What is Arthaus? It’s White Wolf’s newest imprint. White Wolf’s mission has always been to create art that entertains; White Wolf Arthaus is the embodiment of this ideal. Modeled after small press, the Arthaus team strives to create those games and projects that are new, experimental and unique. White Wolf Arthaus now manages whole game lines, supports others and creates specialty projects whenever possible.
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Prelude: Spring

Jonathan's eyes were closed. He knelt on the soft bottom sand of the brook as the hands of the High Priestess ritually washed his body. I should be cold, he thought to himself, but he was not. Nary a goosebump marred his smooth white flesh, and the soap the ancient crone was using filled his head with wondrous scents.

"As is the flesh, so is the soul. The water will cleanse and make thee whole." The woman repeated this phrase over and over, and he let her wash him as an infant would be bathed by its mother. When she finished, he opened his eyes and watched as the last of the sun's light bled out of the spring sky. Excitement surged through him again, and he was filled with joy at the thought of being the Priest tonight — the night of all nights — Beltane. Tonight he and his new Priestess would offer their bodies as houses for the very essences of the Lord and Lady. They would ensure once again the fertility of the land for their people — however ignorant and ungrateful those people had become.

He stepped out of the water, and one of the lesser priestesses dried his body. She giggled shyly as she towelled downwards, and Jonathan felt a brief flare of pride he quickly suppressed. He knew he was finely made, seventeen and fully man. As the youngest son of the local Lord, he was seldom discovered sneaking out of the manor for coven meetings. The witches, they had courted him from the time he was a child. One of his mother's serving wenches had whispered things to him from about his eighth year on. The first time she took him by the hand and led him out into the night to meet the others, he had been terrified. In his mind's eye he could see the worm-eaten, wooden Christ crawling down from the cross hung over the alter in the family chapel. He had imagined the broken Messiah tearing his soul from his living body and casting it into Hell, where the Devil waited with hungry eyes and sharp teeth.

"But those who had welcomed him that night were not toothless hags with three tits and brooms thrust between their legs. They were, for the most part, from the local village; his father's own people whom he had known his entire life. Men and women both, although more women than men, and of all ages ranging from those that had not yet bled to Grandmother Dupré who had told him many a tale as he sat, a spellbound child, at her knee.

That night, and the many wonderful nights that followed, made clear to him the meaning of those stories she had told. There was another faith, a faith ancient when the man named Christ was murdered by his followers. The Romans could not choke it out; and the rack and scaffold had only driven its roots deeper into the hearts of the people. This religion spoke to his heart and fed a soul withered on holy wafers and sour wine. The worship of the seasons, the Lord of Winter and Fall, the Lady of Spring and Summer — there was a harmony and a rightness to it. No yawning chasm of Hades awaited for those of impure thought and deed. No longer was it necessary to tithe to the wealthiest entity in all of the World or to buy indulgences from a corrupted priest who might offer up a yawning prayer for the salvation of a soul that he had spent a lifetime condemning to damnation. Here, only joy resided; here there was perfect love and perfect trust.

The High Priestess led him into the grove of stately and ancient trees, and for the hundredth time Jonathan wished the trees could speak. What tales they might tell of the many hand-fastings, Samhains and Beltanes enacted here over the years!

"Wait here, Lord," she whispered, "and think of the mantle that falls upon you tonight. Within you lies the power to green the fallow fields; your seed is the gentle rain that opens the living flowers. Wait here in peace; ye shall be called in what seems but a moment of time."
She left him alone, surrounded by oak and yew and the soft sounds of the Mother. The young Priest settled, and closed his eyes. The hard ground and all other minor discomforts faded as he sought out and found the timelessness of the stillpoint. It was a dreaming of sorts, and a passing strange one at that. He was alone, yet not. From the corner of his eye he could see, flitting amongst the sacred trees, a dark shape. It had the form and figure of a man, but would not stay still long enough for him to truly see.

"Hello? Are you man?" he called. The leaves rustled, and in the dream grove the light swiftly faded. Jonathan felt unease tickle the hairs at the back of his neck, and he strained his eyes to see into the darkness.

"Speak, spirit, and in this place I bind thee to no harm, none to be done or received." Laughter answered him, and something lightly touched his shoulder. Someone was shaking him. He awoke, and as the stillpoint dream faded, he heard the spirit whisper, "Look, but see not. Sleep to know, awaken to be. Through love shall you know me."

"My Lord," the High Priestess breathed. "Your Lady, the Mother of us all, awaits. Will you come?"

Jonathan opened his eyes and stood. From out of the darkness, the coven emerged before him. His heart pounded, and there was a roaring sound in his head like rushing water. Warmth filled him, and red clouded his vision. For a second he could not remember the words the Chosen must say, but then he heard a deep voice, much lower than his own, respond.

"I shall come unto her, glorious in her Spring raiment." He was shocked that the voice had come from him. Moving forward, his simple robe was taken from him, and a wreath of oak and holly placed upon his head. Jonathan stepped into the grove proper, and he noted further strangeness. His body felt hot, and strong. Glancing down, he noted that he was painfully hard, and his flesh glowed with the light of Spirit, as did that of the young woman who awaited him.

She was the High Priestess' granddaughter, matching him in years and almost in height. Her long black hair and dark eyes contrasted sharply with her shining white skin, and her body was lithe and supple. If this was his first time, it was hers as well. The High Priestess stood by her side, holding her hand. Upon seeing him, she released the girl and spoke to the coven.

"Spirits of the North, The East, The West, And The South, I do command thee. Thy essence will herein dwell, and watch over us again, as it was and will be, as the seasons turn and the light bathes our land again. Keep you our promise, Great Horned One. Know our sacred Lady. Lay with and within her. Take her as man takes woman, as plow takes field, as seed sunders Earth. Grant us life again!"

The girl, too, wore only a wreath, and he had eyes for no other. As the Priestess' words faded, Jonathan caught her up in his arms, and lowered her onto an herb-strewn cloth prepared for them at the very center of the ring of trees. In days of old, they would have lain upon an altar of stone, but there was no set altar now. Many turns ago there had been a very fine one, but the Roman dogs had smashed it hoping to smash their faith along with it. But no destruction of a symbol could destroy the Lord and Lady.

The part of him that was still Jonathan was aware of muted chanting, and the other part didn't care. 'Flesh! Once again, Oh, sweet wondrous Lady, flesh! To feel, to hold, to understand again for the briefest of seconds the simple ecstasy of the animal. Within her eyes he saw himself, and something beyond the village maiden looking back at him.

"My love," she whispered, "How I have longed for your touch again! Come into me, for I am in ascendance. Come into me. The land awaits." The flesh of two became one, her warmth encircling him. The chanting rose and fell in the rhythm of time and birth and life and death. The Goddess was of him, through him, within him, and all his boiling heat and joy raced through him and into her essence, as she arched beneath him and screamed.
White light, brighter than ten moons exploded, and still she screamed. Screams. All screams now. Jonathan stumbled upright, hands clasping his face. Fire and heat and light surrounded him and he staggered backwards.

"Mother! Father! I call thee!" he shouted.

"Aaaaaaiiiiee! My child is dead, the Lady dead!"

All he heard was sobbing, no sounds of joy. There was supposed to be joy! What had he done wrong? How had he angered the Lord? And why could he not see? Sobs tore out of him, and he fell to his knees, crying. Grandmother? Leah? Please?

A gentle hand settled upon his shoulder, and a soothing voice met his ear, so soft that he was unsure where the speaker was.

"Poor little one, so unaware. You've lost, yet gained. Open your eyes into darkness, and then open your heart to see. Open your heart and see me."

Jonathan's eyes burned, and he could feel tears of fire streaming down his cheeks. He quieted some, gasped for breath, and slowly opened his eyes.

"Nothing. No light, no form, no shape. No night had ever been darker than this. Panic flared up through him, and the hand on his shoulder shifted as whomever it was moved around to stand in front of him.

"Now, for love, and trust, open your true eyes."

The words stilled the storm within, and he became intimately and divinely aware of every sound in the sacred grove. The hand moved from his shoulder and for an instant he was truly alone. Then the hand settled on his brow, and the soft voice whispered words that were ancient when only waters graced the world. From his whole being could he see. But it was not the sight given to him at his birth, not the mortal sight through which he had somehow struggled for all of his seventeen years. No, this was sight of All Life - from the smallest creature crawling upon the ground to the towering yew. Everything moved and was limed in brilliance. The very air around him swirled with colours for which the entire history of man had no words. He cried out at the sheer pain and marvel in his soul, and heard the creature that had spoken laugh in joy.

"Here, Jonathan! I am here!"

He turned his body but slightly and beheld a creature of light before him. It was neither man nor woman, but somehow more than both. It was dressed in streams of flowing luminescence, and its smile was fire.

"Do you see now, Jonathan? Do you feel? You have awakened my child, and once awake no more will you sleep. Come and walk with me." A slender hand was extended, and Jonathan took it without fear and stood, still looking all around.

Lying at the center of the grove on a softly hued blanket lay the cooling body of the girl who a short time before had housed the spirit of the Lady. Over her, rocking back and forth on withered haunches was the old Priestess softly mewing her grief. Jonathan dropped the creature's hand, and moved over to where the two were on the sacred Earth.
"Grandmother?" he breathed. The crone did not respond. "Leah?"

"Jonathan, those you cannot help. It was the spirit behind him that spoke. "Her life could not withstand the awful beauty of your awakening. But she is at peace, having served her Gods. As for the old woman, her days are numbered. Her faith has become as faded as her flesh. She will see her grandchild soon enough."

"Spirit, can they not hear you? Or see you? Have you a name?"

It smiled. "I exist within and for you. There are those few souls born into this realm who house within them sacred spirits. Those others will see me, in a fashion, and know you for what you are."

Jonathan could no longer bear the sight before him, and turned to follow the spirit out of the grove. "And you? How shall I call you?" he asked.

"How do you wish to call me?"

He stopped to examine a vine twining about a limb. "Both the vine and the tree pulsed and glowed with separate energies, and where they joined a third and quite different energy emerged."

"I have never named a spirit before. Are you man or woman?"

"Neither, and both. I am not of flesh, only spirit."

"Then I shall think on a name." He paused and looked at the blood rushing through his hand. "Spirit, will my eyes ever see again, as they did?"

Once again, it smiled.

"No child. You have no need of that now. They were out of the trees and the night sky swirled like strawberries in fresh cream. 'Go home now, Jonathan. When you call for me, I shall come. I have always been within you, and shall never leave until we can travel to the stars together.'"

"But how can I return?" he cried. "I am not the same: nothing is the same."

"But return you must, little one. Or your own will hunt you down and kill you." He recalled the witch hanging he had seen as a child. "Yes, that is right, Jonathan. You too will feel the fires of your people's fear. So go, and speak of this to no one."

He watched the spirit walk towards him and into him, and he felt a wholeness that all his years he had taken for granted. Slowly he began to walk across the freshly plowed fields towards his father's house. As he walked, his steps grew more sure and he held his head high. 'What lay ahead, he did not know, but he could feel vast new energies swelling inside him. And with that thought, he began to run over the carpet of tiny breathing things, anxious to see his first true sunrise."
Introduction: Red River

Introduction

It always begins with blood.

Saturn eats his children. Cronos does the same, but is castrated and killed by his surviving son, Zeus. Marduk slays the dragon Tiamat and forms the heavens and earth from her innards. A similar fate greets Yrmr, whose flesh becomes the earth, his bones the mountains, and his skull the sky. Other legends begin with blood and pain, too — the birth-agony of Rhea, the banishment from Eden, the war between the Tuatha Dé Danann, the Firbolgs and the Fomorii, and many other such tales. These legends remind us that life is a splendid yet excruciating cycle of birth, agony, joy, death, and ultimately hope.

Perhaps that is why Pagans frighten their Christian brethren so. For while the Christian bewails the days spent in this cycle, the Pagan embraces them. A heathen does not weep for some lost Eden — she carves a new garden from the living earth, seeds it with her passions and pains, and feasts on the fruits before the Underworld takes her. For as long as she lives on this earth, the Pagan is determined to enjoy it. Life may be (and often is) nasty, brutish and short, but it’s also exhilarating, beautiful and above all, sacred.

Yes, sacred. Because, you see, our world is alive and built on the bones of those who have gone before. Likewise, we nourish the future with our blood. Unlike the circle of dust described in Christian liturgy, the Pagan world teems with wonders and vitality. If it seems somewhat brutal at times, well, what do you expect? Anything worth having costs a little pain.

And the Old Gods understand this well. While God the Father watches aloof in His distant heaven, the ancient deities of Rome and Eire and Babylon are gods of the earth. They walk like men, love like men, fight like men, and often bleed like men. They sire children on mortal paramours, gift heroes with magical protection, glower down upon living sacrifices, and bind their wills to the seasons and the flesh. Thus, their followers search for omens in the changing of the leaves, and spill their blood in fields and groves. Unlike the God of the Book, these earthy entities seem close and tangible, both in form and in spirit. Their words rustle on the winds, and their anger falls like thunderbolts, shattering hearts and thrones alike.
What is a “Pagan,” Anyway?

Most folks seem to think pagan implies savagery, devil-worship, ungodliness and rebellion. Wrong. Essentially, a Pagan is someone who recognizes the many gods and goddesses of Nature. The word derives from the Latin pagus — “a place marked on the ground,” “village” or “community.” The extension, paganus, means “country-dweller,” and implies a citizen who lacks the sophistication of a true civis (“townsman”). Literally, the word means someone bonded to Nature, and its connotations suggest someone who is more “barbaric” than “civilized.”

As Christianity acquired a militaristic edge, the term became a synonym for “non-Christian” (Christians being “soldiers of Christ”). The agrarian nature of the Old Gods and their worshippers — who often continued ancient rites to ensure the fertility of the soil — soon tied the knot between the paganus and the Pagan. Time (and a bit of demonization from the Church) warped the worshipper of nature-gods into the worshipper of devils; given the carnal nature of fertility rites, this wasn’t exactly surprising. Eventually, the two became indistinguishable, and the word became a curse.

(A similar transformation turned hTHEN — “one inhabiting the wilderness” — into heathen — “savage,” or “barbaric.”)

Modern dictionaries define “pagan” as “a person who is not a Christian, Moslem or Jew,” or “one who believes in many gods.” Technically, this makes Buddhists, Hindus and so forth into pagans. Somehow, the idea that nearly 1/3 of the modern world’s population is pagan seems a tad inaccurate; certainly the followers of those other faiths take issue with the label! The agrarian pantheons of African, Native American and Asian cultures also fit the definition, but their followers, too, often dislike the term. Although many Christian sources consider those indigenous religions to be “heathen,” the people themselves do not. Try calling a member of the Native American Church a pagan if you don’t believe it...then run away — fast!

Nobody seems to like the word “witch” very much, either. Despite its roots in old words for feminine [wicce], bending [weik], wisdom [witæn], ivy [vetch], and branch [viker], the term is an insult in almost every modern language. Some have tried to save it, but still others revel in its diabolical connotations. As for the Satanists who refer to themselves as “witches”, these folks are totally missing the point. A Satanist is a monotheist with an attitude problem; a Witch isn’t a monotheist at all.

Post-modernist sources often link paganism with the old Norse, Celtic, Slavic, Mesopotamian, and sometimes Meso-American religions and nature-based Asian ones. Despite the cultural differences between these civilizations, they do contain enough common traits to bind them all to the rural roots of the word. That rural connotation goes out the window when you expand the term to include the old gods of Greece and Rome, however, but most sources consider the pantheons of Zeus and Jupiter to be the epitomes of “classical paganism.” Latter-day neo-pagans prefer to stick with the rural connotations of the word, and often define themselves as people who see Divinity in the many forms (and sometimes gods) of Nature. Even then, however, the label is too broad for our purposes.

We choose to alter that spectrum just a bit. In The Sorcerers Crusade, “Pagan” is a general reference to the followers of the nature-based, pre-Christian gods of old Europe (and the pre-Mohammedan pantheons of the Middle East). “Witch” specifically refers to the established priestess and priesthoods dedicated to said gods. Although the nature-based religions of Asia, Africa and the Americas may qualify as pagan, they’re a bit too culturally diverse. A category that includes all forms of polytheistic, agrarian religion is just too vast to be practical, and a book that attempted to describe them all would have to be twice the size of the Sorcerers Crusade rulebook to do its subjects any justice. Despite their differences, the Semitic-European pantheons share enough common ground to make certain generalities possible, and their gods and rituals are familiar to most fantasy fans. Hence, we can put the Norse vitki, the Sicilian strega and the Irish bard into the same category without offending the Old Gods too deeply!
The Pagan Heart

A wolf that lies in its lair never gets meat, or a sleeping man victory.

— Norse proverb

Like the crops on which it depends, the Pagan heart is rooted in the soil. The elements, seasons, and beasts of the natural world are far more than pawns in the hands of God’s chosen — they’re divine spirits in their own right, and worthy of respect. In the temperate lands of Gaul, Greece and Rome, where a season’s crops stand between life and death, fertility gods and vigorous heroes inspire Pagan myths. In the cold northern wilds — where hunting, trade and plunder take the place of farming — the gods seem strong and savage, and their tales ring like battle cries at the hearth. While the God of the Book urges His followers to forsake world, flesh and Devil, the Old Gods revel in the here-and-now. Thus, their people, tied to this world, understand the bond between humanity, divinity and the land.

In our air-conditioned, electronic, Net-connected world, it’s hard for us to feel the ground beneath our feet. Even modern neo-pagans who follow “the Old Religion” are products of a post-Christian, post-industrial culture. But the Pagans of the Dark Fantastic world walk barefooted — often literally — on the living earth. As they must. In their world, you can’t just go down to Safeway to buy the groceries or shut the windows against a storm. In their world, you either make your peace with the elements or you die. The Pagan traditions, with their magick, gods and rituals, all rise from this necessity. To survive, a person must propitiate the living world. And the Pagan ways are all about survival.

Thus, despite the many differences between their cultures, Pagan folk hold certain virtues in high regard:

- **Courage** is essential to one who would dance with the gods upon this earth. For to the Pagan mind, life is capricious and often cruel. Justice comes only
through sacrifice, and misfortune waits, just out of sight, for all the gods’ children. Given the harshness of life, it’s easy to weep; thus, the man or woman who faces life’s trials with a smile and a laugh is given great respect.

- Generosity is a prime Pagan virtue also. Indeed, in many Pagan circles the measure of wealth is how much you can afford to give away. A good Pagan takes care of his own, and offers aid to worthy strangers as well. “A generous hearth keeps warm stones,” so the saying goes, and a man who goes out of his way to help others will be rewarded.

Such generosity goes beyond physical things, however. A generous person gives away care and property without complaint, and a generous spirit enjoys the pleasures of this world — love, camaraderie, sensual delights and revelry. Naturally, gratitude is essential, too; a man who disdains another’s hospitality (or the bounty of the gods) is to be despised. Given the unforgiving lands where Paganism prospers, it’s not hard to understand this virtue. The gods provide only so much. Mankind must supply the rest.

- Honor, a word that gets short shrift in later years, is vital to a Pagan. For honor is the measure of dependability and trust. In this harsh environment every person must be able to depend on her companions. Hence, in Pagan circles your word becomes your worth. A man with no honor has no place in society, either.

An honorable Pagan does more than keep his word; he also has a duty to his people and his gods. Such duties are rarely easy to fulfill: mythic heroes like Cuchulainn and Antigone put their obligations above their needs, and often die for it. The Corn Kings and Oracles give up their lives so that their people may prosper. Brave wives and siblings surrender their beloved relatives to tragic fates because it’s simply the right thing to do. There’s little room for deceit and selfishness in Pagan life and lore; those who betray their trust, like Sisyphus or Fafnir, suffer outrageous fates both in this world and the next.

Shame is poison to the Pagan heart. Far better, it’s often said, to suffer a thousand flayings of the flesh than to endure a gash upon your honor. Shame caries beyond the oathbreaker’s person; a disgraced man dishonors his ancestors, descendants and friends. More “civilized” Pagans, like Romans and Greeks, have more flexible ideas about honor than Norsemen or Celts; even to them, however, treachery or cowardice disgusts the gods themselves.

This sense of honor pervades magick, too. Spells worked with integrity usually bring good fortune upon the magicians, while those cast in cowardice or spleen conjure disaster. The rule of Threefold Return is Pagan in origin, and seems to hover over Witches and their ilk. Many heroes and magicians also bear destinies and prohibitions — geasa — that are essentially pacts with the gods; to break them invites destruction. Unlike the stern God of Christendom, the Pagan deities are quite free with magickal gifts. Those gifts come with heavy prices, though, and one such price is responsibility. Like a good farmer, the Pagan must tend his fields. He who shirks responsibility will be punished.

Along similar lines, Pagans also prize wisdom, strength, vitality and humor. Although age is a mark of distinction, a glorious death is preferable to senility. To many heathens, life is to be enjoyed but death is to be accepted. All men and women die; to die with renown, to leave great tales behind and to be remembered long after the Underworld claims you — that is the legacy most Pagans crave.

(Author’s Aside: After watching my stepfather waste away from cancer I can understand this sentiment all too clearly. Warren was a strong, proud old bastard. Seeing him lose the use of his legs, his strength, his voice and finally his breath I understood why a slow death was so fearsome to ancient folk. Few things are sadder than watching vitality drain away when there’s nothing you can do to stop it. A sudden death is cleaner and more preferable.

There’s another message in this too, folks: Don’t smoke. It’s an ugly way to go.)
Wheel of Pain and Glory

To outsiders, the Pagan ways seem cruel. To a degree, they are — no one would mistake the Norsemen for angels! And yet, life is cruel. Given the harsh lands that bred such faiths, the Pagan creeds are simply pragmatic: Take care of yourself, take care of your people, and take what you need. If other people aren’t strong enough to take care of themselves, then perhaps they don’t deserve to survive at all.

Yes, life is a sacred thing. But “sacred” doesn’t always mean “kind.” Like the land, the Pagan gods are remorseless and unpredictable. Few are actively evil in the way that Christians declare that Satan is evil, but very few are all-loving, either. Thus, Pagans tend to be a fatalistic lot. The wheel of birth, death and rebirth is neither kind nor pitying, and the best you can hope for is a fine life, a good death, and songs to be sung in your honor when you’re gone. Perhaps that’s why the forgiving doctrine of Christ (and the less-than-forgiving antics of his followers) eventually supplants the Old Gods’ ways. To those without our modern technologies, the hope of heaven is far better than the drudgery of earth.

And yet the old ways persevere. Even after the triumphs of Christianity, many folk tend the hearths of ancient gods, bribing the soil with rituals and blood. Paganism is about survival, after all, and those who keep the old faiths alive despite the Church’s disapproval are hearty folk indeed.

Now, as the Sorcerers Crusade begins, these holdovers need all the courage they can muster. For ages, Christianity and the Pagan faiths could coexist in relative harmony. But now, as witch-hunters grow fanatical and the Church spreads forth its claws in search of heresy, new wars rage: the burning of Baerwald, Wyndgarde’s March, the Oath of Fire and the bastard crusade of Tezghul the Insane all overturn this simmering cauldron and spill new blood upon the land. Angry Pagans reclaim their birthrights of their woad-clad forebears, and even those who choose not to fight are caught out in the storm. The wheel of pain and glory that marks life on this earth has begun to spin faster and faster.

The Witches and Pagans have sworn to survive. May the Old Gods stand with them!

Historical Note

By the Renaissance, Paganism is officially “dead” throughout most of Europe. Rural enclaves still reserve old secrets, and Christian rituals and saints give a monotheistic sheen to polytheistic traditions. Even so, the old cultures of the Norse, Greeks, Celts and so on have been superseded, and even the country folk are ostensibly Christian, if only in name.

But in the Dark Fantastic setting, the potency and numbers of Old Religion holdovers has been increased for dramatic reasons, and a war has been declared between Christians and Pagans that does not “historically” exist during this period. (Aside, of course, for the Burning Times, which are pretty damned one-sided!) Given the existence of magick and the supernatural factions in the World of Darkness, though, this is a reasonable liberty. And given the violence the real-life Church inflicted against “heretics,” “infidels” and “witches,” it’s fair to assume that a virtual army of witch-folk would have taken issue with these so-called “holy wars” had those witch-folk existed in greater numbers.

Another note: Because the word refers to a general set of beliefs rather than to a specific religion, “pagan” is rarely capitalized in common usage. However, since religious conflict marks one of the major themes of The Sorcerers Crusade, we choose to capitalize “Pagan” when the term refers to the Old Gods, their ways and their followers. This puts the Pagans on more-or-less equal footing with Christians, Jews, Muslims, etc., and connotes a magickal unity that real-world Pagan faiths lacked. It also implies a bit more respect than the diminutive “pagan” form contains; after all, the word and its adherents have been kicked around enough already.

Oh, and for those who don’t know, polytheism refers to religions that contain many gods, while agrarian means “relating to or concerning the land.”
Witches and Pagans are people of oral traditions, of story, song, lore and legend passed down from mother to daughter and from father to son. Only recently have they become people of the written word, and this out of necessity. On the Witches’ Pyramid, Secrecy is considered to be the most important point. Unfortunately, while that secrecy saved many an old crone from the flames, it also contributed to the death of many an old tradition. As older Pagans passed from middle age into elder-hood, they found fewer and fewer worthy students to pass their tales and such on to. And so when they died, their Craft died with them. Some wise ones, not wishing their Arts to be lost to death and time, made the decision to commit the sum total of their life’s learning to a Book of Shadows or a Book of Light (or both, depending on the tradition). These books were highly personal and each one unique, sometimes written in inks blended with sacred herbs and sometimes written in a Pagan’s own blood. Often they contained histories, both individual and of a coven, stories, spells learned and those created by the Witch herself, potions, tinctures, recipes, and other useful information.

With this in mind, The Authors decided to try something a little different: The first three chapters of this book are intended to read like a Verbena Grimoire, and as such do not follow the traditional sourcebook style. Chapter I: History recounts the spiritual and worldly history of the Verbena and other Pagan peoples across Europe. Chapter II: Knowledge puts forth a collection of rotes, spells and effects (with the necessary game systems), from the most simple to the most secret, gathered from the far corners of the Western world. Chapter III: Wise Craft presents information on herb use, mystical symbology, practical magick, ritual tools, common enemies and an explanation of the flight of broomsticks.

Chapter IV: Weavings returns to the sourcebook style and reveals a trove of treasures for Players and Storytellers alike, including revised rules for creating familiars, new merits and flaws, a few new knowledges and backgrounds, and a small collection of commonly worshiped Old Gods. Also, we include a list of books and films that might prove useful for character and story development. We hope you will find the blending of old and new to be enjoyable, entertaining, and most of all, useful. Blessed be!
Introduction

Samhain, 1550

Another year ends and so much has changed, so many of the Wise have gone beyond, consigned to the flames by jealousy, hatred, fear and ignorance. We are not people of the Book. Our knowledge and secrets, stories and legends are passed through story, song and ritual – from one living voice to another. But we are dying and I fear that the mysteries we have uncovered and preserved for these many centuries will be lost if they are not consigned to the permanence of ink and parchment.

I know that by keeping this Book, I take considerable risks. But I would rather die than lose the little that still remains. If I must burn so that our Tradition might live, then I welcome the fires of purity. For ten years, I have traveled across the land to meet with others who call themselves Verbena. Awakened and un-Awakened alike have given me stories, others spells, potions, histories, and many more secrets of their Arts. I have even had the pleasure of conversations with those who do not call the Tradition theirs: priests of the Nailed God, artisans who temper their Arts with Science and Reason, and some of those who Speak with Dreams.

Herein is contained a record of these mysteries. May it survive this Inquisition to enlighten the world when I am dust.
WITCHES AND PAGANS
Throughout my travels, I have heard many tales in many tongues, telling of how the Wise came to be. Magus and Witch, Pagan and Sorcerer alike tell stories that are, in the end, quite similar. After all, there is but one story and one story only – all that changes are the names and places. Here, then are my own stories of beginning, those of my sisters and brothers within my Tradition, and those of other Pagan peoples throughout Europe.

The Hidden Children

When I was a child, one of the first stories my grandmother told me was that of the Hidden Children. I choose to record it here first as a tribute to her, as a reminder of the common heritage of the Verbena and the Dreamspeakers, and as a remembrance of those who have gone before, marking the paths upon which we now walk.

Before there was mankind, there were the Pure Ones, beings of celestial energy. It was they who gathered together the elemental essences and gave mankind the gift of form, flesh and blood. Some among them had mind to be teachers and guardians of their new-made creations, and so these Wanderers clothed themselves in flesh and walked amongst us. Even so, they glowed with a light most rare and refined, and as they traveled the Earth, men and women were enraptured by them and drawn to them as water is drawn to earth. The Wanderers mated with these men and women, mixing their essence with the blood of humankind.

Their children, who called themselves the Wyck, were many and their magicks were great and powerful, unfettered by doubt, darkness and mistrust. These wise ones could heal the sick with a mere touch, or wither a field of crops with a single glance. Like the Pure Ones before them, they too wandered through village and vale, passing on the wisdom of their mystic parents to all they encountered. They taught mankind to recognize the turnings of the Wheel, how to sow the seeds and reap the harvest, and they gave man the gift of fire to remind him from whence he came.
Everywhere the Wyck traveled, civilizations arose which practiced the rites and rituals they had been taught. In time, the Wyck themselves had children, and to these children they passed down the wisdom of the Pure Ones, who no longer walked the Earth among men. The children of the Wyck were called Aeduna, and they were leaders amongst their peoples. These Priests and Priestesses went forth into their villages, cities and towns, upholding the mysteries of their birthright and carrying the light forward. There were those who could shape the flow of Life and others who were able to see beyond the veil into the realm of Spirit. Just as water will fork and split in twain as it flows, so did the Aeduna split between those who worshiped the spark of Life within creation and those who would speak with the Spirits they saw within that same creation. Those following the path of Spirit we now call the Speakers of Dream. Honor them and show them respect, for they are our kin.

As it has always been from the beginning, the Wheel of Fortune turns, and what is high must fall and what is low must rise. The followers of the Nailed God, beaten and broken by their oppressors for so long, at last gained amnesty and their beliefs and teachings took hold upon the hearts and minds of men. This God was a jealous god, and so his people sought to bury the great temples and groves of the Pure Ones and the Wyck. Soon, what was once great lay in ruins, and the Aeduna were forced to wander the Earth as their parents had, desperately seeking out others like them. But just as the Pure Ones had glowed with mystic light, so too did their Hidden Children. And thus it was that the Aeduna and their children were able to recognize their brethren, sparkling jewels amidst the mud.

So it is that we of the Verbena recognize our own, the Hidden Children of the Pure Ones, and carry on the traditions that have existed since the dawn of time.

Lilith

While travelling through Italy and Greece, I stumbled across a rather curious sect of willworkers calling themselves Bahari. They claimed to be followers and descendants of Lilith herself and recounted to me a most amazing story of the First Mother and her role in the beginning of all things.

Their tale follows the Christian creation story, but begins much earlier, documenting the birth of the Pure Ones themselves from the reflection of the Universal One. Apparently, Jehovah was the firstborn of the Pure Ones, and the garden of Eden was simply one of many gardens created by the Pure Ones at the beginning of all things.

According to the tale, Jehovah created Adam and Lilith together as equals, back to back, and gave them both gifts of Power. To Adam, he gave the gift of Naming and Shaping. To Lilith, he gave the gift of Fertility and Intuition. As in the Christian Bible, the god selfishly forbade them to eat of the trees of Life and Knowledge, and yet left them in the center of the garden to be tended by his creations. But here the Bahari tale sheds some new light on the Eden myth. Lilith was curious about the trees and visited them every day. Rather than picking the fruit outright, however, she instead waited for the fruit to grow heavy and fall naturally before she partook. The fruit transformed her and made her as the Pure Ones themselves.

Lilith keeps her secret until Adam, who up to this point has been rutting with the beasts of the garden, demands she submit to his desire. When she refuses, Adam attempts to rape her, but Lilith calls out the hidden name of Jehovah, and is lifted out of the garden.

The story continues with Lilith and Jehovah residing in the heavens as lovers until the god comes to resent the strong will and new-found equality of his creation. And so he casts her out from Heaven to die in the unmade lands. For many days and nights, they say, Lilith walked in the desert, pregnant with the seed of Jehovah and feeding upon her own blood for sustenance. When she came to the edge of the Great Sea, her body blackened with the heat of the sun, she descended beneath it and birthed the brood of Jehovah, thus creating the great creatures of the oceans. There she lay for many years, resting and healing.

Eventually, wishing to create her own garden, Lilith left the sea, and found lands from which she brought up a great many strange and wondrous plants.
and flowers and fruits. But when she tried to plant the seeds from the trees of Life and Knowledge, they would not grow. And so she returned to Eden, to uncover the mystery.

Here is where the story really takes a strange turn! When Lilith arrived at the gates of Eden, who did she find guarding the place but Lucifer Morningstar! Rather than the fallen rebellious Angel the Christians portray him to be, Lucifer is a brother of Jehovah, and a Pure One in his own right, guarding against the return of She Who Was Cast Out as a favor to the firstborn. Lucifer recognized her, not as the outcast but as a Pure One and fell in love with her immediately. He gifted her with the cloak of Night and made her ruler of the Moon and Tides.

Now allowed to pass into Eden, Lilith cast her cloak of Night over the trees and transformed herself into a large winged serpent, the better to hide in the grasses unseen. She coiled herself about the roots of the Tree of Life and asked it how it came to grow. It replied to her that it sprang from the seeds numbering seven times seven. And so Lilith swallowed whole seven of its fruits, each of which had seven seeds. She did the same at the Tree of Knowledge, but before she could leave, she was approached by a strange woman who called herself Eve. Lilith saw that Eve was a lesser thing, not even of the True Earth, but shaped from Adam. She took pity upon Eve and bade her eat of the fruit, so that this woman might be enlightened as she herself had been.

Here the story resumes the familiar turn of events we find in the Christian Genesis story. Eve took the fruit to Adam and bade him eat, which he did. Jehovah discovered their disobedience and pronounced his curses upon them. But when he tried to pronounce curses upon Lilith and Lucifer, they reminded him that they were his equals (something he apparently has great difficulty accepting) and that he has no right to curse them. The whole number of the Pure Ones was called together to bear judgement in the case and after a long argument, during which Adam and Eve almost lost their lives, a decision was reached.

Lucifer and Lilith were banished to the unmade lands as punishment for their betrayal, but were allowed to remain together as lovers. As for Jehovah, he was forever cursed to be a wandering god of wandering
peoples. Eventually, it is said, he turned his back upon his creations, mourning the loss of his Paradise and his immortality. Lilith went on to establish a great and beautiful garden, which she tended alongside the Lightbringer for many years. Great and powerful were her magicks and they sustained all of her creations and the growing things within the garden and beyond.

There is more to this story, but alas, I was not privy to the details. The Awakened Bahari were willing to tell me this much: that Lilith endured much more suffering, and the loss of the Lightbringer, who descended into madness. However, she emerged from her struggles stronger and wiser than ever before. They say that she still wanders the earth, tending her own creations, the gardens that her fellow Pure Ones left behind, and even lending care to the abandoned creations of Jehovah. It is speculated that many of the words of God in the Old Testament of the Bible are actually the words of Lilith, acting in his stead.

Even more amazing than their tale are the Bahari themselves. Amongst their number, I counted four Awakened souls and three times that many Sleepers. During the second night of my stay, I was surprised to learn that some of those Sleepers were actually Vampires! I had been told that they existed, but never had I seen one with my own eyes. Just as surprising was the presence of Shapeshifters in the same group, although I did note that the Undead and the Shifters were seldom in a room together at the same time.

The Hidden Realms

Any mention of Lilith cannot go without also mentioning her legacy to the Verbena. We believe that our Hidden Realms were left to us by the First Mother herself, keyed to open only for magicks similar to her own. Work still continues in these places, and I believe it will take a thousand lifetimes to uncover all of the secrets and mysteries contained therein.

The four Realms are seasonal, corresponding to the four yearly turnings of the Wheel. In the Winter Realm, the landscape is always as after a fresh night’s snow. There is a castle there, and within the courtyard stands a great oak tree with massive bare branches the color of blood and sunset. All manner of creatures live in this realm, possibly denizens of the great evergreen forest that lies at the foot of the castle hill.

The Spring Realm is a large, open garden ringed with fragrant trees in full blossom and alive with the chirping of birds and the mating calls of various woodland creatures. There is not much else to it now, but there is talk of constructing a small cottage or shelter at the center.

The Summer Realm is my favorite of the four. It is simply a grove of oak trees surrounding a single tree of great immensity. In my wanderings of that place, I have counted concentric rings of other trees, groves in their own right. Each of the nine magickal woods can be found there, in addition to others. We still continue to explore this place, as the areas we have mapped are only a very small portion of the land we see stretched out before us.

Finally, the Autumn Realm is made up of a large dancing circle with a great stone altar at the center. Around the edges there are many, many trees all in the effulgent colors of the fall. Scrying herbs grow near the altar and some Verbena have mentioned small pools just beyond the trees that are mirrors into strange and fantastic worlds.

The ways into the Realms are known only by the Verbena at this time. Perhaps when these dangerous times are past, we may be able to share these places of beauty and mystery with others.

Pagans of Note

Sir Garland of Laramay

Once upon a time, Sir Garland was one of the Knights Templar, those mystical soldiers of the Christian Messiah, supposedly founded by the Gabriellites. In 1313, the Church turned upon its Soldiers, hunting them to the ground as they now hunt us. After a year of hiding and evading the forces of his former brethren, Sir Garland surfaced in the Heart of the Holy Roman Empire. In the Cathedral, his armor gleaming and his tunic the brightest white, the Templar forewore his allegiance to the Nailed God before the Cardinal, his Priests and the Holy Roman Emperor himself.
Now Garland was skilled in the Arts, and so before the Church men could seize him and pronounce him a heretic, he opened himself to the Mist Ways and fled out of that place, through the realm of Spirit. He journeyed deep into the Black Forest, a wood famed to be the home of dark Fae and the Shifting Beasts, and there he made claim to an expanse of the woodland. Soon, Pagan folk began to gather in that grove, claiming it as a haven from oppression, persecution and Inquisition. And in 1317, Sir Garland established the land as his own fiefdom and called it Baerwald.

Such an act was a direct slap in the face of Rome, Christiandom and the Holy Roman Empire, so it is not surprising that the Church did all it could to destroy Sir Garland and his stronghold of the Old Religion. But the forces of Baerwald held true through every attack. For over one hundred years, the Pagan peoples of the Black Forest lived in this place, raising their children, growing their crops, and forming a bond with the other mystic denizens of the woodland.

Sadly, ten years ago, Baerwald finally fell to the numbers of the Gabrielite army. It is believed that Sir Garland perished in the attack. The Gabrielites made a grand show of producing a body and some armor they claim to be his. However, the Mystics of that place say that Garland escaped, wounded, into the forest where he now lives with the Shifting Beasts. Those he left behind have sworn bloody vengeance upon the Church and its agents. When I traveled through that region recently, I saw much warfare and strife between our people and the Christians who rule there. It is sad that such a peaceful dream had to end in death and struggle.

Talia de Almovar
(aka The Talon)

To my knowledge, Talia is not Awakened, but her command of practical magicks grants her strengths that sometimes rival the abilities of most Adepts. She was born in Castille to parents of minor nobility who had the great fortune, or misfortune as it turned out, to own a large parcel of choice lands. When the Church grew desirous of her father's land, they sent men to murder her entire family, accusing them of witchcraft and declaring the lands forfeit.
Thanks to a faithful servant, Talia escaped. She made her living as a prostitute, then as a courtesan, which is where she acquired instruction in the art of swordcraft. Her talent was astounding, even as a beginner, possibly owing to her practice of the wise arts. How she gained that instruction is ever a mystery.

Vowing to avenge the death of her family, Talia assumed the life of an assassin, and has since become the scourge of Inquisitors and Gabrielites throughout Spain and France. They say she moves on silent feet, blending with the very shadows of night. Her sword moves with the swiftness of the wind, and her knowledge of deadly poisons is endless. Wherever someone is unjustly accused of traffic with the devil, she mysteriously appears to free the innocent and visit death upon the unjust, leaving her grisly mark: a T carved into the forehead of the false accuser.

The Hooded Man, The Maid, and their Merrie Band

Some like to claim that Stephen Trevanus, the outlaw Craftsmason, was the original Robin Hood. But the legends of Robin O’Wood, or the Hooded Man have existed long before him.

He and The Maid go hand in hand throughout the walk of history, their daemons being born again and again, seeking each other out. Guinevere and Lancelot, Abelard and Heloise, even Trevanus and his love, Marion, are all incarnations of these bound souls. He is all that one could wish for in a man; brave, tireless and just, although not always by the standards of society. He seeks justice and equality for all, and rights the wrongs he perceives. He reveres authority, but not corrupt power. The Maid, in turn, is the very embodiment of beauty and virtue, strength and honor. Not only is she an equal to the Hooded Man, but she is that which lifts and inspires him to greatness. She remains steadfast through all that fate and time can muster, seeing the truth and light in his eyes. They are the perfect balancing of woman and man, the Horned God and the Mother, and they are drawn to each other regardless of the life into which they are born, or the commitments forced upon them.

Guinevere could no more stop her love for Lancelot than the moon could choose not to rise. In turn, The Hooded Man, although honorable, could never tear himself from his other soul. As individuals, they are formidable Pagans in their own right. Together, they are a powerful force to be reckoned with. When they assume their mythic identities, the two cast off the
trappings of their former lives and take up the work that destiny has prescribed for them. In doing so, every incarnation of the pair calls together a band of thirteen witches as companions and aids to their purpose. These Merrie Men, as they are sometimes called, are also reincarnated souls, and are known for their love of music, art, revelry, verse and jest.

Signy Hammarvind, the Storm Witch

Signy Hammarvind was the seventh in a line of powerful “Sturmvitte” in the far Northern reaches. She had flame red hair, with a streak of pure gold at the temple and eyes the color of stormclouds at sunset.

The Northern peoples celebrate the coming of spring much as we do — with celebration, feasting and the coupling of new lovers beneath the Beltane moon. They give a name to that mysterious energy that draws lovers together. It is called the Soul Finding.

Signy’s mother and grandmother, together with the village elders had decided that she was to be the storm witch for Janef Erikson’s ship. From the time she was a child, she had been betrothed to Danogar, Janef’s son. Secretly it was hoped that Signy and Danogar would experience the Soul Finding and continue the alliance between the two families.

But during the Soul Finding, something strange happened: both Danogar and his rival, Leif Jorgenson, were equally drawn to the storm witch, as she was drawn equally to them. As a choice had to be made, the elders of the village proposed a series of challenges for each suitor. Signy would declare the winner in each contest.

Both men were equally matched, each winning an equal number of challenges. However, Leif’s grandmother knew that Signy was a storm witch and wished the honor of future blessed children to fall upon her grandson. So when the victory of the final challenge fell to Danogar, she gave her grandson a potent poison to place into the horn of victory mead.

Danagar fell very ill and within a few hours was dead. Leif was so overcome with his own guilt and shame and so moved by Signy’s grief for Danogar that he confessed his crime and begged his love to pronounce his punishment. This is the wording of her curse as it came to me:

I curse you, Man, to roam the earth
Without home and without hearth,
With no kind face to meet your eye
Until you bring this gift to me:
A proud, bold ship with sails thrust high,
To navigate both sea and sky,
A ship to sail through ocean’s twist,
A ship to sail through spirit’s mist.
A ship so strong that Wodin not it bars
A ship to grant me passage to the stars.
Bring this gift and then be duly blest
Fail, and nevermore again find rest.

Upon hearing her words, Leif kissed her hand, nodded silently and left the village that very day with nothing but his axe, his knife and the clothing upon his back. Months passed with no word or sign of the banished man, and Signy began to regret her decision. And when word came that Leif had been killed by a terrible fire demon, Signy retreated into herself and into her grief, hardening her heart. She took up her assignment on board Janef Erikson’s ship and there grew her reputation as one of the most fearsome and ruthless storm witches in the Northern lands.

Leif, however, was still very much alive and had found work as a hired hand on various sailing crews all down the French and Spanish coast. In Portugal, he found work on a ship that, to his delight, matched exactly the design and function that Signy had charged him to find — except for the ability to travel to the stars. That obstacle, however, was soon to be overcome.

His hard work and abilities gained him membership into the ranks of the Void Seekers. While un-Awakened when he started, his potential was noted. The captain of that great ship believed that it would take a truly spectacular event to jar his sleeping Dae-mon awake. That year, the captain plotted his course
beyond the night horizon into the stars and to the moon. It is said that these Wizard sailors have the means to travel the lines of the web that extend from the Earth to the heavens. It is quite possible that their travels take them through the deepest mists of spirit, wherein dwell creatures so horrific, they defy description. When the ship returned to its moorings, Leif, his Captain and three crazed sailors were the sole survivors out of a crew of fifty men.

During this time, Signy had called out to the spirits of the Underworld to help her find Leif’s soul, but to no avail. And yet she could see him in visions battling strange and terrible beasts. Despairing that she had damned him to live forever with Hella, she endeavored to end her own life. She called up a great and mighty storm that ripped apart Janef Erikson’s ship and sent all aboard to watery graves. The witch herself was spared, plucked from the icy waters by a ship of Shapechangers from the Irish isle. They took pity on her and allowed her to live amongst them on the outskirts of their sacred grove — a thing most rare!

Leif’s experience in the dark mists had Awakened him, but the shock to his spirit was great. He had seen horrific visions throughout his journey, visions of Signy sinking beneath the waves of a deep black sea into a world of great beast men with claws like knives and hands the size of a man’s head. The captain also confessed to seeing visions of a flame-haired woman. But in his visions, she was the scourge of mankind, a bringer of apocalyptic storms — not simply of water and wind, but of fire and spirit as well.

The two men came to blows, and their battle was fierce and angry, but in the end, Leif proved victorious. With what little he knew of his Arts, he called out to the spirits of his ancestors to guide him to his love. Three years later, he arrived at the door of Signy Hammarvind’s cottage a haggard, weary, heartsick man, barely a shadow of the proud youth he had once been. It is said that the tears she shed upon seeing him fell upon his face and beard and mixed with his own, restoring him to his former youth. To my knowledge, the two of them are sailing still.

The Pictish Witches

I have been told of the remnants of a tribe of witches, far lost in the grim gray mists of the highland of Scotland. They are descended from the original inhabitants of this bleak land, and are small, dark and fierce. Their rituals follow the Wheel much the same as those of the witches of the gentler climes of the South, but that is the only similarity. These rites recall more barbarous and bloody times.

At Samhain, each ancient stone hut is warded with a human skull set out front, a tallow candle burning from within to welcome home their dead. They do not celebrate Yule. Festive rites would be difficult indeed on these frozen peaks where winter is cruelest.

At Imbolc, a virgin is brought naked into the circle and taken on the altar by the high priest, her maiden’s blood blended with muddied earth and dried heather. This mixture is then sealed into a bottle and covered in black cloth for 13 nights. A little is smeared onto every plow and spade that will break Earth come the thaw, to ensure that the land will give what little it can.

Eostre, at the end of March, seems to involve much drinking and coupling. At this time, should the community have anyone who has committed a crime or betrayed the code of his or her people, their throat is slit, and the blood sprayed on the new lambs and the greening fields. The body is burned, the bones ground to ash, and kept for ritual paint of the body. The paint, a mixture of the ash and woad, is often all they wear their rituals.

Beltane is a time of high ritual, bonfires and feasting. The high priest is the God himself this night, the high priestess his bride. Amongst these people this is considered the best night to conceive. They say many a lass has her first menses on this night, as well as her first lover. And it goes without saying that most of the village babes are always born around the first of February.

Midsummer is the time of fire, strengthening the sun, warming the crops and burning the enemies. Few
venture into these hills for the dark stories heard. I have it further, from an old man’s lips, that midsummer is when they mourn those of their tribe who could wear the flesh of animals. They say these warriors went down into a pit of the great serpent, and what emerged was foul beyond all naming. No one has ever witnessed this rite and spoken of it before, but the old man said that you could hear the far off howling of the lost ones. From that day to this the village is visited by the dark ones once a year on this date, to bring new blood and mate with the old.

Be careful wandering from true paths when visiting the highlands. There are dark corners that have not yet seen the enlightenment of these brighter days.

**Lady Nightshade**

She is the greatest of us, so I would be remiss if I did not include some small account of the pivotal role she has played in the founding and survival of our Tradition.

Her story begins in Harrogate, England, in Midsummer of 1435. Whilst attending a celebration on Midsummer eve, the circle was attacked by one Christopher Wyndgarde, so-called Knight of the True Cross. Every man, woman and child in attendance, clad only as they were born, were ruthlessly set upon by Wyndgarde and his men. Though the Gabrielites will tell a different, cleaner, self-righteous tale, the truth of the matter is this. The men and boys the knights castrated and left to bleed. The women they raped repeatedly before slitting their throats, and the girls they burned alive. All this in the name of their dead God, their Nailed God.

You will forgive me, but I am unable to be objective. There was no excuse for such a brutal and senseless slaughter of innocents. Only Nightshade escaped, by virtue of her Arts, to hide in the surrounding forest until dawn. And at the sun’s first rays, she spilled her own blood in honor of the slain. And on that blood, she cried out her oath of vengeance to Morrigan, and Hecate, and Lilith
and all the gods of wrath. She then buried the dead and set up wards so that none might stumble into that place of sorrow, sadness and restless spirits.

For four years, she hunted Wyndegarde, gathering her forces and making small directed attacks on him and his men. For four years, this evil one cut a swath through the Pagan peoples of England, Scotland and Wales, desecrating each circle as he had that first one. And with each drop of Pagan blood spilled, Nightshade’s vengeance grew stronger.

In the midst of this came the Seer, Sh’zar, an Ecstatic prophet from the Arabian lands. He foretold a world overrun with gruesome demons and metal monsters, a Nephandic playground of chaos. In dreams, Nightshade saw this strange visitor from the South, and she saw herself meeting with two others: one who bore the symbol of Hermes Trismegistus and another who seemed surrounded by the music of the Universal One. The dreams came every night until upon New Year’s night in 1440, Lady Nightshade traveled to the ruins of that place called Mistridge. There she met Sh’zar face to face, and was introduced to Baldrick LaSalle, the Hermetic, and Valloran, the Chorister. Together with four of the noble Fae houses, they agreed to form a new Tradition, encompassing all the magickal traditions across the world. And so they went forth with the purpose of gathering the Awakened together in a common body. At that moment, she became the emissary for the Pagan magi of Europe, as the others were emisaries for the Hermetics and the Celestial Chorus. But her work was difficult, and her mind was still troubled with thoughts of her grave vendetta.

And then, in the summer of 1442, Nightshade happened to cross paths with an old Witch with the Sight. Together they scryed the mists of future Time and saw Wyndegarde and his men marching across Ireland, near the town of Newry. By this time, Nightshade had amassed at least two-score Witches, cunning folk, and fae creatures. Together they laid a trap for Wyndegarde and his men, at the very spot where the Seer had espied them marching. For seven days and seven nights, the Lady Nightshade’s army lay in wait, deep in meditation, weaving magicks and building a mighty cone of power. Some say that amongst their number was a woman of stunning beauty, with long black hair and amber skin. She spoke not a word, but aided the efforts with strange and dark magicks. The Lady Nightshade is convinced that Lilith herself came to her aid in that time of need. Far be it from me to doubt her.

On the eighth day, Wyndegarde came marching, his troops behind him. Once they had reached the center of the hidden circle, Nightshade raised a mighty cry, and her forces unleashed years’ worth of vengeance upon the unsuspecting Gabrielites. And though the summer sun was hot and high in the noon-day sky, every man of them was frozen solid, their blood instantly turned to ice in their veins. Wyndegarde himself was transfixed in a Web of Fortune of Nightshade’s own design. Around him, she cast her circle and called forth the Guardians to witness her rite.

It lasted for hours, I’m told. In the end, the Web finished its slow work and the once proud and virile soldier hung suspended in air, a withered and broken old man. And then she castrated him and left him to die. And when his soul had released from his body, she trapped it in a snare of Spirit, and together with nine other Witches, she shredded the soul that had been Christopher Wyndegarde and scattered it to the four winds.
Word spread quickly from coven to grove of Wyndegarde’s March and of his death at Nightshade’s hand. Where once her people had been reluctant to join together in one common Tradition, they now saw the value of such a union. In 1449, there was a second meeting at Mistridge, and a great multitude of Awakened sorcerers gathered at that place.

But the Craftsmasons and the Artisans of the Order of Reason had heard word of the meeting and attacked, midway through the convocation. Fortunately, Nightshade and the others were prepared for such an attack, and the resulting battle raged on for many days. While the Magi were triumphant, the battle took its toll on both sides. Many of the winged dragons were lost to Artificer artillery, and many magi themselves sacrificed their lives in the battle.

Following the Battle of Flames, it was decided that a Realm should be created in the Mists as a meeting place for mages to take sanctuary from opposing forces on the Earth. Nightshade’s role in the creation of Horizon was pivotal, as was her role in the establishment of the Council of Traditions. She continues to be our most valued connection to that great body to this day. But I feel that Lady Nightshade’s greatest achievement was finding and selecting Eloine as the Verbena representative to the First Cabal.

The Tragedy of Eloine

Next to Lady Nightshade, Eloine was one of the best of us. Her command of the Arts and her willingness to give over herself to intuition, the dance and Spirit, made her the obvious choice to represent the Verbena. Those I spoke to have described Eloine as both ethereal and earthy at once. She was possessed of astounding beauty, the pinnacle of which was her lovely red hair. It is no wonder so many loved her, including the Great Betrayer.

But beauty was not the extent of her greatness. Eloine’s magicks were fierce, passionate and powerful. It was her magicks that aided the First Cabal’s advantage in their altercation with Rivallon de Corbie’s Legion de Triumph, and it was she who decided the battle at Kupala Alka, the seat of Tezghul’s power.

Alas, her betrayal by He Who Shall Not Be Named, and the abduction of her children was too great for even her great spirit to withstand. Upon her liberation from de Corbie and his torturers, she returned to Horizon a ghost of the woman she once was. It did not take long for sorrow and madness to overwhelm her. She left us, eventually, renounced her Arts, and went out into the wide world to face the remainder of her life. Even now, almost 80 years later, her story makes me weep. That such potential and greatness had to fall before the dogs of Reason!

The Confessions of Brother Antonio di San Benedetto

The conversation that led to my gaining possession of this account came quite by chance and I can only thank the Lord and Lady that they placed me in the right place at the right time. The following account is true. Of that I am certain and am willing to swear to that upon my tools of Art. Lady Nightshade and one other are the only ones besides myself who know the fate of Eloine’s children. Though we still have no clues as to their whereabouts in the world, our Strega sisters and brothers assure us that they remain safe and are vigilantly guarded. Here then are the words of Brother Antonio, formerly of the Gabrielite Brethren, now a Solitary Witch.
As I begin to commit these words to paper, I look up at the wooden cross that hangs on the wall beside my small cot. Tonight I have prayed for many hours beneath it. There is neither kneeling bench nor cloth, but I am used to the discomfort. Truth be told, I welcome this little pain, for the distraction it gives takes my heart, however briefly, from a much greater anguish.

The Monastery is quiet. The final bell sounded hours ago and all lights save mine and the prayer candles within the sanctuary have been extinguished. I am quite sure I am the only one awake.... no, this new strangeness within me tells me for certain that I am the only creature still restless within these walls.

I look to the bed. My satchel is still unpacked from my two-week stay within the grim walls of the Inquisitors prison. Save for the book.... Oh, had I not been an inmate of that dark fortress! The things I have seen chill my soul beyond hope of any Heavenly warming. There is nothing for it but to steel my nerves and tell the tale.

I had been assisting a Monsignor Alfonso, of Castille, an esteemed Inquisitor and whispered famous throughout the halls of the church. Alfonso had been, despite the expectations of a man from Spain, somewhat fair with grayish-colored eyes. But the eyes were as cold as the dead, and in the past two weeks I only saw fire within their depths just the once.

As SHE was burning.

There had been six witches to save; six misguided souls lost from the true faith. Within my mind, I wondered why this handful of the damned had been of sufficient importance to require the eyes of Rome. Monsignor Alfonso de Castille, no less, rumored to be the bastard of Ferdinand de Aragon, conceived and nurtured far from Isabella la Catolica’s ever-watchful eyes. Our abbot had only been to happy to lend the inquisitor a priest gifted in the reading and writing of many languages. That is my gift, of which I have committed the sin of being proud. This horror; this fortnight of darkness is the reward I have reaped for my sins.

We were given two small rooms for our purpose, and I was given a plentitude of parchment, goose quills and ink, as well as a sturdy writing bench. There was a torturer, wearing the mask, a sturdy table with straps, and two chairs; one for me and one for Alfonso. The stench of the surrounding cells so filled the very air that I retched and heaved upon first entering the place. Even though foulness is not uncommon in this year of our Lord, 1502, this was extraordinary. Filth, death and corruption from the centuries made the very stones reek.

My work was seemingly simple; record. The first girl was the hardest. It was the first time I had seen a girl naked, but I felt only pity, no lust. She was terrified and dirty and thin, begging and pleading, saying that there had been an awful mistake. She swore no knowledge of a coven, and even after her fingernails had been ripped out one at a time, she still swore innocence. At the end of the session, Alfonso stood, approaching the broken thing, and whispered something into her ear.

"I do not know, my Lord," she rasped. "Oh please, I know nothing of any children."

And so it was with each of the women. First the torture, then the question. A pattern formed, and Alfonso unfailingly condemned each of the women to death.

When there were only two prisoners left, I took it upon myself to visit the women in their cells. The first was quite mad, rocking herself back and forth and crooning lullabies to an imaginary babe. The second cell appeared empty, until SHE emerged from the shadows. She came forward slowly, and I tried to guess her age. She was passing rare; a woman that could have been twenty, maybe forty. Or all the years in between. Her hair was the shade of old wood, black with red and brown, and her eyes were almost an amberish brown. Witch’s eyes. I caught myself crossing my fingers in an old sign my Grandmother taught me. She smiled.

"Ah, young one. Does the old evil one send you to do his deeds?"

"Do you refer to Monsignor Alfonso, witch?" I asked.

"Come closer," she said, "and I shall save you and myself the pleasure of your toys."

Against my better judgment, I leaned forward, and to my great surprise her breath smelled of wild mint. She wet her lips and whispered, "I am a witch."
Like a fool, I staggered back, fearfully wishing one of the guards had come down there with me.

“Please, do not be afraid. I promise you I will do you no harm. I simply wish to speak with you.”

I muttered a quick, “Hail Mary, full of grace...”, and she tossed her head back in laughter.

“Child, if only that worked!” She beckoned me closer once more. As if pulled, I found my hands clasped on the bars. “I only wish to open your eyes, even as mine close. My name is Luria, and I am a Witch of the Strega. I am indeed that which your master seeks. But oh, he has a dark purpose.” She shivered. “He seeks that which was lost in 1469, that which was stolen by them, and kept until 1482, when my sisters and I retrieved and hid the most precious away. And I say to you here and now he shall not have it from me.”

“What is it my master seeks?” Visions of the lost cup of Christ, or maybe the True Cross danced in my head. “Children,” she purred. “Two extraordinary children. Grown now, and free. Would that I could live to gaze upon the wonders they will create.”

I thought of the whispered question, and it made somewhat more sense. “These children,” I asked. “Are they witches?”

She closed her wonderful eyes, and when she opened them again I saw...little lights dancing in their depths. They moved outwards and increased in brightness, circling somehow about my head and stopping just in front of my eyes. And then, to my great shock, they leapt inside me! I tried to scream, but I could not. I heard her say, “I am sorry, young one, but there is no time. I disobeyed my sisters, and made a record of all we did. It is in here.” She pulled a small book from her apron. “Take it, in secrecy, and so I do bind thee. I mark thee as one awakening, a witch like unto me. Read if you so choose, but never, on your soul, reveal to the ones like Alfonso what lies within these pages. Tomorrow I go on to the next cycle, and now I bid thee farewell. Go, priest. Go!”

I took the small cloth-bound book, and stumbled from the holding area, returning to my sleeping chamber without memory of having done so. For the first time in years, I found myself wishing for a looking glass, to see what horror she had wrought. The washtub had to suffice, and the pale reflection that waved in the water's depths looked just like me, young Brother Antonio of the Monastery at SanBenedetto. Perhaps the eyes were a little brighter.

Luria died the next day, after such tortures that would loosen the bravest man's bowels. She never cried out, and seemed to welcome the flames. When Alfonso whispered the question, she whispered something back, and his cold gray eyes filled with such fire and hatred that I shrunk back in fear.

I shall never forget the look she gave me as they led her to the stake. Compassion? Pity? Perhaps even a little joy. The young woman I had spoken to was gone. In her place was a shriveled hag of at least 50 years. The fires leapt up far faster than they ought to have, and within moments she was no more.

That was when the true strangeness began for me. The trees, the people, the very Earth itself seemed rimmed and lined in so many colors, some so fantastic I am sure no mortal has name for them. The drab, dismal village of Al Vittorio suddenly had life within life. A chorus of breath and blood, sky and moon. I remember thinking, “Is this to be the witch's curse upon me; to make me a witch, too?” I was deathly afraid at that moment and avoided all contact with the Monsignor for the remainder of the day. As it turned out, my fear was wasted. The following morning the Inquisitor was gone, not a word to anyone. The ashes were cold and the names of the damned already forgotten. And so I slowly journeyed back to the monastery, to resume my life. The inquisitor had not even bothered to take my notes. It all seems fruitless, and a waste.

The night I returned, I sat alone in my cell, staring at my satchel. Although the room was dark, moonlight streamed in through the solitary window, and caught in my eyes until I could see clear as day. Without a will of my own, I opened my satchel, unwrapped the witch's book and began to read.
Witches and Pagans


We have done it! Oh, it has taken twelve years, but at last we have done it! We have found them. Oh, blessed Mother be praised.

I could not stand one more day in that scabrous convent, or the disgusting pawing of one more “holy” priest. It was decided amongst us at the start that we would dress as nuns, going from convent to church and shrine, hoping the damned Gabrielites would have left some sign somewhere as to the location of Eloine’s stolen babes. It was Maria who found the clue.

She had journeyed to an obscure shrine, near a collection of cottages too small to be called a village or anything for that matter. A local carver of wood mistook her for someone else, and proudly showed her the letter blocks that he had made to order, as well as two magnificent dolls, one male, the other female. He was a skilled artisan, and she thanked him most kindly, but said that she had other business to attend to that day. He would be paid most handsomely if he could deliver the goods in person. The artisan agreed and she bid him farewell. Then, calling upon her Arts, she hid herself from sight and waited to follow him. She was curious as to why he would think a nun would be sent to pick up costly children’s toys.

Eventually, the man left his hut and traveled several miles into the countryside to a small villa, very old with thick walls far up on the hillside. As she drew closer, she found herself working through complex wards and she grew more and more excited. These wards were designed to warn those inside of the approach of other willworkers, such as ourselves, and not ordinary men and women. They, apparently, could come and go as they pleased.

She did not approach the villa itself, but instead circled around into the gardens. There she was overcome with joy. For under the watchful eye of a gray-haired priest, two children played, a boy and a girl of perfect beauty. She said later that there was no doubting they were Eloine’s twins, but knowing Maria I am sure she thoroughly questioned her senses. Nonetheless, what she saw was convincing. Both had hair colored with the red of their mother, lightened by the gold of their father into a russet dawn. Their skin had the glow of the Italian sun, and just a hint of golden freckles. They were in that brief last moment of childhood, before the winds of change would make them man and maid. Maria recalls that she watched for an hour, with her earthly eyes and also with the aid of her Art. Any doubts she may have had at the beginning were dispelled by the fact that they never once spoke to each other, but rather had the silent communion of those talented in the magicks of the mind. The whole time, the priest was taking note of their behavior and recording his observations in a small leather book.

Towards noon the priest stepped away to relieve himself behind some bushes. Using her inner voice, Maria called to the children, and they came to her with no fear in their hearts. She asked if they were happy living at the villa with the priests, but they were not sure what happy meant. Next she asked if they knew who their parents were, but they had been told not to ask, as their parents had committed great and terrible sins. Holding her anger for the priests at bay, she told them that their mother was one of the greatest women who had ever lived, and that the people here had taken them from her, to use and study. And if they would be rescued, she had been sent to deliver them from that place.

Maria told us that the boy and girl effortlessly pushed her out from the link, and conversed among themselves. She said they held hands and gazed into each other’s eyes, but spoke not one word out loud. At last the girl turned to her, and said that they knew the truth of Maria’s words trusted her. Our sister plucked two leaves from the tree beside her, and using the shaping arts, transformed each into a tiny cup filled with sweet liquor. Bidding them to drink, she instructed them to ask for a nap, as the potion would make them sleep. Then she slunk over to the well in the garden and poisoned the water so that all who drank from it would die.

That night she sent forth spirits to summon the rest of us, and we traveled through the mists until we were all gathered together. At the sacred hour, we went up to the villa on the hill. All was quiet and the place echoed with the stillness of death, every servant, priest and guard passed on to the next life. In their rooms, the two children slept like angels. We gathered
them in cloaks of the finest lambswool and stole away into the night.

As we journeyed, there were some amongst us who thought it only right and fitting that we return Eloine’s babes to her breast. But wise Loretta reminded us that our poor Sister is not the woman and mother she once was. Poor thing, her wits have wandered and the fires of the Underworld have warped the metal of her soul, not tempered it. Far better for the babes to grow in the light and kindness of strangers than in the spiraling darkness and madness of their mother. The children, young as they are, seem to know and understand this. Even amidst our joy, it is a sad thing.

Reflections

The journal goes on to speak of the years that followed, of the joy and sisterhood that developed between the girl and the sisters, how the boy grew into something rare. Never at any point in the journal does Luria name the children, or state where they were. Even in disobedience, she was cautious. But there is a curious symbol drawn on several of the pages. In the last pages of his confessions, Brother Antonio could not help but believe that if he found that symbol, he would find the twins. And he very badly wanted to find the twins. His writings state that he wanted someone to know how brave Luria had been, and that he wanted someone to guide him through the newness of his Awakening — for that is what I believe the “strangeness” he speaks of to be. As a curious footnote, Antonio concludes his confessions with an account of his flight from the monastery. Amongst the things he took with him from the small herb garden — several sprigs of mint on which to chew. The Wheel turns and that which was dead lives again.
y sojourns amongst the Wise of the world have given me ample opportunity to observe, record and learn the ways in which our many varied traditions practice the Arts. For obvious reasons, most of what I record here are spells, rites and rituals that can be performed with Awakened magicks. However, what I find fascinating is that in most cases, some of the simpler effects are within the reach of some of our non-Awakened sisters and brothers in the Craft, if only they have the strength of will and enough skill.

As I am writing this for posterity's sake, I will take a moment to briefly explain the organization of this collection of wisdom. The rotes are first arranged by Sphere, then by degree of difficulty. I am an initiated Witch and Priestess of the Verbena, and as such my delineations of degree correspond to that which I am accustomed.

Spells marked “Neophyte” indicate those workings that are within the reach of those newly or recently Awakened, and, where indicated, non-Awakened hedge wizards, cunning women and the like. “Initiate” workings are those that might be possible for an Awakened Witch who has had some training in his Crafts beyond his first encounter with true magicks. In some rare cases, even these rituals are possible for a non-Awakened shaman.

“Second Degree” and “Third Degree” spells require the willworking skills of an Adept within a particular Sphere of influence. Unfortunately, these are beyond the reach of the un-Awakened. Finally, workings marked “Elder” are those rituals given to only the wisest among us, those who have proven themselves to be strong of will and true Masters of the Art. Now, it is time to begin.

Life

As this Sphere is the first taught to most of our Neophytes and Initiates, it is where I will begin. It is also referred to as the Art of Blood by many Pagans throughout the civilized world. It is the art of the body, of healing, and of growing. To me, these spells are the most sacred and useful of all.
Neophyte

A Gift Horse

Sir Ryan of Ogletree, a great and personal friend, loved to make a day of the local horse fair. With him, as always, would be his aged and half-blind steward, Khartoum. Sir Ryan’s father had brought Khartoum, then a young man, back from the last great crusade, a gift from a Mahmout in Egypt. About his neck Khartoum wore a silver talisman of the old gods. Holding it firmly in his hand, muttering under his breath, the little brown man would inspect each of the purchases his lord desired to make. Without fail, even the most seemingly healthy of horses, if refused by Khartoum, would indeed turn out to be grievously flawed. Many times has Sir Ryan been approached by others wanting to buy Khartoum, but in every case, he has vehemently refused to sell.

 Truly see how Life flows, and you will see its health and ills. Even a horse with grey hair tinted and teeth filed will show its age to the magus.

System: A Mage with Life 1 can sense the true age and state of health of man or beast. Arete roll, difficulty 6. For the hedge wizard, a sharp nose and a keen eye can sometimes suffice. Perception + Awareness, difficulty 7.

Initiate

The Hedges of Foxglove

Matilda was the last of her line, and lived solitary within the old ruins of Foxglove Hold. The delight of her last years was her maze of thick and curiously sculpted hedges, growing taller than a man and twisting and turning in secret paths about her estate. The hedges would draw one into pockets of garden with little streams and tiny apple trees with fruit of such perfection and sweetness, their equal could be found nowhere else. Being Witch, I delighted in the beauty of her workings, and grieved at her passing. In memories, can still see her, clad only in silver hair that flowed down to her ankles, walking through the hedgerows in the moonlight, new growth springing forth at her touch. I have visited the place since her passing, and was amazed to find the hedges of Foxglove had encompassed all of the ruins, and there is naught to be seen of Foxglove Hold.

All people should have such beauty around them. Reach within the simple forms, say of an apple tree, and re-weave its life-pattern ’till it is near perfect. One can do the same for oneself, removing a “witch’s mark” or straightening a tooth.

System: Life 2. To effect small changes in simple animals and plants as well as heal oneself or make minor cosmetic changes in appearance, an Arete roll, difficulty 6, is needed.

Second Degree

Blood to Water

French Witches tell the tale of Robere du Bois, a knight of years gone by, black of heart and evil in his
ways. No maiden was safe within his lands, until he had the misfortune to cast his eye upon the lovely Edith, the blacksmith's daughter. Many suspected her to be a Witch, and I have it from her granddaughter that this was so. On the day Sir du Bois and his men came upon her bathing in the pond, he took her by force, her pleas to no avail. His men, normally fond of such sport would have none of it, for later they told of seeing the girl glow with a strange light. Rising up, torn and bloodied, Edith dipped her hand in her own virgin blood and held it up to be seen. “As mine is red, so yours shall be white. A coward’s deed bares a coward’s death. Your blood shall be as water ere passes twelve nights.”

Within days, the Knight grew ill, calling feverishly for his leech. Upon bleeding him, the goodly doctor swooned away, for nothing but pond water filled the bowl. Sir Robere died that night, the eleventh from knowing the Witch.

A Note of Caution: When working such upon an enemy, be ever mindful of the Law. Do no harm unto others; lest it come back upon ye threefold. Be certain the reward is worth the consequence!

System: This is a Life 3 effect, difficulty 7. At the Storyteller's discretion, this effect could be achieved with Life 2+Matter 2, lowering the difficulty to 6.

Third Degree

The White Deer of Tanith Bay

There came into my possession a parchment with a tale of such sorrow and pathos that I shall record it here. There lived on Tanith Bay a Sorceress named Boudica, after the ancient Queen of some fame. She had taken in a girl named Lilian to train in the Ancient Ways. The girl had hair the color of moonlight, and eyes deep as the night sky. Boudica came to love her, as a man would love a maid, but unbeknownst to the enchantress, Lilian had become enamoured of one of Boudica’s kinsmen, a young man whose name was not recorded. When Boudica expressed her desire to Lilian, the girl refused her, and that very night took the young man as husband.
In a rage, Boudicea called for her servants to seize the couple a-bed. The man was sealed alive within the castle walls, his screams echoing through the dark stone hallways like a banshee. For Lilian, the enchantress produced an especially bitter spell. The girl was dragged naked into the circle of ancient standing stones, and Boudicea cast her circle, called the towers and warped and weaved the girl's fabric anew. “Lord hear me, Lady pity me. For love I begged of thee, bitterness I have had of thee. I cast this girl's clay anew. Herne, Great Horned One, Master of the Hunt, I give thee prey. A doe to hunt along Tanith Bay!” Then Lilian's body was twisted into that of a young deer with white fur and midnight blue eyes. The parchment speaks of the girl's frightful agony, and the servants screaming in terror. For fast upon the transformation came the wailing of ghostly horns, and the baying of unworldly hounds. Lilian, now trembling on four delicate hooves, erupted into flight, and Boudicea covered her eyes to hide from the sight. I have never visited Tanith Bay, but have heard it said that on dark nights with little moon, one can still hear the echoes of hounds bringing a doe to bay.

This is a sad tale, and I know of no Magi who will use the standing stones of Tanith Bay to this day. With the power of the Gods comes godlike grief. Think carefully before working such changes on those other than yourself.

System: To effect the transformation from one shape to another, the Mage must have Life 4. The difficulty should be dependent on the storyteller’s perception of the situation. A Witch transforming an attacking Gabrielite into a rabbit would have much more difficulty than a witch transforming herself into a hawk and escaping!

Elder

The Lorelei

Along the Rhine River is a stand of rock that has always been known as the rock of the Lorelei. It juts out over the waters, casting a shadow over passing ships and barges. Before Christianity infected these lands, ancient tales told of a mermaid perched atop the rocks, luring sailors to their deaths with her beauty and song. Finally a prince, with sailors whose ears were filled with wax, climbed the rocks and defied her, whereupon seven steeds from the Rhine rose up and carried her, laughing, far away.

Now the truth. Her name is Ilse and she is a Magus unrivalled in her Arts. She herself is ageless, so perfect in form and beauty such that no man or woman can resist her charms. An exiled prince, wishing to interrupt the flow of trade, paid her quite nicely to assume the form of the Lorelei. Sitting high atop the rocks, breasts bare and proud, legs turned to the graceful rainbow tail of a fish, and hair the sweet green of new grass, she created such a confusion that trade did indeed stop. Add to that her ability to so sculpt the mechanisms of her voice that no angel could sing sweeter, and she truly became a sea nymph.

The prince who confronted her was a Sorcerer, charged to solve the problem by killing the devil-spawned creature. Upon climbing the rocks, he succumbed to Ilse's charms, and the two made love high above the water. From each drop of his seed, she created a pearl, and using a strand of her own hair made a necklace. When he confessed to his mission of destruction, she laughed, and from the waters rose up seven fish turned into sea horses thirty hands high. She agreed to cease, if he agreed to give the pearls to his wife as a betrothal gift. He acquiesced, and returned to his employer triumphant.

I believe the pearls still exist, and are treasured within his family. But their origin is seldom known to the lass who wears them...

System: Such complex and refined alteration of living matter is a Life 5 effect. At this level, the willworker needs neither foci nor rituals, but the use of either or both can lower the difficulty levels by one. Again, the difficulty of the action depends on the storyteller’s discretion.

Fortune

If one is to know Life, then one must equally know the way of all Life which is Death. All things must eventually succumb to decay and the turning of the
Wheel. Fortune is its momentum. The Romany and the Strega often instruct their students equally in both the Blood Art and the Art of Fate. Extra caution must be used when working with this Sphere, however. In my travels, I have seen many a Pagan tainted with the essence of corruption from the use of these magicks.

**Neophyte**

**The Winds of Fate**

Francesca Sforza tells of a lesson handed down to her family by Fata Morgana, herself. It seems that her grandfather, Roberto, was a gambler and a duelist in his younger days. While he enjoyed great successes for a time, his times of defeat threatened to be quite costly to his health and wealth. It was at his lowest point, when he faced an unwinnable duel with a Maltese duke, that he was approached by a radiant vision of a woman. She called herself Alessandra and she was fair of face with eyes of deepest green and hair like spun gold. Beckoning him to follow her, she told him she knew of a way for him to win his duel at dawn. Desperate for any way to save himself, Roberto followed the ethereal woman into the countryside. There was a new moon that night, so the sky was black as pitch and the only light came from the soft twinkling stars. She led him into a copse of pine trees and pointed to a small clump of flowers growing nearby. “It is henbane, the Oracle’s herb. Gather the flowers and then return to your home. Just before dawn, strip yourself naked and offer up a prayer to Janus, the two-faced god of Beginnings and Endings. Then burn the flowers in your hearth and breathe deep of the fumes. Release your mind to the winds of Fate, and you will know your enemy’s smallest weakness.” And with that, she vanished into the night. Roberto did as he was told, and the next morning, with the winds of Fate at his back, he faced his enemy. As if directed by an unseen force, his eye was drawn to the duke’s every weakness - the knee he favored, an old stab wound just under the ribs, not quite completely healed. Silently thanking La Fata, he made his move, and struck the other man a fatal blow. From that day until the day he gave up his craven ways, he always had flowers of henbane in his pouch and he never lost a duel.

Caution must be taken when using henbane. I do not recommend its use for Enlightened pagans, as they are able to see the winds of fate without such ritual aids.

**Healer’s Sight**

In the wild lands of Livonia, villages are few and far between. Many of the Wise practice their Arts in solitude and serve as healers and midwives for peoples across great distances. Very often, the men and women they see have wounds too old to determine their age by sight. Likewise, sometimes an old wound can be deceptive, the infection contained within the body while the skin appears healed. The midwife, Zrinka, shared with me this very useful spell to determine the progression of decay or infection in a wound, or to find the exact location of a broken bone.

Take a clear glass, and moving widdershins, pass the glass over the wound or broken limb in a downward spiral motion. Do this three times, all the while visualizing the turning Wheel. Then peer through the glass and see the true state of the wound or the exact place where the limb is broken.

Zrinka notes that the use of the glass is not necessary for the Awakened, nor is it particularly necessary for folk healers and the like. However, her lands are plagued with dark, vain magicks and the ritual motion is always a comfort to the suffering ones.

**Initiate**

**Weighted Dice**

This clever little proverb comes by way of the Gypsies themselves. Such ingenious people to hide a spell within a warning!
WITCHES AND PAGANS

Never gamble with Gypsies,
They play with weighted dice.
While they always see sevens,
You will see snake eyes!
Turn the bones round in your hand,
Roll them as you may,
You will never foulness find
Until you start to play.
Blow upon them, pray to God
No fortune will you win.
The Gypsy whispers to the bones
And oh, how the money rolls in!
So never toy with Tinkers,
They play with weighted dice.
While they always roll sevens,
You will get snake eyes!

Note that this is an extremely subtle working and sometimes takes a little mundane effort to achieve the desired results.

System: Player must have Fortune 2. Roll Arete, difficulty 6 for a small object, difficulty 7 for a larger object or grander effect.

Second Degree

The Unbreakable Goblet

On the mantle above my hearth sits an exquisite blown glass goblet so delicate and fine that when I drink from it, it is as if my wine is suspended in mid air by some kindly spirit of the East. I had it of a Venetian artist whose shop is filled with such delicate baubles and trinkets. While I sojourned with him, I had the opportunity to watch him at work. The time it took for him to blow and shape the glass was relatively short compared to the time he spent with it once it had cooled. He had a special white silk kerchief that he would use to lovingly polish and smooth the glass, all the while whispering words of praise to Arachne. This he would do for a few minutes with each piece, several times per day. He explained that if one looked at the pattern of the glass, it was possible to determine where the “weave” of the four elements was weakest. By rubbing the glass with his cloth, he was able to smooth and strengthen the elemental web that made up the glass, eventually removing practically all flaws and shatter points. Time was crucial, of course, which is why he normally worked with an individual piece several times per day over the course of many days. To demonstrate the extent of his magicks, the artist took one of his delicate creations and tapped it against the stone countertop. What would have shattered an ordinary glass did nothing to harm his handiwork.

As I left with my creation, he gave me a small square of the special silk he used and instructed me that, being gifted in the Arts, I could continue this delay of weakness myself. As glass is part air and fire, it is ever in constant motion, though it seems to be fixed. Continual maintenance of the pattern serves to slow this motion and prevent breakage. I polish that goblet every day, and to my great delight it has sur-
vived intact the many tests of weight in motion that my cat has chosen to give it.

"What of our children? Would you deny us the means to feed them?" She was now on her knees before these coldhearted men, and as she looked up at them, she saw nothing but hatred and evil behind their eyes.

“They are demonspawn and deserve to die as do all creatures of the pit.” Hearing this, the Gypsy rose to her feet and seemed to tower above the men. Marking strange signs in the air as she spoke, she called out these words: “Those who would find demons in honest men and women are cowards, afraid to face the demons who live in their own hearts. Never would we allow the least of you to starve in the blight of winter, and yet you would do so to us for naught but foolishness.

So reap, now your folly, man. A witch you desire? Then a witch you shall have! May your fattened fields wither and bring forth no grain. May your harvested wheat spoil and rot with vermin. May your livestock fall with pestilence and may your fatted beasts appease the hunger of the Wolves. May your wives be struck barren and may your own seed become powerless and stagnant. So do I curse you!"

As I hear tell, it all came to pass as she had intoned. By midwinter, when the gypsies came back to collect the children, the two aldermen were dead and the rest of the village near starvation. Apologies were swift and profuse and the gypsies remained with the folk of Anotchka for the rest of the winter, hunting and helping the survivors as best as they could. To this day, Gypsies are always welcome and well respected in that town.

When pronouncing curses with this Art, do be mindful of the Threefold Law...

System: Fortune 4, Arete roll, difficulty determined by the Storyteller based upon size and extent of the “un-doing” desired.

Elder

Wyndegarde’s Web

This rite has existed for many, many centuries, and used to be called the Web of Fate until Lady Nightshade used it to exact her revenge upon Christopher Wyndegarde. Extreme caution should be used...
WITCHES AND PAGANS

when weaving magicks of this kind. Even now, Lady Nightshade bears the taint of that act done so long ago.

Take ye the berries of the Belladonna, the male part of the mandrake and monkshood from roots to flower. Crush these into a smooth liquid, all the while chanting “Berries of Death, roots of ill, coat my Web and work my will.” When the mixture is ready, pour it out into a widdershins circle around your victim. When the circle is complete, call ye upon your Arts and weave the web over and around the subject. Then incant these words while walking widdershins around the circle: “Remember man, that you are dust, and to dust you shall go. As I walk, the Wheel turns faster, and time and life for you doth flow.” It may help to have other witches chant and lend their support to this ritual. This would give you more time to focus upon the Wheel and turn it ever faster. Depending on the desires of the Witch, death should come for the victim within the hour, or it can be prolonged for several hours. The latter is not recommended, as the suffering involved can be terrible.

System: Fortune 5, Arete roll, difficulty determined by the Storyteller. Keep in mind that this is dark and powerful magick and the Resonance gained through it could be detrimental to the willworker in some way. If the rite is done to restore the balance, as in the case of Lady Nightshade, then the Storyteller may decide that the repercussions should not be as dire.

Connection

The Nordic Stormwitches, the Romany, and some of the more nomadic peoples of Iberia like to refer to this as the Travelling Art. I have also heard it called the Art of Pathways. It is the web that radiates from the One and connects every thing that exists in the entirety of creation.

Neophyte

Find the Secret Doors

Stories abound the world over regarding those of the Wise who have discovered Secret Doorways that lead to strange and far-away places. One sister in Yorkshire relates that she stumbled upon (and through!) a doorway in the woods near her home that spilled her out into a storage cellar in Palace kitchens in London! Another man, a Romany seer, has said that he knows the location of a doorway that transports the traveler clear across the ocean to the New World.

Unfortunately, not all are skilled at seeing such doorways, but those with the sight will notice a strange patch of air that doesn’t seem to belong. It may ripple slightly in the wind, or when viewed at just the right angle it may reveal a picture of what is on the other side. In a heavy fog, it will stand out as a clear spot against the haze, and in rain, one may see the outline or notice a dry spot of earth amidst the wetness. I myself have only found traces of two such doorways, and in these particular cases, the doorways themselves had already been sealed shut.

System: the player must have Connection 1, or Prime 1. Roll Arete (difficulty 6) or roll Perception + Awareness (difficulty 8). Number of successes determines how distinctive the impression is, how easy or difficult it is to keep track of where the door is, and whether or not the portal is transparent, hazy or opaque.

Mother’s Sense

When I was a child, my mother always seemed to know where I was. She could also find anything I managed to hide or misplace, no matter how small. We lived for a time with the travelling people, and I remember that the leader and the ostlers used to consult with my mother before making a journey. She somehow knew the distance between towns or safe havens and the best route to take to get there. I seem to have inherited this gift from her, but I am told that my talent is quite extraordinary.

Personally, I believe that anyone can develop this sense, given meditation and time. The key is to trust your intuition and pay attention to the patterns of distance between various things — especially when travelling.
CHAPTER TWO: KNOWLEDGE

Initiate
Circle Guardians

This is a practical protective measure. Coven members with the witchsight should place themselves in the circle at the quarters and the midpoints in between. When all members are in attendance, the Guardians should stand just outside the circle as it is being cast, extending their vision or hearing beyond the perimeter, so as to provide early warning of intruders or attack.

I have known Guardians who, after years of practice, were able to extend their senses over considerable distances – sometimes many leagues. However, the majority of those who practice this art have said that a short distance is all that is possible in an alert state of mind (although there are some who have mental gifts that allow them this extension while still awake!)

In My Pocket, In My Sack

In France, one of my brothers met a travelling tinker whose purse never seemed to be empty. Furthermore, the man carried saddlebags upon his back, out of which he could pull any tool that might be necessary at the time — even some that could not possibly have fit in there! Alas, a cutpurse in Paris thought this man to be a worthy target, and proceeded to fulfit his occupational title. When the theft was realized, the little tinker simply threw back his head and laughed. The pouch, it seems, was always empty, but his money chest at home, to which it was connected, was quite full. To open a small portal between purse and chest, or saddlebag and toolbox, the man would recite the following rhyme:

In my pocket, In my sack,
Let appear the thing I lack.
Far away though it may be,
Make it now come forth to me!

System: Connection 1 (can be combined with other Spheres if the effect calls for it). The player rolls Arete to activate the sense (difficulty 6). Only one success is needed. Then the player makes a Perception + Awareness (or Alertness) roll (also difficulty 6) to determine her characters intuitive accuracy. At the Storyteller’s discretion, additional successes on the Arete roll may be added to the Perception + Alertness roll, or may reduce the difficulty (to a minimum of 4).

Second Degree
Pull the Cloak of Shadows

Pull the Cloak of Shadows,
Keep out Prying Eyes!
For when a Door you Open,
Your enemy it Scrys!

Wind the Weave around you,
Pull it fast and tight.
Hide the Door behind it,
Safely out of sight!

System: Using Connection 2 (and sometimes Mind 1, if desired), the player rolls Arete to “activate” the sight. Only one success is needed. Then the player rolls Perception + Alertness or Awareness (difficulty 6). The number of successes determines the maximum distance the character may extend his senses. At the Storyteller’s discretion, additional successes on the Arete roll may be added to the Perception + Alertness roll, or may reduce the difficulty (to a minimum of 4).

System: Connection 2 or 3. The player rolls Arete (difficulty 6) to mask a portal or gate in the Tapestry. With Connection 3, the player may use this effect to actually close portals, gates and other person-sized rips in the fabric of Creation.
Third Degree
Wayfarer’s Boon

Should a traveler wish to shorten his journey, all he need do is focus his mind upon the mysterious path between where he is and where he desires to be and then step forward. Through the power of his will, he shall be transported there in an instant.

System: Connection 4. Allows the player to step across great distances in the blink of an eye. Player rolls Arete (difficulty 7). One success pinpoints the proper threads in the Tapestry that will accommodate the feat. Two successes will pinpoint the locations and open a doorway between them. More than two successes may allow the character to close the doorway behind him, to prevent being followed.

Forces

The Art of Winds or the Storm Art is known to Witches and Pagan peoples the world over. The Stormwitches are most famous for their command of the elements, but even they speak with wonder at the skill of the shamans and priests who live in the Americas. Every Witch, Awakened or otherwise, would do well to learn at least something of this essential art.

Neophyte
Sun or Storm

When the first light of dawn appears, step forth into the open air. Face the East and with your writing hand, draw an invoking pentagram and attune your senses with those of Elemental Wind. Next, face the South, draw an invoking pentagram and attune your senses to those of Elemental Fire. Do the same for Elemental Water to the West and Elemental Earth to the North. Then return to the East and turning slowly clockwise, expand your attuned senses as far as your mind and visualization can take them. By this way, you will be able to sense oncoming storms, the end of rainy weather, drought or frost.

System: Forces 1, Arete roll (difficulty 5). Un-awakened witches may also attempt this kind of prognostication with a Perception + Alertness or Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7).

Hear the Whisperer

The courtesan Giulietta Malfitano, now a Priestess of Aradia, was wont to make use of this spell in her days of intrigue amongst the wealthy and powerful merchants of Venice. In that place, a conversation overheard or a secret discovered can mean the difference between vast riches and complete ruin. Some ordinary skill and cunning is required to achieve one’s listening spot, but once there, the following chant along with the use of the Art will produce the desired results:

Folletti and Lasa, spirits of Air
Fly to the one I hear whispering there

System: Forces 1, Arete roll (difficulty 5). Un-awakened witches may also attempt this kind of prognostication with a Perception + Alertness or Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7).
Make his words sound as if spoken free  
Make his words heard, but only to me.

I have found that since the Folletti and Lasa are located mainly in the South, it helps to call upon the Faeries and Sprites instead when invoking this chant in the northern countries.

System: Forces 1, Arete roll, difficulty 6. Storytellers may allow this effect to be possible for non-Enlightened characters as well. In which case, they should make a Perception + Alertness roll. The difficulty should be determined by the Storyteller, depending on the location and ambient noise level.

Initiate

Hush

The Lady Giulietta also gave me this spell as a companion to her listening spell. It requires a bit more skill with the Arts than the other, but the results are well worth the extra effort. Once again, the Folletti and the spirits of the Lasa are invoked, so the same rule for northern witches applies as for the previous spell.

Folletti and Lasa, spirits of Air  
Bring aid to my secret, help me take care  
Between these amongst me, let all be heard  
But may others who listen, hear not a word!

System: The willworker uses Forces 2 to muffle the sound of his voice or footfalls, etc. Arete roll (difficulty 6). Storyteller note: if someone is attempting to “break through” this spell, their difficulty is base 6 plus the number of successes rolled by the caster.

The Voice of the Goddess

It was said that Boudicea had a voice so powerful and commanding that she could be heard by all of her men across the great distances of the battlefield. According to the legends, she met with her Druids before each encounter and conducted a short ritual whereby she drew down the primal Goddess force into her body and assumed the voice of the Divine Lady. Modern witches have discovered that by attuning
themselves to the subtleties of sound and silence, they can achieve the same effect.

System: Forces 2 is required. Arete roll, difficulty determined by Storyteller based on level of volume desired and surrounding noise level (or lack thereof).

Second Degree

Witch Wind

If ever there is a need to learn the Art of Winds, this tale illustrates that need perfectly. Morena of Navarre was to have been burned at the stake. Fortunately for her, she was not tortured in the usual manner beforehand, otherwise she would have been hard pressed to work the magicks that she did. While the Inquisitor pronounced her sentence to the waiting crowd, Morena began to concentrate and draw upon the very Elements themselves, and a cool breeze began to blow. Soon that breeze was a howling winter wind that turned the Inquisitor’s flame to ice in an instant. Using her powers of Shaping, she transformed her bonds into nothing and called up another powerful wind to carry her far away from her would-be executioners.

I hear that she traveled under cloak of night to Portugal where she boarded a ship for the Americas. Once every few months or so, her closest friends receive strange gifts with lengthy letters from faraway lands.

System: To transform one force into another, such as fire into ice, water into air, etc. the sorcerer must have Forces 3 and make an Arete roll (difficulty 6). To conjure forces out of thin air, or transform a substance into a natural force the magus may add Prime 2 or Matter 2 to her spell (difficulty 6).

Third Degree

The Sunken Fortress

In the mountainous valleys of the Salzkammergut, there was a palace with great iron walls that shone like a mirror-bright beacon across the land. It sat atop the highest peak in all the land, and to reach it, one had to travel along a steep and narrow road that looped around the mountain like a ribbon. The baron who lived in the palace had been brought up in the Old Ways by his father, who taught him to always respect the Wise and heed their counsel. But the baron renounced the Old Ways and took up the banner of the Christian God. As is the custom with all those who convert, the baron was full of zeal and listened readily to the Holy Roman priests who charged him to rid his lands of “the Devil’s Handmaidens.” He called up an army of warriors to lay waste to the groves and sacred circles of the Wise, and he called upon an army of Artisans and Masons to build churches to the Nailed God upon those sacred places.

His work was short-lived, for the Wise of that place gathered together those amongst them skilled in the Art of Winds and the Art of Shaping. The witches gathered and concealed themselves on a nearby peak and there they conjured earth into air and air into water. For three days and three nights, the earth shook and rumbled and a heavy fog descended. For three days and three nights after that, the rains fell from the skies hard enough to kill a man and flatten the strongest and sturdiest of trees. When the skies cleared and the fog lifted, the Iron Fortress was gone, as was the peak upon which it had stood. In its place was a vast, deep and placid lake with a lovely wooded island at its center. It is said that the baron and all within the palace were consumed by the waters, and that those Wise ones who were displaced by the baron’s folly now live and flourish upon the island. An ironic kind of justice, don’t you think?

System: Powerful magicks such as these require Forces 4, Arete roll (difficulty 8). Combining efforts with fellow Witches and utilizing other Spheres may help to lower the difficulty (at the Storyteller’s discretion of course). Keep in mind that vulgar magicks such as these almost always incur the Scourge.

Elder

Call the Tempest, Disperse the Storm

The Sturmvitte of the far North are prized and revered amongst their people, and for good reason. The power to call forth fierce, shipwrecking storms
out of clear skies is something to be treasured and respected. Equally as valued is their ability to bring an end to destructive weather. A kinsman of Janef Erikson recalls an incantation used by Olaf Hammarvind, Signy’s father, to calm a deadly sea storm:

Mighty Donner cease your fearsome work
Set down your Hammer and let the thundering end
See how the sweat from your brow falls upon us
We are almost drowned!
The air that moves with each swing of your arm
It wants to break our mast!
Rest you now a little while, that we might have safe passage.

Apparently the Sleepers amongst these Stormwitches are unaware that they are the ones who calm the tempests. The common belief is that Stormwitches have the power to commune with the gods, who alone have the power to call forth or dispel storms. The older the Stormwitch, the more prized she is, as it is felt she has had time to establish a strong link with the gods. In actuality, the Stormwitch has had time to hone her Arts and is like a goddess in and of herself.

It should be noted that calling storms, winds, etc of great magnitude tends to call the notice of the Old Ones and disrupt the balance of Nature. The storm you dispense in your land may result in a flood or drought in a neighboring land. Be ever mindful of the balance and work accordingly.

Neophyte

Like Seeks Like

It was told of Elizabeth of Dorset, that she had in her ways an enchantment to find treasures. Whilst tilling her fields she uncovered a coin of gold, Roman ‘tis said. Thought she, “Where one might lie, others there could be nearby.” That night, having cleaned and polished the coin till it shone, she took it to the old willow tree on her land and buried it in the loam at the roots. When the moon had risen, lighting the tree and grounds all around, she danced thrice about the willow chanting “Like seeks like, kind seeks kind, precious coin my treasure find.” After her third turn, the coin had risen up through the Earth. Upon grasping it in her hand, she felt the coin pulling her in the direction of a low, old wall. There she dug, and found a whole host of gold coins to match the first.

For this to work, the enchanter must know the feel of a thing. The scent and grain of wood; the cool weight of gold, the way the fibers of cloth intertwine with one another. To make like seek like, the Magus must have an affinity for the very dust of the object held.

System: For the Awakened, this is a Matter 1 effect (difficulty 6). For the hedge wizard, this is a Perception + Rituals roll (difficulty 7).

Find the Hidden

Often one must find that which another does not wish to be seen. Doors hidden within the pattern of a stone wall or a wooden floor can lead to great things, and are best found by touch. Drape a square of black silk over your fingers and by the light of a single white candle touch all along the surface feeling the texture of that which makes it up. Do it with eyes shut, using your inner sight and trusting your touch. Incant, “By my will, what is hidden shall be seen, for my sight to behold.” When your eyes open, it shall be clear to thee where the hidden door or compartment can be found.

How long you search depends on your strength within this sphere, and on the skill of the craftsman seeking to hide the panel or door.

Matter

The first Verbena were crafters of stone, shaping knives and other tools out of formless rock, crafters of seed and root, coaxing life from the lifeless. Now the Shaping or Crafting Art is used in all manner of spells and incantations to the betterment of art and wealth.

System: Forces 5, Arete roll (difficulty 8 without incantation or focus, difficulty 7 with foci). Note to Storytellers: Effects such as this one are extraordinarily powerful and vulgar. If done in open sight, the character may be forced to deal with the intensified attentions of the Inquisition, the Cabal of Pure Thought or both.
Here is a warning, not a spell. I knew a magus named Driscoll, whose dark humor and tainted ways brought about his end. In the small village where he lived, the priest had died of plague and the church could find no recruit eager to take the dead man's place. Driscoll told the baker's wife, with whom he rolled in the hay more than her husband rolled dough, that a new priest would give mass that very night. He then crept into the old priest's chambers and helped himself to the dead man's vestments. I understand that he did a passable Latin mass; not that the peasants would truly understand if he did not. Then, as he was pouring the sacramental wine into the chalice, he declared that a miracle of God had occurred. The grape had transformed unto the blood of the Savior! He insisted each man and woman drink. Hysteria ensued, and news spread like wildfire across the countryside. Within days, Gabrielite emissaries arrived to investigate and Driscoll was burned for heresy shortly thereafter.

I prefer to think he was burned for idiocy. The moral of the story being, although it is child's play for the craftsman of matter to turn wine to blood, it is best to avoid doing so in the Holy Church.

System: This is a Matter 1 effect, and the difficulty of the roll depends upon the skill level of the person who constructed the hidden portal or panel. If the artisan is un-Awakened, difficulty is 6. If the Artisan is awakened, then the Storyteller should determine difficulty based on the skill and/or Arete level of concealer.

## Initiate

### Wine to Blood

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### Croesus' Hoard

Take some simple copper coins, tightly bind them in a green kerchief, and place them at the center of a cast circle. At the four watchtowers, place ash, salt, water and the blood of a freshly-cut dove. At the rise of the moon (quarter-full works best) sit before your coppers clad as you were born. Chant three times: “Lord, I beseech thee. Lady, I entreat thee. Wealth I do need the better to serve thee. Here I have copper, but gold is best. Bless this scant hoard with the wealth of Croesus.” When you open the cloth, where copper was, gold should be. As an offering of thanks, take one of the gold and toss it into the nearest river or stream.

Note: Such wealth is granted to those who serve their gods with pure heart. Take one part of this treasure, and give to a blind beggar for luck. One must have an affinity for crafting in the metals, a feel for true copper and true gold. But spend quickly; what is given is oft taken just as fast!

System: Matter 2, Arete roll (difficulty 7). A cunning woman can do this ritual, but the metal will only appear to be gold, returning to its true hue in a set time determined by the number of successes with a Wits + Rituals roll (difficulty eight).

### Second Degree

#### To Turn a Sharp Blade

There is an armorer in Castille, who makes the finest chain link and the strongest plate known. Although once sought by the church as a Witch, wealthy lords bought his freedom in tithes and alms. Truth be known, he is indeed a sorcerer, but one of the Craftsmasons, devoted solely to the making of the finest in arms. It has been said that he can take a sword, still rough, crude and charred from many foldings, and with his lips moving in secret words smooth the metal between his fingertips. (Personally, I believe this to be an exaggeration, as I understand the Order of Reason frowns on such vain displays of power.) At any rate, the result is a blade so true that beaded water will not slide. In fact, it can rend all but the Mason's own forged plate. To own a blade by the master is truly a boon, as it need never be sharpened.

The Shaper can use only his or her hands to craft metal, stone or anything else the heart desires. Workers of these arts have created some of the loveliest of works in the world for their Christian Cathedrals. But...
hush! Tell the fools naught, and they will continue to grovel at the Madonna’s feet.

System: Matter 3 is required to cast this effect. The artisan must roll Arete, difficulty determined the complexity of the material used and the intricacy of the form desired.

Third Degree

The Shaper’s Sweets

Leslie of London, an old and wise willworker, used to hold the rarest of dinners within her home. The table was a living tree, growing broad and smooth, with perfect indentations to hold one’s trencher and cup. The benches, although wood as well, would soften and form to each guest. And the food! Sweet oranges from Spain, dripping with honeyed lemon, roast capon each perfectly done and served with lentils and tart shallots. The soup would be thickened milk, with heart-shaped champignons floating in small puddles of churned butter. Each loaf was always served warm, with the whitest of cheeses. Yet when I asked to compliment her cook, she simply smiled at me with bright eyes, and led me laughingly into a cold and bare kitchen that was clearly unused for years. Such blatant displays of power are foolish, though. Sadly, she burned not long after I visited her, and within days was as much as forgotten.

Only one with an inner eye to how all things are, can do such as take a pinecone, and turn it to fresh bread. You must know the cone, and feel it to be bread, and by thy will, make it so. Much practice is needed.

System: Matter 4. Difficulty on the Arete roll depends on the extent of the transformation required, to be determined by the Storyteller.

Elder

Deadly Fruit

Several years ago I secretly worked as an advisor to His Majesty the King of France. (You would be surprised at the number of supposedly “Christian” rulers who still maintain ties with the Old Ways!) I worked this particular magick during a siege on the castle at Pont du Blanc. The fortress showed no sign of falling, and the King had entered into negotiation. The nobles who were sent within under the flag of truce, came back over the walls — or at least their heads did. This so enraged my Lord that he arranged a great rain of fruit within the city, our ballista working night and day. At first, the apples were untainted, and then under the third night of the waning moon, he commanded me to curse the fruit about to be shot. I reached within the fruit, changing its very seed so that no matter what, no human gut could pass it. Within days, the city was silent. Our men scaled the walls to find a city of the dead, bloated bellies and faces distorted in hideous anguish. More curious were the plentitude of dead carrion birds, that had attempted the flesh of the dead and dying. All was burned, and my King, sickened at the sight of me, drove me from his presence. I went unpaid for this work, but considering that His Majesty could have sent me unto the Inquisition, I am willing to consider the matter settled.

Note: Mortals beg us to be their hand of darkness, and then curse us for the lack of light. Stay true only unto your own kind, and ne’er work “miracles” before ordinary men.

System: Only a magus with Matter 5, a true Master of the Art can so radically change an object or a substance as to make two normally compatible substances utterly alien to one another. Difficulty on the Arete roll should be determined by the Storyteller, if he wishes to allow such a spell to be used at all!

Mind

Many Pagan peoples develop The Sight, or the Seeing Arts, quite separate and apart from Awakening. For some it is a harbinger of that greater moment of Enlightenment. For others it is the only gift the Gods see fit to grant them...in this lifetime, at the very least. In recent days it has become more of a necessity to develop and use this often neglected and underappreciated Art. Though others disagree with me, I feel that this Art will be our saving grace in these times of Inquisition.
Neophyte

Open the Inner Eye

For one but beginning in the Arts of Mind, I recommend this exercise. Take up an object, of which you know naught but of which a friend knows all. It can be anything—a purse, a dagger, a spoon. Hold it barehanded, emptying your mind of all but the object itself. Repeat, softly to yourself, “Inner eye, open to me. Reveal the secrets, reveal the dream.” Gradually, images will appear to you, fragments of thought and emotion connected with this object. Was the dagger used in violence? If so, you may encounter swirls of red and a flash of the victim’s face, perhaps a momentary touch of the cutpurse’s greed. This should be practiced quite often, as the more one does, the clearer the images become.

For those just beginning in the Seeing Arts, it is best to avoid working with objects known to be tainted. The emotional shock can be a setback. Instead start with simple things and work towards deeper readings. Many a criminal has swung the gibbet because of a Seer’s skill with this art.

System: This is a Mind 1 effect (difficulty 4). For the sorcerer or hedge witch, a Perception + Meditation roll should be made (difficulty 6).

Woven Shield

When one first uses the Sight, one’s heart is often filled with dread, knowing how like glass the most intimate of thoughts can be. But even the novice can be trained to obscure her thoughts and intentions. ’Twas explained to me by example. Observe the woven cloth: separately, the threads are poor and weak, but woven together, they become a solid thing, difficult to see through in most cases. Take the thoughts of your mind, the simple and inane, and weave them in and out all around yourself, till only a magus or witch more powerful then you will know your mind. The cloth can be dropped to commune with another magus that you have come to trust. Such intimate contact, mind-to-mind and thought-to-thought, can be glorious indeed. Caution, caution. Others, well versed in these arts, can ensnare you in their own mental weavings and string you like a puppet such that you would dance to whatever tune they told you was playing.

System: Mind 1, Arete roll, difficulty 5, or Perception + Meditation, difficulty 7.

Initiate

Ripples on the Pond

Even the cleverest of liars cannot dissemble to a Mage well versed in the Arts of the Mind. Use your will to force an entrance into another’s thoughts, and the truth of their intentions will become known to you. Touch can assist in this for the novice. Using a working tool as a focus is also an extremely useful for beginners. When young and at that level, I had a small stone strung on a leather tether about my neck. While engaging in conversation, I would stroke it with one hand, while idly entering their mind. Many a hidden intent became clear; and it pays one well to know thine enemies. Think of yourself as the pebble, and their thoughts as the ripples created by the thrust of your intrusion. The ripples, as well as the thoughts, are clearest closer in.

A note of caution: be very sure that your subjects are human. I once knew a Mage of the Hermetic traditions named Clarence, who played in and out of people’s heads as though they were green fields in which to frolic. One day, he tried to salaciously manipulate the thoughts of a maid who turned out to be one of the were-folk. They often have an uncanny sense of the supernatural and tend to have a severe dislike for intrusions of that kind. We never did find all of the pieces of him to bury…

System: Mind 2, Arete roll, difficulty 6, unless resisted. If there is resistance, the mage must roll against the number of successes on the subjects’ Willpower roll. For the Unawakened, some success can be achieved with a Wits + Empathy or Perception + Empathy roll, but it will not be anywhere near the clarity of thought achieved by the Enlightened.
Second Degree

Dream-Weaver

In the case of a reluctant lover, try this for sure capitulation. Each night that he or she sleeps, wherever you might be, cast your wards and descend into a lucid dream state. This may take some practice, but once mastered, it is quite easy to do. In the Aethers of Mind and Dream, the Veil is very thin, so it is possible to release your consciousness into the dreaming. Whenever you do this make sure that a faithful servant stands guard over your body. Find the object of your desire within the lands of slumber and gently make love to the image of him or her that he or she projects in the dream. Done correctly, your lover will flush and moan in his or her sleep, and will freely spend in dream that which is miserly-guarded in the waking world. Direct the dreams to serve your purpose, but never forget to permit some of the night to remain his or hers alone. All men and women must slumber undisturbed for at least some time every night or else they sicken.

The next day, when both of you are awake, make court to your love, dropping sly hints that make it seem as if you know one another intimately already. Your actions will seem overly familiar, and your love should grow quite comfortable with your touch. Soon, you will taste the true nectar of love, as well as the dream of that delicacy.

I know a Sir John who takes great pleasure in doing this to self-righteous and wedded women. He takes all due time — often weeks, teasing them mercilessly till they end up sweating and naked in his bed. I have often wondered why so many Magi walk alone when company can be so easily found. However, a note of caution: do take care to do no harm to your lover. Men should use their various arts, to prevent their maids becoming with child. There are sufficient bastards within this world and there need not be more from those who have the power to prevent their coming.

System: Mind 3, difficulty 8 on the Arete roll, possibly higher if resisted (difficulty 8 + number of successes on resisting subject’s Willpower or Arete roll). Sleepers may find it very hard to resist such spells, but the Enlightened have an edge and a chance to defend themselves. To resist such a spell, the Mage would roll either Willpower or Arete, difficulty 8.
Third Degree

The Living Haunt

I knew a Mistress Joanne of Castlerock who was a most spiritual woman. Although not Awakened, she had great depth and insight into the mystic world, and was a practitioner of such Arts that require no Daemon. She swore upon the name of the Lady of Spring that her home was haunted. As a favor to her, I searched through the stones with my inner eye, and encountered no lingering soul. Yet she stood firm, with the ring of truth in her words, that almost every night she would awaken to find a man standing at the foot of her bed. She knew him to be of aether and not flesh, as the gentle light of the fire logs could be seen through him. He was of sweet and sad countenance, and would smile and hold out his hand. Joanne would try to touch him, but her fingers would pass through the mist of which he was formed. Once her fear of the spectre had passed, she became obsessed with her ghostly visitor. At her entreaty, I stayed the night, and discovered the roving mind-essence of a Witch. I stepped into the shadows to speak with him, and there he confessed that he had found Joanne through dreams. Too shy to speak with her in person, he had decided to travel outside of his flesh instead. I assured him of her interest, and some weeks later a man appeared at her door, the very image of the astral visitor. Joanne cried out with joy upon recognizing him, and they were betrothed in circle that very night. I have never known another pair of lovers who were happier.

Walking the astral reaches, unfettered by your flesh, is a feeling of such freedom and exhilaration that I must recommend it to any skilled in the Seeing Arts. Guard and ward your body well, as you will want your flesh to be intact when you eventually return to it. Have a faithful spirit or servant stand watch over you, as the Unawakened will think you dead or dying. I once heard of a Sorcerer who, upon returning from the far-flung heavens, awoke in a crypt!

System: Astral projection requires Mind 4, difficulty 7 on the Arete roll. Storytellers may wish to stress the dangers involved when Players leave their characters’ bodies to walk the astral planes. An empty vessel is an open invitation to some Umbrood and Nephandic forces. Without proper warding, spirit guards, or other defensive measures, the Mage may return to find his body occupied by someone (or something) else!

Elder

New Sheath

This last of the Arts of Mind is a dark working indeed. For a Pagan wise in Life magicks, the body’s youth and vitality can be prolonged. But, alas, there comes a time when the flesh eventually wears thin without sufficient skills in the Turning Arts or Time magick. But with the Mental Arts, ah, a new path to immortality can be easily achieved. There are those who focus the sum total of their potential and energy into Mind magicks, because they swear all other Arts are but pale copies. Such a Sorcerer can take his or her mind, their very Essence, and force entrance into a lovely young man or woman, usurping their body, condemning their mind to oblivion. This is murder for sure and for certain, and a practice most ill favored by our kind. I met the Contessa di Rimini once, some forty years ago. Her body was that of a lovely child, but her eyes revealed an ancient evil scarce contained by the sweet flesh. She walked carefully, as though terribly old and frail, and it looked passing odd in one so physically young. Her knowledge of pleasure and the arts of the flesh was the culmination of many years of decadence and debauchery. To those of us aware, the soul and skin were poor matches.

The lesson here is simple: look well into the eyes of Magus and Sleeper alike. Eyes are the doorways to the mind and heart. Furthermore, I urge you: do not practice dark arts such as this. To stray along such paths tempts madness or the attentions of the Infernal hosts. That way lies ruin.

System: To permanently inhabit another’s body, the Mage must have Mind 5, and succeed on an Arete roll difficulty 8 plus the number of successes the victim gets on his or her Willpower roll. The Scourge will most certainly come with this type of spell; stealing another’s body and identity is extremely vain magic and borders on the Infernal. But then again, nobody ever said the Pagan path was a lily-white one...

Prime

I must confess that my knowledge and mastery of this particular Art is rather lacking. However, I have had the pleasure of studying with several Witches whose command of the Art of Power is quite stunning.
CHAPTER TWO: KNOWLEDGE

This “Quintessence,” as the Hermetic mages are wont to call it, is Magick at its most basic and simplified form. Even the smallest of workings within this Sphere are quite powerful indeed.

Neophyte

The Unicorn

There is a tapestry that hangs in Windsor Hall. It was woven one hundred years past by Wilena Sartre. Her life-mate was a Shifter, exiled from his kind for loving a Sorceress. The Wolves are highly spiritual creatures, so Wilena surrounded their home with mystic energy and light to ease and comfort him. Most of the Pattern she wove has dissolved, but to anyone with even a touch of Prime the tapestry in the main hall is a delight. It portrays a rearing unicorn in full majesty, complete with gold-tipped horn. Each thread shimmers and winks with tiny sparks of quintessence, and is clearly visible to the Prime aware magus and other supernatural creatures.

Be aware that objects touched with Power shine brightly and are clear beacons to other Mages and creatures of the mists. If you desire solitude, be cautious in your use of these vital magicks.

System: If a Witch desires to see the Patterns of Quintessence in the world around her, Prime 1 is required, difficulty 4 on the Arete roll.

The Waters of Life

For one gifted with Prime, the ability to seek out and contain the essential energies of the gods becomes simple. Close your eyes, and with your inner sight and foci firmly in hand chant, “Lord and Lady, from whom all goodness flows, show your servant your threads of life.” Then open your eyes, and the world will be filled with tiny bursts of light and beauty as well as many intersecting and connecting threads. There are places where many of these threads meet and pool. Fortunate indeed is the Witch who finds such a Cray to draw Power from. Quite often, these pools of power are graced with some kind of flowing water, either a spring or a brook, and are quite lovely. But be warned — the Shape-shifters use these places as well. Should you encounter others nearby whose auras exceed your own in brightness, leave at once!

Initiate

Goddess’ Kiss

Isabella de Aragon was extraordinarily skilled in the uses of Power. She carried with her, at all times, a small looking glass that hung from her waist upon a silken cord. A creature of great vanity, she desired for none within the whole of the Spanish court to be lovelier than she, or have prettier baubles. Isabella escaped the scrutiny of the Church that would have hunted her by seducing the most influential priests, breaking them to her whim. If a new beauty arrived in court with a trinket Isabella coveted, the unsuspecting woman would be invited to take sherry with the jealous woman within her private quarters. There, using the looking glass as a Tool of Art, she would gently shine it upon the desired bauble, and with Prime and the Shaping Arts create an exact copy, a mirror image of the thing. Isabella would then threaten the terrified girl, warning her that if she ever wore her trinket again, she would accuse her of theft, and have her locked away.

Often, as her magicks were incomplete in some way, the item would lose luster and solidity with time. When asked how she could do such, she spoke of her Goddess’ kiss, and told all who would listen that she was blessed above other women.

It came to pass, though, that this senseless and useless creature eventually met her just end. Sickened by her pettiness, upon bedding her the young man bound her pattern within her mirror. In the course of a month he watched as she faded and was eventually lost to the world. At the last, no one even remembered her; the young man in question was hard put to correctly give her name.

To create anything from thin air one must know how to weave the threads of quintessence. Take a lesson from above, however, and be pure in your
WITCHES AND PAGANS

I have used such to save my life, conjuring from seemingly nothing a dagger to sever my bonds. Be sure of your skills, and practice this in solitude, for the less than perfect items can sometimes be frightening to un-Awakened onlookers.

System: To create something from nothing, Prime 2 is needed. Arete roll, difficulty 6. Normally this is done in combination with another or multiple Spheres, but it is possible to draw upon and store raw Quintessence (up to 10 points). Each success=1 point of Quintessence.

Glamour

There is a French lass of much renown whose carnal appetite is voracious to say the least. Not being possessed of any great beauty, her opportunities for such pleasures were few and far between until she perfected this magickal technique. Using the threads of Power, weave for thyself a shroud of ideal beauty. Weave it tight so that it lays upon thee as a second skin. Thy true form will be invisible to others; all they shall see is the glamour. Understand that this is but a reflection of a dream and will fade in due time, so be quick about thy work!

System: Prime 2. Arete roll, difficulty 6. To affect a more lasting change in appearance (for example, if you want to manifest angel's wings) combine this with the Life sphere.

Second Degree

Disrupt the Pattern

As it is possible to see the patterns of Power that exist in the world and weave them together, it is also possible to fray or disrupt those patterns. At this level of skill, a Witch has the ability to inflict pain upon another, simply by agitating, pulling, shaking or knotting those threads that run within other living things. While the pain inflicted is not as severe as that done with Fortune, it can still be quite considerable.

Many of the Wise have used this working for their own self-defense, and in that way they do not violate the Threefold Law. However, enchanters who walk upon the darker paths often use this and worse to inflict great suffering upon the populace. Sometimes we are our own worst enemy.

System: Prime 3. Arete roll, difficulty 6. Each success = 1 point of normal damage. Victim may make a Stamina roll to "soak" the damage. Conversely, at this level, Mages can pull together their own Pattern energy to boost Stamina. The roll is the same and a success raises Stamina temporarily by 1. The total number of successes determines the duration of the effect.

Third Degree

The Fiery Sword

I have already mentioned the famed Lady Giulietta and her prowess with Mind magicks, but I have not yet mentioned her husband, Sir Rysler Wesland, Knight of Herne. Sir Rysler grew up a poor farmer's son in western France. As a child, he had an affinity for communion with the Faerie folk, and even fell in love with one for a brief time. When he Awakened, it is said that the Horned One sent the mystical Master of the Keep to train the young man in the art of swordcraft. When the Master was satisfied, he Knighted Rysler in the name of Herne and Diana. Since then he has proven himself a valiant warrior in the fight against the Inquisition and their allies amongst the Gabrielites. Rysler has some great skill with the Power and uses it to infuse his sword with otherworldly fire. Before every battle, he offers up a small sacrifice to Herne and meditates, drawing Power from the air and directing it into his sword. While this ritual does not allow him to shear through metal or thick wood, it does create an awe-inspiring sight and renders the blade virtually unbreakable.

System: To infuse an inanimate object with power, Prime 4 is required. Arete roll, difficulty to be determined by the Storyteller. Usually some form of ritual, prayer, or meditation is required to draw the appropriate energy from the surrounding environment. Also, the opposite of this is possible without the ritual and meditation. To make an inanimate object disappear (i.e. to drain it of essential Prime energy), roll Arete, difficulty determined by the size and strength of the object. Keep in mind that once an object is dispersed in this manner, it cannot be brought back. A replica may be created with Prime 2 + Matter, but that specific item is gone forever!
Elder

Turn the Undead

The Romany of Wallachia and Moldavia often recount sorrowful tales of entire families and tribes killed by hordes of Undead masquerading as fellow Gypsies. Normally the Romany are formidable Sorcerers in their own right, but not many amongst them are Masters of Prime. So they appealed to the great Baba Yaga for aid. As I hear tell, Baba Yaga is a powerful Witch — perhaps one of the last remaining Wyck or Aeduna — with Mastery in all the mystic Arts. The Christians in that land have done much to malign her good name, claiming that she travels with Death and eats children alive and other such nonsense. At any rate, Baba Yaga agreed and fell into a deep trance. The very next night, after the agreement had been struck, every caravan leader was greeted by a vision of the great Witch. This happened every night until, once again, the Undead made their attack, this time upon the caravan of Milos Karkovska. At that moment, the vision of Baba Yaga became solid and the Witch herself appeared in the flesh. She spread her arms wide and there was a sudden rumbling in the air. At once, the Undead began to twist and writhe with pain as the Great One drank deep of the primal energies that still remained within them. Some managed to resist for a short time, but in the end all were forced to succumb. And Baba Yaga drank from them until they no longer polluted the weaving of nature.

There is no record of the payment rendered to Baba Yaga for her service, but it is well known that the Undead have not dared attack the Travelling People again to this day.


Neophyte

Spirit Glow

A dear sorceress known as Dame Judith teaches this simple ritual to those just starting in the Spirit arts to develop their new abilities. She has the young ones sit, legs crossed, at the center of a cast circle that is well warded against the more harmful things that roam about. With hands at rest upon their knees and their minds quieted of all distractions, the pupils study their own reflections in a dark glass. They then chant, “Within, without and all about, dwell spirits fair and spirits not. Open the inner eye to see the glow of the spirits upon me. Now do I see, now do I see… by my will so mote it be!” Gradually the new witches become aware of a luminescence, a liming of their reflection.

This subtle light, this spirit glow and the many colors that swirl about within it, can teach the seer many things about the person within. If you should ever encounter one of the shape changers you will note the intensity and depth of their colors. This marks them in a magus eye, and eases our avoidance of such. There is a great antipathy between the majority of our kind and theirs. Of course, there are exceptions, but they are rare. Fey as well show different, as do those with a Daemon and the Undead.

One learns, in time, to judge the true state of an individual’s feelings and emotions. The smiling woman, whose drab colors run night-sky sad, fools no Witch into trusting her friendly guise.

If this is the only skill you develop within the Sphere, it will still serve you well. An awareness of the spiritual truth of a person has saved my life several times. After some time, you will be able to instantly see the spirits that surround you through the force of your will.

System: Spirit 1 (or Mind 1). Arete roll, difficulty 6. Note that time and knowledge are needed to read and understand what you are seeing. The Storyteller may choose to make this into an independent Knowledge or Skill, or he may choose to base the extent of the information gained upon the number of successes achieved. With a Perception + Rituals roll, difficulty 7, the un-Awakened can learn to see auras as well.
**Dead Man’s Touch**

Even the most unaware of humans have stood alone in a room, the hairs at the nape of their neck standing as erect as the legions of Rome, and shivered as cold chills ran the length of their back. They quickly dismiss it, saying with a shrug that there must have been a draft. In truth, the dead walked near, and to one who has mastered the spirit sight, sensing an object or place touched by the spirits of the dead is child’s play. Simply enter into the area, or touch the object in question, and using yours and your Daemon’s will you can see what mark a spirit has left. The effect can be terrifying at first. I recall, when first learning this, holding an old sword in my hands. It had been found in the kitchen garden, and I believed it to be Roman. As I worked my will upon it, I saw within my mind the dirt fall away from the blade, to be replaced with rivulets of blood. A disembodied hand, with a bloodied stump for a wrist, firmly held the rotting wooden handle. It was most disconcerting. Sometimes echoes of a thing, or of a deed long past will whisper across your thoughts. A strong will, and good Mind arts help shield the gifted from too many shadows intruding all at once.

Note: Use your foci at first, to assist you in your efforts. Spirits are unpredictable things, and for every fool on this side, there are a thousand fools on the other. Ward yourself against them, and beware the ones with glowing eyes. They seek a body to inhabit that they might live again.

**System:** Spirit 1, Arete roll, difficulty 4. The shaman or wise man, with talisman in hand, can use a ritual or séance to gain the same effect.

**Initiate**

**The Mouse Trap**

I knew a Magus who was foolish enough to anger the Shape-shifters. Those creatures can enter and exit the shadows and spirit lands with little effort. Fearing retribution, and justly so, he took great care to thicken the Veil of Spirit surrounding him. His theory was simple; make the Gauntlet as thick and as impassible as week-old porridge, and no creatures would be able to sneak into his chamber whilst he slumbered. He rather hoped that any who tried would become lodged, like a field mouse in honey.

To the end of protecting his sleeping chamber, his plan worked. Alas, while shopping in London-town, one of the beasts, in its man form, encountered him in an alleyway. It simply shifted one hand and tore off his head.

What interested me was the way he went about thickening the Gauntlet. Each night, he walked about his room making weaving gestures with his hands muttering “Over, under, through and out. Mist and Shadows I weave thee stout. No creature shall enter here to harm that which I hold dear.” The result was a thickened, almost deadened feel to his chamber – as though it was completely cut off from the spirit plane. His mirror reflected poorly; sometimes not at all. The effect lasted some time after his death, and I heard that the next owner of that home eventually sealed up the room, furniture and all.

Although you can thicken and raise the barrier in this way, always keep in mind that there exist far more powerful things than you, and the Gauntlet is never completely impassible.

**The Spectre of Ansley Hall**

While traveling, I stopped one cold and rainy night at a place known as Ansley Hall. It was an old Saxon Stronghold built on Roman fortifications, and later re-shaped by the Normans. A grayer, grimmer pile of stone I have never encountered. But the night had a sharp bite, so I accepted the pale host’s offer of sanctuary. By the light of a single candle, he led me through the massive oaken door into the great hall. At the far end was a hearth, big enough to roast half an ox, with a small pile of logs burning at the center of it. My host introduced himself as John Ansley, the last living member of the Ansley clan. A traveler was a welcome relief in the long dark nights of winter. We sat on benches blackened with age and conversed over some mead that I had brought. At last, with the moon barely visible through the rolling clouds,
he bade me goodnight, and showed me to a room where I might rest.

Left alone, I sat on the bed and surveyed the room. It had belonged to a woman, that much was clear, and had not been used in a very long time. I settled down to sleep, and as I lay there, I watched a shadow sliding along the far wall. I used my Spirit wits, and the shadow materialized into the hazy form of a lovely young girl, dressed as they did long ago. Her dark hair moved as though in a gentle breeze, and her skin shone so white the moonlight seemed to leap from it. “Who are you?” I asked. “Matilda” she whispered, more heard within than without. “Why stay you on here?” She did not reply, but simply shook her head and held out her hand. Hesitantly, I reached out and allowed her to clasp my own. All warmth fled my body, and something hard was pressed into my palm. I heard her whisper, “Please, please…” and then she vanished, leaving me blue-lipped and shaking. Quickly I burrowed down into the bedclothes, and to my surprise slept quite soundly.

The morning that followed brought sunshine, and I was very grateful to leave that sad place. Before departing, I held out my hand and showed my host the ring the spirit had given me. It is a rare thing to see a man so moved. Tears flowed down his face, and in a choking voice he told me of the night, thirty years past, that his bride of one year had died giving birth, and the babe with her. She had removed her betrothal ring and put it away for safekeeping while she was still with the child. John Ansley had searched in vain for it ever since. As I rode away he was sitting on her grave, waiting to join her.

Have a care — not all spirits are so friendly. Some are embittered or driven mad by their state. Always use caution and wards when dealing with such as these.

Second Degree

Through The Looking Glass

The shadow world can open its doors in any number of ways. The simplest way is to enter through a looking glass. In her room in Paris, Lorraine Fichu keeps a great, silvered mirror. She will disrobe and stand in front of the full-length reflective surface, closing her eyes and reaching out, both with her Daemon and her hand. At first the surface is be cool and firm, then gradually it warms and softens, until at last it is passable. Lorraine describes the sensation as “like walking through soft water, but never becoming wet.” One through, you open your eyes into another world, the same as the one you left and yet so different. Within the Penumbra, all things glow and dance with their inner spirits. But be warned. Other souls might be traversing this world, and harm done here will surely kill as quickly as in the world of flesh.

It is a good idea to take kindred soul on your first journey, someone who has traversed the Ways several times before. The sheer strangeness and beauty can so fill the senses that your head spins.

System: Spirit 3. Roll Arete, difficulty dependent on the thickness of the Gauntlet. It is not necessary to cross over completely nude, however clothing and other gear add one to the difficulty and number of successes needed. If an Enchanter has the power to create objects in the waking world, then those same Arts (Matter, Prime, etc.) will work the same while in the Penumbra.

Third Degree

Devil’s Dwelling

I shall burden you with a difficult tale of a foul act. The Sorcerer Millhaud had lost his faith, his love, and his sanity. He took it upon himself to seize control of a good-sized village in the North of France. There he ruled for a hundred years, using his dark Arts to extend his life. This so terrified the peasants that they never spoke of the Master who lived in their midst.

Millhaud had a strong and particular dislike of all things pure or virtuous — possibly shedding some light
upon the cause of his descent into madness. It so happened that he came across a fair and beautiful young lad, the son of a local priest, by rumor. The boy had a Daemon, not yet awakened, and he radiated with the pure white light of innocence. The old Sorcerer attempted to corrupt the youth into following his own Infernal path, but the child refused to be swayed, all joy or pain aside.

Finally, in a fit of rage, Millhaud called forth from the darkness a terrible spirit, a beast of the shadows that ought never to have been loosed upon this world. He offered the child as host, and greedily did the foul thing accept. The boy's eyes changed in color, going from blue to black, with no whites showing at all. But when done, the evil man discovered that while summoning a demon is simple, controlling one is a different thing entirely. The boy's Daemon awoke, and a terrible battle of Spirit ensued. The old bastard, the unfortunate boy, and indeed the entire village was consumed. To this day, nothing grows on the cursed earth.

I feel obligated to say that this level of Spirit magick can be used to great good, as well. Many of my brothers in the Craft have evicted foul spirits from unwilling hosts, and called forth the light-filled hosts to aid in their work.

When all the gifts had been received, she stepped outside, where a summer storm had recently passed. Far above there was a rainbow, glittering in the light of a setting sun. She spread her arms, and, as we watched and wept, stepped into the light of the rainbow, becoming a part of its glory. I think of her, whenever I hold the ruby in my hand, and I envy her the courage to Ascend into the Void beyond.

Magi at this level can create perfect worlds in which to dwell. Someday, someday....

System: To walk the stars or create new worlds, the Sorcerer must have mastered all five levels of Spirit. The Storyteller should decide if she will allow a Master level character to perform this working, as it is the closest thing to voluntary Ascension that exists in the Dark Fantastic World.

**Time**

So very few of us are trained in the Prophetic Arts, but there are very good reasons for this. When a Witch studies the Art of Turning, there is always the danger that she might someday be crushed by the Wheel itself. Of course, the Seers of Chronos thrive upon this danger, and so have become Masters of the Sphere. Nevertheless, there are those amongst the Verbena who excel in the manipulations of Time. Thankfully some of them have shared their methods with me.

**Neophyte**

**Measure for Measure**

The Hooded Man and his Merrie Band of coveners have been known on occasion to travel throughout the land singing for their supper. Unlike other minstrels who lose track of time and wear out their welcome (along with the inkeeper's nerves!), this group seems always to know exactly when to start playing, when to announce last call and when to call it a night. In
addition, while playing, their rhythm is always steady and constant, be it a slow ballad or a fierce dance.

Actually, it is quite easy to gain this sense of perfect timing. All the student need do is listen intuitively to the rhythm of the Earth and even the stars themselves. If he can train his inner ear to constantly hear these most perfect timekeepers, his own tempo and cadence will grow in precision. Practice is, of course, necessary for mastery of this skill.

Initiate

**Visions of Once and Future Glory**

I am very fortunate to have as a close friend a Greek Priestess of Delphi named Panagiota. She claims, as do the other members of her coven, to be directly descended from those who tended the grove in ancient days. Having sojourned with them and seen the brightness of their auras, I am inclined to believe this is true. I asked her about the famous Oracle who figures in so many epic histories. What happened in that place to disperse the divine energies that granted the gift of Prophecy to the Priestesses of old? My friend informed me that nothing has happened to those energies. They still permeate the ruins, the ground and the very air all around that place. In other words, the Oracle of Delphi is alive and well and still available for those who would seek her wisdom. Panagiota has explained that now, as in antiquity, Priestesses draw upon the Power collected there to reach the oceans of Time. There they swim and sail through the waters towards that which they seek. The past is always defined in perfect clarity. What lies ahead is ever shrouded in a silver fog, hidden from all but those who know how to break through the clouds.

**System:** To gauge exactly the passage of time, the Sorceress should have Time 1. Roll Arete, difficulty 5 for short durations (under 1 hour), difficulty 6 for longer durations. At the Storyteller’s discretion, a player may lower his difficulty or forego using Arete by rolling Intelligence + Weathercraft to use the position of the sun, moon, stars, etc. in the telling of time.

**Faerie Soil**

It is well known to Pagan folk that sometimes for every hour that passes in our world, days or even years might pass in the worlds of Faerie. Therefore it is vital that those brave souls who venture into such unpredictable realms be able to keep track of the relative passage of time. Even those of us amongst the Verbena would do well to understand the differences between the passage of time here and in our own Hidden Realms.

To do such, the Witch must trust her intuition and see the passage of time in both places as if they were two streams flowing side by side. Judge the difference between the two, fast or slow, based upon the meter of the Universe. If the student has mastered the lesson above, this should not prove difficult.

**System:** Time 1 is needed to judge the relative passage of time between two places. The Magus should roll Arete, difficulty 5. If Connection is used, it may be possible for the Mage to judge the amount of time gained or lost while traveling from one place to another.

**Steady the Wheel**

Rivalry amongst the North men can be fierce. Unfortunately, the Stormwitches amongst them can become caught up in these conflicts, resulting in fantastic losses of life on both sides. Some of these Sorcerers have some skill in the Turning Art and are wont to use it against their enemies, perhaps to trap a rival ship in a deadly tempest or to send it careening into sharp and jagged rocks. To guard against such deadly workings, Stormwitches have learned to "steady the wheel" and fortify the weavings of Time around them and their ships. Essentially, this is accomplished by willing the flow of
Time to stiffen slightly. Needless to say this takes a great deal of practice in order to be successful.

**Third Degree**

**The Sleeping Maid**

Those stories we like to call Faerie Tales often have more basis in the truth of this world than in the foleries of the Fae lands. This is most definitely the case in the tale of the Sleeping Maid. The Enchantress in that tale cast a great spell upon the beautiful maiden in question, causing her to fall into a deep slumber lasting one hundred years. At the end of those hundred years, a young prince (it is always a young prince, never a lost peasant or woodsman!) finally came riding along, defeated the Enchantress, kissed the maiden to break the spell and they lived happily ever after.

Of course, the reality is never as glamorous as the stories. That the Enchantress cast the spell is probably true. For whatever reason — social slight, fit of pique, past transgression to repay, whatever — she decided to stop the flow of time in that place. Rather than a prince, it was more than likely a wandering Magus who happened upon the working and used his own Turning Arts to undo the weave and allow the Wheel to resume its steady course. The discovery of the young maiden was simply a pleasant surprise, and more than likely ended in a monetary reward for the Magus rather than a union between a princess and a common man.

**Second Degree**

**The Cave of the Eternal**

In the highlands of Scotland there lives a wise and ancient Crone who has enchanted the cave in which she lives. For many ages now, she has been a guide and a seer for the clans in that harsh country. When petitioners go to visit her, they must remain just outside the mouth of her cave. Before them, there is a shimmering mist through which they can see the wise woman and hear her voice. One Roddy MacLean told me that as he stood before the mist, the old woman's shape shifted in that mysterious fog, transforming her from wizened crone to maiden to full-grown woman and back to elderly sage again. Likewise, her voice seemed to echo as if from a distance in one moment and then sound as if she were speaking in his ear the next.

MacLean also told me the story of one woman who dared cross the mystic barrier to see the Crone face to face. When she entered that place, her children were “wee bairns” and barely walking. When she finally came out, those “wee bairns” were dead and their grandchildren grown men and women with children of their own! She had only visited with the Old Woman for an hour. Based on this tale, I can only surmise that the Crone has woven the threads of Time around her like a cocoon and has changed the flow of time in that place dramatically. Much like the Faerie lands, one hour there can be fifty to one hundred years in the real world.

**Elder**

**Walking Future Fates**

My respect for those who work the Turning Arts is great, mostly due to an experience I had with one Samar Sivanesen of the Sahajiya. She explained to me that though we often link time to the linear flow of a river, the Turning is more like a pomegranate. Each
every time is singular unto itself but is also a part of one greater whole. All moments are the same moment, all events the same event. Knowing this, the master of Time may move amongst moments and events and ages effortlessly. It is also possible for others to travel with the Master and see those moments both past and future.

Our current times are those of terror, betrayal, sorrow, strife and great loss. But my soul is uplifted by the journey I have taken with Master Samar. The world she showed me was one of great wonder where our sister and brothers are free to gather in grove and haven to worship the Old Gods, protected by the law of the land and in some ways accepted by others around them. There, cities stretch up to the skies, some buildings even piercing the clouds above. All nations are one nation, not under the power of a Church or of Science or even our Old Religion, but under the unity and power of mankind. Men and women once again working in balance for the greater good of all humanity and all live upon this Earth. Such a vision as this fills me with hope and shows me that not all roads of Fortune lead to ruinous ends. I am much encouraged.

System: For a Seer to sidestep the laws and boundaries of Time — such as they are — Time 5 is required. The Storyteller should determine difficulty and number of successes needed for the Sorcerer to send himself through the ways of time or to send himself and others. Since the Turning arts are quite unpredictable, the Storyteller may want to prepare a set of rewards and consequences for critical failure and critical success. The smallest action taken in the past may completely change the outcome of the future. Storytellers can find an endless supply of adventures and chronicles within the channels of Time, and may even change the face of the Dark Fantastic world altogether! But beware — the Scourge is harsh on those who would be gods, and Witches and Pagans are not the only ones capable of Turning the Wheel...
there is so much wisdom in the world that my small book cannot hope to gather all of it. What is included here are those things I feel every Witch and Pagan should know in this ever-changing world. I have also included those mixtures and recipes that have proven useful to me over the years. I hope that you too will reap the benefits.

The Pentagram

It is the most sacred symbol amongst Pagan peoples everywhere. The Celtic Wicca, the Strega, and all those in between use this symbol above all others for protection, invoking and banishing. It represents the convergence of the eternal Spirit and the Four Elements — Earth, Air, Fire and Water — under the divine supremacy of the Universal One. This one shape combines the sum total of Magickal thought and belief into its simple form. The first lesson all Pagans learn is that of the Pentagram. In its upward pointing position it stands for the triumph of will and knowledge over the imperfections of the flesh and senses.

When the Pentagram is drawn, the motion reminds us of the great Mystery that brought all things into being. From Spirit descended Fire, the first Element and the spark of life. Fire then met Water, the second Element, and from their dissonant clashing came the third Element, Air. The joining of these three manifested Earth, the fourth Element. And with these four there was Balance in all things. Between Air and Fire there is Harmony, as is there between Water and Earth. This is as it should be since Fire and Air are both Active energies. Because of this, we link them to the Male. Similarly, Water and Earth are both Recep-
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tive energies, and represent the Female. The push and pull between these energies is what turns the Wheel and yet keeps it in balance.

As of late, our enemies have taken to inverting the Pentagram and claiming it as a symbol of the Christian Devil. Sadly, this is but one more desecration of that which we hold dear. Some of the blame for this can be placed at the feet of the Hermetics. Their Pentagram points towards the East (for reasons that will become evident as I continue), but to the untrained eye appears to be inverted. Carelessness, arrogance and corruption have brought them to war with the Church, and as such, their symbols have been associated with such vices. As their symbols are borrowed from ours, you see where this leaves us....

The Witches' Pyramid

It is the way of humankind to attach human qualities to their symbols. The Pentagram is no exception. In addition to a star shape, the Pentagram can be thought of as a Pyramid with four façades which converge upward into a single point. Some of the Wicca have taken this visualization and utilized it as a focus for their workings. Fire represents the Will, Water, the Imagination. Secrecy is gained of Air and Faith comes from Earth. The point of the Pyramid, Spirit, stands for Achievement and Release. In order to gain a true appreciation of the deep complexities involved in this seemingly simple progression, I think it vital to provide a more thorough discussion of the Elements themselves and all we have come to associate with them.

The Elements and the Quarters

Fire

Understand that when I say Fire, I do not simply mean that which burns in your hearth or upon the end of a candle. Rather, I refer to the most primal Essence of Fire that manifests from the Lord and Lady. It is the force that motivates and vitalizes. It is the seat of the passions and of male virility. Fire is continuous motion and it is all-consuming, all-purifying. This is why many need spells involve casting one’s wishes into the flame of a candle or a bonfire. If the Inquisitors realized this, they might understand why so many of us are unafraid to face the flames in death. To us, it represents the ultimate purification, the fastest method of release from this physical plane into the aetheric one. A threat means nothing where there is no fear. In the sacred circle, Fire resides in the South.

Water

Where Fire represents action and motion, Water represents perception and stillness. It is the ruler of love and charity, of malleability and change. Water is the feminine principle and the center of all emotion. While Fire consumes, Water combines; Fire takes, Water gives. Within a mother’s womb, man begins his days in Water, and of Water he is made — blood being the water of Life. The West is Water’s quarter within the circle.

Air

Air, the second male force, is the element of speed and reaction. It is the intellect, the quickness of thought, the creative muse. The Breath of Life carries our songs, our words and rules our ears and minds. It also takes our sacrifices, our wishes, our needs and disperses them unto the Lord and Lady. Air feeds Fire, as creativity feeds the will, and is born of Water, balancing action with inaction. Some Pagans place Air in the North, but the greater majority place it in the East.

Earth

The final element, Earth, represents balance, strength and endurance. It is the second feminine principle, although some traditions would argue that it is the primary one. Of all the elements, it is the one easiest to understand. We bury the seed within her, and from her comes the tree. Earth receives and provides the foundation upon which all else is built. It absorbs the flesh of man when his Spirit has taken leave and from that energy helps shelter and feed the things that grow from it. As with Air, some choose to place Earth in the East, but its usual place is in the North.
Correspondences

Colors, numbers, gems, herbs. All of these have some correspondence to the Four Elements and Quarters as do the various supernatural and mystical creatures of the world. Likewise, the health and well being of a man can be determined by the balance of the elements within him.

To the East and Air belong the Faeries and all other Sylph-like spirits. It is represented by the color yellow and rules the Sanguine humours. If a man be garrulous, fickle, dishonest, contemptuous of others or if he be short of breath, then he has need of balance with this humour.

The Djin of Persia and the Fire Devas of India are ruled by the South and Fire. In fact, my correspondents in those far corners of the world tell me that the word Djin is actually Indian in origin. The reds of passion and the pale rose of love find home here. And if a man be gluttonous, jealous or destructive, then a wise woman will know he must be balanced in his Choleric humours.

Quite obviously, the mermaids, naiads, necksies and other Fae of the deep, belong to the realms of the West and Water. These too, also rule the Melancholic humours and the vital essences...
that flow within men, plants and animals. The color blue is symbolic of this element and quarter, which is why we say someone is blue when they have an overabundance of Melancholy. Laziness, indifference and depression are always sure signs that there is an imbalance of Water.

Earth, in the North, is the domain of the brownies, drais, satyrs, goblins and gnomes — essentially all those of the Faé who live upon, within and under the ground. As those things that spring forth from it are green, so is green deemed to be the color of Earth. From the Phlegmatic humors, we can determine the health of the bones and the body. Balance in this element staves off dullness, insipidity, misanthropy and slowness.

**The Seven Planetary Powers**

In addition to the Elements and Quarters, some amongst us recognize the Seven Planetary Powers as vital influences upon life, work and spirit. They are: Sun (Male), Moon (Female), Jupiter (Laws and Governing), Mars (Warriors and Hunters), Venus (Love), Saturn (The Mystic Arts), and Mercury (Intellect and Artistry). Rather than write a treatise on each power and its corresponding herbs, colors, numbers and such, I have drawn together these charts to make relating them easier.

**Planetary Herbs**

- **Sun:** Sunflower, laurel, angelica, saffron, cinnamon, wolfsbane
- **Moon:** Moonflower, hyssop, garlic, rosemary, watercress
- **Jupiter:** Henbane, mint, sage, basil
- **Mars:** Hellebore, capiscum, wolfsbane
- **Venus:** Verbena, valerian, lavender, foxglove, coriander
- **Saturn:** Rue, mandrake, aconite, hemlock, cummin
- **Mercury:** Parsley, marjoram, fennel, mint

**Planetary Colors**

- **Sun:** Gold
- **Moon:** White
- **Jupiter:** Blue
- **Mars:** Red
- **Venus:** Green
- **Saturn:** Black
- **Mercury:** Violet

**Number Correspondence**

Numbers have power, as do names. Amongst Witches, certain numbers have certain meanings. Three is the most sacred of numbers and any multiple of it is also sacred and extremely potent. Four is the number of balance. Seven is the number of the Goddess, and Five is the Witch’s number.

- **Sun:** 6
- **Moon:** 9
- **Jupiter:** 4
- **Mars:** 5
- **Venus:** 7
- **Saturn:** 3
- **Mercury:** 8

**Trees**

- **Sun:** Laurel and Oak
- **Moon:** Willow, Olive and Palm
- **Jupiter:** Pine, Birch and Mulberry
- **Mars:** Hickory
- **Venus:** Myrtle, Ash and Apple
- **Saturn:** Elm
- **Mercury:** Hazel

(While on the subject of trees, I feel I should list the nine magickal woods of the Verbena which are Rowan, Apple, Elder, Holly, Pine, Cedar, Juniper, Poplar and Dogwood. Rowan and Apple woods are exceptionally good for magickal wands and the like, but never craft your tools from the wood of the Elder tree, for that is the Lady’s tree and is sacred to her.)
CHAPTER THREE: WISE CRAFT

Stones and Gems

These can be used as wonderful foci for the beginning student. Stones blessed by an Enchantress or in some way dedicated to a specific purpose are rare and quite valuable above and beyond the realm of commerce. Should one of these come into your possession through gift or inheritance, hold fast to it for it is treasure indeed.

§ Sun: Diamond, Topaz
‘ Moon: Moonstone, Opal
H Jupiter: Amethyst
W Mars: Ruby, Jasper, Bloodstone
E Venus: Green Jade, Emerald, Aquamarine
V Saturn: Onyx, Jet, Black Jade
D Mercury: Citrine

Incense and Aromatic Oils

As an agent of Air, scent can add extra focus to your rituals and spells. Listed here are but a small number of aromatics, most derived from resins and flowering plants. To render the essential oils, allow the flowers and such to sit in a bath of ale or wine. The oil will separate out from the rest and may be skimmed off and saved.

§ Sun: Cinnamon, Laurel
‘ Moon: Camphor, Jasmine, Almond, Lotus
H Jupiter: Juniper, Nutmeg, Basil
W Mars: Dragon’s Blood, Aloe
E Venus: Rose, Myrtle, Ambergris
V Saturn: Poppy, Myrrh, Frankincense
D Mercury: Fennel, Aniseseed, Cinquefoil

Tools

A practitioner of the Craft must ever be aware that his greatest tool of Art is his mind. That said, there are many ritual tools that have become common in the varied traditions of Pagan peoples throughout Europe. Some tools are used by every group, while others are only used by specific groups or individual Pagans. Whatever the case, each implement, regardless of who does or does not use it, is linked to the Elements, the Quarters and to the will of the Witch who uses them.

The Altar

For most covens, and even for solitary practitioners, the Altar and its tools are the most important objects of their Craft. Some traditions have special rituals for consecrating these tools and directing them to the Enchanter’s will. Often they are physically marked with ancient runes and symbols, while in the case of the Awakened, some of these markings are done on a spiritual level, only seen to another with the Power. These implements are kept special and apart from ordinary mundane items and are only used for the purpose of working magick.

Other traditions, those with roots closer to the folk magicks of old rather than to elevated ceremonial magicks, simply point out what tools are necessary to practice the Craft, allowing willworkers to choose from amongst things they already posses and use on a regular basis. This often alleviates the need for an altar, and allows the Pagan to mask her Art in the everyday trappings of life. After all, it is much easier to incriminate a neighbor as a witch and a heretic if she has costly, dedicated tools upon an altar than it would be if her only Tools of Art were a worn carving knife and her cooking pot.

In any event, the one rule that applies universally to one’s ritual implements is this: Never haggle or bargain for their price. This cheapens their worth in the sight of the Gods.

The Wand

Often made of one of the nine magickal woods, the witch’s wand is one of the most powerful tools of her will. It is a tool of Air and sits on the Male half of the altar. To make your wand, find a branch, thin and slender on the tree of your choosing. Before cutting — and this is vital — tell the tree of your purpose and intent and ask, politely, that it make a gift of its branch for the furtherance of your purpose. If you have the ability to see and speak with spirits, have this conversation directly with the spirit of the tree. Some Witches, experienced in the Shaping Arts and the art of Life,
have found ways to render a branch from the tree without cutting or harming it. However, in either case, the proper request should be made.

When you have your branch, remove the bark and sand the wood to sheer smoothness. Some traditions have their witches carve the tip of the wand into a phallus, but a natural point is also quite proper. Hollow it out and stuff it with sacred herbs, then bind it to you and you alone with three drops of blood from your left hand. Add any sacred runes or symbols that you like, the whole time infusing the wand with the strength of your will. The stronger the will, the stronger the wand.

The Blade

The size, color, shape and nature of the blade varies from tradition to tradition, but regardless of difference, this tool is universally looked upon as another extension of the Pagan’s will. It is considered a tool of Spirit and the Fifth Essence as well as a representation of Fire and so either takes its place in the center of the altar or on the Male half.

The Celtic Wicca and other paths with more ceremonial leanings tend to utilize two kinds of blade — one with a black handle, known as the athame, and one with a white handle, known as the bolline, or the working knife. These peoples tend to reserve both these blades for ritual purposes. The athame has a handle of dark wood — ebony is best — and a double-edged blade for the purpose of swiftly directing inner energy. Most Wicca inscribe this blade with sacred symbols and charge the blade in a closely guarded ritual. I have even known those Witches skilled with the use of Quintessence to alter the pattern of the blade so that it might be a better channel for the will.

The bolline normally has a handle of blonde wood, white horn or bone, and the blade has only one edge. It is used to inscribe symbols on other tools, cut wax, wick or incense on the altar, or for any other cutting that must be done during ritual.

In other traditions, and amongst hedge wizards and the like, only one blade is used for all manner of ritual use — and even for some ordinary uses. After all, magick nourishes the spiritual side of life. Why not incorporate this magick into the preparation of food for the nourishment of the body? I have even heard of some practitioners using swords as their ritual knives!

A cunning woman from Provence gave me this small ritual for the consecration of a Blade of Art:

Take your blade to a crossroad at midnight on the new moon. Find some soft earth and bury it, blade down, hilt and all. Conceal your buried blade and then leave it in the Earth for 13 nights. When you dig it up again, the full moon should be in the sky. Cleanse the blade in clear spring water, purified with salt, or in the running waters of a stream or river. Declare the blade to your will and purpose in the names of the Old Ones and then it shall be ready for use.

The Cauldron

Though it can be a vessel for liquids, potions and such, the cauldron is sometimes considered a tool of Fire and often represents the void from which the first spark was engendered. Mostly, however, it is a secondary tool. In the workings of the Strega, sometimes the cauldron is filled with a strange liquor that when lit, burns with a bright blue flame. They call this the spirit flame and it holds the central location on their altar. A shell or a ceramic bowl is also common as the vessel for this strega liquore. More often than not, however, the cauldron is used to prepare Sabbat feasts or even more mundane meals.

The Chalice

This tool is representative of the feminine principle and of Water. It can be made of wood, glass, stone, or any fine metal, preferably silver. Some Pagans choose to inscribe it with runes or spiritual symbols, while others enchant it to be ever full of pure water or sweet wine.

Plunging the Blade into the Chalice is meant to symbolize the sexual union between god and goddess, spirit and flesh, sun and earth, man and woman. When done in ritual, the act consecrates the sacrificial wine or mead before it is passed around to the participants.
However, it is rarely done as a substitute for the actual Sacred Marriage, performed by the High Priest and High Priestess.

The Paten

Also known as the Pentacle, this tool is under the influence of Earth, and resides on the Female half of the altar. Really, it is merely a plate on which rests the fruits, breads and cheeses that are served at the Sabbat feast. It can be made from a crosswise section from the stump of a felled tree, of shaped earth or stone, or of fine metal, preferably gold. The Paten is almost always physically inscribed with a pentagram, although it can also be marked with more spiritual runes and symbols. When the cakes are blessed in circle, they are placed on the Paten and lifted in the names of the Lord and Lady. Any food left at the end of the feasting is placed upon this tool and left out upon the altar overnight, that the Fair Ones might also partake of the feast when the human revelers have gone.

Ritual Vestments

Many of my Verbena sisters and brothers prefer to work their rituals clothed only as they were when they came into the world. Such skyclad rituals allow a Witch to be close with the elements of her Craft without hindrance from physical or mundane things. However, modesty and climate sometimes dictate that we wear certain items while working our Arts.

The Cape and Cord

Embroidered with runes, pentagrams, and the seven planetary symbols, the cape is normally made of black cloth and only worn in the presence of the Guardians and the Gods. As black dye is awfully expensive, as is silver thread and gold thread, not many Pagans possess such garments. Lady Nightshade has one, I am told, but hers came as a gift from the Wicca of Ireland and England in thanks for her efforts against Wyndegarde. Some hedge wizards have come by capes once owned and worn by powerful Magi and so infused with their Power and Art, that the simple wearing of the garment confers upon them great mystical power. Common Pagans use instead simple robes of dark brown or green, corresponding to the colours of nature. White or homespun is sometimes worn at Imbolc or on particularly chilly Beltane nights.

The Cord is a length of red cloth, wool or silk, nine feet in length and braided. At one end a knot is tied, symbolizing the feminine and the knot that is tied in the cord that links mother to child in the womb. At the other end, two knots are tied and the strips of cloth hang free, symbolizing the male and the threads of Fortune. The Witch wears the cord around her waist and uses it in the ritual binding that occurs at Initiation, handfasting, and other rites.

The Garter and the Crown

These two items are seen mostly as symbols of a High Priestess and are very rarely worn by anyone other than her. Much mystery surrounds the symbolism of the garter — even amongst the Verbena. It is rumoured that the Wyck and the Aeduna wore garters to distinguish them as shamans and healers. Now it is mostly a symbol of status, rank and prestige. A new High Priestess is normally presented with a garter of green leather, lined with red silk and joined with a single silver buckle. As she grows in her Craft, she is presented with more buckles to adorn her garter. A Witch with seven buckles upon her garter is seen as a formidable willworker, indeed.

The crown is made of a whisper thin circle of silver joined by a crescent moon. She who wears it represents the Goddess in the circle, and is seen as a Queen of Witches. Some covens keep the crown for their High Priestess, while others allow whomever is conducting Sabbat to wear it. Such an honor is not taken lightly, as the young Priestess will join into communion with the Old Ones and speak as their mouthpiece. I feel I must mention the counterpart to the crown — The Horns. To my knowledge this is the only piece of honorific regalia that the High Priest wears and they are his exclusively. Very often, the Horns are from a stag he hunted and brought down himself.
Witches’ Herbs and Recipes

As much as I would like to include a full herbary in this volume, such an endeavor would take a lifetime. Instead I include here a few notes about particularly valuable Witches herbs and a few recipes for food and drink that may further their work — good or ill.

Rue: Of all the magickal herbs, she is Queen. The Strega use little else in their workings. If ever you have need of a healer or a Witch, look for the sprig of rue or the Cimaruta hung in the window, tied with red ribbon and possibly bedecked with silver charms (the most common being a fish, a key, a flower and a crescent moon). Rue is easy to identify as its branches always divide in three, symbolic of the Triple Goddess. It is evergreen and can grow quite tall if well cared for. As a curative, rue can be used for practically every ailment, but is particularly useful in correcting sluggishness, convulsions and blindness. If ever a Pagan has need of a protective amulet, he may stuff a small bag with rue and fear not.

Foxglove: I have found this herb useful for curing ailments of the heart and the blood. You may recognize it by its bright purple flowers that resemble a woman’s long, slender fingers.

Ergot: To ease the pains of birth, mix an infusion of this herb blended with a crushed berry of the nightshade plant while the mother-to-be is still able to walk without pain. The draught should relax her and ease the child’s entry into the world.

Mandrake: Common superstition would have it that this herb must be harvested at the full moon with a dog, some string and other such things — all to avoid the screams that supposedly leap forth when the “little man” is ripped from the Earth. However, I have harvested mandrake with my own hands and still have the useful function of my ears, having never heard a whisper from the root. To awake the passions of love in a man, dry thirteen root hairs and powder them. Then blend the powder in his cup of wine or ale. Do take caution, however, as this herb is highly poisonous! If thou desirest victory in battle or spoils of war, carry a full root of mandrake wrapped in red cloth.

Henbane: Circe’s herb. Burn with lavender for clear visions, or infuse in a potion to cure fitful sleep. Brave souls may smoke the leaves to receive particularly powerful visions.

Bluebell (Monkshood): Easily recognized by its rich blue flowers that take the shape of a cluster of bells or the caps of Friars. In love potions, use only a pinch — any more is quite deadly. To poison an enemy quickly and thoroughly, use root, leaf and seed.

Fennel: One may find this fragrant herb in the hills of Greece. To my knowledge it does not grow in the Northern climes. Roman Witches call it the Emperor’s Herb or the Emperor’s Staff, as the plant can grow to the height of a man. The seeds may be chewed as an easement of stomach pain, and the fronds, when bound in red and silver cord and worn about the neck, can act as an amulet for successful endeavors and protection.

Recipes

Syllabub

Take a pot, sturdy and clean, and fill it with cider. Put in a goodly amount of honey, with no comb. Add some nutmeg, not too old, if ye have it. Then, spoon in thickened cream, only two spoonfuls at a time. Cover and let stand several hours, and then eat. It is best eaten fresh with shortbread still hot. Serve as dessert for Beltane or Midsummer, when the fires burn bright.

Atholl Brose

Take ye three cups of oatmeal dry, and mix with half a water cup of honey, a cup of spring water and two pints of dark whiskey. Stir it and cork in a bottle that has been scalded. When two days have passed, under the light of the Alder moon, strain through cheesecloth and discard the thick, serving the liquid at ritual. Slainte agus saol agat! Health and long life to all who drink!
Rosewater

Take the petals from two blooming red roses, and put them in a pot of water half the depth of your little finger. Warm over the fire, but boil not. Take the liquid and pour into a cleanly bottle, well-scoured with boiling water. An excellent add-in for rose-flavored cakes, Elder flower fritters and love potions.

Bread of the Land

8 cups of fresh milled flour
2 spoonfuls of salt
2 spoonfuls of soda
3-6 cups buttermilk or thickened milk

Take all the dry together, and add half the milk. Knead and add milk 'til soft dough forms. Divide in two loaves, and round them. Put each into a pan, and cut a cross in the top. Bake in the hottest part of the oven for quarter of an hour, and then pull to a cooler part of the oven for half an hour. Check to be sure it does not burn.

Seeds of Joy

Watch for the flowering of Grandmothers Lace, also known as wild carrot, and wait until the seeds are fully formed. Harvest them, and lay them to dry in a sunny patch where no wind shall whisk them away. Keep them tightly sealed in a pottery jar, and take one spoonful after lying with a man. Drink fully a glass of water. The seeds shall stop a babe from taking root.

Periwinkle Tea

Take the petals and the man part of the flower, and dry in the warm sun. Should you find yourself with child and this be not your wish, brew a strong tea, and let the tea steep in the full light of the moon. Drink three cups for three days in a row, and you shall loose the babe ere your indiscretion can show. Use this not over much, as your stomach will sicken, and the cramps be fierce.

A Draught for Love

Take a healthy handful of Damiana. Work the herbs in thy hand, warming them and infusing them with thoughts of the beloved. Add some Nutmeg, just three pinches, for a pinch is sweet, a little more is sweeter, but too much nutmeg can kill! To bring forth warmth and comfort, add ye one handful of whole, fresh Cloves. Then add a touch of Cinnamon for caprice. The Queen of Herbs brings life-blood to love, so three parts Rue add ye in. Strength of the Earth is what Vetivert brings. A handful gives richness, and binding. Love is not blind, so bring ye in Mugwort and Dittany for clarity. And as love must sting, to grow the heart and mind, add but a pinch of Mistletoe and Mandrake. To soothe the heartache and longing of desire, a handful of Basil is best. All these mix ye together into a vessel of blood red wine, thinking always upon the beloved. Finally add a pepper for passion and three drops of thy blood. Let the draught sit in the light of a full moon, and serve. Thy lover shall be thine.

A Detailed Explanation of the Flight of Broomsticks

Common Perceptions

This is something of a controversial topic amongst Pagans, as some believe that broomsticks actually fly while others feel that the flight in question is simply the result of drug induced hallucinations.

Everything from Science to superstition has been held up as an explanation for a Witch’s ability to take freely to the sky, but none of these explanations can be fully confirmed as facts or denied as all out lies. I feel it my duty to present some of the theories, superstitions, and even a scientific explanation of this phenomenon.

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giving properties, I, myself, believe that such unguents do nothing more than disorient the senses and weaken the will. Nevertheless, I include two different recipes for those adventurous souls who wish to test the merits and shortcomings of such ointments for themselves. Extreme caution is advised if and when these ointments are used. Herbs vary in strength and potency from plant to plant. What may be the perfect measure for a cunning woman in one place may prove deadly for a wizard in another. To apply, a man should thoroughly anoint his member before joining with his lover. Women wishing to fly alone may anoint the end of a broomstick, or any other phallic object they may use for pleasure. Those not wishing to engage in such carnal exploits may combine the herbs into an incense and breathe in the vapor when it is burned.

**An Italian Recipe**
Blend together with fat, oil or butter: betel, henbane, belladonna, cinquefoil, hemlock, bat's blood, hashish of Persia and five poppies dried and ground.

**A French Recipe**
Squeeze the juice from the water parsnip and blend with fat. Add then three pinches each ofaconite and cinquefoil and three berries from the deadly nightshade. Then at midnight under the new moon, blend in the blood of a bat and three pinches of graveyard dust. Hide in a cupboard beneath a grey cloth until the next full moon.

**A Scientific Approach**
Before I go further, I must say, without hesitation, that not all members of the Order of Reason are horrible, cross-bearing, intolerant, persecutors of Pagan peoples. Some of their number are Pagans themselves, and some were even brought up in the Craft. We all are familiar with keeping secret the depths of our spiritual hearts while going through the motions of the common faith. So it is with these brave souls.

From one such, named Sylvester, comes a rather clever and scientific explanation for broom flight. As I understand it, she has tested this method herself with great success.


Broom flight begins and ends with the ubiquitous object itself. Not every broom is capable of flight, but with certain scientific adjustments, some brooms can indeed make use of the Lunar currents of energy that ebb and flow between that Body and the Earth, thus achieving lift-off. The broom itself must have a sturdy handle made of hard wood and bristle of broom leaves and hazel. Into the handle should be placed two lodestones, one at the head of the handle and one at the base, which must be set at the Golden Ratio.

With the broom constructed, the rider must become aware of the Moon and its phase. Broom flight is best beneath the full moon, but can be done, with a few mathematical calculations, during both waxing and waning phases. Take off is possible during the new moon, but altitude is severely affected.

The Author has determined that the field emanation point of Lunar energy corresponds with the top of the lunar axis. When attempting take off, align the top lodestone with the field emanation point. Then position the bottom lodestone at a 45-degree angle. Correct positioning will trigger a magnetic opposition between lodestones and Lunar magnetic emanation and lift will be achieved. Take care — lift is often sudden and quite swift!

The maximum altitude is determined by multiplying the rate of lift by the air density or humidity and then dividing the depth of the nearest ocean tide. Usually this comes out to about 150 to 200 feet at high tide but altitudes of up to 300 feet are not unheard of at the full moon.

When flying, certain protocols should be observed to ensure a rider's safety and comfort. Around the broom itself is a protection field, seven feet around at its largest point, generated by the two lodestones. The rider should sit as far back on the broom handle as possible while maintaining balance. This puts her in the maximum protection field — approximately two or three feet in height. There is less protection granted in the six or seven inches above the MPF, and the remaining space towards the outer zone requires head protection to prevent dizziness and shortness of breath. Passengers must ride behind the posterior lode-
stone and may act as navigators as only slight pressure on the bristles will steer the broom right or left. For further illustration, please consult Diagram Thirteen from Sylvester’s Compleat Books of All Things that Mystify Men, Volume One.

Personal Observations

To be perfectly honest, broomsticks are much too uncomfortable and unpredictable to be utilized for flight on a regular basis. However, when flight was necessary, I have sometimes found tapestries or even a cloak to be quite effective. I hear that the Taftani in Persia use carpets interwoven with elaborate magickal designs as foci for the Arts of Power and Winds that allow them to fly. Other tales indicate that Baba Yaga has enchanted a great cauldron to lift into the air with her inside! Personally, I find flight to be a risky business altogether. There are much more subtle ways of traversing long distances without calling undue attention to oneself.
Interlude: Summer and Fall

Jonathan sat at the head of the table, listening with only half an ear to the dismal minstrels playing ballads of doomed and tragic lovers. Beside him sat a girl of fifteen, shivering from fright and cold. She was named Mary, after the virgin mother of Christ, and the daughter of a wealthy merchant from London. After several polite refusals from minor daughters of minor lords, including one fair maid who preferred the convent to blind Jonathan, his mother finally settled for gold, not blood.

Mary was a simple girl, overly dressed in fine clothes, heavy with stylish embroidery — not that Jonathan could see all of this. However, his mother had taken great care to extol every virtue of both the girl and the wedding party. His bride had been silent throughout the ceremony, whispering her responses to the priest in a tear-choked voice. Jonathan, for his part rather bored, spoke his vows clearly enough. He made a great show of his blindness, fumbling and dropping the ring, forcing his bride and the altar boy to scuttle for it on the cold floor. At last the priest whined to a halt, announcing to the meager guests that the two were now husband and wife.

So now they sat, the wedding cup between them scarcely touched. Jonathan sighed, turned on his inner sight and looked about the room. Most of the guests' auras were weak, wavery with drink. It was growing late, and soon they would retire. Jonathan felt endless irritation at what this wife would mean. He could have women, if he wished. But a wife would be there, constantly prying and asking endless questions as to the time he spent within his library. He felt a formless anger building inside him, and he turned to the young girl at his side.

"Are you not enjoying the wine?" he asked.

"Yes, my Lord." She turned to him then quickly looked away.

"Am I ill favored in your eyes?" His voice sounded hollow and chilled.

"No. No, my Lord." He could hear tears again, and her weakness fed his anger. "Are you virgin?"

She dropped the spoon that she had been holding. "Beg pardon, my Lord?"

"I feel as though my question was clearly spoken. I shall repeat: are you virgin?"
“Yes, my Lord.” He had to use his attuned senses to hear the tiny whisper from his bride’s chalk-white lips.

“Then drink the wine, girl. Did the old nursemaid not tell you what is to pass? The wine dulls the pain.”

She stood up, looking like a rabbit caught in a wire. His father took this as a sign of the couple’s eagerness to retire, and the attendants moved forward to take them separately to the bridal chamber. Jonathan cordially responded to the crude jests, feigning the part of the anxious groom. Many lewd suggestions later, clad only in a nightshirt of purest white, he was led into a room, and left alone with Mary. At least, he assumed that the shivering thing under the pristine sheets was his new bride. He sat on the edge of the bed, unbuttoning the nightshirt.

“Mary, sit up. I wish to speak with you.” She sat up slowly, clutching the sheet to hide her bare flesh.

“You have heard things, about your new husband? Tell me of these things.” He pulled the nightshirt over his head, discarding it on the floor.

“Oh, please my Lord,” she begged. “I am afraid.”

“My name is Jonathan. And as you are my wife and about to carry my seed within your womb, you will address me by my name in private and answer my query. What have you heard?”

“I have heard dreadful things,” she whispered. “They say you traffic with the devil, and can see though your eyes are whited. They say you are a dread warlock, and will come to no goodly end. My sisters cried for me.”

Jonathan pulled the sheet from her, running his hands over her breasts. They were small and firm, and his body began to respond of its own volition.

“It is so, Mary. I can see you, but not with sight such as you have. I see your soul and your truth, your heat and your sorrow. You are fertile now, and I shall give you a child. You will raise it and never question me or interfere with my wishes.” He lowered himself onto her and into her, immune to her feeble struggles and prayers to Christ. He finished quickly, turning away and feeling ill within himself. In his head, his Daemon spoke a singsong chastisement for his wanton cruelty.

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“Have you then, Jonathan, son of Harrold of Wyche, trafficked with the Lord of Darkness?”

Jonathan sat on the rough wooden stool in front of the old priests. Goddess, they stank! Perhaps no more so than the others crowded into the dim chamber, but a stifled, perverse lust fed through years of pain tainted their sweat with a peculiar corruption.
He barely stopped himself from looking about the room. Blind men had no need of such actions, and little it mattered. There was only one person of interest within the chamber, and without eyes he could feel that smile upon his back, hear that laughter from within. The man was in peasant clothes, his patrician features altered to resemble those of the fearful nothings around him. He was the Baron du Roche, and a Sorcerer, as was Jonathan. But that was the extent of their similarity. In the twelve years since his Daemon had awakened, Jonathan had tried to do as little harm as possible with his Arts, as the Threefold Law dictated. The Baron, in contrast, seemed to thrive upon the suffering of others. So while he stood falsely accused of wickedness before the church, the true evil-doer sat in the crowd of on-lookers and gloated.

The two had met at court, each recognizing the other, both shining with their Daemons’ light. At first Jonathan had been filled with a fierce joy. At last another to study with, to share wisdom with! He invited the Baron and his retinue of handsome servants to journey to his lands, and the Baron had done so. He had enjoyed his meat and wine. Mary, his wife of eight years and the mother of his son, had been overwhelmed that a man of such import would grace their home. She was gone now, and Jonathan knew not where his son was. The poor girl had been driven to take her own life, leaving only a tearful servant to tell of her shame.

Jonathan pulled back from the stream of memory and became aware that the trial was over. He had not heard whether they had asked him to speak, but he felt sure within his heart that his words would have been useless. A burly guard hoisted him by the arm none too gently, deliberately tripping him over benches and chairs as they marched from the room. His ears burned with the derisive laughter of the crowd. They were hungry and eager for their show. Compared to the press of the unwashed masses, the solitude of his filthy damp cell was a welcome relief. He had fought the tears for the past few hours, refusing to weep for the entertainment of such a morbid audience. But now he sank down onto the soiled straw, his face buried in his hands, shoulders heaving with sobs. Gods, how could he have not seen? How could evil wear so fair a face?

The Baron had charmed and delighted. His servants, young men of splendid clothes and beautiful bodies had been the very essence of politeness. He had stayed up late the first nights, eagerly sharing with the older man the mysteries he had unraveled, quietly hoping that the Baron would help him divine more...

Jonathan squirmed for the hundredth time, and sighed. Mass had been plodding along for quite awhile, and the nasal toned priest was driving him slowly mad. To add insult to injury, the Abbey was cold, and even with his heaviest and best clothing donned for the King’s anniversary mass, he still felt stiff and miserable. Mary was dozing off beside him. The journey had been trying for her, but all nobles, regardless of their rank amidst the cock wars of court, were required to be present.

Driven by a desperate need to be anywhere but there, Jonathan turned with his inner eye and slowly, so as to not attract attention, scanned the packed Abbey. Immediately, two figures stood out from the herd of humanity shivering in that giant crypt. One stood by the door, and the other sat up front among the high ranked visitors from other courts. The one by the door would have stood out in any crowd. He was nearly six foot, and not far from fourteen stone. His face was rough and bearded, and his body showed as much boredom as Jonathan felt. But his spiritual glow truly stood out: a North Star in comparison to the tiny dots of far-flung light in the night sky. Jonathan’s
Daemon whispered to him, and he felt a chill. Unsure of what the man by the door was, he nevertheless felt it prudent to abstain from staring.

The gentleman up front was more intriguing. His light was dual, like his own, yet so intense and rich. Jonathan felt the first tremulous excitement hit him: could this be another? What then, would be etiquette? What did you say to another sorcerer? He had prayed to the Lady to guide his path away from his solitary studies, and perhaps now...

"Droll, isn't it?"

Jonathan jumped and twisted about in his seat, startling his wife awake.

"My Lord," she whispered and nervously touched his sleeve. "What passes with thee? Are ye unwell?"

"Silence, woman," he grumbled. "I am listening to his Grace."

Mary dropped her eyes, and her pale cheeks flushed. Jonathan ignored her, straining with his outer and inner ears to hear the voice speak again.

"Untrained, as well, I see. No, do not look at me. No one else can hear me. I am Henri du Roche, and you are Jonathan. After Mass, we shall have to meet in the flesh."

His heart racing, Jonathan tried in vain to compose his thoughts. The remainder of the service crept past, and finally ended. The party of Nobles moved through the streets of London to the Tower, where a masque was to be held in honor of his Highness.

At the ball, Mary quickly left his side to be with her sister, who had also purchased a nobleman for a mate. Jonathan wandered about, careful to stumble from time to time, and waited for the voice to manifest into flesh.

"Jonathan, my dear boy," someone called. "No, over here." An older friend of his father's moved towards him with exaggerated care. "This is the Baron du Roche, of the court of France."

"Baron," replied Jonathan, and bowed quite low as befitted greeting a noble of a higher station and of another court. The baron simply smiled, dismissed his host and took Jonathan by the arm.

"My friend from the Abbey. Well met."

"My Lord. There is so much I desire to ask you..." The Baron laughed, a rich and hearty sound.

"Slow down. We have all night. Come to my chambers: and we shall drink good French wine and speak a little of dark magicks."
The two Sorceers conversed through the night. Jonathan asking, the Baron somewhat answering. The thoughts were tangible, hanging in the air between them like jeweled droplets of wine. The Baron answered by not answering, painting half portraits of long gone masters, hinting at decades of life and war and lust. Jonathan had never met his like, and he drank in each word like a sacrament.

The celebration at court lasted a week, and Jonathan spent almost every waking moment with du Roche. They broke bread together, shared endless hours of rich discussion. One evening Jonathan even shared the Baron’s mistress and a young servant boy who traveled with him. He was a stranger to such pleasures, and was unsure as to his tastes. The boy was mute, by the Baron’s choice, the girl endlessly virgin. The morning after, du Roche asked to extend his stay at Jonathan’s home. At first nonplussed, the younger man quickly warmed to the idea. Mary was aghast: they were unprepared for a visitor of such greatness. But, as usual, her protests were overruled, and they started the journey home.

‘With bright eyes, the Baron offered to conduct a ritual for Jonathan. He asked for the aid of a young girl, and solitude to prepare. Several of Jonathan’s servants were of his coven, and when he asked, Isabella, only sixteen, shyly agreed. He permitted du Roche and Isabella to enter his inner sanctum, agreeing to return when one notch had burnt away on the hour candle. How he paced, burning with excitement! What would await him behind the door? What new realm of power would be opened to him?

Upon entering the room he was confronted with such a vision of Hell that in that very instant he knew in his soul that the Baron was an Infernal creature. The girl, Isabella, was still living; how, he knew not. Du Roche had driven nails through the soft flesh of her wrists and ankles, laying her out like the Christian god on his working table. Chalices had been set to capture the flowing blood, and as Jonathan entered the Baron finished spilling his seed into the largest of the cups, already brimming with Isabella’s life. His eyes were closed, and the dark spirits summoned by this grisly rite chuckled and caressed the girl’s dying flesh, taking small bites out of her tiny breasts.

Jonathan recoiled in horror, and steepled his fingers in warding. Gathering up the light and heat of his soul and fueled with his Daemon’s righteous horror, he lashed out into that darkness with the strength of his will to ward and cleanse his lands. Henri du Roche screamed, his back arching in agony. A flailing hand knocked over the chalice, sending the vile contents washing over the arcane markings drawn on the floor. Hissing, the vaporous spirits sank into the girl’s open wounds, and with his spirit sight, Jonathan witnessed them wrench her soul from her body and feast upon it. There would be no eternity for poor Isabella.

All that followed was a blur. He remembered, as though with another’s memories, a servant telling him of the death of the woman he barely knew: his wife. Then this cell, this farce, this thing the Church held up as justice.

At last he slept, cold and hungry. He dreamt of his son’s laughter and of the warmth of a spring day long ago. In that blessed place, his Daemon walked with him, hand and hand, through rich clover and purple heather.
"Shall you die on the morrow, sweet one of mine, or shall you live?"

"Have I any choice in this?" Jonathan asked, stopping to drink of a small stream.

"Are you not a sorcerer, and a man?" Its hand, four fingered and soft, traced patterns in the air, leaving illusions of light.
"Yes. So I shall live, and find my child."

"You should live and avenge your life. The Baron should not be; he has caused too much strife."

"Then it shall be so. Strengthen me, spirit. I need you now, more than ever before."

"And you shall have me now, as always before."

With the first graying of the sky, they came for him. He was dressed in a simple robe, and led out to a cart in front of the church. His nobility had kept much of the traditional pains and tortures at bay, but no rank and title protected him now. The town had come to see the witch be burned. He was battered with filth of every type, but Jonathan endeavored to stand upright and proud. From the forces around him, he drew the Power, nursing it to his bosom like a mother and babe. He could feel small charges course through his blood, and his spirit sight had never been so keen.

At last, at the center of town, they came to the platform piled high with faggots of wood. They pulled him off the cart and tied him to the stake. An ancient priest, toothless and senile, was giving him something resembling last rites. He smiled.

As the magistrate bent down with the torch to set the wood alight, Jonathan's ropes became dust. He forced his will outward, and the fire became the breath of a dragon, searing into the jeering mob. Men, women, and children alike exploded into roaring, twisting balls of purest flame. The fire spread with the swiftness of thought, and through the walls of intense heat walked Jonathan.

He passed the ragged outskirts of the town, deserted now as everyone had fled in terror. The death garment he pulled over his head, discarding it in the mud. First, the Baron. Then to find his child. Then... Paris, perhaps. Yes. Paris. A free man possessed of nothing, Jonathan walked quietly away.
I can do you blood and love without the rhetoric, and I can do you blood and rhetoric without the love and I can do all three concurrent or consecutive but I can’t do you love and rhetoric without the blood. Blood is compulsory — they’re all blood, you see.

— Tom Stoppard, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead

Children of the Old Gods

Folklore would presume that all witch-folk assume certain shapes: the gnarled hag, the vital temptress, the savage beast-man and the bitter warlock. While there are always those who fit the stereotype, of course, Witch and Pagan characters can verge wildly off the common path.

Paganism defines belief, not profession. In the days before Christ, nearly everyone was technically a Pagan, after all. Hence, a follower of the Old Gods could pursue any vocation she chose — assuming, of course, that she kept her true faith very carefully hidden. Still, many folk do define themselves by Pagan concepts. Some helpful character types appear below, and can provide inspiration for characters employed by players and Storytellers alike.

For Pagans who choose other roads, Infernalism: The Path of Screams, The Artisans Handbook and The Swashbucklers Handbook offer a selection of other appropriate templates for Pagan characters. Followers of the dark roads include the Black Knight, Blood-Pagan, Bon Vivant, Catacomb Rat, Devil’s Whore, Necromancer, Rake-Hell, Satanic Witch, Star-Ravaged Madman, Vision-Mocker, and Wildling. Among the artisans, several types — the Alchemist, Artist, Body-Forger, Geometrician and Weapons-
Crafter — tend toward Pagan beliefs and concepts. And in the courts, any character could be as easily Pagan as Christian, although various personages — the Strange Child, Aging Lord, Driven Usurper, Otherworldly Complicater, Court Magus, Tempestuous Rebel, Avenging Protector, Old Reprobate, Deadly Rake, Disguised Adventuress, Nurse, and Court Fool — seem drawn to Pagan ideals, if not beliefs.

Common heathen characters include...

**The Village Healer**

Your ancestors have always practiced the healing ways. From the time you were old enough to listen and understand, your parents and grandparents took you out through the woods and into the fields to harvest herbs. They taught you how to recognize the curative plants by sight and by name, later showing you how to liquefy, mix, dry and crush them to make salves, potions and other life-giving tinctures. As you grew into adulthood, you learned other, more practical arts of healing — bonesetting, midwifery, leeching, dressing wounds and preventing infection. Eventually your parents passed their work on to you, and since then you have built a strong bond with the people in your village. They trust you to soothe their aches and pains and cure their sickness and hurt.

Of course the old men of the Church and of the new Universities have said that what you do is against their law and against their god. They have laid claim to the healing arts, calling them “medicine” and limiting the practice to men of power and wealth, who of course kowtow to the Pope. Heathen healers, such as yourself, are labeled as shams and charlatans, and the Church hunts you down as witches and worshipers of devils. But Rome is of little concern to you or your village, and you highly doubt the men of Science will be visiting your tiny corner of the world any time soon. As it stands, you are the only thing standing between the health of your village and the spectres of disease and death. Given those choices, the risk of arrest, trial and perhaps death is a necessary one.

**Pagan Artist**

Art, it is said, is the lightning of the soul. You have been struck by this bolt so deeply that its kiss has burned your very essence. Although you were probably raised in a good Christian home, the constant dirge of mortality and sin rankled your wondering sensibilities. This world, your passions cried, was no dying sin-trap, but a glorious reflection of all Divinity. Denied your inspiration by the hanging god’s words, you sought out darker corners to find the source of your muse. Eventually, you found her, and she made you her own.

In this era, you probably discovered the once-lost treasures of Rome and Greece, their vivid frescoes and lifelike statues so far removed from the flat, crude works of Christian hands that you wanted to weep. Since this discovery, you have strained your fingers and your mind in search of that mirror of truth. Perhaps you’re good at your craft, maybe even a legend among the courts of Italy; or it could be that your skills are not yet equal to your vision. Either way, you came across your magickal Arts in the search for more obvious ones. If this inspiration damns you in the eyes of the Church’s god, then so be it! There’s no longer room in your soul for lies.

**Artisan-Magus**

When you were a child, your playground was the open field, the stream and the wood. But where other children played at tag and other games, you were ever...
daydreaming, creating great halls out of trees and a
King's bath out of lakes and rivers. Perhaps the artist
in you surfaced early with the coming of the invisible
friend that no one else could see, but who whispered to
you such fantasies of beauty and perfection they made
you weep. Soon you could conceive projects beyond
the ken of a normal artisan; where the simple man saw
a church, you saw lace arches reaching for the clouds
and windows of indescribable depth and color. Where
the ordinary artist painted a portrait, you imbued the
canvas with something of the sitter’s essence, perhaps
catching in subtle strokes the iniquities and virtues of
the woman or man. Every art is open to you; there
seems to be no skill or craft that you cannot master.
Great works progress quickly with these skills; but not
too quickly lest the eyes of the superstitious fall upon
you. For now, you work alone, or perhaps you have
gone through so many assistants that now none will
bear to labor beneath your exacting standards. But you
trust in the Old Ones and you know they will someday
guide you to a partner, a lover and an equal.

Wild Child

Once, in the dim dawn of memory, you had two
parents who loved you, but they died long ago and
their faces are lost in the mists of time. Now Father and
Mother are the Sun and the Earth, and from them you
get everything you need to live and survive. As a young
child you learned to run with the beasts of the forest.
From the raccoon you learned how to forage for food.
The great birds taught you how to build shelter.
Mother bruin showed you how to hunt, climb and
swim. And from the Fair Ones you learned of magick,
language and the world of men.

Now you are older and perhaps you have been
taken from the green-canopied home. To you, men are
strange and frightening creatures, nothing at all like
the beasts of the forest or the Fae or the Wolves. But
these people say you must learn to live like they do,
speak their strange language, and learn their customs.
Or maybe you have been left to live out in the wild,
mistaken for the Green Man or feared as a terrible
spirit. Either way, now your survival depends on your
ability to adapt to this new “forest” of civilization and
the curious inhabitants who dwell there.

Landsman

While some folk live off the sweat of other people,
you make a more honest living off the land. Not an
uncommon vocation, really — most people of this age
are farmers. But while most of your neighbors give
thanks to the Church of Christ, you acknowledge
older patrons, the fertility goddesses and horned gods
your forebears worshipped. For safety’s sake, you prob-
bly bend your knee at the Church’s altar; at home,
however, you give thanks to the patrons of the seasons
and pass on the Old Ways to your kin. As a result, your
fields grow a little faster, a little greener, a little
hardier. Maybe more rain seems to fall upon your land,
or perhaps the fruits, vegetables and grains harvested
are fatter, sweeter, and healthier. Whatever the case,
it is probably a good idea to share your good fortune
with others in your village, lest their jealousy lead
them to suspicions of witchcraft.

Muse

Like the artist, you glow with fiery inspiration.
However, thanks to a lack of skill or proper circum-
stance, you cannot shape your visions with common
tools. Hence, you use your body and mind as canvas,
and inspire those who can capture your vision to do so.

There’s so much more to what you do than simply
posing for an artist; like the Greek spirits before you,
you provide the fire of inspiration — the spark from
which art’s grand lightning is drawn. Men will die for
such a paramour... and sometimes do. You are not some
common girl, but a goddess incarnate. Without you,
paint is only color, and clay is but dead earth.

Heretical Cleric

What was once a beautiful path of peace and love
has become overgrown with the thorns of greed, envy
and pride. Perhaps there was a time when you believed
your Prayers to the Sagrada Familia were heard, but
now it seems that Christ and his Holy Mother are deaf
to your pleas. But there are whisperings amongst the
peasants you shepherd...tales of an older family, of a
great beneficent Goddess of bounty and her Lord, the
Huntsman. It would seem that they at least listen to the
cries of their earthly children who gather beneath the
cover of night to dance wildly 'round the fires of need.
WITCHES AND PAGANS

More than this, amongst the simple folk, there is no buying and selling of Divine love, no corrupt priests who preach the litany of abstention and purity while they themselves feast at the tables of lust and gluttony. Perhaps you are curious to see what truth and light might be gained from these Old Gods, even though you know that your own God would consider such thoughts a sin. Maybe you have accepted the Old Ones but work to continue their worship in the guise of saints and other “holy” men and women. The Church may one day arrest you as a heretic, but for now you will continue to feed your starved soul in the pure simplicity of the heathen craft.

Merits and Flaws

Upon her eyelids many Graces sate, Under the shadow of her even brows.

— Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queen

A Pagan magus, by definition, comes from a deeply magical background. More often than not, he has unusually close ties with the living world, and his magick often reflects those ties. Given the cultures and practices so entrenched in a Pagan wizard’s world, certain Merits and Flaws follow the heathen magus. Sometimes they even define him.

With a handful of exceptions, other characters may purchase the following Traits. These Traits are, however, especially appropriate for Pagan magicians, and have been based on common myth and folklore. For other appropriate Merits and Flaws, see the sidebar nearby.

Shimmering Aura (2 pt. Merit)

Your virtues literally shine. The life-forces within you are so potent that your soul-colors (aura) blaze with unusual intensity. Night-folk and wizards recognize you as a wellspring of vitality, and even mortals feel an undeniable stirring in your presence. Most times, this is a good thing — people tend to like you without knowing exactly why. Occasionally, though, you draw the interest of parasites and the ire of creatures that cannot abide a passionate soul.

Story-wise, a magus with this Merit boasts an unbridled zest for living. This doesn’t always translate to happiness; indeed, such people might be considered bi-polar in a later century — they tend to be tempestuous sorts, for good and ill. As a Merit, this is a lesser version of the Spark of Life Trait. Like the latter Merit, Shimmering Aura reflects the power of the life-force; unlike it, the Aura doesn’t grant healing powers or improved Life-Sphere magicks. Even so, this Merit grants a character a bit of a social boost (~1 to all Social difficulties; possibly ~2 with certain mystic types), and grants him a bright and vivid soul-shine. Those who can see auras see an extraordinary palate of colors; those who can’t simply recognize the strong passions brewing within the magus.

A magus with a Shimmering Aura often possesses a Daemon of unusual strength (+3) as well. See the rulebook, p. 270, for other details about soul-colors and the emotions behind them.

Wild Affinity (2 pt. Merit)

Renaissance people are aware of the natural world in ways that few 21st-century folk can imagine. This is doubly true of rural villagers, and triply true for magi who recognize divinity within Nature. As one such, you notice the ebb and flow of sounds, scents and sights — newly-bent grasses, animal tracks, birdsongs, and so forth — that fill the wilderness. In your native environment (woodlands, savanna, mountains, coast, etc.), you could shame an animal with your perceptions.

These perceptions, of course, do not work everywhere, nor are they truly magickal (although magick can enhance them). In game terms, your character is so accustomed to the various signals of her world that she lowers the difficulty of any roll that involves hunting, tracking, hiding, surviving, or noticing something unusual within her domain. As mentioned earlier, this “domain” must be tied to the mage’s background — a coastal Norse-kin would not be particularly attuned to the sensations of the Carpathian Mountains. The environment doesn’t have to be the land of that
Common Pagan Merits and Flaws

The rulebook and The Sorcerers Crusade Companion both feature a slew of other Merits and Flaws. Many of these come directly from Pagan folklore and pre-Christian cultures, and seem especially appropriate to Pagan magi:

**Appropriate Merits:** Acute Senses, Arcane Heritage, Bardic Gift, Beast Affinity (very common among rural witches), Code of Honor (common among Roman, Norse or Greek Pagans), Fae Blood, Faerie Affinity (both notable among Celts and Slavs), Mark of Favor, Mistguide (quite appropriate for Verbena travelers), Spark of Life, Traveler's Intuition, and True Faith (in Pagan deities).

**Appropriate Flaws:** Age (especially for hermits and witches), Bard’s Tongue (a common faerie curse), Beholden, Craven Image (a real drawback among Norse or Celtic folk!), Cursed, Dark Fate, Dark Secret (like, oh, being a witch in the first place!), Deformity (common among old crones and Slavic shamans), Echoes (very common, especially for witches), Enemy, Family Enmity, Geas (almost required for Celtic magi and heroes), Infamy (outlaw), Oathbreaker (very bad for Pagans!), Reaper’s Touch, Religious Aberrant, and Repulsive Practice (often involving blood magick, live sacrifices or chopped-up animal parts).

Fallen Pagans

As the “character types” section mentions, some Pagans cross the line into outright demon worship. Among these sordid individuals, certain Merits and Flaws from Infernalism: The Path of Screams seem frighteningly common:

**Merits:** Lord of Flies, Unshockable (after cutting a few blood-eagles, everything else seems pretty tame), Demonic Heritage (common among evil Slavs and Finns), and Unholy Aura.

**Flaws:** Repulsive to Animals (often a sign of evil in Pagan lore), Infernal Aura, Cannibal (Sawny Beane, for example), and Horrific (another common sign of taint — see below).

**Investments and Fomori Powers:** If traditional folklore is to be believed (and in this world, it is), then evil Pagans frequently manifest bizarre powers and monstrous deformities. The word “fomor,” so common in Werewolf chronicles, comes from Celtic mythology and describes the corrupt beings that warred with the Tuatha Dé Danann. Certainly, Tezghul’s horde contains many man-monsters whose bodies have been warped to match their spiritual corruption.

In game terms, such twisted things sport grotesque demonic Investments (see Infernalism, pps. 72-75), such as Armor, Beast Form, Claws and Horns, Goat Feet, Hellfire, Invulnerability, Pan-pipe Voice, Serpent Skin, Talons of the Plague-crow, Uncanny Beauty, and Wings. If you run a crossover game with Werewolf settings and rules, Pagan fomori are quite appropriate; see Infernalism, pps. 72 and 107-108 for details.
character’s birth, but it must be a setting she has spent a lot of time getting to know.

Normally, this Trait reduces the difficulty of related rolls by –2. For example, a woods-witch character in the Black Forest would subtract two from the difficulty of her Elusion, Hunting, Stealth, Survival, Tracking and Weather-Eye rolls if she possessed this Merit. At the Storyteller’s discretion, certain circumstances might make the task easier (a bleeding animal has limped along a path, –3 difficulty), while others (darkness, snow, etc.) might raise it to –1, or even nullify the Merit completely.

Note that this Merit can be combined with the Acute Senses Merit. A character with such keen perceptions would rival wild animals with her acuity, but rural folklore is full of people who are incredibly attuned to their surroundings.

**Elemental Affinity (4 pt. Merit)**

Fires flare or gutter with a wave of your hand. At a word, a light breeze can spin into a howling gale. Be it earth or air, fire or water, you seem to have a deep, inherent understanding of the most primal essence of an element. This grants you great insights into the nature and working of these things on Earth, and for the Awakened Witch, may even make manipulating the elements just that much easier.

A character with this Merit cannot botch on spells and workings using their element of choice. However, this Merit can only be taken once for one element.
Berserker (5 pt. Merit)

When in battle, your blood sings with the heat of war! Thor himself guides your weapon arm and floods your mind with a wild and brutal rage. Suddenly you are transformed from a simple fighter to a dread and mighty warrior of the gods.

When berserk, a character...
• adds two dots to his Strength Trait
• gets one additional Stamina dot
• gains three Bruised Health Levels
• and takes no wound penalties to Dice Pools until he reaches Wounded; thus, his wound penalties would be: Wounded –1, Mauled –1, Crippled –2, Incapacitated –2, and Dead.

These gains are temporary, and last only as long as the berserker state itself. While not in themselves magickal, these transformations are clearly inhuman, and they terrify anyone unfortunate enough to be around you when the fury takes you — including your companions.

Faerie Cursed (4 pt. Flaw)

You have enemies among the Fae. Did you violate a sacred ring? Or seduce a nereid’s lover away from her pool? Or cheat the faerie queen of her prize mortal? Or win a rich prize from a curmudgeonly sprite? Oh, there’s certainly a story in this sad fate, and as you’ve discovered that little drama will cost you dearly….

Immortal beings make very bad foes. Even if you remove yourself from the place where this enmity began, the faerie and her allies still follow you, dogging your steps with mischance and soiling your soul. Many legends speak of mortal wretches who had won the upper hand over one of the Fair Folk, only to have this victory breed a lifelong curse. This curse might take several forms, depending on the faerie(s) offended, the nature of the affront, and the whims of the Storyteller. Some faerie-foes suffer lingering sicknesses that no healer can cure; or fall prey to strange attacks that injure and embarrass but do not kill outright. Perhaps you simply have an aura of weirdness about you now, one that causes mortal men and beasts to shun your presence; or maybe you’ve been branded by an invisible fae-glyph that announces your crime to faerie allies. Once in a while, an angry faerie will actually face her rival in deadly combat, but most Fae Ones are too clever and subtle for that. To most Fae, a mortal humbled is better than a mortal slain.

Hence, this Flaw reflects a particularly nasty problem that is specifically “designed” to hinder your character without actually killing him. Whatever form it takes, this curse cannot be dispelled (magickally or otherwise) without somehow making amends with the vengeful faerie, killing her, or convincing some other powerful Fae being to undo the curse. Oh, there’s sure to be a story in that undertaking, too. Be sure to tell it around the fire if you survive the experience.

Storytellers Note: A Faerie Curse should be more creative than outright destructive. For examples of such plagues in action, see any good collection of faerie tales, legends or folklore. Note also that every Faerie Curse should have some “escape clause” — a task, quest or talisman that can revoke the faerie’s ire and set the mortal free. This clause, like the curse itself, should be custom-made to fit the character, his situation, and the needs of your chronicle. For details about the Fair Folk in this setting, see Crusade Lore, pps. 63-68.

Death-Haunted (1-5 pt. Flaw)

Although it rarely seems as horrific as the Christian Hell, the Underworld is a bleak fate for Pagan folk. Despite the common promise of reincarnation, most human souls are doomed to spend an agonizingly long period among the dust-eating shades of the wailing dead. Unless you’ve accomplished some truly heroic feats during your earthly life, the afterlife is...well, it’s really going to suck.

Even so, some witches and dare-hells venture past the gates of death. Those who do so, however, often return to the living world tainted with the dust of the Underworld (assuming, of course, that they return at all...). Such travelers live out the rest of their lives under a cloud of gloom. To them, every joy seems tainted, each breath a prelude to the cold end of mortality. Worse, the Underworld seems to cling to a traveler’s soul; people and animals grow uneasy in her presence, babies cry, and winds seem to blow just a little bit colder when she’s around.
In game terms, this Flaw reflects a close brush with the powers of Death itself. Perhaps the character is a necromancer, or has journeyed to the borders of the Underworld. Quite possibly, she's been cursed to wander in Death's shadow, even if she's had nothing to do with the Underworld at all. Whatever it was that brought this taint about, the Flaw affects the character's social graces, magick, and state of mind.

Like many other Flaws, the bonus points depend on the severity of the curse:

- For one point, you seem distant and melancholy even in the brightest moments. Your discourse tends toward morbid subjects (suffering, ghosts, etc.), and other people grow uncomfortable in your company.

- For two points, you feel a profound curiosity about — even an attraction toward — mortality. You frequently study dead things, and occasionally seek out executions, slaughterhouses, and so forth. Other folk avoid you, and many of the more intelligent animals flee when you approach.

- For three points, you make Hamlet seem like Falstaff. Your garb and weaponry evoke the Reaper, and your conversations are grim at best. Grave-dreams are your constant company, and other living beings bristle in your presence.

- For four points, the actual smell of death surrounds you. Perhaps your clothes are gritty with the dust of Ganzir, or the chill breeze of Helhiem follows you everywhere. Those who can see souls note that yours is rotting, surrounded by blackness and stinking of decay. Very few living things can tolerate your presence for long, and some (like were-creatures) may attack you on sight.

- For five points, you actually become a “minor death”; small things (flowers, insects, tiny animals and birds) sicken and die when you stand near, and others feel distinctly sick. Although you don’t actually carry a contagious disease, most people will assume you’re a plague-bearer and run like hell. More disturbingly, you enjoy seeing things suffer and die; sometimes, you even “help them along” a little. Such extreme corruption is more appropriate for wretched hags and half-mad hermits than for player-character heroes. Folklore is full of such tainted souls, but they’re usually villains or enigmatic fonts of information. Exceptions don’t tend to live very long.

Yes, the Flaw Death-Haunted is essentially identical to the Scourge effect Jhor (see the rulebook, p. 236). Both reflect the “aftertaste” of death, and both leave the same marks on a character. The primary differences between the two comes from storytelling, not game mechanics:

- Jhor reflects the Resonance of death-magick, while the Death-Haunted Flaw marks the mortal who has been cursed or tainted by other means. Thus, a character who has never used necromancy can still be soul-stained by a trip to Hades, or by the curse of a vengeful witch.

- Also, Jhor is a degenerative condition linked to Scourge backlashes; Death-Haunted is a Flaw, bought at a certain level in return for character points. It does not get worse, but cannot be lessened by purification unless the player buys the Flaw down and roleplays the breaking of the curse.

In all other respects, however, the game-effects of both death-taints are the same.

New Knowledges and Backgrounds

Many of the skills, talents and knowledges you will need to play a Witch of Pagan character have already been detailed in the rulebook and in the Sorcerers Crusade Companion (pgs. 112-120). In particular, Awareness, Animal Ken, Meditation, Survival, Enigmas, Lore, Occult, Empathy, Hunting, Tracking, Animal Speech, Beast Lore, Symbolism, and Weather Eye are all Traits you might want your character to
have. However, there are a few other Traits that heathen characters might find useful...

**Knowledges**

**Craft Lore**

The Christians have their Church history, but the Craft has its own deep and rich lore that reaches back to the birth of the Universal One and the beginning of all things. Passed down from generation to generation, usually through story, song and rhyme, this knowledge is fiercely guarded and hidden from those who would do harm to the children of the Goddess. However, those who command this secret history know much about the Craft and those who have worked, lived and died to preserve it.

- **Dabbler**: You know the cycle of the Wheel and the right songs to sing.
- **Student**: You have a teacher, and know your faith’s history for the past three generations.
- **Scholar**: The songs and rituals and rhymes are yours by rote.
- **Master**: You are familiar with the heroes and martyrs of old and will sit among them.
- **Virtuoso**: There are no tales unsung, no hidden mysteries of which you have not heard.

Possessed by: Witches, Pagans, occult scholars, keepers of the hearth

**Rituals**

Every spell, every working, every circle cast beneath the blue moonlight is a ritual of some kind. They can be as simple as snipping the air three times with scissors to cut off worrisome thoughts, or they can be long, detailed and elaborate, like a Beltane sabbat or making a poppet. A Witch with training in rituals understands that with magickal working, there is a balance of sound and silence, motion and stillness, action and patience. Over time, she can use that training to further her own works of will.

- **Dabbler**: You can dance the maypole without tripping.
- **Student**: You can lead the maypole dance, draw down the moon and assist at the great rites.
- **Scholar**: You understand the inner balance and workings of most rituals.
- **Master**: You inspire reverence in others, knowing what ritual or herb is right in every case.
- **Virtuoso**: You create your own rituals, in harmony with all things, high priest or priestess.

Possessed by: Crones and Witches, Pagans of old

**Pagan Culture**

Pagans have ways of identifying each other, symbols and signs, phrases that pass from one faithful soul to another. Theirs is a unique culture, an identity in the world of men that marks them as followers of the Old Ways while yet maintaining their secrecy beneath the watchful gaze of their Christian neighbors. To an ordinary man, a sprig of rue in the window means nothing, but to the Pagan it means safe haven and a kindred soul.

- **Dabbler**: You can recognize the obvious symbols and signs.
- **Student**: You have begun to explore the hidden meanings in words and gestures.
- **Scholar**: You have an eye to recognize kindred spirits, and know the correct response.
- **Master**: You have mastered the hidden language of yours and other traditions.
- **Virtuoso**: None could deceive you; the inner meanings are clear as Roman glass.

Possessed by: Witches, Pagans, some sorcerers and, on a darker note, some inquisitors.
New Background

Familiar

Shadow studied the window above, cocked his head to the left and then to the right. Poised to jump, he stood still as stone for a heavy moment, then he leaped through the air landing firmly on the sill. He looked behind to make sure that no one noticed. Of course, no one did. He was, after all, just a cat. Shifting his attention to the room inside, he studied the scene. There she lay, his benefactor, curled in the corner, unconscious and bleeding. They had beaten her badly, the holy men had. For a moment, he paused to wonder about that. How could someone claim himself holy and yet, at the same time, commit such acts of violence as he had seen delivered to her, his friend. He knew not the answer, just that he desperately needed to awaken her before dawn. That was when the holy men would return to finish the punishment. He braced himself against the inner wall searching for the spot to land, fell smoothly and quietly and rushed to her side.

The familiar is a spiritual essence in the body of an animal that has agreed to bond itself with the magus. Normally, the Witch will form a normal, natural bond with a particular animal, be that black cat, raven, hawk, rat, dog or wolf. Sometimes the spirit already resides in the body of the animal and is drawn to the willworker instinctively. Often this is because the spirit is linked to the Witch's daemon. In other cases, the magus herself decides to attract a familiar spirit and invite it to infuse her animal companion for a while. A gift is offered, usually involving an amount of quintessence comparable to the power and strength of the spirit the magus wishes to attract. Once the familiar has settled into its new body, the Witch must then strike a bargain with the familiar spirit or it could quickly lose its interest. The bargaining process can be anything from "I shall aid you in whatever quest you seek in this world." to "I shall provide you with enough rats to make you fat and lazy." The actual details of this bargain should be worked out between the player and the Storyteller. Once the bargain is struck the bond is complete, and the magus begins to reap the benefits from the union.

Each familiar has a rating of 1-5. This rating represents the spirit's power level and the amount of Quintessence it must receive from the magus each week to maintain the bond. The higher the rating, the stronger the familiar and thus the more expensive it is to maintain. Furthermore each familiar provides a variety of different benefits to determined by the player and Storyteller upon creation of the familiar.

Start by deciding wither you want to purchase the Familiar with background points or experience. For every point purchased, it will cost double that number of background points or four experience points. For example, a 4-point black cat familiar will cost eight background points or sixteen points of experience. Once the rating has been chosen it may not be raised.

The familiar receives one experience point at the end of each gaming session or whenever experience is issued. These points are exclusive to the familiar and reflect the growth in the bond between the magus and his animal companion. They can be used to increase the animal's natural attributes, abilities, willpower and health; or they can be stored as "luck" points and can add to the animal's ability to resist normal damage. If the familiar should be killed, the Witch suffers one level of unsoakable damage per power rating of the familiar. (i.e. if you have a 5-point familiar and it dies, you take five points of immediate aggravated damage.) This damage can be magically healed later...if the Witch survives.

Benefits

Familiars are expensive, but the benefits gained often far exceed the cost. The following are benefits that can be chosen when creating the familiar. Keep in mind that benefit points can also be used to increase a familiar's attributes, abilities, willpower and health.

Last Resort: This benefit is granted by all familiars. In times of great need the magus may use the willpower of the familiar to her own personal whim. He may also draw Quintessence equal to the power rating of the familiar. Warning: a time of need is just that, a time of dire straits where the magus may die or face capture, torture, etc. If the willworker abuses her familiar's gift then the familiar will break the bond leaving the magus stricken with the same effect as if the familiar had died (cost: 0 points).

Communication: Some benefactors and familiars are able to communicate with each other on a deeper level. This benefit allows the familiar and benefactor to understand and silently communicate with one another (cost: 1 point).

Eater of Scourge: This familiar feeds on Scourge instead of Quintessence and will absorb one point of Scourge equal to her power rating per week. The draw-
back is that the magus must cast some vulgar effects, with or without witnesses, in order to maintain the familiar's bond. The spirit must eat and will go to whatever lengths necessary to insures that it does. Note: any Scourge that is not absorbed when the familiar eats, remains with the character until it is burned off. The familiar will not eat it at a later date (cost: 2 points).

Fountain of information: The familiar possess countless amounts of knowledge and is willing to share with you. This benefit adds one die to any Knowledge roll made (cost: 3 points).

Watchful Eye: The familiar grants its benefactor "eyes in the back of her head". She sees what it sees. This can be combined with the next benefit (cost: 3 points).

See Thine Enemy: The Witch gains the ability to use the visionary capacity of her familiar animal as well as see what it sees. If her animal is a cat then she is able to see in the dark. If her animal is a hawk then she is able to see for miles and miles (cost: 4 points).

Pseudo-Background: The familiar may grant the magus one of the following backgrounds with a rating equal to the familiar's power rating; Arcane, Mentor, or Sanctum. The familiar must be within eyesight for this benefit to work. The background must be chosen when purchasing this benefit and may not be changed. However, more than one pseudo-background may be purchased (cost: 4 points).

Whispers in the Wind: The familiar allows the benefactor to utilize all of its senses, hear what it hears, smell what it smells etc…. This is extremely useful when trying to spy on the Church (cost: 5 points).

Pseudo-Attribute: With this benefit, the familiar grants the benefactor one die equal to the familiar's power rating in any chosen attribute chosen by the player. The familiar must be within eyesight for this benefit to work. The attribute must be chosen when purchasing this benefit and cannot be changed. However, more than one pseudo-attribute may be purchased (cost: 5 points).

Assume Form: The Witch is able to assume his familiar's animal form. This benefit allows the familiar to share all the joy of its experiences as an animal with its benefactor (cost: 10 points).

Walk with Me: The familiar grants the magus the ability to enter the Spirit Ways with it. This form of travel is only capable while the familiar is present. Furthermore, this does not prevent the magus from being assaulted or harmed while in the Spirit realm (cost: 10 points).

- Weak Familiar: The animal's standard attributes, plus three points in benefits.
- Average Familiar: The animal's standard attributes, plus six points in benefits.
- Strong Familiar: The animal's standard attributes, plus nine points in benefits.
- Exceptional Familiar: The animal's standard attributes, plus twelve points in benefits.
- Outstanding Familiar: The animal's standard attributes, plus fifteen points in benefits.

To raise the familiar's attributes, abilities, willpower, and health levels using benefit points:

Increasing attributes 3 for 1
Increasing abilities 1 for 2
Increasing willpower 1 for 1
Increasing health levels (considered bruised) 3 for 1

Experience Chart

Attributes: current X5
Abilities: current X2
Benefits: benefit cost X2
Willpower: current

The storyteller is advised to create the goals and agendas of the familiar. Furthermore the stats above reflect the animal not the spirit. If the storyteller wishes she may expand on the familiar to the end of her imagination.
Books

We’ve tried to include as much practical knowledge in this book as we possibly can. However, there are literally hundreds of books out there containing far more useful and interesting information than we can include here. Here’s a helpful and lengthy list of resources to help players and Storytellers breathe life into their characters and chronicles.

**Adler, Margot, Drawing Down the Moon — For those with an interest in the modern versions of Paganism, this essential text traces the neopagan movement from its elder roots to current incarnations.

Ahmed, Rollo, The Black Art — Yes, here it is again. For all its dated ideas and tortured prose, this is too good a source not acknowledge.

Aveni, Anthony, Behind the Crystal Ball: Magic and Science from Antiquity to the New Age — Somewhat dry, but quite interesting overview of the shared lineage of science and the occult.


Blum, Ralph, The Book of Runes — New Age bullshit for the most part, but worthwhile for its concise descriptions of common runes.

Bonwick, James, Irish Druids and Old Irish Religions

** Bradley, Marion Zimmer, The Mists of Avalon — A classic retelling of Arthurian myth from the feminine perspective. Highly recommended, both for its storytelling and for its vivid examples of magic, ritual and the living conditions of the Dark and Middle Ages.

* Constantine, Storm, Sea Dragon Heir — The first in an epic trilogy of Pagan magic and family intrigue. Highly recommended.

Costley, Sarah and Knightly, Charles, A Celtic Book of Days


Crichton, Michael, Eaters of the Dead/The 13th Warrior — A rousing Norse retelling of the Beowulf myth (from the perspective of an Arab traveler), this fun little book bursts with cultural and anthropological details of Norse lifestyles — good, bad and deeply, deeply ugly. Released under the latter title to cross-market with the film adaptation of the same name.

Cuhulain, Kerr, The Wiccan Warrior — Although it’s focused on the modern form of Paganism, this short yet entertaining book takes a much-needed hatchet to some oft-quoted “sacred truths” of the neo-pagan revival and its ties to the so-called “old religion.”

** Cunningham, Scott, Cunningham’s Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs — A vital reference for anyone who wants to employ herbal magick in her chronicle.

Daraul, Arkon, A History of Secret Societies — Somewhat hysterical (intentionally and otherwise) overview of (in)famous cults and their dirty doings. Weird, but entertaining.

Dunwich, Gerina, Wicca Craft and The Concise Lexicon of the Occult — One of the more respectable voices in neopaganism presents these concise and accessible overviews of modern Wicca and its magical-mystical heritage.

Eisenkraft-Palazzola, Lori, Witches: A Book of Magic and Wisdom — A bargain-edition reprint that features some really nice artwork, a helpful (if sketchy) overview of the Craft and its traditional practitioners, and some hilarious wishful thinking about the ancient Celts (“...An adventurous and attractive people...men were tall and fair-haired...women were quite lovely and statuesque, their beauty heightened with make-up, their long and wild hair smelling of earth and fresh air, flowers and herbs. All were slim and athletic, and averaged six feet tall...”).
* Euripides, The Trojan Women, Medea, The Madness of Heracles and Electra — The James Cameron of Greek drama proves that classical theatre is not nearly as boring as you might have imagined. Strong themes and powerful characters keep these Pagan plays gripping over 2000 years after they were written.

* Frazer, Sir James George, The Golden Bough — The classic source for the anthropological, cultural and psychological roots of Pagan and tribal magic and religion. Despite its age and occasional ethnocentrism, Sir James' work is far more accessible, entertaining and occasionally snide than you might expect from a cultural anthropology text.

Green, Miranda, The World of the Druids

Greene, Liz and Sharman-Burke, The Mythic Journey: The Meaning of Myth as a Guide for Life — Okay, yeah this New Age guide to “mythological self-awareness” is a bit hokey. Still, it offers some fairly decent retellings and interpretations of classical folklore, complete with some of the most beautiful artwork you'll find in any book on the market.

* Guiley, Rosemary Ellen, The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft — The essential reference for its subject; although a tad biased, this one's as accurate a source as a modern reader could wish for — and it's a fun read, too!


GURPS (Steve Jackson Games): Arabian Nights (by Phil Masters), Celtic Myth (by Ken and Jo Walton), Greece: The Age of Gods and Heroes (by Jon F. Zeigler), and Vikings (by Graeme Davis) — Three of the best GURPS supplements offer concise yet detailed background for Celtic, Greek and Middle Eastern characters and chronicles. Very highly recommended.

Howard, Michael, The Occult Conspiracy

** Jong, Erica and Smith, Joseph, Witches

Markale, Jean, The Celts, Women of the Celts

Masello, Robert, Raising Hell: A Concise History of the Black Arts and Those Who Dared to Practice Them

Pennick, Nigel, The Pagan Book of Days — Helpful for marking those important holidays and celebrations.

* Piggott, Stuart, The Druids — Cheesy cover aside, this book take a better-than-average look at the lost cult that bedeviled the Romans and left an impression that continues to echo long after their final songs have faded away. A vast improvement over the oceans
of New Age crap attributed to the Druids, Piggot’s book concentrates more on history than on fantasy — thank gods!

* Richards, Monica, *The Book of Annwyn*

** Shakespeare, *Macbeth, King Lear, A Midsummer Night’s Dream* — Can you say “Boil, boil, toil and trouble?”

* Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex and Antigone* — Masterpieces of ancient tragedy that offer a firsthand glimpse of the Pagan struggles between honor, passion and fate. Highly recommended.

Starhawk (Miriam Simos), *The Spiral Dance*

Stewart, R.J., *The Way of Merlin*

Stone, Merlin, *When God Was a Woman*


Tyson, Donald, *Ritual Magic*

Williams, Selma and Adelman, Pamela, *Riding the Nightmare: Women & Witchcraft from the Old World to Colonial Salem*

Films

Frankly, there aren’t many good movies that feature Pagan subjects. Most “witch flicks” subscribe to the same old bullshit, and substitute flat cliches for inspiration. Even so, a few films left their marks on the authors of this book:

* Braveheart — Mel and the boys are technically Christians, but this rousing classic captures the bloody defiance of *Sorcerers Crusade* Pagans beautifully.

Caligula — Yes, it’s crap, but this wallow through Rome’s underbelly offers glimpses of *World of Darkness* excess.

* The Devils — Ken Russel paints a painfully vivid picture of Renaissance witch-hunting. Based on true historical people and events.

The Friar and the Sorcerer — Slow but engrossing French rarity that pits a forest healer against a fanatical monk crusading against heresy. Recommended for its historical accuracy and spiritual depth.

* The Friar and the Sorcerer — Slow but engrossing French rarity that pits a forest healer against a fanatical monk crusading against heresy. Recommended for its historical accuracy and spiritual depth.

* The Masque of the Red Death — Vincent Price gobbles scenery as usual, but this flick is surprisingly effective even now.

* The Pit and the Pendulum — Cheesy in the extreme (and complete bullshit historically), but better than it has any right to be; credit Lance Hendrickson’s star turn as Torquamada.

Prospero’s Books — A carnal portrait of Pagan mysteries; painfully slow, but worth seeing.

* Snow White: A Tale of Terror — Fuck Disney! Sigourney Weaver stars as an evil stepmother in this dreamlike look at the darker side of fairy tales.

* The 13th Warrior — Cheesy? Yeah, but a lot of fun.

Twins of Evil — Hammer Films romp featuring two sisters, vampires, a mad witch-hunter, and loads of black magic. Wheee!


Witchcraft Through the Ages — If you can find it, this silent movie retains a creepy sort of power despite its antiquity and occasional goofiness.
Epilogue: Winter

The streets of Paris were quietest just before dawn came to lighten the night. Jonathan, needing little sleep this far into his life, would sit at the open window, awaiting his morning show.

First would come the baker’s wife, fussing with a handcart overly filled with delicious and still steaming bread. Inevitably, some of the rolls would start to fall, and Jonathan, with a whisper of his mind, would right the treats before they could touch the ground. The fat and merry peasant woman, thinking herself graced with great good fortune, would happily continue her trek to market.

Then the noisome children and their weary keeper would spill out onto the street from the merchant’s house down the way. Jonathan had watched three generations grow and wither within that house, and he felt an almost grandfatherly pride in the continued health and doings of the noisy tykes. After the children had sped around the corner, his excitement would grow. Yvonne would arrive soon with his breakfast and his wine. Right on time, his sharp ears heard her key turn in the lock, her light step on the narrow stairs.

Master? Are you awake?” she called. He felt a brief flare of irritation; the question was not needed. Today he was filled with joy, fire and impatience to live.

“Yes, yes, child. Please, set up the food; though I have little hunger.” He watched her move in the first rays of bright Parisian sun — her trim form, creamy skin and thick dark hair an eternal joy.

She looked up and caught his eyes, and smiled fearlessly into their sunken blind depths. She newly Awakened, a daughter of a rich merchant.

Each time she smiled at him, his old heart skipped a beat, then raced to catch up. He was in love — the first true love of his life. He felt trapped in a man’s body of eighty, while she was but seventeen.

“But today, if she said yes, he would be young again. He burned with such a need to walk, run, love and dance again.

Yvonne finished setting out the simple feast, and he took her by the wrist.

“Yvonne, girl. Please speak with me.” She looked puzzled, sitting on the other chair.

“If it concerns the mishap of the other day, I have worked very hard. The water boiled quite well, with no flame. and....”

“No dear one,” he said, and waved his hand. “Today, I have something for you. Go to the window seat, and please fetch the box that is lying there.” She stood and moved over to the window, looking curiously at the wooden box.

“What is it?”
He smiled. "Open it and see." Yvonne came back to the table and, after a second of hesitation, opened the box. She simply sat, staring within.

"You do not like it?" Jonathan asked, suddenly crestfallen.

"No… no. I know not what to say. It is… lovely." She pulled the heavy gold chain out, and examined the oval locket. "How does it open?"

"Use your gift, dear Yvonne, and open it yourself."

She closed her eyes, and he felt the flow of her magicks. He had used his own to construct the gift, and had cleverly sealed it. But by her will and hers alone would it open. At last, with a small click, the jeweled hinge popped, and out of the center sprang an image. It was himself as a young man, walking through the sacred grove. Holding his hand was Yvonne, and as the sparkling colors faded the young Jonathan turned to her, and mouthed the words, "I love you."

There was silence in the room. From outside the window the noisy rush of Parisian life flowed onwards, oblivious of the miniature drama taking place within. All of his soul waited for a word, a breath, her slightest gesture.

Yvonne laid the locket carefully back in the box, and took a deep breath, then another. She was weeping. Jonathan felt a deep sorrow that shook him to his shoes, and a sharp pain tore through his eyes. He knew he wept as well, but he no longer cared for the cloak of dignity that accompanied his years. He sobbed like a child, and then…the sensation her cool hands upon his face.

"Master… Jonathan, please do not. You cry tears of blood. Please, not for me - I am not worthy of such devotion." She leaned forward and gently kissed the tears from his cheeks, then his lips. The kiss, at first made of compassion and charity for pain, lengthened and warmed, till at last she pulled away, eyes shut.

"I love thee, with all my heart," whispered she.

The pattern of her words released the time-held spell. The force shook the building’s aged timbers and sent streamers of dust pouring out into the bright sunlight through the new cracks in the roof. Yvonne tumbled to the floor and cried out in fear. As the rumbling ceased, a familiar and yet strange voice bade her stand, and a strong hand took hers to raise her up. Amazed, she gaped at the young man in old man’s clothing who smiled brightly from behind blind eyes.

"Jonathan?" In answer, he simply held her. Within, he heard his Daemon whisper to him.

"At last you know your heart doth see. Your sight I now return to thee." The white eyes ran like spilt ink, the irises turning a summer sky blue. Yvonne’s face came into clarity for the first time, and after sixty-three years of darkness, Jonathan could think of no lovelier waking sight. Hand in hand, they walked out into the spring morning of Paris, to see what was to be seen.