



## Ars Minimae

*A light-hearted game of magi and medievalism*

**Characters:** Players may have three types of characters. Magi are powerful wizards, companions are important non-magi, and grogs are expendable bit characters.

Players can swap characters or create new ones at the start of any season in their saga.

**Time:** Each game year is divided into four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Each character can spend a season adventuring in a story or working on a preoccupation.

**Stories:** A story is an adventure undertaken by some magi, companions, and grogs. Typical goals would be to obtain a magical ingredient, explore a strange site, resolve a political machination, or defeat a threat to their troupe.

The expected number of stories would be one per year. The story occupies a season and each player can bring one character (a magus, companion, or grog) along.

**Attributes:** When a character is created, assign levels 2, 1, 1, and 0 to their attributes. These attributes determine how many dice you will roll when attempting a risky action.

- *Esoterics* measures your character's obscure learning and hidden knowledge. The Esoterics attribute is rolled to cast spells, recall ancient lore, or decipher languages.
- *Brawn* measures how physically strong and durable a character is. The Brawn attribute might be rolled to endure attacks, throw a punch, or leap a chasm.
- *Finesse* measures how agile and precise a character is. The Finesse attribute might be rolled to dodge attacks, toss a dagger, or perform an acrobatics routine.
- *Wit* measures how insightful and charismatic a character is. The Wit attribute might be rolled to observe, persuade, or perform a comedy sketch.

**Virtues:** Virtues are special traits of your character. When a Virtue gives you an advantage on a roll, you'll add a bonus die.

**Story Burden:** Story burdens are special motivations which help create drama for your character and which can be overcome through their adventures.

**Rolling Die:** Whenever a character does something risky, the storyguide will ask for a roll to determine the outcome. The rules for rolls are based on the Forged in the Dark system.

1. The player states their goal.

*I want to beat the brawny troll in an arm-wrestling contest.*

2. The player explains how their character acts in the fiction:

*During the contest, I cheat and secretly cut the troll's tendon with a hidden knife.*

3. Based on the player's action, the storyguide chooses a challenge for the roll. Minor, Major, or Mythic, this challenge represents how difficult the action is.

*There's a crowd of cheering spectators. Finessing a knife wound is risky - it would be a Major roll.*

4. Based on the fiction, the storyguide determines the effect of the action.

*If you succeed, everyone will believe that you burst the troll's ligaments with brute strength.  
If you fail, the crowd will attack.*

5. Roll the dice pool. The pool contains one die for each level of the rolled attribute. Add a bonus die if a relevant Virtue or other mechanic advantages the character. Subtract a die if the character is hindered by wounds or other mechanics.<sup>1</sup>

*My thief has Finesse 2 and the virtue Subtle Murderer. I'll roll three die.*

6. Judge the outcome. If any die shows 6, then the character succeeds. If multiple die show 6, then the character succeeds with increased effect. Otherwise, consult this table for mixed success and failure.

Challenge	Highest Die	Effects
Minor	4-5	You hesitate. Try a different approach, or else succeed with a consequence: a minor <b>complication</b> occurs, you have <b>reduced effect</b> , or you risk a <b>wound</b> .
Minor	1-3	You falter. Press on with a Major challenge roll, or else wait and try a different approach.
Major	4-5	You succeed, but with a consequence: a <b>complication</b> occurs, you have <b>reduced effect</b> , the effect is <b>delayed</b> , or you are <b>wounded</b> .
Major	1-3	Things go badly. A <b>complication</b> occurs, you lose this <b>opportunity</b> , or you are <b>wounded</b> .
Mythic	4-5	You succeed, but there's consequences: a <b>serious complication</b> occurs, the action requires an <b>additional cost</b> , or you are <b>wounded</b> .
Mythic	1-3	Things go badly. A <b>serious complication</b> occurs, you lose this <b>opportunity</b> , or you are <b>wounded</b> .

<sup>1</sup> If the pool has zero or negative dice, then roll twice and keep the lower result.

### Spellcasting:

All magi can cast spells. The magical arts are Latin verbs and nouns which correspond to the spell's action and target[s] respectively.

Each maga or magus begins with two arts: a verb and noun. Magi can gain additional arts by spending seasons studying occult texts and conducting practical experiments.

Verbs	
Creo ("I create")	Creo is the power to create something from nothing. Stone castles, blasts of fire, or herds of wildebeest can all be created with creo spells.
Perdo ("I destroy")	Perdo is the power to unmake and delete. Perdo spells could be as simple as slaying a man or as complex as making an elephant weightless (by removing the animal's weight).
Muto ("I transform")	Muto is the power to change its targets. A muto spell could add wings to a horse or color your hair purple. Muto spells could also alter a memory or manipulate a human's perception of the world.
Regio ("I control")	Regio is the power to move or to command its object. Regio magic could send a boulder flying through the air or spin bales of flax into cloth. It could also dominate the mind of a man or beast.
Intelligo ("I know")	Intelligo is the power to learn. Observing an enemy from across the world, translating a lost tongue, or discovering the nature of a spell might be achieved with intelligo.

Nouns	
Corpus ("Body")	Corpus spells affect humans and anything wearing a humanoid shape.
Animal ("Animal")	Animals include beasts, birds, fish, and other non-human creatures.
Herbam ("Plant")	Herbam spells affect plants and trees. This includes processed plant matter like timber or paper.
Aquam ("Water")	Aquam is water, one of the classical elements. Aquam spells affect water and liquids.
Ignem ("Fire")	Ignem is the element of fire. Ignem spells have power over fire, heat, and light.
Auram ("Air")	Auram is the element of air. Auram spells affect air, weather, and can grant true flight.
Terram ("Earth")	Terram is the element of earth. Teram spells affect stone and metal.
Imaginem ("Image")	Imaginem concerns illusions and perception. Imaginem spells affect the senses and impressions of a thing.

Mentem (“Mind”)	Mentam spells affect the minds of a target. Mentam magic has power over memories, thoughts, and emotions.
Vim (“Power”)	Vim concerns raw magical power. This art affects other Hermetic spells as well as other natural magics.

Conjuring a fireball would be *Creo Ignem*. Dispelling an enchantment would be *Perdo Vim*. Transforming a knight into a chicken might be *Muto Corpus Animal*. The vast majority of spells require just two or three magical arts.

Casting a spell is always challenging and requires rolling Esoterics. The size and nature of a Hermetic spell determines its power and the roll’s challenge: Minor, Major, or Mythic.

Spellcasting should be an interesting puzzle. The storyguide can negotiate with a player to trade effect for challenge or allow creative substitutes for magical arts.

Spell Power	Effects
Minor	Minor spells affect a small object, small area, or a single creature in moderately unusual ways. Healing a broken limb, conjuring a torch flame, or pulling a rabbit from a hat are minor spells.
Major	Major spells affect large objects, areas, or multiple targets in extraordinary ways. Summoning a ghost, tossing a fireball, or conjuring a swift horse are Major spells.
Mythic	Mythic spells are the stuff of fairytale and legend. They can affect huge objects, areas, and many targets in spectacular ways. Moving a mountain, putting a city into a magic slumber, summoning a herd of elephants, or quelling a hurricane would be Mythic spells.  Mythic spells tend to suffer dramatic complications.

Spell Power	Example Complications
Minor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The spell also produces a colorful, brilliant lights.</li> <li>2. The spell also produces a loud whistle, pop, or other sound.</li> <li>3. The spell targets an ally as well.</li> <li>4. The spell requires an additional minute to cast.</li> <li>5. The spell also summons a hundred square paces of thorny rose briar.</li> <li>6. The spell also conjures a small thunderstorm.</li> <li>7. The spell strikes fear in all who can see you.</li> </ol>
Major	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You are also targeted by the spell.</li> <li>2. The spell requires an animal sacrifice.</li> <li>3. The spell summons an unfriendly demon, fairy, or other spirit.</li> <li>4. The spell translocates you 1d6 minutes in time.</li> <li>5. The spell translocates you 1d6 paces in space.</li> <li>6. The spell erases a treasured memory. What is it?</li> <li>7. The spell disrupts an ally’s magic.</li> </ol>



Mythic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The spell requires a human sacrifice.</li> <li>2. The spell is indefinite until broken by true love's kiss.</li> <li>3. The magic of the spell indefinitely warps you. How?</li> <li>4. The spell offends an archdemon, great fairy, or other powerful spirit.</li> <li>5. This is black magic. It is mortally forbidden by the Order of Magi.</li> <li>6. The spell translocates everyone present in time.</li> <li>7. The spell translocates everyone present in space.</li> </ol>
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Hermetic magic has a couple of fundamental limits.

### Limit of the Divine

Hermetic spells cannot affect the Divine. Magic is powerless against true miracles.

People and places touched by the Divine such as angels, mystics, and holy locations may have some resistance to magic but are not completely immune. See Mighty Creatures for such mechanics.

### Limit of Connection

Magi must have a connection to the target of their spells. This could be through direct observation or a sympathetic connection. A sympathetic connection might be soil from a targeted location, hair from a targeted animal, or a close personal belonging of a targeted person.

### Limit of Impermanence

Spells naturally end when the first dawn breaks after they are cast. Objects created by magic disappear. Targets transformed or controlled by magic return to a natural state.

A spell's duration can be extended by spending a raw magical resource called viz.

Duration	Pawns of Viz Required
Until dawn	None
A week	1
A season	2
A year	3
Indefinitely	4

**Wounds:** Whenever a character is damaged, such as from dragon fire or a crossbow bolt, the character marks down a wound. After receiving three wounds, magi and companions are incapacitated. Groggs who suffer three wounds die.

Wounds hinder characters. Whenever you roll for a wounded character, subtract one die.

**Preoccupation:** Other than adventuring in stories, players can also spend seasons improving their characters or advancing a long term project.

Study: Magi can gain a new magical art by spending (1 + their existing number of arts) seasons studying in their library.

Craft: Magi can spend a season creating a supernatural object. Constructing a supernatural object requires a season of time, a mystical ingredient, and raw magical resource called viz.

The mystical ingredient usually obtained in a story. Boots of flight might require griffon feathers. A cap of invisibility could require asphodel flowers from Hades. An ever-burning blade might require fire lit from the sword of the angel guarding Eden.

Like spells, supernatural objects have three levels of power and are created with a spell roll.

- On a success, the item is created without accident.
- On a mixed success, the player creates the item but it has a drawback.
- On a failure, the item is not created, the season is wasted, the viz is consumed, but the mystical ingredient is **not** destroyed.

Item Power	Viz Required
Minor	4
Major	8
Mythic	12

Example Drawbacks
The item requires 50% more viz to complete.
The item is unstable and has 1d6 chance of exploding whenever used.
The item requires a pawn of viz every time it's used.
The item only works in daylight.
The item requires an additional season to complete.

Master a Spell: Magi can spend the season perfecting a specific spell such as throwing a fireball, summoning light, or identifying magic. The magus gains a Virtue which grants an advantage when casting this specific spell.

The magus must invent a name for the spell. For example, "Alfred's Wind Wobbler."

Scribe Spell: Magi can spend a season writing a spell into a velum scroll, tattoo, or papyrus. Companions and grogs can use these scribed spells by reading them aloud.

When a scribed spell is used, the author maga makes a spell roll as if she had cast it. The result of the roll affects the user of the scribed spell.

Recover: By resting for a season, a character can heal one wound.

Reconnoiter: A character can spend a season exploring a territory. The character becomes skilled at navigating through the area and can roll to discover one of the following:

- The location and nature of one aura in the territory (if any)
- The lair, habits, and type of one powerful magical beast (if any)
- The location and history of one hidden site, ruin, or dungeon (if any)

Gossip: A character can spend a season gabbing, spying, and information-gathering. The character can roll to learn circulating rumors, local trivia, and legends.

Develop Virtue: A companion or grog can obtain a new Virtue by spending (1 + current number of Virtues) seasons training, plotting, and studying.

Developing a new Virtue requires a mystical ingredient which is usually obtained in a story. The *Skin-changer* Virtue might require a werewolf bite. Becoming *Ageless* could require discovering the fountain of youth. The *Martial Expert* Virtue might require training from the Byzantine hero Basil of Digenes Akritas.

Architect: Characters can oversee large-scale building projects. Whether erecting a pyramid, castle, or dikeworks, construction is challenging. It requires labor, time, and a roll to succeed.

The labor is measured in the size of the human polity required to create the construction. The actual source could be hired artisans, mountain trolls, or golems. More challenging projects require more labor and time.

The size and nature of a construction determines its challenge: Minor, Major, or Mythic. Construction should be an interesting puzzle. The storyguide can negotiate with a player to trade scale for challenge, labor for time, or allow other creative work-arounds.



Each season spent advancing the project, the character overseeing the construction should make a roll. On a success, the project's clock is advanced. On failure, the labor and season of time is wasted.

Finished constructions can be given supernatural properties and powers by magi by crafting them into supernatural objects or by casting spells onto the constructions.

Challenge	Scale	Labor	Time
Minor	Minor constructions are of moderate scale.  A palisade, library, well-equipped smithy, glazery, dike, bridge, and local shrine are all Minor constructions.	village	1 season
Major	Major constructions are grand in scale.  A baron's castle, cathedral, city wall, fortress bridge, lighthouse, high tower, and the Venetian Arsenal are all Major constructions.	county	3 seasons
Mythic	Mythic constructions are of fantastic scale.  The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Colossus of Rhodes, Giza Pyramid, Tower of Babel, and city of Laputa are Mythic constructions.	kingdom	9 seasons

### Auras:

Otherworldly auras influence some special locations. The Avernus crater, Golgotha in Jerusalem, and the heart of Tiveden forest have Infernal, Divine, and Fey auras respectively.

An aura influences spells cast within it:

- Inside an Infernal aura, add one die to spell rolls.
- Inside a Divine aura, subtract one die from spell rolls.
- Inside a Fey aura, add or subtract a die to spell rolls depending on the fairies' whim.

An aura's strength may be Minor, Major, or Mythic. Based on the strength, the aura may possess additional effects. See the Aura Tables for examples.

### Mighty Creatures:

A few legendary creatures like dragons, demons, or saints possess innate resistance to magic and harm. This is represented by Might points.

When a Mighty creature would be damaged or be subject to a spell, that creature can spend one Might point to resist the effects instead. Mighty creatures regain all spent points at the end of the season.

## Magi Character Sheet

**Name:** *Character Name*

### Attributes

Esoterics	Brawn	Finesse	Wit
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*Assign 2, 1, 1, 0 to these attributes.*

**Wounds:**

**Challenge:** *Minor / Major / Mythic*

### Magical Arts

Verbs	Nouns
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*Pick one verb and one noun*

### Concept

*Where is your character from? What clichés do they evoke? What motivates them?*

### Story Burden

*Pick one. This characteristic motivates your character and can be fulfilled by some accomplishment.*

### Virtues

*Pick one. This characteristic generally helps your character.*

## Companion Character Sheet

**Name:** *Character Name*

### Attributes

Esoterics	Brawn	Finesse	Wit
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*Assign 2, 1, 1, 0 to these attributes.*

**Wounds:**

**Challenge:** *Minor / Major / Mythic*

### Concept

*Where is your character from? What clichés do they evoke? What motivates them?*

### Story Burden

*Pick one. This characteristic motivates your character and can be fulfilled by some accomplishment.*

### Virtues

*Pick four. These characteristics generally help your character.*

## Grog Character Sheet

**Name:** *Character Name*

### Attributes

Esoterics	Brawn	Finesse	Wit
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*Assign 2, 1, 1, 0 to these attributes.*

### Wounds:

**Challenge:** *Minor / Major / Mythic*

### Concept

*Where is your character from? What clichés do they evoke? What motivates them?*

### Virtues

*Pick three. These characteristics generally help your character.*

**Character's Hoard**

*Track viz, valuables, and magic items here.*

## Virtues

*This is a big list of virtues your character might take. Feel free to pick some or invent your own.*

Highborn: Your character has high social status, equivalent to a baron or other noble. You have an advantage when intimidating or commanding your social inferiors.

Theologian: Your character has uncommon insight into the nature of the Divine and the history of theological thinking. Your character's opinion may be respected by clerical authorities.

Diabolist: You have uncommon knowledge of demons, fiends, and other infernal creatures. You may know many demons' habits, weaknesses, and powers.

Polyglot: You have a special talent for learning languages. Your character knows three additional languages and is skilled at interpreting unknown languages.

Lawyer: Your character has studied civil, canon, or common law at university. They can interpret relevant laws and recall precedents.

Athlete: Your character is fit and excellent at running, leaping, and other physical feats.

Troubadour: Your character is a talented poet, musician, or singer. They can compose and perform with uncommon skill.

Liberal Arts: Your character studied at the university of Paris, Bologna, or some other school. They've read the classics and learned of music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.

Silvertongue: Your character is blessed with charm and rhetoric. They excel at persuasion and deception.

Martial Expert: Your character is an excellent warrior with an advantage in any fight. Knights, students of the sword, and other combat specialists recognise your knowledge and tactical ability.

Armored: Your character owns expensive armor. Once per story when you would receive damage, you can use this virtue to avoid suffering a wound.

Berserker: A mad rage runs in your blood. Once per season, you can channel your rage to accomplish a super-human feat of strength like smashing down a castle gate, catching a ballista bolt, or throwing a mountain troll.



Walking Arsenal: Your character collects and studies weapons of every kind. You are skilled with the use of these weapons and have any non-magical dagger, poleaxe, flail, or other weapon you might reasonably transport.

Sneakthief: Your character has experience in lockpicking, stealth, and second story work. You have an advantage on any roll related to thievery.

Wealthy: Owning land, herds, or credit at the Templar's banks, your character is as wealthy as a baron or prosperous merchant lord. You have any non-magical prop which fits your lifestyle. Once per year, you can spend this virtue to alter the plot. For example, buying a ship or paying a bribe to a high official.

Skinchanger: You have the power to transform into a specific beast such as a bear, eagle, or dolphin. Any wounds you receive in this form persist after the end of the transformation.

Jager: Your character is an experienced stalker and hunter of beasts. You are at home in the wilderness and have an advantage at survival in them.

Medical Leech: You are a trained physician who has studied Galen, Aristotle's humors, and all the best medical authorities. You have an advantage in healing the sick or creating medicines.

Poisoner: You are skilled at the mixing of deadly tinctures, fumes, and powders. Whether to sicken, sedate, or kill you have an advantage in creating and using poisons.

Haggler: You are hard to deceive and an able negotiator. You can accurately appraise merchandise, estimate prices, and often execute profitable trades.

Artisan: You are skilled in masonry, blacksmithing, book-binding, or some other craft. You have the materials of your trade and the respect of your guild.

Historian: You are a learned student of Herodotus, Livy, and other writers. A scribbler yourself, you've started a comprehensive documentation of your own time.

Geographer: You have the tools and training of a mapmaker. You are able to survey and map new territories and also have an expert's knowledge of local or documented topography.

Natural Philosopher: You have an insightful eye for the workings of Nature. Mechanical devices, non-magical phenomena, and empirical deduction come naturally to you.

Bookish: You've read all the books. You have an advantage in recalling ancient lore and quoting literature.

Animal Friendship: Woodland creatures are naturally at ease in your presence. They do not fear you, understand your words, and even perform small tasks you request of them.

Beast Speech: You possess an innate ability to speak to and understand the language of birds, beasts, and other animals.

Lucky: Once per season, you can spend your luck to retry one roll.

Guardian Spirit: A ghost, angel, or other spirit watches over you. Sometimes fearsome, melancholy, or narrow-minded, this guardian is ultimately an ally.

Friend of the Fairies: You have a fey benefactor, friend, or lover. Sometimes tricksome, this friend is ultimately an ally.

Second Sight: You have an innate power to perceive the invisible world. Fairies, ghosts, demons, and other supernatural creatures may not hide from your vision.

Giant: You are physically huge. Perhaps a descendent of giants or enlarged by magical mishap?

Yeoman: Born of hardy peasant stock, you are one of the common people. You are welcomed and trusted by the humble and poor of the world.

Prophetic: On rare occasions, you receive uncontrolled visions of the future. Arriving through dreams, ravings, or via magic chickens these omens of the future are troubling but often useful.

Ordained: You have been ordained into the Church, graduated from rabbinical school, or otherwise been recognised as a member of your religion.

Ageless: The passing of years does not age you. You are not immortal and may be killed by wound or spell, but the infirmity of old age will never harm you.

Subtle Murderer: You are an expert at stealthily killing. You can conceal a small blade through any search and have an advantage when silently injuring enemies.

Spell Resistance: Somehow, you've gain an innate resistance to magic. Once per story, you can use this Virtue to defeat the power of a spell targeting you.

Chimera Wings: Through some quirk of heritage or magic, you have great feathered wings. Your powerful muscles and light bones allow you to fly at a runner's pace.

## Story Burdens

*This is a big list of burdens your character might take. Feel free to pick one or invent your own.*

Great Ambition: You have a great work or deed you must accomplish to carve your name in legend and history.

Quest: You have accepted a nigh impossible quest. The consequences for failure are unthinkable and you must pursue the task to the earth's end or beyond.

Haunting Fear: Your character is deathly frightened of someone or something. Probably for good reason.

Blatant Gift: Your character is ominous and witchy, even for a magi. Ordinary people and animals are unsettled by your presence and fear you.

Excommunicant: Your character has been exiled from the organized Church. You are shunned by most of the faithful and tempting prey for demons.

Cursed: Your character suffers from a powerful curse which limits them in some way. The curse's bestower may still be alive and the conditions of its relief may seem impossible.

Fated Death: A prophecy has specified how you will die. As its omens near, this flaw will make it difficult to escape your doom.

Outlaw: Branded or infamous as a criminal, you have no protection of the law. The authorities searching for you might even announce a bounty for your head.

Dark Bargain: You've made a terrible pact with an evil being. The fiend, fairie, or other creature you owe cruelly holds you to your debt.

Usurped: Your rightful inheritance was stolen. Somewhere, the thief enjoys property, privileges, or something else which belongs to you.

Orphan: Your parents are dead or lost. Some mission drives you to find them, revenge them, or fulfill a task they left incomplete.

Moon-cursed: The full moon causes you to transform into a wild creature. In this form, you inspire fear and may not be able to control your actions.

Mutated by Magic: The power of your spells is slowly changing you into something inhuman. Every magical mishap advances this affliction.

Feud: A rivalry with a colleague, dispute with a family, or long-held grievance drives you. Your enemy is capable and crafty, but you must overcome or make peace with them.

## **Bestiary**

*Creatures are mostly flavor, but might possess Might or special abilities*

### Loyal Mutt

The loyal mutt is a very good dog. Happy and eager to please, this short-snouted slobberer loves to fetch, play, and chase rabbits.

*Favorite Person:* The loyal mutt can recognise their owner through any disguise or illusion.

*Mostly Obedient:* The loyal mutt's owner may make a roll to command the animal to fetch, roll over, or complete similar tasks. Add a bonus die to the roll.

### Fafnir

Fafnir is a tremendous, evil serpent. Slithering on his long belly, Fafnir has sharp teeth, armored scales, and poisonous breath.

Incorrigible and greedy, Fafnir was once a human. Fafnir murdered his father and hoarded stolen treasure in the remote depths of Myrkviðr forest. Eventually, this draconic behavior transformed his body. Fafnir still remembers his days as a human and sometimes likes to reminisce with visitors.

*Mighty:* Fafnir has three Might points which he can use to avoid damage or defeat spells.

*Poison Breath:* Fafnir can exhale a cloud of poison which is deadly to anyone caught in it.

*Heartblood:* Tasting the blood from Fafnir's heart gives the taster the permanent ability to understand the language of animals. The taster gains the *Virtue Beast Speech*.

*Source of Magic:* Every season that Fafnir lives, one coin in his hoard is imbued with raw magic. This coin can be drained by a magi to produce one pawn of viz.

### Jago the Spriggan

Jago is a stone fairy. A tin miner by trade, Jago appears to be a wizened old man wandering dark pits and underground tunnels.

Naturally irritable, if Jago is too annoyed then he'll use his pickaxe to knock sense into heads.

*Earth Walk:* Jago can effortlessly travel through stone, dirt, and other earth.

*Prospect:* Jago is exceptionally skilled at appraising the quality of ore, identifying varieties of minerals, and other mining-related tasks.

*Source of Magic:* Every year, one of Jago's hairs is charged with raw magic. This hair can be drained to produce one pawn of viz.

### Mephistopheles

Mephistopheles is an arch-tempter and devil of Hell. He was one of the original rebels cast out with Lucifer. Ever since, he's slunk around the Earth sowing mischief and discord. He is motivated by entertainment and impulse rather than planned malice.

Mephistopheles is a powerful fiend but cannot directly contradict the Divine. Frustratingly for him, Mephistopheles often must leave loopholes in his contracts to respect the free will of his mortal clients.

*Mighty:* Mephistopheles has a single Might point that he can use to avoid damage or defeat spells.

*Incarnate:* Mephistopheles is a pure spirit and does not have a permanent body. He creates a material form to interact with creatures on Earth. Mephistopheles can discard this conjured flesh to travel insubstantially through the invisible world.

*Dealmaker:* Mephistopheles's great pleasure is luring humans into corrupt bargains. He can create any illusion or draw on the vast resources of Hell to offer tempting agreements.

### Gorgon

One of two surviving sisters with vipers for hair. The Gorgon is a monster with bladed claws, poisonous fangs, and an appetite for flesh. Ever since their sister Medusa was killed by a Greek hero, the Gorgons have nursed a special hatred for humanity.

*Petrifying Gaze* - any creature who directly looks at the Gorgon begins turning into stone. The Gorgon's head keeps this power even if severed from its body.

*Source of Magic:* When a Gorgon devours a human, the bones of the victim are imbued with raw magic resource. Each set of bodily remains can be drained to produce a pawn of viz.

### Thermae Ghost

The restless spirit of a heathen bather. The semi-nude spirit of this Roman haunts the bathhouse where it died. The ghost is just as boisterous and protective of its ablutions in death as it was in life. The ghost generally tries to expel strangers from its bathhouse but might befriend the truly expert bather.

*Ethereal:* The ghost can become invisible and pass through objects at will. A projection of a human soul, the bath ghost is immune to physical harm.



*Command Steam:* The ghost can conjure steam in any quantity and any temperature. In a fight, the ghost will try to scald its enemies with blasts of steam.

*Proper Burial:* Consecrating the bodily remains of the ghost to the Divine ends its manifestation in the material world.

### Ash Wraith

This swirling cloud of flame and ash is animated by a captured spirit. Created by a spell, this monster is an unintelligent but powerful servant. The necromantic magic ties a suffering human soul to burning ash and is frowned upon by right-thinking magi.

Bound to material ash, the creature can be dissipated by physical attack or by spell.

*Fiery Lash:* The wraith lashes out and attempts to burn a character.

*Combustible Cloud:* The wraith fills a twenty-foot radius with a cloud of partially burned soot. Vision is obscured in this cloud and any open flame within causes the cloud to explosively ignite.

*Proper Burial:* Consecrating the ash or other bodily remains of the spirit to the Divine frees the soul and destroys the wraith.

### Cadwalader

Cadwalader is a gigantic red dragon sleeping beneath the Welsh county of Caerleon. A creature of extreme heat, his scaly coat glows at the temperature of molten iron. The dragon's claws, toothy maw, and sky-spanning wings are weapons more fearsome than an entire Roman legion.

Cadwalader does not fear mundane opponents - only magi, heroic companions, or very lucky grogs can hope to harm him.

*Mighty:* Cadwalader has five Might points which he can use to avoid damage or defeat spells.

*Earthshaker:* With a tremendous stomp, Cadwalader creates a minor earthquake. Characters should roll to avoid being knocked over. Buildings and other structures might collapse.

*Breath of Fire:* Cadwalader can exhale a breath of fire, engulfing a hundred-foot radius.

*Source of Magic:* One apple tree in Cadwalader's domain produces a golden apple each summer. The raw magic in this apple can be extracted to produce a pawn of viz.

### Plague Herald

This skeletal rider is cloaked in rags and filth. It rings a bell as it stalks the landscape, tolling the coming of pestilence wherever the Plague Herald wanders.

*Sound of Disease:* Any creature which hears the Plague Herald's bell must roll or be infected with maddening pox, leprosy, or some other horrible disease.

### Mirror Knight

A silent warrior is made entirely of silver glass, enchanted by an unknown maga or magus. It reflects images strangely and is nearly invisible in moonlight.

*Spell Mirror:* Any spell targeting the Mirror Knight is reflected back on the caster.

*Fragile:* Any physical attack on the Mirror Knight has advantage.

### Cacklerook: The Grimoire Crow

This large, intelligent crow steals magical texts and scrolls, fastening them to her wings. Cacklerook can speak her stolen spells aloud, casting them with chaotic effects.

Cacklerook is conceited, vainglorious, and susceptible to flattery. She's hostile if pressed, but could also share her stolen texts with a friendly maga or magus - or even consent to become a familiar to a kindred spirit.

*Magical Magpie:* Cacklerook has an eclectic stash of magical scribbles. She could have a clue to one of the troupe's current predicaments.

*Stolen Magic:* When Cacklerook improvises a spell, randomly select one of the following:

1. Cacklerook suffers a Minor Complication.
2. Cacklerook suffers a Major Complication.
3. Cacklerook casts Fireball.
4. Cacklerook casts Invisibility on herself.
5. Cacklerook casts Flesh to Clay.
6. Cacklerook casts Swarm of Worms.

### Catalog of Supernatural Objects

*Some examples of possible supernatural objects. Feel free to use, alter, or create your own.*

Lion Torc: (Major) This golden torc transforms its wearer into a 400 lb African lion. A character's number of wounds are not altered by transforming into a lion or back to their original form.

Adiabatic Sword: (Minor) This leaf-shaped bronze sword was forged by bog elves. Its temperature is impossible to alter - always exactly the body temperature of its wielder.

Deva's Lamp: (Major) This small lamp shines like moonlight and burns quicksilver instead of oil. In its glow it is impossible to knowingly lie.

Galantine: (Major w/ Drawback) This beautiful arming sword has an emblem of the midday sun on its pommel. This magic weapon gives advantage on attacks made in daylight. In darkness or at night, rolls to use Galantine have disadvantage.

Warg Mask: (Major) This wooden mask allows its wearer to borrow the senses of any mundane animal the wearer can see through it.

When the wearer takes over the senses of an animal, she or he perceives everything the animal does and controls its actions. This magic lasts until the wearer releases it, during which time the wearer is unaware of their own surroundings.

Echoing Lyre: (Minor) This turtleshell lyre allows the player to perfectly reproduce any sound they have heard before - even if the player has only the faintest memory of it.

Moon Veil: (Major w/ Drawback) This silk gauze causes its wearer to become invisible in moonlight.

Coat of Icarus: (Major) This mottle-feathered cloak can transform into powerful wings. The wearer can use the Coat of Icarus to fly at a runner's pace through the air.

Flight Stone of Laputa: (Mythic) This carved obelisk levitates all material within a one mile radius. By placing a hand on the Flight Stone, a character can move all levitated material in any direction at the pace of a galloping horse.

This mythic object was used to suspend and move the Flying City of Laputa.

## Formulae

*Some examples of possible spells. Many could be cast with different arts or altered to suit your game.*

### Wizard Eyes (Major Intelligo Vim)

This spell allows a creature to see the invisible world. Fairies, ghosts, demons, and other supernatural creatures may not hide from your vision.

### Stammer (Minor Perdo Mentam)

This spell causes a targeted creature to forget what they were going to say. It grants advantage to intimidate or persuade the target.

### Inspire Fear (Minor Creo Mentam)

Causes overwhelming fear in a targeted creature. The caster chooses the cause and nature of the fear.

### Hidden Patience (Minor Perdo Imaginem)

Causes a creature to become invisible so long as they remain motionless and in place. Any substantial movement ends the enchantment.

### Invisibility (Major Perdo Imaginem)

Causes a creature to become invisible.

### Greater Vanishing (Mythic Perdo Imaginem)

Cause any structure, creatures, or area that the caster can see to become invisible. If cast from a mountaintop, then this spell could cause an entire country to vanish from sight.

### Destroy Phantom (Variable Perdo Imaginem)

Dispels one illusion of any kind. The power of Destroy Phantom is equal to the power of the targeted illusion.

### Eagle Eyes (Minor Intelligo Imaginem)

You gain the vision of an eagle and can see at great distances clearly.

### Minor Illusion (Minor Creo Imaginem)

You create an illusion of one creature, small object, or small area. This illusion is perceptual only - it doesn't affect material reality.

### Major Illusion (Major Creo Imaginem)

You create an illusion of a group of creatures, a large object, or a large area. This illusion is perceptual only - it doesn't affect material reality.

### Mirage (Mythic Creo Imaginem)

You transform the appearance of the landscape for as far as you can see. Desert can be made into a lush oasis, a mountain can be placed into a rolling plain, or a bayou turned into a flat steppe.

Since this only affects the perception and not the physical reality of the landscape, areas enchanted by a Mirage are often very difficult to navigate.

#### Loquacious Visage (Minor *Creo Imaginem*)

You conjure an illusion of a spectral head. This apparition recites any message the caster pre-records.

#### Eclipse (Mythic *Perdo Ignem*)

You darken the sun over the whole Earth. The climate, cultural, and political impact depends on your game. 😊

#### Darkness (Major *Perdo Ignem*)

The caster fills an area they can see with ink-black darkness. No light may pass through the targeted area.

#### Extinguish Life (Minor *Perdo Ignem*)

You weaken the fire of life within one creature. The target is wounded as frost leaches through their body.

#### Extinguish Lives (Major *Perdo Ignem*)

You weaken the fire of life in a dozen or fewer creatures that you can see. The targets are wounded as frost leaches through their bodies.

#### Fireball (Major *Creo Ignem*)

You throw a ball of flame which explodes in a twenty pace radius.

#### Throw Fire (Minor *Creo Ignem*)

You throw a handful of flames at a single creature.

#### Conjure Light (Minor *Creo Ignem*)

The caster conjures a magical lamp light.

#### Scry through Fire (Major *Intelligo Ignem*)

Allows the caster to see through any fire that they have a Connection to. A pinch of ashes from a fireplace, brazier, or candle is sufficient to provide a connection.

#### Scry through Water (Major *Intelligo Aquam*)

Allows the caster to see through any pool of water they have a Connection to. A thimbleful of water from a specific lake, bay, or basin is sufficient to provide a connection.

See through Stone (Minor *Intelligo Terram*)

Allows the caster to see through any stone wall or barrier.

Awaken Tree (Major *Creo Mentam Herbam*)

The caster transforms an oak, willow, or other tree into an intelligent, ambulatory leshy.

The awakened creature obeys the caster's commands but becomes increasingly self-aware over time.

Awaken the Forest (Mythic *Creo Mentam Herbam*)

The caster transforms an entire forest into a single animated intelligence. The awakened forest can move any limb, vine, or other plant within itself and can perceive any area under its boughs. The awakened forest obeys the caster's commands but becomes increasingly self-aware over time.

Ensnare (Minor *Regio Herbam*)

The caster animates a nearby bush, vine, or other plant life to seize a creature.

Entangle (Major *Regio Herbam*)

The caster animates nearby trees, vines, or other plant life to seize a dozen or fewer creatures.

Conjure Bouquet (Minor *Creo Herbam*)

The caster conjures a bouquet of roses, daffodils, or other flowers.

Toady Transformation (Major *Muto Corpus Animal*)

The caster transforms one person into a common toad. Wounds or even fatal injuries suffered in toad form persist when the transformation ends.

Spider's Climb (Minor *Muto Corpus Animal*)

The caster transforms a person - giving them a spider-like ability to climb sheer surfaces.

Bear's Strength (Minor *Muto Corpus Animal*)

The caster transforms a person - giving them a bear's hulking musculature and an advantage on feats of strength.

Cat's Fall (Minor *Muto Corpus Animal*)

The caster transforms a person - giving them an ability to fall uninjured from any height and an advantage on feats of acrobatics.



Wither (Major *Perdo Herbam*)

The caster kills all plant life within twenty paces.

Greater Wither (Mythic *Perdo Herbam*)

Using a leaf, branch, or sap as a Connection to a particular forest, the caster kills all plant life in the targeted forest.

Ward Against Demon (Variable *Regio Vim*)

The caster bars a location to infernal creatures. The power depends on the strength of the barred creatures: Minor for imps, Major for ordinary fiends, and Mythic for archdemons.

Ward Against Fairy (Variable *Regio Vim*)

The caster bars a location to fey creatures. The power depends on the strength of the barred creatures: Minor for sprites, Major for ordinary fey, and Mythic for great fairies.

Disenchant (Variable *Perdo Vim*)

The caster destroys the magic of one supernatural object, rendering it mundane and powerless. The power of this spell is equal to the power of the targeted object.

Break Charm (Variable *Perdo Vim*)

The caster dispels one magical effect. The power of this spell is equal to the power of the targeted magic.

Identify (Minor *Intelligo Vim*)

The caster discovers the exact abilities and powers of one supernatural object.

Curse of Lear (Minor *Perdo Corpus*)

You blind a single person.

Curse of St. Auditus (Minor *Perdo Corpus*)

You deafen a single person.

Curse of Igles (Minor *Perdo Corpus*)

You still the tongue of a single person, rendering them mute.

Still the Heart (Minor *Regio Corpus*)

The caster temporarily halts a person's heartbeat, placing them in a deathlike state. While the target is enchanted, the progression of aging, poison, and disease are paused.

Compel Silence (Major *Perdo Mentem*)

The caster silences an entire group, preventing them from speaking, shouting, or otherwise vocalizing.

Witch's Ladder (Minor *Creo Herbam*)

The caster conjures a ladder from entwined vines and branches, allowing safe ascent or descent in forests, over cliffs, or in other areas.

Chalice of Truth (Minor *Muto Mentem Aquam*)

The caster turns a chalice of wine, beer, or other alcoholic drink into a truth serum. A creature which consumes the serum cannot knowingly lie.

Lament on the Wind (Major *Muto Mentem Auram*)

The caster enchants the wind to carry a sorrowful sound that induces despair in all those who hear it. Any creature which can hear the wind blow is demoralized.

Quicksilver Armor (Minor *Creo Regio Terram*)

The caster conjures a suit of gleaming, liquid metal armor that moves over their body like a second skin. This armor grants advantage to resist any physical attack.

Guardian's Vigil (Minor *Rego Corpus*)

The caster grants a person the ability to remain awake and alert without fatigue, ideal for sentries or prolonged watches.

Flesh to Clay (Major *Muto Corpus Terram*)

The caster transforms a person's body partially or fully into hardened clay. The transformed portions of their body are paralyzed but the other portions of their body function normally.

Murmur of the Deep (Minor *Intelligo Terram*)

The caster listens to the earth and learns of any secrets beneath the ground - whether hidden tunnels, buried treasure, or even the creeping of enemies below.

Fruit of a Poisoned Mind (Major *Muto Herbam Mentem*)

The caster transforms a tree, bush, or other plant causing it to bear poisonous fruit. This fruit induces madness in any who consume it.

Plague Breath (Major *Perdo Corpus Auram*)

The caster exhales a cloud of diseased air, infecting any creature who breathes in the cloud with fever, coughing, and feebleness.

Shroud of Silence (Minor *Rego Auram*)

The caster creates an area of perfect silence. No sound can be created in the area by voice, instrument, or other means.

False Face (Minor *Muto Imaginem Corpus*)

You transform your facial appearance to that of another person known or invented by you.

Icebound Knight (Major *Creo Aquam Corpus*)

You conjure a frozen servant: a knight of animate, crystalline ice. This creature obeys simple instructions from the caster but is otherwise mindless.

Riddled by Rust (Minor *Perdo Terram*)

You whisper a riddle to a mundane metal object, causing it to decay to rust instantly.

Light of the Fallen (Major *Creo Imaginem Mentam*)

You light a black-flamed candle atop the skull of a corpse. The candle flame reveals the last thoughts of the deceased.

Swarm of Worms (Major *Creo Animal*)

You conjure a swarm of hungry, biting worms. Emerging from the earth, these worms devour any organic matter that you direct them to - leaving only bones behind.

Phantom Feast (Major *Creo Imaginem*)

The caster conjures an illusory banquet of delicious food and drink that overwhelms the senses. Anyone partaking of it is convinced they are full, though no nourishment is truly gained.

Famine Incarnate (Mythic *Creo Vim*)

The caster summons Famine, the fiendish embodiment of hunger and third rider of the Apocalypse. An archdemon, Famine consumes flesh and soul alike.

If the spell is fully successful, then Famine may be unsummoned at will. If not fully successful, then he is free to devour all in his path.

### Aura Effect Tables

Fey Aura	
<b>Minor</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If paid with sweets, brownies complete your housework overnight.</li> <li>2. Occasionally you hear the giggling of an invisible audience.</li> <li>3. Forests, fields, and rivers are supernaturally abundant with fruit, grain, and flesh.</li> </ol>
<b>Major</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local animals are intelligent and capable of human speech.</li> <li>2. Plants grow precious gemstones instead of fruits or flowers.</li> <li>3. Fairy riders hunt poachers who enter their woods.</li> </ol>
<b>Mythic</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When you leave this aura, roll a die. On 6 six, only one minute has passed outside. On a 5, one hour. On a 4, one day. On a 3, one season. On a 2, one year. On a 1, a century.</li> <li>2. The food within this aura is supernaturally delicious. If you eat so much as a pomegranate seed, then mundane food becomes as unappetizing as ash to you.</li> <li>3. Any promise or bargain made here is unbreakable.</li> </ol>

Infernal Aura	
<b>Minor</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blood doesn't clot and wounds never heal in this aura.</li> <li>2. Creatures who sleep here suffer nightmares of their deepest guilts.</li> <li>3. An unhealthy miasma dims all light and disadvantages rolls to resist disease.</li> </ol>
<b>Major</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Speaking of a devil summons it.</li> <li>2. Here ghosts of the damned invisibly suffer. Offerings of wine allow them to speak.</li> <li>3. Animals sacrificed here have their innards filled with hellish gold.</li> </ol>
<b>Mythic</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Any murder inside the aura extends the life of the murderer by one year.</li> <li>2. Exiting the aura requires permission of the stern Underworld judges.</li> <li>3. Any creature killed here rises as a vengeful revenant.</li> </ol>

Divine Aura	
<b>Minor</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Minor miracles are granted when requested by the faithful.</li> <li>2. No magical power can cause fear or influence minds here.</li> <li>3. Touching the relic at the heart of this aura breaks any Minor spell.</li> </ol>
<b>Major</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cusswords are divinely censored and replaced with bowdlerized euphemisms.</li> <li>2. Creatures inside the aura do not hunger, tire, or age.</li> <li>3. All speech inside the aura is perceived as one's native language.</li> </ol>
<b>Mythic</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Violence is impossible inside the aura.</li> <li>2. Any creature who speaks a name of the Divine is smote. Usually with lightning.</li> <li>3. Creatures spend more than 9 hours here stop aging. They gain the Ageless Virtue.</li> </ol>

## Playing the Game

The three pillars of Ars Minimae games are spell-casting puzzles, exploration, and character roleplay.

Combat and many other challenges can be resolved by finding a clever way to use the player's limited magical arts to create a suitable spell. The unpredictability of magic adds tension and gives non-magi an opportunity to help.

Here an example of how this could be played by a story guide and group of three players: Adam, Julie, and Rachael.

*While exploring a mysterious system of caves, our players' troupe is trapped by a tunnel collapse. In the darkness, the player Adam proposes that his magus Patroculus use his art "Creo Ignem" to create light. The story guide advises this is a minor spell.*

*Adam has Esoterics 2, so he rolls two dice. The highest is a 5. The story guide offers success with a complication. His spell produces a magical flame but will also slowly exhaust the breathable air in the tunnels. Adam accepts the bargain.*

*The troupe continues exploring and eventually looks towards the story guide for a twist. The guide makes a move, telling the group that the player Julie's grog Barbara Bowleg is short of breath. The troupe is slowly suffocating.*

*Adam considers putting out the magic fire, but would prefer to keep the light. No one has a "Muto Ignem" or "Regio Auram" spell which could transform the fire or circulate fresh air. Eventually, the player Rachael proposes that her magi Sylvestra uses her art "Perdo Vim" to remove the magic fire's consumption of air. The story guide advises this is also a minor spell and Rachael makes an Esoterics roll using two dice.*

*The dice show two sixes - a critical success. The story guide narrates as the magic fire transforms into an insubstantial witchlight. The cold-white gleam catches on an arrow scratched into the tunnel walls. A clue to the cavern's exit?*

This example illustrates another pillar of play. Exploring fantastic environments is a core part of playing the game. Characters should trek through sulfurous swamps, visit midnight goblin revels, and storm the stronghold of Chernabog's cultists. An interesting setting gives players an opportunity to express their characters and fulfill their motivations. Ars Minimae is inspired by mythic and medieval games, but don't let history get in the way of fun.

Along with story burdens and an adventurous temperament, rewards should be an important reason to explore the world. Magi should want viz to increase the duration of

their spells or to craft magical objects. All characters should want mystical ingredients to advance. Avoid handing out too much though. Magi should never feel like they have quite enough viz. Mystic ingredients should be hard-sought. Even mundane wealth should feel like a satisfying triumph.

The final pillar of Ars Minimae is character roleplay. Players create characters with unique virtues, burdens, and magical arts. They should have fun concepts and be enjoyable to play. Stories should have non-player characters to interact with, persuade, and struggle against. The social interactions are important and should add to the natural rapport between players.

Characters as well as the troupe as a whole progress over time. Magi gain new magical arts through study. Companions or even grogs obtain magic items or develop new virtues. Story burdens are overcome. Long-term projects are completed. Part of the game is choosing between different ways to progress and creating a sense of advancement over time.

The troupe can also progress together. Threats to their home can be defeated. Local authorities and powers can be swayed into alliances. Monstrous *sources of magic* can be discovered and tamed. The troupe's home can be protected or enhanced with indefinite spells.

The characters and their adventures should become sagas remembered for ages.



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