreshes to at least 1. A magician’s Essence bank cannot be reduced below 0, even by a disaster.

A magician can also refresh his Essence bank by absorbing it from an external source. Aether can be absorbed naturally from a nexus or from coynes of aether. This is an active magical task, DR: 3, Intelligence + Aether/Void/ Manipulation. The magician must be in the nexus, or in contact with the coynes, to absorb the aether. A magician may absorb up to 10 Essence points into his bank, even if his Essence rating is not so high. Each round afterward, however, the

magician loses 1 Essence bank point until the bank is reduced to its proper level. Magicians sometime pump up their Essence banks just before performing a difficult writhe.

A magician may also absorb Essence from his familiar if the familiar is willing, or from a talisman to which he is attuned. A magician can draw Essence from a resisting source such as another person or an unwilling familiar. This is a magical task, DR: 6, Intelligence + Aether/Void/ Manipulation. The magician must be able to touch the target, except for a familiar, from which he can absorb Essence over their shared link.

Non-living items with their own source of Essence, such as talismans, recharge their Essence banks naturally at a rate of 1 Essence point

per day. A talisman placed in a nexus can refresh its Essence bank at a rate of 1 point per hour by absorbing the Power of the nexus. A magician may also choose to spend points from his Essence bank to refresh a talisman.

Spending Essence Rating Points

Discussions of magical effects and Essence expenditure through most of this chapter have assumed that a magician would be spending points from his Essence bank, Essence which the magician or nexus would be able to regenerate with time. In some cases, however, a magician may choose to spend points from his Essence rating. Spending Essence rating points means that the source of the Essence, whether magician, nexus, talisman or familiar, loses the

Essence permanently, as if it had never had it.

Why, then, would a magician want to spend his Essence rating? The answer is simple—to make a magical effect permanent. All normal magical effects will fade with time, and altered patterns will revert to their original state. Sometimes, however, the magician wants the result of his magical effect to last indefinitely. The only way known for this to happen is for at least 1 point of Essence spent on the writhing of a magical effect to be an Essence rating point.

Spending Essence rating points can be dangerous. If something’s Essence rating is reduced to 0, that thing is destroyed. Thus, a magician whose Essence rating is reduced to 0

dies, as would a familiar or even a mundane, while a nexus or talisman would crumble into dust.

Familiars

Familiars are special magical companions to a magician. A familiar is always some type of animal; inanimate objects and Humans need not apply.

A typical animal in the **Phantasmal Lights** system can be represented as having Intelligence and Essence ratings of 1 each; the other characteristics can vary as needed, even exceeding 10 if necessary. A proto-familiar, however, can have both Intelligence and Essence at ratings higher than 1. In fact, the only thing that keeps a

proto-familiar from actually becoming a magician is the lack of magical abilities. Proto-familiars can often cause spontaneous effects, but typically cannot control them.

Proto-familiars are drawn to other Aware. When those other beings are other proto-familiars, the results can be tragic, as these proto-familiars can usually not overcome their animal instincts; often, a battle ensues between the two creatures, and it is typically a battle to the death. On rare occasions, however, these proto-familiars come together peacefully and bond, becoming life-long companions.

On occasion, proto-familiars are drawn to a Human. If this Human is a feral, the two often form a bond of pet and master that

is notable for the loyalty between the two. If the Human is a magician, however, he can bond the creature to create a familiar.

There are numerous benefits to bonding a familiar. By concentrating on the familiar, a magician can perceive through the familiar's senses, making familiars excellent spies and warders. (A magician cannot use his own magical abilities through this link, however, unless the familiar happens to be in the normal range in which the magician can operate; the magic is still centered on the magician, though, not the familiar.)

The magician can also use the familiar's extra Essence as if it were his own. If the magician seeks to use the last point of the

“ Some magicians draw elaborate pentagrams, spending hours or even days in their completion. Others use elaborate hand gestures, or even dance, while others use words, songs or writing. ”

familiar’s Essence bank, however, the familiar can resist, which can break the bond.

A magician and his familiar can communicate on a basic level. A magician can assign his familiar simple tasks, such as following someone or knocking over a piece of furniture, for example. The familiar will continue the task, or attempting the task, until the task is completed, until he can no longer attempt it or until it is obvious that the familiar simply does not have the ability to perform the task, or the magician cancels the assignment. Likewise, the familiar can give messages to his master over their telepathic link. These messages are typically quite simple, such as warning of danger, indicating hunger or something of

that sort. By their very nature, familiars have limited memories for new information. Someone can try to give a simple message for a familiar to carry back to his master, but there is no guarantee it will work.

While bonded, neither a magician nor a familiar may bond with another.

Bonding a Familiar

Bonding a familiar is a DR: 3 task based on the magician’s Presence bank, plus any ability the Director rules is appropriate, Biological Sciences/Zoology, for example. One success point is all that is needed to create the bond. A magician may not bond with an unwilling proto-familiar.

Breaking the Bond

Once the bond exists between magician and familiar, it is difficult but not impossible to break. A magician and familiar can break a bond by mutual consent. All that is required is for both parties to concentrate on the bond and it will be severed. If one party to the bond attempts to cause the other fatal harm over the link between them, the target can attempt to resist that attack. Resisting is a DR: 3 task, Determination + Military/Discipline or Performance/Meditation. If the target succeeds in resisting the attack, the bond is broken. If one party to the bond dies, the bond is automatically broken, obviously.

Foci

A focus is any external item or action that a magician uses to aid his use of magic. Foci are completely personal, and actually have no need to be magical, although it is not unusual for magicians to use talismans as foci.

A focus can be anything that aids a magician focus his magical abilities to create the desired effect. Some magicians draw elaborate pentagrams, spending hours or even days in their completion. Others use elaborate hand gestures, or even dance, while others use words, songs or writing. The most common foci, however, are items, usually small

and easily transported, often jewelry or weapons.

There are two types of foci, major and minor. Major foci are unique, a specific piece of jewelry, a specific hand gesture, a specific dance step. Minor foci are generic versions of major foci which can sometimes be substituted for major foci. Foci can be further subdivided by the magical abilities. A focus can be used for a specific principal or discipline, or it can be used for magic in general; it cannot, however, be used for both.

Major Foci

A major focus must be specific or generic; that is, it must be related to a specific principal or

discipline, or it must be related to all the magician's magic.

Specific Major Focus: A specific major focus is related to one and only one principal or discipline. Any magic using that principal or discipline receives a task modifier of +2. However, if the focus is not used, any magic using the related principal or discipline receives a task modifier of -2.

Generic Major Focus: A generic major focus is related to all of a magician's magic. Any magical task attempted by the magician using the focus receives a task modifier of +1. However, if the focus is not used, any magical task attempted

by the magician receives a task modifier of -1.

Minor Foci

A minor focus is a generic item which can be substituted for a specific item which is not present. Not every focus can be replaced by a minor focus; the Director must rule what is allowable. As a general rule, no intangible foci—such as words, gestures, movements and so on—should be allowed to have a minor foci equivalent. A minor focus grants no benefit by itself, but does negate any negative task modifiers for not having the major focus.

Creating a focus

Creating a focus requires a bit of effort on the part of a magician.

“ There are many theories about why nexi form, the most commonly accepted theory being that when the nearly infinite strands of time merge into reality at the present, there are gaps in the Weaving, just as there are occasional gaps in a weave of cloth. ”

Whether the focus is specific or generic, to create a major focus, a magician must concentrate on the item or perform the action for a number of game hours equal to the rating of the principal or discipline, in the case of a specific major focus, or the magician's highest rating in any principal or discipline, in the case of a generic major focus. Also, the magician must spend 1 point of Essence on the focus. Creating a minor focus requires the same procedure as creating a major focus, but takes only minutes instead of hours. The Essence cost is the same.

Replacing a Focus

As stated above, a magician may use a minor focus to stop the negative effects of performing

magical tasks without the appropriate major focus. However, the magician may not replace a major focus until he has divested himself of it. Divesting a focus requires the magician to concentrate on the item or perform the action for a number of hours equal to the rating of the principal or discipline in the case of a specific focus or the magician's highest rating in any principal or discipline in the case of a generic one. The magician must also spend 1 point of Essence. The focus must be in the magician's possession in order for him to divest himself of it. Also, the magician must be able to use the focus normally in order to divest himself of it. If the focus is a gesture that the magician can no longer perform,

or a word he can no longer speak, he cannot divest himself of that focus. The magician may not create a new focus that does the same thing as the old one until he divests himself of it, or the focus is destroyed.

If a focus is destroyed, the magician suffers the negative task modifier for performing magic without his focus until he creates a new one to replace it.

Using a Focus

While performing a magical effect, the magician must incorporate the focus into the writhing. If the focus is a gesture or movement, the magician must perform that gesture or movement; if the focus is a word or song, the magician must speak the word or

sing the song. If the focus is an object, the magician must have the object in his possession and concentrate on it while performing the writhing. If the magician does not do these things, he suffers the negative task modifier for not having his focus.

Nexi

A nexus is a place that is a naturally occurring source of aether. There are many theories about why nexi form, the most commonly accepted theory being that when the nearly infinite strands of time merge into reality at the present, there are gaps in the Weaving, just as there are occasional gaps in a weave of cloth. These gaps allow free aether



to flow into the Continuum from “Outside,” being the Void, the Cosminium or something else (depending on whom you talk to). A vocal minority is of the opinion that this explanation is a far-too-literal interpretation of the Weaving metaphor and that there must be some other explanation, but so far no one has presented a theory that has gained much acceptance.

Nexi have certain characteristics in common. Nexi are almost always enclosed in some way, as a cave or an isolated glade in a forest. They are never large, seldom bigger than a medium-sized room and often less than a cubic meter. Most importantly, nexi are never permanent; all are destined to some day fade and disappear. Some nexi

are extremely short-lived, lasting only a day before they dissolve.

Others have significant lifetimes and exist for decades. One circle in Europe claimed that it had used a nexus in the Black Forest for over three centuries before it dissolved, but this is unconfirmed. So far, the longest living confirmed nexus is about 100 years old, and still exists in a small glen in the highlands of Scotland (only its keepers know exactly where).

Another characteristic common to nexi is that they produce coynes of aether. These coynes are always a natural product of the nexus, and can take on almost any form—crystals, geodes, mushrooms and so on. One nexi which happened to be located in an aquarium produced

algae that, when dried and separated, proved to be excellent-quality coynes. As a rule of thumb, one coyne of aether is less than 1,000 cubic centimeters in volume but seldom smaller than 1 cubic centimeter, with a mass of 100 grams or less. The quality of coynes from a nexus are judged by these volume and mass standards; the less volume and mass a coyne has, the higher its perceived quality.

Characteristics of a Nexus

Like a character, a nexus has certain defining characteristics. These characteristics are Level, Essence and Rank. The Level of a nexus determines how often it produces usable aether. The Essence of a nexus rates how much aether it

“ There is something about a nexus that causes any living creature with a minimal level of mind to want to leave the nexus once its personal Essence bank has been restored, which means that most mundane creatures stay in a nexus very little time at all. ”

produces. The Rank determines how long a nexus is expected to exist before it fades and dissolves.

Level: Nexus levels are rated on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest. Levels determine how often a nexus produces aether. If the aether of a nexus is not used by the end of the cycle, that aether is transformed into coynes. If the coynes are not used by the end of the next cycle, they decay into the mundane versions of their natural form, or sometimes simply dissolve. If a magician uses a certain amount of aether in a nexus, the nexus will produce that amount of aether less in coynes at the end of its cycle.

Level	Cycle
Level 1:	4 weeks (28 days)
Level 2:	3 weeks (21 days)
Level 3:	2 weeks (14 days)
Level 4:	1 week (7 days)
Level 5:	1 day (24 hours)

Essence: The Essence rating of a nexus is exactly like the Essence rating of a character, and is rated 1 to 10. This is how many points of aether the nexus has available during its cycle, and how many coynes of aether it produces at the end of that cycle if the aether is not used.

Rank: Rank is a measure of how long a nexus is expected to last. Rank is measured on a scale of 1 to 5.

Rank	Duration
Rank 1:	1 day
Rank 2:	1 week
Rank 3:	1 month
Rank 4:	1 year
Rank 5:	Indeterminate; years, decades, centuries?

Using a Nexus

There are several different things a magician can do with a nexus, not the least of which is using it as a source of aether. A magician can absorb the aether of a nexus, filling his Essence bank up to 10 points, or the magician can take the coynes of aether from a nexus and spend them likewise.

No one, however, can stay long in a nexus. There is something about a nexus that causes any living

creature with a minimal level of mind to want to leave the nexus once its personal Essence bank has been restored, which means that most mundane creatures stay in a nexus very little time at all.

A magician, having a rational mind, can choose to attempt to overcome this compulsion to leave a nexus once his Essence bank has been restored. This is a task based on the magician's Determination characteristic and Performance/Meditation ability. The difficulty rating is based on the cycle of the nexus and how long the magician tries to stay. For the first cycle after the magician's Essence bank has been refreshed, the difficulty rating is 2, for the second cycle difficulty: 3 and so on.



Therefore, if a magician attempts to stay in a Level 1 nexus beyond the time needed to refresh his Essence bank, he will have to make a difficulty: 2 task check for the first 28-day period he wants to stay. (Extra success points do not grant the magician any benefit in this case.) If the magician wants to stay another 28-day period, his difficulty rating is 3 and so on. If the magician ever fails his task check, he feels an overpowering compulsion to leave the nexus and must stay away for at least a number of days equal to the level of the nexus plus one day for each extra cycle the magician managed to stay in the nexus. For example, if a Magician manages to stay three cycles in a Level 3 nexus before he must leave, he will have to

stay away from the nexus for six days, three for the Level and three for each cycle he stayed.

Gateways

One feature of a nexus some magicians find disconcerting is the tendency of nexi to form gateways to the other Realms, or to other points in the same Realm. A magician has no control over these gateways, and cannot even detect if they are active. A gateway will open in a nexus at random.

Physically, the gateway can take on any form, but it usually takes on a form that compliments the nexus. If the nexus is a cave, for example, the gateway may appear as a fissure in the rock; if the nexus is a grove in

a forest, the gateway may appear as an unknown path through the trees.

The destination of a gateway, likewise, can be anywhere. Sometimes, a gateway leads from one nexus in the Material Realm to another; of course, that other nexus could be halfway across the world or even on a planet in a star system three galaxies over. Sometimes, a gateway leads to the Transcendental Realm, which can be an unsettling prospect for any magician. Most of the time, however, gateways lead to the Nether Realm.

There is little that can be said about a gateway for certain, but there do seem to be a few rules of thumb that can be followed with them.

“ Some legends of magical society say that magicians of old could, with great effort, cause gateways to form from one specific nexus to another, and had some limited control how long the gateways remained open. ”

- Gateways always open in nexi. No one has yet found a gateway that was not associated with a nexus.
- Gateways typically link to a location with similar terrain. Therefore, if a nexus on one end of the gateway is in a cave, the nexus on the other end is also likely to be in a cave.
- Passing through a gateway from one nexus to another takes a short time; typically, it's an easy walk from one end to the other even if the nexi are separated by light-years.
- Passing through a gateway gives the traveler a sense of the gateway's location and condition. Once a traveler passes through the gateway, he

seems to know instinctively where one end of the gateway is in relation to the other. If he travels away from the gateway and out of the nexus, he will know where the gateway is until it closes. He will also have some warning that a gateway is about to close, though not much; a gateway usually gives a warning of from 1 minute to an hour before it collapses, and the traveler has only a general sense of how much time he has before the collapse.

- Those caught in the gateway when it collapses disappear, never to be heard from again. Some speculate that a collapsed gateway opens into the Void; others believe that it just

ceases to exist, along with everything and everyone in it. However, no one really knows.

- There is no way to detect a gateway; usually, they are stumbled upon by accident. Likewise, there is no way to judge how long a gateway will last before it collapses; it could last for seconds or centuries.
- Gateways appear at random. If one waits around a nexus long enough, there is a chance one or several gateways will open up; there is also a chance none will.

Some legends of magical society say that magicians of old could, with great effort, cause gateways to form from one specific nexus to another, and had some limited control how

long the gateways remained open. If anyone ever actually had such knowledge, it has been long lost to modern magicians.

Sancta

Many magicians have what is known as a sanctum (pl. sancta). A sanctum is a private place for a magician, a personal space that has become attuned to the magician's magic. That personal space might be as large as a warehouse or as small as a closet; it depends entirely on where the character feels safe.

Having a sanctum is an advantage for the character, but costs no development points to possess. The specific features of the sanctum, however, do. A player

creating a sanctum can use his character's development points to purchase these sanctum advantages, or the player may choose to assign various limitations to the sanctum to gain development points. Development points gained in this way may only be spent on the sanctum itself.

Selecting a Sanctum

As mentioned above, anyplace the magician feels secure can be a sanctum. As a rule of thumb, however, a sanctum should never be too large. For example, the magician may own a huge, two-hundred room castle, but only a modest suite of rooms in the castle should be the sanctum, not the entire castle itself.

A sanctum does not have to be stationary. If the magician feels most secure in a 1978 Ford Econoline van with a waterbed in the back, that can be his sanctum. Likewise, the sanctum does not have to be enclosed in a man-made structure; a Wikkan, for example, may wish to make a sanctum in a secluded glade in a forest, or a clean, dry cave.

Although it would be quite convenient to do so, it is rare—almost unheard of—for a magician to make his sanctum in a nexus. The very nature of a nexus makes it difficult for anyone to stay long in one, making it almost the antithesis of a sanctum.

The Attributes of a Sanctum

Just as characters, sanctums have advantages and limitations. The advantages cost development points, and the limitations earn development points to be spent, but only on the sanctum. A character can spend his own development points to improve his sanctum, but he may not spend the development points earned from the limitations of his sanctum to purchase advantages for himself.

Advantages

Arcane Library: The Magician has at his disposal a collection of arcane writings which may be used in the creation of writhes, researching the history of magical society and so on. A Magician may make a task check

“ **Extraspacial:** The sanctum seems to be larger on the inside than the outside. ”

based upon the level of the library using Intelligence + Information Gathering/Research. Any successful research conducted in an arcane library earns a magical task task modifier of +1 per success point achieved in the research task. Only one research task is allowed per outside task. Also, the amount of time required to conduct research in a library varies according to level. Any research task requires an amount of time equal to the library’s Basic Research Time. Each additional success point achieved in the research task can reduce that time by 20 percent of the basic research time to a minimum time of 20 percent of the basic research time.

Level 1: The library is in an incredible state of disarray and strongly resists any effort to organize it. Any research attempted here has a difficulty rating of 10. The basic research time is 1 year. This level costs 5 points.

Level 2: The library is in an advanced state of disarray and resists any effort to organize it. Any research attempted here has a difficulty rating of 8. The basic research time is 6 months. This level costs 10 points.

Level 3: The library is in a moderate state of disarray and is difficult to keep organized. Any research attempted

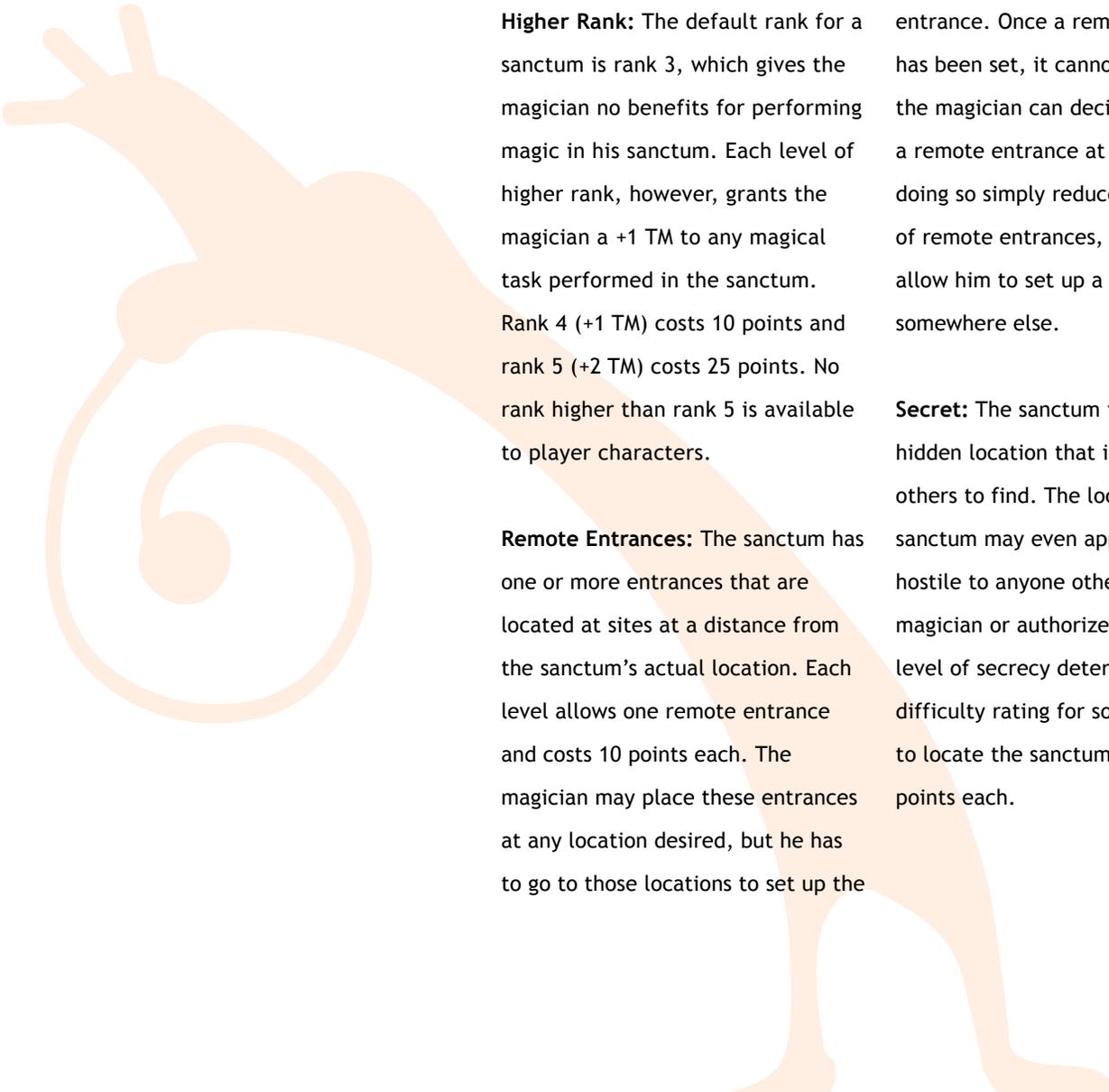
here has a difficulty rating of 6. The basic research time is 3 months. This level costs 15 points.

Level 4: The library is in a slight state of disarray and requires some effort to keep organized. Any research attempted here has a difficulty rating of 4. The basic research time is 1 month. This level costs 20 points.

Level 5: The library is in an acceptable state of organization and tends to stay that way. Any research attempted here has a difficulty rating of 2. The basic research time is 1 week. This level costs 25 points.

Extraspacial: The sanctum seems to be larger on the inside than the outside. The explanation of this has baffled magicians through the ages. Some theorize that matter entering into the sanctum actually becomes smaller, while others theorize that the sanctum actually exists in a bubble of space attached to the Continuum but actually floating in the Void. No one, however, really knows. Each level allows the sanctum to double its apparent size.

Level 1: x 2 5 points
 Level 2: x 4 10 points
 Level 3: x 8 15 points
 Level 4: x 16 20 points
 Level 5: x 32 25 points



Higher Rank: The default rank for a sanctum is rank 3, which gives the magician no benefits for performing magic in his sanctum. Each level of higher rank, however, grants the magician a +1 TM to any magical task performed in the sanctum. Rank 4 (+1 TM) costs 10 points and rank 5 (+2 TM) costs 25 points. No rank higher than rank 5 is available to player characters.

Remote Entrances: The sanctum has one or more entrances that are located at sites at a distance from the sanctum's actual location. Each level allows one remote entrance and costs 10 points each. The magician may place these entrances at any location desired, but he has to go to those locations to set up the

entrance. Once a remote location has been set, it cannot be moved; the magician can decide to collapse a remote entrance at anytime, but doing so simply reduces his number of remote entrances, and does not allow him to set up a new one somewhere else.

Secret: The sanctum is at a secret, hidden location that is difficult for others to find. The location of the sanctum may even appear to be hostile to anyone other than the magician or authorized visitors. The level of secrecy determines the difficulty rating for someone seeking to locate the sanctum, and costs 5 points each.

Level 1: 2
Level 2: 4
Level 3: 6
Level 4: 8
Level 5: 10

Limitations

Dangerous: The location of the sanctum makes it a hazard to get to, even for the magician. The magician is not allowed to magically bypass this danger; anytime he travels to the sanctum, he must face it. Once inside, however, the danger is negated. Each level gains 5 points.

Level 1: Traveling to the sanctum offers the risk of minor hardship or sickness. The chance of injury is slight.

“ **Disputed:** The sanctum is claimed by another magician who does not have access to the sanctum currently but will do almost anything to get it. ”

Level 2: Traveling to the sanctum offers the risk of significant hardship or sickness. The chance of injury is minor.

Level 3: Traveling to the sanctum offers the risk of major hardship or sickness. The chance of injury is significant.

Level 4: Traveling to the sanctum offers the risk of extreme hardship or sickness. The chance of injury is major.

Level 5: “What, are you nuts?” Travelling to the sanctum offers a certainty of hardship or sickness. The chance of injury is almost definite.

Disputed: The sanctum is claimed by another magician who does not have access to the sanctum currently but will do almost anything to get it. Each level of Disputed gains 5 points.

Level 1: The claimant will attempt any civilized and appropriate means at his disposal to gain possession of the sanctum.

Level 2: The claimant will attempt mild threats or coercion to gain possession of the sanctum.

Level 3: The claimant will attempt serious threats or coercion to gain possession of the sanctum.

Level 4: The claimant has mounted what amounts to a terrorist campaign to gain possession of the sanctum.

Level 5: “Of course, you know, this means war.” The claimant has mounted a serious and violent campaign to gain possession of the sanctum.

Labyrinthine: The sanctum has a mutable structure that baffles even the magician. One day, a staircase might lead down to the attic; the next, it might lead up to the basement. Corridors shift and entrances suddenly go into entirely different rooms. The space within rooms, however, is reasonably secure. Each level of Labyrinthine gains 10 points. Finding one’s way in

a labyrinthine sanctum is a task based on the character’s Intuition + Information Gathering/Observation.

Level 1: The layout shifts about once every month. Difficulty: 2.

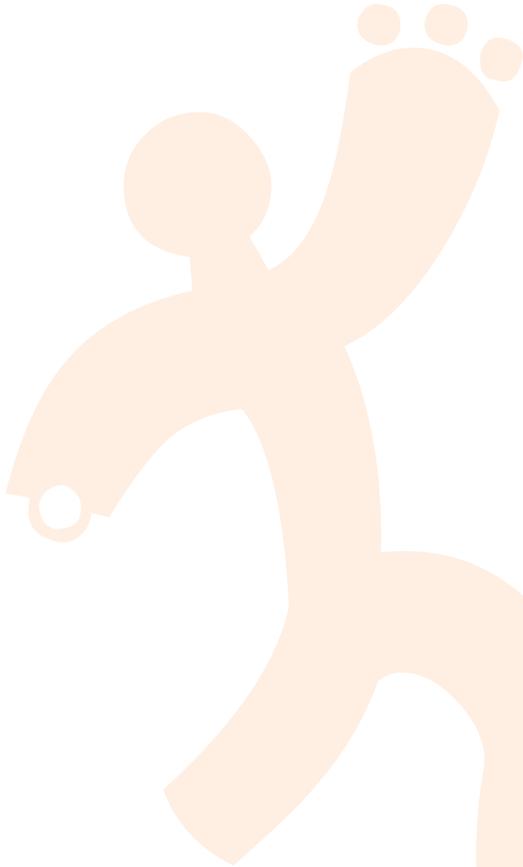
Level 2: The layout shifts about once a week. Difficulty: 4.

Level 3: The layout shifts about every day. Difficulty: 6.

Level 4: The layout shifts about once every hour. Difficulty: 8.

Level 5: The layout shifts once every minute. Difficulty: 10.

Lower Rank: The default rank for a sanctum is rank 3, which gives the magician no benefits for performing magic in his sanctum, but inflicts no penalties, either. Each level of lower rank, however, inflicts a -1 TM on



any magical task the magician attempts in the sanctum. Rank 2 (-1 TM) gains 10 points and rank 1 (-2 TM) gains 25 points.

Public: The sanctum is in a relatively public location. Each level of Public gains 5 points.

Level 1: The sanctum is in a location that could be stumbled onto by accident, but this is not likely to occur.

Level 2: The sanctum is in a location that is commonly seen by the public on a regular basis.

Level 3: The sanctum is in a location that is commonly entered by the public on a regular

basis, such as a park or office building.

Level 4: The sanctum is in a location that is commonly entered by the public frequently, such as the lobby of a hotel or a bar.

Level 5: "Excuse me, sir, but what are you doing in that stall?" The sanctum is in a location that is commonly entered by the public frequently and is even on display, such as the window of a shop or the stage of an auditorium.

Talismans

Talismans are items which have been imbued with magical abilities. Like foci, talismans are divided into

major and minor. A major talisman is one which has been empowered with all the abilities of a principal or discipline, even several of each, allowing the talisman's user to manipulate those principals or disciplines as if he possessed knowledge of them. A minor talisman has been programmed to perform a specific effect or a suite of specific effects.

All talismans must be imbued with Essence. A magician may imbue a talisman with a portion of his own Essence, or with Essence from a nexus. In either case, the Essence loss is permanent.

Creating a Talisman

Selecting an Item: The basis for a talisman must be a single, non-

“ If a talisman is ever broken into parts, it loses its ability until all of its parts are rejoined, so most talismans are solid, study items. ”

living item. If a talisman is ever broken into parts, it loses its ability until all of its parts are rejoined, so most talismans are solid, study items. A talisman may be attached to other items—a crystal talisman in a necklace, for example—but removing the attached item does not affect the talisman itself.

Determining the Talisman’s Effects: Decide what you want the talisman to do, what abilities it should have. If you are creating a major talisman, outline what principles or disciplines you want it to have and at what ratings. If you are creating a minor talisman, decide what specific effects you want the talisman to perform.

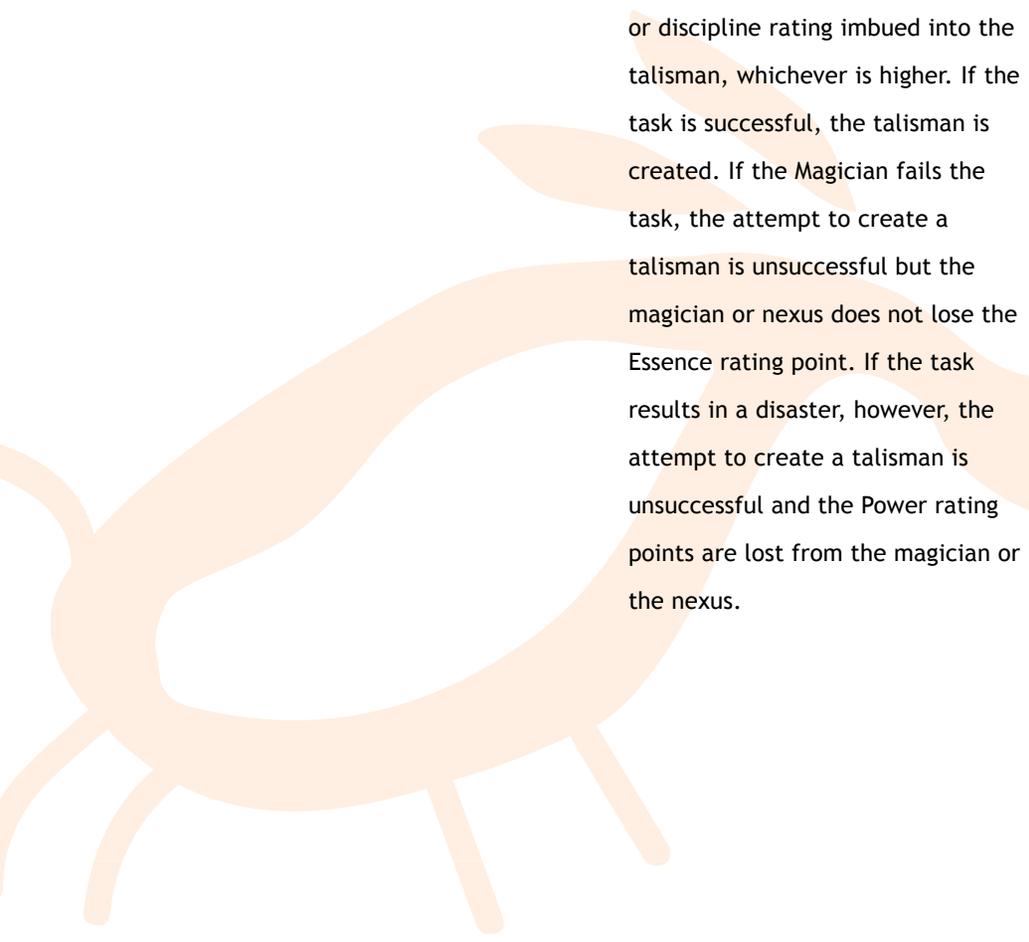
Creating a Major Talisman: Creating a talisman is a ritual. The ritual must take place in a magician’s sanctum or a nexus. Each rating point of principal or discipline encoded into the object while creating a major talisman requires one hour of concentration and 1 point from the magician’s or nexus’ Essence bank. For example, if a magician wishes to encode Death/Life 3 Manipulation 4 into an object, he will have to concentrate on the object for seven hours and spend seven Essence points.

A magician creating a talisman may not encode a principal or discipline at a rating higher than he knows himself.

At the end of the ritual, the magician must imbue the object

with whatever Essence rating the talisman will have; this will cost an Essence rating point from either the magician or the nexus. Performing the ritual is a task based on Intelligence + Aether/Void/Transformation, with a difficulty rating equal to the principal or discipline rating imbued into the talisman. If the task is successful, the talisman is created. If the magician fails the task, the attempt to create a talisman is unsuccessful but the magician or nexus does not lose the Essence rating points. If the task results in a disaster, however, the attempt to create a talisman is unsuccessful and the Essence rating point is lost from the magician or the nexus.

Creating a Minor Talisman: Creating a minor talisman is a ritual similar to creating a major one. The ritual must take place in a magician’s sanctum or a nexus. Each effect being encoded into the talisman requires the magician to concentrate on the object and the desired effect for a number of hours equal to the sum of the principal and discipline ratings used to create the effect and to spend 1 point of Essence per hour. A magician creating a talisman may not encode a magical effect requiring a principal or discipline at a rating higher than he knows himself. At the end of the ritual, the magician must imbue the object with whatever Essence rating the talisman will have; this will cost an Essence rating



point from either the magician or the nexus. Performing the ritual is a task based on Intelligence + Aether/Void/Transformation with a difficulty rating equal to either the principal or discipline rating imbued into the talisman, whichever is higher. If the task is successful, the talisman is created. If the Magician fails the task, the attempt to create a talisman is unsuccessful but the magician or nexus does not lose the Essence rating point. If the task results in a disaster, however, the attempt to create a talisman is unsuccessful and the Power rating points are lost from the magician or the nexus.

Using a Talisman

Attunement: Before a magician can use a talisman, even one he has created, he must first attune himself to the talisman. Attunement is a non-magical task based on the character's Determination + Performance/Meditation, with a difficulty equal to the Essence rating of the talisman. The cost of attunement is 1 Essence bank point. Even a mundane can use a talisman, although the act of attunement will cause the mundane to become unconscious for a time.

Using a Major Talisman: A character who has attuned himself to a major talisman now can use whatever principals and disciplines have been encoded into the talisman

as if he knew those principals and disciplines at the encoded ratings. The magician must have the talisman in his possession to do this. The magician may also use the Essence bank of the talisman to fuel magical effects created by the talisman or by the magician.

Using a Minor Talisman: A character who has attuned himself to a minor talisman now can use whatever magical effect has been encoded into the talisman. The magician must have the talisman in his possession to do this. The magician may also use the Essence bank of the talisman to fuel magical effects created by the talisman or by the magician.

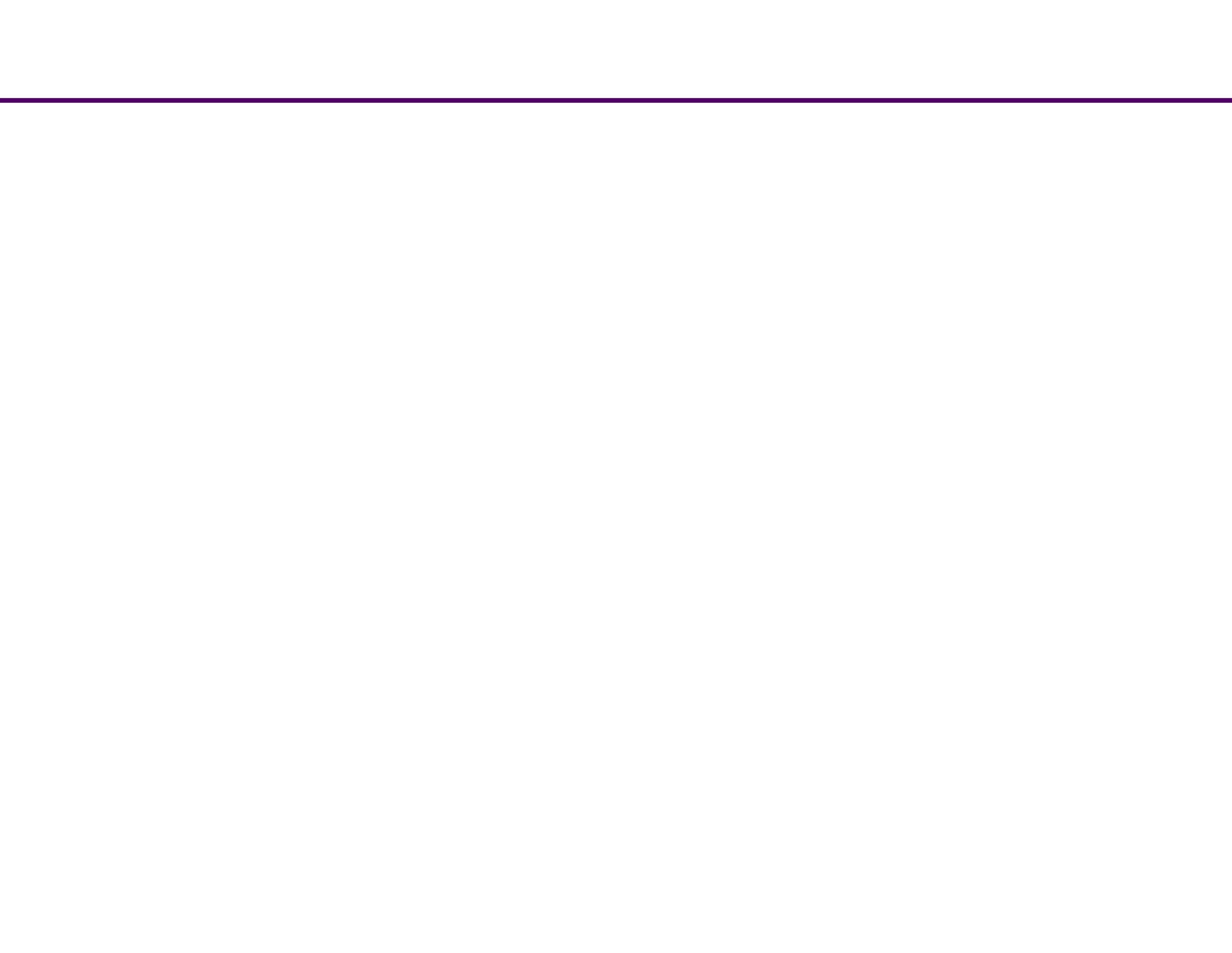
“ Once created, it is difficult to destroy a talisman. A talisman can automatically resist any Destruction magic aimed at it. ”

Refreshing a Talisman

Because a talisman has an Essence rating, it will refresh its bank naturally over time at a rate of one point of Essence per day. In a nexus, a talisman can refresh itself at a rate of one point of Essence per hour. A magician can also spend Essence to refresh a talisman. This action requires no task check, but any limits on how much Essence a magician can spend apply.

Destroying a Talisman

Once created, it is difficult to destroy a talisman. A talisman can automatically resist any Destruction magic aimed at it; each point of Essence in a talisman removes 1 success point from any attempt to destroy the object magically. A talisman can be broken into parts, and doing so negates the talisman's abilities, but if all the parts of the talisman are reassembled, the talisman becomes active again.



The Illumination of Thomas Dancer

Part 5

Dunstan climbed the staircase quickly and lightly, not touching the thin rail for support. Thomas followed, more reluctantly, and tried to forget his minor fear of heights. At last, however, no matter how long Thomas tried to put it off, they were at the top.

The top cloud was a large circle, easily 5 meters in diameter. A rail of chrome and glass encircled the island, and much of the circumference was lined with comfortable couches, chairs, a bar and so on. Several lights placed to provide an ambient glow gently turned up, as if controlled remotely, giving the place a soft, golden atmosphere.

To one edge sat a huge desk, of chrome and glass like the railing; Dunstan stood before the desk quietly, his hands clasped behind his back. Only the way Dunstan fidgeted with his fingers signaled Thomas that the other man was at all nervous. Reluctantly, Thomas joined his companion.

Behind the large desk was a chair of heavy wood and leather turned away from them. Slowly, the chair turned, and Thomas saw clearly the man he'd seen only in shadow a few moments ago.

The man was Asian, perhaps 50 years old. He was completely bald, but he sported a thick, dark goatee and remarkably bushy eyebrows. His suit was dark and clearly of the highest caliber; his tie was an almost

comical shade of yellow silk, something Thomas found a bit unexpected. As the man turned, he carefully placed his hands on the desk before him.

“So, Dunstan MacGregor,” the man said, his voice rich and rumbling. “I was beginning to think you had forgotten about me.”

“Not so, Kojami, not so at all,” Dunstan replied, an almost flippant attitude in his voice, as if he was not the one who had just been caught breaking into this man’s office. “I see all, I know all; it’s in my job description, you know.”

Kojami grunted in what might have been amusement. “So, then, Magistrate MacGregor, am I too assume that you are here in your official capacity?”

“You may do so,” MacGregor said. Without being asked, he strolled over to a chair of ballistic cloth suspended over a light frame and sat, crossing his legs and making himself comfortable.

“And this one?” Kojami nodded over to Thomas, who, though standing in the middle of the floor, was trying hard to remain unnoticed. “A new student for you?”

“That hasn’t been decided yet.” Thomas was not sure, but Dunstan’s reply seemed to have an edge to it, as if Kojami’s innocuous comment had carried a sting.

“Indeed,” Kojami replied. “Perhaps you should tell him the story of Christopher before he decides if he wishes you for a mentor-”

“The lad’s mentor is exactly why we’re here,” Dunstan snapped; Thomas glanced at him and saw that Dunstan’s face was, for a split second, beet red as from great exertion. He wondered who Christopher was, and hoped that he would have a chance to ask later.

Dunstan continued as the high color left his face. “Someone tried to shang-hai the lad just this morning. You know and I know and St. Peter’s dog knows that that is just not the way things are done.”

“Indeed,” Kojami said, though he seemed to be staring directly at Thomas. “A novice must come of his own free will. I have always honored the traditions of our kind, that tradition most of all.”

“Truly, Kojami?” Dunstan asked, the nonchalant wit returning to his voice. “Well, then, I suppose we have a bit of a difference over the meaning of ‘free will.’ “

“Not at all, Magistrate.” Thomas could hear a touch of annoyance in Kojami’s voice. “Why, just ask Natalia here. Did you not come to me of your own free will, my dear?”

“But of course, my mentor.” It was all Thomas could do to keep from jumping out of his boots; the voice had been so close he could feel warm breath on the back of his neck. As it was, he spun around and stepped back, his heart in his throat.

Standing less than a hand’s width behind where Thomas had been standing a second earlier was quite possibly the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She was tall, nearly as tall as he, with long, black hair and dark eyes. She wore a dark slacks suit and white silk blouse with a remarkably low neckline. She looked over at Thomas and smiled with strong, red lips; he felt frost suddenly grow at the base of his neck.

“Natalia is my newest pupil,” Kojami said, pride showing in his voice. “And one of the best I’ve had in a century.”

A century? Thomas heard no note of hyperbole, but surely the man could not be so old. Could he? Natalia walked with the unconscious grace of a fine dancer over to the bar, where she poured a drink of some dark fluid. She leaned against the railing, allowing Thomas to see her

form was a lean and sleek as a cat. “You flatter me, sir,” she said, though Thomas could hear the pleasure in her voice.

Kojami returned his attention to Dunstan. “So, Magistrate, as you can see, I have my hands filled at the moment. It would be quite a burden for me take on another pupil, even . . .” Kojami looked at Thomas as he spoke, allowing his voice to trail off with his sentence uncompleted. “It would be . . . inconvenient . . . to take on another now.”

“Really?” Dunstan rose from his chair. “I suppose it’s just the Westerner in me to believe that everyone thinks he can never have enough of a good thing.”

“Indeed.” Kojami’s voice was low, his eyes shaded.

“Very well, then,” Dunstan said as if preparing to dismiss an appointment. “It seems our efforts this evening have borne us little fruit. With your permission, Kojami, I and my friend will be off.” Dunstan bowed slightly to Natalia, then turned toward the stair case.

“Natalia,” Kojami said loudly enough to carry to Dunstan. “Please show our guests to the elevator. We have such a large office; it would a pity for them to get lost in the dark.” Natalia sat aside her drink and stalked across the floor to join Dunstan and Thomas at the staircase.

Before the woman could lead them down, however, Kojami spoke again. “I’ll give your regards to Archon Van Heflin when I speak to her tomorrow, Magistrate MacGregor.”

For a moment, Thomas thought Dunstan was going to reply, but he only nodded in Kojami’s direction and headed down the stairs.

Once they had gone beyond Kojami’s inner office, Natalia pulled a small remote control from her pocket and switched on a row of lights leading, it seemed, toward the suite’s entrance. She walked crisply down the hall, as if she were sure they had no choice but to follow.

“So, Natalia,” Dunstan said, his voice casual. “Been with Kojami long?”

“A while,” she replied, a slight look over her shoulder.

“And you’re his only pupil now?”

Thomas heard what he thought must be an amused huff. “I’m all he needs.”

“Really, now? Why, I remember when he and Grayson Monk seemed to be in some breakneck competition to see how many students each could cram into his studio without having them squirt out the windows like tooth-paste.”

“That was quite some time ago.” They had reached the outer door already; Natalia held it for them, then pressed the button for the private elevator. The doors opened immediately. “You sound as if you disapprove, Magistrate. I’m surprised; I’ve always heard that you preferred one student at a time yourself.” A sharp gleam seemed to enter her eyes. “But, then, the last one alone proved more than you could handle, didn’t he?”

For a split second, Thomas thought he was going to have to hold Dunstan back, but the man simply walked into the elevator, looking at nothing.

As Thomas started to enter, Natalia handed him the carved rod Dunstan had used on the door; feeling it, he realized for the first time that it was bone. “Here,” she said. “It’s always polite to clean up one’s toys before leaving.”

“Is that like rather like cleaning out the litter box?” Thomas asked, trying his best to put Dunstan’s nonchalant tone into his words.

If his thorn hit the mark, Natalia did not show it. She merely smiled, wished them a good evening, and disappeared behind the closing elevator doors.

The car dropped quickly toward the ground floor. “So,” Thomas said, hoping his voice carried over his pounding heart. “Kojami isn’t our man?”

Dunstan stared at the inside of the elevator door; Thomas thought he might have to repeat himself. “No,” Dunstan said at last. “But he certainly knows something about it.”

“How do you know that?”

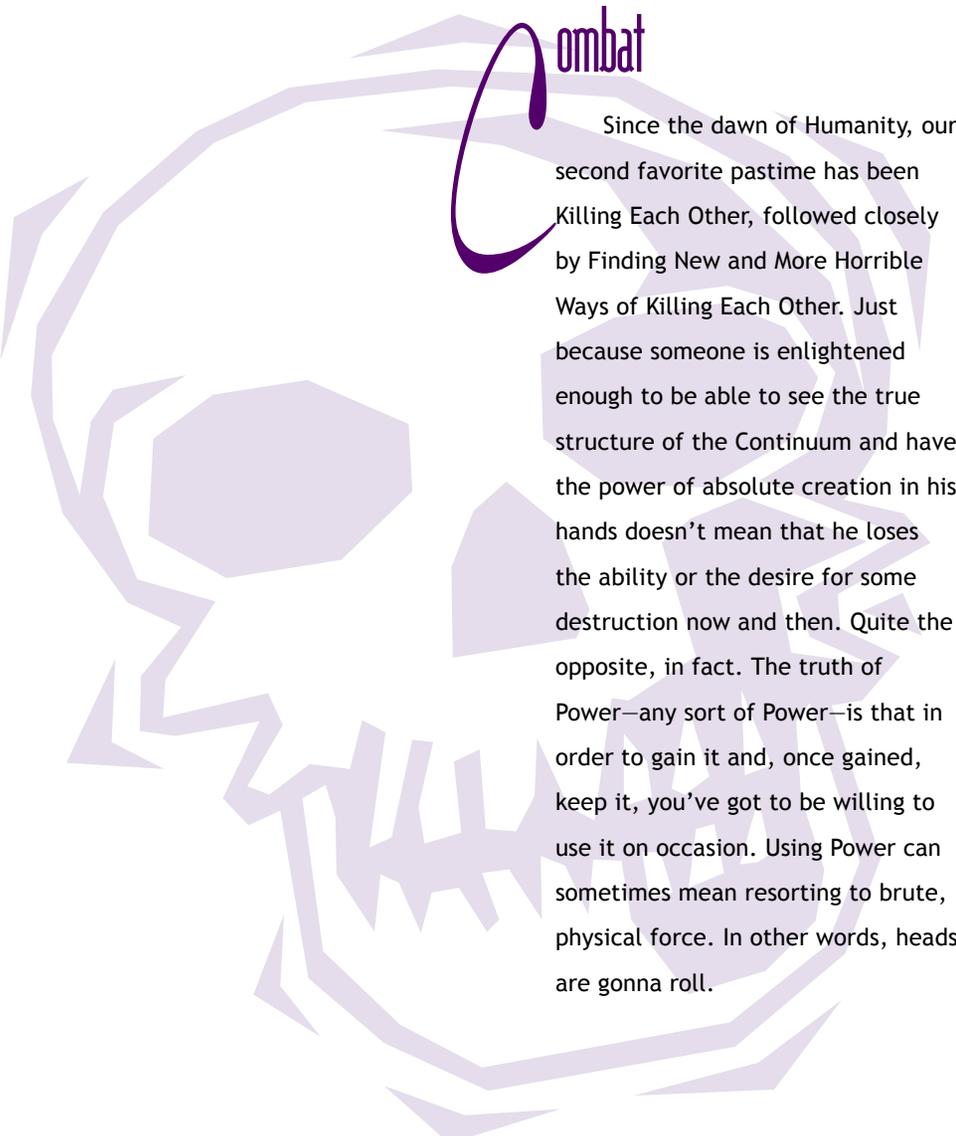
“Because he’s a schemer. He always has his finger in everybody else’s pie. And it wasn’t that long ago that he would have been flailing us both alive for this-unless he had something going on and wanted to know what we knew first.”

Thomas shook his head, half in amusement, half in disbelief. “Man, you people are just playing games with my life. I don’t know what the hell is going on here.”

“Don’t worry, Thomas,” Dunstan said. “You’re in good hands. I won’t let anything happen to you.”

“Really?” Thomas replied. “Who’s Christopher?”

The elevator doors popped open, then, and the two emerged on the building’s ground floor. Dunstan walked stiffly around the block to where he had parked. Thomas walked beside him, but the two men said not another word.



Combat

Since the dawn of Humanity, our second favorite pastime has been Killing Each Other, followed closely by Finding New and More Horrible Ways of Killing Each Other. Just because someone is enlightened enough to be able to see the true structure of the Continuum and have the power of absolute creation in his hands doesn't mean that he loses the ability or the desire for some destruction now and then. Quite the opposite, in fact. The truth of Power—any sort of Power—is that in order to gain it and, once gained, keep it, you've got to be willing to use it on occasion. Using Power can sometimes mean resorting to brute, physical force. In other words, heads are gonna roll.

Combat Round

A combat scene is divided into a number of five-second (game time) combat rounds. Everyone involved in a combat round has the opportunity to move and to take one action (or continue an extended action). When all characters have done everything they can in a round, the round is over, and a new round is started if necessary.

To help make combat manageable, a combat round is divided into a number of phases.

Initiative Phase: During this phase, all characters roll for initiative to determine in what order they act in the round. Initiative is a specialized task using an irregular task asset formed from the character's Dexterity and

Determination banks, and rolled against a difficulty rating of 6. The character with the highest number of success points goes first, while the character with the highest number of failure points goes last, and everyone else is distributed between depending on how many success or failure points they have. If multiple characters have the same number of points, characters act in order based on their Dexterity banks, highest to lowest. If multiple characters have the same Dexterity banks, characters act in order based on their Intuition banks, highest to lowest. If multiple characters also have the same Intuition banks, these characters are considered to be acting simultaneously.

The initiative phase may be eliminated from subsequent combat

Chapter 5: Game Systems

rounds if the initiative order is obvious or irrelevant.

Action/Movement Phase 1: All characters involved in the combat scene may now either take, begin or continue an action, or they may take a movement. Everyone involved in the scene resolves his action, if appropriate, or carries out his movement.

Resolution Phase 1: Once all the characters have done whatever it is they're going to do, the effects are applied in the phase. Results are applied in initiative order; this may indicate that one character's action will interrupt the action of another character farther down the line.

Action/Movement Phase 2: Characters who moved in the first action/movement phase may now take their action for the round, if

allowed, while characters who took their action in the first action/movement phase may now move, if allowed.

Resolution Phase 2: Once again, all actions and movements are resolved, just as in resolution phase 1.

The combat round phase sequence is repeated until all characters in the combat scene select to withdraw or are incapacitated.

Combat Actions

Attack: One of the more common actions in a combat is an attack. There are two types of attack, a ranged attack and a melee attack.

A ranged attack is made with a weapon that propels something at the target or something that is thrown from a distance. Ranged attacks use the attacker's Dexterity as their controlling characteristic, combined with the appropriate ability and concentration.

A melee attack is made with a hand-held weapon, or with the attacker's body itself, requiring the combatants to be relatively close to each other. Melee attacks use the attacker's Strength as the controlling characteristic, plus the appropriate ability and concentration.

Dodge: A character may elect to attempt to dodge a melee attack made against him. By definition, a dodge is a conflicting task. The dodging character takes an action,

Dexterity + Melee Combat/Dodge, and subtracts the number of success points achieved from the number of success points achieved by the attacker. If the dodging character fails, add the number of failure points suffered to the number of success points achieved by the attacker, or subtract them from the number of failure points suffered by the attacker. Yes, it is possible for a character to screw up and "walk into" an attack that would otherwise have failed. Combat ain't pretty, boys and girls. If the dodging character achieves a triumph, the attack misses him entirely, no matter how many successes the attacker achieves. If the dodging character suffers a disaster, however, the result is the same as if

the attacker had achieved a triumph.

Dodge is a reflexive task, meaning that a character can attempt to dodge even if he has already taken an action that phase. However, in doing so, the character sacrifices his next action/movement phase, even if it is in the next combat round, and must pass.

Go Prone: A character always has the option of going prone, which means he drops to the ground behind the best cover available. Someone attempting to attack a prone character suffers a -2 TM unless local conditions warrant a difference.

Move: A character not otherwise engaged may move during one of the action/movement phases of a combat round. A character can walk, run or sprint a number of meters

based on his Speed, and modified by local conditions. A character may also move in some other manner—crawl, for instance. The Director will have to rule how fast the character can move in these circumstances, usually a rate based on the character's Speed.

Parry: A character who is melee attacked may attempt to parry the attack, that is, he may attempt to deflect the attack away, and even turn it partially back on the attacker. Parrying is a task, Dexterity + Melee Combat/Parry, with a difficulty rating equal to the attacker's Dexterity bank. Any success points achieved by the parrying character are subtracted from the number of success points achieved by the attacker; if the attacker's success points are

reduced to 0, but the parrying character still has some success points, those points are inflicted on the attacker as damage points. Any failure points suffered by the parrying character are added to the number of success points achieved by the attacker, or subtracted from the number of failure points suffered by the attacker. If the parrying character achieves a triumph, all success points achieved by the attacker are inflicted upon the attacker rather than the target. If the parrying character suffers a disaster, however, the result is the same as if the attacker had achieved a triumph.

Parry is a reflexive task, meaning that a character can attempt to parry even if he has already taken an action that phase.

“ The game system assumes that an attacker can hit a target all day long, but that no one really cares if he isn’t doing any damage. This is a bit of an abstraction that some gamers may have a hard time visualizing. ”

However, in doing so, the character sacrifices his next action/movement phase, even if it is in the next combat round, and must pass.

Pass: A character may elect to do nothing at all during an action/movement phase. A character who has passed does not go prone, may not dodge an attack, move or take any action whatsoever. Of course, this means that during this phase, the character is a perfect sitting duck. Quack, quack.

Special: A special action is one not specifically covered by any of the others. The Director must rule whether the desired action is possible under the current conditions.

Difficulty Ratings in Combat

Difficulty ratings in combat are based on the target’s Physique bank. An attack task is not necessarily concerned about whether the attacker hits the target with his attack, but rather if the attack potentially inflicted any significant damage to the target. The game system assumes that an attacker can hit a target all day long, but that no one really cares if he isn’t doing any damage. This is a bit of an abstraction that some gamers may have a hard time visualizing. “So, you mean the bigger the target is, the harder he is to hit? Huh?” That’s not the information the system is giving you.

Damage Ratings for Weapons

Each weapon listed in the game has a damage rating based on the range band. This rating is a task modifier applied to the attacker’s task asset. The higher the rating, the more it benefits the attacker; the lower the rating, the more it hinders the attacker. Remember that you want your character’s task check to be as far under your task asset as possible.

Other Factors

Other factors can come into play in a combat situation that will influence how successful an attack is. Darkness, weather, being in the middle of a crowd, confined space, being underwater and many other factors can crop up in a role-playing game. It is beyond the scope of

Phantasmal Lights to offer

guidelines to cover these factors. My only advice at this point is to be reasonable and fair, and use some common sense.

Body Area Location

Once a player has determined that his attacking character has successfully hit a target character, the player must roll for the body area location of the attack. This determines what part of the target’s body is hit in the attack. Consult the Body Area Location chart below to determine which body area is hit in an attack.

Body Area	Die Roll
Leg, Left	1
Leg, Right	2
Arm, Left	3
Arm, Right	4
Chest	5-7
Abdomen	8-9
Head	10

Called Shot: Once an attacker has successfully made his attack, he may select to spend his success points, not on damage, but on “walking in” the attack to a desired body area. Each success point spent in this way allows the attacker to move up or down 1 point on the Body Area Location chart. So, if the attacker hits his target’s right leg, 4 on the chart, but wants to hit the target’s head, he would have to spend 6 success points to walk the attack up to 10 on the chart.

Likewise, if the attacker just wants to wound the character and keep him from running away, he could walk the attack down from the target’s abdomen, 8 or 9 on the chart, depending on what the attacker rolled, to the right leg, costing 3 or 4 success points. This, of course, cuts into the amount of damage an attack inflicts.

Point Blank: If the attacker is at point blank range with the target, and the target is doing nothing to avoid the attack, the attacker may simply select the body area hit rather than having to roll. This avoids some rather darkly humorous results that might occur otherwise. “Damn! I put the muzzle of the gun against this guy’s head, and he’s passed out on the floor, but for some

reason, I shot him in the leg. I know I’m not that bad a shot”

Armor Ratings

A target can wear some form of armor on any of his body areas, or he can take cover behind something with an armor rating. (You will notice that armor ratings are always negative numbers—that is, they hinder the attacker’s task—unless there’s something very screwy about the armor.) Armor has a rating that is a task modifier to the attacker’s task asset. See the Armor section later in the chapter to determine the specific task modifier armor grants a target.

“ Other factors can come into play in a combat situation that will influence how successful an attack is. Darkness, weather, being in the middle of a crowd, confined space, being underwater and many other factors can crop up in a role-playing game. ”

Damage

If an attack is successful, each success point that an attacker achieves is subtracted from the body point rating of the body area hit by the attack. The specific effects of this depend on how many body points are lost, and which body area is hit.

Body Points: The game system divides the Human body into seven body areas, each of which has a set number of body points. Each body area can suffer three different types of wounds—minor, major and mortal. What happens to a character when he takes damage depends on the degree of the wound and which body area suffers it.

Body Area Ratings (Minor/Major/Mortal)

Head	1/1/1
Abdomen	2/2/2
Chest	3/3/3
Arm, Right	4/4/4
Arm, Left	4/4/4
Leg, Right	5/5/5
Leg, Left	5/5/5

Minor Wounds: When a character suffers a minor wound—that is, when the body point total in a body area in the minor wound column is reduced to 0—he receives a -1 task modifier to all tasks he attempts until the wound is healed. In addition, he loses 1 point from his Stamina bank. This reflects the stun and fatigue that minor, non-life-threatening wounds inflict on a character.

Major Wounds: When a

character suffers a major wound—that is, when the body point total in a body area in the major wound column is reduced to 0—he receives another -1 task modifier to all tasks he attempts until the wound is healed. In addition, he loses 1 point from his Physique bank. The character also has a chance to lose consciousness or temporarily lose the ability to use his limbs, depending on which body area is affected.

Head, Chest and Abdomen:

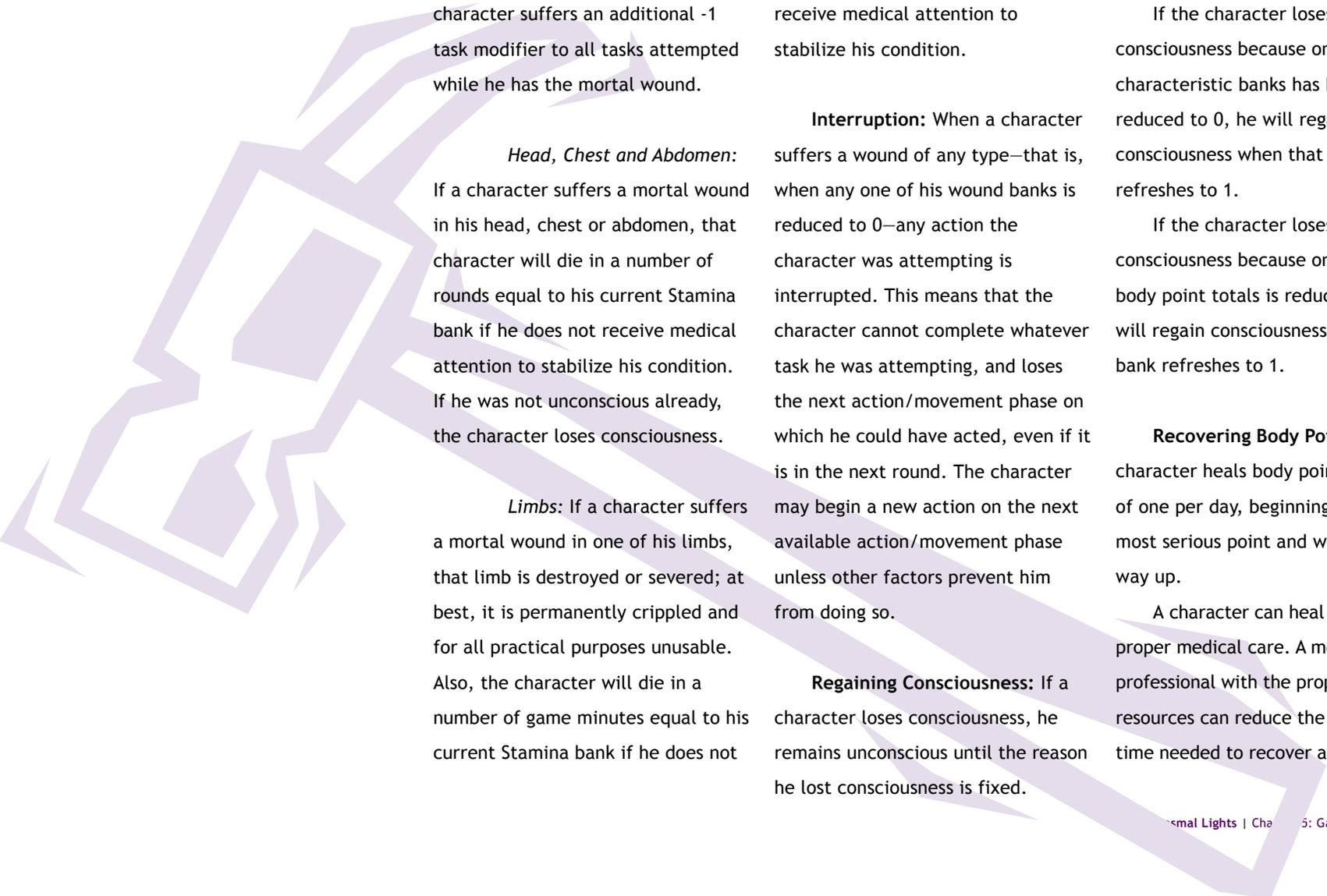
If the major wound column for the character’s head, chest or abdomen is reduced to 0, the character loses consciousness until the major wound bank for that area is restored to at least 1.

Limbs: If the major wound

bank for one of a character’s limbs is reduced to 0, the character loses the use of that limb until the major wound bank for that limb is restored to at least 1. The results of this should be obvious; a character without the use of one of his arms can’t perform certain actions such as firing a rifle, or at least not easily, while a character without the use of one of his legs is going to have a hard time moving around.

Mortal Wounds: When a

character suffers a mortal wound—that is, when the mortal wound bank for a specific body area is reduced to 0—that character has the chance of dying or being permanently crippled, depending on the body area affected. In addition, the



character suffers an additional -1 task modifier to all tasks attempted while he has the mortal wound.

Head, Chest and Abdomen:

If a character suffers a mortal wound in his head, chest or abdomen, that character will die in a number of rounds equal to his current Stamina bank if he does not receive medical attention to stabilize his condition. If he was not unconscious already, the character loses consciousness.

Limbs: If a character suffers a mortal wound in one of his limbs, that limb is destroyed or severed; at best, it is permanently crippled and for all practical purposes unusable. Also, the character will die in a number of game minutes equal to his current Stamina bank if he does not

receive medical attention to stabilize his condition.

Interruption: When a character suffers a wound of any type—that is, when any one of his wound banks is reduced to 0—any action the character was attempting is interrupted. This means that the character cannot complete whatever task he was attempting, and loses the next action/movement phase on which he could have acted, even if it is in the next round. The character may begin a new action on the next available action/movement phase unless other factors prevent him from doing so.

Regaining Consciousness: If a character loses consciousness, he remains unconscious until the reason he lost consciousness is fixed.

If the character loses consciousness because one of his characteristic banks has been reduced to 0, he will regain consciousness when that bank refreshes to 1.

If the character loses consciousness because one of his body point totals is reduced to 0, he will regain consciousness when that bank refreshes to 1.

Recovering Body Points: A character heals body points at a rate of one per day, beginning at the most serious point and working its way up.

A character can heal faster with proper medical care. A medical professional with the proper resources can reduce the amount of time needed to recover a body point.

“ A character can heal faster with proper medical care. A medical professional with the proper resources can reduce the amount of time needed to recover a body point. ”

This is a task, Intelligence + Biological Sciences/Medical, DR:(11 - Patient's Stamina Bank). Each success point reduces the time needed to recover a single body point to (24 - [success points]) hours.

For example, Leonard has lost 5 body points. Normally, this would take five days to heal. Dr. Muffs achieves 8 success points on her task check, however, which reduces the recover time to 16 hours per body point, or 3 days 8 hours.

Any significant physical activity during a recovery period cancels out the healing that would normally have occurred.

First Aid: A character with the Wilderness/First Aid ability can stabilize a wounded character, even himself, until more sophisticated

medical care is available. The first aid task, Education + Wilderness/First Aid, DR: 7, must achieve a number of success points equal to the total number of body points lost to stabilize the wounded character.

The task modifiers from the Body Area Location chart above apply to this task. After that, the character administering first aid must make a successful task every hour to maintain the wounded character's stability with an addition task modifier of -1 for each hour.

Weapons Charts

Firearms: Weapons Data

Range Bands (RB): There are five range bands that apply to all ranged weapons. Listed on the chart for each weapon at each range band

is a task modifier applied to the attacker's task asset representing what affect attacking with that weapon at that range has on the attack; this is the weapon's damage rating. A dash in a range band indicates that the weapon is not effective at that range. Rather than being exact measurements, range bands are generalized descriptions of the distance between an attacker and his target. This makes it much easier for the Director and player to visualize the combat scene.

- **Touch:** Point blank range; the attacker can be in physical contact with the target.
- **Close:** More or less within arm's reach, no more than a step or two away.
- **Short:** Can be reached by walking easily in a single combat round.

- **Long:** Within visual range, but would require several rounds to reach on foot.
- **Extreme:** On the edge of visual range, requiring the better part of a scene to reach on foot.

Fire Rate (FR): The number of rounds that a weapon capable of automatic fire can fire each attack.

Mass (MS): The mass of the weapon unloaded in kilograms.

Magazine (MG): The number of rounds that a fully loaded weapon can hold.

Magazine Mass (MM): The mass of a weapon's fully loaded magazine in kilograms.

Firearms: Weapons Descriptions
The firearms listed are generic descriptions rather than specific models. Really, there isn't that much difference between a Glock and a

Heckler-Koch automatic pistol or an M-16A2 and an AKM assault rifle, not as far as the game system is concerned. In the following descriptions, the first cost given is the cost of the weapon from the manufacture, followed by the cost of a full magazine. Actual costs may vary depending on the circumstances.

Grenade Launcher: A military weapon that shoots an explosive shell at a target, often used as indirect-fire weapon. Grenade launchers are sometimes independent weapons, but are often attached to assault rifles.

The damage ratings listed indicate the distance between the target and the impact of the grenade. Everyone and everything within range of the grenade's impact

receives the same amount of damage from the explosive attack.

As far as actual range goes, a grenade launcher is only capable of firing at Long range. Any less than that and the grenade does not rotate enough times to arm itself, a safety feature designed to keep grunts from blowing up themselves and their buddies, and thus does not explode, becoming the equivalent of a big thrown rock; the shell that fires the grenade is not terribly powerful, and is not capable of firing at Extreme range.

Grenade launchers are military weapons, meaning that they are highly illegal for civilians to own in almost every jurisdiction.

Cost: \$750/\$15.

Pistol, Light: A firearm designed to be fired with one hand. A light

pistol is generally small and easily concealable, but does not have much stopping power and does not hold a particularly large magazine. The pistol described is an automatic, but a revolver version is available with the same characteristics except that it only holds six rounds.

Cost: \$500/\$35.

Pistol, Heavy: A firearm designed to be fired with one hand, although larger models benefit from using a two-handed grip. A heavy pistol is less concerned with concealability than it is with stopping power and magazine volume. The pistol described is an automatic, but a revolver version is available with the same characteristics except that it only holds six rounds.

“ **Pistol, Light:** A firearm designed to be fired with one hand. A light pistol is generally small and easily concealable, but does not have much stopping power and does not hold a particularly large magazine. ”

Cost: \$750/\$75.

Rifle, Assault: A light rifle designed to fire multiple rounds and carry large magazines. It is a military weapon and, in its fully automatic mode, is illegal for civilians to own in almost every jurisdiction. Many assault rifles are available in semi-automatic mode, however, which are often less restricted, although it is often easy

to modify a semi-automatic rifle to fire in full automatic mode. That is often an insignificant point, however, as even in semi-automatic mode an assault rifle can empty its magazine faster than most targets could possibly react.

The damage ratings listed are for a weapon firing the commonly recommended three-to-five round bursts. Subtract 2 points from the

task modifiers if the weapon is fired in single-shot mode.

Cost: \$350/\$100.

Rifle, Hunting: The classic deer rifle, typically a bolt action weapon with a heavy wooden stock and equipped with a telescopic sight. A hunting rifle is designed mostly for accuracy at range and killing the target with a single shot. Because of that, hunting rifles tend to have smaller magazines than assault rifles, but the rounds fired tend to be heavier and of larger caliber.

Hunting rifles are common almost everywhere, with few restrictions on their ownership.

Cost: \$750/\$25.

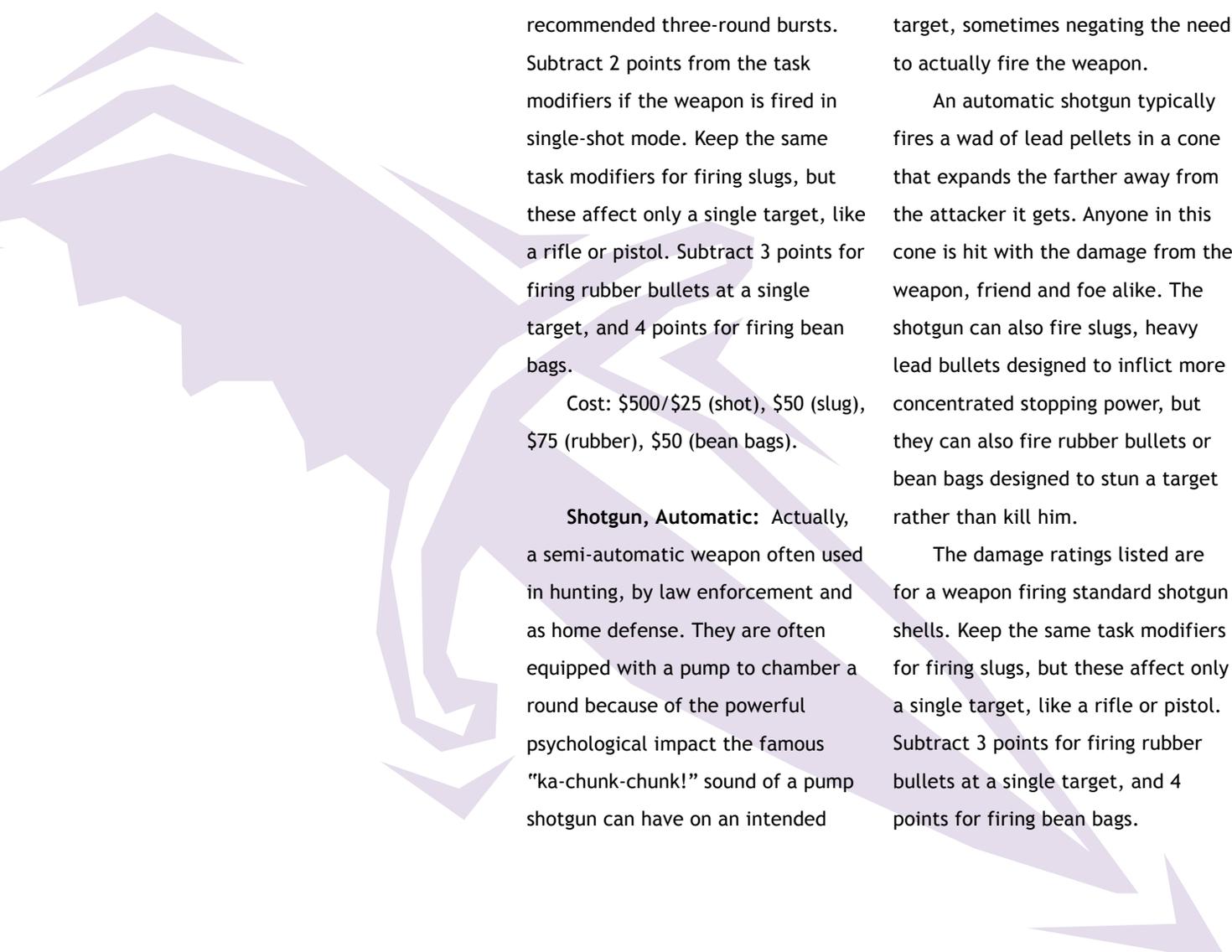
Shotgun, Assault: A military support weapon designed to spray a

lot of lead into a relatively small space, only slightly more controlled than just chucking in a grenade. Assault shotguns usually resemble assault rifles in configuration, and often are fitted with big drum magazines.

An assault shotgun typically fires a wad of lead pellets in a cone that expands the farther away from the attacker it gets. Anyone in this cone is hit with the damage from the weapon, friend and foe alike. The shotgun can also fire slugs, heavy lead bullets designed to inflict more concentrated stopping power, but they can also fire rubber bullets or bean bags designed to stun a target rather than kill him.

The damage ratings listed are for a weapon firing standard shotgun shells in the commonly

Weapon	RB	FR	MS	MG	MM
Grenade Launcher	+8/+4/+2/+1/-	1	3	1	0.25
Pistol, Light	+3/+2/+1/-/-	1	1	7	0.50
Pistol, Heavy	+4/+3/+2/+1/-	1	2	15	1.00
Rifle, Assault	+6/+4/+2/+1/-	5	4	30	2.00
Rifle, Hunting	+5/+4/+3/+2/+1	1	5	5	1.00
Shotgun, Assault	+6/+3/+1/-/-	3	4	25	5.00
Shotgun, Automatic	+3/+2/+1/-/-	1	5	5	1.25
Submachinegun, Pistol	+4/+3/+2/+1/-	5	2	25	1.50
Submachinegun, Rifle	+6/+5/+3/+1/-	5	3	50	2.50



recommended three-round bursts. Subtract 2 points from the task modifiers if the weapon is fired in single-shot mode. Keep the same task modifiers for firing slugs, but these affect only a single target, like a rifle or pistol. Subtract 3 points for firing rubber bullets at a single target, and 4 points for firing bean bags.

Cost: \$500/\$25 (shot), \$50 (slug), \$75 (rubber), \$50 (bean bags).

Shotgun, Automatic: Actually, a semi-automatic weapon often used in hunting, by law enforcement and as home defense. They are often equipped with a pump to chamber a round because of the powerful psychological impact the famous “ka-chunk-chunk!” sound of a pump shotgun can have on an intended

target, sometimes negating the need to actually fire the weapon.

An automatic shotgun typically fires a wad of lead pellets in a cone that expands the farther away from the attacker it gets. Anyone in this cone is hit with the damage from the weapon, friend and foe alike. The shotgun can also fire slugs, heavy lead bullets designed to inflict more concentrated stopping power, but they can also fire rubber bullets or bean bags designed to stun a target rather than kill him.

The damage ratings listed are for a weapon firing standard shotgun shells. Keep the same task modifiers for firing slugs, but these affect only a single target, like a rifle or pistol. Subtract 3 points for firing rubber bullets at a single target, and 4 points for firing bean bags.

Cost: \$250/\$10 (shot), \$20 (slug), \$30 (rubber), \$20 (bean bags).

Submachinegun, Pistol:

Sometimes called a machine pistol, a weapon designed to be held in one hand and to fire small-caliber pistol ammunition in fully automatic mode. Machine pistols are not especially accurate, but are relatively concealable, handy in close quarters and throw a lot of lead down range. Police, private security and commando units sometimes use these weapons, but they are most commonly found in the hands of underworld elements. Because of this, they are usually highly restricted in all jurisdictions.

Cost: \$500/\$125.

“ They are often equipped with a pump to chamber a round because of the powerful psychological impact the famous “ka-chunk-chunk!” sound of a pump shotgun can have on an intended target, sometimes negating the need to actually fire the weapon. ”

Submachinegun, Rifle: A
 military weapon designed to be held with both hands and to fire small-caliber pistol ammunition in fully automatic mode. They’re not especially accurate, but are easier to conceal than a rifle and spit out a lot of lead, earning them the appellation “street sweepers.” Police, private security and commando units often use these weapons, but they are also often found in the hands of underworld elements. Thus, they are highly restricted in most jurisdictions.
 Cost: \$750/\$250.

Melee Weapons: Weapons Data

Weapon	RB	MS
Axe	+4/+2/-/-/-	3
Knife	+2/+1/-/-/-	1
Mace	+3/+2/-/-/-	4
Staff	+2/+1/-/-/-	2
Sword	+3/+2/-/-/-	3

Projectile Weapons: Weapons Data

Weapon	RB	MS
Bow	+3/+2/+1/-/-	2
Blowgun	+2/+1/-/-/-	1
Sling	+3/+2/+1/-/-	1
Spear	+4/+3/+2/-/-	3
Thrown	+2/+1/-/-/-	1

Armor

A character can try to prevent damage by wearing armor. Armor has a rating used as a task modifier to the attacker’s task. It comes in two types, flexible and rigid. Flexible armor is often concealable and does not limit its wearer’s physical movements too much. It offers a relatively low level of protection, however.

Rigid armor is never concealable and hinders its wearer’s movements quite a bit, but offers the best personal protection available.

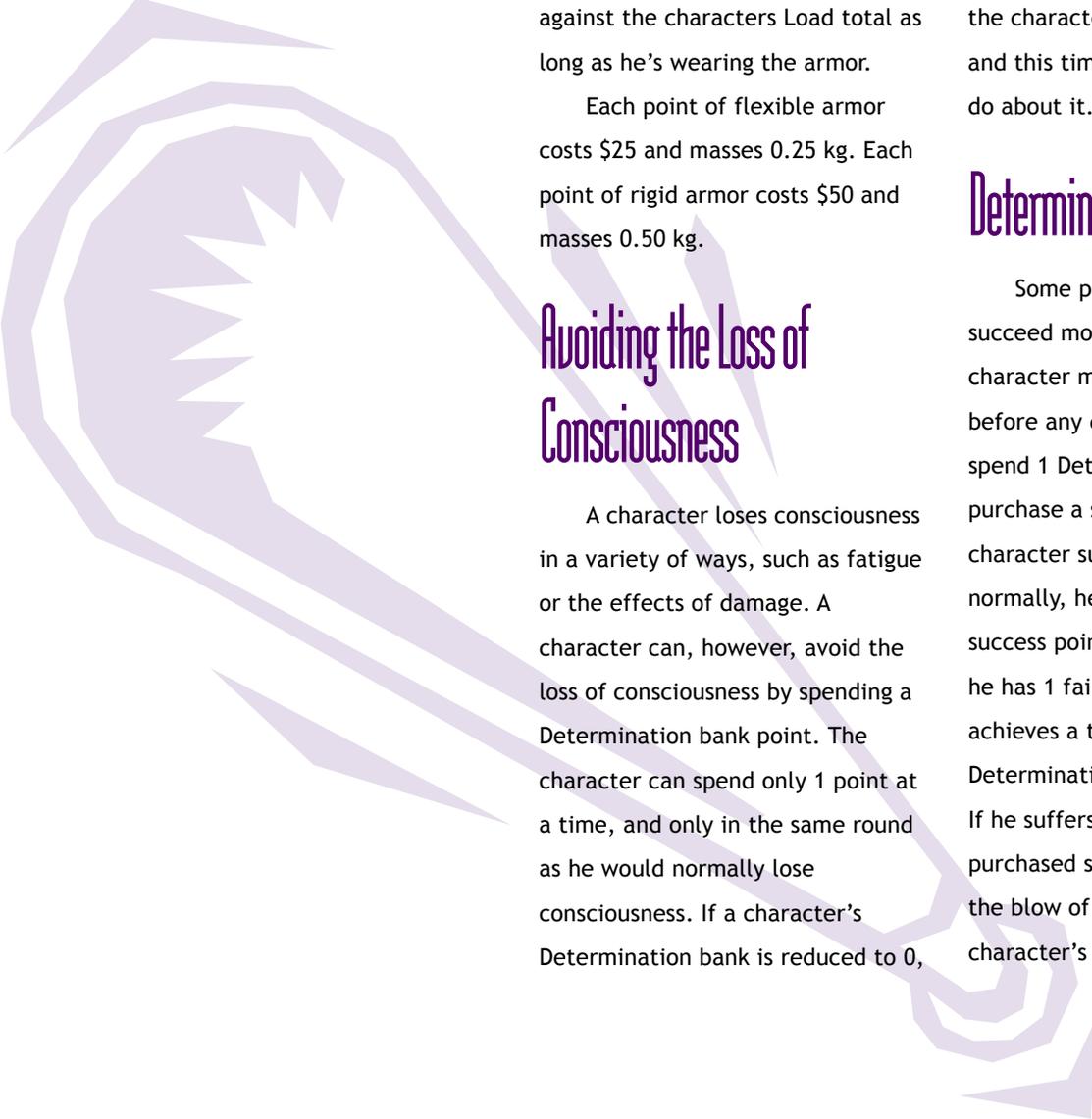
Flexible armor has a rating ranging from -1 to -5 per body area. Total the ratings for all body areas covered with flexible armor. Every 5 points or part thereof of flexible armor worn inflicts a -1 TM on any

action attempted by the wearer that might be affected by wearing armor.

Rigid armor has a rating ranging from -1 to -10 per body area. Total the ratings for all body areas covered with rigid armor. Every 5 points or part thereof of rigid armor worn inflicts a -2 TM on any action attempted by the wearer that might be affected by wearing armor.

Armor ratings are cumulative. If you want to wear both rigid and flexible armor on the same body area, go for it. Of course, penalties are cumulative, as well, along with an additional -1 TM for each body area on which you wear more than one layer of armor.

Because armor is distributed relatively evenly over its body area, the mass of armor does not count



against the characters Load total as long as he's wearing the armor.

Each point of flexible armor costs \$25 and masses 0.25 kg. Each point of rigid armor costs \$50 and masses 0.50 kg.

Avoiding the Loss of Consciousness

A character loses consciousness in a variety of ways, such as fatigue or the effects of damage. A character can, however, avoid the loss of consciousness by spending a Determination bank point. The character can spend only 1 point at a time, and only in the same round as he would normally lose consciousness. If a character's Determination bank is reduced to 0,

the character loses consciousness, and this time, there's nothing he can do about it.

Determination

Some people just want to succeed more than others. Before a character makes a task check, before any dice are rolled, he can spend 1 Determination bank point to purchase a success point. If the character succeeds at the task normally, he just has an extra success point. If he fails at the task, he has 1 failure point fewer. If he achieves a triumph, the Determination bank cost is negated. If he suffers a disaster, the purchased success point can soften the blow of the disaster a bit. If a character's Determination bank is

ever reduced to 0, the character loses consciousness.

Fatigue

Fatigue occurs when a character exerts himself, either physically or mentally. If a character exerts himself beyond his limits, he suffers from extra fatigue. There are a variety of causes for fatigue.

Lift

If a character attempts to hold up a mass equal to or less than his lift limit beyond his time limit, the character loses 1 Stamina bank point per phase. If a character attempts to hold up a mass equal to up to twice his lift limit, the character loses 1 Stamina bank point per round, and 2 Stamina bank points per round

“ Some people just want to succeed more than others. ”

beyond his time limit. When a character’s Stamina bank reaches 0, he loses consciousness.

Load

If a character attempts to carry a load beyond his time limit, he loses 1 Stamina bank point per hour. If a character attempts to carry a load that masses up to twice his load limit, he loses 1 Stamina bank point per hour that he carries this load, and 2 Stamina bank points per hour beyond his time limit. When a character’s Stamina bank reaches 0, he loses consciousness.

Mental Activity

A character can engage in significant mental activity, such as research, for a number of hours equal to his Determination bank

rating before he begins to suffer the effects of fatigue. Each hour beyond this limit costs the character 1 Intelligence bank point. When a character’s Intelligence bank reaches 0, he loses consciousness.

Movement

A character can walk a number of hours equal to his Stamina bank until he needs to rest or begin to suffer the effects of fatigue. A character can run a number 10 minute units equal to his Stamina bank before he needs to rest or begin to suffer the effects of fatigue. A character can sprint a number of seconds equal to his Stamina bank before he needs to rest or begin to suffer the effects of fatigue.

For each applicable unit of time beyond his limit that a character

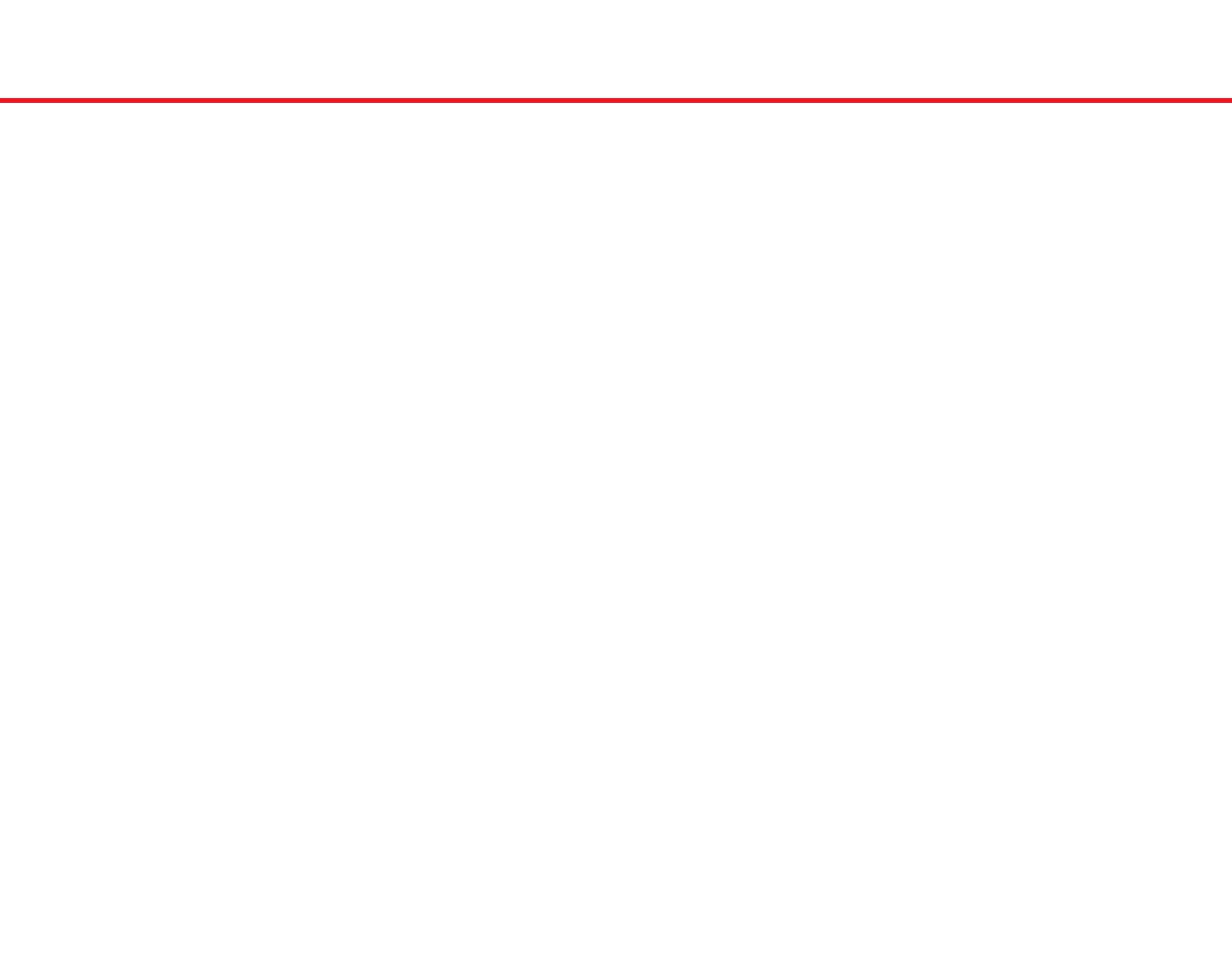
continues his movement, he loses 1 Stamina bank point. When a character’s Stamina bank reaches 0, he loses consciousness.

Luck

Sometimes, a character just needs a little luck. Fortunately, in the game, at least, luck is not always a matter of random chance. A character’s Essence bank is normally used to power the effects of magic, but even a non-magical character (or even a magical one) can use his Essence bank to buy a lucky break.

If a character fails a task check by 1 point—that is, the character suffers only 1 failure point—he can spend an Essence bank point to negate the failure point and give him a single success point. This does

not give the character an extraordinary result. If a character’s Essence bank is reduced to 0, he loses consciousness.



The Illumination of Thomas Dancer

Part 6

Thomas finally realized that his entire life had changed about halfway to the lake. Quitting his job had not done it, even after Mr. Goforth's impassioned pleas for him to stay. Arranging to have all his belongings moved from his apartment to Dunstan's beautifully restored Victorian did not do it. It was only when driving up to Dunstan's cabin on Clear Lake that the enormity of what he was doing truly struck him.

It was about two o'clock in the morning. Dunstan was asleep in the back seat, and Thomas had been driving since about eleven. About the time the San Francisco radio station he had been listening to faded out, Thomas thought that he really should get to bed, that he had to get up and go to work in the morning-when, suddenly, he remembered that he would quite probably never have to worry about such a mundane thing again in his life.

At once, Thomas had difficulty breathing. He rolled down the window, but the sudden rush of air only made the sensation of suffocation worse, as if the air was flowing by too fast for him to breathe. His heart began to race, and he almost jammed on the

breaks when he noticed the lights of a rest area on top of the next hill. Oddly, that comforted him enough that he managed to pull into the rest area parking lot, stop the car, throw open the car door and rush to the tree-lined park. He closed his eyes, took deep breaths and at last just lay down on the soft, moist grass.

He heard the soft click of the car door closing, followed by the whip of footsteps through damp grass and the creak of someone sitting on a picnic table near him. Dunstan, of course. It was almost as if he could feel him there, as if the man burned with a radiant heat Thomas could feel on his face. Thankfully, though, the other man said nothing, and waited silently until Thomas felt the wave of panic smooth and flow away. At last, he slowly climbed up to his feet, surprised to notice that every muscle in his body seemed to ache.

“Don’t worry,” Dunstan said quietly. “You’ll get used to it all, eventually.”

“When?” Thomas asked as he joined the other man at the table. Dunstan could only shrug.

“There’s no way to know. There’s one fellow I know of who just couldn’t get used to the Life. He’d been a magician for, oh, maybe ten years or so, and it had been a struggle for him everyday. Then, one day, almost like a balloon popping, he told me, all the anxiety and tension just faded away, and he felt at peace with himself for the first time.”

“What about you?”

“Me? Oh, let me see—for about two weeks, I felt like I was trying to get through life drunk, and not a pleasant drunk, mind you. One of those nasty drunks when you really don’t know what’s real and what’s a dream. It faded, though, a little at a time.”

“Has there ever been anyone, you know, anyone who just hasn’t been able to cope?” Dunstan sat silently, thought Thomas could almost hear the thoughts running like water through the man’s mind. For awhile, Thomas thought Dunstan was not going to answer, but eventually he did.

“Yes,” he said. “Sometimes, there are those who just can’t cope.”

Once again, Dunstan when silent, and Thomas thought he might begin at any time with another illustrative story, but at last Dunstan rose, and headed for the shack of soda machines.

“I’ll get us some drinks,” he said. “You get in the back and sleep. I’ll drive us the rest of the way.”

At the cabin, the days began to flow. Thomas had not worked so hard even in college, rising before dawn, then working and studying usually until long after dark. For some reason, Thomas had expected his training in magic to be, somehow, more mystical, more philosophical. As he and Dunstan jogged around through the chilly pre-dawn air around the lake, though, Thomas began to reflect that he felt more as if he were training to be an astronaut than a magician.

He studied tomes of magical theory with equations and theorems more dense than any physics course he had taken in college. He trained in martial arts with a vigorousness that might have impressed a Shao-Lin monk. He spent hours just watching the world, taking in the detail of the shape of a leaf, the texture of sand,

the scent of pine needles, and then working to recreate those images in his mind as perfectly as possible.

“Magic is based in reality,” Dunstan once told him. “You must have a firm understanding of what reality is before you can change it into what you want it to be.”

The work was hard. There was no time for recreation, little time for reflection. One day, Thomas looked at a calendar and realized that he had lost track of how many days he had been working without a break; he was surprised when Dunstan told him they had been at the cabin for nearly a month.

“So,” Thomas asked Dunstan one day as they took a breather from their daily morning run. “When do I actually get to do some magic?”

Dunstan smiled, and Thomas could tell he was almost ready to laugh. “That, me boyo,” Dunstan replied, slapping Thomas hard on the back, “that is a very good question.”

The day, Thomas had noticed, was overcast, but not gloomy. The dark clouds, the occasional rumble of thunder, the sudden shower of rain that would just as suddenly stop, all these things

seemed to lay a thick, comforting blanket over the world, and Thomas felt a calm restfulness, a sleepy peacefulness as on a lazy Sunday afternoon with nothing to do.

He sat on the floor of what Dunstan called the Meditation Room, mostly because there was nothing else to sit on in this room. One wall of the room overlooked a small valley behind the cabin which lead down to the lake.

Thomas sat facing the glass, but rather than watching the scene outside, he concentrated on a candle before him.

The candle was new, fresh from its plastic wrapper. It was of white wax, thin and tapered, a dinner candle, set in a clear glass candlestick. The wick was fresh and white and ragged, as if the string were coming unraveled down to the wax. He concentrated on the fuzzy wick, imagining how it felt, imagining the smell of the wax, its texture in his fingers, even its weight.

Then, he began to imagine fire. First, he saw the flickering light of the flames, the red and yellow of them.

Then, he thought of the heat, the drying heat of the flames.

At last, he sought to merge the two images, the clean wax of the candle, the flickering flames of the fire. He tried to concentrate on them both, making them both as real in his mind as they would be to his real senses. He pictured them both as clearly as he could.

After what seemed a huge amount of time, Thomas began to wonder if anything was going to happen. Perhaps, he began to think, he was not ready for this, when suddenly, the candle almost exploded into flame. Molten wax shot across the room, and Thomas could feel a fine spray of molten wax mist his face. On the floor of the Meditation Room, the wick burned its entire length, and the wax of the candle was nothing but a molten puddle. Carefully but quickly, Thomas tugged off his sweatshirt and tossed it on the fire to smother it out.

Behind him, he heard a sudden laugh and clapping of hands. He snapped around to see Dunstan standing there, laughing and applauding, and at first he felt his face burn with embarrassment and then anger, both of which quickly gave way to his own sense of amusement and then, almost unexpectedly, triumph.

“I did it,” he said, almost laughing. “I really did it.”

“That you did, lad,” Dunstan said. He came forward and shook Thomas’ hand, slapping him on the shoulder with the other.

“This is a great day, Thomas, a truly great day. And tonight, my friend, tonight we celebrate!”

System Terms

System terms are words and phrases used by the Director and players of the game to deal with the mechanics of playing the game. They are not intended to be used by the characters within the game, and should not be used so, at least not in this context. (Unless, of course, your players play a group of gamers sitting around playing a role-playing game—but that would be just too weird.)

Ability: A body of knowledge and experience a character has acquired dealing with a specific subject.

Act: A part of a story which can be seen as a unit but is not in itself a complete story, usually consisting of more than one scene.

Attribute: An advantage or limitation a character has that can have a significant effect on the character's ability to act in the game.

Bank: The current value of a trait.

Body Areas: On a Human, seven areas of the body that are treated distinctly in the rules, consisting of the head, chest, abdomen, right arm, left arm, right leg and left leg.

Body Points: Values assigned to each of the seven body areas representing the health of that particular body area.

Character: The personalities controlled by the Director and players during a game. There are two types of Character—the player character, which is the personality controlled by each player in the game, and the Director character, which is controlled by the Director.

Characteristic: A descriptor which allows a Director and players to quantify the innate abilities of a character.

Combat Round: A five-second period of game time used to manage the actions of characters involved in a combat scene.

Continuum: The fictional multiverse in which the game takes place.

Concentration: A specialty of an ability.

Damage Rating: A task modifier assigned to a weapon for each range band to reflect the relative amount of damage that weapon is likely to cause at a particular range.

Die: A random-number generator. **Phantasmal Lights** uses a ten-sided die to generate random numbers from 1 to 10.

Chapter 6: Terminology

Difficulty Rating: The rating of how hard a task is to perform, ranging from 1 to 10 (ten being the most difficult) and set by the Director for each task.

Director: The game moderator for **Phantasmal Lights**.

Disaster: An extraordinary result that occurs during a task, generally the worst possible failure that a character can experience.

Episode: A single game session, in which the players participate in one or more stories in part or in whole.

Failure Points: The difference between a character's task asset and task check when the character fails at a task.

Game Time: Time as it passes within the game continuum.

Personality Factors: Traits used to quantify a number of qualities

that help define the personality and attitudes of a character.

Phase: A division of the combat round, used to help the Director manage the actions of the characters involved.

Range Bands: Five divisions of relative distance between an attacker and target, including self, close, short, long and extreme.

Rating: The numeric value assigned to a trait representing its permanent value.

Real Time: Time as it passes in the real world.

Scene: A part of a story that occurs at a single location for a continuous period of time.

Series: A group of related stories.

Story: A complete tale, including a beginning, middle and end, which may be part of a series.

Success Points: The difference between a character's task asset and task check when the character succeeds at a task.

Task: A distinct action performed by a character which requires a significant amount of effort to accomplish and in which there is a possibility of failure.

Task Asset: The value created by combining the banks of one characteristic and one ability.

Task Check: The combination of a 10-sided die roll and a difficulty rating, which is compared to a character's task asset to determine whether he has succeeded or failed at a given task.

Task Modifier: A modifier applied to the task asset; a positive task modifier is generally beneficial

to the character, while a negative task modifier is generally harmful.

Trait: A quantifiable descriptor of a character in the game, typically given some sort of numerical rating.

Triumph: An extraordinary result that occurs during a task, generally the best possible success that a character can experience.

Wound: An amount of damage taken by a character to one of his body areas significant enough to have specific effects on the character's ability to act within the game. There are three levels of wounds—minor, major and mortal—which have different effects on the character depending on which body area suffers the wound.

Setting Terms

Setting Terms are words and phrases commonly used by characters in the game continuum, as well as by the Director and players.

Adept: An experienced and accomplished magician, the fourth rank a magician can attain.

Aether: The most fundamental element of the Continuum, the basis of all matter, energy and spirit. Free aether is required for the Aware to perform magic.

Apprentice: A magician in training, the second rank a magician can attain.

Archon: The senior agent of the Magisterium in a domain.

Ascetics, The: A group of loosely associated Aware banded together to forestall any interference with its members by any faction or individual of magical society.

Canton: An area in the Nether Realm that conforms to a given paradigm, often one formed deliberately.

Chancellor: The leader of the Magisterium, chosen by the Conservatory.

Circle: A group of closely associated magicians.

Conservatory, The: The ruling body of the Magisterium.

Continuum: The Three Realms, the Material, the Nether and the Transcendental.

Corrupter: A derogatory expression for a Templar.

Cosminium, The: The legendary, perhaps mythical, source of all aether in the Continuum.

Coyne: A unit of aether, a natural product of a nexus.

Curator: A member of the Conservatory, the ruling body of the Magisterium.

Discipline: A magical specialty, the equivalent of a concentration.

Domain: The area assigned to an Archon by the Magisterium.

Dreamrunner: A person capable of detaching his spirit from his material form and travel about the Dreamscape.

Dreamscape: Either the Transcendental Realm as a whole, or a specific "area" of that Realm devoted to the dreams of sentient creatures.

“ **Curator:** A member of the Conservatory, the ruling body of the Magisterium. ”

Essence: Raw aether processed and purified by a living being, the most potent form of free aether.

Factor: Someone who assists a magician, usually with dealing with mundane affairs.

Fae, The: The inhabitants of the Transcendental Realm who consist of spirit rather than matter.

Feral: A person with a powerful natural aptitude for magic, but who is untrained and outside of magical society. A feral may be completely ignorant of his abilities, using magic unconsciously. When a feral is discovered, groups of magicians will compete, sometimes violently, to bring the feral under their control.

Focus: An object or technique that assists a magician perform magic.

Principal: An area of magical knowledge, the equivalent of an ability.

Guild: A group of magicians loosely associated by philosophy, magical technique or other factors.

Illuminatus: An organization formed during the Enlightenment as a reaction to the policies of the Magisterium. Illuminatus believes that magicians should use their abilities however they see fit to do so, and that includes using those powers to gain power and influence in the mundane world.

Journeyman: A magician considered to be qualified to practice magic without supervision, the third rank a magician can attain.

Magician: A magically Aware who studies magic to gain skills in manipulating reality.

Magisterium, The: An organization formed following the Inquisition to regulate the use of magic and maintain the secrecy of magical society. The Magisterium is dedicated to the principle that magicians and other Aware should not use their abilities to influence the mundane world.

Magistrate: Agents of the Magisterium in an area who work under the authority of an Archon.

Masque: A person who, while suffering a near-death experience, has his body occupied by a Fae attempting to cross over to the Material Realm. The presence of two spirits in a physical body often gives the being significant powers.

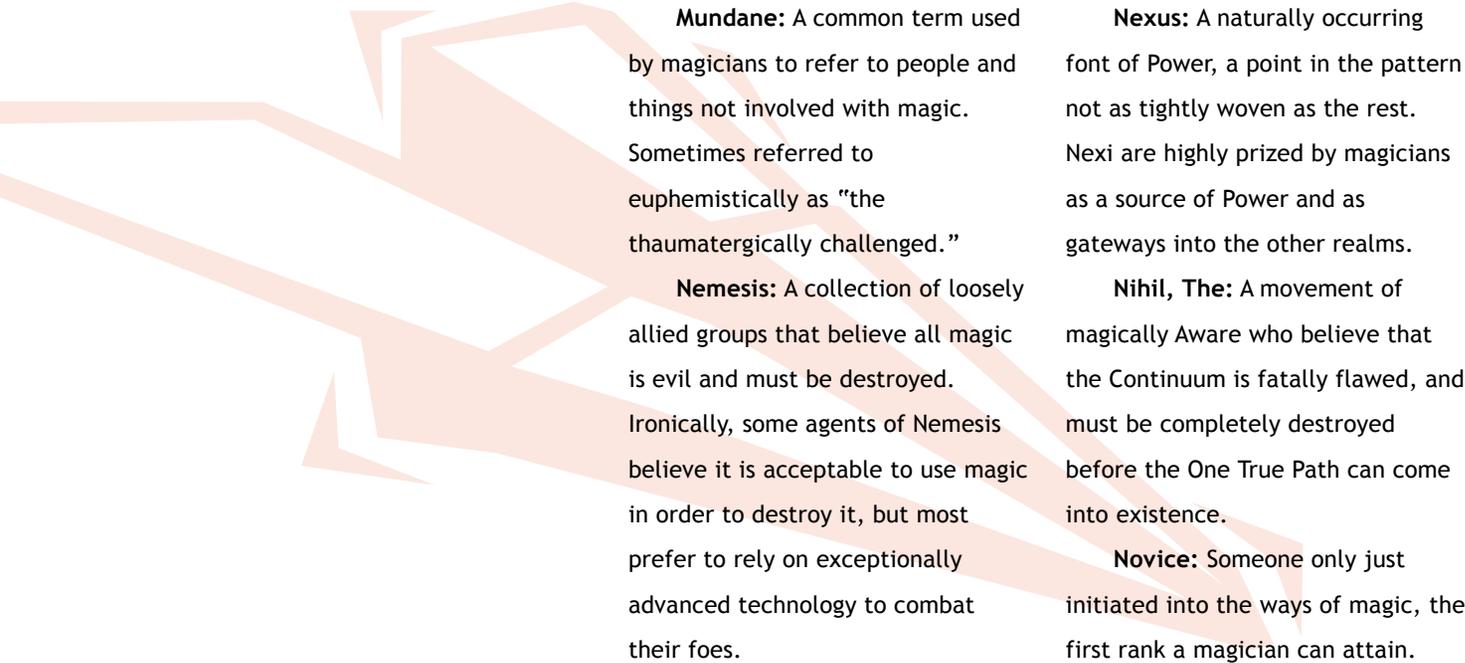
Master: A magician of the highest caliber, the fifth and greatest rank a magician can attain.

Material Realm: The physical plane of existence; for Humanity, this Realm is the world we experience with our physical senses.

Mentor: A magician given chief responsibility for the training of Apprentices and Novices. A Mentor may have several students at one time.

Metropolis: A vast, ever-shifting city in the Nether Realm in which Humans, Fae and other creatures interact. One of the more permanent features of that Realm.

Monitors: Mundanes who are aware of magical society and observe it for their own ends. Some monitors observe only to satisfy academic curiosity; others observe in an attempt to in some way gain power; a few see magical society as a threat to the mundane world and actively seek to destroy it.



Mundane: A common term used by magicians to refer to people and things not involved with magic. Sometimes referred to euphemistically as “the thaumatergically challenged.”

Nemesis: A collection of loosely allied groups that believe all magic is evil and must be destroyed. Ironically, some agents of Nemesis believe it is acceptable to use magic in order to destroy it, but most prefer to rely on exceptionally advanced technology to combat their foes.

Nether Realm: A plane of existence on the border between the Material and Transcendental Realms which combines elements of both. Creatures from both the Material and Transcendental Realms may interact here.

Nexus: A naturally occurring font of Power, a point in the pattern not as tightly woven as the rest. Nexi are highly prized by magicians as a source of Power and as gateways into the other realms.

Nihil, The: A movement of magically Aware who believe that the Continuum is fatally flawed, and must be completely destroyed before the One True Path can come into existence.

Novice: Someone only just initiated into the ways of magic, the first rank a magician can attain.

Paragon: Someone with a natural immunity to magic, and the ability to transform Essence directly in physical abilities. Paragons are extremely long lived and rarely suffer from disease. Sometimes referred to as Living Nexi because

they produce more Essence than they generally need themselves.

Prelate: A high official of the Magisterium who usually acts with the authority of a Curator, if not the whole Conservatory.

Realm: One of the Three Realms, Material, Nether or Transcendental.

Rendering, The: The backlash a magician may suffer if he fails to properly perform a writhing.

Sanctuary: A place designated as a safe zone, neutral ground from which all disputes are excluded. For the most part, most of the major factions respect sanctuary. Anyone may declare a place sanctuary, but it is practice and tradition that makes it so; a majority of Aware in the area must accept a place as sanctuary for it to be so. Anyone who violates

“ **Prelate:** A high official of the Magisterium who usually acts with the authority of a Curator, if not the whole Conservatory. ”

sanctuary can be declared an outcast and is denied the benefits of membership in magical society.

Sanctum: A base of operations for a magician or a circle of magicians, normally protected by magic, often associated with at least one nexus.

Shadow War, The: Specifically, the centuries-long conflict among the various magical factions, especially the Magisterium and Illuminatus, but any conflict between magical groups outside the view of mundane society is usually considered part of the Shadow War.

Sphere: A “pocket” universe that forms outside the Three Realms, but has all the characteristics of the Continuum, including a continuing source of aether. A sphere typically has its own

paradigm, often its own native inhabitants. In spite of some rather outlandish claims to the contrary, all known spheres form naturally.

Spheres are often attacked and consumed by Void beings, as they are somewhat easier to breach than the Continuum itself.

Strand: A thread of time running from the beginning of time to the end; there are an infinite number of strands, which are merged into a single pattern at the present.

Talisman: An object that has been enchanted with the ability to perform a specific writhe.

Templar: Someone who agrees to serve as a conduit for aether to a Void being in exchange for the being performing acts of power at the Templar’s request.

Three Realms, The: The Material, Nether and Transcendental Realms together, also known as the Continuum.

Transcendental Realm: The spiritual plane of existence, inhabited by the Fae.

Tutor: A magician who teaches students for whom he is not Mentor. Most students have many tutors in their lives.

Void, The: The place outside the strands of reality. Some do not believe the Void exists; others believe it exists but is literally a void; a few believe that creatures of vast and horrible power exist in the Void, some of whom wish to enter into the Continuum. Also refers to an aether-consuming substance.

Void Being: A general name for the entities believed to exist outside

the Continuum in the Void.

Composed, at least in part, of the Void itself, these beings cannot easily enter the Continuum, but hunger for the aether they can only get there.

Weaving, The: The pattern formed by the merging of all the strands of reality in the present.

Wilder: A somewhat derisive term for a feral, sometimes used by magicians to refer to the other magically Aware.

Writhe: A magical effect.

Writhing, The: The act of performing magic, which is usually difficult, sometimes painful and always dangerous.



The Illumination of Thomas Dancer

Part 7

The Noisy Bridge glowed in the dark with many happy lights, and lived up to its name with the sounds of music and celebration. The bar was one of the most popular places in Clear Lake, but on this night it rang with a private celebration, a party in honor of Thomas Dancer.

Thomas had been surprised not only at the speed with guests managed to arrive, but the sheer number of people whom he had never met who seemed interested in his rise to apprenticeship. Much of the reason, he knew, was because of Dunstan, who had many friends in the magical community. Some of the reason, he learned as he talked with and listened to many of the guests, seemed to be that naming a new apprentice was something not terribly common anymore, as if the traditional structure of magical society were slowly dying out. It was not uncommon for guests to express surprise that Dunstan, specifically, had taken another apprentice. Though it was unspoken, Thomas could almost hear the name that entered almost everyone's minds-Christopher. Thomas tried to block any doubts from his mind as, like the Noisy Bridge club, attempted to live up to his name by dancing with every woman and

girl at the party. Mostly, however, he seemed to dance with Heather—at least, when Dunstan himself was not dancing with her.

At last, after much food, drink and dance, Thomas finally left the dance floor, a laughing, glowing Heather Manyon on his arm. Grabbing a couple of drinks, the two made their way through the wide doors to the patio into the cool, crisp evening.

“What a time,” Thomas said, sipping his beer and feeling, somehow, a deep sense of comfort he could not remember feeling in a long time. If ever. “Do they do this often, or is this a special occasion?”

“Oh, the occasion is special, all right,” Heather said. She pulled her copper, curly hair away from her face and let the night breeze cool her. “It isn’t often that a master takes a new apprentice, and Dunstan, well, Dunstan is a special case, anyway.”

Heather pointed back into the bright interior of the club. Thomas could see Dunstan dancing with great abandon with an older woman who had been introduced to Thomas as Matilda; she danced with as much abandon and pleasure as Dunstan, and Thomas could almost hear her thick Australian accent in her laugh.

Just then, Dunstan grabbed Matilda and dipped her; she fell back, one leg kicking high in the air.

“I remember the first time I saw Dunstan dance,” Heather said wistfully. “I was afraid lives would be lost.”

Thomas laughed and drank his beer. A bit of melancholy, though, managed to slip into his mood, and for several moments neither spoke, merely allowing the outside air to cover them like a bubble, letting in only a little of the party’s sound and light. At last, Thomas turned to Heather and spoke.

“Heather,” he asked nervously. “Who is Christopher?”

For several moments, she did not answer, and Thomas began to think that she either had not heard him or was deliberately ignoring his question. At last, however, she spoke. “‘Who was Christopher’ is more accurate,” she said, turning away from Thomas and looking into the starry night sky over the lake. “Christopher is dead.”

“Oh,” Thomas replied. “I take it from what people have been saying that he was Dunstan’s apprentice.”

Heather nodded, a move Thomas could barely see in the dim light. “Yes. Christopher was one of the most promising students to

come along in the Bay Area in years. Dunstan-all of us-had high hopes for him.”

Thomas nodded himself in acknowledgment. He hesitated, not sure he wanted to know the answer, and then asked, “What happened to him?”

“He fell in love.” Heather looked back at Thomas and smiled sadly. “There was a girl named Rhiannon, a student of Matilda Wylde, dancing with Dunstan in there. She was a fiery one, I can tell you that. Well, you already know how dangerous the life of a magician can be. One night, some Illuminatus magician with a grudge against Matilda sent an assassin to the Wylde house. Rhiannon found him, tried to stop him, but she was just an apprentice, no match for an Illuminatus assassin.”

“She was killed.”

“Yes. Matilda came as soon as she could and took out the assassin, but it was too late; Rhiannon was dead. Christopher seemed to lose his mind when he heard. He was only an apprentice himself, had only been studying for about a year, but he swore this one-man war on all Illuminatus until he found the master who had

sent the assassin. Dunstan tried to talk sense to the boy, but he wouldn't listen. Finally, Dunstan had no choice but to let him go.

“For a while, Christopher had some degree of success in his battle. Illuminati, even, aren't used to such tactics used against them. They soon learned, however, and banded together enough to . . . to defeat Christopher.”

Thomas was silent for several moments. “Dunstan must have taken it hard,” he said at last. “Dunstan was devastated,” Heather replied. “Christopher had been like a son to him. He felt that he had abandoned the boy to his fate when he should have been helping him. It was all I could do to keep him from going off against Illuminatus and self-destructing the way Christopher had.”

Gently, Heather took Thomas's hand. “You have been a good thing for him, Thomas. I was always worried that Dunstan might never heal from Christopher's loss, but I think, now, by taking on your training, that if he hasn't healed, he has at least taken the first step toward it.” She stood on her tip-toes and kissed Thomas on the cheek.

“Thank you for that.”

“Hey, now, what’s going on here?” Thomas turned to face the unknown voice as a tall man dressed in a flowing silk shirt and paisley silk vest took up Heather and spun her around the patio. Thomas was alarmed for a moment, but Heather’s laughter put him at ease.

“Damian, Damian! Put me down!” she called out, laughing, as the man spun her about. At last, he did so, and Heather hugged him tightly.

“Thomas,” she said after she disentangled from the man, “This is Damian Wylde, Matilda’s son.”

Damian took Thomas’ proffered hand and shook it vigorously. “And you, sir, need no introduction,” he said. “You’re the guest of honor, indeed. Pleased to meet you.”

Before Thomas could get a word out, however, Damian took Heather up in his arms again. “These two fellows have been hogging your attentions all evening, my pastoral beauty,” Damian said. “I didn’t come all the way to this bucolic paradise just to hug the trees, you know. Come, dance with me!” Twirling to the music, the two merged back into the crowd.

Thomas watched them go, and felt his good mood returning. This was a closely knit group, Thomas thought, and it seemed to be a group that had welcomed him with open arms, unconditionally. That felt, he realized, very good. Rather than joining his new-found community, however, Thomas felt the need to be alone, so he strolled down the path from the Noisy Bridge toward the shore of Clear Lake.

It was a cool evening, crisp and clear. A slight breeze blew over the lake. Behind him, Thomas heard the muted sounds of laughter and music. Suddenly, the sound burst and the light exploded; a wave of explosive energy hit him hard enough to throw him to the ground. As fast as he could, Thomas scrambled to his feet and headed back toward the Noisy Bridge.

The building was on fire; people scrambled out, some stunned, others helping those who could not help themselves. Thomas started to run to offer assistance when he felt a hard whack against his head; the next thing he realized, Thomas had his face buried in the dirt of the path and colorful sparks orbited his vision.

“Got you, you son-of-a-bitch!” Thomas heard someone above him growl, along with the mechanical sound he took to be the bolt of a rifle being drawn back. He felt cold, hard steel on the back of his neck; he was sure that his heart was about to burst.

“Brown was a friend of mine, Dancer,” the voice growled again. “If the Master didn’t want you alive, I’d blow you away right here, right now!” Thomas felt himself being lifted by the back of his shirt; he stumbled to his feet and tried to turn, but his captor would not allow it. Somewhere near, Thomas heard the sound of weapons fire, and heard the crackle of magical energies, both sounds drowning out the screams of pain and terror.

His captor shoved Thomas forward; Thomas, rather than resisting, threw himself further forward, rolled on his shoulder and jumped to his feet, facing his captor. Before the man could train his weapon on him again, Thomas leaped up and kicked the gun away.

Thomas got, then, his first look at the man. He was large, tall and broad shouldered. His hair was as dark as his clothing, and a beard covered his face; a snake scar moved out of the beard on the

man's right cheek. In his eyes, Thomas saw nothing but burning rage and hatred. The man smiled, a smile of bitter satisfaction.

"The Master wants you alive, boy," the man growled. "He didn't say alive in what condition, though." He assumed a stance; Thomas could tell immediately that this man was well-trained in and comfortable with violence.

The man attacked then, a kick toward Thomas' face. As Thomas dodged, however, he realized that the kick had been a feint, and the man's fist struck Thomas solidly in the face. Thomas was on his back and his attacker kneeling over him before he knew it.

"Say goodnight, Gracie," the attacker growled, raising his fist again. Before the blow could come, however, Thomas saw something dark and small leap out of the woods and impact with his attacker's head. The man flew back, rolling in the dirt. The much smaller figure did not wait for her target to get up; it descended upon the man in a flurry of kicks and blows that Thomas didn't think he could have followed even if his head were not reeling and his vision not blurred.

At last, the big man went to the ground, motionless, and the small figure turned, leaping to kneel over Thomas as his attacker had.

“Natalia?” Thomas croaked out, shocked to see Kojami’s beautiful apprentice here, shocked at her ability.

Before he could say anything, though, Natalia took his face in both hands and planted a kiss on his lips that

Thomas thought might succeed in taking away the rest of his consciousness.

“Don’t say I never gave you anything,” Natalia whispered before she sprang up and disappeared into the darkness.

By the time Thomas regained his senses enough to stand and make his way back to the Noisy Bridge, the fighting seemed to be over. The local fire department had arrived, but the fire seemed, inexplicably, to have blown itself out. The grounds around the club were littered with the forms of injured people being treated by paramedics, party guests, anyone who could help.

“Thomas!” The voice was loud, but muted by the ringing in Thomas’s ears. “Thomas, are you all right?”

Someone grabbed Thomas and spun him around; for a moment, he tensed, prepared to fight, but he quickly realized that it was Dunstan who had found him. “Thomas?”

“I’m-I’m fine,” Thomas stuttered out. “What happened?” Dunstan drew himself closer, looking at the paramedics, firefighters and police. “It was an attack. An Illuminatus attack, I think.”

“The Master,” Thomas said, remembering what his attacker had said. “They were from the Master, the same guy who sent Brown and the others after me in San Francisco.”

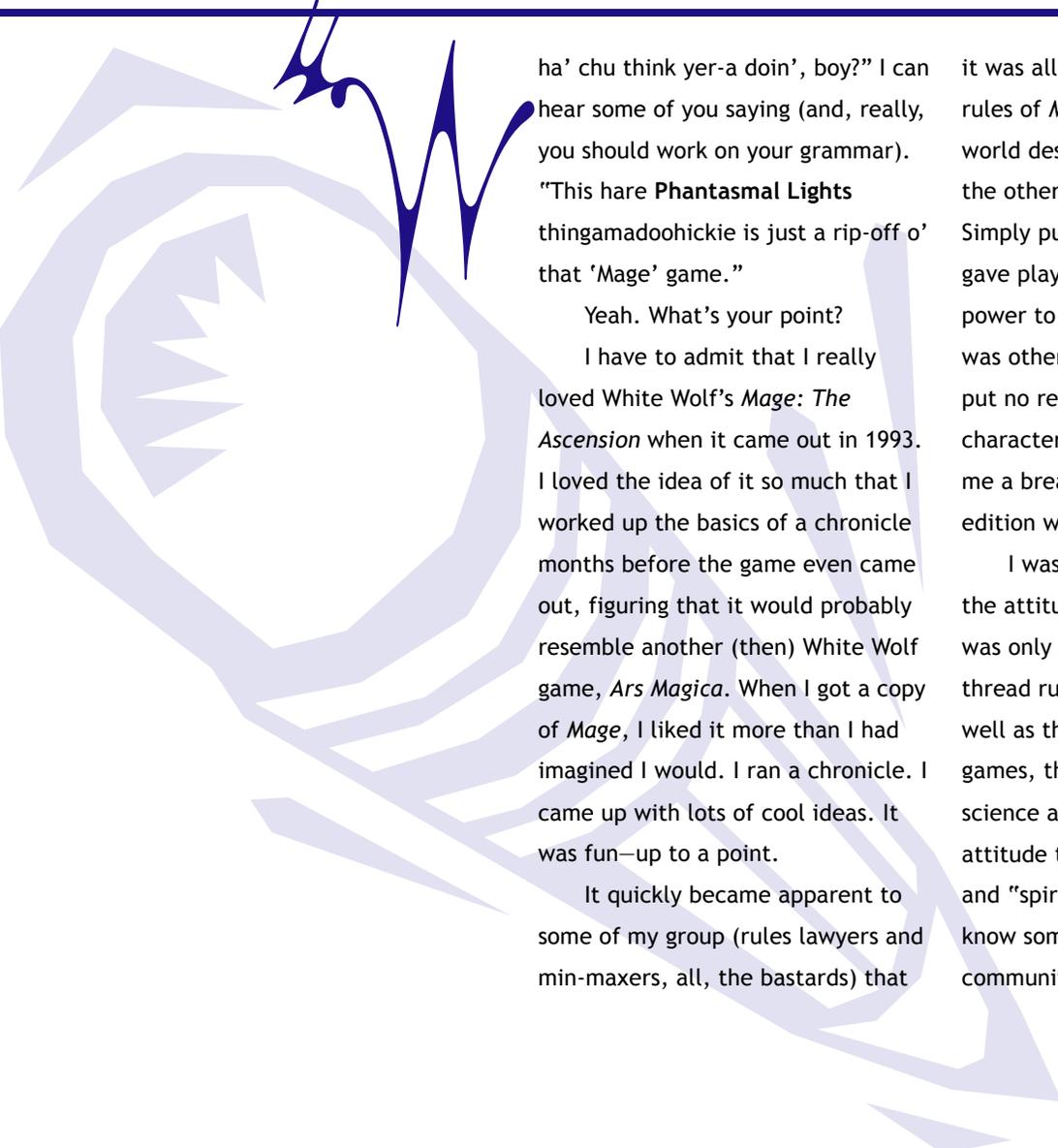
Before they could continue, however, they were joined by Heather, who threw herself around Dunstan’s neck, and a limping, almost smoldering Damian Wylde. As Dunstan and Heather assured each other of their well-being, Damian stumbled over and flopped down next to Thomas. Seeing the sense of getting off his feet, Thomas joined him.

“Thomas,” Damian said. “You folks throw one hell of a party up here.” Thomas grinned, and could barely contain his laughter; it would be the laughter of relief and fatigue, he knew, but he still thought it inappropriate. “Is everyone okay?”

Damian shook his head. “No. Everyone is not okay. Hugh Davenport was killed. They’re bringing in ambulances for the rest; Tuck Hollander and Clarise Morton are in bad shape. The rest seem to be a mixture of burns and shock.” Damian fell back then, facing the stars. “What about you? Are you all right?”

Thomas looked about him, looked at the injured people lying on the grass, people who had come here to celebrate his joining their community, his becoming part of what they were. Thomas felt a hot burning in him, and for a moment he understood perfectly what Christopher must have felt when Rhiannon died.

“No,” he said, his voice hoarse. “I’m not all right. I won’t be all right for a long time to come.”



ha' chu think yer-a doin', boy?" I can hear some of you saying (and, really, you should work on your grammar). "This hare **Phantasmal Lights** thingamadoohickie is just a rip-off o' that 'Mage' game."

Yeah. What's your point?

I have to admit that I really loved White Wolf's *Mage: The Ascension* when it came out in 1993. I loved the idea of it so much that I worked up the basics of a chronicle months before the game even came out, figuring that it would probably resemble another (then) White Wolf game, *Ars Magica*. When I got a copy of *Mage*, I liked it more than I had imagined I would. I ran a chronicle. I came up with lots of cool ideas. It was fun—up to a point.

It quickly became apparent to some of my group (rules lawyers and min-maxers, all, the bastards) that

it was all but impossible to use the rules of *Mage* to play in the game world described in that volume and the other World of Darkness games. Simply put, the rules for magick gave player characters far too much power to allow a game set in what was otherwise the real world, and put no real limits on what the player characters could do. (Paradox? Give me a break. Paradox in the first edition was a joke.)

I was also disturbed by much of the attitude of the book. Sure, it was only a game, but there was a thread running through *Mage*, as well as the other World of Darkness games, that was definitely anti-science and anti-reason, and attitude that valued emotionalism and "spirituality." Worse, as I got to know some of the members of the community of *Mage* players out in

the budding world of the Internet, I realized that there were a lot of people who actually believed this stuff was real.

At that point, for me, *Mage* stopped being just a game and became emblematic of a cultural movement that, personally, I consider to be the most dangerous thing to hit Western thought since the beginning of the Dark Ages.

Let me be very clear. I do not believe in magic, or spirit, or any of that other stuff, except as metaphors. I do not believe in the soul, again, except as a metaphor. I do not believe that we have an existence beyond our physical bodies. I do not believe that any part of our personalities existed before we were born, nor continues after our bodies die, except perhaps, in some way, in the genes

Chapter 7: Random Notes

of our ancestors and descendants. I do not believe in any god or otherwise “higher” being. Most of all, I believe that people who take all this stuff seriously are, at best, wasting their own lives by living in denial of reality, and who are, at worst, fueling the collapse of society and dragging us all down into a new dark age.

That being said, all this magic stuff sure is a lot of fun, isn’t it? Wouldn’t it be swell if some of it were real? With that in mind, in 1994, I began working on what was initially an adaptation of Mage. Eventually, I figured if I was going to do all this work, I might as well use my own ideas, so I dusted off a stack of notes on a role-playing game system I had been working on off and on for many years. I was also interested in designing a book,

something that, as a graphic designer, I get the urge to do on occasion.

Thus began the project that would become **Phantasm**. The first draft took me almost a year to finish. At first, I created a few volumes just to hand out to my old gaming group, just as most of them were starting to move on to other things in life. I created a website and put a copy of the rules up there, and started hearing from gamers around the world who liked what I had done.

In 1996, I was contacted by a French game publisher called Multisim. Some of you may recognize the name; Multisim was the original publisher of the game *Nephilim*, published here by Chaosium. The company was interested in publishing some

translations of foreign games for the French market, and thought **Phantasm** would make a nice addition to that plan. Excited, I rushed about and rewrote the game, stripping out all the nifty graphic design stuff to produce a manuscript and rewriting much of the game system to implement new ideas I had for task resolution. In early 1997, Multisim published the game *Imago*, based on that manuscript. It’s a beautifully produced volume, comparable to the best stuff published by TSR or White Wolf over here. And, it was a major flop, so much so that the folks at Multisim wouldn’t return my e-mails anymore. Oh, well. The advance paid off my student loans, so I’m not complaining.

Since then, I have to admit, I haven’t done much with **Phantasm**.

Life goes on, one gets older and loses interest in the hobbies of one’s youth. From time to time, I’ve fiddled with designing a new edition that incorporates all the nifty ideas I’ve come up with since creating the original game. Every now and then, I get a nice e-mail from someone who downloaded a copy of the manuscript from the website and liked (or didn’t like) the game.

A while back, one of those e-mails was from Robert Lionheart (now there’s a name for a gamer) at *Storm Crow Magazine* asking for a condensed version of the game, **Phantasm Light**, if you will. Well, here it is. I hope you enjoy the game, such as it is. If you do, you might drop me a note at wildhaven@technologist.com.

Take care.

L.

Phantasmal Lights Character Record

Character Name _____ Circle _____

Player Name _____ Guild _____

Series _____ Rank _____

Date _____ Type Magician Mundane Other _____

Personality Factors

Brave/Cowardly _____

Cautious/Impulsive _____

Energetic/Indolent _____

Extrovert/Introvert _____

Forgiving/Vengeful _____

Gentle/Cruel _____

Honest/Deceitful _____

Modest/Proud _____

Optimist/Pessimist _____

Trusting/Suspicious _____

Secondary Characteristics

Age (years) _____

Height (centimeters) _____

Initiative (Dex+Det) _____

Kick (str/2) _____

Lift ([Str×25] kilograms) _____

Load ([Str×5] kilograms) _____

Mass (kilograms) _____

Punch (Str/4) _____

Speed (mpr) _____

Throw ([Str×10] meters) _____

Advantages _____

Limitations _____

Cost _____

Gain _____

Primary Characteristics

Mental

Determination _____

Education _____

Intelligence _____

Intuition _____

Presence _____

Physical

Dexterity _____

Essence _____

Physique _____

Stamina _____

Strength _____

Combat

Body Points

1 Arm, Left (Flexible Rigid DM: _____)
 ○○○○|○○○○|○○○○

2 Arm, Right (Flexible Rigid DM: _____)
 ○○○○|○○○○|○○○○

3 Leg, Right (Flexible Rigid DM: _____)
 ○○○○|○○○○|○○○○

4 Leg, Left (Flexible Rigid DM: _____)
 ○○○○|○○○○|○○○○

Magical Abilities

Aether/Void Career Life

- Perception _____
- Manipulation _____
- Destruction _____
- Transformation _____
- Creation _____

Death/Life Career Life

- Perception _____
- Manipulation _____
- Destruction _____
- Transformation _____
- Creation _____

Energy/Matter Career Life

- Perception _____
- Manipulation _____
- Destruction _____
- Transformation _____
- Creation _____

Mind/Spirit Career Life

- Perception _____
- Manipulation _____
- Destruction _____
- Transformation _____
- Creation _____

Space/Time Career Life

- Perception _____
- Manipulation _____
- Destruction _____
- Transformation _____
- Creation _____

Abilities

Administration O Career O Life

- Bureaucracy
- Business
- Finance
- Legal
- Negotiation

Athletics O Career O Life

- Acrobatics
- Climbing
- Riding
- Stealth
- Swimming

Biological Sciences O Career O Life

- Biology
- Botany
- Ecology
- Medical
- Zoology

Culture O Career O Life

- Ethics
- Etiquette
- Communications
- Language
- History

Expression O Career O Life

- Musical Composition
- Drawing/Painting
- Photography
- Sculpture
- Writing

Firearms O Career O Life

- Grenade Launcher
- Pistol
- Rifle
- Shotgun
- Submachinegun

Information Gathering O Career O Life

- Computer
- Observation
- Research
- Search
- Surveillance

Interaction O Career O Life

- Influence
- Instruction
- Interrogation
- Leadership
- Psychology

Mathematical Sciences O Career O Life

- Cryptography
- Geometry
- Mathematics
- Programming
- Statistics

Melee Combat O Career O Life

- Dodge
- Grapple
- Kick
- Parry
- Punch

Notes

Melee Weapons O Career O Life

- Axe
- Knife
- Mace
- Staff
- Sword

Military O Career O Life

- Camouflage
- Discipline
- Logistics
- Strategy
- Tactics

Performance O Career O Life

- Acting
- Dance
- Legerdemain
- Meditation
- Musical Instrument

Physical Sciences O Career O Life

- Astrophysics
- Chemistry
- Forensics
- Geology
- Physics

Projectile Weapons O Career O Life

- Bow
- Blowgun
- Sling
- Spear
- Thrown

Social Sciences O Career O Life

- Anthropology
- Economics
- Linguistics
- Political Science
- Sociology

Technology O Career O Life

- Demolitions
- Electrical
- Electronics
- Engineering
- Mechanical

Transportation O Career O Life

- Aircraft
- Automobile
- Motorcycle
- Tracked Vehicles
- Watercraft

Underworld O Career O Life

- Deception
- Disguise
- Streetwise
- Gambling
- Forgery

Wilderness O Career O Life

- Navigation
- Scrounging
- Survival
- Tracking
- First Aid

