Merinita Mysteries

by David Chart

The Mysteries

This presentation of Faerie Magic is a complete replacement for Faerie Magic as presented in *The Wizard's Grimoire, Revised Edition*. The spells listed there could be converted to standard Hermetic spells, without the magnitude adjustments, if you wanted to keep them in your saga while using these rules.

Outer Mystery: Faerie Magic

Faerie Magic is a +1 Virtue. A character cannot initiate this virtue, or start with it at character creation, unless she has been touched by the fay in some way. Anyone with a faerie virtue or flaw, including Faerie Enmity, qualifies. Lesser contact may also count. Having a faerie lover would be enough, and attending a number of faerie feasts most likely would as well. However, simply fighting a few faeries does not count. The troupe must make the final decision. A maga who is touched by the fay must still be initiated into this mystery in the usual way.

A maga with this virtue gets the full value of faerie auras as a bonus to her magic totals, and does not have to roll additional botch dice. In effect, she may treat faerie auras as if they were magic auras, for most purposes. If a maga with this virtue extracts vis from a faerie aura, the vis is faerie-touched. This does not usually have any game effects, but someone who drinks a longevity potion made with faerie-touched vis counts as faerie-touched, and thus may initiate this mystery.

Magi with this virtue have the Arcane Knowledge Faerie Magic, which starts at a value of one and may be increased like any other knowledge. This knowledge acts as an affinity with all spells invented using the Mysteries of Faerie Magic. It is not possible to learn the Inner Mysteries without a score of at least one in Faerie Magic.

Finally, the maga can use additional Ranges, Durations, and Targets, as follows. These categories may be used in spontaneous magic by magae with Faerie Magic, subject to the limitation that spontaneous magic may not have a duration greater than one month (*ArM4* page 69).

Road (Range): The maga may target anyone or anything on the same road or path as her. The identity of roads and paths is not always clear, and the troupe must decide if things are difficult. Two paths may cross each other, but two paths may not become one. In that case, either one path joins the second, or the junction is actually the joining of three paths. The maga need not be able to see her target, but she must know that it is there, unless the spell is an Intellego effect intended to find out if something is there.

People are only on a road if they are actually between the edges of the path, at least partially. Buildings are on a road if the primary access to the building is from that road. Plants and small objects must be between the edges of the path.

For purposes of spell level calculation, Road is the same level as Far.

Bargain (Duration): As in *WGRE*, page 137.

Fire (Duration): As in *WGRE*, page 137.

Until (Condition) (Duration): As in *WGRE*, page 137.

Year + 1 (Duration): As in *WGRE*, page 137.

Bloodline (Target): As in *WGRE*, page 137.

The Four Courts

Symbol: A quartered circle, sometimes with symbols of the four courts of faerie in the quarters.

Motto: *In Varietate Iunctio* (In diversity we are joined)

Patrons: The four great faerie monarchs of Bright Winter, Dark Winter, Dark Summer, and Bright Summer. Or, at least, very powerful fay who claim those roles.

House Affiliations: Almost entirely Merinita, with some Ex Miscellanea.

Origin Myth: When Quendalon entered Arcadia to seize the secrets of the fay, he learned the greatest secret of all: that humans all have the power to become faeries, and leave mortality behind them. He brought that knowledge back with him from Arcadia, and turned the House of Merinita towards the fay, so that magi would be ready for the greater secrets taught by this society.

Levels of Initiation: Members of the Four Courts take a feudal rank upon themselves. There is no central authority to hand them out, but members are expected to assume ranks commensurate with their level of power. The rank of King or Queen is reserved for those who have become faeries through initiation.

Goals and Practices: All magi have the power to leave mortality behind and join the fay, and this society guides magi along the path. As human beings are diverse, so are the members of this society. Nevertheless, members are required to accept one another — internecine squabbles are not tolerated. The society has no shared goals other than that of helping its members to reach faerie.

Any magus who has been touched by the fay may seek initiation into this society, and any maga who has been initiated may guide the initiation of another.

Virtues: Cyclic Magic (Var.), Faerie Magic (+1), Affinity with Faerie (+2), Arcadian Bridge (+2), Lesser Glamour (+3), Greater Glamour (+4), Quendalon's Gift (+5).

Affinity with Faerie: This affinity adds to all spells cast on faeries or faerie items. It does not add to spells cast in a faerie aura if they are cast on non-faerie things. Characters with faerie blood count as faeries; merely being touched by the fay does not qualify.

Preferred Ordeals: Good Works, Initiation Quest, Prohibition, Sacrifice of Power (flaws relating to iron or the Dominion, Cyclic Magic)
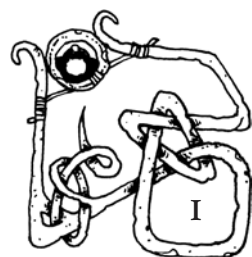
Stories for Elder Magi

by Timothy Ferguson

One day, your magi will become so powerful that, together, no mundane force can stand against them. Many sagas collapse at this point, because its difficult to coax such powerful characters out of their laboratories. Drama requires conflict, and combat is always the easiest style of conflict to write sagas around, but if your magi have reached this exalted age, you need to get sneaky, and design conflict that isn't simple hostility over resources.

You need to strike at the character's ego.

Legacy

Although their motivations vary, it is a rare elder who does not dream of an accomplishment which, deliberately or co-incidentally, will illuminate their name in the history of the Order. Legacies form the basis of extended story arcs, as the magus first seeks the means, then the realisation of their dream. Sometimes an entire covenant of Elders will co-operate to produce their opus, but it's not unusual for a group to assist each other in a basketful of projects, each of which has significance to a particular magus.

Parents and Children

Some magi seek atavistic immortality by training apprentices. These subunits with a house are called lineages. Most are simply based on filial interest and affection, but some contain formal structures that emphasise the political position of a chosen member. Often the favoured member is the senior most, but sometimes the one most similar to the founder, or the founder's ideal, as measured by traditional tests, is preferred. The founder of a lineage is often substantially weaker than other magicians of similar age, because they invest so much of their time and other resources into the training of their children. Simultaneously, these children are usually more powerful than other magi of equivalent age.

Developing a lineage is a difficult process, for several reasons. The magus needs to locate suitable children for training. These children need to survive not only apprenticeship but also the ardours of early Hermetic life, including victimisation by the master's powerful enemies. These filii must then be prevented from seeking a personal vision, incompatible with the founder's. Finally, a system of succession needs to be developed which neither incites intrafamilial hatred nor encourages patricide.

Context Problems

Context problems, to borrow a term from Iain M. Banks, are those that arise from outside the paradigm, or worldview, of the magi. They are difficult to counter because they include elements which make no sense to the magi, or which exceed the experience of the Order. Magi who resolve Context Problems are the heroes in the history of the Order, but this is a legacy for which it is difficult to prepare. Those defending the Order from unknown threats are, necessarily, reactive.

Forward thinking, or morbid, magi have identified a handful of long-term context problems which the Order might be facing. None have demonstrated that these are brewing crises, and many, more optimistic, magi feel that specific, preventative preparation in one or more of these fields is a waste of resources. In those few cases where consensus is broad, no magus has yet made the revolutionary leap of intuition that demonstrates a solution.

The Old Ones

Many magi believe that they are descended from an ancient race that is gone for now, but not forever. They see not only threats, but also opportunities, in seeking out, and possibly awakening, these antediluvian progenitors. This legend becomes a solid context problem when someone finds a clue or hint that makes the return of the Old Ones a less than theoretical scenario. Characters overcome this context problem by working out what the Old Ones are, how they are related to Hermetic magi, and what the effect of their return will be. They need then to resolve the crisis by either releasing or containing these enigmatic ancients.

Cestus Numina

Certain Hermetic magi believe the fae will eventually be so disturbed by the predations of their sodales as to strike back against the Order. Characters can overcome this threat in two ways. The first is to so thoroughly understand the fae that they become slaves to Hermetic power, much as the elements are. The second is to successfully promulgate a new Hermetic culture that irritates the faeries less. A third option is to ally with the faeries and turn renegade.

The Return of the Druids

It can be safely assumed that were the followers of Diedne to return in belligerent frame of mind, they would strike without warning, and with overwhelming force. Presumably they'd disguise the motive for, and method of, their attack. This would give them the initiative in their Crusade against the other Houses, until someone contextualised them.

A subtler context problem lurks within the Diedne threat. Most of those concerned about their return believe that the Order, once it had recovered from the first wave of assaults, would overcome the Deidne using the same methods employed during the Schism War. This is an incorrect and dangerous assumption. The Mercurial wizards who formed the core of the Flambeau forces were destroyed in the final major battle and their descendants may not be capable of performing the conflagourous rituals that were essential for victory. Also, were the Druids to return, it would demonstrate that the methods used during the Schism War did not effectively exterminate the foe and at best could purchase a second, similarly limited, victory.

Covenants as Characters

by Erik Dahl

The covenant in **Ars Magica** can be seen as more than a setting, since it is the common link to all characters in a saga. Indeed, it might be seen as a character in and of itself: a collection of stats and traits that helps to define all those who live within it, played as a whole by the entire troupe, much like a grog that always interacts with the characters.

It seems most appropriate to me that as a covenant has elements of character about it, it should be designed in a way that more closely resembles a character. Perhaps the rules for designing a covenant could be more similar to the rules for designing a character, and perhaps there is no need to complicate the process by introducing different kinds of points and traits.

Since the first read, the canonical rules for designing covenants have felt extremely complicated to me, and yet still oddly lacking in detail. Thus, I have designed new rules for designing and running covenants. They attempt to simplify the existing rules, but also to develop them more deeply, to allow for richer descriptions and a greater feel for the mythic qualities of a covenant.

I have condensed the eight Characteristics and their respective traits into values that represent more general aspects of the covenant, in the spirit of characters' Characteristics. I have also designed a method by which a covenant can grow and change over time without modifying these standards, using Virtues and Flaws and a flexible scale for measuring the Seasonal model.

Covenant Virtues and Flaws

Characteristics can be used to give a general feel for the flavor of a covenant. Especially when describing a distant covenant or a place the characters are visiting, only general indicators are necessary to understand how it compares. In more detailed situations, however, Covenant Virtues and Flaws can provide atmosphere and allow for unique settings that break the mold, so to speak. Like a character's Virtues and Flaws, these traits provide depth to the covenant, and balance themselves out to create a well-rounded setting.

Over time, a covenant will improve or decay, gaining or losing different advantages and disadvantages. Covenant Virtues and Flaws can be used to represent this cycle. While the ideal covenant would have a balanced number of each, through play these totals may change significantly, resulting in a covenant with few (if any) Flaws, or even one with no Virtues to speak of.

Virtues and Flaws may be gained and lost using a method similar to the way characters gain and lose Virtues and Flaws. Many troupes allow significant story events to achieve this end, or use rituals and ordeals similar to those described in *The Mysteries*.

Here are a number of ideas for Covenant Virtues and Flaws that you might use to uniquely describe your covenant, but you are also encouraged to invent your own. Generally speaking, the value of a Virtue or Flaw is equal to a number of pyramid points, which can then be applied to the value of one of the Characteristics, or compared to other Virtues to determine how much it would help a given character living in the covenant. For example, a holy relic belonging to the covenant would probably be a +3 Virtue, since its value is similar to the character Virtue of the same name. If the relic generated a yearly income, due to pilgrimages and the like, that effect might also be described with an Increased (Income) Virtue.

Variable Virtues

Varying Aura (positive): Your covenant's aura varies in strength, radiating out from a central feature of the covenant. In that specific area, the size of a point of Extent, the aura is increased by one, though this Virtue can be stacked to represent several different rooms or a greater effect.

+2 Virtues

Caves: The covenant is built into the earth or the side of a mountain with an impressive array of tunnels or caves. This Virtue gives the covenant four additional points of Extent, but reduces its Defenses by one.

-3 Flaws

Discredited Covenant: The quaesitores suspect or have proven that your covenant has participated in terrible crimes in the past, and thus they regard its members with a suspicious eye. You have a bad reputation of the appropriate type among quasitores, at level 4, and have to watch your step or suffer immediate legal action.