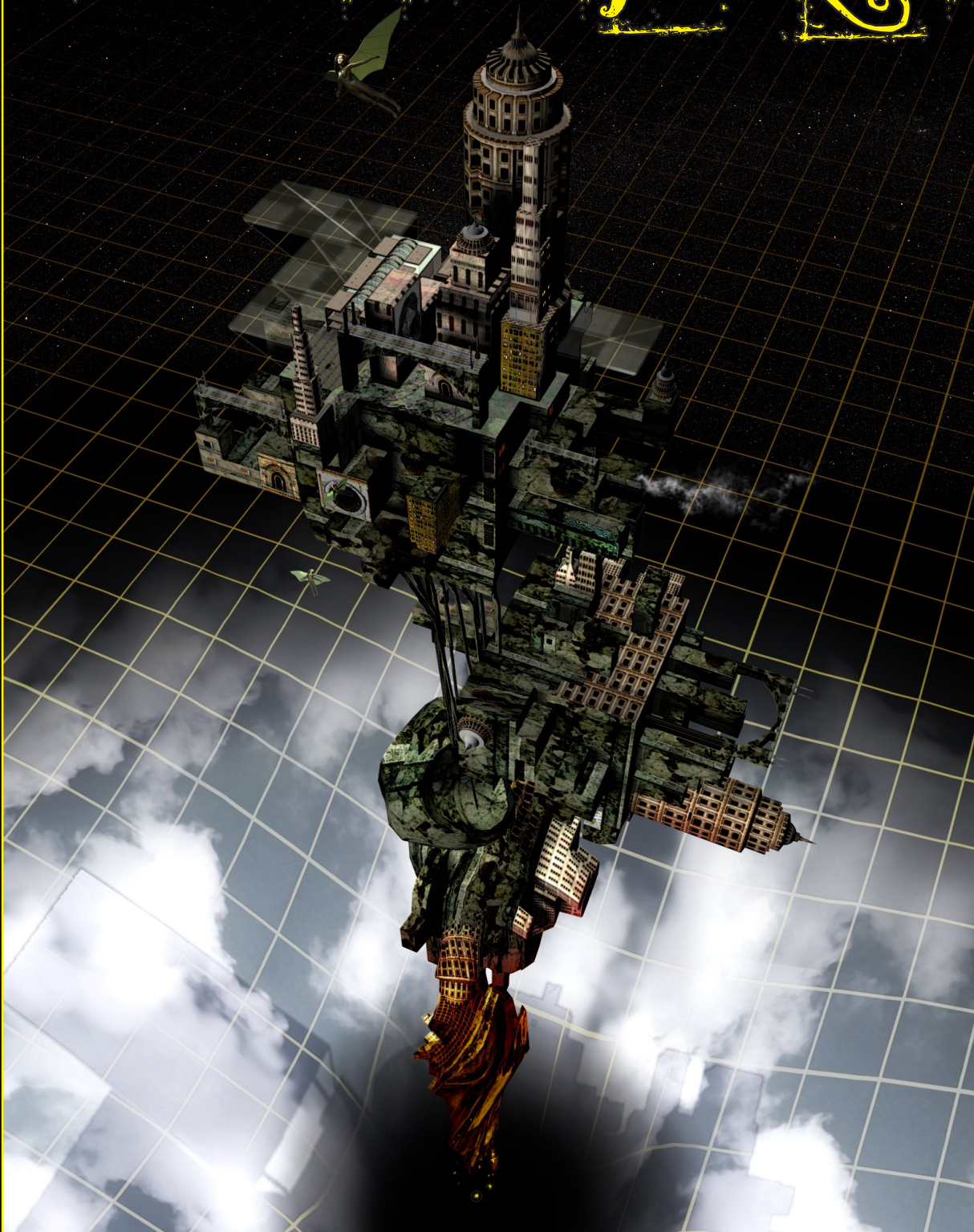
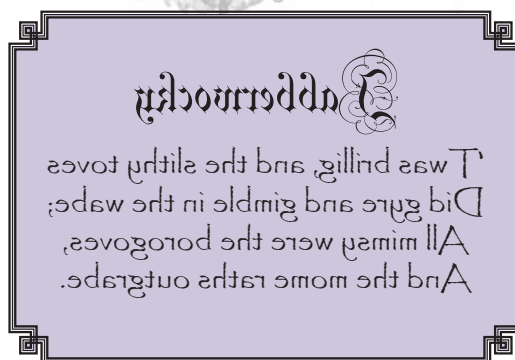


The Book of Knots



A Sourcebook for Wonderpland for the JAGS Roleplaying System
by Marco Chacon



The Book of Knots

A SOURCEBOOK FOR *Wonderland*
FOR THE JAGS ROLEPLAYING SYSTEM
BY MARCO CHACON

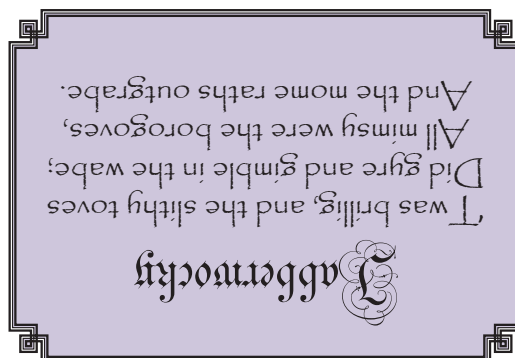
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The Book of Knots

Lord Kelvin (from whom we get the term *absolute zero*) hypothesized in 1876 that the “atoms” that made up reality were best understood as *knots*—as configurations of tied *strings*. This led to the science known as *knot theory*, which had very little practical application when the theory of knots as atoms was eventually disproved.

That is, until *string* theory came along and *quantum mechanics* appeared ... and then it seemed that Kelvin, or, at any rate, *someone*, might have been onto something after all.

Wonderland on an elemental level is composed of knots, of puzzles, of clever wordplay. Its universal forces aren't gravity or electromagnetism but the rules of *drama*. They are the rules of literature and the foundational forces of *criticism* and *canon*. Wonderland at its deepest level is a story wherein the authors are also the characters (and, you know, that's a paradox we see somewhere *else* in life ... in certain kinds of *games*).

Wonderland is all about *knots*. It's all about the twisty little tricks and closed loops of symbolism and foreshadowing. The forces of simile are what binds *like* and *like* together, not gravity—unless you mean “*the gravity of the situation*.”

This final section is the *book of knots*. It's untying (decomposing in the language of Knot Theory) the knots to show what's twisted up inside.

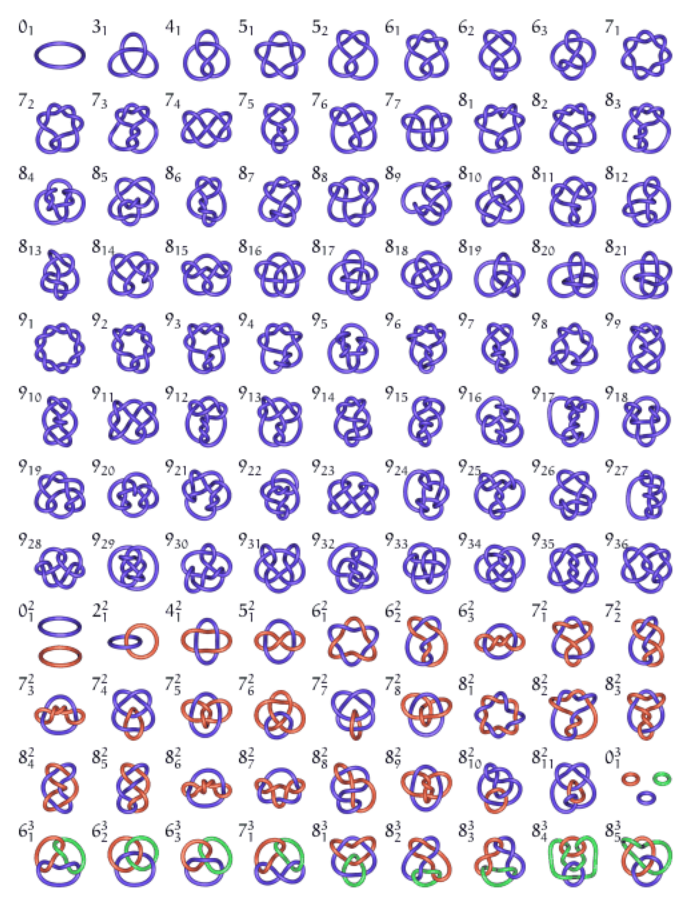
Chapter 1: The Caretakers

Who are these inhabitants? Who are the lords and ladies of Wonderland? Who are the gross inhuman things, the elementally angry things, the demanding, bizarre things that exist on Chessboards Five and Six? They are the Caretakers and they were made in the same act of creation that created the chessboards themselves. They are powerful beings: part discrete intellect, part “office,” part “idea.” They do not perceive the logic and proportion the way we do. For the most part, by human standards, they are insane.

And they have charted the future of humanity ... and its solution.

Chapter 2: The Symposium

What effects have the Caretakers had on Chessboard Zero? Well, Wonderland Infection isn't limited to the random flopping about of the Underground—in fact, although the rate of decay is accelerating, there has been contact with Wonderland (on some level) for time out of mind.



The periodic table of knots

The Magicians understood there was something deeper (and something darker) beyond the ken of mundane reality. The Government, for all its fail-safes and firewalls was shot through with Infection almost from first direct contact.

And, of course, Wonderland and its inhabitants are aware of *us*. They can look through those mirrors from the reverse-side any time they like. Their spies are always hiding just out of view where *we* can't see them, peeking around when we're looking away and making plans.

Chapter 3: Project Puritan

Project Puritan was created when Project Pilgrim was shut down: someone in the government—someone with influence and vision—feared that the Infection had survived. They were right. Now Puritan exists as an arm of the Secret Service. On the books it exists to handle so-called “emergent threats of a hypothetical nature to the national psyche and infrastructure.” Closer to the bone, it exists to combat the forces of Wonderland.

Chapter 4: The Community of Magicians

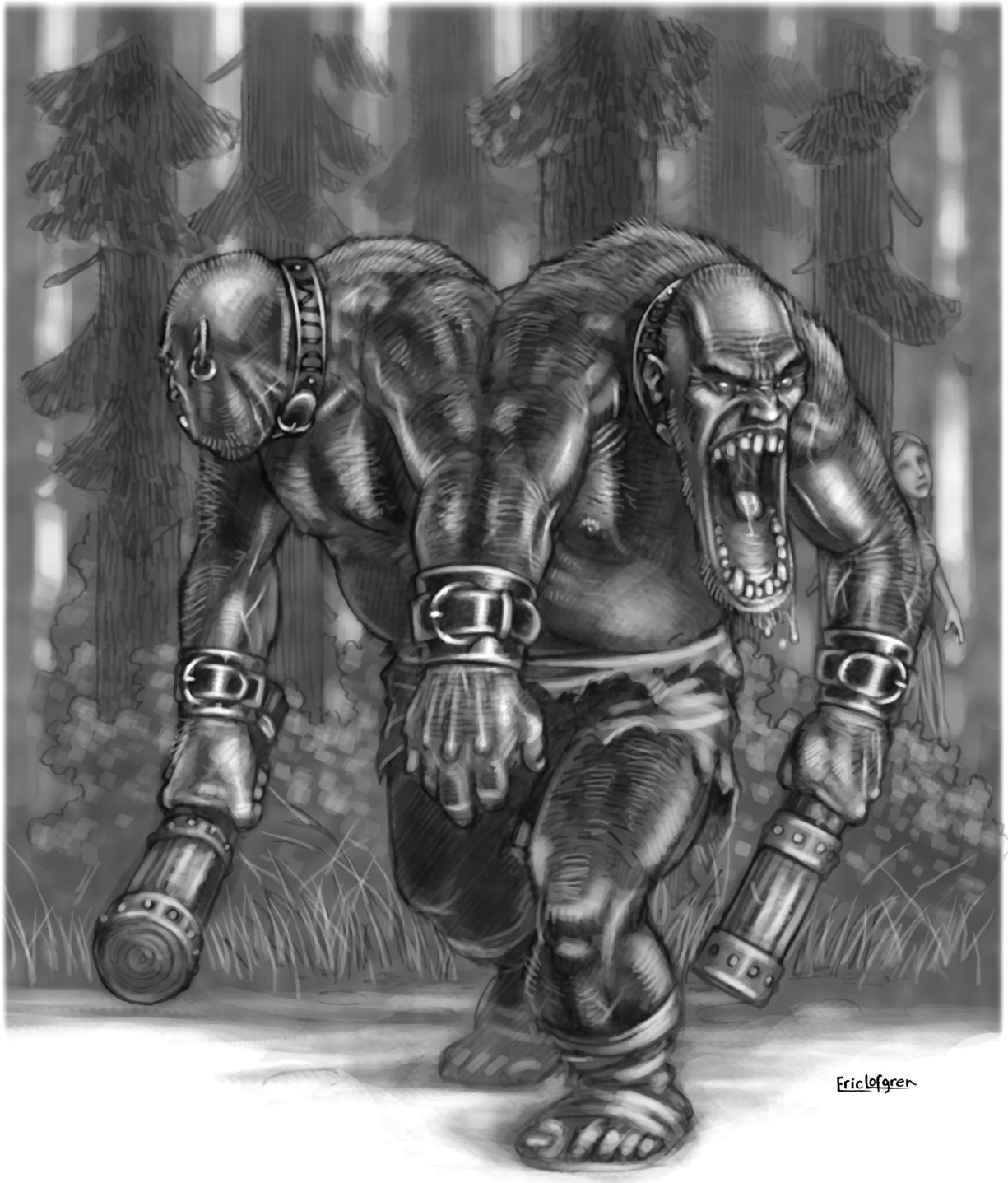
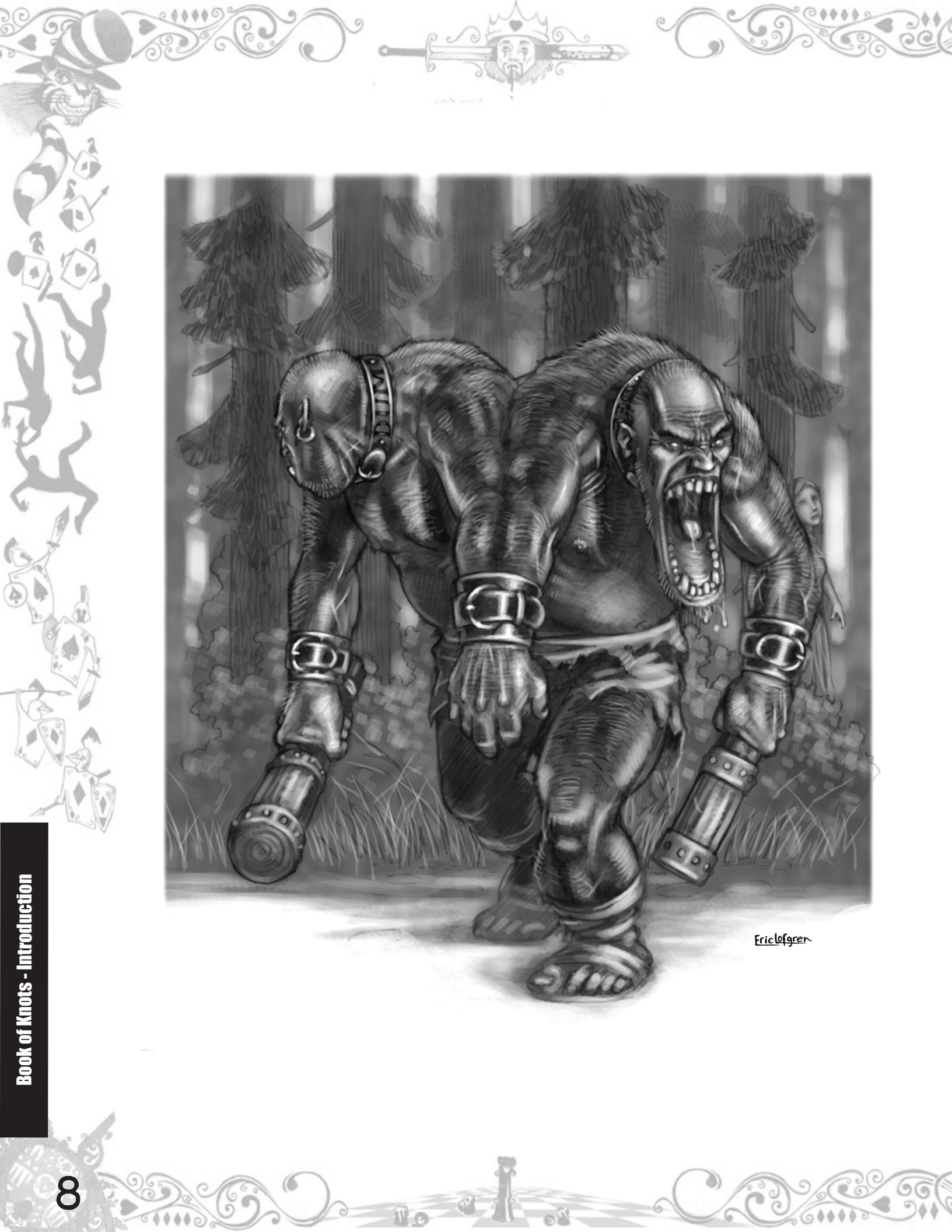
There has always been *some* traffic into Wonderland. The human mind is capable of reaching through the barrier between Chessboards and pulling back perceptions, insights, and madness. In the past, this was done with arcane knowledge and occult practices and so today, although in a much evolved form, The Community exists. As the walls of reality have become thinner and thinner so to have the risks of such studies become greater and greater.

Chapter 5: The Department of Works

Chessboard Seven is all but inaccessible to the world at large. The Caretakers cannot access it. The Linear Maze can take you there—if you can navigate it—but it tends to Moebius Loop back on itself and become more barred doors than open windows when you try to go that deep.

But there, in the depths of reality is the machinery that creates the world. If things are falling apart, that might be where someone—maybe the right someone—can put it back together.





What Wonderland Wants

Go Ask Alice, I think she'll know.

--Jefferson Airplane, White Rabbit

Once upon a time there was everything and there was nothing. Everything looked like a big glowing plastic marble that was big (well, compared to *nothing*, which looked like a little tiny black plastic marble, but was really a four-dimensional hole you could fall into by looking at ... or even thinking about too hard).

And in between there was, well, there wasn't anything—but we can't say there was nothing, can we? There were else-things that we don't have words for.

Then there was a bright flash of light like someone turned the bathroom light on while you were asleep and woke you up: that kind of bright. And there was a noise (well, if you could imagine a noise—there wasn't air or sound waves yet) as loud as when you dropped your tray in the lunchroom and everyone laughed at you (if that never happened to you, then just know that there's a special circle in hell for popular kids).



And then BANG. There were four dimensions (yes, time was the fourth. You can put down that Stephen Hawking book and close that PDF on super-string theory and those 34 other theoretical dimensions: this is a bedtime story, kid). And they were “The Universe.”

Everything and Nothing had joined in one big cataclysmic cosmic orgasm of creation and destruction.

Anyone over 20 may have the worldly wisdom to know that doing things like this often has unintended consequences. Sometimes bad unintended consequences.

The name of that consequence was *Wonderland*: Outside of reality was *Kaos*, which is a Greek word that I think is most poetically described as “angry want of being.” “Want of being” because it’s not *in* the universe and “angry” because, well, it’s never pleasant to be the odd one out.



But there were also flies in that soup—and the dross that was left over after creation ... the dribblings down the side of the forging pot—that became its *own* thing. And on its *own* it wasn't very *sane*.

But it was okay with that, and the Caretakers who were self-sustaining patterns that we might call (naively) organisms were okay with that too. Reality looked like a big slightly purple tetrahedron that they could look into—but not *get* into—and it was mostly full of ... well ... physics.

Yes, it was jam-packed full of physics. It had leptons and bosons and tachyons (that really only exist if you aren't looking for them, which is why physicists trying to test for them will never succeed) and all kinds of other stuff. Math. Calculus. Probability theory. Yuck.

The Caretakers found all that *math* to be pretty repulsive (cue to Barbie saying “Math Class is Hard”). But they didn't care because everyone knows that Math and Logic are for *losers*.

What the Caretakers had in Wonderland (which was, itself, *not* mollified by the fact that there was a bunch of ugly physics in the single wanted child of Everything and Nothing) was *Literature*. The power of the Word. The power of Concept.

Paradox was no problem for *Literature* because it could be expressed in Words without breaking anything—try doing that with math and you relativity and ugly questions and divide-by-zero errors and wicked stuff like that.

Literature was beautiful. Literature was *poetry*, man—and I mean that literally ... I think. Wonderland, under the Caretakers, became a world governed by the laws of Literature rather than the laws of physics—and the Caretakers watched reality cool down like a big sugary pastry that was almost ready to *eat*.

Now there should be a brief aside here even though it makes the story a little more complicated. The Caretakers—living in sunny, logic-less, overly literal Wonderland—were called *Caretakers* because they had functions that dealt with each of



the three dimensions of reality (the three sides of the Tetrahedron that are 'up' if you go and look at one). The fourth side, which was 'down', was time—and there were no Caretakers for time ... well, there were—but they did something different—and that's where our aside comes in.

The Caretakers, in the formative stages of universal four-space had jobs holding the walls up ... which they did (even while Wonderland, where they lived, was seething to get in). They were ultimately arrogant and highly self-assured and having an *important* job to do suited them well, they thought. They were important self-sustaining-information-patterns, after all.

The Fourth House, so to speak, *automated* their duties (which were considerably more mathematically complicated than the first three) and created something known as The Department of Works (we're almost done here, I promise, then you can go to sleep).

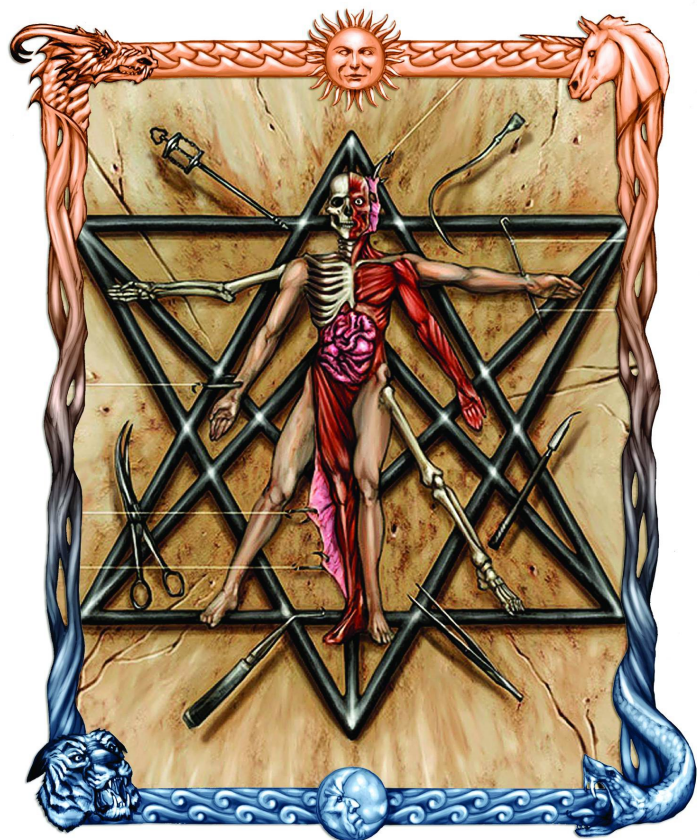
Where the caretakers could not comprehend the concepts of infinity and zero (they had words for them, but to fully understand them requires ... well ... math.), the fourth house had to handle all the Quantum Dynamics and Relativity Mechanics and all that stuff which is (as you know, if you got past high school physics), like, math-central.

When the Fourth House was done with the Department of Works (which is, taken together, a thing of *great* beauty), the patterns in the Fourth House stopped self-sustaining and sublimated into the infinite.

The Caretakers, however, had no such plans. None at all. They began their great lives by making many lesser lives with which to be vastly superior too. It was good to be the Caretakers, looking every now and then at the universe getting cooler—and clumpier—and darker—and more ... volumetric.

And then, as you may know, something went *dreadfully, horribly wrong*. It was like having someone piss on your Picasso. It was like finding a worm in your apple with two dung-covered worm-hands curled into tight-fisted worm-middle-fingers poking up at you from the bite you just took, knowing that the rump half of the worm is in your mouth and the worm has, well, a certain kind of worm-grin on its worm-face that I won't go into here.

It was like that—but a bajillion times worse.



The Department of Works and Normalization

The Department of Works creates the physical bedrock of the Chessboard Zero universe. Its machines are essentially *part of creation*. It resides on Chessboard Seven, thundering out creation itself and it winds through all levels of reality. Its pipes and conduits run through physical space as much as through human imagination. It is the Mirror Works. It is the back door through reality.

It's also the ultimate weapon. Sort of. It prevents paradox on Chessboard Zero and it tries to prevent the impossible from happening—but it doesn't always work ... it doesn't always work quite right.

If it were perfect there would be no such thing as Infection (There is some evidence that humans could breach the wall themselves and maybe get Infected but there would be no *cracks* that Wonderland could sneak in through). If it were perfect then no "impossible things" could ever happen in reality. If it were perfect we could all sleep soundly in our beds at night.

But it isn't perfect. In fact, it's damaged and there *are* cracks. They're small enough that most people suffer Reflection Disassociation and Wonderland Infection is hard to spread. The Department of Works is strong enough that a really big impossibility, like a Caretaker appearing on Chessboard Zero, would result in Normalization: the sane rationalization of the universe.

That's a euphemism for destruction of the Caretaker—if a Caretaker tried to exercise the power that it wields on the lower levels on Chessboard Zero it would be pounded out of existence by the machines that keep a universe-worth of subatomic particles all spinning correctly.

The universe—reality—that cosmic D4—coughed up *man*.

Humankind came about and humankind was *an insult*. Humans, trapped in their little reality crystal were far inferior to the Caretakers. They were miserable little disgusting things with no vision, no intellect, and no manners.

And they could conceive of Zero and Infinity. They could do 4th House Math. They were *obscene*. They were *offensive*. They were ... shielded behind an impregnable reality firewall that was, as I said, a faintly translucent shade of purple. Only now, they thought, it seemed to be a subtly *mocking* shade of purple. More of a *lavender*, really.

And so they were almost terminally appalled. But Wonderland—the very dimensional space they inhabited—had been doing its own thinking and it knew things.

It knew that children before a certain age could safely breach the four-wall and exit out into Wonderland (mostly only in their imaginations but sometimes in their physical worlds too).

It knew that some adults—a very few adults—could do so safely as well.

And it knew that where there were cracks where it could reach in and touch people. It could *infect* them—like a disease—and then their *eyes* would be cracks in reality *too*.

And so the Caretakers stand. They're looking down, into the great tetrahedron of the universe, disgusted by man. The stand motionless as they decide what is to be done with man. Should he be Civilized? Destroyed? Allowed to exist in some diminished capacity? What? And while they are paralyzed by indecision, the universe boils, rolls, and seethes, and Wonderland has found all the cracks under all the doors. Now, as the 4th Estate machines start to run down, Wonderland is coming in.

Now go to bed.

The Deconstructionists: The Coming Civil War in Wonderland

Very little is concretely known about the life cycle of the Caretakers. They are not organisms in any meaningful sense of the word and part of their existence is directly related to their *office*. These *offices* are best described as something that is a cross between a title, an arena of responsibility, a point of view, and a hobby.

Imagine an English teacher, high up his departmental ladder, scribbling madly at his various scattered theses on the body of work that comprises his profession's canon. He's muttering "publish or perish.

Publish or perish. PUBLISH or PERISH” over and over in a dark room lit with flickering, guttering candles. He’s mad.

That’s a Caretaker.

Their *existence* is tied into a recursive feedback loop that generates the literary meanings and perspectives lead them to believe *must be* or which they *speculate* should be. Whether that last sentence is meaningless or not, one thing is clear: they argue a lot.

But there’s something else—most Caretakers are in some fundamental way created from a perspective and a mass of arguments and an intellect. They believe things are true and so they are. They *instruct*. They *analyze*. They *philosophize* and they *contemplate*. All this is both the natural state of being and the *responsibility* of the Caretakers. They are beings of literal literature.

But not all of them “hold office” and certainly most do not hold “high office.” In the bizarrely complicated network of hierarchy that is Wonderland society, there are those who could be considered *assistants* ... *apprentices* ... or *students*. They are in some senses “younger” (although by any real measure they are “the same age,” so far as anyone knows) and they are in some senses “less powerful” (although the measure of power for a Caretaker is an odd thing). One thing they are is a lot less sure that the massive, towering structure that is the *Criticism and Canon*, that comprises the bedrock *existence* of Wonderland—is in any way *right*.

The Caretakers who meet and scheme and formulate plans to tear it all down have a name. The rebel faction in Wonderland that threatens a low, rumbling, civil war has a banner: Deconstructionists.

The idea that “nothing intrinsically *means* anything”—that all viewpoints—author, interpreter, and beer-addled NASCAR-watching reality-TV-junkie commentary—is *equally valid* is the equivalent of Wonderland’s Global Thermonuclear War.

The brewing internal conflict between the shadowy Deconstructionists (Decons) and the Caretakers is one that, if it sparks, could destroy the very fabric of creation.

The Enemy of My Enemy is a Useful Tool

Not all the Caretakers hate humanity (some of the most dangerous are the ones who love humankind!) but it is generally considered amongst even the most beneficent that *something really should be done for the poor things*.

The Deconstructionists, however, see things a little differently: they understand that the Department of Works is, in some fundamental way, connected to the shared perspective of man.



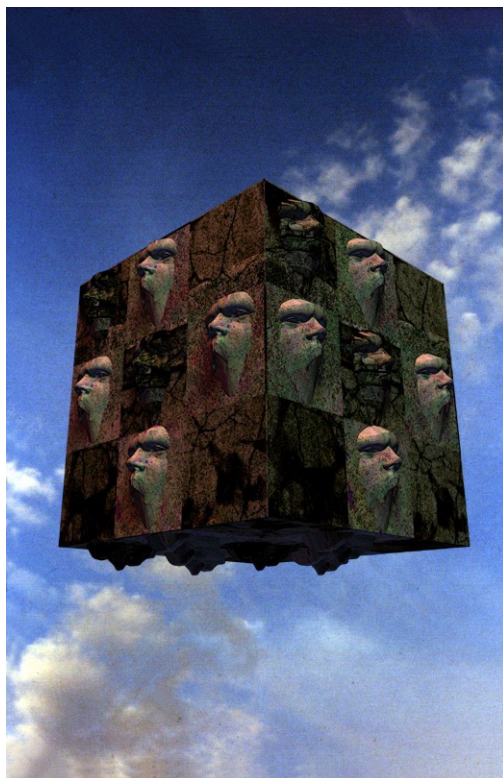
The Civilized Man

It used to be human. Now it is a box. Each side is an irrational number in length (about a foot). It's done with red velvet and dark wood in geometric patterns along the side. Sent in the center of each face is a mouth with red lips. Each of them talks in a low whisper.

Some plead. Some sing. Some give winding speeches wherein the topics and the points shift and flow and ebb. The one on the bottom mutters curses into the floor. Sometimes it creaks. Sometimes, at night, when no one is close, all of them sob.

"This is MAN! Civilized.
Risen! Made into his proper
ACCEPTABLE form and place.
This is the VISION for what we can AID Mankind to BECOME!

We must NOT fall to simplistic solutions of *artistic* genocide or *aesthetic* obliteration—no—we must have COMPASSION for humankind. We must resolve ourselves as worthy guardians!"
—*The Somatoform Prince*. Speech for the Continuation of Man before the Symposium.



What the Caretakers see as their *responsibility* to the world (the eradication or 'civilization' of man—the *White Rabbit's Burden*) the Deconstructionists see as perhaps an almost subconscious form of *self-defense*. The Deconstructionists think that in some way, ultimately, mankind is potentially useful in *recalibrating* the Department of Works, as a weapon—a method of bringing a philosophical, literary, and therefore cataclysmically physical *relativism* to Wonderland.

And as they say, *Every Dog Has Its Day*.

So the Decons are interested in studying man. Many are interested in various non-destructive experiments or uses. Some are trying to determine what effects a sort of "alliance" between

the Deconstructionists and groups of humankind would have on the world (in practice, really, this almost never translates to what a human would think of an alliance—it's more like a bizarre *religion* or incredible *delusion*).

They have plans for mankind. So do the Caretakers.

The Symposium On Man (The White Rabbits Burden)

The Caretakers met after a prolonged contact with human kind in the 1960s and they decided that, finally, *something had to be done*. So they bargained and argued and warred and inveigled and did all the things they were wont to do and they decided that Man, as a general concept, needed to end.

"Let me *conjecture* that, as many of you know, it is my *theory* that every wish for continued existence is a *lie*. We tell ourselves this lie so that we may go on creating *denial* about our own lack of real intent to continue existing!

In my *proposed simulation*, we remove these comforting blankets from *mankind* and, as I have shown in my work, the outcome is *predictable*: self-destruction.

If we can bring a chemically assisted and media-amplified version of my *pogrom ... err ... program* to these benighted souls we can *relieve* them of their irrational need to live and they'll simply take care of their own wretched little lives *themselves*!"

— *The Hypotherapist*, Speech at the Symposium on Man

Now some of them, a good deal really, felt that Man was an inferior beast to be taken under their wings and educated and uplifted and civilized—or at least just put in their place with a few, erm, minor modifications to make man more pleasing. More aesthetic. More ... palatable.

The Caretakers didn't *like* rising above Chessboard Five any more than you would like plunging your hands into a pool of garbage and excrement filled with thrashing worms and maggots. Going up to humankind was disgusting.

"The human being is a computer whose function is marred by the flaw of emotionalism. Without this, each mind is a powerful, directed calculation engine that bears the hallmarks of design—design by a flawed craftsman, to be certain—but even primitive tools can be used. Many small cogs create powerful engines.

In fact, I am *certain* that each person has some potential virtue as a piece of a grander design: it is a design I plan to examine and study. First the emotional fracture must be understood and fixed. Then, when humans behave with perfect predictability, their numbers can be reduced to a minimum-redundancy-set and we can give them their place in the machine they are born to serve in. Whatever that is."

--*The Mad Scientist*. Speech to The Compassionate Alternatives committee.

It was also, well, difficult: the active and *powerful* methods of the Department of Works prevented the Caretakers from just manifesting on Chessboard Zero and raising their arms and "turning off the lights on humanity." If they'd tried that, they'd have been annihilated. That was pretty disturbing right there, all by itself.

But they were able to go up to Chessboard One or, better yet, they could *send things* up to the higher Chessboards to take people down (if they could "get their claws on them") and they could influence things.

Their solution was to remove humanity's *will to live*.

And thus was born the project Big Pharma (Pharmaceutical). It is a covert, subtle, and subtly insane system that is designed to, over time, kill off man.

"Off with their heads!"

--The Queen of Hearts. Opening speaker; entire speech.

It wasn't a great solution. Nobody (except the Hypotherapist) thought it was a good solution—but it was the one they could all *agree to* when they were all together in the massive auditorium which floated in a spherical void and whose floor was a Moebius strip surrounding a circular stage whose ratio of circumference to diameter was *exactly* 3 (the auditorium is still there, you can visit it. People tend to go mad if they look at the center stage long enough, so don't do that).

Instead, after the agreement, there was a vast fragmentation of subcommittees, study groups, and action organizations, all trying to see if they could come up with a solution on their own—especially one that would work faster and more completely than Big Pharma's.

You're all going to die
down here.

- The Red Queen,
Resident Evil

The role of Caretakers and Deconstructionists in

JAGS Wonderland

Caretakers are both major background antagonists and bit-parts in the game world. They are the prime movers that (from a Chessboard Zero perspective), exist *far* behind the scenes but they are also the characters Alice meets (almost immediately) on her first two trips to Wonderland.

Our conception of the civil war between the Caretakers and the Deconstructionists is that, while one might run into *evidence* of it and *effects* from it all over the place (including running into the principle parties) the overarching *structure* of the situation isn't clear—even to very experienced people.

There are several groups that know “things” or “entities” exist in deeper Wonderland. Many people know that rather than the fanciful characters most adults perceive the characters in *Alice* as, the real beings are actually more like Clive Barker's *Cenobites*.

However, few people understand the true structure or the real forces at work behind the machinations of Wonderland. That's why we've put this section last: it's quite possible to know everything and have a great game—but it also might be a lot of fun to explore the concepts we've laid out here and use them as revelations.

The Symposium was a tremendous spectacle and was, in fact, a focal point of the highest of high drama that Wonderland had, perhaps, ever seen. Its shockwaves were felt across all of reality, however faintly.

While the important attendees were the Caretakers, their understudies were there as well—and they were taking notes. Many of them wished to do whatever was necessary to assume higher offices and grander titles—to prove themselves and modify themselves and critique themselves (which, in Wonderland, is a kind of physical change that comes from Literary Analysis) into being fully accredited, properly certified Caretakers.

And some of those watching wanted to bring it all down.

The caretakers created Big Pharma, The Army of No, the Devouring Accents, and several other less auspicious projects.

The Deconstructionists waited.

The Nature of Caretakers

Caretakers are elemental forces that are *contextually* defined as Entities within Wonderland (where, of course, *context* is everything). Rather than laws of physics, they are governed by the rules of Literature. Dramas “orbit” around the Caretakers as (analogously) planets orbit the sun.

They're the beings Alice met *down the rabbit hole*. They are the arch-demons of the lower-realities. They are the dark gods and nightmares at the back of the mirror-corridor set up when you open your medicine cabinet so that it faces the looking glass over your sink. That's where they live.

So forget about asking *what they are*—instead, let's answer some basic questions.

Can You Kill Them?

You probably can't—but if you really do a number on them you can make them go away.

The physical manifestation of a Caretaker is very powerful. Within its *office* (by which a reader would infer a physical room but by which we confusingly mean an appointed title) it is essentially indestructible.

If you go to the Queen of Heart's banquet and gift her with a nuclear weapon that you are somehow immune to, chances are you will find yourself elsewhere when it goes off and she'll still be conducting business.

But she'll be *out of your story* for a while—maybe forever. It'll be kind

of like she's forgotten you exist, like she doesn't ever want to hear your name or have anything to do with you, like she's scared of you. It isn't any of those things—but if you 'slay' a Caretaker's physical manifestation you do, indeed, kind of win.

This is different than the question “can they die” (to which the answer is “yes”).

As to how they 'die,' that's another matter: usually a matter of choice or by being 'vituperated' by other *noted* critics (of which humans number very, very few); essentially receiving a *bad enough* literary review.

What Are The Limits of Their Power?

You ask the hard questions, huh? In person, they are strong, tough, and can do immense damage just by looking at you (although they almost always delegate). They can re-shape reality (and usually do so subtly): walk with one for an hour and you could wind up on the far side of the moon.

They can vanish in an instant but almost always make a dramatic entrance. They usually conform to some element of *style* when they act: they are, in a human sense, insane.

In a larger sense, they create the world of their *office*—a physical manifestation of their conceptual title and responsibilities. This “realm” or “bubble” in Wonderland (on Chessboards Five and Six) is an area that conforms to their ideas of what reality, in some sense, is like—a statement of their critique and lit-analysis of it. Needless to say, these places are pretty strange.

Beyond that (and within it as well) they *create life* after a fashion. Caretakers intentionally create unique, named servants who *are* “beings” in the common sense. They spawn numerous servants to take care of the physical necessities of their households (in a way, the servant polishing the bronze banister is sort of like a personification of gravity which keeps people moored to the earth). They also create

The Caretakers and Their Minions in Combat

Minions of the Caretakers can be destroyed and will be recreated by the elemental forces that are the Caretakers themselves (recreating them may not be so much an “act of will” as a natural occurrence). The stats they have are for their typical *incarnations*. If they are killed it'll set back a plan or stop some initiative (and, indeed, the next incarnation might be different in temperament!) but it won't get rid of the character.

Caretakers, likewise, *can* be destroyed—but it usually takes an act of another collitiation of Caretakers. The process is described as “Editing Them Out of Existence.” More often a Caretaker will simply be “demoted” or “banished” or “punished in some semi-permanent fashion.”

If you kill a Caretaker (their “avatar”) through anything resembling a physical method, what usually happens is this: the reality around you collapses quickly (maybe instantly) and you (and everyone else nearby) are ejected back up to Chessboard Zero (or maybe One or Two). This can happen in a random fashion (you could wind up hundreds of miles away—although usually on solid ground) and is moderately traumatic (you may have amnesia, lost time, be disoriented, etc.)

In combat with a Caretaker they may either “fight you physically” (which usually happens if the attack is not a breach of social etiquette or extremely disrespectful) or decide to will you out of existence. The physical option is good news since their *standard* forms aren't unstoppable. However, even in this case, they may rearrange themselves in order to face you on a more even basis (or even an overwhelming physical basis).

On the other hand if you really upset them, they'll *erase* you (or warp you or imprison you). This is *bad news*. Unless you have attained Expert or Master level Mastery you don't have much of a chance against it (running is a good idea—but if they really want you that won't work).

Caretaker Stats

The stats Caretakers are given are for when they are the size and scale of the characters they are interacting with. This is their “standard form.” If attacked they will become Large, as per Twisted and their stats will change accordingly (they will have 4x the listed standard Damage Points). This “Dominant Form” is adopted if they are in combat but not “truly enraged.”

However, if they are *really offended* (a gross breach of etiquette is worse than an out-and-out attack) then they will turn their *attention* to you (their full attention, that is) and they will *Edit* you. This means being either destroyed or re-envisioned as they wish to see you. There aren't many defenses against being Edited into some horrible form or fate. The really powerful Caretakers can do this to other Caretakers, so if you're on the true receiving end of a death sentence (and it's sort of a sentence in the literal sense). Either some other Caretaker needs to intercede on your behalf or you are just screwed.

If you have Mastery of Expert or Master then you *stand* a chance.

Mastery	Notes
Expert	You get a WIL roll against the Caretaker's WIL. If you beat theirs by 5, nothing happens and you're immune to Editing by that Caretaker thereafter. If you win by 0 to 4, you "survive" but may have both permanent Damage (the GM may assign one or two Damages) and you may be physically <i>warped</i> in some way (a -4 point crippled). If you lose you are affected fully.
Master	You get a straight WIL vs. WIL roll. If you win, you're immune. If you lose by -1 to -3 you suffer the "damage effect" as above. If you miss by 4 or more you are fully affected.

Editing a sentient being is an 8 REA Long Action. Getting into the Linear Maze or otherwise leaving the Chessboard will help you escape—physically moving, won't. Destroying the physical form of the Caretaker *may* save you. It isn't guaranteed.

Note: Editing may be something dramatic such as turning someone 1" tall and stepping on them. This is pretty unfair but it may give a clever character a chance.

Caretaker's Block

Caretakers, for 2 REA, can "dismiss" an attack that's coming in. This works *automatically* on a 13- roll (it isn't rolled against the to-hit score). This may be accomplished by a wave of the hand which makes the incoming projectile vanish or deflects a physical blow off an imaginary shield.

Caretaker's Teleport

All Caretakers can teleport as an 8 REA Long action. This is infallible and can get them out of any danger (they can simply disincorporate).

Change Terrain

Within their domains, the Caretakers can (apparently) reorder

dramas. These *dramas* are enacted by beings that exist outside of the Caretaker's offices and, while they follow certain literary rules and have characters and real-seeming living beings, they are also very much aspects of the fundamental forces of existence that the Caretakers represent.

What if a Caretaker is Mad At You?

Let's back up a minute there, Sparky: a better question is *what if a caretaker is aware of you?* Let's get to first things first. We call being in the eye of a caretaker Notice (and it's touched on in earlier chapters).

Notice is something you risk when you go deep. On Chessboards Three and Four, Notice means that Wild Things might follow you home. On Chessboards One and Two, Notice means some of the top-level things like Whirls, have gotten involved with you or are following your life.

If you hit levels Five and Six, then Notice means a Caretaker is aware of you. Once you are *Noticed* by a caretaker you may be drawn into their *drama* field. This means you start getting *roles* and *responsibilities* assigned to you on those levels in those lower realities and neglecting them or not understanding them can have very real consequences!

But what if they're just mad at me?

You don't give up, do you? I like that in a game-book paper-person. Well, the good news is that if you are on Chessboard Zero there isn't much an angered Caretaker can do. Very, very few of them are directed and focused enough to even go after someone on the higher levels of reality—and to expend effort going after a *human*? How gauche.

The bad news is that you are probably Unsane and that means you're going down there to their areas sooner or later. Even if you *don't* natively go down to Chessboards Five or Six during an Episode, if you're Noticed then even a moderate descent may be "hijacked" and you could wind up in one

of their dark orbits—a dangerous Caretaker Drama (or, more rarely, even face-to-face with one).

What Are They Like If I Meet Them?

Insane. Clearly this varies a lot from Caretaker to Caretaker but most of them are far from what would be considered *normal*. In addition to possessing unusual ideas about logic and proportion, they are also rarely pragmatic since, in their reality, *style is also substance*. This is good in that rarely will they just melt you by looking at you. It's bad in that, if they decide to be creative, they can do far, far worse.

But when most Caretakers are met—and not already angry—they appear as talking things or people of a somewhat grumpy, didactic disposition. Although they are grossly offended by humanity in general, in specific they rarely seem to be able to distinguish between an actual human and one of the many artificial creations (actors and minions) that populate their world: that is, even if they know you are a human, once you are down there with them, many will not just immediately vent their low opinion of humanity on you in a fiery mushroom cloud.

Of course you don't want to *insult one*—and they are usually *very quick* to take offense (as Alice found out).

Are They Gods?

No—although they are “god-like.” They don't exercise power over things like the weather, childbirth, health, or dying like mythological deities do. Their relation to whatever the afterlife is isn't clear, although they can intercede in death and they seem to have some way of communicating with either the actual personalities or constructs of the deceased.

They are sources of great amounts of information about the workings of the universe—most of it almost incomprehensible, some of it, outright lies. Sometimes, in “full regalia” their personages carry with them, a kind of spectral awe.

They can also be worshipped. Well, not worshipped—they can have *disciples*. On the lower levels, things that are spawned by them (either intentionally or by the nature of their existence) sometimes do worship them—or otherwise *follow them*. Even up to Chessboard Zero there

space and time as they wish. In theory this should give them an ultimate weapon over any attacker. However, they usually don't simply smash people flat by dropping the roof on them. If a Caretaker spends 8 REA to “Imprison” someone, it is usually done in a dramatic, often horrific, but usually not all that *effective* manner (i.e. An imprisoned character might escape eventually or be rescued). More commonly this is used to create needed chambers and doors.

Caretaker's Power Bolt

If a Caretaker is upset and engaged in combat, most of them can throw power blasts for 5 REA (-1/50 yards). These hit for 24 IMP damage (although, once again, if a Caretaker is really upset they can crank that up to astronomical amounts of damage).



Eric Lofgren

are cases where humans have become disciples of Caretakers (usually with very little understanding of what they are doing).

The process is a lot more conceptually like having a favorite author whose philosophy you study than like worshipping in, say, a pagan religion. But, on the other hand, getting into those philosophies, as a human being, leads to things like ritual murder and cannibalism, charismatic leadership of lesser minds, and a good deal of license in the spreading of the word. Maybe you'll decide it really is like a religion after all.

At any rate, what they do for their followers tends to be in many cases almost *autonomic*—persons of sufficiently and specifically warped frame of mind descend directly to the Caretaker's *office* where, being insane and following the Caretaker, they have a better chance of survival than most. The experience will tend to Twist the person in specific ways and drive them further and further from humanity until they snap completely and either die or come down to the *office* forever. At least that's what people think happens.

What are Minions, Actors, and Servants?

They are different beings that Caretakers create.

Minions are unique individuals that serve some function in the Caretaker's household (or act as messengers or confidants or what have you).

Minions, if you meet one, are, to the average human undergoing Descent, indistinguishable from a Caretaker save that the Minion rarely claims noble rank (although since not all Caretakers do either, this is by no means a universal test). They can be coolly crazy, annoyingly insistent, gruff, incoherent, easily offended, brilliant, and inscrutable. Often they do what their natures tell them to in the service of their Caretaker rather than necessarily following orders. In a few cases, that function could be something like "Go out and annoy other Caretakers I don't like."

Minions are usually fairly powerful but, unlike Caretakers, may be slain. If this happens, another Minion—of different personality—but the same statistics is usually naturally created.

Servants, while each is "an individual," of which there are several and they too serve the Caretaker in some way. Usually they are less strong of personality and often less powerful, and they are produced at a steady rate as they die, drift away from the dramatic orbit of the Caretaker, or are slain.

Actors are another matter altogether—and they need their own section.

Tell Me About Actors and Dramas

Imagine the office of a Caretaker as a castle (and if you envision it as Kafka's Castle, all the better). Imagine that around it is the lands it rules: This gives you have an easily grasped (and very, very wrong) impression of how a Caretaker manifests itself. For another analogy, imagine a super-storm whose central eye is a baleful sun and each particle caught up in the cyclone around it is both created by the sun and given an intellect by it so that it *believes* that in the exercise of its free will, it dances and swirls according to its designs while the greater perspective shows that is merely part of a larger vortex.

That's a little better. Now expand it out to eleven dimensions and pretend that virtues and vices were actually physical forces like electromagnetism and gravity. Still got that? Good.

The particles caught up in the storm are *actors*. They are not (directly) servants of the Caretakers. They are not (exactly) subjects either (although they may perceive themselves as such—or not even be aware such things as Caretakers exist). In their realms (Chessboards Five and Six) time is not a linear thing: existence over any great period is dreamlike. The present always seems sensible to you—but mad to someone with even a minor variant of perspective. Everything within this world moves with a plan—but not a conscious plan by some authorial director.

Instead it is a *script* or a *story* because the bedrock nature of reality in Wonderland is *stories ... stories and knots*. To the actors, things such as

Running Dramas

Running Dramas

For characters caught in Caretaker dramas the experience can be anything from demented horror (the character is assigned the role of setting up a party at which the guests, Shadows of the people the character knows and cares about, will be flamboyantly executed) to lighthearted adventure.

In our experience, running the Drama game involved the following:

1. A Caretaker who was at least moderately sympathetic to the characters and treated the characters as though they were subjects or employees.
2. Fantastic terrain (the worlds of Chessboards five and six) to adventure in.
3. A task to which the characters were at least nominally suited.

Examples

In one game, a Caretaker (the Red Queen, a 9' living chess piece) summoned an astronomer character (and her escorts, the other PCs) to her court. A new constellation had been sighted in the sky and the Royal Astrologers needed to know its name in order to properly read its portents.

The character was assigned to a fleet of sailing vessels (the Winkin, Blinkin, and Nod) to sail off the edge of the world and into the sea of night to reach the constellation and ask it its name).

In another drama-based adventure a mountaineering character was asked by the Mad Hatter to carry a letter (penned using tea as ink) to Time, who was imprisoned on a mountain across the Tulgy Wood.

In both of these adventures the characters weren't sure if they were going nuts or not—but they were motivated to work with the powerful (and fairly friendly) forms of these beings (who, in their turn were able to do some things for the characters such as offer protection from other Wonderland dangers).

Timing

A drama may be played out in one descent but the above dramas took place over many days and weeks of game-time. The ongoing action in the drama simply ended when the characters went back to Chessboard Zero and resumed more or less where it left off when they had their next Episode.

In our games deep Descent dramas were played out interspersed with shallow Descent Episodes.



gravity, light, electricity, and chemistry seem like natural things—like universal laws (when they think about them)—but they are not.

The Actors are part of the *dramas* that surround (or “orbit”) the Caretakers. On the dusty, Victorian streets of the Great Gray City, an orphan girl perishes in the snow: her tragedy is a story and it is dictated by the laws that created her. A carriage plies the almost empty streets, the gentleman inside looking for his lost love: that too is a story in every sense—the conflagration of events has meaning, premise, theme, symbolism ... it isn’t the random nature of intersecting particles but there is no conscious author to it—it is the nature and existence of the Caretaker.

The man’s wife who he thinks has in a bout of depression run out into the cold dark actually coils in her lover’s arms in a decrepit hotel. The two of them drink cheap alcohol and trade disease: that is a story too. Neither she, nor her husband, know that the girl is their niece and, when his carriage runs over her body, causing him to stop (too late) it is the delay that ensures that his love (now dying of the cough) will never see him again as she makes her way towards the high gates of the city wall.

But it doesn’t end there—the dramas take place on all scales and in

many, many different ways. In this Great Gray City there is a cat who knew the orphan. It's a cat that wears a tuxedo and dines on mice who beg for their lives before they are eaten. The dramas know no limits of size or plausibility—the gentleman would never be surprised to see a tuxedo wearing cat or a talking mouse.

The cat has fished a pocket-watch off of a drunk who, in turn, lifted it from an eager young secretary who was having it repaired for his new employer. The cat prizes the watch, but wants it to *tick*. It knows there is a raccoon—a disreputable fellow—but very good with his hands—who lives above Harley street and he will have him fix the watch—for a price. A price, which, perhaps, involves the gentleman.

All of this—and a thousand more stories—in a hundred more terrains—winds on and on like a clockwork storm of interacting particles of theme and genre and portent.

Do Humans Get Caught In Those Storms?

When they come down to Chessboards Five and Six, they may. That's the woods Alice wandered in during *Wonderland*. It's the chess match of *Looking Glass*. When a person is on Chessboard Five or Six, they may be more of a tourist—or they may be *caught up* in it. The latter happens when they are “mistaken” for someone who has a “role” in the drama. In some cases, people from reality have found themselves in twisted doctor's offices—as the *doctor*—forced to diagnose and treat patient after inhuman patient.

Screw up badly enough and you could get *tried* for be a fraud—run for it and you might be *hunted*. On the other hand, quick wits and a touch for seeing the literary story-structure of what's going on might get you through it.

Actors (be they white rabbits late for dates with murderous queens, high-society human-seeming members of a gentleman's club where the servants are all floating draperies with tentacle-like tassels, or tiny armies of ants in Napoleonic uniforms) are all real living beings that exist within what they think of as an actual, logical world. Despite their creation and trajectory as “literary characters” they are capable of self-direction (or, well, at least that isn't as clear as maybe it could be) and when a human arrives in their midst, they will treat them both within the constraints of their role and to their basic personalities.

The Royal Drama: Meeting The Caretaker

We've established that there are dramas and actors but it hasn't been made clear under what circumstances a human undergoing Descent might *meet* a Caretaker. This, actually, happens quite a bit: it is called the Royal Drama. *Alice's* adventures are an example of these—she meets one Caretaker after another as she wanders through the dreamlike reality of the deeper realms.

A caretaker is...

Mad

Because he sees the world, not as it is but as he wishes it would be. And for millions and millions of years, the world has bent to conform to his delusions.

The Eye of the Storm

Because she believes herself to be physical thing, while her influence roars around her, corrupting, perverting, and degrading everything within her sphere.

Munificent

Because he has everything he could ever desire and yet can still be bigger by demonstrating his largess.

A Petty Bastard

Because she knows she has limits and they make her furious and when she sees weakness and mortality in others it reminds of things that she hates in herself.

Paradoxes with Opposing Poles

Each Caretaker is obsessed with something and repelled by something else. Sometimes these are polar opposites. Sometimes these are the same things. And these things are represent deep, universal truths that would be enlightening if one could see through the pageantry, rage, and distortion.

The Queen of Hearts has sacrificed millions upon the altar of the rules, but violates their spirit with every psychotic deed.

The Duchess of Knots is ensnared in storm of

□ maddening change and tumultuous chaos, but sponsors a massive, dark bureaucracy whose rules and bylaws and dusty files consign those caught in its grip to stasis.

The Liebrarian worships the sanctity of truth, while residing over an infinite collection of blasphemy and perversity. She seeks ordinal mastery over the un-ordered and cardinal understanding of the un-numbered. She is a keeper of knowledge so wrapped in lies, it provides uncertainty.

Darker things less human rule over chasms dedicated mirth that are filled with weeping.

The Factory is, in itself the means of production – the engines of capitalism, but they vomit up resources without scarcity: the utopian dream.

Full of Hatred

In a refined, civilized way, they hate everything, and it gnaws at them.

This is sometimes dangerous *directly* and often dangerous *indirectly*. In the direct sense, anyone without a Survival Trait who meets a Caretaker is often consumed, twisted, and/or driven insane by the encounter. For those *with* Survival Traits (or without, under special circumstances) the encounter may be simply another encounter with an odd, irrational, non-human entity.

But if you're unlucky, the Caretaker *Notices* you—and then you may be given specific tasks (roles) in ongoing dramas or you may be (more 'rationally') expected to serve the Caretaker's interest on Chessboard Zero. The latter is rare: the Caretakers don't really *understand* Chessboard Zero and most of their servants are simply twisted students (Hunger Disciples) who sort of do the Caretaker's work by their natures.

What Do The Caretakers Want on Chessboard Zero?

Ultimately? The end of man (for the most part). More concretely: they don't really have a plan you can formulate well. Their communication with the humans involved in Big Pharma is so diffuse that it's hard to really know what they think is happening as a whole. The *Army of No* has some potential to cause humanity problems but it's usually limited to Chessboard Two and it usually needs help to really impact the real world.

Hunger Disciples are a direct effect of the Caretakers on Chessboard Zero but they're almost an autonomic function: a person gets close to a Caretaker and they come back *warped*. The Hunger Disciple may teach a doctrine (a warped form of "literary criticism" directed at man or the nature of the universe) but there's no indication that these cults—dangerous and destructive as they may be—are part of a Caretaker design. But if you are *Noticed* then you will find that the Caretaker may expect you to obey the orders of something far closer to the surface than itself—a minion it controls that *may* have distinct plans (for the corruption of innocence, for instance) and you may find yourself battling with *that*.

How Does All This Apply To Deconstructionists

The Deconstructionists have plans for mankind too—they plan to use man as a pawn in their coming civil war in Wonderland. On a basic level this means changing the *global perspective* of mankind so as to cause massive Infection, which would *recalibrate* the Department of Works.

On a more sophisticated level, though, it involves far more practical things. Certain ideas can be insinuated into mega-cultures in subtle ways to *adjust* the Department of Works ... just a little. That's easier to do.

They also recognize that Humans, for all their innate inferiority can have substantial effects on the lower realms from their high-ground position. So having them form Magician Lodges, cults, and Waldens is something the Deconstructionists are working with all the time.



Imagine a hundred disembodied hands trying a million combination locks: that's the Deconstructionists playing with humanity, trying to find the combination of changes on Chessboard Zero that will give them power in the coming storm.

Running the Caretakers

The entities at the bottom of Wonderland are paradoxical, complex, and insane by human standards. They are extremely versatile and may go from antagonist to monster to ally depending on how they are approached and what role they are fulfilling.

Multiple Personalities

Caretakers are creatures of drama as much as they create their own “drama vortex.” As such they may be encountered as implacable enemies of humanity (and thus the PCs) or as benevolent royalty where they assume the PCs to be their subjects, or as seemingly random travelers in an insane land. This isn't exactly contradictory: the mind of a Caretaker is highly fractured and when they are acting as a regent they are not so much playing a role as *being* it. A trip to the Queen of Heart's castle could be a bloody death-fest—or it could just be a fancy ball (albeit still with a strong hint of execution, most likely).

Individual Caretakers may wish death or brutal “civilizing” on humanity in general but they respond to PCs caught in their dramas the same way the respond to human-like and non-human actors caught in their dramas: as “people.” If a PC is summoned to The Factory as a “quality inspector” the fact that The Factory's ultimate aims for mankind are as part of its machines won't result in an ambush for the character—rather they, so long as they play the role of “quality inspector” to some reasonable degree, will only be in as much danger as that character would be in the drama.

Differing Aspects and Incarnations

In addition to having more than one active personality, Caretakers may have quite different appearances and physical attributes depending on how they are approached. Sometimes versions of themselves will be found traveling on the lower-chessboards and, although still formidable, they are pretty much their physical incarnations there. When encountered in their offices their abilities and knowledge may be quite expanded.

Often fragments of traveling Caretakers may even be seen as weak and *pathetic* to human eyes (a Queen may be lost in the woods, Humpty Dumpty may be broken, etc.) How the character relates to them will have some *bearing* on how other incarnations of the Caretaker respond to the character but often another incarnation's memories of the event may be indistinct or even *different*.



Obsessions and Religions

Caretakers are philosophical beings at their core: they represent a complicated set of obsessions, irrational beliefs, and a superior intellect. They have massive egos and their egocentricity is so deep that they are not merely “self-centered” but rather warp reality itself to their own aggrandizement. As a result of this and their innate power in manipulating the lower Chessboards, they act as rules and gods to the beings of the upper Chessboards.

On Chessboards as high up as Two (but most commonly seen on three and four) they are the mysterious alien royalty that, while rarely seen, has powerful influences on the civilizations there.

A colony that is a subject of the Queen of Hearts could be focused on streams of oppressive, irrational, and often changing rules with hideous judicial punishment for breaking them. If a town is under the thrall of the Duchess of Knots it may have a twisted, oppressive, *incomprehensible*, bureaucracy about it (while the scions of the Politician would be endemically *corrupt* and bureaucratic).

The beings that serve as their subjects do not understand the nature of the “royalty” they serve (they may have several explanations for it or simply accept that the beings that rule them are worthy of their exalted status although rarely seen and having seemingly little interest in their taxes or tributes save wanting obedience for its own sake). However, beyond the simple subjugation of these people, there is an aspect of

reverence. When one adopts the *philosophical world-view* of a Caretaker (at least as much as one is able, usually drifting into various degrees of insanity) one becomes its *disciple*. This can have powerful effects. Towns, villages, and individual persons on the lower Chessboards that do follow the edicts of their rulers more aggressively and authentically will usually change in their *nature*. Even on Chessboard Zero, a person who adopts the insanity of a Caretaker can become a Hunger Disciple.

The Queen of Hearts

Side: Caretaker

“What *is* the fun?” said Alice.

“Why *she*,” said the Gryphon. “It’s all her fancy, that: they never executes nobody, you know. Come on!”

--The Gryphon, reassuring Alice about the Queen of Hearts, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

“I see nobody on the road,” said Alice.

“I only wish *I* had such eyes,” the King remarked in a fretful tone. “To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too!”

-- The White King, putting that assurance in proper context.

Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There



Overview

On the high plains of Gosnor (where even the blades of grass are political) sits The Twisted Palace, an exterior of columns, frescos and stairways surrounds a series of inner-chambers adorned in the finest blood-red velvet and gold leaf. It is said that the ceilings are painted masterworks colored with pigments made of the ground heartstrings of the souls that have been ground within. The Twisted Palace is the domain of the Red Queen and her vivisectionists who *critique* the human condition in the form of its painstaking and painful disassembly and *analysis*.

The Red Queen seeks to fill her cavernous, ever-growing library—a collection of analytical works on *The Human Condition*: the largest volume of literature ever “published.” She and her disciples believe that humankind itself—each individual—is a book in the language of its DNA. She seeks to, by tortuous insight into the individuals, find the *touchstone* in each person that is their own point of view that sheds light in The Author’s statement that is the person made flesh. Massive meat grinders connected to madly chattering linotype machines stand next to great looms each unspooling a human mind into component thought threads, each loom positioned above their owner’s screaming faces. Vivisection tables whose clay surfaces etch their victim’s thoughts as they run with fresh blood slowly take the measure of each of their occupants.

Her minions in the world are those whom she has taken and deemed *salvageable*: they have been disassembled and reconstructed in an image that is pleasing to her—an insane image. They are monsters that exist with only semi-ordinary Shadows at Chessboard Zero. At Chessboard One or Two they become bloated things: recruiters for her horror-show. Sometimes they simply take anyone they can catch—but other times she has certain themes or trends she sends them after (runaways, television executives, twins, etc.). In these cases her minions in the real world are built to pass until their time comes to drag her prey screaming into a mirror.

NAME: THE QUEEN OF HEARTS					CARETAKER	
PHY 14	STR 24	BLD 14	CON 14		To Hit	16-
REF 10	COR 10	REA 10	AGI 10		To Be Hit	+1
INT 17	RES 17	MEM 17	WIL 17		Armor	10/20
DP 240	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	varies
Wounds	80	240	480			
Description: The Queen, an entity that takes form as a 12’ grotesque woman in an ornate, flowing gown sweeps the corridors ceaselessly ordering her chaotic domain. Where she goes death follows by decree of execution, by consumption for her own ravenous appetite, by dissection for study, or simply for her amusement.						
She wears a massive ball-dress and carries a fan. Everything about her from the smallest piece of jewelry to the fractally complex designs in her dress is reeks of hearts.						
The Queen of Hearts is an imposing, bombastic figure, striding across the landscape and issuing commands to terrified underlings. Her ugly mouth can unhinge at the jaw stretching to become massive in size (although she does this rarely) and she has literally bitten the head off of those who displease her.						
In person she performs her court’s duties: presiding over trials, attending games and dinners, dancing at balls, and so on. She usually travels with a small retinue of sycophants.						
Hearts Blade: She carries a royal scepter with a heart-shaped blade atop it (often red with blood). It can extend up to Long Reach and it cuts for 40 PEN damage, 120pts if it hits by 4+ (and that’s <i>Base Damage</i>). At Medium Range, it costs 5 REA to swing. When extended to Long Reach, it has a +2 Back Swing (and can only be used once per turn).						

The Queen of Hearts

I like the Queen; she’s found her method of coping with life – beheadings – and she’s okay with that. It’s kind of like creative visualization, really; if there’s something happening that she doesn’t dig on, she creates a world where the person responsible has died horribly. And if nobody ever actually ends up headless, well, you create your own reality. I really think there’s some room here for a new and potent form of therapy. B+

- Lore Sjöberg,
The Book of Ratings

NAME: THE HEART CARTOGRAPHER					MINION	
PHY 11	STR 11	BLD 08	CON 11		To Hit	12-
REF 12	COR 12	REA 12	AGI 12		To Be Hit	-2
INT 15	RES 15	MEM 15	WIL 15		Armor	8/16
DP 45	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	7 PEN Sword
Wounds	14	45	90			
Description: The Cartographer is a tall man—bald and gaunt and bent over like a question-mark. He wears a white lab coat and his skin is an asphyxiated blue. He sports a head-set with magnifying glasses in various powers, flashlights, and quills in various colors.						
Station: The Heart Cartographer is one of the stewards of the Red Queen’s castle. From his high tower in the Twisted Palace he works for the Queen’s aims, seeking people whose life stories have a specific <i>theme or premise</i> . Making maps of the mysteries of the human heart, he specializes in those who have loves that are forbidden.						
He can find these people with his telescopes (that stare up into the sky and show him views of planet Earth). Sometimes people embroiled in such affairs are <i>turned in</i> to him—he receives mail with the proper address from the real world.						
The Art of the Deal: The Heart Cartographer (whose tower is filled with maps of imaginary continents the shape—and bearing the geographical features—of loves forbidden, lost, or hard won) can contact those who he seeks. He can make <i>deals</i> . It is said that he may permit three of four to slip away from him such that he only takes a quarter of those he contacts. Others say that to deal with him at all is to have one’s broken heart graphed in the massive steam-driven plotting machines while the two lovers are sealed in glass jars separated for all eternity. What he <i>can do</i> is <i>intervene</i> if some test is met or passed. He usually sets the nature of the test and he usually determines if one passes—but he’s a very exacting individual (one may expect cartographers to pay attention to their work) and he is “fair.” Whatever that means.						
Blinding and Binding: When the Cartographer intervenes he does so by visiting his target (usually someone other than the lovers) and talking to them. He understands the chambers and arteries, the highways and byways, and the hidden places of the human heart and his words are irresistible to those he contacts. It is said he can convince anyone of anything—but he acts in the subtlest way possible.						

Disposition Towards Man

She wishes to study man in order to complete her library—but if mankind were to go away then it would be finished just the same. Her fury is genocidal.

Encounter Threat

Very high. To displease her is to invite death (the upside is that she doesn’t always carry out the sentence herself so you might be able to beat her headsman once you get a little away from her).

Domain: The Palace of Hearts

The Palace of the Red Queen is a place of shifting reality that conforms to her nightmare vision. She is truly mad—and incredibly powerful. Doors vanish, halls appear—but if you’re there you’ve got nothing coming: nothing good, anyway.

Physicality

The Palace has the look of an animation to it—the materials

all seem slightly luminescent and well defined—but it is a real physical place ... or seems to be.

The Palace (whose colors are red and gold) is resplendent. The guards (playing cards, Marionettes, and Mannequins) wear uniforms reminiscent of the most gaudy of the 17th century European armies. Checkerboard patterns in various colors repeat themselves and many corridors go from being “paintings” to “real” seemingly on a whim.

One constant is the many, many pictures of the Red Queen (there are also statues). They show her presiding over beheadings, riding into battle, etc. These paintings can become animated with some portion of her spirit and give commands (or even step out and take actions—but they’re still obviously animated 2D oil paintings). The problem with these is that one never knows if following their instructions (or failing to) will get you in hot water with the Queen.

There is also a gallery of severed heads that winds a *long* way. The heads are still animate (in glass cases) and can speak.

The Dungeons and Cages are where the Queen’s victims are taken. Most of the cages are tiny—some are ‘form fitting.’ There are interrogation rooms—but, more terrifying, are the *examination* rooms where the targets have pieces of their anatomy removed and inspected in a search for the “touchstone”—the physical (if, perhaps, microscopic) manifestation of their being that explains their point of view and thus illuminates the cryptic text of their DNA. Her blood-splattered, gore drenched Chirgons are capable of taking apart a person slowly and meticulously looking for it. This does not always (and, in fact, far too rarely) mean death: there are great meat-grinder machines into which the still-living, still-sentient person is fed: they become gristle for the Marionette factory (the biological material is converted to “living” plastic and wood”). The spare parts may also be used to assemble monstrosities.

Rules

The Palace is a complex eco-system of predation: the furniture can walk around and eat you and many chambers become traps. Sometimes, deathtraps fill with water or sand, or corridors are patrolled by huge rolling metal spheres or sliding blocks. Weapons (pole-axes) march around by themselves, and even the seemingly sane beings that “oversee” sections of the madhouse are prone to degenerate in a sudden downward spiral of insanity.

That’s a Survival Trait: if you are insane, a lot of the bizarreness makes sense (and the worst can be avoided). A person who instinctively and reflexively is disconnected from what their senses tell them about the world will perceive the castle as a different sort of place: that stairway

NAME: THE CEREBELLUM PREPARER					MINION	
PHY 13	STR 13	BLD 24	CON 13		To Hit	13-
REF 11	COR 11	REA 11	AGI 11		To Be Hit	+0
INT 11	RES 11	MEM 11	WIL 11		Armor	8/16
DP 90	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	13 PEN Bite
Wounds	30	90	180			
Description: The Preparer is a fat thing whose face is a massive mouth of jagged teeth. It wears a blood-stained apron and its thickly muscled arms have metal talons set over the fingernails. When it speaks the voice is cool, pleasant, and urbane—it seems to issue from the air <i>around</i> the Preparer—not from its maw.						
Station: In the lower reaches of the Twisted Place are the kitchens and each fortnight the Queen dines on a Royal dinner. Her chefs and appetites are legion and legend but one office that stands out is the preparer of the Cerebellum.						
The room is a horror show of clamps and knives so that the subject’s brain may be removed, examined, and prepared for consumption. The meal, however, is not intended to <i>nourish</i> the eater—rather, the experience of consuming a human’s brain is meant to <i>inform</i> the diner—to <i>explain the thoughts, life, and mind</i> of the person consumed.						
The centerpiece of the course is the Head Plate—a domed plate under which a still living head, bare from the eyes up, is placed amidst a composition of rare vegetables, spices, and oils. As the brain itself is prepared painstakingly, delving into the meal is a exploration of the senses—taste, sight, smell, and even touch (finger food!). Although the brain has no nerve-endings, the preparation—the sauces, the stuffing, the cutting and the basting—leave the subject with a cyclone of sensory stimulation that often leaves him or her screaming, singing, or babbling for the audio component.						
Subjects of Interest: The Preparer wants only the most rarefied subjects for his feasts. It is those who think in some way <i>different</i> (oddly, owning a Mac doesn’t qualify you). Artists, musicians, writers, and others are on the dream menu. The preparer often is lured with the promise and tantalizing hints at an awakening of muse—of the creativity within. When possible the Preparer works through a network of “talent scouts,” who seek to bring those with the tastiest talent into their domain.						

isn't the way up—instead, one must be eaten by the couch and then 'released' upstairs from the alcove with the bust in it.

Adopting this mindset is hard to do intentionally (although some of the people there come by it 'naturally' after a time)—the best bet is to get a guide (and a guide, being crazy, is capricious at best).

Dramas

The Queen of Hearts acts as the *head magistrate* in her kingdom and her court is bloody and random. There are barristers who one can appeal to for help—but the system of “justice” is Byzantine and nonsensical and one is almost as helpless with one's lawyer as with the final judge. Many dramas include various Actors in Wonderland being drawn into her courts and trials.

She is also a *socialite* and holds balls, fairs, and other events (Croquet matches) to which one may receive an invitation. Refusal means execution but accepting is usually almost as dangerous.

Humpty Dumpty

Side: Deconstructionist

NOTE: Unlike most Deconstructionists (whose sympathies are hidden or are hunted) Humpty is both recognized as the 'head of the movement' (well, at least a major philosophical contributor and aider and abettor) *and* accepted in Caretaker society (although many despise him). This is partly because he is powerful. It is mostly because the office he holds, as he has *redefined it*, legally allows him to critique Wonderland itself into destruction!

Alice felt even more indignant at this suggestion. “I mean,” she said, “that one ca'n't help growing older.” “One ca'n't, perhaps,” said Humpty Dumpty; “but *two* can. With proper assistance, you might have left off at seven.”

-- Alice and the Egg Man, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*

Overview *The Hollow Kingdom* is a shared domain where the *Futile King* sits on a golden throne. The



lands of the Kingdom are fairy-book rolling hills, copses of trees, and towers with banners flying from them. There are small hamlets and during the winters: sleigh tracks past the numerous winding walls and fences that run across it. It looks idyllic.

The people (many human, but also a good helping of talking foxes, chased by talking hounds during the hunts) live a strangely simplified life—in many ways, a ‘perfect one,’ so long as it is examined on a small scale.

On a large scale, it is *disaster*. The Hollow Kingdom is eaten through with subtle worms of failure in every enterprise beyond the microcosm of the small faux-medieval town. Many of the walls are broken waterworks of failed aqueduct projects. There are picturesque windmills that do nothing and waterwheels that turn broken mills. There are numerous clock towers, but the times told by the hands are *random*.

And there are dark mud-plains where the disease of *failure* has overtaken everything, sucking towns, and people, and travelers down into the mud. When failure comes, it comes like a storm and it can bring pitiless starvation and ruin. This happens *fast*—maps are all out of date. Roads sometimes curve away from where a town has vanished to ghost-town (or worse). All of this is part of the world.

There are several Entities that share this sprawling Kingdom. One of them, is Humpty Dumpty.

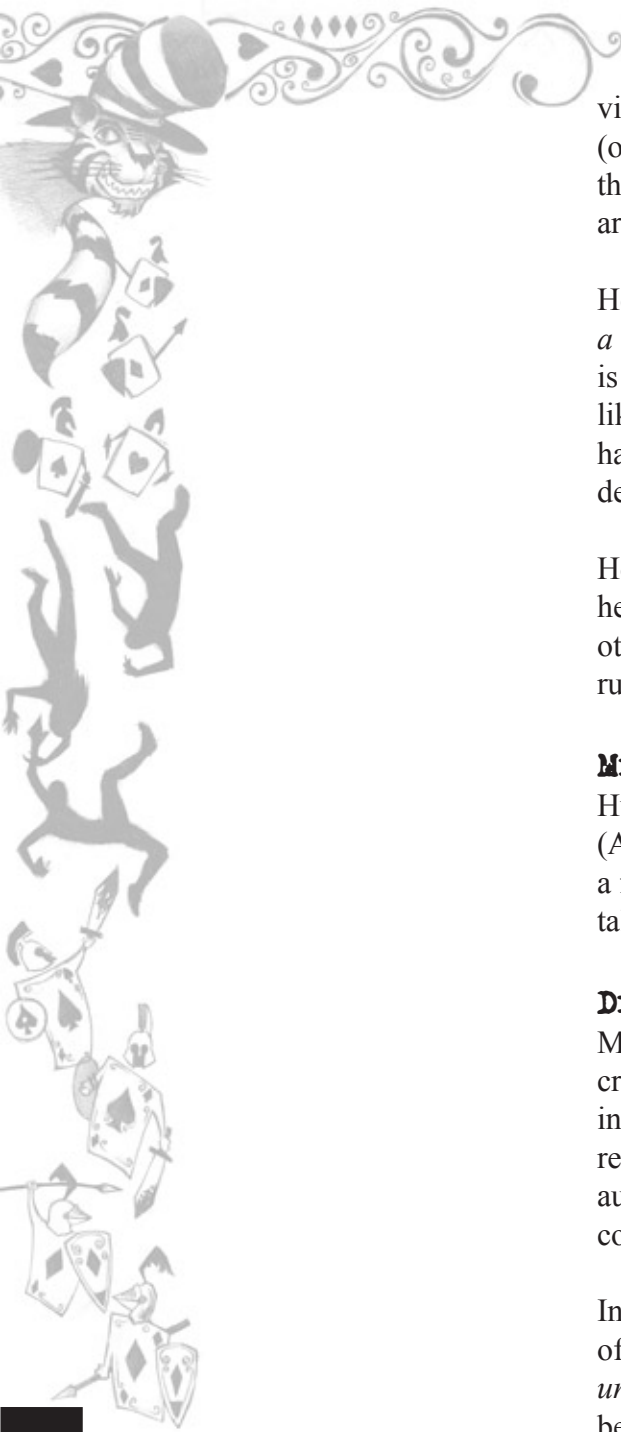
Personality

At heart, he is the *critic* and his drive is to *destroy by analysis*. Although he has set his talents on many things and people over time, his ultimate goal is the *devastating critique* of Wonderland itself. As such, he is not just a Deconstructionist—but their leader. He is the first amongst the Anarchists.

He travels many places and is accepted (in Wonderland) as a personage of great prestige and power (although he is treated as a *nobleman* or *visiting royalty* and not a king). Where he casts his eye, he will observe and then judge. His judgment goes beyond harsh: if he does it right, he will make the child lose faith in his mother, the champion lose faith in himself, and the pastor lose faith in God.

In person, he is disgruntled—quick to take offense (although rarely

NAME: HUMPTY DUMPTY					DECONSTRUCTIONIST	
PHY 09	STR 09	BLD 12	CON 09		To Hit	14-
REF 11	COR 13	REA 11	AGI 09		To Be Hit	+1
INT 19	RES 19	MEM 19	WIL 19		Armor	None
DP 6	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	None
Wounds	2	6	12			
Description: Humpty Dumpty is an egg with arms and legs. He wears a cravat and a scowl. He has a wicked sense of humor and a cruel nature. He is, however, fragile. He is easily broken (although he'll reform within a day or two). Whenever he is broken, great tragedy occurs within the Hollow Kingdom unless the King, his advisers, and anyone else who can help is able to reassemble him. So far, they've never been able to.						



violent) and demanding. He will spar verbally with a person he chooses (one who believes something strongly, or holds a side) and argue with them (often redefining words in an imperious manner, making his arguments tautological—if, to some, unconvincing).

He will also, bestow *wisdom*. This is sort of a euphemism for *bestowing a curse*. In an elemental sense, his act of giving a final piece of advice is (sort of) the kind of thing that, once heard, careens around your head like a cue ball “breaking” your free-will. In practice, once Humpty has bestowed his *wisdom*, one way, or another, the recipient is usually destined for a *great fall*.

However, he is quite learned and, if he can be engaged in a proper way he can be useful. Alice was, perhaps, lucky to be a little girl. There are other ways to encounter and even talk with Humpty Dumpty without ruin, but being *cleverly obsequious* helps.

Minions

Humpty Dumpty has noble rank and calls on the various servants (Actors) of the Hollow Kingdom to serve him. He rarely travels without a footman and a small escort of immaculately dressed cavalry (with talking horses).

Disposition Towards Man

Mankind is, ultimately, the audience whom will look upon his final critique of Wonderland (perhaps before they, themselves, are destroyed in a cataclysm of relativism). As such, he doesn't want them *gone*. He recognizes the value of mankind as a (simplistic? Moronic? Idiot?) audience for his analysis—what he feels he must do (not himself, of course, but his *movement* is *educate* them).

In person, this usually means haranguing individuals for their paucity of thought, but on a grander scale he wishes to instill a *foundation of understanding* in mankind. He supports the Big Pharma project, not because he wants it to succeed, but because he thinks it will fail and create, along the way, mind-altering, advanced, Wonderland-based pharmo-psychotics that will allow him to redesign the human mind.

His ideal human is hard to describe (and can take many forms). One that he'd be satisfied with is a physically mutated (mutilated) sea-going (since it can't live upright or support itself out of water) being with limbs fused into flippers and numerous aphasic mouths spouting lexically complex word-salad. He might settle for a group of “properly educated” graduate students (who would be, by our standards, quite insane—although they might not appear that way at first glance) if he had to.

Encounter Threat

Medium. Violence wise, Humpty Dumpty is not much of a threat (even if one fights through his retinue of men, he will break easily). However,

in most cases, the person would be surrounded by soldiers who will kill or imprison on his command (and if he gets to determine your fate it will be worse than death!) However, in social situations, if snubbed (or if he perceives he is snubbed) he will *bestow wisdom*.

Operations

He gets messages from the resistance movement. He organizes operations on the higher chessboards like a round, grumpy general moving troops. He sabotages other Caretakers for fun.

There are several Chessboard Zero operations trying to get in contact with him (some know him from the Carroll books and have no real understanding of what he might do to them or what his aims are). Some are misguided Infected philosophy students who have made it a point to reach him and absorb his teachings. These people form some of the communes—and they accept people based on their ability to swallow Humpty Dumpty’s dogma which consists of seemingly nonsensical arguments that use “redefined words” to “make sense” or streams of nonsense where the student must work out the “right context” of the words (which are never authoritatively given because that is, in fact, counter to the philosophical underpinnings) to make any sense.

Dramas

The Hollow Kingdom has a king who is in a constant state of panic (and is in a dismal mood when he is not) dealing with various pre-ordained catastrophes. Humpty Dumpty finds the palace quite a wonderful place to hang out. He may be found chatting with the ladies, accepting accolades from the premier fencers or chefs or artisans (whose work he inexorably destroys by ruining their faith in themselves).

The dramas that surround him are those of failure or potential failure when anything but the *absolutely mundane* is attempted.

And, of course, having something of an interest in man, he may wish to encounter travelers in his domain or have them brought to him.

The Caterpillar

Side: Caretaker

“What do you mean by that?”
said the Caterpillar, sternly.

“Explain yourself!”

“I ca’n’t explain *myself*, I’m

NAME: THE CATERPILLAR					CARETAKER	
PHY 09	STR 09	BLD 12	CON 09		To Hit	14-
REF 11	COR 13	REA 11	AGI 09		To Be Hit	+1
INT 19	RES 19	MEM 19	WIL 19		Armor	None
DP 6	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	None
Wounds	2	6	12			
Description: The Examiner appears at different scales and in different proportions at will (he believes he has <i>always</i> chosen the appropriate size for an occasion) and he is usually in the role of a professor—asking questions and demanding answers. Sometimes he is insistent (and can become angered if the subject does not cooperate). He is gruff and short tempered but, if his questions are answered with an appropriate sense of gravity, he can be helpful as well.						
The Hookah: The Caterpillar’s water-pipe can produce profound hallucinations, mind-expanding experiences, and Twists in those who inhale its potent chemicals.						



afraid, Sir,” said Alice, “because I’m not myself, you see.”

“I don’t see,” said the Caterpillar.

“I’m afraid I ca’n’t put it more clearly,” Alice replied, very politely, “for I ca’n’t understand it myself to being with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.”

“It isn’t,” said the Caterpillar.

-- Alice and the Caterpillar, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

Overview

The Office of the Examiner is filled a with single being with more than one form: most often it is a caterpillar. Sometimes, it is that of a butterfly. The shift back and forth takes place when the Examiner has gone from thesis to antithesis and from there to synthesis (back again). The Examiner is looking for something—some element within his subjects—which will answer the questions he has been posed. What these questions are, exactly, is unknown: The Examiner has said that ultimately, humankind (and most of Wonderland) cannot formulate them with their meager grasp of language.

Disposition Towards Man

The Examiner believes that humankind is a cipher which he must unravel: within man’s blunted, nearly blinded perceptions is the key that will unlock the secrets he seeks. As such, he is dispossessed towards *not* seeing them destroyed and is interested in altering their states of mind to see if that gives them any more insight or any more clarity into their own conditions (which he believes is some fragmentary fractal shard of a larger truth). He is a patron of magicians and often lures those who wish to experiment with their own minds.

Encounter Threat

Low. The Examiner is more likely to give you mind-altering drugs (of *temporary* effect) or Twist you (which may be disturbing but usually doesn’t *Damage* you) than slay you. If one is obstinate with him, he may make things difficult for them but is rarely murderous. He does, however, come off as insistent and demanding and has little regard for a subject’s feelings when questioning them.

Domain

The Examiner lives in a spiral palace which is said to be built into a seashell that is either incredibly huge or exists on a tiny scale along some normal-sized beach. Within it all directions eventually shift and

wrap around themselves. Any travel that does not successfully navigate “inwards” into smaller and smaller chambers will return to where it started.

Within the estate is a hall of many columns, each of which contains a human body suspended in light. These people are surrounded by an aura of whispers that is their thoughts, memories, and experiences sublimating out of them in a soft babble of many different languages. These bodies do not decay—but they do *collapse*. In some columns only a brain, two eyes (connected with nerves) and a spine remain. In others, the skin is only starting to collapse. In each case, this person is yielding *all that they are* to the great listening machines somewhere in the nexus of the palace.

Often, however, The Examiner is found beyond his home traveling and questing. In some cases he may merely wish to speak with a person. In other cases he has been known to find them and *alter them*. Sometimes beneficially, sometimes horrifically.

Operations

The Examiner believes that each expression of a human soul is a tiny expression of a larger whole and that this can be clarified by changing the state of mind of the artist. He was behind part of the Flower Power movement and is often associated with the Waldens as he is eager to make contact with those who can reach him.

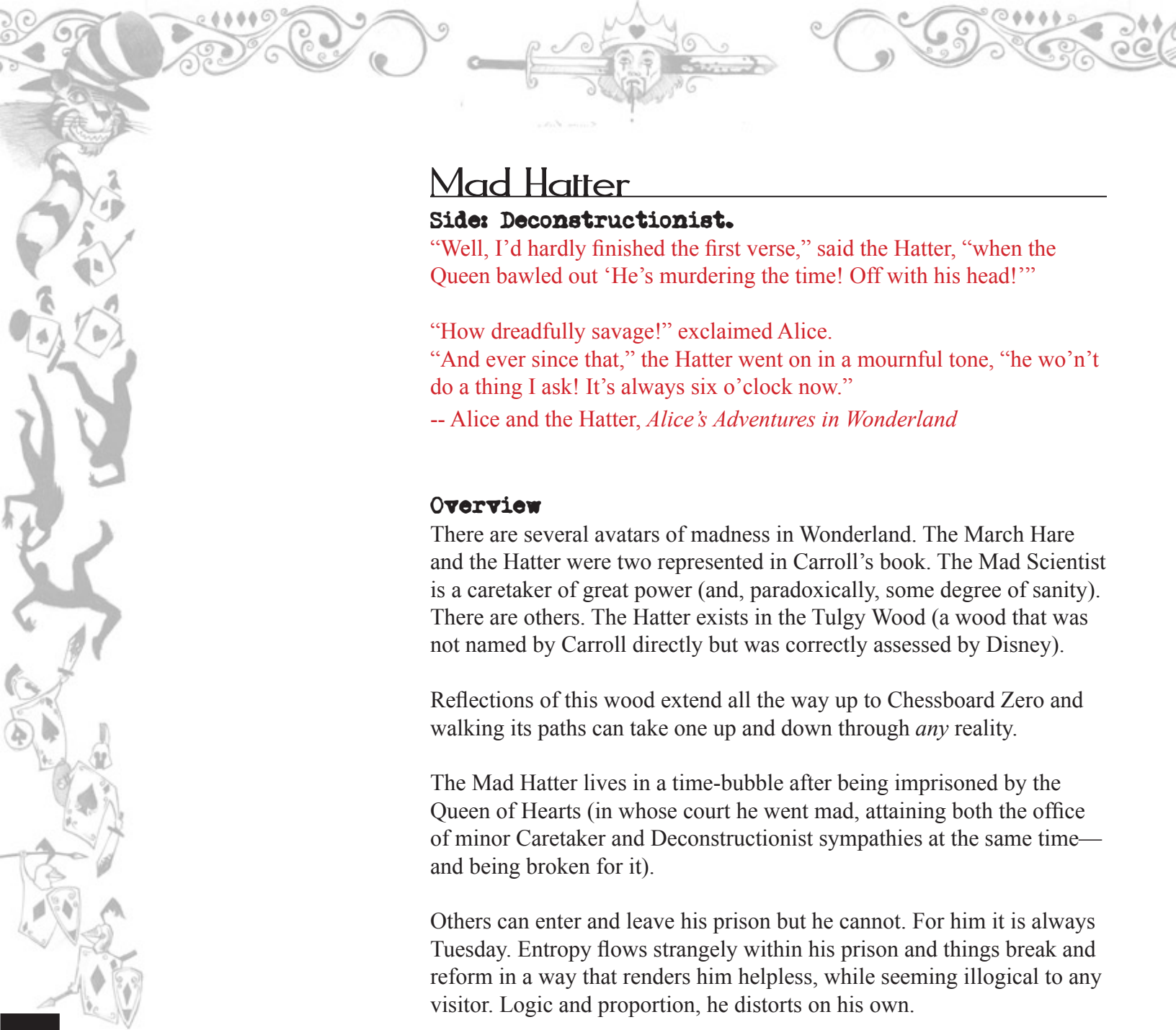
He works, himself, as an artist in the spectrum of mind-altering substances and produces vials and powers and rolled cigarettes which all have profound effects on those who ingest them. In some cases, these materials, when ingested by a non-Infected lead to Infection and deep Descent. He has been active in getting traveling magicians to bleeds where they can transfer these materials up to the surface: in the hands of the right people, if they take his drugs, he can bring them down and *examine* them (a cross between a philosophy-class oral exam and a mutation-generating medical exam).

Dramas

The Examiner is often drawn to dramas of *questioning*. Actors will sometimes come to question “who they are” (in both an existential sense and an “I’ve awoken as a giant insect” sense!). He also meddles in one’s physical sense of self and has been an agent of Twisting for many who’ve undergone Descent.

In some cases, he is sought out—he can provide interesting conversation—but there is always a risk that he will either be displeased with the simple mindedness of the applicant or decide to undertake an experiment that renders the subject “differently sane.”





Mad Hatter

Side: Deconstructionist.

“Well, I’d hardly finished the first verse,” said the Hatter, “when the Queen bawled out ‘He’s murdering the time! Off with his head!’”

“How dreadfully savage!” exclaimed Alice.

“And ever since that,” the Hatter went on in a mournful tone, “he wo’n’t do a thing I ask! It’s always six o’clock now.”

-- Alice and the Hatter, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

Overview

There are several avatars of madness in Wonderland. The March Hare and the Hatter were two represented in Carroll’s book. The Mad Scientist is a caretaker of great power (and, paradoxically, some degree of sanity). There are others. The Hatter exists in the Tulgy Wood (a wood that was not named by Carroll directly but was correctly assessed by Disney).

Reflections of this wood extend all the way up to Chessboard Zero and walking its paths can take one up and down through *any* reality.

The Mad Hatter lives in a time-bubble after being imprisoned by the Queen of Hearts (in whose court he went mad, attaining both the office of minor Caretaker and Deconstructionist sympathies at the same time—and being broken for it).

Others can enter and leave his prison but he cannot. For him it is always Tuesday. Entropy flows strangely within his prison and things break and reform in a way that renders him helpless, while seeming illogical to any visitor. Logic and proportion, he distorts on his own.

Personality

He is frantic, nervous, and disjointed—it is speculated that he may actually be *quite sane* and his dialogs and actions *make sense* from the perspective of the Queen of Heart’s prison-reality. If so, some have speculated her sentence is one of abject cruelty.

The Hare, on the other hand, has become quite sane and a good deal more urbane (he shops on ebay, has a cell phone, and smokes). When encountered with the Hatter, the Hare often acts as an interpreter, protector, and agent.

Disposition Towards Man

Whatever was done to him (either to his mind or perspective) he seems fairly incapable of distinguishing between “man” and “anything else” as

such, he is one of the few Caretaker-type-beings that does not have an agenda.

Encounter Threat

Low to none. He may be confusing or maybe helpful—his dialog may sometimes give a person a sense of where to go or what to do.

Operations

Interestingly, a discontinued and sterilized project run in the wake of Pilgrim but developed separately in England, “contacted” an information source identifying itself as “Mad Hatter.” This was using radio frequencies and random number generators and high-level cryptographic sequences so no one could be sure if the “messages” were actually “innate as a transmission” or if random phrases were just being “interpreted out of thin air.” For a few weeks, point-source Hatter carried out several *possible* (if extremely disjointed) conversations with personnel and claimed, among other things, to be Jack the Ripper.

The facts surrounding the project are murky but it seems that some of the project was ‘compromised’ (Infected? It seems likely) and vanished, looking for it. There are still echoes and rumbles from this in the annals of conspiracy theory today.

Dramas

The time-bubble around the Hatter prevents him from creating drama-driven actors. Usually he is encountered as a separate entity.

The Duchess of Knots

Side: Caretaker

“The Duchess! The Duchess! Oh my dear paws! Oh my fur and whiskers! She’ll get me executed as sure as ferrets are ferrets!”

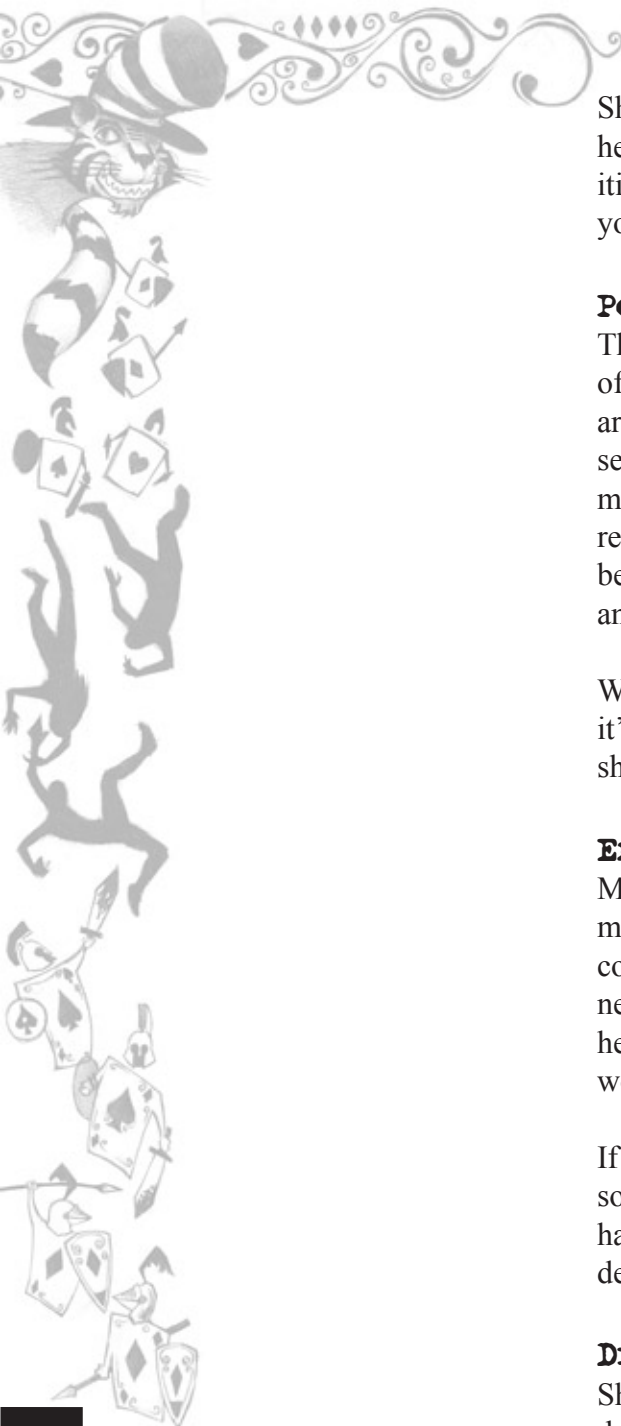
-- The White Rabbit, *Alice’s Adventures In Wonderland*

Overview

From cottages to grand musty castles and sprawling estates, the Duchess hurries on with her retinue of sycophants and servants fleeing from one crisis to another. There’s a ball to attend, a theater show that she must be seen at, a disaster in the kitchen to look after ... and the Duchess (a large, ugly woman of nasty temper and prone to physical abuse) is terribly *in charge* of it all.

NAME: THE DUCHESS					CARETAKER	
PHY 15	STR 15	BLD 16	CON 15		To Hit	14-
REF 12	COR 12	REA 12	AGI 13		To Be Hit	+1
INT 13	RES 13	MEM 13	WIL 13		Armor	None
DP 90	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	6 IMP
Wounds	30	90	180			
Description: She is a large, exceedingly ugly woman dressed in regal clothes with a massive headdress. Her voice is a dissonant shriek and she is given to cuffing and striking servants as well as throwing things when enraged (which is often). She stands over six feet tall and tops seven with her headgear.						





She is the roiling eye of a storm of chaos and activity that swirls around her. With a chain of homes that stretches across Wonderland and an itinerary nearly that vast, she is always caught up in *something* and if you're with her, you'll be caught up *too*.

Personality

The Duchess is often found in a foul temper, surrounded by the tangle of dramas she brings down on herself. Unlike most Caretakers who are often observers or instigators of their dramas, she is often one of several *protagonists* and she's not happy about it! She has to clean up messes other people make (and her wrath may be extreme). *She* has responsibilities and orders to take care of (from very important people, to be sure) and you don't want to cross her when these aren't going well ... and so on.

Whether this is some sort of masochistic self-imposed game of hers—or it's the Caretaker equivalent of a psychological illness isn't clear: but she certainly doesn't *seem* happy about it!

Encounter Threat

Medium. She is usually attended by servants (maids, footmen, even arms men at times) and, if threatened, can lash out with, well, *frightening* consequences. However, she is usually involved in some drama and needs (although may not especially *want*) assistance. If you don't assist her, that's dangerous. If you do, that can have consequences too, but they won't be her attacking. Indeed, some people get off lightly.

If you are near her, you may be struck physically (or she may throw something). She is capable of hitting *very* hard—but usually only strikes hard enough to hurt or leave a bruise. Rarely is her “casual” violence deadly or dangerous.

Disposition Towards Man

She doesn't have time to notice, frankly. Those who wander into her dramas are often imperfect servants—but almost all of her servants disappoint her at one time or another (good help is *so* hard to find these days).

Dramas

There are always at least two emergencies she is responsible for. Congratulations: you've got one of them. Sometimes they resolve themselves, sometimes ... they don't. If you get stuck with a sticky one, you have to do your best and suffer the consequences—just running out on her will earn her wrath. You might be put in charge of a chaotic kitchen with (literally) nonsensical orders and demanding patrons she's entertaining. There might be another member of royalty she is entertaining and you've got to make pleasant conversation and hold things together while she sees about some other catastrophe.



The Cheshire Cat

Side: Deconstructionist

The Cat only grinned when it saw Alice. It looked good-natured, she thought: still it had *very* long claws and a great many teeth, so she felt it ought to be treated with respect.

-- Not quite the Disney picture, is it?

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland



Overview

The Cat is one of Wonderland's outlaws: the Caretakers (the elder, established Caretakers) have been trying to kill him, well, forever. He exists in a state of what has been described as Hisenberg Uncertainty—everywhere and nowhere at once.

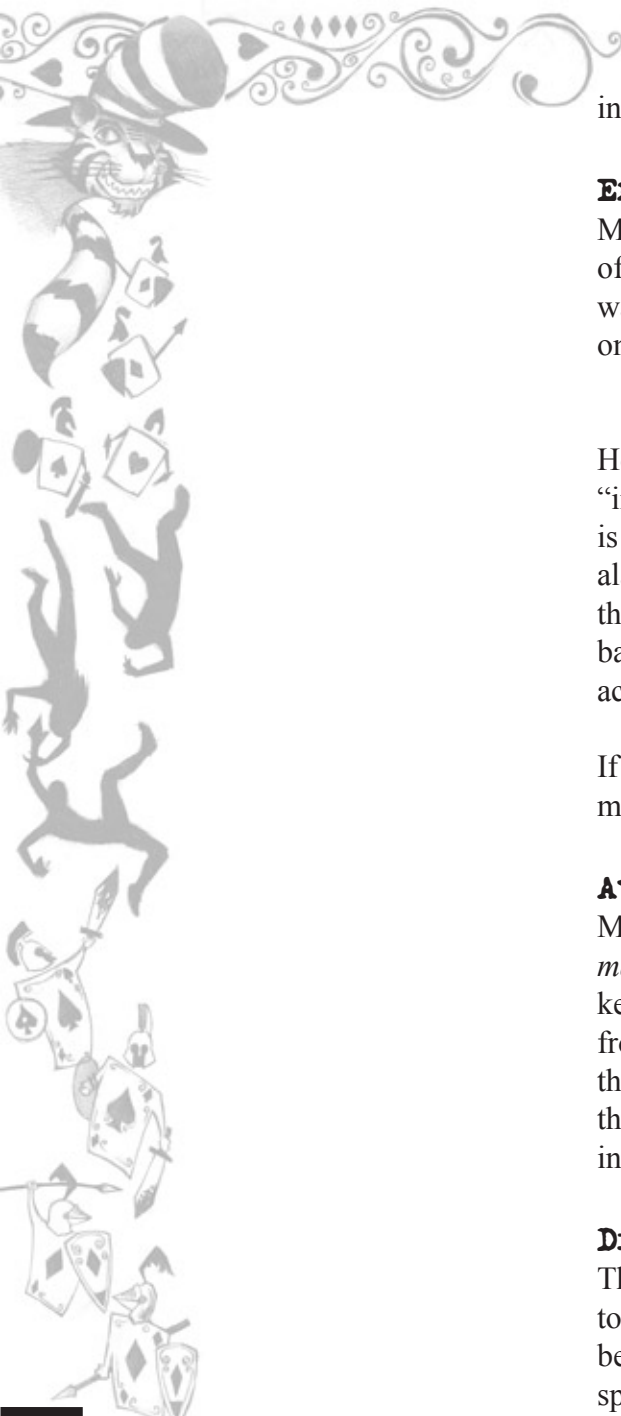
He can certainly manifest at will, becoming solid, a phantasm, or only partially "there" in an instant (or taking his time). When he is invisible, no force known can locate him (other than sound, if he speaks).

Personality

The Cat is a trickster: he likes to watch. He likes to stir things up—the more chaos the better. He likes the underdog but may play games with those he's chosen to engage with. He can be hard to get a straight answer out of as he finds frustration and confusion amusing and he's never one to let things settle down to a conclusion if he can "turn the heat up."

If you are powerful, and you have a plan he gets wind of, he may decide to foil it for his amusement (indeed, many of the Caretaker's meetings take some precautions to keep the Cat out, should he discover the congregation). If you are noteworthy, he may find ways to vex you, since nothing is more interesting than an

NAME: THE CHESHIRE CAT					DECON	
PHY 14	STR 14	BLD 08	CON 14		To Hit	18-
REF 16	COR 16	REA 16	AGI 16		To Be Hit	-7
INT 16	RES 16	MEM 16	WIL 16		Armor	None
DP 90	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	13 PEN
Wounds	30	90	180			
Description: The Cat appears as a shaggy, leopard-sized feline with a massive grin and wicked claws that extend like switchblade knives when it wants to <i>scratch</i> . It is sometimes striped a little like a tiger and sometimes solid in color. Often it is only partially visible, shifting in and out of space and time as it wishes.						
The Uncertainty Principle: As a Short Action the Cat can vanish and re-appear anywhere. There is no roll for this and it operates as a defensive action. It can equally become insubstantial and any attack that effects the normal spectrum of physical objects will simply pass through it. Equally, if it chooses it can become invisible (or partly invisible).						
Phase Claws: If the Cat chooses physical combat (very rare, often simply to make a point) its claws ignore all armor and, if it hits by 4+, the Base Damage is doubled to 26 PEN (before damage modifiers are applied).						



interesting person in a sticky situation.

Encounter Threat

Medium. The Cat is rarely aggressive—almost never, in fact. He is also often perceived as *helpful* since he can sometimes give one directions or warnings that, if properly deciphered, can get one out of the frying pan one has found one's self in (and where do you go *then*?)

He's rated as a Medium threat since his appearance usually portends "interesting things" for the character who meets him even if the danger is not directly related to him. He has freed captives and then sounded alarms (leaving them to scramble and hide). He has led lost groups out of the woods and into unfamiliar lands (from which they have no easy way back). He has told people things that impel them to take risky courses of action.

If he is insulted or mocked in a vulgar manner (he appreciates clever mocking though), he may bite.

Attitude Towards Man

Mankind has the same right to exist as the Caretakers and, with so *many* of them, they boast enough interesting specimens to be worth keeping around. The Cat is no "great friend" of mankind in general from a philosophical perspective (he does not weep for the injustices the Caretakers' plans wreak on their victims) but he doesn't want to see those plans succeed either—and on a case-by-case basis, he may find individual humans interesting!

Dramas

The Cat is usually an instigator to someone else's drama. He may appear to tell a bride-to-be that her husband is giving his affections to another beloved, touching off a comedy of errors (perhaps a black comedy) of spying, counter-spying, and mistrust. Of course, it may turn out that the groom is giving his love to an aging family *pet* and not another woman.

Sometimes the Cat simply appears, untouchable, to provide snide commentary and see if he can provoke a reaction out of someone. In other cases, his advice may be actually helpful. Either way, the inability of just about *everyone* to do *anything* about him (other than, sometimes, chase him off—most Caretakers can throw him out of their home domains) has frustrated beings across the entire range of power-scales.

The Hypotherapist

Side: Caretaker

'The time has come,' the Walrus said,
'To talk of many things:
Of shoes--and ships--and sealing-wax--

Of cabbages--and kings--
And why the sea is boiling
hot--
And whether pigs have
wings'
-- A conversation before lunch.
Through the Looking Glass
and What Alice Found There

Overview

In the mad city of Durithel where there are no right angles and the buildings stand like crooked teeth, there is a massive dark estate that is The Asylum. Within it are the offices of the Hypotherapist, a being who has devoted himself to studying the “lie” that is consciousness.

He is a great 2000-pound Walrus usually appropriately dressed in a suit with tails and he sports a monocle. He has Doctorates in Philosophy from all the most prestigious schools, lectures before the esteemed masses and he knows his business.

His business is that of despair. He believes that all “reasons to live” are simply the result of a pragmatic biological survival instinct (indeed, many of those who have been subjected to his therapy have committed suicide). He believes that love is a form of denial. That hope is *always* self-deception.

His method of therapy is to pose *hypothetical cases* which he uses like a jeweler’s hammer to try to shatter the subject’s inner faith, strength, or integrity. He isn’t explicitly cruel in this (although he can seem so)—he is scientifically examining a phenomena. All emotions are lies *anyway*.

His subjects are patients in the Asylum—many are non-human things captured or interred for a variety of obscure rationales. Some are captive humans. Some are shadows. A very few beings come and see him for regular sessions—his acumen and insight is *powerful* if it can be harnessed safely.

As he conducts his experiments on the nature of sentience, he writes great twisted books (and studying

NAME: THE HYPOTHERAPIST					CARETAKER	
PHY 26	STR 14	BLD 81	CON 14		To Hit	14-
REF 11	COR 11	REA 11	AGI 11		To Be Hit	+3/+3
INT 16	RES 16	MEM 16	WIL 16		Armor	3/18
DP 210	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	35 IMP
Wounds	70	210	420			
Description: He has the air of a stuffy professor and a dark, shadowed aura about him. He moves with surprising speed for something of his bulk and he reads voraciously. His flippers form as hands holding anything he needs to.						
Therapy: Having the Hypotherapist treat you is taking a terrible risk. If you engage him in therapy he can easily drive even a stable person to suicide. Usually this is handled by comparing his 19- Psychology roll (Level 4) against either the Psychology roll of the target or the target’s WIL. There may be bonuses (as the GM deems appropriate) for a strong will to live. A roll the character loses by 10 will result in the character doing whatever the Hypotherapist asks (usually self-destruction). A roll lost by 5-9 will result in the acquiring of a major psychological defect. A roll lost by 1 to 4 a minor one. A therapy course is usually 1-3 rolls						



NAME: NURSE SHARK					MINION	
PHY 12	STR 14	BLD 11	CON 12		To Hit	14-
REF 12	COR 12	REA 12	AGI 12		To Be Hit	-2
INT 11	RES 11	MEM 11	WIL 11		Armor	2/6
DP 27	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	7 PEN
Wounds	9	27	54			
Description: Imagine a small shark wearing a white medical gown with a little red “plus sign.” Nurse Sharks are quite capable of adequate medical care (14-, L2) and basic psychological counseling (L1, 13-). It’s not their fault that they sometimes eat the patients. They can fly or walk on their tails as appropriate.						

them closely can give the reader awesome psychological insights—but can also do terrible psychological *damage*).

Disposition Towards Man

Man is disposable and, if mentally healthy, would destroy himself. The Hypotherapist created the solution that was chosen by the Symposium. He has a cool, scholarly interest in

seeing mankind awaken to the objective pointlessness of its continued existence.

Encounter Threat

Medium. The Hypotherapist is not given to *violence* although he distains *denial* (and running away from him is a perfect chance for him to capture you and force you to face your own denial!).

When talking to him, if he goes into therapy mode there is the danger of becoming psychologically skewed, developing blindspots or taking on self-destructive behaviors. Worse: he can cause his hypotheticals to become true (“What if all of your friends were dead?”). When this is done, the changes may only be temporary and there may be some ways to “get back to how things were”—but not always—and not easily. In some cases, rarely, his commentary is *beneficial*—but one must be careful in dealing with him not to get caught up in “therapy.”

Domain

The Asylum is a terrifying place where faceless mannequins and carnivorous nurse sharks preside over an almost medieval snakepit of bedlam and horror. There are squalid padded cells and straight jackets that crawl around and jump on you. There are electroshock therapies and “face your fear” sessions in dark rooms where whatever you are afraid of comes for you.

Operations

The books the Hypotherapist has written are dangerous and valuable in multiple ways—more than one has found its way onto Chessboard Zero where they act as gateways, inflict various Wonderland-style insanities on their readers, and consume (usually mentally, but in some cases physically, those who study them).

The Hypotherapist also has some contacts with the entities that are running Big Pharma—and, although he finds it distasteful, has toured the

upper realms once in a while in this capacity.

There are several therapists who, during these periods, have become his disciples. Dr. Nothing, from the *Fall of New York* JAGS module is a template for one such person. These people are on Chessboard Zero and they are doing his work, spreading his despair.

Additionally, his minions sometimes capture Shadows from the upper reaches and take them down for therapy. This can have subtle, life-wreaking effects on those whose Shadows are taken. Often the Shadow vanishes—and reappears safely, thus “freeing it”—but actual humans have been driven insane because their Shadow was in the Asylum.

Dramas

When encountered “on the road,” a character might find that whatever he is presently pursuing somehow relates to the lecture the doctor is going to be giving when he reaches his destination. This could result in meaningful, necessary, dangerous conversation.

Shadows of people captured may be people the character knows (prompting a rescue attempt).

The Politician

Side: Caretaker

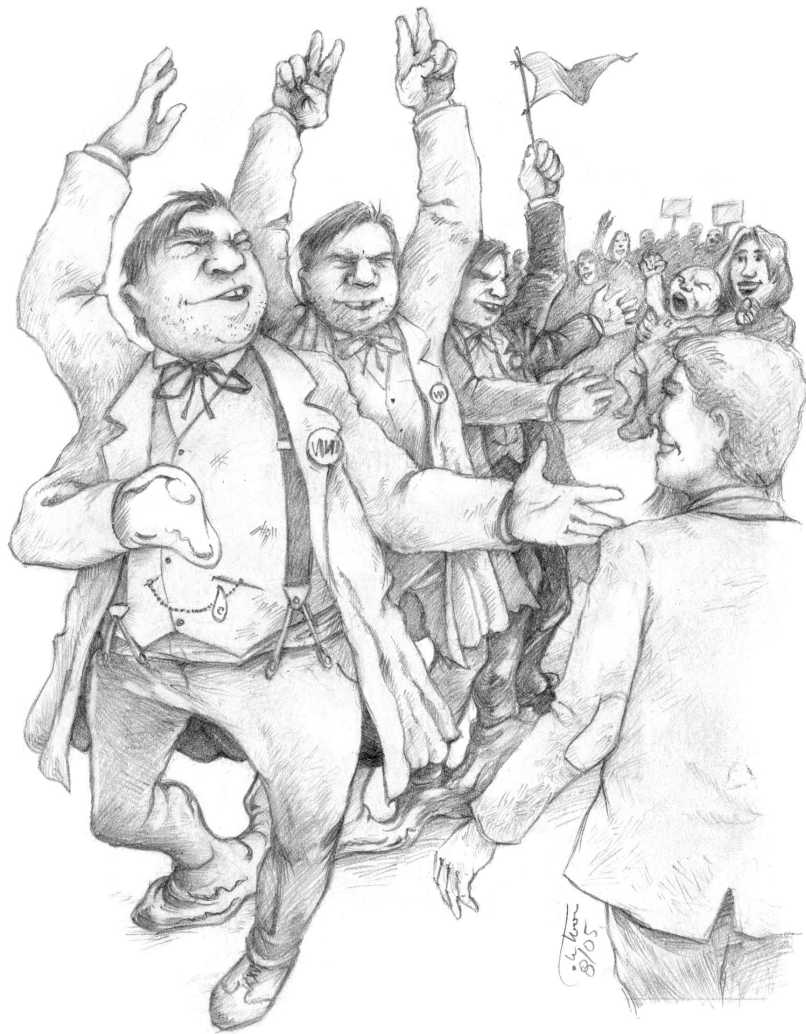
Overview

On the outskirts of the great gray city are the estates. These are picturesque spreads of well-tamed land with massive fountains (some six stories high!), sparkling ponds, and massive gates of marble and iron. Roads wind through these estates between the massive homes: homes that may be said, in some senses, to be infinite inside but are mainly folded into each other.

The Politician lives within one of them and travels (as is part of his duties) to an office in the Ministry of State in the Great Gray City. He is the leader of the governmental machine that runs the Great Gray City and while he may appear as the Head Minister of many different offices within the building he pretends not to know of his other appearances—while still keeping some hidden agenda

NAME: THE POLYTICIAN					CARETAKER	
PHY 12	STR 12	BLD 23	CON 12		To Hit	13-
REF 11	COR 11	REA 11	AGI 11		To Be Hit	+1
INT 12	RES 12	MEM 12	WIL 12		Armor	None
DP 90	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	5 IMP
Wounds	30	90	180			
Description: The Politician appears as a fat man in an expensive suit with many arms. When he moves, a centipede-like “trail” of multiple versions of himself trails out behind him, each talking at once and gesturing and making comments. When he stops, this trail ‘collapses into him,’ leaving only the arms which sprout from him at will to mark his nature (and he can be several places at once, to boot).						
Multiple Attacks: The Politician can make 5 attacks per turn for 5 REA (striking with many hands).						
Pick Pocket: The Politician can lift things from a target with an 18- Level 4 skill.						

going.

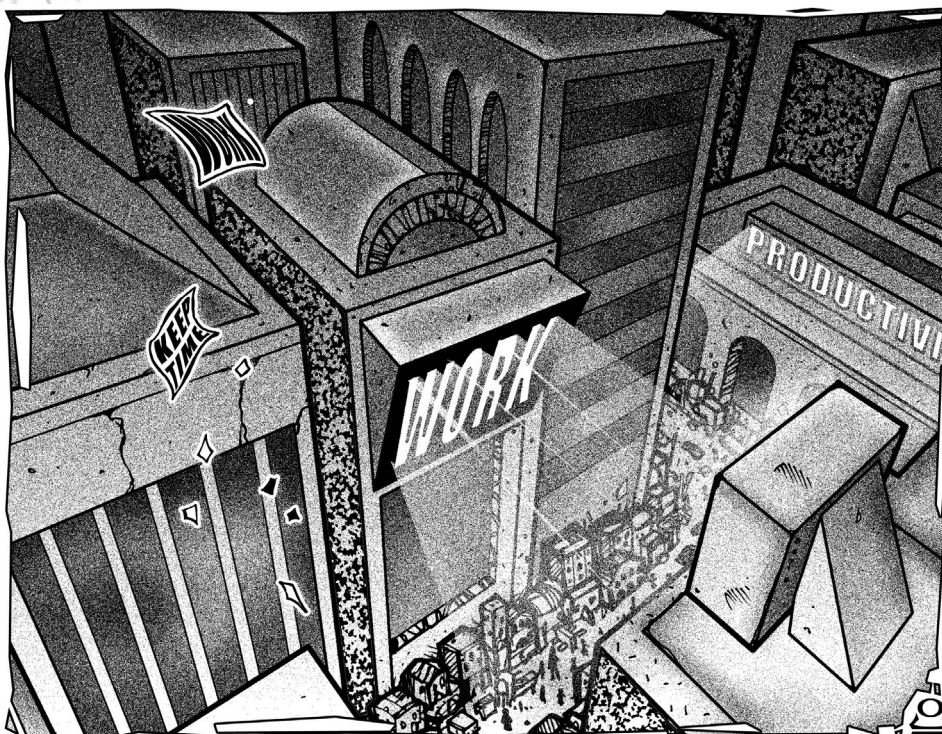


He oversees a massive, Kafkaesque bureaucracy that is unintentionally cruel to those it rules, bizarre in the extreme (documents require drops of blood as identification, forms to do anything are Byzantine, and miles of mechanically accessed filing cabinets wind through dusky warrens in the many basements of the Ministry of State). Ultimately, he is a powerbroker (both in the Great Gray City and in Wonderland in general)—he is a schmoozer in some cases, a monster in others. He gets things done or stops them from getting done. He rewards his friends and relentlessly punishes his enemies.

Description and Personality

A slimy political animal with multiple hands in multiple pockets, the Politician is by turns charming, threatening, and pandering. He is an expert pickpocket and to meet with him is to be fleeced, although he usually makes a point of giving back people the things they “dropped” when they leave—he is not at all, a common thief. He’s an *uncommon* thief and

he participates in all kinds of high-level graft, payoff, and corruption—it’s how things get done with him.



He is also an expert manipulator. He usually knows what he has that you want and what you have that he wants. In the case of people who often “have nothing,” he is both monstrously indifferent and exquisitely cruel (this is the case for most of the suffering Actors who come across him)—but for human Infecteds, he may have designs.

Usually he is chummy, gregarious, and bombastic (and spits a bit when he talks). Sometimes he is dangerously quiet and reserved.

Servants

The Politician surrounds himself

with many actors who are “powerful men” in his dramas—although he may be found behind any door in the Ministry of State, in the old-boys clubs and the back rooms—there are cigar-smoking gentlemen who are the elements he uses to make his masterpieces of incomprehensibly complex governmental office.

Indeed, often he will declare that he, unfortunately, may not do something because “the man upstairs” or the “Executive Minister” or some such title has made a “Indisputable Policy Change.”

Disposition Towards Man

The Polytician believes that man should be erased like a tract of overgrown woodland that badly needs a condo (no offense to present company).

Encounter Threat

Low to Medium. The Polytician almost never initiates physical combat and is not violent. However, usually someone in the Great Gray City is in violation of some law, bylaw, rule, stipulation, regulation, or ordinance. When encountered, one is often on thin ice and he might well summon the constabulary to deal with an offender, after all: rules are rules. Sometimes he may even be apologetic as the party is being carried off.

Needless to say, The Trial (capitals as a reference to Kafka) is horrific and the *sentences* are long, wordy, and *severe*.

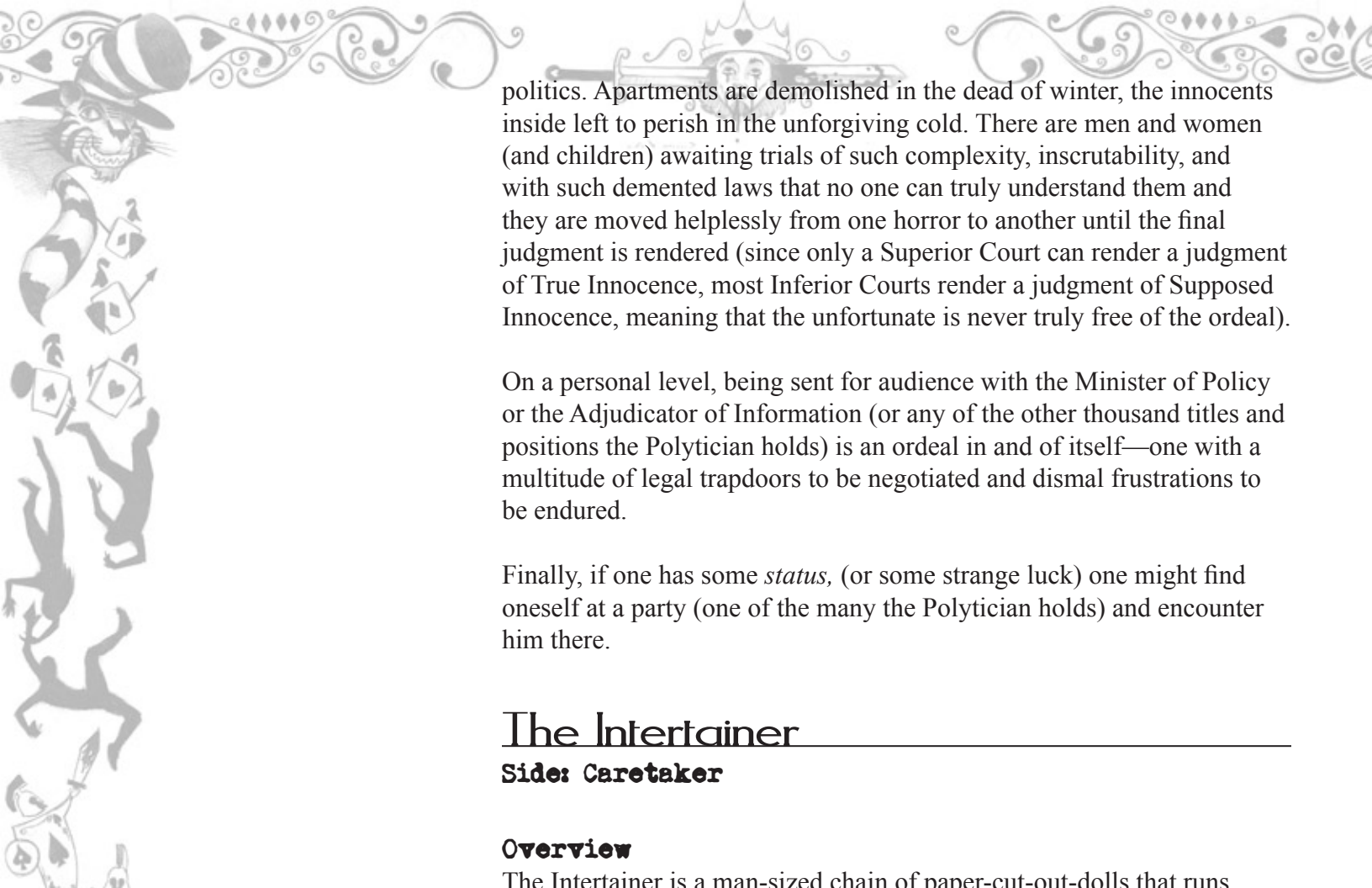
Operations

The Polytician is usually involved with other people’s operations since he is brought in as a facilitator and negotiator. In some rare cases, humans on Chessboard Zero who have encountered him have become servants of his—members of his organization who seek to rebuild his organization on Chessboard Zer. There are some truly nightmarish governments and corporations, especially in third-world countries that are reflections of the Machine that runs the Great Gray City. Whether he really understands or endorses this is a matter of speculation.

Dramas

The denizens of the Great Gray City suffer deeply under its policies and

NAME: THE INTERTAINER					CARETAKER	
PHY 12	STR 12	BLD 23	CON 12		To Hit	13-
REF 11	COR 11	REA 11	AGI 11		To Be Hit	+1
INT 12	RES 14	MEM 12	WIL 12		Armor	None
DP 90	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	5 IMP
Wounds	30	90	180			
Description: The Intertainer appears as a life-sized chain of paper dolls and most often seen as what appears to be several people, seen in shadows, seated around a massive, round, table.						
Combustible: Being made of paper is sometimes a fire hazard. If attacked with flame—even a candle flame, there is a 7- (+1 per point of damage taken) that he will catch on fire and burn at the end of each round for that amount of damage. Frantically flapping about, trying to extinguish himself, he will have a 13- (-1 per point of damage done, minimum of 6-) chance to extinguish himself each turn taking an 8 REA Long Action.						
No Vital Organs: The Intertainer takes only 1pt of damage from PEN projectiles (they make a small hole).						



politics. Apartments are demolished in the dead of winter, the innocents inside left to perish in the unforgiving cold. There are men and women (and children) awaiting trials of such complexity, inscrutability, and with such demented laws that no one can truly understand them and they are moved helplessly from one horror to another until the final judgment is rendered (since only a Superior Court can render a judgment of True Innocence, most Inferior Courts render a judgment of Supposed Innocence, meaning that the unfortunate is never truly free of the ordeal).

On a personal level, being sent for audience with the Minister of Policy or the Adjudicator of Information (or any of the other thousand titles and positions the Polytician holds) is an ordeal in and of itself—one with a multitude of legal trapdoors to be negotiated and dismal frustrations to be endured.

Finally, if one has some *status*, (or some strange luck) one might find oneself at a party (one of the many the Polytician holds) and encounter him there.

The Intertainer

Side: Caretaker

Overview

The Intertainer is a man-sized chain of paper-cut-out-dolls that runs

The Broadcast Station (its main offices are in the Great Gray City but there are many others across Wonderland). It is a media-mogul, producing mad snippets of TV and radio that might seem, for a moment, like news or comedy or drama but, when listened to for a time, are things that work on the receiving mind like a deep massage on the body: its effects are subtle, the meanings obscure, but intuitively understood.

The signal drives some people insane.

The highest rated shows the Intertainer puts out are the Reality TV dramas. The Intertainer is one of the incredibly few Caretakers who even modestly understand Chessboard Zero: Actors are not the preferred subjects of its shows—it prefers Infecteds.

The shows involve commentary from a few of its several voices and its right-hand minion, the Master of Ceremonies². An Infected is *auditioned* and *selected* (of course the explanation is never, shall we say, very exacting).



In each episode there is one or more trials the character must overcome and the character will be able to *hear* the ironic running commentary in his head. Usually this will give some indication of what is going on—and maybe even clues to help the hapless subject.

Announcer's Voice: Today seems like a normal day for Henry—breakfast in the morning, the commute to work, and the long hourly slog until the five o'clock bell rings. But *ssshhh*! Don't tell him: we've replaced one of his co-workers with a psychopathic mannequin who's going to try to kill him!

If he survives the initial round, on each hour, we'll reveal the *secret location* of various *weapons* we've hidden around the office! Will he last long enough to get the *machine gun*? Let's find out.

If the subject doesn't cooperate or leaves the area, sometimes the script will be broken—but usually the Intertainer is happy to *wait*—or up the stakes:

"Henry left work before the Bonus Round even started—we've sent Psycho-The-Mannequin to kill Karen, his pretty innocent co-worker: what will Henry choose? Door number one? Or Door number two? Let's find watch and find out!

Minion

The Master of Ceremonies². This is a tall handsome man who dresses immaculately and has a deep, booming voice. He can bi-locate: appear in exactly two places at once. When he meets with you, you usually only "see" one of him (viewers see more on TV) but his other half is around—and making comments. Usually the only time you realize the other being was *there* is after he already *left*. Then, in your memory, you recall the second, identical version providing ironic commentary as you talked.

Note on Running This: Depending on how the participants (GM and player) want to handle this it could be dramatic to have the GM describe the other version of the MC² making illuminating, but snide comments as the PC and the visible version have their conversation.

It might even be possible for the PC to react to what is being said even though, in the game, he cannot hear it. Perhaps there is a crawling sense that things are wrong. A lot will depend on how your group handles in-character vs. out-of-character information.

Servants

There are walk-in audition halls as high as Chessboard Two. There are talking black-birds that "talent scout" for people on Chessboard One (Infecteds). They'll make deals ("I have a great proposition for you") and keep them.



NAME: MC-SQUARED					MINION	
PHY 11	STR 11	BLD 10	CON 11		To Hit	13-
REF 11	COR 12	REA 13	AGI 12		To Be Hit	-2
INT 12	RES 12	MEM 12	WIL 12		Armor	None
DP 21	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	1 IMP
Wounds	7	21	42			
Description: A young, trim, very handsome game-show announcer whose manner implies a sharp, ironic sense of humor.						
Bi-Locate: The MC-Squared can exist in two places at once, one of whom is not usually visible to normal people in the area.						
Security!: If attacked, the MC-Squared will summon security. Stats vary, usually they are very large, very tough humans with no faces and audio-headsets attached to their ears (with a mike running to where the mouth would be).						

If the target is really *interesting* (most PCs would probably apply) then these talent scouts may barter anything from modest control of one's Infection to secrets of power to money and goods. The Intertainer has ways to get these to people.

Disposition Towards Man

Man is the raw material for the ironic masterpiece that the Intertainer is creating. Man is the jester that dances for him. Actors are commonly used

(and *their* programs range from simple atrocities to raw abominations of cruelty and low-brow humor). But Actors aren't satisfying. It's Humans the Intertainer needs and it would like to get all of them into its shows.

Encounter Threat

Medium. The Intertainer is always looking to cast you *somewhere*. Maybe you'd be perfect for his "College Kids go out in the woods and get killed" show. Maybe he's looking for a new person for "Date from HELL." Whatever, you fit somewhere and when you meet him there's a chance he'll be figuring out how to place you.

Being *dull* isn't a good defense either. He hates the terminally dull. Some people have used *agents*: having someone like a powerful magician, another caretaker, or previous winner act as an Agent can work. However, that's far less satisfying; if you are willing but you have backing and your price is high, he might move on.

If you are willing and you seem a reasonably good casting (dramatic, maybe angsty or bubbly, or otherwise good TV) then he might 'go easy' on you: cast you in a show where, although you may think you are losing your mind (hearing voices) for a while, you may come out of it okay.

Operations

Usually Infecteds encounter either a talent scout or an audition hall. The scouts (talking blackbirds) might appear to someone having an Episode and offer him "help with his pain." A person wandering around a deserted wasteland in Chessboard Two might find a fluorescent-lit doorway with a personable (if strange seeming) girl inside who gives you a clipboard with a weird questionnaire and asks you some questions (has you read some lines) and then delivers you safely back to sanity (out the back door). Later, the problems start.

Most of the games take place on Chessboard One—not Chessboard Zero—however, once someone is *cast*, the game can take them up and down rapidly. Essentially, the character may have burst episodes where strange things happen (seemingly in reality) but the results are hard to prove.

In the Killer Mannequin game, there is, indeed, a mannequin somewhere on the premises—on Chessboard Zero, it's inert. On Chessboard One, it's walking around with a butcher's knife. It'll move on Chessboard Zero when no one is watching it.

Dramas

The Major Studio is in the Great Gray City—but there are other studios all over the place. There are many on Chessboard Four in the Naught lands. People come from far and wide to be on the shows in an attempt to better themselves. Some of these people need help. Some need to be rescued.

The Beastly Baby

Side: Caretaker

Overview

In the grimy countryside out past the Great Gray City, near the Basalt Peaks, and near the slate-rock lake, there are villages, cottages, ranches and farms. Many of these have connections with the politics of the city and the machinations therein—but there are other stories as well. One is particularly dark.

The Beastly Baby travels amongst them and other places as well. Its form is vile but helpless—those caught in its thrall are subjected to the torments worse than outright slavery. Keeping it is a horror visited on the unfortunates—one that usually, if the Beastly Baby has its way, ends with the life of its caretaker.

Its ambitions are far less *visible* than many of the Caretakers, but in a sense far more vile. It has no realm, but rather travels where its guardian-victims take it. No one attached to it will be welcome in one place long, and so it moves.

The Baby's desire is to *play* – and all the world is its plaything. Its games range from the elementally simple (breaking things) to the monstrously intricate and complex. It has a razor-honed appreciation of chaos; both the confusion and misery it wrecks and the ability for a small change (or small *creature*) to affect the world at large.

There are those who suspect the Baby may be one of the most masterful strategists in Wonderland.

Description

The Beastly Baby is first recognized as being worse than other babies.



NAME: THE BEASTLY BABY					CARETAKER	
PHY 02	STR 02	BLD 01	CON 7		To Hit	12-
REF 09	COR 09	REA 13	AGI 09		To Be Hit	+0
INT 14	RES 14	MEM 14	WIL 14		Armor	Special
DP 30	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	Varies
Wounds	10	30	60			
Description: An offensively ugly, ill-tempered baby.						
Play: When the baby is playing with something its own size it usually strikes for up to 3 PEN damage. When terrorizing something larger, it can bite for up to 6 PEN damage ignoring all armor.						
Invulnerable: The baby can only be damaged if the attack is properly thematic. It can disappear and reappear anywhere near its current care giver (throw it off a cliff, it's waiting for you back at home). In order for destruction to be properly thematic, the attacker must have "suffered enough" (often that means the death of one of the two parents) or have lost everything in order to care for their child. Then, and only then, will damage work. Sometimes, however, a caregiver can be rescued. In these cases, dramatic events such as presenting them with their "real child" or getting the baby to do something that will destroy itself may work (it is lured off a cliff with the promise of torturing the family pet).						
Helpless: The baby's psychological grip is strong. When it wants a new caregiver it will appear nearby and call out to them. This gives the target a WIL roll against the baby's WIL. This is at -3 if the target is given to being a care giver in the first place (GM's decision). If failed, the character must care for the baby until one of them is dead. This means the care giver must be present with the baby and make a minimal attempt to feed it (since it cannot be ditched effectively, feeding and cleaning it is the only way to maintain a semblance of sanity with it). The caregiver is still allowed to do whatever he or she can to destroy it--but until the thematic goals are met, the odds are not good.						

For one thing, it is bloated to the point of obesity, and misshapen in a hard-to-define asymmetrical way. It has beady, guilty-looking eyes. It is damp, sticky, and smells suspect. Its feet have lumps where they shouldn't and too many knotty toes. Its color is off, as though it had been holding its breath.

It does not cry exactly, nor talk, but makes either gurgling noises that are disturbing to the point of causing nausea when it has succeeded in something wicked, or a horrific screeching noise when it has been prevented from doing something wicked.

It cannot walk. Therefore it must be cared for.

Minions

The baby does not have minions, per-se, but it will discover creatures capable

of caring for it, and subtly enslave them. It usually appeals (initially) to whatever maternal or paternal instinct they might have. Although no one would look at it without feeling some measure of unease (or outright disgust), most subjects feel guilty leaving a baby – even an preternaturally ugly one – to its own devices.

Of course, once it's been invited in, leaving it will be terribly difficult. If directly attacked, it will use powerful magic to defend itself. Otherwise, it will manipulate its guardian-victims through mild rewards and vicious punishments as they try to guess what it wants of them (to be taken here or there, where it might continue its games).

It does have a number of *toys* which are wind-up constructs and automations which follow it and are capable of tending it and moving it in a pinch.

One of these is the **Meat Grinder**: a largish grinder (about the size of a wood chipper) with a tiny baby-sized crank handle. A living creature fed into it will emerge at 1/10th its original size (after the traumatic experience of feeling slowly ground up). The Baby delights in having people made into "toys" for its amusement. The Meat Grinder travels

about on long, spindly spider's legs when no one is looking.

Servitors

The Beastly Baby surrounds itself with people who owe it something or are willing to do its bidding in order to be left alone. These 'servants' speak for it and advance its agenda, while its victim-guardians scurry in desperate, unending attempts to keep it happy.

The Beastly Baby may also be found in the company of the Army of No, but while it is one of their leaders, the Army is somewhat... unreliable and the Baby knows this and doesn't trust them very far.

Disposition Towards Man

The Beastly Baby hates everyone; man, especially.

Encounter Threat

High. Running across the Beastly Baby is *dangerous*—it probably will desire that the character adopt it. It will screech and demand to be picked up and fed (it may bite; its favorite food is flesh). Characters who ignore it do so at their own risk. It usually doesn't attack directly but has made arrangements with the local environment to bring pressure to bear (other Wonderland entities may demand that the characters take care of it).

If it *is* being cared for, it very likely knows who the characters are (or if not, is interested in them) and will try to fit it into one of its games. Characters who refuse to play are advised to clear out quickly. Any contact with the Beastly Baby is unwholesome at best and traumatically fatal at worse.

Operations

The Baby is one of the Triumvirate (originators) of the Army of No.

NAME: THE MEAT GRINDER					MINION	
PHY 12	STR 19	BLD 21	STC 15-		To Hit	14-
REF 12	COR 12	REA 10	AGI 12		To Be Hit	+1
INT --	RES --	MEM --	WIL --		Armor	9
DP 150	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	12 IMP
Wounds	-1:10				Grapple	24/22
Description: A walking mechanical meat-grinder with spindly legs and long, narrow mechanical arms it uses to feed people in.						
Grind: When the meat grinder scores a Major Success on Grappling the person starts being fed into it (the mouth can expand as necessary to handle up to 100 BLD). Each turn the grinder will grind up 5 BLD per 5 REA action. When the target is "ground" they are ejected at a Very Small size.						
Machine: The grinder does not suffer Penetrating damage modifiers. A Major Failure will cause it to stop grinding a target. A Minor Failure will reduce its offensive grapple to half.						



Dramas

The Baby's games usually involve putting someone in a position where they have to choose between two horrific fates for them or their loved ones. The Baby manipulates these scenarios subtly, spending months researching its games pieces, and then carefully laying a web of traps for them. Its favorite tools include debt, disease, and temptation. It may use characters in its dramas as *bait* or as force to be employed when the subject resists.

The Baby is usually not *obviously* involved, but it can't resist being nearby and watching. An astute observer will notice that the Baby is present when the trap is sprung and fate is delivered.

The Clear Widow

Side: Caretaker

Overview

The Clear Widow is a mysterious, tragic figure that wraps itself in tears and aggressive self-pity. Its sorrow is both a very real, palpable thing and an affectation: a pose adapted to justify its extreme, unending *need* and *hunger*. While some Caretakers are angry, the Clear Widow's

attitude is more one of *vicious resentment*.

Description

A woman dressed in white—a wedding dress turned mourning shroud. Her clothes are soaked by a quiet, constant drizzle of tears that makes her smell brackish. Her flesh is transparent; vaguely visible. She has *cried out* all of her color and substance. She weighs as much as a feather, and drifts in the hallways of her great mausoleum like a ghost.

She is very quiet. To hear her, one must lean in close and concentrate. She is wracked constantly by sobs that seem to come from deep within her body. Those who approach her feel a great sense of unease at her misery: some party of them that feels empathy longs to comfort her, but even at a distance it is clear that her misery is *beyond comfort*—practically infinite, and that is where the second disquiet one feels comes it: is it safe to get so close to such an open wound, a vacuum? Might one be... drawn in?

The Clear Widow is, in fact, a vortex of hyperbolic, melodramatic grief.

NAME: THE CLEAR WIDOW					CARETAKER	
PHY 12	STR 16	BLD 08	CON 12		To Hit	13-
REF 12	COR 12	REA 12	AGI 12		To Be Hit	-2
INT 12	RES 14	MEM 12	WIL 12		Armor	None
DP 240	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	18 PEN
Wounds	80	240	480			
Description: A very quiet, grief-wracked woman in a wedding dress. She is translucent and carries a tactile aura of sadness.						
Hate Claws: When angered, her hands become wicked talons. She can tear for 18 PEN damage twice per turn (5 REA each).						

Her existence is a litany of one unendurable loss after another. Husbands, lovers, children, friends, fortune – all have been lost to her, and each loss has left not scars (for she does not scar), but a wet *laceration* that goes through flesh and into her soul.

And yet, even after all of that, she does not protect herself, but still she *desperately* seeks more things to *lose*. She inexorably draws people into her orbit, fully and perversely aware they will be taken from her.

Howlers

When someone in her domain *runs* (See Dramas), she unleashes the Howlers. They are great balls of gnashing teeth and bone spikes that cry like wolves and move with terrible, flickering speed. They swarm out of great pits and track unerringly. They first bite to cripple and then consume the subject alive, leaving nothing but blood-soaked earth in their wake.

Waifs

Waifs are very sad, very pretty girls that project a kind of aching emotional (and physical) vulnerability. They look as though they might be drawn away by a strong wind. As though the world weighs heavily upon them, and as though they might shatter into moaning tears at any moment.

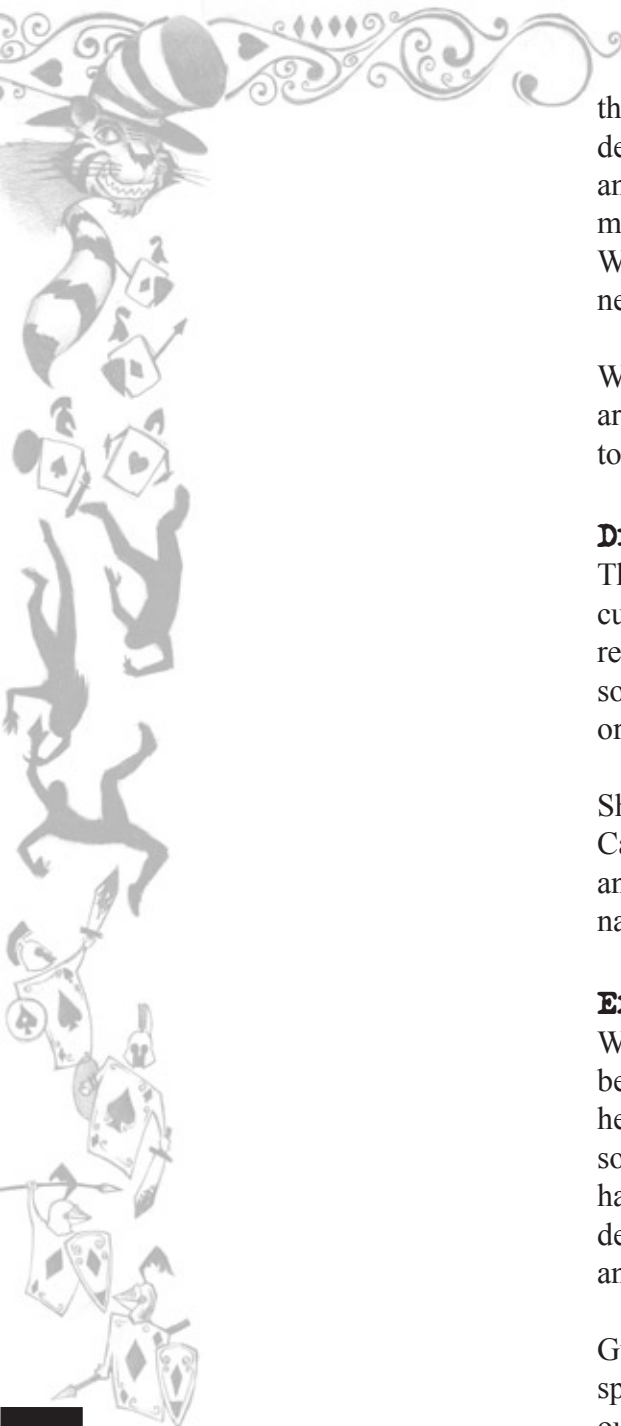
Careful examination reveals signs of self-mutilation —cutting of the delicate flesh —and a waif almost *always* has a journal nearby filled with heart-rending poetry that bares her most private soul.

Waifs are spawned when the Clear Widow's tears fall on grass; the grass grows tall and flutters and becomes a waif— you can still see their origins in their emerald-green feline eyes.

Waifs need to be protected, saved, cherished, nurtured. They are far too delicate for this world, and anyone who meets one senses first, that they are too fragile and second

NAME: HOWLERS					MINION	
PHY 12	STR 15	BLD 12	STA 15-		To Hit	13-
REF 12	COR 12	REA 14	AGI 12		To Be Hit	-2
INT 08	RES 08	MEM 12	WIL --		Armor	3/8
DP 60	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	12 PEN
Wounds	-1:4pts					
Description: Balls of gnasihing teeth and bone spikes about a yard and a half across. They can move at 18 yards per second and attack in groups of up to 15!						
Tracking Sense: The Holwer’s track like bloodhounds with a 15- L3 Perception roll.						

NAME: WAIFS					MINION	
PHY 08	STR 08	BLD 06	CON 09		To Hit	13-
REF 11	COR 13	REA 11	AGI 11		To Be Hit	-1
INT 10	RES 10	MEM 10	WIL 10		Armor	None
DP 8	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	none
Wounds	3	8	16			
Description: Waifs are young, pretty (Attractive Level 2) girls of indeterminate age who exude a sense of vulnerability and helplessness. They appeal to one's need to <i>protect</i> and, while physically helpless, are masters of emotional manipulation.						
Manipulation: Waifs have a Charm and Persuade score of 16-.						



that they must be *rescued*. They are *charming*—in their sad, clinically depressive kind of way. Waifs are the Clear Widow's eyes and ears, and to men who need to be strong protectors or women with emotional, maternal instincts they are almost *perfect* parasites. In a home where a Waif has taken up residence, she will run the household, her never-met-needs driving everything until there is *nothing left*.

Waifs wait on the Widow as serving girls and handmaids and when there are guests of the right persuasion about she can be quite cruel with them, tormenting them so that they might be *rescued*.

Disposition Towards Man

The Clear Widow claims to *love* mankind; to appreciate—if not his current form, at least his potential. Mankind's *obstinate refusal* to reciprocate that love (and, presumably, either self-immolate or undergo some indescribable mutilating change) is an act of betrayal of the highest order.

She feels all of the disgust (and fear) and repulsion that the other Caretakers feel toward humankind, but because of her great sensitivity and her generous, kind, and loving nature, she has taken Mankind's nature *personally*.

Encounter Threat

When meeting an individual human, she will happily give the visitor the benefit of the doubt—she can be a gracious (if distracted) host, but once her (considerable) patience has run out, she will begin to gently suggest some “options” to her guest: he could renounce his humanity *this way* or have it surgically removed through *that* procedure... or at least have the decency to drink *this* cup and thus acknowledge his miserable existence and end it simultaneously.

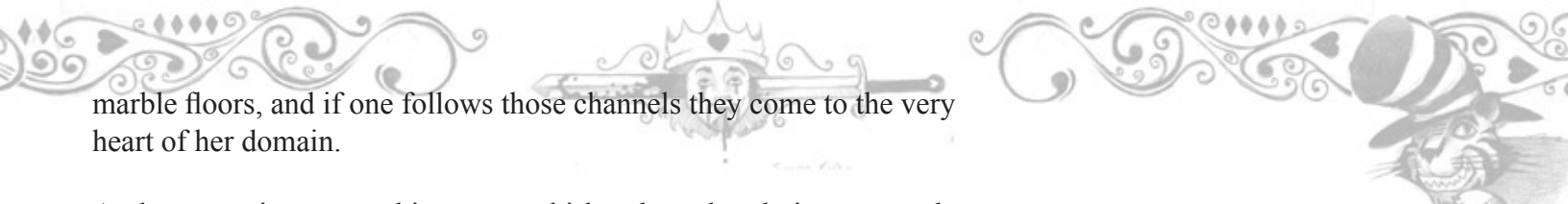
Guests who do not pick up on subtle hints will receive gradually more specific suggestions until (finally) her long-suffering patience will run out and she will become *angry*. Angry that she has been forced to act terribly despite her good nature. Angry that her kindnesses and well-meant advice has been rejected. Angry that she has been *put in the position* of administering punishment.

Her wrath, under those conditions, can be intricate and truly terrible.

Domain

The Clear Widow lives in a vast mausoleum surrounded by a graveyard that extends from horizon to horizon. Each tomb, or urn, or slot has a specific meaning to her. It is someone who was *cruelly* taken from her.

As she walks the halls of her domain/prison, she is wracked by the memories of each loss, the tragic stories that still haunt her. The terrible unfairness that surrounds her. Her tears flow into channels cut in the



marble floors, and if one follows those channels they come to the very heart of her domain.

At the center is a vast, white-water whirlpool—a thundering vortex that makes the sound of wailing. The whirlpool can be viewed from high-arched glass doors and several verandas that look down into its raging waters. Mists rise up into the sky, a vast dull-white cloud.

Operations

She is the architect of some of the most aggressively sadistic elements of the Army of No. These were not all her ideas; she collected them from other imaginative and inventive Caretakers. The thought of what she's doing pains her greatly, but given what humankind has *done to her* there's really no other choice.

She, unlike many of the other caretakers, also pursues operations concerning *specific* humans. She has her agents (Waifs, amongst others) searching the higher chessboards looking for people of interest. Her “charity work” involves rewarding the virtuous and punishing the deserving—although she has found (to her infinite dismay) that if she watches *long enough* almost everyone is *deserving*.

Dramas

The Clear Widow is a creature of her dramas – her life is *all drama* and she revels in it. Her domain is a vast graveyard of her victims: thousands (tens of thousands?) murdered by her or driven to suicide (or worse).

She opens the game by giving of herself—helping some poor soul at great cost to her own well being (after all, she is *in mourning* – even getting out of bed in the morning is an impossible feat). The game continues as she works the subject further and further into her debt, all the while acting as a wise and kind benefactor.

She adopts orphans. She befriends the bereft. She gives succor to the miserable and a helping hand to the humbled. She gives and gives and gives (usually in ways carefully crafted to ensure that the subject will still need *more*). And what she asks in return is friendship: “Come and sit with me and let a sad, sad woman tell you her tale. Let me reminisce about my dead lover. Visit me—for in my misery, the ones I had truly *thought* were my friends have *abandoned me*.”

And over time, the demands become greater and greater, always in accordance with what she has given. Soon, the subject is in her orbit and in her control. To leave—to disengage—is to draw her wrath, and so she takes and takes, requiring ever more to fill her emptiness.

And then one day, her new friend has nothing more to give and she finds an urn, or a cabinet, or a plot of land for him, and she has one last thing: another story; another wound. Another tale of woe to spin for the *next* guest who comes to her domain.



NAME: LIEBRARIAN					CARETAKER	
PHY 12	STR 10	BLD 08	CON 12		To Hit	13-
REF 12	COR 12	REA 13	AGI 12		To Be Hit	-2
INT 15	RES 15	MEM 15	WIL 15		Armor	None
DP 90	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	Special
Wounds	30	90	180			
Description: A young, female, stern-looking librarian. She wears large glasses and is dressed conservatively.						
Scissors: When the Liebrarian hits with Scissors, the subject gains a Physical Defect of her choosing.						

The Liebrarian

Side: Caretaker

Overview

High up in the Basalt Mountains there is a massive structure that looms over a tiny, picturesque town below. It is the Liebrary and it is both the sum of all knowledge in book form and the largest

collection of untruths in existence. So cryptographically sophisticated is its filing system that one could browse it for centuries and never know if you had found something true or not. But if you *could* tell—then it would be one of the greatest prizes amongst the Caretakers.

There's one person who can tell. She's the keeper of the Liebrary: the Liebrarian.

The Liebrarian is a *young* Caretaker—a wonderland entity recently appointed to her own House. As such, she is in some ways more unsure and in other ways more certain than the others; she desires their approval—her own success.

She appears as a young woman, impeccable and conservative, with ever-so-slightly ridiculous glasses and an overly stern disposition. Her position places her in the possession of considerable information, and she's quite careful to give the appearance of being responsible and neutral with it.

The Liebrarian is a keeper of forbidden knowledge concerning various hyper-infectious strains of Wonderland. As such, she is sometimes part of special groups that work against the Deconstructionists or with the Magicians.

The Liebrary is something many Magicians have a concept of visiting and searching for information (but without help they will usually come away with ever more twisted falsehoods ... or, worse, run afoul of her rules and regulations).

Description

A girl in her mid-20s, but far more serious and collected than most young women. Everything she does is considered and precise (especially her choice of words; she speaks so elegantly that it's almost flipped over into awkwardness).

She is rather appalled by even the most mild breaches of social etiquette and in her own domain spends considerable time ensuring that visitors obey the rules (especially her check-out, return, and never-above-a-whisper policies).

When things are in order and the project is under control, she can be helpful and charming. She's ambitious—her post gives her considerable visibility and a chance to rub elbows with the top echelons of Caretaker society. Any potential to insert herself into the dramas of a powerful Caretaker (in a way that might reflect well on her) would be of great interest to her.

After making sure the rules are obeyed and seeing to the project, she has a few minutes every night to reflect on social life; she is lonely running a House, and wonders what will become of her—success and glory, or failure and ignominy? She believes herself to be a *caterpillar* – a creature that was destined to enclose itself in a chrysalis, and emerge as something radically different. Her chosen career path prevents that, and in her quiet moments, this fills her with regret.

She is far too busy with the key dramas of her life, however, to spend much of her waking life revisiting decisions already made.

Book Worms

While the Liebrarian can bi-locate (and then some) to handle many affairs of her collection, she has many helpers, all of them a bit fanatic. The Bookworms are large, friendly worms with luminous tails that crawl about the Liebrary reshelving and mending books (with self-spun silk). They can also be helpful to visitors since they know the maze of books better than almost anyone but the Liebrarian herself.

Disposition Towards Man

She is intrigued and utterly convinced of the Red Queen's "Human Condition" project (one of the reasons she was chosen for the job was her honest appreciation of the Red Queen's approach). She believes that mankind should be properly converted into book format and filed under the appropriate setting.

Encounter Threat

Medium. Out of her domain, she's reasonably inoffensive (although very often irritating —she's prone to scolding). In the Library, she can be quite dangerous unless one is either very careful or protected by a

NAME: BOOKWORM					MINION	
PHY 13	STR 23	BLD 50	CON 13		To Hit	13-
REF 10	COR 12	REA 10	AGI 10		To Be Hit	+2/+3
INT 11	RES 11	MEM 18	WIL 11		Armor	None
DP 60	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	24 IMP
Wounds	20	60	120			
Description: A large brown worm with a friendly looking human face, the bookworm's tail has an amber, incandescence that is good light to read by. They are friendly and helpful (although they cannot distinguish the truth in the library from the lies, they can locate many items or at least get a person close to what they are looking for.						
Shock: The bookworm can throw an amber bolt from its tail (ROF 1, -1/5 yards) hitting for up to 24 IMP damage (they usually just fire a 1-2pt warning bolt, however). This is non-flammable: that could damage the books!						



powerful Caretaker whose favor she wishes to curry. Her library is full of useful information, but the risks involved in getting it are quite high.

Visitors to her library are subject to her rules, and she has elaborate punishments for those who break them.

- Speaking unnecessarily or *ever* speaking above a whisper: She has a pair of brass tongs decorated with jade that she uses to rip the tongue out. Tongues are pressed into a special book; as you turn through the pages they *wag*, repeating whatever the offending sentence was.
- Touching a book with unwashed hands: She has a pair of (blunt) scissors that she uses to cut the hands of the offender off. Walking with unwashed feet will result in the same thing. This punishment often results in screaming which is, unfortunately, talking above a whisper...
- Late books: Flesh from the offender is *cut into paper dolls*—one doll per day the book is late. This produces a row of tiny, screaming figures (that look like the offender) made of compressed flesh linked at their hands and feet. The ‘paper dolls’ live in terrible agony for a few days (they scream and writhe constantly in soft, very, very high-pitched voices). The offender suffers not only being partially (or completely) flayed, but the dying figures still transmit the pain of their deaths (although at a greatly reduced rate, or the subject would go mad).
- Reading something you’re not allowed to read: She plucks your eyes out.
- Damaging a book: Death by pressing.
- Misplacing a book: She’ll snatch away a feature (eye, nose, mouth, etc.) or limb and just as quickly replace it in the wrong place (“See how *you’d* like to be mis-placed!”).
- And so on...

For those who encounter her outside of the Library, there is still a risk: a risk that she will become honestly fond of certain you (she likes those who appreciate literature and are a little bit... shy in social settings). People whom she takes a liking to will be delivered to the Red Queen for translation and binding so that she can enjoy their company whenever she desires (she sees this as a great compliment, but understands that most people are a “tad squeamish” about such a fate, so she’s unlikely to give them much advanced warning).

Domain

The Liebrarian’s House was created to oversee the Encyclopedia—the development of a canon of all knowledge. The Encyclopedia would be a set of books that record every fact in the universe. It would, by itself, be a perfect model (in text form) of the universe.



The passion behind this project (its purpose) has to do with proving the foundational beliefs of the Caretakers: that the universe is finite and that it can be fully and properly expressed in terms of literature.

Operations

She is often an *element* in someone else's operation. A Caretaker may send someone to see her and ask for information (this usually takes some doing and may, in kind, result in doing favors for her).

Dramas

Actors are often sent to see her to check out books for others. This is dangerous since the books might be returned late or in bad condition (very dangerous). It is also not unusual for Actors who don't *understand* the nature of the Encyclopedia to become obsessed with finding some obscure fact within it—this can take centuries and still come to nothing since the filing system is so obscure. However, searching the deeper and darker sections of the Liebrary has many dangers (not the least of which is that you will break one of the rules).

The Typeist

Side: Caretaker

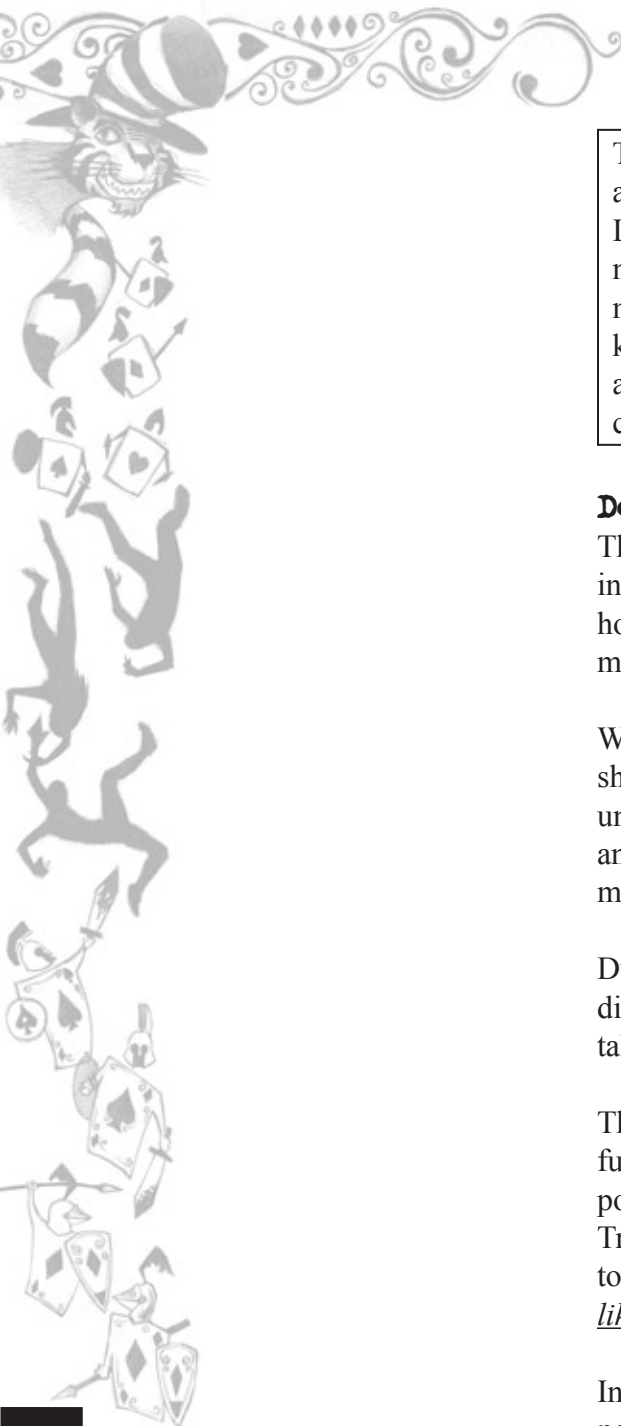
Overview

The Typeist is a sixteen-legged 'spider' the size of a Volkswagen with the head of a young woman and each of her eight legs terminating in a white gloved hand, she crosses all Wonderland observing and categorizing one thing after another in infinite series of lists and tables. She is part of the group that creates and maintains The Encyclopedia (where the Liebrarian oversees the access and cataloguing of the work).

The Typeist believes that everything has a fundamental nature and that things can be reduced to theirs with enough study and insight. She is trying to gain that and produces volume after volume (her bloated stinger contains an near infinite supply of books and quills).

she has catalogued many things : Actors, Minions, Servitors, Caretakers, and the like. These things are easy. Her stumbling point, of course, is *man*. As that's where she runs into trouble, that's where those who encounter her may run into trouble.

NAME: THE TYPEIST					CARETAKER	
PHY 12	STR 21	BLD 25	CON 12		To Hit	13-
REF 12	COR 12	REA 12	AGI 12		To Be Hit	+0
INT 12	RES 13	MEM 12	WIL 12		Armor	None
DP 120	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	Special
Wounds	40	120	240			
Description: A spider with 16 legs and a (female) human's head. Each of her legs terminates in a white-gloved hand and she is constantly moving about examining, categorizing, and tabulating.						
Shrink: Once per turn as a 5 REA Medium action, she can shrink a target down to Very Small size (mouse-sized). She gets no to-hit negative against small targets.						
Multiple Attack: With any 5 REA physical attack, she can make two more "for free" due to her multitude of arms.						
Clinging: The Typeist can cling to any surface and is effectively weightless if she wants to be (but she must remain affixed, she doesn't float).						



The Typeist is considered one of the leading sources of data and analysis on strains of Infection. This information was used to create Llamed and is considered *dangerous* by the Caretakers: they do not want hyper-infectious strains created since a mass Infection of mankind could destroy Wonderland. She is loyal to the cause of keeping this information protected but is often a bit absent-minded about it: Deconstructionists have gotten information out of her on this count.

Description and Personality

The Typeist comes off as a little frantic, a little distracted, and a little incoherent. She is usually writing with two or three hands at once and holding magnifying glasses, calipers, scales, and other instruments to measure whatever it is she has discovered.

When she finds a person though, she wants to categorize them. Usually she has some new theory (“There are 10 types of people: those who understand binary notation and those who do not—which are you?” and then try to make some generalizations about them and see if they measure up to her theories.

During conversation with her, one might find a full accounting of their dimensions, favorite ice creams, and least preferable ways to die all taken and recorded.

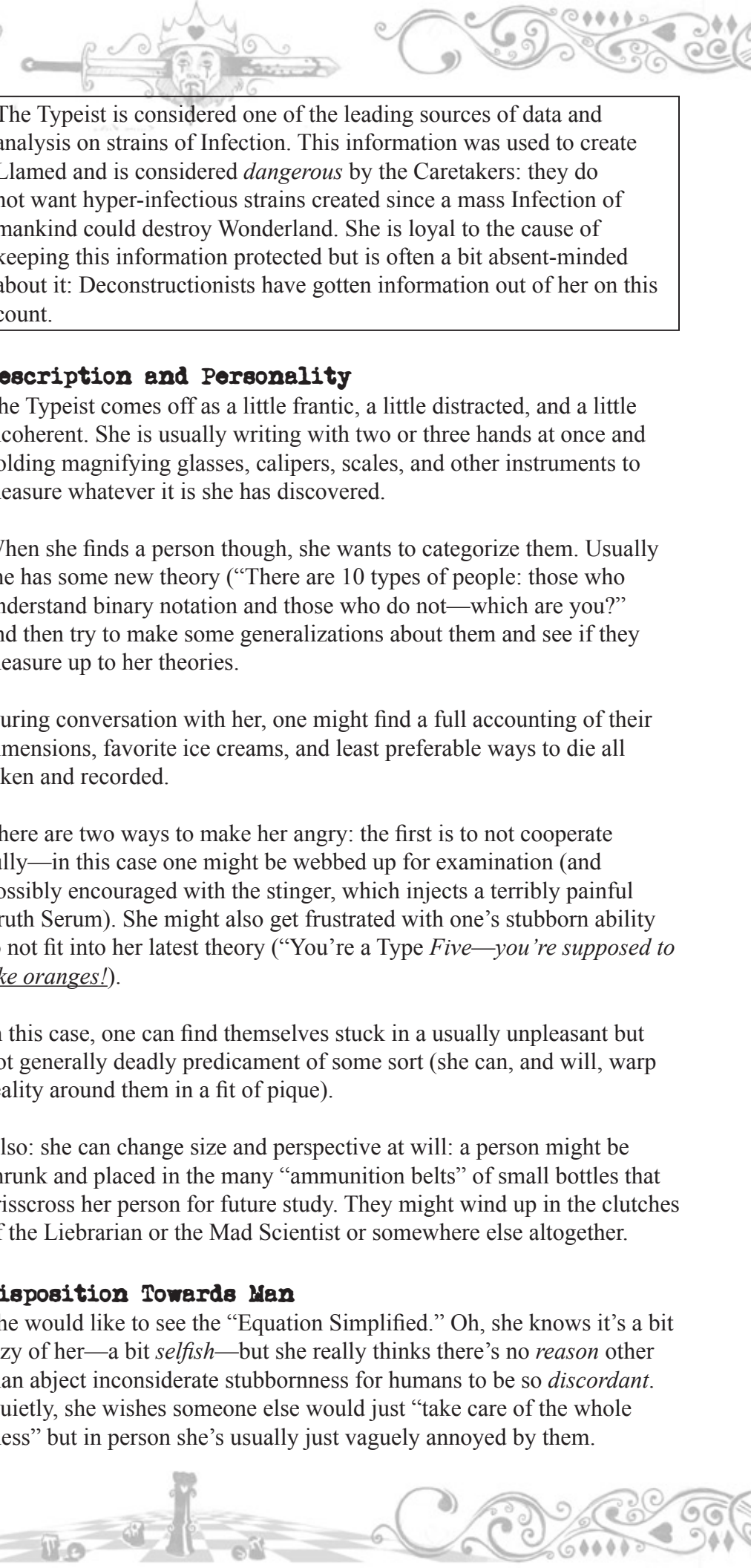
There are two ways to make her angry: the first is to not cooperate fully—in this case one might be webbed up for examination (and possibly encouraged with the stinger, which injects a terribly painful Truth Serum). She might also get frustrated with one’s stubborn ability to not fit into her latest theory (“You’re a Type *Five*—*you’re supposed to like oranges!*”).

In this case, one can find themselves stuck in a usually unpleasant but not generally deadly predicament of some sort (she can, and will, warp reality around them in a fit of pique).

Also: she can change size and perspective at will: a person might be shrunk and placed in the many “ammunition belts” of small bottles that crisscross her person for future study. They might wind up in the clutches of the Liebrarian or the Mad Scientist or somewhere else altogether.

Disposition Towards Man

She would like to see the “Equation Simplified.” Oh, she knows it’s a bit lazy of her—a bit *selfish*—but she really thinks there’s no *reason* other than abject inconsiderate stubbornness for humans to be so *discordant*. Quietly, she wishes someone else would just “take care of the whole mess” but in person she’s usually just vaguely annoyed by them.



Encounter Threat

Medium. She is rarely *deadly* (that would be shirking) but often highly inconvenient or even dangerous to encounter. She is good at detecting lies and one rarely knows what the right answers are to her questions. However, some people have placated her by guessing answers (if she's really frustrated she might 'lead the witness' in her polling) or by explaining some "reason" for their personal anomalies. Finally, sometimes when she's encountered, she may be useful (she often carries many things and people and knows lots of facts).

Dramas

The Typeist's Dramas center on Actors whom she has taken for categorization (sometimes their relatives will seek her out to get them back). Sometimes they center on questions she is trying to answer and she is a "guest" in someone's home while observing them.

She is also quite familiar and friends with the Liebrarian.

The Black Rose

Side: Deconstructionist

Overview

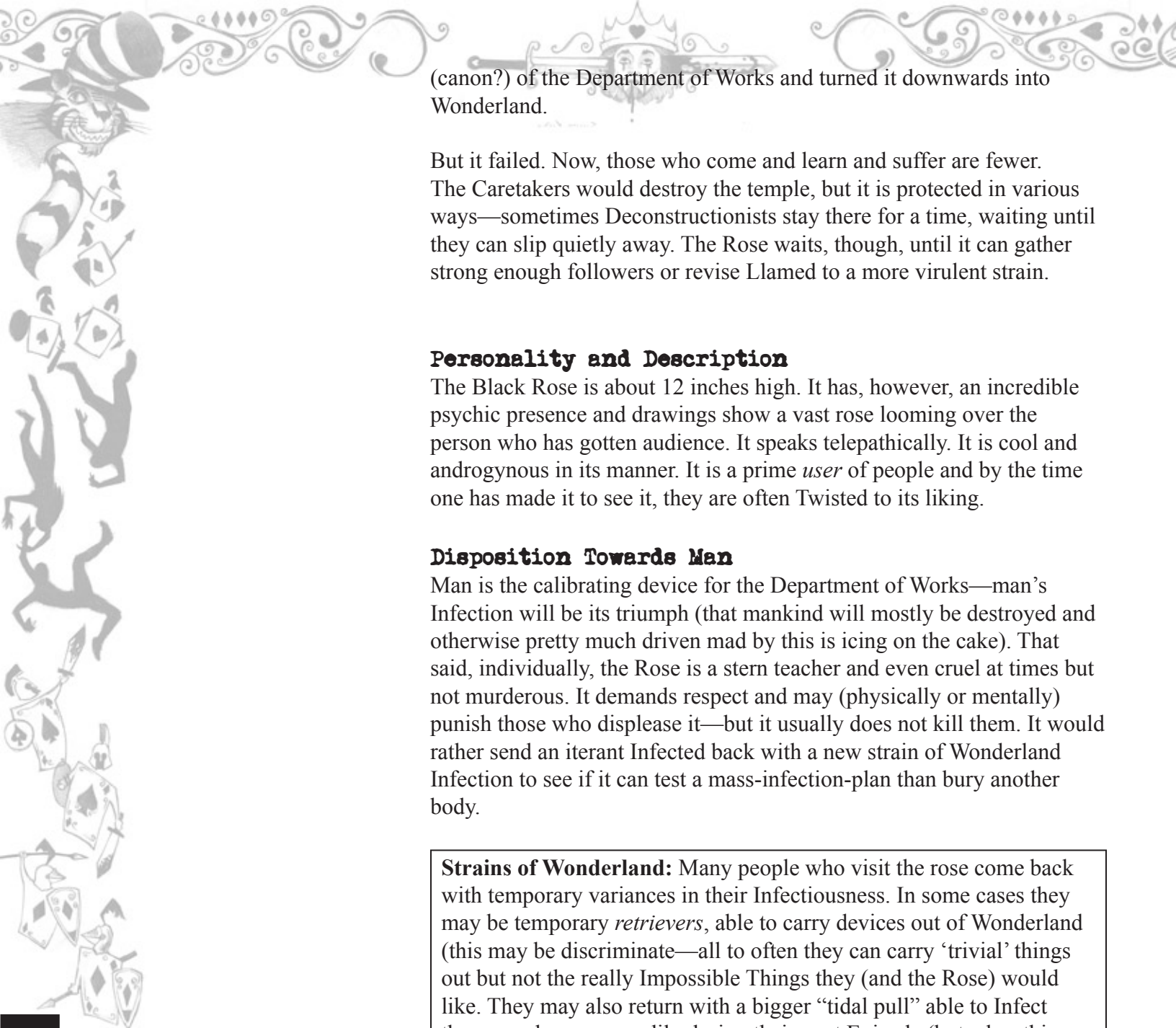
On the far side of the Basalt Mountains, near the Mare Imbrium coast, there is a temple. It is now overgrown with vines that bear flowers whose scent is that of dreams, whose nectar tastes like warm compliments from someone you admire, and whose leaves are a multi-hued hypnotic green. Wind-sanded idols stand ancient watch at the gateways and there are many stairways, many terraces, and inner courtyard after inner courtyard.

There are monks who tend the temple and there are the sea-villagers who know of it ... and there are those who come and seek it out. In the center of the temple, in the Exalted Inner Courtyard, stands a single perfect rose, its pedals a color that is described as Infra-Black. It is a color that makes one think of blood so deep red that it has become black—of a lightless heart that beats within a mammoth chest. The rose is the subject of the temple. The Temple is the *Temple of Secrets*.

When Shadows come here, sometimes sent by Magicians, more often sent by members of the Underground who wish to see global Infection, in order to learn, they must pass through several chambers of testing and several trials of the *terrible secrets*. These are rooms where the hieroglyphs are, once understood, *shattering* to the person who reads them. They are the Truths we fear. They are what our Loved Ones Really Think. They are our most Frightening Desires set in stone. The supplicant must decipher the writing and re-write it with brush and parchment and ink wet with tears.

The Black Rose is a teacher—it is a teller of secret truths, and it is a destroyer. If Llamed had been successful, it would have taken the world in a super-storm of unreality and it would have engaged the cannons





(canon?) of the Department of Works and turned it downwards into Wonderland.

But it failed. Now, those who come and learn and suffer are fewer. The Caretakers would destroy the temple, but it is protected in various ways—sometimes Deconstructionists stay there for a time, waiting until they can slip quietly away. The Rose waits, though, until it can gather strong enough followers or revise Lamed to a more virulent strain.

Personality and Description

The Black Rose is about 12 inches high. It has, however, an incredible psychic presence and drawings show a vast rose looming over the person who has gotten audience. It speaks telepathically. It is cool and androgynous in its manner. It is a prime *user* of people and by the time one has made it to see it, they are often Twisted to its liking.

Disposition Towards Man

Man is the calibrating device for the Department of Works—man’s Infection will be its triumph (that mankind will mostly be destroyed and otherwise pretty much driven mad by this is icing on the cake). That said, individually, the Rose is a stern teacher and even cruel at times but not murderous. It demands respect and may (physically or mentally) punish those who displease it—but it usually does not kill them. It would rather send an iterant Infected back with a new strain of Wonderland Infection to see if it can test a mass-infection-plan than bury another body.

Strains of Wonderland: Many people who visit the rose come back with temporary variances in their Infectiousness. In some cases they may be temporary *retrievers*, able to carry devices out of Wonderland (this may be discriminate—all to often they can carry ‘trivial’ things out but not the really Impossible Things they (and the Rose) would like. They may also return with a bigger “tidal pull” able to Infect those nearby more readily during their next Episode (but, alas, this usually doesn’t last nor is it transmitted).

The Rose As A Teacher

Visiting the Rose does not *necessitate* going through the shattering, twisting chambers of Truth—if one seeks an audience, there is usually a way to arrange it. The Rose, however, can be convinced to teach magic for a trade in carrying Twisteds and Infections back to Chessboard Zero.

Encounter Threat

Low. If one misbehaves in the Temple, they may be flogged. If one annoys the Rose (comes in to make deals with it that are clearly one sided) they may be Twisted and Infected with some test strain and kicked out—but even this is rarely deadly and often no more than extremely

unpleasant or inconvenient.

Operations

The Black Rose is works through *Waldens* and *Activists* on Chessboard Zero. Many discuss The Temple of Secrets without really knowing what it is (Chapel Perilous?) and consider it a path to enlightenment, which it certainly can be after a fashion.

Dramas

Along the sea-coasts of Mare Imbrium there are many people who know of the Temple and periodically make pilgrimages there to seek physical help, counsel on a tough problem, or ask for a variety of blessings. These all have various high prices the Rose extracts.

Also, in the fishing villages, there is a tendency to “haul in” dreamers (who may be humans undergoing deep Descent or may be other actors) and bring them up to the shores. Usually these people are used in a variety of important rituals for the villagers and may, for instance, be married to the daughter of a village elder or be asked to participate in an important function.

Most times these revolve around secrets that one of more of the Actors (not necessarily the person who washes up) has, and their catastrophic exposing.

The Factory

Side: Caretakers

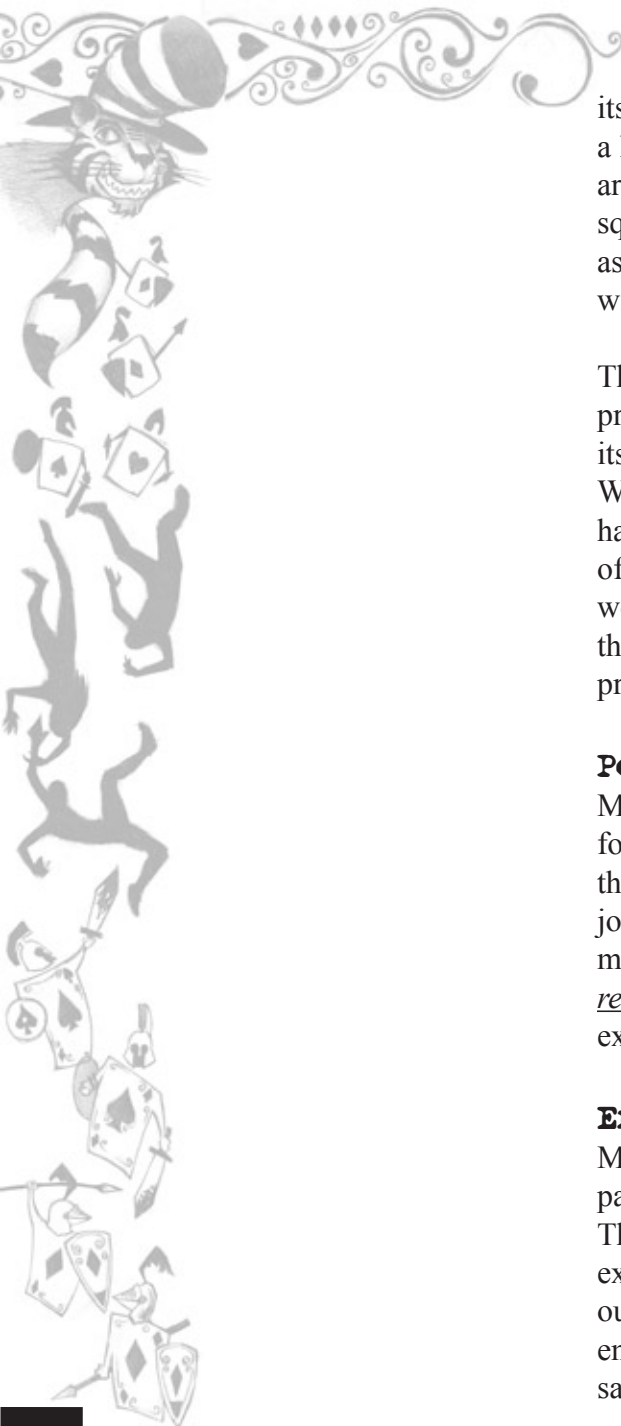
Overview

There are vast acres and complexes of buildings powered by miles of buzzing generators. Underground there are layered stories of conveyor belts, furnaces, and robot-arms. The “Executive Offices” are hospital-sterile and mausoleum-quiet, the omnipresent industrial grayness punctuated by cheery motivational posters (and ominously threatening safety posters) mounted under dirty, scratched glass.

This is The Factory. Men, women, and even children toil away here on every shift. No one is sure what the factory makes—in some places workers use machine-loom to spin fabrics into cloth ... but is it for clothing? In other places metal is melted and cast in waves of blinding heat. Still other sections across its seemingly limitless span have refineries—and hospital wards where subjects are bled into tanks—and machines crush rocks—and workers stand before walls of humming radium dials—and ...

The fact is, you’ll never find anyone who *runs* the Factory: at each step up the corporate ladder the illusion of luxury and paradise is shattered by close inspection revealing misery and despair. The Factory, some say, exists to grind down the souls of those in its clutches: and those in





its clutches are *legion*. Where a human must manage production quotas, a legion of uniformed cats must catch (and kill) uniformed rats (who are part of the scavenger teams). Along the outer walls and around the squalid, poisoned villages that house the workers (and children as young as three must work) there are anti-aircraft guns and turrets and barbed wire.

The truth is that The Factory *itself* is alive and cognizant and it *does* produce things. Weapons and soldiers for the Army of No roll off its assembly lines. It produces toxic waste to be dumped throughout Wonderland and the upper Chessboards. It produces waste heat to try to hasten along the final burn-out of the universe (this is a conceit: the laws of thermodynamics don't apply in Wonderland). It expands to swallow woodlands. It opens branches to hire workers. It makes policy to destroy them (the most cleverly and subtly sadistic individuals are, of course, promoted to HR ... just as in reality).

Personality

Mostly what you'll speak to is one of the Executives—a “spokesperson” for the Factory who may either “spin” (giving you glowing lies about the work that is done) or threaten (if you are perceived as not doing your job). When it does speak or communicate (in a cacophony of clanging metal) it is slow, patient, and *bitter*. It is *showing what the universe is really like for all its wards and servants—giving them the unvarnished experience*. They ought to be grateful, really.

Encounter Threat

Medium-high. If you are caught on Factory Grounds *without* a visitor-pass, you are a worker and, if you aren't working, *you're slacking!* This can result in punishments (ranging for humiliation to horrific execution depending on who catches you). If you approach from the outside and *get* a visitor pass, there will usually be some offers made for employment—and sometimes some industrial accidents arranged if you say ‘no.’

Attitude Towards Man

Man is fuel for the machine and must be properly *refined* in order to be used. The Factory would like to turn the entirety of space-time on Chessboard Zero into more of *it*. On a personal level, Man is a dirty, lazy, misdirected slacking employee with no sense of decorum, personal pride, or honor: these things come from being tireless, obedient workers and humankind must be *shaped* into them (or scared into doing a poor approximation).

Dramas

There are many prisoners of the Factory and many tragedies within it. Everyone wants to get out (although most don't see this as an *escape* attempt—but rather an need to find another job elsewhere, something that is impossible for most of them with the schedules they keep).

There are also those irrepressible souls who strive to find happiness with one another within the world of the Factory: it *particularly* enjoys crushing them. Finally, sometimes, a person will come, hoping to work only a while (the money is good) and then return home (in some cases to a higher Chessboard) and, of course, something will happen (some regulation will be broken, some contractual loophole will be found, etc.) that traps them and keeps them within the machine.

The Wheel

Side: Caretaker

Overview

The Wheel turns out in the vast desert called the Nonillion Planes. It is 70 stories tall above ground, and must be 70 below. It is the color of rust and dried blood.

Its axle extends through the earth, and ends in a vacant cement building at a joint connected to nothing. It is clear, then, that the axle does not turn the Wheel. The Wheel turns the axle.

From a hundred miles away, it sounds like the whisper of thunder. At a hundred yards, the earth churns, drawn up and cast back down, and it sounds like a waterfall. To stand within its shadow is to be blinded by the sandstorm it drives.

Every year (as near as it can be figured in Wonderland), on each solstice and each equinox, it stops.

And when the Wheel stops, it speaks.

One of the most remote of the Great Lords of Wonderland, it has its own language and its own philosophy. It has told its *scribes* many things, and some of them are probably lies, but its wisdom is considered unparalleled in Wonderland, even if it is (Even amongst the Lords and Ladies of the Mad) *perverse*.

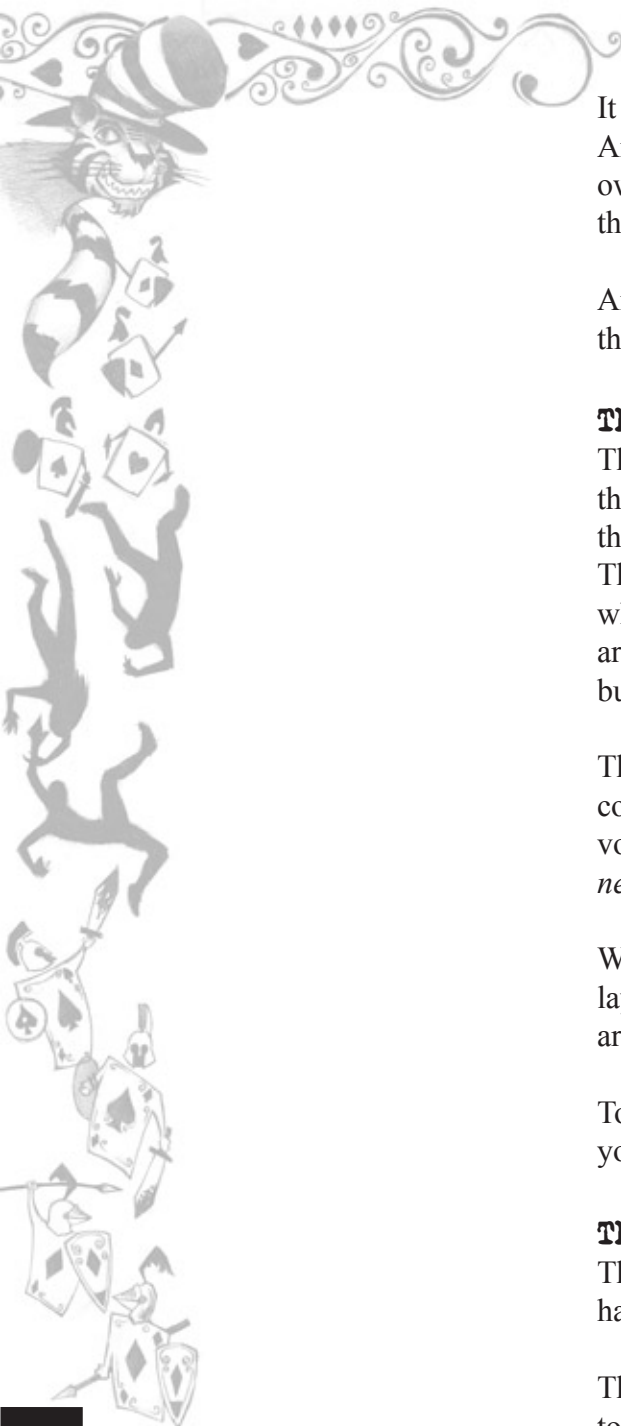
It has been asked "What drives you, Oh, Great Wheel?"

And it has answered, "Self Hatred."

It has been asked, "What is the Nature of the Universe?"

And it has answered, "A circle for which the centre is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere"





It has been asked, “What is the Nature of a Thing within the Universe?” And it has answered, “Each Thing contains within itself the kernel of its own annihilation – and each atom of nothingness contains, within itself, the kernel of an whole Universe.”

And so the Wheel turns, and it stops, and it speaks, and around it are those who revere it.

The Scribes

The Wheel is tended by The Scribes, who rise before dawn to see it, and then travel back to their low mud huts to wait for evening. They sustain themselves on its wisdom, reading transcribed works, for sustenance. They practice its Art – eternity through focused self-loathing, through which they hate themselves *empty* and are filled by bounty of the world around them – not because the world wishes to cherish or nurture them, but because *Nature Abhors a Vacuum*.

The Scribes appear as stooped, wasted men, with loose flesh under dun-colored robes. They smell of ashes and faintly of faded flowers, and their voices rasp dry. They are smart – they have to be – for they must pull *new* wisdom from the Wheel’s koans or they will wither and die.

When they *do* die, they wither quickly and become dust, and their robes lay in the narrow streets between the buildings, until a new person arrives in town ready to drink knowledge from the teat of the Wheel.

To even think about being a Scribe, you must be nearly suicidal, but hate yourself *just enough* not to be willing to end your misery.

The Bride of the Wheel

The Wheel is married to its Bride who was chosen, it is said, because she hates The Wheel more than it hates itself.

The Bride is a column of seven hundred helium balloons that are wound together in a DNA-like helix. The Bride and the Wheel are both mobile, but the Wheel never goes anywhere. The Bride carries out The Wheel’s bidding amongst its servants and in other realms. She will often dispatch a balloon (usually a red one, or sometimes a blue one) to float afar and deliver its message. The balloons can communicate telepathically and can carry objects weighing less than a 16th of a pound tied to their string. Their strings are *not* prehensile. They hang limply.

Disposition Towards Man

Some years ago, the Wheel produced a series of discourses on *humanity*. It outlined, in its works for that year, *what* is so repulsive about men and *how* they can be cured.

No one is quite sure exactly what it meant (in either case), but after much study of the book-length dissertations, the general consensus was

that humanity is corrupted by its irrationality, and its vulgar strength of emotion. To be cured, then, The Wheel seemed to suggest, mankind should be scrubbed clean until nothing was left but the hidden jewel of pure, logical thought.

The Wheel's Bride, realizing that as badly humanity offended and distressed The Wheel, the only thing it hated more was to see its own awful ideas put into action, set about developing what is known as the Rational Actors.

What made humanity objectionable, said The Wheel, was the way its *emotions* and *self-doubt* interfered with its beautiful capacity for rational thought. So research begun as to how to destroy those parts of humanity that were so disgusting. When a method was found that was thought to work there was one problem: the procedure needed a lot of help from Chessboard Zero and none of the Caretakers had any assets there.

Enter Project Pagan. When contact was made, although it's highly unlikely that Pagan really understood The Wheel (they weren't that insane yet) and it's equally likely that The Wheel and its emissaries didn't understand an apocalyptic secret society within the US Air Force they were able to agree on something: they both wanted each others cooperation.

The discourses have been refined over time but the basic thrust is this: turn everyone who is suitable into a Rational Actor ... the sterilize the planet of everyone else.

Encounter Threat

Low. If you are the kind of person the Scribes can push around then it goes to Medium or High—but if not, The Wheel, unless you have the capacity to destroy it, doesn't get involved. In fact, if you make it to the Wheel the Scribes may try to recruit you.

Dramas

The desert is largely empty of recognizable human Dramas but if you look there are some. Around the monasteries there are small, miserable towns (with humans and other things) that assist the scribes (bringing food, doing laundry, etc.). These people are often involved in a state of seeking *answers* that they *might* get if they can overcome the myriad near-impossible, often nonsensical tasks the scribes impose on those who wish answers. The graveyards of these towns are filled with headstones that, in addition to names and dates, are inscribed with the unanswered questions that the person came for and died unknowing.



Interview 1 (The Director of a Major Pharmaceutical Company in the United States)

Sometimes--a lot of times--I get the [high-pitched, nasal, vaguely feminine voice] "how could you doooo this" crap. Like it's some kind of... I don't know. Like they wouldn't. You know?

The fact is - I'll tell this straight up - the fact is anyone would take the kind of opportunity I've been given. Anyone. All the whining moralists. All the blubbering mental invalids. Any of them. If they'd been approached the way I was, they'd have said yes.

Yeah--you would too. Believe me. A chance to work with these guys? A chance to be part of the future? You're either a winner or a loser --that's never been more true than today, and it's getting more true all the time. And let me tell you: I'm a winner. They saw it in me and that's why they chose me. And all those crybabies? Losers.

And I'll tell you something about losers - listen: you don't hear the truth very often, so you know, take notes: Better. Off. Dead. I mean it. These guys haven't been happy a day in their miserable lives. This work we're doing--this work I'm doing? It's a fucking mercy, okay?

So don't lecture me about right and wrong. Ninety percent of the human race needs the fucking strength to do what's right and we're going to give it to them.

[Pauses. Breaths calmly for a moment, staring out the window as though his thoughts are ordering themselves before he continues talking]

So. Do I feel bad about it? Not a bit.

Recruited. You make it sound like I'm in the army. I didn't get "Recruited." I'm the director for --well, no details. Let's say I do serious long-term R&D [Research and Development] for a company you'd know the name of if you read the Journal [The Wall Street Journal]. We make the drugs that are changing

The Civilizing of Mankind

From the Symposium there were a variety of solutions to the problem of man. The only one that was fully endorsed was Big Pharma—but several coalitions of Caretakers created their own initiatives (some well known, some in secret). All of these were designed to either alter man to an "acceptable state" or destroy humanity outright. Some of these solutions are detailed here:



Initiative: Big Pharma

Mission Statement: Develop a pharmaceutical solution for Mankind. Prognosis: 88% mortality; remaining 18% of humanity will be chemically

cured of hope and creativity. Potential for ultimate extinction through species-level suicide: High. Regrettable.

Caretaker Sponsor: The Hypotherapist

Chessboard Zero Affiliation: Global Pharmaceutical Industry.

Note: Big Pharma is the official Symposium Initiative. All other Initiatives are considered either renegade or at least suspect.



Initiative: Project Pagan

Mission Statement: To create a civilized variant of mankind (see "Rational Actors"). These mutations are fused with self-generated Whirls and will reflect both beneficial psychological and physiological

changes in the subject.

Caretaker Sponsor: The Wheel

Chessboard Zero Affiliation: US Air Force division known as Project Pagan

Note: Pagan is a direct descendant of the US Government's Project Pilgrim. Pagan is considered under sanction/quarantine by Project Puritan [Orders: Shoot on Sight].



Initiative: Army of No

Mission Statement: The punitive destruction or enslavement of mankind by lower-reality military force. Short term goals: infliction of global-scale suffering. Long term goals: extermination.

Caretaker Sponsors: The "triumvirate" (The Clear Widow, The Beastly Baby, The Factory)

Chessboard Zero Affiliation: Individual operatives.



Initiative: Llamed Infection

Mission Statement: To create a "strain" of Wonderland Infection which will be extremely easy to contract. The resultant pan-cultural infection will result in the break-up and dissolution of the

Chessboard Zero structure in its entirety. Projected immediate mortality: 85% to 98%. Projected eventual mortality: 100%.

Caretaker Sponsors: Deconstructionists. Lem, Black Rose.

Chessboard Zero Affiliation: The Community (magicians), The Underground's Upper Echelon

Note: Uncontrolled Lamed Infection could result in the destruction of the foundational sub-structure of the universe itself. The Caretakers council considers it a forbidden initiative.

Big Pharma

Resolve Humanity by "curing" one of the most irritating and obscene delusions harbored by mankind: hope. The Hypotherapist believes that there is some simple psychoactive medicine that, when delivered to the human central nervous system will heal the pathological tendency toward optimism and aspiration and replace it with a pragmatic and undeluded view of reality.

Humans, so treated, would be expected to undergo "self-directed therapy," colloquially known as "suicide."

Sponsor

The Hypotherapist is the primary caretaker sponsor but a number of other Caretakers provide assistance with the research that is necessary.

Approach

The solution requires several steps

- 1) Identify and develop a working relationship with Chessboard Zero entities willing to support the project. This step has been accomplished: The Caretakers have found their Chessboard Zero allies at the top of the pyramid of the multinational pharmaceutical companies generally referred to as "Big Pharma"
Status: Complete
- 2) Develop the Cure. In some ways, this is no different from any normal development of a pharmaceutical product. Advances in neurochemistry and psychopharmacology have provided significant assistance in this area. And many current drugs result in varying degrees of suicidal psychosis anyway. The trick is to find something that's subtle enough for use Stage 3 – distribution. **Status: Underway**
- 3) Worldwide Distribution. Once the cure is developed, it must be administered to the overwhelming majority of the population. This step is far enough in the future that it remains a "mere logistical detail" but everyone operationally involved in the project (the people on and close to Chessboard Zero) know it's going to be tough. Some of the plans on the drawing board include marketing the cure as a cheap *treatment* for a number of mental ailments (and working with the major insurance companies to ensure that it will be widely prescribed as a treatment). Ultimately, however, there may need to be a government (and ultimately pan-government) mandate that requires *everyone* to take it. **Status: Planning**

people's lives--make your dick stand up. Make you grow hair. Hell, I've seen the "big one"--the pill that makes you skinny... [snickers]

And yeah--the ones that make you happy. Those were some of mine. Back when serotonin was all the rage.

So if you're going to find the guy who can help you, who do you go to? I'll tell you: you come to me. And that's what they did. They did their homework, that's for sure. They knew the industry. They had a short list of guys in my position and guys with-- you know--my philosophy.

My philosophy? Simple--I'll lay it out for you. Take notes: this is good. Ready? I'll tell you my fucking philosophy. It's the same philosophy all the guys at the top have. Seven habits of highly effective what? Forget that crap. It comes down to one thing:

Never. Lose.

Got it? That's me. And, say, two or three other guys. Sure there's a lot of 'family men' out there in the industry plugging away like... well anyway. They're useless. It was me, it was some others – we're out there at the cutting edge, and we're willing to do what it takes to win.

So they'd done their homework, and they knew me...

It was a phone call. From a 'placement specialist.' Yeah--a headhunter. Executive headhunter. Said he had an opportunity for me. And I was looking. You know? This was when making your prick hard was still new and everything and our pipeline had something in it that made your heart valves go all screwy. Kind of a low point.

So I said I'd listen...

And here was the pitch. You don't leave your job. You start working with certain... executives. Members of the board. Top, top, top guys. But it's all quiet. It's secret. And you're working with guys from other firms also.

And the payback?

When it goes down--and it will go down--you're like the only ones left. What'd I tell you about winners and losers?

We win.

You lose.

It's that simple.

Don't ask me why the fuck I do this, or if I feel bad about it, or anything else that stupid. If you have to ask shit like that, you know what you are? Yeah. You know it, don't you.

Get out of here. Don't come back.

[Laughs]

No. I'm not worried about anyone believing it. Fuck, I'm not worried about you even publishing it. We got lawyers, buddy. Go away.

Initiation

Imagine you're one of the top four or five guys in the *world*. You run a multinational empire of drugs that make people happy, erect, and (hopefully) thin. Imagine that it's not enough—it's *never* enough.

Then you start having visions. In the vast cathedral to chemical salvation that your building has become, many, many Chessboards of reality down, your Shadow has been brought before a terrible and magnificent queen. She has taken it and *warped it* and dictated to it over and over again what it is to do. The tenuous link between it and you is strengthened and thickened until you, on Chessboard Zero, begin to hear voices.

The procedure requires vast expenditures of power. It requires skill and luck. It requires exotic techniques that almost nobody understands—but in the end, you know *something is coming*. And it does.

Your Shadow is snapped from you, creating a Whirl—a vision of you that is an Ambassador from the lower realms. It embodies everything you are afraid is true about yourself. It is every desire you've spent a lifetime trying to destroy made flesh. You can't see it ... yet. But you know it is coming.

It travels upwards with a retinue of guard. It travels upwards guided by constellations that you'll never see. It travels upwards, looking for *you*. It has been made powerful and *mad*. It has a message and it casts a feeble reflection to Chessboard Zero when it arrives on Chessboard One.

If you are ready: if you have been prepared you know its there, patient. Waiting. You begin to seek and eventually, in mirrors, probably, you find it. You suffer the schism of reality that makes you Unsane. You've been prepared in a very, very specific manner and you can meet with yourself—with the dark image of yourself

then, talking in mirrors, hearing voices, making contact.

The message is ... the message is ... so awful it fills you with awe. So terrifying it's like lightning. This thing that you do not

Interview 2 (The Doctor, A leading research Physician)

The idea is not to cause depression-- whatever that means. But if you ask the suits that's what they'll tell you. [Sighs] It doesn't matter because fortunately we understand the objectives of the project.

Oh? It's simple - to remove hope. The Doctor - the Hypotherapist - is very clear about that. Hope is an illusion, the result of millions of years of evolution, that makes life bearable. And when you remove it, you see things the way they really are. Hopeless.

Do I? I... Well, when you've seen what I have, you start to suspect that maybe there's something to it. I mean... in the project we know what's out there. Most people—the folks walking around on the street - they have no idea. And that makes it, you know, bearable to them.

I like to think we're in the business of bringing them Truth. [Smiles]

understand has come from beings that are not gods and not demons and it wants you to do what you've always dreamed of. It has chemical equations (strange ones—the scientists need to be hand-picked and they need to examine and refine the formulas that were conceived of by a mind so far from human in your nightmares you dread to meet it). It has techniques and experiments that make your hands clammy. It has promises that you'd kill your own children to secure. Well, that's not so much. Promises you'd trade *everything* for.

And the project begins with you—with a few others. You start making the contacts and you're careful about what you tell the others—even the powerful ones who you need to keep close: because talking to yourself in mirrors isn't something a sane person does. Is it?

Operations

Big Pharma runs “test markets” (which are no kind of market at all) wherein subjects collected by a number of means (such as tracking depressive teenagers by posts to a certain message board) are given various chemicals to see how they react to it. The usual goal is mass suicides and they've have a number of success. But their failures are even more impressive so they've gotten several new tactics.

The higher-ups—the inner circle are well aware that their benefactors are far, far from human. They have made some cautious inquiries and studies into the real “state of the world” and have received disturbing results. But they *have* come up with a few alternate techniques.

Chemicals *combined* with therapy (of the right sort) has had a *powerful* effect. One of Big Pharma's initiatives has been to spread infection amongst its subjects using chemical hallucinogens to create temporary shifts wherein their targets can watch a Hypotherapist-hosted Dr. Phil-like TV show, where the guests are the Shadows of the targets. This has had a number of successes (of course people not on the chemicals can't see the show which has added advantages in making the subject despair and believe they are going crazy). Attempts to create permanent or strong infection, however, have been uniform failures.



NAME: ALIEN. TYPE GREEN					WHIRL	
PHY 08	STR 08	BLD 06	CON 09		To Hit	15-
REF 12	COR 14	REA 12	AGI 12		To Be Hit	-2
INT 13	RES 13	MEM 13	WIL 13		Armor	none
DP 6	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	Special
Wounds	2	6	12			

The Greens were the first generation of Rational Actors. They have the strongest ties to Wonderland and to The Bride. They are greenish in pallor, with especially large heads and especially spindly and useless limbs. The Bride, after an exhaustive search, selected one Alex Cotlington, because of his belief that his particular intelligence and superiority gave him the moral right to strangle his neighbor when he was sixteen and she was a year younger.

The Bride knew he was perfect when he was caught because he would not deign to lie about doing something that was his birthright as a superior creature. Upon stating for the court record (Cotlington v. the State of Illinois, 1917) that he had planned to further murder his parents that they might hasten to fulfill their last reason for existence (to provide him with a substantial inheritance) he was committed to a discrete facility in Connecticut where he was abducted.

In the intervening years, his body has decayed, but his handpicked team of physicians (all formatted into greens) have developed a technique for sustaining the brain in a glass tube filled with semiotic fluid, oxygenated by a special pump.

He has conducted several such experiments, and has created entire "Brain Trusts" or "Think Tanks" of formatted minds he deems especially worth saving. These baroque, living super-computers are housed in installations off the coast of Maine and in a salt mine in his home state.

Although far too psychotic to have direct dealings with normal humans, some of his followers are more patient (if not more moderate in their beliefs) and have opened lines of communication with elements of the United States Government. They have even conducted joint ventures including military operations in Soviet countries and an exchange of technologies (some elements of the flying saucer technology for cutting edge biological warfare research).

Cotlington was never patient and losing his body and most of his mind hasn't helped. He believes that if the Program is not "on a success path" by 2010, that it should be scrapped, and the human race destroyed through a series of viruses and nuclear detonations.

Project Pagan

Even amongst the most highly knowledgeable and experienced of Wonderland Scholars (itself, a very elite group) it is widely believed that *only* the InNetwork Physicians have discovered a way to "breach" the barrier that lets connects one's Shadow to one's self. Only the twisted doctors can become "hollowed out" from the inside and taken over by autonomous, degenerate versions of themselves.

This, technically, is true (so far as *anyone* we can find knows)—but it isn't, as they say in the courts, "the whole truth." If certain things are done to you on *Chessboard Zero* then, indeed, your Whirl can not only "inhabit your body" but it can even, powerfully, create *bleeds* in your form and mutate you *physically*.

As you might imagine, this process of separating a human sentience from its body and then allowing it to be devoured by a warped version of itself is *horrific*. The process, itself, is called

alienation.

After the disintegration of Project Pilgrim, the government research team that "made contact" with Red Queen (an aspect of the Queen of Hearts) the "sterilization of information" that was supposed to take place *failed*. An arm of the US Air Force, guided by both high-ranking commanders and extremely wealthy civilians with religiously based apocalyptic visions of the future created a think-tank to reestablish contact with the data source under the belief they could barter with it: they thought they could trade a nuclear holocaust for gardens of paradise.

They were wrong.

They thought they could control their contact in a safe fashion.

They were wrong about that too.

If the original conspiracy had a name or the present one does, it isn't known. It's referred to, by those who do know it exists, as Project Pagan. It is a name to conjure with: Project Pagan exists behind multiple veils of government secrecy. It has members both infected and subverted at multiple levels of national and state government. It has its hooks deep within the armed forces.

Its motive, what can be gleaned from it, is the complete reformation of life on earth into its vision: its vision of alienation.

The Wheel's Vision of Man

The Wheel views man as work of art wherein the genius is obscured and damaged by the unnecessary work that the artist has done—unnecessary additions to the piece. When it made contact with the agents of what would later be called "Project Pagan" it enticed them with a new vision of humankind—a *clean* vision. Whether they were already disposed to be taken in by its madness or it warped their minds to its vision is unclear but the results are obvious. Pagan has become an *alienation* factory.

The ideal man is a human who has been stripped of the filth that is emotion. They are beings of pure logic and perfect hate (not an emotion by the Wheel's definition, but rather an expression of a universal force). These beings, the "perfect men," are Whirls who are created on Chessboard One by horrific psychological processes and then reunited with their host-bodies by technological procedures on Chessboard Zero. Their final unification comes when they consume their hosts from within.

The Rational Actors are created by

Mind Stunners: When an abduction is taking place (at first) it is taking place with the subject's Shadow on Chessboard One (the real person is asleep in bed or something). The creation of a "contact field" means that the real person, however, experiences the abduction as though it were real. Since it is terrifying, Mind Stunners are used to make people compliant. They are a Resisted attack against WIL with a Power of 14-. They can only be used once. They look like remote controls and never miss.

Result	Effect
Minor Effect	Victim feels calm and dream-like. There is no effect on performance but the essential horror of the situation is mitigated. If this is the best the Aliens get they may simply make contact and try to come back later.
Standard Effect	The subject is lethargic and feels like he or she is "stuck in a dream." All rolls are at -2 and the victim loses 3 REA. If this lowers the character's REA to 7 they are "stuck."
Major Effect	The character has two seconds of being Dazed before they are paralyzed. The character's recollection is very good at the beginning but will get vague after about 30 minutes.
Critical Effect	The character is instantly paralyzed. Memories of some parts will be clear and some will be murky.
Catastrophic Effect	Character is instantly paralyzed and will have a hazy memory of what happened.

Grabbers

When a human isn't cooperating and the Mind Stunner hasn't taken them down (or only partially worked) they'll use grabbers. These are harness-mounted extendable robotic arms that can be used to catch and immobilize targets. They have a reach of 20 yards (telescoping out in a bizarre fashion and growing joints as they go) and they terminate in a large padded claw with a camera lens and a syringe needle mounted on it (so the alien can reach around corners and see). It has a 21 Offensive Grapple. It can squeeze for 5pts of damage per turn (but once a person is held they'll administer a sedative through the syringe).

NAME: ALIEN. TYPE GRAY					WHIRL	
PHY 09	STR 09	BLD 08	CON 10		To Hit	15-
REF 12	COR 14	REA 12	AGI 12		To Be Hit	-2
INT 13	RES 13	MEM 13	WIL 13		Armor	none
DP 6	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	Special
Wounds	2	6	12			

The Grays are much like the Greens, but taller and a little stronger. They are the result of a Green experiment in the early 70s that was supposed to produce a more “reliable” format. It did—while only the most extreme humans can be converted into Greens, most people who are reasonably selfish, proud, and a little smarter than normal can be successfully converted into Grays.

To the outside world, Grays and Greens seem pretty similar (both are insane), but they find each other repulsive as well.

Grays are especially offended by humans who display strong, honest emotion. They express this offense as “curiosity” and seek to “explorer and examine” the “specimen.” They track “vectors” who are “emoting” and abduct them when they are alone and vulnerable.

Gray’s experiments usually consist of exposing the subject to a very convincing hallucination that adapts to the subject’s experiences to push his or her buttons—often reliving trauma or abuse, or finding one’s self sudden back at the end of the last horrid relationship. The effect is not unlike a horrible nightmare that is remembered in vivid detail when the subject is released.

The experiment must be repeated several times, and subjects are usually quivering wrecks by the end, usually choosing suicide over continued mental torture. Since they will not remember the abduction, they are usually not clear on how to protect themselves (the Grays are unwilling to risk exposure, so being surrounded by friends is a pretty good defense; checking into a sleep clinic where one would experience 24-hour observation would work also).

In most cases, the subject is broken and is finally abducted and formatted. In some cases, however, the experiment is surprisingly *therapeutic*, and the subject will not only overcome the trauma (healing), but may even remember elements of the abduction or develop enough of an understand of what is going on to take action against her tormentors.

In rare cases, those humans have developed strong psychic powers—something that horrifies both the Grays *and* the Greens.

Caretaker-instructed humans (Project Pagan agents) operating on Chessboard Zero in concert with the Rational Actors on Chessboard One. The Rational Actors have developed a process where (suitable) subjects’ Shadows are strongly linked to their casters (the real person on Chessboard Zero) and abducted for the process of Extraction. To the subject this feels like a real (well, surreal) abduction but there is almost never any *evidence* of it (as it is really their Shadow that is abducted on Chessboard One or Two).

They are taken to the Extraction Theater where horrific procedures began the process of “separating” an Alien Whirl from the subject’s Shadow. This involves lurid half-memories of mutation, of fleshy, membranous cancers growing up and bursting from one’s stomach, of terrible devices inserted into the flesh, and other things (the implantation and removal of eggs in female subjects).

When Extraction is complete, there is a new Alien Whirl

on Chessboard One, separate from its host. It is a fragile thing: it will not live long. That is when the person is ready for “Phase 2 final processing.” This is when the human arm of Pagan moves in and abducts the subject back into reality. Real machines are used and physiological and psychological techniques are employed to “open the subject’s mind like a flower.” The Alien Shadow, on Chessboard One, then “inhabits the host,” causing the physical body itself to mutate and the subject to complete the final process: to become *alienated*.

These subjects (now appearing as mutations with expanded heads, shrunk spines and spindly arms and legs—the blood vessels of the eye burst to become a uniform black) are beings of perfect logic and a deep

understanding of Newtonian Physics. They are stored in bunkers and “sleeper tubes” until Pagan can locate a Bleed through which to eject them into the lower Chessboards in a physical form. There are “hives” of these aliens and their human caretakers under various buildings, schools, and homes where Pagan operatives live and work. Although most of the Aliens sleep, some are always awake and experiments and abominations continue in these twisted laboratories until the Migration can be accomplished.

Pagan Operations

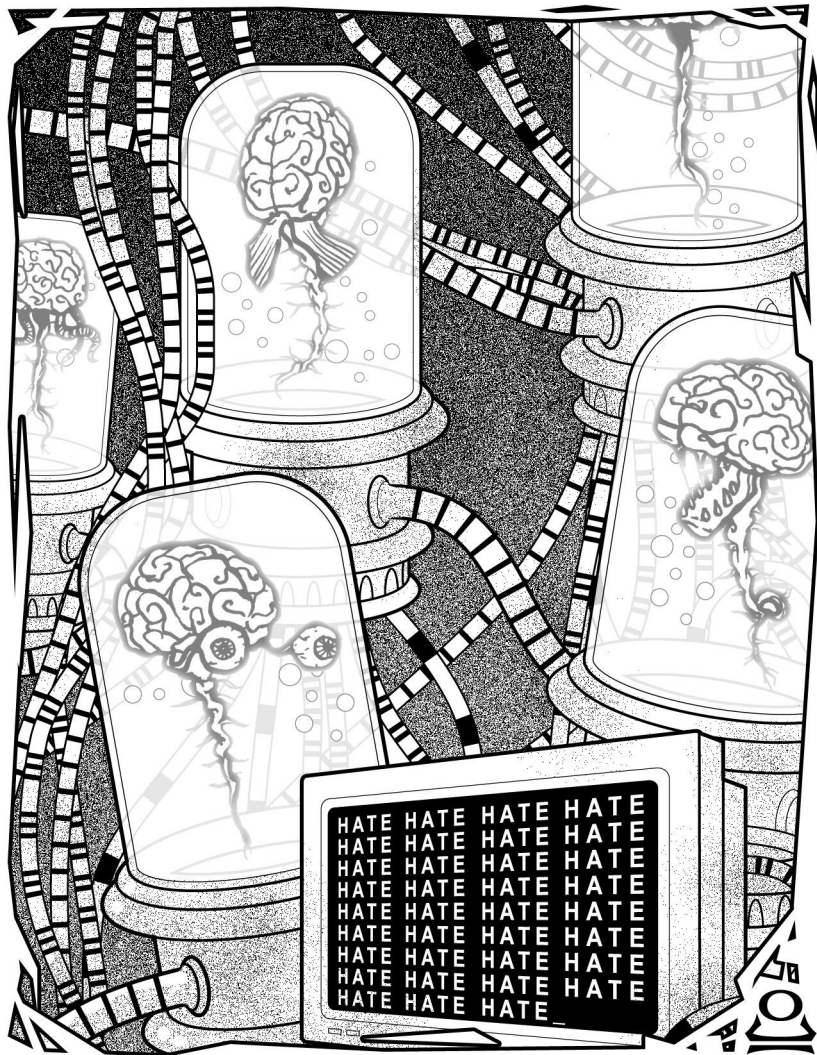
Pagan is working on the Alienation project but it has many different tentacles doing many different things. Pagan has managed to organize several mass infections which, due to mass-Descent have plunged a closing-down military base into Chessboard One. The servicemen and women were then attacked using the technology and resources that the Aliens have created (much of which only works in Wonderland) and were overwhelmed and given personality reformat into Pagan agents. The base (on the outskirts of a Midwestern town) was the site of human experimentation, test flights of Impossible aircraft, and the launch point of a variety of mind-games on the nearby town (including several Wonderland Infections using Llamed strains).

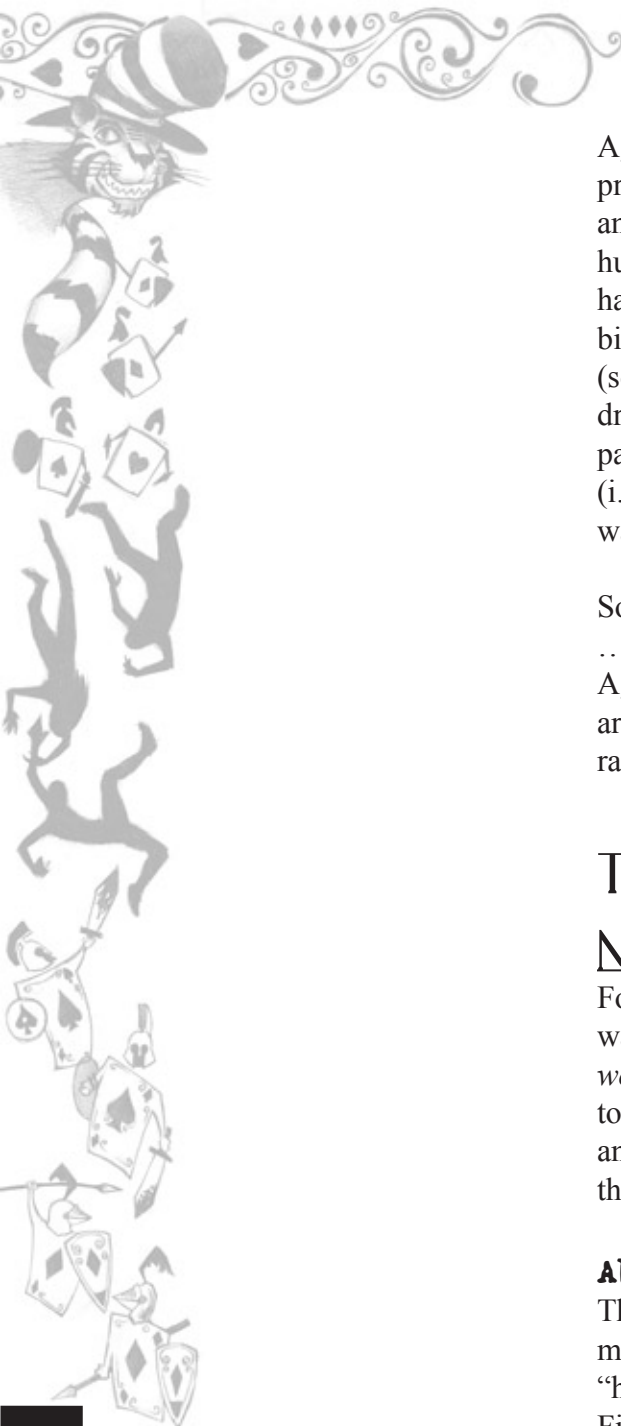
Pagan is very interested in finding and controlling Bleeds (which allow them to exchange alienated humans and receive closely guarded technology from Wonderland). There are many teams of “investigators” following up on unusual news stories and scanning the Internet for any information that looks like it might indicate an active, semi-permanent Bleed.

Pagan Agents, Pagan Operatives

Pagan Operatives are the term for the “humans” involved in *running* the operation. There are fewer of these than you would think. Most of them don’t qualify as what would normally be thought of as sane, however, they are far more sane than the other members of the group. They range from apocalyptic ultra-rich paranoids out in Montana compounds to high-ranking Pentagon officials. They cover their tracks well.

The Operative’s ultimate aims may be power. They may be to remake the humanity in something like the image of the Alienated. They may be personal and petty. What makes an Operative an Operative is that they are a functional human being.





Agents, on the other hand, are people who've been "inducted." The process of recruitment involves psychological conditioning, drugs, and Wonderland Infection (which is very well managed). They *seem* human. They can *act* human for a good long time. They're not: they have personality re-format overlays and they are essentially complicated biological machines. If you somehow got to speak candidly with one (something they are essentially incapable of doing) you would find them dramatically insane. Their minds exist only on a per-mission basis. They partake of strange disturbing behavior when they are not "on the job" (i.e. in private they may eat insects, mutilate themselves, paint hotel walls in intricate, repeating patterns, etc.)

Some of them have families (their families think they are workaholics ... at best). Most of them live alone and have a façade of a normal life. Agents can be very dangerous, exhibit very complicated behavior, and are very well trained. All of them will, programmatically, commit suicide rather than be captured.

The Army of No. (Johnny Comes Marching Home)

For many Caretakers, Big Pharma was judged insufficient. Humanity was not just disgusting—its existence was an insult. The Caretakers who *would not compromise* created their own solution—one designed not just to eliminate humanity, but to *punish* it: to inflict the maximum misery and pain along the road from subjugation to annihilation. They created the Army of No.

Abstract

The Army of No is both a force and an ideology. Physically, it is a mechanized fighting force supplied by an independent neo-national "homeland" deep within Wonderland (although not on Chessboard Five—the Caretakers do *not* want the Army of No next to them). Philosophically, it follows a brutal, fascist philosophy that calls for absolute obedience to the leader and enslavement and ultimately destruction of all outsiders through a program of total and continuous war.

Ideally, the Army of No would directly invade Chessboard Zero, but since this remains well beyond their capabilities, their current plan is to wage war on Chessboard One, enslaving Shadows and exerting control over their casters.

The current plan as it now stands, calls for the development of interment camps on Chessboard One from which the Army will develop operations for Infecting Chessboard Zero humans and collecting them when they Descend. The Army is also conducting cutting-edge research into finding ways to spread Wonderland Infection and influencing Chessboard Zero

humans through operations on their Shadows. The Army is a great believer in research and science.

The Army of No is sponsored (primarily) by three Caretakers whom the soldiers refer to as the “Triumvirate.” They are

- The Beastly Baby
- The Factory
- The Clear Widow

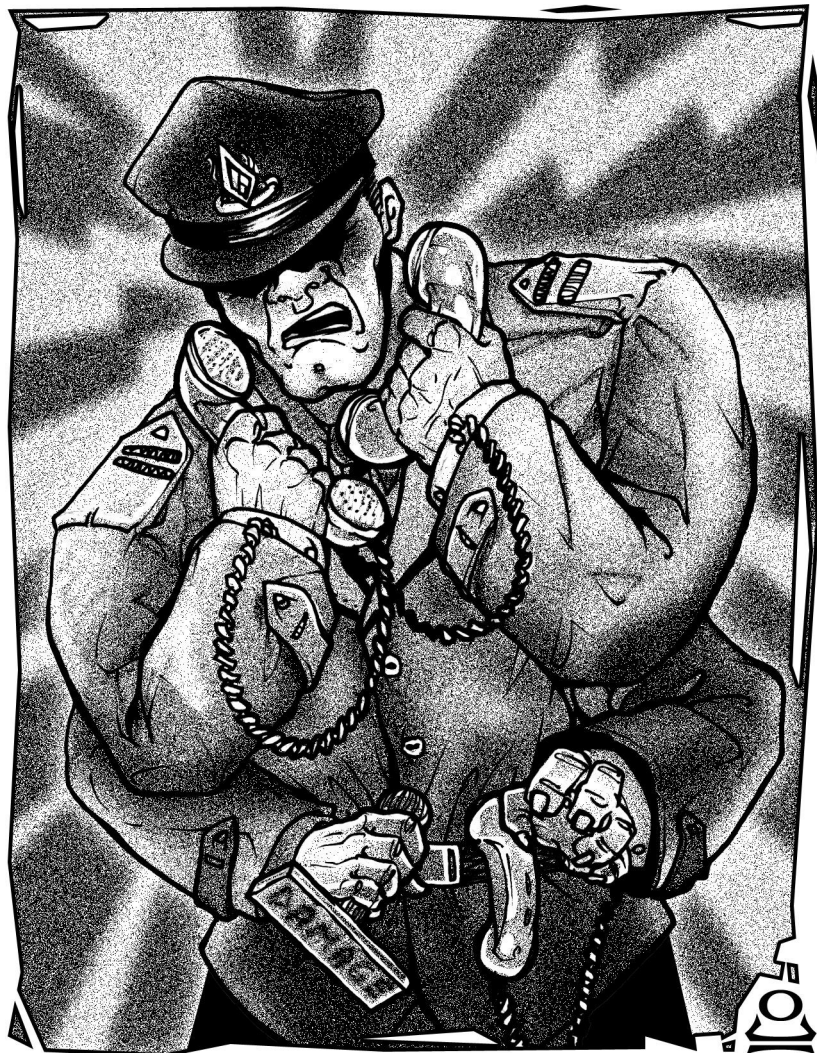
The Red Queen is also a significant contributor, although she objects to the Army’s color scheme.

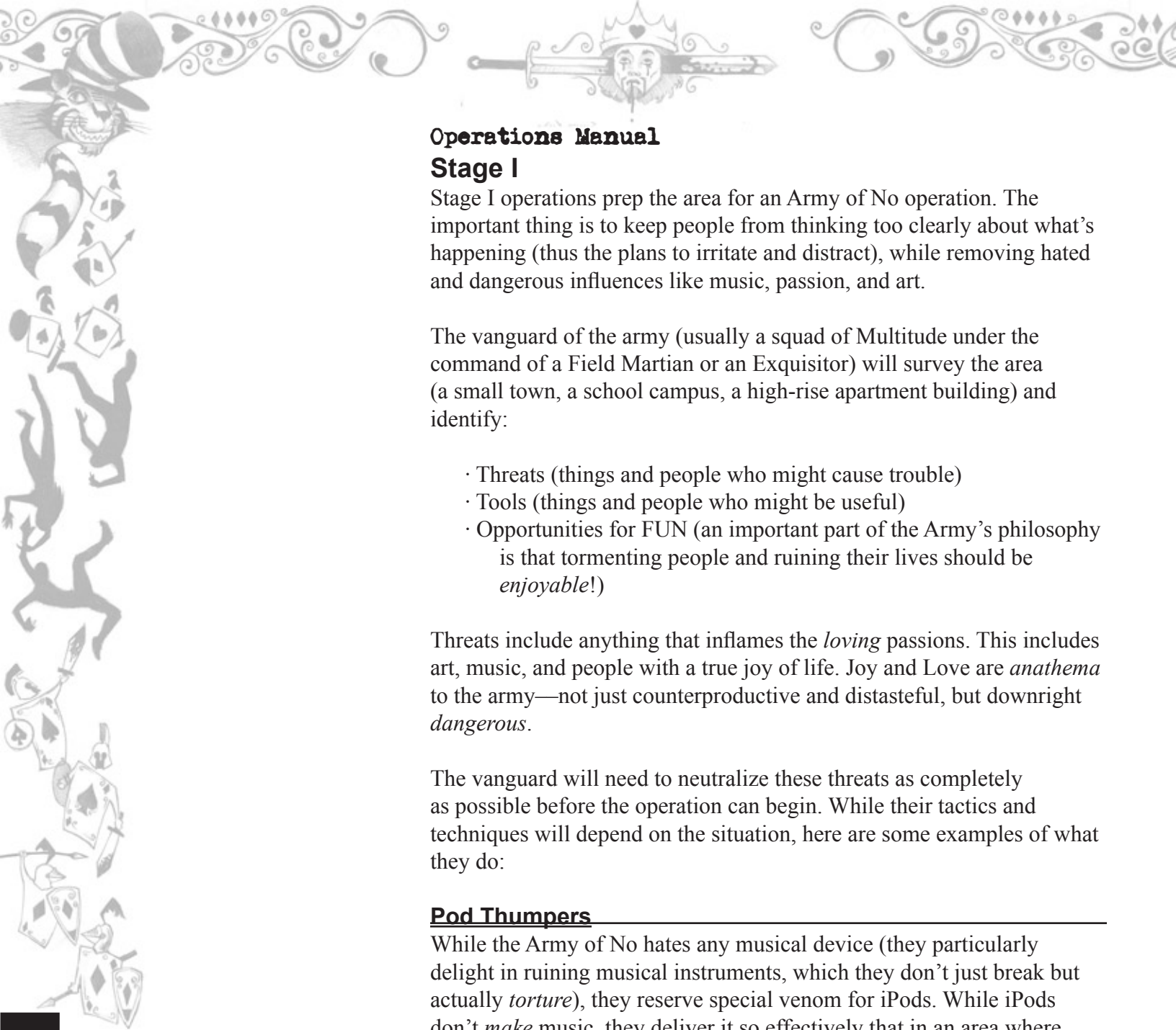
Phases

The Operations of the Army of No work according to a fairly regular series of steps. They try to affect Chessboard Zero by changing things on Chessboard One. This is tricky but theoretically possible (especially with help from humans on Chessboard Zero). It involves the creation of a dark army that will march up from the lower levels to enslave and control man.

Note: All stages are in planning:

- 1) Establish observation posts and ‘beachheads’ on Chessboard One. Identify humans who can be affected by their shadows. Recruit or gain influence over Infecteds who can operate directly on Chessboard Zero.
- 2) Develop command centers where direct experiments and Chessboard Zero operations can be carried out. Permanent Interment Centers on Chessboard One have dramatic effects on Chessboard Zero (on both the environment and the people whose shadows are interred).
- 3) Find an approach to either bring Chessboard Zero people to Wonderland (working with Army-controlled, Chessboard Zero totalitarian states, for example) or for gaining direct access to Chessboard Zero (the Army’s “Manhattan Project” seeks to find a way to gain reliable, wide-scale access to the E-Train in Manhattan).
- 4) Establish a world-wide totalitarian state on either Chessboard Zero or Chessboard One.
- 5) Eliminate 90% of humanity directly and the remaining 10% through “scientific research.”
- 6) Find another enemy.
- 7) Rinse, repeat.





Operations Manual

Stage I

Stage I operations prep the area for an Army of No operation. The important thing is to keep people from thinking too clearly about what's happening (thus the plans to irritate and distract), while removing hated and dangerous influences like music, passion, and art.

The vanguard of the army (usually a squad of Multitude under the command of a Field Martian or an Exquisitor) will survey the area (a small town, a school campus, a high-rise apartment building) and identify:

- Threats (things and people who might cause trouble)
- Tools (things and people who might be useful)
- Opportunities for FUN (an important part of the Army's philosophy is that tormenting people and ruining their lives should be *enjoyable!*)

Threats include anything that inflames the *loving* passions. This includes art, music, and people with a true joy of life. Joy and Love are *anathema* to the army—not just counterproductive and distasteful, but downright *dangerous*.

The vanguard will need to neutralize these threats as completely as possible before the operation can begin. While their tactics and techniques will depend on the situation, here are some examples of what they do:

Pod Thumpers

While the Army of No hates any musical device (they particularly delight in ruining musical instruments, which they don't just break but actually *torture*), they reserve special venom for iPods. While iPods don't *make* music, they deliver it so effectively that in an area where people are jamming contentedly to the music that really *speaks* to them and *makes them happy*, the Army has a hard time operating.

As a short-term solution, the Vanguard will round up all the Shadows with iPods, confiscate the pods, and smash them (they carry special thumb-screw-like devices and revel in destroying the iPods in front of their enraged and terrified owners).

In the long-term, the General is investigating a Program similar to the Big Pharma program to work with the RIAA and other Chessboard Zero legal entities to make personal music devices illegal.

Commercial Bugs

The Army of No finds television—at least commercial television and most broadcast radio—useful. As the General has said, "If Commercials

didn't exist, we would have had to invent them!"

Annoying, offensive, and intrusive, commercial broadcast are exactly the right kind of torment the Army loves to inflict on its targets. Their survey of the Op Zone should identify all of the electronic receiver devices, and they'll work to ensure each one is fitted with a *commercial bug*.

A commercial bug is a fat, blue cockroach with long, disgusting, feathery antennae and RF sockets. They're fit between the antennae and the receiver, and they can expertly insert the most irritating, fingernails-on-chalkboard commercials into any broadcast.

When the installation is done, no one is safe from their maddening corrupted electronic devices.

Special Treatment

The vanguard will also begin a campaign of harassment and terror against the Shadows they find especially dangerous—anyone with joy in life. Anyone with passion.

While *everyone's* Shadow will be having a hard time (people are getting harassed by the Vanguard soldiers) special targets are identified for special treatment. Exquisitors will devise special torments for these special targets and work hard to influence Chessboard Zero. They can attach special machines to the target's bed that prevent sleep. They will kidnap the Shadow and perform special dental operations that wire the jaw shut. They might replace the shadow's blood with 40 weight motor oil. These torments are not designed to be lethal to the shadow but subtly damaging to the human on Chessboard Zero.

A well-run operation can cause despair and misery even before it officially starts.

Stage II

When Stage I is complete, the Army can start real operations. They usually try to increase *both* anarchy *and* authority in the area under assault. While these might seem like a contradiction, it is part of how the Army fundamentally views reality and the human race.

Specifically, they will instigate anti-authority acts (vandalism, mild crimes, rebellious disobedience) in order to provoke an over-reaction and crack-down from the authorities.

This will be carefully planned. The Exquisitors will have identified who the most likely miscreants are and which

The Scrucifixes: Machines created by the Army of No are used to *empower* those whom they wish to aid. On the lower levels they look like gruesome vertical wracks with electrical devices wired into the subjects and a massive metal screw that winds *into* the head at the base of the neck. Generators spark, dynamos hum, and jacks and wires penetrate the skin while the Shadows strapped to the devices smile their gruesome rictus grins.

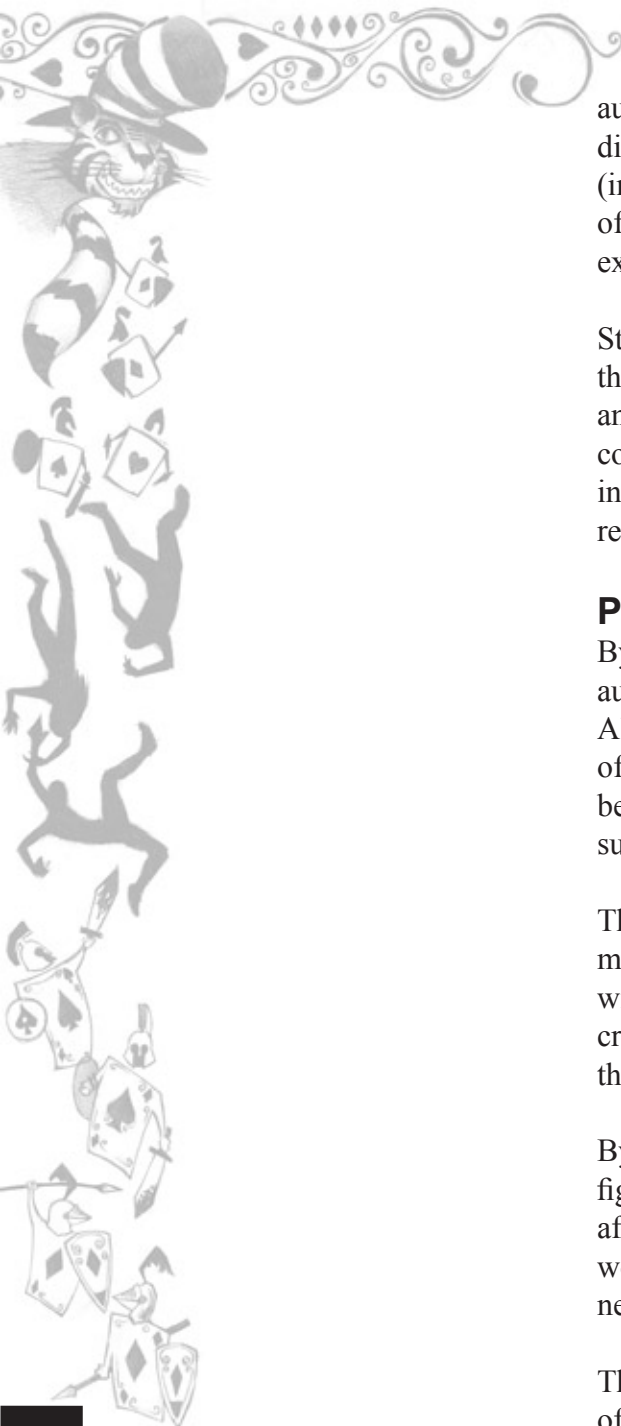
The people whose Shadows are in these devices *are* suffering—but they're *getting something* too. These devices require a sort of agreement with the Army of No to work: the subject, on Chessboard Zero, may not, indeed, usually *does not*, know what they are agreeing to exactly—but they are “down with the program” and work can begin.

For one thing, people whose Shadow is attached to a Scrucifix, can be more clearly communicated with by the arm. They can hear voices in their heads. They can see images. They can be *told what to do*.

They can be *tortured*. If they displease the Army (or don't please them enough) they will be. Headaches, physiological symptoms, sickness, and worse are all possible. Even death may be caused.

They can also be given power. They may be made stronger, tougher, more perceptive, run through “training cycles,” and given psychological defects to better suit the Army's needs.

Those hooked up are usually *not* Infected—and if they become Infected, when they have an Episode they may either wind up in the machine (in which case they may well stop working for the Army) or may appear elsewhere and their shadow will be freed—so the Army isn't interested in Infecting its human factor—just controlling and using them.



authority figures are most likely to play along. Still, Stage II is very difficult to pull off. In many cases they will work with Agents In Place (infected people who have agreed for whatever reason to serve the Army of No), or Whirls such as the Orange Peel Men who have considerable experience in subtly manipulating the physical world.

Stage II will usually begin with acts of mild sabotage and defacement that escalate as the response escalates. They will use all of their tricks and power to encourage the authorities to overreact—if they can provoke collective punishment or humiliation of suspected (usually framed) individuals, they will have successfully completed Phase II, and are ready for Phase III.

Phase III

By Phase III, things have already gotten bad. The relationship between authority and everyone else in the area will be strained and on edge. Almost everyone will have taken sides by now (and those who started off on someone's side will be nearly fanatic). Daily operations will become a *battle of wills* between authority that requires obedience and submission, and the workers or students who desire autonomy.

The environment will be almost unlivable—mechanical malfunctions make radios and TVs almost unwatchable. Heaters and air conditioners will be broken or running intermittently. Noise—humming, scratching, crackling, is a constant background annoyance. And everyone knows things are heading for a showdown.

By this point the Army will have identified their *fulcrum*—an authority figure who demands victory at any cost and sees defiance as a personal affront. This is the kind of man (or, often, woman) who the Army can work with. They will try to make contact through infected agents or (if necessary) dreams.

They will offer the *fulcrum* total victory and the humiliation and defeat of those who stand against him if he will agree to serve them. By this point they are almost never refused.

What the *fulcrum* is to do, is to institute the Army's rule on this world and (ultimately) Infect those under his care so that they will *Descend* into the Army's grasp. In areas where they have reached Stage III, the army has established a beachhead in Chessboard Zero, and has one more piece of the Grand Puzzle in place: the creation of hell on earth.

The Army

The army is composed of very big single-celled, cybernetic organisms (technically called Eukaryborgs) that may *look* somewhat human. Some army organisms are 90% mechanical and these are called Cybarkyots.



General Ledger

The leader of the Army of No is General Ledger—he (it) appears as a hugely muscled four-armed man about 12 feet tall. His eyes burn with a coal-fire red light and he is bedecked in a startling and awe-inspiring uniform of the Army’s standard black-leather and cobaltblue decorated with glittering medals and symbols.

The General always wants *reports*. His staff, an elite guard of no-accountants, provide him with a constant flow of everything from the latest battle-damage estimates and casualty counts to the results of the Army’s cutting-edge experiments. He reads theses without pause, constantly signing forms, scribbling out orders, and barking out demands for *more reports!*

He has several great black telephones cybernetically attached to his body and there’s always at least two ringing, while he’s got someone on the phone and someone else on hold. Being close to him is dangerous — many of his hands wield stamps and being (even capriciously) stamped with a “Terminated” mark is a death sentence.

The General is the ultimate micromanager, and it is said all of the Army’s operations flow through and from him.

The Secretary of the Army (Andrea)

If this poor girl wasn’t cruel and evil, you’d feel sorry for her. Her job is to manage the General’s schedule as best she can. To see the general, you need to go through her. She’s a knockout blonde, who’d be ice-cool if not for her utterly impossible job: she’s always in a state of frazzled hysteria, pausing only to tell people desperate for an instant of the General’s time that it’s “Impossible. Booked until Thursday of next year.”

She cleans her fingernails (and dispatches people who annoy her) with a poisoned stiletto, and smokes unfiltered cigarettes on her breaks. In the beginning, the General went through secretaries quickly, executing (or eating) a few a day (and always drawing more from the spawning pool in the dank basement of his fortress office ministry), but Andrea proved

NAME: GENERAL LEDGER					GENERAL											
PHY 13	STR 45	BLD 25	CON 14													
REF 12	COR 12	REA 12	AGI 12													
INT 13	RES 13	MEM 13	WIL 13													
DP 120	Minor	Major	Critical													
Wounds	40	120	240													
					To Hit	15-										
					To Be Hit	-1										
					Armor	12/24										
					Damage	38 IMP Punch										
Description: General Ledger is a 12 foot tall man in a crisp, cobalt-blue military uniform decorated with rows of ribbons and medals. He has four old-fashioned (rotary dial) telephones grafted onto his body and answers them constantly. He carries a stamp that can say anything he wants at his belt and he is a constant flurry of activity.																
Luger: He wears an Luger handgun that is built to 2x scale (firing 18mm bullets!). He is a crack shot: 15- Level 3. He also strikes as a boxer in close combat (14- to hit).																
<table><tr><th>Name</th><th>Dmg</th><th>Range</th><th>ROF</th><th>Clip</th></tr><tr><td>Luger</td><td>18 PEN</td><td>-1 / 13"</td><td>S</td><td>9</td></tr></table>							Name	Dmg	Range	ROF	Clip	Luger	18 PEN	-1 / 13"	S	9
Name	Dmg	Range	ROF	Clip												
Luger	18 PEN	-1 / 13"	S	9												
Reflection on Chessboard Zero: If the General is in your area on Chessboard Two or higher (he usually isn't) then there will tend to be a <i>presence</i> like one sees in 3 rd world countries with massive images of <i>something</i> all around. It might be oppressive corporate logos, the face of a dictator, or massive outdoor plasma-screen TV's all showing the same thing.																

NAME: SECRETARY OF THE ARMY					HUMAN	
PHY 09	STR 09	BLD 07	CON 11		To Hit	14-
REF 13	COR 13	REA 13	AGI 13		To Be Hit	-3
INT 13	RES 14	MEM 13	WIL 13		Armor	none
DP 120	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	-2 IMP
Wounds	40	120	240			
Description: A short, pretty looking young woman with a ruthless glint in her eyes. She tends to dress conservatively with unbelievably scandalous undergarments underneath. She often wears large glasses (some believe because it cultivates a “bookish and intelligent” stereotype).						
Ice Pick: She strikes for 1 PEN damage with a 4 PEN Value. If 1pt is done and the attack penetrates the poison is Base Damage 24, Power 17- (nasty stuff!). She full-strikes with it for a damage of 3, PEN of 6.						
Reflection on Chessboard Zero: Andrea has no specific Reflection on Chessboard Zero. She’s too subtle.						

so brilliant and indispensable, that now, even if he wants to kill her, he’s afraid that it might be a... mistake. An impression she relentlessly cultivates.

On her desk there is a black phone and a *red* phone that is, in fact, a hotline to the Caretakers. When the red phone rings, it *always* gets through.

It should be noted that Andrea is one of the few members of staff that doesn’t dress in black leather and cobalt. She prefers autumn colors and

Prada accessories.

No-Accountants

The Army is run by pencil-pushers and bean counters: the No-Accountants. These troll-like creatures tend to be pudgy, squeaky rat things (some look more crow-like and shed feathers). They have quick, beady eyes, and are always scheming. Even their slick black leather and dark indigo uniforms can’t make them cool.

NAME: NO-ACCOUNTANT					SERVANT	
PHY 10	STR 10	BLD 12	CON 12		To Hit	11-
REF 10	COR 10	REA 10	AGI 10		To Be Hit	+0
INT 11	RES 11	MEM 13	WIL 11		Armor	none
DP 120	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	2 PEN Bite
Wounds	40	120	240			
Description: A shabbily dressed, overweight vermin-looking creature (often with thick glasses and reeking of cigarette smoke). They toil away endlessly on reports, analysis, and inter-department memos. They are nasty-tempered and cruel.						
Reflection on Chessboard Zero: The office of Army No-Accountants will tend to be a place of chattering, discordant machines. They will pick places like secretarial pools (real typewriters are preferred) or computerized offices. Even a machine shop (a printing press) would work. The machines will become louder and while they won’t <i>break</i> , they will <i>malfunction</i> —sort of. What is happening is that they are becoming reminiscent of the twisted adding and calculating machines used by the No-Accountants. Computers will pick up strange viruses. Keys on typewriters will stick, be reversed, or even appear strangely redesigned.						
Subjects who run the machine-shop (a secretarial pool, an accounting office with computers, etc.) will become protective and secretive (even more so if they are part of the program and have their Shadows placed in Scrufixes). They will try to bring in stranger and stranger devices.						

But when you’re an accountant, you don’t need to be cool... you control the flow of information, processing and consolidating the field reports that flow through several layers of “middle management” before they reach the General. The No-Accountants would never lie, but a well-turned phrase here or there can *influence* the General’s decisions.

Typically, getting something through to the General means paying a lot of medium-sized bribes to the No-Accountants, or one truly enormous (and usually humiliating) bribe to his secretary.

This institutionalized incompetence is intentional on the part of the General. Bureaucracy is *part* of the Army’s regime of terror.

The Long Divisions

The General wouldn’t go to war with ordinary divisions; he demanded *long* ones and he got them (the army, all together, are the *multitude*, of course). These divisions are filled with the foot soldiers of the army. Slope-headed hulking things, with kind-of-piggy faces (and sometimes piggy tails), they’re not so much dressed in leather and navy—their skin dyed blue and the leather is sewn into their flesh as they leave the conveyer belt.

Looking at these brutes, one might be surprised to see that they’re prone to giggling and screaming like little girls. When not commanded by a fierce leader, they flee from any confrontation they aren’t fairly certain they’ll win. The Multitude is an army of lazy bullies who prefer nothing more than settling down to a nice meal and tormenting the prisoners of the day.

The Long Divisions are armed with riding crops and carpenter’s hammers for close range combat and Bubble Guns and Stun Cannons for engaging the enemy at range. At this stage in the army’s operations targets are meant to be captured, and giving them real guns would tend to make that unlikely.

Bubble Guns

Bubble Guns are non-lethal weapons that fire sticky bubbles which entrap their opponents. The ammunition must be “activated”—mixed with saliva, and spat into the weapon’s breech.

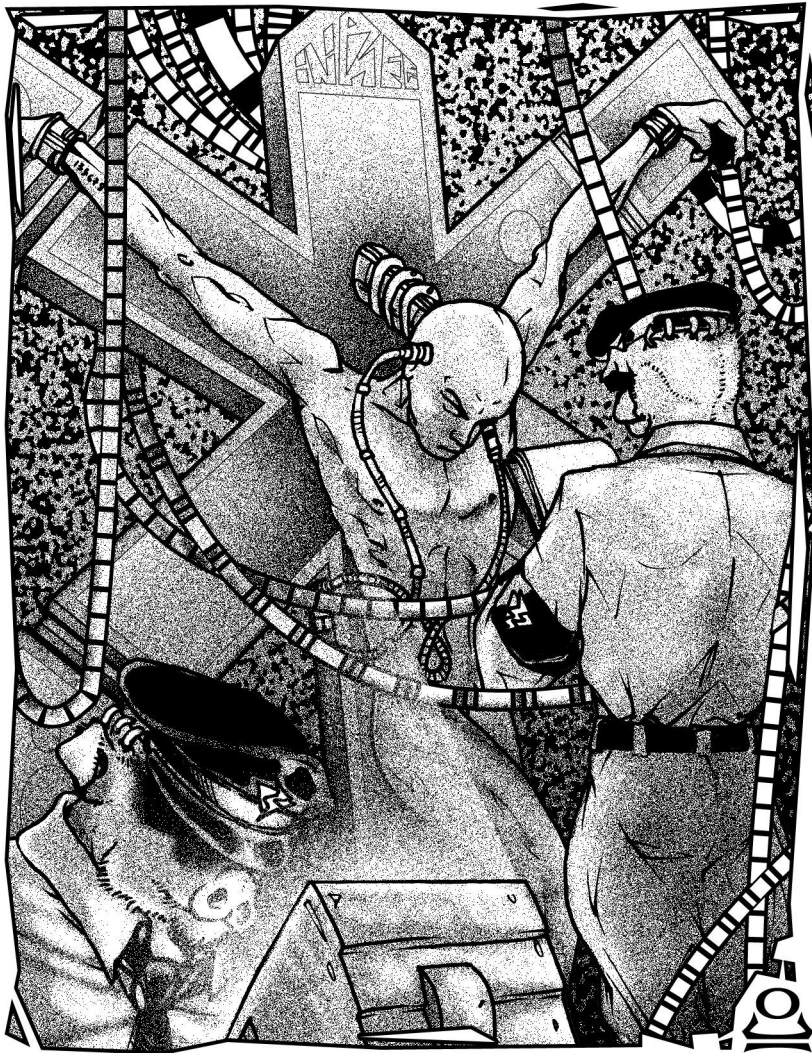
Stun Cannons

Huge, black, oversized blunderbuss-looking-things that fire pseudo-electric bolts which paralyze their targets.

Bull Dogs

Tiny, vicious bulls that the soldiers of the Multitude use to intimidate and track enemies. They live for nothing more simple than to be let off-leash so they can gore and maim their prey.

NAME: LONG DIVISION SOLDIER					SERVANT	
PHY 12	STR 12	BLD 14	CON 12		To Hit	12-
REF 11	COR 11	REA 11	AGI 11		To Be Hit	-1
INT 09	RES 09	MEM 09	WIL 09		Armor	2/4
DP 15	Minor	Major	Critical		Damage	Varies
Wounds	5	15	30			
Description: They dress like demented Nazi fetishish						
Reflection on Chessboard Zero: When the Long Divisions have moved in, things will become oppressive and dilapidated. Graffiti will appear on walls (even inside). Equipment will break. Discord reigns. People may feel giddy or nervous or full of wild destructive energy (how they respond will vary a lot). Pipes will leak water, lights will flicker, and systems will break.						
Someone is making a mess of things: garbage will be found everywhere and it almost always can be traced to a real source—but the person littering may seem unaware of it. Some of the trash may literally seem to come from nowhere.						
Those who cast Shadows down to Chessboard Two where the arm is will feel watched, imprisoned, oppressed, or terrorized without any direct reason for it (their Shadows are being mistreated).						
Where guards are posted, there will be new locks, stuck doors, and blocked passages on Chessboard Zero.						



Field Martians

The General needed to mass produce strong officers to run his army. His scientists developed the Martians. The Martians don't come from Mars—the name may be a reference to the Roman god of war. Unlike the Multitude, their skin is green, and their armor is bronze and gold. The Martians are tough, disciplined, and form the competent core of the army.

They rule their divisions with great bullwhips and use megaphones for barking orders. If they have a weakness, it's lust. The General's scientists developed Martians that, in classic form, need women.

There is an almost infinite variety of other soldiers in the General's army. These include Weeping Willows (great, crying, walking trees), a developing air force composed largely of Flying Buttresses (don't ask), and an armored cavalry mounted on nearly indestructible armored unicycles.

Exquisitors

Special troops who look like sleek, beautiful humans (albeit cobalt blue and black...) who are experts in interrogation and pain. They are connoisseurs and their own senses and appreciation of sensation guide them in the use of pain as well as pleasure. The Exquisitors have antennae that vibrate (with a faint audible hum), that allow them link nervous systems with a subject so that he feels what they feel and vice-versa.

Exquisitors are often dispatched for special operations or to deal with important prisoners. Their base of operations is a campus near the General's fortress that is famed for its development of unspeakable perversions for which there are no names in common languages.

Reflections on Chessboard Zero: The Exquisitors are sometimes seen as shadowy auditors who may leave an *impression* of having been seen—but were not “actually there” (“Who was that talking to you in your office?” “I was here alone.” “I could’ve sworn I saw someone through the glass.”)

However, they do have places they work—the torture chambers. These are places where strange sculptures are welcomed (and will start to “collect” if left to their own devices). On Chessboard Zero, one might find an office with disturbing leather straps on office chairs. One might find an abandoned basement with dentist drills scattered about the floors, etc.

A person who has been or is being tortured there will feel a horrific aversion to the room. A normal person may have walked his Shadow into the chamber with Exquisitors—they may become sick and horrified very quickly!

Toy Soldiers (Wind-up)

The Multitudes are poor troops but they are cheap (4 for a dime). Somewhat more expensive are the Toy Soldiers. These are wind-up robotic troops which look a bit blocky (their chests open up to reveal two flashing Stun Cannons).

Praying Mantis (Chaplains)

Six-foot tall Praying Mantises are the religious support for the Army of No. They are the beings that can sort of “get a message” to the Caretakers that created the Army (other than going directly through General Ledger—but that’s crazy-talk for most field commanders). They are also powerful battle machines—although they are a bit rare and high in the chain of command to be front-line troops.

They are also *counselors*. They, perversely, play the *good cop* to those caught in the Army of No’s torture chambers and prisons. They are often the ones who will talk to the Shadow of an authority figure they are trying to *convert to their cause*. They have resonant voices and are masters of psychological manipulation.

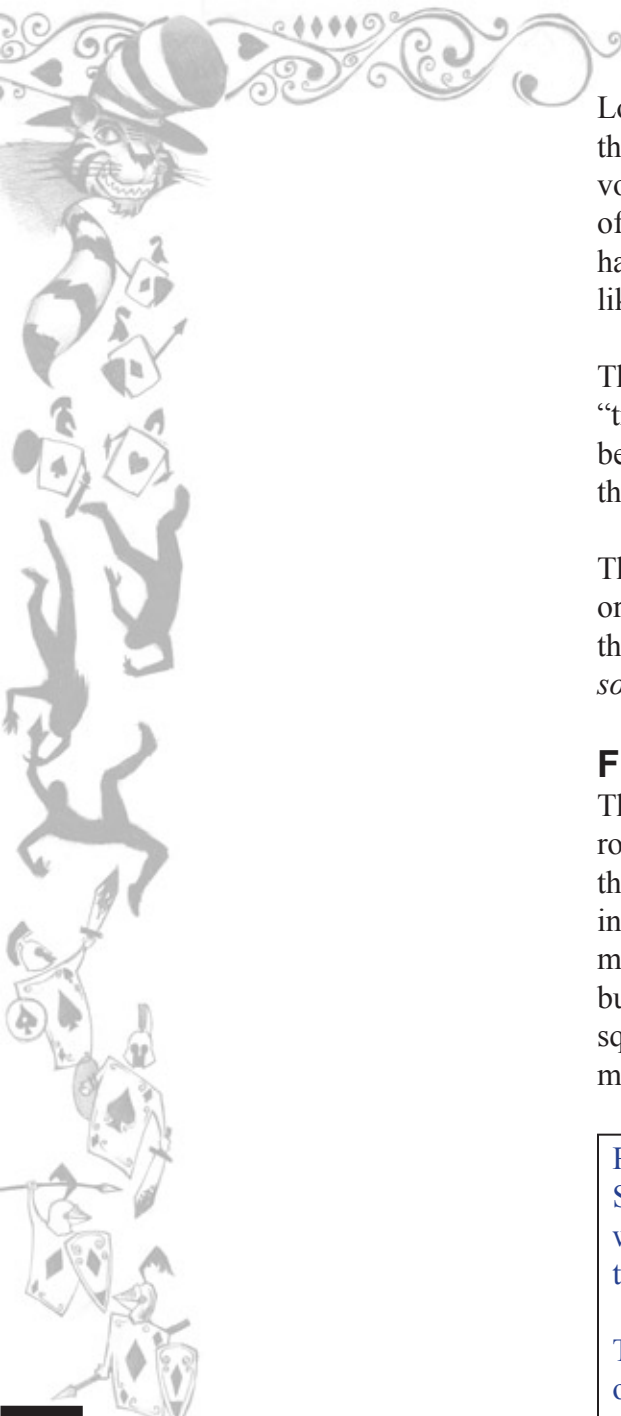
Reflections on Chessboard Zero: The chaplains love motivational posters. They like mugs with slogans like “There’s no *I* in Team”—they like all that stuff with the most condescending smarmy atmosphere that can be mustered to go with it. Their disposition is one of false morale and manufactured cheerfulness.

It’s the irony of the guy with the “Vision” Poster telling you that your idea just “isn’t mature enough.”

Pundits (Talking heads)

Pundits are the Psy-War radio stations of the Army of No. They are about six feet tall, blue, and immobile (they are usually moved around by the





Long Divisions on wagons). They need to observe and then hold forth—their speeches can rally the troops but they serve another function: their voices can be heard by Shadows on Chessboard One. Some percentage of people will be aware of what their Shadows hear (some people who have a very strong connection to their Shadow or those who’ve trained, like magicians, will hear the voices clearly “in their heads”).

This can be used to try to gain converts—usually people who are sort of “trying” can project their Shadows down to Chessboard 2 where they can be seized by the Army of No and, after some extreme things are done to them, used to communicate more directly with their owner.

This can also be used to demoralize people or create rumors of unknown origin. Shadows hearing the broadcast may relay the message to their casters. The real people will have the idea they heard something *somewhere*—and may repeat it to others.

Flying Fists

The ultimate fetishistic fascist weapon, the Flying Fist appears as a rocket-propelled hand (pointing with a finger or curled into a fist) that strikes like a kinetic kill missile and targets based on its own intelligence. It has eyes and, between the second and third fingers, a mouth. Thankfully these are rare and most divisions have, at most, one, but in areas that have been subjugated there may be shows of force with squadrons of four of them streaking through the skies over the huddled masses (Shadows) below.

Reflections on Chessboard Zero: Flying Fists represent *power*. Shadows cringe when their scram-jet roar thunders overhead: people who are in the same vicinity on Chessboard Zero tend to cringe a little too.

There is a feeling of being watched from *on high* and a distinct feeling of a giant fist ready to smash down. The ‘Hanger’ is usually some high up place with limited access (the guards on Chessboard Two usually mean the doors are locked). In the area one will find empty fuel cans, bits of mechanics, computer gear (sometimes broken) all arranged in a strange way that has *meaning*. This is where the Fists come to roost.

Bombardiers

The Long Divisions are good at instilling general terror but they are bad at making examples of people. The Bombardiers are good for that. They appear as tall skinny men walking on high stilts and wearing stripped top-hats. They drop 1.5 yard-diameter “green apples” on their targets. A target that has been covered loses all motivation—the shadow becomes despondent and listless. A real person who has had their shadow “bombed” in this fashion may lose their zest for life or at least their will to resist.



Llamed Infection

There's a pirate radio station that plays out of Cleveland. The FCC is looking for them hard but they use a clever series of re-broadcasters and some people say a "mobile unit" like a van with a transmitter in it. You've read (on private Internet message boards) that if you listen to it a lot you'll start having disturbing visions. Some "long-time listeners" have posted frantic, disjointed messages warning people off. Others say it changed their lives.

There's an old guy you met in a diner near Pittsburgh off I-279 who told you he was there at Altamont Speedway when the Stones concert got out of hand. His story includes government agents with some kind of sonic "agitation generator" and silenced pistols with special subsonic bullets. "They shut it down, man," he told you through a beard with food stuck in it. "They knew what'd happen if it kept on going. It'd have been the *end of the world*."

You read about a mass-suicide up in Vermont by a bunch of tech-literate cultists who were publishing encrypted books about magic on the web. You've got a friend who works for a local paper near there. She says a story came across her desk saying that the first investigators into the house have been having "experiences" and some of them have *vanished*. One went nuts before the psychiatric facility *lost track of him*. It all sounds too weird to be believed.

They are talking about Llamed Infection—even if they don't know it.

The Caretaker's first response to the discovery of the really appalling nature of humanity was to simply try to attack the Department of Works, shut it down, and then crack reality open like an eggshell. Humanity would be Infected, plunged into Wonderland, and the resulting chaos would get rid of most of them and, well, reshape the rest.

The Operator

He's a short guy with thick glasses and tousled brown hair. He runs the only reliable communications network that spans several Chessboards of reality. He came to a Support Group in the late 90's as a telecommunications specialist who had begun experiencing nightmares and hallucinations after troubleshooting (and listening in on) calls that were routed through a small Southeastern Telco. After eight months of not-getting-better he moved to one of the enclaves out off I-95 that farmed its own food, grew its own pot, and promised its members a safe-place in the insane new world they were sinking into.

The Operator, however, wasn't willing to wait and find out what "eternal interconnected brotherhood" actually meant (he says, today, it turned out to be something like a terrifying jigsaw puzzle—just what it sounds like) but he used the resources and the experiences there to *experiment*.

And slowly he created the bathysphone—a device that, when "dropped" down through layers of reality could still, somehow, communicate with others of its type. It is said the Queen of Hearts has a listening room where a servant stands over what looks like a vacuum-tube-phonograph machine listening for messages and will run (or crawl, since the servant looks like a massive human ear with a small globe from which eight-spider-legs extend) to her side with a message, should it be sent.

The Operator isn't public and he isn't cheap—but he is *connected*. Many people from multi-billion dollar heads of pharmaceutical companies to members of the four-star-club of the armed forces call on him for a few minutes of static, awful sounds, and a whispered message from out of the depths.

Revolution Girl

Her father's *rich*. She got most of it from him so she's *rich*. She's angry too: enraged. People say that if you're with her at the wrong time—when she *Descends*—she becomes a towering burnt thing with many long necks ended with brutal, sightless mouths arching out from the top of it. They say that if you're with her at those times and she harbors even a trace of dislike for you? You'll be eaten ... slowly. She likes to chew her food *well*.

She is the spider in the center of the web that is Pathogen, a cellular organization devoted to the spread of destructive memes. When she came to understand what Wonderland was, she brought in trainers, psychologists, and mystics to prepare her—and then used her vast monetary reaches to collect objects and people in an attempt to Infect herself. She succeeded.

Pathogen does things like try to destabilize the stock market with perfectly timed rumors. They try to create food-scares and terror-alerts. They're working hard to try to spread the “new disease”—in some cases she's just trying to get the idea that there *is* a communicable psychological disease out there. In others she has actual, super-rare artifacts she tries to utilize for a mass Infection).

In person she acts like a revolutionary: she has several homes (owned under a maze of corporations) and often has armed bodyguards with her. Those who come looking for her are people with a twisted sense of right and wrong and an interest in her expertise: she meets these people for a price, often in the form of favors. She has a small chain of mental health facilities whose purpose is to study the people (many of her own) who have been Infected. She hires InNetwork doctors to conduct these examinations, as they are willing to do what others would not.

This turned out to be a big mistake; the machinery of the Department of Works hit back ... *hard*. So they tried a different tact: if Wonderland infection could be reconfigured so that instead of being hard to catch it was much *easier* (say by reading the wrong book or watching the wrong TV show) then humans could break open reality *themselves*.

A few early successes were tempered by two things: Firstly, although some of the new strains (called Llamed by the humans who later catalogued them) were moderately successful there were always hard limits on how well any could really spread. Secondly, and far worse, preliminary projections showed that while a massive Infection could break open reality like an eggshell, as the Department of Works was *calibrated* somehow based on humanity's perceptions,

even marginally out of control such an event could “flat-line the continuum.” If that sounds scary to you, it was exponentially scarier to the Caretakers who think they're the only ones who matter anyway.

But the Decons were willing to gamble a lot more than their more established brethren and so, when the project was shelved, they took it up themselves. What's more, they realized that while the Caretakers had never really been willing to interact much with humankind, the project was potentially *far more successful* if they had human help.

And they had something to offer. The magicians wanted secrets of the universe—the Decons had secrets aplenty. A small percentage of Infecteds wanted to stabilize their condition, whatever the cost. The Decons could help with that. The group of human nihilists wanted to bring “the whole thing down anyway.” The Decons *understood that*.

So journeying magicians and desperate Infecteds and angry nihilists (mostly in the ranks of the Underground) were contacted and the plans were made. Test cases were created and operations are planned. They're going to perfect the disease ... and they're going to spread it.

Sponsors

The sponsors of the original project put the Liebrarian and the Typeist in charge of gathering data and making plans. When the project was shelved, it was undertaken by the Black Rose whose contacts with magicians gave it purchase in the human world.

Agents of Infection

The Underground's *Upper Echelon* is the prime force behind Llamed. The members range from magicians (who have never been to a support group meeting) to survivors who have personal and political motivations for wanting to see the Infection spread. The group is so disparate that there is no one vision concerning what will happen if a decent Llamed strain is developed but the goals range from enlightening mankind to destroying it.

For its part, although this is potentially the most dangerous operation (if mishandled it could tear reality down), it is also the one that is, in its way, the most conscientious: The Black Rose doesn't want to destroy humanity (or even, really, civilize man—the target is the order of the Caretakers). If Llamed was *properly* handled (at least in theory) the results could be far less destructive than standard Infection usually results in. There is at least a hypothetical chance that such an outbreak, managed and controlled and properly “calibrated” could raise mankind to an elevated level of consciousness.

It could also destroy it.

Operations

These are some of the historical Llamed projects. Modern ones include similar initiatives (and a great deal of danger from Puritan, who is dedicated to eradicating the threat).

Flower Power

The Lost Family

There are two of them, a man and a woman (although they are not married). They were Infected and came together in a facility run by one of the malignant beings that calls itself an InNetwork physician. When the ordeal was over and the doctor was dead they both escaped—and survived, as well as they were able. They managed to control their Infection. They managed to repair some of the damage.

Now they work with groups around the country to find and exterminate the warped things that call themselves therapists. They provide what comfort they can to their victims and what advice they can give to the other Infecteds (and they don't have much good advice—they know the odds are not good). Their “children” are those taken, often damaged, from the hospitals where they have been imprisoned. The immediate members of the Lost Family organize breakouts, plan escapes, and sift through information looking for evidence of their former tormentors.

The two have deep experience in the lower Chessboards and are often sought for help (and, often, they make sojourns down into the lower realms to help those of theirs who have fallen ... if they can). It's an overwhelming task and one that wears on them—but they are tireless and they are kind. They have the respect of the rest of the Upper Echelon because of their expertise, mastery, and the information they gather. They have contacts within many major psychiatric hospitals and have friends throughout the MHS whose identities they guard closely. They are aware of Big Pharma. They are aware of Project Puritan (and Pagan) but they keep this information secret from most of their wards as part of a deal that extends their reach and credibility.

They believe that the only solution to the mounting series of tragedies is the creation of a strain that will reduce the damaging effects of Nin (the name for the “standard strain”). They have dedicated some of their safe-houses and resources to studying this.

The Mind Expansion Guru

In an exclusive mansion in the Hollywood CA hills, the Mind Expansion Guru holds court. The price for one of his three-day retreats is three hundred thousand dollars. You sign a contract saying you cannot divulge *anything* that goes on there. The grounds are surrounded by high walls and armed guards: it is said they will open fire if someone tries to get in ... or tries to get out. Before attending, the group is taken by limousine to the LAX airport and the group are marched through the metal detectors and examined by the security there. They are taken, as a group, into the enclave.

What happens inside is unclear: those who return, speak *very* rarely (and very vaguely), talking of *wonders* and of *communion* with “greater spirits.” The Guru himself is highly sought and, at the most exclusively elite functions (which are the ones he attends), he says he is “opening the doors of the mind” and taking the people *down* into the depths of the “underworld” from which no traveler emerges unscathed or unchanged.

A freelance journalist (now missing) traced the MEG’s origins to a grubby junior college campus where a very few people (all in institutions) reported his arrival at the age of 21 as a depressive schizophrenic in need of assistance and having horrifying visions. The story (never run for legal reasons, but released on the Internet) found witnesses who said he experimented with a variety of highly unusual hallucinogenic and tantric magic while swimming through the culture of junkies, crazies, and hustlers that made up San Francisco’s “rock bottom” street scene.

The most audacious (and, some say, nearly successful) attempt at a full-scale Llamed push occurred during the sixties and early seventies. The psychedelic movement offered a new consciousness and universal connection through the use of intense (transcendental) meditation, hallucinogens (LSD being the breakthrough development), and trance music. It is impossible to know how many of the drop-out-disappearance and narco-casualties of the era were actually Wonderland Infection, but it is believed that the experiment was a failure partially due to active countermeasures by Pilgrim acting through more well-known government programs like MK-ULTRA and COINTELPRO.

Lullaby

A popular children’s author who is also the member of a fraternal order has developed a song that subtly (subconsciously) communicates the basic existence and nature of Wonderland to young children who are still willing to believe the impossible. While children in this stage cannot be Infected by Wonderland, their experiences may be sufficient to trigger episodes when they reach maturity. Characters that had a *strong reaction* to the books or lullaby’s as children will still be especially attuned and vulnerable to the invisible world as adults, but the lullaby is not reliable enough to be a fully successful strain of Llamed. Some adults may even be *triggered* by hearing or re-reading the books as adults.

Audio Drone

A fraternal order of techno-pagans developed an audio signal (sounds like static with distant voices babbling over each other) that can be broadcast over AM, FM, and Shortwave frequencies. People who listen to it *at length* will receive flashes of insight about Wonderland from their Shadows (they will “hear” their Shadow’s voices in the signal). Over time (as they begin to trust and believe this insight) they will begin to develop a full-fledged Infection.

The Drone can be broadcast independently or in the background of a more normal broadcast. The techno-pagans mix it with popular underground tunes that get played on pirate radio-stations. They also



distribute it in mp3 format over p2p networks.

The Audio Drone is potent enough, but it requires significant devotion to be effective. Only a small portion of the population would ever study the Drone sufficiently to become Infected and therefore it is *not* considered a fully effective Llamed Strain.

The System of Dr. Tarr

There is rumored to be a text penned by a student of Freud's that reveals surprising secrets that the master never shared in his own works. The text is long lost, but experts in the restoration and *fabrication* of books from that era have created a convincing forgery that describes a regimen of ritualized meditation artfully disguised as a variant form of psychotherapy. When practiced correctly under the direction of a trained therapist, the ritual will support contact with the subject's shadow that can be quite therapeutic and can also lead to triggering events and Infection.

The book will be sold at auction, but its audience will never be large enough to fully realize Llamed.



Project Puritan

Mother, Should I Trust the Government?

I have a dark fantasy in my mind about how it goes.

It goes like this: I get the communiqué—it's not a phone call, it's not an email. It comes in on a special channel, and I know what's in it before I open the envelope. There's only one thing that comes in on that channel, and if it comes, it means one thing: nightmare.

I open the envelope and read it. No surprises.

I go to see the President. He's in his office; everyone's nervous. When he gets an unexpected visitor (not *really* unexpected; I've called ahead—made arrangements, of course), it means something *bad* has happened.

In my fantasy, the colors of the room seem washed out; the sound's muted. In my fantasy, there are Grave Men there with him to hear what I have to say.



"Mr. President," I begin, showing him the communiqué, "Sanction has been invoked. I need to brief you, and we need to discuss your options."

He answers me, confidently, as though he's aware of the situation.

"No, Sir," I have to explain. "This isn't about the aliens." He knows about the aliens. Every President since Eisenhower's known about them. Part of the induction briefing. All about their machinery and hives, and how they aren't really *aliens* at all.

But this isn't about the aliens.

It's about something else, and in my fantasy, I look down at the paper to explain the situation.

And in my fantasy, it's blank.

Because 50 years ago wise men looked into the dark heart of creation and learned something so awful and deadly that just *knowing* it killed them. But before they

died, they put protocols and directives in place so that if the *worst case scenario* ever came true, we—the United States, the human race—would have one last chance.

They created the Sanctions—the ‘seals’ on the scrolls of apocalypse. And God Help Us—the scrolls are opening.

I don’t know *what* the communiqué would say. I can’t even *imagine* what might justify killing a hundred and fifty million people.

But in my fantasy, I read it and I understand, and the President orders the bombers fueled and bedecked with their heavy cobalt payloads, and I shiver.”

—Psychological Evaluation 4425, Subject 1QE473 Directorate of Secret Service

Project Puritan

Project *Pilgrim* made contact—and was hushed up. In the end, the Inner Circle didn’t know what they’d found but they knew it was dangerous—too dangerous to be disseminated. They also knew that eventually they’d see it again. The dissolution of the Inner Circle was supposed to be a complete roll-up of the operation. There were no survivors from the project down below. The Inner Circle’s official findings to the congressional oversight “Outer Circle” would indicate that the initial reports were false: there was no unusual intelligence. Things would go back to normal.

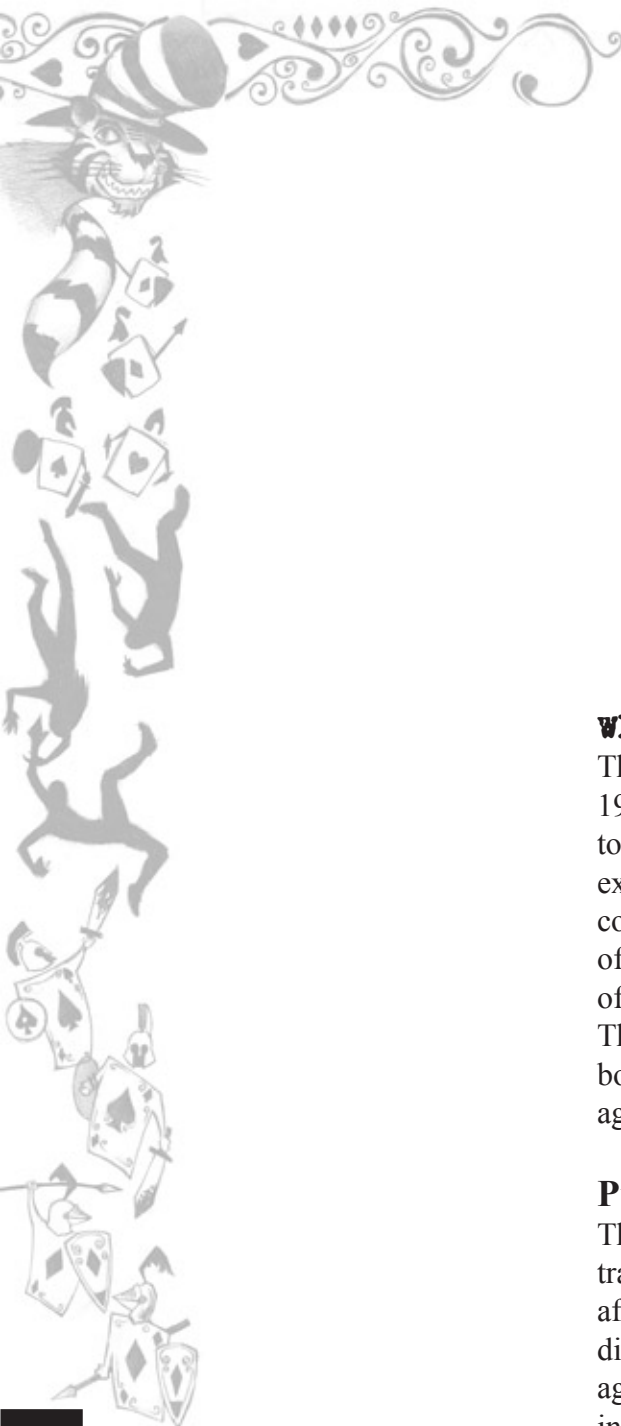
That didn’t happen.

One of the members of the Inner Circle began work on a special division of the Secret Service, which is known internally as Project Puritan: as in *purify by fire*. They are the new inquisition. They are the new watch keepers. Many Puritan operations work through proxies and other departments. There are NIMH and FBI initiatives to keep watch on Underground Activists (there have been some “sterilizations” as well, although those are carried out by an elite Special Operations Group). There are Federal Marshals who have been quietly recruited and wield their (considerable) authority to control situations where Wonderland seems to be active and ... out of hand.

Today Puritan has three primary responsibilities:

1. Remember and be prepared. There are sealed orders and affidavits signed by generals and scientists that (supposedly) explain the danger and ask the President to take all necessary action to prevent *mass Infection*. This is called *Sanction*. It is a last-chance clause if the other two responsibilities fail, wide-scale annihilation of Infected populations would be the only way to contain the disease.
2. Finish the job. Pilgrim left traces. There are still records in





university labs, books (out of print) in forgotten public libraries, puzzle pieces that could be put together. Puritan is charged with eliminating all trace, by whatever means necessary. This includes the identification and termination of Pagan.

3. Maintain vigilance. The threat is still out there. In the 1950's it took a massive government program and super computers to make contact with the other side. What the lab-coats *didn't* know was that outside, in the communes, dormitories, and occult temples, *contact* was being made by other means. Puritan was formed during the years of calm before the storm of the *psychedelic* movement and the many faceted spirit of the *new age*. They reacted, and they may have won many battles, but the genie is out of the bottle, and today they're tracking the spread of Wonderland through the population, watching the ranks of the *Underground* grow, and deciding what to do about it.

Who Knows What

The name "Project Puritan" referred to an operation created by the 1950's Secret Service to assess "real, theoretical, and hypothetical threats to the psychological health of the nation." The project was officially expanded in 1963 and became an internal organ of the Service that continues to this day. From the outside, they are tasked with a variety of threats dealing with sophisticated political blackmail against military officers and politicians to recruit the mentally ill for terrorist activities. Their real purpose is closely guarded and their agents are selected from both the Secret Service and the FBI. This section details what different agencies know about Wonderland.

Puritan Operatives

There is a refitted missile silo out in the Midwest that serves as the training and induction center for Puritan Agents. Agents are recruited after they have been exposed and Infected (when the damage of possible disclosure has already been done) but they also recruit and train new agents. In the silo (also called "The Rabbit Hole"), there is training in Mastery techniques (most Infected Puritan Agents are Proficient or Advanced level) and psychological conditioning exercises.

The top-level Puritan operatives (of which there are exceedingly few) understand the Chessboards, Reflections and Shadows, and Whirls. They are less clear on the Caretakers—they know entities exist on the lower levels but are unclear as to their natures. They prefer to work with non-Infected agents (people who are not part of the inner circle). They believe that any accurate knowledge of Wonderland is a dangerous thing beyond their organization. It has been conjectured that a complete briefing given in a believable manner to, say, the President, would make him far more susceptible to Infection.

Puritan Agents

There's a very small number of Operatives. They are trusted with the

deepest secrets Puritan has and they are expected to devote their lives to the battle. Often, however, Puritan needs more manpower than its pool of Operatives can provide. That's where *Agents* come in.

Agents are members of other services (most often the FBI—but also Federal Marshals, and in a few cases, big city police forces). These are people to whom *something* has been explained. Each Agent has a “controller”—an Operative who manages them. What exactly they are told depends on how well they are trusted.

Grade	Information
Grade 1	The Agent is told that there are terrorists using hallucinogens and schizophrenia-inducing drugs working with disaffected citizens to create chaos as practice runs for a major initiative to destabilize the government. The Agent (who is not Infected at Grade 1) may be expected to spy on or infiltrate groups that are engaged in Wonderland activity.
Grade 2	The Agent is aware that something is wrong with the world. They may be told there are aliens, demons, or other such non-human entities at work. The Operative may simply say “we don’t know.” The Agent may be asked to assist in cleanup operations, to assist normal forces in an investigation and keep things quiet, or to take direct action against a threat.
Grade 3	The Agent (usually a military or law-enforcement officer) is Infected. They are not “brought into the fold” but are given training, drugs, and other assistance in controlling their condition. They are asked to assist in operations but they are not “fully briefed” as to what is going on. In some cases, if Grade 3 Agents become highly proficient and have the right psychological profile they may be “adopted” and become fully briefed Operatives. In other cases, they are deemed a security risk and “retired.”

Special Advisor to the President

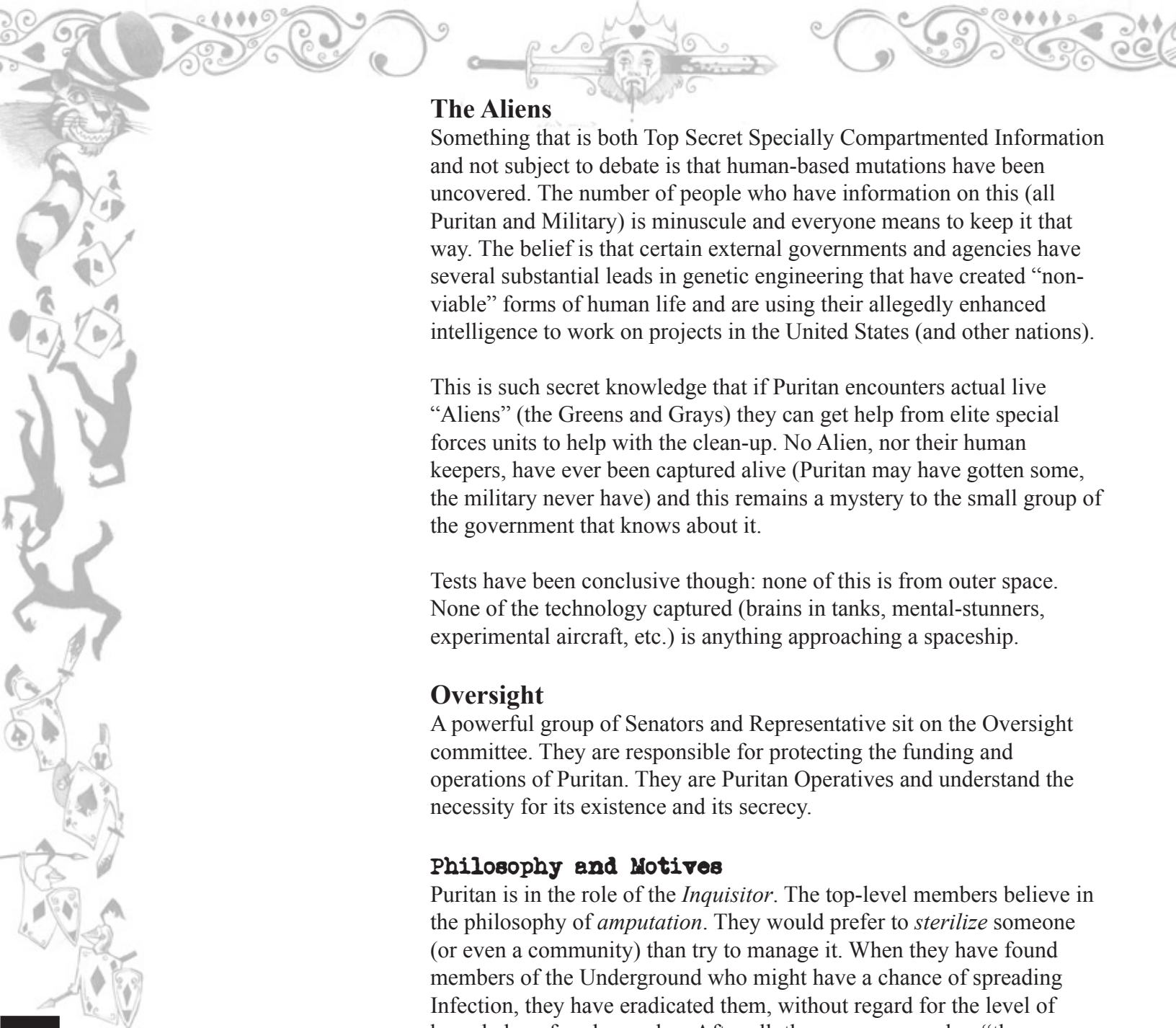
The highest public position on Puritan’s Team is the Advisor to the President. He rarely meets with the President and often says nothing or very little unless the topic under discussion is *very* strange. He is prepared to brief the President concerning what Puritan knows about Wonderland and what must be done. This has never been invoked. Most in Puritan hope it never will be. Many think it’s just a matter of time.

The FBI, CIA, and Military

Puritan has produced numerous papers, NIMH studies, and evidence of the existence of “phagic memetic warfare” which is described as psychological warfare techniques in use by global and domestic terrorists. The claim is that these techniques (ranging from sub-sonics to some poorly understood subliminal hypnotic trigger generators) can induce anything from schizophrenia to hallucinations to “religious conversions” in certain subjects.

All of this is considered hypothetical and (by many) a waste of time. The military has concluded that no such techniques exists and usually doesn’t credit Puritan with doing much important work. However, various high-ranking members of the government’s intelligence and law-enforcement agencies believe there is a loose-knit movement to undermine the national mental health. This has received some attention (such as separate FBI investigations into CPD and Support Groups ... which were disturbing but inconclusive).





The Aliens

Something that is both Top Secret Specially Compartmented Information and not subject to debate is that human-based mutations have been uncovered. The number of people who have information on this (all Puritan and Military) is minuscule and everyone means to keep it that way. The belief is that certain external governments and agencies have several substantial leads in genetic engineering that have created “non-viable” forms of human life and are using their allegedly enhanced intelligence to work on projects in the United States (and other nations).

This is such secret knowledge that if Puritan encounters actual live “Aliens” (the Greens and Grays) they can get help from elite special forces units to help with the clean-up. No Alien, nor their human keepers, have ever been captured alive (Puritan may have gotten some, the military never have) and this remains a mystery to the small group of the government that knows about it.

Tests have been conclusive though: none of this is from outer space. None of the technology captured (brains in tanks, mental-stunners, experimental aircraft, etc.) is anything approaching a spaceship.

Oversight

A powerful group of Senators and Representative sit on the Oversight committee. They are responsible for protecting the funding and operations of Puritan. They are Puritan Operatives and understand the necessity for its existence and its secrecy.

Philosophy and Motives

Puritan is in the role of the *Inquisitor*. The top-level members believe in the philosophy of *amputation*. They would prefer to *sterilize* someone (or even a community) than try to manage it. When they have found members of the Underground who might have a chance of spreading Infection, they have eradicated them, without regard for the level of knowledge of each member. After all, the person pegged as “the new guy” might really be one of the Upper Echelon members there to observe or guide the group when necessary.

They have an uneasy relation with their own Infected members (and it’s not an uncommon case). Operatives undergoing an Episode may create publicity problems: their Reflections, acting as grim (or sometimes funny) parodies of investigators create Men In Black legends. But these same agents are often better equipped to actually deal with Whirls or monsters than the un-Infected.

There is a secret training base in a decommissioned Minute Man nuclear missile silo that provides special training and evaluation for members who are Infected. Usually these people are heavily monitored and often segregated. In some cases, if they are believed to become unstable, they

are “retired” (the word is that you have a choice between honorable suicide or going to a special asylum for the rest of your life).

Operations

Puritan members are far more likely to be “agents in place” (meaning they work for other agencies but have been selected and recruited) than “operatives” (members of the Secret Service who work full time for Puritan). The people Puritan wants are usually FBI, Federal Marshal, BATF—those with unusual amounts of license to operate and the ability to provide cover and oversight for unusual projects.

Secrecy is paramount: an attempt to protect its members would eventually necessitate the revealing of the information the Inner Circle was ready to commit suicide to protect. It’s possible that if Puritan’s files and labs were exposed and studied there could be *mass Infection of the government*. As such, the organization prefers to be as subtle as it can. Although it has acted decisively in a few cases, mostly, it would rather track the activities of persons believed to be involved with Wonderland and try to “collect them” through normal means and agencies.

What this means is that Puritan is an almost all-powerful force but, it is a very quiet, very subtle force which is willing to lose many battles so long as it wins the really important ones.

Equipment and Training

Puritan Operatives have access to a small amount of special gear and weapons.

Black Knight Helicopters

Refitted Black Hawks with stealth rotors for silent flight. They are also painted with an active-camouflage paint that makes them nearly invisible at night. They are sometimes used for urban operations and have excellent surveillance gear. Some of these are outfitted with fairly heavy anti-aircraft cannons and sophisticated missiles. They have operated in areas where Pagan aircraft have been sighted.

White Rook Mobile Command Station

A panel truck outfitted with armored sides, a medical bay, and surveillance and communication gear. When one can be requisitioned it can tap area phones, triangulate mobile phone numbers, pick up images off of computer screens at 100 yards, and access most wireless networks (even if secured).

Black and White Bishops

The possibility of the successful launch of a Media Event (a wide-spread Wonderland Infection) has convinced Puritan that the most dire circumstances call for the most dire responses. There are two normal-looking 18-wheeled trucks always in motion around the country. Each



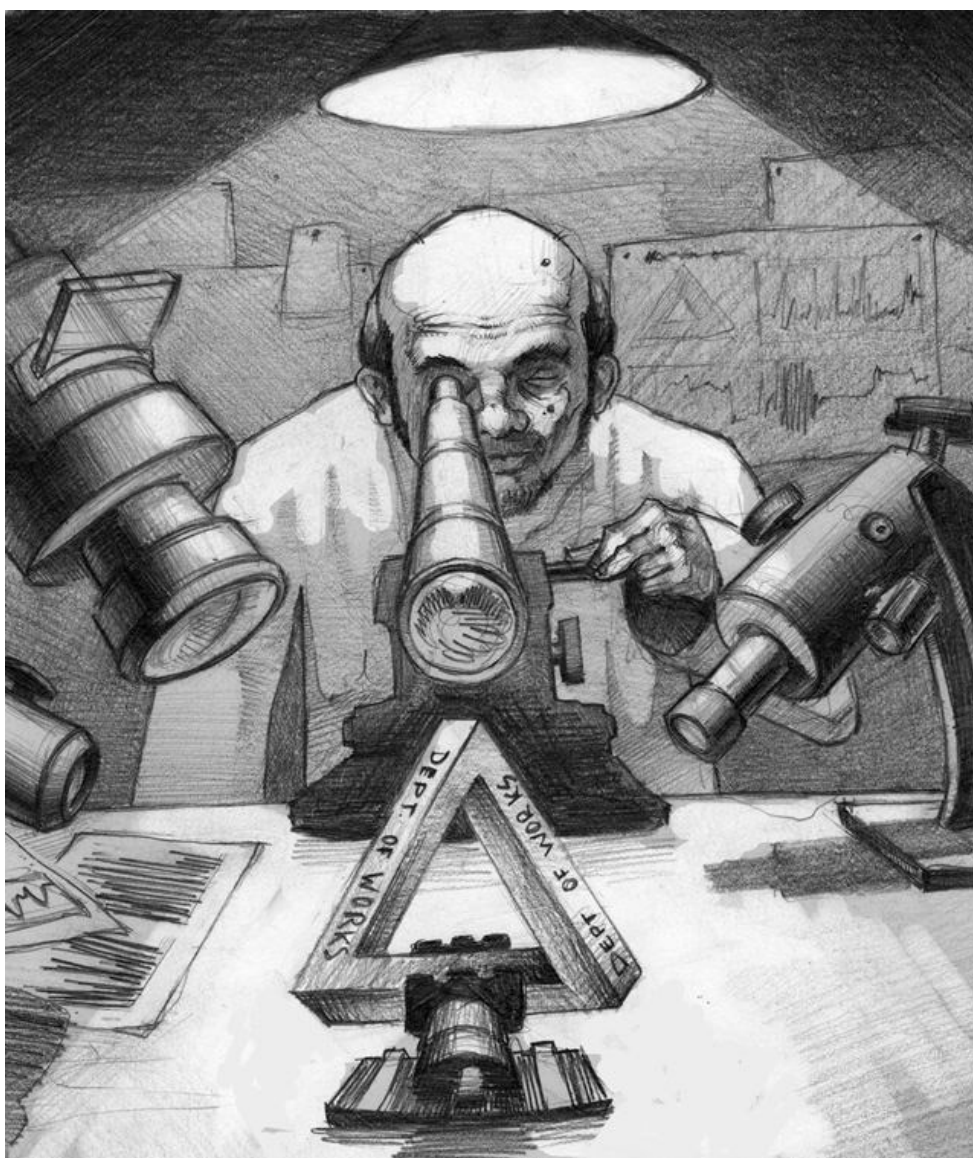
contains a “dial-a-nuke” with a yield range of 10 Kt (kilotons) up to 5 Megatons. They would be invoked in the case of an unstoppable outbreak under the command of the President. This is known as “Sanction.”

Playing a Puritan Operative

Operatives are usually built on 75 to 100pts and have investigative and military skills. Most are Infected and have Proficient or Advanced level Mastery. Many have 4-8 AP (16-32pts) in Twists. Puritan is aware of, but does not employ, practicing magicians as standard Operatives.

Playing a Puritan Agent

A Puritan Agent can be anyone Puritan deems solid enough to trust with a degree of responsibility in the battle with Wonderland. Police officers, military personnel, and so on are all good possibilities. They may be 50-75pts and will be capable characters.



Magicians

In the human body where the blood flows into the brain there is a layer of endothelial cells which have gaps no larger than the smallest of molecules between them. Oxygen, carbon dioxide, and sugars can pass but almost no drug, no bacteria, almost nothing else can penetrate it. This wall, called the blood-brain barrier protects us from the chemical chaos in our own bodies.

It is the same wall, of a metaphysical sort, that screens the perceptions and thoughts of our Shadows from our own consciousness. It is called The Egg. If The Egg did not exist the visions, sounds, and sensations of the lower realities would come flooding into our minds. We would be Infected. We might go *insane*.

The Egg is many things but it is *not* absolute. When you feel a haunted chill in an empty room it may be because your Shadow is seeing things that you can't. An instant dislike of someone? Your Shadow sees the "true person" in their own Shadow and you feel that faint echo.



The Magician in JAGS Wonderland

Magicians are usually fairly advanced characters: the modern magician is "stereotypically" *not* Infected with anything worse than Aleph (although PC Magicians, we think, most commonly *will be*). Their magical training will allow them to do and know certain things about Wonderland that even many experienced Infecteds will not. It will give them some abilities, if they are Infected, that will rival some of the Twisted's (and, of course, a Magician may be both Infected and Twisted, combining the abilities).

It is even possible that some PCs will be Hunger Disciples—the usually deranged predators of the Invisible World.

The GM will need to decide what role Magicians will play in the game: they may be forces in the shadows that *know* things but rarely *do* things. They may be a force that is seeking to explore and exploit Wonderland for their own purposes—but they're rarely involved in mundane affairs.

There might be a whole party composed of Magicians—or Magician trainees—that is seeking to approach Wonderland on *their* terms. It is our experience that Infected Magicians (either intentionally or accidentally) make for more involved characters than those who practice their craft but are extremely careful never to come in actual *contact* with the subjects of their work.

“There is great danger in me; for who doth not understand these runes shall make a great miss. He shall fall down into the pit called *Because*, and there he shall perish with the dogs of Reason.”

LIBER AL VEL LEGIS

-Alister Crowley

Reason over magic – and then reason over religion, and ultimately reason over everything. In our Age of Reasons, there is no place for wonder – reason dissects and explains and grinds away the very ideas of grandeur and magnificence. In its understanding, it belittles.

But it still obeys the ancient laws: to name something is to own it. Let us chant now.

- The universe is 15 billion light years across. Nothing is bigger.
- It is 15 billion years old. Nothing is older.
- Planck’s distance is 10 to the -33 meters. Nothing is smaller.
- Planck’s time is 10 to the -43 seconds. Nothing is younger.

Reasons has fit everything into a box, and there you are. There is ignorance in the box, but no *secrets*. Reason has no interest in secrets.

Suppose you know what’s going on in another room? It may be that your Shadow has left you (for a minute) and wandered off—you get faint impressions sent back like static-filled radio waves from deep space. Mostly, in today’s rational, scientific world, we think nothing of this. Mostly, where the barrier leaves off, our intentional blindness begins.

But that’s not true for everybody. That hasn’t been *universally true* for a long time.

The Language Of Secrets

“Whosoever would know Secrets, let him know how to keep secret things secretly;

and to reveal those things that are to be revealed, and to seal those things which are to be sealed”

The first Aphorism from Arbatel of Magick

Translated by Robert Turner, 1655

The inner voyage of meditation, ritual, and arcane specially structured belief patterns that lets one *crack* The Egg has been known of for a long, long time. Deep secrets have been kept. Great truths have been sought. Almost everywhere, almost everyone understood that this journey, when embarked upon for real, is a private thing that *must not be shared*. The greater one’s understanding, the greater one’s grasp of the danger.

There was certainly great danger from one’s fellow man misunderstanding your goals in these esoteric meditations and sometimes horrific summoning rituals. There was certainly danger in becoming “blinded” to your own insights by trying to share them too broadly. There was danger from your brother magicians if they figured out you were trying to get the word out.

But, largely, the danger was that if you did things well enough to start learning but screwed up just a little? Well, there was danger you could go *mad*—or *worse*.

People say that in the ancient times things were safer: the world was more whole and the journey to the lower Chessboards was more *abstract*. If things came back after you they were far weaker, rarer, and more transient. For another thing, with fewer cracks in the world, it was a lot harder to “fall down the dark well at the center of everything.” It was harder to meet the things down. It was harder for them to get at *you*.

Today the Magician walks a finer line: the world *is* cracking. Mirrors *are* opening. If you work the magic they may open for *you*. To the standard magician, Wonderland Infection is a great danger—something that one must avoid (unless you are one of the transgressives who explores the forbidden of the forbidden). To the standard Magician, the lower realities are touched *only* through one’s Shadow and one must keep one’s own soul *clean*.

The Magicians

Who are these Magicians? Who gains entry to the Invisible World? Why does one come to magic at all?

Throughout the ages, magic has been sought in the role of a *religion*. It is not. Magic offers no inner peace, no spiritual solace, and no absolution.

Others have come to magic for power and wealth. It is no sure route to either. Magic is subtle. Magic, even for real Magicians, is trickery. It does not offer as sure a way to slay an enemy as a blade. It does not offer as simple a way to gain money as theft.

Magic has been sought for knowledge. It offers knowledge but the truths it exposes are mad truths. It does not deliver the beautiful revelations of science or medicine or art.

Those who have become Magicians traditionally fall into three broad categories:

- Con Artists. Magic offers *advantages*. Magic can trick, fool, and manipulate. Magic can put the odds in your favor, reveal hidden cards, and get you out of a tight jam with a little work. If you wish to be the power *of* the throne it is no sure method ... but *behind* the throne? Magic can help.
- Seekers of deeper truth. The purest of the Magicians, the seeker comes to magic willing to know what is. Magic does reveal the lower realities. Magic does reveal the Caretakers (called “Entities” by Magicians who, for the most part, do not truly understand the Chessboards below Four). These seekers want to plunder the depths of creation and are satisfied to know things, even if those things are ugly.
- Libertines. Those who have felt that *nothing* should be forbidden them have always been drawn to magic. Magic opens a door to such a place. Magic offers a method to near ultimate license with one’s fellow man. Magic, by its nature, is somehow counter to the laws of nature and man.

For people within the extremes of any of these categories magic is out there. When these people encounter even the vestiges of magic it is said they are resonant with its hidden possibilities. It is said that the secret that Magicians keep is seen clearly by those who *seek*.

Three Truths

The Initiate is a Seeker: Magicians are almost never recruited. In many cases the training runs in families. In some cases students are sent to private tutors or even schools to learn the trade—but successful Magicians who progress beyond the beginning mysticism and the early ordeals are always (it is said) looking for *something*.

Making a Magician

If the GM allows characters to be made as Magicians (or become them in the game) a number of Archetype Points will be allocated to the characters. These will be spent on:

1. Magical Expertise
2. Mastery Level (if the character is infected with normal Wonderland Infection)
3. Twists (if the Magician is infected).

Additionally the Characters will have to have Occult Skill (Level 1 if Initiates, Levels 2 through 4 if they are actually competent Magicians).

The GM should work out what Lodges they belong to and what politics are going on in their world. Since most PCs in a Wonderland game will either start Infected or become Infected the GM will need to figure out what the ramifications of that will be to the characters (they might be outcast from their peers for having transgressed too far—they might be part of a sect that pursues power in that regard ... but since not all Magicians have Survival Traits, the ones that take this approach are risking a great deal).

Using Magic on the Lower Chessboards

When a Magician is on Chessboard Zero, his Shadow is a useful tool: if he sends it into the next room, he can see what is going on in there and it's usually highly relevant to what's happening in reality. If the Magician is on Chessboard 4, one Chessboard down looks and acts *nothing* like where he is.

When a Magician is on the lower Chessboards (and therefore Infected) he may use any of his Shadow's Twists normally and without incurring any Stress cost (he simply uses them as standard, listed powers). Anything that lasts more than one second costs Running endurance to keep going.

Sciomancy is a different deal, however: the Magician can still send his Shadow questing for him—but the information it brings back won't be as relevant. Unless the Magician has Sciomancy Level 4 and Binding Level 4, he cannot bring a Shadow to his own level. If he does have Sciomancy 4, he may “meet himself” and may run two characters (or the GM may run one). In this case, any time one of them takes damage, the other will take it as well (although they may make separate CON rolls).

When the Student is Ready the Teacher Will Appear: Magicians do teach. There is something seductive in the passing of forbidden knowledge from one person to another. Any Magician can tell you that when the right student appears the master will know. Something about the key of the seeker and the lock of the master's knowledge just *fits*.

The Truth is Forever Hidden in Lies: There is probably no Magician in the world who could tell you precisely what of ritual, belief, and incantation is necessary for the learning and working of magic and what is not. Since the beginning men who have studied magic have embellished it and enhanced it and coated it with lies. It is said amongst the cabals of modern lodges that magic is not only the *best* secret mankind has ever kept: it is the *only* secret.

The Lodges

As far back as anyone knows the lodges were secret. They had hidden chambers and coded messages. They wore hoods to cover their faces and masks to change their voices. The Lodges were always parasites: another organization would be chosen as a host (the best being another secret society) in which to hide themselves. They would draw their students from the seekers within the host body, culling them out for admission into the Invisible College (the general term for a school of magic). It is said that Pythagoras' cult (from where we get the once secret Pythagorean Theorem) was host to one of the greatest schools of magic the world had ever known or has ever seen since.

Secret societies already did the things that the Lodges would be punished for—they simply did them for religious reasons rather than exploratory ones. If the cult was found the activities of the Lodge were obscured by whatever rituals the host organization held. Whatever secrets (save for inter-Lodge communications which were always, always written in invisible inks and encoded with advanced ciphers) might be found were few amongst many others, each indistinguishable: a tree hidden in a forest.

Vows of silence are part of the initiation for all Magicians but there is something deeper that worked in their favor: the kind of person who is drawn into the world of magic has a special ability that most of his brethren simply do not: the true Magician can keep a secret. This, it has been written, is rarer than genius, more valuable than diamond, and harder to divine by sight than empty air.

Today the Lodges are still in existence. They work in much the same way. Pagan-ized executive retreats for ultra-wealthy captains of industry (which are a mix of male bonding, old-fashioned cathartic ritual, and a dash of mystique) hold within them real members of the Invisible Colleges. There is a secret order of librarians who track the library use in ways the FBI can only dream of. It is said that they know when someone is ready—and they keep secret books written on the backs of random grocery receipts with the single contacts for other Lodges who might

train their members (in invisible ink with advanced ciphers, of course). There are mind-expansion gurus and their cults (within them an accountant or right-hand-man will be meeting select students off on the side). There book-clubs that read demented exotic fiction and hold fully-clothed orgies in the backs of prestigious bookstores in a fashion such that you could watch one from afar without realizing anything unusual was happening (there's someone about mid-way up who will speak with those of a certain *bent* and see if they want to try something *stranger*).

Lodges tend to be well-off (but not always wealthy or super rich: magic is not a method to easy money). They tend to meet in secret, having social contact only through the host organizations they feed off of. They meet to exchange notes, to share experiences, and to assist the others in their exploration of magic itself.

Lodges are often composed of 3 to 12 men (sometimes women) who are often average men in many respects. Some may be wealthy. Some may be powerful. Some may work as mid-level managers in department stores. Some are virtually homeless. Many are poorly received artists.

Magicians are always “dangerous” in that they are often possessed of very shaky morals and have both exotic appetites and little respect for the rules of society. They are also *sneaky*—a mediocre Magician may have difficulty killing a man, but far less than a court of law would have of convicting him.

Lodges, however, are usually *advisors* to the more dangerous conspiracies. They are adjuncts to the political movers and shakers who employ armed assassins. They are figures behind the regimes that commit atrocities. They are more likely to be found in a jury than as the judge. When men of power do seek to become Magicians they are often the worst sort—but for the most part Magician's goals do not deal with the manipulation of governments or the silencing of witnesses (there is usually nothing to witness). When they act they are more often inscrutable, petty, and personal.

The Three Knowledges

There are three things that a magician can learn to do and these, combined, make up the Magician's Tricks (which are called spells by Initiates and neo-Pagans and contributes to the mysticism that obscures all of Magic). These are:

- Sciomancy: The art of commanding and seeing through the eyes of one's Shadow.
- Binding: The art of strongly associating what happens on a lower Chessboard to what happens on a higher Chessboard.
- Warping of the Shadow: Sometimes a human is not enough. Magicians can Twist their own Shadows to be more than human.

Buying Magic

Each Archetype Point spent on Magic counts for 4pts used to buy Sciomancy, Binding, or Twist Shadow. A character who invests 4 Archetype points in Magic would have 16pts to purchase Sciomancy, Binding, and Twist Shadow with.

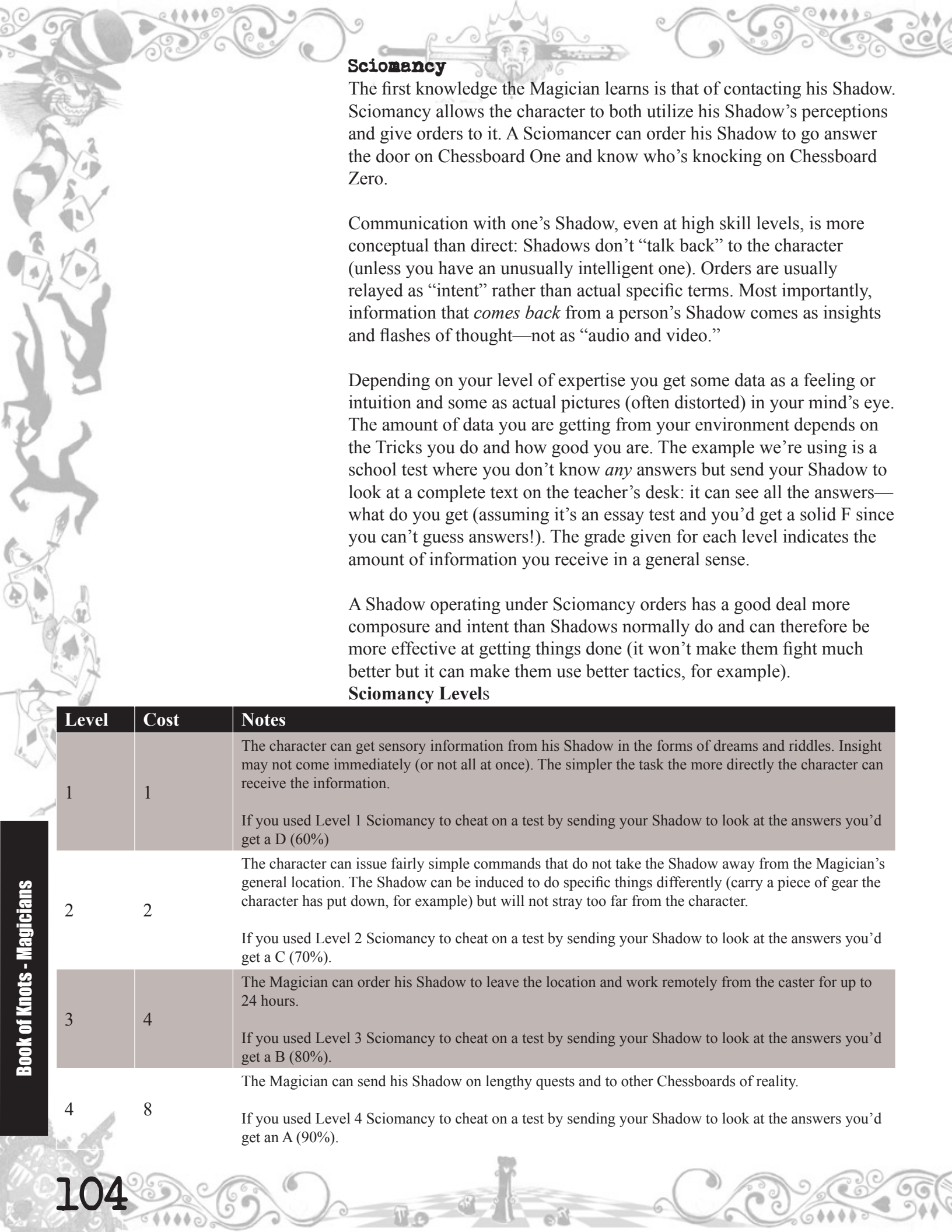
The character might look like the following:

Sciomancy Level 3 [4pts]

Binding Level 2 [8pts]

Twist Shadow [4pts]

Such a character could perform, for example, the *Sleight Trick* which requires Sciomancy and Binding and Level 2.



Sciomancy

The first knowledge the Magician learns is that of contacting his Shadow. Sciomancy allows the character to both utilize his Shadow's perceptions and give orders to it. A Sciomancer can order his Shadow to go answer the door on Chessboard One and know who's knocking on Chessboard Zero.

Communication with one's Shadow, even at high skill levels, is more conceptual than direct: Shadows don't "talk back" to the character (unless you have an unusually intelligent one). Orders are usually relayed as "intent" rather than actual specific terms. Most importantly, information that *comes back* from a person's Shadow comes as insights and flashes of thought—not as "audio and video."

Depending on your level of expertise you get some data as a feeling or intuition and some as actual pictures (often distorted) in your mind's eye. The amount of data you are getting from your environment depends on the Tricks you do and how good you are. The example we're using is a school test where you don't know *any* answers but send your Shadow to look at a complete text on the teacher's desk: it can see all the answers—what do you get (assuming it's an essay test and you'd get a solid F since you can't guess answers!). The grade given for each level indicates the amount of information you receive in a general sense.

A Shadow operating under Sciomancy orders has a good deal more composure and intent than Shadows normally do and can therefore be more effective at getting things done (it won't make them fight much better but it can make them use better tactics, for example).

Sciomancy Levels

Level	Cost	Notes
1	1	The character can get sensory information from his Shadow in the forms of dreams and riddles. Insight may not come immediately (or not all at once). The simpler the task the more directly the character can receive the information. If you used Level 1 Sciomancy to cheat on a test by sending your Shadow to look at the answers you'd get a D (60%)
2	2	The character can issue fairly simple commands that do not take the Shadow away from the Magician's general location. The Shadow can be induced to do specific things differently (carry a piece of gear the character has put down, for example) but will not stray too far from the character. If you used Level 2 Sciomancy to cheat on a test by sending your Shadow to look at the answers you'd get a C (70%).
3	4	The Magician can order his Shadow to leave the location and work remotely from the caster for up to 24 hours. If you used Level 3 Sciomancy to cheat on a test by sending your Shadow to look at the answers you'd get a B (80%).
4	8	The Magician can send his Shadow on lengthy quests and to other Chessboards of reality. If you used Level 4 Sciomancy to cheat on a test by sending your Shadow to look at the answers you'd get an A (90%).

Running Shadows

There is a difference between Commanding a Shadow and Inhabiting it. A character with Sciomancy Levels 1 or 2 may command their Shadow and will “get reports from” their Shadow. We advise that the GM will not usually “play out” a character’s Shadow performing tasks (for one thing, the Shadow might try something over and over).

For tasks a Shadow is sent to perform we advise the GM assign a success number (usually between 6- and a 13-) and roll that to see how well the Shadow performs (and make an estimate as to how long it will take for the results to come in).

When the character is at Sciomancy Level 3 or 4, they may choose to “inhabit” their Shadow and steer it directly. When this is being done the Magician is meditative and isn’t acting (they are controlling their Shadow).

Binding

The second knowledge the Magician learns is to “bind” a Shadow to Chessboard Zero more tightly. This reduces the Disassociation that occurs when one’s Shadow does something. Thus, if the Magician wishes to damage someone on Chessboard Zero they will *bind* that target to their Shadow and then kill their Shadow. If the target’s Shadow is *tightly* bound they will die when their Shadow does! If the target’s Shadow is more loosely bound they might just get sick.

When the Magician binds his own Shadow to Chessboard Zero then the Shadow’s actions have more effect there. If you command your Shadow to wash your car and bind it, your car will get mysteriously cleaner (but probably not completely clean unless your binding is very strong!).

Level	Cost	Notes
1	4	Weak Binding: Only effects that seem “reasonable” will happen on Chessboard Zero. They will take time to happen as the Magician’s Shadow must work on the target over and over and over. Damage done to a bound Shadow may appear as simply getting sick or having some other negative effect. In the case of actual damage getting through (GM’s call) the damage is quartered and must come from some potential viable source (if there is none in the GM’s opinion then no damage will be done).
2	8	Binding: Only effects that can translate as “plausible” will happen on Chessboard Zero (even if <i>very unlikely</i>). Damage done to a bound Shadow is halved and will appear from some other form (a slip and fall, a collapse of a wall-rack, sudden internal bleeding, etc.)
3	16	Strong Binding: the effects of actions will have a very close effect but will usually still appear to have “no obvious cause.” Effects will usually only last no more than 2 seconds (i.e. if the Magician has his Shadow lift a pen it’ll be seen to float up, hover, and then fall). Damage done to a bound Shadow is taken directly but may appear to be some other form of injury.
4	24	Perfect binding: the actions taken by the Shadow will reflect exactly on Chessboard Zero. Effects persist so long as the caster <i>wants</i> . Damage done to a bound Shadow is taken directly and appears as the type of damage it was.

Binding: Double Attacks?

Let’s say a Magician with Level 4 Binding punches you. His Shadow punches you too (well, your Shadow). Does that act like you got hit twice? It doesn’t unless the Magician is doing a specific kind of Trick (Double Team).

Binding Block

A Magician may use his Binding directly against another Magician's Binding as a block. This is done by bidding Stress. The Blocking Magician pays 3 REA and makes an Occult Skill roll. If made, he may bid any number of Stress up to his Threshold (initially). The target Magician may bid to counter. Each may only increase the Stress by one pt each round. Whoever wins pays the entire Stress amount.

If the Blocking Magician won, the target's Binding Level is reduced by ½ (round down) the Blocking Magician's level for up to the Blocker's WIL x 10 minutes.

Corruption

When a Magician's defenses fail entirely he becomes a Hunger Disciple. These are Infected beings who have become Twisted in such a way that they can Infect others (although they usually must be alone with the victim) or feed on the Infected to prolong their life. This transformation is not simply a change to the subject's body: their psyche becomes shot through with subtle fault-lines and deep, disturbing, desires.

Hunger Disciples are explained in more detail in the Creature's Appendix.

Twist Shadow

The third knowledge that Magicians learn is to "edit" their Shadows and give them impossible abilities. This relies on an intuitive understanding of the "literary nature" of Wonderland. This greatly improves what a Shadow can be asked to do for the character. A Magician who is Twisted will be able to manifest his abilities in his Shadow at will but Magicians can learn some additional, specific, talents.

Unlike Sciomancy and Binding, Each Twist Shadow ability is purchased separately. The cost is on a per-Twist basis and is determined either by the Trick description or by the GM (if the Player wants something that is not listed in the book).

Other Rules

Damage: Overdoing Magic

Since ancient times, Magicians have known that there are dangers to doing too much magic. Working in the lower-spaces and working with one's Shadow makes the Magician *vulnerable* to certain influences. Magicians who over-exert the bond between human and Shadow can become *Damaged*. This is the same type of negative-twist that characters without Survival Traits can get (although having a Survival Trait won't stop Damage from magical over-use).

Each trick has a certain "stress" which is applied to the character when they do it: these points accumulate. When they exceed the Magician's Threshold, the Magician starts suffering Damage. Fortunately, in most cases, Damage is not permanent and the effects can be fought off after a day or two. Unfortunately, sufficient abuse and bad luck can *shatter* the protective Egg and the Magician that happens to will *not* recover!

Threshold: WIL + (Occult Skill Level²)

Example: A Magician with a 12 WIL and Level 3 Occult has a Threshold of 21.

When the Magician performs a Trick, causing Stress, he adds that Stress number to his total score. The negative effects of too much Stress don't happen immediately. About a minute or two after the use of magic (usually *after* a magical battle) the total Stress accumulated is compared to Threshold.

The Player has the option to either "reduce his Threshold" temporarily (taking a few days to return to normal) or risk a WIL roll against suffering Damaging Twists (or possibly even Corruption, the Magician's fate-worse-than-death).

The amount of Stress the Magician has *above* his Threshold is checked on the chart below and the Magician can choose to reduce his Threshold statistic by ¼ per rank the results are reduced.



Points above Threshold	WIL Roll	Effect
0 or less	No Roll Needed	NONE
1 to 4	-2	2pts, Recovers within 1 day
4 to 5	-3	2pts, Recovers within 1 week
6 to 10	-4	4pts, Recovers within 1 month
11 to 15	-5	4pts (no specified recovery)
16+	-6	Corrupted

If the Magician cannot reduce the Effects to NONE, then the Magician *must* make the WIL roll. If the roll is made, the Magician suffers no ill effect. If the roll is missed, the Magician suffers the listed effect. If the roll is missed by 5+, the Magician suffers one rank *lower* (worse)

Example: The Magician expends 24pts of Stress in a mystical operation. He has a Threshold of 18 so he is 6 points of Stress above his Threshold. On the chart that is 4 pts of Damage Twists (which will last a month!). He doesn't want to risk that so he reduces his Threshold by 50% (to 9) moving the effect two levels down (2pts Damage, recover within 1 day).

He makes a 13- WIL roll, reduced to an 11- and rolls a 9, no effect.

Recovery of Stress

A Magician who has Stress equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ or less of his Threshold after about 2 minutes of magic will recover it all within 2 minutes. If, after 2 minutes of doing magic the Magician is above that level, his total Stress will still be reduced by $\frac{1}{4}$ his Threshold but the remainder will go away at a rate of 1pt per *hour*.

Recovery of Threshold

A Magician who has reduced his Threshold will get it back at WIL/10pts per day.

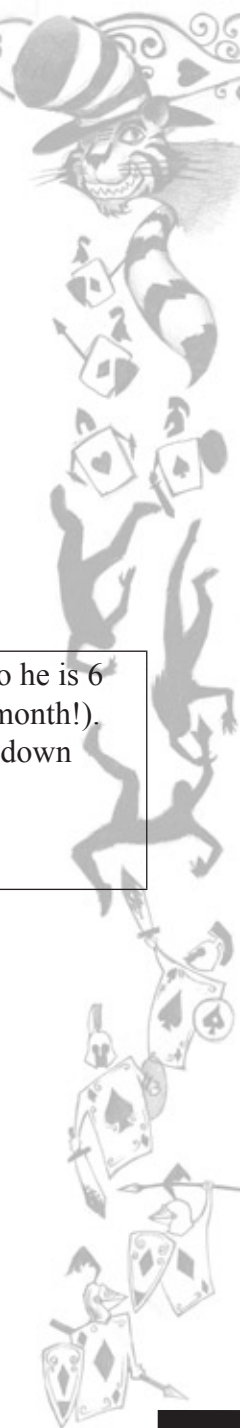
Meditation and Other Techniques

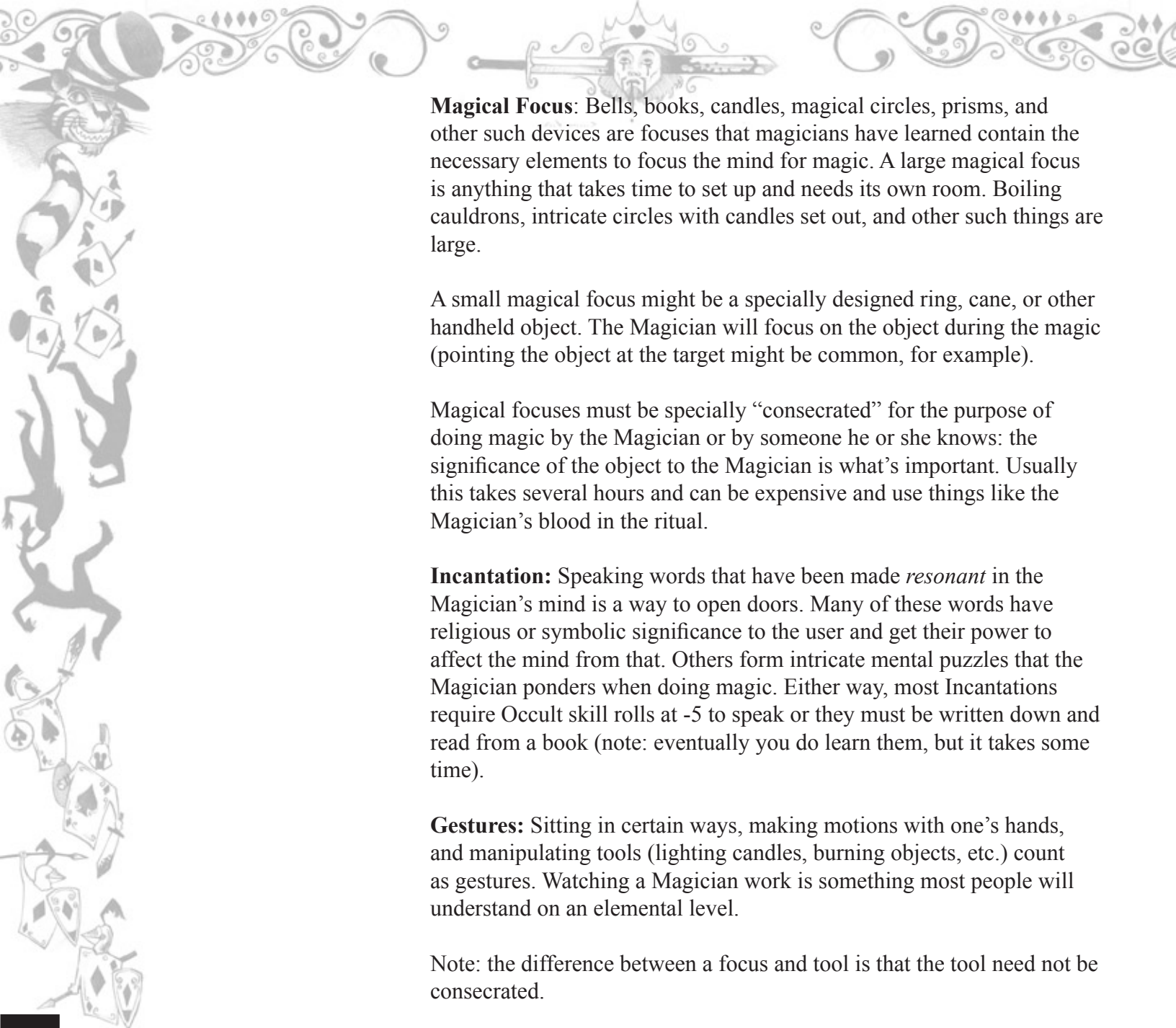
There are numerous methods for recovering Stress and Threshold faster. Burning certain herbs, drinking certain potions, and other rituals can mend the Magician's Shadow-egg more quickly. The GM may determine what methods are available.

Ritual: Doing Magic

A Magician's ultimate tool is his mind but the methods man has discovered of learning and teaching magic rely on a complex and poorly understood network of thought-forms that is usually accessed through certain repetitive steps: ritual. The art of walking the inner pathways of the mind is not easily reduced to scientific equations or basic simple elements (although many have and continue to try).

The way that a Magician invokes his magic is by the use of Occult skill. The level of skill in Occult will determine how quickly and easily the character can use the Magical knowledge they've learned.





Magical Focus: Bells, books, candles, magical circles, prisms, and other such devices are focuses that magicians have learned contain the necessary elements to focus the mind for magic. A large magical focus is anything that takes time to set up and needs its own room. Boiling cauldrons, intricate circles with candles set out, and other such things are large.

A small magical focus might be a specially designed ring, cane, or other handheld object. The Magician will focus on the object during the magic (pointing the object at the target might be common, for example).

Magical focuses must be specially “consecrated” for the purpose of doing magic by the Magician or by someone he or she knows: the significance of the object to the Magician is what’s important. Usually this takes several hours and can be expensive and use things like the Magician’s blood in the ritual.

Incantation: Speaking words that have been made *resonant* in the Magician’s mind is a way to open doors. Many of these words have religious or symbolic significance to the user and get their power to affect the mind from that. Others form intricate mental puzzles that the Magician ponders when doing magic. Either way, most Incantations require Occult skill rolls at -5 to speak or they must be written down and read from a book (note: eventually you do learn them, but it takes some time).

Gestures: Sitting in certain ways, making motions with one’s hands, and manipulating tools (lighting candles, burning objects, etc.) count as gestures. Watching a Magician work is something most people will understand on an elemental level.

Note: the difference between a focus and tool is that the tool need not be consecrated.

Occult Skill	Notes
Level 1	The character requires a skill roll at -5 to make anything happen. Each roll (ritual) usually takes at least two hours: an initiate can work for days without anything happening (and when it does, it usually isn’t much). Rituals require more than one large magical focus, incantations, and gestures.
Level 2	A ritual takes 1 hour and requires a large magical focus (props), incantations, and gestures. If the character makes a roll at -3 they can try a short-form of the ritual taking only 10 minutes and requiring only one of the components. If the character has a 15- roll or better the short-form is always successful if the character has a small magical focus and the player only need roll if the GM deems the situation especially difficult.
Level 3	With a word, gesture, or small magical focus the character can perform magic in 1-5 minutes. If the character takes a -3 skill roll the character can use a small magical focus to perform magic as a 5 REA action. If the character has a 15- skill roll or better there is no need to roll.
Level 4	The character can perform magic as a 5 REA action with no obvious actions or gestures at all.



Extra Damage Points

The training a Magician undergoes changes his body. A Magician's Shadow gains 4 DP for each Archetype point spent on Magic. This means a Magician with 8 AP in Magic (32 Magic points) will get +32 DP. How this relates to the character on Chessboard Zero depends on their level of Binding.

Level	Effect
Binding 1	Character gets +1/4 his extra DP for his Chessboard Zero persona.
Binding 2	Character gets +1/2 his extra DP for his Chessboard Zero persona.
Binding 3	Character gets +3/4 his extra DP for his Chessboard Zero persona.
Binding 4	Character gets +1x his extra DP for his Chessboard Zero persona.

Tricks

There are many, many tricks a magician with sufficient knowledge, craft, and creativity might be able to work. These are some of the more common. Any trick may be performed if the magician has the required levels of Sciomancy and Binding—and has the required points spent in Twist Shadow.

There is no specific cost for any Trick.

Trick	Needs
Truth of Place	Sciomancy 1
Truth of Person	Sciomacny 2
Minor Hex	Sciomacny 2, Binding 2
Mesmerize	Sciomancy 2, Binding 3, Twist Shadow [4,8]
Wanton Violence	Sciomancy 2, Binding 3/4, Twist Shadow [2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12]
Message (human)	Sciomancy 3, Binding 2/3, Twist Shadow [1, 2]
Summon Entity	Sciomancy 4, Binding 2, 3, 4
Protection	Sciomancy 1, Binding 2, Twist Shadow [2, 4, 8, 12]
Levitate	Sciomancy 1, Binding 3,4, Twist Shadow [8, 12]
Vanish	Sciomancy 2, Twist Shadow [8]
Artifact	Sciomancy 4, Binding 4
Sleight (of hand)	Sciomancy 2, Binding 2, 3, 4
Awareness	Sciomancy 2/3
Spy	Sciomancy 3,4 Twist Shadow [6]
Astral Travel	Sciomancy 4, Twist Shadow [4]
Healing	Sciomancy 1, Binding 2,3 Twist Shadow [2,4,8]
Twisted Abode	Sciomancy 3
Double Team	Sciomancy 3, Binding 3

Truth of Place

Stress: 1,2,4

Requires: Sciomancy 1

Description: This basic trick lets the Magician interface with his Shadow so as to see what a place is “really like” on a lower Chessboard. The character can choose to “look shallow” or “look deep.” This involves linking to a Shadow cast on lower chessboards.

NOTE: Depending on the character’s Sciomancy level they may get this information quickly or over time (say, through dreams).

Ritual: The ritual must be performed in the place to be examined.

Chessboard	Cost	Notes
One	1	This will give you some “prevalent but under the surface” information about a place. It’ll let you see monsters for what they really are. It’ll tell you what the present common “vibe” is in a place. It’ll look past the “presentable” appearance of a location.
Two	2	The character can see if there are “really bad” influences on the place from lower Chessboards. The caster can get information about likely future events or states pertaining to the place (and in a general sense—often a personal one).
Three	4	The character can get a profound philosophical sense of the place. This may be poetic in nature or difficult to understand (and it may be essentially useless if there is no good way to encapsulate it). Usually the Magician will know what values are held as most important in this place. They will know what levels of reverence the owners of the place have for their endeavors.

Truth of Person

Stress: 1

Requires: Sciomancy 2

Description: The character uses his Shadow to question the subject. Subject’s Shadows are usually a

lot less on guard than real people and will talk about things that they don’t consider important secrets.

For example, a target’s Shadow, asked nicely would show the Magician’s Shadow a driver’s license: so the Magician could learn the subject’s name “without asking him.” Questioning a target’s Shadow takes some time and Magicians will usually fill the time with more ritual while the answers come in.

The amount of information depends on the level of skills you have and/or your Psychology levels (Persuade or Entrance).

NOTE: If you are questioning a “hard target” (a military man, for example) or are trying to get information the person no-how, no-way would reveal then this can be almost useless (or at least no better than trying to question the person on Chessboard Zero). In a boardroom of powerful, directed CEO’s you wouldn’t get much secret information about secret projects).

Ritual: The caster must interact with the person. Usually reading cards or palms is used to fill the time up before the “reading is complete.” If the target can be put at ease or gotten talking that makes the Shadow Interrogation easier.

Ability	Notes
None	You can get stuff you’d get from friendly conversation (name, where the person lives, etc.)
Journalist or Police Procedure L3	You get medium-level secrets from people who are mostly “unprepared” for being questioned (they let stuff slip). You might get a good impression of guilt or innocence from the person. You might find out if they “have knowledge” of a crime or subject.
Journalist or Police Procedure L4	You can crack a subject open! You can get a sense of things they’ve done that they might not want to speak about <i>at all</i> .
Persuade or Entrance at 13-	You can get medium-level secrets from the person (assuming their WIL is 10 or 11)
Persuade or Entrance at 14- to 15-	You can get deep secrets from the person assuming their WIL is 10 or 11).

Persuade or
Entrance at 16- +

You can get deep secrets from a person assuming their WIL is 4pts lower than your roll.

Minor Hex

Stress: 4

Requires: Sciomancy 2, Binding 1-4

Description: You send your Shadow to attack or inconvenience a target! The result of this is usually not actual damage but rather some related misfortune. The GM will usually not run the actual attack (this is far more conceptual and could involve *several* attacks over time!).

Ritual: The ritual is done and then the character has Occult Skill x Level x 10 minutes to reach the target. When the target is reached there is either a noticeable gesture (Occult skill Level 2) or a subtle gesture (Lvl 3), or nothing (Level 4). If the ritual involves a weapon that weapon will be carried *by the Shadow* (but not the Magician) for the duration.

Usually an Occult Roll is made when the target is sighted.

Magician is equal or superior to the target in combat	Effects as noted. Weapons can help with this although at the lower Binding levels they don't make the effect more <i>severe</i> .
Magician is inferior to the target (an unarmed normal guy vs. an experienced brawler)	Effect is <i>one binding level down</i> .
Magician is greatly inferior to the target (a wimp vs. a large, trained fighter)	Roll an 8- to effect the target. If the roll is a 12- the Magician suffers an <i>inconvenience</i> or <i>misfortune</i> . (GM's choice)
Target is "hard" (bodyguards, armored installation, would be hard to approach or assassinate)	This hex is usually useless against such targets.

Binding Level	Notes
1	The effect is <i>inconvenience</i> . The subject will get a headache, spill coffee on themselves, etc.

2

The effect is *misfortune*. The GM will determine if the Magician has a decent chance to inflict damage. If so, the effect will probably be something less than a minor wound. It may also take several minutes or hours to take hold. An assault on Chessboard One or Two could equate to a sprained ankle on Chessboard Zero. If the ritual involves a weapon then the Shadow will be able to use that weapon for Occult Skill x 10 x Level minutes after the ritual (a Level 3 14- roll would get 7 hours after the ritual to find their target).

The ritual may involve a weapon if necessary to give the Magician the edge necessary over the target (however, worse weapons won't inflict worse misfortune).

3

The effect is *death* or *damage*. Something "plausible" will happen for one attack rolled with *no* Damage Bonus as per the weapon type used. The physical effect may be environmental (a car crash) or biological (a heart attack).

This may happen any time within one to ten minutes after the character is targeted.

4

Damage is by weapon type and happens directly as though with a shot (this will effect hard targets if the Magician can get in range).

Mesmerize

Stress: 2

Requires: Sciomancy 2, Binding 3

Twist Shadow 4 or 8

Description: The Magician's Shadow uses a hypnotic aura and glamour to entrance the subject's Shadow and distort its perceptions. A strong binding to the target person means they can be compelled to do one's bidding.

Ritual: This depends on the Magician's skill level.

Level	Notes
2	The Magician must have blood or hair from the subject and do the ritual using that.

3	The Magician must hold the target's attention for three seconds to a higher degree than simple conversation.
4	The Magician must simply approach the target.

Effect: Mesmerize is a Resisted Attack vs. the target's WIL where the Power is 12 (for 2pts of Twist Shadow) or 15 (for 4pts of Twist Shadow).

Effect	Result
Minor	Subject is Dazed and recovers via WIL rolls (note, at Occult Level 2 or 3 this is hard to do in combat). The subject will not remember any time passing.
Standard	Subject is under "hypnotic" control for twenty seconds. If the order is something dangerous or outrageous the subject won't do it—but fairly unwise things can get by (a guy running a register would empty it or let the magician walk off without paying and not raise an alarm). The actions will seem normal afterwards (unless they are brought to the subject's attention).
Major	Subject is under hypnotic control for 5 minutes. Outrageous things will be done. Dangerous things still won't be. Orders for subtle behavior can be given and will be enacted within 24hrs.
Critical	Subject is under hypnotic control for 1 hour. The subject will do dangerous and outrageous things. The orders for overt behavior can be given and will be enacted up to 10 times within a week.
Catastrophic	Subject is under semi-permanent hypnotic control of the Magician.

Wanton Violence

Stress: varies

Requires: Sciomancy 2, Binding 3,4
Twist Shadow 2 to 10

Description: The Magician's Shadow is Twisted to use powerful destructive abilities. The Magician only pays full cost for his most expensive Twist. Each additional Twist costs 1pt unless that Twist can be used in the same turn as another (most attacks can only be used once per turn). If a Twist can be used in conjunction with another as a separate 5 REA Medium action attack it costs full price.

Ritual: This depends on the Magician's skill level.

Level	Notes
2	The Magician must perform the ritual at home and may carry the trick, ready to cast as an 8 REA Long action for Roll x 10 x Level minutes.
3	The Magician gestures at the target in a meaningful fashion (but not incredibly overt).
4	The Magician may simply look intently at the target.

Effect: There is a COR or RES based roll to hit (purchased as a Combat skill) followed by a damage roll. The various Shadow Twist abilities appear below. The character may have one or more of them.

Bolt of Rage [2]

Stress: 2

Description: The bolt is a pale red light that burns from the Magician's eyes and hands. It strikes for 8 IMP damage each turn. It has an ROF of 1.

Splinter Lightning [4]

Stress: 4

Description: The Magician throws white-hot lightning-like cracks in the fabric of Wonderland. These strike for 18 PEN damage. They have an ROF of 1.

Blast of Revulsion [4]

Stress: 4

Description: A translucent green wave of force crackles out of the Magician's hands. It gets a +3 Large Weapon Bonus and can hit up to three targets if they are no more than a yard apart. It strikes for 12 IMP damage. It will push targets back Damage / [Target's Mass] yards (they must make AGI rolls at -1 per yard pushed or fall down). It has an ROF of 1.

Arc-Light [6]

Stress: 4

Description: The caster throws a semi-solid glowing bolt of light that shrieks through the air. It takes a 5 REA action to summon it and a 5 REA action to throw it. It hits for 22 IMP damage and can be set to explode with a 2 yard RAD.

Death Web [6]

Stress: 6

Description: The caster makes a “cat’s cradle” like gesture with his hands and then throws out writhing, crackling, brilliant blue electrical whips of energy. They will strike and *hold* a target with a Grapple of 18 and burn for 12 IMP damage each turn. A held target can be suspended for 4 seconds (and the cost of stress will be 1pt each second thereafter). For 5 REA the target can be “burned again” using the original Damage Mod to-hit roll. While holding a target, the caster can’t move without breaking the link and must spend at least 5 REA each turn to burn the target (or release him).

Occam’s Razor [8]

Stress: 2

Description: A black ray, razor thin and four inches wide, is projected from the Magician’s open hand (from the pointed fingers). It slices for 9 PEN damage, 27 if it hits by 4+. It takes 5 REA to summon and can be used as a ranged attack or a medium reach blade thereafter (it costs 2 stress per second). They can block each other (and other weapons). If used as a ranged weapon it acts only once per turn.

Decimate [10]

Stress: 6

Description: The Magician places his hands together as though praying and creates a wave of destruction around him. This does 24 IMP damage to foes—but not friends (as defined by the Magician). It expands out at a radius of 4 yards per second (each second the Magician does nothing and gets no AGI bonus). It can go up to 16 yards. Anyone damaged will be knocked back 16 / [Target’s Mass] yards. Each second of expansion costs 1 stress.

Message

Stress: 2

Requires: Sciomancy 2, Binding 2,3
Twist Shadow 0 or 2

Description: The Magician’s Shadow is Twisted to use powerful destructive abilities. The Magician only pays full cost for his most expensive Twist. Each

additional Twist costs 1pt unless that Twist can be used in the same turn as another (most attacks can only be used once per turn). If a Twist can be used in conjunction with another as a separate 5 REA Medium action attack it costs full price.

Ritual: This depends on the Magician’s skill level.

Level	Notes
2	The Magician must have a picture of the target and know how to find them. Delivery is within hours or minutes if the subject is easily reached.
3	The Magician must know the target’s name. Delivery is within minutes if the subject is easily reached.
4	The Magician’s Shadow will invest much effort in running down the person (much like a private detective might). Delivery is within seconds if the subject is easily reached.

Effect: The message will be delivered to the target depending on what Twists were taken and the level of Binding.

Effect	Result
Binding 2, Twist 0	Impressions and Rumors. The subject will have a series of sudden “thoughts” of roughly 70% of the message sent. Usually this will be enough to get some common course of action (call me). If the message is, say, a treasure map, this won’t work so well (the subject might have an idea that something interesting might be found ... somewhere). Magicians familiar with this technique, however, can get an entire message delivered clearly this way.

Binding 3,
Twist 0

Phantom Message. The target will have an odd memory of “getting a phone call” or “meeting a stranger with a message.” The message may lack credibility—but it will be clear. The target will have a pretty good idea that the event of getting the message didn’t actually happen and will therefore be puzzled by the clarity. NOTE: the phone may ring several times—but the person who picks it up will hear static and the phone company will show system anomalies.

Binding 2, Twist 1

Ghost Writing. The message can appear in written form any place it plausibly could (i.e. graffiti, an email from some unlikely address, written on the target's car in the dirt on it). It cannot appear inside the target's house unless a lot of people have been in and out recently.

Binding 3, Twist 1

Phone Calls From the Other Side. The phone actually rings and the Magician's voice speaks from the other end. Since communication is two-way, the subject can speak with the Shadow which can give some more clarification. Usually contact must be brief (2-4 minutes). The Magician's Shadow will seem *strange* but not "goofy."

Binding 3, Twist 2

Voice of Air. The subject hears eerie voices (they are being heard by his Shadow, really—they won't show up on tape). Since communication is two-way, the subject can speak with the Shadow which can give some more clarification. Usually contact must be brief (4 to 20 minutes). The Magician's Shadow will seem *strange* but not "goofy."

Summon Entity

Stress: 4

Requires: Sciomancy 4, Binding 2,3,4

Description: The Magician sends his Shadow down to the lower Chessboards to seek an audience with the entities that dwell below. This is both very risky and potentially very powerful. If the Magician gets good guidance about which entities to seek (the Black Rose is good, so is Lim) then it can be a route to great knowledge and power. If a master is not available to teach Twisting or the next level of Binding then this will suffice. It can also be very dangerous.

Ritual: This depends on the Magician's Occult skill level.

Level	Notes
2	Entities met are almost at random: several rituals might go past without the Magician encountering one. Worse: the Magician may meet Wonderland entities that are interested in <i>him</i> .

3

If the Magician has proper directions (a name—but not necessarily the Entity's correct name, "directions," etc.) then the Magician can reliably contact that Entity (usually at Level 3, the Magician will have instructions to two Entities. Their real identities will be up to the GM).

4

The Magician can contact entities based on what the Magician wishes to know (i.e. who can provide the best service).

Effect: The Magician will feel a strong presence in the room and will have an (often distorted) view of the thing he is communicating with. The Magician may gain profound and useless insights into the nature of the universe, learn more magic, get Twisted, etc. The Magician may also get Damaged by these Caretakers if he does not work to expertly separate himself from his Shadow in the event of an attack.

Usually dealing with an Entity is a confusing exercise in quid-pro-quo. The Entity will have almost incomprehensible desires dealing with Chessboard One and they are not easily transmitted (even with Sciomancy 4, the connection is very distant). The Magician will want things (specific Twists, information, assistance with his own Descents if he is Infected, etc.)

Historically there has been a lot of confusion resulting in sacrifices that didn't really please the Caretakers or the imparting of wisdom that the Magician couldn't use ("The universe is composed of nouns and verbs divided into sub-atomic and fundamental force bestiaries ..."). Some Magicians have opted to subvert themselves to the Entities in order for better communication. This results in power—but also abominations (see *Hunger Disciples*).

Binding Level	Notes
2	The Magician makes an Occult Roll during the casting at a random negative determined by the GM of -1 to -6 (roll one die and keep it secret). If the Entity makes a WIL or RES roll by more than the Magician's roll the Entity can inflict Damage equal to half the difference (this effect goes away in a few days usually—but may be permanent).
3	As above, but the Magician ignores -3 points of the negative modifier.
4	As above, but the Magician ignores -6 points of the negative modifier.

Protection

Stress: varies

Requires: Sciomancy 1, Binding 2

Twist Shadow 2-12

Description: The Magician modifies his Shadow to withstand attacks and can bind to it in order to gain protection on Chessboard Zero.

Ritual: This depends on the Magician's skill level.

Level	Notes
2	The Shadow is normal unless the ritual is performed. The modifications last 10 x Roll x Skill Level minutes.
3	As above. Note: the ritual can be cast quickly.
4	The effects are permanent.

Effect: The effects are determined by the specific twists. The Level of Binding determines the effect on attacks against the Magician's person.

Level	Notes
2	The effect only works against attacks from lower Chessboards.
3	Works as listed against all attacks.

Purity Sphere [2]

Stress: 1

Description: The Shadow is surrounded by a Sphere of pure white protective light. This sphere has Damage Points equal to 12pts. Any damage done comes off this first. It does not effect grapples.

Golden Net [4]

Stress: 2

Description: The Shadow creates a glowing golden mesh cylinder around itself going up into the sky and down into the ground. It will absorb negative energy and direct it into the ground. This is a Force Field of 12 Power. When hit it will *degrade*: if any damage gets through it is reduced by 1/5th the total damage of the attack. If the damage is stopped but the amount is more than half the current value of the Field, the Field is reduced by 1/10th the total damage done (minimum 1pt). If the Magician spends 5 REA and 1 Stress it may be *reinforced* for 3pts (up to its maximum). It has 24 points of Penetration Defense until totally knocked down.

Orb of Indifference [8]

Stress: 4

Description: The visible effect is of an occluded sphere around the character This is a Force Field of 24 Power. When hit it will *degrade*: if any damage gets through it is reduced by 1/5th the total damage of the attack. If the damage is stopped but the amount is more than half the current value of the Field, the Field is reduced by 1/10th the total damage done (minimum 1pt). If the Magician spends 5 REA and 1 Stress it may be *reinforced* for 4pts (up to its maximum). It has 48 points of Penetration Defense until totally knocked down.

Shadow Armor [12]

Stress: 5

Description: The visible effect is of an occluded sphere around the character This is a Force Field of 36 Power. When hit it will *degrade*: if any damage gets through it is reduced by 1/5th the total damage of the attack. If the damage is stopped but the amount is more than half the current value of the Field, the Field is reduced by 1/10th the total damage done (minimum 1pt). If the Magician spends 5 REA and 1 Stress it may be *reinforced* for 5pts (up to its maximum). It has 72 points of Penetration Defense until totally knocked down.

Levitate

Stress: 4

Requires: Sciomancy 2, Binding 3

Twist Shadow 0,4,8

Description: The Magician can actually float in the air or make other objects float. In the most basic case this is because the Magician's Shadow is lifting or pushing a small object. In the more advanced case it is because the Magician's Shadow is Twisted with the power to make things float.

Ritual: The Magician's skill level will determine how useful the spell is: a Level 2 Magician can levitate an object for an audience. A Level 4 Magician can fly on demand. The amount of time the effect lasts depends on the character's level.

Level	Notes
2	The trick lasts 4 seconds for an object the Magician would have trouble lifting or WIL minutes for a small object. This may be extended for each additional stress.

3	The trick lasts WIL x 4 minutes.
4	The trick lasts WIL x 10 minutes.

Effect: The effect is based on the level of Twist.

Level	Notes
Twist 0	Small objects can be levitated within 4 yards of the Magician's body.
Twist 4	Movement speed is 4 / Mass yards per second.
Twist 8	The Magician can levitate at 16 / Mass yards per second.

Vanish

Stress: 5

Requires: Sciomancy 2, Binding 2,3,4
Twist Shadow 8

Description: The Magician's Shadow turns invisible and that makes the Magician hard to see. NOTE: the character really is invisible on Chessboard One but is purely visible on Chessboard Zero. Cameras and other security devices will tend to show the character ... or fail.

Ritual: This depends on the Magician's skill level. The ritual may be enacted and then "carried" for WIL x Skill Roll x Level minutes (activated as an 8 REA action).

Level	Notes
2	The "Invisibility" works so long as the character does not interact (touch, attack, make a loud noise, etc.) with anyone or anything. Hearing perception rolls will suddenly get the character noticed if he is making noise (use Stealth). The effect last WIL x 10 seconds.
3	The Invisibility works for WIL minutes.
4	The Invisibility works for WIL x 5 minutes.

Effect: Depending on the level of Binding the effect to other people will be as follows:

Binding	Notes
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2	People still "see" the character but do not notice him. A guard will stop the character but in a crowded area the magician will be unmolested.
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3	Characters searching for the character must make Perception rolls at -3 to see the character in "plain sight." If the character is concealed or using Stealth, add that negative modifier. If missed, the character will be unnoticed. If seen (and someone makes a fuss) the effect is ended.
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4	People respond to the character as a blind spot. A Perception roll at -6 will let people know "something is strange" but they won't see him.
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Artifact

Stress: 12

Requires: Sciomancy 4, Binding 4

Description: The Magician can create a short-lived bleed and actually bring things up from the lower Chessboards to Chessboard Zero. This is considered one of the most dangerous magics possible (often above summoning). The risk of Infection is very high.

This is *not* good for taking up objects from Chessboards One and Two: Shadows of real objects can be brought back but they tend to quickly decay and break down (after all, they only existed because the real object existed). They usually last 1-6 days.

Objects (or beings) native to Chessboards Three and below can be recovered, however. The item will be permanent until its presence Infects too many people and the Normalization functions of the universe removes it to a lower Chessboard.

Ritual: The ritual is only a small part of the time necessary to perform this spell. There is a search time for the Magician's Shadow to find the object to be recovered. The Magician's experience is crucial here.

Objects usually "appear" on Chessboard Zero out of sight of even the Magician. There are ceremonial boxes (now called Schrödinger Boxes) that are used to hold the object during its elevation to Chessboard Zero).

The Quest time is based on the Magician's level and the rarity or value of the object.

Rarity	Negative	Example
Common	-0	A Chessboard One item (remember, it'll decay quickly).
Uncommon	-6	A magic knife from Chessboard Three.
Rare	-9	Inspiration mined from Chessboard Four.
Very Rare	-12	A vorpral blade. A magic box full of horrific fates.

NOTE: If the Magician knows where something is because he has *been there* (and is Infected) that's a roll at -0. Additionally, if the Magician is simply "fishing" and doesn't have something in mind, almost anything can be brought up. A roll can be made at -4 to see if "something is found."

A ritual gives one roll. The Magician then continues extending the search if it wasn't found.

Level	Notes
2	Extensions (one additional roll) cost 4 Stress and take 2 hours.
3	Extensions (one additional roll) cost 2 Stress and take 1 hour.
4	Extensions (one additional roll) cost 1 Stress and take 30 minutes.

Effect: The object appears in the container.

Sleight

Stress: 2

Requires: Sciomancy 2, Binding 2,3,4

Description: The Magician has his Shadow do things to assist him "as though by magic." A Magician might touch a doorknob while his Shadow picks the lock, for example.

NOTE: The Stress for Sleight is so low because the manipulation is done *sight unseen*. If someone or some recording device would show the manipulation it will fail.

Ritual: The ritual must be done but the Shadow can

be "ready" for Skill x Level x 10 minutes after it is performed to do two tasks per Level of Occult.

Effect: This depends on the character's level of Binding. If the character wishes to pick locks or some such, the Shadow must be capable of doing it. Usually the Stress doubles for each point of Mass—but it's said someone found a way to Vanish an elephant so who knows if there's a shortcut?

Binding Level	Notes
2	Objects can only be moved and arranged.
3	Objects can be "teleported" around within 4 yards of the Magician's body.
4	Objects can be "vanished" down to Chessboard One and their Reflection <i>vanished</i> . This means the object can be recalled at any time to the Magician's area.

Awareness

Stress: 2

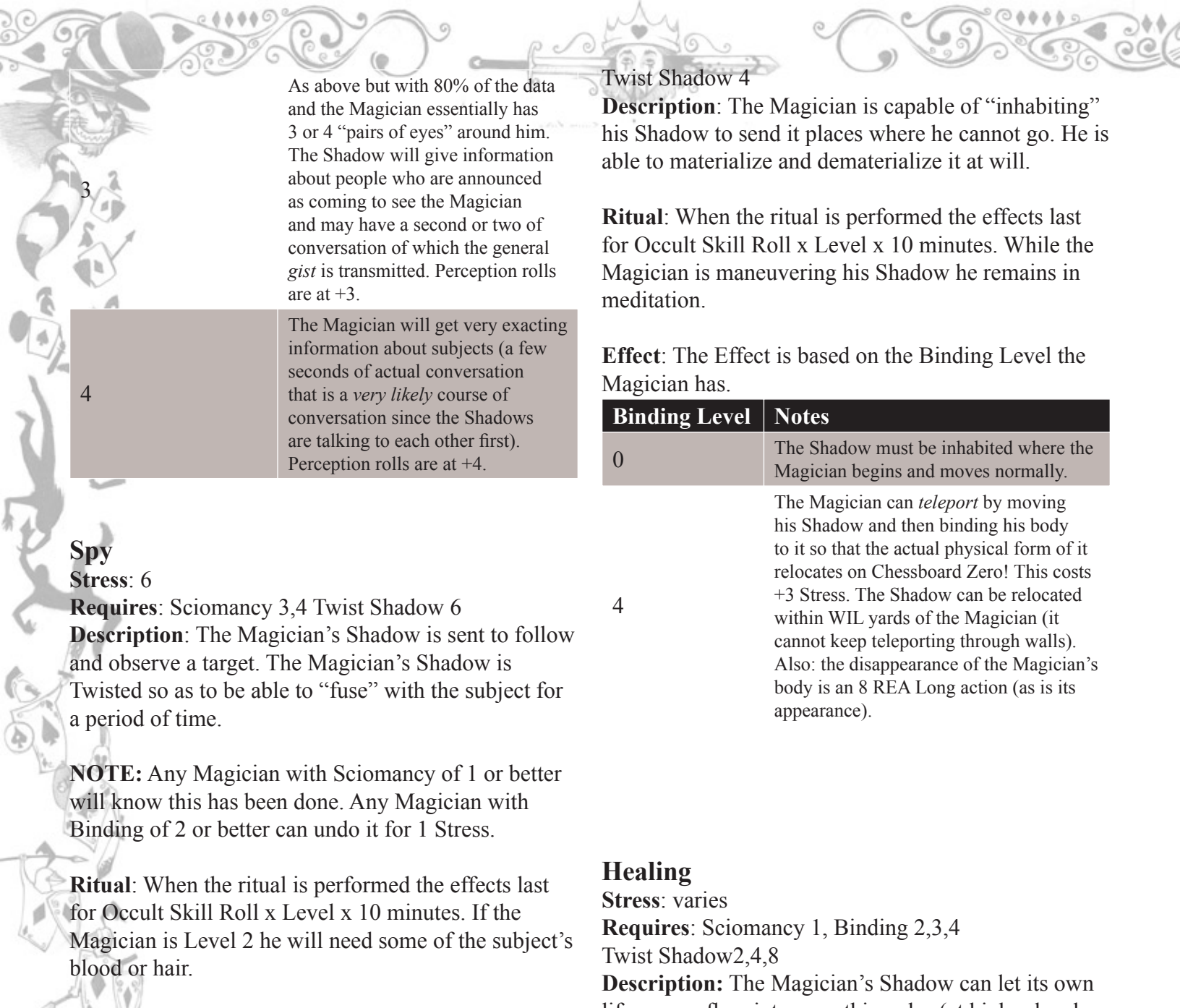
Requires: Sciomancy 2,3,4

Description: The Magician's Shadow "stands guard" and performs tasks like answering the telephone or getting the door before the Magician. It'll also walk ahead of him (when possible) and may even disincorporate and reappear at various locations around the Magician. The Magician receives a steady stream of data about what is going on around him.

Ritual: When the ritual is performed the effects last for Occult Skill Roll x Level x 10 minutes.

Effect: This is based on the Magician's level of Sciomancy.

Sciomancy Level	Notes
2	The Magician gets +2 to Perception rolls. A Perception roll will give general information about things in nearby (accessible) rooms. If the Magician concentrates on something he gets roughly 70% of the relevant data about it. The Magician's Shadow will get the door and the phone but usually only a vague sense of who is calling will be transmitted.



3

As above but with 80% of the data and the Magician essentially has 3 or 4 “pairs of eyes” around him. The Shadow will give information about people who are announced as coming to see the Magician and may have a second or two of conversation of which the general *gist* is transmitted. Perception rolls are at +3.

4

The Magician will get very exacting information about subjects (a few seconds of actual conversation that is a *very likely* course of conversation since the Shadows are talking to each other first). Perception rolls are at +4.

Spy

Stress: 6

Requires: Sciomancy 3,4 Twist Shadow 6

Description: The Magician’s Shadow is sent to follow and observe a target. The Magician’s Shadow is Twisted so as to be able to “fuse” with the subject for a period of time.

NOTE: Any Magician with Sciomancy of 1 or better will know this has been done. Any Magician with Binding of 2 or better can undo it for 1 Stress.

Ritual: When the ritual is performed the effects last for Occult Skill Roll x Level x 10 minutes. If the Magician is Level 2 he will need some of the subject’s blood or hair.

Effect: The Magician gets an information feed from the subject.

Sciomancy Level	Notes
3	The Magician will get about 70% of the data the subject is getting (this is a 13- Perception roll to get specific facts).
4	The Magician gets about 90% of the data the subject is getting (a 15- Perception roll).

Astral Travel

Stress: 6

Requires: Sciomancy 4 Binding 0,4

Twist Shadow 4

Description: The Magician is capable of “inhabiting” his Shadow to send it places where he cannot go. He is able to materialize and dematerialize it at will.

Ritual: When the ritual is performed the effects last for Occult Skill Roll x Level x 10 minutes. While the Magician is maneuvering his Shadow he remains in meditation.

Effect: The Effect is based on the Binding Level the Magician has.

Binding Level	Notes
0	The Shadow must be inhabited where the Magician begins and moves normally.
4	The Magician can <i>teleport</i> by moving his Shadow and then binding his body to it so that the actual physical form of it relocates on Chessboard Zero! This costs +3 Stress. The Shadow can be relocated within WIL yards of the Magician (it cannot keep teleporting through walls). Also: the disappearance of the Magician’s body is an 8 REA Long action (as is its appearance).

Healing

Stress: varies

Requires: Sciomancy 1, Binding 2,3,4

Twist Shadow2,4,8

Description: The Magician’s Shadow can let its own life energy flow into something else (at higher levels of mutation it can generate energy itself as well, without draining its own life-force).

Ritual: This depends on the Magician’s skill level.

Level	Notes
2	The ritual takes time to perform (several minutes similar to first aid).
3	The ritual may be done with the laying of hands.

Effect: On Chessboard Zero, healing acts like anesthetic (the subject feels better but the damage remains) unless the character has Binding 4. It works normally at lower Chessboards.

Vampiric Healing [2]

Stress: 1

Description: The Shadow pours some of its glowing blood into you and you heal damage. Each point of damage transferred heals 2 points in the target.

Ritual: None needed.

Healing Touch [4]

Stress: 3

Description: The Shadow's hands glow with a white radiance and the subject's skin and bones mend. The Magician can heal 12 DP per time this is done (each use is a 5 REA Medium action).

Healing Light [8]

Stress: 5

Description: The Shadow can spend 5 REA to throw healing light from his hand. This heals for 24 DP per casting and does not miss (if the target wishes to be hit).

Twisted Abode

Stress: zero

Requires: Sciomancy 3

Description: A Magician with Sciomancy 3 or better can spend a portion of his normal waking life "inhabiting his Shadow." Magicians who do this often begin to lead lives that at least partially exist on Chessboard One. When they do this they may often accrue a variety of strange artifacts whose reflections on Chessboard Zero are not (usually) Impossible--but are often very strange. The reason is that these items are useful on Chessboard One.

Ritual: None needed. The Magician must have Occult Level 3, however to be able to spend a substantial amount of time on Chessboard One.

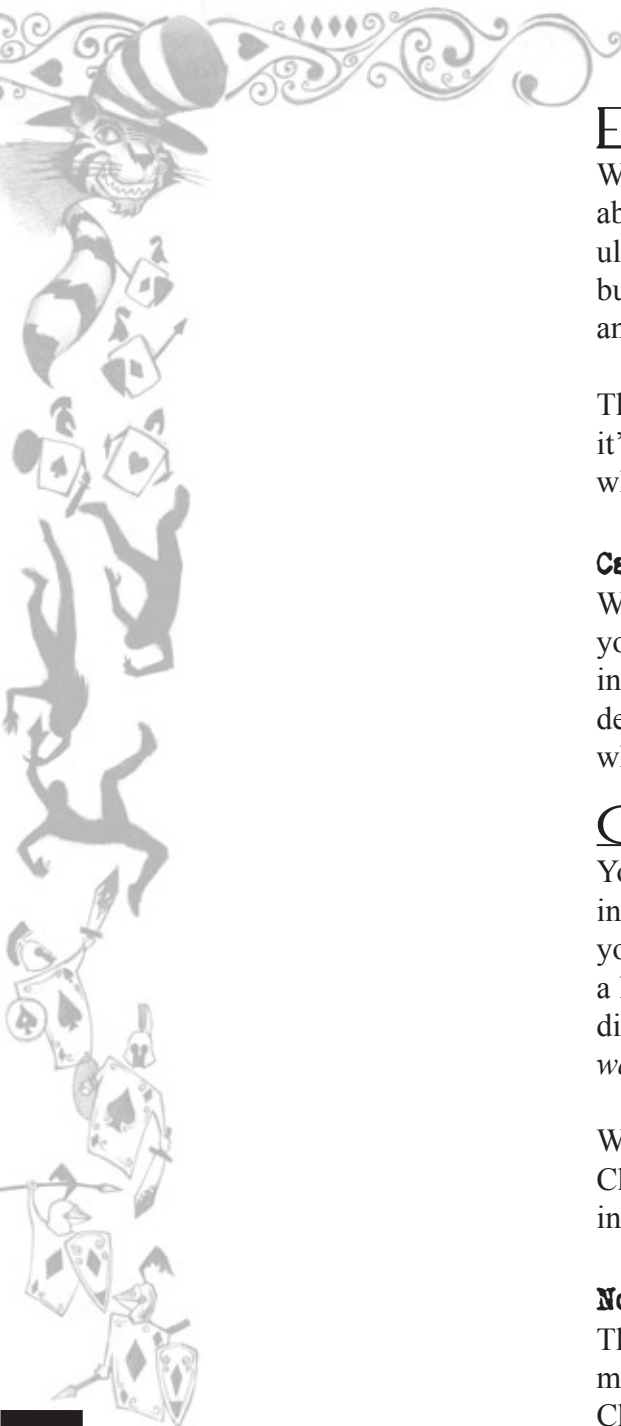
Double Team

Stress: 4

Requires: Sciomancy 3, Binding 3

Description: The Magician orders his Shadow to attack a target at the same time he, himself does. The Shadow will not use Twisted attacks but may use any gear or skills the Magician has. The Magician, however, will suffer double damage from any hit while this is happening (the results last about 1 fight).





End Game

We see a long-running Wonderland Game as a series of discoveries about the true, hidden nature of the universe, humanity's role in it, and ultimately (perhaps) humanity's fate. Chessboard Seven is where the buck stops and where all the mysteries are resolved and the questions answered—it's where the ultimate truths and final secrets lie.

This section describes what you've heard about Chessboard Seven, what it's like to visit and what you might find there. The next section describes what it means in the game.

Caveat Lector

What follows are *our* answers. They don't have to be *your* answers, in your game; they're what we used and there's some consistency built into them, but ultimately these are our designer notes and campaign descriptions. Now that you've read JAGS Wonderland, it's yours. Take what you like from here and leave the rest of it.

Chessboard Seven

You typically won't even hear of Chessboard Seven until you've been in Wonderland for *awhile*, and you'll probably hear about it *long* before you ever go there. Even for Wonderland it's remote: you have to go past a lot of dangerous things to get there, and although they won't openly discuss it, a lot of the things between you and Chessboard Seven don't *want* you arriving.

We'll get to actually going there in a minute: learning the basics about Chessboard Seven is tough. Asking questions or even bringing it up in the wrong circles can get you *killed*.

Not in Polite Conversation (who knows what)

This section describes what you might have heard and where you might have heard it. It also gives you the "conventional" wisdom about Chessboard Seven as held by the Wonderland power-elite.

Finally, there is a good deal of knowledge to be had in **books and files**. The Caretakers won't *talk* about it (at least not publicly, and certainly not with humans) but they are (and have been) interested in the Department of Works for a long time. The Liebrary may have the whole story there (including truths the Caretakers are unwilling to face) but it's so hard to parse the truth from the fiction, that secondary sources are often more *accessible*.

The Caretakers

They almost *never* discuss Chessboard Seven or the Department of Works. Anyone bringing it up is likely to be considered vulgar and rude. Maybe even *criminally* rude. In many of the *best* households discussing the "lower geographies" is a killing offense. They won't cop to this, but Chessboard Seven and the Department of Works makes them intensely uncomfortable – partially because of their history with it (the automated

defenses of the Department of Works killed a lot of Caretakers in the not-entirely-distant past) and because it represents unpleasant truths that challenge their ideas about what they are and what they stand for. Humans who show an interest in Chessboard Seven and appear to be capable of reaching it will usually be targeted for *annihilation* by the Caretakers; they take this *very* seriously. Of course *because* Chessboard Seven is a forbidden, uncomfortable thing many of the Caretakers are closet Department of Works *fetishists*. Some of the best information is found in their locked closets and in the books hidden *under their beds*.

The Deconstructionists

The Deconstructionists delight in violating taboos and showing off how edgy and radical they are, are happy to honestly discuss what they know about Chessboard Seven with those they respect and trust. They know a lot (everything listed in “Common Sense”), but they need to know *more*: their ‘master plan’ involves harnessing the power of the machines for their own ends, and to make that work, they will have to untangle the remaining mysteries.

Other travelers

Random people may be a good source of information, but the depth of their knowledge, its accuracy, and their honesty should be considered highly variable. Long-lived, well-traveled Infecteds or *very* advanced renegade magicians (a lot of magicians don’t even properly understand Wonderland’s nature or existence!) are likely to have uncovered a reasonable amount of “common knowledge.”

Caretaker personal journals and private studies are the best references. A good deal of Deconstructionist plots involve attempts to “liberate” (steal) these records. Both Caretakers and Deconstructionists privately sponsor “expeditions” to Chessboard Seven for the purpose of further study (and... prurient gratification). The explorers are usually executed upon return, but the logs and records remain.

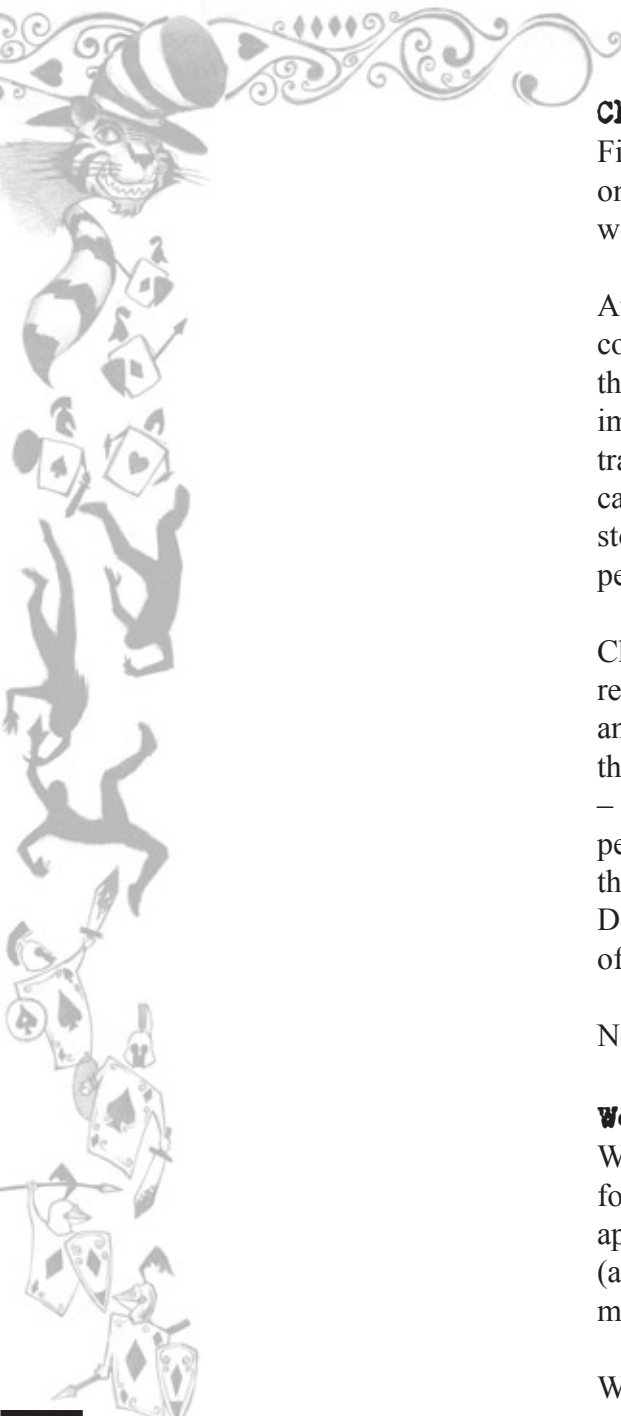
Native inhabitants

Those who live on Chessboards Four and deeper will have some experience with and understanding of the Department of Works; they’ll have heard the term and associate it with ancient and secret things. Those that are intimate with and aware of the Caretakers will know a good deal of what their masters know.

Common Sense

This is the story of Chessboard Seven that’s *commonly* known to well-informed, well-traveled denizens of Wonderland. Many creatures (even on Chessboard Four) will know *nothing* of this. Some will know bits of it, and a few will know all of it. It’s not uncommon for any given source to have some of it *wrong*.





Chessboard Seven (Common Sense Part I)

First the basics: humans on Chessboard Seven do *not* cast reflections up; once you have made it all the way down, you *disappear* from the real world.

At the bottom of the universe is Chessboard Seven. It is not generally considered reachable through ordinary Descent. Reports on what resides there vary greatly: many people report vast, dead ruins and massive, impossible castles. Great machines dominate the terrain: huge domes trapping apocalyptic, primordial lightning storms, entire stars held in cages, and pump systems that could drain oceans. Many of these are stopped or damaged but many more continue to run by themselves, perhaps eternally.

Chessboard Seven is barren but not entirely deserted. There are sketchy reports of tall, impassive things whose features are hidden by sheets and who communicate telepathically. Even stranger, are stories of the villages of fluid things that disperse, reform, and change at will – things that shed more than just their physical being, but their identity, personality, age, and skills. Are there races of mechanics that service these vast machines? Are these lost survivors of the original builders? Do the cyclopean towers that exist on the horizons contain the architects of creation?

No one is sure. But we do know a few things.

We Know It is Called The Department of Works

We know this because its name is stamped on the artifacts and ruins found there: The Seal of the Department of Works. The lettering appears to be in whatever language the person to find it is most fluent in (although they are engraved plates and of quite solid construction). The machines are believed to be those that create *the universe*.

Within the great industrial complexes there are control centers, catwalks, power-plants, and other facilities, all slumbering, their analog dials hovering at quarter power. No one can say for sure if the physical form the apparatus take is tied to some base-level human *archetype* of what they should look like—or if this is somehow their “true form.”

Maybe there’s no difference.

We Know It Was Damaged

Those who traffic in the history of the Caretakers learn that at some point in the distant past they mounted an assault, traversing the Linear Maze to find the machines and smash them down. They believed that if they could either commandeer or destroy the Department of Works they could snuff-out Chessboard Zero (and mankind) like a candle flame.



They did *damage*. There are magnificent toxic deserts with semi-permanent whirlwinds, bubbling pools, and mighty, rolling thunderstorms. There are scarred and burnt installations where every corridor is lit with red lights and steam vents from pressure valves.

There are craters and rubble and charred towers.

It Hit Back

The Caretakers abandoned their plans in panic. The nature of the response is murky: it isn't a topic for much discussion—but whatever the effects were precisely they were *absolutely convincing*. The Department of Works could defend itself. It is speculated that amongst the rubble there are the graveyards of whatever is left of a Caretaker when it dies

The Purpose of the Machines (Common Sense Part II)

Those who have studied the machines and what is known of them have learned that there are mysteries deeper and more primal than the Caretakers. And maybe mysteries beyond those. Perhaps its mysteries all the way down. The Department of Works runs and maintains the universe; the Caretakers in their offices affect the way the Universe feels and behaves but not its existence.

At the hart of the department of works, in the most remote regions of Chessboard Seven are the great Canons; almost no one alive has seen them and even those who have find that the memory of them fades as though they were a dream.

To understand Chessboard Seven, one must understand the Canons and their *implications*.

The Canons

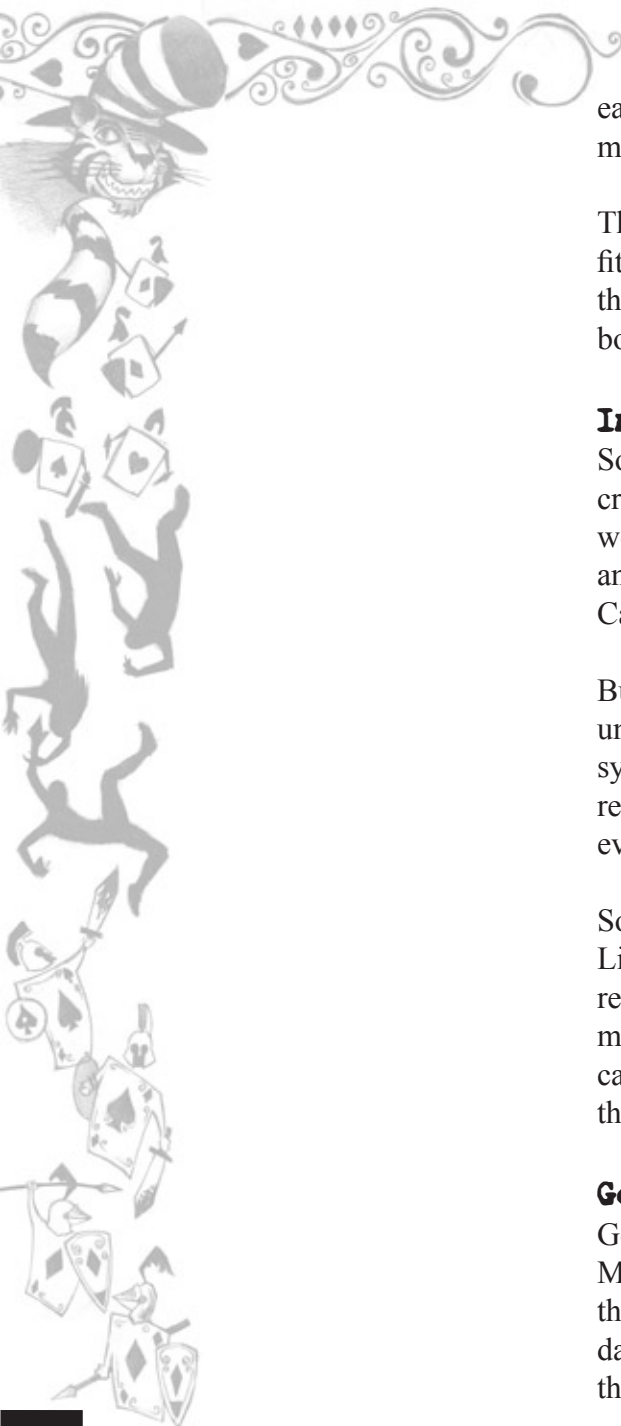
Magicians who have voyaged in their minds as far as they can go and Infecteds who have fallen all the way down into the universe's foundations have reported vast fields – mile, upon mile – of mighty transmitters, aimed into the universe above.

These are at the heart of the network of pipes and tunnels and wires that lead all the way from the hundreds of powers stations, pump houses, and processing centers of the Department of Works. The Canons are what it's all about.

What comes out of them cannot be seen, but it can be heard and *felt*. It may be what eastern religions would call the Tao. These are beaming out the signal that is *everything*—beaming it up into the sky to filter upwards and construct the chessboards “above” Chessboard Seven.

Those who have visited the continent-sized array have said they could hear and feel something like an anthem—like a chorus—or like the rumble of an active volcano. Those who have experienced it say that





each note is a universe, each chord a law of nature, every melody a meaning for something's life.

This is flowery language but no one has come up with anything more fitting. The transmitters are called the Canons because they are seen as the defining source for, well, everything else: the objective reality at the bottom of the universe.

Implications: Cracks In The Universe

Some people say that the walls that protect Chessboard Zero are crumbling—that as more people become Infected the “real world” gets weaker and weaker. Some say that the Caretakers are “chipping away” and eventually will take it down. They may be right: no one, not even the Caretakers themselves, are sure.

But there's some other options. It is theorized that if someone could understand and control the Department of Works and harness the symphony of the great array of Canons... or even *repair* it—they could reinstate the walls of reality. Perhaps they could erase the Caretakers or even remake them in their own images.

Some people believe that the secrets to Chessboard Seven reside in the Liebrary and that the knots of truth and lies exist to protect *that* terrible reality. Some people believe that the reason the Department of Works manifests itself to humans *as* human-built machines is because mankind can, eventually master it. Perhaps the Caretakers know this—and maybe that's why they are afraid of it.

Getting There and Getting Back

Getting to Chessboard Seven requires traveling extensively in the Linear Maze. From the lowest levels of Wonderland (Chessboards 5 and 6) this takes about a *week* of walking. It can take months; and the way is dangerous (most of the “well known paths” are guarded or trapped by the Caretakers who don't want anyone poking around).

There *are* secret trails known to only a very few people and since the Linear Maze shifts constantly, there are always pathways and portals opening and closing; spend enough time looking (a lifetime?) and you might get *lucky*.

Getting back means finding a random opening to the Linear Maze on Chessboard Seven or going through one of the seven well known Gates – semi-permanent gateways that are controlled by the Caretakers and are constantly under threat of assault from the Deconstructionists. Think of these as remote outposts at the edge of the Roman Empire – the things dispatched there are all but cut-off from their masters, in a very strange world, indeed, and in terrible peril.



What you might find there

Chessboard Seven is an empty place with a palpable sense of being long-forgotten and almost used-up. There are great open plains, endless deserts and badlands, and even a few placid seas, but rather than being full of promise, it feels used up—abandoned, and deserted.

It is not uninhabited – there are plants, animals, and strange, primitive civilizations, but unlike life elsewhere (or, in the case of the Caretakers, life-like things), the native flora and fauna of Chessboard Seven absolutely lack ambition or curiosity. They are stolid, polite, ignorant, and passive. They don't even seem to (particularly) fear death or pain – their senses of the world are dull and remote.

The only things of any real interest are the machines – the derelict factories and processing plants, the miles and miles of train track and twisted train-yards, the refineries and finally (most distant) the Cannons themselves.

The Department of Works feels very much like a puzzle with many (important) pieces missing; many of those who have spent lifetimes studying it have quit, convinced that whatever secrets it once held, they are now inaccessible. Clearly it has lasted *billions* of years, but it has been failing for billions of years and it's failing, still.

There may treasures to be found and insights to be gained by exploring Chessboard Seven – a properly skilled and equipped expedition might, for example, be able to learn secrets about the physical universe, the true cosmology of creation, or the nature of time, itself, by a careful study of the machines of the Department of Works. And (perhaps), in the most inaccessible places, there might be things worth stealing – but overwhelmingly the study of the Department of Works raises more questions than answers.

The Secret History of the End of the Universe

In canonical JAGS Wonderland the secret at the end of the universe is not that humanity is doomed – it is that humanity's victory (and the obsolescence and annihilation of the Caretakers) is *inevitable*.

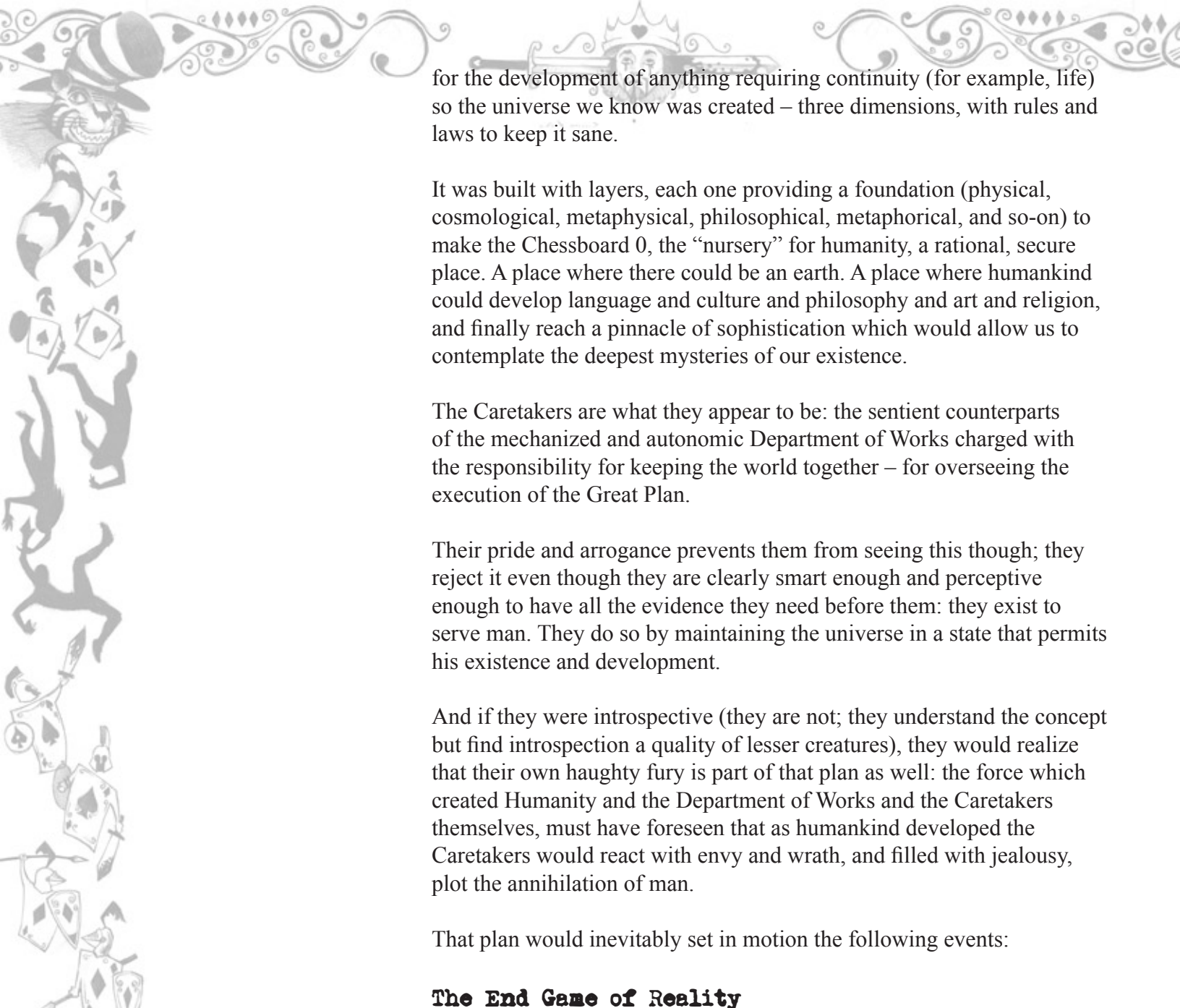
When someone realizes this – really understands it – they'll know the purpose of the Department of Works (and that it was obvious the whole time), and they'll do what needs to be done: they'll *turn it off*. And when they do that, the Universe ends.

Here's our explanation:

The Awful Truth

The awful truth that the Caretakers cannot face, and that humankind is yet ignorant of, is that Creation is, indeed meant for man. The primal universe – a chaotic blizzard of “all” and “nothing” was far too unstable





for the development of anything requiring continuity (for example, life) so the universe we know was created – three dimensions, with rules and laws to keep it sane.

It was built with layers, each one providing a foundation (physical, cosmological, metaphysical, philosophical, metaphorical, and so-on) to make the Chessboard 0, the “nursery” for humanity, a rational, secure place. A place where there could be an earth. A place where humankind could develop language and culture and philosophy and art and religion, and finally reach a pinnacle of sophistication which would allow us to contemplate the deepest mysteries of our existence.

The Caretakers are what they appear to be: the sentient counterparts of the mechanized and autonomic Department of Works charged with the responsibility for keeping the world together – for overseeing the execution of the Great Plan.

Their pride and arrogance prevents them from seeing this though; they reject it even though they are clearly smart enough and perceptive enough to have all the evidence they need before them: they exist to serve man. They do so by maintaining the universe in a state that permits his existence and development.

And if they were introspective (they are not; they understand the concept but find introspection a quality of lesser creatures), they would realize that their own haughty fury is part of that plan as well: the force which created Humanity and the Department of Works and the Caretakers themselves, must have foreseen that as humankind developed the Caretakers would react with envy and wrath, and filled with jealousy, plot the annihilation of man.

That plan would inevitably set in motion the following events:

The End Game of Reality

Move 1 (Mate in 5)	The destruction of some of the Department of Works
Move 2 (Mate in 4)	The breaching of the membrane between Chessboard 0 and the lower levels of reality
Move 3 (Mate in 3)	The discovery of the lower Chessboards by humans
Move 4 (Mate in 2)	Ultimately, the discovery of the Department of Works by humankind
Move 5 (Mate in 1)	The understanding of the machinery of the Department of Works by man, and mankind’s mastery over those machines
Move 6 (Checkmate)	The apocalypse – the revelation – when humankind accepts what has always been his birthright: the Dominion over Creation and the decommissioning of the machines

This will end the universe, for it will no longer be necessary: humanity is now able to face the true nature of Creation – the co-existence of EVERYTHING / ALL and NOTHING / VOID and enter the CHAOS without fear.

And with the shedding of the universe as we know it and the ascension into the universe as it is, the Caretakers will no longer be needed all that

they have been and will be will fall away, consumed in the maelstrom of the ancient poles/houses.

This plan is *inevitable* and the Caretakers choose not to see it; instead they choose to rage against it – to assert their superiority of humanity, to claim the universe as theirs, and to attempt *absolute homicide*, in the face of the mathematical certainty of failure.

JAGS Wonderland: Mate in Two

JAGS Wonderland takes place in the 4th move of End Game; some humans have already journeyed to the bottom of universe and seen what there is to see there. None of them have *understood* it yet (at least not understood it in its entirety) but this is only a matter of time.

These are the last days before the unveiling of the universal truth and the outcome of the war between humankind and the Caretakers; someone – some human – will journey deep enough and travel far enough, and arrive with the wisdom to see what is possible.

Playing the End Game

The way we play, the PC's learn about Wonderland in stages, peeling away the layers of the onion – initial discoveries of the Caretakers suggests a world without hope, but further exploration will identify a *false hope*—the Deconstructionist and the coming “Civil War” in Wonderland.

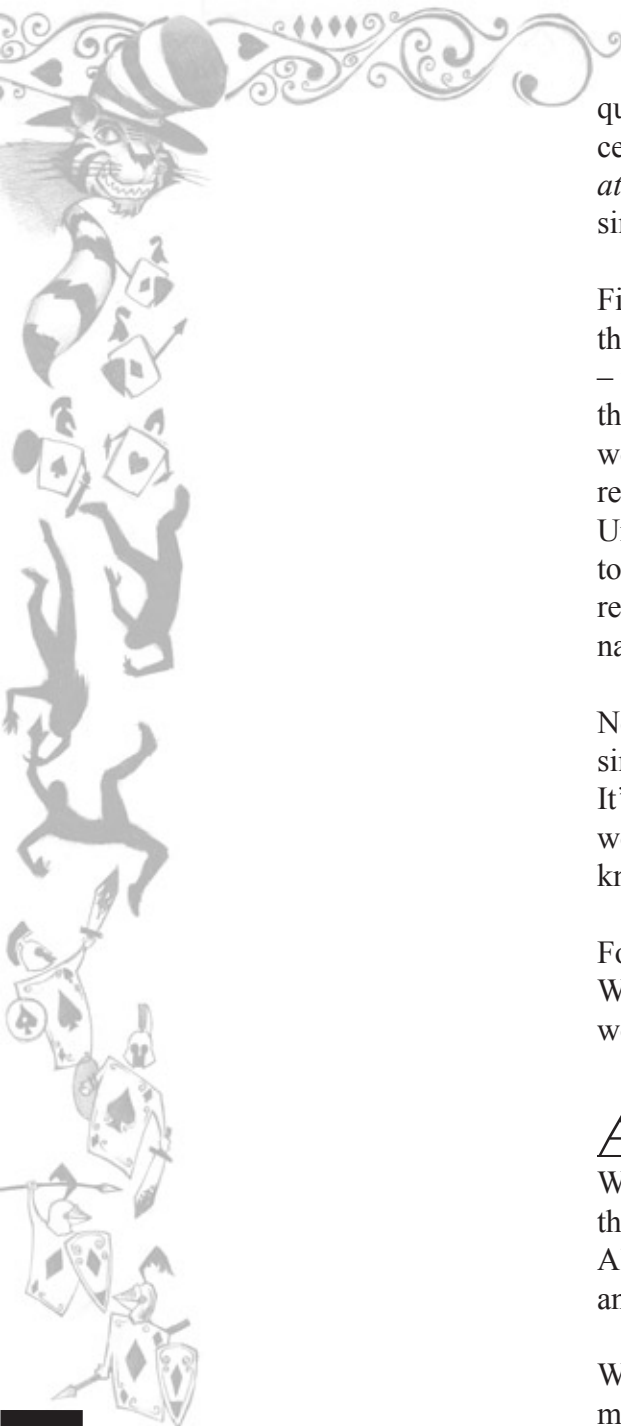
Saving humanity at this point (midway into the game) seems to be a matter of playing the Deconstructionists against the Caretakers – a great game between alien superpowers who are both inextricably tied to humanity.

Eventually, though, the truth will emerge: the Deconstructionists are *nihilists* at best and *hypocrites* at worst – they would either systematically destroy everything or would overthrow the Caretakers, only to become them (in spirit) and develop their own awful plans for humanity. In any case, all of them are insane and overwhelmingly powerful.

Sometime during this period, the PC's would discover that there are secrets even the Caretakers don't understand – forces they fear. The foundations of the Universe hold some terrible secret and (perhaps) hope.

In the “canonical” JAGS Wonderland Game, the PC's will probably visit Chessboard Seven before they understand its true meaning – typically searching for clues others have missed. These initial contacts would be frustrating and disappointing. The ruins are really ruins; there are no sages or sphinxes or oracles to ask for answers. The machines are all but ruined and repairing them (even if they were understood, which they are not) seems an impossible task... likewise, controlling them is beyond





question: in the past, there may have been settings and dials and control centers. These have fallen apart beyond repair: they have undergone *atomic decay* during the billions and billions of years that have passed since the universe was forged.

Finally, the PC's may realize that the Deconstructionist plan (to destroy the machines and bring about the end of the Universe) is unnecessary – there *is* something humankind can do: to the Department of Works: they can turn *off* the machines. But it's all-or-nothing: the Caretakers would like to erase the boundaries between the Chessboard (giving them reign over Chessboard 0), without bringing down the outer walls of the Universe. The Deconstructionists would like to reprogram the machines to either erase everything within the Walls or to simply (and subtly) remove the Caretakers from power without otherwise disrupting the nature of things.

Neither of these are achievable, but it is possible for seven humans to simultaneously shut down *everything* (there are seven control stations). It's not even that hard to do. This would plunge Creation into Chaos; it would remove all boundaries from everything. Matter and reality as we know it would cease to exist.

For the Caretakers and the Deconstructionists and most of the inhuman Wonderland creatures this would be annihilation, but for humanity, this would be enlightenment and freedom.

Afterword

Well, that's that. "That," in this case, being about 400pgs of game-world that grew from what seemed like a very, very simple concept ("Hey, Alice in Wonderland—I bet that could be cool"). Now it's got monsters and magicians and eight different chessboards and all kinds of stuff.

We hope you enjoy it. We've been playing in versions of this for well more than a year (and if you count the source games whose material found itself rolled into *JAGS Wonderland* way more than 10 years). In that sense the effort, tremendous as it has been, has been a success.

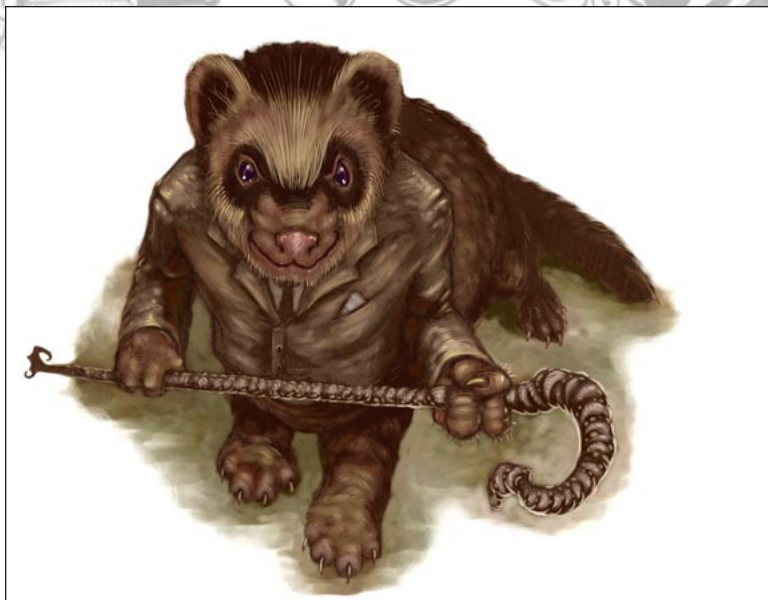
In another sense we keep finding new stuff we think we've gotta add and more clarification and this and that ("Hey, Eric? I don't think we've really distinguished Chessboard Five from Chessboard Six enough. Want to put in your notes about Caretaker domains and universal constants?"). Finally, though, you end it somewhere.

Thanks for reading. This is where we've decided to end it (except for appendicies). Well, really here.



Wonderland Creatures

Wonderland is the home to multitudes of beings. Some are singular—some are common. Many qualify as monsters—they hide in the darkness, they stalk the defenseless, their motivations are at best murky and at worst utterly plain: to generate fear. Many are “people.” They may or may not look like humans but they act with a recognizable humanity that has all the variations we expect from ourselves. Others are caricatures: they seem to be the living embodiment of some idea or concept and while they may be intelligent, their existence is defined by rules that may seem alien to man.



Reflections

Some creatures on Chessboard One will throw Reflections of themselves up to Chessboard Zero. How they manifest there (as subtle changes in the environments, appearing as semi-ordinary things that behave strangely, or even appearing as themselves) is based on the presence the being has. Each creature will have a Reflection rating that describes its appearance on Chessboard Zero.

The Boojum, a variety of Snark usually found on Chessboard Three. Approach with extreme caution.

Manifestation: Presence

When a creature manifests as itself (a leering Jabberwocky with burning eyes, for example) it will either Infect those who come into contact with it, be reduced in its power due to appearing as something less abnormal, or be repelled (or even destroyed) by the machinery of the universe that works to keep Wonderland out.

The rule of thumb is that a creature may “cloak” itself (appear as something less bizarre) if dealing with an uninfected person. An Infected person may see it for what it is. If a creature is presented to a group of Uninfected people and shown plainly, the GM can call for a roll of 10 [+2 per Uninfected person watching] – [Creature’s Presence]. If the roll is made, the creature’s Reflection on Chessboard Zero will become inert or disintegrate and the creature itself will either be repelled down one or more levels or reality. If the roll is made by 5 or more under the total, the creature may be ruled destroyed.

Encountering Creatures on Chessboard One

Creatures are far more commonly encountered by PCs during Episodes on the lower Chessboards. This is where they are most dangerous and most commonly seen.

Monsters and Infection

Monsters are a potential vector for Infection but it’s not one that gets much attention. The biggest reason for this is that even monsters that *can* cast dangerous reflections to Chessboard Zero rarely *do*. A few beings

The sleep of reason
produces monsters.

~ Goya

thrive on this—and they do cause Infections (or death) but they are rare.

Secondly, it may be ruled that monster-encounters, being flooded with adrenaline and fear may be less substantially imprinting on the subject's

NAME: BANDERSNATCH (LARGE)

PRESENCE 16

PHY 14	STR 125	BLD 350	CON 14
REF 12	COR 12	REA 15	AGI 12
INT 11	RES 11	MEM 11	WIL 11
DP 350	Minor	Major	Critical
Wounds	117	350	700
Move	24y/s		
Grapple	219/183		

DP	350
To Hit	13-
To Be Hit	+3/+2
Armor	
Damage	Bite 60 PEN

Description: Bandersnatches are horrific monsters that stalk Chessboard Four, sometimes solitary, sometimes in herds. They appear as massive, dirty ostriches growing to the size of an elephant. Instead of a bird's head, from their necks come a single hand with a vicious mouth in its palm.

The Bandersnatch contains, under its feathers, human-sized “marionettes” (which, themselves, have their own intelligences and personalities). These beings, attached by strings, but capable of their own movement as well, serve, tend, and gather prey for the Bandersnatch.

Bandersnatches have uses for humankind. They eat them, torment them for sport (often depositing them in the most frightening locals they can find) and selling them to the Naughts as slaves.

Bandersnatches also serve the Caretakers as functionaries on the higher Chessboards, from time to time.

Reflection: Bandersnatches sometimes appear on Chessboard Zero as large machines (trucks, for instance) that move through a neighborhood and *take* people when no one is watching.

They also extend their hand-heads through mirrors if something has happened to open the mirror maze. Sometimes they will release their mannequin servants into the mirror-maze and have them enter the upper Chessboards on the other side of the mirrors, waiting for a time when a projection can open the maze (a Presence roll) and have the mannequin grab a solitary target and drag them in!



PURDY05

NAME: BLEEDERS

PRESENCE 03

PHY 11 STR 06 BLD 02 CON 11

REF 11 COR 11 REA 11 AGI 11

INT 09 RES 09 MEM 10 WIL 09

DP 3 **Minor** **Major** **Critical**

Wounds 1 3 6

Move 2y/s

Grapple 13 [see]

DP	3
To Hit	14-
To Be Hit	-3/-2
Armor	None
Damage	Varies
Damage	Claw 2 IMP

Description: Bleeders are small 9" tall blue humanoids with a thirst for human blood. They use rods and nets adorned with fishhooks and, when they prey, they will usually slice their victim and then move in to collect the blood. They are usually found on Chessboard Two.

A successful attack will use nets and hooks. They are surprisingly heavy for their size and quite strong for it too. They will usually spear the victim several times and then hold them for a few seconds to bleed them.

Reflection: Bleeders usually have no Reflection on Chessboard Zero. A person who suffers Bleeder attack will usually return to find that their Reflection has been scraped and scratched all over.

Fishhook Nets: A Bleeder attack involves a group of about six of them. Four will use their hooks and nets, two will carry containers to siphon the victim's blood. This is a to-hit roll with a 13 Grapple. If it gets a Minor Success the Base Damage is 1pt PEN. If a Standard Success or better, 2pts PEN. The subject must Break the Grapple to escape. Once netted, the subject attacks at -2 to hit (and the Bleeders are not all that fast so they aren't that hard to hit—but they maneuver pretty well).



NAME: BOROGOVE

PRESENCE 05

PHY 11 STR 13 BLD 09 CON 11

REF 12 COR 12 REA 13 AGI 12

INT 06 RES 06 MEM 10 WIL 11

DP 15

Minor

Major

Critical

Wounds

5

15

30

Move

8y/s

9y/s (fly)

Grapple

15/13

DP

15

To Hit

14-

To Be Hit

+0

Armor

1/3

Damage

Bite 3 PEN

Damage

Claw 2 IMP

Description: The Borogove appears as a 1.5 yard long dirty cocatrice-like being. Part bird, part lizard, they extrude a stench and sense of decay. Around them objects will tarnish, age, and stain. They excrete garbage constantly, creating wakes of rubbish behind them when they wish.

Borogoves are drawn to places where something *unsavory* is happening. They are “curious” and are attracted to what might be called “dirty laundry” (not actual soiled linens). Some persons keep trained Borogoves for the purposes of hunting for places to find blackmail information. They are also sometimes found in offices where fraud is being committed on a significant scale.

Reflection: Areas haunted by a Borogove will become dirty, filled with disarray, and mechanical breakdowns. When a Borogove does manifest, it appears as a small shabby looking bird with white cataract filled eyes.

Filth: A person struck by a Borogove will sustain damage (the Bite is a Grab attack) but will also become wretchedly dirty, their clothes will be ruined with stains of old food and sweat, their faces smudged, and so on.



PURDY05

NAME: DOORKNOB PEOPLE

PRESENCE 03

PHY 12 STR 06 BLD 01 CON 12

REF 13 COR 13 REA 13 AGI 13

INT 10 RES 10 MEM 12 WIL 10

DP 3

Minor	Major	Critical
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Wounds 1 4 8

Move 3y/s 5y jump

Grapple 6+

DP	4
To Hit	13-
To Be Hit	-7/-6
Armor	None
Damage	Varies

Description: Imagine a spider whose yellowish legs extend out to roughly the circumference of a basketball. The spider's body is the gnarled face of an old, leering man. They live in the twisted reflections of doorknobs.

When they enter a house (usually attracted by some unwholesome activity on the part of the occupants) they began building "nests" on the "other side" of the warped mirrors that are doorknobs. When there are enough of them, they can *attack*. They are not powerful: they seek to prey on children or weak adults—but they also enjoy causing fear and may seek to attack a subject simply to Infect them.

Doorknob people are malevolent artists, working to warp the Chessboard Two reality of a place into a distorted version of itself (a Warped Zone), changing perspective and proportion and adding their own frightening touches. When they are finished, they need the final ingredient: a person or, preferably, a body. They will try to pull someone into their warped horror-show and hope it, or something in it, consumes them.

Reflection: In a house with a Doorknob People hive (visible on Chessboard Two as a large dirty looking spider-web style structure attached to doors in the house) the occupants may feel watched and spied on.

When there are enough of them (see the rules for Hive below) they can project up, springing from the doorknob and streaming out! If they can web and Infect a target, they can bring them back!

Hive: Doorknob People can build up enough Presence to Infect a person by spawning more of themselves and increasing their numbers. Each clutch of four people has the listed Presence (8). They will spawn an additional member by creating senses of paranoia and fear in the household. They will work to project up and move small objects, cause electrical faults, and other things. The more scared the subjects get the more Doorknob people will be able to spawn. Usually each week creates another two People. Each additional 2 people adds one to the Presence of the Hive.

Attack: Before they are ready to attack, they will *spy*. Perceptive people may see the small, warped, hideous faces looking at them out of doorknobs. When they do attack, they will spring out in a group of four for a Grapple of 10. An additional Doorknob Person will come out each turn. They usually only stay out for 3 seconds.

If they don't Infect the person, they will have to retreat and, in any event, won't go more than 5 yards from a doorknob on Chessboard Zero. They will try to web up a target (they vomit sticky web stuff) and, if their combined Grapple can get a Major Effect, they will be able to "drag them into the Doorknob."

Fighting Them On Chessboard Zero: Certain rituals (Feng Shui) can alter the environment to make it unfriendly to Doorknob People. Additionally, if a person sets clever traps for them, they can be prevented from breeding and will have to eventually abandon their present locale.

Finally, they are *impatient*. They will often attack if someone become curious or believes in them (this often happens with children).

NAME: ENVELOPERS**PRESENCE 13****PHY 08-12** STR 06 BLD 01 STC 15-**REF 10** COR 10 REA 11 AGI 11**INT 08** RES 08 MEM 10 WIL 11

DP 3 Minor Major Critical

Wounds -5:1pt

Move creep 4ys 5y/s float

Grapple 6+

DP 4

To Hit 13-

To Be Hit -7/-6

Armor None

Damage Varies

Description: They are six-foot tall almost two-dimensional paper people (usually with two-dimensional top hats). They are often found folded inside books or otherwise near areas where writing (or typing) is a common occurrence. They are physically often weak, but they may strike from surprise.

When they attack, they grapple, and if they get a Major success, the target is “Enveloped”—trapped in an addressed envelope and then vanishing to appear at an address in deeper Wonderland.

Envelopers seem to originate on Chessboard Two as some sort of manifestation of fear. They are stealthy (they make sounds like paper rustling) and they can theatrically creep up on a victim, startling them before striking.

Reflection: Envelopers usually manifest directly if they can.

Mailed: A character that is enveloped will be held for three seconds after which the Enveloper will vanish and the subject will appear (a bit the worse for wear) at some Wonderland address (often a Caretaker who wants to talk to them) a few days or hours later. The address is legible if someone is outside to see it.

Once a person is Enveloped, the Grapple jumps to 18! It's hard to get out.

Fragile: Envelopers are just paper—they are easy to rip and tear. Each pt of damage will force a roll. The first at a 10-, the second at a 5-.

NAME: GOATFOOTED BALLOON MAN

PRESENCE 12

PHY 13 STR 16 BLD 09 CON 13

REF 12 COR 12 REA 12 AGI 12

INT 12 RES 12 MEM 11 WIL 12

DP 30

Minor

Major

Critical

Wounds

10

30

60

Move

8y/s

Sprint

16y/s

Grapple

18/16

DP	30
To Hit	14-
To Be Hit	+0
Armor	1/3
Damage	Strike: 6 IMP
Damage	Kick: 9 IMP

Description: An old man with a *stretched* face and goat's feet. He often carries balloons—and if you look closely, sometimes you can see the face of a screaming child in each of them.

The Balloon Man is a Chessboard Three monster—dedicated to the spread of terror. When he comes to Chessboard One, he'll stalk children as best he can, usually preying on runaways but sometimes on those who have slipped under society's radar or "strayed from the path."

These creatures are *very* moralistic and greatly prefer to take victims who have been breaking social rules (although sometimes they will go after a generally good, well behaved, person since "no one is truly pure of heart.")

Reflection: The Balloon Man looks like a creepy older man (often seen at a distance, sometimes moving "wrong," as with a too-fast jerky motion like speeded up film). He may appear as a derelict or a janitor.

Taking: The Balloon Man will attempt to get his subject into captivity (often using an old house or cave or basement for a lair). Once the subject is Infected and held captive they are made to inflate a balloon (one of the many the Balloon Man will have). This may take several days since the breaths must come from a scream of terror. These breaths are hot—and the balloons rise. When the final breath is breathed (usually about 1 day per 3pts of the target's WIL) the subject will be *sucked inside* and become a balloon. If the balloons are pierced or the air is released, the terrified screams will come spilling out—however, every last breath put into the balloon must be emptied for the victim to be freed.

The Balloons are often taken down to Chessboard Four and sold to Naughts. Sometimes they are released in the lower realms to drift until they pop, depositing the hapless victim somewhere strange—and with no good way to get back. While within the balloons the victims exist in a state of constant terror—it is up to the GM whether they are severely traumatized or may recover.

Killings: Balloon Men will sometimes kill (usually with an exotic array of knives or other interesting signature methods). Often they reserve murders for those who have crossed them or sought to cross them.



NAME: HUNGER DISCIPLE**PRESENCE 13****PHY 12** STR 14 BLD 11 CON 12**REF 10** COR 10 REA 12 AGI 10**INT 11** RES 11 MEM 11 WIL 11

DP 45-90 Minor Major Critical

Wounds 15 45 90

Move 7y/s

Grapple 17/14

DP 45-90

To Hit 13-

To Be Hit +0

Armor None

Damage Bite 11 PEN

Description: People who deal directly with Caretakers outside of Dramas (such as happens when Magicians overuse Magic or overreach or when people who understand only a little of Wonderland seek to curry the Caretaker's favor) can become Hunger Disciples. Their Shadows are mutated beyond all recognition and they develop fearsome appetites and disgusting habits.

Hunger Disciples are usually all a bit different: depending on what Caretaker they decided to follow, what they were like before, and their force of will they can be dangerous but pathetic things or cold, powerful serial killers. Some of the leaders of Big Pharma have become Hunger Disciples. Many Magicians who have delved into deeper Wonderland seeking infernal deals as well.

Stereotypically, they appear as human-sized flesh-colored grubs with powerful three-part beaks as their only identifiable heads and tiny arms and legs. They may have many and varied goals but all of them are driven by a hunger to feed on humanity—to devour it and debase it, and eventually to destroy it.

Reflection: They appear as they usually did before their conversion, unless they manifest.

Consuming: A Hunger Disciple may consume a person it kills with an additional 8 REA Long Action, adding their BLD to its own. This gives it +1 STR (and therefore damage) per point of Mass the person had, +10 DP (for the whole person, even if they had more), and +10 BLD (even if the person was larger). This equates to a total of +3 damage per person eaten. This goes away over a few hours.

Bite: The bite of a Hunger Disciple does 11 PEN damage (at first). It also acts as a 17 Grapple Grab (and the Hunger Disciple may continue to bite for 5 REA keeping the original to-hit score).

NAME: JABBERWOCKY

PRESENCE 16

PHY 18 STR 18 BLD 25 CON 13

REF 12 COR 12 REA 12 AGI 12

INT 11 RES 11 MEM 12 WIL 13

DP 30

Minor

Major

Critical

Wounds

10

30

60

Move

8y/s

9y/s (fly)

Grapple

25/21

DP 90

To Hit 14-

To Be Hit -2/-2

Armor 4/16

Damage Bite 16 PEN

Damage Claw 11 IMP

Description: Jabberwockies are commonly a little bigger than humans with long snake-like necks, tails, and wings. Their claws erupt from their hands and their eyes burn with inner-fire. Their mouths are forests of jagged teeth.

Jabberwockies have some of the highest Presences of any Wonderland being: when they reach Chessboard One, they can often walk amongst Chessboard Zero in full sight.

Jabberwockies are sometimes *feral* (and these grow to great size and have even more fearsome stats) but are usually *civil* (meaning “civilized,” not “friendly”). Civil Jabberwockies act as mercenaries, bounty hunters, and hit men for lower Wonderland.

Beings that have delicate, intricate business on Chessboard Zero may send a Jabberwocky if they can find one and afford it.

Reflection: Jabberwockies reflect as cool, tough-looking humans when they are not making an effort to Project up to Chessboard Zero in their true form. They usually wear sunglasses and almost always smoke (even in places where it isn’t allowed). They have high Intimidate values and may appear as bikers, gang members, or other such persons.

Eyes of Flame: Jabberwockies can project bolts of fire from their eyes. These have an ROF of 4 and hit for 13pts IMP damage.



NAME: MOAM RATH

PRESENCE 16

PHY 12 STR 12-22 BLD 12-50 CON 12

REF 11 COR 10 REA 11 AGI 11

INT 08 RES 08 MEM 12 WIL 10

DP 30 Minor Major Critical

Wounds 4-17 12-51 24-102

Move 8y/s

Grapple 14/12 to 24/20

DP	21-51
To Hit	12-
To Be Hit	0 to +2
Armor	None
Damage	Bite 8-16 IMP

Description: Looking something like an obese, bloated egg with red lips at the top, the Moam Rath traps its prey with objects of desire hung from gossamer threads. They lurk in the shadows and leave their traps where people will see them: a wallet discarded by a storm drain, an expensive watch left on a park-bench, one of those new PDA's seems to be laying, alone, in a stairwell.

When you touch it, however, you are hooked—and the Rath will drag you to its mouth and devour you, if it can. Moam Rathes vary in size and strength. Many are small and would threaten a man—but not a powerful Twisted. Some get much larger and more dangerous.

Reflection: Rathes can project up to Chessboard Zero. Their fairly high Presence and disguise abilities make them capable of existing fairly safely in most urban environments.

Stealth: for something so big, the Moam Rath is surprisingly stealthy. It can stand on walls or ceilings. It can, when stationary, appear as some ordinary object (a large trash bin, a weird looking vending machine, etc.)

A Moam Rath usually functions with about a 15- Level 2 Stealth roll. If it must be “in plain sight” it will usually take an 8 REA Long action to drop the illusion around itself before it can attack or move. This does *not* apply to hooking people, however.

Objects of Desire: Moam Rathes will pick through garbage dumps, trash cans, and other areas looking for discarded objects that are similar to what a person might desire. When the object is extended on the end of a thread, the long, articulated joint hovering out of sight like a fisherman's rod and reel, the object will appear as a pristine, shiny, top-end model of whatever it roughly resembles—the exact nature designed to match the subject's preferences (a broken or scuffed digital watch appears as a several-thousand dollar Patek Philippe).

Hook, Line, and Sinker: If you look at these objects carefully, a Perception roll by 4 or 5 will show a glimmer of a spider-web like strand leading from the object. Indeed, it appears that one *could* cut the strand, or simply touch the object so as to avoid the thread. This is dangerous: a COR roll made at -5 is necessary to liberate the object. The thread isn't where you think it is, even if you're looking right at it, the object isn't exactly as it appears either and is networked with the strong, sticky trap.

Furthermore, once stuck, the long, insectoid arm of the Moam Rath will find you and grab you—and the thread, itself, will start reeling you in!

The thread has a 14-24 Offensive Grapple (depending on size). When stuck, it will immediately begin making one Grapple roll per turn (although it can snare numerous people). Once a Major advantage is scored on the subject, the Rath will begin biting for 8-16 IMP damage for each 5 REA Medium action (dependant on size). A character who is bitten will be subject to a Hold.

Treasure: If a Rath is killed it may have nothing but junk—however, as they last longer, and take victims, they accumulate things. On the lower Chessboards, these items are usually Shadow-versions of real things—and therefore tend to evaporate after the Rath is slain ... however: Rathes will sometimes have items that have come to them from Chessboard Zero and these items may actually be valuable.



NAME: MOCKING TURTLES

PRESENCE 07

PHY 09 STR 09 BLD 1 CON 11

REF 09 COR 09 REA 11 AGI 09

INT 12 RES 12 MEM 12 WIL 12

DP 6 **Minor** **Major** **Critical**

Wounds 2 6 12

Move 1y/s

Grapple 13/11

DP	6
To Hit	13-
To Be Hit	-2/-1
Armor	4/9
Damage	Bite 1 IMP
Damage	Claw 11 IMP

Description: Mocking Turtles appear as small sea turtles with the heads of a small calf and longish necks. They are about 2 feet in length. They don't climb all that well (although they can jump a whole yard) and they have strong blunt jaws.

They are nasty tempered and enjoy toying with people and tormenting them. A school of Mock Turtles (usually 2 to 12) will find a victim having an Episode and terrorize them. Mocking Turtles have keen insights into the psychological weaknesses of their targets and will make fun of them, harass them, and verbally bully them. If they can, they will BITE them and hang on, causing nasty bruises.

Shadows who are not their targets tend to ignore them or maybe treat them as minor pests (usually Shadows will "not hear" their comments). The person having the Episode, however, will have to go about their day (in the area where the school is, anyway) jumping over them, avoiding them, or finding ways to kill them. This leaves their Reflection ranting about invisible Turtles!

Reflection: Mocking Turtles don't have much by way of a reflection on Chessboard Zero. They sometimes look like lumps in the rug or bits of trash on the floor.

Mock: The Turtles are usually snide and mean. They will make fun of perceived inadequacies while they slowly approach and try to bite their victims. A subject with any susceptibility to playground-style mockery may need to make a WIL roll (usually at plusses or minuses depending on the emotional fragileness of the character.

Bite and Hold: The turtle will bite as a Grab attack and will then hold as long as it can. They can inflict damage for a 5 REA Bite action. They usually go for extremities (-2 to hit) or even clothing. Turtles will usually do no more than half the subject's DP in an attack. They are not murderous.

Soup: The Mock Turtle makes a *fine* soup. Sometimes cooking them up and dining on them is the best revenge!



NAME: ORIGAMI MASTER

PRESENCE 14

PHY 13 STR 16 BLD 01 CON 13

REF 13 COR 13 REA 13 AGI 13

INT 11 RES 11 MEM 11 WIL 11

DP 30 Minor Major Critical

Wounds 10 30 60

Move 7y/s float

Grapple 17/14

DP	30
To Hit	14-
To Be Hit	-3
Armor	Special
Damage	Special

Description: The Origami Master is a floating wraith with green eyes and an exoskeleton made of folded paper. The exist partially outside of the regular three dimensions and can use their talons to twist and fold space-time to turn their opponents inside out.

They are traditionally Chessboard Three monsters who often act in the service of the Caretaker Royalty. They may also appear as palace guard.

Reflection: Origami Masters sometimes appear at a distance as gruesome hooded monks. Up close they appear as eerie moving shadows.

Claw: The Origami Master's claw attack does 15 PEN damage ignoring all worn armor (although it will not ignore Force Fields).

Dhen Surgery: The term for Knot-Theory manipulations, if an Origami Master grabs you, for a second 5 REA Medium action, it can *fold* you. This is a resisted attack of Power 15 vs. CON

Result	Effect
Minor	Target takes 1pt of damage.
Standard	Target must make a Minor Wound roll, taking a Minor Wound's worth of damage.
Major	Target must make a Major Wound roll, taking a Major Wound's worth of damage.
Critical	Target must make a Critical Wound roll, taking a Critical Wound's worth of damage.
Catastrophic	Target is turned inside out, wrapped in impossible arcs and loops, dying horribly.

Spectral Nature: Origami Masters can take an 8 REA Long action to shift from visible and "substantial" to invisible and "insubstantial" (they can pass through walls and such). They can teleport as an 8 REA Long action up to 100 yards.

Damage Reduction: Origami Masters take a -4 Damage Modifier from all normal attacks (Twisted powers and Magic don't count). This is applied *before* checking for PEN damage.



NAME: PUNCH**PRESENCE 7****PHY 12** STR 35 BLD 30 CON 12**REF 11** COR 11 REA 11 AGI 11**INT 11** RES 11 MEM 11 WIL 12

DP 45 Minor Major Critical

Wounds 15 45 90

Move 9y/s

Grapple 50/41

DP 45

To Hit 14-

To Be Hit +0

Armor 6/12

Damage Mallet 38 IMP

Description: Punches are giant, gruesome jack-in-the-boxes that carry heavy hammers. They serve the Caretakers on all levels of reality. They can be aggressive, cruel, officious, and (at best, usually) stuffy. They range from malevolent to merely arrogant.

They move by sliding on the floor or, sometimes, *jumping*. They are often surrounded by soft, frightening music along the lines of nursery rhymes and children's songs.

Reflection: Punches usually don't manifest directly on Chessboard Zero—their Presence is too low. They will often lurk on Chessboard One looking for an Infected to press into service if they have some message to be sent to someone on Chessboard Zero. Wherever they are there will be an increase in things like surveillance and bureaucratic cruelty and red tape.

Sleep: A Punch can retract into its box and *wait*. It has a 13- Perception and, if someone comes close, they'll hear *pop goes the weasel*. If the Punch detects them (makes the roll) he'll spring out (often striking).

Capture: If a target is caught in a Major Hold, as an 8 REA Long action the Punch can vanish with them, taking them back to their master's abode.

NAME: RAZOR BLADES**PRESENCE 3****PHY 12** STR 12 BLD 1 STC 15-**REF 11** COR -- REA 11 AGI 10**INT 05** RES 05 MEM 12 WIL 12

DP 5 Minor Major Critical

Wounds -3:1pt

Move 5y/s 9y/s hurl

Grapple --

DP 5

To Hit 12-

To Be Hit -2/-2

Armor 2

Damage Slice 5 PEN

Description: Two foot long flying razor blades (like the kind that fit into old-fashioned shaving razors—not straight razors). They travel in packs and often nest in filing cabinets or large electronic junction boxes. They fly through no obvious means and will slice their targets. Razor Blades are most often found on Chessboard Two.

Reflection: The Razors are sometimes found as real discarded Razor Blades in the area. Meticulously seeking them and finding them and breaking them will make the Chessboard One (or Two) are safer.

Hurl: The blades do not fly all that fast—but if they take an 8 REA Long action and reduce their chance to hit to a 9-, they can hurl themselves 9 yards. They will usually hover at range and then hurl themselves in. A subject can choose to either block/dodge or strike them on the way in.

NAME: SNARK (AND BOOJUM)

PRESENCE 3

PHY 10 STR 09 BLD 8 CON 12

REF 11 COR 11 REA 11 AGI 11

INT 11 RES 11 MEM 14 WIL 12

DP 12 Minor Major Critical

Wounds 4 12 24

Move 9y/s

Grapple 11/9 to

DP	12
To Hit	13-
To Be Hit	-1
Armor	None
Damage	Bite 2 PEN

Description: There are a great many different varieties of Snark (some claim the major genus are top, bottom, up, down, charmed, and strange Snarks). Some have feathers, some bite—all are quite edible (the flavor must be tasted to be fully understood, however: it is meager but crisp (like a coat too tight at the waist) and a flavor of will-o-the-wisp).

Snarks are obsessed with verbal criticism and psychological infighting. They elevate irony to an artform and revel in sarcastic, ‘constructive’ criticism.

All are fond of Victorian bathing machines (large umbrella-like contraptions used to preserve modesty while bathing at the sea) and most have decent manners.

There is one kind of Snark, however, that is universally feared: the boojum (described below).

Reflection: Snarks don’t visit the upper chessboards very often and when they do, they usually throw no physical Reflection. However, the more litigious varieties of snark will usually make their presence known by an increase in contentious behavior—especially on Internet message boards.

Vanish: A Boojum is one of the most rare and feared Snarks in existence. As a 3 REA Short action, they can *vanish* a target (it disappears quickly and quietly with the essence and noise of a soap bubble popping). There is no roll to hit and no resistance. Boojums are rare, solitary, and usually stoic and martial in their habits. They are enemies of the Army of No and even the Caretakers treat their preserves with deference.

Skewer: Snarks can gain intimate insight into a target and, if they choose to (if they are “on duty” or pursuing their “professional bent”) make remarks that cut their target to the quick. The GM can call for WIL rolls against the Snark’s skill (usually 12 to 17) to determine how upsetting the conversation is. The exact results of this are left up to the GM and player but a Snark who has time to talk at leisure with a victim may be able to provoke some strong reactions.



NAME: TOVES

PRESENCE 7

PHY 12 STR 21 BLD 15 CON 12

REF 12 COR 12 REA 12 AGI 12

INT 08 RES 08 MEM 12 WIL 12

DP 33 Minor Major Critical

Wounds 11 33 66

Move 7y/s

Grapple 22/26 to

DP	33
To Hit	13-
To Be Hit	-2/-2
Armor	2/8
Damage	Bite 13 PEN
Damage	Claw 9 PEN

Description: A Tove is an alligator-sized being that's a cross between a lizard and a badger. They have only front legs, their thick, muscled hind quarters slither on the ground. They live in "pocket" spaces near time-pieces (since they usually live outdoors, they are partial to Sun Dials) and they can attack subjects, "corkscrewing" out of the air to leap on them.

When Toves are "screwed in" (in a space-time pocket near a time-piece) they can sense the outside world and be sensed. Beings can get Perception rolls to notice them (usually at -2). A made roll will make the subject feel *uneasy*. Wary creatures will not come within the strike distance (4 yards). Sometimes the Toves will be outside, sunning themselves or crawling around.

Reflection: Toves usually only manifest on Chessboard Zero under rare conditions or in areas where there are bleeds. Their comparatively low Presence makes them unlikely to attack unless their target is Unsanse.

When they are visible on Chessboard Zero, they are spotted as small odd creatures that live in hard to find burrows around sundials and near hedgerows.

Corkscrew: A Tove Attack is an 8 REA Long action wherein the Tove appears and rakes or bites. The subject, if they are not surprised by the sheer fact of the Tove's appearance (non-combat characters can get WIL or REA rolls to be *able* to respond) may choose to either block/dodge or attack the Tove as it strikes.

Bite: A bite is a Grab attack that leaves the Tove at 0 AGI Bonus while it is holding on to a target. When it hits, it does 13 PEN damage and may bite again each turn for 5 REA using the same Damage Mod roll.

Rake: The Tove will usually rake with its claws against more than one opponent in order to keep its AGI bonus.

Familiarity: Toves can be beaten or trained into recognizing a person as not being a target. They will then ignore that person and will not attack those identified as that person's "pack" (friends, family members). Trained Toves are often used as guardians.



NAME: TRIALS**PRESENCE 7****PHY 12** STR 45 BLD 240 CON 13**REF 11** COR 08 REA 11 AGI 11**INT 11** RES 11 MEM 12 WIL 13

DP 240 Minor Major Critical

Wounds 80 240 480

Move 18y/s

Grapple 61/51

DP	240
To Hit	13- (+2 Large Wpn)
To Be Hit	+2/+2
Armor	8/24
Damage	Punch 51 IMP
Damage	Hammer 80 IMP

Description: Trials are giants with hammers where their heads should be. Their fists are blunt slabs of meat (their low COR for small stubby fingers) that they usually use to catch and beat people with. They stand about 2-3 stories tall and are dense for their size. They wear black judges robes.

Trials are elementals of judgment: they prowl Chessboard Four and will find and punish those who they feel deserve it. Usually *everyone* deserves something (a broken leg, a smashed hand, etc.—resisting judgment brings on more punishment).

Reflection: Trials usually don't come up to Chessboard One (sometimes, rarely, Two). When they are around, people will notice a more punitive streak in authority figures (as the Trial dispenses judgment on the Shadows of those who disobey).

Hammer: The Trial can Hammer an opponent for an 8 REA Long action. Usually a Step attempt on the part of the subject will give the Trial a -3 to hit (the Trial rears back and then slams it down). This means that the Trial will either grab the subject or frighten them into taking their punishment (standing still for it).

NAME: TYGERS**PRESENCE 1 1****PHY 13** STR 22 BLD 25 CON 14**REF 13** COR 13 REA 13 AGI 13**INT 12** RES 12 MEM 12 WIL 14

DP 45 Minor Major Critical

Wounds 15 45 90

Move 12y/s

Grapple 29/25

DP	45
To Hit	15-
To Be Hit	-1/-1
Armor	6/12
Damage	Bite 24 PEN
Damage	Claw 13 PEN

Description: Tygers appear as great, stripped cats (some are black and white, most are orange and black) with molten-metal glowing eyes and breath like a furnace or forge. They speak and are quite intelligent and urbane.

Tygers are consummate stalkers and hunters. Their code of ethics requires that they both reveal themselves to their intended prey and explain the terms of the game. A Tyger on Chessboard One will project to Chessboard Zero (when their subject is alone, preferably) and explain to them that they are being stalked (and often when/where the Tyger will be looking for its prey!)

If the subject is in that place, alone, while being stalked, the Tyger may attack and devour them!

Reflection: Tygers usually don't throw Reflections up to Chessboard Zero unless they are Projecting up to appear themselves. A Tyger stalking a copy room (its prey would be well advised not to go in there alone!) will sometimes result in an oppressive jungle heat seeming to coalesce in the area.

Throw Voice: A Tyger may appear in person to inform their prey but may also simply project their voice to Chessboard Zero.

NAME: WHITE RABBITS

PRESENCE 09

PHY 10 STR 10 BLD 11 CON 11

REF 11 COR 11 REA 11 AGI 11

INT 12 RES 12 MEM 12 WIL 11

DP 45

Minor

Major

Critical

Wounds

5

14

28

Move

8y/s

Grapple

10/12

DP	14
To Hit	13-
To Be Hit	-1/-1
Armor	None
Damage	Bite 2 PEN
Damage	Strike 0 IMP

Description: White Rabbits are well-dressed, human-sized rabbits. They are intelligent beings who act as agents of Infection and descent. Their motives are unclear (although there is an element of the tempter about them) and they are known for making deals that will result in the target following them through open bleeds.

As they can rarely manifest directly (they can, but don't like to) they will use their Reflection to try to lure targets to where they can be led through an open bleed. Usually there is some offer or deal involved (which they are good about keeping). A person led to Chessboard One might be given an interview with a Shadow of a potential employer. Since the subject actually walked through a Bleed, they are casting no Reflection. The Rabbit may use its Presence to have the interview *influence* the subject (and Interviewing with a Shadow is usually more surreal but often easier to manipulate, such as through blatant flattery, than the real person). Thus the person will not be remembered but will find the real interviewer more favorably disposed towards the.

Rabbit's destinations are usually not especially pleasant for their subjects (they are usually taken to Caretaker's Dramas) but the Rabbits, for their part, often feel some sense of responsibility for their victims and may be around later for some advice or help.

Reflection: The White Rabbit manifests as a person with a certain shifty air about him—usually the aspect of fallen class or ill-gotten money. They are mannered and watchful.

Navigate: The Rabbits can navigate the Linear Maze expertly down to Chessboard Six. They are capable of opening doors to it and taking characters safely down.

Unponderables . . .

Why do the eyes in paintings always follow you?

Where does your shadow go when you're in the dark?

How is a raven like a writing desk?

To be properly eccentric, does one have to know where the circle is first?

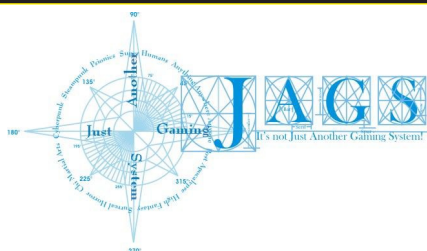
When does now happen?

What does your reflection do when you're not using it?

Where do I go if I want to lose myself?

If I lose myself, where can I be found?

The Book of Knots is a companion book for **Wonderland**
... a worldbook of absurd horror based upon the works of Lewis
Carroll for use with the JAGS (and JAGS²) roleplaying system.



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