

HERMETICA

A solo saga engine for Ars Magica, Fifth Edition



Live an Ars Magica saga on your own: one magus, their companions, turb and covenant, over years of game time, with the game's rules, its setting, and your own decisions.

THE IDEA

Ars Magica assumes a table: a storyguide who brings Mythic Europe to life, and a troupe sharing magi, companions and grogs. Hermetica replaces those two things and nothing else. Magic, laboratory work, combat and aging stay exactly as the game has them.

The engine is fully analog: dice, a deck of cards, tables and a notebook. It plays at two scales, and you choose which one for each matter: from afar, in a single roll, or up close, scene by scene.

WHAT THE ENGINE ADDS

- ◆ **A world that acts without you.** Five Powers and four Realms pursue their own ends. Doing nothing is a choice, and its price is written down.
- ◆ **Events you cannot foresee.** Omens, events and complications are drawn from cards and dice, after you have decided.
- ◆ **Two scales of play.** The Season runs the covenant in a quarter of an hour; the Story plays an adventure in about an hour.
- ◆ **Mundanes and the Realms.** Procedures for talking to mundanes, dealing with faeries, resisting demons and living alongside the Church.

WHERE THE PROJECT STANDS

A 188-page booklet exists as version 0.3, in French only for now: Mythic Europe, the game's rules restated, the solo engine, and Tribunal expansions including a full Provençal booklet. Every rule has an example, built around one covenant, Val-Sainte, in 1220.

What is missing is the test of play. Only three example seasons have been played, and a simulation of 4,000 sagas was used to tune the pacing. No long campaign has tested the engine yet. Before putting hundreds of hours into it, I would like to know whether it answers a real wish.

WHAT YOU NEED

The Ars Magica Fifth Edition core rulebook, three ten-sided dice, a 54-card deck, a few tokens, a notebook.

TARGET PLAY TIMES

Founding the saga, once	1–2 h
A quiet season	10–15 min
A season with a Story	45–90 min
A year of play	2–3 h
A Tribunal cycle, seven years	15–20 h

Design estimates, still to be confirmed in play.

FOUR SUITS, FOUR REALMS



Magic

Vis, beasts of virtue, spirits, regiones. It holds its Places and does not come to you.



Faerie

Tales, markets, courts and hunts. A Role, a Price, a word kept to the letter.



The Divine

The Church, the saints, the Dominion. It does not bargain; it stifles your magic and holds Hell back.



The Infernal

Temptation, discord, lies. Its masks fall to neither magic nor force.

THE MECHANICS IN BRIEF

THE SEASON TURN

1 The Omen One card: what the season brings	2 The Designs Two dice: who makes a move	3 The response Story, Mission, or let it run	4 Activities Laboratory, study, saga missions	5 The Story The adventure, if there is one	6 The close Experience, one line in the Annals
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Decide, then draw

You state what your characters do before drawing what the world does. No procedure lets you learn the opposition's answer before you choose, and you do not go back on it once the card is turned.

Powers and Tides

Lord, Church, Town, Order and Rival covenant each have an Attitude and a Design: a four-box clock, veiled until the second box. Four Tides measure each Realm's strength in your region and set the power of whatever you meet.

Two oracles

Two dice answer closed questions: yes or no, shaded by a "but" or an "and". For open questions, two dice draw a Technique and a Form, read as a verb and an object: Perdo Corpus, at a lord's court, "to lose an heir".

The Deck

One 54-card deck does everything: omens, story plots, complications. Suits are the Realms; court cards are people: Jack for the Town, Queen for the Order, King for the Lord. A drawn card returns only after a joker: the world does not repeat itself.

The Story in three Acts

Three face-down cards: the Threshold, the Knot, the Heart. The value gives the trial (road, parley, riddle, guarded place, confrontation); the suit gives the Realm in your way. A Peril clock rises with each misstep; three Clues let you understand.

The Mask

Demons lie, and magic cannot detect it. When a character is doubtful, a card is slipped under their sheet unseen. It is turned over only after an investigation, by divine means, or at the story's end. If it is a Spade, they served Hell.

First rule: *the Ars Magica rules decide first; the oracles speak only where the rules are silent.*

YOUR OPINION DECIDES WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

I am trying to find out whether this project is worth continuing. Even a one-line answer helps.

- 1 Do you play Ars Magica, and would you play it solo?
- 2 Does this engine make you want to try it? What appeals to you, and what puts you off?
- 3 What would you expect from a solo game in Mythic Europe that you do not find here?
- 4 Have you tried other solo rules, for Ars Magica or elsewhere? What did you take from them?
- 5 In what form: free PDF, low-priced PDF, printed book, dedicated card deck? Would an English edition matter to you?

Give your opinion

Answer the questions alongside, even just one of them.

Read the booklet

Ask for it: I will send the version 0.3 PDF, 188 pages, in French.

Playtest

I am looking for a few volunteers to play one year of a saga, a few hours of play, and tell me what works.

How to reply. In a comment under the post, or by replying to the message that brought you this document.

Thank you for reading. — Cédric Bohnert

Transparency. The booklet and this overview were written and laid out with the assistance of an AI, from my own prototype and design choices.

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