Mage: the Ascension – Panopticon

v1.0

By Quantumboost

This world will look a lot like the one you remember being 'home', Jumper. Oh, there's monsters and 'magic' and all sorts of things, but it looks mostly the same on the surface, right? Hah. No. You have no idea, and if you're lucky it'll stay that way.

I don't think you're going to be lucky.

Call me Catherine, if you want, grasshopper. It's as good a name as any, and it's mine, which is convenient. Don't go tossing it around just anywhere, though, or you might have some unpleasant folks – or otherwise-pleasant folks with a shoestring budget and a lot of desperation – coming down on you. But you'll need an introduction to how things work here, and your… Benefactor… pulled me in to explain this whole setup.

The world is at war, but it's a war of ideas. The Masses – aka the Sleepers – make reality what they think it is, though they're unaware of that. The Enlightened – or Awakened if you prefer – try to make their ideas and philosophies part of that reality, even as they harness it to make miracles happen.

I'll have my *proper* grasshopper show up a bit down the road; you might meet her, and heck, you might even survive meeting her. Or her possibly-evil twin. In any case, that hasn't happened yet, and still might or might not happen. Time is annoying that way.

Actually, here, take this. You might find a use for it.

You'll be given the chance to join into the timestream around 2014, when one Jamelia Belltower's Amalgam forms to investigate the theft of artifacts from a museum in Moscow, and stumble onto something much more dangerous.

Character Creation

As sex, gender, apparent age, and other factors are easily mutable with the right Life and Mind effects, you may choose them as you wish, or default to 20 years old and the same sex and gender as your previous jump.

Faction and Subfaction

There are four major 'sides' in the Ascension War, but the breadth of possible Paradigms is so broad – and the other two sides essentially twisted or dark reflections of these – that we'll limit the options to the major factions in the Traditions or Technocracy. If you want to *actually* join the faction in question, you'll begin in a Chantry or Construct (Traditions or Technocracy stronghold) in a region of your choice; otherwise, you'll have your own normal residence.

If you want to get involved in the Panopticon Quest plot, you may choose to be either a Technocrat or a recent Traditions convert assigned to Jamelia Belltower's Amalgam.

Factions come in the "mystic" and "technomancer" types; roughly, mystics believe their power is a personal one (even if personally bestowed by outside forces), while technomancers believe that the phenomena they employ are mostly impersonal. The Virtual Adepts, Sons of Ether, and all Technocracy Conventions are technomancers, while most of the other Traditions are mystics, but there are some rare examples of each in most factions.

The Council of Nine Mystick Traditions

This group are a collection of mystics and former Technocratic Conventions who exist mostly to defy the Technocracy's control over the global paradigm and keep their own styles alive in the wake of globalization. They're fairly Eurocentric, due in no small part to the Order of Hermes' influence in setting up classifications early on.

The **Akashic Brotherhood** are an organization based mostly on Buddhist teachings; stereotypically, they're kung-fu-warrior types, but there are a wide variety who use other aspects of philosophies from around East and Southeast Asia.

The **Celestial Chorus** originated as a heretical pantheist sect of Christianity, but nowadays include large numbers of monotheist and pantheist mages who work miracles through faith.

The **Cult of Ecstasy** are a group who focus on transforming their mental state in order to expand their perceptions of reality, usually via extremes of sensation and chemical enhancement.

The **Dreamspeakers** are shamans, animists, spirit-talkers, and other mediators between the worlds of humans and spirits. The Tradition itself is very loose, with many of the subgroups included 'by default', but there are some more organized animist traditions among them.

The **Euthanatos** are a collection of reincarnationist groups who seek to use karma and fate-manipulation to keep the wheel of ages running. More infamously, they often help people dump the accumulated bad karma of their current lives – often by sending them to the next.

The **Order of Hermes** represent much of formal Western Occultism, existing well before the formation of the Council. Likewise, they had the most substantial impact on the classification of magic used by the Traditions.

The **Sons of Ether** are a former Technocratic Convention devoted to exploring alternate forms of science and theories debunked by the 'mainstream' scientific consensus.

The **Verbena** use magic drawn from lifeblood, nature, and primal forces; largely European pagan traditions, but blood mages and skinchangers from many civilizations are counted among them.

The **Virtual Adepts** are hackers of both technology and reality, subverting complex systems with esoteric mathematics, technical savvy, and understanding reality as a computational system.

The Technocratic Union

The Technocracy is composed of five Conventions, all of whom (mostly) work together to the (supposed) benefit of mankind. And of the Union. They usually consider those to be the same.

Iteration X are engineers, physical scientists, and soldiers making up what was once the Union's primary military force. They've since become heavier on the civilian side, but the Shock Corps is still fairly militant. They produce nearly all the Union's hardware and heavy equipment.

The **New World Order** are a combination of intelligence agency, soft sciences and humanities, and media control, responsible for keeping the Masses informed exactly the way the Union needs. They also handle (re)education and intake of personnel from outside the Union.

Progenitors are the biotech and medical wing of the Union, responsible for most modern medicine and wielding expertise in genetic manipulation, cloning, and dealing with the inevitable results of lots of mad scientist types doing lots of genetic manipulation and cloning.

The **Syndicate** are the Union's finance branch, handling economic theory, the markets, and taking a bit off the top to keep the other Conventions funded and running. They have their fingers in a lot of pies on both sides of the law.

The **Void Engineers** are the space and exploration Convention, handling everything about the Umbra. They're barely fighting off an enemy called Threat Null (so they claim), but are cagey about telling the rest of the Union anything, and since 1999 have militarized heavily.

Spheres and Arete

The Nine Great Spheres as the Hermetics reckon them are:

- **Correspondence:** relating to distance, connection, and space.
- **Entropy:** relating to the interplay of order and chaos, in particular probability, fortune, fate, and decay.
- **Forces:** relating to energy, both positive and negative; light and darkness, heat and cold, motion and stillness, etc.
- **Life:** relating to biologically living things, both natural and artificial.
- **Matter:** relating to non-living material and things made from it.
- **Mind:** relating to emotions, thought, self-awareness, and the collective unconscious.
- **Prime:** relating to the fundamental energies of the universe and meta-magic.
- **Spirit:** relating to the mysterious and often subjective spiritual and otherworldly realms of the Umbra, their denizens, and the human soul.
- **Time:** relating to the flow of events from past to present to future.

The first rank in a Sphere represents perception of the phenomena and minor indirect influence of those parts of the phenomena that are part of you; Time 1, for instance, tells you what time it is, gives you incredibly precise timing, and detects alterations in the flow of time. The second rank represents limited influence over it; ranks above that increase the level of influence you can achieve. See descriptions of the Spheres in Mage: the Ascension for details.

You begin at what the game rules term “Arete 3”, and receive six ranks in the Spheres. Your Spheres can never increase above your Arete; insufficient enlightenment prevents you from increasing your more direct understanding of how to apply that enlightenment. Note that while the Nine Great Spheres are the usual standards, you can in fact choose alternate Spheres to put these dots in, or alternate ‘versions’ of the above Spheres, so long as they have roughly the same ‘weight’ of effects as is typical.

Oddly, it seems that “Time 1” is already locked in here, and the readout still says you get six more Sphere ranks…

Disembodiment

Leaving Earth and going to the Umbra will slowly loosen the Consensus’s hold on you. The solar system’s ‘material’ space is safe out to the Kuiper Belt, thanks to efforts by the Void Engineers over time. There are ways to offset this, but normally three lunar months cut off from Earthly Quintessence transforms you irreversibly into an ‘idealized’ version of yourself. This counts as death for the purposes of the chain, as the simplification involved definitely cuts off your Jumper nature.

Perks

Particulars of Magic

Extended Casting

While the most straightforward method of harnessing Awakened Magic/Enlightened Science is an immediate application of one's excellence, many effects – especially creating Wonders or creating large or persistent effects – require longer periods of time and effort. The amount of time and effort that a single Mage can expend on a given effect is proportional to their level of enlightenment and reserves of will.

Ritual Casting

When multiple Mages or unAwakened Acolytes work together on a project entailing the use of Magic, the result is a Ritual Casting – each contributes their belief and power to the working as a whole. Five unAwakened assistants add up to one Awakened assistant, unless the Awakened one actually has the full set of Sphere knowledge needed for the effect. Of course, at least one participating Mage must have the full knowledge in order to tie everything together.

Paradigm Tenets (200 CP each)

Every Mage has a Paradigm, which defines and represents how they believe the world – and more importantly, their 'magic' – works. If something is outside their Paradigm, a Mage is almost always incapable of intentionally manifesting it. This is more than just 'belief-in-belief' – a typical mortal's experience with people not being able to just arbitrarily fly means they can't just decide to fly unless they rebuild their expectations on a basic level.

On the bright side, by this point, 'being a Jumper' is almost assuredly part of your worldview – your Perks and Powers from out-of-jump will function just fine, and integrate well with your Awakened powers.

In addition, there are some fragments of Truth that your Benefactor has made available to you, minor enlightenments that may lead you on the path to greater ones. While aspects of these can be achieved normally by clever use of the Spheres and deeper understanding, purchasing them here guarantees they won't be removed from you via mental warping. They will stack on top of and enhance any similar abilities you already have.

Each perk in this section costs 200 CP if not given freely.

Apparatus (Free Technomancer)

You have a knack for creating and using tools to solve problems. Implants, weapon systems, manufacturing facilities, all sorts of technology; you know how to take the basic principles of the universe and put them to work.

Along with an intuitive grasp of how to use any technologies you encounter (though not necessarily how they work), if you understand an ability, you can create an apparatus to replicate that ability using its own physics. If it's not something you yourself can do, you might need some assistance – or 'assistance' – from someone or something which can, but as long as you have that and understand the base principles, you're good to go.

Will to Power (Free Mystic)

While the Traditions call all of this stuff willworking, you have the ability to literally take your mind (or soul, or sheer metaphysical chutzpah, whichever) and make things happen because you will it. Most Traditions members can pull this off with extreme effort, and the Union has its psychics, though they're usually unpopular these days.

In addition, if you have any powers that require gestures, speech, or props that aren't inherent to the effect, you can spend a proportionate amount of effort and energy to disregard a need for 'instruments'. Invoke a command spell without speaking or gesturing, give someone a scathing glare without them needing to see it, project an object without visualizing in detail, etc.

Altered Mentality (Free Cult of Ecstasy)

What you see is a matter of perspective, and altered states of mind let you see things in a new light. Looking at things a different way, changing yourself to change the world, you can know what used to be incomprehensible and influence what you thought was other than yourself.

As a result of long practice looking at things from a multitude of perspectives, you can now handle horrible realizations in a way that isn't nearly as self-destructive. Memetic warfare, eldritch horrors, and basilisk hacks don't shatter your mind – they just reveal that it was a shining multifaceted jewel of consciousness all along.

Badass Normal (Free New World Order, Free Euthanatos)

You're just that damn good, and reality knows it. It's some mixture of training, instinct, gut feelings, divine favor, and just being that awesome, and you can harness it to do just about everything a normal unempowered human can do *better*.

You now intuitively grasp any human skill or ability you have, making everything you do significantly easier, and have a heightened awareness with the senses you have. This also boosts intuition and creativity, and raises your learning rate and maximum skill by a fifth of what it was.

Colors of the Wind (Free Dreamspeakers)

You know that every rock and tree and creature has a life, has a spirit, has a name. Living and 'nonliving' things alike have animating forces with their own will and intent, and they work better for those they like, worse for those they dislike.

Anything you do that applies to spiritual beings may apply to anything you encounter as if they were such beings, and you can interact with the 'minds' of things that others might call non-sentient the same way you interact with other minds.

Flexible Skinchanging (Free Verbena)

Communion with the beasts of the field allows one to understand how they think and act – and then, how to become like them. Taking on a shape puts a shape on your mind and perception, and this often works in reverse. Just as perception is a continuum, so is life and form.

You may, with a moment of concentration and the same action you would take to assume that form, partially manifest any form you have. This can be body parts, special qualities, etc. If you so desire, this change may be made a permanent part of the form you are already in.

Hardcore Materialist (Free Iteration X)

Everything is stuff, or built out of stuff. You can create things that disregard all that nitty-gritty through abstraction layers, but ultimately all those things humanity sees and values – ideas, morality, etc. – are arrangement of substance. Substance can be analyzed and reconfigured.

You may now treat various ephemeral or esoteric things as being essentially physical and material; ghosts, mental abstracts, divine essence, etc. Maybe not *tangible* with normal means, but material. With some practice, you can manipulate these substances and even alloy them with other materials, use them as computing substrates, or a host of other things.

In the Blood (Free Progenitor)

There's something in your bloodline that makes you more – or perhaps simply *other* – than merely human. While even unAwakened family might gain similar powers, you have an intuitive 'backdoor' into any genetic or ancestral potential you might possess. Progenitors take to genetic modifications and organ implants, but this also covers divine heritage, being part-vampire, etc.

As a side-effect, you have fine control over your own heredity, binding and unbinding powers to your bloodline and body. Mental and spiritual abilities can be carried over, biological ones blocked, and even cybernetics can be 'grown' over time. These will develop safely over time, by puberty at the latest. They will still require practice for your heirs to master; implanted knowledge and skill will only give basic proficiency without it.. Even without your guidance, however, they'll have the potential to work things out on their own.

Life Hacking (Free Virtual Adept)

The greatest efforts of the Virtual Adepts were in the Digital Universe project and the development of true AI, though those are mostly historical footnotes now. Regardless, some of that mathematical realism remains ingrained in the Tradition, and understanding the laws in order to modify them is the essence of their paradigm in many ways.

You gain an intuitive grasp of the 'rules' of a society you encounter, as well as the various loopholes and 'access privileges' relevant to your current situation. Furthermore, you now know how to sneak in additional rules, though making permanent changes to the social fabric will still take time and effort – just a bit less than if you had no idea what your starting point was.

Moderately Peeved SCIENCE!!! (Free Sons of Ether)

In the halls of the Etherites, scientific theories based off discarded hypotheses, alternate interpretations, and way too much enthusiasm are constantly debated, and tested, and 'proven' free of the constraints of the scientific establishment. And often, these theories seem to each work even when mutually contradictory, often in the same room.

You've worked out how to handle such chaotic innovation in a way that is… *moderately* stable. By attaching subsystems working off wildly disparate understandings of the universe, you can nonetheless make them function well together, with a bit of phlebotinum and GENIUS mixed in. This will never be as stable as putting in the same effort to make something based off an actually coherent theoretical basis, but it's close!

Universal Value System (Free Syndicate)

People and what they value are the core of what really matters in life; money is just a way of measuring that empirically. It's the outcome of human labor, knowledge, and worth that gives things value, and what Primal Utility measures.

Now, you not only recognize the value of something both objectively and subjectively for yourself – and anyone you know well enough – but you can freely exchange goods and services for their actual equivalent worth, and ensure you never lose on utility in any exchange you make (though you might only break even; actual profit will depend on your negotiation skills). Likewise, you may exchange currencies (i.e. things valued based on their symbolic worth rather than their immediate use) freely based on their current relative value.

Riddle of Maya (Free Akashic Brotherhood)

Reality as you know it is an illusion; or at least, reality isn't what others perceive to be so. You can't bend spoons, but that's just because you know it's really *you* that's bending. Perhaps you follow Buddhist philosophy or esoteric interpretations of physics, or maybe you actually believe that reality's a giant computer simulation.

You can now interact with any illusions as though they were fully real, even if you successfully 'disbelieved' them (though if so, you can choose not to use this ability or do so selectively). Second-order effects of them being 'real' also occur, such as blocking an arrow with an illusory shield, though self-willed beings who recognize the illusion as unreal may disregard the direct effect on their person, if it otherwise wouldn't affect them.

Faith Like a Mustard Seed (Free Celestial Chorus)

You are sure of what you hope for, and have certainty of what you don't see. When all seems lost, you have faith enough to light the way. What you have faith *in*, I'm not sure, but it's there, and that's what matters in this place.

In addition to directing your Arete through your faith, you can ward off enemies of the faith and unholy things – vampires, spectres, and other nasties who lurk in the World of Darkness – and similar beings in other Jumps, as well as getting a small amount of innate countermagic, and a few other minor miracles which aren't subject to Paradox. This is equivalent to the True Faith merit and can potentially be grown to the higher expressions of that merit in time.

True Naming (Free Order of Hermes)

The names of things contain their essence, to a greater or lesser degree; by knowing a thing's name, you can manipulate it by manipulating the name.

You now have a True Name that's distinct from your birth name and any other monikers you may assume; moreover, no other form of sympathy or information about your person makes it any easier to target you with a given effect. If something requires sympathy, you can ignore it if they don't have your True Name. Someone knowing this name makes it as easy to affect you as if they were right next to you and in direct physical contact.

Tychoidean Cosmology (Free Void Engineers)

Models and thoughts gain reality, and the more well-specified they are, the more real they become. Every world in the Umbra is a model of a reality, an idea-world that is of sufficient detail to stand on its own, but not enough to become fully realized.

You can now model things in your mind or with another computer, and if you construct them in enough accurate detail the universe will instantiate them. With enough detail, they can even become true and permanent in their own right, gaining the ontological inertia needed to keep on keeping on without extra power or intervention.

General Perks

Extra Sphere (50-100 CP)

You now have yet another Sphere at the 1-dot level, with basic perception of its associated phenomena. This perk is 50 CP if you already have a power that allows you to perceive the phenomena in question; otherwise, it costs 100 CP.

Escape the Jaws (100 CP)

Power is a trap. Or at least, some kinds of power. You now know before gaining power – whether it's Archspheres, a Perk, or consuming a font of endless corrupt mystical might – how it will shackle you, in a general sense. You can reject such things even if time constraints or similar considerations would prevent you from doing so, making a decision as if you'd had time and space to deliberate it. Finally, if you've made such decisions before receiving this perk, you may review and if necessary re-make those decisions once each.

Note that this doesn't prevent you from being constrained or doomed by *others*' decisions or actions; this only prevents you from screwing *yourself* over.

The Face of Danger (100 CP)

No, you aren't necessarily blind, but you are a daredevil. Whenever the rubber hits the road and failure is extremely dangerous – or especially when it's deadly – you have phenomenal luck and your skill peaks. Anything you attempt that carries such risk will be substantially more likely to succeed. You may not be unkillable, but your odds are better than most.

Also, you can parkour like an Assassin's Creed protagonist, just for kicks.

Terminal Moe (100 CP)

You are adorable. Even a terrifying vampiric hybrid sculpted to look like a supermodel can look cute, and you definitely do. Not only are you physically attractive, you seem to exude an aura of cheerful sincerity, leading others to like you all the more, even if they're total tsunderes who can't possibly admit it.

Willing Defector (200 CP)

Old enemies can make fast friends, at least for you. Whenever you join an organization you have opposed in the past, they won't hold your previous deviancy against you, and you'll have an easier time sniffing out corruption in the ranks. Additionally, you know just how to phrase anything you learned on the other side in a way that will have your new buddies accepting that it's legitimate for you to know these things, and possibly make it easier for them to understand and accept what you have to say itself.

Legendary Mech Jockey (200 CP)

Like the illustrious ~~Asuka~~ Henriette Langley~~ Sohryu~~, you are at home behind any sort of vehicular interface, able to make even the clumsiest mech or transportation dance, and pushing even the capabilities of more elegant systems. No mere expert in the field of piloting can match up to your capability, which is distinctly superhuman (or beyond whatever limits you otherwise would have, in the likely case that you surpass human capability). Also, if your vehicle is destroyed, you will automatically and reflexively eject and survive the wreck – even if your ride isn't designed for that.

Heart of the Dragonslayer (300 CP)

Whether or not you survived 20 years scavenging space wrecks on a planet infested with cyberdragons, are the engineered reincarnation of Achilles, or are a master of Islamic judicial principles, something about you ensures that dragons should be wary in your presence. That doesn't mean they will, since those foolish enough to be hostile to you will be foolish enough to underestimate the danger you pose unless you make it clear to them, but those wise enough will definitely have a measure of respect. Not deference, of course; they're still *dragons*.

Additionally, your destiny is such that you may encounter any draconic beings that are relevant to any jumps you are present in, if you like. Your attacks are naturally baneful to dragons when you *really* want to hurt them, making any wounds so inflicted noticeably more painful and harder to heal. Finally, the sheer terror of their presence washes off you; you can still recognize them as a threat, but the fear is never crippling.

Gear, Companions, and Paraphernalia

Items

You receive a single 100 CP or less item free, and gain discounts on two other items in this section.

Tenses: A Chrononaut's Guide (Free)

This dog-eared book is an extensive, jargon-heavy reference guide to English verb tenses – several of them artificial – used in relation to time travel, alternate timelines, and other exotic causal event streams. Its particular perspective is normally only comprehensible to those who're immersed in the Void Engineers' Paradigm, but this particular copy has extensive personal annotations by one "Catherine Nichols" that make it useful to anyone.

Any Mage who reads through this book cover-to-cover may gain Time 1 for free (if any of your Companions spent one of their starting ranks on Time, they may instead switch it over to the first rank of any other Sphere they've been attempting to learn). Other readers gain the ability to keep track of time down to the nanosecond, and a sense for when something is 'off' about the flow of time in their vicinity.

Personalized Focus (50)

Many rotes and procedures can be performed with just any old appropriate object or set of objects. This one, however, is fully customized to you and matches your preferred rotes perfectly, as well as being a superlative tool for its more ordinary functions. Its spirit has also been awakened, allowing it to affect immaterial beings and the spirit-realms normally.

This property can be applied to one of your existing items at the same cost as acquiring a new one. It can be purchased multiple times.

Magic Bullets (50)

These are very special and normally very expensive bullets. They might be magical in themselves, they might just be made of some very exotic material - if those are different. Actually, what you have is a small manufactory that can take mundane metals as input and spit out magazines, about one per day, though it needs to be hooked up to a Node to pull this off or fed Quintessence directly. You might be able to puzzle out how it's manufacturing the rounds.

Primium ammo can be made this way, but the metal itself is low quality and useless for making non-disposable items or armors.

Bob Requisition Forms (100)

This document is a standard Technocratic Requisitions form, though it only has an entry for B-series clones, and will work even if you're a *filthy Traditionalist* or on another world entirely. Really, Bobs are so cheap the people reading this form don't even care where they end up. If you fill in a number, role, and location, then mail this off, within an hour, a number of Bobs will be delivered to the location outfitted with a basic skillset and equipment for their role.
B-series clones, or 'Bobs', are very basic and mass-produced human clones used for menial labor and as cannon fodder. Those sent to you are physically average or slightly above-average for humans, but due to design decisions to allow mass production all Bobs are incredibly dull, unimaginative, socially inept, barely self-aware, and almost incapable of learning. None of your Bobs will Awaken, not that it's particularly likely in general, and they normally expire in about 10 years.

They will follow any orders you give them; for reasons unknown they are programmed to be utterly and unquestionably loyal to you personally rather than the Technocratic Union. However, there are quotas in place since even Bobs take *some* effort to create, so you won't be getting more than 100 per week from these forms. You can stockpile them, though.

Bobs count as pets rather than followers. Augmenting them mentally can change this.

Box of Daiklaves (100)

This is a box of very sharp very large magical swords made of exotic metals, dating back to prehistoric times. They seem to require some form of Primal Energy synchronization to be used as something other than very large sword-shaped hunks of metal, and don't have terribly exotic traits, but they have a good deal of archaeological significance!

Spy Gadgets (100)

Bought wholesale from Q Division surplus, these gadgets are fashionable accessories for your inner Bond Villain wannabe. Any personal gear shown in a Bond Movie has a replica here, and even Sleepers can use the basic functions of this mix of Extraordinary equipment and Devices.

A Certain Magical Grimoire/A Certain Scientific Principia (200)

Each time you purchase this item, it gives you a new Grimoire (or Principia, same thing) listed in either Panopticon Quest, Forged By Dragon's Fire, or for that matter any other Mage book which contains such things. Using such a book can grant a discount on Spheres, bypass the need for a Seeking to raise Arete, or otherwise empower a user who meets its prerequisites and holds a Paradigm compatible with it.

Note that Grimoires need not be *books*; video games, katas written on scrolls, mountain journeys, memetic contagions, etc. are all possible forms for a Grimoire. If the Grimoire is non-portable, you may find equivalents in future jumps, or attach it to one of your properties.

Chantry/Construct (300-400)

Your very own paradigmatically-appropriate space, this is a facility, mansion, or other locale isolated from surrounding Consensus. Only the rules of your paradigm, or your Companions', hold sway here. Improvements to the Chantry will persist between worlds.

Entrances to the Chantry may be present at any number of other locations or properties you own, including the Warehouse (although the door will be sealed if Warehouse access is blocked). These locations need not be adjacent, nearby, or even in the same dimension.

For 400 CP, your Chantry has a dedicated Node, which can power static defenses, recharge Wonders, and supply mystical energy to do fancy things with.

Post-Spark, the Chantry can be co-located anywhere you choose. Post-Chain, you may still open persistent doorways to your Chantry with a Correspondence 5/Spirit 5 or equivalent ritual and extensive work.

M-1992 ZERUEL Humaniform Posthuman Combat Chassis (600)

This instance of the ZERUEL is a hand-me-down from Autochthonia's "garage sale", a combat chassis designed for Iteration X leadership, and if provided with a human brain will perform a destructive upload (which does not count as death). It consists of a Primium micromachine skeleton surrounded in a shapeshifting cloud of adaptive nanotech, with a powerful reactor in a pocket dimension. The former gives it a disguise ability and 'flensing cloud of blades' form, and can replicate nearly any mundane tool or weapon; the latter gives a substantial degree of Paradox resistance and an anti-fortification plasma cannon. The sheer computing power and redundancy makes any mental actions faster, and in crisis situations can give unlimited thinking time in a moment.

An Enlightened mind inhabiting the chassis can make good use of its various systems as an conduit for Enlightened Science, with canonical feats including things like faking biology, disguising the chassis as an office desk, and reviewing memories to determine that time has been altered.

The ZERUEL can start off hosting an already-uploaded Jumper or Companion (either integrating their existing body's along with all their existing body's benefits), or be used after the fact. In either case, this particular unit has been modified to absorb their existing body's qualities if desired, or leave it behind.

The Time Machine (800)

Not just *a* time machine; this is *The* Time Machine.

The original version of NWO Director Herbert George Wells' masterpiece Device (he took the upgraded one with him on his last journey to the future), a mechanical assembly of various metals and stone (mostly quartz), this looks exactly like the description in the book… except for what looks like a canister of some unknown fluid tapped into the machine's innards, with a gauge attached showing various readings and marked with the label 'anti-Paradox lubricant'.

This machine treats Time as another spatial axis, and travels through it; this is a pure Time 5 effect, and cannot be used on its own to travel through alternate possibilities or even to another location relative to its seating. It also contains a chameleon circuit, preventing the machine itself from succumbing to too much temporal paradox when used, though it does little to protect the user once they've left the machine.

The Paradox lube will gradually recharge when set up in a locus of power, such as a Node. Normal electrical outlets will take a very very long time to recharge this, but more potent sources of energy will likely be much faster.

Companions

The Sleepers Awaken (50-300 CP)

Humans are social beings, and arguably this is why those separated from Consensus become warped by the Umbra. Now, you don't have to be alone; for every 50 CP, you may import a single Companion into this jump, with their choice of faction, subfaction, and reasonable in-jump history and form. For 200, you may import 8, and for 300 you may import all your Companions or things that could potentially be Companioned.

Each imported character receives the first dot of Arete and two Spheres, as well as 600 CP to spend on anything above. They may 'choose' their Paradigm, though this is really more of an outgrowth of their own worldview, and they can start off in your own faction or as contacts in one of the others.

An Old Acquaintance (200-300)

The World of Darkness's Umbra contains every idea, philosophy, and truth in human experience, and now that you're here, it contains yours as well. Normally, these would just be caricatures or idealizations (to the extent those are different)… but with this, the Umbral manifestation of someone from your past is fully realized in a way wholly indistinguishable from the original. They will follow you on your journey with full memories of any past you have together, as well as their powers; if you should ever return to their home universe, they will remember all their adventures as your Companion and have all acquired perks, powers, etc. as if they were there.

Perhaps they were?

Normally, these Companions cost 200 CP. For an additional 100 CP, they gain the same benefits as if imported with The Sleepers Awaken.

Canon Companion (100-200)

There are a number of interesting figures in this particular instance of the setting, and some of them might be up for a jaunt around settings fictional and real without the risk of dissolving into a spiritual entity made mostly of people's opinions of them. For 100 CP, you can pick any non-Master (anyone with less than Arete/Enlightenment 5) who shows up in Panopticon Quest or canon Mage materials and agrees to come along on your journey. For 200 CP, you can even pick up one of the existing Master-level characters or Catherine Nichols. You'll need to buy both the Langley sisters if you want them to come along due to their rare bond, and strangely, choosing a certain high-ranking Progenitor also nets you a certain mischievous Damage Control constable and vice-versa, almost as if they were the same person…

Mages acquired here have their native Paradigm, which also gains them the appropriate perks upon leaving this jump. You can also select non-Mages or even non-humans if they were canon characters in Mage rulebooks (and only Mage) or Panopticon Quest. You know, if you wanted to pick up Nines Rodriguez here rather than in the Vampire Bloodlines jump, or your very own HIT Mark.

Modifications

Toggles

Do Not Believe What the Scientists Tell You.

The natural history we know is a lie, a falsehood sold to us by wicked old men who would make the world a dull gray prison and protect us from the dangers inherent to freedom. They would have you believe our planet to be a lonely starship, hurtling through the void of space, barren of magic and in need of a stern hand upon the rudder.

The prehistory of this jump is now as described in *Exalted* – specifically, any Exalted jumps/gauntlets/etc. you have taken are now the prehistory of this instance of the jump. Yes, even if they're mutually incompatible; this is Mage: the Ascension, that's normal here.

You may encounter new incarnations of those you once knew, ancient artifacts that are remnants of places and things you once interacted with, and other unrelated remnants of the ancient world that haven't been wholly overwritten by the tides of Fate and Consensus.

Differential Phase Interference

Your choice of other Classic World of Darkness jumps also happened, or are still happening, or will have happened, in the history/present/future of this jump. Alternatively, they may have happened/be happening in parallel realities or timelines of this jump.

Note that if you interfere with events in a way that contradicts what you observed before, this gives Paradox as if time-traveling to the past and interfering with events, and will also force things to be self-consistent with your experiences in that jump.

Additionally, Wrinkle will be very, very disappointed in you.

Drawbacks

You may take as many drawbacks for points as you like. Companions may also take these drawbacks, though they may only gain up to 300 CP or the amount you take, whichever is greater.

Permadoxed (+100-500 CP)

For one reason or another, you've exceeded human limitations – and reality has taken notice. You have some amount of Paradox permanently tangled in your very being (until the jump is over, anyway), a point of Permanent Paradox for every 100 points, tied to the benefits of your chosen Perks or possibly just the remnants of ill-advised youthful indiscretions involving vulgar magic. Every time you act in a way opposed to reality, even with out-of-jump powers, your Paradox Backlashes are stronger and more ironic. You might be able to mitigate this by keeping your activities subtle and shrouded in coincidence – but if you were inclined to do that, would you be in this situation in the first place?

Huuuuuuuuuuubris (+100 CP; +0 CP ego-based casters)

You have a special kind of Virtue; Hubris. Yes, this is virtuous somehow, but it also gets you into trouble sometimes, because you tend to assume that any fine details or unanticipated problems can be handled by your *magnificent hypercompetence*. Well, there's also the issue that this presumption isn't actually correct all the time. This is only +100 CP because you're a *Mage* so why *wouldn't* you have hubris?

As certain kinds of Mages (*coughHermeticscoughpsychicscough*) can harness their egocentric qualities for mystical purposes, they receive no CP for this Drawback, but instead gain a boost to the raw power of their magical, psionic, and spiritual abilities due to sheer egotism.

This Drawback's effects may be retained indefinitely after this jump, so long as the Jumper wishes. Companions may retain it as long as they wish, whether or not the Jumper did. Even companions that aren't imported.

So long as you retain this Drawback, you may justify any and all of your decisions to others by stating its name, and they will immediately stop being confused by your decisions, the sensation replaced with resigned exasperation.

~Tsuntsun~ (+100)

You have difficulty expressing and acknowledging your feelings, being a classic tsundere. Everyone around you will recognize this and (might) be amused; however, the more naive might still be perplexed by your reactions. Perhaps you can work to keep this on the milder side, but an edge of denial will be there for as long as you're in this jump.

Additionally, you'll forget you picked this drawback; the extra points were an oddity in the jump-document, if you're aware of such things.

Angry Exes (+200)

You've had a lot of past relationships, and they nearly always went sour; now your exes are on the other side, or worse, on *your* side. You might be able to leverage your former relationship with a *lot* of work, apologies, and humility, but by default, you'll encounter them at least a couple times during this jump and working at cross-purposes. They might not try to *kill* you, but at the very least they'll be needlessly obstructive in a way that the higher-ups can't help you with, and attempting to harm them in any way *will* be emotionally taxing. Even if you're a total sociopath.

Harem Protagonist auras and other supernormal means of getting people to like you will, at best, just result in problem alchemy turning this into a large number of mild yanderes after you. They'll still be just as obstructive, but for entirely different reasons.

Stuck In the Eighties (+200-400)

Maybe not the *Eighties*, but you are definitely out of your right time. Your cultural and technological comfort zone is displaced by at least two decades, although this doesn't necessarily mean the past; someone who grew up in Autochthonian culture or fell through a time-warp from the near future is just as out of it as someone who still thinks mullets are fashionable.

For 400 points, this is an extreme level of anachronism; modern society is alien and incomprehensible to you in a major and significant way. Perhaps the very idea of computers is alien because your latest memories are of hunting vampires in the 1700s, or you think this "Industrial Revolution" is just a fad and things were so much better when you were a kid in the Iron Age. Or you're from the distant utopian future and this "money" thing is some backwards barbarism.

Roseluck (+300)

Your luck just doesn't hold out. Most of the time when something is left up to chance or unknown external factors, the dice seem to be conspiring against you, and your Paradox backlashes seem to lash out more often than most and in hilariously ironic ways (which is about par for the course with Paradox, but still!). About the only good thing that can be said is that you don't accumulate Paradox much, because it discharges itself too often.

In Character (+300)

You know how your Jumper powers are normally part of your worldview? Well, now they aren't. For some reason, you can't truly believe that any of your previous jumps were more than a dream, no matter how convincingly someone makes a case for it or whatever lip service you give the idea, so any Jumper abilities are locked away… except in Dreamscapes, where they function normally. You'll have to rely entirely on in-jump methods elsewhere.

Perhaps you can figure out a way to harness the Spheres to emulate your erstwhile powers? Many have been inspired by their dreams, after all.

Paradigmatic Incompatibility (+400; requires Cabal)

While the recent ecumenism of the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions has brought them together and encouraged collaboration in ways unseen in yesteryear, your Cabal… doesn't. Each of you is completely confident in their own Paradigm, to the exclusion of all others.

Well, maybe not *all* others. Just each other's. Even those of the same Tradition (or Convention, as the case may be) will find critical (in your minds) discrepancies that prevent enough common ground to allow ritual casting. Furthermore, none of you are able to use each others' Sancta, if any; everything becomes Vulgar due to just being *wrong wrong* ***wrong***.

Evil Twin (+600)

Either you have an evil twin, or you are the evil twin. Possibly both. They might not be a literal twin; little sisters given psychosurgery to match your personality also count. They will act against you either subtly or overtly, are your equal in most ways (though their powers are all subject to Paradox), and will be a constant thorn in your side. Furthermore, they are valued by Threat Null, and are provided with substantial resources, though often hilariously ill-suited ones to their preferred problem-solving approach. They will gradually acquire an ensemble cast of dark mirrors to your own.

The good news is, if you manage to well and truly defeat them, they stay defeated. You might have to go so far as bullying your vampire-addicted little sister into becoming a space robot god to do so depending on the circumstances, but by gum, you can *do* it.

If you manage to survive nine years of their tender attentions, your twin's orders will expire and if you so choose will follow you on your journeys as a Companion.

A-Marauding We Will Go (+600, incompatible with *Widderslainte*)

Your reality is a bit different from everyone else's. Perhaps you think you jumped into the New World of Darkness setting. Perhaps you're convinced that the entire world is Manhattan, or that you're in a high fantasy Romanesque world with magical analogues of technology. Either way, your delusions shield you from the outside world, and the Paradox of any Vulgar effects you perform partly doesn't affect you – it just bounces off, and any that does stick merely thickens your delusions. Your Quiet.

You are a Marauder, a Mage who creates a bubble of alternate reality around them, either a region where their Paradigm holds sway over the Consensus or a thick blanket of hallucination around their psyche. While this does protect you partially from Paradox, if you become too detached from reality, your Quiet will slowly worsen until you're forced out into the Umbra. You'll need to stay in contact with people with more down-to-Earth perspectives, or your perspective will keep you away from Earth.

High-Quiet Marauders aren't subject to Void Adaptation, but being locked away from Earth in this way is still a chain failure.

***Widderslainte* (+800, incompatible with A-Marauding We Will Go)**

Okay, maybe you're not a *widderslainte*; maybe you deliberately hurled yourself into the Caul and were remade as one of the Nephandi. But you're a Nephandus, whether by choice or by birth. Your Avatar is dedicated to pointing you down the path of Descent; everything you touch will be twisted with foul Resonance, all your inspiration will be malign and dedicated to the corruption and degradation of the world as a whole and whatever your plots involve in particular… you are just generally a totally irredeemable blight of a human being.

Yes, irredeemable. The only known 'cures' for a Nephandus are the *gilgul* rite – destruction of the soul – and a rite of reincarnation performed by an Archmaster of Spirit. Both would involve your death in some form, and an end to your chain. Perhaps you have other means of inverting a soul already damned… but if you did, would you even use them?

After all, this world is terminally ill. Why *not* pull the plug?

Ascension

Perhaps you've spent the full 10 years Earth-normal time here, or perhaps you've managed to Ascend in the meantime. Either way, it's time to move on.

Stay Here

You like this world, or you feel a burning need to make it a place fitting your own ideals. You will remain here until you Ascend. Who knows what awaits after that?

Go Home

This whole subjective reality thing is just too much; it's even spoiled you to visiting other unfamiliar realities. It's time to go to a nice, stable, *real* reality, and that means home.

Another Story

This isn't the end of your story, just another chapter in the middle. You're ready to move on to yet another adventure.

Endjump Scenario (WIP): The One Ring

Threat Null, the Sins of the Past

Threat Null don't call themselves that; it's a designation by their enemies. What the Void Engineers don't want the rest of the Union to know is what they *do* call themselves.

They call themselves "The Technocratic Union".

Threat Null are, very simply, the remnants of those portions of the Union who were lost in space or stranded in alternate dimensions (really, the same thing) during the Dimensional Anomaly, unable to get Quintessence supplies from Earth that could maintain their humanity. Now, they're something else, each a powerful Disembodied spirit with Charms reflecting the heights of their Awakened power – and despite *fundamentally* incompatible worldviews, they're still working together well enough to be fighting the rest of the Universe and steadily not-losing.

The reason behind this otherwise-nonsensical unity is Conditioning. More than just the normal effects, this has become so integral to the spirits' mythos that they will coordinate and collaborate in ways that spirits simply don't. As long as Conditioning holds, only fundamentally remaking a member of Threat Null can make them oppose Control or their allies.

You, Jumper, need to put a stop to this if you want your Spark here.

Conditioning

Applying Conditioning to an individual or removing it from them – at least, a sane, mortal individual capable in theory of exerting their own will – is normally an Adept-level Mind rote. In theory, you could unmake or remake every single member of Threat Null to remove it… which would require finding and fighting all of them, when they're a fully unified opposition. Perhaps you could do so, Jumper… or you could just go for the head. It might be easier in the long run.

Conditioning as a whole is a fantastically powerful self-reinforcing miracle of Archmastery, a Mind 6/Prime 6 working which draws vast quantities of Primal Energy from creation as a whole to reinforce itself. It's been running for centuries. The effect itself is anchored by a mythical artifact of unfathomable power, the very spiritual and conceptual incarnation of enforced unity and loyalty. In recent decades, however, this anchor has come to take a particular form more often than not, even as it lies out in the subjective depths of the Deep Umbra.

One Ring to rule them all; One Ring to find them.
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.

In order to unmake Conditioning outright, an equally potent working would be required; this sort of working would be unquestionably Vulgar with Witnesses, as it contends directly with the Ring itself and its anchoring in human psychology. Alternatively, you could usurp control – or rather, usurp Control.

Sadly, there are no Hobbits in play here, Jumper; it'll have to be you leading whatever allies you can scrounge up. Allies who you'll have to convince to fight against the spiritualized forms of some of the most dangerous Archmasters to ever live in their seat of power.

Finding the Ring

The location of the One Ring is a well-kept secret, but its defenses are not solely obscurity. Indeed, the woman who met you when you arrived has contacts who might well know just where you can find it, as well as give information on the members of Control present there.

Tychoides of the Void Engineers knew about Void Adaptation, and has managed to stave it off so far by scrounging supplies; with the help of Catherine Nichols, he's helped to keep Earth safe from Threat Null's depredations. He knows where the Grand Viasilicos is, an artifact dating from the early days of the Order of Reason, used for divinations and travel across the universe. That's what the leadership of the Order used to link themselves to the Ring, and how they maintain their control over Conditioning.

There And Probably Not Back Again

In order to reach the Grand Viasilicos, you'll have to either sneak past the majority of Threat Null's most powerful forces, and then contest with the Inner Circle and Control themselves. Every one of them a former Mage who'd broken through to Arete 6. You could try recruiting other Mages or even Incarna-level spirits… but they'll want assurance that there'll be a place for them in your new world, especially if they're risking their lives to give you this opportunity.

It's on a station in deep space, made from the White Tower of Languedoc, where the Order of Reason was first formed. This location has been fortified over the centuries, and made even more secure since the Dimensional Anomaly. One member of Control exists for all but four of the original groups, aside from those that left for the Traditions and the Void Engineers. Each of them is an ancient Archmage-spirit, in a place that matches their nature. Even the Inner Circle are all Masters, and they are *far* more numerous than Control.

Additionally, this area is secured with special defenses that make any unauthorized person's abilities Vulgar WIth Witnesses. Even the Charms of Spirits and the Disciplines of Vampires are affected, and your Jumper powers as well - reality itself will be working against you the entire step of the way, Jumper.

The Smell of Arete In The Morning

If you can get past all the forces arrayed against you and to the Viasilicos itself, you now have the opportunity to issue whichever commands you like through Conditioning. The Traditions and Void Engineers can't be affected by this, and some members of the rest of the Technocracy have degraded theirs to such a level it has minimal effect… but Threat Null are all wholly subject to Control's influence. If you can remove their unity, their ability to work together despite everything else about them being incompatible, they will be consumed by infighting and their Forever War against the entire rest of the universe.

Of course, this is quite a bit of power. You've likely promised a number of powerful beings to make a place for them in the world, and unless you were lying and made them believe you, you really ought to use that power. The Ring has the power to issue commands to everyone who is Conditioned, and in its periphery, that includes every Sleeper who's received first-world-based education, everyone who's joined a corporate culture… and that's a lot of belief.

Once you've remade the universe, fulfilled those vows you intend to keep, and destroyed Threat Null once and for all… or, alternatively, if you've unmade Conditioning and the Ring itself, destroying a good chunk of humanity's social constraints… the walls of the Deep Void open, and your Spark awakens.

Notes

On Magic, Technology, and Spiritualism

A number of perks from elsewhere distinguish between magic, technology, spiritual powers, divine abilities, and so on. The abilities in this jump do not, and ‘Awakened/True Magic’ ‘counts as’ whichever are appropriate given the Paradigm it’s filtered through. This means that your Hermetic invocations will be considered magic, your Dreamspeaker rituals will be spiritualism, your ItX implant railgun will count as technology, etc.

On Avatars

Every Mage has what the Traditions call an 'Avatar’, which is what grants their ability to use True Magic. Apart from interaction with the Jumper's perks, what it is largely doesn’t matter apart from 'the part of the Jumper that lets them use Mage powers’, and has been left deliberately ambiguous, but they have certain properties worth keeping in mind.

- Avatars can be interacted with directly only through Master-level effects and the Charms of *very* powerful or specialized Spirits – the latter of which are unlikely to be encountered here without severe effort.
- ‘Destroying’ an Avatar requires Spirit 5 if the caster believes in souls, or Mind 5 if they don’t. Former Mages who have their Avatar destroyed often commit suicide, and seem to lose all creativity.
- Making a ‘human’ psyche that can *potentially* Awaken requires either Mind 5/Spirit 5 (to make it receptive to free-floating Avatars) or Mind 5/Life 5 (to emulate brainstates conducive to Genius). If the full psyche is displaced, the Avatar will naturally follow it.
- Avatars can fragment when exposed to sufficiently destructive spiritual phenomena; canonically, Technocratic 'spirit nukes’ have done so. These fragments will naturally seek out a 'human’ host and can potentially Awaken them.
- Dying causes the Avatar to pass on. Being resurrected soon enough brings it back, but becoming undead does not unless the Avatar is held captive. Even then, vampirization seems to destroy or free it, though if you become Kindred via another jump that should not apply.

On Avatars (Continued)

For interacting with out of jump abilities, the following can be used. If you're already familiar with Mage, you probably have your own perspective on the matter; feel free to use that instead.

- Abilities that interact with souls may interact with the Avatar if they can distinguish 'parts' of the soul. Avatars roughly correspond to the superego, innate divinity, or the capacity for self-examination.
- Perks and other things that render a soul inviolate will block Gilgul or other manipulations of the Avatar, so long as the soul is not deliberately exposed. Using Awakened Magic does not expose the Avatar.
- Effects that damage the mind might damage or wreck the ability to use Awakened Magic, by ruining the mind's creativity or imagination. Mental defense perks can help.
- Willpower perks may increase the Mage's Willpower trait, which caps Arete; it doesn't directly affect willworking. Being able to use Willpower more often is enough synergy.

On Arete

While a Jumper may be more enlightened in some fashion overall, by default Jumpers gain Arete 3 upon arriving in-jump. This represents the depth of their *fully internalized* understanding of the local metaphysics. Merely academic understanding does not suffice for even Arete *1*. If you can quickly grasp the way to higher Arete due to prior experiences, I'm not stopping you.

Achieving Arete 6 is possible, but the Seeking for that level in particular involves coming to an understanding that is alien to even the experience of most Mages. Many never break that ceiling, much like how many Sleepers never Awaken.

Arete and Essence from White Wolf's Exalted setting measure essentially the same trait as relates to the same universe, and if you've been to or visit an Exalted jump, your Arete and Essence are the same value. Gnosis from Mage: the Awakening is a different matter, being your understanding of the relationship between the Supernal and the Phenomenal.

Yes, you can breach the Arete 6 hurdle via being an Elder Exalt. Having a fully-functional cosmic enlightenment engine attached to you is hax that way.

From Arete 6 onward, a Mage will increasingly see reality as being an overlay of all possible interpretations, leaning towards the more established interpretations. Those at Arete 10 will constantly perceive this way. Whether this continues on with other, more objective settings is up to your inter-jump metaphysics.

On Disembodiment

Disembodiment is known by those on the Traditions side who have accumulations of Umbral lore (not very many these days, but they exist), and known very well by the Void Engineers. The rest of the Technocracy, importantly, does *not* know about it except for occasional individuals who are familiar with scattered examples that are mostly academic in nature.

The reasons behind Disembodiment are a matter of hot debate between and within different factions among those aware of it; one explanation might be that, by living in a manner reflecting only your own preexisting beliefs, you slowly lose the ability to understand or acknowledge contrary opinion. Perhaps doing so in the Umbra – where your entire being is mental and spiritual – simply makes that a more permanent and all-encompassing state of being.

There are rotes to spend exotic energies to fend off Disembodiment, usually involving Spirit or Dimensional Science at a high level. If you have a source of Earthly Quintessence or equivalent energies, these rotes can potentially stave away the transformation indefinitely. Sadly, energies pulled from the Umbra are tremendously ineffective at this.

Jumpers might be able to fend it off longer or indefinitely via perks that provide a defense against this sort of thing. Abilities that prevent degradation or alteration of your person or maintain your humanity would definitely help.

On Paradox and Vulgarity

Paradox, in a practical sense, occurs when your manifested “reality” actively conflicts with the surrounding “reality”, or when your attempt turns in on itself (game mechanically, when you botch an Arete roll). This is usually the result of trying something impossible, dangerous, or unreliable within that reality (i.e. vain or vulgar magic). This can build up to discharge later, or it can ‘release’ immediately in a backlash. The Permanent Paradox drawback gives you a persistent pool of ‘built up’ Paradox that doesn’t go away when discharged.

In-jump, since Sleepers generate the ambient reality (aside from places with artificially set Paradigms), having one of them notice that something is “impossible” worsens the backlash or erodes an existing effect, though it’s still a big deal if you do something too major even if nobody’s watching. In later jumps, this extra severity depends on how ‘rigid’ the local reality is, unless it’s being directly generated by the beliefs of those around you (at which point it works just like Mage Paradox).

On Paradox and Vulgarity (Continued)

A few effects are "Always Vulgar Everywhere", almost all of which wrench at the very fundaments of existence or directly act in opposition to cosmic superbeings or their works (like, say, trying to unmake the Curse of Caine). These effects are, as you might expect, always vulgar everywhere.

Some areas have more fluid or unstable reality, such as idea-spaces and the Near Umbra between major Realms. In other Jumps, this includes places like the Warp, the Vortex World in SMT: Nocturne, and Nasuverse outside a Grand Reality Marble. In such places, nothing aside from AVEs is Vulgar, though Paradox still exists.

Some areas have *no* defined reality. This includes much of the Deep Umbra, and places like Pure Chaos in Exalted. Not only are things aside from AVEs non-Vulgar, but Paradox itself doesn't exist, because there's no reality to conflict with.

Historically, Paradox wasn't always a purely detrimental force; in realities that aren't hardened against warping of this sort, you might instead encounter the Scourge, which is more like a Wild Magic backlash that can be good or bad, but is never quite what you were trying for.

Paradox – and, for that matter, Scourge – manifests in varied and often highly personalized ways, and how exactly it happens depends on the paradigm you're actualizing, the world around you, and what exactly you're trying to do. Machines might malfunction – pistols jamming, plasma weaponry venting on the operator, safety features failing, etc. – while mystical Paradox might show up as classical signs of a witch or other supernatural being, such as milk curdling in their presence, clocks running backwards, or hallucinating that the figures in paintings are talking to you. Imitating vampire powers might temporarily give you classical vampire weaknesses. Severe Paradox manifestations can potentially trap you into a pocket dimension until you resolve the inconsistency, or summon a cosmic censor who harassess you for awhile. Someone with a Warhammer-esque psychic paradigm might even deal with actual Perils of the Warp.

Generally, using even more vain magic will only serve to make the Paradox manifestation worse, and even subtle works hinder as often as they help. Sensory effects have the best chance of helping you deal with a Paradox manifestation, if only by helping you understand what exactly the problem is. Likewise, Prime 5 enables you to spend Quintessence to counteract an equal amount of Paradox, and can thus be used to alleviate such things. Certain other obscure Spheres also have this property at their highest level.

Use your imagination, and with Paradox, your sense of schadenfreude.

On Quintessence

'Quintessence' refers to what might be described as the underlying building block of the universe. Other forms of supernatural power in the World of Darkness are considered forms of Quintessence – Chi, Vitae, Gnosis, etc. – and likewise any sort of supernatural power source can be used as Quintessence in later jumps. Stamina or health can likewise be sacrificed by anyone with Prime or Primal Utility.

Tass is essentially Quintessence in a material, tangible form that can be directly used in appropriate workings. Using Tass in a nonsensical or contrary way – one that doesn't match its flavoring or physical nature – can actually make an Effect harder rather than easier.

On An Old Acquaintance

No test the Jumper ever performs be able to perform will be able to conclusively determine that the companion is not the person they are based on. It isn't explicitly stated that they are the same, just that they're empirically indistinguishable by any means they will ever have access to.