

SORCERERTM

REVISED EDITION



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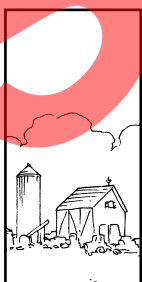
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PRELUDE: GREEN FOR THE EARTH



Jeb Moran stared at the earth beneath his feet. The ground was dry and dusty; most of the grass had already died. Jeb's skin was dry and dusty too — he refused to use the rose-scented moisturizer his wife Mandy bought at the grocery, so cracks split the calluses on his fingertips open. Short, gray hair stuck to his forehead in the heat. "So you see," he said, "if this crop dies, we'll lose the house." His voice

cracked. "Mandy's relatives hate me, so we'll have no place to go." He kept his eyes on the ground.

Bruce Clark nodded, his eyes on the sky. The sky was clear and achingly blue, and the weather report that morning had only predicted more of the same. His own dark hair stuck up into the air in places where he'd run his hands through it, and rivulets of sweat beaded along his jaw-line. He was a big man, and he moved slowly, thoughtfully. He nodded. "That would be a right shame, it would." He chose

his words carefully — he knew how difficult it had been for Jeb to come to him, and he didn't want to hurt the man's pride. "I'd hate to lose you as neighbors. I'm sure there'll be some rain soon."

Jeb glanced up at him sharply. "You're sure?"

"As sure as I can be." Bruce smiled. "Now why don't you go home. Weather like this is nothing to be running around in; you heard the advisory on the radio. I'll see you tomorrow."

Jeb relaxed visibly. "I'll do that."

Bruce nodded and smiled.

...

"But sweetheart, are you sure this is such a good idea?" Emily's brow furrowed right up the middle, pointing straight to the part in her red hair. "Your father said that big things like rainstorms were only for emergencies...."

Bruce put his hands on his wife's arms and smiled down into her warm brown eyes. "I can't let Jeb down, you know that. Now please call my sister and tell her to come home for dinner tonight."

Emily pulled her flower-printed calendar and address book from the hand-carved bookcase next to the dining room table. She flipped through it until she found the right page and picked up the phone.

Bruce kissed his wife on the forehead. "Thank you."

Emily smoothed one sweaty hand against her yellow dress. "Well, like you said, we can't let Jeb down." She smiled.

...

Dinner had come to an end. Emily and Susan cleared away the last of the dishes; Emily had brought out the good blue tablecloth for the occasion, and Susan had made her famous maple-apple pie. Everyone was stuffed and happy.

Emily shooed Anne, her 12-year-old daughter, into the kitchen. "Take care of dishes; we need to handle the crops."

"Can't I help? I'm old enough now. I've been doing my studies." Anne put her hands on her jeans-clad hips.

"Don't argue with me." Emily glared at Anne, and Anne turned to the kitchen with a roll of her eyes.

Bruce watched her go and shrugged. "We should initiate her soon. She is old enough."

"Oh, don't you let her hear you, or she won't give up nearly so easily next time," Emily teased him.

...

By the light of a flashlight, Bruce took a sturdy hunting knife from the trunk and a grass-green beeswax candle. He stuffed the knife under his arm, while he pulled out a cheap plastic lighter and lit the wick. "Green for the earth," he

whispered as he put the lighter in his pocket and turned off the flashlight. Susan had taken out another knife, and both of the women lit their candles, whispering the same benediction.

Bruce held his candle high, as he drew a circle around them in the dirt with his knife — he tried to relax and hold his concentration as he felt the hot wax drip onto his fingers. He put the candle down on a rock near the center of the circle and lifted an old, leather-bound book from the trunk. He read rough, guttural words from its pages — no one knew what the words meant, but they'd been taught to pronounce the syllables long ago. Not knowing what he said only heightened the sense that something special was about to happen. He felt the quickening of his heartbeat, at once familiar and exciting. He passed the book to Emily, and each family member in turn read from its pages.

Emily put her candle on the ground and stepped to the center of the circle. She closed her eyes and reached out with her hands and her mind. She felt a spark as her awareness touched the sky, and she gasped for breath. "As our fathers and mothers before us have always done, we call to the earth and beg a reply. Bring rain for the crops, or we shall die." In the distance, a faint peal of thunder sounded.

Susan looked up into the night sky at the sound of thunder and shuddered — she'd done things like this for years, but it never failed to bring a flush to her cheeks. She brought her attention back to the circle and took her place in the center. "In return, we give of ourselves. We nourish the earth, so that it might nourish us in return." She ran her knife along the inside of her left arm and stiffened at the pain. Her breath hissed as she squeezed her arm so the blood would drip onto the dirt and the yellowed grass. Another peal of thunder sounded, a little closer this time. A cool breeze cut through the heat.

Bruce closed the book and put it back in the trunk. The knives joined it, and the extinguished candles. The flashlight shone out over the field once again. Emily laughed as she shut her eyes and turned her face up to the breeze. She could already feel the moisture in it, the promise of rain.

"It feels incredible," she said.

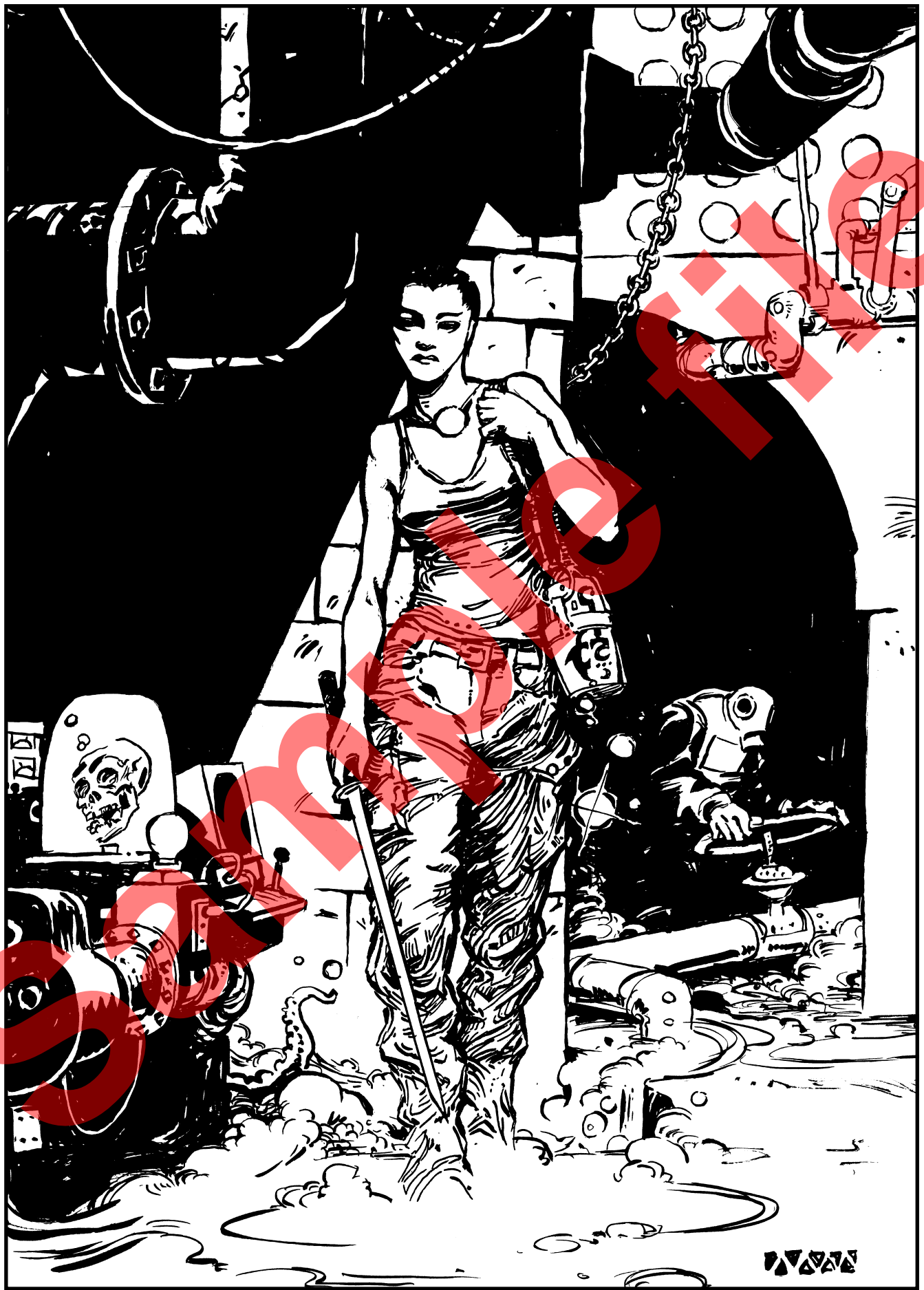
"The magic or the coming rain?" her husband asked with a smile as he wrapped his arms around her from behind. They heard Susan gather up the last contents of the trunk and carry it back toward the farmhouse.

"Both." She pressed her hands into his and stood for a long time, until a drop of rain fell onto her face, landing in the corner of her closed eye.

She shivered.

Nothing had ever felt so perfect in the entire world.





INTRODUCION



Welcome to the newly revised edition of **Sorcerer**, the book of Numina for **Mage: The Ascension**. While **Mage** deals with those phenomenal humans who've Awakened to the power to change reality, **Sorcerer** details those who have discovered a more limited path to power. Still, they're nothing to sneeze at — a sorcerer, though perhaps not as flexible, is just as much a dweller in the occult world as any mage.

A sorcerer leads a sort of half-Awakened life, right on the cusp of the magical world but without the breadth and flexibility of a full Awakened mage. Grasping at the mythic threads held in legend and history, some resurrect ancient magics from ages long ago. Others push themselves to extraordinary understanding of science or spirituality and develop the capacity to exceed normal people in phenomenal ways. One can hardly call sorcerers "limited" — they have far more wisdom, and far more concomitant peril, than most mundane humans. While Awakened mages are the trailblazers who forge new ways, the sorcerers are those humans who dare to walk those paths opened by the Awakened instead of complacently waiting for the world to come to them.

Herein, you'll find newly updated rules for sorcerers, their Paths, their societies and practices, plus a complete set of psychic Numina, new guidelines for storytelling and character creation rules for the numinous mortals of **Mage**. So, without further ado...

Chapter One: The Twilight World introduces the world from the point of view of a sorcerer.

Chapter Two: Sorcerous Societies looks into the many groups of sorcerers, how they operate, who they recruit and what they believe. Here you'll also discover the role of sorcerers in the various Traditions and Conventions.

Chapter Three: Character Creation examines the creation rules for numinous mortals, including their special Merits, Abilities and powers.

Chapter Four: Paths and Rituals covers all manner of magical abilities that sorcerers practice, from alchemy to techno-sorcery.

Chapter Five: Psychic Phenomena unearths the strange mental powers possessed by a blessed (or cursed?) few.

Chapter Six: Storytelling advises on how to include sorcerers in games, how to integrate sorcery with the World of Darkness and ways to make sure that sorcerers don't take second seat to more flexible mages.



CHAPTER ONE: THE TWILIGHT WORLD



I know what my sisters do not know. I have seen what my brothers have not seen. And I can never tell them, for it would break our circle. All I can do is protect them from what they do not know.

– Caroline Goldberg, Newburg Night Cabal, at age 26

Who Are We?

My name is Caroline, and I have lived for more than 70 years; I spent the last 30 of those chronicling the details of cabals from Maine to Zimbabwe and Cambodia to Alaska. In those years, I have seen things that do not exist, and I have done things that cannot be done. Yet, I am nothing compared to the monsters that walk in the shadows. I am a “just,” like normal humans are “just” – at least, to those others. Among my own people, I am respected for my knowledge and wisdom, looked up to for the powers I have gained. Some would say that I have achieved my hopes and dreams – far more so, at least, than most people ever have the chance to.

We sorcerers are the in-betweens – we walk the twilight world. We are human, entirely mortal. No spirits ride our backs. We have a pulse and warm blood. And yet we can do things no human should do. We are a contradiction

of terms, and that makes us outsiders to everyone. Those who know of us fear us, respect us, worship us — or think we're kind of pathetic. We are religious leaders, professors, businessmen, farmers and housewives, and we are pawns, fodder for other people's wars and sometime-companions to those other creatures. Perhaps you can see now why we set such stock in secrecy.

What is it like to be one of us? It's heartbreaking. Every child dreams of magic. Everyone wishes they had powers beyond the norm. Who hasn't daydreamed of calling forth fire, summoning a spirit or changing their shape? Who hasn't longed for the things our parents told us weren't true? Who hasn't wished, just for a moment, for even the dark things to be real — just so long as it meant that magic was real, too? To be a sorcerer is to know these things, to understand them, to feel the rush of them in your belly — to gasp at the thrill along your spine when you create that first spark, when you summon that first breeze to caress your palm. We fight hard for every understanding we reach, and this only makes the knowledge that much more exciting when we uncover it.

Few mention this to their students along with the more traditional warnings, but sorcery is addictive. Once you see someone do something that cannot be done — once you taste real magic — you can never go back. This addiction bites both ways, of course. It gives us the enthusiasm and motivation we need for the endless studying and practice, the incredible effort of will that is sorcery. Yet, it also leads some of us to make bargains with devils, demons and far stranger things in the rush to learn more.

For those very few of us who have seen the other things that walk the earth, it bites even deeper. Imagine if you will that you've just gotten your first car, after working for years to pay for it. You're incredibly excited that you can drive now, you can go wherever you want. You're free. Then you discover one day that there are people out there who can fly. Suddenly your car doesn't look so amazing any more. It's slow and clunky. But you will never be able to fly — it's impossible for you. And you can never return to your innocent state, to your enthusiasm and your freedom. You are forever defined by the boundaries of your now much-smaller car.

I suppose I am a little bitter. Pay me no mind, please.

I think the ritual of sorcery attracts as many people as the power. People have an instinctive love of ritual — it makes us belong. I believe this is the secret behind the great power religion has over the masses. Even some mental illnesses breed ritual — the motions an obsessive-compulsive performs make her feel better; she becomes stressed if she is prevented from performing them. Whispered prayer calms us. Prescribed motion settles us. Ritual focuses our will, helps us to control our bodies and centers our minds. Many meditations involve breathing exercises or precise bodily motion (such as tai chi, which to some people is a meditation-in-motion) — another type of ritual. Those people who lead us in ritual, such as priests, hold great sway over our emotional and spiritual lives. People give money and time to churches in return for the comfort of ritual. They turn to religion — to ritual — whenever they are most in need, when they have lost loved ones, jobs and homes.

I took an evening psychology class some few years ago, and the lecturer said, "neurosis is a private religion; religion is a public neurosis." Sorcery is both our religion and our neurosis. It is our comfort and our obsession, our solace and psychosis. It may help us to put our lives back together after some tragedy, or it may send us over the edge. It gives us something to believe in and sets us forever apart from our fellow man. It is the between-place, the sharp divide, the fine line and the twilight path. We stand between the mortals and the terror that hunts the night, and we may give aid in the form of potions, devices, voodoo and spells, or we may apprentice

ourselves to those same terrors in the hopes of gaining greater power. We may not be at the top of the food chain, but we do matter. Don't ever let bitter old people like me convince you otherwise.

Companions

What most people call a cabal, I call a church, but I'll stick to the usual terminology so as to avoid confusing you. As I said, I see no real difference between ritual and religion, so my ritual is my religion. Those who try to convince themselves that their cabal does not matter to them or that their cabal is only a collection of colleagues are lying to themselves. You cannot put such an emotional stake into your work and claim that those you work with mean nothing to you — and you cannot perform magic without emotion. There comes a point when the work and those performing it become one and the same, when the magic and the man become inseparable. That is the act of will.

Cabals soothe and welcome. They give us a place to be who we are. They help us to reach our full potential. Or they can pressure us into doing things we aren't ready for, keep all of their secrets from us and lead us along the darkest of roads with bright promises and lies. I've known cabals that make demons look slack, they're so adept at sucking people down the wrong path. Cabals can be about the search for knowledge, companionship, simple practicality, religious zealotry or several things at once.

Never make the mistake of believing that cabals are simple social clubs. Your cabal is your responsibility. You have responsibilities to your cabal — these differ from cabal to cabal — and you have responsibilities with respect to your cabal. This includes the need to take note if your cabal appears to be headed down the wrong path and to either help to turn them back if possible or turn them over to someone better able to handle the situation if you cannot. Worst case, if there is no one better able to handle the situation — and there rarely is — it's your responsibility to run away. You're just as guilty if you stand by and watch atrocities being committed as if you'd committed them yourself.

Membership in a cabal may come with resources and responsibilities. It often comes with a cause, as well. If you're lucky, you may be filled with the rightness of your cause, uplifted and inspired. If you aren't lucky, you'll find yourself wondering what your cabal is really up to and why they seem to be hiding things from you. You may be pulled into a search for forbidden knowledge, an exploration of self-discovery — anything from devilry to divinity and everything in-between. Cabals are essential — it's almost impossible to learn what you really need to know without one. But cabals are also dangerous. They concentrate all the human frailties of their members in one direction — sorcery.

I'll give you a few examples of cabals I've seen and heard about; I suspect it will be far more effective than any pontificating I could do.

A group of students at the college I went to sat around doing drugs and having visions. They seemed pretty harmless. I wasn't into the drug thing, and at the time, I didn't even realize they were anything other than lazy students — it wasn't until later that I could look back and recognize the signs. They sucked people in, though, and those people lost months and years to the drugs and visions. Some of them went crazy from what they saw and ended up on psych wards. One killed himself; I still don't know why he did it. Others just lost time that they could have spent learning other magics. I don't want you to think that they were bad — some of them went on to do great things, and one or two developed true power in those smoky rooms. They just weren't for me.