REVISED BASIC MECHANICS FOR AMBER

SORCERY

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Based on Erick Wujcik's AMBER DICELESS Roleplaying Game

Foreword

This small e-book presents an alternate Sorcery system for the *Amber Diceless* RPG. Although is has been specifically designed for use with the alternate REBMA rules, it can easily be adapted to the official *Amber Diceless* game system.

Unlike the basic REBMA mechanics, this variant system takes some serious liberties with the Amber « canon » about Sorcery, spells and related subjects (topics which are major elements of the Merlin saga but are almost left untouched in the original Corwin cycle). The main purpose of this variant system is is not to provide an accurate simulation of what Merlin and other sorcerers perform in the second Amber cycle but to offer a simple, flexible and Amber-compatible approach to Sorcery, without bothering with lynchpins and other complications. That being said, the various spells described in the *Amber* rulesbook and in the *Shadow Knight* supplement can be used with this system – but in a much simplified manner.

Since the main purpose of these variant rules is to define *what* Sorcery is and *how* it works rather than *what* it can do, they do not include spell lists or spell descriptions, As noted above, the *Amber Diceless* rules and *Shadow Knight* already offer an extensive sorcerous repertoire and one of the most interesting dimensions of Sorcery in the game is the possibility of developing custom-made, character-specific spells.

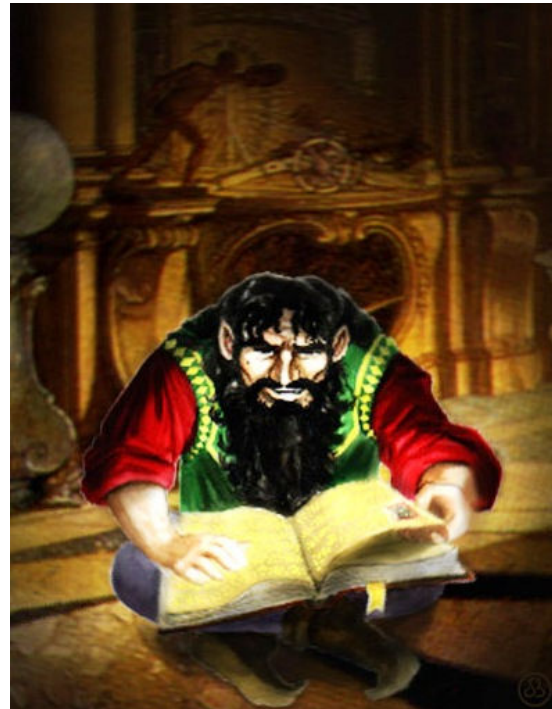<div align="right">Olivier Legrand</div>

What is Sorcery ?

Sorcery can be defined as the art of using magical energy fields to affect one's surroundings or other individuals.

These magical fields do not exist in every Shadow – thus, Sorcery is far less potent than most other powers in the Amber universe since it requires a specific Shadow environment.

Furthermore, the harmonics of these magical fields are different in every magical Shadow, which means that a Sorcerer cannot normally use his spells outside his home Shadow (but there are several important exceptions to this basic rule, as detailed below).

This means that Sorcery is the only power (with Power Words) that can be acquired by a character who is neither a Prince of Amber or a Lord of Chaos… but Sorcerers with Amber or Chaos blood have access to various additional options that allow them to combine their sorcerous knowledge with their other powers, as detailed below.

In the REBMA rules, the power of Sorcery costs 20 points and can only be acquired by characters who already master at least five Power Words. Characters with Sorcery will also start with 3 basic spells.

Spell Weaving

Once a Sorcerer has learned a spell, he no longer needs to memorize it from a grimoire (or from any other source).

The formulas of all the spells known to a Sorcerer remain deeply engraved in his mind but each formula must be reconstructed and « brought to the surface » every time he wishes to cast the corresponding spell.

This complex mental process, known as *spell weaving*, is the reason why Sorcery spells normally take so much time to cast.

Weaving a Sorcery spell takes time. This time is equal to the *casting time* used in the original *Amber Diceless* rules, without the extra time for lynchpins (which are simply not used in this simplified system).

The process of spell weaving is subject to all the restrictions and limitations applied to the memorization of spells in the original rules : if the Sorcerer's concentration is broken, the spell immediately unweaves itself and the process must be started all over again.

A Sorcerer can only hold one woven spell in his mind at a time : once the spell is cast, it unweaves itself and cannot be cast again without being woven all over again. As detailed below, there are several ways to ignore this « one spell restriction ».

Once a spell has been woven, it may be released immediately or kept in mind by the Sorcerer for later use – but only for a limited duration : the spell will erase itself if the Sorcerer loses consciousness or as soon as he falls asleep. A Sorcerer can only keep one woven spell in his mind at a time.

One way to have keep a « ready-to-fire » spell is to store it inside a magical matrix. Also known as a spell container, a magical matrix is an item which can be used to « rack » a certain number of spells, as explained in the *Amber Diceless* original rules.

Releasing a woven spell is an instantaneous process. Once a spell is released, its magical energy is used and its formula unweaves itself.

What, no Lynchpins ?

For simplicity's sake, this variant system does not use lynchpins – which make Sorcery a bit faster to use and significantly more versatile, since spells can now be used as all-purposes powers, instead of being tied to a specific target, location or other factor. This change is especially important in the case of racked spells, which are made much more useful and become quite close to the quickfire, single-shot spells of traditional many fantasy games (keeping in mind the restrictions about Shadow attunement).

Sorcery and Shadows

Sorcery is much less flexible than the other powers of the Amber universe, since it can (normally) only be used in specific Shadows.

As a general rule, Sorcerers can only use their Sorcery in a Shadow with magical harmonics to which they are *attuned*.

Mortal Sorcerers will automatically be *attuned* to the magical fields of their home Shadow.

Likewise, player-characters with Sorcery with Amber or Chaos blood will automatically be attuned to the magical energy fields of their personal Shadow (if they have one).

Attuning oneself to the magical harmonics of a given Shadow is a fairly long process that cannot be separated from the study and learning of the local form of Sorcery.

Each magical Shadow has its own harmonics and its own brand of Sorcery.

In other words, if a mortal Sorcerer was transported out of his home Shadow into a new Shadow, his Sorcery would not work in this new environment : all he could do to become a Sorcerer once again would be to study and learn the Sorcery of his new home, which would probably take years…

Of course, Sorcerers with Pattern Imprint or Logrus Mastery will be able to ignore, bypass or circumvent these restrictions in a variety of ways, as detailed below.

Magical Nexi

Some magical Shadows contain magical singularities known as *nexi* (singular *nexus*).

A nexus is a direct link with the magical fields of this Shadow and can greatly enhance the powers of the Sorcerer who controls it.

At the gamemaster's discretion, the presence of a magical nexus may be a distinctive and exclusive feature of Primal Plane shadows (see the *Amber Diceless* rules).

On a purely physical level, a nexus may have any form : swirling clouds of pure magical energy, an invisible aura of power, a column of magical fire, a crackling vortex etc.

Nexi always occupy a specific location, usually a spot identified as a « place of power » by the locals (or at least by the local Sorcerers) and often marked with a special feature, such as a circle of standing stones, a huge tower built on the nexus itself, a giant rune carved in a cavern or secret chamber etc.

A single Shadow can only have one nexus, which may only be controlled by one Sorcerer (which does not prevent other Sorcerers from trying to topple the character in order to gain control of the precious nexus).

To take control of an uncontrolled nexus, the Sorcerer must first locate it and then attune his own Psyche to the nexus, which takes a variable amount of time depending on the nature of the nexus and the Sorcerer's Psyche rank (GM's discretion).

Once the link is established, it gives the Sorcerer direct access to unlimited quantities of magical energies, allowing him to weave his spells much faster. In game terms, this will halve the time needed to weave the spell. Thus, a spell with a basic casting time of thirty minutes will only take fifteen minutes to weave, while a spell with a basic casting time of two hours will only take one hour.

The power of a nexus only works inside its Shadow – but gamemasters may decide to create unique exceptions to this rule (see the *Afterword* for a few ideas along these lines).

Gamemasters may also decide that the regular use of a nexus may cause unwanted side-effects (such as temporary psychic confusion, a kind of magical inebriety or even a form of power addiction or personality warp).

Cross-Shadow Sorcery

These variant rules greatly restrict and simplify the way Sorcery can interact with the stuff of Shadows.

Under these rules, the micro-spell *Shadow Opening* cannot create a gate from one Shadow to another – but only within the same Shadow. To avoid confusion, the variant version of this micro-spell should be renamed *Opening* ; *Shadow Manipulation* could also be renamed *Manipulation* since this micro-spell also allows a Sorcerer to affect the physical or mental state of Real people like Amberites or Chaosians.

The only ways a Sorcery spell can cross Shadows are through a Logrus tendril or through a Trump contact.

Sorcery and the Pattern

As a general rule, Sorcery cannot work in Amber or near any other Pattern. At the GM's discretion, Dworkin and other characters with Exalted powers *may* be able to bypass this restriction… or perhaps this explains why Dworkin disappears in dimensions of his own to conduct his sorcerous experiments, away from the influence of the Pattern. See also *Spells & Trumps* next page for a very specific exception to this restriction.

Sorcerers who have Pattern Imprint at the basic level do not directly gain extra powers : they still have to weave their spells like any other Sorcerer and are not able to use their Sorcery in other Shadows than the one where they learned it in the first place (and to which they are automatically attuned).

If such characters move through Shadows while weaving a spell, the magical energies will *not* follow the character through the Shadows and will be dispersed as soon as the character starts to move through Shadow.

As with everything else in *Amber*, exceptions are always possible. Characters with Pattern powers might be able to find Shadows with magical laws and harmonics similar to those of their personal Shadow – so similar that their Sorcery will work here too.

These compatible Shadows will usually be very close to the character's personal Shadows (both in terms of distance and atmosphere), perhaps to the point of being almost identical – but without the degree of control the character may have on his personal Shadow.

All these restrictions may explain why most Amberites rarely bother to learn Sorcery, at least not before they have reached a certain degree of power, where Sorcery spells may give them that extra edge they need to foil, trap, lure or defeat their enemies and rivals…

Advanced Pattern powers allow a Sorcerer to « tweak » the magical harmonics of any Shadow he is in so that he can use his Sorcery there. See the section on *Altering the Rules* in the original *Amber Diceless* rules (p 44).

Additionally, a character with Sorcery as well as *Advanced Pattern* powers will be able to seek those very rare Shadows which contain a magical nexus.

By manipulating the local magical harmonics, such a character will be able to benefit from the power of the nexus (which will greatly reduce the weaving time of his spells when using Sorcery in this Shadow), even if is currently under the control of a local Sorcerer (who will almost certainly notice this strange disturbance of his power source).

Even characters with *Advanced Pattern* powers will be unable to use Sorcery in Amber or near any other Pattern, for exactly the same reasons that prevent them from affecting reality in Amber (or near any other Pattern).

As noted above, if some kind of « Pattern Sorcery » actually exists, it should probably be one of Dworkin's best kept secrets…

At the GM's discretion, a Sorcerer with *Advanced Pattern* may be able to use his Sorcery spells in the Courts of Chaos (perhaps with unpredictable, hazardous side-effects).

Sorcery and the Logrus

A Sorcerer who also has Logrus Mastery (even at the basic level) can rack his spells in the Logrus. There is no limit to the number of spells that may be racked but each spell can only be racked once because of the chaotic nature of the Logrus : multiple versions of the same Weaving would create a form of order or structure which is simply incompatible with the chaotic essence of the Logrus.

As noted in the core *Amber* rules, spells racked in the Logrus tend to fade away over time and must be re-racked regularly. Also note that these racked spells can only be accessed through the Logrus itself : if, for some reason, the Logrus cannot be contacted, the Sorcerer will be unable to use his spells.

Spells which are cast from the Logrus draw their magical energy from Chaos itself : thus, they operate in any Shadow, even in Shadows which do not normally include magic in their natural laws. The only exceptions to this rule are Shadows in which, for some reason, the Logrus cannot be summoned.

Under these variant rules, lynchpins no longer have to be defined, making Logrus-stored spells significantly more useful and versatile. In the Courts of Chaos, a Logrus Sorcerer can use his magic with the same time reduction as when using a nexus : thus, Sorcery is far easier and quicker to use in the Courts of Chaos.

A Logrus Master with Advanced powers is also able to cast his spells through Shadow, using Logrus tendrils.

Such a character will also be able to manipulate the magical harmonics of any Shadow, tainting them with Chaos (at least on a temporary basis, as noted in the original *Amber* rules). This could allow him to cut the power source of local Sorcerers by disrupting and corrupting the local magical energy fields, which would also attune these fields to chaotic Sorcery, allowing them to use Sorcery in this Shadow without summoning the Logrus.

Given enough time, a Logrus Master with Advanced powers could also create a temporary nexus of Chaotic power : this would give him the same advantages as any other nexus but would also permanently damage or alter the local magical fields, with all sorts of nasty consequences for local Sorcerers.

Logrus Sorcery (or any Sorcery, for that matter) cannot work in Amber, Rebma, Tir-na Nog'th or near any other Pattern.