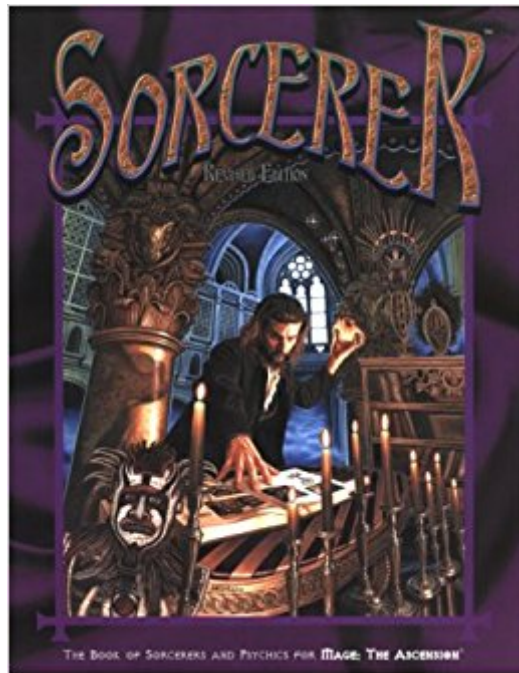


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Sorcerer Revised Edition *OP (Mage: The Ascension)



Synopsis

Supplement for Mage: the Ascension.

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Customer Reviews

Supplement for Mage: the Ascension.

This book covers the so-called Hedge Wizards, or sorcerers, as opposed to those who practice "True" magic. Although their magic is not as flexible or open-ended as that of "true" magic, it can be just as potent and is much more focused. Plus it doesn't have Paradox! The book opens with a general intro fiction about a farmer calling down rain to end a drought, and then moves on to a typical introduction and terminology. Surprisingly, the first chapter (written in-character by an acolyte) delves into what "hedge magic" is, and the various hows and whys that accompany it. This then quickly moves to the next chapter, which points out very clearly that the distinctions between "hedge magic" and "true magic" are pretty much pointless, as both are magic and only a handful of scholarly types even make the distinction. We then get a look at how Sorcerers fit into all of the Traditions, from Akashic martial artists to Dreamspeaker shaman to Euthanatos necromancers to Verbena witches, often because of cultural affiliations. They exist amongst the Hollow Ones and Orphans too, and even the Technocracy has those who specialize in "advanced" chemistry, engineering or other such sciences. From there we are given a look at "independant" societies as well, the ancient Egyptian cults of Isis and Osiris, the Bata'a voudonists and santeros (who maintain

a separate identity within the Dreamspeakers), the anti-Semitic infernalists of the Nebuu-Afef, the near marauders of the Silver Portal, the UFO conspiracists of the Star Council and more. The smaller factions are also looked at, and the reasons for their decline (the African Uzoma and Mayan Balamob joining the Dreamspeakers, for instance, the Irish Fenian and Mormon Nephites joining the Celestial Chorus and the dark pagan Asatru Futhark being destroyed). The next chapter gives the general Character Creation guidelines, along with new rules, Backgrounds, Traits and Merits/Flaws specific to Sorcerers. Most of the stuff is quite appropriate too. This is followed by a look at roughly 15 Paths, like shapeshifting, teleportation, alchemy, summoning, weather control, elemental control, divinations, shadow control, alchemy and so forth. Each path includes a number of rituals and even variations on paths (like necromancy, high-tech chemistry and so forth). In the next chapter we are given a look at another alternative: psychics, along with rules for psychic powers as magic, chi-manipulation or whatever (this option is especially appropriate for Akashics, Dreamspeakers or Ecstatics). Like with hedge magic, some 20 Psychic Powers and variations are given, like telepathy, mind shielding, clairvoyance, pyrokenesis, psychic vampirism, animal psi, astral travel, biocontrol and the like. There's also a couple psychic fellowships given, though none are particularly large or powerful. The next chapter, though, is quite useful, covering guidelines for running a sorcerer/psychic chronicle. Themes, mood and concepts (like seeker of forbidden secrets of chem student) are given, along with rules and options for hedge magic and other supernaturals (as well as half-supernaturals like ghouls, kinfolk, kinian, etc). This covers both learning it and being affected by it. There's also an examination of the limits of hedge magic, and rules for making new Paths. All in all, this was a very useful section, of a very useful book. Go check it out if you enjoy Mage: the Ascension or even just want to add a darker, supernatural element to other World of Darkness games.

A friend of mine interned down at White Wolf Games during the Phil Brucato era. Brucato was working on the original WoD: Sorcerer, and per my friend, he referred to it as the "Here It Is, Now Shut the F^k Up" book. I bring this up to illustrate a particular point about the original World of Darkness setting (aka the oWoD): there was a demand by players to play humans who could wield magic. However, many of those same players didn't like Mage: the Ascension (2nd edition), and were quite vocal about it. Why didn't they like it? Some felt the magic rules were too complex and wanted something simple, others didn't like the idea of any humans in the WoD being able to incinerate a vampire at the drop of a hat or teleport a pound of silver into a werewolf's stomach. Regardless, the 1st ed. WoD: Sorcerer book was written to appease that vocal segment

of the fanbase, while not invalidating the magic system in _Mage: the Ascension 2nd edition_. Thus, _WoD: Sorcerer 1st ed._ gave the hedge wizard some fairly formidable magical abilities, while at the same time making them less flexible, less magically-fast, and overall less powerful than True Magi. This was a good compromise, allowing the GM of other oWoD games the opportunity to add human spell-casters who were compatible with their chosen system (V:tM, W:tA, etc.) but leaving the really high-level magical power in the hands of True Magi. _WoD Sorcerer: Revised_ essentially invalidates a good chunk of of the _M:tA 2nd ed_ (& Revised ed.) magic system, by making the hedge wizard every bit as powerful as the True Mage, to wit:(1) the writers retcon the difference between hedge wizards and True Magi. Before, any Mage with Prime 1 could see the difference between True Magic and hedge magic when it was cast; now, the difference is so subtle and obscure only a handful of scholars can even tell it's there. The writers claim the differences were artificial, but those of us who've played since 1st ed. know better.(2) Hedge wizards are now the equal in casting speed, technique, and knowledge acquisition. If there's a chance a Mage can know it and do it, then so can a hedge wizard. Hedge wizards are now so close to True Magi in terms of magical ability that the book even provides optional rules for hedge wizards to gain Paradox if the GM feels that they are unbalancing.(3) Socially, boundaries are dissolved as well: hedge wizards can now serve as those who guard and hold the actual beliefs of a Tradition -- they're the ones who perform the magic that one can point to and say, "That's what the Order of Hermes is about!" while the more Awakened magi go out and push the boundaries of that magic and do the things that get HIT-MARKs sent after them. Gone is the social tension between the groups.

Bottom-lining it: This book is _Mage: the Ascension_ for people who hate _Mage: the Ascension_ rules. The above is both good and bad, depending on what you're doing in the oWoD:(1) If you're a fan of oWoD cross-over adventure/campaigns, this book is probably a godsend. Let's face it: the rules incompatibility across the oWoD game lines sent many a GM into screaming fits. If you're a GM who wants a human spell-caster who can hang with Kindred/Garou/Wraith/Changelings *without* unbalancing your game, have your player generate a character according to these rules. (Or switch to the New World of Darkness).(2) If you're running straight-up _Mage: the Ascension_ 1st/2nd/Revised ed, your PC options suddenly become more complicated. The power level of hedge wizards now makes them practically indistinguishable from True Magi, and the fact that they don't gain Paradox in the process will attract twink-players to your table. In addition, if you have a story structure that involves any social tension between hedge wizards and True magi (master-disciple interaction, both sides arrogant about their own perspectives, etc.), this book will kill that dead. Consider carefully before allowing _Sorcerer: Revised_ at your M:tA table. On the plus

side:(1) The hedge wizard society write-ups are wonderful. You have the option of integrating a hedge wizard into an existing Tradition, or having them be of their own independent society, or even making up one of your own.(2) The psychic rules are great (psi are considered separately from wizards). They were strong in the original WoD: Sorcerer and this book only improves on them.(3) The chapter in the back on GM advice (hedge magic for other semi-supernaturals in the oWoD, like kinfolk or ghouls; moods & themes; rules for making new Paths, etc.) is superlative. I would recommend this book to any oWoD fan on the strength of that alone.(4) Finally, all of the above gives you everything you need to run a sorcerer and/or psion chronicle. This is technically a supplement but is so well-written and organized that it feels like a stand-alone. You could easily use the material to build a human-focused oWoD story, or even use it for a generic horror game. So, I give this book three stars: I applaud its completeness and the material it offers to the cross-over GM or the GM looking to mix things up a little with his stories. However, I recognize that Brucato gave the original edition of this book its nickname for a reason: Sorcerer (in both its incarnations) re-writes Mage: the Ascension for people who don't like Mage: the Ascension. If you like M:tA, you may not have much use for it.

White Wolf has been alluding to the (somewhat ridiculous) term "Hedge magicians" for years, to distinguish these folks from True Mages. Finally they "clear it up." There's no real difference between the magic of a Sorcerer and that of an Awakened Mage. One is "linear" and the other is "affinative" (whatever THAT means.) Why then, if they cast the same spell, does a Mage incur paradox but a Sorcerer doesn't? Why wouldn't Mages study Sorcery, to have a few paradox-free tricks in their bag? The book even goes as far to claim that "trying to create divisions is a waste of time -- magicians have better things to do." Huh? The Order of Hermes NOT making divisions? The second part of the book deals with Psychics -- neither Mages nor Sorcerers, who have powers markedly similar to Vampires (i.e. Obfuscate, Movement of Mind, etc.) I'm not sure how they connect to Mages or Sorcery, or if a connection was even intended. Yet it's still a neat book. What's cool about Sorcerers is their independence -- no Traditions, no Ascension War, none of metaphysical pomp and circumstance of Mage. As far as magic goes, this IS your father's Oldsmobile: alchemy, hellfire, and broomsticks. But the system is coherent and interesting, and as a stand-alone game, Sorcerer might actually be fun.

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