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DreamwalkerTM

Diceless Roleplaying in the Land of Dreams

Dreamwalker™

for

Active **EXPL****ITS**

diceless roleplaying

Active Exploits is a diceless roleplaying system designed for quick and easy game play. The Active Exploits Core Rules are available on the internet at <http://www.pigames.net>. Active Exploits Core Rules may be distributed in printed form or its original electronic format, provided that you charge no fee and do not alter its contents or layout.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.”

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

Humanity is under attack. The enemy is an alien species that assails us in our most vulnerable state—while we sleep. The Taenia Spiritus are a race of soulless, hive-minded creatures that invade our dreams in order to foster and feed off the negative vibes and emotions caused by their presence.

You are a Dreamwalker. Whether through the use of drugs, prayer, meditation or natural ability, you are able to leave your own dreams and travel into the Dreamworlds of others. Once there, you can manipulate the dream’s spiritual energy, or mana, to produce wondrous effects.

You have been recruited by Project Dreamwalker—a government backed organization that unites others like you in order to rid the spirit world of the Taeniid plague. The task is difficult. Not only do you face the Taenia but you must also satisfy the whims and desires of the Dreamer in whose mind they are ensconced. Can you do this and still maintain a grasp on your own sanity?

Good luck, Dreamwalker. You may be our last hope.

What this Book Is

A work of fiction. Dreamwalkers are able to pass freely into the dreams of others. Mastery of dream magic enables them to change shape, fly, and alter the very fabric of the Dreamworld itself as they seek to destroy an alien foe.

However, the existence of the Taenia Spiritus, the ability to Dreamwalk, and many of the other supernatural concepts expressed herein were designed solely for the purposes of this setting. Once again, Dreamwalker is a work of fiction—as far as we know.

What this Book is Not

A medical treatise on the psychological meaning of dreams and their effect on the human psyche. While many of the groundbreaking, dream related theories of psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Fritz Perls are alluded to within this work (especially those of Jung), Dreamwalker is not an endorsement for any particular person, viewpoint, or field of study. We have provided just enough background information on dreams and the process of dreaming to make the setting both interesting and playable.

Simpler Times

“There are no great things, only small things with great love. Happy are those.”

Mother Theresa

by Peter C. Spahn

“Yom no ho ren gay keo, yom no ho ren gay keo, yom no ho ren gay keo...”*

As the drug, Black25, takes effect, the lab, the technicians and even the drone of Billy Chun’s incessant Buddhist chanting slowly fade away.

Entering the dream state is always a pleasant and peaceful experience—a gentle transition from the physical world to that of the spirit. For me, the trip is almost instantaneous. One minute there is only the darkening haze of semiconsciousness; the next, I float beneath a rolling purple “sky” along the iridescent waters of the Periphery.

This is the crossroads of the Empyrean, land of spirit, land of dreams. Some believe this to be the true afterlife; the place where all people go when they die. As a Christian, I have my doubts on this. Still, the peace and beauty of this place is undeniable.

I drift along the spiritual waters, waiting for the others to arrive. Each wave brings snatches of the dreams emanating from the Dreamworlds below. Some are just beginning, others are nearly at an end. They range the gamut of emotions from love to hate, joy to pain. I soak them all in, reveling in the depth of the human heart and soul.

The pleasantness of the Periphery is deceiving however, and I dare not relax too much. Even here I sense the underlying, yet tangible presence of the Taenia—the evil that is slowly turning the Empyrean into a land of nightmares. They are out there. Watching. Waiting. Tainting each Dreamworld with feelings of anger, hatred and fear. They are a plague upon humanity and the sworn enemy of all Dreamwalkers. They fear us and hate us as well for we know of them and can fight them. What’s more, we help others to do the same.

I feel the approach of the rest of my team, Team Circles. I am their leader although I hardly feel deserving of the title. Still, my mentor, Jinx, believes that the best leaders are seldom those who ask to be chosen.

Linda Cobbles appears first, her spirit floating gently along the Peripheral waves. She is like me, only able to Dreamwalk with the aid of Black25, a drug especially designed by the founder of our employer, Project Dreamwalker. I grasp her hand to steady her. It is like grasping a feather. We are weak here, creatures of smoke and spirit and that makes the potential danger even greater.

Billy Chun arrives next. His spirit pulses with vitality and grace. Through intense meditation and a strict Buddhist regimen of mind and body, he has mastered the art of Dreamwalking without the use of drugs—something few could ever hope to accomplish. I envy his discipline. He is almost a part of this world and the dangers of Dreamwalking are less for him than for us.

Paul Canty is the final member of our team and as usual, the last to arrive. His spirit is ragged and unstable. It knifes through the Periphery in a herky-jerky manner that is almost repulsive to watch—a result of his own method of Dreamwalking, his addiction to psychotropic drugs. The drugs are strong, in some ways they make him more powerful than the rest of us, but he is prone to loss of control and lapses in judgment. Eventually his mind will become too unbalanced to work with the team and to be honest, for that I am glad. More than once Paul’s recklessness and penchant for violence has endangered our mission and our lives.

Together, we surf the ocean of dreams for our objective. Somewhere out here is the Dreamworld of Henry Geller—a forty-eight year old advertising executive who has fallen into a deep state of depression. In cases like these, more often than not, the Taenia are involved. More often than not, the source of many of life’s problems can be found within ourselves, within our dreams. More often than not, they can be fixed with the help of a Dreamwalker.

Henry Geller’s Dreamworld isn’t hard to find. Another specially designed drug, Dreamtracer, makes it stand out to us like a beacon. As one, Team Circles passes through the spiritual Barrier surrounding the Dreamworld of Henry Geller.

One never really knows what to expect upon entering

a Dreamworld. The extensive psychological evaluation each patient is subjected to usually prepares us for some of the things we encounter but each Dreamer is different and therefore, so is each Dreamworld. In general, the less creative and more stable the Dreamer, the more grounded in reality the Dreamworld. Geller is a simple man with simple tastes. In all likelihood, his Dreamworld will be bounded in some type of reality.

The descent from the Periphery into the Dreamworld is instantaneous and once inside, it takes only a moment for our spirits to adjust to their new forms. This is always a moment of great anticipation. Dreamwalkers have no control over our initial manifestation and the results are sometimes. . . strange.

Not this time, though. Here, we manifest as replicas of our physical selves although our style of dress is somewhat curious. I am dressed casually in shorts, T-shirt and sandals with a necklace and bracelet of friendship beads. Linda's pretty Latin features are accentuated by a halter top and bellbottom pants. Billy Chun maintains his customary bald head and long braid but a distinctly non-Asian leather vest and form fitting pants cling to his lithe and muscular frame. Only Paul looks somewhat normal, his lanky frame sporting a tie-dyed shirt with a peace symbol emblazoned on the front.

From the clothes, I place the time period somewhere around the 1960's. Once the when is determined we have only to figure out the where so we take a few minutes to look around.

We are standing in a coastal amusement park, surrounded by crowds of Unreal—the spiritual inhabitants of the Dreamworld that for all intents and purposes are real, at least for the duration of the dream. The sky is gray and overcast. A city skyline looms in the distance, its shape and pattern looking vaguely familiar.

Unreal seagulls circle high above, filling the air with raucous caws. The taste of salt is sharp and pungent on the cool sea breeze. The sweet smells of cotton candy and popcorn just barely override the smell of rotting garbage. Calliope music dominates the park. The organ is badly out of tune and sounds as if it is missing a few pipes.

"Coney Island," Linda says and we all look at her. "I can't remember the name of the park." She shrugs. "At least I think that's what it's supposed to be."

I nod. It makes sense. Geller's file stated that he grew up in New York City. Very few people who live there have never been to Coney Island at least once.

Turning back to the park I see that Geller's depression is deep and there is a strong Taeniid presence. No drones, thankfully, but many of the

Unreal park-goers have become hosts for Taeniid larvae. These larvae manifest as bloated, tick like insects, probably in response to some underlying fear of the Dreamer, and have attached themselves to the backs and necks of the Unreal.

Even the Unreal who are not infested are listless and apathetic, a side effect of the overpowering presence of the Taenia. Like sheep, they shuffle along through the park. Some stop to buy moldering food from seedy looking vendors while others stand in line for a number of thrill rides and roller coasters. These rides look unstable at best—most of the paint and decorations are replaced by large, flowery blossoms of rust and the metal supports of most of the rides are twisted and warped. Ratchety mechanical noises precede the weary, almost programmed screams of the riders.

This is bad. All signs point to a Dreamer who is nearing the edge of sanity. Project rules are strict and unyielding when it comes to severe Taeniid infestations such as these—if things look too bad, get out. Staying risks not only the health of the Dreamer's psyche but also our own lives. If we die in someone else's Dreamworld, we could very well die in the real world. I understand the Project's concerns on the matter but I am loathe to leave Geller's dream without at least trying to help. A quick poll finds the others in agreement.

We search the park for the Dreamer. His presence is undeniable making him easy to find despite the drastic change in his appearance. Gone is the defeated, middle-aged man we met in the lab. Here, Henry Geller is still a tawny haired, freckle faced boy of eight. He stands out from the dismal crowd, bathed in a rippling aura of his own spiritual mana—a shining patch of light and color in an otherwise drab and dreary setting.

We watch him buy a cone of cotton candy from a vendor's tray. The candy fluff is an ugly yellowish brown until it touches the Dreamer's hand, then it turns a bright, vibrant pink. Geller tears off a piece and stuffs it into his mouth. We follow him as he wanders through the park. Like everyone else, he appears oblivious to the rot and decay around him. Here, he is just a young boy spending a happy day at Coney Island. A trail of sparkling mana streams out behind him as he walks, giving life and color to everything it touches but after he passes, it too is soon swallowed up by the pervading gloom.

"Hey Tim," Paul says, "We ain't gettin' any younger."

I nod and take a deep breath, then step forward and tap Geller on the shoulder. "Excuse me," I say.

Slowly, reluctantly, the boy turns around. Fear is evident on his face. Little boy fears—fear of talking to strangers, fear of things that go bump in the night, and beneath it all, fear of the Taenia. This close, I can see

the scared eyes of the man he has become in the real world. On a deeper level than this, he is aware of the presence of the Taenia, but unwilling to admit the truth even to himself.

"I'm here to help you," I say. Of course he doesn't understand but I know that he believes me. That is good. Very few untrained Dreamers have the power to resist a Dreamwalker but it is always easier when they willingly accept your presence and aid.

I gently take the boy's hand. He looks up at me with trusting eyes. "I promise this won't hurt you," I say. The boy nods.

I call upon my spiritual energy, my mana, and will myself to Join with Henry Geller ignoring the way Paul impatiently clears his throat. He thinks I am being theatrical. I am not. It is true, I could Join with the boy without making my presence known but I find it best not to upset the Dreamer whenever possible.

To those watching, the Joining takes less than a heartbeat; to me it feels much longer. My spirit ebbs and flows, becoming one with that of the Dreamer. This is a spiritual moment for both of us—a period of great enlightenment and understanding. For a very brief time, our thoughts and memories mingle together. In effect, I am now Henry Geller and this is Coney Island as he remembers it, in the year 1966.

Looking through the Dreamer's eyes, I see the park as it is supposed to be, bright and vibrant, with no sign of the Taenia. The air is thick with music, laughter and excitement, the Unreal are happy and alive.

I stare stupidly at the cone of cotton candy in my hand. The sweet candy smell is almost overwhelming. I tear off a piece of fluff and put it on my tongue, reveling in its taste as it dissolves in a screaming burst of sugar.

Billy Chun clears his throat bringing me back to the present. I open my eyes to find the others staring at me with a mixture of envy and amusement.

"Sorry," I say somewhat sheepishly. "I'm in."

The others nod their understanding. The sensory laden world of the Dreamer is a difficult lure to resist. At one time or another, every Dreamwalker must fight the temptation to just sit back and enjoy the natural course of someone else's dream. Still, we are here for a reason. I shift perceptions back to my own and once again see the decaying park for what it truly is.

"Nice duds," Paul snorts. Linda giggles in response and even the normally stoic Billy offers up the ghost of a smile. I look down and can see the outline of the boy

superimposed over my own form. I smile. The strange sight goes unnoticed by the passing Unreal—they still see the illusion of the boy. Only other Dreamwalkers—and the Taenia—can see the truth of what lies beneath.

"So, what are we supposed to do?" Linda asks.

That's the heart of the matter. Despite what some people say, dreams are rarely just random occurrences—almost every single one has some sort of purpose or goal that the Dreamer desires to complete. We call these dream goals denouements. Denouements can be almost anything from the fantastic to the mundane. Whatever it is, our job is to help the Dreamer do it. Only after his mind is thus occupied do Dreamwalkers dare to assault the Taeniid infestation head on.

In the case of Henry Geller, the dream's denouement is obvious. "The Ferris wheel," I say, and we all turn to look at it. The Wonder Wheel, so named by the large gaudy red letters at its hub, dominates this section of the park. It is a monstrous, rusting structure well over fifty, and perhaps close to a hundred, feet tall. As a boy, Henry Geller had wanted very much to ride it but had been too afraid to do so. This dream's denouement involves rectifying that lost opportunity. I explain the situation to the others.

"Sounds easy enough," Paul says. I only hope he is right.

"Any sign of trouble?" I ask.

Billy shakes his head. "No drones yet, but they could just be waiting to strike."

M

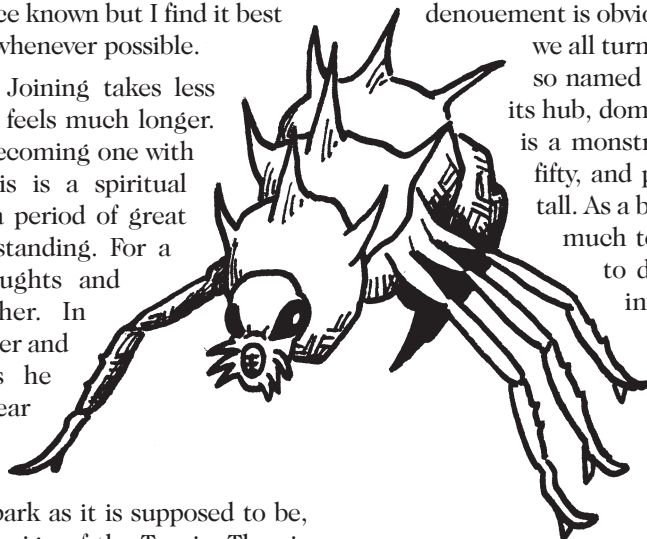
"Spread out and mingle. Keep your yes peeled. I'll see if I can get this done."

"The operator's infested," Linda says, indicating the thin, mustached man in the ridiculous striped suit and matching top hat.

"Got him," I reply, having already noticed the tick like larva latched onto his back. Larvae are little more than a nuisance to Dreamwalkers—they usually avoid us if at all possible. They are cowardly creatures who would rather run than fight and are only dangerous when cornered or in great numbers.

I/Geller walk up to the Ferris wheel and get in the queue line, keeping an eye on the operator who for now seems unaware of my presence. The rest of Team Circles disappear into the crowds. They will keep watch and remain close by until I am finished with the Dreamer. Or until there is any sign of trouble.

More out of boredom than necessity, I do a quick scan of my/Geller's memories and discover the origin



of the tick phobia. When Geller was five he spent the weekend with his grandparents upstate. After a long day in the woods, he returned home that night with several ticks latched onto his body. Despite his protests and tears, his parents burned the ticks off with a hot needle. He has been terrified of ticks ever since.

The Wonder Wheel fills up twice before I/Geller finally get to the gate. As the riders exit the bucket, the larval operator grins at me through a jagged mass of teeth.

“Sorry kid,” he says. “Ride’s broken. It’ll be running again in about an hour.”

A wave of disappointment and defeat spirals up from Geller’s subconscious mind. I fight down the feeling just as the ride operator takes an awkward swing at me/Geller with a rusty crowbar. I duck easily and reach for him as he turns his assault towards the ride operating device, giving the mechanism a few good whacks before I can stop him. Sparks fly up from the damaged controls. I shield my face from the flash and smoke.

“Now! Get him now!” the larval operator yells, then turns and runs, dropping the crowbar onto the platform with a clang. I curse, jump the gate and snatch up the weapon.

Shouts and screams erupt from the crowd of Unreal as half a dozen Taeniid drones clatter out of the shadows. Each manifests as a hideous crossbreed of man and tick—strikingly similar to their natural form. The drones clamber over buildings and through gaming stalls, killing any Unreal in their path as they converge on the Ferris wheel. On me.

Shouts. Screams. Chaos. The Unreal panic and stampede towards the exits. Those that fall are trampled beneath the press.

I call upon my mana, Reshaping the crowbar into a sword. A gun would probably be safer and more effective but complex devices are more difficult and draining to manufacture. Again I call upon mana, this time honing my reflexes and fighting ability until I have the speed of an athlete and the skill of an expert swordsman, at least for the duration of this dream. This done, I sit back on the ride platform and wait for the drones to come.

Billy Chun leaps onto the platform beside me. He has picked up a wooden board and he too uses mana to Reshape, turning the wood into a long, slender staff. Unlike me, Billy needs no mana to bolster his fighting ability—he is an accomplished martial artist in the real world. What’s more his mystical mana Talent turns him into a whirlwind of destruction. He gives the staff an expert twirl and braces himself to meet the charging drones.

The first of the drones reaches the Ferris wheel

platform and clambers over the railing with snapping claws. I dodge its deadly assault and strike with my blade. The sword shatters through the creature’s carapace and penetrates deep into the soft tissues beneath. The drone dies with a ragged hiss and collapses into a pile. A second drone scrambles over the railing, forcing me to give ground as I parry its attacks.

Billy wades into the battle moving so fast that my eyes cannot follow. He becomes a furious blur, leaping, dodging and lashing out with deadly effect. In seconds, two more drones lie broken, battered and dead on the platform.

Just then, something small and hard slams into the back of my skull. A burst of white light scatters my vision. Dazed, I drop my sword, staggering away from the advancing drone and clutching at my bloody scalp. The larval ride operator grins at me from a safe distance away, already hefting another rock to throw. I stumble and fall to one knee. The tick-drone clambers towards me but stops as gunfire erupts throughout the park and its head disappears in a cloud of black ichor. The creature collapses heavily on top of me. Despite being winded, I have the momentary satisfaction of seeing surprise on the ride operator’s face before several bullets slam into his chest, knocking him from my view.

Not surprisingly, Linda and Paul are the source of the gunfire. Each has Possessed a park police officer, their forms superimposed over the Unreal’s much like mine is over that of the Dreamer. They continue to fire at the remaining drones. The noise is almost deafening. Linda’s face is a mask of concentration as she aims and fires. Paul wears an expression of pure glee. His gun is the same size as Linda’s, but boosted by his drug tainted mana, it sounds more like a cannon. The bullets it releases have much the same effect.

The tick-drones squeal in pain as his slugs rip through them steadily dissolving their bodies into a mass of shattered carapaces, dark meat and black ichor. So much violence is not only terrible, but also dangerous before the denouement has been achieved.

As I extricate myself from beneath the drone’s bulk, I feel the Dreamer’s fear as he struggles to end the dream. The Dreamworld ripples. If he awakens we will all be in danger. With a pulse of my own mana, I help him to calm down.

The battle is over in seconds. With a shot and a final squeal the last drone collapses into a steaming putrid mass.

“Goddamn!” Paul says. His eyes are wide with excitement. “Did you see that! Just like Bonnie and Clyde! Goddamn!”

Linda turns on him unexpectedly. “You can’t just kill like that, Paul! Not before the goal is complete.”

"What?" He says, his face darkening into a frown. "Lighten up. Those scumbags had to die anyway and the sooner we waste them the better, right? Right? Now we can get this part over with and get on to the Queen!"

I would like to argue his logic but my head hurts too bad. My mana flows over me, Healing the wound and instantly making me feel better.

Meanwhile Linda and Billy exchange worried looks. Neither are pleased that Paul is still on the team. When we get back to the lab I am going to request he take some time off. Perhaps even permanently.

But now is not the time to worry about that. We have to move fast. The Unreal have fled for the moment and there were none in sight, but the police would be here soon.

"We have a problem," I say.

"What is it?" Billy asks.

I show them. The damage to the ride mechanism looks bad. It can be fixed with mana but since it is both a mechanical and electronic device, the cost will be too great. We still have to find and kill the Taeniid Queen.

Linda kneels down to take a look at the device. She is better with mechanical things than any of us. She closes her eyes and focuses her mana, manifesting the desired repair knowledge in much the same way I bolstered my combat ability.

"There," she says, opening her eyes. "I can fix it, but it would be easier if I had the right tools."

"Give me a minute," Billy says and trots off into the park.

"I'll stand guard," Paul says, twirling his pistol like an old west gunslinger. Linda frowns but I shake my head. Now is not the time.

"Don't shoot anyone if you don't have to," she says anyway which only irritates him even more. She's right though. It is hard enough to keep the Dreamer asleep as it is. More random death and destruction is a sure way to awaken him.

We wait. For now, there is little fear of the Taenia, any remaining drones are scuttling back to protect their Queen, but in many ways, the Dreamworld was similar to the real world. The battle has caused quite a stir and Unreal policemen will soon be on hand to investigate. While they represent very little danger to us, once again, the danger to the Dreamer's psyche is more important.

In the distance, we hear the wail of police sirens.

Billy returns having Possessed a park maintenance man. A tool belt and a ring of about a thousand keys dangle from his waist. Linda takes the tools, opens the ride panel and sets to work. In minutes, the ride is

operational again. Linda works the controls as I/Geller climb into one of the buckets. Geller's emotions are a tangled mixture of fear and excitement.

I gently disengage my spirit from his and reform on the seat facing him. He blinks as if awakening from a dream.

"Have a nice trip," I say, getting up.

"You're not going to ride with me?"

I shake my head and rest a comforting hand on his shoulder. "No. There are some things you need to do by yourself."

He nods and I know that some part of him, the adult part of Henry Geller, understands. I climb out of the bucket and close the door, then stand and watch with the others.

Linda presses the operating button. Like some great dinosaur, the ride begins to move. We watch the bucket slowly go up, crest the top, then come back down again. Although the boy inside maintains a white knuckled grip on the safety rails the entire time, his mouth is open in a wide grin and his expression is that of pure joy.

On the second time up, the bucket begins to glow with an iridescent white light. We watch as the light spreads outward from the bucket, bathing us in a wash of pure spirit mana. Its touch revitalizes us, restoring some of the precious mana we had used. It melts away the park's decay and brings color back to Henry Geller's Dreamworld. The remains of the Taeniid drones sizzle and dissolve under its glare. The light spreads out from the wheel and continues on to envelope the entire amusement park in its shimmering glow. The wail of police sirens dies away and the Unreal begin to return to the park in droves as if nothing untoward had happened.

Somewhere, deep in Henry Geller's Dreamworld, the Queen of the Taenia vents her fury. She senses our presence, and our victory, and she is afraid. If we can find her while the Dreamer's mind is thus occupied, before the dream ends, we can destroy her. Only then can Henry Geller begin the long process of repairing his psyche from the damage done by the Taenia.

For now, we watch Henry Geller revel in the fulfillment of his childhood dream. It is a small victory in the grand scheme of things but that doesn't make it any less important.

After a while, it is time for us to go. Time for the real work to begin.



Chapter 2

Dreams

“A dream is a microscope through which we look at the hidden occurrences in our soul.”

Erich Fromm

Dream (*dreem*) *n.* A series of images, ideas, emotions and sensations occurring involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep.

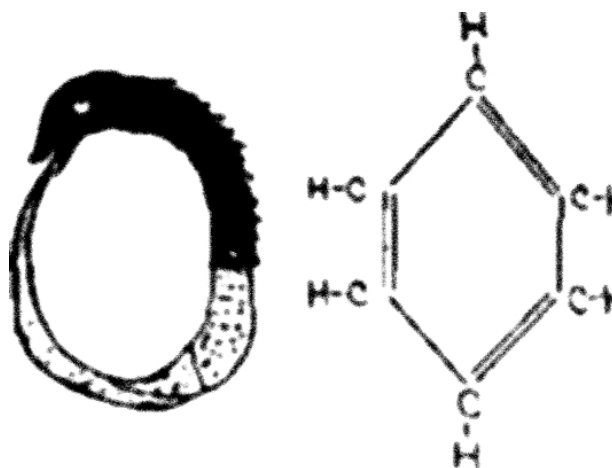
Dreams have been a natural part of our sleeping lives since the beginning of time, but only recently have we started to harness their potential. Dreams offer us unlimited opportunities for fun, adventure, and romance and sometimes even personal insight. They are a private means with which we may explore our own inner realities; a way to experience things that our conscious mind can hardly imagine. Overwhelming evidence now indicates that dreams can also be used to improve our waking life as well.

REM Sleep

Dreams occur throughout the night, but studies show that we experience our most vivid dreams during a period of sleep known as Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep. During REM sleep, the brain is very active; the eyes move rapidly back and forth under the lids and the body secretes a chemical that paralyzes the larger muscles of the body in order to keep us from acting out our dreams. REM sleep occurs every ninety to one hundred minutes, about three to four times a night, and lasts for up to forty-five minutes.

The Meaning of Dreams

Although scientists continue to debate the issue of whether or not dreams have meaning, most people find



their own dreams to be of great personal significance. Dreams can provide insight into feelings, thoughts, behavior, and motives of yourself and others. Actual cases have been documented in which dreams have been used to solve problems or improve skills, sometimes drastically and even overnight. Artists, writers, and scientists especially often get creative ideas from their dreams.

Unfortunately, not everyone enjoys the benefits of such profound dreams. Some people find it difficult, or even impossible, to remember their dreams. Others suddenly remember a dream later in the day or on another day, suggesting that the memory is not totally lost but for some reason has been buried deep in the subconscious mind. Sleep, dreams, and dream recall

may also be affected by a great variety of drugs and medications, including alcohol.

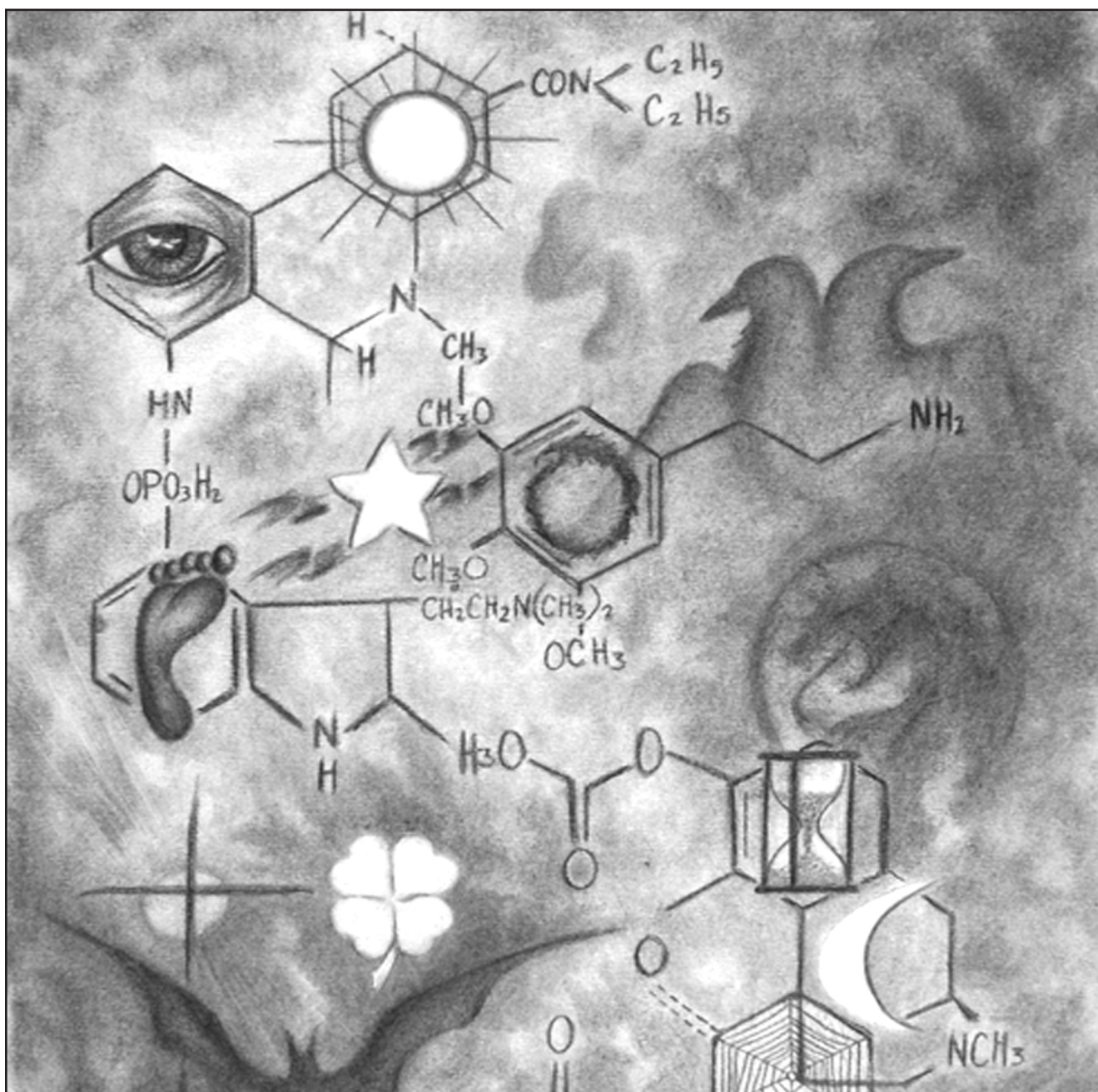
Nightmares & Night Terrors

Nightmares are very common among children and fairly common among adults. Often nightmares are caused by stress, traumatic experiences, emotional difficulties, drugs/medication, or illness. However, some people have frequent nightmares that seem unrelated to their waking lives. Recent studies suggest that on the average, these people tend to be more open, sensitive, trusting, and emotional.

Night terrors are more frequent in children and usually subside with age. They differ from nightmares in that they occur during non-REM sleep and are usually so intense that the sleeper awakens in panic, often screaming, with heart pounding, and with less or no recall of the dream's content.

"Dreams say what they mean, but they don't say it in daytime language."

Gail Godwin



History of Project Dreamwalker

“All men who have achieved great things have been great Dreamers.”

Orison Swett Marden

Dr. William Morris Black

As a child, William Black was subject to the semi-rare sleeping disorder known as night terrors. In time, he eventually overcame his affliction but because of the experience, grew up fascinated by the process of dreaming.

By the mid 1940s, William Black, now an esteemed clinical researcher and professor at M—, began a series of experiments focusing primarily on dreams and their relationship to the health of the human psyche. Several groundbreaking discoveries involving dreams and their effects on the human psyche were attributed to Dr. Black’s work.

Black25

In the late 1940s, Dr. Black developed an experimental sleeping drug known as Black25. Numerous tests on laboratory animals ensued and after extensive interpretation of the results, it was theorized that Black25 stimulated the parts of the brain responsible for inducing REM sleep, allowing for longer and more vivid dreams. In addition, the animals responded surprisingly well to the drug, becoming much more healthy and active than before.

In 1950 Dr. Black felt it was time to test Black25 on human subjects. The board of directors firmly denied this request and then denied it again for each of the ten years following.

Discouraged and fearing he might never get the chance to explore the true potential of Black25, Dr. Black secretly gathered a few of his most trusted assistants and former students who had worked closely with him on the Black25 animal experiments. After explaining the potential risks (both career and physical) and consequences of unauthorized testing, he proposed a plan to administer the drug to himself under their close observation. In this way, Dr. William Morris Black became the first person injected with Black25.

The results were far greater than anything he could have possibly imagined. Dr. Black entered the dream state as a fully lucid Dreamer, retaining complete control over his own thoughts and actions. Ironically, the Dreamworld he found himself in was an exact replica of his first meeting with the board of directors.

The board members were exact duplicates of their counterparts in the real world and with some amusement, Dr. Black decided to pitch his proposal again and attempt to do what he had been unable to do before—convince the board to approve testing of Black25 on human subjects. To his surprise, the board unanimously approved his proposal. When he was awakened by his assistants after the allotted time had passed, he felt invigorated and refreshed. What’s more, he had total recollection of the things he had experienced in his dream.

Dr. Black had always been a proponent of the Jungian theory that the purpose of dreams and the unconsciousness were to show the conscious mind what needs to be done to get rid of unease and unhappiness and to achieve fuller satisfaction in life. The resolution of his dealings with the dream board seemed to confirm this theory on the importance of resolving dream goals, which Dr. Black later termed denouements. A host of related tests followed and the results were surprisingly irrefutable. When he resolved his dream’s denouements, he woke up feeling well rested—when he did not, he awoke frustrated and irritable.

Dreamwalking with Black25

Dr. Black soon began to explore the boundaries of his Dreamworld and eventually learned that not only could he travel to the hidden levels of his own psyche, but he could actually leave his Dreamworld and enter the dreams of others. These dreams also had denouements that needed to be resolved, although the resident Dreamer was frequently unable to do so.

It was during this time that Dr. Black first encountered the Taenia. He did not know what they were at first, but they instilled in him a primal dread that he fought hard to overcome in order to pursue his research.

In his travels throughout the Dreamworlds, Dr. Black realized that the Taenia were readily recognizable despite drastic differences in their appearance. Over time, he was able to catalogue the three basic types—larva, drone, and Queen, although he only saw one Queen as the drones grew hostile whenever he ventured too close to a nesting area. Otherwise, the Taenia ignored him as long as he kept his distance.

Dr. Black also noted the way the Taenia actively worked to hinder the Dreamer from achieving the dream's denouement and thus hypothesized that they somehow gained sustenance from the negative emotions incurred. He soon discovered that their efforts slowly increased the dementia of the host and surmised that if he could find some way to combat the Taenia, he might be able to heal the psyche of those infested.

A year of Dreamwalking research passed without any apparent ill side effects. Dr. Black finally relented to overwhelming pressure from two of his senior assistants, Kevin Laerty and Dawn Rogers, and agreed to administer Black25 to them so they could experience the wonders of the Dreamworlds for themselves. With practice, they discovered that they too could leave their own respective Dreamworlds, meet in the Periphery, and then travel throughout the Empyrean together. They kept extensive records of their travels and experiences during this time—the compilation of notes and papers now known as the Black Files.

Exposure

It was toward the end of this second year of Dreamwalking that disaster struck. Dr. Black and his two assistants were investigating the mind of a particularly disturbed individual when they encountered their first Broodking. The creature attacked them immediately. In the ensuing conflict, Dawn Rogers was killed, and Dr. Black and Kevin Laerty barely escaped the Dreamworld with their lives.

Back in the lab, they discovered that Dawn Rogers was truly dead. Dr. Black was overcome with grief despite the reassurance of his assistants that it wasn't his fault. He immediately phoned the campus police and informed them of what had happened.

The following investigation into the death of Dawn Rogers led to the exposure of the entire Black25 project. The results were withheld from the general public, but caused quite a stir in the scientific

community. Reactions ranged from mild interest to angry disbelief. Many scoffed at the contents of the Black Files and refused to even accept the possibility of traveling into the dreams of others. This was the 1960s and most believed that Black25 was just another dangerous, hallucinogenic drug similar to LSD, which easily explained the strange accounts documented within the Black Files.

A Ray of Hope

Meanwhile, William Black was brought up on charges of malpractice and neglect. Just when it seemed inevitable that he would serve jail time for the death of Dawn Rogers, Black was contacted by Senator Wade Wilson of Texas. Following a riding accident, the Senator's daughter, Sarah, had been comatose for over a year. Senator Wilson heard about Dr. Black's radical new dream experiments through an old M— alumnus and wondered if Black25 could be used to help coma victims. Dr. Black wasn't sure, but not having anything to lose, he agreed to try.

He was granted the use of a government facility and together with the help of his assistants, he entered the dream state intent on reaching out to Sarah Wilson's unresponsive mind.

No one really knows what happened next. One minute, William Black's vital signs were normal, the next he was flat-lining. By contrast, the girl's eyes fluttered and opened. She sat up in bed and dazedly watched as medical personnel tried to revive William Black. After a year of being in a coma, Sarah Wilson had finally awakened.

William Black died despite all attempts at resuscitation. Nevertheless, the wheels were in motion and the work he had begun would not remain idle for long.

Project Dreamwalker

Sarah Wilson made a full recovery and grew up both physically and mentally sound, possessing a strong desire to be the best at everything she did. She had no memory of Dr. Black or of the time spent in the coma but it was hardly surprising that she became obsessed with the process of dreams and dreaming. Her graduate studies reflected this interest and in the early 1980s, as a graduate student and dream researcher, she attempted to retrieve Dr. Black's notes and records from M— archives. To her surprise, she discovered that the Black Files had been classified and withdrawn by person or persons unknown. No other information was forthcoming.

Not one to be discouraged by such minor setbacks, she cajoled her father into pulling a few strings and

discovered that Dr. Gunther R. Endell had recovered the Black25 program in 1976. With government funding and supervision he established The Clinic in eastern Virginia and resumed Dr. Black's dream research and experimentation. Sarah visited The Clinic several times but was denied access. Attempts to contact Dr. Endell himself were repeatedly and rudely rebuffed.

Then one day, Sarah was approached by Dr. Black's former assistant, Kevin Laerty, now a senior Clinic staff member. Kevin was willing to answer all of Sarah's questions about Dreamwalking and Dr. William Black. To her surprise, Sarah learned that not only could Dreamwalkers travel into the dreams of others, but that now they could manipulate mana (the spiritual energy of dreams) to produce wondrous effects. Kevin

and most of Dr. Black's former assistants had been recruited by Dr. Endell and were currently working at the Clinic but many were unhappy with the direction his experiments had taken. Dr. Endell and his government superiors seemed more concerned with the military applications of Black25 than fighting the Taenia and healing the human psyche.

With backing from her father and a few other prominent politicians (mostly rivals of Dr. Endell and his supporters), Sarah Wilson staged a minor coup, enticing Laerty, a few researchers, and several Dreamwalkers away from The Clinic. With their help and *liberated* records on the Dreamwalking experimentation, she established the basis for Project Dreamwalker.

Kubla Khan

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree,
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.
But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place; as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced,
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,*

*And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air
That sunny dome! Those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.*

The Empyrean

“To confine our attention to terrestrial matters would be to limit the human spirit.”

Stephen Hawking

The Empyrean is the name given to the land of dreams. It is a realm of pure spirit mana where anything is possible. The Empyrean is comprised of four basic parts—the Barrier, the Periphery, the Dreamworld, and the Underpsyche.

The Barrier is the thin membrane of mana that divides the other three levels of the Empyrean. The Periphery is the astral border between the real world and the land of dreams. The Dreamworld is the spiritual manifestation of the Dreamer’s current dream. The Underpsyche refers to the nearly infinite number of dormant Dreamworlds, or Underworlds, that lie within the subconscious mind of the Dreamer.

To simplify, try to picture the Dreamer’s mind as a cake with an infinite number of layers. The top layer represents a Dreamworld, each subsequent layer represents an Underworld and the coat of frosting on top and between each layer represents a Barrier.

The Three Forms

Dreamwalkers are able to adopt three basic forms—physical, spiritual, and pseudophysical.

Physical

The physical form is that taken in what we call the real world. It is made of flesh and bone, and is subject to all the laws of science and nature. While Dreamwalking, the physical form is in its most vulnerable state as the mind is totally oblivious to its surroundings.

Spiritual

Although technically everything in the Empyrean is made of spirit mana, the spiritual form refers to the state which the Dreamwalker’s body assumes while traversing the Periphery. This spiritual form appears as a colored, flickering image of the Dreamwalker’s physical self. Dreamwalkers are vulnerable when in spirit form.

Pseudophysical

The pseudophysical form is that taken within the Dreamworld. Although composed of mana, it is shaped by the subconscious mind of the Dreamwalker (and sometimes the Dreamer) and usually corresponds with that of his physical form including all abilities and skills.

The Dreamer

Anyone who dreams is considered to be a Dreamer. The Dreamer is the creator of the Dreamworld and may appear as anyone or anything within it (even inanimate objects). There are two basic types of Dreamers—idle and lucid.

Most Dreamers are idle. An *idle Dreamer* is unaware that he is dreaming and has little or no control over his own actions during the course of the dream. Idle Dreamers are content to wander through the Dreamworld under the direction of the subconscious mind. The experience is similar to that of watching a movie in which the Dreamer is the star.

Lucid Dreamers on the other hand, are fully aware that they are in a dream. They not only have complete control over their own actions, but to some extent, the Dreamworld itself. Lucid Dreamers can be extremely powerful and are, therefore, rarely subject to Taeniid infestations. Most lucid Dreamers are unaware that others are able to enter their Dreamworld and during the dream it is nearly impossible to convince them otherwise. Lucid Dreamers see Dreamwalkers and the Taenia as a natural part of the dream.

Whatever the type or form, the Dreamer always appears as the most bright and vibrant being in the Dreamworld.

The Periphery

The Periphery is the silvery border ethereal—an unbelievably vast, ocean-like realm of spirit mana set beneath a brooding, purple sky. Billions of

Dreamworlds lie beneath the Periphery's iridescent waves and its waters often reflect the condition of those below—pure, clear water represents a Dreamworld which is virtually free of the Taenia; turbulent, brackish brown or green tinged seas indicate severe infestations.

As a realm of spirit, The Periphery is bound by no physical laws. Concepts such as time and distance are all relative. Movement through the water is accomplished by thought and is virtually instantaneous. The experience is akin to floating or swimming, although no true effort is expended. Perception is limited while in the Periphery—the five senses of sight, sound, hearing, smell, and taste are muted by residual emotions drifting up from the Dreamworlds below.

The existence of the Periphery has long been a subject of debate. Many scientists of Project Dreamwalker view the Periphery as a fabrication of the subconscious mind, designed to ease the transition between reality and dream. Throughout history, Mystics have assigned various religious or purgatorial significance to the Periphery, while other more altruistic Dreamwalkers view it as proof that all of humanity is linked together by a common bond.

Whatever its true nature and purpose, all who have experienced it agree that the Periphery is a place of great peace and formless beauty. Even so, it is not without its dangers.

Astral storms are frequent occurrences. These vary greatly in size and intensity, the largest mirroring the devastating effects of those in the real world. Spontaneous whirlpools occasionally suck unwary Dreamwalkers down into the depths of a nearby Dreamworld. Just passing over the unwholesome waters of some of the more disturbed Dreamworlds is a danger to one's own sanity and peace of mind.

Worst of all is the constant threat of the dreaded Taeniid Brookings. These powerful evil creatures often prowl the Periphery, lying in wait beneath the astral waters to attack a passing Dreamwalker.

The Barrier

The thin layer of mana that divides the Periphery from the Dreamworld as well as the Dreamworld from the Underpsyche is known as the Barrier.

Although the Barrier is only sometimes visible, it can be traversed at will from anywhere within the Dreamworld. The procedure is instantaneous and causes a slight distortion around the character as he passes through it. The character may delve as deep into the Underpsyche as he desires, but each level costs one point of mana to traverse.

The Dreamworld

Not every dream is accessible to Dreamwalkers—only those that occur during the deepest levels of REM sleep. These pseudophysical landscapes are known as Dreamworlds. Each Dreamer is different and therefore, so is each Dreamworld.

The Dreamworld's appearance is largely dependent upon the Dreamer's psychological state and makeup. Many also reflect his interests and hobbies. The Dreamer's convictions have a strong influence as to the content of the Dreamworld as do his general abilities. Dreamers with a high Creativity often have fantastic Dreamworlds while those suffering from dementia can alter the general mood and atmosphere—the more inflicted with dementia, the more horrid the Dreamworld.

Some Dreamworlds are outlandish creations, others are more mundane. A Dreamer who dreams of captaining a starship from his favorite television series manifests a Dreamworld vastly different than one who dreams of being a princess surrounded by a harem of handsome, obedient men.

Like the Periphery, the Dreamworld is a place of great beauty and great danger. The Dreamworlds are the home of the Taenia—the worse the infestation, the greater the Taeniid presence.

The Denouement

Most dreams are a series of scenes or random images reflecting the Dreamer's thought processes and/or current state of mind. However, several times each night (during REM sleep) these dreams take on greater significance; they are not just random occurrences, but rather the psychological manifestation of some real or imagined goal the Dreamer desires to complete. These goals are called denouements.

Denouements are a natural function of the healthy psyche. They are a tool of the subconscious mind used primarily for entertainment, problem solving, or resolution of past events. Upon completing a denouement, the Dreamer wakes feeling invigorated and refreshed, despite whether or not having any conscious recollection of the dream or its outcome.

Given time, the Dreamer usually completes the denouement on his own. The Taenia, however, subtly work to prevent this from happening in order to feed off the Dreamer's feelings of frustration, failure, and disappointment. People who wake up unrested, in a bad mood, or *on the wrong side of the bed* have often been unsuccessful in accomplishing their denouement.

Boundaries of the Dreamworld

Each Dreamworld is usually centered around its denouement. The further one travels away from the

denouement, the less distinct and populated the Dreamworld becomes. For instance, take a denouement centered around a cross country hike from New York City to Los Angeles. The Dreamworld would be clear and distinct along the route the Dreamer plans to take, becoming less so, the farther one ventures away from the route until reaching the Barrier at the edge of the Dreamworld.

The Underpsyche

Beneath the Dreamworld lies a nearly infinite number of dormant Dreamworlds known as the Underpsyche. These Underworlds are the doorways into the subconscious mind of the Dreamer. The Underworlds are Dreamworlds-to-be and follow much of the same guidelines. They are dimly lit, however, and entirely devoid of Unreal. This combination provides for an eerie and unsettling effect.

Despite its emptiness and gloom, there is reason to travel through the Underpsyche. Scattered throughout the Underworlds are hidden pockets of unused mana that may be harvested by Dreamwalkers to replenish their supply. These pockets always appear as something important or interesting to the Dreamer and vary greatly in size and strength. For instance, an Underworld which manifests as the Dreamer's childhood home may contain pockets of mana in the form of his favorite pair of roller skates or his Babe Ruth autographed baseball.

Unfortunately, these pockets of mana are rarely left unguarded. In an infested psyche, Taeniid drones routinely transport eggs to the various levels of the Underpsyche. Some of these drones remain behind to defend their charges and must be dealt with before the mana pocket can be absorbed.

The Unreal

The Unreal are the pseudophysical manifestations of all people, animals, and monsters living within the Dreamworld.

Some are duplicates of people the Dreamer knows while others are mere fabrications of his sleeping mind.

The Unreal generally act as would their real world counterparts, but are sometimes bound by the Dreamer's perception of reality. Therefore, Dreamwalkers would do well to learn as much about the Dreamer as possible before entering his dreams.

The Taenia

The Taenia Spiritus are spiritual parasites that derive sustenance from the negative emotions generated by the human psyche. More importantly, they actively attempt to foster these emotions in order to thrive and multiply. Their presence corrupts the Emphyrean like a

plague, turning otherwise peaceful Dreamworlds into places of nightmare.

It is not known for certain how Taeniid infestations arise in the human psyche, although many theories abound, most including Broodkings who roam the Emphyrean at will.

At some point or another, everyone is subjected to at least one minor Taeniid infestation and some people play host to them on a routine basis. Strings of bad luck and lingering feelings of sadness, guilt, anger, envy, or betrayal are all that is needed for a Taeniid colony take hold. The subconscious mind is not entirely defenseless and often fights off and destroys these colonies while still in their formative stages. Some colonies are not destroyed but instead rendered dormant until revived (even years later) by some trauma, related occurrence, emotion, or other unknown event. Each time a Taeniid colony is destroyed, the mind becomes more resistant to new infestation.

Taeniid infestations may spread quickly or over the course of months, years, or decades, depending on the strength of the Dreamer's psyche. The Taenia latch onto and help generate negative emotions. During sleep, the Queen begins laying eggs and distributing them throughout the different levels of the Underpsyche. Meanwhile, the infested person gradually sinks deeper and deeper into a state of depression.

These colonies eventually become too large for the Dreamer's mind to handle alone. Lucid dreaming techniques, therapy, and prescription drugs have proven useful in combating less severe Taeniid infestations. Failing that, the only thing that can help the patient is the intervention of a Dreamwalker.

Other Types of Dreamworlds

Animals

It has long been established that animals dream in a way similar to that of humans. However, the content of those dreams is largely open to debate and would most likely shed some light on the inner workings of the animal mind as well as the depth of their relationship with humans.

Thus far, no Dreamwalker has been able to locate the Dreamworlds of an animal. This has lead to a host of speculation and the belief of an entirely different land of dreams. Thus, the quest for the Animal Emphyrean has taken on a near mythical status among some Dreamwalkers.

Children

By Project rule, Dreamwalking in the mind of a child is to be avoided at least until the child reaches adolescence.

This rule was established for the safety of all those involved. Children do not dream as adults do. Their perception of reality is underdeveloped and concepts such as life and death are often beyond their grasp.

The dreams of a child are sometimes so chaotic and unpredictable that they can be overwhelming and dangerous to an adult mind. One child's Dreamworld was reported as a land made up entirely of cartoon characters. These cartoons fell from cliffs, handled explosives and happily pummeled away at each other with little more than comedic effect. The Dreamwalkers however, were not so lucky.

Criminally Insane

The Dreamworlds of the criminally insane are often dark and hellish creations with cruel and perverse denouements. Even worse, joining with the Dreamer or possessing many of the Unreal is enough to threaten the sanity of any Dreamwalker. There is a belief that within each insane mind, a part of the Dreamer's consciousness realizes that his beliefs and actions are abnormal. Attempts to contact this alter ego have met with limited success.

Except in extreme circumstances, Dreamwalking in the mind of the criminally insane is forbidden by members of Project Dreamwalker. Unfortunately, The Clinic has no such restrictions.

Coma Victims

No one knows for sure what took place when Dr. William Black entered the mind of Sarah Wilson. To date, no one else has ever been able to enter the mind of a coma victim. Those who have tried, report a Barrier that is impossible to cross.

Project Dreamwalker imposes strict taboos on entering the mind of a coma victim, but The Clinic continues its attempts to access the unresponsive mind.

Mentally Challenged

The Dreamworlds of the mentally challenged are often a pleasant change from the chaotic and nightmarish Dreamworlds of others. Almost all are surreal and very few seem to have denouements other than enjoying the simple pleasures in life. Mentally challenged individuals immediately recognize and happily welcome Dreamwalkers into their Dreamworlds. To date, no Taeniid infestation has been found in the minds of the mentally challenged. Project scientists are hard at work trying to figure out why.

Out of Body Experiences

It has been determined that most (but not all) so-called out of body experiences are actually just the dreams of a lucid Dreamer as he wanders about his own

Dreamworld—a world mimicking the one he knows. The mistake is a natural one as the mind often cannot tell the difference between the Dreamworld and the real.

Dreamwalkers

Within their own Dreamworlds, Dreamwalkers gain the same benefits as lucid Dreamers. They automatically know their dream's denouement and completion conveys the usual feelings of triumph and euphoria, minus the backwash of mana. In addition, subdenouements and incidental achievements sometimes impart cryptic messages or provide better insight into something that is troubling the character in the real world. Dreamwalkers would do well to heed the workings of their own subconscious minds and investigate all fluff and other strange manifestations occurring within their dreams.

Islands

Islands are pseudophysical manifestations formed by the thoughts and dreams of thousands, sometimes millions, of people that were inspired by the same concept or ideal.

Islands vary greatly in size, shape and content. Some are based around a certain time period, some are centered around a particular person, organization, or movement, while others have deep religious significance. In recent years, several well known books and movies have given birth to brand new islands.

It is also rumored that each island contains an ancient standing column or pillar, supposedly engraved with directions to glorious Manaed, the City of Dreams.

Others

The Emphyrean is a land of few laws so who knows what other types of Dreamworlds there may be and what rules they may conform to. This is particularly frustrating to the scientific personnel of Project Dreamwalker as it limits the correlation of data.



Chapter 3

Characters

“A dream is a microscope through which we look at the hidden occurrences in our soul.”

Erich Fromm

Characters in the Dreamwalker setting are created using the same guidelines presented in the core rules. The following new abilities, gimmicks, and skills may also be used in addition to those listed in the core rules. Some are required by Dreamwalker characters and are noted in their descriptions.

While the dramatic reality rules may be more appropriate for characters in the real world, players may find more enjoyment by utilizing the pulp reality rules for creating characters to be used in dreamworlds. As with other elements of play, this decision is ultimately up to the director.

Dreamwalker characters must choose one of the Dreamwalker gimmicks and may be restricted by other aspects of the character.

☑ Infinite Mutable Abilities

Infinite mutable abilities function in the same manner as special mutable abilities, except that there is no defined limit to their rating. Basically, they can range from zero (0) to infinity (∞); five (5), one hundred (100), and one thousand (1000) are all theoretically possible, but will most likely be limited by actual game usage.

Mana

Mana is an *infinite mutable ability* and represents the raw spiritual energy from which the Dreamworlds are formed. Within the dream, Dreamwalkers are able

to manipulate this energy to produce various spectacular effects by thought alone. Many choose to do so in a variety of other ways, however.

Some Dreamwalkers learn occult mana *spells* from ancient tomes. Others focus their spiritual energy through good luck charms, crystals, or mystical runes tattooed on their bodies while still others, particularly Mystics, use holy amulets, icons, elaborate dances, chants, body paint, or musical instruments to call upon their *magic*. Upon entering a Dreamworld, these extraneous components (spell books, runes, magic staves or wands, good luck charms, etc.) are always included among the character's possessions and/or incorporated into the Dreamwalker's pseudophysical form.

Use of extraneous components is highly based on the character's concept, and the player's ability and willingness to roleplay. Directors may choose to give the character **1** on all mana based creativity tasks when using extraneous components in a dreamworld. Similarly, if divested of these components or otherwise prevented from performing his normal routine, the character should receive **1** on all mana based creativity tasks in a dreamworld.

Keep in mind that some of the more visual extraneous components and uses of mana in general may produce a negative response among witnesses. The Unreal act as would their real world counterparts. A Dreamwalker chanting and dancing around is likely to draw unwanted attention. Firing mana bolts and

creating fire in the Middle Ages is a sure way to be branded a demon or witch, and hunted down by the populace. Blatant use of certain powers in sight of the Unreal (such as possession or joining) or acts which define a Dreamer's convictions may require the additional expenditure of mana or even discipline as decided by the director.

Each Turn, a Dreamwalker may spend a number of mana equal to or less than his creativity ability. In some cases, a task check may be required in addition to spending mana. If the task fails, half of the mana points that the character would have normally spent are still subtracted (minimum of one). The mana total replenishes each time the character returns to his own Dreamworld.

If the desired effect has a mana cost greater than the character can spend per turn, he may focus his attention over subsequent turns (deferring the incomplete portion of the cost for the next turn) as long as his concentration is uninterrupted—this is a sustained action, but does not include the extra effort normally associated. Sustained use requires the utmost concentration, leaving the Dreamwalker vulnerable to outside attack. During this process, characters are considered surprised and knocked down for purposes of combat.

Several Dreamwalkers may also pool their talents together in order to help with an effect—this is a united action, but does not include the extra effort normally associated. The Dreamwalkers must be in physical contact with one another and must all concentrate (considered surprised and knocked down in combat) for this to work. The total mana cost of the effect is distributed evenly among those involved.

If one or more of the characters are interrupted before the desired effect is complete (such as by a character being attacked), all previously expended mana is lost, but the effect is not successful.

Some of the more common uses of mana are listed below. Unless otherwise noted, these effects occur immediately. Most effects last for the duration of the dream and disappear when the dream ends or the character leaves the current Dreamworld (whether he travels into an Underworld or back into the Periphery).

Aegis

This effect can increase the difficulty of any attack directed at the character by one grade for every two points of mana expended.

Channel Damage

Mana may be channeled through a normal attack such as that of a sword or gun in order to increase the amount of damage dealt. The intent to channel damage must be stated before the attack is made. If

the attack is successful, the weapon inflicts +1% or +1⁺ (depending on weapon type) per mana point expended. The mana points are still expended if the attack fails. Calamities indicate that the character making the attack receives the increase in damage originally intended for his target.

Speed Boost

Mana may be expended to increase a character's haste in a turn. Each point of mana expended counts as |+1| effort toward acting in haste.

Forte

Fitness or reasoning based skills which the character does not possess may be acquired in the Dreamworld at the rate of one grade per point of mana expended, plus one additional point of mana. This is most useful in surreal Dreamworlds where some skills have no real world counterparts. The character must have at least some idea of what type of skill he needs.

Healing

Dreamwalkers may heal themselves or others at the rate of one grade of fatigue for every point of mana expended or one grade of injury for every two. This effect heals normal damage as well as damage from other sources of injury such as fire and acid without leaving scars. It does not extinguish flames or dissolve acid, however. Therefore, the character may continue to take damage on subsequent turns. Healing can also be used to reattach severed limbs, provided the original limb is still available. It is ineffective against disease but does neutralize and heal damage from poisons and other sources of physical injury.

Vigor

The character's discipline rating may be increased at the rate of one per point of mana expended. This increase only lasts until the end of the focus situation in which it is used and it may not go above six.

Heightened Ability

Fitness or awareness may be increased at the rate of |+1| per point of mana expended. These abilities may not be raised higher than |+5| in this manner.

Heightened Skill

Fitness or reasoning based skills which the character already possessed outside of the dreamworld may be increased in the Dreamworld at the rate of one grade per point of mana expended.

Mana Bolt

A mana bolt is a devastating attack that tears at the very fabric of the Dreamworld. A mana bolt produces a rippling pulse of raw mana that streaks out from the

character's extended hand. In addition to doing damage, a mana bolt can be used to attack larval Unreal without harming the host. This can be done automatically by touch (the target must be subdued first) or by an attack using the precision stunt. If successful, the larva is burned out of the host's body. Otherwise, the Unreal host takes damage instead.

Mana bolts are classified as *J damage* and inflict 1☹ per point of mana expended. They require a standard throwing task to hit. Since no armor is effective against the *J damage class*, mana bolts bypass all armor.

Nullify

Nullify is an instinctive ability inherent to all mana-using creatures, enabling them to deflect and disperse direct mana based attacks at a rate of one mana point per mana point expended. Direct mana based attacks include mana bolts as well as alteration powers that directly affect the character's pseudophysical form (including all clothing and possessions) usually through physical contact. Nullification occurs automatically and has no effect on how many mana points the character may expend over the remainder of the turn, although he cannot use more than his turn maximum for nullification.

Possession

A Dreamwalker may usurp the form and identity of an Unreal by using the possession effect. The Taenia (including their Unreal hosts) are immune to possession.

Physical contact with the Unreal must first be made. The Dreamwalker's body then melds with the new shape, gaining the appearance and form of the Unreal in question. During possession, the Dreamwalker retains all of his own abilities and skills, but all mana costs are raised by one point until he resumes his regular form. Additionally, all damage taken in combat is subtracted from the Unreal's health instead of the character's. The character suffers no penalties for fatigue or injury, but if the Unreal is incapacitated or unconscious, he is incapable of any action other than disengaging from the host. The character does not take damage from further attacks, but may be forced to disengage if the host body is destroyed (such as by rending apart or burning)

In the case of possessed animals, fitness may be increased or decreased depending on the creature's rating. In addition, the character also gains use of all of the animal's physical characteristics (birds can fly, sharks breathe water and swim fast, bats see by sonar, etc.) and can interact (but not communicate) with animals of the same type. Some skills can be more difficult or even impossible to accomplish in animal form.

The Dreamwalker does not gain any memories or skills in this manner so he must be careful when dealing with friends or relatives of the Unreal possessed. After the Dreamwalker exits the body, the Unreal has no memory of the possession and may be extremely confused, especially if he is wounded or in an unfamiliar location.

Possession is near instantaneous, but the procedure may prove terrifying to Unreal who witness it, sometimes inflicting 1☹ upon them. A character may cross from one Unreal to another at the normal mana cost with no noticeable effect and without having to resume his natural form. Possessed Unreal may not cross any Barrier. Characters who do so and then return to the Dreamworld, resume their natural form. Possessed Unreal are easily distinguished by the Taenia and other Dreamwalkers.

One mana point must be expended in order to use possession. This amount is increased by one for small animals such as rats and cats, or very large creatures such as elephants and giraffes. There is no cost for disengaging with the Unreal and resuming the character's original form.

☑ New Gimmicks

Natural Dreamwalker

This type of Dreamwalker is born with the natural ability to do so. The talent manifests at a very early age and gradually fades (but never disappears) as the child matures and the demands of reality become more pressing.

As a child, most Natural Dreamwalkers are too young to realize the exceptional nature of their dreams. Most of these children are unable to properly communicate what is happening even if they did. Some become so enamored with the things they see while Dreamwalking that they spend as much time as possible sleeping. Others are so traumatized by encounters with the Taenia that they become subject to night terrors—a defense mechanism of the subconscious mind that stops the child from Dreamwalking. Night terrors eventually subside as the ability to Dreamwalk becomes dormant with age.

Some adult Naturals have suppressed the ability to Dreamwalk, but continue to have lucid dreams. These people are usually artists, poets, or otherwise highly creative individuals who gain nightly inspiration from the experiences in their own Dreamworlds.

Most Natural Dreamwalkers are discovered by the Project at a young age. Children who exhibit severe sleeping disorders are singled out by Project therapists. Experienced Dreamwalkers visit these children in their dreams upon reaching adolescence in order to determine if there is any latent Dreamwalking ability.

Those who have the ability, receive Project funding and scholarships to further their education and are eventually recruited by the Project and taught to develop their unique abilities.

Most Naturals are between the ages of nineteen and twenty-two and begin play with 10 points of Mana. Naturals also require a creativity rating of $|+2|$ or greater.

Mystic Dreamwalker

These Dreamwalker are spiritual and holy men from all walks of life who have learned this rare art through intense rituals, meditation, or prayer. Throughout history, Mystics have received prophetic visions and sudden inspiration through the process of Dreamwalking. Many are unaware of what is happening at first and often assign religious significance to the things witnessed within the Empyrean.

Mystics view Dreamwalking as a highly spiritual and rewarding experience. Each has his own method of entering the dream state, most often in a way reflecting his individual faith or religion. For instance, a Catholic priest might begin Dreamwalking only after receiving (or giving) communion and prolonged prayers. A Baptist minister may speak in tongues and dance with serpents until his mind is properly focused. Buddhist monks enter deep meditative trances. Many primitive tribal shamans have developed elaborate dances and rituals which are passed down from generation to generation. Whatever the process, the results are essentially the same.

The Mystic follows a strict code of guidelines, morals, and taboos (essentially convictions) related to his particular faith, often making his life seem rigid and unyielding to others. These ethics translate into the Dreamworld and can sometimes cause conflict with his team's objective. For instance, murder is a mortal sin for a Catholic priest. He may find it unbearable to kill or allow harm to befall innocents, even the Unreal. The consumption of beef is forbidden by those of the Hindu faith. Muslims refuse to partake of swine or alcohol and must still pray at sunrise and sunset, even in a dream. Celibacy is a common restriction that is often retained in a dream. Because the Taenia are universally recognized as enemies of mankind, these taboos never inhibit their destruction, although in most cases, Unreal infested by them should be neutralized rather than killed.

Mystics usually find their own way to Project Dreamwalker, whether by word of mouth or sudden, seemingly divine inspiration. They begin play with 25 points of Mana and require specific convictions at commitment or compulsion levels related to their chosen faith (the player and director must determine which convictions are appropriate).

Analyst Dreamwalker

These Dreamwalkers the direct result of the vast amounts of time and money spent on the Project. Analysts are relative newcomers to the Dreamwalking experience and reach the Empyrean through routine injection of Black25.

Most Analysts begin their careers as students interested in the study of psychology and dreams. Those that excel are singled out and approached by agents of Project Dreamwalker. After extensive background checks, they are granted an internship at a nearby chapter house and eventually given the opportunity to use Black25.

Analysts come from all walks of life. They are scientific and analytical by nature, hence their name, but many have a strong creative side. Analysts begin play with 15 points of Mana and require any one of the following academia: *medical science*, *philosophy*, *biology*, *genetics*, *psychology*, or *theology*.

User Dreamwalker

Users are drug addicts, plain and simple. They are either chemically or psychologically dependent upon some sort of hallucinogenic drug (LSD, ecstasy, peyote, marijuana, etc.) and must have regular doses of this drug to function properly. This drug is also what enables them to enter the Empyrean.

Users are recruited from clinics and halfway houses throughout North America. They can sometimes be encountered aimlessly wandering the Periphery in a drug induced stupor. Project Dreamwalker does not try to corrupt Users trying to overcome their addiction. Rather, they target those so hopelessly addicted that they continually backslide.

The arrangement works out well for most Users. In return for their service, they receive regular doses of their chosen drug. The moral and ethical concerns of giving Users the drugs that eventually destroy their sanity has caused more than a little consternation among many Project members.

Users can be difficult to work with and as such, their actions are more closely monitored than other Dreamwalkers. When Users become too unstable, or if they ever decide to rehabilitate, they are relocated to secure government funded clinics. After rehabilitation, Users are given minor government jobs, although they remain under supervision for the rest of their lives. In addition, they must take regular doses of GRE-13, a drug designed to suppress their Dreamwalking ability.

Users begin play with 30 points of Mana and require the dependency conviction (drug of choice) at compulsion level.

Lucid Dreaming

This gimmick indicates that character is fully aware he is in a dream and has complete control over his own actions as well as, to some extent, the Dreamworld itself. Because of this, the character is rarely subject to Taeniid infestations. Characters with this gimmick who are not able to Dreamwalk are typically unaware that others are able to enter their Dreamworld and during the dream, it is nearly impossible to convince them otherwise—Dreamwalkers and the Taenia are seen as natural parts of the dream.

☑ New Aptitudes

Alteration (creativity)

Mana can be used to alter the pseudophysical reality of the Dreamworld itself. Alteration applies only to non-living things—a piece of lumber may be *created* or *reshaped* but a living tree may not. Only normal items or items inherent to the Dreamworld (such as a laser rifle in a science fiction setting) are subject to alteration. Therefore, the director will have to make a lot of judgment calls as to what is allowed and what isn't during the course of each session.

Altered items may be identified by those with high awareness ($|+2|$ or greater) or with investigation tasks if the character is actively searching for anything unusual. Altered items last for the duration of the dream and disappear once the character leaves the Dreamworld. Creative players may somehow be able to use this to their advantage.

A cautionary word on alteration: the following rules are purposely designed to be flexible and that very flexibility opens itself up for a lot of misuse. Creative use of these powers should be encouraged rather than inhibited, but keep in mind that the ability to alter the very fabric of the dream allows you to accomplish almost anything within reason—don't let players cheapen the fun by exploiting the rules. Directors and players alike should put the spirit of the game ahead of the actual rules.

Object Size

Alteration uses the item's size to determine difficulty and the amount of mana which is required. In some cases, units of measurement (pounds, liters, or ounces), especially in regards to tiny items (such as explosives, acids, or poisons), may be more appropriate.

The Director should be prepared to allow a lot of leeway here as object size refers primarily to the item's actual mass rather than its height, length, or width. It is perfectly acceptable to rule that a football field and a one-hundred yard long piece of string are not of the same object or purposes of difficulty and mana cost. By

the same token, the creation of ten swords should be treated as the creation of multiple items, even if all of those swords are connected to each other by a tiny piece of metal.

Also keep in mind that what works in one Dreamworld does not necessarily work in others—the rules of the Empyrean are constantly changing and an increase or decrease in difficulty and/or mana cost often manifests for no particular (or known) reason. The following sizes are used:

<i>tiny</i>	<i>cigarette lighter, paperback book, jewelry (less than 1 foot)</i>
<i>small</i>	<i>handgun, computer, dining room table, car, bicycle (1 to 15 feet)</i>
<i>medium</i>	<i>tank, fishing pond (16 to 50 feet)</i>
<i>large</i>	<i>airplane, house, football field (51 to 500 feet)</i>
<i>huge</i>	<i>train, aircraft carrier, skyscraper, shopping mall, stadium (more than 500 feet)</i>

Creating Objects

Everything within the Dreamworld is composed of mana and as such, is subject to the whims and desires of the Dreamwalkers, who are able to take raw mana from their surroundings and transform it into something more useful, whether it be a finished item (such as a car), raw materials (lumber or stone), liquids, and even gasses, upon succeeding at an alteration task. Base mana costs are determining by the size of the object.

<i>tiny</i>	<i>4 mana</i>
<i>small</i>	<i>6 mana</i>
<i>medium</i>	<i>10 mana</i>
<i>large</i>	<i>16 mana</i>
<i>huge</i>	<i>20 mana</i>

Creation takes place upon touch and is nearly instantaneous—the desired object literally appears to sprout forth from the character's hand (or whatever part of the body he desires). Clothing does not hinder creation so a character may wear gloves, for example, and still produce the same effect. A working knowledge of the created item is not necessary, although the character must know what kind of item he wants to create. For instance, a poison antidote may not be created unless the character knows what kind of antidote is needed.

Once created, items conform to their natural shape and form. Liquids must be stored in some type of container, fire must have fuel to continue burning, gasses may be dispersed by heavy winds, etc. Created items do not imply motion—air may be created but wind may not.

Reshaping Objects

Reshaping is similar to creation, but less costly to perform. The Dreamer's mind imposes a pseudophysical form on everything within the Dreamworld that may be altered with a successful alteration task. Base mana costs are determining by the size of the object.

<i>tiny</i>	<i>2 mana</i>
<i>small</i>	<i>3 mana</i>
<i>medium</i>	<i>4 mana</i>
<i>large</i>	<i>6 mana</i>
<i>huge</i>	<i>10 mana</i>

Only non-living solids or liquids may be reshaped, although these materials can be transformed into almost anything—even a gas. Once again, a working knowledge of the item is not necessary although the character must know what kind of item he wants to reshape. The original item must be roughly the same or greater object size than the desired item and it generally becomes unusable after reshaping.

A character can use reshape to alter the form of items at a distance equal to twenty times his creativity rating in yards. The character must be able to see the item being reshaped and some part of the character must be touching something that touches the item—a character standing in a room may reshape the ceiling as his feet touch the floor which touches the walls which touch the ceiling. The base difficulty is determined by range.

The target must also be stationary in regards to the character. For instance, if the character is aboard an airplane, items inside would be considered stationary. If the target is not stationary, the character receives 1D to his alteration task. Living creatures are never considered stationary for purposes of this task.

Reshaping over a distance produces a visible effect—both the item being reshaped and the intervening distance ripple during the procedure. Therefore, if the effect is some type of attack form (such as making the floor disappear or growing spikes from the walls), characters may, at the director's discretion, be allowed to take some type of simultaneous action (such as dodge or nullify) to avoid injury.

Complex Devices

Complex devices include almost any type of mechanical item; this increases the difficulty by 1D and the mana cost by two points. The total number of mechanical parts does not matter—the difficulty remains the same. Most modern weapons and all vehicles are considered complex devices. Additionally, items which do not fit in with the Dreamworld (such as a machine gun in a medieval setting) are considered complex and the mana cost is increased by five points.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices include any type of manufactured item with electronic or electrical components; this increases the difficulty by 1D and the mana cost by four points. The number of electronic parts does not matter—the difficulty and cost remain the same.

Multiple Items

Multiple items of the same type or groups of related items (such as a bow and quiver of arrows, a furnished apartment building, a desk and chair, a bed frame, a box spring and mattress, a fully outfitted aircraft carrier, etc.) may be created or reshaped with a single task. In this case, the approximate size of the largest item or the overall size of the gathered items is determined by the director and an increase in difficulty of 1D is applied to the roll.

United Alteration

Some things may be difficult or even impossible for one character to create or reshape alone. Several Dreamwalkers may pool their talents together in order to help with the alteration (if they are skilled in it). The character directing the task receives |+1| effort from each additional Dreamwalker assisting him (this effort does not count toward fatigue gain). The Dreamwalkers must be in physical contact with one another and must all concentrate (considered surprised and knocked down in combat) for this to work. The total mana cost of the item is distributed evenly among those involved.

Sustained Alteration

This is the same as sustained actions for mana effects, but if the character is interrupted before the desired alteration is complete (such as by the character being attacked), a partially formed item or structure is created instead. If the character is interrupted during creation, he loses the mana spent during the current turn. The item may be reshaped normally but it may only still be useful in the rarest of cases.

Alteration Attacks

In some cases, creation and reshaping can be used as an attack form such as when creating a pillar of fire around an enemy or turning a larval knight's armor suit into an iron maiden or even pure acid. To do so, the Dreamwalker must first make physical contact with his target—in combat, the target must be grappled. The alteration task may take place after contact is made but counts as a separate action.

In most cases (such as with fire), the character is immune to the effects of his own attack for the turn in which the attack form is created only. Thereafter he may suffer damage from his own creation normally.

Other factors may compromise this immunity at the discretion of the director. For instance, creating an electrical charge while standing in a pool of water is generally not a good idea, nor is creating a bonfire while drenched in kerosene.

Direct attacks against a mana-using creature are subject to be nullified (*see nullify effect*). Creating a steel box around a character may not be nullified but grabbing his wrist and encasing him in a block of ice may be.

By rule of thumb, damage is handled like the mana bolts effect and is classified as *J damage*. 1☹ is inflicted per point of mana expended and all created items correspond with the object size (two points of mana spent on a bed of lava would be a small object or one to fifteen feet in length and inflict 2☹ per turn until it cools).

Joining (creativity)

Joining is similar to Possession but instead of merging with the Unreal, the Dreamwalker is able to unite with the Dreamer himself. For joining to take place, the Dreamwalker must first make physical contact with his target—in combat, the target must be subdued. A successful joining task must then be attempted after contact is made and costs one point of mana to initiate (and none to disengage).

The Dreamer may believe that the character intends to do him harm and seek to distance himself from that character and his allies. If pursued, he will seek help from others in the Dreamworld (such as the Unreal police force) and use any available means to defend himself. This can be particularly lethal when dealing with a lucid Dreamer. In addition, the Dreamworld begins to reflect this hostility towards the characters. All subsequent tasks made by the Dreamwalkers are reduced by one point of effort. This lasts for the course of the dream or until resolution of the denouement.

Subsequent tasks to join with the Dreamer (by anyone) allows him to successfully resist the attempt by spending one point of discipline or revelation. In some instances, no one can join with the Dreamer and the only way to learn the dream's denouement is by guesstimation.

If the joining is successful, the character's pseudophysical form melds with that of the Dreamer. The Dreamwalker retains all of his own abilities and skills while joined, and may manipulate mana normally. If the Dreamer's form is something other than human (such as an animal), the character gets the benefits of the new form as well.

In combat, the Dreamer's (or Dreamwalker's, if joined) opponents may not expend discipline to decrease the fatigue or injury sustained. This includes combat against the Taenia and other Dreamwalkers. A

joined character must subtract damage from his own health and not the Dreamer's. If the Dreamwalker is killed, he is ejected from the dream as normal; the Dreamer remains unharmed. The Dreamer cannot pass through any barrier.

A joined character is easily distinguished by the Taenia or by other Dreamwalkers, and is also immediately able to recognize and interpret the dream's denouement. Most Dreamers (even lucid ones) are content to let the characters control their actions while joined, viewing the course of events as a natural part of the dream.

The Dreamwalker can feel the mind of the Dreamer lying just below the surface of his consciousness and gains automatic access to all of his trivial memories (but not skills). An investigation task enables the character to delve even deeper into the Dreamer's mind in order to access his more private memories and help recognize the significance of fluff and Taeniid manifestations. This includes access to knowledge that the Dreamer knows in the real world, so joining can be disastrous in the wrong hands. Luckily, the Dreamer is not without protection.

If the desired information is extremely important (such as a high level security passcode) or potentially damaging or embarrassing (such as the name of the married woman with whom he is having an affair), the Dreamer's mind may resist the task by spending one point of discipline, luck, or revelation. Once resisted, it may not be attempted again for twenty-four hours and the character is automatically ejected from the body of the Dreamer. Additionally, the character may choose to gain 1☹ or else be ejected from the Dreamworld as well. The character can feel the Dreamer's mind begin to seize up before this happens and should be allowed to cease the memory search without having to attempt the task.

There are also dangers associated with successful joinings. Dreamwalkers do not dream as normal people do. They know what their denouements are and can easily fulfill them which sometimes makes their own dreams seem routine and uninteresting by comparison.

Upon joining with a Dreamer, the sensory input is almost overwhelming and the Dreamwalker becomes temporarily lost in the surge of thoughts and memories, gaining 1☹. The character is incapable of any action and can only watch helplessly as the Dreamer wanders about the Dreamworld, trying to fulfill the dream's denouement. This effect can last for up to twenty minutes, after which time, the Dreamwalker assumes control of the Dreamer's mind and actions normally.





Chapter 4

Behind

the Scenes

*“The better work men do is always done under stress
and at great personal cost.”*

William Carlos Williams

The following sections are primarily designed for the director’s use. These chapters contain some more information on Project Dreamwalker, technical information on the process of Dreamwalking, facts about the Taenia as well as a rundown on recent Dreamwalker related happenings in the real world. Players should consult their director before reading further into this text.

Chapter Houses

Chapter houses are the control centers of Project Dreamwalker. There are currently over twenty chapters operating in North America with half a dozen more scattered throughout parts of Europe and the Middle East. Project headquarters is located just outside of Seattle, Washington.

Most chapter houses are small, isolated compounds located in rural areas but the size and appearance of each varies from site to site. Chapter houses maintain a good relationship with the local communities and are often regarded as private asylums reserved for wealthy patrons. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Staff Members

All staff members are aware of the Project and its true function. Senior staff members and many of the junior staff are trained in lucid dreaming techniques in order to protect themselves from Taeniid infestation or the depredations of rogue Dreamwalkers.

Patients

Patients are hand picked from an extensive file of would-be candidates referred to the chapter therapist by colleagues in the field. For the most part, these patients are normal people with normal problems. Criminally insane patients are not handled by Project Dreamwalker although special cases may arise. This is a classic example of the needs of the many far outweighing the needs of the few. The idea is that because Dreamwalkers can help heal thousands of people, why risk their lives on the few who are possibly beyond help.

Once chosen, patients are invited to the chapter for a stay which usually lasts from one to four weeks. Except in special circumstances, the patients know nothing of Dreamwalking or the Project. During the first part of their visit, new patients undergo a

comprehensive psychological evaluation. This enables the chapter therapist to make his own decision on whether or not the patient is suitable for treatment. The evaluation also conveys the patient's hobbies, interests and past or present Phobias and/or Dementia. Unless there is a good reason not to, this information should be relayed to the characters beforehand and may give them a better idea of what they may face within the patient's dreams.

Once the psychological evaluation is complete, the Dreamwalkers are allowed to interact with the patients and get to know them on a more personal level. Although the characters are not required to befriend or even particularly like patients, such interaction often helps with locating the Dreamworld and recognizing possible subdenouements or incidental achievements within the dream.

Finally, the Dreamwalkers enter the patient's dreams, help them achieve their denouements and attempt to destroy any Taeniid infestation. Success rates are very high and most patients leave the chapter feeling that therapy and a change of scenery were the reason.

Although many of the patients are wealthy, at least half of those selected are people who could not normally afford treatment. After all, the goal of Project Dreamwalker is to better the human condition, not to make money.

Dreamwalking Drugs

Black25

Black25 (1948, Dr. William Black) is a Vitamin B derivative that stimulates the part of the brain responsible for REM sleep, promoting more vivid and lucid dreams and better dream recall.

Upon administration, seventy-five percent of human test subjects experience an increase in strange dreams as well as mild abdominal discomfort, but are otherwise unaffected. With practice, the other twenty-five percent become Dreamwalkers; able to enter the Empyrean at will. Scientists have thus far been unable to determine why Black25 confers Dreamwalking capabilities to some people and not others, but studies indicate that high creativity and reason may be a determining factor.

Analysts must be injected with Black25 at least twice a month in order to be able to Dreamwalk. The dosage cuts back to once a month after about five years.

GRE-13

GRE-13 (1977, Gunther R. Endell) inhibits the part of the brain responsible for REM sleep by suppressing the ability to Dreamwalk or have lucid dreams. GRE-13

neutralizes the effects of Black25 but apparently has no other side effects.

Dreamtracer

Dreamtracer (1980, Luther Crane) Dreamtracer is a specially designed drug that enables a Dreamwalker to home in on the Dreamworld of a specific Dreamer. The drug must be administered to both the Dreamer and the Dreamwalker in order to be effective. It may be used in conjunction with Black25 without any apparent ill effects. Slight chemical variations are added to each dosage of Dreamtracer in order to avoid detection by and/or conflict with other Dreamwalker teams.

Dreamwalking, the Process

Project Dreamwalker imposes a strict set of guidelines on Dreamwalking to ensure the safety of all those involved. These rules have been summarized by the acronym P.R.O.J.E.C.T.D.W.—Penetrate, Recognize, Observe, Join, Establish, Contain, Treat, Do your best, and Wipe out.

Before and after a Dreamwalk, characters must undergo a complete physical and psychological evaluation that sometimes takes up to several hours. If everything checks out, the characters are cleared for the upcoming Dreamwalk. Only one Dreamwalk is allowed per team per week. This rule is sometimes broken (or ignored) in extreme circumstances.

Dreamwalkers enter the dream state from a soundproof room that is specially tailored to each team's specific needs. These Dreamwalking Chambers are designed to promote the tranquillity and peace of mind necessary to enter the dream state. Audio and visual devices as well as highly technical, but unobtrusive brain wave (EEG) and heart rate monitoring equipment individually monitor each character while they sleep (or meditate).

A discrete viewing room borders each Chamber allowing Project scientists to observe and evaluate the proceedings through a wall length window. This window can be opaqued to minimize light levels in the Chamber and to give Dreamwalkers the illusion of privacy. Instruments in the viewing room record the readouts from the monitoring devices in the Chamber and a general (entire room) and personal (earplug) PA system allows researchers to communicate with or awaken the Dreamwalkers if necessary.

Beginning characters are awakened by medical staff whenever their physical bodies begin to exhibit predestined symptoms (such as when the character's pseudophysical form is incapacitated) or whenever he is *killed* or *goes mad* in his own Dreamworld. Any Dreamwalkers within his Dreamworld are immediately ejected when the Dreamer awakens. Dreamwalkers

who are awakened while in their own Dreamworld are unharmed. Dreamwalkers who are awakened while in the Periphery or someone else's Dreamworld suffer from dump shock—the character immediately awakens in an agitated state and will fall unconscious if his current dementia level is agitated or greater. (irrational or greater if awakened from outside sources). Falling into unconsciousness may be prevented by spending one point of discipline. In addition, the trauma of being hurled through the Empyrean results in a loss of up to five mana points as decided by the director.

The Dream State

The dream state refers to the REM portion of sleep where people have their most vivid and memorable dreams. Dreamwalking is only possible during this time.

Naturals enter REM sleep ninety to one-hundred minutes into the sleeping cycle. These REM periods last up to forty-five minutes and occur three or four times during the course of the night. Naturals are more at home in the Empyrean than any other type of Dreamwalker and are less likely to be harmed by premature awakening and may spend one point of luck or revelation to avoid dump shock.

Mystics take varying amounts of time to enter the dream state. The mental and physical preparations necessary to properly focus their minds can take anywhere from a few minutes to several hours. Some Mystics enter the dream state through the normal course of sleep (ninety to one-hundred minutes) and may remain in REM sleep for periods of up to forty-five minutes that occur three to four times each night. Others achieve the dream state through meditation or prayer and can remain in the dream state almost indefinitely unless their concentration is broken.

Since Mystics exercise such control over their passage into the Dreamworld they too are less apt to be harmed by premature awakening and may spend two points of luck or revelation to avoid dump shock.

Analysts reach REM sleep in ten to sixty minutes and can remain in the dream state for up to two hours. This is due to the effects that Black25 has on certain portions of the brain.

Users reach their version of REM sleep in a relatively short amount of time (thirty to ninety minutes) and may remain in the dream state for periods of up to six hours in length while on an especially good high. Unfortunately, Users suffer the worst from premature awakening—discipline cannot be spent to avoid dump shock. In addition, they sometimes suffer the effects of a *bad trip* that must be role-played out.

Destination

When a Dreamwalker first enters the dream state, he may choose to remain in his own Dreamworld or go straight to the Periphery. Dreamwalkers must return to their own Dreamworld before waking and automatically return there between periods of REM sleep. Each time he returns, ninety to one-hundred minutes of real time pass in the blink of an instant. This is a normal part of the Dreamwalking process that enables the mind to cycle down as it prepares for the shift from the dream world into the real world or from one dream to another (between periods of REM sleep).

Upon returning to his own Dreamworld, the character's pseudophysical form is healed of all fatigue and injury, and his mana supply is completely replenished. He may return to the Empyrean normally, although the amount of real time that has passed may make it impossible to return and achieve the Dreamer's denouement.

Dangers of the Periphery

A lot can happen in the space of a few minutes, especially in a realm where things like time and distance have little meaning. Dreamwalkers are at their weakest while traveling through the Periphery—no more than one half their fitness ability (rounding down) may be used as effort and they are unable to use mana, leaving them even more vulnerable to attack. Sensory perception is reduced to a range of about 100 yards therefore it is quite possible for teams of Dreamwalkers to pass close by each other without even knowing it.

The following are a few of the more common dangers likely to be encountered while traveling through the Periphery. Peripheral dangers should almost never be random occurrences. The director should always plan the encounter ahead of time in case the unexpected happens—the character might fail a task and get sucked down into a disturbed Dreamworld. The director must be prepared just in case.

Astral Storm

Astral storms quickly manifest and batter away at the spiritual forms of the Dreamwalkers, causing any amount of fatigue or injury decided by the director. Dreamwalkers who are killed are ejected from the Periphery in the same manner as being ejected from the Dreamworld.

Whirlpools

Spontaneous whirlpools occasionally manifest, forcing all Dreamwalkers in the vicinity to make athletics tasks to avoid being sucked down into a nearby Dreamworld.

Disturbed Waters

Passing over the Dreamworld of a criminally insane Dreamer may inflict 1☹ to Dreamwalkers at the director's discretion. Spontaneous whirlpools are also known to manifest.

Broodkings

Broodkings can sometimes be encountered in the Periphery where Dreamwalkers are at their weakest. The Project has instructed all of their Dreamwalkers to flee these encounters rather than fight.

Locating a Specific Dreamworld

The Periphery is huge. It literally spans the minds of billions of sleeping people, so locating a specific Dreamworld is difficult at best, not to mention dangerous.

A successful investigation task is required to locate the Dreamworld. One task may be attempted for each Dreamwalker in the group. The difficulty may be adjusted by 1☹ if the Dreamwalker is very familiar with the Dreamer. Distance is also a factor as Dreamworlds roughly correspond with the physical locations of their Dreamers.

Traversing the Barrier

Dreamwalkers are able to pass through the Peripheral Barrier and into the Dreamworld and vice versa at no cost. Other Barriers may only be traversed by the expenditure of one point of mana.

The Barrier between the Periphery and the Dreamworld is relatively easy to cross. The Barrier between the Dreamworld and the Underpsyche is somewhat more difficult to traverse and those between the different levels of the Underpsyche get progressively harder the deeper one delves.

Characters who traverse a Barrier and then return to the Dreamworld find themselves one to one-hundred yards away from the Dreamer. Personal items inherent to the Dreamworld (such as clothes, guns, money) may be transported from the Dreamworld into the Underpsyche and vice versa, but altered items disappear once the Dreamwalker crosses through any Barrier, even if the altered item is no longer in his possession.

Multiple Barriers may be traversed at once, up to the amount of Mana Points a character may spend each Turn. Pursuit into the Underpsyche is also possible but an investigation task is required to correctly guess the pursued's destination.

Attunement

Upon entering a Dreamworld, Attunement enables a character to instantly blend in with his surroundings in a manner that does not draw attention to himself.

Attunement manifests in various ways, depending on the content of the Dreamworld. For instance, Dreamwalkers who find themselves in a World War I trench would find themselves dressed out in full military gear while those appearing at a Sunday picnic would be clothed accordingly.

In the case of Dreamworlds whose environments are inherently hostile and/or incapable of supporting life as we know it, Attunement provides the necessary means of survival, usually without altering the Dreamwalker's pseudophysical form.

For example, a Dreamwalker who finds himself in an underwater ruin might manifest with an air tank and scuba gear or in the cockpit of a small submersible. On the moon he would be protected by a full, bulky space suit. In a land of freezing cold and ice, shelter or warm clothing would be readily available.

Special cases may apply, depending on the particular Dreamworld and the content of the dream. When in doubt, the Dreamer should be used as a reference as his form should initially be compatible with that of the Dreamwalker.

For example, in a forest Dreamworld where the Dreamer appears as a timber wolf, the characters may also appear as wolves. Similarly, if the Dreamer manifests as an aquatic alien, the Dreamwalkers will mirror this form. Possession or the use of certain Talents may eventually alter this form but the initial manifestation is considered to be the Dreamwalker's natural form throughout the course of the dream.

Locating the Dreamer

Dreamwalkers usually materialize within one-hundred yards of the Dreamer, although special cases may apply. The Dreamer may not be visible right away, but it is impossible not to feel his presence which makes locating the Dreamer fairly easy.

Getting close to him may prove difficult, depending on the dream and its denouement. If the Dreamer manifests as a Mafia kingpin or the 14th century King of France, the Dreamwalkers will have to get creative in order to get close enough to Join.

Interpreting the Denouement

In some Dreamworlds, the denouement is not readily apparent. The simplest method of learning a denouement is through joining. Players are encouraged to put all the pieces of the puzzle together and deduce it themselves.

Violence

Excessive amounts of violence and destruction by Dreamwalkers or the Taenia can cause the Dreamer to receive an increase in dementia which will eventually cause him to panic and awaken.

At some level, the Dreamer is aware of everything that is happening within the Dreamworld. Therefore, any time the characters engage in deviant and/or non-denouement related behavior (such acts of perversion and murder or sometimes even rudeness) towards the Unreal, especially those related or close to the Dreamer, he may also receive an increase in dementia. The Dreamer's mind simply refuses to take part in what is happening and struggles to wake up.

Keeping Track of Time

Because Dreamwalking only occurs during periods of REM sleep, the length of time which a Dreamwalker may remain in the dream state varies. But, time is a tricky concept in the Empyrean. Minutes, months, years, and even centuries may seem to pass during the course of a dream that lasts only a few seconds in the real world. Exceptionally long Dreamwalks are another good reason to have someone on hand to *talk down* the Dreamwalker until his mind fully returns to the present.

It is up to each director to tailor the game to his own needs and those of his players. Some directors carefully keep track of each passing minute while others assume that each dream only lasts a few seconds, allowing the Dreamwalkers a near infinite amount of time to complete their goal. REM sleep and the threat of awakening is best used as a plot device to heighten tension as the characters race to achieve the dream's denouement and destroy the Taenia.

Aftermath

Achieving the Denouement

In a dream with a passive denouement, it is vital for the Dreamwalkers to help resolve the Dreamer's goal before tackling the Taeniid infestation.

Once the goal is complete, the Dreamer becomes lost in the euphoria of the moment and revels in his success. He becomes less interested in the happenings throughout the rest of the Dreamworld making it much easier for Dreamwalkers to manipulate mana and engage in combat.

In realistic Dreamworlds, all mana costs return to normal, but surreal Dreamworlds are unaffected. More importantly, resolution of the denouement creates a backwash of pure mana (five to fifteen points total) that the Dreamwalkers may absorb to replenish their supply. The Dreamworld becomes an even more bright, colorful, and vibrant place. Taeniid larvae wither and die while drones scuttle back to the nest to protect their Queen.

In a dream with an active denouement, resolution occurs when the Taeniid Queen is destroyed. This produces a great feeling of triumph in the mind of the

Dreamer and causes the same backwash of mana as in a passive denouement. Depending on the content of the dream, there is often some type of celebration by the Unreal during which the Dreamer is honored for his accomplishment. Although the Dreamwalk is essentially over, Dreamwalkers may choose to leave immediately or stay and indulge in the festivities.

In either case, once the denouement has been achieved and the Queen destroyed, the characters may choose to leave the Dreamworld or skirt through the Underworlds and root out any drones hiding within.

Failing to Achieve the Denouement

In a dream with an active denouement, failure occurs when all of the Dreamwalkers are *killed* or they decide that the Queen is too much for them to handle and leave the Dreamworld.

In a dream with a passive denouement, failure occurs when it becomes obvious to the Dreamer that he cannot attain his goal. For instance, if the denouement involves buying a particular car and the car is somehow destroyed in the presence of the Dreamer, the denouement cannot be fulfilled. If it was stolen however, the Dreamwalkers may be able to track down the thieves or even create a duplicate of the desired car.

The dream itself does not end upon failure of a passive denouement. Instead, the Dreamworld becomes much like an Underworld, turning gray and lifeless as the Dreamer wallows in feelings of self pity and regret. The Unreal fade away. Most of the larvae die although a small portion metamorphosize into drones. Characters may still attempt to destroy the Taeniid Queen but the additional drones make this a difficult task at best.

Failing to achieve a denouement has other adverse affects as well. The next time the characters enter the Dreamer's mind, there will be at least double the number of drones lurking about. In addition, the Queen will have absorbed a number of drones equal to the amount she usually has in her presence. Therefore, it is usually best to wait some time before returning.

Recovery

Once the Taeniid Queen is destroyed, the Dreamer's mind may begin the long process of healing. The Dreamer slowly reduces dementia as, in his dreams, he hunts down the rest of the colony over the course of the next few months or years, depending on the severity of the infestation. This process may also be helped along by additional therapy.

PENETRATE the Barrier surrounding the Dreamworld and enter the patient's dream.

RECOGNIZE your limitations. Take a moment to get familiar with your newly manifested form. Take a look around the Dreamworld to get a feel for what type of world you are in.

OBSERVE the Dreamer. If the Dreamer does not seem immediately threatened, watch what he does and how he reacts to the events unfolding in the Dreamworld. You may be able to guess the dream's denouement without having to join.

JOIN with the Dreamer. If you cannot guess the dream's denouement on your own, join with the Dreamer as soon as possible. Not only does this relay the dream's denouement but it also provides the Dreamer added protection against the Taenia. In violent dreams, it is best to stay joined with the Dreamer for as long as possible.

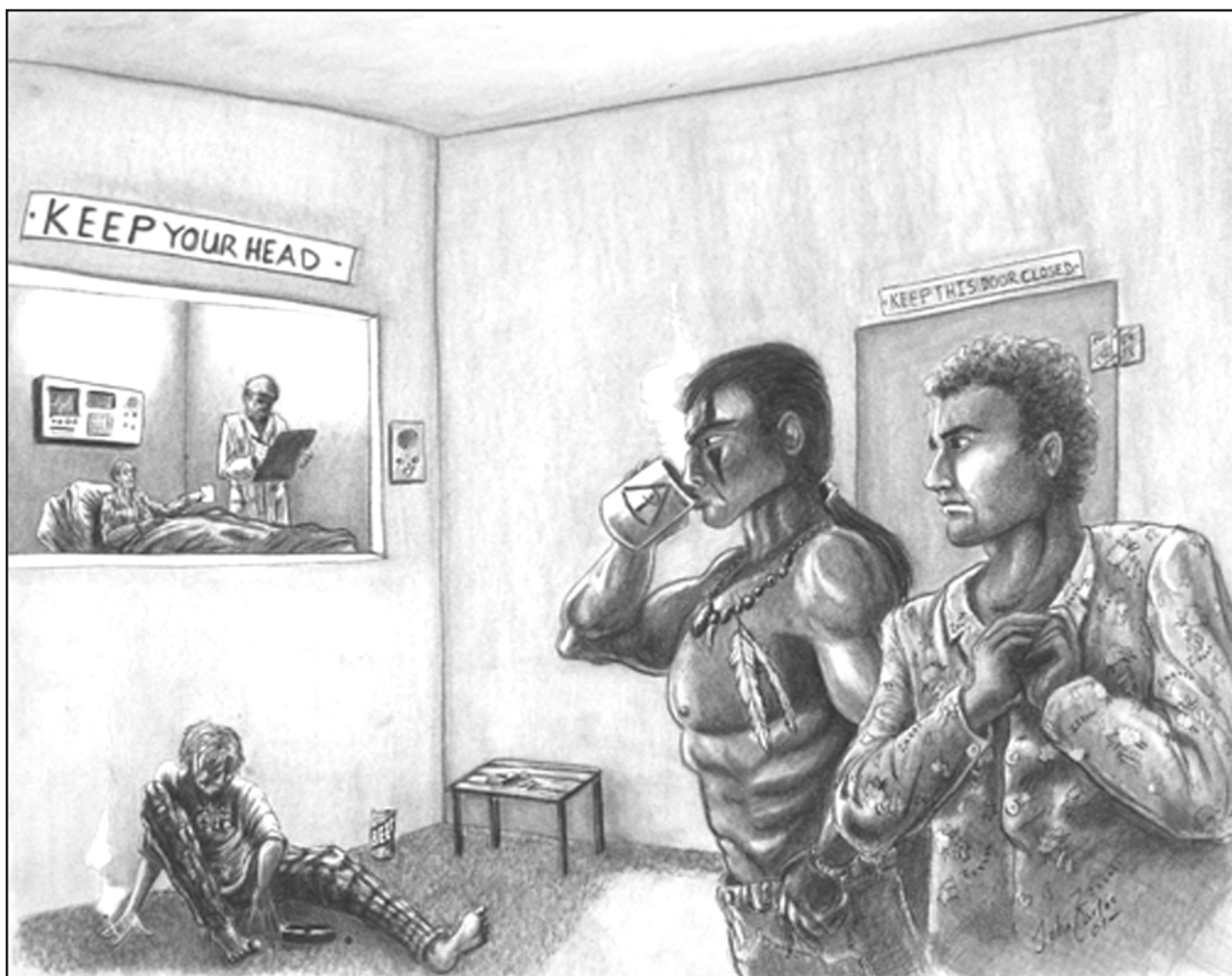
ESTABLISH a plan to achieve the denouement. When establishing a plan, try to proceed in a manner that most closely relates to the Dreamer's interpretation of how the denouement is supposed to be achieved.

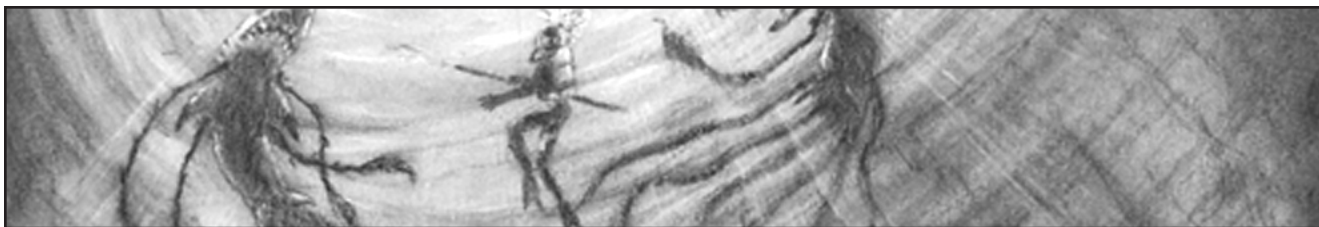
CONTAIN larvae and drones. Be aware that containment does not necessarily mean destruction. Avoid unnecessary combat whenever possible as sometimes even small amounts of violence may upset the Dreamer and could possibly end the dream.

TREAT the Unreal as you would real people. Once again, this is an attempt to pacify the Dreamer. The Dreamer is aware of everything that takes place within the Dreamworld, even if his pseudophysical form is not present. He views the Unreal as real people and for the duration of the dream, so should you.

DO YOUR BEST to achieve the denouement. Some denouements, particularly heavily combat oriented ones, may be impossible to achieve. Do not be ashamed to leave a dream with the denouement unfulfilled. *Live to dream another day* is a common Project proverb. Always think safety first.

WIPE OUT the Taeniid colony. Once again, some colonies may be too large and/or the Queen too powerful to destroy. If this is the case, do not hesitate to leave the dream. The patient can always continue his normal therapy sessions until a more experienced team of Dreamwalkers can be assembled.





Chapter 5

Taenia Spiritus

“They mostly come at night. Mostly.”

Newt, Aliens

Thus far, information on the Taenia is largely inconclusive. Nothing is known about their origin and any attempts at peaceful communication have failed; disastrously in some cases. Clinic Analysts have captured several Taeniid larvae, drones, and Queens in order to examine them within the confines of the Dreamworld. This data has been correlated with the information contained in the Black Files, but the highly adaptable nature of these parasites makes any comparisons difficult at best.

Still, a few things have been determined about Taeniid physiology and behavior. They are hive minded creatures whose entire existence seems centered around protecting the Queen and enlarging the colony which is only active during sleep; lying dormant while the host is awake.

Types of Taenia

Four types of Taenia have thus far been encountered—larvae, drones, Queens, and Broodkings.

Larva

Taeniid larvae may be found throughout the Dreamworld. They are the unformed state of the drone, spawned from eggs that incubate on mana pockets in the dormant Underworlds. These eggs hatch in the presence of the Dreamer (at the beginning of a dream). The larvae then bond with the nearest Unreal in a manner similar to possession. More than one larvae may infest a single Unreal in this manner. Hatched larvae cannot cross through any Barrier, even with help.

Once attached to an Unreal, a larva seeks to hinder the Dreamer from achieving his denouement, thereby

Larval Form



+1
fitness

0
awareness

0
creativity

0
reasoning

0
mana

luck
discipline

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

gimmicks
natural weapon (bite; A1)

aptitudes & academia
brawling (apprentice)

prolonging its own existence. Larvae can verbally communicate with and command drones to do their bidding.

In their natural form, larvae are quite helpless. They are worm-like, with no arms or legs, forced to wriggle around on the floor until they find suitable hosts. The head is eyeless and contains several sucking, lamprey-like mouths surrounded by hooks that are used to attach themselves to the Unreal. Bonding with Unreal takes one turn.

The life cycle of a Taeniid larva is very short, lasting only for the duration of the dream. At that time it either metamorphosizes into a fully functional drone or ceases to exist.

Each Dreamworld is home to an amount of larvae equal to twenty times the Dreamer's level of dementia. Larva die when the dream's denouement is achieved. If the denouement is not achieved before the dream ends or if the Dreamer believes it is impossible to achieve the denouement, ten percent of the total molt into fully functional drones; the rest die.

Drone

Taeniid drones exist only to serve the Queen. They are near mindless and usually attack Dreamwalkers on sight unless ordered otherwise. Drones may be

encountered throughout the Dreamworld but are most often found in and around the Nest or in the Underpsyche watching over the Queen's eggs.

Drones are entirely fearless and fight to the death. They can be injured and slain in most normal ways, but do not suffer from wound penalties. Some have additional strengths and weaknesses depending on their manifestation (see *Taeniid Appearance, below*). In combat, their attack form is generally dictated by their manifestation.

Drones only appear in their natural form when encountered in the Underpsyche or when summoned to a Dreamworld by the Queen. In this case, they manifest as large, shadowy, insect-like creatures with bloated abdomens, sharp spines, and barbed appendages.

Drones may be Propelled into the Underpsyche by their Queen but cannot enter the Periphery or bypass any Barrier on their own.

Each Dreamworld is home to one drone for every ten larvae.

Queen

The Taeniid Queen is the heart of the colony, and the mother of all larvae and drones within the Dreamworld.

Drone in Natural Form

+2

fitness

+2

awareness

0

creativity

0

reasoning

0

mana

luck

discipline

✓

✓

gimmicks

natural weapon (bite & claws; B1), tolerance to pain

aptitudes & academia

brawling (proficient), athletics (proficient), survival (proficient)

Drone in Manifested Form

+2

fitness

+2

awareness

0

creativity

0

reasoning

0

mana

luck

discipline

✓

✓

gimmicks

tolerance to pain

aptitudes & academia

as per manifestation

Active
EXPLORITS

33

Queen



+3 fitness	+2 awareness	+4 creativity	+3 reasoning
		25 mana	+1 esp
luck		☐	☐
discipline		☒	☒

gimmicks

tolerance to pain, inexhaustible energy

aptitudes & academia

telepathy (expert; with drones only), others as per manifestation

Broodking



+4 fitness	+2 awareness	+5 creativity	+3 reasoning
		50+ mana	+1 esp
luck		☒	☒
discipline		☒	☒

gimmicks

tolerance to pain, inexhaustible energy, dreamriding

aptitudes & academia

as per manifestation

Their intelligence ranges from genius level to a crafty, animal-like cunning and a knack for learning and adaptation that should never be underestimated.

Queens have limited telepathic ability, allowing one-way communication with their drones. Scientists and Dreamwalkers have thus far been unable to duplicate this effect with any degree of success.

The natural form of the Queen is unknown as she only manifests within the Dreamworld. Her appearance is bound by the fears of the Dreamer and may change each night or even from dream to dream.

The Queen can be injured and slain in most normal ways. She may also have additional strengths and weaknesses depending on her manifestation (see *Taeniid Appearance*, below). The Queen never leaves the vicinity of her nest. She avoids hand to hand combat if possible, preferring creative mana use to harm or delay opponents if direct confrontation seems inevitable.

Taeniid Queens are able to manipulate mana in much the same way as Dreamwalkers, except that they cannot pass through any Barrier.

Broodking

Taeniid Broodkings are the biggest mystery of all the Taenia, in part because they are (thankfully) so infrequently encountered. Broodkings are an anomaly among the hive-minded Taenia. They seem to operate independently of any Queen and their motivations and goals are entirely unknown.

Broodkings may be encountered anywhere in the Empyrean and are inherently hostile. The few attempts to communicate with them have resulted in immediate conflict, always initiated by the Broodking. The one documented case of attempted capture (by The Clinic) ended in disaster.

Broodkings are formidable opponents. They are able to manipulate mana and possess abilities and skills to rival even the most experienced Dreamwalkers. More horrifying is their ability to enter the real world. Broodkings do this by killing the Dreamwalker's pseudophysical form and *riding* his consciousness out of the Empyrean.

Since so few cases of Broodkings have been documented, it is unknown if they have developed any other special abilities. Broodkings manifest in various ways; usually as something horrific, alien, and violent.

Taeniid Mana

Taeniid Queens and Broodkings are able to manipulate mana in much the same way as Dreamwalkers. In addition, they have developed several unique mana effects which Dreamwalkers have thus far been unable to reproduce with any degree of success.

Absorption

With absorption, drones may be consumed in order to enhance one's own power. Each consumed drone adds one point of effort to any task and bestows two points of mana to the recipient. Absorption takes one turn to initiate. The Queen automatically absorbs all drones at the beginning of a dream with an active denouement.

Fear Generation

Using fear generation, the Taenia are able to cause irrational fear in a character's mind, causing him to gain a phobia conviction at commitment level (spending one additional point of mana makes it a compulsion). This may be countered by spending one point of revelation or discipline. The director and/or player must work out what type of phobia this is. Fear generation costs at least one point of mana to initiate and is also subject to nullification.

Chaos

Using Chaos, the Taenia are able to directly attack a character's mind, which increases his dementia level by one grade (two grades if four additional points of mana are spent). Chaos is only used against the Dreamer in dreams with active denouements. Chaos costs at least one point of mana to initiate and is also subject to nullification.

Summon/Propel

Queens often use this power to propel drones throughout the Underpsyche. In this way, drones are routinely dispatched to carry egg sacs throughout the levels of the Underpsyche. In times of trouble, she can also use this power to summon up to five drones which arrive in up to ten turns. Each drone which is propelled or summoned in this manner costs one point of mana.

Taeniid Gimmicks

Dreamriding

The creature can join with the consciousness of a character whose pseudophysical form has been killed, thereby using it to leave of the Emphyrean and manifest in the real world. This may not be used by player characters—it is intended for Broodkings only.

Immunity

The character can ignore all damage from the indicated source. *Bullets*, *asphyxiation*, and *fire* are some examples.

Inexhaustible Energy

The creature does not tire or gain fatigue. This may not be used by player characters—it is intended for Queens and Broodkings only.

Taeniid Appearance

The appearance of the Taenia varies between dreams and is largely dependent upon the type of denouement. Dreamwalkers can always see through any disguise to the Taeniid presence lurking beneath.

In a passive denouement, the Taenia manifest as some deep seated, past or present fear of the Dreamer. The Taenia instinctively latch onto and give form to these repressed fears in order to gain nourishment from the feelings of uneasiness and revulsion this causes in the Dreamer's subconscious mind. These manifestations are highly diverse and may have nothing to do with the current Dreamworld. Larval Unreal incorporate a minor characteristic of this fear into their appearance, while drones embody it in a more recognizable form. The Queen either appears as a larger version of the drones or as the culmination of the fear itself.

Take for instance a Dreamer who, as a child, witnessed a particularly gruesome car accident that left several people severely injured and one man dead. The child had recurring nightmares for weeks after, but as time passed, he eventually managed to suppress his fear and forget about the accident. The memory is still there, however. Even now he is careful to drive the speed limit and is made uneasy by the sight of blood.

In the Dreamworld, larval Unreal manifest minor characteristics of those involved in the accident such as glass in the hair, bloody clothing, lacerations or bruises. Drones manifest as more seriously injured people, paramedics, police or news crews that were on the scene. The Queen manifests as the grisly remains of the man who died.

The Unreal are oblivious to the presence of larval manifestations, even when the larvae are in their natural form. Taeniid drones and Queens, on the other hand, may cause uneasiness or sometimes even outright terror throughout the Dreamworld, depending on their appearance.

In an active denouement, the Dreamer is consciously trying to destroy the Taeniid Queen. This is why Taeniid infestations are rare in the minds of lucid Dreamers. Larvae may be found anywhere in the Dreamworld and their behavior is more aggressive than in passive

denouements. In addition, there is a distinct absence of drones—the Queen absorbs them at the beginning of the dream in order to enhance her own power.

The Taeniid Queen manifests as the source of the Dreamer's opposition. Destroying her results in resolution of the denouement. The larvae actively seek to hinder the Dreamer from accomplishing the denouement without harming him directly unless he is Joined. The Queen has no such compunction and attacks the Dreamer on sight.

One example of a dream with an active denouement is a Dreamworld set in a medieval fiefdom ruled by a tyrannical Baron. The denouement is to kill the Baron and put his castle to the torch. Since the denouement is active, the Taeniid Queen manifests as the Baron himself. Her larval minions may be found among the Baron's knights or attached to any other inhabitants of the Dreamworld. The larval knights may attack the Dreamer (under orders from the Queen) while other larvae use delaying and misdirection tactics to hinder the Dreamer from accomplishing his denouement.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The basic statistics of the Taenia remain the same no matter what form they take, although all skills and additional gimmicks conform to that of their appearance. This includes any strengths and weaknesses inherent to the form in question. Therefore, a Taeniid drone manifesting as a vampire would have the tolerance to pain, immortality, invulnerability, and vulnerability (sunlight, fire) gimmicks (*or whatever else belongs to a vampire; see The Shaded Veil setting*). Note that these strengths and weakness are largely dependent on the Dreamer's interpretation of the strengths and weaknesses of the form in question.

The strengths and weaknesses may or may not be readily apparent but are most often based in common sense—a Taeniid Queen manifesting as a giant ball of flame may have immunity (fire), but also possess vulnerability (water) (*see Character Conversion Kit 1*).

Even human-like manifestations should have certain weaknesses. A Queen posing as a military general may have immunity (altered weapons), while also possessing vulnerability (weapons native to the Dreamworld). Weaknesses are especially important when dealing with active denouements as they are sometimes the only thing that enable the characters to overcome the Queen.

Behavior During the Dream

The Taenia instinctively know what the dream's denouement is and actively seek to prevent its

achievement. How they do this depends mostly on what stage of development they are in.

Larva

Taeniid larvae are willful and as intelligent as their hosts. They possess a strong self-preservation instinct which forces them to walk a thin line between their own survival and their obligation to the colony.

The sole purpose of a larva's existence is to become a drone. At the same time, it is loathe to end the brief period of free will bestowed upon it during the course of the dream. Therefore, it tries to keep the Dreamer from completing his denouement in a way so as not to end the dream.

Because larvae are incubated near the source of the dream, they often attach themselves to Unreal prominent to the resolution of the denouement. These larval Unreal try to distract the Dreamer from accomplishing the denouement in a multitude of ways.

For instance, if the denouement involves the recovery of some lost item, the larvae will move the item rather than destroy, because this would end the dream. If the denouement involves travel, the larvae may attempt to disable the Dreamer's vehicle, set up roadblocks and detours along the way, or even force the Dreamer into a minor accident in order to delay him from attaining his goal. If the dream involves resolving a conflict with a child, parent, or ex, the larvae may kidnap the person in question (or perhaps even the Dreamer) to temporarily keep the denouement from being achieved.

Larvae avoid contact with Dreamwalkers whenever possible and much rather flee than fight. If conflict seems unavoidable, they will fight, but some have even been known to help or negotiate with Dreamwalkers in order to enjoy a bit more freedom. Dreamwalkers should be forewarned that larvae are not to be trusted.

Larvae are more prone to fight in dreams with active denouements than passive ones. They fully understand that destruction of the Queen ends not only their own existence but that of the entire colony.

Drones

In the Underpsyche, drones attack Dreamwalkers on sight. In the Dreamworld, they are usually more subtle because they have a vague understanding of the disruption their actions and presence cause throughout the dream. Some drones are even crafty enough to follow Dreamwalkers, waiting to ambush them in some dark, secluded place.

Queen

The Queen's only goal seems to be procreation and ensuring the safety of her eggs. Her reproductive system is highly active and complex, enabling her to

spontaneously lay hundreds of eggs each night. The Queen never abandons her eggs. This behavior is instinctual rather than due to any feelings of motherly love. If the eggs in her nest are destroyed, the Queen uses any means available to hunt down and destroy the perpetrators and has even been known to pursue Dreamwalkers to the edge of the Periphery for such an offense.

The Nest

The nest is the hub of all Taeniid activity in the Dreamworld. It is the lair of the Queen and the birthing chamber of the Taeniid larvae. Inside the nest, the Queen lays clutches of gelatinous eggs and cocoons them for distribution throughout the Underpsyche.

The appearance of the nest conforms to the Dreamworld and the denouement. Its size depends on the severity of the infestation and may range from an office suite to the inside of a skyscraper. Some nests are even mobile (such as in the back of a truck) and most can be moved through the Dreamworld, provided the Queen has enough mana for a massive reshaping.

The direction and location of the nest (within one to ten yards) may be discovered by Dreamwalkers who undertake an active search. In passive denouements, this task receives 2 if the denouement has not yet been achieved.

The Colony

The Dreamer's degree of dementia directly reflects the size of the Taeniid colony. Chronic sensitive or agitated grades of dementia are often a byproduct of the infestation rather than the cause. One does not have to be crazy to become a Taeniid host. Even the most stable person gets angry, or feels sad or betrayed. However fleeting, these emotions are all that is necessary to attract the attention of the Taenia.

The colony cannot survive without the Queen. Without her, the Taenia are near helpless. If she is destroyed, the larvae immediately go into hiding. Any remaining drones wander about the Dreamworld in confusion. The Dreamer's own mind eventually roots out and destroys them all during the course of future dreams. In addition, the Dreamer's mind becomes resistant, and sometimes even immune, to further infestations. As the saying goes, time heals all wounds.

Broodkings in the Real World

The worst thing that can happen is for a Broodking to escape the Empyrean. Upon entering the real world, each reacts differently to its newfound freedom. Some go on unheralded reigns of murder and violence, while others take a more subtle approach, often retreating to some remote location to set up a lair.

Like other Taenia, Broodkings feed off negative emotions such as misery and fear. In the real world, Broodkings create a sort of mind numbing, spiritual disturbance that increases acts of violence and murder as well as feelings of hate, anger, and betrayal in all those around them. Those who have experienced this effect describe it as akin to being in a dream (or nightmare). They remember what they saw and did while under the influence, but had little or no control over their own actions.

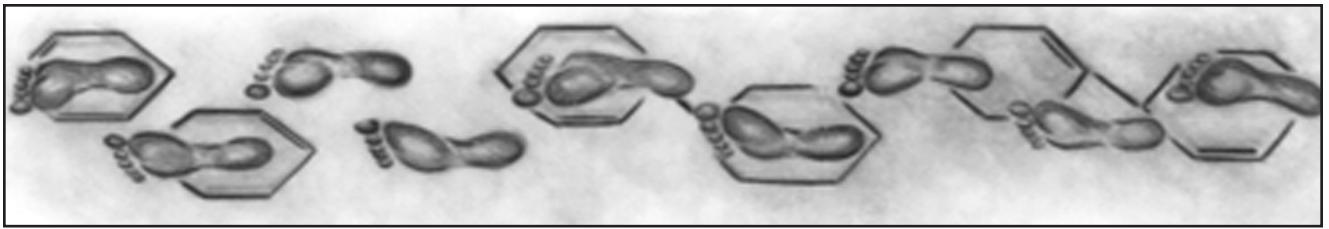
Dreamwalkers are unaffected by this disturbance. In fact, it is possible for Dreamwalkers to track down Broodkings by homing in on this disturbance (treat as locating a specific Dreamworld). Once within the area of effect, they are able to manipulate mana just as if they were in a dream. It is almost as if they have entered the nightmare realm of the Broodking itself.

Several particularly bizarre killing sprees have now been attributed to escaped Broodkings. It is also believed that over the centuries, escaped Broodkings may have given rise to many mythical and legendary creatures such as dragons, vampires, and werewolves to name just a few.

Final Thoughts on the Taenia

It should be made clear that the Taenia are not inherently evil. They do what they must to survive and procreate just like any other living creature in the real world. While they are responsible for the gradual increase in dementia, the Taenia are not the cause of all negative emotions in the world, nor are they responsible for the actions of every single madman.

Some believe the Taenia have been with us since the beginning of time. Others believe that they are not native to our world at all, but instead have crossed over from an alternate dimension that closely borders our own. Still others speculate that the Taenia may be a tangible reflection of the evil within ourselves. Only one thing is agreed upon for certain—while they may not be evil, the Taenia represent a threat to the psychological well being of all mankind.



Chapter 6

The World at Large

“The only limits are, as always, those of vision.”

James Broughton

Organizations

Below are some of the more prominent organizations that the characters are likely to encounter in the real world. Some have never even heard of Dreamwalking, others have their own unique perspectives on the matter.

Public Opinion

In the early 1970s, new age enlightenment began spreading awareness of the importance of dreams and their relationship to our daily lives. Hundreds of dream interpretation books were published. Several even tried to teach normal people how to lucid dream. As a result, a handful of faith healers, psychics, and other spiritually aware individuals actually developed the ability to Dreamwalk on their own.

Even so, despite an occasional tabloid article, the general public has very little information on Dreamwalking and even less about the Project. If asked, most people will say that the ability to enter someone else's dreams is pure fantasy. Very few have even heard of the 1960s' scandal of Dr. Black and his new dream drug.

This opinion is more than acceptable to the Project and its benefactors. It is commonly agreed that widespread panic would probably result from the

knowledge that nearly all of the world's population are routinely exposed to an alien infestation, not to mention the legal complications that would arise from confessions such as *“It wasn't me, the Taenia made me do it.”*

Religious Groups

Religious groups perceive Dreamwalking in various ways; it largely dependent on the beliefs and practices of their individual faith. Some shamanic traditions, such as that of the American Indians, the Mayans, and Australian aborigines to name a few, have been practicing the art of Dreamwalking for generations. Many *Far Eastern* religions have incorporated and accepted the Dreamwalking process as a natural part of spiritual growth. Unfortunately, many of the more orthodox religions (Christianity being the largest) firmly denounce accounts of Dreamwalking as delusion, heresy, or both. Parishioners who express interest or support about the possibility of Dreamwalking are often ostracized, ridiculed, or in some cases, even expelled from their respective faith.

The Vatican

Throughout history, the Vatican has had its sometimes not so subtle hand in most controversial and political affairs across the globe. By now it is certain that they have encountered at least some

evidence of Dreamwalking. Curiously, while individual congregations have their own viewpoints and agendas, the Catholic Church has declined to take an official stance. Project benefactors are not sure if this is a good thing or not.

United States Government

The U.S. Government has an unofficial *Don't ask, don't tell* policy regarding government-funded research concerning the Dreamwalking process. In other words, don't ask them about it and they won't have to lie.

Project Dreamwalker and The Clinic receive the majority of their funding from government sponsors, therefore, both are technically under government control. However, in practice, little authority is actually exercised. Proponents and opponents of both organizations may be found throughout the higher levels of government organizations, including the CIA, FBI, and NSA.

The more civic-minded of these supporters sponsor the Project for the good it does mankind, while others view Dreamwalking as a potential source of power and gain. So far, the Project has been left to its own devices, but it is only a matter of time before someone in authority attempts to exercise more control.

Other Governments

The Clinic has confirmed Peripheral contact with teams of Dreamwalkers from at least three other countries—Egypt, Japan, and Great Britain. Suspicions ran high during each occasion and little information was exchanged.

It is quite likely that other countries have developed and are exploiting the ability to Dreamwalk. What this means to national security is unknown, but soon after contact was made, several Clinic Analysts were transferred to Washington DC for *special duty*.

The Clinic

The Clinic was founded in 1977 by Dr. Gunther R. Endell. Dr. Endell was granted the authority to manufacture Black25 in small doses and resume the Dreamwalking experiments detailed in the Black Files. Many of Dr. Black's former students and original staff were happy to return to their old work. In addition, people from all over the country who had reported experiences similar to Dreamwalking were assembled, screened, and recruited. Some of those that came later were experienced Mystics, able to instruct Dr. Endell's Dreamwalkers in the ways of the Empyrean, the dangers of the Taenia, and how to manipulate mana.

Morale was high during The Clinic's initial stages as Dr. Endell's experiments closely followed Dr. Black's line of research. However, as time and the capabilities

of his Analysts progressed, his research began to take a more aggressive turn. Some believe it was urging from one or more important sponsors that caused him to redirect his focus towards more military applications of Dreamwalking. Others believe that this is what Dr. Endell had planned from the start.

Whatever the reason, new procedures were planned and enacted. Under Dr. Endell's direction, Taeniid larvae, drones, and Queens were captured and examined within the confines of the Dreamworld before being destroyed. Many unsuccessful attempts were made to transport and control the Taenia with the intent of distributing them into the Dreamworlds of others.

Failing that, Dr. Endell's research turned toward influencing the subconscious mind of the Dreamer. The idea was to see if thoughts could be imprinted on the subconscious mind in such a manner as to make the sleeping person do things after he awoke. These experiments did not go over well with many of the original analysts and members of Dr. Black's staff. Their complaints were ignored and many contemplated early retirement.

It was about this time that disaster struck. Failing in attempts to transport the Taenia across the Barrier and also having limited success with mind altering techniques, Dr. Endell proposed a plan to locate and capture a Taeniid Broodking. The original members of Dr. Black's staff were vehemently opposed to the plan. In particular, one Kevin Laerty, the only one present who had ever encountered a Broodking, got into a heated argument with Dr. Endell and had to be forcibly removed from the facility.

Despite opposition, Dr. Endell proceeded with his plan. It took several weeks, but finally, a Broodking was located. The Dreamwalkers were no match for the creature's ferocity. In minutes, several were killed and subsequently dumped out of the Dreamworld. What's worse, the Broodking actually rode the conscious mind of one of the Dreamwalkers out into the real world.

The Broodking killed all of the Dreamwalkers, several other Clinic staff members and destroyed the lab before fleeing into the nearby Appalachians. It migrated to a small farming community, causing horrible mutations among the local people and animals before it was finally tracked down.

Under Dr. Endell's recommendation, a covert military strike was ordered on the community. A special forces unit entered the area and summarily fell under the negative effects of the Broodking's spiritual disturbance as did the second unit sent in after.

A team of Clinic Analysts were then assembled to infiltrate the community. Before they could act, however, a band of Mystics calling themselves the

Sword of Gaia entered the affected area. According to eye witness reports, the group captured the Broodking using a large web-like net made of pure mana. After which, both the enraged Broodking and members of the Sword disappeared into thin air.

The Sword of Gaia

The Sword of Gaia is a mysterious group of Dreamwalkers made up entirely of Naturals and Mystics who seem to resent the infringement of Analysts into the Empyrean. From the only brief encounter with the Sword, it was discovered that their order was founded in 1237 with the purpose of hunting down and destroying Taeniid Broodkings—a tradition they continue to uphold to this day. Other than that, their motivations and whereabouts are entirely unknown.

Dreamstalkers

Power corrupts. This is one of the oldest and truest facts of life. Not all Dreamwalkers are interested in helping others and healing the human psyche. The ability to enter the Dreamworlds and influence the minds of others is too great a temptation for some people to resist. These rogue Dreamwalkers are known as Dreamstalkers. The Project has given its Dreamwalkers unofficial permission to *extradite* a suspected Dreamstalker if encountered in the Dreamworld. Otherwise, contact with Dreamstalkers is to be avoided if possible.

Antagonists

The following are a few broad categories of non-player characters likely to appear in a Dreamwalk. Due to the wide variety of people and occupations encountered in a dream, the descriptions of each category have intentionally been left vague. Directors are encouraged to create abilities ratings and skills based on the content of the dream (a modern day artisan will have vastly different skills than one living in 14th century France). Keep in mind, the Unreal are essentially phantasms with little form and substance.

Average Person

Average people make up the bulk of the world's population. Some examples are security guards, bartenders, retail counter clerks, waiters, salesmen, and secretaries.

Professional

Professionals include most white-collar workers; those whose work usually does not involve manual labor and requires them to dress with some degree of formality. Some examples are businessmen, lawyers, physicians, judges, teachers, college professors, and architects.

Manual Laborer

Manual laborers make up the bulk of the blue-collar working force. Their jobs are physically demanding but also generally field related rather than specialized (see *artisan below*). Some examples are construction workers, ditch diggers, road crew, lumberjacks, and factory workers.

Artisan

Artisans are blue-collar workers who excel at some sort of trade or handcraft. Some examples are welders, electricians, mechanics, and TV/VCR repairmen.

Artist

Artists are individuals of exceptional creative ability or skill who are able to produce works of aesthetic value, especially in the fine arts. Some examples are painters, sculptors, jewelers, writers, and filmmakers.

Athlete

Speed Athletes are trained to contend in exercises or events that require extreme fitness. Some examples are wrestlers, sprinters, light- and middleweight boxers, football wide receivers, baseball players, and centers (basketball).

Low-level Law Enforcement/Military

These are normal people trained in military or police style procedures. Some examples are trained security guards, police officers, and low ranking enlisted men.

Mid-level Law Enforcement/Military

These people are better trained in military, police and/or peacekeeping procedures. Some examples are police detectives, police chiefs, naval officers, and military pilots.

High-level Law Enforcement/Military

These include elite military, police or peacekeeping personnel. Some examples are Green Berets, Navy SEALs, S.W.A.T. members, and CIA agents.

Dreamwalker

Skill and ability can vary for Dreamwalkers depending on their experience (beginners, professionals, and veterans).

Animals

A wide variety of animals may be encountered within the Dreamworld. Some are fantastic others mundane. Directors can incorporate animals into their scenarios any way they choose—using standard character abilities and skills to reflect their size and power, or freeform as threats and obstacles by which the director decides on the outcome. Some animal descriptions are listed in *The Shaded Veil* setting.

Vehicles

A wide variety of vehicles are available to characters throughout the course of any given dream (or in reality itself). Unless otherwise noted, the following rules apply for driving and all piloting skills.

Vehicle Potential

Vehicles possess certain abilities in much the same way as characters. Each vehicle is assigned two potential abilities: **handling** and **speed** which may be used to exert effort in certain situations. This effort may be applied to vehicle tasks, but do not count toward fatigue loss for the character who is driving (or piloting). Instead, the effort is applied toward the vehicle's own measure of fatigue (mechanical stress) which is explained later in this section. Potential abilities for vehicles are rated on the following scale:

- 1 commercial and antique vehicles
- 0 utility, luxury, and spartan vehicles
- +1 typical small passenger vehicles
- +2 sports vehicles*
- +3 military vehicles
- +4 military vehicles
- +5 military vehicles

* maximum ground and sea ratings

Handling

Handling represents the vehicle's maneuverability and responsiveness, and allows effort to be used in conjunction with vehicle tasks for the following situations:

- jumping an obstacle or hill
- precision driving and dead stops
- ramming another vehicle
- sharp turn or spinning
- performing stunts
- dodging incoming fire

Speed

Speed represents the vehicle's top velocity and acceleration, and allows effort to be used in conjunction with vehicle tasks for the following situations:

- outrunning another vehicle
- catching up to another vehicle

Vehicle Integrity

In addition to potential abilities, all vehicles are assigned the mutable ability of integrity. This represents the size, efficiency, durability, and degree of shelter offered to the passengers of the vehicle. Whenever the amount of effort exerted in a single turn

from vehicle potential is more than the vehicle integrity rating, the vehicle receives one grade of mechanical stress. Integrity is rated on the following scale:

- 0 basic structures and motorcycles
- 1 small economy cars and boats
- 2 sedans, small planes and motor boats
- 3 utility and small commercial vehicles
- 4 large commercial vehicles and military attack craft
- 5 tankers and military transports
- 6 large military vehicles

Vehicle integrity provides the following benefits:

- one point may be expended to negate one damage grade to the vehicle
- one point may be expended to negate one damage grade to a passenger

Vehicle Weapons and Armor

Weapons and armor which are fitted to vehicles are assigned damage and armor classes in the same manner as described in the Focus: Combat chapter of the core rules.

Sample Vehicles

A sheet is included at the back of this book which may be duplicated and used to record all vehicles present in a Dreamworld. The vehicles listed below are but a fraction of what is available. The director may also decide to substitute magic or alternate technologies for our real world equivalents. For example, a car which is fueled by a magical potion, luxury cruiser which floats among the clouds, or military aircraft which runs on fusion power may all be present instead of what we are actually used to seeing.

Honda Accord

Speed: +1, Handling: +1, Integrity: 1

Porsche

Speed: +2, Handling: +2, Integrity: 1

Cadillac

Speed: +2, Handling: +1, Integrity: 2

Tank

Speed: +1, Handling: 0, Integrity: 6

Armor: Advanced

Weapons: Canon (D), Machine Gun (C3)

Cessna Airplane

Speed: +2, Handling: +1, Integrity: 2

F-16 Fighter Jet

Speed: +4, Handling: +4, Integrity: 4

Armor: Advanced

Weapons: Machine Gun (E), (2x) Missiles (D)

☑ Focus: Vehicles

Focus situations for vehicles come into play during pursuits or when stunts are performed.

Actions

Drive (vehicle skill)

This action represents the standard operation of a vehicle.

Stunts: *trick driving*

Pursue (vehicle skill)

This action is an attempt to follow another vehicle and maintain a relatively fixed distance behind it.

Stunts: *ram, nudge, overtake, tail*

Ehude (vehicle skill)

This action is an attempt to lose a vehicle which is in pursuit.

Stunts: *outrun, evade*

Shoot (firearms)

This action is an attempt to shoot a weapon (a firearm or one that is fixed to the vehicle such as a canon).

Stunts: *aim, reload*

Adjust (vehicle skill)

This action is an attempt to manipulate controls or computer components on the vehicle. Flying a passenger liner on manual control or diverting power from one source to another are but a few examples.

Stunts: *repair*

Risks: *variable*

Stunts

Aim

This stunt represents the aiming of a projectile weapon. A task which is resolved immediately after aiming receives one extra point of effort per continuous turn of aiming (up to a maximum of 2).

Risks: *collision (if driving/piloting)*

Reload

This stunt represents reloading the bullets, magazine, or shell of a projectile weapon.

Risks: *collision (if driving/piloting)*

Precision (1D)

This stunt focuses an attack at a particular location on the vehicle's frame or a specific passenger. If successful, the location or passenger is hit. The difficulty to hit a passenger is adjusted by the current integrity of the target vehicle (see table below).

Current Integrity

0

1-3

4-6

Difficulty

1

1

2

Risks: *collision (if driving/piloting)*

Nudge (1D)

This stunt is an attempt to push another vehicle off the road or to follow a specific route.

Risks: *collision*

Ram (1D)

This stunt is an attempt to drive the vehicle into another, causing a violent impact. The target vehicle receives a number of grades of damage equal to the amount of effort exerted from the speed ability. The ramming vehicle receives half of that amount.

Risks: *collision, flammable*

Overtake

This stunt is an attempt to close the distance with another vehicle in which you are in pursuit, or simply outrun it. The difficulty is determined by the distance (same as range).

Risks: *collision*

Outrun

This stunt is an attempt to lose a vehicle which is in pursuit by increasing the distance to it and speeding out of sight.

Risks: *collision*

Evade

This stunt is an attempt to dodge another vehicle which is trying to ram or nudge your vehicle. If successful, the attacker receives 1D, but the evader may not take any other actions.

Risks: *collision*

Tail

This stunt is an attempt to pursue another vehicle without its knowledge. This stunt can lead to surprise when engaging the vehicle. Attempting to spot the tail is a contested task (awareness may be used as the primary ability for the vehicle skill).

Repair

This is an attempt to quickly repair the vehicle's frame or mechanical components which would normally require a garage, hangar, or dock. No more than one integrity point may be restored and the difficulty is as follows:

Damage level

dented

breached

compromised

wrecked

Difficulty

routine

challenging

improbable

impossible

Risks: *collision (if driving/piloting)*

Trick Driving

This is an attempt to pull off special maneuvers such as hard turns, skids, driving on two wheels, etc. The difficulty should be adjusted accordingly.

Risks: *collision*

Conditions

The standard conditions listed in the Task Resolution chapter of the core rules may be used. In addition, the following conditions may also be used.

Poor Visibility

The situation is occurring in near darkness, fog, or a patch of smoke. The task receives **1D**. Military vehicles, those fitted with infrared technology, or characters with night vision can ignore this condition.

Impeded

The vehicle's performance is hindered due to an obstacle, hill, patch of mud, or turbulence. The task is resolved with one less point of effort.

Rough Terrain

The vehicle's performance is hindered due to terrain which is extremely difficult to traverse such as rocky areas, swamps, or coral reefs. The task is resolved with one less point of effort **AND** receives **1D**.

Breached

The vehicle is being made to perform while slightly damaged. The task is resolved with one less point of effort.

Compromised

The vehicle is being made to perform while very damaged. The task is resolved with two less points of effort.

Overworked

The vehicle is being made to perform while slightly stressed. The task is resolved with one less point of effort.

Overheated

The vehicle is being made to perform while very stressed. The task is resolved with two less points of effort.

Encumbered

The vehicle is carrying an excessively heavy cargo or passenger load. The task is resolved with one or two less points of effort (director's discretion).

Risks

The standard risks listed in the Task Resolution chapter of the core rules may either be applied to the passengers or the vehicle itself. In the case of the latter, mechanical stress may be substituted for fatigue and structural damage may be substituted for injury. The following risks may also be used.

Collision

A failure indicates that the vehicle has crashed into an obstacle, another vehicle, or building. Assign a number of damage grades equal to the current amount of effort exerted from speed. Also, if luck or effort to a vehicle skill is used toward speed, it too is counted. This damage is applied to both the vehicle (structural damage) and the passengers (injury). Seat belts will reduce the damage grade to passengers by one and half of that to fatigue instead of injury.

Flammable

A failure indicates that the vehicle bursts into flames, causing D class damage to the vehicle as well as injury to passengers.

Health

It is obvious that vehicles cannot be measured in terms of health, but the nomenclature is used here in order to maintain consistency with the standard combat rules. There are two aspects of vehicle health: *structural damage* and *mechanical stress*.

Structural Damage

This represents damage sustained by the vehicle. The only way to increase the structural integrity of a vehicle is to have it repaired, but only if it has not passed beyond compromised. Structural damage is rated on the following scale and functions identically to *injury* (**6** can also represent structural damage):

<i>dented</i>	
<i>breached</i>	-1
<i>compromised</i>	-2
<i>wrecked</i>	x

Mechanical Stress

This represents fatigue and wear on the vehicle's drive components (*engine, transmission, ailerons, etc.*). Mechanical stress may only be restored by one grade after at least one hour of rest. This gives the internal components time to cool down. Repairs can be performed at any level of stress, provided that the vehicle is at rest. Mechanical stress is rated on the following scale and functions identically to *fatigue* (**6** can also represent mechanical stress):

<i>engaged</i>	
<i>overworked</i>	-1
<i>overheated</i>	-2
<i>disabled</i>	x



Chapter 7

Dream Design & Adventure

“Always design a thing by considering it in the larger context—a chair in a room, a room in a house, a house in an environment, an environment in a city plan.”

Eliel Saarinen, Time, July 2, 1956

Designing a Denouement

Before designing a Dreamworld, the director must first design the dream’s denouement. Denouements are the adventures of the Dreamwalkers—the goal they must complete to better help the Dreamer overcome the Taeniid infestation. Since a dream can be about anything, denouements are limited only by the imagination of the director.

Achieving the denouement produces a feeling of triumph accomplishment in the mind of the Dreamer resulting in a backwash of pure mana. Up to ten points of mana may be absorbed by each character (the director must decide for each character based on their participation in reaching the denouement).

Denouements are divided into two general categories—passive and active. Ninety-nine percent of all dreams contain passive denouements.

In a passive denouement, the Dreamer seeks to accomplish a goal independent of the Taenia. In fact, more often than not, the presence of the Taenia is not even apparent to the Dreamer’s conscious mind.

Passive denouements need not always involve combat. Most revolve around the completion or resolution of some task (either mundane or abstract) important to the Dreamer. This is a great chance for the director to make characters pay for bypassing such often ignored skills as crafts, design, performance, philosophy, botany, and literature.

Winning the local bake-off, finally getting up the nerve to ask a coworker for a date, getting an A on a biology exam, taking a long overdue vacation to Rome, or standing up to the schoolyard bully are all examples of passive denouements.

In an active denouement, the Dreamer is consciously trying to fight the infestation in his psyche. He may not realize what the Taenia are, but he instinctively knows that the colony must be destroyed.

Active denouements are combat oriented. The Taeniid Queen manifests as the chief antagonist of the Dreamworld and the Dreamer’s goal (with the help of the characters) is to destroy her. Killing the Queen is always a difficult task in a dream with an active denouement as she absorbs her drones as the dream begins. At no other time is she more prepared for

combat than when the Dreamer himself is out to destroy her. Defeating the alien army sent to invade earth, storming the beaches of Normandy, or hunting down a pair of man-eating lions are all examples of active denouements.

Keep in mind that things such as time and distance are relative in the Dreamworld so there is no set limit to the time allotted to accomplishing the denouement. Dreams may span days, weeks, years, or, in extreme cases, even centuries in the mind of the Dreamer.

Subdenouements

Subdenouements are smaller goals that may be accomplished within the dream. Some have a bearing on the dream's denouement, while others do not. Subdenouements are more common in passive denouements and are useful for breaking longer Dreamwalks up into smaller sessions.

Resolution of a subdenouement produces a mildly euphoric feeling of accomplishment in the mind of the Dreamer (whether he is present or not) that results in a backwash of up to five points of mana per Dreamwalker. Resolution of each subdenouement is handled separately.

Characters should be unaware of the dream's subdenouements until they are resolved and thus, some subdenouements may never be completed. For instance, upon joining, the Dreamwalker learns that the denouement is to take a pleasure cruise past the nearest cluster of moons. Related subdenouements may involve procuring passage aboard the next available starliner, helping to apprehend a notorious jewel thief plying his trade on board, and repairing the propulsion system damaged by the Taenia.

In the example above, the apprehension of the jewel thief is entirely extraneous to the dream's denouement and the characters may never even get involved with the investigation. Ignoring the other two subdenouements make achieving the denouement near impossible, however.

Incidental Achievement

Incidental achievements are even smaller goals that may be achieved and usually have more bearing on the Dreamer's thoughts or the dream's content than its denouement. For instance, in a fantasy setting, incidental achievements might include grabbing a mug of ale at the local tavern, haggling with a smith over the price of a sword, entering an archery contest at the edge of town, or anything else the Dreamer feels is appropriate for the setting. Incidental achievements are a tool best used to get characters to take some time to explore the Dreamworld and interact with the Unreal.

Designing a Dreamworld

Since dreams are shifting and malleable, like the denouement, the types and content of Dreamworlds are limited only by the creativity and imagination of the director. Thus there are very few guidelines to go by when designing a Dreamworld. The main thing to keep in mind is that a dream can take place anywhere and at any time.

Dreamworlds are categorized into one of two basic types—realistic and surreal. All dreams have elements of both, but one is always more dominant than the other.

Realistic Dreamworlds are subject to most of the laws of science and nature, and can appear as anything from any time or place in the real world. A modern day city, a medieval village, or a vast forest or desert are all examples of realistic Dreamworlds.

Mana point costs are doubled in realistic Dreamworlds as abundant use of mana often upsets the Dreamer's concept of reality.

Surreal Dreamworlds, on the other hand, are often bizarre landscapes populated by wondrous creatures. A medieval fantasy setting, the inside of a computer chip, a distant planet in a galaxy far, far away, or even a hodgepodge collection of different places or worlds are all examples of surreal Dreamworlds.

Characters receive one  on all creativity based tasks, because the Dreamer is more open to radical changes in the environment.

Dreamworlds of either type can undergo sudden, radical changes in time and location, all subject to the whims of the Dreamer's subconscious mind. These changes are centered around the Dreamer but affect characters and the Taenia as well. Most are denouement related. The joined Dreamwalker might be walking through a house on his way to the airport, open a door, and suddenly find himself aboard an airplane, well on the way to his destination.

Imprinting

The Dreamworld is a collection of the Dreamer's past and present life experiences and on some conscious or subconscious level, everything he knows is contained within. But what about things the Dreamer has no knowledge of such as the cockpit of an F-14 Tomcat, how to glaze a ham, or the components necessary to repair a nuclear missile?

Although no one has been able to explain it as of yet, the Dreamer's knowledge seems to have little or no bearing on the authenticity of things found within the Dreamworld. A Dreamworld African swallow would be identical to one encountered in the real world even if the Dreamer has no idea that an African swallow exists.

In the case of real life people and places, general characteristics are conveyed rather than specific ones, so information such as Israel's missile code launch sequence, the layout of Fort Knox, or Bill Gates' ATM code are still safe. These items would have different representations in the Dreamworld.

Some researchers have hypothesized that the correct information is being imported from the Dreamworlds of others. While this theory is so far unconfirmed, this *collective unconscious* is viewed by many as further proof of the bond that exists between all of mankind.

Fluff

Fluff are extraneous touches and details that can be used to reinforce the impression that the characters are in a dream. Fluff usually has no bearing on the denouement and most often manifests as things that have left a mark on the Dreamer's subconscious mind. Put more simply, fluff are those confusing little things that seem both natural and out of place during your dream, but whose meaning sometimes becomes clear once you wake up and have time to think about it ("Oh! So, that's where that came from.").

For instance, take a Dreamer who just returned from a trip to Japan. Although his dream takes place in Los Angeles, all the Unreal within might be dressed in traditional Japanese clothing because that was what was on his mind when he went to sleep.

Fluff can be insignificant, humorous, or dangerous. While fluff usually has no bearing on the outcome of the dream, it can sometimes be utilized by creative players to help achieve the denouement. Fluff can also provide clues or answers to puzzles troubling the Dreamer in the real world.

Fluff is more common in realistic Dreamworlds and less (or more?) evident in surreal. Some examples of fluff are given below.

- *Streets are lined with gears, cranks, and pulleys that serve no apparent purpose but occasionally turn and wind.*
- *Winged horses nest upon rooftops of skyscrapers.*
- *The forest looks impenetrable, but the trees and shrubs part way whenever approached.*
- *Marathon runners race by at random intervals.*
- *All vehicles are covered with fur (or leaves, or grass).*
- *All plants and trees are pink (or blue, or red, etc.)*
- *All buildings except those related to the denouement are empty storefronts. The Unreal disappear as they enter and reappear when they exit.*
- *Tumbleweeds made of barbed wire blow through town.*

- *The streets are filled with water; there are no ground vehicles—only water craft.*
- *A green flag flies from every rooftop.*
- *The Unreal are all elderly (or obese, or men, or women).*
- *Police state—the military closely monitors all actions through the use of security cameras, listening devices and undercover agents. Big Brother is watching you.*
- *An unseen woman screams in agony whenever someone steps on a crack in the sidewalk.*
- *The Unreal spontaneously combust. This does not affect the Taenia or Possessed characters.*
- *All entrance doors are false—entry into any building is gained through trapdoors resembling doormats.*
- *The entire dream takes place as a black and white Noir type film instead of color.*

The possibilities and/or significance of fluff is nearly unlimited. To better understand fluff, let's first talk a bit about memory. The human brain is a vast repository of knowledge, much like a computer, that routinely stores sensory information in the form of memories. The most accepted theory states that there are three stages of memory storage—*sensory, short-term, and long-term*.

Sensory memory retains sensory images for only a small part of a second—just long enough for us to develop a perception. You see someone and recognize him as male. You smell something and recognize it as baking bread. You hear a noise you recognize as a car horn. These are all examples of sensory memory.

Short term memory persists for about twenty to thirty seconds, without rehearsal of the information. The color of someone's shirt or dress, the lyrics to a new song, brief conversations, unfamiliar telephone numbers, names, and dates are all examples of short term memory. These memories do not immediately disappear, but slowly fade into what is known as our long term memory.

Long term memory is believed to be permanent—that nothing is forgotten and that only the means of retrieving it is lost over time. This information is not lost, however, and is in fact quite accessible in the place few people think to look—in our dreams.

In Dreamwalker, fluff represents the pseudophysical manifestation of the Dreamer's long term memory. This means it can be anything which the Dreamer has ever seen, felt, heard, smelled, tasted, or even thought about over the course of his entire life.

Types of Fluff

For game purposes, fluff is divided into three main categories—humorous, insignificant, and dangerous. These categories are entirely dependent upon the tone the which the director wishes to set for the Dreamwalk. A light-hearted adventure with lots of potential for laughter should stick with humorous or insignificant fluff. A more serious or lethal Dreamwalk should obviously contain dangerous fluff.

Keep in mind that fluff is generally extraneous to the dream's denouement, although its effects might hinder the characters from completing their task, especially where dangerous fluff is concerned.

Humorous fluff manifests as something funny to the Dreamer. This humor might have a darker or even unfunny edge to it, say for example if the Dreamer finds dead baby jokes funny. Humorous fluff is seldom dangerous to Dreamwalkers.

Insignificant fluff is the most common type of fluff. It manifests as either something the Dreamer has thought about or something he has actually encountered in the real world. While not inherently dangerous, insignificant fluff can be lethal. For example, take a Dreamer who was once awed by the sight of a dam opening up. In his dreams, a simple water faucet might release a torrent of water that slams into the unsuspecting characters, threatening to drown them in an unexpected flood.

Dangerous fluff manifests as, well, something dangerous. It can be something of which the Dreamer is actually afraid or just something he knows to be dangerous. For instance, take a Dreamer who was once injured in a fire. In his dreams, the building he is in might spontaneously combust, trapping everyone inside. This event might even happen more than once.

Personalizing Fluff

Giving fluff a reason for being there, even if no one ever discerns what that reason is, not only adds flavor to the setting but also helps the director to better visualize the Dreamer.

Personalizing fluff is very easy to do. Ideas for fluff often pop up naturally as the director develops the Dreamer's background. Directors who are interested in dream symbols and interpretations (as posted by the many dream interpretation books on the market) are encouraged to use these to flesh out the Dreamer's fluff. For those who are not, the following guidelines should be of use.

For each category listed below, jot down at least one thing appropriate to the Dreamer. After that, determine exactly how many items of fluff are to appear over the course of the dream (usually one to three). Then randomly choose one for each item of fluff and write down the results.

- *Best thing that happened to the Dreamer*
- *Favorite actor or actress*
- *Favorite person*
- *Favorite movie or television show*
- *Favorite animal*
- *Favorite song or type of music*
- *Favorite story, magazine or novel*
- *Favorite color*
- *Favorite place*
- *Favorite job, hobby or interest*
- *Least favorite job, hobby or interest*
- *Least favorite place*
- *Least favorite color*
- *Least favorite story, magazine or novel*
- *Least favorite song or type of music*
- *Least favorite animal*
- *Favorite movie or television show*
- *Least favorite person*
- *Least favorite actor or actress*
- *Worst thing that happened to the Dreamer*

Putting the Sur in Surreal

Once this is done, look closely at the results and determine what aspects of each item are the most memorable. Try to go beyond the obvious. With movies and books for instance, think of what images immediately come to mind. With a person, ask yourself what that person is best known for, or what he does for a living, or even which of his facial characteristics are the most prominent. Now decide the type of fluff (humorous, insignificant, dangerous) and try to assimilate these things into the Dreamworld.

Other Types of Fluff

Listed below are several other common types of fluff, many of which can be combined for even greater effect. These occurrences always center around the Dreamer—the characters (and the Taenia) are swept along without any choice in the matter.

For game purposes, these effects should always be pre-planned by the director, because they could potentially have an adverse effect on achieving the dream's denouement. For instance, if the goal was to take a plane to New York City, a Location Shift to Planet X might make achieving the denouement nearly impossible.

Note that while these events can be quite interesting, it is recommended that only a few take place during the course of a single dream as the effects can be somewhat disorienting and/or aggravating for the players.

Abrupt Changes are relatively random occurrences where a part of the Dreamworld transforms into something else. Thus a building might melt into a runway or a road might turn into a stream.

Time Shifts send the characters backwards or forwards in time. This can be a shift of a few minutes, hours, days, or even years. In extreme cases, the shift can span eras or centuries as in one from colonial America to modern day.

Location Shifts abruptly transport the characters to a new location. This might be just a different floor of the same building, a different part of the city, or even a different country or planet.

Futility is a common occurrence in many dreams. It manifests as a complete inability to accomplish something within the dream, be it fire a gun, punch someone with any real effect, drive a car, remember something important, or give a speech without embarrassing yourself. Futility rarely affects anyone other than the Dreamer—the joined character is susceptible to its effects as long as he remains joined. Unfortunately, futility often manifests during stressful times and can therefore be quite dangerous to the characters.

Problem Solving is probably the most important and underused aspect of fluff, with its ability to provide clues or answers to questions that are troubling the Dreamer in the real world. These clues are sometimes obvious but more often they are not. Take for instance a Dreamer who has lost his wedding ring down his bathroom sink. In the dream, any time a character approaches a drain he hears a clinking sound. If he investigates, he finds the ring which should point him in the right direction when he awakens.

Or, take a Dreamer who was out walking her dog one night. Without realizing it at a conscious level, she saw a man lurking in the shadows of a nearby house. The next day she learned that someone had broken in and killed the occupants of that house. Unbeknownst to her, a detailed image of the man has been burned into her long term memory and he occasionally manifests in her dreams and commits murder. If the characters can discern the true nature of this memory, they can provide his description to the police in the real world in order to aid in his capture.

Inhabitants of the Dreamworld

The Dreamer

For the most part, Dreamers are content to wander about the Dreamworld trying to accomplish the dream's denouement.

There are two types of Dreamers—idle and lucid. Ninety-nine percent of all Dreamers are idle.

An idle Dreamer usually (though not always)

manifests in a form that directly corresponds with that of his physical one including all abilities, skills, convictions, and gimmicks.

The appearance of a lucid Dreamer also varies, but once again usually corresponds with that of his physical form. His abilities and skills, on the other hand, are vastly improved. For game purposes, a lucid Dreamer (this includes a Dreamwalker in his own Dreamworld) has twice his normal fitness and awareness rating (up to the maximum of $|+5|$ and possesses the jack of all trades gimmick. In addition, he has an unlimited number of mana points (it is his dream, after all). He also gains six points in luck and discipline, and may also manifest any gimmick he desires although many lucid Dreamers are unaware that they possess the gimmick or can spend mana. These benefits disappear if the Dreamer leaves his own Dreamworld.

The Unreal

The term Unreal is somewhat of a misnomer as for all intents and purposes these beings are real, at least for the course of the dream. They have names, personalities, and all the abilities and skills of their counterparts in the real world. Their appearance generally conforms to the characteristics of the Dreamworld.

In some cases however, the Unreal are bound by the Dreamer's perception of reality rather than reality itself. For instance, if the Dreamer belongs to a family full of police officers, the Unreal police force in his dreams will most likely be friendly and helpful. On the other hand, in the Dreamworld of a career criminal, the police will be arrogant, rude, and more prone to violence and brutality. Similarly, a Dreamer who was once bitten by the family dog may view all dogs as vicious and unpredictable, thereby making every dog in the Dreamworld a potential danger.

The Unreal may be divided into two types—mobile and inert. This classification depends primarily upon their behavior once the denouement is achieved and should be decided when creating the Dreamwalk. It is even possible to have some of each type within the same dream.

Mobile Unreal continue to interact with the characters and the Dreamworld even after the denouement has been achieved. Their actions and behavior remain the same—firemen act as firemen, secretaries act as secretaries, gang members act as gang members, and so on.

Inert Unreal, on the other hand, cease to interact with the Dreamworld once the denouement is achieved. In some cases, they remain present, but are entirely wrapped up in the Dreamer's post-denouement celebration and are oblivious and immune to anything the characters do.

The Taenia

The appearance of the Taenia varies from Dreamer to Dreamer and sometimes even from dream to dream. Therefore, each manifestation should be interesting and unique. This is no difficult task *thanks* to the number of real world fears which the director may choose from.

Taeniid manifestations are easiest to incorporate into dreams with active denouements since the Taenia represent the dream's chief antagonists. In dreams with passive denouements, however, the manifestation is drawn from the Dreamer's subconscious mind and sometimes has little or nothing to do with the Dreamworld itself.

The following concepts are the three basic types of fears which the director can use to determine the appearance of the Taeniid colony.

Traumatic/Disturbing Events are sometimes at the center of Taeniid manifestations. These can be drawn from anything the Dreamer has experienced, witnessed, or heard about, even those his conscious mind has forgotten or repressed. The Taenia manifest as people the Dreamer associates with the event itself. A plane crash, a horror movie or book, the death of a loved one, being tortured, beaten up, or witnessing a murder or rape are all traumatic/disturbing events.

Concrete Fears are easy to represent and center around some tangible aversion or phobic conviction that is easily incorporated into the Taeniid manifestation. While it's no laughing matter, you'll be shocked at some of the things people are afraid of. Fear of fire, cats, wings, grass, plastic, eyes, cars, guns, rocks, television sets, and virtually anything else are all concrete fears.

Abstract Fears are a little harder to represent in game terms but can be much more interesting to roleplay. Abstract fears center around negative emotional and/or perceptual responses—things like fear of heights, getting lost, open spaces, closed spaces, crowds, aging, conversations, motion, and being embarrassed are all Abstract fears. With a little thought, these can all be incorporated into the Taeniid manifestation.

Take fear of heights for instance. The larval Unreal might be ridiculously tall or walk around on stilts. Drones, if any, resemble vaporous clouds that produce feelings of vertigo with each attack. The Queen is a larger version of the drones with the nest set atop the highest building in the Dreamworld.

Enemy

Taeniid manifestations, particularly those appearing in active denouements, are sometimes based around a central antagonist or group of antagonists. Enemy manifestations can take the form of a predatory

animal, a neighborhood bully, an organized crime ring, an invading army, a rival corporation, in-laws, a local street gang, or a government agency.

Boundaries of the Dreamworld

Each Dreamworld is usually centered around its denouement. The further one travels away from the denouement, the less distinct and populated the Dreamworld becomes. For instance, take a denouement centered around a cross country hike from New York City to Los Angeles. The Dreamworld would be clear and distinct along the route the Dreamer plans to take, becoming less so the farther one ventures away from the route until reaching the Barrier at the edge of the Dreamworld.

Designing an Underworld

Beginning characters will need to replenish their mana supply often so the director must be prepared for short trips into the Underpsyche. Several Underworlds should be loosely designed ahead of time. These don't have to be full sized Dreamworlds, only rough outlines to give the characters an idea of where they are.

Underworlds are devoid of Unreal or fluff, but otherwise follow much the same design rules as a Dreamworld. Instead of a denouement, however, each Underworld contains a single pocket of up to ten mana points which may be harvested by the characters. Characters enter the Underworld up to one-hundred yards away from these pockets and may return to the Underworld later if the total number of points in the mana pocket has not been used up.

Mana pockets sometimes (more likely if the Dreamer has a high dementia level) act as incubators for Taeniid eggs, guarded by up to five drones.

Designing an Island

Islands follow the same rules for design as do Dreamworlds, although they do not have denouements. The inhabitants of an island are considered to be Unreal. Of all the Taenia, only Broodkings have been known to manifest on an island. Islands are most useful for directors who wish to run long campaigns using the same setting.

An island constantly floats through the Periphery. Therefore, Dreamwalkers wishing to return to an island may do so only at the director's discretion.

Islands are shifting and malleable, and concepts like time and distance can never be trusted. Some islands undergo normal changes with the passage of time but most islands do not. Instead, they continually repeat major events as they originally happened and only change if a Dreamwalker intervenes. In these cases, the

island splits off into two parts—one part reverts to its original form, while the other becomes a *new* island.

This new island is entirely dependent on the Dreamwalker (or Dreamwalkers) who caused it to form and dissolves if the character leaves the island for a variable length of time. Therefore, only characters who have *crossed over* may permanently alter the fabric of an island.

Bridges

There are places throughout the world where the lines between dream and reality occasionally become blurred. These *bridges* between the two realms most often result from high concentrations of residual psychic and/or emotional energy. Each bridge varies in size and appearance, but its general nature usually conforms with the type of energy that caused it to form.

Bridges are classified into two main categories—permanent and temporary.

Permanent bridges are bound to certain locations, although in rare cases, a bridge may be bound to an item or artifact. The location, if not the true nature, of a permanent bridge is often well known and sometimes even incorporated into local mythology and folklore. The home of a beloved politician, that section of subway where weird things always seem to happen, Area 51, a child's treehouse, an Indian burial ground, and haunted houses or castles are all examples of permanent bridges.

Temporary bridges are brief and generally random manifestations that can occur almost anywhere. Bleeding idols and other stigmata, unexplained shifts from one location to another, UFO abductions, crop circles, and cattle mutilations are all examples of temporary bridges.

Additionally, bridges of both types may be governed by triggers—that is, the bridge may lie dormant until activated by some event or occurrence (which may or may not be random). For instance, a rain of frogs may be triggered by some obscure planetary alignment or for no particular reason at all, a ghost ship might only appear on the anniversary of its sinking, pressing a certain gem on an ancient Egyptian scepter may cause a bridge to form, or the bridge at Stonehenge may only manifest at certain times of the day, month, year, etc.

Some bridges have been known to produce Unreal manifestations which may explain such varied phenomena as angel, mermaid, leprechaun, dinosaur, fairy, ghost, Bigfoot, and even Elvis sightings. These Unreal usually conform to the nature of the bridge in question—the amorous denizens of *Makeout Point* will appear and react vastly different than those manifesting around Auschwitz or Chernobyl.

In the dream world, a bridge may be accessed via the Periphery where it usually appears (and functions) as a normal Dreamworld, except without the Dreamer. In this case, the bridge's area of effect in the real world acts as a Barrier which cannot be crossed by creatures or items of spirit (including creatures such as Broodkings who stumble across the bridge in this manner).

In the real world, a bridge creates a spiritual disturbance within its area of effect, similar to that created by the presence of a Taeniid Broodking. Non-Dreamwalkers who enter this area are affected in a variety of ways. Some retain complete control over their actions while others slip into a waking, dream-like state and may behave or act erratically. For game purposes, they become Unreal as long as they remain within the affected area. Upon leaving, memories of the time spent within the bridge are cloudy and disjointed. Normal people often attempt to rationalize, downplay, or even repress the memories of their experiences within the bridge in order to avoid ridicule and/or maintain a grasp on their own sanity.

A Dreamwalker who enters a bridge through the real world may manipulate mana as if he were in a dream, although he may not cross the Barrier into the Periphery. The character's mana supply may be restored in one of two ways—by slipping into REM sleep (or the Dreamwalker's equivalent) or by leaving the area of the bridge and returning later. In the latter case, the mana supply replenishes itself at the rate of one for every two points of the character's current discipline rating per hour (or completely if the character later enters REM sleep).

Dreamwalkers can always sense when a temporary bridge or one governed by a trigger is about to close. When a bridge closes, creatures who accessed the bridge through the dream world are usually expelled into the Periphery unharmed. It is up to the director to decide what effect a closed bridge has on any real creatures caught inside. Most bridges fade away peacefully leaving the real world unaffected but occasionally some manifest special effects. For instance, the bridge located in the Bermuda Triangle has been known to carry real things off to places unknown.

Characters (and normal people) who enter a bridge via the real world must be extremely careful when engaging in combat. Injuries sustained affect the character's physical form (although they may be healed with mana while in the vicinity of the bridge) and death is permanent, more often than not. Altered items (or people) sometimes continue to exist (or remain changed) outside the boundaries of a bridge but these effects eventually wear off (director's discretion).

From a campaign standpoint, bridges (especially those bound into an object) should be extremely rare occurrences. Directors should resist the temptation to include a bridge in every real world adventure just so the characters can manipulate mana. It is often much more rewarding for the players when they can solve problems as normal, mundane people.

Designing a Good Dreamwalk

Now that we've discussed the different types of denouements (active, passive) and Dreamworlds (realistic, surreal), this chapter focuses on how to put everything together in order to design a good Dreamwalk.

Psychological Evaluation Sheet

Psychological Evaluation Sheets are a useful and fun tool for both players and directors alike. It is essentially a profile of the patient (Dreamer) which includes general information about his career, childhood, interests, and hobbies as well as brief notes taken by past and current therapists. The profile may have little or nothing to do with the Dreamworld's content or denouement, but more often than not, it should either foreshadow or shed light on some of the things encountered within.

Dreamworld Sheet

The Dreamworld Sheet is designed to help the director outline the things that happen during the course of a Dreamwalk. It contains information on the Dreamworld, the dream's denouement, the Taenia, and the Unreal. The Dreamworld Sheet is a resource for the director only and should not be viewed by the players.

Denouement

When designing a Dreamwalk, first, start with the denouement. This is the heart of the adventure and a good denouement can be adapted to almost any type of Dreamworld.

Dreamwalker has a distinct advantage over most other roleplaying games and setting in that the players cannot just get bored with a scenario and decide to go home, thereby wrecking an adventure you spent hours of your precious time preparing. Each dream has a distinct goal and resolution of this goal is crucial to the overall success of the mission.

Denouements should be stated in one to three sentences. They can be as vague or specific as you desire and can even involve the completion of one to three interrelated events (although one is usually the norm). Keep in mind that the more vague the denouement, the easier it may be for characters to circumvent the adventure you have planned (which is not necessarily a bad thing).

For instance, say the Dreamer has always wanted to own a 1967 Chevelle Super Sport. If the denouement was that generic, the characters could easily create or reshape the necessary car and quickly achieve the denouement. However, if the denouement was more precise, say that a particular car had to be purchased from a certain dealer in the Dreamer's home town, the characters must work a bit harder to help him achieve his goal, even without Taeniid interference.

The following is a list of a few of the more common dream scenarios. When designing a denouement be careful not to limit yourself by only thinking in terms of people—remember that the Dreamer can take any form (animal, alien, monster, vehicle, etc.) and each of these scenarios are easily adapted to the new form.

Action-adventure scenarios usually involve travel, mystery, and the discovery or reclamation of some treasure or precious artifact. The Dreamer can be a pirate, treasure hunting archaeologist, or space merchant exploring new galaxies.

Dream fulfillment scenarios are the most common theme among passive denouements. They involve doing something the Dreamer has always wanted to do, whether it be skydiving, finding a cure for cancer, or traveling to the moon.

Escape scenarios often begin with the Dreamer (and usually the characters) trapped in one form or another. Escape can take place in an alien prison, a bad marriage, or aboard a sinking ship.

Guard Scenarios are when the Dreamer has been hired to guard someone or something important such as a priceless necklace, the President's daughter, or a favorite pet. In order to achieve the denouement, the characters must help him watch over his charge for a set period of time.

Injustices are when a wrong has been committed against the Dreamer or someone he cares about. Injustice scenarios center around taking revenge, righting the wrong, or making sure the injustice never takes place.

Investigations usually pit the Dreamer against a complex mystery. You've all seen a movie or read a book in which the main character is a detective or private eye. In this scenario, the Dreamer assumes the role of the investigator intent on finding the killer, missing person, stolen object, etc.

Past resolution is another common theme among passive denouements. The Dreamer either did or did not do something in his past and constantly regrets his decision. It is up to the characters to help him correct the mistake. Past Resolution can involve acts of betrayal, child-parent/husband-wife interaction, returning a stolen item, or convincing the Dreamer's drunken friend not to leave the party.

Rescue scenarios are when someone or something needs saving—it could be a friend, princess, or monkey from an animal research facility.

Search and destroy is the universal theme of all active denouements. Search and destroy scenarios are fairly straightforward. The characters juice themselves up for battle and commence to kicking Taeniid tail.

Subdenouements and Incidental Achievements

Subdenouements and incidental achievements are so Dreamer and dream specific that it is hard to give set examples. The director must decide when or if there are any of these in the dream, usually after some event or occurrence. As stated before, subdenouements are most useful for breaking up long Dreamwalks into smaller parts; incidental achievements are even more random and usually harder to spot. Completion of an incidental achievement should only be disclosed after the Dreamwalk is over.

Dreamworld

After you have determined the dream's denouement, you must adapt it to the Dreamworld. Try to make each Dreamworld as unique or interesting as you can, or at least add some surreal elements to give it that effect. Dreamworlds sometimes reflect the denouement, but this is not always the case. There is no rule against a Past Resolution scenario taking place in a sidewalk café on the surface of Mars or a Guard scenario where the Dreamer becomes a Praetorian charged with defending Ancient Rome from a barbarian horde.

Here are a few of the more common settings for Dreamworlds along with a few examples of each.

Alien Place

Alien settings are places not found on our earth. They can be real planets, something from a science fiction movie, or a conglomeration of both. There may be four suns, no land masses, less gravity, or the planet may be made up entirely of machines. You don't have to wrack your brain too hard trying to explain why things don't make sense. After all, it is just a dream.

Childhood Place

This is someplace the Dreamer remembers from his childhood. It can be a bedroom, the place where he received his first kiss, a tree fort, a local park, a fishing pond, or a school.

Different Time

The Dreamworld is set in an entirely different time period, whether past or future. Examples include the roaring Twenties, the Old West, the Jurassic era, medieval France, or colonial Virginia.

Familiar Place

This is similar to the childhood place but is more often associated with real places that the Dreamer has visited as an adult. It can be anywhere from the Dreamer's office, to a museum, a farm in Arkansas, to the Australian Outback.

Fantasy Place

These are mythical realms that exist only in fairy tales. Fantasy worlds are chock full of tall castles, brave knights, and legendary creatures such as wizards, trolls, dragons, and elves.

Horror Place

These are nightmare Dreamworlds set in some place that the Dreamer fears. A graveyard (human, animal, aircraft, etc.), a gothic castle inhabited by vampires, an insane asylum, a lonely moor, a forest cabin assailed by awakened demons, or even an orphanage are all examples of horror dreamworlds. As you can guess, the Taenia thrive in horror dreamworlds.

Post Apocalyptic

Post apocalyptic settings deal with the world as we know it turned upside down by some type of holocaust. The comet has struck earth, the bombs have been dropped, or the virus has spread—whatever the case, survivors must eke out a living amongst the ruins of civilization.

Unfamiliar Place

This is similar to a familiar place except that it represents a real place which the Dreamer wishes (or once wished) to go. Unfamiliar places include a local strip club, an opera house, a chic restaurant in Chicago, an amusement park, or the Grand Canyon.

Conglomerate

Conglomerate Dreamworlds are a chaotic combination of several different types of Dreamworlds listed above. Time leaps (both forward and backward), location changes, and randomly occurring anomalies (such as the temporary suspension of the laws of gravity) are all frequent occurrences. Conglomerate Dreamworlds are more common to Dreamers with high creativity and/or increased dementia.

Beyond the Dream

Although Dreamwalker is centered around adventuring in dreams, there are many opportunities for interaction with the real world. The following are just a few scenarios involving these types of adventures.

- A character is contacted by agents of the Clinic (or some other organization) and enticed to *switch sides*. Is the offer for real or is this a test of the character's loyalty to the Project?

- An accomplished Dreamstalker with a grudge against the Project learns the location of the group's chapter and begins following teams through the Periphery and harassing them in the Dreamworld. The characters may try to ambush him or they may try to learn his true identity so he can be located and dealt with in the real world.
- A visiting patient turns out to be a relative or old friend of one of the characters. Is there something in his past he doesn't want revealed?
- A horror writer (or artist or poet) reaches a sort of symbiotic relationship with the Taeniid colony infesting his psyche, gaining inspiration from its presence. He may even take action against characters trying to destroy his livelihood. This can be particularly lethal if the writer is a lucid Dreamer.
- As a child, the Dreamer witnessed a murder and the subsequent burial of the victim but was too young to understand what he saw. Within his dream, several non-denouement related events expose the incident along with clues pointing to the real world location of the grave. The Dreamwalkers can inform the authorities or perhaps investigate and find the killer themselves.
- A Broodking has escaped the Emyrean. The characters may or may not be responsible, but may decide to take action anyway.
- Almost everyone has seen a movie where the main character (usually a psychic) must delve into the mind of Dreamer in order to extract some vital information about the real world. The most recent is The Cell, but there have been plenty of others.
- Another variation on this theme—a cowardly, Saudi-born terrorist has been *extradited* from Afghanistan. He admits to planting bombs throughout a nearby city but refuses to say more. The characters must enter his dreams and discover the location of the bombs before they go off. This information may be impossible to extract through joining so the characters must actively search the Dreamworld for the bombs and/or any hidden clues that point towards their location in the real world.
- Recurring dreams are common but similar dreams have been occurring in the minds of different people. Is it a coincidence or does this event have a deeper meaning?
- Trouble erupts with the locals when one of the characters visits a nearby town. The character is arrested and held until the judge sets bail. Although the Project will soon have him released (unless he did something truly foolish), one of his cell mates is criminally insane and playing host to

a large Taeniid infestation. A wandering Broodking recognizes the nearby presence of a Dreamwalker and implants a murderous suggestion into the criminal's sleeping mind.

- The character's chapter admits only disturbed war veterans. These men have exchanged horror stories for so long that their dreams are set in similar locales and may even contain the same Unreal enemy.
- Several writers have been working together on a collective project based in a fantasy realm. One of the writers dies abruptly and the rest are too upset to continue the work. Their agent refers them all for therapy and the characters find that the Dreamworlds all take place in the fantasy work in project.
- The latest horror movie hits the box office and is a huge success. Unfortunately, it causes nightmares in hundreds of people. Their dreams are centered around the movie and the Dreamwalkers may get caught up in the plot. As an added twist, the movie was written by a writer, inspired by a Broodking. The Broodking travels through many of these nightmares, reveling in the fear and misery he has caused.

Beyond the Project

This book assumes that characters are members of Project Dreamwalker. But what if the Director wants to run Dreamwalkers from other, perhaps less altruistic factions?

Dreamwalkers in the employ of the Clinic would encounter much darker themes as the Clinic has no limitations on the Dreamer's level of dementia. What ancient mysteries and lost powers do the Sword of Gaia possess? Who can say what the Dreamwalking goals and motivations of other countries are? Does the Vatican or some other religious group control a secret Dreamwalking task force? The possibilities are virtually endless.

Inspiration

The task of designing a denouement and populating a Dreamworld is less daunting than it first appears. Ask yourself a few basic questions before you start. What do you dream about? Think about the dreams you have had in the past. Did they have a common theme? A purpose? A goal you were trying to attain? Could they somehow be worked into a suitable Dreamwalk for the characters.

Try keeping a piece of paper and a pencil on your night stand. When you wake up in the morning (or if you wake up during the night), try and write down

everything you can remember about the dreams you just had.

Pester your friends and family into telling their strangest or most important dreams. Most will be happy to comply. People love to talk about their dreams even though the content usually has meaning only to themselves. If they can't remember their dreams, give them a Psychological Evaluation Sheet to fill out (but make sure to tell them it's just for fun!). You might be surprised at what ideas their answers spark.

Most people become directors because they like to tell stories. Chances are that you've had at least one idea which you think would make a good book or movie. Even if you never get a chance to write it, the idea need not be wasted—it can be used as the basis for a Dreamwalk. Just lay out the setting for the Dreamworld, the plot for the denouement, and make the main character the Dreamer. It's that easy.

The same process can also be used with books and movies that have already been written. These are an unlimited resource of potential Dreamwalks. Although plagiarism is illegal, nothing says you can't borrow someone else's idea as long as you're not doing so for publicity or profit. For best results, try and pick movies or books with which the players are unfamiliar or change the setting enough to make it unrecognizable.

Historical characters, place, and events are also a great source of ideas for Dreamworlds and denouements. Who would pass up a chance to safely prowl through foggy London streets in search of Jack the Ripper, walk across the Great Wall of China, or set sail on the ill fated voyage of the legendary Titanic? As Dreamwalkers, characters can do all of these things and more and who cares if they manage to alter the normal course of events? After all, it's only a dream.

Included is a short bibliography of books and films that we believe give the feel of Dreamwalker.

Films

Dreamscape (1984), directed by Joseph Ruben. A psychic recruited by the government, and taught to travel into other people's dreams. We would love to see a remake of this movie with modern day special effects. *Dreamscape* was one of the key inspirations for Dreamwalker. Buy it or rent it if you can.

The Matrix (1999), directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski. What can be said about this movie that hasn't been said already? Awesome special effects coupled with strong acting and directing, great dialogue and plot easily makes the Matrix one of the best action (and perhaps even best overall) movies of the last few decades. An excellent example of the physical advantages Dreamwalkers have over the Unreal.

The Cell (2000), directed by Tarsem Singh. What this movie lacked in plot, acting, and dialogue, it more than made up for in stunning visual effects and a creepy antagonist. A great example of what's to be expected in the dreams of the criminally insane.

What Dreams May Come (1998), directed by Vincent Ward. Like the Cell, this movie made up for similar shortcomings with an array of unbelievable visual effects.

Dark City (1998), directed by Alex Proyas. A surprisingly good movie that unfortunately did not get the credit it deserved. In Dreamwalker terms, think of John Murdoch as a lucid Dreamer trapped within his own Taeniid infested Dreamworld.

A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors (1987), Directed by Chuck Russell. You must know by now that Freddie was one of the inspirations for the Taeniid Broodking. This movie deals with normal people becoming lucid Dreamers and manifesting powers in their own Dreamworlds. Great stuff, especially because this was before Freddie really became a comical, one line spouting hack. Oh well.

Honorable Mention: *Aliens*, *The Crow*, *The Prophecy*, *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Time Bandits*, *Sliders*, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, and even *Killer Clowns from Outer Space* (think hive-minded Taeniid manifestation).

Books

The Dark Tower Series, by Stephen King. This entire series reads like a dream and if it doesn't spark some part of your imagination, nothing will.

It, by Stephen King. A great example of what happens when a Broodking escapes into the real world. This book is suggested for some of the imagery and dream sequences alone. In fact, nearly all of Stephen King's books contain this type of surreal elements and he is a master of foreshadowing and/or relating dreams to later, real world events.

The Death Gate Cycle, by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. An excellent series and a good example of the problems powerful wizards face when trying to blend in and interact with the Unreal...err, mensch.

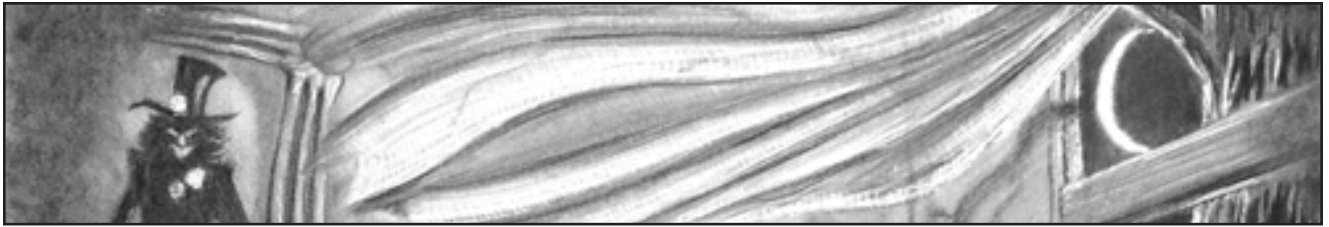
Imajica, by Clive Barker. You'll just have to read it.

Other Sources of Inspiration

Please visit the Dreamwalker website for links to other inspirational and dream related sites:

[HTTP://DREAMWALKERRPG.HOME.ATT.NET](http://DREAMWALKERRPG.HOME.ATT.NET)





Chapter 8

The Pinebrook Chapter

While it is perfectly acceptable to jaunt from one random Dreamwalk to another with no time in between, some groups may wish to roleplay and develop their character's lives outside of the dream.

The following includes all the information needed to begin roleplaying in the land of dreams. The Pinebrook Chapter and its members are detailed here (directors can create stats to fit the reality level and style of their campaign) as well as several Dreamwalks suitable for beginning characters.

Pinebrook

The Pinebrook Chapter is located in a remote part of southwest Georgia, about twenty miles outside the city of Albany. Pinebrook was once a summer camp and many of its original buildings have been retained and converted for use. Newer structures were designed to convey the same rustic, log cabin theme. The grounds span several thousand acres, marked off by a simple wooden fence. Only one road leads into the compound. Hidden security cameras monitor the entrance gate while others (motion activated) are placed at various intervals throughout the grounds.

The main compound centers around an administration building and library with a cafeteria/recreational room nearby. Guest cabins are provided for visiting patients. A boathouse on Lake Joseph, small male and female dormitories, and several other cabins of various sizes (some empty, some home

to Dreamwalkers and other permanent residents of Pinebrook) are scattered throughout the grounds. The chapter's laboratory and Dreamwalking facilities are underneath the administration building and are off limits to visitors.

Like most chapter houses, Pinebrook is relatively self sufficient. The chapter receives ample government and corporate funding, providing access to top level scientific and medical equipment and facilities as well as special clearance for operatives working in the field.

Pinebrook is run more as a household than a work place. Staffing is kept to a minimum. Potential employees must undergo a thorough screening before acceptance. Staff members are well taken care of during their tenure with the Project and are highly recommended should they choose not to re-sign once their contracts are up. In addition, Dreamwalkers routinely enter the Dreamworlds of each staff member to keep them free of Taeniid infestation. Such practices help ensure the loyalty of even the most menial employees of Project Dreamwalker.

Dreamwalkers are expected to contribute little to the daily operations at Pinebrook. Between Dreamwalks, they are encouraged to interact with patients and staff, explore their own Dreamworlds, and develop their abilities. This pampering is done on purpose. Great pains are taken to ensure Dreamwalkers remain stress free—a stark contrast to the hazards they routinely face within the Emphyrean.

The Underbrook

Pinebrook's laboratory and Dreamwalking facilities are located underground. Access is only possible through a secure elevator in the administration building. Electronic pass cards are needed to access the lab and all doors within. All uses are recorded, videotaped and archived.

The elevator opens onto the viewing room in the center of the underground facility. The viewing room is bordered on three sides by Dreamwalking chambers and the fourth by the chapter's laboratory; all visible through large windows made of reinforced glass.

In addition to monitoring the Dreamwalking chambers, the viewing room also secretly monitors patients as they prepare for sleep. On the night of the Dreamwalk, patients are given Dreamtracer and minor sedatives along with their normal medications. Cameras hidden within each guest cabin help the Dreamwalkers coincide their own periods of REM sleep with that of the patient.

Welcome to Pinebrook

Upon their arrival, a meeting is held in which the characters are introduced to the entire chapter staff. Newcomers are then housed in the male and female dormitories during an evaluation period that can last anywhere from a few weeks to several months. Dr. Koenig and his senior staff use this time to assess the character's personalities, their dedication to the Project and how well they interact with patients and other staff members.

During this time, Dreamwalking is only permitted into the Dreamworlds of other Dreamwalkers (including those of Team Lucky). Once the characters are acclimated to chapter life, Dr. Koenig schedules their first real Dreamwalk.

Team Lucky

One of the Dreamwalking chambers belongs to Mac and his team of Dreamwalkers. The chamber resembles a comfortable looking apartment with beds, tables, and chairs. There are even bathroom facilities and a small kitchenette.

A full entertainment center dominates one corner of the room, its cabinets packed with assorted CDs and DVDs. A large crucifix hangs on the wall opposite the viewing room window. Several paintings of horses hang along the other walls and some of Pony's small ceramic horse figurines line the night stand beside her bed. A chess set rests on a card table and is frequently used by Hendrix and Father Gramps as they wait for the patient to retire for sleep.

Entering the Dream State

Careful preparation is made to assure the characters are in the right state of mind before entering the dream state. Soon after arrival at Pinebrook, one of the empty Dreamwalking chambers is personalized to the group's specifications.

During each Dreamwalk, Dr. Haire, Dr. Lanier, and one or two techs are always present. Dr. Koenig is also on hand until the characters' evaluation period is over. As a safety precaution, characters are immediately awakened if their pseudophysical forms are reduced to incapacitated or unconscious.

Aftermath

Once the Dreamwalk is over, staff members conduct an extensive physical and mental examination on each character. Dreamwalkers are required to log a formal report detailing their experiences in the Dreamworld within twenty-four hours. The director should assume that each character gives an accurate account of the proceedings unless the player states otherwise. Dr. Koenig personally reads each file before cataloguing it and sending a copy to Project headquarters in Seattle.

Staff

Dr. Edward Koenig, 52, *Director*

Edward Koenig is a tall man of German origin. He is thin and balding with wire rimmed glasses set over a beak-like nose. His gaunt frame belies a hidden strength however and few can hold the gaze of his cold blue eyes for long. Despite this, Koenig has a warm heart. While he could never be considered jovial, he has certainly been known to be kind. On occasion.

Koenig is in charge of the day to day operation of the Pinebrook chapter. He is responsible for the welfare of those beneath him as well as the running of the chapter house itself. Koenig has the final say in all Project related matters. He lives in a cabin on site and has dedicated his entire life to furthering the goals of the Project. This dedication ultimately cost him his family—he is divorced now for almost ten years.

Koenig is courteous to newcomers (the characters) but not overly friendly until he has had time to properly evaluate them. If they prove dedicated to the Project he eventually warms up. If not, he requests they be transferred.

Edward Koenig is a fully capable lucid Dreamer.

Christopher Allen, 28, *Director's Aide*

Chris answers only to the Koenig. He handles all incoming calls (via cellular headset), patient scheduling and most of the mundane paperwork for the chapter. He calls himself a glorified receptionist

but is very happy with his job at Pinebrook. He lives in Albany but is always on call.

Chris is young, attractive and good-natured. He is happy to lend an ear to anyone who wants to talk and tries his best to help newcomers adapt to chapter life.

Dr. Dana Haire, 36, *Head Researcher*

Dana Haire could easily be mistaken for a model—her flawless chocolate brown skin and dark flowing hair have caused many men to take a second and then a third look. Few would guess that her intelligence far outweighs her beauty.

Dana takes her responsibility as head researcher seriously. She has dedicated her life to the study of Dreamwalking, dreams and the healing of the human psyche. Although she is a fully lucid Dreamer, Dana has deliberately foregone the use of Black25 in order to maintain a more objective view of the results.

Dana is courteous, but not overly friendly with any of the Dreamwalkers as she is afraid of the effect that personal relationships might have on her research. She and Koenig had a brief love affair several years ago but both realized it might compromise their work so they broke it off. Each still harbors strong feelings for the other.

Dana is currently single and lives in Albany.

Dr. Michael Lanier, 38, *Therapist*

Michael is Pinebrook's only therapist. He evaluates all incoming patients and personally sees to their welfare while they are on site.

Michael is friendly but would much rather listen to people than talk. As a therapist, this is an excellent quality but in social situations, it is not. Many people feel uncomfortable in his presence, as if he is evaluating and analyzing everything that is said—which, in fact, is exactly what he does.

If the characters ever have a problem, he is always there to lend an ear. Unfortunately, he answers most questions with questions of his own—"What do you think that means?" or "Why do you think you did that?" Whatever the reply, he always nods sagely and says the same thing: "Interesting."

Michael is married with two children. He and his family live off site in Albany.

Jon Abraham, 44, *Minder*

Jon is a large man, in excellent physical shape. He is an ex-marine corps officer who served combat tours during several different engagements. In military fashion, he always refers to people by their handles or last names. During secret ops in Desert Storm, he took a bullet to his throat and can only speak in hoarse, throaty whisper. Therefore he speaks only when necessary.

Jon respects strength of mind and body. One way to get on his good side is to accompany him on his daily morning twenty-five mile run.

Jon holds Koenig in high regards and has a grudging respect for Haire although he is a chauvinist at heart. He knows better than to voice his opinions publicly but it becomes evident that he rarely acknowledges the presence of female characters and only speaks to them when absolutely necessary. He dislikes Users and views them as weak, instructing his security team to pay extra close attention to any Users among the characters.

Jon lives on site. He has a girlfriend in town but doesn't talk about her.

Guy Lamont, 27, *Security*

Brent Woodson, 29, *Security*

Guy Lamont and Brent Woodson round out the chapter's security force. Both are bachelors who live on site. They are good friends but rarely get to socialize together because of their staggered shifts. Once off duty, either could be talked into accompanying the characters into town for a few drinks.

Clay Jordan, 48, *Custodian/Groundskeeper*

Dinah Jordan, 42, *Food Preparation*

Clay takes care of the grounds and keeps the facilities near spotless. Dinah is the chapter cook. She is a large woman who handles all food preparation at the chapter although Clay sometimes helps her out in the kitchen as does her nephew, Lucius, 13, who lives with his family in Albany.

Dinah and Clay are friendly to the characters and immediately try to make them feel at home. Dinah treats them in a motherly fashion (as she does almost everyone at Pinebrook), and constantly tries to get them to eat more. She is an excellent cook and a wizard when it comes to desert. Her homemade apple-walnut pies are a much sought after delicacy.

Clay and Dinah have been married for over twenty years, have no children and live on site.

Michelle Robbins, 22, *Lab Technician*

Anthony Parks, 20, *Lab Technician*

Larry Sandler, 21, *Lab Technician*

All three lab techs are college graduates, currently doing an internship with the Project. They help Dr. Haire out with the more menial tasks in the lab. Part of their training also includes mastering the basics of lucid dreaming.

After their internship, Michelle and Larry plan to become full fledged Project scientists/researchers. Anthony hopes to become a Dreamwalker. All three live on site in the dormitory.

The techs are friendly and eager to talk with Dreamwalkers, especially Anthony who does his best to befriend any Analysts in the group.

Karl Heinlannder, 51, Maintenance

Karl wears a heavy tool belt over dirty coveralls and looks much older than his age. Koenig has mentioned bringing in someone to help with some of the heavier work around the chapter but let it drop when Karl seemed less than delighted by the idea.

Karl is forever grateful to the Koenig and the Project. He was devastated in 1985 when his wife and son were killed by a drunk driver. The Taenia summarily latched onto his psyche and assisted his downward spiral into depression. His sister finally convinced him to seek therapy and he eventually ended up in the hands of the Project.

Despite his limited imagination, Karl is a lucid Dreamer who is now fully capable of protecting his own psyche. He lives on site in a room adjacent to the maintenance shed.

Karl rarely speaks to anyone except Koenig. When he is summoned for repairs, he listens to the problem, nods and silently sets about his work.

Team Lucky Personnel

Five Dreamwalkers make up team Lucky. They have been a team for almost five years and share a close bond, forged by several narrow escapes and close calls against the Taenia. Mac insists that the *Luck of the Irish* has helped get them this far. Each member of Team Lucky answers questions, gives advice, and does his best to make newcomers feel at home. The team lives in neighboring cabins around a small fishing pond located just south of the main compound.

Dr. Ian “Mac” McKenzie, 26, Analyst

Mac grew up in a stable, middle class home. He worked his way through junior college, receiving a scholarship that allowed him to attend medical school. His hopes of becoming a physician were put aside when he realized he was more interested in the intricate workings of the mind rather than the actual physiology of the brain. Unfortunately, this did not fit within the bounds of his scholarship. He signed on as an EMT but continued his studies in psychiatry and psychology and eventually ended up with the Project. Mac is the current leader of the team although he often defers to Father Gramps’ judgment.

Dr. Lisa “Pony” Lawson, 24, Analyst

Pony was born with mild muscular dystrophy and forced to use a wheelchair her entire life. Ever since childhood, she has dreamed about riding horses. In her

dreams, not only can she ride horses, she can become one if she likes.

Pony’s family was wealthy enough to support and encourage her creative pursuits. She did a stint at writing, wrote several short stories on dreams and was doing research on a similarly themed novel when she decided she wanted to learn even more about the process of dreams and dreaming. After excelling at several courses in psychology and psychiatry she was eventually recruited by the Project.

Curtis “Grapes” Boudreaux, 30, Analyst

Grapes grew up in Louisiana. His mother practiced a form of voodoo so he grew up around mysticism and dreams. Thus when he learned about the Project while attending college, he happily signed on. Grapes once suffered from homicidal mania but managed to overcome the affliction with Dr. Lanier’s help and the support of his teammates. He still has lapses and is particularly brutal to enemies in the Dreamworld.

Grapes is a charmer and likes to flirt with the ladies. He purposely speaks with an overly pronounced Cajun accent as he likes the effect it has on people.

Gregory “Father Gramps” Daniels, 41, Mystic

Father Gramps is an ordained Catholic priest. He once believed God had blessed him with divine visions and had a minor crisis of faith when he realized he was Dreamwalking instead. Consultation with his superiors provided mixed results. Finally, one of his colleagues referred him to a nearby chapter house.

He has been with the Project for almost ten years. The other members of his team jokingly gave him his nickname which he adopted as his handle. He still dresses as a priest (minus the collar) and came to terms with God, since he realized that nothing has changed—water is still wet, the sky is still blue and God is still God. He tries his hardest to obey the tenets of the church, even in the Dreamworld. This originally put him at odds with other Dreamwalkers but he finally found a home with his current team.

Kenny “Hendrix” Thompson, 20, Usher

Hendrix has been hopelessly addicted to LSD since the very first time he tried it back in 1998. The Project recruited him on the last of his many trips to the rehab clinic. With their help, he has been weaned off LSD and can now function on a milder Project created hallucinogenic. He still has lapses however, and occasionally Creates and takes stronger hits in his own Dreamworld.

Listening to the immortal Jimmy (through a personal set of headphones) relaxes Hendrix and helps him reach the dream state faster. Unlike most Users, he is very clear headed and stable. Although young, he

is smart enough to know that he can't keep taking drugs forever. He enjoys working with the team but is glad the Project will provide for him when he is unfit to continue. He has a slight crush on Pony but has never revealed this to anyone.

Patients

Patients do not just show up at Pinebrook, take a few meds, and then go to sleep. Some stay at the chapter for several days or even weeks, allowing ample time for interaction with the characters.

Dreamwalkers are encouraged to associate with patients as much as possible, although they are not allowed to discuss Dreamwalking or even their reason for being at the chapter. Since patients are not supposed to discuss their status either, many believe the characters are fellow patients like them.

The following patients were diagnosed by Dr. Lanier as suitable for beginning Dreamwalkers. Based on their psychological evaluations, these patients have only small infestations and are intended to test the character's capabilities and to see how well they act together as a team.

Each of these patients spends only a weekend at Pinebrook, arriving Friday night and leaving Sunday evening; the Dreamwalk takes place Saturday night. The short descriptions listed with each patient should be used when deciding their attitudes and behavior during this time.

Joe Horn, 35, *Writer*

Joe Horn is part owner of an art supply store in Macon, GA but his true love is his writing. He is an accomplished short story author and hopes one day be able to support himself solely on income made from writing. Unfortunately, Joe has been suffering writer's block for over a year. Thus far, therapy has been unable to help him work through his condition.

Joe is a personable fellow who enjoys meeting new people and undertaking new experiences. He can most often be found reading in his cabin or the administration library but is open to other activities if invited out.

Grant Stacey, 38, *Used Car Salesman*

Grant Stacey is a big man, broad shouldered but out of shape and vain enough to hide his *spare tire* by sucking in his gut and wearing loose fitting shirts and jackets.

He is easygoing but not terribly bright and tries to charm people with stories of some of the places he has been (Mexico, Las Vegas, New Orleans). Otherwise, conversations with Grant usually revolve around the latest sports scores, fast cars and beautiful women.

Intelligent women intimidate him and he avoids characters fitting this description if possible.

Grant played football and baseball in high school and even made the state wrestling team his senior year. He married young and flunked out of college soon after. Grant owns a used car lot and makes more than enough money to support his family comfortably.

His marital problems are the reason he is seeking help. He has taken to drinking and arguing with his wife and is extremely unhappy with her decision to pursue a career rather than stay home and raise children. He has an intense dislike for her *feminist lesbian* boss—she owns an art gallery and has even convinced his son to pursue a future in art rather than find a real job.

Grant can usually be found either in the recreational room, or in his cabin watching television. He politely declines any invitation to physical activity but welcomes those who wish to watch the next ball game with him.

Claire Destin, 35, *Daycare Manager*

Claire is almost always smiling and exuberant. She is a *go-getter* and is always on the move. She enjoys outdoor activities like hiking and camping and is thrilled at the prospect of spending the weekend at Pinebrook.

Claire loves children and animals. She is a member of several animal rights organizations and is a strict vegetarian—she cannot bear to even watch people eat meat. While she is more than willing to discuss her interests and beliefs, she does not push them on others.

Claire manages a daycare center for preschoolers and is usually quite happy with her life. Over the past few years however, she has suffered several bouts of severe depression and does not know the cause. Prescription medication and a supporting husband have helped immensely but her episodes seem to be getting worse.

Throughout the day, Claire can be found strolling through the chapter grounds. She welcomes company and would love to go canoeing on the lake but cannot manage a boat.

Dr. Michelle Hobbs, 39, *Psychology Professor*

Michelle Hobbs (maiden name, Santana) is of strong Latin descent. She is intelligent, highly charming and treats everyone she meets with kindness and respect.

Michelle is a psychology professor at a nearby university. She feels therapy is unnecessary but has come to Pinebrook at the behest of her close friend, Michael Lanier. Michelle's husband died of heart problems last summer and since then Michael has

noticed a subtle change in her behavior. He is worried about her and wishes to make sure she is coping as well as she appears.

Michael is bending the rules by admitting her and had to pull a few strings with Koenig to get him to agree. Personal relationships are generally not a factor when deciding which patients need care but since she is so stable, Michael managed to convince Koenig her Dreamworld would be perfect for the newcomers.

Michelle's friendly demeanor is a complete facade. She is suffering from severe paranoia and is cold and calculating at heart. She has already committed at least one unspeakable act and has a vague notion of committing another. Her knowledge of psychiatry and

psychology has enabled her to hide her Dementia from even her closest friends and relatives. She has even managed to fool Dr. Koenig, which is no easy task. Michelle fears that Michael has caught on to her deception and hopes that this visit to Pinebrook will at least temporarily allay any suspicions he might have.

Michelle spends most of her time in the chapter library (in the administration building) or her own cabin. She accompanies others around the compound if invited out (although she remains constantly on her guard) but refuses to venture into the surrounding woods for fear of snakes. Otherwise, Michelle keeps to herself as much as possible.



Hard Rain

Dreamer: *Joe Horn*

Dreamworld: *realistic*

Key locations/events: *flooded neighborhood, getting to Joe's house, Joe's house, child rescue*

Denouement: *passive*

Details: *keep Joe's house from being flooded*

Unreal: *passive*

Taenia theme: *waterlogged corpses*

40 larvae (burial attire, corpse like features)

4 drones (zombies)

1 Queen (large zombie)

Underworld Setting

Joe's office; 1 drone; mana pocket: Joe's computer (8 points)

Italian restaurant; mana pocket: plate of linguini (6 points)

Atlanta, GA; 3 drones; mana pocket: ice skating rink (12 points)

Entering the Dreamworld

Upon entering the Dreamworld, the characters find themselves on the front lawn of a middle class suburban home. Dark, gray clouds fill the sky. A flood is in the making and this normally peaceful neighborhood is already partially submerged beneath brown, brackish water. The water is filled with floating logs, trash, and debris; a rank, swampy smell emanates from it. The Barrier surrounds the entire neighborhood.

The water level rises, even as the characters watch, engulfing both vehicles and houses in the flood. Only one house seems safe from the danger. Its lawn is surrounded by a waist-high wall of sandbags and the noisy purr of a generator drifts out over the sound of running water. Several men and women can be seen filling sandbags to bolster the strength of the wall. One of them is the Dreamer, Joe Horn.

Getting There

This is Joe Horn's neighborhood during the Flood of 1994, a natural disaster that struck many parts of Southwest Georgia in the early summer of 1994. His neighborhood was flooded by the nearby Loogaroonie Creek.

The characters must act fast if they wish to safely get to the Dreamer's home. The water is steadily rising—the street itself is already under water and so are many of the intervening homes. The water is slow moving but the current is deceptively strong.

If the characters act fast, they may wade through the rising water without having to attempt a task. Otherwise, an athletics task (swimming) is required to reach Joe's home safely. The difficulty will slowly increase for every few *real time* minutes which the characters stand around and do nothing. Failure results in the character being swept into the Barrier and out into the Periphery (a calamity indicates that he also loses two points of mana). The character may return to the Dreamworld, but returns to the original spot and must repeat the process again.

Fluff: *As the characters enter the water, the theme from Jaws slowly builds to a crescendo.*

As the characters journey towards the Dreamer's house, several coffins float by. These airtight coffins come from a nearby cemetery that was flooded out. They float with the current, spinning and bumping into things but are easy to avoid. Several have gotten hung up on parked vehicles or lodged against the nearby houses.

The water is filled with unformed larvae. Like leeches, they latch onto fish, turtles, alligators and anything else they can reach. A larvae attaches itself to each character who enters the water, causing one grade of fatigue. Within all of the commotion going on, the characters should not realize this until they exit the water.

Just as the characters reach the sandbag wall, the generator sputters and dies. Shouts of confusion follow as Joe and his Unreal neighbors rush over to assess the damage.

The House

Joe Horn's house is located in a circular court at the west end of the road. It is the highest house on the

block. A yellow truck sits in the driveway. A battery operated radio apprises everyone of news updates and water level measurements. A waist high wall of sandbags encircles the property.

The house itself is unremarkable. Inside, all of the furniture has been placed up high. Plenty of canned goods and fresh water are stocked within.

Joe's Neighbors

All of Joe's Unreal neighbors live on this street. The rest of the neighborhood evacuated some time ago. Those who stayed did not think the flooding would get this bad or happen in such a short amount of time. Only Joe had the foresight to protect his property and once the others realized their homes were lost, they decided to help Joe save his.

Now they stand around the generator with a box of tools. Two neighbors (Otis and Clete) are infested with larvae—one is missing an eye and the other wears a tuxedo that is open in the back. The others are Bill, Jed, and Missy. Use typical ratings for them.

The Dreamer

Joe horn was busy stacking sandbags to the wall when the generator went out. When the characters arrive, he is with some of his neighbors trying to fix it. He welcomes the characters and any help they might provide, but without the generator, the situation looks grim.

The Denouement

The dream's denouement is to keep Joe's house from being flooded. During the Flood of '94, Joe was on vacation. While he was away, his house was flooded and he lost nearly everything, including the computer and backup files that contained his writings. In this dream he seeks to prevent this loss from happening.

The Generator

The generator supplies power to a pump that drains excess water from behind the sandbag wall. It stalled because one of the larvae poured sugar in the tank, although this is not apparent at first. A successful mechanical or mechanical engineering task can determine the cause of the failure, although Joe refuses to believe that any of his neighbors would do this.

Repairing or replacing the generator is crucial to achieving the denouement. Without the generator, the house will be flooded and the denouement will not be achieved.

The easiest way to get the generator running is to mend it through reshaping. However, this is difficult if not impossible to do while the Unreal are close by and may force the Dreamer to gain dementia. If the

characters choose this option, either think of some way to work in *The Rescue* or skip ahead to *The Breach* section, below.

After tinkering around with the generator and realizing that it is beyond their ability to repair, one of the Unreal neighbors (Jed) remembers that one of the larval neighbors (Otis) has a generator next to his shed. Otis denies this at first, but is prompted by Bill who remembers seeing the generator just before he came over. Otis' shed is high up on a slope so they believe the generator may still be dry if they can figure out some way to get it and bring it back.

Getting to the Shed

There are several ways to get to the shed. One is to swim. This is extremely difficult due to the current (improbable difficulty) and requires an athletics task to get there. The results are the same as above.

Another method is to build a raft out of the materials on hand. This raft will only hold two people (and the generator). A boating task is required to reach the shed. None of these men have the mechanical or mechanical engineering skills, however, so if the characters do not build the raft, there is a high probability that the raft will break apart each time it is used.

A boat or raft may be created or reshaped, although doing so in front of the Unreal results in the Dreamer gaining dementia.

Those who think about it can use reshaping to propel characters or crafts through the water by creating numerous swells and ripples. This negates the need for any task.

The Shed

The generator is outside the shed. It is dry and functional, and easy enough to load and transport it back. Once at the shed, however, the characters hear the sound of a crying child coming from a nearby flooded home.

The Rescue

If the characters choose to investigate the source of the crying, no task is necessary to get to the house. The back door is open and the lower floor is completely flooded. In the living room, an open, empty coffin floats amidst the furniture and debris.

The upper levels are dry. An Unreal child, Courtney Aims, is in her bedroom crying. Scratch marks mar the surface of her bedroom door. She quiets if she hears anyone on the stairs, but will not open the door. The flimsy door is locked, but may be opened with a coat hanger. Otherwise, it may be battered down.

Courtney Aims (Unreal Child)



0
fitness

+1
awareness

+1
creativity

0
reasoning

luck
discipline

☒	☒	☒	☒	☐	☐
☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

aptitudes & academia
subterfuge (apprentice)

Walking Dead / Zombie Mom (Drone)



+2
fitness

0
awareness

0
creativity

0
reasoning

luck
discipline

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☒	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

gimmicks
tolerance to pain, natural weapon (bite & claws; B1),
immunity (asphyxiation), natural armor, inexhaustible
energy

aptitudes & academia
brawling (proficient), athletics (proficient)

Courtney is hiding in the closet. As soon as her hiding place is exposed, she launches into hysterics, crying, and struggling to run away. A leadership, performance, or psychology task is needed to calm her, after which, she latches onto that character and refuses to leave his side.

If asked, she tearfully explains that she and her mother were waiting for their father to come home before they evacuated. Once the flooding started, they both rushed upstairs. Her mother then went back downstairs to get a few necessities. There was a crash and then her mother started screaming. Courtney hid in her room. She later heard groaning sounds and scratching at the door but was too scared to open it.

Courtney's mom was attacked and killed by a wandering drone. The drone is close by and manifests as a withered corpse (formerly from the coffin). As the characters tend to Courtney, the drone and the resurrected zombie of Courtney's mother soggily shamle up the staircase and attack uttering a single phrase—*brains*.

A Called Shot to the head or neck of either the drone or zombie mom destroys it instantly.

Back to Joe's House

The current is traveling roughly southwest so no task is required to get safely back to Joe's house.

The Breach

If all of the characters went to retrieve the generator, they return to find the rear sandbag wall partially destroyed and the backyard filling with water. Soon after the characters leave (or if the characters reshape

the generator), the larval neighbors topple one of the sandbag stacks. They then swim to the nearest house and hide inside, awaiting the outcome of the dream.

If the characters get the generator running, the pump is eventually able to contain the influx of water and drain the area. The wall itself is difficult to repair. and united and/or sustained athletics tasks are required to fix the wall.

Once the wall is fixed and the pump operational, it is only a matter of time before the denouement is achieved. Water occasionally seeps through gaps in the sandbag wall and everyone must rush to fill them in but the characters should have no further problems with the flood.

Resolution

The water level crests at thirty-five feet not long after the wall is shored up and the generator operational. They hear this news over the radio. The sky lightens, the storm clouds disappear, and a backwash of mana rolls over the entire neighborhood. Joe and his neighbors congratulate each other on a job well done.

Getting to the Nest

A athletics (for swimming) or boating task is required to reach the nest. Characters who approach the house are attacked by three drones lurking beneath the water.

The drones manifest as waterlogged corpses (one shot to the head or neck destroys one instantly). Upon returning from his vacation, Joe found a coffin inside his house. By some ironic twist of fate, its contents had

spilled out onto his waterlogged bed. The experience was so unsettling that his subconscious mind has never forgotten and the Taenia take full advantage of his uneasiness.

These drones try to topple any boats. A boating task (contested by the drone’s fitness) is required to stay afloat.

The drones grapple any swimming characters. Their added weight immediately drags the character down to the bottom. Speech is impaired under water, but the one phrase the drones utter is unmistakable—*brains*.

The Nest

The nest is located inside a house at the eastern end of the street. The lower level is flooded and filled with a large school of fresh water piranha reshaped by the Queen.

The school attacks one character relentlessly and must be taken beyond the incapacitated level of injury before it is dispersed.

The nest itself is located on the upper level and resembles an endless graveyard that stretches as far as the eye can see. The Taeniid eggs reside within several buried coffins, firmly attached to the corpses inside.

The Queen (manifested as a waterlogged corpse) reshaped two zombies (same ratings as drones) to guard her. They attack anyone who enters the upper floor. One shot to the head or neck destroys a zombie or the Queen instantly.

If the piranha school is still alive, the Queen reshapes holes in the floor beneath her attackers. An athletics task must be made to avoid falling into the waters below. Otherwise, the Queen uses mana each turn to channel damage through her claws.

Aftermath

Back at the lab, the Pinebrook staff are anxious to see how well the characters handled their first strike against the Taenia. Dr. Haire and the techs conduct basic physical examinations, while Dr. Lanier assesses any possible mental damage. The Dreamwalkers are encouraged to talk about their experiences during this time as discussion helps dream recall.

If everything checks out, the characters are taken to the cafeteria where a surprise party is held in their honor. Mac and his team are in attendance along with the rest of Pinebrook’s scientific and medical staff. Dr. Koenig gives a short speech praising the characters for surviving their first Dreamwalk.

From there, champagne is opened and Mac orchestrates a toast to the character’s future success, expressing delight that he and his team are no longer the only spoiled brats in the Pinebrook family. This is a good time for characters to interact with staff members on a more personal basis if they haven’t made an effort to do so already. The festivities last until just before dawn. The characters may stay and unwind or choose to retire at any time during the night.

In a few years, the staff at Pinebrook, and any friends Joe made while there, receive an autographed copy of

School of Piranhas

+1

fitness

+1

awareness

0

creativity

0

reasoning

luck

discipline

✓

✓

✓

gimmicks

natural weapon (bite; B1)

aptitudes & academia

-

The Queen

+3

fitness

+2

awareness

+4

creativity

+3

reasoning

10

mana

+1

esp

luck

discipline

✓

✓

✓

gimmicks

tolerance to pain, natural weapon (bite & claws; B1), immunity (asphyxiation), natural armor, inexhaustible energy

aptitudes & academia

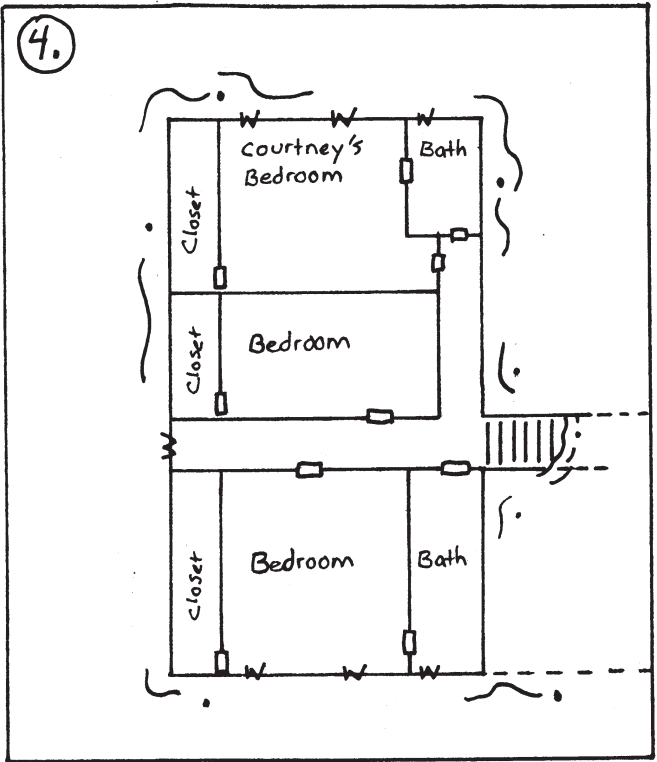
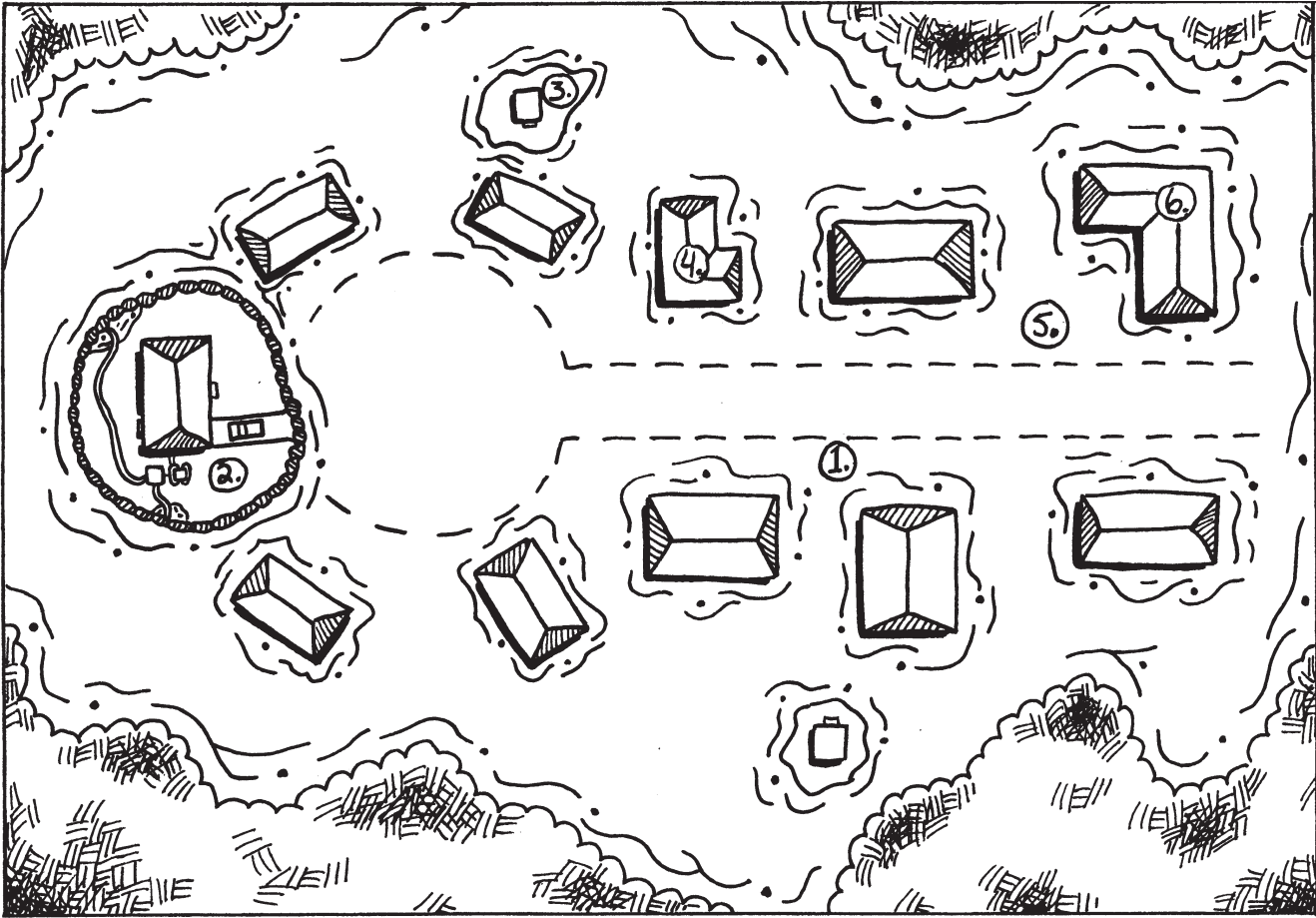
telepathy (expert; with drones only), brawling (expert), athletics (expert)

Active
EXPLORATIONS

65

Pinebrook Chapter

Joe Horn's first book—a horror novel wherein the protagonists (a group of people remarkably like the characters) must find their way off a zombie-infested island.



"HARD RAIN"

KEY	
	HOUSE
	SHED
	SANDBAGS
	WATER
	TREES
	TOMBSTONES
	DOOR, WINDOW

Winning is Everything

Dreamer: *Grant Stacey*

Dreamworld: *realistic*

Key locations/events: *Manhattan Sports Dome, parking lot, football game*

Denouement: *passive*

Details: *to watch the Manhattan Island Jets win the Champion Bowl*

Unreal: *inert*

Taenia theme: *strong, independent women*

40 larvae (pain, conservatively dressed women)

4 drones (body builder type women)

1 Queen (women's rights activist)

Underworld Setting

Grant's office (car lot); 1 drone; mana pocket: Joe's address book (5 points)

Grant's home; mana pocket: bedroom mirror (10 points)

Grant's favorite bar; 4 drones; beer cooler (12 points)

The parking lot is teeming with activity; the atmosphere full of cheer and good will. Hundreds of smiling people wearing team colors (either the black and green of the Jets or the pink, white, and blue of the Blowfish) exchange catcalls and friendly jibes with fans of the opposite team.

Fluff: *Some of the Unreal wear Grant's old #12 Blue Ducks high school jersey. Sale prices are written in soap across the windshields of all parked vehicles.*

Reporters and camera crews wander among the revelers conducting fan interviews while M.S.D. security guard patrols make sure the peace is kept. Tailgaters beckon the characters to join them for a free meal of beer, bratwurst, hot dogs, hamburgers, chicken, or steak.

The shimmering haze of the Barrier lies beyond the parking lot. The city of New York ripples across its surface like a badly drawn photographer's backdrop. Vehicles seem to enter and leave the parking lot through the Barrier, appearing and disappearing into thin air.

The unmistakable presence of the Dreamer emanates from somewhere inside the stadium.

Stadium Security

Security has been increased for the game and security guards may be encountered almost anywhere in and around the stadium. Larvae have infested several members of the security force and do their best to discourage characters from helping the Dreamer without starting an all out battle. Regardless of gender, these larvae manifest slight, conservative, female characteristics (small breasts, wide hips, brown lipstick, etc.) into their appearance. All security guards carry a .38 revolver, night stick, walkie-talkie, and badge.

House Arrest

Characters placed under arrest are taken to a dingy holding cell in the stadium basement. They are kept under close supervision by one larval supervisor and up to five Unreal security guards until the end of the game. Breaking out of the cell is possible but any escape attempt must be done quickly before the guards can raise the alarm.

Combat

Initiating open combat before the denouement is

Entering the Dreamworld

Upon entering the Dreamworld, the characters find themselves in the parking lot of New York City's newest arena—the Manhattan Sports Dome. Colored banners, flags and marquee signs proudly advertise today's featured event—Champion Bowl XXXX, the final game of the season in which the hometown Manhattan Island Jets play host to the Miami Blowfish for the right to be called the best in the North American Football League (NAFL).

A huge television screen is mounted to the outside of the stadium, overlooking the parking lot. A series of football related images flash across it as broadcasters narrate seasonal highlights from both teams. A clock in the bottom right hand corner slowly counts down the minutes until game time—just under an hour.

achieved may disrupt the dream. Gunfire causes chaos to break out among the fans in attendance. The crowd panics, trampling dozens of people as they stampede for the nearest exit. up to five additional security guards arrive every turn and attempt to subdue or kill the characters, depending on the situation. If the fight lasts for more than five turns, the game is canceled in light of the terrible tragedy. Skip ahead to *The Resolution*.

Getting Inside the Stadium

Since the Dreamer is somewhere inside the Dome, the first priority should be getting inside the stadium. Ticket booths are closed because the game has been sold out for months. Security is beefed up for the event making the prospect of sneaking in impossible.

The easiest way to gain entry is to either create a ticket, possess someone who already has one, or possess a security guard. Hard cash can also be created in order to buy a ticket from a scalper (\$1000 minimum for nosebleed seats). Scalped tickets have a slight chance of being counterfeit and recognized immediately at the gate.

Two larval security guards patrol the parking lot crowd. If the Dreamwalkers make no effort to hide, the larvae eventually spot them and alert the rest of the Taenia via walkie-talkies. The larvae avoid contact with the Dreamwalkers but radio for backup if molested.

Entering the Stadium

If the Taenia are not already aware of the Dreamwalkers, they become so when the characters try to enter the stadium. Possessed security guards have no problem obtaining entry. All other characters are

detained at the gate and subject to a routine security search. These are normal security guards under the direction of a larval security chief named Chuck Givens.

Chuck Givens is a tall, skinny man with a hawk nose and piercing eyes. When dealing with Dreamwalkers, he has a constant scowl on his face. He tries to intimidate the characters while avoiding close contact. He flees if attacked.

The security guards pat down the characters and rifle through any bags, backpacks, or purses they may be carrying. If the characters did not think to check beforehand, there is a slight chance that a possessed character is carrying some minor contraband (such as counterfeit tickets, illegal drugs, pocket knives, etc.) If anything is amiss, Givens immediately orders the character be placed under arrest.

If everything checks out, the security guards apologize for the delay and allow the characters to pass. Givens retreats with a glare but reappears moments later with the two larval security guards.

"This is no place for you," Chuck says. *"I'm advising you to leave while you still have a chance. If you don't, there's going to be trouble."* One guard punctuates this threat by lowering his hand to the butt of pistol, the other by tapping his nightstick into his hand.

Givens responds to attempted conversation with: *"Leave now. You can't help him. I'm not going to ask you again,"* or *"This is your last chance to leave. I'm serious."*

This is all bluff and posturing. The last thing the larvae want is a fight. If the characters make as if to move past them or demonstrate any sign of aggression, the larvae quickly withdraw, even running away if

Security Guards



+1
fitness

+1
awareness

0
creativity

0
reasoning

luck

discipline



aptitudes & academia

subterfuge (apprentice), firearms (proficient), law (apprentice), investigation (apprentice), brawling (proficient), melee (apprentice)

Chuck Givens (Security Chief)



+2
fitness

+1
awareness

0
creativity

0
reasoning

luck

discipline



aptitudes & academia

subterfuge (apprentice), firearms (proficient), law (apprentice), investigation (proficient), brawling (proficient), melee (proficient)

necessary to avoid a fight. “You’ll be sorry,” Chuck calls over his shoulder.

The characters should have no further problem entering the stadium. The outer ring of the stadium and the inner ring (where the seats are) are separated by a long (one half mile) tunnel, the floor of which is black asphalt, painted with orange and white lines. Poster sized pictures line the walls at regular intervals showing a glimpse of Grant’s life, from his childhood until now.

The Manhattan Sports Dome

The stadium is huge and brimming to its 80,000-seat capacity. A revolutionary, paneled, dome style roof protects the field from the elements. The playing field is ringed by three tiers of seats (Upper Level, Mezzanine, Lower Level), each accessible by ramps and/or staircases. Concession stands take up three sides of the Mezzanine with the fourth side belonging to the press and game announcer’s booths. Several dozen luxury skyboxes overlook the eastern side of the Upper Level.

Even before the game, noise from the crowd is near deafening as thousands of voices give rise to ragged team chants and an occasional disorganized *wave*. Tray vendors wander the aisles selling programs, beer, pretzels, and hot dogs.

One of these vendors is a florist with several dozen roses. She holds a card and appears to be looking for someone. If stopped or questioned, she explains that she is looking for someone named Grant Stacey. She is supposed to deliver these flowers to his wife but must be paid seventy dollars first.

Fluff: Somewhere between the parking lot and the stadium, the Unreal have undergone a startling change—they now appear as tall, robust, blonde-haired, Barbie doll type women dressed in Jets team colored midriiffs, bikinis, and other skimpy and suggestive clothing. Even security and the other stadium employees have succumbed to the effect, their normal uniforms now ridiculously tight and scant.

The only people unaffected by the gender change are the two teams warming up on the field, the referees, and the coaching staffs. Taeniid larvae are easy to spot scattered among the crowd. These manifest as conservatively dressed women with short, close cropped brown hair or small breasts or broad, man-like features. The field referees and a few of the Blowfish are also infested by larvae.

The Dreamer

Grant Stacey is at the fifty yard line marker down on the home team sideline. He sits on a battered couch

with his legs propped up on a coffee table, surrounded by an unwallled replica of his home den, complete with bathroom and refrigerator. A dozen extraordinarily beautiful cheerleaders practice their routine nearby, seeming to perform especially for him.

If the characters wish to approach the Dreamer, they must once again contend with stadium security. Possession of a security guard is the simplest way to get on the field, but the characters may come up with other ideas. Any attempt to jump the wall onto the field is met with swift reprisal by up to ten security guards followed by ejection from the stadium.

The Joining

Upon Joining with the Dreamer, the character is overwhelmed by the excitement of the moment. He can either sit back and watch the game unfold or resist.

During the game, Grant’s hopes rise and fall with the play of his team. This is the first time the Jets have been to the Championship game in over thirty years. Grant saw them win that game when he was a boy and it remains one of his favorite childhood memories. He has always hoped the Jets would return but they never have.

Grant is intimidated by strong, independent women, which is the source of the Taeniid manifestation.

The Denouement

Once the denouement is discovered, the characters can better assess the situation. The outcome does not look good for the home team. Even during warm-ups, it is obvious that the Jets are no match for the opposing team. The Blowfish are just too good. In addition, larvae have infested various members of the Blowfish, including the head coach. The three field referees are also infested. The larval referees and players stand apart from the rest of the team, discussing what to do about the Dreamwalkers.

One way to even the odds is for the characters to possess the Jets coach or some of the players. The best time to do this is before game time, when the two teams enter the locker room for the coach’s pre-game motivational speech. The characters should be able to isolate their targets without any problem inside the locker room. Once the game starts, possessing the coach is almost impossible because of all the attention he draws. Possessing the players is still possible however.

Possessing members of the Blowfish is not a good idea. The larval coach immediately benches any possessed player. If they resist, he calls security and has them escorted from the stadium. If the coach is possessed, a phone call from the team’s larval owner transfers management of the team to the Blowfish’s offensive coordinator who is watching the game from a

Mezzanine level booth. Once again, open resistance results in the coach's ejection, this time by a larval referee or an Unreal NAFL official, and subsequent removal from the stadium.

Taeniid larvae may be destroyed normally with mana bolts, but if the any team member is openly attacked, the stadium erupts into full blown chaos (see *Combat, above*).

The Game

Fifteen minutes before game time, the announcer introduces the starting lineups of both teams. Each player runs onto the field, slapping hands and high-fiving his teammates to the delight of the cheering crowd.

The stadium quiets during the national anthem. A coin toss (won by the Blowfish unless the characters are present—in this case, the coin may be flipped normally) follows to see who gets the ball first and then finally, the game begins.

The football game lasts for four quarters. The director may decide the winner of each quarter based on how the players interfere. At the end of the game, the team who won the most quarters wins the game.

At half time (the end of the first two quarters), the teams are herded back into their locker rooms. If a team is tied or winning, the head coach is upbeat and encouraging. If the team is losing, the head coach challenges the manhood of each player. If they haven't done so already, this is a good time for characters to possess the Jets players or the head coach.

On the field, the half time show consists of a rock and roll number by an all girl band named *Starz*. After half time, the teams return to the field and play out the remainder of the game.

If the characters think to ask, they may possess players whose positions maximize their own strengths.

Head Coach: The Jets head coach is responsible for calling all plays and on-field adjustments (reasoning & leadership).

Quarterback: The Jets quarterback relies on quick thinking and on the field decision making (awareness & athletics).

Skill Players: Skill players either handle the ball or attempt to keep others from doing so (fitness & athletics).

Linemen: Linemen are the grunts of the football team. Their work is done head to head in the trenches and relies heavily on strength and foot speed (fitness and awareness).

There are three larval referees which do their best to avoid the characters but can be intimidated into leaving. Any player who voices displeasure at there

terrible calls is summarily ejected from the game (no exceptions!). Killing the larva infesting a referee (with a mana bolt) and then possessing that referee can make calls in their favor.

Resolution

If the Blowfish win, a visible wave of disappointment and failure radiates from the Dreamer, causing a ripple effect throughout the entire stadium. The Unreal shimmer and fade out. Color drains away leaving everything bleak and gray. Stripped of their hosts, the remaining larvae writhe on the ground in agony. Most dissolve into a steaming pile of foul smelling goo, but three molt into fully functional drones, rise up and attack the characters. The characters must decide whether to stay and fight for their lives or leave the Dreamworld.

If the Jets win, the crowd erupts into a rabid frenzy and rushes onto the field. Jets team members parade around the field to the delight of the masses. A podium is erected in the center of the football field and the President of the North American Football League gives a short speech before awarding the Championship trophy to the Jets head coach. As the coach raises the trophy high overhead, the crowd once again roars its approval. A backwash of glorious mana (up to 10 per character) spews from the trophy to envelope the entire stadium, destroying all larvae in the blast. Afterwards, the characters are free to seek out the Taeniid nest.

The Stadium

The following assumes that the denouement has been achieved or the Dreamer has realized that the denouement cannot be fulfilled. If not, the director must amend this section accordingly.

The nest is located in an Upper Level luxury sky box. Inside, the stadium is eerily quiet as all of the Unreal have either disappeared or gone onto the field to join in the celebration.

An access ramp leads to the Upper Levels which are closed off by locked security doors. The lock may be picked or the door may be bashed down.

Once the characters bypass the door, the skybox door opens. The Queen yells "*Get 'em girls!*" and three Taeniid drones exit and attack.

The drones are all body builder type women with mannish features and close cropped brown hair. One of the drones has a hand held stun gun (taser; F1) and one has a can of pepper spray (tear gas; A2). Each drone also has a set of keys that they can bunch into their fists (knife; B1).

The door to the luxury box is locked and via reshaping, the Queen has wired it to the stadium's

electrical system. Anyone touching the knob immediately receives F1 damage.

The luxury box contains everything that would be expected in a standard luxury box. In addition, paintings, statues, and other objects d’art decorate the room. The large glass window overlooking the stadium has been broken outward and a slimy trail leads across its threshold.

The Taeniid Queen has reshaped the entire room, dropping the nest to the level below. The broken window is a diversionary tactic she hopes will lead the Dreamwalkers away until the dream ends.

The Nest

The nest is identical to the luxury box above, except the room is dark and there are no doors or windows. In addition, gelatinous cocoons encase the art. Inside the cocoons are what appear to be severed portions of the male anatomy.

The Taeniid Queen is a painfully androgynous woman named Terry McCall armed with a 9mm handgun with three extra magazines. In the real world, Terry owns the art gallery where Grant’s wife works. She is also the head of two prominent feminist groups—The Foundation of Womyn’s Rights and the Elevation of Womyn Above Men.

Terry has taken cover behind a chair. She attacks the first Dreamwalker she sees and keeps firing on him until he goes down. For the first few turns, she uses mana to act in haste and may take multiple actions as well. She also heals herself as needed.

Female characters or characters who are currently possessing female Unreal do double damage with each attack (vulnerability).

Aftermath

Back in the lab, the characters undergo routine post Dreamwalk procedures. There is no celebration this

time, but if the colony was destroyed, Dr. Koenig is visibly impressed. He once again commends the team’s efforts and looks forward to watching their development.

The next morning they learn that Grant made a private call to his wife and is leaving Pinebrook early. Before leaving, he thanks the staff and promises to keep in touch with any new friends he has made. Over the course of the following weeks, he is able to reconcile with his wife and greatly improve his relationship with his son. The characters should feel good about their part in helping keep his family together.

The Queen (Terry McCall)



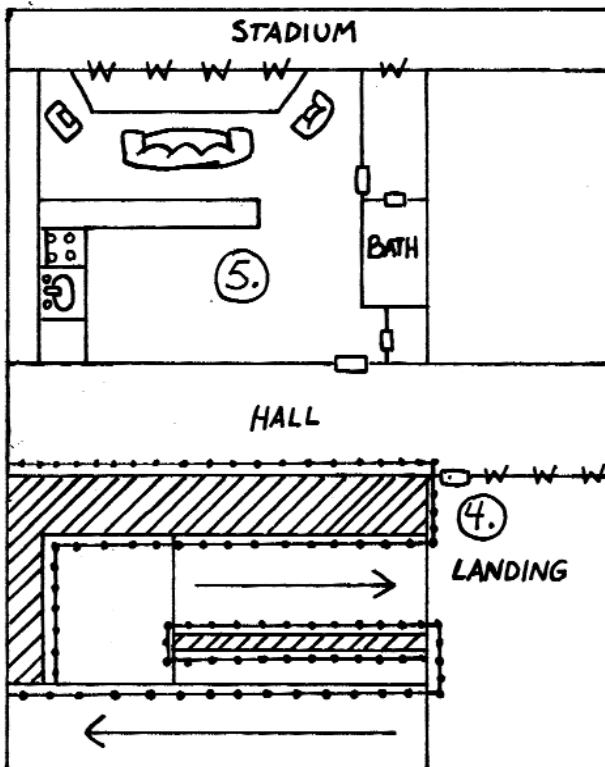
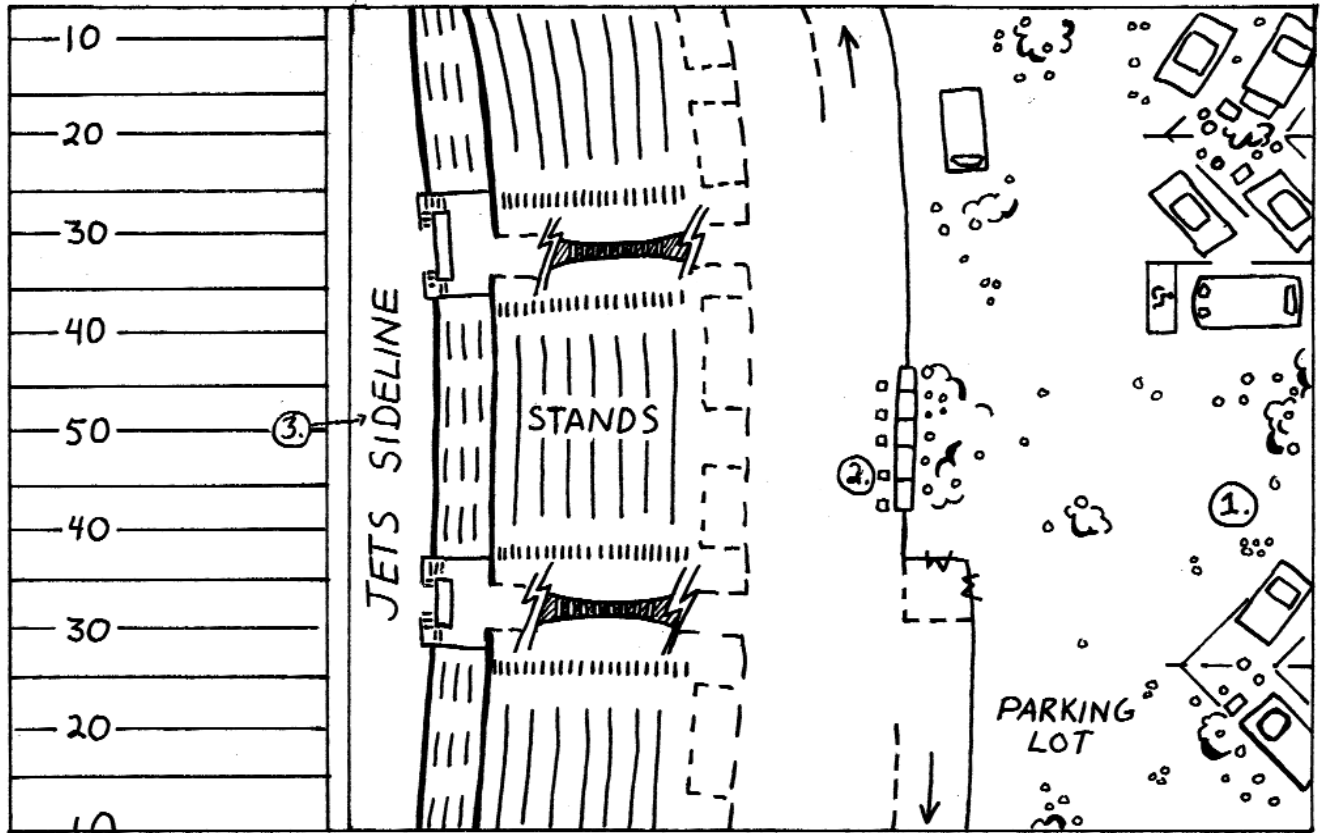
+3 fitness	+2 awareness	+4 creativity	+3 reasoning
	8 mana	+1 esp	
luck	☐	☐	☐
discipline	☒	☒	☒

gimmicks

tolerance to pain, inexhaustible energy, vulnerability (attacks from women)

aptitudes & academia

telepathy (expert; with drones only), brawling (expert), athletics (apprentice), firearms (proficient), first aid (proficient), investigation (expert), politics (proficient)



"WINNING IS EVERYTHING"

KEY	
	CROWDS
	VEHICLE
	INDOORS
	OPEN SPACE
	RAMP

Lt. David Jensen

Lieutenant David Jensen was a member of the British special forces who served near the start of World War II. In 1940, after Britain had officially declared war on Germany, but before any major engagements had occurred, his unit was deployed into the forests of northern Germany. During a heated skirmish with enemy troops, Jensen was wounded and left for dead. His body went into shock and his still form was passed over by the German force. The cold and the snow kept him hovering at the brink of death for some time, but though his body was numb, his mind continued to function, cycling through memories of his childhood, images of his wife and children back home, and mostly dread at the thought of what would happen to his family and to all of England should the madman that was Hitler be allowed to continue his expansionist ways.

Eventually Jensen's heartbeat started to fade. He began to feel light-headed and then as if he were weightless—he knew his life was near its end. He was not afraid to die but he was filled with a great sense of sadness and remorse at having failed in his duty to his family and country. It was this sense of patriotism and devotion to those he loved, combined with his latent Dreamwalking ability, that somehow enabled him to *cross over* into the land of dreams and become a creature of pure spirit.

David Jensen wandered the ocean of dreams for several days after his *death*, not fully understanding what had happened at first. Eventually he became aware of the varied emotions floating up to him from beneath the *wæces* and, upon investigating, realized he was actually entering dreams that were not his own. Even more, he quickly discovered that he could learn much about the Dreamer just by observing the natural course of the dream. At that point, he realized he had been given a great gift and that somehow he had been given a second chance to protect those he loved.

For the next few years, he did his part to help the Allies win the war. He routinely sought out sleeping Germans and then attempted to convey what he had learned from their dreams into the dreams of those who could use the knowledge best. Several important military and strategic victories can be attributed to Jensen's subtle guidance—nothing so great as Normandy, but important nonetheless. He was not always successful, because at the time very few people took great stock in the content of dreams. However, those who did choose to act upon his warnings were

often rewarded with victory and success. Much later, many of them were credited as being men capable of remarkable flashes of insight and intuition.

It was during this time that Jensen first encountered the Taenia—hive-minded spiritual parasites who feed off the negative vibes and emotions they produce in people during sleep; creatures whose very presence eventually turns the host insane. The Taenia are instinctively able to adapt to and appear as the Dreamer's greatest fear within the dream and since Hitler and his SS were so widely feared during this time, even among his own armies, nearly all the Taeniid manifestations Jensen encountered bore some token of the Nazi regime.

Because of this, he came to the erroneous conclusion that the Taenia were actually created by Hitler, a known practitioner of the occult. Jensen once entered the mind of Hitler himself in order to find out more and was nearly overwhelmed by the horror within. Never before and never since, has he encountered so great a Taeniid manifestation and he was lucky to escape with his life.

After the war, Jensen returned to England and tried to make contact with his wife and family through their dreams. Unfortunately, he never could convince her that he was anything more than a dream and his repeated attempts to do so only seemed to heighten her grief. He was saddened by this and eventually stopped making his presence known, although he continued to visit her dreams to make sure she was well.

Plot Hooks

Jensen has dedicated his existence to combating tyranny, whether in the dream world or real. He often visits the dreams of war veterans in order to help them overcome problems facing them in the real world, deal with severe psychoses, or to rid them of Taeniid manifestations. He occasionally enters the dreams of his descendants to do the same.

Jensen may be encountered anywhere in the Empyrean, but most often where there is some sort of ongoing, large scale conflict, be it in the dream world or the real. Only once in the past, has Jensen actually sought dream world help from anyone else, recruiting the *Sword of Gaia* to help him rid a war torn Dream Island of a tyrannical Broodking. However, he may subtly help characters who are obviously in league with

the Dreamer. For instance, he may provide timely artillery or air support in a conventional war-based dream, he may provide hints to the whereabouts of cell leaders or planted bombs in a dream-based war on terrorism, or he may otherwise help the characters when things seem darkest. In this case, the director should give the characters a glimpse of a being of great power and then let them wonder what he was and why he chose to help.

If Jensen does make direct contact with the characters, it is usually to ask them to investigate a real world problem that is affecting a particular Dreamer. Afterward, he may become a valuable ally but like all those who *cross over*, Jensen has lost touch with the demands of the physical world. Time means little to a creature of spirit—in the land of dreams, a day in the real world may seem like no more than an hour, a month, a year, or even more, making prolonged contact with the living nearly impossible. Characters who encounter him may become confused when he agrees to meet them in a week and then shows up a month or two later.

Another interesting way Jensen may be encountered is by drawing the characters into a shared dream in a setting that closely mirrors the world around them. In this case, the characters should be unaware that they are dreaming. Have Jensen pose as a scout or resistance fighter with crucial information about a dangerous real world mission. Then conduct the dream mission as a standard adventure, perhaps throwing in a few subtle clues over the course of play (a modern day airplane, the appearance of a fictional character, a purple tank, etc.) to suggest that things might not be all they seem. As an added bonus, the director can be as brutal as he wants since characters *killed* over the course of the dream eventually wake up.

Success in the dream adventure should result in success in the real world, and the director can automatically *fast forward* to the end of the mission. However, failure in the dream means that the characters still have to go on the mission (if they wish) and may be in for some nasty surprises if the director decides to alter some of the upcoming encounters.

Lieutenant David Jensen



+3
fitness

+2
awareness

+4
creativity

+2
reasoning

40
mana

luck
discipline



gimmicks

dreamwalking, multilingual (English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin, Russian, Spanish)

aptitudes & academia

firearms (expert), warfare (expert), boating (proficient), athletics (proficient), subterfuge (proficient), driving (proficient), financial (apprentice), investigation (proficient), law (apprentice), leadership (expert), brawling (expert), survival (proficient)



Dreamwalker

Diceless Roleplaying in the Land of Dreams

Dreamer

Dreamworld (Key Locations & Events)

☐ Realistic

☐ Surreal

Denouement

☐ Passive

☐ Active

Unreal

☐ Passive

☐ Active

Taenia Theme

Number and Manifestation of Taenia

Larvae

Drones

Queen

Underworlds (settings, # drones, & mana pockets)

Dreamworld Record Sheet

Dreamer

Dreamworld (Key Locations & Events)

☐ Realistic

☐ Surreal

Denouement

☐ Passive

☐ Active

Unreal

☐ Passive

☐ Active

Taenia Theme

Number and Manifestation of Taenia

Larvae

Drones

Queen

Underworlds (settings, # drones, & mana pockets)

Vehicle Data



Vehicle

Description

Integrity ☐☐☐☐☐☐

Weapons _____

Armor _____

Notes

Mechanical Stress

- ☐ engaged
- ☐ overworked -1
- ☐ overheated -2
- ☐ disabled x

Structural Damage

- ☐ dented
- ☐ breached -1
- ☐ compromised -2
- ☐ wrecked x

speed	handling	crew	passengers
------------------	---------------------	-----------------	-----------------------

Vehicle Data



Vehicle

Description

Integrity ☐☐☐☐☐☐

Weapons _____

Armor _____

Notes

Mechanical Stress

- ☐ engaged
- ☐ overworked -1
- ☐ overheated -2
- ☐ disabled x

Structural Damage

- ☐ dented
- ☐ breached -1
- ☐ compromised -2
- ☐ wrecked x

speed	handling	crew	passengers
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Patient Information

Name

Age, Gender, & Ethnicity

Date & Place of Birth

Occupation

Family Members

Name & Relationship

Occupation & Age

Name & Relationship

Occupation & Age

Name & Relationship

Occupation & Age

Place of Residence

Street Number & Name

City, State, & Zip Code

Country

Childhood Information

☐ Lower Class

☐ Middle Class

☐ Upper Class

Street Number & Name

City, State, & Zip Code

Country

Personal Information

Favorite Movies & Television Programs

Favorite Books & Magazines

Favorite Color

Employer Information

Name

Street Number & Name

City, State, & Zip Code

Country

Education

Medications & Prescriptions

Physician's Notes