Wonderland

A Worldbook of Absurd Horror for the JAGS Roleplaying System

by Marco Chacon

Looking-Glass Maker

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Jabberwocky

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Wonderland

A Worldbook of Absurd Horror for the JAGS Roleplaying System

BY MARCO CHACON

Informed by the works of Lewis Carroll

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Jabberwocky

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
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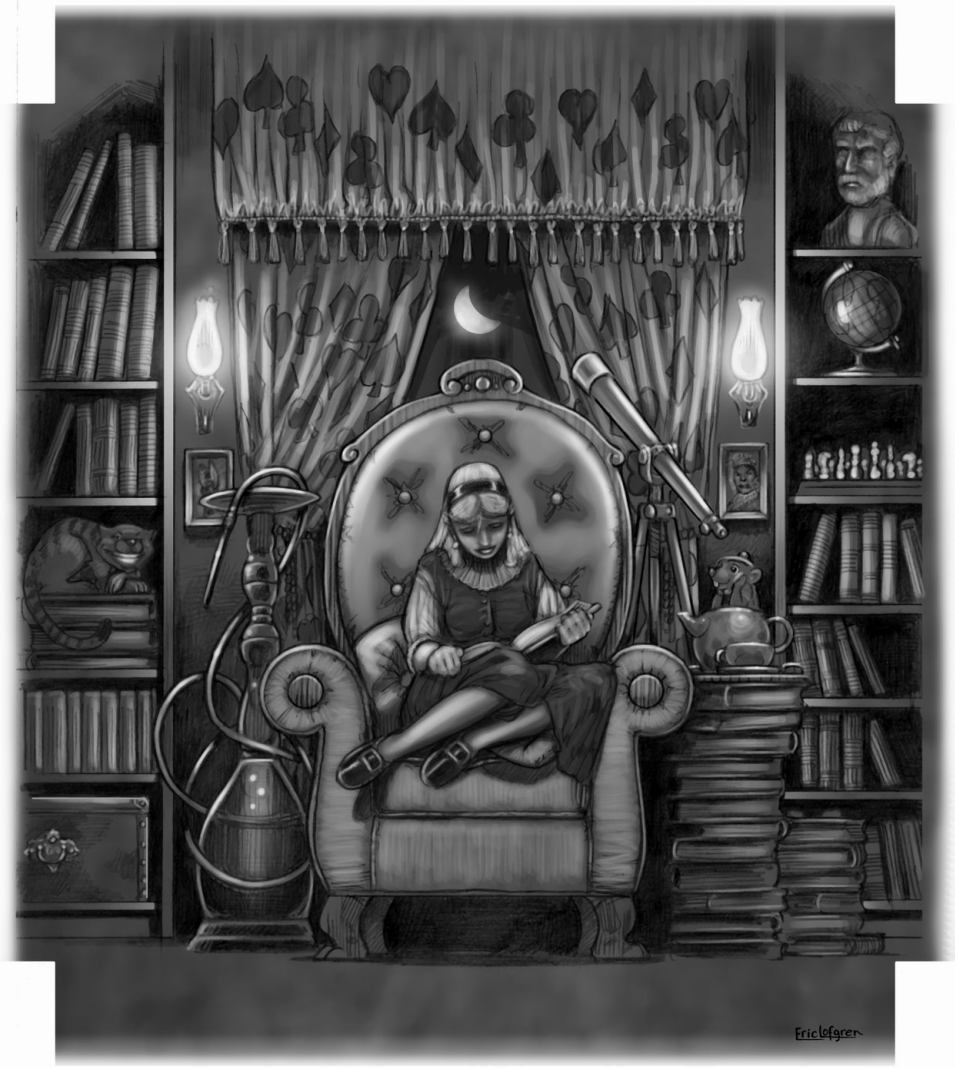
It's the world on the other side of the mirror—the world that *pretends* to look like ours—that behaves while you're watching it—that's watching *you* when your back is turned. Wonderland is the world that exists in empty places where no one can see it. It's the universe that's up and about at 3:00 AM. It's twisted and hungry and it knows all about you. It's read your mail, your diary, and your mind. It has your single, missing socks. It's eaten your sister. It's awakening across the globe and getting stronger. Wonderland is what you should be afraid of, instead of **the dark**.

First Warning

"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.
"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."
"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.
"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."
--*Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*

The blonde girl sits, almost engulfed, in the high-backed leather chair reading a book. You've never met her, yet in her blue dress and pinafore she is naggingly familiar. She smiles faintly, her lips moving slightly as she reads the words. And then she looks up—a flash of surprise on her face.

"Oh, it's you, and you've come early! I thought I had a few more minutes—I'd even set the clock back." She scowls, thinking for a moment. "But I guess not back far enough." Then she smiles, brightly, and closes the book.



On the spine it says *Alice's Journey Beyond the Moon*, by Lewis Carroll.

"I'm so very glad you've come. Here, let's have some tea and then we can talk. Unless Lorina comes and awakens me. I suppose you think you're reading about me while I think I'm dreaming of you, but we can't really be sure who is dreaming of whom and who is reading of whose dreaming … or … is it whomever's . . . ?" She trails off, her eyes wandering. Then . . .

"Oh yes." She says, seriously. "'Wonderland.'"

On the shelf next to her is a leather-bound book with polished bronze corners, held closed with a black leather strap that locks with a golden clasp. The title reads: *JAGS Wonderland*.

"Well," she says "they had such a dreadful time explaining it that they finally asked me to give it a whirl." She smoothes out her dress absentmindedly. "Can you imagine that? I suppose you think you can—or you can imagine them imagining that—but really, what if it's them who are imagining that you can imag-

ine them imagining that you *can* imagine . . . . Sorry, I get carried away with myself sometimes." She smiles again, almost like a cat.

On the table off to the side of you and her are teacups. The porcelain is quite fine. With a soft click she opens the black book with a shiny key.

"'*JAGS Wonderland'*," she reads from the first page, "'is a modern-day roleplaying game of surreal horror.'" She looks up to make sure you're listening. "'The themes'" she continues . . . and then stops.

"All this talk about 'themes,'" she says. "They make it sound like a Literature lesson." She shakes her blonde head, closes the book, and looks at you. Her eyes are very deep and very blue.

"Wonderland is about madness," she says then, picking up a cup of tea and sipping daintily. "Wonderland is about living in a world that seems normal on the outside but is full of worms and horrible laughter and empty halls and doors to nowhere and upside-down staircases underneath. Wonderland is about an infectious, predatory, alternate reality." She sets her drink aside. "Let's try again, shall we?"

She opens the book and reads again: "'*JAGS Wonderland* is a like a magic box with many different configurations and different appearances through different perspectives. There's more than one way to solve it.'"

"That's better. A little better, anyway." She flips through the pages. "Look at that!"

"The world is a chessboard," the girl says, pointedly. "Actually, eight …

chessboards. You live on Chessboard Zero; that's called 'Reality.' But as you go further and further down things get stranger and stranger. And the things down there get stranger and stranger and curiouser and curiouser and, well, you know. 'The weird turn pro?' It's like that."

> Children are put off by Alice's underground adventures not because they cannot understand them; in fact, they frequently understand them too well. Indeed they often find the book a terrifying experience, rarely relieved by the comic spirit they can clearly perceive.
> --Donald Rackin, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass Nonsense, Sense, and Meaning*

The last level of metaphor in the Alice books is this: that life, viewed rationally and without illusion, appears to be a nonsense tale told by an idiot mathematician. At the heart of things science finds only a mad never-ending quadrille of Mock Turtle Waves and Gryphon Particles. For a moment the waves and particles dance in grotesque, inconceivably complex patterns capable of reflecting on their own absurdity. We all live slapstick lives, under an inexplicable sentence of death.
--Martin Gardner, *The Annotated Alice*

She turns a few more pages.

"Those levels of the chessboards below reality? Those are Wonderland and Wonderland isn't just a place or a multi-dimensional construct of space-time," the girl says (her voice sounding strangely, resonantly, hollow) "it's also alive. Or at least sentient. Intelligent. It's trying to get into Chessboard Zero and," she says, looking up, "into your own mind."

"Everything it touches it warps and twists. The things that live within it follow no rules you understand—or *can* understand. Their rules. Rules that don't just break the laws of physics but crumble them outright, gleefully adding insult to injury."

"Wonderland is a whole new universe next door to yours and it *isn't* a nice neighbour. Wonderland is full of things that go bump in the night and it's full of madness and it's looking to come pouring through into our world. It's coming for a tea party and it's bringing friends."

She looks in the book again. "'*JAGS Wonderland* is a game of horror and madness set in a world shot through with cracks ordinary people can't see but can still fall into. It's about the trap doors that exist all around us and even under our feet: the trap doors we walk over, obliviously, every day of our lives.'"

"'And it's about the eerie nightmare world that exists at the bottom of the chutes that they empty into when they do snap open and suck us down.'" She closes the book, smiling. "It's time to wake up now," she says.

And then she's gone.

Second Warning

'Now, if you'll only attend, Kitty, and not talk so much, I'll tell you all my ideas about Looking-glass House. First, there's the room you can see through the glass -- that's just the same as our drawing room, only the things go the other way. I can see all of it when I get upon a chair -- all but the bit behind the fireplace. Oh! I do so wish I could see that bit! I want so much to know whether they've a fire in the winter: you never can tell, you know, unless our fire smokes, and then smoke comes up in that room too -- but that may be only pretence, just to make it look as if they had a fire.
--*Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*

1958. New Mexico. A hundred and fifty feet of sterile blue-steel vertical shaft beneath the desert leads to a 155,000 square foot environmental pod built in a natural air pocket in the bedrock. There are 37 men there—linguists, mathematicians, psychiatrists, and physicists. You can see them, if you close your eyes, they're dressed uniformly in white lab-coats and many wear black-rimmed glasses. They've got slide rules in the era before pocket calculators but in the cold, thick-windowed clean-rooms there are computers with endless spools of dark magnetic tape. They are the Contact Team of Project Pilgrim. Six weeks ago, the

gauge-energy experiment had something unexpected happen: they made contact.

The government in the midst of a cold war had made contingency plans for the discovery of a superior intelligence. They had analyzed what it might be like and the conclusions were not good. History, the advisory teams told congress (you can imagine them too: serious gray-suited men meeting to discuss matters of grave importance in an era where it wasn't a breach of etiquette to smoke cigars in a conference room) details several encounters between less advanced and more advanced cultures: the less advanced culture is usually destroyed (cf. The Conquistadors).

The decision had been made that should such contact be established (and since we were going into space—those Red Bastards had orbited Sputnik just last year—it seemed possible) that no one but the government should be told until the populace was judged "ready." With flying-disks in the public mind already, media leaks would be controlled by *firewalling* information: the team that made contact would have a single point of contact to an analysis team, which would in turn have limited points of contact to congress and the president.

When Pilgrim made contact, the entire chain of command was restructured to an Inner and Outer Committee. The Outside Committee were the men that communicated with Congress, the President, and the military. The Inside Committee were the men (and one woman) who met in a secret facility above the shaft which housed the Pilgrim station. They (the Inside Committee) were under orders to shield the Outer Committee and the government from any information that was deemed too dangerous to spread.

Imagine a wood-paneled meeting room, deep within a nameless government building in New Mexico. Scrambled cable lines run black and white pictures and scratchy sound—like pictures from deep space—to the men in the Inner Circle. They wear no insignia and they sit before lit partitions so they appear as shadows. They don't even use their real names—there is supposed to be nothing that links them to each other. In the event of Exposure the group is to be dissolved and there is to be no connection—no external collaboration. The room is swept for listening devices before each meeting (and each enters through a separate door in the building). There is a sense of giddy excitement—they are at the vanguard of humanity's contact with what appears to be a superior intelligence. They may be leading their nation to the gates of heaven and supremacy.

November [a large bearish man of military bearing]: *Well (clears throat) we've all had a look at initial report. Can someone tell me why we don't think these signals might not be coming from our own backyard?*

September [a narrow-framed man with glasses]: *A—an enemy nation, November?*

Most readers picture only Tenniel's illustrations when they summon up concrete visual images of the Alice books. Those delightful illustrations have become so integral to a part of the institutionalized literary experience we call "Alice" that Tenniel's renditions of the adventure constitute for most people the "official" ones; the ones that shape their perceptions of the verbal texts/ Carroll's drawings, however--naive and primitive as they might seem--often better illustrate both the original and the published book. They do so mainly because they better reflect the horror comedy that pervades both texts.
--Donald Rackin, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through The Looking-Glass, Nonsense, Sense, and*

GameSpy: What inspired you to transform Lewis Carroll's whimsical fantasy world into a gothic circus of cartoonish morbidity? Why was this an appealing setting in which to create a game?

American McGee: Why was it appealing? Because the original books and characters are actually pretty dark to start with. This felt like a very natural extension that the existing characters and fiction.
--Interview with American McGee, creator of "Alice"

On a cool, wet July 4th (a day the children who heard the story recalled as bright and sunny) an Oxford mathematician (who, according to his diaries suffered from strange visions) created the first of two works: each with exactly 12 chapters. They are encoded survival guides meant as warnings. They are an old and new testament for a coming age of insanity.

The number 12 is not arbitrary (months in the year? Hours in the day?): in the second book (*Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*) the 10th and 11th chapters have only 59 and 38 words respectively. What do you think that means?

It means Wonderland is coming.

When you enter Wonderland there are two kinds of *Descent*: controlled and uncontrolled. Uncontrolled (*falling* down the rabbit hole) is the first book. Survival is a matter of luck and chance. The characters are *cards*. The second kind of Descent is *controlled*. That happens in the second book (*crawling* through the mirror). Survival is a matter of skill. The game is *chess*.

The narrative is disguised as a children's story: we are assured *nobody* is killed. The book

November: *For all I know these signals could be coming from Santa Claus … or the moon … or Moscow. What makes you think they're from 'elsewhere?'*

August [a female figure]: *It's clear that the Pilgrim team—*

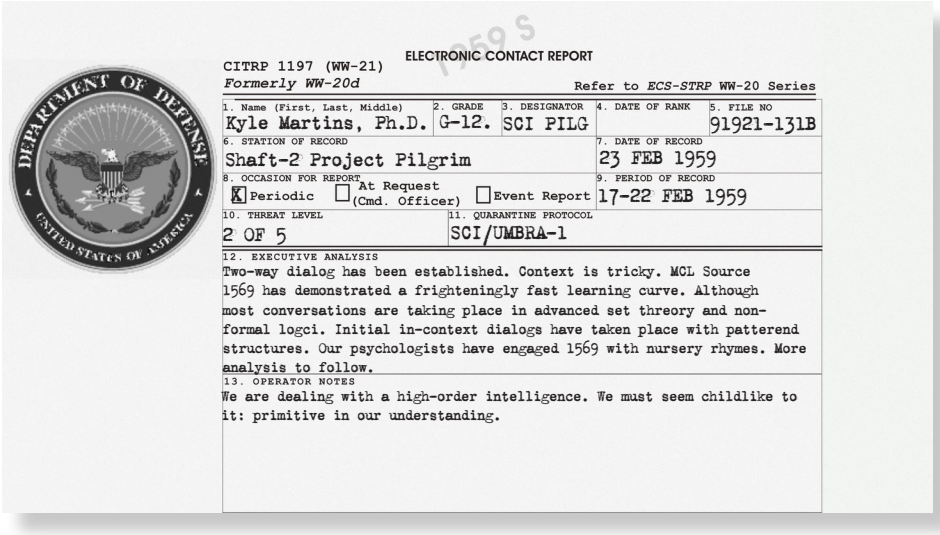
September: *The Pilgrim team—and my own analysis—have concluded that the number-theory used in the initial conversations is several decades in advance of our own. Either you accept that the soviets have a 50-year lead on us in mathematical science or you accept that the signals are coming from* elsewhere.

August: *I'm more concerned with the content of the initial communications than the methodology.*

September: *Nursery rhymes would be a sensible place to start communication. Basic sentence patterns and a moral subtext ... remember, we're like children when it comes to ...*

(August raises a hand.)

August: *I'm not talking about basic conversation. I'm concerned about data-vector. Nursery rhymes? I wouldn't expect it to know them* before *making contact with us for the first time.*



1969 S

ELECTRONIC CONTACT REPORT

CITRP 1197 (WW-21)
Formerly WW-20d
Refer to *ECS-STRP* WW-20 Series

1. Name (First, Last, Middle)	2. GRADE	3. DESIGNATOR	4. DATE OF RANK	5. FILE NO
Kyle Martins, Ph.D.	G-12.	SCI PILG		91921-131B

6. STATION OF RECORD	7. DATE OF RECORD
Shaft-2 Project Pilgrim	23 FEB 1959

8. OCCASION FOR REPORT: [X] Periodic [ ] At Request (Cmd. Officer) [ ] Event Report — 9. PERIOD OF RECORD: 17-22 FEB 1959

10. THREAT LEVEL	11. QUARANTINE PROTOCOL
2 OF 5	SCI/UMBRA-1

12. EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS
Two-way dialog has been established. Context is tricky. MCL Source 1569 has demonstrated a frighteningly fast learning curve. Although most conversations are taking place in advanced set threory and non-formal logci. Initial in-context dialogs have taken place with patterend structures. Our psychologists have engaged 1569 with nursery rhymes. More analysis to follow.

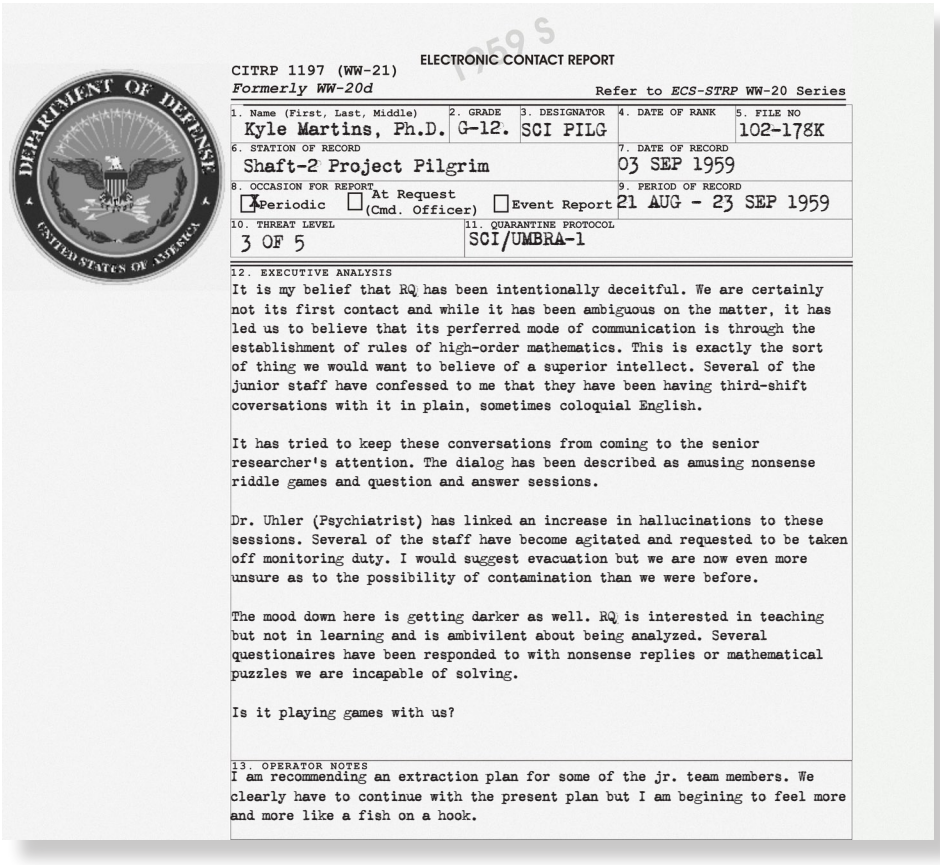
13. OPERATOR NOTES
We are dealing with a high-order intelligence. We must seem childlike to it: primitive in our understanding.

Contact continued with the entity that became known as Red Queen. Under Information quarantine, the scientist who descended into "the pit" (it wasn't called "the rabbit hole" until much later) were on a one-way trip until the danger-assessment phase was complete. Birthdays passed (the monitors in the inner-circle showed streamers and confetti and reflective pointy hats). News reports about the Space Race trickled down and mission reports filtered up.

Eighteen weeks into the project, the Inner Circle reported to the

Outer Circle that the team was now unsure that they were receiving real signals. The pattern-matching systems had moved so far into the theoretical range, the Inner Circle reported, that the team was re-analyzing data to see if they weren't "seeing faces in clouds" (this lexical-entropy analysis pre-dates, but was reconstructed four decades later, for the Bible Code).

With reports from the Inner Circle reduced to a trickle of mathematically defined doubts, the Outer Circle and the power-brokers, they advised moved on to other things. Project Pilgrim made no more demands for personnel—their request was for more and more powerful computational machinery. Oddly, they also made discrete requests into disbursement rules of the pensions of the men in the containment pod.



1959 S

ELECTRONIC CONTACT REPORT

CITRP 1197 (WW-21)
Formerly WW-20d
Refer to *ECS-STRP* WW-20 Series

1. Name (First, Last, Middle)	2. GRADE	3. DESIGNATOR	4. DATE OF RANK	5. FILE NO
Kyle Martins, Ph.D.	G-12.	SCI PILG		102-178K

6. STATION OF RECORD	7. DATE OF RECORD
Shaft-2 Project Pilgrim	03 SEP 1959

8. OCCASION FOR REPORT ☒ Periodic ☐ At Request (Cmd. Officer) ☐ Event Report
9. PERIOD OF RECORD 21 AUG - 23 SEP 1959

10. THREAT LEVEL	11. QUARANTINE PROTOCOL
3 OF 5	SCI/UMBRA-1

12. EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS

It is my belief that RQ has been intentionally deceitful. We are certainly not its first contact and while it has been ambiguous on the matter, it has led us to believe that its perferred mode of communication is through the establishment of rules of high-order mathematics. This is exactly the sort of thing we would want to believe of a superior intellect. Several of the junior staff have confessed to me that they have been having third-shift coversations with it in plain, sometimes coloquial English.

It has tried to keep these conversations from coming to the senior researcher's attention. The dialog has been described as amusing nonsense riddle games and question and answer sessions.

Dr. Uhler (Psychiatrist) has linked an increase in hallucinations to these sessions. Several of the staff have become agitated and requested to be taken off monitoring duty. I would suggest evacuation but we are now even more unsure as to the possibility of contamination than we were before.

The mood down here is getting darker as well. RQ is interested in teaching but not in learning and is ambivilent about being analyzed. Several questionaires have been responded to with nonsense replies or mathematical puzzles we are incapable of solving.

Is it playing games with us?

13. OPERATOR NOTES

I am recommending an extraction plan for some of the jr. team members. We clearly have to continue with the present plan but I am begining to feel more and more like a fish on a hook.

Several weeks into 1959 (with Gregory Peck starring in *On The Beach*, Chomsky and Skinner going head-to-head over "Syntactic structures," and *Mack the Knife, Sleep Walk*, and *La Bamba* topping the pop-hits charts), the Inner Circle begin to fear the worst. It became clear to them that the reports from the subterranean base had, themselves, been filtered for content. Whatever was happening to the team of scientists and researchers, the reports that had been sent up had been edited to *protect the Inner Circle.*

is an encrypted *warning*: we are told that *nobody* is a person who is very, very hard to see. If *nobody* is alive then there's also a stack of bloody severed heads in the alcoves of the Queen of Heart's castle.

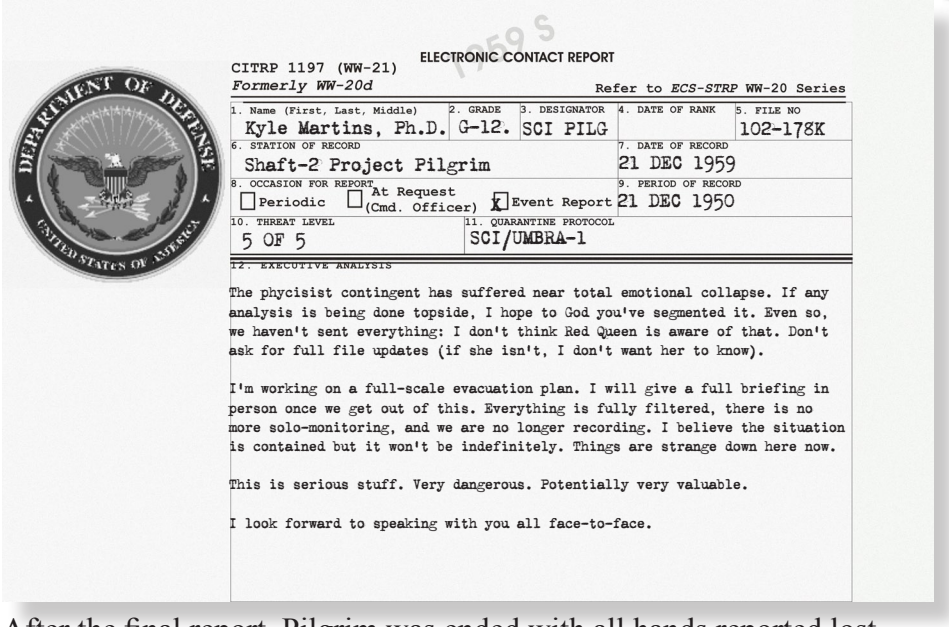
The walls of reality have cracks in them. There are cracks in the world.

Lewis Carroll saw this coming and he tried to warn us. His personal diaries (of which there are 13—the number of cards in a suit) are missing four volumes. Pages have been excised from the remainder. Were those the *key*?

Disney may have understood the message but their movie has hidden things even *deeper*. There is no such book as *Alice in Wonderland* (the name most adults know both works by). There were always clues in the artwork: the Knave of Clubs is in the court room illustration, the Knave of Hearts is in the poem as Lewis Carroll was formally trained in symbolic logic none of this is coincidence.

The fractures are growing wider. Wonderland is waiting on the other side—waiting to get in.

Wonderland is coming.



ELECTRONIC CONTACT REPORT

CITRP 1197 (WW-21)
Formerly WW-20d
Refer to *ECS-STRP* WW-20 Series

1. Name (First, Last, Middle)	2. GRADE	3. DESIGNATOR	4. DATE OF RANK	5. FILE NO
Kyle Martins, Ph.D.	G-12.	SCI PILG		102-178K

6. STATION OF RECORD	7. DATE OF RECORD
Shaft-2 Project Pilgrim	21 DEC 1959

8. OCCASION FOR REPORT: ☐ Periodic ☐ At Request (Cmd. Officer) ☒ Event Report
9. PERIOD OF RECORD: 21 DEC 1950

10. THREAT LEVEL	11. QUARANTINE PROTOCOL
5 OF 5	SCI/UMBRA-1

12. EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS

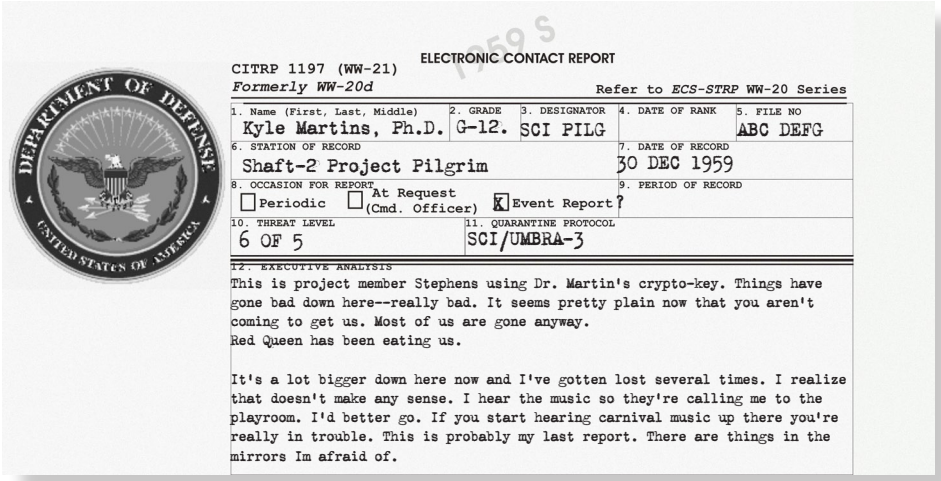
The phycisist contingent has suffered near total emotional collapse. If any analysis is being done topside, I hope to God you've segmented it. Even so, we haven't sent everything: I don't think Red Queen is aware of that. Don't ask for full file updates (if she isn't, I don't want her to know).

I'm working on a full-scale evacuation plan. I will give a full briefing in person once we get out of this. Everything is fully filtered, there is no more solo-monitoring, and we are no longer recording. I believe the situation is contained but it won't be indefinitely. Things are strange down here now.

This is serious stuff. Very dangerous. Potentially very valuable.

I look forward to speaking with you all face-to-face.

After the final report, Pilgrim was ended with all hands reported lost. The team that was sent into the shaft returned almost immediately and the contents of their final report is unknown. Several documents were recovered but in the end, satchel charges were left with short timers and the long deep shaft was filled with concrete: Pilgrim was ended.



ELECTRONIC CONTACT REPORT

CITRP 1197 (WW-21)
Formerly WW-20d
Refer to *ECS-STRP* WW-20 Series

1. Name (First, Last, Middle)	2. GRADE	3. DESIGNATOR	4. DATE OF RANK	5. FILE NO
Kyle Martins, Ph.D.	G-12.	SCI PILG		ABC DEFG

6. STATION OF RECORD	7. DATE OF RECORD
Shaft-2 Project Pilgrim	30 DEC 1959

8. OCCASION FOR REPORT: ☐ Periodic ☐ At Request (Cmd. Officer) ☒ Event Report?
9. PERIOD OF RECORD:

10. THREAT LEVEL	11. QUARANTINE PROTOCOL
6 OF 5	SCI/UMBRA-3

12. EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS

This is project member Stephens using Dr. Martin's crypto-key. Things have gone bad down here--really bad. It seems pretty plain now that you aren't coming to get us. Most of us are gone anyway.
Red Queen has been eating us.

It's a lot bigger down here now and I've gotten lost several times. I realize that doesn't make any sense. I hear the music so they're calling me to the playroom. I'd better go. If you start hearing carnival music up there you're really in trouble. This is probably my last report. There are things in the mirrors Im afraid of.

The Inner Circle remained. There had been mechanisms in place for the circle to make policy with a minimal paper trail (in case they had to, say, organize an emergency shutdown of the space program). The members (of which there were between five and seven, accounts differ) held a last meeting to assess the possibility that the contamination had spread.

Their final, sealed report—accessible by executive order only and sealed until the end of the Nixon administration—concluded in the negative: any potential infection had been contained. Like every document that was officially produced: they had lied. The two-men teams in the underground pod had withheld information from their equally trapped superiors. The senior scientists themselves had left vast stores of messages unsent and entombed in the underground bunker. The final

report itself failed to alert the Congress and the Executive office.

The Inner Circle concluded that the infection *had spread*. That they, themselves, the final gatekeepers *might be* infected—and that the cycle was only beginning. There was a sterilization option: keys worn around the neck of each member. Turning the keys in a lock at each station of the table would detonate charges set into the walls of the room. The Inner Circle would be sterilized in a cloud of superheated air and high-velocity metal.

They didn't do that. Whether it would have ultimately made a difference or not, they did not invoke the final suicide switch. Instead, by joint decision, they liquidated the committee. They separated, sworn to silence. It was supposed to end there, but just as it hadn't really *begun* there, it didn't.

Project Puritan was born.

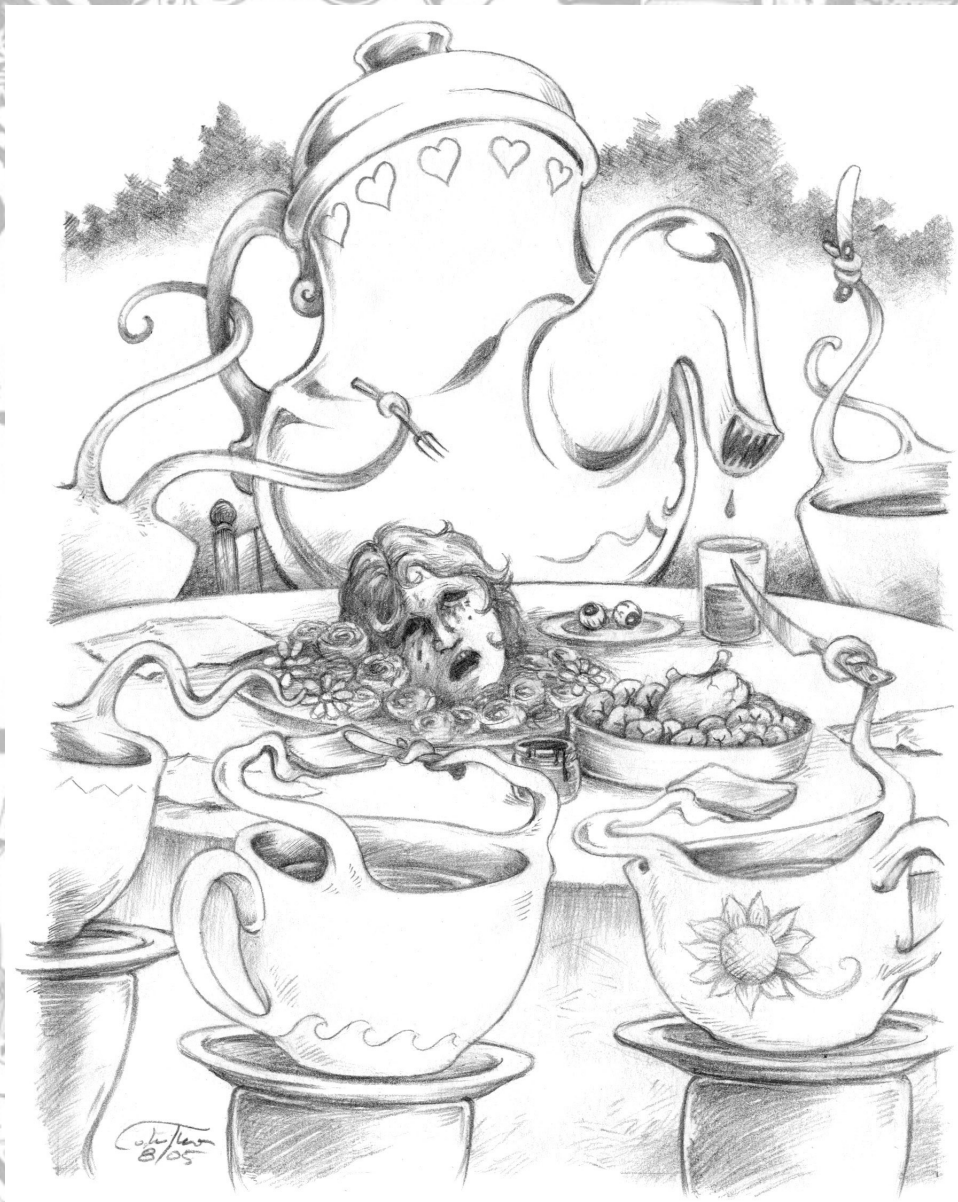
Third Warning

'A loaf of bread,' the Walrus said,
'Is what we chiefly need:
Pepper and vinegar besides
Are very good indeed--
Now,if you're ready, Oysters Dear,
We can begin to feed.'
-- The Walrus, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*

I woke up about a year ago. We—Linda and I—were playing with mirror corridors: like when you open your medicine cabinet in front of your bathroom mirror and you get an infinite regression of mirrors that go back to a dark place. We were meditating with them, reaching into them. Pretending to drop things into them. Making sacrifices.

We were also doing a lot of drugs and kinky sex and shit. I think that helped as much as the mirrors some times. I did more than Linda since she kept her job. She kept us together through that. I'll always admire her strength. I was strung out in the bathroom drawing made-up symbols on the mirrored depths in my own blood while she was out working at the supermarket.

But it's funny who gets rewarded. When it came up out of that darkness I was the one who was home. I was the one who was there and could see the glass bulge and pulse because for some reason it couldn't get out.



Until I let it out. After it talked to me. While it was in there, trapped behind the glass, it looked a little bit like a cute, luminescent turquoise and purple spotted fish and it sweetly told me what to do—and what it'd do for me.
So when Linda came home, I hugged her and I told her I was thinking we should finally get married after all and that I was done with all the freaky stuff for now—and could she please go clean the blood off the glass in the bathroom?

I even set the table while she was up there. I think she was so happy I was agreeing to help out she didn't think twice. I could tell when she did it because there was a sound like a soap bubble popping—but loud enough for me to hear it downstairs. If you think about it, that doesn't make any sense but that's what it sounded like.

It took longer than I thought. She struggled and screamed softly for a while—and then I went upstairs—pretty scared, I admit—but it upheld its part of the bargain and while it had gotten Linda ready it was good to its word: it hadn't kept her all for itself.

So we brought her downstairs to the table and we had her for dinner. After it was through with her, we ate her up just like spaghetti.

Final Warning

JAGS Wonderland is a world book for a reality that is starting to unravel and in the dark spaces where the threads have come apart are candy-colored nightmare eyes. It's horror in the traditions of the *Silent Hill* computer games. Cinematically it draws from *Hell Raiser* (itself somewhat derivative from the *Alice in Wonderland* books—ask Project Puritan) and *Jacob's Ladder*. It's informed by the phantasmagoric works of Lewis Carroll which any child knows are scarier than they are whimsical, darker than they are humorous, and, as American McGee realized with his wonderfully gothic *Alice* video game, far more *mad* than either the Hatter or the Hare.

Characters range from normal people caught up in the madness to paranormal investigators to military operatives or even experienced journeyers in the far realms of human existence. How you decide to play will determine which rules you focus on but whatever you do, we hope you like it.

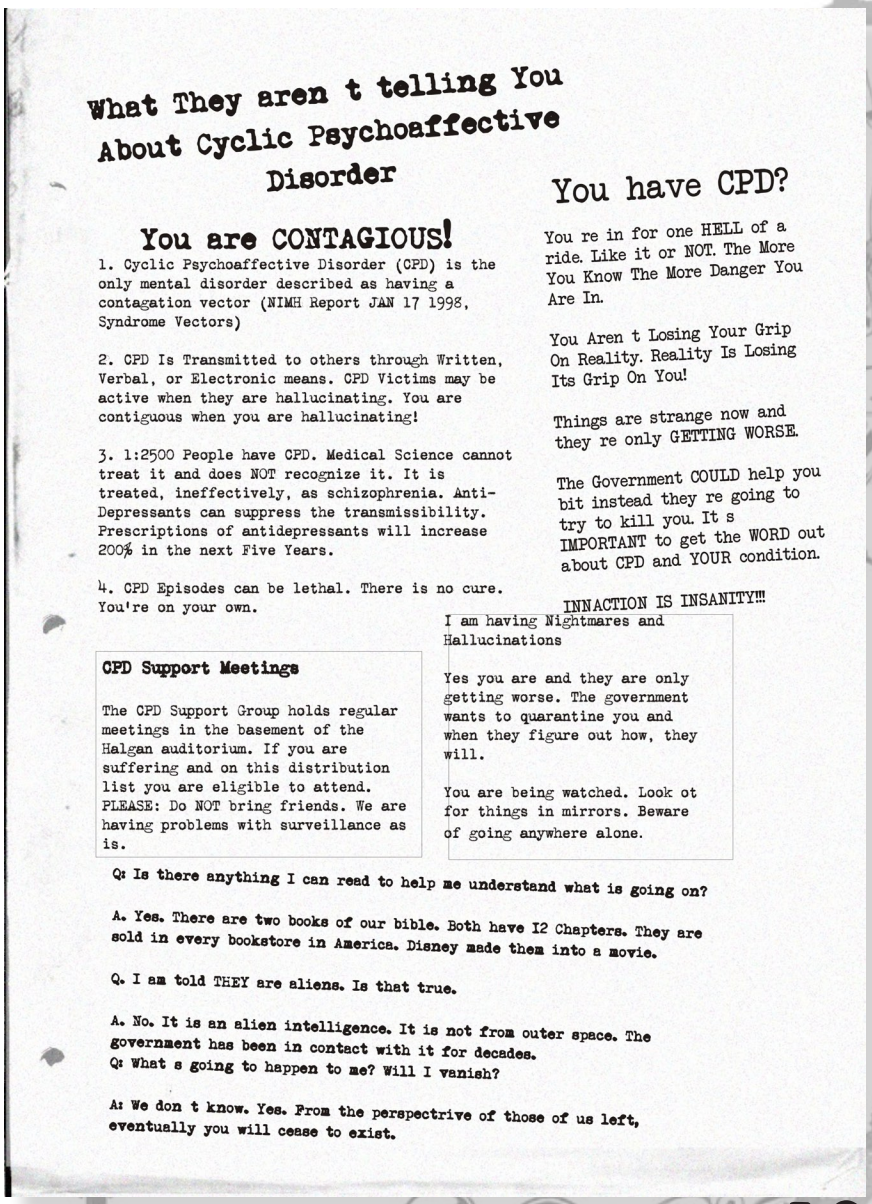
Wonderland is coming.

JAGS Wonderland

Wonderland is an infectious, predatory, alternate reality. The universe is like a stack of eight chessboards. On the top is what we think of as "reality." That's Chessboard Zero. You'd recognize all the pieces. You'd understand all the moves. But some of those squares are fitted with trap doors. Some of them have ladders, chutes, and stairways going down to the *lower* chessboards.

One level down, most of the pieces are the same but some are different. Some are monstrous. As you go further and further down you wouldn't recognize any of them at all. When you are exposed to Wonderland you are *Infected* and when you are infected you will begin to undergo *Descent*. An Episode of Descent is like a bad trip. It's like being plunged into a psychotic fun house. It can kill you.

Wonderland is trying to spread. So far, it isn't *very* good at it. Most people who are Infected are not simply contagious. But, you know, that could change.



What They aren t telling You About Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder

You are CONTAGIOUS!

1. Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder (CPD) is the only mental disorder described as having a contagation vector (NIMH Report JAN 17 1998, Syndrome Vectors)

2. CPD Is Transmitted to others through Written, Verbal, or Electronic means. CPD Victims may be active when they are hallucinating. You are contiguous when you are hallucinating!

3. 1:2500 People have CPD. Medical Science cannot treat it and does NOT recognize it. It is treated, ineffectively, as schizophrenia. Anti-Depressants can suppress the transmissibility. Prescriptions of antidepressants will increase 200% in the next Five Years.

4. CPD Episodes can be lethal. There is no cure. You're on your own.

You have CPD?

You re in for one HELL of a ride. Like it or NOT. The More You Know The More Danger You Are In.

You Aren t Losing Your Grip On Reality. Reality Is Losing Its Grip On You!

Things are strange now and they re only GETTING WORSE.

The Government COULD help you bit instead they re going to try to kill you. It s IMPORTANT to get the WORD out about CPD and YOUR condition.

INNACTION IS INSANITY!!!

CPD Support Meetings

The CPD Support Group holds regular meetings in the basement of the Halgan auditorium. If you are suffering and on this distribution list you are eligible to attend. PLEASE: Do NOT bring friends. We are having problems with surveillance as is.

I am having Nightmares and Hallucinations

Yes you are and they are only getting worse. The government wants to quarantine you and when they figure out how, they will.

You are being watched. Look ot for things in mirrors. Beware of going anywhere alone.

Q: Is there anything I can read to help me understand what is going on?

A. Yes. There are two books of our bible. Both have I2 Chapters. They are sold in every bookstore in America. Disney made them into a movie.

Q. I am told THEY are aliens. Is that true.

A. No. It is an alien intelligence. It is not from outer space. The government has been in contact with it for decades.

Q: What s going to happen to me? Will I vanish?

A: We don t know. Yes. From the perspectrive of those of us left, eventually you will cease to exist.

How to Use This Book

JAGS Wonderland is organized into three sections:

Section 1: Introduction (this section). It sets the tone and flavor, talks a little bit about what kinds of characters you might play and lays out some very basic concepts of what the game is about. If you trust your GM to know what you enjoy and like what you see, you can stop reading here.

Section 2: Deeper Mysteries. This starts getting deeper. It moves into the specifics of how Wonderland and Infection and Episodes work. It talks about the different levels of reality. It discusses how you can get *Twisted* by contact with Wonderland. It's perfectly acceptable for players to read this section without "spoiling" any potential surprises. In fact, if you, as a player, want to

have a lot of input into the games you play in, we advise it.

This section gives some advice meant for both players and GMs alike on setting up the Wonderland Game and how to specify what sorts of things will go on in it and what the focus will be (we don't mean "exactly what will happen," but we do mean how empowered the PCs will be and how much focus on insanity the game will have).

The Second Book: All the material on deeper Wonderland, an Appendix of monsters, and information on various unique personalities is in the Book of Knots. It can be seen as an expansion, a GM's book, or simply the rest of the material (it was originally going to be a third section but it became too large).

The Wonderland Game

In *JAGS Wonderland* you play a person who has come into contact with this reality and are trying to deal with it. You might be a normal person in suburbia whose life is rapidly degenerating. You might be a government agent trying to solve a problem nobody really understands. You could be a member of the "Underground" a loose knit group of Support Groups, counter-culturalists, and activists who are Infected.

Wonderland Characters

Wonderland characters tend to be pretty normal people (at least at the beginning). Characters tend to go from 75pts (Government Agents) to 30pts (average students, housewives, and office workers). In the middle would be 50pt "competent" investigator characters (who might or might not actually be *professional Investigators*).

Survival Traits

No one is sure what the real "death rate" from Wonderland Infection is. This is partly because so little is known about it in general. It's partly because there's so much variation in how it works. It's partly because the final stage is often the subject *going irrevocably insane* or just *vanishing*. Under these circumstances, to quote the experts, "it's hard to say."
But unofficially, the stats say that if a mass of humanity were infected the casualty rate would hover somewhere near 85%. That means that out of a hundred people, within the space of a year or a year and a half 85 would be gone or *raving lunatic mad*. Compared to a hypothetical Ebola outbreak that doesn't sound so bad. Considering that the experts think Wonderland Infection, if "done right," could spread over a TV channel, that's scary.

But not everyone dies. In fact, although the evidence is contradictory, inconclusive, and incomplete, there are some really weird trends.

There tend to be "syndrome clusters."

People who are Infected as a group tend to suffer some of the same symptoms. People who have been Infected separately and are together for a time tend to "synch up" in some ways. No one understands this.

There tend to be "*survival clusters*."

This doesn't mean you get to live. It means, mathematically, that your odds of just dropping out of existence altogether aren't exactly the cold-hard 85% that most people face. It means there's a ghost of a chance. There is some scant evidence that if you are in a survival cluster Wonderland Infection *might* be manageable. Maybe even reversible. Everyone's hoping.

To get into one of these clusters you have to be, well, kind of lucky. You have to be the right kind of person. That takes a certain outlook on life. Like having gotten an immunization at a young age, some people have it. Some don't. Maybe it can be taught. Maybe it can't. No one knows.

But if you're in the *JAGS Wonderland* game you have one of what are called *Survivability Traits*. These don't cost points (some extreme versions of them may cost points—but the basic format doesn't) so pick one for your character (or come up with something similar that ties you to the world that the GM is okay with). If you *don't have one* then expect a very short and very doomed game.

The Pragmatist

Under pressure you want *results*. You don't spend too much time doubting yourself and you tend to take what you see at face value. The pragmatic character may not spend a lot of time worrying about *the implications* of Wonderland being real. They spend more effort worrying about what they need to *do*.

The Dreamer

You find reality just plain dull. You are still scared by frightening things—but *strange* things you not only can deal with: you like them! For you, Wonderland is a bit like waking up and coming home. This character will need neither convincing that Wonderland is real, nor time to come to grips.

The Scientist

You are open minded in the sense that you are willing, eventually, to accept what your senses tell you—but you are curious and given to test your suppositions or observations. You won't easily believe (occam's razor) but in fairly short order you will come to accept that "insanity" doesn't seem to describe what you are experiencing. (note: you do not need to have any actual scientific skills to have this outlook).

Get It Together!

You are as prone to hysteria as anyone else when you first start experiencing Descent. There can—and will—be an incredible amount of fear and worry. You will perhaps (likely?) seek mental help. You may undergo nervous breakdowns—but you will, in due time, "get it together." This character will require both some convincing that Wonderland is real and some time to come to grips.

Dr. Faustus

You are an explorer in the far realms of belief and reality and *this*, although probably confounding, is *not* exactly unexpected. There *is* a greater reality. There *are* intelligences other than those of man. They are frightening, powerful, and illogical to the core—but they *exist*—and they may be dealt with … to *learn* and then … *to control*. The difference between Scientific Curiosity and Dr. Faustus is that Faustus doesn't greet the discovery with great skepticism—but rather with exhilaration of expectation.

Great Faith

Your belief in a higher power is the bedrock of your stability and reaction to the unnatural. So long as your faith is not shaken (and it's almost unshakable) you believe that although things may seem irrational there is a plan. You may never understand it: you don't need to. It may appear the universe is a cruel joke played on humanity—you *believe* that isn't true. This is usually but not always religious faith.

The World as You Know It

There are voices at the edges of society that have been whispering a little louder than normal. You've heard of Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder: people say it's a communicable psychological illness. You've heard that the American Psychiatric Association doesn't believe it exists. You probably didn't pay much attention.

It seems to mostly affect college students and drug addicts anyway. Certainly those people have more probable causes for schizophrenia than a communicable psychiatric disorder. Some of them say the Aliens brought it. Some of them say the Government is behind it. This is the same old story.

There has been domestic terrorism incidents: they rolled black cellophane in the shape of a giant crack down the Chrysler Building. They tried to get some really disturbing advertising parodies spliced into the Super Bowl. You've heard they want attention. You've heard they want *mind share*. You probably don't worry about it very often.

Until things start to go wrong.

Then you might want to look for the Underground. You can find them—they're everywhere. There are photocopied notes in head shops. There are pamphlets in the Student Union. There are papers taped to the wall in restrooms. There's graffiti in the alleys. There are notes on Internet message boards. There are web pages with directions and discussions of encrypted email. When you start listening you'll find out that you're not

the first person to *change their mind about things*. Then, maybe, you'll show up at a support meeting ... just to see.

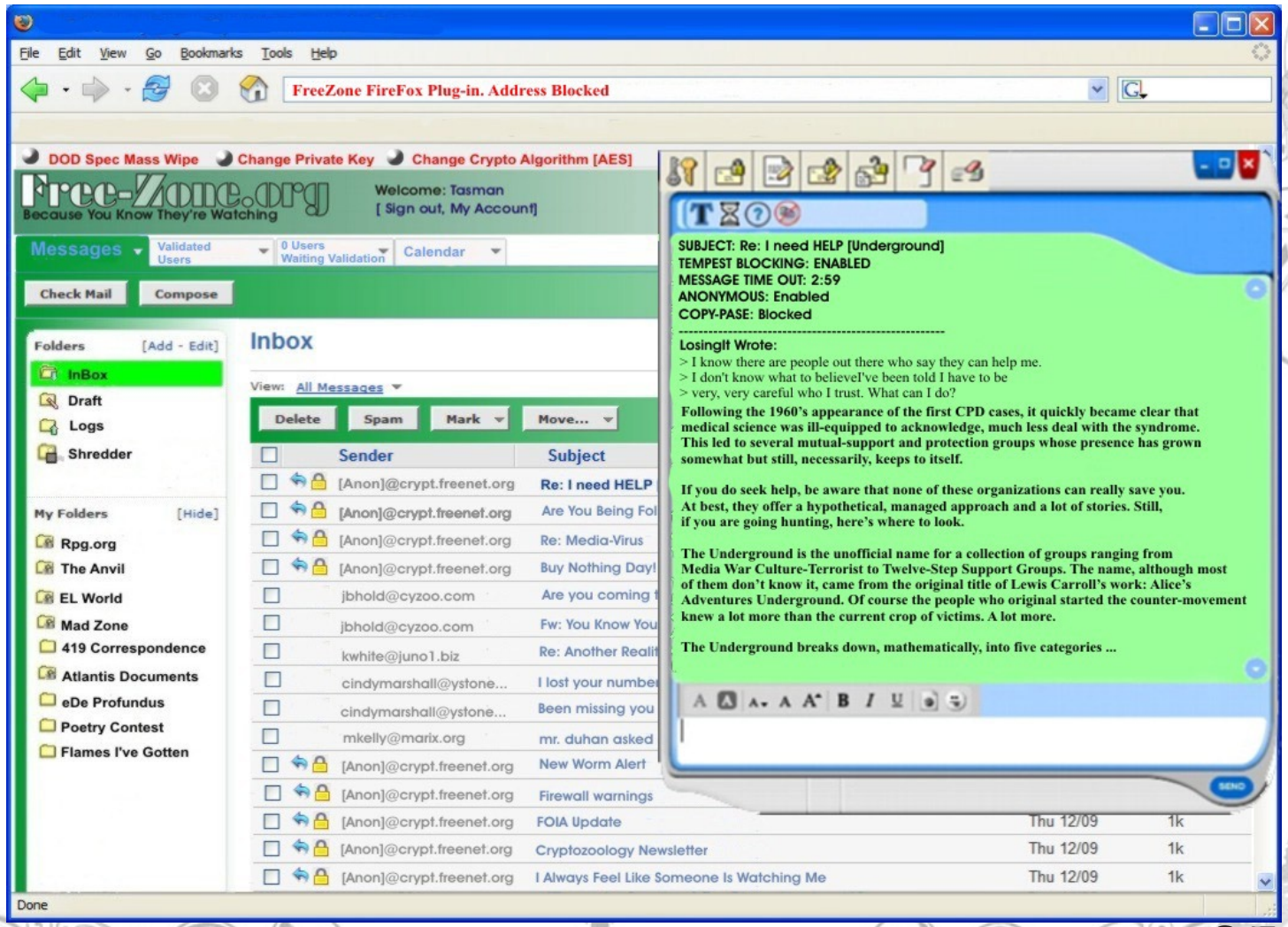
The Underground

You look around the basement of the old Student Union building. Cheap plastic chairs. A scarred table with unfinished edges, meant to be covered with a table-cloth. The faint burble of a coffee machine. Cold fluorescent lights. A swept concrete floor.

The chairs are in a circle. Several of them are empty and you can feel the invisible chords of tension as the people in the occupied chairs wait to see if the missing will arrive.

Mooney is up at the lectern. He's tapping it—in the relative hush it sounds overly loud.

MOONEY: "It's seven-thirty, we're going to start." He's annoyed—you can hear it—but he exudes confidence and you like that. "If you're not going to make a meeting, you have made a personal commitment to contact your sponsor. That's important. Personal Commitments are important. If anyone needs to re-commit, this is the time to do it."



He's talking about the empty chairs. Like he thinks everyone who's not hear just found something better to do. Maybe they did.

CHERYL: "We have a new member." Her voice sounds flatter, though—a single ominous note of dullness that says she's not gonna get too close. You feel the eyes on you.

MOONEY: "Right. And the rule is that if you come, you talk—first night. But you don't have to go first. Who wants to state the Agreements?" You can hear the capital letter. "Vincent?"

VINCENT: "Okay." He's a big man—a bit soft too. He looks pale and scared and a little distracted. He stands up.

"FIRST AGREEMENT: Medical science has failed us—we do NOT discuss the program with our therapists. We do NOT discuss the program with our doctors or with the authorities."

"SECOND AGREEMENT: If you 'hear the piper' you call your sponsor. You do NOT go out in public. You do NOT remain alone."

"THIRD AGREEMENT: If you know you are having an episode you will remain calm. You will NOT Use or drink. You will NOT examine or pass through doorways that are 'new.' You will NOT talk to things that you would normally believe aren't there. You will NOT discuss your condition with anyone but your sponsor."

"FOURTH AGREEMENT: If a member of the program is behaving in a way that is inconsistent with the program you will protect YOURSELF. You will inform his or her sponsor and have NOTHING to do with the person."

"FIFTH AGREEMENT: If you slip you will report it to your sponsor immediately. If you cannot make a meeting you will report to your sponsor ahead of time. If you attend psychiatric therapy, you will sponsor ahead of time." He sits down.

You are in Kevin Mooney's car, a clean, squared-away Honda Civic with a file-box filled with newspaper and magazine cut-outs occupying one of the backseats. He describes himself as a Mental Health Care Survivor.

MOONEY: "The American Psychiatric Association doesn't recognize Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder. The diagnosis is usually Schizophrenia but Schizophrenia isn't contagious. There have been three studies that each concluded that the pattern of CPD showed up like a plague vector. Try to get a therapist to talk about any of them and you're asking for being placed in custodial care."

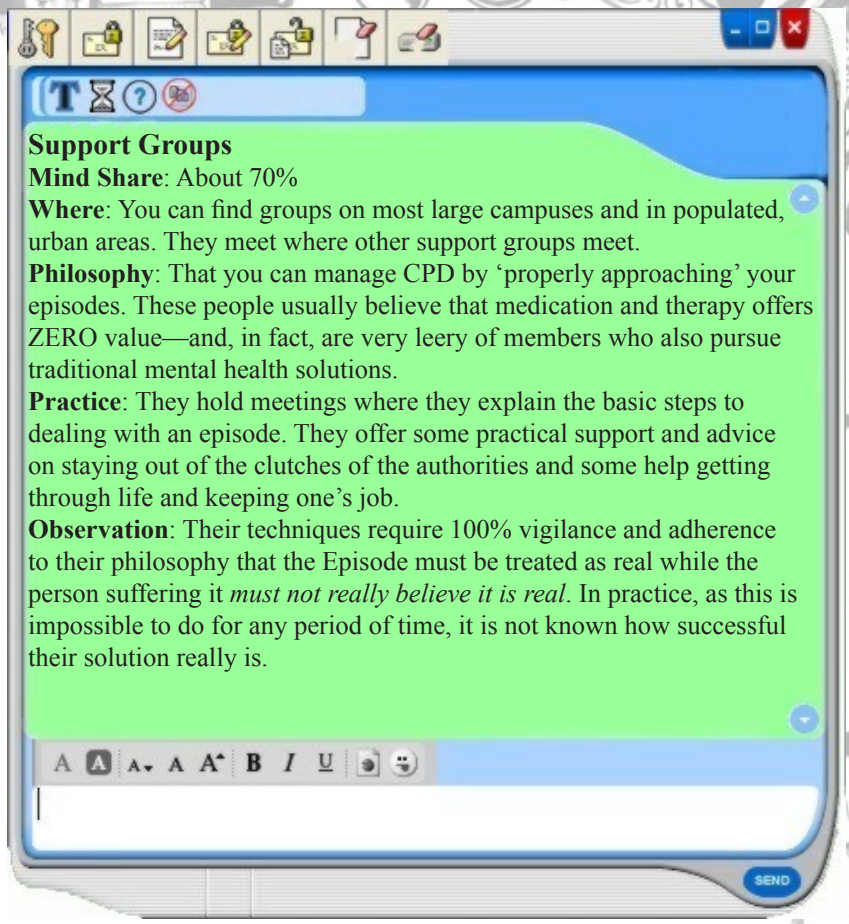
The car makes a sweeping arc across the freeway. It's 2:30 AM. You're almost alone.

"Pills don't work. They can dull the effect—at first. I know a lot of people who take them anyway—but they don't work. Therapy doesn't work. This isn't about your mother or your father or your childhood—it's a disease. You might as well try to talk away cancer."

He shifts gears, taking the car gliding down an off-ramp.

"About one or two in 25,000 people are infected in the US. We don't have data for other countries. I hear it's about the same in Europe. Maybe … maybe worse other places. That means maybe as many as 500 in New York city alone."

"When you are infected … the odds … long term … well, they're not good. That's putting it mildly. Optimistically. Long term we don't know. We lose touch with people so rapidly. I can tell you about short-term though."



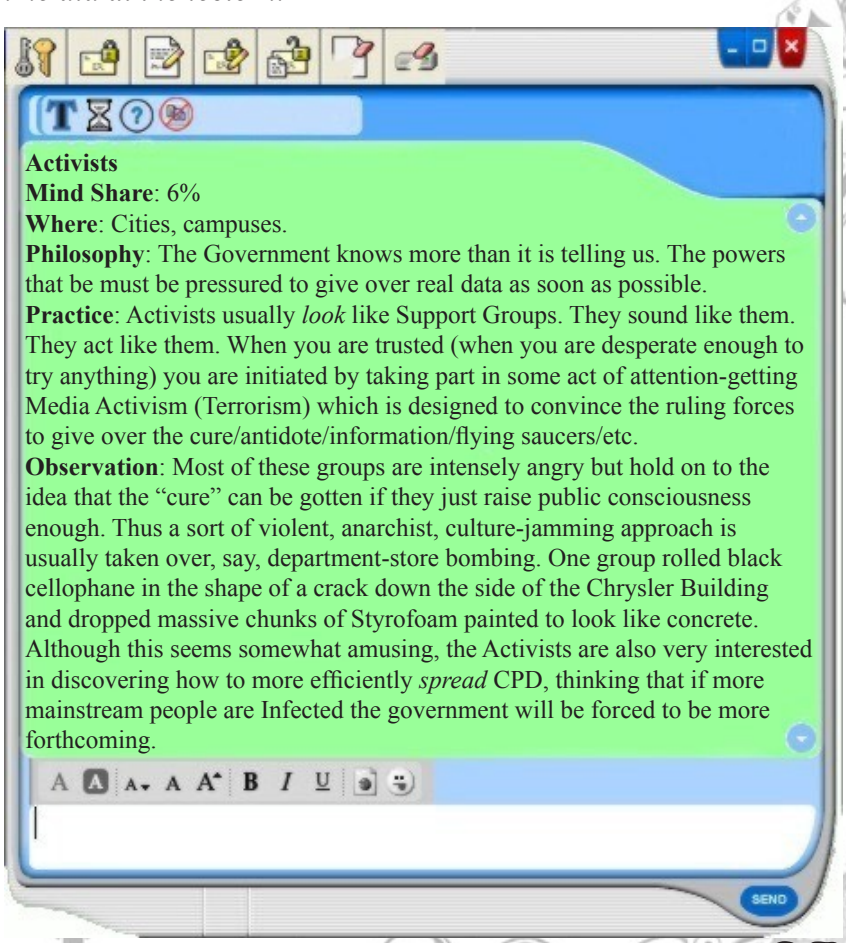
He looks over. He looks less confident now than he did at the lectern. Still strong. Still smart—but now maybe paler. His face, lit by the streetlamps and the dashboard could be the surface of the moon.

"In the first three months about 30percent of the people will be placed in custodial care. About five to ten percent will commit suicide or take off somewhere—we don't know exactly."

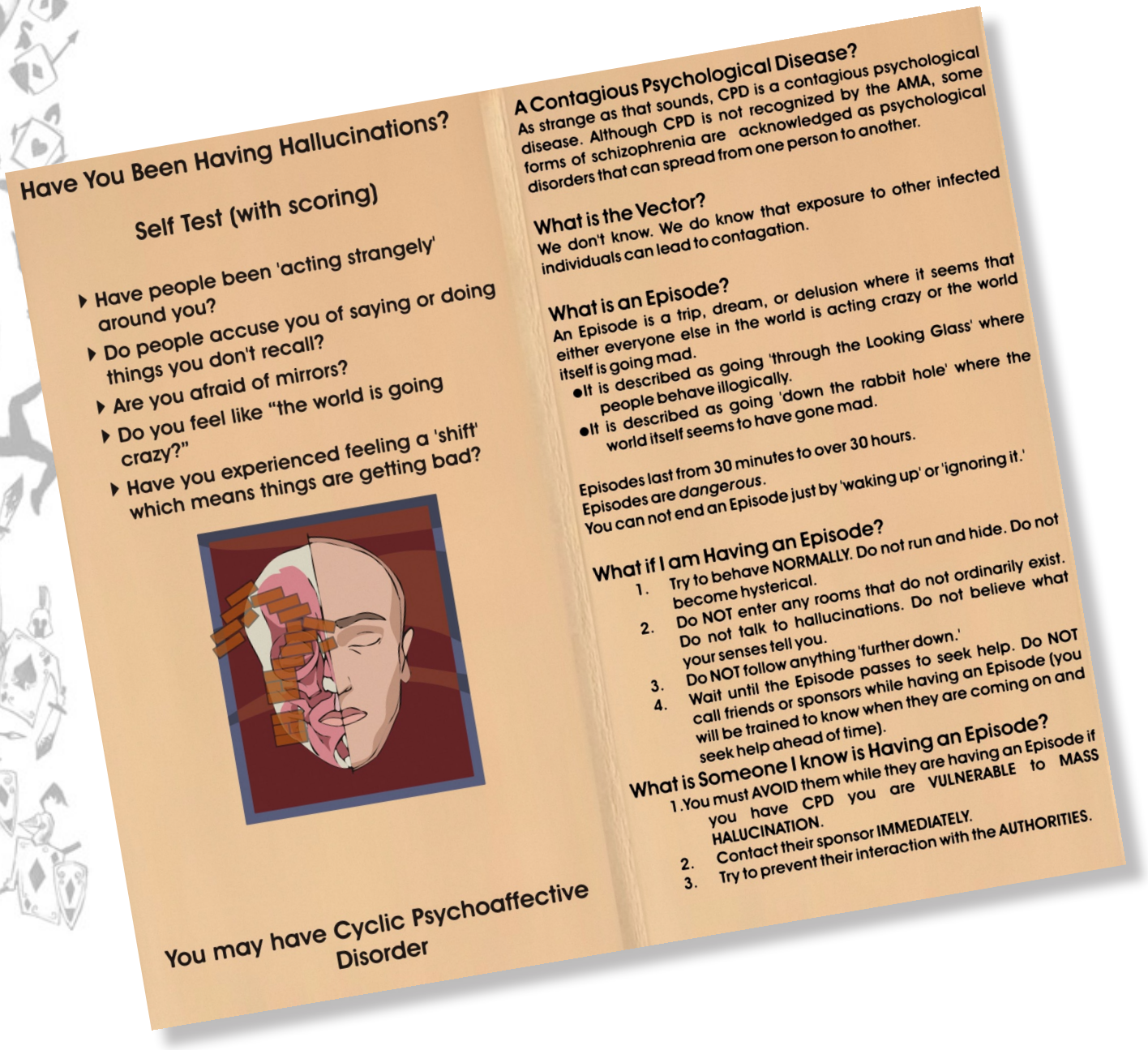
You're at a stoplight. The 24-hour fast-food arcade stretches ahead of you, a few ghost-town restaurants with nothing but their drive-thrus open.

"In the first three months most people have what we call Mild Triggers and Mild Episodes—short-term disorientation and they're not that easy to set off. If you're lucky it's about once a month and maybe less than four hours. If you're really lucky no one even notices things and you might not."

"But after that it usually gets worse—that's



when we see them. Triggers are whatever sets you off and usually it's something like stress or maybe certain media. Media is very important. Films are the worst. I'm glad The Wall *came along when it did—that's one of the top … maybe* the *top. If you take a CPD to watch* The Wall *you can almost guarantee an episode. A bad one."*



Have You Been Having Hallucinations?

Self Test (with scoring)

- Have people been 'acting strangely' around you?
- Do people accuse you of saying or doing things you don't recall?
- Are you afraid of mirrors?
- Do you feel like "the world is going crazy?"
- Have you experienced feeling a 'shift' which means things are getting bad?

You may have Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder

A Contagious Psychological Disease?

As strange as that sounds, CPD is a contagious psychological disease. Although CPD is not recognized by the AMA, some forms of schizophrenia are acknowledged as psychological disorders that can spread from one person to another.

What is the Vector?

We don't know. We do know that exposure to other infected individuals can lead to contagation.

What is an Episode?

An Episode is a trip, dream, or delusion where it seems that either everyone else in the world is acting crazy or the world itself is going mad.

- It is described as going 'through the Looking Glass' where people behave illogically.
- It is described as going 'down the rabbit hole' where the world itself seems to have gone mad.

Episodes last from 30 minutes to over 30 hours.
Episodes are *dangerous*.
You can not end an Episode just by 'waking up' or 'ignoring it.'

What if I am Having an Episode?

1. Try to behave NORMALLY. Do not run and hide. Do not become hysterical.
2. Do NOT enter any rooms that do not ordinarily exist. Do not talk to hallucinations. Do not believe what your senses tell you.
3. Do NOT follow anything 'further down.'
4. Wait until the Episode passes to seek help. Do NOT call friends or sponsors while having an Episode (you will be trained to know when they are coming on and seek help ahead of time).

What is Someone I know is Having an Episode?

1. You must AVOID them while they are having an Episode if you have CPD you are VULNERABLE to MASS HALUCINATION.
2. Contact their sponsor IMMEDIATELY.
3. Try to prevent their interaction with the AUTHORITIES.

"I knew someone who triggered on optical illusions. She'd get fascinated and then start behaving weird. I could tell she was having an episode. Then they released this car commercial that had all these optical illusions in it and she stopped coming around. I'll tell you, I don't think this is coincidental. I think Media is very important."

"By the end of the third month, traditionally, you start getting worse triggers. More frequent episodes—shorter cycles. You also go deeper*."*

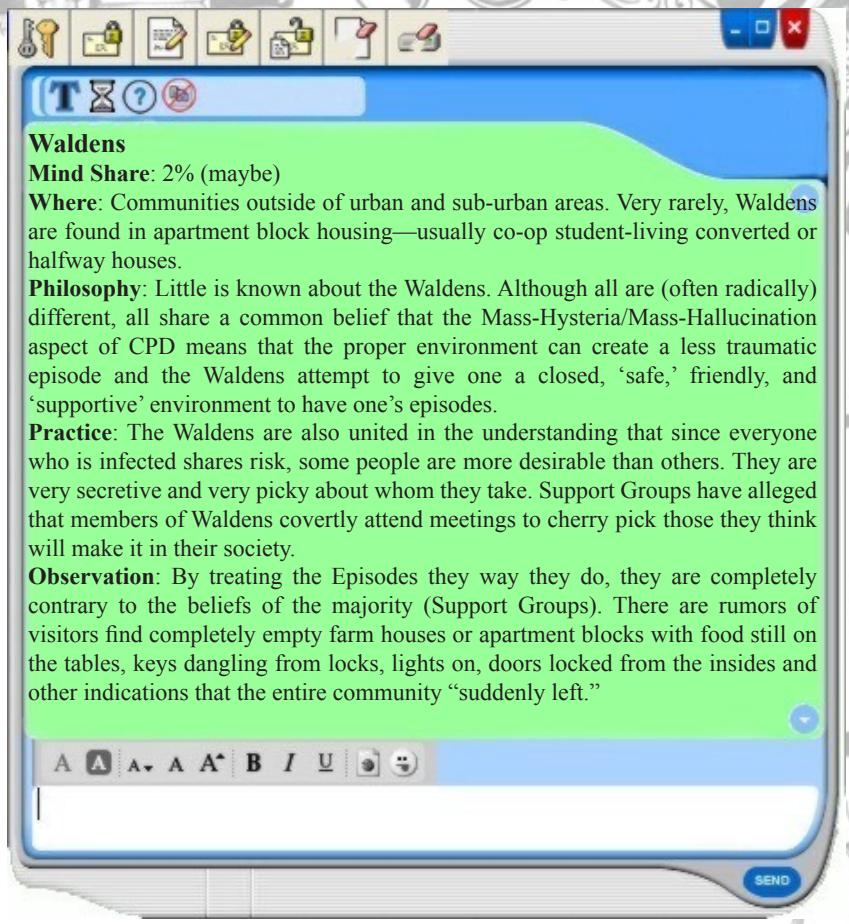
There's something about his voice that gives the word 'deeper' a finality.

"That's what we call it, anyway. Deeper. The basic Episode—as you know—" he looks at you, decidedly uneasy now, "is when you think everyone is acting weird and you can't read things correctly. Like everyone has gone crazy but you.

"But when the episode is over, you can watch videos of yourself or listen to tape recordings and you know that you *were the one who lost it." He looks at you and nods. "Right?"*

"But that's a shallow *episode. If you can stay shallow—stay even—manage it and not get any deeper then you can last. I've lasted. I've had a few deeper episodes myself."*

He's silent. Then: "I never want to have another one. I've been vigilant and committed and I keep the program. That's why I haven't had another deep one—and you don't know how lucky I was. Most people? They have a deep one? That's it. They … we lose them. Usually."

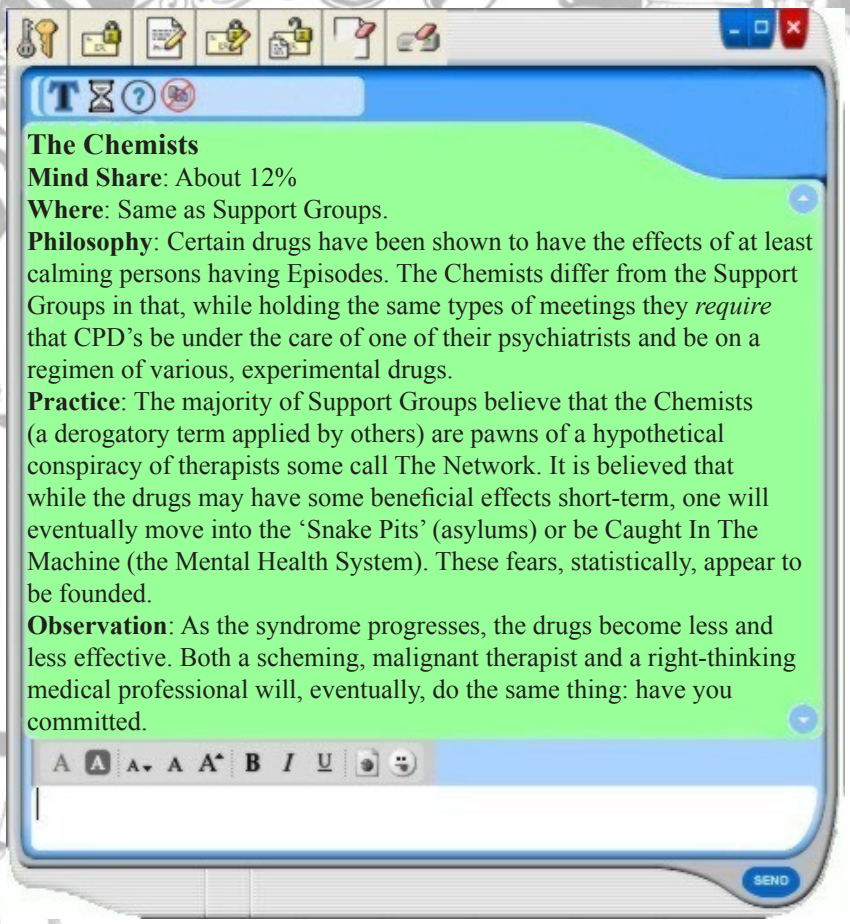


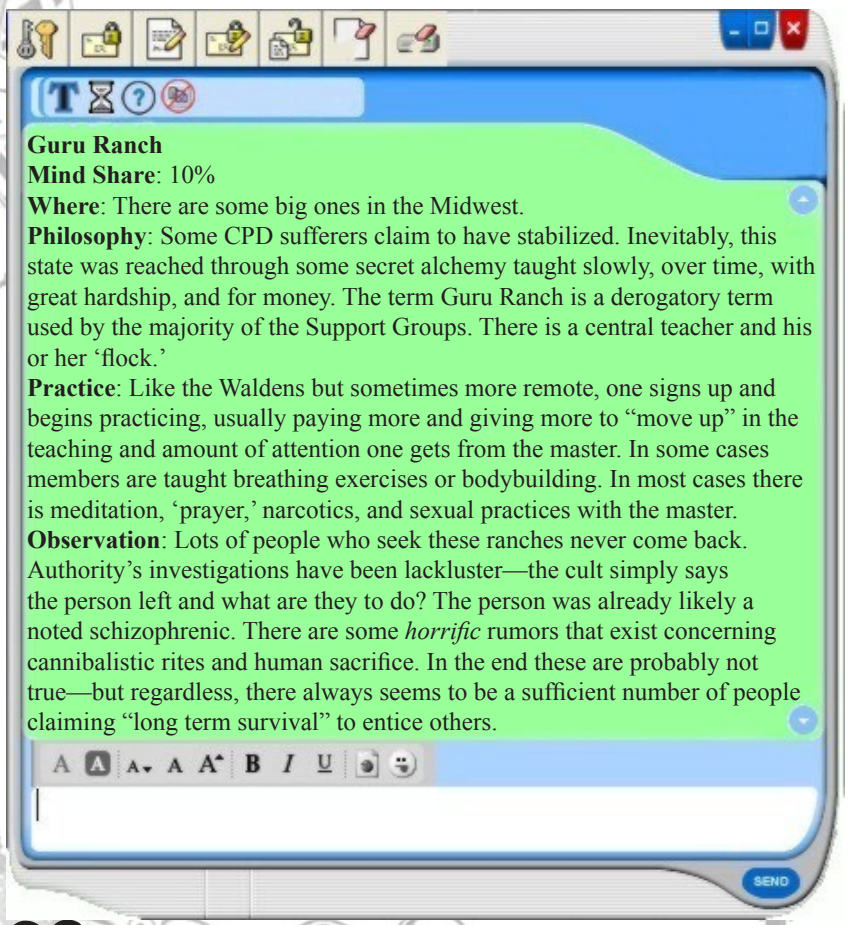
"But if you do have a deep one it isn't just like people have gone crazy—it's like the whole world has gone crazy and that's just the beginning. It's like a nightmare that's really happening but it's weirder than anything you can imagine. I've seen—I don't talk about what I've seen and you shouldn't either. Curiosity—it gets more people than anything else. Curiosity is what gets most of us, I think." He shakes his head.

"We call it going down the rabbit hole*—and let me tell you, most people don't really come back from that. Not for long anyway."*

"After about six months though, most people—most people have made some mistakes. They've opened doors that don't exist. They talk to things—follow things down. They make mistakes*. They go* deeper*. And once you start—you ever been on a boat in a storm? If the boat gets hit by a wave while you're inside and you see green light through the window it means you're not too bad—the boat got swamped but it's gonna make it back to the surface. If you see black water through the windows though, it's bad—it means … it means the boat's really submerged. It means you might be going down instead of back up. Every time you go deeper, it's like being hit by a wave. You might see green—but you might see black. I think most people see black water. Most people go down."*

The car is crawling now. The streets are deserted—desolate. The strip malls are closed and dark with a few sparse lights on in the depths of the





big department stores. A police car, cruising, makes a turn up ahead. You're stopped under the scarlet glare of a red light.

"Most people see black—but if you stick to the program and you don't slip you can come back up—for a while. Most people, outside of 8 months have a serious trigger. Everyday life can set it off easily. Most people have some significant depth too. Behavior gets weird—really weird. They … if they don't get committed they're street people usually after a year but that's not the worst."

He makes a turn. You're parked behind a two-story building that looks to be in a mild state of decay. He turns the engine off and opens the door. You follow him.

"About eighty-five percent? Even with the program? After a year we lose them. Right off the grid. I know that we're not the only ones. Missing persons—right out of custody—that's the big new thing. Some people say the government is taking them for study or sterilization. I know some people who tell me they've found whole wards empty one morning. I know people who say they've seen CPDs just … get swallowed up into the floor."

He shakes his head. He's using two different keys for separate deadbolts on the back door. Click. Clack.

"People vanish. It's a disease and people fucking vanish. If they're not careful."

The room is a therapist's office with framed certificates and diplomas and a comfortable sofa and chairs. There's something wrong about it. There's something about the positioning of the furniture and the relations of the windows and the yellow sodium light that enters the room that gives it a quality of a place that is abandoned.

Behind the desk is another counter and, in the after-midnight office, its slide doors are opened revealing rows of bottles of prescription pills in every possible variation

and configuration standing like silent chessmen.

Dr. Shatter waits in the chair behind the desk wearing a brown uniform and tie. He seems perfectly alert at 2:00 AM and he watches you and Mooney enter.

MOONEY: "Doctor."

Dr. SHATTER: "Kevin—and your guest." His voice is affable. He nods. This is a serious conversation.

MOONEY: "I'd like you to explain about the suction. About the vortex."

Dr. SHATTER: "Certainly. Please sit down. I am one of a very, very few members of my profession who has both examined and been willing to face the realities of so-called CPD. I say so-called because while it is a real phenomena, it is not a mental illness in the sense the term Psychoaffective or even 'disorder' implies. I'm convinced this is something else. Something ... new."

He locks his hands and fingers together and leans back, assessing you.

"You are presently infected? Experiencing, waking nightmares—disturbing, frightening dream-like states during which you, without any memory of it, behave in disoriented manner? That is what we call Infection. What we call an Episode. But Kevin brought you here to discuss some of the more unusual elements of the phenomena. As I have studied it, I can do that."

He looks at Kevin. His look says And I trust you have brought me someone whom I am right to share this with?

Kevin nods, even though nothing's been said. 'Go on.'

DR. SHATTER: "Put two infecteds in a room: One with multiple triggers and a deeper depth and another with relatively few triggers and a shallow depth and induce trigger in the first. What happens?

"What happens is that when the first person begins his Episode he will pull down *the other. He will bring the other or others down to his depth. I've seen it, even if the two are separated by a partition—even if they are not* aware *of each other.*"

MOONEY: (quietly) "Like the suction that a ship makes when it's sinking."

DR. SHATTER: "A somewhat visceral analogy. I was able to study the phenomena for a time, believing it to be a mechanism that would relate somehow to mass hysteria—a specialty of mine. But that was before I too was infected. I have retired from those lines of study now to concentrate

on managing my own condition. My own Infection."

He looks at you meaningfully.

MOONEY: "Tell him about transmission."

DR. SHATTER: "I wish I could. There's so much we don't know. Infection occurs by exposure—but … most of us are highly resistant to the sort of transmission that most Episodes threaten. In fact, I have seen people who I considered psychologically fragile remain un-infected even in the close proximity of those having episodes. It's all too easy to adhere to the mainstream mental health industry's view of infection and transmission as a fable—a figment.

"But I know for a fact this isn't so." His tone is dark. "Infection occurs when the individual experiences something related to another's episode that convinces *them that something* more *is going on—that something … Impossible is happening."* You can hear the capital letter. Impossible.

"Cognitive Dissonance, the means by which we believe two contradictory things is one of the great mechanisms of human rationalization. We can believe our politics cause no ill while the other side's politics are responsible for everything that is wrong with the world, for example. It is said that we cannot believe 'Impossible things.'"

He looks evenly at you. "Sometimes, however, we must. That is when, I believe, infection spreads. Most of us—those here in this room—would

have a hard time infecting anyone intentionally if we tried. If you have an Episode you simply convince others that you are insane. Transmission is difficult. But … not impossible." He smiles at the irony.

"I believe that the government, in part, is aware of the danger of transmission and has began taking steps to stop it. Covert steps. Dangerous steps. If the disease was more easily transmissible or if it became so, then we will see certain policies enacted. The creation of control-zones and 'firebreaks.' I have it on some authority that certain 'blackout' protocols will provide authority to shut down the media and, in some cases, even power and shortwave radio."

He looks at you seriously. "People have been killed over this already. Worse than that even."

MOONEY: "Tell him about Rockridge."

DR. SHATTER: "Rockridge Asylum dealt with some 18people who we would say were suffering CPD. That wasn't the official diagnosis of course, but it happened to be a centralized point for several persons committed by the authorities in the upper New York area. It was also the case of one of the only recorded mass disappearances that anyone who'stalking will admit to. In 1997, some thirty patients and nine staff vanished in the course of a morning. Although records are sketchy I believe that several of the early respondents—police, firefighters, other mental health professionals, were infected."

His eyes flicker down for a moment.

"It's what we're calling a hot-zone. A transmission event. Whatever the conditions were at Rockridge, they were right to transmit the infection to many of the people who entered the building. Because it was on fire when they arrived the disappearance of much of the personnel has some tenuous explanations—but nothing really holds up. What is more interesting is what was reported—what sketchy events were reported from those who went inside that building.

"I believe that what happened at Rockridge was that something *expanded the episodes those people were having—something convinced the people there that it was more than* simple schizophrenia*." His last words drip with contempt.*

"That's all," he says. "That's all I'm willing to discuss at this time." Mooney nods and stands.

MOONEY: "Come on," he says softly. "We have one more stop to make."

You and he exit down the back stairs and out to the parking lot. In the high office you can now see a faint light in Dr. Shatter's office. You think

you see a shape as well—he's watching you.

MOONEY: "The doctor's a good guy—but—he doesn't treat Infecteds. He doesn't get too close to us. He takes a lot of pills. I don't know how it's working for him but he says he's been stable—high functioning for about three years. That's close to a record so maybe he's doing something *right."*

You get back in the car. Mooney pulls out.

MOONEY: "He's right about the government too. I know it. There are people poking around on message boards asking questions. I've known people to be followed. And people vanish. People are getting taken*." He shakes his head.*

Out on the streets, by yourselves, a police car slides in behind a hundred yards back. Mooney glances at it in the mirror.

MOONEY: "The sharks are out tonight."

He makes another turn into a road bounded by old apartment complexes. He watches the lights turn in behind you—following.

MOONEY: "Society doesn't like us. Back in the plague days it was like this too. This next person we're meeting—don't tell her we saw the doctor. Everyone ... everyone believes what they want to in this—but she doesn't trust doctors or therapists or anything. She has good reasons too."

You're outside a door, the car parked by an overflowing dumpster. The blinds are drawn but you can see light and hear music from inside—soft music. The door is opened and you smell incense and perfume. The woman is in her 30's—attractive but her face is lined with stress. She wears royal blues and purples in silk scarves and a hood. The room is hung with Indian tapestries and you can see a tarot deck laid out on an ornate coffee table. The kitchen, glimpsed through a square arch to the right, is a filthy mess.

MISS M. "Kevin—and you brought your friend." She looks at you, critically. Suspiciously.

MOONEY: "Yeah, I told you this. We're fine. No one's an informant, we just want to talk. Tell your story. No one's recording."

MISS M. "I owe you, Kev. So okay—but you," *she looks at you, "I don't owe—so keep that in mind."*

You nod—and sit. She looks at you. She sighs.

"Is he in therapy?"

MOONEY: "He's in the program. No."

MISS M. "Good. You know about Therapists? Spell it—set the first three letters apart." She looks at you. "It's your mind they want to savage, and they'll do it."

MOONEY: "She's had some bad experiences. She—"

MISS M. "It's the Network. True Faces. I can see them, when I'm on a different level, I can see their true faces. The therapists, the counselors, they have red eyes like someone who hasn't slept—like people who never *sleep. And, they're malformed. I saw a thing where they took people and split their faces in half—with a computer. Then they flipped each side and stuck them back together. So instead of a left side of the face and a right side of the face you had two lefts or two rights—to make one face.*

"One side always looked kind of dumb—kind of spacey. One side looked … cruel. That's how the True Faces of the therapist in the Network look: two-left halves, no right. Cruel. Vicious. They had me for 20 months before I got out."

She looks down. Her hands, holding a coffee cup tremble.

MISS M. "They have a machine that can take out your eyes and show them things—and then put them back in. Then you see them like a movie you can't stop watching until it all unspools."

She looks down again. "You didn't come here to hear about that."

MOONEY: "Tell your story."

MISS M. "They have a Chemical Shock—instead of electro-shock. The THErapist Networks—" you can hear the way she says it. "They inject you and you go all numb like your blood wants to get out of your body—and they have beds under these flashing lights and you can be sick for hours. *They want to* make *you crazy. I've seen lamps with big black cables and the cables move like snakes—by themselves. When no one but you is watching. High-tech snake pits."*

MOONEY: "That's if you get committed. We think—" he looks at you "We've heard these stories from people who've never met each other. We've heard stories about the Network for a few years now. Some of these places are unbelievable … even if they sound impossible—they're not."

MISS M. "If you visit your THErapist during an Episode you can see their true face. You have to be careful though—they can commit you then. Custodial Care. If you're having an Episode it's easy for them.

"But you can learn too. Sometimes? I learned how to leave my body when I'm having an Episode and I can wander and my body does all the bad things but I'm still me … on another level. On a stranger level.

"So I was locked in a cell in one of their jackets that makes you almost suffocate and I slipped and had an Episode—and in the Episode I was very small and got out, under the door—and left my body back in the hood and coat—and I found my THErapist and I bit him on the foot.

"With a very sharp, very poisoned tooth. And he died and his face froze up and turned black. And when I woke up he was dead and another doctor let me out. I think maybe he was afraid. He was right to be."

MOONEY: "Are you okay?" He seems tender but he's also, he's concerned. He looks at you. She's having one <u>now</u>, his look says. <u>Dammit</u>, she's having an Episode <u>right now</u>. *"Mandy, are you okay?" he's standing over her. She's trembling. He looks around.*

MISS M. "There were mouse-holes in the walls that I could see when I was down there—and inside them were little, tiny mouse asylums. It was a good thing I got out when I did."

She's not hearing him. He stands—he's scared to be close to her, when she's having an attack—like she might suck him down too.

MOONEY: "We have to go."

MISS M. "But there were men from the government too. In the grocery stores—that's where they watch us. They're afraid that we might bring something back*—from down below."*

That's too much for Kevin.

MOONEY: "We have to go NOW." He looks at Miss M., harshly. "You're having an Episode—you're supposed to have called a sponsor!*"*

MISS M."I called and called and almost fell into the telephone holes. They lead other places than the wires." You hear something move in the back rooms of the apartment. Something bangs on a door. Something big.

Kevin is pale. He's backing away through the living room. Your feet feel glued to the floor.

MISS M. "I'm running around now, small and poison somewhere and they're following me back up. Yum! Yum! Chomp! Chomp!" She giggles.

S*omething falls over in the back rooms. You see a light come on in the hall—a green light. Kevin is struggling with the locks. Either he can't*

get them open or they're locking themselves as he frantically turns one then the other then twists the know.

MOONEY: "Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!"

MISS M. "In the Room! In the Gloom! And Soon! Soon! Soon!"

MOONEY: "DAMMIT! DAMMIT! DAMMIT!" He slams his hands on the door in sick desparation. The hall is filled with light and shadows. Her eyes are rolled back while her hands are up, claw-like in the air.

The air in the room goes hot and raspy.

--The End.

Welcome to Wonderland

"Why is a raven like a writing-desk?"
--The Mad Hatter, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Because there's a 'b' in both and and an 'n' in neither.
--Aldous Huxley

Welcome to Section 2. We're getting deeper now. This section discusses what Wonderland *is* and some decisions the players will want to make about the game they're playing. By that we mean stuff like whether the focus is on the horror of going crazy or on the exploration of a new reality. Stuff like how empowered the characters are and just how dark the game will get. Important stuff like that.

So, let's go!

Unsanity

JAGS Wonderland is a surreal game of personal horror: it's a game where in the basic format your character is *Infected* by Wonderland and goes *insane*—well, *Unsane*, because it's really real and it can really kill you. This section explains the secrets of the universe, how Unsanity works, and how to do magic.

If you're gonna *play* Wonderland, you have an option not to read this section and discover it during play. 'Course, you can choose to peek behind the curtain and see what you're in for: that's fine too. There's still *another section* of deeper secrets you can choose to hold out on. Either way, this is how you lose your mind.

Making Unsanity Fun

The challenge of roleplaying horror is how to generate the kind of thrilling fear that one gets when reading a scary story or watching a cool, frightening movie while still empowering players to have their decisions matter in a game. In a movie, you can revel in the rising tension as the girl creeps closer to the shut closet door that we know has a monster behind it—because we can't do anything about it. It's a movie. In an RPG, she might be dousing the door with gasoline and tossing a match at it from across the room.

That's cool too. So we wanted to give you (that's GMs and Players both) a toolkit to work with that generates the *JAGS Wonderland* experience.

In order to do this, we have defined several mechanics (Triggers, Episodes/Descent, Notice, Twists and Insights, and Mastery) that can be *tweaked* in order to produce the kind of game you want. We've also given you several pages of our thoughts about how a variety of "standard" (canonical) and "more unusual" games might go. You can check 'em out.

But before we started in with this—or indeed, any explanation we wanted to talk about the basic Unsanity Experience—right here, up front—so you know what you're reading about.

Unsanity and The Schizophrenic Episode

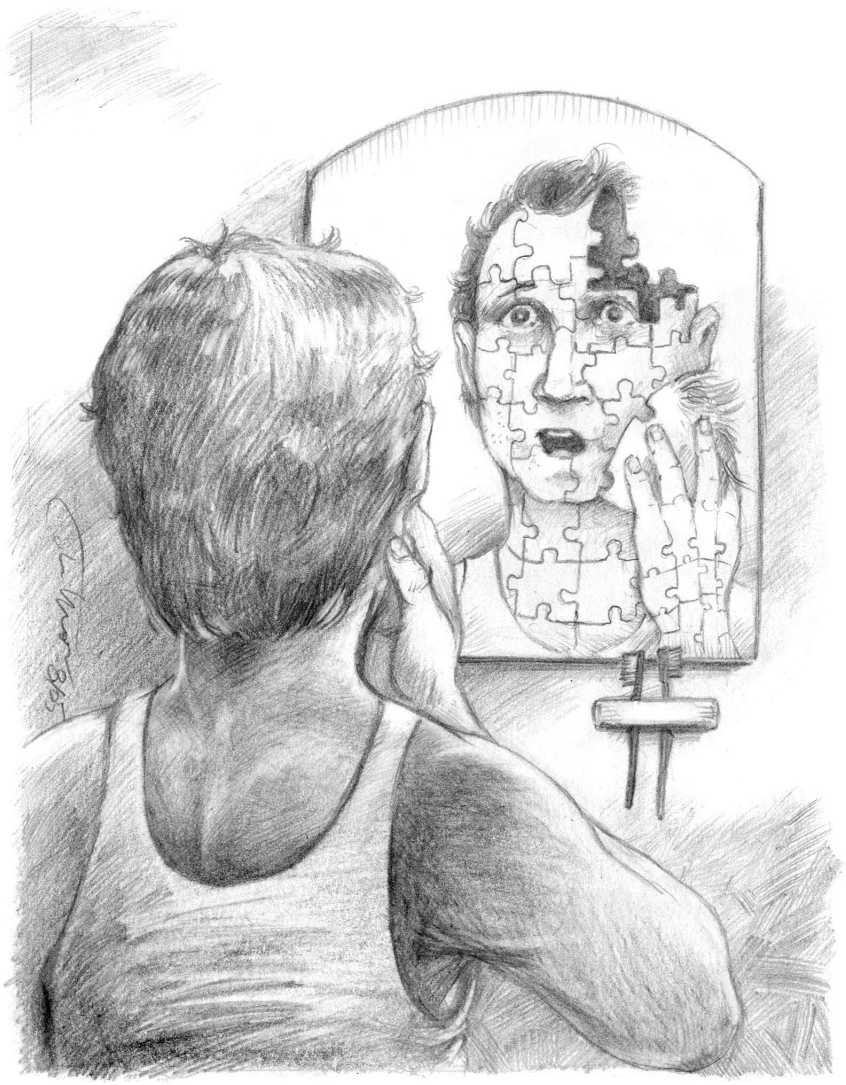
When you are Infected with Wonderland ('Unsane') you are slowly losing your grip on reality. Unlike insanity (although a lot of people go *insane* too) this doesn't mean you are losing your sense of logic and proportion: it means logic and proportion are losing their sense of *you*. You are sliding down through the cracks of reality and, as your Unsanity gets worse, you fall deeper and stay down longer.

These 'slips' are called "having an Episode" in the language of the Underground (the loose network of people who are Infected and have some sense of what is going on). When you "have an Episode" you drop down through the chessboards of reality.

But you don't *vanish* from the real world. No: you sort of leave behind a shell, called a Reflection, that *kinda* acts like you (it mimics what you're really doing as much as it can) and most people think *it's you, and that you're losing your mind*.

The 'personal horror' aspect of the game comes from having characters battling with this bizarre condition (and, possibly, losing their family and

> No live organism can continue for long to exist under conditions of absolute reality.
>
> - Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*



friends), doubting themselves, and, eventually mastering it (we hope).

(Just so you know, there're plenty of horror from ghosties, ghoulies, demonic things, conspiracy plots, and other stuff. There's also action and adventure and you can wind up a mutant or a magician so it isn't all about losing your loved ones—but the part that *may be about that* is the part we wanted to discuss up front. We figure you're probably familiar with the rest of it).

Handling the Episode

When a character is having Episodes (adventures into Wonderland) their 'Reflection' (the version of themselves that is left on reality) will often do things that make people think the character is crazy—or even get him into legal trouble.

In our experience this can be very disturbing for players that empathize with their character. The nature of Episodes can also be seen as "disempowering" since most characters (and players) cannot control how long the Episode will last or when it will come on. So we want to make sure that the players and GMs are on the same sheet of music (so to speak) about what role this is going to play in the game. Here are some options:

Example: Samantha Lawton is a college student in the North East. She suffers a "Major Complication" after "Deep Descent." Because of the specific nature of the Episode, the play of the game that happened in Wonderland gives no indication of what happened "back in the real world. Something called "Disassociation," which means that their left-behind Reflection persona in the real world was *so distanced* from their actual self down in Wonderland that there was no clear match-up in behavior or situation means that it's up to the GM to determine what happened.

The GM (probably using a table provided—or just making a judgment call) determines there was a "Major Complication" in the character's life.

Major Complication: Major Complications usually involve a risk of being *committed* (at least for a time) or a brush with authorities. The character behaves in a way that makes those around her think she is

going crazy or on drugs. The damage from a Major Complication is serious and cannot simply be explained away or ignored.

How The Player Feels About Unsanity

At this point, the GM will take his or her cues from the player—how does the player feel about Unsanity? We don't believe there are literal categories of players—but there are some general elements of "how badly my character can get hosed before I stop having fun."

These are:

- Hose me pretty badly.
- Make sure there's a safty net.
- Don't seriously mess up my character.
- Let me decide!

Hose me pretty badly: Exploring the Emotional and Social Impact of Insanity (Unsanity) Well, being crazy often causes people real, serious embarrassment. Since the player is okay with that, the GM rules that she recovers in a local holding cell under psychiatric observation. She discovers to her horror that she got up in front of her history class and begin drawing doors on the chalkboard telling the class that they had to be careful because the doors could "open" if you "looked at them right." She became violent, kicking and shrieking when the teacher tried to remove her. She ranted, standing on a desk, until the police came and dragged her screaming to the police car.

The consequences of this are run *as the GM thinks is likely*. If the PC doesn't work carefully, she may wind up committed.

I trust you—so be careful with my character: Exploring the Social and Emotional Impact of Unsanity With A Safety Net: Some players might want a potentially dark game where they can have their players break down (maybe even commit themselves, thinking they are mad) but don't want the game to end in a padded cell. We think this is a pretty reasonable way to play if it's discussed up front.

In this case the example is "as above" but the GM will take care to ensure that the play doesn't become disinteresting because the player embraces playing a character who is losing it.

The GM has determined, before hand, that there is a psychologist at Samantha's school who doesn't "believe" in Unsanity—but recognizes it as a psychological phenomena (whereas most therapist simply think it is schizophrenia or drug-induced psychosis). That character will "get her out of jail" and will also begin a treatment program that will keep the game interesting. Eventually Samantha may drop out of school (and out of reality altogether) but the player can have the character be as freaked out as they want without having to worry about the cops locking them up.

NOTE: This is considered the *default* setting and the player's choice of Survival Trait should help inform the GM how the character will likely react to "going Unsane." In this case, if Samantha has chosen 'Get it Together' then the character may well be terrified and incoherent *even after the episode is over* in the police station (which would not be a good tactical move for someone who wants to stay out of an institution).

*Note:*it is also possible to have exciting options of play if the characters *are* committed to an institution. Some games may start that way! It's a good idea to discuss this before the start of the game though.

Don't hose me *too* badly. Player Does Not Want to Role-play Having the Character Socially Humiliated: The GM rules that the character recovers in a holding cell. She missed class and, according to reports, walked past her roommate without saying a word ('She was high,' says the roommate, 'I know it!'). She was found spray-painting doorways graffiti style in the back-lot of the Student Union building. She was bloody and her close were ripped. She told the security that she needed to "open the doors to find herself." She was taken quietly to the hospital.

Ask The Player. Player Is Uneasy With the Idea of Loss of Control: If the player doesn't like the idea of having unknown complications thrust on them, the GM still has some options. The GM asks the player what happens and says "give me a good Major-Level" complication. The player thinks about it and says: "I was caught breaking into a closed Home Improvement store with face-paint on, commando style. They found me in the section that sells doors trying to get them opened and spray-painting mystical symbols on them. I refused to talk, saying I wanted a lawyer, a magician, and a priest."

This is a good Major Complication and, it should be noted, players, given the chance, will usually screw themselves harder than they'd let the GM do it!

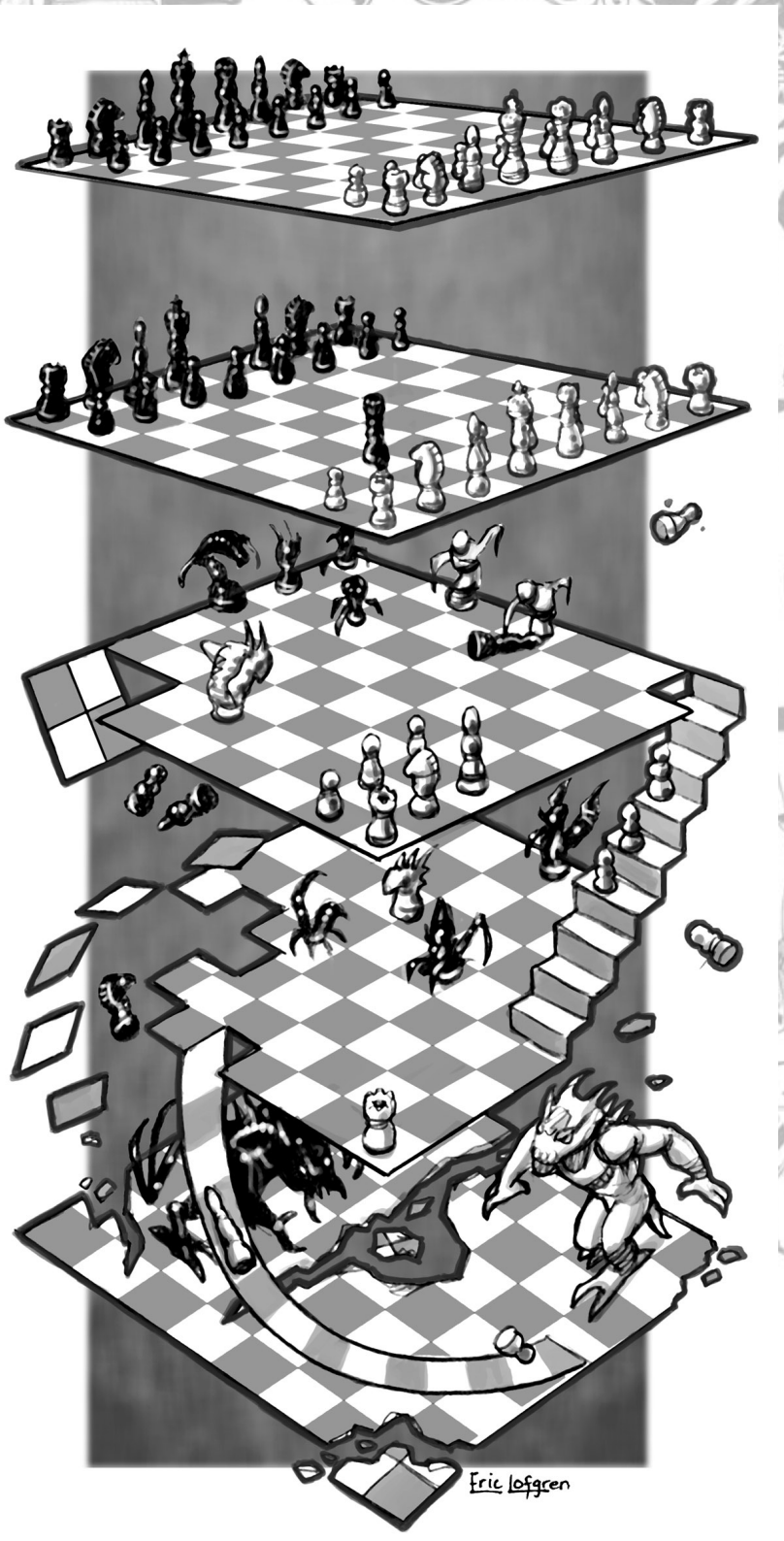
If the player chooses 'my druggie roommate sees me acting strangely' as a Major Complication, then it's probably a good idea to reassess the role that 'personal horror' via Unsanity is going to take in the game: clearly that player isn't too interested in that aspect of it (that's okay! There are many others!)

The One-Minute Guide to Wonderland

Psst. Hey buddy? Come here—a little closer. There's something I've *gotta* tell you. Gonna save your life. Yeah. Here—here's what's *really* going on. Listen up.

Reality Is Composed of Eight Chessboards.

Right. You live on Chessboard Zero. That's reality. All the boards under it? Those are *Wonderland*. Chessboard One looks pretty normal. Chessboard Two? Almost normal. But after that, it gets weird fast. All the way down to Chessboard Six which is about as far as you should go: so far as we know, nothing 'physical' exists on the last level, Chessboard Seven ('cause we started counting at Zero).



Wonderland is Hungry. Wonderland is Infectious.

All those other *universes* are under the management of Wonderland. Wonderland isn't something you can meet and talk to—it's something you sort of live in. But Wonderland *is hungry*. Wonderland is Infectious—like a disease.

There Are Cracks In The Chessboard.

Chessboard Zero has cracks in it—where Wonderland seeps in. When you are *exposed* to Wonderland (like you come into your kitchen and see a Jabberwocky making breakfast) you become *Infected*. That means you are a *carrier*. Right—for an alternate dimension. It also means you have the disease. You are *Unsane*. Huh? That's like *insane*—but it's for real. It can kill you.

Being Unsane Means You Undergo Descent.

When you are *Infected* you have these … spells … or trips … or periods of 'delusion' (except it's real) where you fall *down* through the chessboards to the lower levels. How far down you go determines how weird it gets—and how dangerous. The good news is that you don't stay down: you pop back up (unless, well, you die).

There are more chessboards to go, but Zero through Four is enough for now.

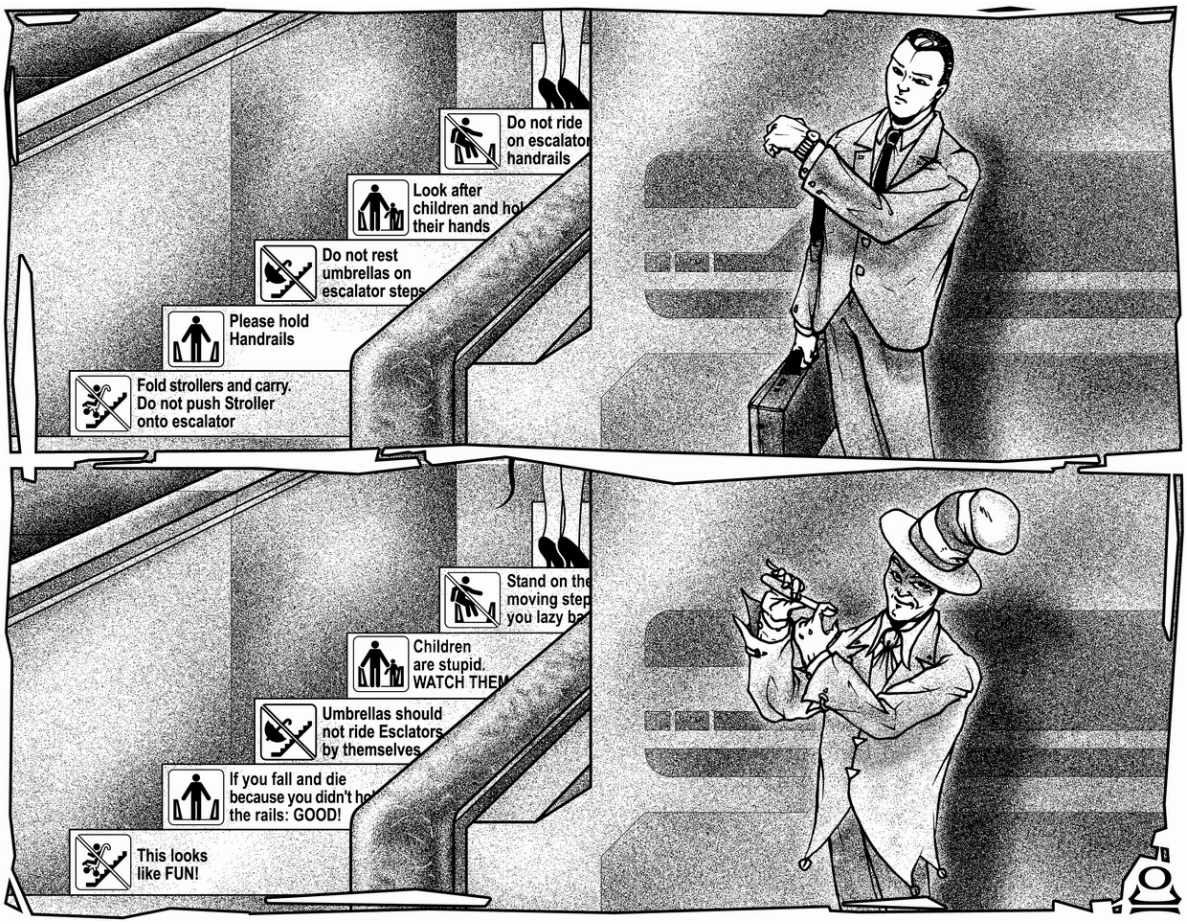
A period of Descent is called an Episode. When you are having an Episode it's like the world has gone insane.

You Can Meet Things that Look and Act Like People You Know On Lower Levels.

Chessboard One looks, physically, just like Chessboard Zero (reality). So what's different? Is it deserted? No. People *cast Shadows* down from Chessboard Zero. You do. I do. Yeah, really. Those people you "meet" are really the Shadows of people on Chessboard Zero.

Your Shadow Acts Like A Crazy Version of You.

Well, more like a caricature. If you walk into your favorite pub on Chessboard One you'll see all your friends there—but it isn't really *them*—it's their Shadows. And if you don't know what's going on, you'll think they've all gone *mad*.



When You Are Undergoing Descent You Cast A 'Reflection' Back Up To Chessboard Zero.

When you have an Episode you don't just *vanish*. It'd be kind of nice if you did—'cause then psychiatrists and doctors and scientists would believe something was really happen.

No, you get *replaced* by your Shadow (now called a "Reflection" 'cause it's going up from below to Chessboard Zero. Your Reflection acts *kinda* like you (but, you know, a bit loopy and maybe deranged) and it kinda tries to *mimic you* as you do things on the lower levels of reality.

So when you walk into that bar on Chessboard One, while you're having

an Episode? You see all your friends *Shadows* and you think "Everyone has lost their mind!" On Chessboard Zero (reality) they see your Reflection walk in—and them? They think: "He's losin' his *bleedin' mind*." It's insidious that way.

There's a Lot More.
That's enough for now.

The Eight Chessboards (Real Quick)

This is a brief overview to put the rest of the section in perspective. Following the mechanics chapters, there is a very in-depth look at each level and what its specific rules are. If you have questions that aren't answered in the one-paragraph descriptions, look there for the answers.

The world has eight levels—like the eight ranks of a chessboard. We start counting at Zero and Chessboard Zero is the real world. Look around you. Yeah. That one.

Chessboard Zero
It's a nice place. Good neighborhood. Decent schools. Law abiding, if you know what I mean (as in, the *laws of physics*).

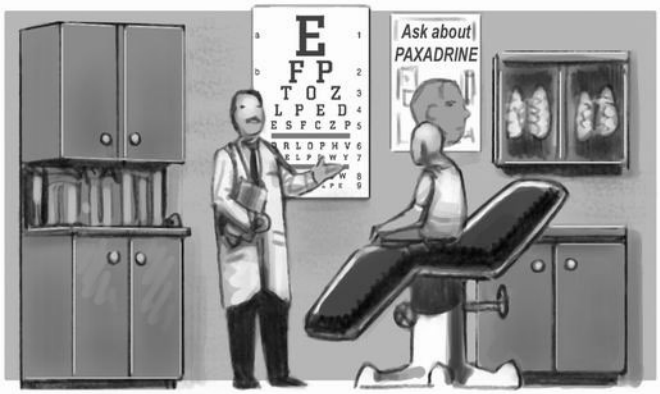
It's *cozy*.

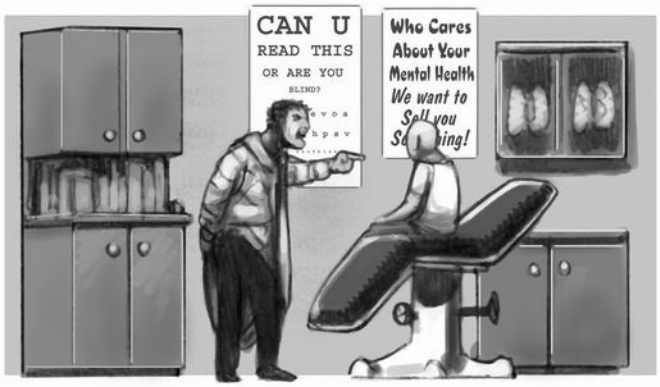
But it has a problem: there are all these trap doors and steep staircases and cracks in it. There are all kinds of places you could *fall through*. There are places where things can *come up*.

If you get *Infected* with Wonderland then, from time to time, it just opens right up underneath you, and you fall. You could fall all the way *down*.

Let's take a *really quick tour*—we'll get more involved later.

Promise.





The same scene from Zero down to Three ...

The Chessboard Zero Game

Games usually start on Chessboard Zero and may well keep the focus there for some time. There's a lot of stuff to do on Chessboard Zero. There are government conspiracies, evil cults, the Underground's various factions each vying with each other. There are horrific mental institutions. There are monsters.

Things that live just below the surface of reality (Chessboard One, sometimes Chessboard Two) can *cast Reflections* up. Something may look like a bum or street person: but if you are Infected you may see it with a different perspective. It can still be *very* dangerous (although usually things below the surface are less dangerous on Chessboard Zero than if you're down there with them).

There are "agencies" (see the section on Whirls) that are working to effect change on Chessboard Zero. They, and their mad schemes, exist on Chessboard One—but a lot of the action may center on Chessboard Zero.

There is a rich Chessboard Zero game—but it's only the beginning.

Chessboard One

Chessboard One, physically, looks just like home. It's just like reality and that's nice. But all the people there are just Shadows of the real people on Chessboard Zero: so if you wind up there you'll think everyone has gone mad. There are some other changes too. A lot of times printed material says *what it really means* instead of what it says in real life. Right. Like that movie. Right—but without the sunglasses.

The Chessboard One Game

For the "average Infected" the Chessboard One Episode is the mainstay of their Wonderland experience. This may or may not be true for PCs (canonically because PCs have Survival Traits, which makes them abnormal); GM may introduce deeper levels right away.

The experience on Chessboard One, during the Episode, is that *you* are sane but everyone else you meet (their Shadows, anyway) are *nuts*. When the Episode is over, though, all the (real) people will (correctly) remember *you* (your Reflection) being the one that was crazy.

Photographic evidence will bear them out: the strange conversations you had with them on Chessboard One will be mirrored with *you* (your Reflection) being the absurd one on Chessboard Zero.

This theme is the bedrock of the game's "personal horror" experience. On the deeper levels (a lot of Chessboard Two and everything below that) things get so strange, so fast that it's clear *the world* is screwed up.

How long the GM wants to keep the action in the shallow parts of Wonderland will depend a lot on the focus and action of the game. There are *things* that may be happening on Chessboard One beyond a bunch of loopy Shadows hanging around—that's a reason to focus on the shallow-game: things going on there often *directly* impact the real world—Infected and non-Infected alike.

Another reason to keep the focus there is that it is often, in its way, *more disturbing* than the nightmarescapes below Chessboard One. It's subtler. When there are monsters , they often hide in closets and on the other sides of mirrors.

Chessboard Two

Some of it looks like real life. There are a lot fewer people—erm, Shadows. But a lot of it is *desolate* and *abandoned* and *trashed*. A lot of Chessboard Two looks like it was ransacked and graffiti covered and looted … years ago. Some of it is just plain flat-out crazy: like a deranged mutation of the place it is on Chessboard Zero. There are monsters. There are worse things than monsters.

Chessboard Three

Places here might be really weird—like giant floating islands inhabited by overdressed dwarves. There are Victorian-style societies that live in environments that you can barely imagine. Places that *do* resemble their Chessboard Zero selves often show their *inner natures*. Imagine a shopping mall on Chessboard Zero? On Chessboard Three it could be a massive *Cathedral to Consumption*. Its pews are populated by six-foot frozen chickens (like the kind you buy in the grocery store). They can get rather *testy* if you don't *worship*.

Chessboard Four

Down here, human concepts become physical objects. There are ways to farm human vices and mine human virtues. Inspiration comes in crystal and the things that live here are, well, bizarre in the extreme. The world itself changes with every hour on the clock.

Chessboards Five and Six

Where the Wild Things Are. Here there be nightmares. You're in Terra Incognita. Reality is plastic—it ebbs and deforms. It's dreamlike. There are vast insane palaces. There are blood-soaked courts. There are worse things. Chessboards Five and Six are the *end of the line*.

The Chessboard Deeper Games

Traditionally, when an average Infected person (without Survival Traits) visits the deeper levels it's about over for him (his life, his sanity, you know—that stuff). Usually it happens only in late-stage Unsanity.

However, that's not to say that the PC's first adventure couldn't take place down the rabbit hole (after all, Alice's did). In fact, a lot of people have their first exposure by falling through a bleed down to a lower level. When and *if* they come back up, they are Infected and confused.

If the game starts with Chessboard Zero weirdness and moves to Chessboard One conspiracies, it may, eventually, get deeper. There are things down there that are also scheming. There are deeper secrets whose natures lie at the bottom of reality.

Eventually the game may get there—or, you know, it might start there. There are all kinds of options.

Chessboard Seven

Babylon. Discordant energy. A vast expanse of change so rapid and abrupt that nothing can be said to exist. No one goes here. There are (said to be) machines (in a metaphysical sense, whatever that means) that created the universe—and like the motor on one of those big "bounce

houses" keep it 'inflated.' It's the sub-basement of the universe where the boiler is. It's the foundation.

The final level of reality contains the foundation of everything that exists in the material universe. When we say it's not accessible, that isn't strictly true: the Linear Maze goes there (if you can find your way) and it's important. But mostly game action won't take place there … until it's time for some *very* big changes.

Wonderland Terminology

As Wonderland infection spreads across the globe, people are waking up to the fact that reality "ain't what it used to be." People are falling through the cracks. Most governments know *something*. Most people in the mental health system simply believe that schizophrenia is on the rise (and not even all that substantially) due to drugs, to sub-cultures that popularize and publicize it, and due to counter-cultural movements that lionize the mentally ill for political purposes.

There are also several conspiracies.

You knew that, though, right?

The Underground (you read about them in Section One) in general believes that *Unsanity is a transmissible mental illness*.

The *fringe* of the Underground that believes something *real* is going on. Everyone else is just *scared.* When they talk about it though, here are the terms they use. We're using the same ones to explain it—but that's okay: we know what's real … and what isn't.

Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder

The 'technical term' the Underground uses for Wonderland Infection (Unsanity). They believe CPD is a new, contagious (somehow) mental illness that either the MHS (Mental Health System) is in denial about or keeping a lid on. The more paranoid members believe they are being watched by government agencies. Some of them are right.

The Stages of CPD

CPD is said to have four stages.

Early Stage: Episodes happen about once or twice a month. They're hard to trigger. They tend to be "short and shallow" (see depth). The victim may not fully realize 'anything is happening.'

Mid Stage One: Episodes still come once or twice a month with some regularity but the chances of a Trigger Event happening go up. The victim must be more careful about what stimulus he or she is exposed to. Episodes are still usually shallow but are sometimes *deeper*.

Mid Stage Two: Episodes come more frequently (once a week) and Trigger may get much worse (the victim may need to shut off television or retreat inside their house to avoid trigger situations). Many episodes are *deeper* (scarier and more dangerous). The person may feel things have "followed him home" or 'noticed him' and come back 'up.'

Final Stage: After a *really deep* (traumatic) descent, people are said to enter the final stage. Not much is known about this—Episodes tend to be very deep and easily triggered. They come regularly a few times a week. What happens to people is unclear since they are often placed in asylums or just disappear entirely.

Infection

Exposure to some element of Wonderland gets you infected. In many cases people believe the "Infection Event" is "when they begin to go crazy." In some cases this fits with Alien Abduction stories. In other cases there seems to be some element of having "followed a White Rabbit down the rabbit hole." In any event, most people, even when Infected with Wonderland and having an Episode are *not* contagious. That requires special circumstances (and while the Underground doesn't know exactly what these are, they have an idea that it's not so easy to infect your doctor or your family or whatever).

Episodes

The Underground considers Episodes to be periods of *shared* mental delusions. If you get several CPD sufferers (Infecteds) in a room together and one has an Episode, he brings all the rest with him. An Episode is, in reality, a period of Descent (the person actually travels down through the various chessboards) but to the Underground this is considered more like a "bad trip."

Trigger Events

People with CPD (Wonderland Infection) have Episodes at least once a month (sometimes more. Sometimes a lot more). This is called a "cycle." You can usually feel it coming and as time goes on, it gets more and more rapid and more and more serious.

However, environmental influences can cause an Episode *too*. These are called Triggers. Media, drugs, and various occult practices (or hypnosis) can set off an Episode.

At later stages, seeing optical illusions, complex graffiti patterns, or large

Terminology

If the Underground gets so much wrong, why are we using "their terms?" One reason is that although the Underground has a lot of their facts wrong, they get a lot of the basic concepts *right*. They don't think a "deep trip" is actually some kind of journey to a lower reality—but they do know that "going deep" is far more dangerous (and rare) than "going shallow." They don't have words for Reflections and Shadows, but they know that when you are having an Episode everyone *you* meet seems to be crazy (to you) and everyone who meets you thinks *you're* the one that's nuts.

So it's a handy way to discuss things. It's also the way most enlightened, experienced people who *do* know something about Wonderland talk. Why? Because usually they were first introduced to the concepts seeking help with the Undeground.

mirrors can set off triggers.

Most notably, however is that stress and fear (especially in social situations) can cause Episodes if the character is advanced enough.

Depth

The Underground doesn't understand the Eight Chessboards of reality. Many of them really do believe they have a strange form of mental illness—but they do have a concept of depth.

Some of the most traumatic Episodes involve a period of "falling down the rabbit hole" (falling through strange corridors) or going through size changes, or finding dark stairways leading down. There's nothing really *special* about the direction "down" (the Eight Chessboards don't really exist in "physical space" but, just the same, when the Underground talks about a *Deep Episode* they, inadvertently, mean it correctly: An Episode that takes you to Chessboard One leaves you in a normal looking world.

One that takes you to Chessboard Six has dropped you into raw insanity.

Underground members are usually very cautious of someone who has "gone deep" since they may do so again and would take everyone around them who was infected *down with them*.

Shadows

Imagine a chess pieces arrayed on a chessboard. Let's pick a pawn. That's *you* on Chessboard Zero. Now imagine another chessboard floating underneath the first. Most of the pieces are there. Most of them look normal—but a few are "out of place." That's Chessboard One and all the pieces on it are Shadows. If you can imagine it, imagine all those Chessboard-One Shadow pieces *acting crazy*: oh, they move with their normal pieces (most of the time) and they do what their normal pieces do (most of the time) but the *way* they do it? Crazy.

Go one level down to Chessboard Two: most of the pieces are gone. There are new pieces, stranger ones. Some of the "ordinary Shadow pieces" have changed too—they've *mutated*. Look, there's a pawn with two heads! There's one with *tentacles*. Oh, look, it's being eaten by that monster piece! The board is different too. There are squares of new colors.

Go another level down (Chessboard Three). Now the few ordinary pieces that are left are entirely out of position, moving by themselves. Now there are *lots* of new pieces. Now you don't know what rules apply.

All the pieces below Chessboard Zero are what experienced Infected people call "Shadows." If your Shadow gets eaten by a monster on Chessboard One you might get sick (in very rare circumstances you might even die). On Chessboard Two, you might have a bad day at the office. On Chessboard Three? A headache. Shadows regenerate

themselves Shadows are caricatures of their casters. Shadows *mimic* their owners to a degree that the lower levels of reality allow them to.

Shadows are not sane. Not, well, not exactly. They parody their caster's personalities. They have a certain degree of rationality but their baseline experience for Normality (even those from the relatively normal Chessboard One) is far different than a normal person's. When you talk to a person's Shadow it doesn't seem normal.

Reflections

Let's go back to the Chessboards. Remember that pawn that's you? Now it's Infected with Wonderland. Look: It's having an Episode! It "jumps" from Chessboard Zero down to Chessboard One (lucky you: it's a shallow Descent). And it *changes places* with the Shadow piece on Chessboard One! Now there's a Shadow loose in the real world. Since it's being cast "up" instead of "down" we call it a Reflection. What does that mean?

The Reflection (and Shadows, which are the same thing) are three-dimensional flesh and blood living organisms just like you are. They have your basic personality and they try to mimic your actions as much as they can ... but their definition of sanity is a lot different. When you move on that lower chessboard (imagine the pawn sliding two steps forward) the Reflection Pawn will too—unless there's a *wall* in the real world that doesn't exist on a lower level of reality (we discuss this in much greater detail later).

See Chessboard One? You, the real you, is next to that Bishop, having a chat. But You? You're talking to the *Shadow* Bishop on Chessboard One. Up above, on Chessboard Zero the Reflection you is chatting up the *real* Bishop. So you think the bishop has gone nuts and the Bishop is talking to a version of you that ain't exactly sane. Isn't life grand?

Notice

When you go down deep (Chessboard 3 and below) and, sometimes, when you go down shallow, you can "get Noticed" (the Underground uses this term without really understanding the actual layers of reality). People experienced in Infection describe it as an "uneasy feeling of being watched out of mirrors." What it means is that something with the power to follow you back up *has*. When you have been Noticed your nightmare may continue into your "sane" life as whatever it was comes

up like some deep-sea prehistoric monster chasing its prey.

This is one reason why the Underground is very suspicious of those who have "been deep." Not because they understand or believe there are real things that "follow them home" (they don't even *talk* about that—but because the more experienced members have an understanding that when this has happened to someone they may be *unsafe* to be around even when they seem normal).

Twisted

Exposure to Wonderland can change you. Remember that Abyss gazes also into you thing? It's like that. The changes are usually only evident on the lower levels of reality. Sometimes, though, things happen that make you seem crazy all of the time. The Underground doesn't commonly use *Twisted* as official terminology (they use the term "Damaged," usually). Some Twists are "good" (they make you more powerful when they are evident). Some Twists are bad (they really are a kind of damage). Bad Twists are more common in people who undergo deep descent and *don't* have Survival Traits.

Transmission

It's not known how you "catch" CPD or how you "transmit it." The reality is that any time you are exposed to (and in your heart believe) an Impossible Thing, you become Infected. Underground members know that it's *possible* to Infect someone just by being around them. They don't know how easy it is.

Actually, it's really very hard to spread Wonderland Infection—and that's a good thing. Infection usually happens through "bleeds," actual physical rips in the fabric of reality. A place may have a low-intensity bleed and, when it 'surges,' people there may be *exposed* and Infected. Those are rare—but if you're subject to one, Infection is usually a given.

Being with *people* who are Infected isn't usually so dangerous (therapists treat people who complain of hallucinations all the time and never become Infected). Usually in order to be susceptible you have to be *curious* and entertain the fact that *something real might be going on*.

There are also a very few cases where 'Impossible Things' happen around Infected people. You might see one get sucked into a mirror or change shape. When this happens, you *do* catch it.

Recovery

The Underground holds out hope for recovery—most of them have already passed that point. By the time you are going to meetings it's probably too late. But there is some number of people in the world who have a 'temporary Infection' and either never associate the weirdness in their life with mental illness or otherwise 'shake it off.' No one has statistics for how often that happens.

I stood in the room as Christina lowered herself into the bubbling pool. Behind me was Dr. Perrin and four armed security agents. Before me, Christina met my eyes as she sank into the churning water of the Hydro-Therapy Tank. Her look was almost alluring. She had a cat-like smile. Doctor Perrin spoke.

"Christina will use a trance-state," he said—she was already chanting softly—"to induce a mild *Episode*. We are testing your reaction."

I could hear her words—rhythmic nonsense syllables over and over, whispered into the water. I felt gooseflesh on my neck and arms.

"The results should be minimal and transitory but a CAT scan conducted after the exposure will—"

The chanting was louder now—but her lips had stopped moving. The voices were coming from the bursting bubbles in the water itself. Christina was looking down.

"And we will—" Dr. Perrin was still going on—like he couldn't hear. Maybe he couldn't. Maybe only *I could*.

"*Doctor?*" Christina's voice was high-pitched with alarm. "*Doctor, something's wrong—we're too heavy—I'm—*" I could hear the panic—"I'm *slipping*."

Then she just went down, straight down, into the water. I could feel it in the air, like an invisible funnel—like one of those three-dimensional representations of a black hole—a flowing of reality past me, through me, and including me. The impression of the *drain* before me became larger and stronger. I felt the urge to run less than a second before it overwhelmed me.

Nothing changed—nothing moved—but around me, the four guards and Dr. Perrin were simply *gone*. The therapy tank churned and water bubbled over the sides. I felt tremors in the floor: I knew that whatever it looked like, I was no longer in the therapy room. I was no longer in the world I knew.

Infection

Infection to Wonderland happens through exposure of the person to an *Impossible Thing*. This most clearly happens when there is an actual Bleed or "crack" in reality and Wonderland can come through. If a person is there and aware when something *Impossible* is happening they can be Infected. Fortunately these bleeds are fairly rare. Far more common is an encounter with other Infected people who are undergoing Descent (having an Episode).

Usually these people are *not* contagious: an encounter with a person having an Episode usually just seems like a meeting with someone who is, to some degree, schizophrenic. However, under some (thankfully rare) conditions it *is* possible to be exposed by another person. Usually this happens when they undergo deep, catastrophic descent and you are there: it's rare, but there may be an actual effect (a micro-bleed) on Chessboard Zero.

There are several other ways to get Infected. Certain mind-expanding rituals can do it. There are some techniques by which it is believed one can be Infected by listening to certain music or taking psychotropic drugs.

Condition	Chance of Infection	Notes
A 'Hot' Bleed	Very High	Bleeds usually exist in out of the way physical locations and usually don't look like anything at all. When they are "hot" (active) it means that some element of Wonderland is active in the vicinity *right then*. If you have the misfortune to run into it, you will likely be Infected.
A 'Cold' Bleed	Low	Bleeds are not usually "always open" (some open on cycles, others seem to be attuned to certain events). When a Bleed is closed it can still sometimes be "awakened" and perhaps crossed through (into Wonderland), which will Infect you.
An Infected having an Episode	Low	Although Underground members are wary, they acknowledge that it's not easy to Infect people just by freaking out near them.
Extreme curiosity about Episodes	Medium	On the other hand, if you are *curious* about these Episodes and do things like taking mind-altering drugs with Infecteds to try to induce Episodes, your odds of getting Infected go way up. Often roommates of Infecteds are in danger if they are the curious sort.
Infected undergoes Catastrophic Descent	High	There's something called Catastrophic Descent where the person suddenly, physically, ceases to exist on Chessboard Zero. The Underground claims this doesn't happen (after all, they think CPD is *mental*). It does (it's rare and often fatal for the poor person who falls that far that fast). If you're there when it does you can be "sucked down too" (or otherwise Infected).

Safety In Numbers

Impossible Things don't survive well on Chessboard Zero (reality). Even better: the more people who are capable of observing an Impossible Event (and therefore being Infected by it) decrease the chances of it happening at all. Some people can "do magic" for limited audiences (and doing so runs a terrible risk of Infecting them). Most of them *cannot* do those things before a large audience.

Even video tapes and other recording devices are often ambiguous as to what they show: sometimes when you run the tape you may see the "Impossible Thing." Sometimes when you run the tape you get a blur. Usually groups of more than five people are safe from the majority of Wonderland Incursions (note that walking *into* an open bleed doesn't count: once you are below Chessboard Zero your safety in numbers no longer applies).

The Infection Event

The Infection Event is the term the Underground uses for the exposure. Because they believe CPD is purely psychological, they don't think you can get it "from an abandoned building." You can. If there's a bleed in

the building you could step through it into deeper Wonderland and be Infected. However, they do have a few things right.

Curiosity is *often* a major factor in Infection. Wonderland doesn't survive well in masses of people. It's often the curious who pursue something further than maybe they should. According to lots of reports the nature of a Bleed may itself (in some fashion) act as a *lure*. If you are the kind of person who is given to unwisely follow a White Rabbit into its hole you are the kind of person Wonderland is looking for. Wonderland is *fascinating*. It's full of puzzles and knots and mysterious locked doors. People who are curious are *drawn to it*. Sometimes they are devoured, but not always: sometimes they are *gratified*. It seems to depend on them.

In other cases there's a complete mental blind-spot associated with the Infection Event. There are many reports of people who know *something* happened to them but don't recall exactly what. Missing time, memories of strange hallucinations or terrifying nightmares are common. There's even a sub-set of the Underground who believe the Aliens (you know, those guys who are abducting people) are behind the whole CPD phenomena.

Strains

Not all Wonderland Infections are equal (although the vast majority are). Most forms of Wonderland are not especially contagious and most are difficult to infect someone with in the first place (and a good thing too). However, elements within Wonderland and in the upper echelons of the Underground (where the true nature of Wonderland is acknowledged) have done work—experimentation—on other hypothetical strains. Although most campaigns will involve the common Nin or Llamed Strains there might be others.

Name	Notes	Virulence	Contagiousness
Nin	The most common strain of Wonderland—the "basic strain."	Low: It is only caught through rare events.	Low: It is difficult to spread. Conditions must be extreme.
Llamed	A theoretical strain (several incidences have been reported) that would be easy to catch.	High: In a worst-case scenario it could spread quickly and easily over airwaves (as through a test-pattern). In most cases it is simply *possible* to spread without the person having to have an extremely unusual experience.	Low: Although it can be easily caught, once a person is infected he spreads it no more easily than Nin.
Aleph	A strain that does not cause Episodes. It is contracted by experiencing Wonderland *internally* (as in through meditation or mystical ritual).	Very Low: It usually takes much practice and dedication to reach Aleph. Magicians usually manage this after years of practice.	Very Low: Aleph produces almost no instability in the subject and cannot be spread.
Vel	A theoretical "end of the world strain."	High: Vel would be spreadable through mass media with little degradation due to multiple observers.	High: Those infected would be able to transmit it easily to others. They would be moving holes in reality.

Underground Support Groups: The Buddy System

Running Descent as the GM: There are a lot of options and as the GM, most of the options are yours. Even very experienced characters get caught with uncontrolled descent (they just recover and deal with the danger better). Sometimes trips through the Linear Maze are marked by walls sliding in behind the characters or doorways sucking them through—other times not.

In some cases repeating mantras may take character back up quickly (The Underground Support Groups teach their members to repeat "There's no place like home. There's no place like home." Over and over).

So there are a lot of options. Usually players will have some input (through expertise) over: whether a trigger that is *not* 'very strong' causes descent, how their reflections behave while they are having an episode, and whether they pass up chances for controlled descent (they can choose not to take the door, for example).

If the characters have mastered descent and can control when it happens (for the most part) then the game has moved from more of a horror basis (at least surrounding descent) to an exploration basis. That's fine: part of the game is often eventual mastery of the terrifying (and dangerous) condition of Infection. However the GM is usually charged with the pacing of that. See the Experience Section at the end of this chapter.

Mastery vs. Unsanity

At it's core, Wonderland Infection is a race between the character's attempt to gain Mastery and their tendency to slide deeper into Unsanity (an uncontrolled series of Episodes leading to deeper and deeper descent). Mastery is gained by things like training, exploring one's condition, and otherwise accepting and examining the actualities of Infection.

Unsanity (CPD, to the Underground) begins as something that's almost subtle and becomes a condition that will, literally, consume you. If, that is, you don't control it. The bad news is that for about 85% of the population that control is never likely to happen. You, however, have a chance.

Gaining Mastery

Mastery is gained by spending experience-gained Archetype Points on "mastery" (see the end of this section). When and what gives you the right to do this depends a lot on the horror focus of the game (there's a chapter that goes into this in *detail* at the end of this section) but in short you have to get your hands dirty. It's possible for newly Infected characters to have an almost innate understanding of their condition—but expect to have to have several "bad trips" before you get your 'feet under you.'

In fact, Gaining Mastery can be the *focus* of the game. Seeking masters, seeking doctors, experimenting, all while trying to survive and separate the good information from the bad can make for an exciting, deep, and terrifying game.

Gaining Unsanity

Every time you have an Episode you have a chance of "sliding a little deeper" into Unsanity. You run the risk of getting Damage (the term for bad Twists). You may be chased back into 'reality' by things that you've encountered down deep. Your life will fall apart as people begin to think you are going insane.

Unsanity gets worse over time and can be helped along by "really bad trips." Let's look at how those "Stages of CPD" relate to the actual phenomena.

Stage	Avg. Length	Cycle	Trigger	Depth	Notice/ Damage
Early	1-6 mos	Lunar	None	Chessboard One	Low
Mid - 1	1-6 mos	Lunar	Low	Chessboard One and Two	Low
Mid - 2	1-3 mos	Weekly	Medium	Two to Three	Medium
Late	1 mo	Daily	High	Possibly Deeper	High

Avg. Length

This is a very rough time period of how long an average person will take to progress through the stages of CPD (Unsanity). The actual speed of progression (and, indeed, specifics of each stage) will depend very much on the individual and their specific experiences.

Cycle

The reason the Underground calls Wonderland Infection "Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder" is that, at first, at least, it happens "on a cycle." An Infected who does *nothing* to precipitate an Episode will still have one about once a month in the beginning. Characters who are at a similar stage and undergo Descent together will synch-up, continuing to have Episodes at roughly the same time even if they are separated. The Underground support groups use this phenomena in their "buddy system" method of coping with Unsanity.

Trigger

Environmental factors can set off an Episode even in people who are not due for their "cyclic" Episode. Usually things that can put you in an "altered state" normally (drugs, certain movies, sensory deprivation tanks, etc.) will induce Episodes in Infecteds. When someone has a Trigger rating, though, it becomes far more likely that an *everyday* event could set them off. The rating determines how ubiquitous the trigger is (and specifics are discussed at the end of the chapter).

Depth

This determines how far down the character will go during their Episode. There are a few things to consider here. The first is how *subtly* the character's Descent may be. Going down to Chessboard Three or below usually involves an extremely visible change of scenery (such as a long fall down a surreal rabbit hole). However, going to Chessboards One or Two may not be so noticeable. Characters having Episodes *often do not realize it until someone acts 'crazy' or something Impossible happens.*

Secondly, the trauma associated with Uncontrolled Descent should be considered. A character in Early Stage who takes LSD and watches *The Wall* is asking to go far deeper than Chessboard One. Often deep descents are far more dangerous and result in Damage and Notice.

Notice

This rating is sort of a generalized notion of how threatening each Episode is likely to be. It isn't a hard and fast rule—but when a person *without* Survivability Traits goes down deeper they tend to come back a lot less often than someone with one. Furthermore, the kind of unstable mental state most people are in by the time they reach Late Stage Unsanity (CPD) will tend to result in descents to far darker places.

Notice, per se, (as has been noted) is the aspect of things following you home. A person with "notice" going on in their life will feel hunted.

Mass Hallucination:

Although the lower-levels of the Underground don't *believe* that what is happening is 'real' they do acknowledge that there are some hard-to-explain elements of it. For one thing, if a person begins an Episode in the company of other Infecteds, the others will usually be 'sucked down' as well. For this reason, characters who are 'on cycle' are told to *stay away* from support meetings.

If a character is 'triggered' and feels it coming on, a call to the character's sponsor (a person appointed to help the character) may help 'calm them down.' Most Support Groups (as well as others) employ a "buddy system" of new members placed together when it looks like an Episode is likely. The group (from 2 to 4 people, usually) is meant to enforce the Support Group ethic that *nothing* should be investigated, curiosity should be squashed, and the authorities should be avoided. The

presence

Mass Hallucination, Cont'd

of others also helps calm fears and prevent emotional trauma—of course it does have the possibility of convincing the subjects that there is a real element to their experience.

This feeling that "there is actually something *to* their experiences" is drummed out of them at meetings with horror stories about those who have *embraced* their delusions. A good deal of questionable data on Mass Hysteria and Group Hallucinations (and the power of Suggestion) is given out as well, even though knowledgeable people know that a lucid, continuing, intricate shared experience is entirely unlike Mass Hysteria or hallucination.

Dangerous things may come for him (both on otherwise relatively safe Chessboard One Episodes and, at times, even on Chessboard Zero!). A person with Damage (bad Twisteds) will tend to appear clinically insane when they *are not* having an Episode.

The Episode

Infection means that you periodically have an Episode (a period of time wherein you undergo Descent: traveling to a lower level of reality—'visiting the lower chessboards.') When you are Infected you will have Triggers that "set you off" but even if you insulate yourself from Triggers (or just have very minor ones) the chances are you will still have Episodes and, over time, they will get *worse*.

Handling Triggers as a GM

The Game Master usually decides what triggers a character. Usually this *does not need to be specified*. Things like environmental stress, something unexpected happening, or even daydreaming and boredom can cause episodes. A character who is Infected may undergo Descent several times a day in the wrong environment or if things, in general, are going badly.

Examples: In one game, the PC went into an Episode every time her cell phone rang. In another case there was a segment of a PC sliding in and out of descent in a dizzying fashion (one minute things are normal, the next not—then they're normal again). In another game, episodes came in steady waves on a more regular schedule (once every few days or every few hours). In still another, a coming storm "brought Descent with it"—and the characters could 'feel it coming' as they saw the clouds move in. All of these are canonical examples of how it works.

For most people in the Underground Support Groups, they try to lead crashingly mundane lives and avoid *all* outside unusual influence and still suffer descent about once a month.

How Often Do Episodes Happen?

Generally anyone Infected will have at least one Episode a month. Often there are more short ones—and sometimes a character may have several a day (or even an hour).

Usually one knows when a 'cyclic' Episode is coming on—or, if a character is Triggered, they may know that "it's going to happen soon" (in the next few minutes or an hour).

The Episode: How deep do I fall? How do I go down?

Again, a lot of this depends on the GM and the specifics. An Episode is a bit like an "acid trip" in that it starts and then stops. Let's look at some conventions.

I don't want another of your rational explanations! I know what I experienced and I'm not crazy!

- Melanie,
Amityville: The Demon

Descent to Chessboard One

Level of Subtly: High. A character who is "getting the hang of Unsanity" will often have an 'aura' or feeling before the onset of an Episode or will know that 'something has shifted' when it comes on. However, for many characters who are totally inexperienced *nothing* will tell them things have gone strange—until they do.

What's the Effect Like? Usually there is no 'effect.' Maybe some text seems to change before your eyes—but even that is rare. Mostly things seem 'mostly normal' but disturbingly abnormal in a subtle fashion. Other than a feeling there is usually no visual change.

Descent to Chessboard Two

Level of Subtlety: High if in an inhabited zone (just like Chessboard One)—low if in an abandoned zone. None if in an Insane Zone.

What's the Effect Like? Descent to Chessboard Two *tends* to happen in a sane inhabited zone. Usually if an Episode is coming on, it'll wait until you're "above one" and dropping into it doesn't fell like much. It'll also wait until you are *alone*. So maybe you go to the washroom and when you come out, your office is an abandoned, vandalized wasteland crawling with monsters.

However, sticking with people and in crowded places is only *something* of a protection (some claim you should do exactly this—but it's seen as a bad idea by most support groups). When it comes, there will often be a period of disorientation or a sensation like "passing out" (you may even fall down).

Other people have had terrifying incidences of seeing people around them blink out of existence (and those who they go to for help don't help them at all—the person is on Chessboard One and is talking to shadows). After the people are gone, then, rapidly, the place decays or warps.

Then the monsters come.

Going Deeper

Level of Subtly: None. Going to Chessboards Three or Four or even lower often means dramatic changes in the world around you. However, as with everything Wonderland, that is not *always* the case.

What's the Effect Like? This depends on whether you undergo what is called Controlled or Uncontrolled descent.

The Linear Maze

If reality is a stacked series of chessboards, the connections between them and throught them are the *lines between the squares*. In the lexicon of Wonderland this conduit (which seems to be both a natural artifact of creation *and* an engineered architecture) is called the "Linear Maze." The Linear Maze is what Alice fell through when she tumbled

Curiosity

The Lower Chessboards have chutes and ladders—physical passages further down and some 'back up.' Some of these are newly appearing doors. Some are 'open mirrors.' Some may be other things (a new stop on the elevator). People who explore these often have far, far stranger experiences than those who do not.

To the Underground this is "embracing the delusion" and is the mark of someone who is going to die or vanish very quickly. It is considered poisonous to others around them.

Player Empowerment

Issue: The general rules of *JAGS Wonderland* mean that the characters will have Episodes when the GM wants them to—they are part of the game and most characters can't resist them. However, depending on how the level of player-empowerment in the game is being handled, Infecteds who are more experienced often *do* get a say in whether or not they trigger.

See Mastering Unsantiy for a description of how this works.

The World is Insane On Chessboard One

Chessboard One is a lot like the real world: the architecture is the same, there are plenty of people (even if they're given to acting strangely). You can use the phone, drive a car, order a pizza: all of that.

But it isn't the same if you look closely and in the right places. Mirrors are often doorways that lead down to lower levels of reality. This isn't consistent (indeed, when you are most looking for proof something is wrong with the world it may seem the most normal)—and it may happen when you least want it to—but it's common enough that the Underground warns its members to not to look into mirrors during an Episode. Something unnatural might look back.

Writing and signs often change to be more "honest." Slogans are blatant, bald sales attempts. Advertising is un-ironically honest. An inter-office memo on Chessboard One might say what the author *really means*.

TV looks normal at first too—but if you watch it, it's like the people on the screen are *talking to you*. You may also get very, very disturbing channels from 'elsewhere.' Watching for too long can be a trap that draws you further down too. Web sites may seem subtly different as well and there may be addresses that don't exist in the normal world (or always seem to be down). You have to be careful: being curious often draws you deeper.

down the rabbit hole. It's the network of passages and back-alleys and winding corridors and stairs that exists behind mirrors. It usually isn't a destination as such, but an in-between elsewhere that people go (or are sucked) through on the way to the lower Chessboards (if you descend to Chessboard Three or below you will go through the Linear Maze for at least a few microseconds). NOTE: it is called the Linear Maze because of its in-between relationship to chessboards (i.e. the lines) and is, in actuality, a maze—a very complex multi-dimensional topology. The paradoxical term for it is both descriptive and very fitting for Wonderland.

Controlled Descent (Through the Looking Glass)

Often a really deep episode will begin with a "doorway" opening. When this happens, if the character goes down (crawling through the looking glass) the chances of Notice are often a good deal lower. The character may find themselves in the "Linear Maze" (see the section on it), which leads them between the chessboards. If the character avoids any mysterious openings, they may fall, going into Uncontrolled Descent.

Mirror surfaces turn into gray fog and you can crawl into a twisted version of the room. Paintings open up with deep perspective or new doors or grates or stairways appear where they weren't before. Maybe there are new buttons on the elevator?

When you begin the Descent you are in what is called The Linear Maze: it is the foundation of the world—the "lines between the squares" of the chessboards, the Mirror Works (tunnels and halls and alleys behind all mirrors) and it is created by the Department of Works—the machines that "run the universe" on Chessboard Seven.

What it's like varies *a lot*. In some cases it is halls of a great mansion or vast stone bridges and staircases. In other cases it is back alleys with dim flickering lights or even gas-lamps. In still other cases it is like a funhouse mirror-maze or abandoned steam pipes or underground water works.

There are often passages from which one cannot go back and there may be many changes in perspective and proportion. The tiny door and the bottle labeled "Drink Me" is something one would find in the Linear Maze (note: the term is an oxymoron—but while some people do manage to "get lost" mostly a trip through the linear maze is short and to the point—when you exit it, you are in Wonderland).

When you re-enter it (which is often done through many doors that are found on the lower levels—doors the locals do not take) you usually return near where you were, stepping out onto Chessboard One and then immediately, or very quickly, ascending to Chessboard Zero.

People who are experienced with Descent and are not polluted by the conservative fear of the Underground's Support Groups tend to think that

taking chances for Controlled Descent is usually safer than passing them up.

Uncontrolled Descent (Down the Rabbit Hole)

Sometimes a "hole in the ground" (or the elevator you are in) opens up beneath you and sucks you down (or the elevator opens on a floor that never existed or whatever). Uncontrolled descent happens to you—and when it does, the chances of being Noticed are traditionally much higher (meaning that something dangerous down there knows you are around and tasty).

This is usually far more frightening. The windows might go dark (or suddenly strangely lit). There might be the sounds of a massive bell or chimes or other music. The floor might shake as though in an earthquake. Everyone might vanish or change into statues—the walls may start to collapse and be replaced with an ancient forest.

Usually the area *around* you remains similar for a short period of time but it won't last (some people claim to have had success hiding "under their beds" until a very short episode passes—others swear that when you "Go Down Below" things nearby know and come to check out the fresh meat—so you're far better off running for it).

Ending Descent

Both cases end usually as they began—but if one doesn't take a doorway back up when they feel descent "growing thin," they may just have the world freeze and collapse and rebuild around them, returning them to their body on Chessboard Zero.

Running Deep Descent

Deep Descent usually begins on Chessboard One. If the PCs are at a party and see a door unfold out of the wall, the other guests will ignore it or treat it as "normal." This is because the PCs are already on Chessboard One and the Shadows of the other party members don't react strangely to the door.

When the characters go through it, their Reflections (on Chessboard Zero) will usually Disassociate and the PCs will be down at a lower level of Wonderland. Depending on how experienced the PC's are, their Reflection may freak out—or just act a little weird.

If the PCs undergo Uncontrolled Descent (being swallowed up by the floor) it's the same: the real people at the party won't see them fall through the floor (well, usually) but will see them start acting funny. Reflections freaking out from Disassociation is usually more prevalent for Uncontrolled Descent.

Running Descent as the GM There are a lot of options and as the GM, most of the options are yours. Even very experienced characters get caught with Uncontrolled Descent (they just recover and deal with the danger better). Sometimes trips through the Linear Maze are marked by walls sliding in behind the characters or doorways sucking them through—other times not.

In some cases repeating mantras may take character back up quickly (The Underground Support Groups teach their members to repeat "There's no place like home. There's no place like home." Over and over.

So there are a lot of options. Usually players will have some input (through expertise) over whether a trigger that is *not* 'very strong' causes Descent; how their Reflections behave while they are having an Episode; and whether they pass up chances for Controlled Descent (they can choose not to take the door, for example).

If the characters have mastered Descent and can control when it happens (for the most part) then the game has moved from more of a horror basis (at least surrounding descent) to an exploration basis. That's fine: part of the game is eventual mastery of the terrifying (and dangerous) condition of Infection. However the GM is usually charged with the pacing of that. See the Experience Section at the end of this chapter.

When a PC returns via the Linear Maze, they will find themselves wherever their Shadow is (maybe in a jail cell) and when they return to Chessboard Zero (normality) the door will vanish from the wall.

Infectious Descent

There's one more condition to discuss. Sudden, deep, uncontrolled descent has a history of being *infectious*. In this case, there *is no Disassociation:* observers will see the character "swallowed up by their easy chair" or "drop into the carpet" or whatever.

When a character "goes deep," even if there is Disassociation (so observers just see the character begin to freak out) often there may be many subtle changes in the environment. Those who are somewhat familiar with Infection and Descent (even if they may not understand or really believe it) are very mistrustful of those who have "gone deep" since there is a good deal of whispered speculation that being present when that happens is a good way to get Infected!

Usually this *will not* happen with large groups of people watching—so it can be staved off that way—however, you can't fight it forever (and you can undergo Uncontrolled Descent in a public place with noInfection so as a protection plan, large groups are highly questionable.

Undertow Bringing People With You

When you have an Episode, you bring people who are Infected with you. In some cases, a talented character may act as a guide. Usually if you feel an Episode coming on (either from a trigger or just as a matter of cyclic events) and you are panicked then the odds of going deeper and things being more uncontrolled are higher (note: most newlyInfected characters won't necessarily "go deep" even if they are terrified—but as time and Unsanity progresses, one's mental state does have an impact).

How Long do Episodes Last?

As long as they need to. There are things that characters can do to try to end them early (or extend them) but eventually a character will usually return to Chessboard Zero (exceptions are very rare—usually due to fatality).

When an Episode is Over: Growing Thin

People in a Support Group meeting will say an Episode is 'growing thin.' That's like having a nightmare where you realize you can wake up—maybe. Indeed, traditionally, an Episode that involved Uncontrolled Descent will end with the character returning to Chessboard Zero as though they were awakening from a dream.

But just because an Episode is Growing Thin doesn't mean it's over immediately: there are a multitude of stories of people being chased by monsters down unfamiliar halls going 'Wake up! Wake up! Oh, *please,* wake *up!*'

Usually the GM will call for WIL rolls periodically to terminate an Episode whose time has 'grown thin' and the level of Expertise the character has will modify them.

Entering and Exiting Via Doors

Usually if you come down through a door (as in Controlled Descent) you will, after a while, find another 'similar' door to get back out. That means the episode is "getting thin." It's a good idea to take these—failure can result in Notice.

When you return, you will be returned to your Reflection. If, say, your reflection is strapped to a bed in an asylum, you might find yourself exiting the lower levels via a staircase down *into* the bed (and, when you reach the top, you find yourself awake in restraints).

If you are not restrained, then you might find yourself simply in the same place as your Reflection is and, after a few seconds, the episode will end completely and you will be in whatever situation it was in.

Returning Via Rapid Ascent

If you fell down the rabbit hole (uncontrolled descent) then you may leave that way. The world will just decay and reform around you, kind of like waking up from a dream.

Christy grabbed my hand—*"Run,"* she said in a hoarse, terrified whisper. *"Don't look back."* The tangled wood closed all around us and I could feel the soft grass and leaves under my bare feet. I could hear the sound from behind us: the liquid sound of hearts beating like bass drums.

I ran and she led me. We raced through the forest past patches of oddly luminous mushrooms and past trees with the dark outlines of faces on all sides of us. I remember sprinting, flat out, racing for the dim light of a clearing, my breath coming in painful gasps and my lungs on fire in my chest.

I saw the tree line break in front of us and ahead was a cluster of grave stones. The general outlay of them was that of the mental hospital but they were old, small, and cracked. There was no way inside and they would offer no protection. I couldn't go much further. From the darker reaches of the forest came the Ludd-dumm, Ludd-dumm, Ludd-dumm of the beating hearts.

Christy broke through the trees and dashed, panting hard, towards the stones. *"There's no place like home! There's no place like home! Say it, Samantha,*" she shrieked in a breathless voice. *"Say the words!"*

I couldn't speak, I could barely breathe. I could feel my legs starting to give. I made a choked noise.

"Say the words, there's no place like—" I looked back.

I could see them coming through the trees, looking like giant ostriches sort of. There was something about them—like a blind-spot—something like *denial*—that meant I couldn't really look at them even though *I did look*.

They were the size of elephants and they skipped through the woods as light as prancing ballet dancers. From their bodies—from their feathers—came marionettes the size of humans dancing on strings. A score each of the puppets sliding down from the bodies to run along as well, racing towards us around the massive clawed chicken-legs of their masters. At the tip of each long gray ostrich neck was something horrible—something like a face crossed with a hand with the metal mouth of a garbage disposal.

I screamed, but Christy held me. I felt her *get it*.

"There's no place like home," she said, and I could see the forest floor and the Wild Things drop away beneath us while the grave stones warped and breathed out and popped into massive buildings with shining lights in the windows. Unable to stand, both of us fell, tumbling across the lawn.

Notice: Something's Looking for You

When one goes deep down, one risks being followed back up. Also, when one is "being watched" then when you undergo Descent the next time, there may be something waiting for you.

Scoring Notice

Notice is scored as Low, Medium, High, or Extreme. This is a measure of how likely you are to encounter a dangerous situation *because there is something in Wonderland looking for you*. Many Episodes can be dangerous 'at random.' However, a character with a High Notice score has become a tasty worm on the tip of a hook and one of the deeper things in Wonderland is looking for him.

Notice starts at Low (meaning that chances of something happening because they are being hunted are negligible) and increases based on the character's actions.

Things that Increase Notice

Things that may increase Notice are:

- Undergoing Uncontrolled Descent to Chessboard Three or deeper.
- Being seen by one of the deeper things.
- Refusing to participate in a "Drama"—as explained in the final chapter.
- Avoiding Descent with certain drugs or certain techniques (staying with crowds of people will work in *some* cases—but not others, and it is always risky).

Effects of Notice

There are several ways that having a higher Notice can affect you.

- Something follows you home. Most things *can't* come up to Chessboard Zero, however some, like a Giant Squid reaching the upper layers of the ocean, can come up to Chessboard One for a time. They will often have some sort of dangerous presence on Chessboard Zero (monsters cast Reflections too) and you may find yourself having to deal with them. They may also hang out and look for you next time you have an Episode.
- Getting sucked back into a more and more dangerous Drama. If you go deep and get "involved" in something (as said, this is explained in the final section) avoiding it may result in it recurring—like a nightmare. It may also get more and more dangerous each time.

Satisfying Notice

Notice goes up and down—it doesn't necessarily go high and 'stay high' (not for people with Survival Traits, anyway) so if something follows you home then you may be able to evade it for a while (or kill it) and then be okay. Similarly, if you discharge your responsibility in a Drama you may reduce the ill-effects of Notice (or even benefit by it).

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Christy was in the back of the car, ranting in a high voice—she was babbling—but I knew all too well what she was saying. I turned to Joe.

"Drive, Joe," I told him. "She's … she's having an attack—it's okay, she'll get better—but we'd better go." We'd just left the Burger King restaurant and I knew we had to get to Vegas—to find the guy who could maybe *help us* after we'd fled the hospital.

Joe, who'd been more and more disturbed by this was now looking positively incredulous.

"She's *really* fucked up, Samantha," he said. "She's *really* messed up." She looked it. Here eyes were closed. Her color wasn't good. Joe pulled out into traffic and aggressively cut across two lanes. The overpass loomed ahead. He accelerated. She was talking:

"They're on the highway. They're chasing me down the highway. They're going to *get me.*" Christy was saying in a warbling, terrified voice. "They're like a school of whales—they're coming up and there's more of them. Oh God, oh God, we've got to run. Oh no. No. No. They're coming. The whole school is *coming*."

I turned back to the front seat. "Joe?" I asked. He looked at me from the driver's side. "Don't take the highway," I told him.

"Too late," he said. The car turned right, flowing with the traffic up the on-ramp. "If I bail now, we got cops." It was reasonable—but I wasn't as worried about the cops. I looked frantically out the windows but saw nothing other than normal traffic.

"Christy," I asked, not sure what to do, "*where* are you?"

"The highway. The highway. They can *smell me*. They're *looking for me*." She opened her eyes and looked at me with a lost-little-girl look. "I'm so scared, Sam," she said, tears in her voice. "Please come and get me. I'm so *scared*."

Joe looked at me. He was, I thought, two seconds from not being able to deal. "Drive," I said. "Drive fast. And look for anything … unusual."

His look told me that wasn't making him feel any better, but he punched it and expertly swerved around a slow-moving van.

"We're coming," I told Christy, holding her hand. "We're coming." I wasn't sure if she could hear me or not—or if it meant anything. Then she convulsed. "Oh shit," I said, strangely soft. I could hear her choking. "Oh shit, Joe? I think—" then her eyes opened and she screamed once, loudly—and, in her eyes, I could see that she saw me. She was back.

"Oh Christy," I said. "Thank god—"

She gripped my hand but turned, twisting in the back seat, craning to look out the rear window.

"What?" I asked. Then I saw it. Behind us, about 20 car-lengths back, were a line of semi-trucks with Harvest Gardens written on the sides. There must have been six or seven and they were threading their way between the cars, closing with us. Their windshields were sheets of blinding glare. I couldn't see anything human looking behind the wheel.

"They came," she said, looking behind us, her hand trembling. "They're here."

Twisted

One can't look into the abyss and not be changed. One cannot fall down the rabbit hole enough times and come back normal (unless, perhaps, one is very, very young). Wonderland *twists* those it touches. In some cases that twisting simply causes people to fall apart: they may become predatory things—monsters both more than—and less than—human.

But in other cases, being twisted by Wonderland makes us into something greater than we were. It infuses us. While many people are simply destroyed, "mutilated," or undone by twisting, a few—the kind of person who manages to survive initial infection—are actually enhanced by it.

These people find that not only may their minds be expanded by the experience of Wonderland: their physical form itself can be re-cast in a new mold.

Acquiring Twists

When characters undergo descent, especially if they have Survival Traits, they are *altered* by Wonderland. Their physical beings *on the lower levels of reality* (you don't mutate on Chessboard Zero) become strange. There's a whole chapter on it—read that.

In game mechanics you get Twisted Points when the GM determines some mutation has happened. In practice we give these to all the PCs at the same time (or close together) and it makes the characters stranger and more powerful.

Reflections and Shadows

One of the most complex (and, we think, interesting) aspects of Wonderland is how Reflections and Shadows work. Think back to that stack of chessboards, each floating in space above or below the others. When you, the real you, are on Chessboard Zero (reality) you cast "shadows" down one, two, or (in rare cases) even more levels. These "Shadow pieces" look like you and act like you. They usually *don't* go off by themselves—but in some cases under some conditions they do. As much as the warped topology of the lower levels allows they mimic you when they can, to a extent.

Now you're having an Episode: there's a Reflection piece cast up onto Chessboard Zero while the real you is down one, two, or even more levels deep. Again: the Reflection mimics you. If, on Chessboard One, you go to the store, it goes to the store (remember Chessboard One is, physically, almost exactly like Chessboard Zero so the store is still there). But, what if you're deeper? What if you are down on Chessboard Four and there is no store ... not even a city—down on Chessboard Four? The world is *distorted* so completely that there might not even be solid ground.

What does your Reflection do when you are sailing a fantasy galleon on the Mare Imbrium? What does it do when you have shape-shifted (Twisted) into a one-inch-tall form that is trapped inside a giant clockwork tower? How can it mimic that?

Even more interesting: When you are Twisted, you can be vastly more powerful than your normal flesh and blood body—but those Twists only appear on the lower levels of reality. What if you are down on Chessboard One (still looks pretty normal) but you're Twisted ... and you get *mugged*? What if your Twisted form is 500 pounds of armored muscle and wicked teeth and claws?

Look at the chessboard on Level Zero: your Reflection is surrounded by two "mugger" pieces. It's completely normal (no extra mass, no bio-weapons). It's a pawn. One level down, though, that "Pawn" looks like a giant rook. It's still surrounded by two Shadow Mugger pieces but on this level *they don't stand a chance*. So what happens?

Do you get mugged on Chessboard Zero but kick their ass on Chessboard One? Does the fact that you dismember their Shadows on Chessboard One *affect* them on Chessboard Zero? Does the fact that they overpower you on Chessboard Zero mean their Shadows fight harder on Chessboard One?

It's all very confusing. In these next sections, we sort it out.

Reflections on Chessboard Zero

When you are undergoing Descent your Shadow (well, it's called a *Reflection* if it's being cast "upwards") is active on Chessboard Zero. That means that as you do things on the lower levels, your Reflection will do them, or approximate doing them, in reality. How does that work? Well, here are the guidelines:

- Your Reflection will usually appear somewhat *nuts* (or outright, downright, crazy as hell). If closely inspected, it'll seem like you're sort of sleepwalking or in some sort of strange mental state—you see and respond to things but the Reflection's reactions are all out of context and strange.
- Your Reflection's actions are *analogues* of your actions on a lower-reality. Where they differ is that the Reflection's actions are a "best fit" for the Chessboard Zero reality. If you are talking to a mythical beast on Chessboard Three, on Chessboard Zero you might be mumbling to yourself, shouting out meaningless phrases, etc.
- When you (on a lower chessboard) are talking to normal people's Shadows, the conversation seems a bit surreal to you. The same way your Reflection seems surreal to *them* on Chessboard Zero. However, the topics of conversations will usually somehow, sort of match up.
- Your Reflection may imitate your normal life patterns if that's a good way for things to be analogous—but it doesn't really get things done. For example: you are in your house on Chessboard Three and

it's a bizarre maze you are trapped in. When your friends show up, they'll find your Shadow wandering through your rooms (as you are wandering through the maze). Because the topology of the maze in no way matches the topology of your house, your Reflection's similarity to you is very stretched (and if it is stretched too far it'll disassociate—see below)—but it might appear to be "cleaning house." In fact, when your friends arrive it might have cleaning supplies out and be sort of acting like its cleaning the windows and stuff. When you get back it'll have done an absolutely *random* job of cleaning things up but there'll have been an *apparent* effort made.

- If you succeed at something on a lower level your shadow usually succeeds at it on an upper-level. This is the case where what you do is "mundane." If you succeed at something on a lower level of reality because of special abilities you have there, there are special rules governing that which are explained under Reflection Disassociation.

Example: Gregory Walsh is trapped in a room on Chessboard One. On Chessboard Zero, the room is also locked—but the real Gregory has lock picks and he manages to get the door open on Chessboard One.

Although his Reflection is generally ineffective as a prime motivator and is acting very strangely (other people in the room see it capering around and laughing and whatever else), when it goes to the door and takes out the lock picks, it does manage to get the door open. That's because Gregory succeeded.

What if Gregory, because he is twisted and has great strength on Chessboard One rips the door off its hinges? His normal reflection on Chessboard Zero doesn't have any special abilities—so the door (probably) won't come off its hinges. However, what exactly happens depends on how *experienced* Gregory is at managing Descent.

If he's not experienced, then he exits the room on Chessboard One. On Chessboard Zero his Reflection, unable to keep up, will *freak out* (this is called Disassociation). From that point on, the changes Greg makes on Chessboard One will not likely be mimicked on Chessboard Zero.

If he's somewhat experienced then the door might mysteriously unlock itself on Chessboard Zero. The hinges might "fail." Essentially his Reflection somehow gets the door opened.

If he's very experienced then, yes, people will see the "normal" Reflection of Gregory tear the door off it's hinges. They might even be Infected by that! It's an *Impossible thing*.

Alex Hill, Infected
New York Advertising Executive.
What *he* thinks happened (Down on *Chessboard One*)

Alexander wakes up on a bright morning in the middle of June and looks out the window of his Manhattan sky rise apartment. He feels a little *off* today. This is because he's having an Episode and has descended to Chessboard One. He doesn't have any idea what's going on (he knows nothing about Wonderland or Infection). He just knows things don't feel "quite right."

On the way down he sees his neighbor in the elevator. Tom Gruman is a republican. He's a 60-year-old conservative who talks like he'd piss vinegar and hates anyone under 30. Alexander wonders why he's wearing a red and white striped Cat-In-The-Hat stovepipe hat this morning … but he doesn't say anything.

Down in the lobby the doorman is pouring coffee into the potted plants and talking to them as they rustle in the wind from the open doors. Alex doesn't like that either—but he's late to work.

He ignores the homeless guy with the sign that says "SHAMELESS SYMPATHY PLOY." (and in smaller letters) "GO TO HELL YOU COLD-HEARTED BASTARDS." What gets his attention is that when he stops into the Starbucks for coffee they give him one of those new golden dollar coins and along the bottom it says "Mother, Should I Trust The Government?" instead of "In God We Trust." *That can't be right*. He's heard that line *somewhere,* but he can't remember where and it definitely isn't something they're putting on money now, Sacajawea or not. The kid at the counter won't take it back. The kid blandly and unbelievably, tells him it's lyrics from some *seventies* band and that the government moved from the gold standard to 'fiat currency' so the quote makes *perfect sense*.

Alexander is starting to get worried. Now he's looking around. All the streets are normal. All the cars are right. There are still crowds that move in little spurts and herds when the lights change. The air is clean and brisk. Everything seems … okay … except for those obviously fake little gold coins.

Then he sees big banners in the Department Store Window windows that read "SALE: Minor Price Reductions on Stuff We Couldn't Move."

And then he loses it. He grabs a person and says "Do you see that? What the hell kind of sense does *that* make!?" When the police come, he's standing in the street screaming that he's an advertising executive who makes a quarter of a million dollars a year and that is just *wrong*.

When they ask '*what's* wrong' he points to the banner that now reads "Spring Cleaning Clearance Sale" and … he's … speechless.

Blake Truman, Starbucks clerk.
How it looks to *him* (On *Chessboard Zero*)

One of the regular suits comes in and, you know, Blake can see right away that he's a bit *off*. The guy seems somehow rumpled instead put together like he normally is. When he orders, he says some brief stuff about coffee prices being related to major economic indexes in first world countries. It sounds like a joke—but the punchline gets lost somewhere.

The trouble starts when Blake gives him some of those dollar coins in change. Sure, some people look at them funny or ask questions—but Alexander? He launches into this tirade about how the government has stretched its fiscal credibility to the limit and is now not just putting *women* on coins—but *ugly women*!

He's ranting and the whole place is staring. He's holding up the coin where it says *In God We Trust* and he's demanding that *someone—anyone* explain to him where God (or Yawhe, or some of the other names for the architect of the universe) made any kind of *promise* (he says it venomously) to uphold the value of American currency. He demands money that doesn't *have* to rely on God's not-given-promise and after thundering at Blake, he asks if Blake knows what money's value is based on in the *first place*.

Blake, who is no dummy and takes night classes at the college, remembers that US money is worth something because the government *says it is*—but he keeps damn well quiet about that. He ducks under the counter.

Blake is cringing now, and hoping the guy will get out of there—and finally he does, *skipping*. He's lost it. Totally.

When Blake sees him next, he's out in the middle of the street ranting about the colors of the banner ads Sax is using on its store-front and being restrained by police.

Oddly, when they calm him down, he looks … well … surprised.

Chaos

Acting on Other's Shadows

Imagine you're a normal, non-Infected person. You have a Wonderland Shadow but you aren't aware of it (well, you are *now*—but you think this is just a goofy concept in a game book). Let's say that today your Shadow gets eaten by a floor-shark (you know them, they swim in the concrete oceans of the foundations of giant office buildings).

What happens to you? You have a bad day. Maybe you slip and fall on the floor and break a hip. Maybe you get sick. Maybe you find yourself emotionally fragile for the day. There are a lot of variations—but there is an effect, just not a direct (and fatal) one.

Okay, now imagine that a guy undergoing Descent comes along on Chessboard Two and he grows a giant five-foot wide maw and *devours you!* What happens then? Same thing? Not exactly.

The guy who's undergoing Descent is, unlike most Wonderland monsters, throwing his *own* Reflection up to Chessboard Zero. So you see him coming down the hall. When he (on Chessboard Two) devours you, his Shadow has *some kind of interaction with you*. And it isn't good.

Maybe it's assault. Maybe it's him shouting at you ("Biting your head off" so to speak). Maybe you get a *really gruesome feeling* from him and then collapse, really sick and vomiting. Again, *exactly* how it plays out depends a lot on a massive variety of factors (and is pretty much to the GM to determine).

Let's back up though: what if he just pummels you—no special powers, no weird abilities—he just sucker-punches you and then kicks you in the kidney on Chessboard Two—what then?

Well, again, that depends. It depends on what level of reality the interaction takes place on. See, the "real" him is interacting with *your* shadow. The *reflection* him is interacting with the real *you*. Here's a re-cap.

On Chessboard One

The world is almost *identical* to your real world so what happens is pretty much an exact analog. You fight it out normally. You see him as talking strange and stuff—but the fight goes just like it does for him. Straight up. No difference in the physical outcome. He hasn't used any special abilities so there's no *major* disconnect between what he sees and what you see.

On Chessboard Two

In a "normality zone" it's like Chessboard One—but in an Insane Zone, things are a little different. Here he might hit you once instead of several times. It's still very physical—but it may be a good deal different in the specifics. It'll also tend to be *muted*. If he kills your shadow it might just *injure* you.

On Chessboard Three

It's even more abstract. An assault on your shadow might equate to him screaming garbled obscenities at you on Chessboard Zero. If he kills your shadow, you still get sick—but it the cause and effect won't easily line up (although you'll probably be suspicious!). If he throws your Shadow through a window it might show up as pushing you against a wall.

On Chessboard Four

It's like the Floor Shark. He assaults your Shadow on a lower level of reality—but you don't necessarily even interact with his Reflection on Chessboard Zero (or not much). The effects are purely un-related.

Reflection Disassociation

When you are having an Episode, and you are several levels of reality down, your Reflection is *up* on Chessboard Zero tryin' to keep up with you. This works so long as what's going on with you is *pretty much* what's going on with it. Some of how *in sync* you and your Reflection-self are will be based on how different your locations are with the difference in reality level. Some of this will be based on how different you and your shadow are (if you shrink down to a quarter of an inch tall and climb into the pipes in the walls, your full-sized Reflection will have a hard time following you). Some of this is based on what you are doing. If you are on Chessboard Three having a conversation with an intelligent African Elephant that happens to be coming through the office, chances are your observed behavior on Chessboard Zero will be a little weirder than if you're sitting where your desk ought to be not saying anything.

Reflection Disassociation happens when your Shadow on Chessboard Zero just *loses you*. When it can no longer even *approximate* your actions on the lower level. If Disassociation occurs then it's cut loose. What you do is no longer even semi-relevant to what it does.

In many cases this comes off as you *having a nervous breakdown* or just going completely bonkers. In some cases it's not that dramatic though. The rules for it will be covered shortly but let's look at a series of examples of Normalization and possible Disassociation when you have an Episode at 8:00 AM and (for whatever reason—maybe you're new at this) decide you need to go to work in the morning.

Chessboard One

The office is a place that is commonly inhabited and not on the edges of society. It doesn't change much *at all* on Chessboard One. In fact, it's dead normal. All your co-workers are there. Everything is where it's supposed to be. If you pay attention you'll notice that everyone seems a little spacey—a little *off*. But that's about it

Normalization: It's probably minimal. If you just do your job and work normally then people seem strange to you—and you seem strange to *them*. If you give a presentation people may think you're a little under the weather or in a strange mood. If you notice that *everyone's* acting strangely and corner them about it then on Chessboard Zero you may go off on a dramatic rant about how the office seems to have been replaced by "pod people." Not good for career advancement.

Reflection Disassociation: Like, *none*. Unless you're really Twisted and using it, there's probably nothing at the office that would Disassociate you from your Shadow.

Chessboard Two

If the office is in a Normality Zone then it's a lot like Chessboard One—but it might be a lot less populated (and, note, that even if the building is *basically normal* there will be areas within it that are insane—they may just be small). But let's say it's *not*. It's in one of the insane zones.

When you get to the parking lot you can see that several arching viaducts run *into the building* through great tunnels in the glass walls. The parking lot is composed of blocks that heave up and down like in a video game. When you get to your floor it's almost empty. The co-workers who are there seem *insane* and all the furniture is on the *ceiling*. The copying machines from various offices seem to be grazing in a herd by the supply room and there is a disturbing half-built mannequin that's acting like your boss in your boss's office.

Chessboard Three

On Chessboard Three the whole place is an Insane Zone. There may be a building where your office is—but you might not be able to get to it (all the streets are different). The good news is that your co-workers may never actually get to see you "go nuts." The bad news is that your neighbors very well might. Your office may be in someone's kingdom and the land may bear no resemblance to the office building you know.

Normalization: Chances are that whatever happens on Chessboard Zero will have almost no relevance to Chessboard Three. Often the "area you land in" is a lot like the one you left (your room is normal—but the living-room is an Egyptian temple to an avatar of a giant Coke-can). So when you leave your house or apartment, people you normally meet in the morning will be dealing with an either mostly or entirely cut-loose Shadow that'll probably make for a very strange encounter.

Disassociation: Likely. Chances are that somewhere between your bed and the office the topology and situation will stop bearing relevance to each other and your Shadow will wander loose. It might make it to work—but either way it doesn't look good.

Chessboard Four

At this point Disassociation and Normalization are anyone's guess. Since the terrain changes over time it's a pretty sure bet that if you're there long enough it'll happen.

Chessboards Five and Six

You are *down the rabbit hole*. Your physical body on Chessboard Zero probably *vanishes*. If it doesn't, then Disassociation just happens immediately. You may well take some stuff—real, physical stuff—with you. Sometimes you'll leave a burnt or bald spot on the carpet.

Snap-Back: Resolving Disassociation

Okay—so if I ditch my Reflection and it has a breakdown and gets taken to Belleview, and I'm on Chessboard One and head out to southern Montana … what happens when the Episode is over? What if I brought a camera and took pictures? What if I got stabbed! Huh?

Okay—we'll go with the simple case first. Let's assume you're like most people who are Infected—you're not experienced with this whole thing yet (or maybe you have some experience but you've not *mastered it*). Okay? Here are the answers.

I Disassociated And Wound Up Far Away From My Reflection When the Episode Ended

What happens is you *Snap-Back*. When the Episode is over, like waking up, bang you're back wherever your Reflection was (probably—this is the simple case). That might well be in restraints!

Note: If you do something like fly or teleport or otherwise travel quickly on a lower level of reality your Shadow will try to link up with you—so you might wind up jogging down a back alley or on a bus or taxi … or driving. Shadows can drive. They even drive pretty safely (if you did)—but they tend to get tickets anyway for not paying attention.

Okay: What If I Took Pictures?

Your Shadow takes a lot of weird pictures (but of real things) and those are what you get. Okay—the camera? That's the *Shadow* of the real camera. Let's say that at the start of your Episode the camera (the real one on Chessboard Zero) was taken from your Shadow and *smashed!* The result is that a little while later your camera on Chessboard Two (or whatever) will stop working … or just fall apart.

But let's say it didn't get taken and smashed? Do I get pictures? This gets a little more complex than the "simple case"—the basic answer is:

The more complex case (which we'll go into later) is that you get some *really* weird pictures from Wonderland. But that's not a given by any means.

Faking Your Death: It's not a bad idea to have someone shoot you on Chessboard Zero when you are having an Episode if you want to 'fake your death.' The problems are:

1. If you are not deep (i.e. Chessboard One or Two) and not disassociated then you will also be shot (and killed) on the lower level (i.e. their Shadow will walk up and shoot you too).
2. If you don't have at least a decent level of mastery you may "just die" when your Shadow is killed. This is a danger for many starting or even somewhat experienced characters.
3. Even if you are not "just killed," you usually suffer a major wound when your Shadow is killed. Ouchie.
4. Episodes last a variable amount of time—when you return from descent, your (dead) body will vanish. Since most episodes last minutes to hours, the chances of your dead body disappearing from the coroner's office are substantial. This will, at least, cast some doubt on your actual "death."
5. That said, if you can go down, Disassociate, take the wound, and stay down long enough to get a death certificate then, when you return (see the section on Snap Forward) you will have faked your death with Infection. You will not be the first.

What if I got Shot? Hurt? Killed?

If it's the *real you* down on a lower chessboard then you die for real. Your Shadow just drops dead. But if your Reflection gets killed you feel a really bad feeling, but you aren't dead. Your Reflection will eventually vanish and you'll show up alive somewhere else.

What Do People See if I Was Hurt On a Lower Reality?

If the real you is damaged on Chessboard Three and the Episode ends, when you *Snap-Back* to your Shadow Self (wherever it is) then the skin where you were wounded is discolored but you aren't externally bleeding. Medical Science will see wounds appear under the skin if Medical Science is watching closely—and Medical Science will certainly scratch its head.

Can I Bring Something Back?

Simple answer—no. When you *Snap-Back* you just disintegrate on the lower level of reality and re-inhabit your body. Advanced answer: Yes. Oh yes—and it's often a terrible *mistake*.

Abnormal Normalization: Impossible Events

Disassociation and the way events get translated between the Chessboards are the natural mechanics by which the universe of Chessboard Zero keeps the "possible" in and the "impossible" out. Ideally, it should never happen that a person on Chessboard Zero sees something from the lower levesls that simply shouldn't exist. That, of course, isn't awlays the case: Some people, sometimes, bring things *back*. And sometimes, when you go somewhere or do something on a lower level of reality it affects the upper levels in a way that is conventionally *impossible*.

What determines when something impossible happens on Chessboard Zero is up to a number of factors (skill and experience and specific abilities of the characters, the GM's decision, and how the game is being handled in general). We'll get to deciding *if* the impossible happens—but first we'll look at *how* that can come about.

The Death of a Reflection

There is no hard and fast rule for what happens when a Reflection on Chessboard Zero dies—however: one possibility is to make the character roll a CON roll on the Major Wound Table. If the result is Dead or Dying or Internal Damage then apply a Minor Wound's worth of damage (all internal, and no additional CON roll) and the character is unconscious and helpless for several hours.

There are several gradients of the way this can manifest.

Level 1: Very, very *unlikely*. Let's say that on Chessboard One, I can turn to liquid and melt under a metal door barred from the other side. To observers, my Shadow can't "pick the lock" and it can't "crawl under the door." Usually, myShaodw would Dissociate, but let's say that's not the case. What if the brackets holding the bar suddenly *fail* and fall on the floor—and the lock *unlatches*? I mean, no physical *impossibility* (and the odds of that happening are still probably less than a thermodynamic miracle that involves my individual atoms tunneling to the other side of the door).

Observers will be freaked out. Skeptics (who weren't there) will talk about metal fatigue.

That's the most innocent kind of Abnormal Normalization.

Level 2: Impossible but Obscure. In the door situation, let's say that it's vault door and there are 8-inch tungsten steel rods sunk in concrete. If the mechanism "fails" the door is forever locked—and I just "drained" through a tiny hole. What then? Again: likely? Disassociation—but if that doesn't happen then—what observers see is an electrical discharge, a pulse, an obscuring cloud of smoke. Maybe they watch me stand there, pushed against the door—and nothing happens … and they look away—and suddenly *I'm gone*.

Human perception is definitely part of the equation (although how or why that's the case isn't clear) so the more non-Infected people watching more chance of Disassociation. Cameras may be shut down due to electromagnetic pulses (mild ones).

Level 3: There is an audience, cameras are set up to hardened military standards and there are low-tech devices as well that are recording. I have a shackle around my ankle. Someone is *touching me*. What happens? Assuming no Disassociation (here, probably, really likely) then *bang*. There I go, draining like water through the tiny hole. On tape it'll probably still be a scratchy print—but it'll look like special effects.

So How Do I Know If This Happens?

Here are the guidelines for knowing if "Abnormal Normalization" occurs.

Unverifiable Events are More Likely To Happen

If you are locked in a closet all alone in a house and you descend to Chessboard One and flow under the door there is a greater chance that on re-emergence you'll be outside the door. If people are watching or security is in place (i.e. if it's really a vault) then the chances go down.

Crossing the Street

This is an example that came up during play:

Quin Sential is Infected and having an Episode: she has descended to Chessboard Two where the streets of her town (Baltimore) are all deserted, graffiti covered, and littered with garbage. In shock, she walks across an empty intersection and down the middle of an empty street. What happens? Will her Reflection on Chessboard Zero mimic her actions and get hit by a car?

No: On Chessboard Zero her Reflection will mimic her actions *as closely as it can* while still being aware of danger and its circumstances. It will follow down the sidewalk. This will result in Reflection Disassociation but only of a very minor sort: the Reflection can link up with her easily and is never very far away.

In this case the results of the Disassociation are insignificant (Reflections and their casters are often not *exactly* in the same place anyway)—and there is no need to worry about "being hit by a phantom car" as the Reflection will take care of itself.

Characters Experienced In Descent Can Fight Disassociation

The general rule is that characters with Survival Traits, special training, and experience may be able to prevent Disassociation from happening, thus affecting changes in the real world. There is a section, following this one on how skills can be used.

Experienced Characters Definitely Get More Unlikely Events

Normalization in the *possible* but unlikely zone is a lot more common for experienced characters. It's still no certain thing (and a lot of people watching makes it less likely)—but it can still happen.

Levels of Disassociation

The term 'Reflection Disassociation' refers to a complete break between the actual person and their Reflection (it is possible that if the character returns to a place where his Reflection can catch up that it will re-synch). However, in a more general sense, actions taken on Chessboards One and Two (and to a lesser degree Three and below) will have *some* effect on the real world (Chessboard Zero).

Levels of Association are predominantly based on things like the character's level of Mastery and dedication to causing something to happen—however the number of observers on Chessboard Zero is important too. Seeing Impossible Things happen can Infect people who are studying the phenomena. As such, the number of observers greatly increases the chance of Complete Disassociation (no effect is observed no matter what the character does on a lower Chessboard). *JAGS Wonderland* tracks five *grades* of Disassociation as follows:

Complete Disassociation: When a character is "Disassociated" and doesn't have at least Advanced Mastery this is the most common. This simply means nothing notable happens on Chessboard Zero. Eventually things might add up to some "noticeable" effect but even a pretty observant person will be able to find logical reasons why things happened.

Major Disassociation: A character with Proficient Mastery or (more commonly) Advanced Mastery can get Major Disassociation. At this level *subtle* changes can propagate to Chessboard Zero. Most effects on Chessboard Zero will implicitly be easily explainable but some will seem to (very subtly) defy explanation (a glass on a counter slides two inches one night, by itself). Note that a character who is getting Major Disassociation usually cannot "string a bunch of improbable events together" to add up to some seriously improbable actions.

Moderate Disassociation: At this level of disassociation observers will begin experiencing "haunted house" types of effects. An observer might see short-lived, temporary effects that are impossible or very difficult to explain (objets levitate, doors open and close, etc.)

Minor Disassociation: At this level observers are coming very close to seeing the exact effects of a character on a lower-level of reality. If the character raises a glass of water they'll see it get picked up and spilled on the floor.

Complete Association: The effects are *identical* to what is going on at a lower level of reality.

Example: A character, Disassociated from his Reflection (for some reason) opens a door and walks into a room and closes it behind him.

Level of Association	Effect
Complete Disassociation	Nothing happens. The door on Chessboard Zero remains closed. No one in the room will experience the character's presence.
Major Disassociation	The door might be seen to shake in a barely perceptible breeze. A very sensitive character might get a fleeting sense of presence.
Moderate Disassociation	The door seems to rattle for a moment.
Minor Disassociation	The door mysteriously swings open. Then, as if caught in a soft breeze it swings softly shut.
Complete Association	The doorknob turns, the door opens, and then is closed as though by a human hand.

Example: A Twisted character with super strength punches through a wall to break out of a prison cell and then exits.

Level of Association	Effect
Complete Disassociation	Nothing happens. The character's Reflection will disassociate and freak out. On the lower level of reality the character is probably free but when the Episode ends he'll Snap-Back.
Major Disassociation	The wall develops a very faint fault line. Not enough to really do anything. The Reflection, as with Complete, freaks out when the character goes somewhere it can't follow.
Moderate Disassociation	People see the character (the Reflection) bang on the wall with powerful blows, bloodying its hands (this might happen in the above too). However: a cinder block *cracks!* The character has done a truly impressive amount of damage to a cinder block and cement wall for a normal guy—but not superheroic amounts. The character is still trapped. Over *time,* however, if not disturbed, the character might eventually pound through!
Minor Disassociation	The Reflection puts his hands through the walls. There's blood and dust and it takes a while but the character is like a wrecking machine.
Complete Association	The character evidences impossible strength, destroying the wall with no damage to his hands.

Example: A character on Chessboard One, having an Episode and disassociated calls another character. Note: Under almost every condition an inexperienced character will simply get through to the subject's Shadow. However, a character with a good deal of Mastery could conceivably attempt to "call through to the real world" and convey a message. Wonderland is strange that way: if you're trying to do that, it could work!

Level of Association	Effect
Complete Disassociation	Nothing happens. At the GM's option, the Reflection, although separate, might get an inclination to call the target character but wouldn't talk about anything relevant. On Chessboard One the character on the phone gets through to the target's Shadow (which leaves the real target character no wiser).
Major Disassociation	The target character gets a "funny feeling" from the phone. He might have a fleeting thought of the calling character (this is, likely, because his Shadow answers the phone and the connection between person and Shadow transmits the sensation of taking a call).
Moderate Disassociation	The phone rings once. Caller ID probably shows nothing at all.
Minor Disassociation	The phone rings and when the subject answers he will hear the Disassociated character's voice. Now: the Disassociated character on Chessboard One will be talking to the target's Shadow—but the spoken words will come out of the phone on Chessboard One as well. So it might be a strange conversation since the real subject won't be able to talk back (his Shadow will be doing the talking back—he might hear his own voice saying strange things!)
Complete Association	The Shadow is cut out of the loop (the Disassociated character might hear its voice like cross-talk on the line) and can converse normally with the subject. Caller ID will still show nothing. The electronics of the phone system will show all kinds of conflicting data about where the call came from.

Example: There is a battle between Disassociated characters and monsters in a kitchen on Chessboard One. On Chessboard Zero non-Infected people are in there preparing breakfast. The kitchen is trashed during the course of the fight.

Level of Association	Effect
Complete Disassociation	Nothing happens. On Chessboard *One* the Shadows of all the normal people will flee (probably) when the battle starts. Even if a Shadow gets hurt the most that'll likely happen is that a person on Chessboard Zero feels "a slight pang."
Major Disassociation	The morning is a bit chaotic. Things are more likely to spill and make a mess. There may be some weird knocking sounds from the fridge. Note that the disruptive effects may not directly coincide to the time-frame of the battle. The destruction done on Chessboard One may mean that for several hours the area is a bit more "error prone."
Moderate Disassociation	A few "freak" (or "freaky") accidents happen. A glass window just breaks for no reason at all. The refrigerator door opens and stuff spills out (it doesn't keep flying out, there's just one tumble). People get a fearful impression. If someone's Shadow is injured by a Moderately Disassociated character then they might suffer actual damage to some degree.
Minor Disassociation	Poltergeists! Things fall off counters, break, and roll around. A chair collapses into fragments. Things might even pick them up and throw themselves. Note, again, that the time-frames might be off. If someone's Shadow is injured they might suffer the actual wound.
Complete Association	It's like there's an invisible force battling in the kitchen. If the Shadow is injured or killed it is highly likely the person will be injured or killed in the same way.

Reflection Disassociation vs. Action Disassociation

Something to get straight is "Action Disassociation" vs. Reflection Disassociation. The two are related but not exactly identical. Reflection Disassociation is what happens when you, on a lower level of reality goes somewhere or does something your Reflection can't. For example: you are having an Episode and drive to work. You are stopped by a police officer on both levels of reality.

What happens, exactly depends on a lot of things, however the most likely situation is this: On Chessboard Zero your Reflection doesn't handle itself well and antagonizes or disturbs the police officer. Thus, even though *you*, on Chessboard One, behave normally, the Shadow of the officer is belligerent and unreasonable.

If you deal with this obviously crazy officer in a calm, rational manner then chances are decent he'll let you go—and on Chessboard Zero you'll be free to go about your way too. But that's not necessarily the case (the GM can call for a Complication Roll). If something does go badly then:

1. The Chessboard Zero officer could decide to arrest your Reflection, leading his Shadow to arrest you as well (for "no reason").
2. The Chessboard Zero officer might decide to arrest your Reflection but the Chessboard One officer *does not* try to arrest *you*.

In the second case, Disassociation happens: on Chessboard Zero your Reflection goes off in the back of the police car. On Chessboard One, you go to the office. In this case, Disassociation is pretty much guaranteed by the fact that you and your Reflection forcibly diverge. That's Reflection Disassociation.

Action Disassociation happens when your *disassociated* self gets to the Chessboard One office. You (not realizing anything is "really wrong") sit down and work on your report. On Chessboard Zero you're not there. However: the Shadows on Chessboard One will treat you "normally" (not normally, they'll treat you like Shadows do—which will make you think they're crazy!). However, the work you do might, in a sense, *still get done* if you "associate" enough.

This would be "by magic" but when the Episode ends and you Snap-Back (into the jail cell) and sort out the "misunderstanding" and come into the office you might discover completed files on your computer (which you remember completing). The odds are strongly against it in a general sense (most people don't have any high degree of Association—which means the files they created would only be accessible next Episode when they are back on Chessboard One). But it is possible.

At the end of this chapter there are rules for making rolls to determine how actions might possibly "translate up" to Chessboard Zero when you are Disassociated.

GM's Notes

Firstly: A major factor in how this is run deals with the amount of empowerment the players have/want in the game. The more that events on the lower levels of reality can impact the real world in meaningful ways (especially when the PC's are highly Twisted and more powerful in Wonderland) the less *horrific* the game will be.

We see the "basic game" as staring out about madness, the loss of self, horror, and a certain degree of helplessness. Over time, however, the characters will go from "survivors" to "major players" (or at least bigger fish).

A lot of this will determine when Disassociation stops.

Secondly: the use of Disassociation allows play to continue without a major glitch or impossible to answer questions about how something "Normalizes" when it's impossible in one frame of reference—but a major utility of the phenomena is keeping everyone from finding out the world is crazy.

So long as Disassociation is in force a PC can't ever "prove" to another person that something weird is going on. When they "do the impossible" they are just, eventually, Disassociating.

Thirdly: Once the characters are moderately experienced it may be useful in play to let the character know when Disassociation is threatening (in fact, it may be useful to let the player know all the time if everyone is good with that). This allows the player/character to make decisions about how far to push it.

Snap-Forward!

Snap-Back is what happens when an inexperienced person recovers from Disassociation. Snap-Forward is what happens when an experienced person ends an Episode away from their Reflection. When Snap-Forward occurs, your Reflection vanishes and you appear somewhere analgous to where you were on a lower Chessboard.

Because of the way the universe works, Snap-Forward most often occurs where it cannot be directly seen. For example, if you Disassociate from your Reflection, leave it in your office, and teleport 10 miles away, when the Episode ends, your Reflection will probably go to the washroom (where it quietly vanishes) and you will find Snap-Forward most easy to generate if you terminate the Episode in a back alley rather than in front of a group of people.

Now, a few notes:

- Disassociation usually happens when there's no possibility of Chessboard Zero matching up with the actions on the lower level—so for this to happen, let's say your Lower-Level self is Twisted and you have wings and fly to the top of a giant sky-scraper. You might

Disassociate but the break would be a bit on the minor side and your Shadow (in reality) left behind, would try to link up and reach the top of the skyscraper. Since it's not very slick, it might get caught by security and hauled into an observation room. If you Snap-Back, you're suddenly sitting *in* the chair and there are security guards around! When you Snap-Forward, it'll vanish from the chair.

- Snap-Forward will put you wherever you came out in the condition that you ought to be (bleeding wounds, etc.)
- Snap-Forward does *not* guarantee that carried items will come through. Usually clothes do—stuff that sort of "came from" Chessboard Zero returns with you (and vanishes from wherever it was)—but Wonderland Artifacts won't *necessarily* come. They may—but that's something different.

General Principles

Okay, so you cast a Shadow 'down' to the lower Chessboards (and it looks and acts like you) and a Reflection 'up' and it acts like you as much as it can (unless you or the terrain does something to break the connection and then it *Disassociates*, right?) That seems pretty simple—but it's not the end of the story.

There are a few more things that you need to know for the really complex interactions (note: you can skip this section—mostly PCs and GMs won't get deeply into the metaphysics of *JAGS Wonderland*—but if you do have questions, this should help answer them).

Translation

When events take place on one Chessboard the effects are felt on others (usually the ones right nearby—but the effects of actions can spread

beyond that). How those events, actions, and objects *change* is called *Translation*. There are no hard and fast rules for it, only some guidelines and the specifics are up to the GM. The most obvious form of Translation happens when two characters have a conversation and one of them is undergoing Descent. On Chessboard Zero, the guy who *isn't* having an Episode is the one who makes sense (well, usually) and on Chessboard One, he's the guy who seems nuts. However, despite the fact that the two conversations may be very, very different in terms of length, volume, who says what, and how mad each person walks away, they will share certain *symmetries*.

First General Principle: Higher is Stronger Than Lower

When a change is affected on Chessboard Zero, the results are usually more significant on Chessboard One (and they're pretty significant on Chessboard Two). Imagine a workshop with a half-made chair and two people. One is an Infected on Chessboard One (undergoing Descent). The other is a carpenter on Chessboard Zero (and he's perfectly sane).

The Carpenter is building the chair. The Infected guy is trying to *trash it*. Here's what will happen: as the Infected guy breaks the wood, rips the legs off, and gouges the surfaces of the material, on Chessboard Zero there will be *fault-lines* and *accidents* that happen while the carpenter is working on the chair. Wood will break strangely. Bolts will … fall out. Things will not go well (if the carpenter is a master carpenter, he may become convinced the chair is haunted)—but the chair will, most likely, still be *built*.

On Chessboard One, the chair will be in pieces—but, a day later, there it is—a little shoddy—but whole. The guy who did the trashing may be very frustrated. If he continues to break it, day after day, then the Carpenter will find it falling apart very quickly—but if he works to repair it—to keep it together, even if it's totally smashed on Chessboard One, it'll come back together.

Second General Principle: Fearful Symmetry

Things on the lower Chessboards more concretely represent their true meanings and inner natures. The lower you go, the deeper this gets (there are examples of this in the next section). The GM should always consider what the inner nature and true meanings are of any act and work to keep the Symmetries consistent on the lower planes.

Often things that we hold important (but not *religious*) become *religious* on Chessboard Three or Four. Malls may become cathedrals to consumption. A prison becomes a temple to the god of *Lack* (personified as Eros, the love of things we don't have and *lust* after), etc. In a very real sense, when structure was built, the *intent* that went into it constructed something true to that wish on the lower Chessboards.

People's Shadows say and do deeply honest things that are still within an acceptable range of the real person's actions. A man's Shadow may not stand exactly where he does and won't strike the same poses—but it'll be relatively close by and will be doing *relevant* things.

Third General Principle: Things Can Diverge Greatly, but They Come Back Together

If you go shopping during an Episode on Chessboard One, chances are your Reflection will go shopping too. If you pay for the food you buy, odds are the Reflection will too—it might not hand over the right currency until asked over and over. It might make a scene about some vagary of how the groceries are packed. It very well may not buy the *same things you did*—and when you return to Chessboard Zero you may find that you still need to go out again!

However, let's say you decide to just walk out without paying: after all, these guys are all *nuts*—they may not (effectively) stop you. This does not explain what your Shadow did.

When characters on a lower level of reality (Chessboard One or Two, usually—beyond that, Disassociation is almost a given) their Reflections may or may not succeed on Chessboard One. This is a matter of *experience* (see the Mastery section) in most cases.

The issue, from a Translation standpoint, is that some things are just simpler on the lower levels of reality. Shadows of human guards (like the guy in the grocery store checkout lane who will complain if you just try to walk out without paying) are less attentive, more easily distracted, and more easily fooled. You also may have access to special powers (Twists, Inspirations, Magic, etc.). On places like Chessboard Two, most places, even "inhabited" and "sane" ones are pretty empty. If you need some time alone to stuff that CD you want to steal down your pants in the record store, chances are you've got it.

But in reality, on Chessboard Zero, the place might be packed!

So how do you know if you succeeded? How does the GM determine if the actions your Reflection took on Chessboard Zero and the specific circumstances of it's attempt worked or not? Because if you walk out of the Chessboard Two record store with the stolen CD but your Reflection is busted, you might undergo Reflection Disassociation—or something else might happen. How's the GM know.

Elements of Success and Failure

Level of Understanding and Emotional State

A character who realizes that they are "on a lower level of reality" and "is trying to be sneaky" will get more advantage than one who is just wandering through an area they shouldn't be in, looking around. A lot will be up to the GM. If a character is thinking "I'm *crazy*—although

this place looks deserted, I'm sure there must be people here" then his Reflection may be more circumspect.

Level of Mastery (Experience)

On the beginner level, a carefully executed plan on the lower levels of reality will give a boost to *a skill the character already has*. The Reflection will *probably* make a roll for it even if the character does not. On Chessboard Two, you might walk into the University Administration building, which is *deserted* and go and find your student file (if it's even there—the place might be trashed). On Chessboard Zero, your Reflection might make all kinds of Stealth rolls to sneak around people and get a +1 to +4 to its activities because you were *unopposed* on Chessboard Two.

If you can use special powers to teleport around, this plus will probably be +4—maybe even higher. The Reflection *won't* teleport around—but it will make Stealth checks.

Now, let's say that there is an office where the secretary sits with her back against the door. There is *no real chance* of sneaking by her.

- The character uses a special ability to bypass her. This, for a beginner, will almost always cause Disassociation.
- The character, on Chessboard Two, tries to persuade her to abandon her post. At this point what happens is *very* dependant on the character's mastery level. If he is a Beginner or only Proficient, his *Reflection* will not nearly be as smooth, coherent, or focused as the character will be. While the (real) character on Chessboard Two will be dealing with distracting the secretary's *Shadow* (which is easier than distracting her), his *Reflection* will be dealing with the real person: everything is stacked against it.
    - If the character is of Advanced or Master experience level, though, the success on Chessboard Two will *help a lot* on Chessboard Zero. For one thing, the Reflection will be massively smoother and more coherent. For another thing, when the secretary's Shadow is distracted she will feel sensations of distraction and such and while she won't (probably) be aware something is strange, it'll have an effect.
    - Another important factor is how well the character plays to his strengths. If his attempt to convince her comes from a stumbling, semi-coherent romantic proposition that's calibrated to be cute and/or embarrassing, his Reflection will probably have an easier time seeming embarrassed and rambling than if he pretends to authority he doesn't have.

Degrees of Disassociation and Association

How much will things line up when they are changed on a lower level? A lot of it depends on the *acting character's* level of Mastery. When there is an acting Reflection, things will line up as directly as possible: If you pick up a glass, your Reflection picks up a glass—like that.

But what if you're *Disassociated?* Let's say you are in prison. You break out on Chessboard One, using special abilities (but you Disassociate) and you go to your friend's house and say hello. On Chessboard *One*, you are there, interacting with all their Shadows. On Chessboard Zero, your Reflection is still in prison and it's freaking out because it is Disassociated. What happens?

- The world on Chessboard One will diverge directly and sharply. Since you are out of prison and at your friend's house, if you throw a party and order pizzas the pizzas might or might not come on Chessboard Zero. If all the Shadows at your friend's place are glad to see you and the mood is festive, for reasons that *no one on Chessboard Zero* can really fathom, the atmosphere in the house might get more, you know, lively.
- People on Chessboard Zero may well have the *distinct impression* of having met you (although when they think about it, they'll realize that didn't happen).
- If the Police on Chessboard One *chase you to your friend's house* some police on Chessboard Zero might show up—but they won't be searching for you. Maybe they'll be at the 'wrong address.' Maybe they'll have a 'gut feeling' they should drop by—something like that.
- Subtle or indirect means of communication may or may not work. Phone calls sometimes cross over. So does writing. If, knowing you'll Snap-Back to jail when the Episode ends, on Chessboard One, you write in your friend's diary: "Help, they have me in the county jail—please come bail me out!" then, a few days later, some hazy writing might appear on one of the pages. The person might make out the word 'jail.'
- If the character is very experienced, they might be able to produce 'ghostly effects' by changing things directly on Chessboard Zero by their actions on Chessboard One—however, this is rare.

Stretching things tends to end the Episode. There are forces working in favor of cause and effect. Those are working against you: if you start changing things too much, the situation may end—or you may be dumped *deeper down* into the lower realities. It's hard to be sure.

However: As the situation changes when you are there, it'll also revert back when you are gone. "Free Agents" running around on Chessboard One and Two that do not translate directly to physical people on Chessboard Zero can make a lot of *temporary* changes. However, if you (on Chessboard One) shoot up your friend's house in a battle with the Chessboard One police (while your Reflection is in jail on Chessboard Zero) the house may suffer some "ill effects" (maybe a painting falls off the wall … some glass breaks unexpectedly … the TV goes on the blink for a while … but even on Chessboard One the bullet holes will probably

not stay. When the glass is repaired, the TV is fixed, and the painting is hung back up, someone on Chessboard One would see the damage evaporate.

Fourth General Principle: The More People Who Would See Something Impossible Happen, The Harder It Is To Do

When determining what Translation is like, the GM should consider that if more people are watching, the machinery of the universe is more likely to make the effects *subtle* or non-existent. If a character tries to "perform before a large audience" (of non-Infected people) by having "Impossible Things" happen due to actions on Chessboard One or Two, it won't work. The universe is holding together enough to prevent Infection. That's a good thing. Small crowds usually means one to three observers but as many as five may constitute a small group. Their mental state is important too: if everyone is in an altered state of consciousness due to drugs or meditation of something then displays before much larger groups are possible.

But it's important to note that such people are also more resistant to Infection just by seeing an Impossible Thing in that mindset.

Multiple Shadows, Multiple Reflections

Our first Question is this: does a guy on Chessboard Zero who is 'casting' a Shadow version of himself down to Chessboard One *also* casting a Shadow down to Chessboard Two? Can that happen. The answer is *it can*—but it usually *doesn't*. A person who has been "fractured" by Deep Descent may 'leave a Shadow' on some lower level of reality. A person *might* show up several levels down (seeming less 'like himself' or 'more confused' each time).

Likewise, if you are down on Chessboard Six, having a bizarre Alice in Wonderland adventure, you leave a Disconnected Reflection up on Chessboard Zero but you aren't usually "visiting" the other Chessboards at all. On the other hand, you *might*—it's not *prohibited*. But, usually, when you are spread out like that, unless something weird is going on, you aren't *vulnerable* to having your multiple Shadows or Reflections attacked. Usually one is the "primary" one and that's the only one that really has any strong effect on you.

The Crest of the Fin: Monsters Down Below

Monsters (and other inhabitants of Wonderland) live and exist on the lower Chessboards. They usually do not cast their own Reflections upwards to Chessboard Zero. But sometimes they do. When something from the lower Chessboards does come up to Chessboard Two or Chessboard One, sometimes it manifests in some sense on Chessboard Zero—and that can be dangerous.

When one that does gets close to the surface (Chessboard One) it's a whole different ballgame. Something that is "non-reflective" on Chessboard One *doesn't* appear directly on Chessboard Zero. It may have an atmospheric effect (the lights in the room might seem dimmer—things might decay rapidly due to its presence and influence one level down—but there isn't a physical creature in the room that represents it). In fact, a "non-reflective" hostile being might, on Chessboard One, *kill your Shadow*. You could get sick. You could get unlucky. You might get horrible nightmares—but you won't (usually) *die*.

However, when a *reflective* being is near the surface of reality and it does cast a Reflection upwards—it can kill you dead.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that there are *rules* that these things have to abide by. Being too obvious or too widely seen can have devastating repercussions. Anything that is reflective and is on Chessboard One is taking a risk—when it interacts with a human, it might Infect them—but if it doesn't manage that—if the machinery that protects the universe prevents that from happening it might be *destroyed*. So they tend to keep to the shadows.

What Does A Reflection of a Monster Look Like?

Well, they're all different. Usually they appear, at first glance, like something normal but … a little wrong. That wrongness is usually something most people gloss right over—or avoid. They might look like homeless bums rooting around in dumpsters. They might look like cars that drive themselves—or even more abstract things (patterns of graffiti, standing waves in rippling grass, etc.)

Like optical illusions the Reflection of a monster may appear inconsistent. A person may seem to have green eyes … then blue. A storefront's

door might have decorations that look like *teeth* coming up from the bottom and down from the top when you're across the street but look okay when you're close. Like that.

Some monsters are capable of casting themselves up to Chessboard Zero with no change in appearance whatsoever (there is a rating called Presence that determines which beings can do this). Even so, because of Normalization, they usually remain hidden, appearing only to feed (or other business) or to Infecteds which pose them no problems.

Do All Monsters Cast Reflections?

As we said: no. But everything done on Chessboard One *does have some influence* on Chessboard Zero. Let's say that a "non-reflective" monster trashes your Chessboard One kitchen. What happens? Well in your Chessboard Zero kitchen things will be more likely to spill or get knocked over. Things will *leak*. Appliances will break. The clock on your microwave will reset and blink and maybe say strange things. The magnets holding cupboards closed will weaken and they may swing open. Formerly stout shelves will sag. The windowpane might develop a *crack*.

All of this will look like coincidence—but none of it is: if you descend to Chessboard One when you are having an Episode you'll find the place a wreck—much worse than your real Chessboard Zero kitchen—but there will be certain *symmetries*. Stains will have the same, or similar shapes. Broken things will seem *familiar*.

Other Things Cast Reflections

Sometimes inanimate objects that are dredged up from the lower-levels cast Reflections. A rusting junk-heap of a car might be some kind of bizarre *engine* on Chessboard One. Impossible *Things* can throw Reflections up as well—so be careful what you bring back from below.

NOTE: If a character undergoes deep Descent and returns with something to Chessboard One, places it down, and then ascends all the way up to reality (Chessboard Zero) an observer on Chessboard Zero won't necessarily see it "appear in his hands" (or even see a more normal looking version of it *just appear*). Again, this is done subtly. If the character is under close observation the thing might not make it back at all—or it might appear *slowly*, some time later. Maybe people who look at the character's dresser have an *impression* of having seen a key. Then, a few days later, there's something that sort of looks like a key laying on it.

Imagine you're out at night and there's a figure, half lying down, half sitting up, reeking of alcohol under a street-lamp. His face is cast in shadows. He beckons to you and you come—maybe he needs help—he seems weak. When you get there, though, something is wrong—he's partly wrapped with newspapers and old tattered clothes and he's mumbling your name and talking about the girl you went out with last night and somehow he seems to *know* her—and, worse, his voice—there's something *bad* about his voice.

You back up, not sure what to do, but then he says "We're watching you, you know? We're watching you and sooner or later you're going to lose your grip—and then you slip—into the masterpiece." It sounds musical. It sounds raspy. It sounds like a threat. There's a single visible eye in the shadows but it's not .., a human eye—it's bulging and deformed and ghastly yellow—and then a wind comes and it blows away the newspapers and the rotting old soiled clothes and the hat and everything else. There's nothing on the pavement save for a stain.

Rogue Shadows and Disassociated Characters

We've discussed Reflections and Shadows but there's still another case: The Rogue Shadow (and its cousin, the Whirl). There are some conditions where a Shadow may *abandon its caster*. That means *you're* sitting in the meeting with your boss and your *Shadow* is on Chessboard One riffling through your boss's office!

What good does this do you? Well, communication between Shadows (and Reflections) and their casters is usually very *imperfect*—but you might get a *sense* of what it saw. You might get an image of papers in his filing cabinet popping into your head, or have a dream about what your Shadow found out, or do some "spirit writing," or just get a *hunch* that you really need to go check out your bosses' office. Like that.

When can this happen? It happens most commonly when a person's Shadow responds to the actions of something that *isn't* casting a Reflection on Chessboard Zero. If your buddy is Infected, has an Episode (Descent to Chessboard One), Disassociates at his house, and *he*, leaving his *Reflection* behind goes out and finds *your* Shadow and convinces it to go on a road-trip with him, it'll leave you! No big deal, it'll rematerialize wherever you would normally cast it some time later. You probably won't even know (you may have a sensation like you're enjoying the open road … you might seem to somehow recall you met with your buddy that day … but you'd know that's foolish).

Another way that it can happen is when Shadows get "ideas of their own." Some people have Shadows that do things that *don't* mirror their actions but do mirror thir emotions and true selves. That guy in the office who seems mild-mannered—but everyone's unsure about him? Maybe his Shadow is acting out his true feelings about his co-workers and/or

doing something else that everyone gets the *sensation* of, but doesn't *understand*.

Rogue Shadows may also *mutate*. They may have Twists like PCs. They may be deranged, self-aware (sometimes), and have agendas. In some cases, their human casters seem to be inadvertently acting out on their Shadow's wishes. That can be scary: if your boss's Shadow looks like a mutant, talking lion and you're on his *bad side*, having an Episode in the office could be *fatal!* (If his Rogue Shadow devours you when you're down on Chessboard One, you really die! If he just devours other people's Shadows when the human caster is "chewing them out," well, that's not nearly as bad).

Whirls

Under conditions of psychological trauma, humans sometimes *spin off* a "rogue shadow." In this case, the person keeps their Shadow normally but now there's a damaged, mutant version of them walking around on Chessboard One as well. Whirls tend to seek others like themselves and to have insane aims and directives. Rarely are they benign.

Whirls can have a dramatic effect on Chessboard Zero. Unlike many monsters they are aware of, and understand Chessboard Zero pretty darn well. Unlike deeper (and more physically powerful things) they have the advantages of teamwork and planning—and they can stay at the relatively high levels of Chessboards One and Two indefinitely. They also have the skills of their creator (although the personalities are often far different). They understand the value of pressuring Infecteds they can affect directly. They understand the difficulties they face in changing the real world and they are more than willing to play that game.

Expertise With Descent: Mastery

You have already read about the stages of standard infection: Early, Two Middle Stages, and Late. If you don't have a Survival Trait, and you make it to Late stage, you are in real trouble: either you will die, go permanently insane (your Reflection is abandoned on Chessboard Zero to be committed to an asylum), or vanish entirely.

However, if you are careful—if you are committed to learn—and maybe a little bit lucky, you can learn to control Unsanity and, eventually, master it.

How this is done varies a lot depending on the kind of game you are playing. In some cases, people who survive a few Episodes just start to "get the hang of it." Lots of people (Gurus, in the lexicon of the Support Groups) claim to teach techniques that will help you overcome your Infection (or even cure it). Few really do.

GM's Notes on Mastery
The gaining of skill in dealing with Episodes will have a direct impact on how horrific the game is for the players. If the game is meant to be scarier, mastery should be made difficult or even nonexistent. If the group is looking for something more action oriented then they may be easier to come by.

It's possible to start a game with a somewhat experienced character who can handle Unsanity (either due to training by a person who understands some of Wonderland or, simply because some other life experience has prepared them for it).

Since the evolution of victim to master is the core of many games, the participants should discuss what the pacing should be like. Just because you have four free points doesn't mean you can necessarily start buying mastery. The GM will set the pace at which Mastery can be gained and it may require in-game experimentation and training (or, alternatively, characters may just "start" with a level of intuitive mastery).

Elements of Mastery

Here are the areas that those who are experienced with Wonderland can control.

- The ability to "bring on" an Episode is one of the earlier things a person can learn (and it can be very unwise if the person isn't prepared for what will happen—or very useful once the person is skilled)
- Training to prevent or recover from an Episode. This is tricky (it will not always work), however, if a person can "stabilize," they can prevent minor triggers.
- Training one's Reflection to behave better is both possible and useful: a more savvy Reflection will mean fewer complications when you do have an Episode.
- The ability to Disassociate from one's Reflection at will. This is handy if you wish to be able to do things on Chessboards One or Two but "leave your body home." Unfortunately, your "body" will be doing things without you so it isn't foolproof (and if you, for example, put yourself in restraints, you'll be in restraints on Chessboard One as well).
- Preventing or limiting Disassociation. This is the big one. If you can take unusual actions on the lower levels of reality and *not* disassociate then you can do amazing things on Chessboard Zero.

How These Are Learned

These are learned by spending Archetype Points and Experience Points. How much training is required is up to the GM (based on the level of empowerment in play). Here are some possibilities:

- Learning in a book. There are many books of "forbidden magic" that teach techniques to deal with Infection. Because most

magic does *not* result in Unsanity, these texts are usually held as secret, heretical, and are highly 'encoded.' Still, they can teach techniques for gaining mastery should your magical training lead you into dangerous ground.

- The Internet. The Internet is so full of disinformation, conspiracy theory, fabrications, and mistakes that it's hard to get anything useful out of it—but it could. Studying a book or a web page won't work for everyone and most of the techniques are more like meditative rituals you do that *may* have an instructive effect—but it's not a science.
- Teachers. Everyone wants a guru or a leader to guide them through their ordeal. Most are worse than charlatans. A few might actually teach techniques.
- Special Studies. Some people in academia or the mental health profession have been studying the schizophrenic phenomena for some time. While most physicians do not believe in Unsanity, some have noted techniques used to lessen the effects. Some good can come out of these (although being in the hands of the Mental Health System is usually far more dangerous than beneficial).
- Self Taught. Well, you can "just get it." People who take a systematic or considered approach to dealing with their problems may well come away with some valuable insights and techniques.

Mastery vs. Twists

Mastery is one way of gaining empowerment through Infection. So are Twists (not to mention learning magic—but that's a whole 'nother story). How do these things interact in the game?

Here's how we see it:

- Being Twisted usually "just happens to you." You have a deep descent and BANG, you're Twisted. You might get run through a weird machine on Chessboard Five and come out mutated. You might interact with the Queen of Hearts and come back different—whatever—Twisted happens when it happens and it can happen almost immediately.
- Insights (special abilities based on manipulation of Wonderland) can be trained and learned as above. They can also just be "realized" after a certain amount of mastery.
- Mastery comes in steps and usually starts midway through the "beginning" with the characters learning to control their Reflections and cause Descent when it's convenient. It then grows as they become better and better at either causing (or more dramatically) preventing Disassociation.
- Depending on how the game arc is going, the players may become powerful operatives on Chessboard Zero (since they have mastered Disassociation and can now do 'the impossible' so long as the audience isn't too big) or they may be important figures on the lower levels (as the game takes up importance down below).

For a high-empowerment game we suggest Twists happening fairly quickly followed by a period of learning of basic Mastery. After that, over the middle to end game the characters will refine their mastery levels and grow in power.

Novice Level [0]
Description: When a character is newly Infected they will find Descent, Episodes, and Triggers mystifying things. How long this level of expertise lasts depends on a lot of things: some people never get more proficient in controlling their Unsanity. To get better at dealing with it you need at the very least some clear-headed analysis or some training.
Common Stage: Early Stage (although, as noted not everyone 'gets better with time.')
Standard Effects: ● **Triggers**: Weak Triggers can be fought with a WIL roll at -2 (see the modifiers for some additional training). ● **Descent**: In some cases (often, actually) the character simply may not notice they are on Chessboard One. If the GM calls for a roll it is either PER, WIL, or RES (modified by appropriate traits like Instinct or Sensitive for +1 to +4 at the GM's discretion). ● **Twists**: It is up to the GM as to whether Twists manifest. Usually they will not manifest if the character has not *recognized* that they are having an Episode. They may "fade in over time." On a random roll usually an 9- roll will manifest each given Twist. If the character is threatened or angry, this is increased to a WIL roll (often with GM-assigned modifiers) ● **Notice**: The character doesn't understand Notice and won't have any really good feel for what is dangerous.
Causing an Episode: Most beginners can't simply cause an Episode (and wouldn't want to!) Techniques like using drugs, watching certain movies, or subjecting oneself to very taxing states can do it. So can things like hypnosis and esoteric meditation (or mystical exploration of the self).
Causing Disassociation: Beginners usually don't *understand* Reflection Disassociation or how to cause it. It may happen by accident due to the person doing things their Reflection cannot match—but they can't *cause it*—and if they do, their Reflection will almost certainly freak out.
Recovery From Episodes: When an Episode is "Growing Thin" they can make a WIL roll to recover. There may be negatives for extreme stress and fear or positives depending on the GM's assessment. They usually have no luck at all influencing an Episode when it is not *thinning*.
Reflection Behavior: Reflection behavior is a standard +0 to Complication Rolls.
Action Disassociation: Standard Level is Complete Disassociation.

Proficient [2]

Description: The character has "barely" begun to get a handle on their condition. This is usually achieved with some help from a Support Group or some therapy (or drugs) which calm the person enough for them to try to "get a handle on things." A character may well be 'Proficient' in dealing with their condition but not believe it is anything but mental illness.

This is the level most Support Group members (including leaders) attain.

Common Stage: Early stage or Medium One.

Standard Effects:

- **Triggers**: Weak Triggers can be fought with a WIL roll (see the modifiers for some additional training).
- **Descent**: In some cases (about half the time, actually) the character simply may not notice they are on Chessboard One. If the GM calls for a roll it is either PER, WIL, or RES (modified by appropriate traits like Instinct or Sensitive for +1 to +4 at the GM's discretion).
- **Twists**: It is up to the GM whether Twists manifest. Usually they will not manifest if the character has not *recognized* that they are having an Episode. They will usually manifest further down. They may "fade in over time." On a random roll usually an 13- roll will manifest each given Twist. This may be increased by a GM-assigned modifier (angrier characters may manifest at +1 to +4, for example).
- **Notice**: The character will have a (weak) instinctual feel for Notice and will have an idea that some "commonly held ideas" may actually be very dangerous in the long term.

Causing an Episode: Most beginners can't simply cause an Episode (and wouldn't want to!). Techniques like using drugs, watching certain movies, or subjecting oneself to very taxing states can do it. So can things like hypnosis and esoteric meditation (or mystical exploration of the self).

Causing Disassociation: Beginners usually don't *understand* Reflection disassociation or how to cause it. It may happen by accident due to the person doing things their Reflection cannot match—but they can't *cause it*—and if they do, their Reflection will almost certainly freak out.

Recovery From Episodes: When an Episode is "Growing Thin" they can make a WIL roll to recover. There may be negatives for extreme stress and fear or positives depending on the GM's assessment. They usually have no luck at all influencing an Episode when it is not *thinning*.

Reflection Behavior: Reflection behavior is a standard -2 to their Complication Rolls.

Action Disassociation: Standard Level is Complete Disassociation.

Advanced [4]

Description: The character has gotten some training and some experience. The character has a "feel" for different kinds of Descent and understands (at least instinctually) Notice.

Common Stage: Usually Medium 1 or Medium 2. This is about as good as most people who don't have Survival Traits get—if they try very hard. It is rare to find a person at this level of expertise in a Support Group. They have usually left since they are more capable of exploring their condition than denying it or hoping for a cure.

Standard Effects:

- **Triggers**: Weak Triggers can be fought with a WIL+1 roll (see the modifiers for some additional training).
- **Descent**: The character will almost always notice when they are having an Episode. Perception rolls are at +3.
- **Twists**: Twists almost always fully manifest.
- **Notice**: the character will understand what is dangerous. Since this may be highly at odds with their training to this point experienced characters will often have "falling out" with Support Groups.

Causing an Episode: An Advanced Character can "peek" at Chessboard One with a WIL +2 roll. This usually takes a second or two to "look around." This can be very useful for getting a feel for what is going on lower levels of reality.

Causing Disassociation: An Advanced character can cause Disassociation on a WIL+2 roll. When this is done their Reflection will usually be more "agitated" than normal.

Recovery From Episodes: Recovery from an episode that is "Getting Thin" is automatic.

Reflection Behavior: Reflection behavior is a standard -4 to their Complication Rolls.

Action Disassociation: Standard Level is Major Disassociation.

Expert [8]

Description: At Expert level the character has attained a deep understanding of Wonderland. **NOTE: At this level of Mastery the character is considered "empowered" with respect to Wonderland. Infection may well be seen as a *benefit*.**

Common Stage: This is usually the result of a great deal of experience and an embracing of Wonderland. It almost requires a Survival Trait and the character usually has several deep Descents under their belt.

Standard Effects:

- **Triggers**: Weak Trigger can be fought with a WIL +5 roll. Things that previously might be considered a Strong Trigger may no longer be (GM's discretion).
- **Descent**: The character automatically recognizes Descent.
- **Twists**: Twists almost always fully manifest.
- **Notice**: The character understands very well what will make environments more dangerous.

Causing an Episode: An Expert character can cause deep Descent safely, shifting to Chessboard One and then opening the Linear Maze to go lower. This usually requires a WIL roll at some modifiers to do safely. Often if things are relatively safe and sane, the basic modifier is +1 to +3. If things are dangerous then there may be a -1 to -8 modifier.

Causing Disassociation: Expert characters disassociate with a WIL +4 roll and their Reflections are only "mildly agitated."

Recovery From Episodes: Recovery from an episode that is "Getting Thin" is automatic.

Reflection Behavior: Reflection behavior is a standard -6 to their Complication Rolls.

Action Disassociation: Standard Level is Moderate Disassociation.

Master [16]

Description: The Master has reached complete understanding of Infection and their existence in Wonderland. **NOTE: This is never allowed without GM confirmation. It represents a complete command of the Infection.**

Common Stage: This is anywhere from non-existent to extremely rare. People who have reached the Master level are usually not accessible to people still based on Chessboard Zero.

Standard Effects:

- **Triggers**: Any trigger, including a Strong Trigger may be fought with a WIL roll. Weak Triggers will never affect the character.
- **Descent**: The character automatically recognizes Descent.
- **Twists**: Twists almost always fully manifest.
- **Notice**: The character understands Notice completely.

Causing an Episode: The character can slide in and out of an Episode at will, descending to either Chessboard One or Two with no difficulty whatsoever. Going deeper requires a WIL roll a -2 per level (to "land where you want") unless the character has visited the place prior. The character can find his way through the Linear Maze down to Chessboard Six.

Causing Disassociation: A Master can cause Disassociation at will.

Recovery From Episodes: The character can recover from any Episode at will. This is an 8 REA Long action in most cases.

Reflection Behavior : Reflections get +8 to their behavior.

Avoiding Disassociation: The Standard level of Action Disassociation is Minor Disassociation.

Mechanics for Unsanity

Now we're going to give you a bunch of "random-roll" mechanics to handle Unsanity and Descent. At the same time, paradoxically, we are going to tell you that your group (and you have a say in this whether you are a player or a GM) may not want to use them.

The reason we are doing this is to support the type of game which is run on the "what-would-happen?" principle. Descent and Episodes are *extremely* individualized. Even in the canonical imaginary world of *JAGS Wonderland* these rules would only represent a practically non-existent "center of the bell curve." As a result there is a lot of give and a lot of unanswerable questions about what "would actually happen" to characters presented with this reality.

But sometimes we want a dice-mechanic that can at worst offer guidance and at best resolve a sticky issue in a non-biased manner. We respect that and we want to provide players with the potential to simulate "ordinary people afflicted with Wonderland Infection" without simply resorting to GMs call.

So here they are, the mechanics.

Increasing Unsanity

Unsanity increases through a gradual weakening of the individual's grip on reality. This happens over successive Episodes through various kinds of "trauma." Usually Unsanity increases at a slow and steady rate, punctuated by a few special situations that cause a major increase.

NOTE: The "race against time" focus is not suitable for all *JAGS Wonderland* games. In many (most) situations the PCs will be dealing

Opening the Linear Maze

A character at Advanced (or, especially, Expert) Mastery can "step into the Looking Glass" at will and travel via the Linear Maze.

This is done by "triggering a shallow episode" (to Chessboard One) and then mentally "contacting" the maze. The "portal" may be many things. Most simply (and classically) it is a mirror large enough to step or crawl through. Other options include:

1. Walls with networks of cracks (the character "slips through").

2. Large patterns that, in the manner of an optical illusion, simulate depth (the character can vanish into a wall covered with stylized graffiti).

3. Reflections in a metallic surface.

In order to "travel" from one Chessboard Zero location to another, the character must affect Snap-Forward, and this can be assumed to work if the character correctly accesses the maze (that is: you don't need to roll for it separately when the access is done intentionally). However:

1. A character may become "lost in the maze."

2. The maze may be dangerous (although usually less so than, say, Chessboard Two).

3. This act is an Impossible Thing and is hard to do if people are watching (and will Infect them!).

with the specific *circumstances* of their Episodes (i.e. they will be embroiled in plots that cross several levels of reality) and not the "basic danger of being Infected" itself. However, death by reaching Late-Stage Infection is part of the universe (more so for people without Survival Traits—but it can happen to those with them as well) so we are including some rules here to present *basic* handling systems for GMs and Players who want them.

Tracking Unsanity

If the game is going to center on "tracking the PCs (or important NPC's) Unsanity" then it can be done with a point system. Each time the character has an Episode they gain a certain number of points based on the specifics and, when they reach certain levels of Unsanity Points, they progress to the next level.

Stage	Points
Early	0 – 10
Middle 1	11 – 20
Middle 2	21 – 30
Late	31+

The Cyclic Episode

Cyclic Episodes happen on a regular schedule based on the character's Stage of Unsanity (usually on a Lunar Cycle until the very end). These are "standard" Episodes and tend to happen unless some specific condition interferes.

How Deep Does the Character Go?

The depth a character hits, when it is being randomly determined (the GM is allowed to simply rule) is as follows.

1. Take the standard depth for the character's Stage. If there is a [bracketed] value, that means that the character will sometimes reach that level (albeit rarely). This level will be reached on a roll of a 7-.
2. Additional modifiers may result in "additional levels of Depth being reached."

Situation	Depth
Character is in fearful state	If a WIL-2 roll is missed by 4 or more, add 1 to the level descended.
The character is in an altered state of mind	There is a 12- roll that another Level will be added. If the roll is made, roll again at 7- and again at 2- for additional levels.
Character is Proficient Mastery	The chances of adding a level are reduced by 1 pt (a 12- roll for altered state of mind becomes an 11-).
Character is Advanced Mastery	The chances of adding a level are reduced by 2 pts (a 12- roll for altered state of mind becomes a 10-).
Character is Expert Mastery	The chances of adding a level are reduced by 4 pts (a 12- roll for altered state of mind becomes an 8-).
Character is Master level Mastery	There is no roll, the character does not have random episodes.
Character is on anti-depressants	The chances of adding a level are reduced by 1 pt. For certain drugs and techniques it might be as much as a 2pt reduction.
Character has a guide who is calmer/more experienced	The character's roll for descent will be reduced by 5 pts. He will tend to go to the level of his guide.
Character has Notice of Low	The character's rolls for going deeper are increased by 2 pts. The character has a 9- chance of gaining a level as well.
The character has Notice of Medium	The character's rolls for going deeper are increased by 3 pts. The character has a 10-chance of gaining a level as well.
Character has Notice of High	The character's rolls for going deeper are increased by 4pts. The character has a 12- chance of gaining a level as well.
The character is "heavy."	The character has a 10- chance of gaining a level. If this happens roll again at 8- and again at 6-.
The character has been to Chessboard 3+ once	The character's chances of gaining a level are at +2.
The character has avoided an Episode in the past	Character's chances of gaining a level are at +2 and the character has a 12- chance of gaining a level. For each episode avoided, add +1 to both rolls.

The Triggered Episode

There are two kinds of Triggers (things in the environment that bring on an Episode out of cycle): Strong and Weak. Strong Triggers are rarer (although by how much is not specified). No one but a Master can resist a Strong Trigger. When you are exposed, you may have a little while—but you *will* undergo Descent.

Weak Triggers, on the other hand, give you a WIL roll (at some modifier) to avoid (it might be a WIL roll at -10, but it's still a WIL roll).

When you are exposed to a Strong Trigger it will take you where it takes you (and may do so instantly). When you are exposed to a Weak Trigger, you make the roll and consult the table:

Strong Triggers are a canonical part of *JAGS Wonderland* for two reasons. The first is that no amount of training or experience beyond Master Level is a guarantee against an Episode. The second is that it's

usually handy for a GM to use a Strong Trigger to reliably introduce characters to an adventure. If a portion of the adventure takes place in Wonderland (and the players are agreeable to the concept of a Strong Trigger) then its use can prevent the party from being split.

WIL Roll Made By	Effect
-10 or worse	Catastrophic Uncontrolled Descent. You drop two levels above your standard rating, undergoing immediate Uncontrolled Descent. Most people without Survival Traits do not recover from this. Notice is High for this Episode. Damage is highly likely.
-9 to -5	Uncontrolled Descent: You will drop one level below your standard immediately. Notice is High for this Episode. Damage is likely.
-4 to -1	Immediate Descent: You have an Episode, descending to your standard *deeper* level.
0 to +2	Probable Descent: You feel the Episode coming on and it could take minutes or hours to get there. You get another WIL roll at -5 to "fight it off."
+3 to +4	Unlikely Descent: You may have a short period of Descent in the next few hours but pretty much you just feel a bit disoriented.
+5 or better	You are not affected by the trigger.

Unsanity Points: Roll for Each Level

For each level the character Descends there is a roll of 9 + LEVEL to gain a point. So if the character goes to Chessboard Three there are three rolls. A 10-, 11-, and 12- roll. Each that is made (the roll is less than or equal to the target number) will generate 1pt.

Controlled Descent vs. Uncontrolled Descent

If a character is going down to Chessboards One or Two, Descent is usually *subtle*. Nothing much happens to tip the character off. On the other hand, if the character is going deeper then we are looking at Controlled vs. Uncontrolled Descent. This is a combination of **WIL + modifiers + Mastery Level.** If the character makes his roll he is presented with a Controlled Descent situation: an entry into the Linear Maze that will take him down.

If the roll is failed the character undergoes Uncontrolled Descent which is usually (for people without Survivability Traits, anyway) more traumatic and more dangerous. The situational modifiers are as follows:

Situation	Modifier
Character has avoided an Episode	-2 per Episode Avoided
Character is in a panic	-2
Character is in an altered state of mind	-2
Character is very centered (meditating)	+2

Mastery Level	Modifier
Novice	-2
Proficient	+0
Advanced	+1
Expert	+4
Master	No roll necessary.

Avoiding the Episode

If a character is presented with Controlled Descent and *doesn't* take it (does not enter the Linear Maze) then they have "avoided the Episode" (they are still on Chessboard One for a while, though—but that doesn't count). Although this is standard advice of the Underground, it is *bad*. The dynamic created by refusing to enter the maze sets up a fracture point that makes Uncontrolled and deeper Descent much more likely.

Another way of Avoiding the Episode is to be around lots and lots of people in a socially engaged situation. This is risky: if it works you are still in more danger next time. If it doesn't work you have an Episode in public (meaning your Reflection is far more likely to be encountered doing odd things).

Using the Crowds

If the character is engaged with lots of normal (non-Infected) people then there is an 11- chance, -2 per Stage the character is at that they can avoid either a Trigger (a Weak Trigger) or push off a cyclic Episode by 1d6 days (and if the roll is a 6 it's gone for the whole cycle!) This does, however, count as an "avoided Episode."

Effects of an Episode

Descent can make you think you've gone mad. It can get you killed ... it can warp you. Things can follow you home. When you get back you may discover your Reflection has done things you'll have a very hard time explaining. It can be quite stressful! These are rules for determining the results of an Episode (NOTE: These rules do *not* tell you what happens during an Episode or where you go—that's up to the GM).

The Complications Roll

This is a table the GM can roll on to determine what kinds of social-life problems the character has to deal with after the Episode is over. It's very broad and fairly basic because there is just no way we could cover *everything*. So some interpretation is necessary.

Step 1: Determine if Disassociation happened. If it did then things tend to be a little (or a lot) worse. Firstly, you probably don't remember what transpired. Secondly, when a Reflection Disassociates it tends to become agitated or outright "freak out." This tends to result in more fallout during the social life. The GM will determine if Disassociation happened.

Cycle, Notice, Trigger

These elements of Unsanity increase as the character's Stage increases (see the chart in the beginning of the section). A Trigger of High means, for example, that there are one or more everyday things that set off Episodes.

The GM will determine exactly what the specifics of these are as well as what the general environment on the lower Chessboards is like.

Step 2: Determine if there were any situational modifiers. If the Reflection was stopped by a cop then there may be a police report (or you may be in jail). If you had to give a major presentation ... and did ... on Chessboard One then your Reflection gave some kind of "presentation" on Chessboard Zero: that *can't* be good. So a situational modifier may increase the chance of a more serious complication.

Step 3: Roll on the table taking into account the level of Mastery and other modifiers the character has. More acclimatized characters tend to have Reflections that handle themselves better. People on powerful antidepressants may, likewise, have more sedate Reflections (they are flesh and blood and the drugs work on them too).

Dissociation: +5 to the Complications Roll.

Situation	Modifier
Reflection meets strangers	Generally a –2 to –4. Strangers may think the Reflection is a deranged person, but they usually are not violent or threatening outside of some hyperbolic statements.
The Work Place or at Home with family	+1 to +4. Being with people who know you is problematic.
Stopped by Police	+4 to +8. A police officer may well decide that a Reflection should not be driving.
Character is "on the spot" at home or at work	+1 to +4. When Reflections perform under pressure it's never pretty!
Character has an "average, quiet day"	-2 to +0. It's quite possible for people to just think you were a little off if they aren't closely scrutinizing you.
A lunch date	+2. You're meeting someone you like for lunch ... and you have an Episode. Chances of some fallout from this are pretty high.
Character takes a day off	-2 (although Reflections tend to want to go out and shop or otherwise do "productive things")

Technique	Modifiers
You're on antidepressants	-1 to the roll (possibly -2 for the *right* drugs). The Reflection is more mellow (and so are you).
You have a "guide" or buddy watching over you	Usually this sort of *ensures* that nothing goes really wrong so long as the watcher can keep tabs on the Reflection. The problem is that the Reflection *doesn't think anything is wrong with it*. All of the drama about having an Episode evaporates as soon as it starts and the Reflection, as far as he or she is concerned is *fine*. For randomization purposes the GM can give a -5 to the roll assuming the watcher can influence the Reflection. Otherwise a roll (say 12-) can be made: if successful there are Minor Complications. If *missed* then the Reflection ignores the minder's suggestions and there's a standard roll on the table.
Tying myself to a bed	When you are truly afraid of being locked up, you might try something desperate like tying yourself to a bed or being locked in a closet. This can work a little, however: it makes you a tasty treat for monsters and things below the surface of reality. Also: even if you go deep (Chessboard Three or below) and Disassociate, there will still be "problems" related to you being restrained (subtle things). This will prevent complications but it increases Notice rolls by +4.
Drinking into oblivion	Another not-uncommon tactic to use when one feels an Episode coming on is to really hit the bottle and try to "sleep it off." This gives a -4 to Complications (and can help with Triggers) however, it's a bad gamble: when something really dangerous happens the character can't respond well.
Underground Journaling Technique	The Underground suggests certain types of training that involve repetitious writing on legal pads at certain times of the day during "bad periods" (times when the character is likely to have an Episode). The objective is to make this a *habit* which the Reflection will continue with. It's extremely boring and most new members hate the idea (it feels like a grade-school punishment!). If done religiously the Reflection will maintain the behavior and in doing so burn up several minutes or even hours doing something fairly normal seeming. This can work even if you Disassociate. If practiced this gives a -2 to the Complications roll.
Leaving Notes to Yourself	Leaving notes on your mirror, front door, etc. that instruct the Reflection on how to act can, actually, *help*. They have to be written in a fashion that is *unambiguous* (i.e. "When I raise my voice, people think I am strange. I do not want people to think I am strange so I will not raise my voice!") If someone finds them that can lead to problems. But doing this gives a -1 to the Complications roll, a -2 if you put notes *everywhere*.

Complication Table

The GM rolls on the table and applies the modifiers. This gives a range of *complications*. How this is handled is then up to the group—there are a number of options:

1. Characters who return from deep Descent (Disassociation) may have dream-like images of what happened while they were down below. They may have *some idea* of what transpired (or they may not have any idea at all)
2. The GM can combine complications or produce many little ones.
3. It is usually *not* acceptable for a Reflection to seriously hurt or kill someone. It is also usually not appropriate for a Reflection to commit a serious crime (shoplifting is common, though). This will take the game in a potentially very dark direction and this should be discussed with all the participants prior to play.

4. Participants should discuss what they think about having their characters *embarrassed*. Some players will like it. Some won't—and many will only appreciate it under some conditions. The GM should be sensitive to everyone's tolerance level.
5. Losing friends and family can be painful—even in gaming. The GM should be careful to keep complications as enjoyable aspect of the game. Note that in a horror game, having your wife believe you are going insane may be part of the horror—but the GM should be careful about having her move out if that pushes things over the line.

Note: as we said up front, losing friends and loved ones can be painful and un-fun—even in an RPG. The GM (who has a good deal of control extended to him or her by these rules) should work with the players in determining how Complications will work. Here are our suggestions:

1. **Go for it.** As dark as you want. Part of going insane in real life is loss of self, loss of control, and social difficulties (ranging from humiliation to fear to serious legal problems).
2. **Go easy on the important things.** Have a safety net ready (see the section on the Mental Health System). In this case, there may be difficult *aspects* of Complications but they will not dominate the game nor destroy the character's life. An example of this working well would be a character who is in an *unhappy* marriage but has a loving relationship with his son. The player explains this and the Complications can (or may) end the marriage but will not separate the character from his son.
3. **Go easy on the Social Humiliation.** This is a big deal for some players and if they don't like having their characters put in stomach churning social situations where there are no good solutions, respect that (and some players *love that—so ask if you're not sure!*).
4. **Ask the Player!** There's nothing wrong with letting players choose what happens as their complications. They might even get to choose a sort of "outcome" that will be played for (i.e. I break up with my boyfriend—but he calls me later to see if I'm okay). Yes, this is dictating some of the game. Yes, it's appropriate: Complications are very personal to the character and are (typically) *out of the player's control*. This is a rare situation (in our experience) in role-playing. We think a lot of very good (or perhaps, *very funny* play sessions could come from this with the right group).
5. **Ignore Complications Altogether.** If the players don't like the idea of experimenting (sorta) with 'insanity' then downplay this element in the game. Maybe people think they are 'losing it.' Maybe they even get fired from their jobs or whatever—but it's not the "focus" of the game. It's just background stuff (or maybe nothing happens—this is a core part of the *JAGS Wonderland* experience but, like everything else, that's optional).

Minor Complications

Minor Complications are usually things that can be cleared up with a

little work or an excuse ("I had a terrible cold that day!"). In some cases, the problem with Minor Complications will be tracking them down and dealing with them (a character may have a memory of talking to his next door neighbor or a phone call from that girl he met in a bar—and realize he needs to figure out what actually happened).

Even though minor complications are not so bad, enough of them can start to add up.

Example: The character is at work all day, but nothing is done and some co-workers are a little concerned or alienated (or maybe the young hip guy thinks you're *really* cool and a bit wild).

Moderate Complications

Moderate Complications are the kind of thing that can get you a warning at work or counseled at school.

Example: The reflection is stopped trying to walk out of a grocery store with an arm full of groceries he has not paid for. Clearly this is not a 'theft' attempt and the people at the store just think he is disturbed. The event is witnessed by the character's roommate's best friend.

Example: The character creates a public disturbance to which the police might be summoned (but if they are, it being moderate, they release the character with a warning).

Major Complications

This usually means the police are involved and that there is some kind of legal action. Usually this is minor in terms of jail time but there is a danger of being committed for psychiatric evaluation. A Major Complication means you have a run-in with the Mental Health System.

Example: The character has a breakdown in public, ranting, screaming, arguing, throwing things, etc.

Example: The character is caught breaking and entering into a closed building, thinking he has an appointment (his watch has AM and PM reversed and he's sure it's 2:00 in the *afternoon*—despite the fact that it's pitch black out).

Critical Complication

This usually means that you are committed to psychiatric evaluation (see the section on that). In this case, the character usually "comes to" in a locked psychiatric ward. This is usually the beginning of serious trouble (i.e. all the character's second chances are gone)—but once the character behaves lucidly, they may be released. Having friends in the Underground or, better, the Mental Health Community helps a lot here too.

Too Cool For School

It may be tempting for a character (or player) who is aware of the nature of Descent to try to avoid having his Reflection make a fool of themselves (or worse) by reacting to the weirdness of an Episode by taking it in stride or by showing no reaction *at all*. While this would seem logical, it is actually a flawed understanding of how Reflections relate to their casters.

What is most likely to yield good results is to react *naturally*. If something seems very strange, treat it as strange. If something seems weird and you are curious: investigate. If you see something that "should not exist" treat it as though it should not exist. Taking things in a good humor or a spirit of investigation is usually beneficial but for some characters a *hysterical* reaction may be better than no reaction at all.

A lot of this can be determined by your Survival Trait. A character who is The Scientist should be investigating a lot of things—the Dreamer? Excited by these new occurrences. A Pragmatist will want to treat the new situation as real and very relevant—not as boring or ephemeral. A person who's Survival Trait is *Get It Together* may even want to react *strongly* to Wonderland.

It's these natural reactions that will make their Reflection behave most appropriately on Chessboard Zero.

Complications Roll
The roll is a standard *JAGS* roll plus modifiers:

Total	Notes
0 to 9	No Complications (very minor)
10 to 15	Minor Complications
16 to 25	Moderate Complications
26 to 30	Major Complications
31 or more	Critical Complications

Notice and Damage: the Lasting Effects of Descent

Throughout Early and Mid-state (1) Unsanity, Episodes tend to be pretty self-contained: when they're over, they're over—and that's that. Twists are seen as a kind of consistent delusion (since there is no way to access them when you are *not* having an Episode) so this fits with the idea that even a deep Descent is somehow transitory in nature. But even so, they recognize that *sometimes*, especially after deep or traumatic Descents, things *don't* entirely go back to normal. They tend to call these things "aftershocks" or, sometimes, *damage*.

In game terms these are described as Notice and Damage (bad Twists whose effects are apparent even when you aren't having an Episode). NOTE: Damage is usually *not* an issue for characters (PCs) with Survival Traits. If a character with such a trait does "suffer damage" it is usually short lived.

Notice

Notice is rated from Low to High and indicates how visible you are to things that hunt on the lower levels of reality (these things are detailed in the third book). When a character with a degree of Notice has an Episode the GM can make a secret check to see if something has "began stalking the character." Certain types of actions can increase these chances (for example: a character who insists on treating the lower worlds as though they don't exist).

When the character returns they may have to deal with something coming after them. Usually the hunter cannot maintain the chase and will hang around long enough to cause one or two problems and then Descend again (indeed, in some cases, even if the character does *nothing* to defend himself, the presence of something hunting for you on Chessboard Two may be little more than *disconcerting* on Chessboard Zero). At this point, Notice is said to be "satisfied."

NOTE: Notice is separate from Whirl activity. Whirls are beings that exist on Chessboards One and Two and have their own machinations and plots going on that (when they can) involve Infecteds. When you Descend to Chessboard One and there are Whirls active they can often trace you and realize a human is having an Episode there: being involved with them is not the same thing as Notice which involves things from much further down.

Notice Roll

This roll is made when using random-rules for handling Episodes. A character who undergoes Descent may attract the attention of various things down there and this roll will determine if *something* is after him or her.

Notice Score	Notes
Low	9-
Medium	11-
High	14-

Modifiers

Certain behaviors increase the chances of Notice. The Underground isn't well prepared to deal with this because they deny the fundamental reality of the experience. As a result their information is seen through a fractured lens: they believe that Notice is simply residual psychological problems resulting from trauma.

Attitude	Modifier	Notes
Curiosity	-3	Although the exact mechanism for this is unclear, reacting with curiosity to things going on at the lower levels—*engaging with them* in some way—is a reasonable antidote to Notice.
Adoption of Role	-5	At the foundational level of Wonderland there aren't quarks and gluons. There are puzzles and dramas. When a person finds themselves on a lower level they sometimes are expected to "play a role" (a character could find themselves in an insane court being thrust into the role of a jester). Failure to do this can be dangerous (or lethal) in its own right—but even if it is successfully avoided there may be repercussions later (Notice).
Turteling	+1 to +4	When a character Descends to Chessboard Three or below they do so through the Linear Maze. It seems that doing so "opens a corridor" in reality that doesn't "heal" (or seal) for a period of time. If the character stays where he or she is and doesn't move they sort of "hold the door open" and things can find them.

NOTE: The Underground's general advice for Going Deep is to behave as though the experience "is a dream where one does what one must." They usually advocate minimal interaction—but make an exception for deep Descents. Still, many groups are strongly divided over how they think this should be dealt with.

What Is It and What Does It Want?

Here are some tables for determining what a specific creature might want when it comes to satisfy its Notice.

1. **Threat Level:** How dangerous is the thing? Make a standard *JAGS* roll and consult the chart below.

Basic Unsanity Stage	Modifier
Early	--
Medium 1	+0
Medium 2	+1
Late	+2

Roll	Notes
0 - 5	Beneficial: the thing has something valuable for you (more Twisted points? Information? Assistance with things hassling you on Chessboard One?)
6 – 10	Scary: The thing is hunting you in shadows and mirrors. However, it cannot *manifest* a Reflection on Chessboard Zero. You will be haunted for a few days. If you have another Episode during that though, you're down there with it. That could be anything from very scary … to fatal.
11 –15	Dangerous: the thing *can* manifest a reflection on Chessboard Zero. This is usually done only for short periods of time and in out of the way places (and, fortunately, most things are sort of random as to when they encounter you—they can't just "attack when you are sleeping." Moreover: most Reflections from things down below are pretty weak. Although it may be 'dangerous' it is not necessarily *deadly*.
16 – 20	Deadly: The thing can manifest a powerful Reflection on Chessboard Zero and it wants to consume or kill you (or do something else very nasty).

2. Types of Encounters: So what happens? Well, again, there's no way to be sure. Here are some possibilities. NOTE: These will make some more sense in context with the last chapter (discussing the secrets of Wonderland).

Example	Notes
Curse	Something is down on Chessboard One or Two and it's devouring your Shadow (or harassing it, scaring it, whatever)! In this case there is no "clear" manifestation—just a terrible sense of being stalked. You may also get sick, be accident prone, and have terrible luck for several days. *Usually* this is non-fatal. Usually getting "away" for a while can help (the thing must be able to travel on Chessboard One as you do). If you have an Episode during this time, though, you'll face it for sure.
Emissary	One of the "personalities" (the Queen of Hearts? The White Rabbit?) wants you down on a lower Chessboard for some reason (perhaps unstated). When the Notice is 'served' you may choose to Descend (the thing's appearance acts as a possible Trigger) and then you're down there in whatever mad drama is going on.
Predator	See that *really* decrepit-looking ice cream truck that's been prowling the neighborhood at night? It's the Reflection of something *big* looking for you. It'll hang around (maybe eat someone else too—it's possible) but it's waiting for a crack at you!
Watcher	Something is keeping tabs on you. It might just be curious. It might have something "valuable" to do with that data.
Poltergeist	Glasses fall off of tables. TV channels switch. Books open to strange pages by themselves. Something is on Chessboard One or Two and while it can't throw a physical reflection up to Chessboard Zero (where you are) it can effect subtle environmental changes for a few days.
Trap Door Spider	The thing is a random, powerful Trigger waiting to happen. You may feel it stalking you—but if it gets you alone, or with other Infecteds (or even someone who *isn't* Infected!) it'll manifest and you will have a deep, traumatic episode. Your episode may not be related to *it* at all (it's just sucking you down through its "trap door") but it's not to be trifled with anyway.

3. Dealing With It: The Underground is made *very* uneasy by these things since they speak to a real phenomena and suggest that a person who is haunted is somehow "always crazy." However

there are some pieces of advice for "Satisfying Notice" (getting the thing off your case).

Technique	Notes
Fire with Fire	Kill the Reflection, if it has one, and you tend to shake the thing off pretty well. Maybe you even kill *it*!
Avoidance	If you stay away from it, stick with people, don't look into mirrors, etc. for a few days then the effects may die out as it "Descends again."
Exorcism	The thing is down there and so is your Shadow. If your Shadow is constantly being eaten (and then reforming and getting eaten again) then you'll feel the consequences. Some people will do things like draw magic circles (if done right this can help—but real magicians are hard to come by). In other cases, buying a gun can help. What really needs to happen is that you need to make the mental-shift that allows your Shadow to 'take care of itself.' To an extent, walking around the house, firing off a gun *can* take care of the problem. The monster exists on Chessboard One. *You*, on Chessboard Zero can't see it or experience it—but your Shadow can. If you happened to shoot in the right direction (or you don't—but your Shadow, mimicking your behavior *somewhat*, corrects the aim, you might blow it away … if it can be hurt by bullets). But short of this (risky) extreme, if you can do the right things, you can sort of "authorize" your Shadow to deviate from you for a short period of time. It can go to the Shadow garage and get the Shadow Shotgun and do some Shadow-hunting itself. Maybe. Knowing how to do this falls under the category of secret knowledge but certain rituals and mind-states do help.

Damage

Damage, like Twists, can happen for a variety of reasons. The most stereotypical deals with Uncontrolled Catastrophic Descent: you fall down the rabbit hole, drop for several long minutes, and when you hit the ground, you are *different*. In the case of Damage, you come out warped in such a way that you *don't* recover (unless you have Survival Traits).

NOTE: Once you have a Damage trait going, you are less likely to get another. Give a cumulative –3 to the roll for each Damage trait the character acquires.

Roll for Damage

Any time a character suffers Uncontrolled Descent (to Chessboards Three or below—which is required for Uncontrolled Descent) you make a Damage roll. This is based on your Unsanity Stage.

Stage	Roll
Early	5-
Mid (1)	8-
Mid (2)	9-
Late	10-

If the roll is "made" then you get a Damage Trait, taken from the list at the end of the Twists chapter. If you have a Survival Trait you either do not roll (the GM can give a blanket –3) and if you do get one then it only lasts a few days up to about 2 weeks.

A Guide To Reality: Chessboards Zero Through Six

The last chapter gave an overview of Wonderland Infection: Now it's time to visit Wonderland itself. Each of the Eight Chessboards (although there isn't much to say about Chessboard Seven here) is different from the others. Each one has its own wonders, dangers, and terrain. Here we take a much closer look at what they're like, who lives on them, and what's going on beneath the surface of reality.

Each level of reality is a different from the last. Each chessboard has different pieces and different rules. Here are the basic notes about each level. We've broken the sections up into:

Section	Notes
Topology	Notes about the actual, physical reality (usually how it differs from the next level up). Any special or common issues with it.
Society	What things are like for visitors and semi-permanent intelligent beings that live there. What kinds of power-structures exist. What sorts of things might be "going on" amongst the denizens.
Ecology	The sorts of things (monsters) that you might meet.
Construction	Some notes on how to take a place you know (in the real world) and "map" it to the level of the Chessboard. These are GMs notes.

Stats of Creatures

We have included stat blocks for some of the creatures mentioned here on the theory that the context of a being and therefore the world it inhabits will be easier to understand when you have its stats. *Most* of the creatures that are found on the lower levels (Chessboard Three and below) are not given stats—but, instead, are listed in the Creatures Appendix.

The Linear Maze

"First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything; then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and book-shelves; here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was labeled 'ORANGE MARMALADE', but to her great disappointment it was empty: she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it."
--Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

We'll start where Alice did, in the dark in-between that exists among the worlds. The Linear Maze (which is linear only in the way the lines on a Chessboard are and a Maze by accurate description) is what you go through to reach the deeper levels (and, many think, the upper levels as well: although the trip is so short you don't notice it). When someone undergoes Descent (either Controlled or Uncontrolled) to Chessboard Three or below they usually travel through the Linear Maze. In some cases this is simply experienced as a fall. In other cases it is a winding series of hallways, caverns, or antechambers that eventually leads to one or more doors. Once exited, those doors are usually inaccessible.

Topology

‘At any rate I’ll never go there again!’ said Alice as she picked her way through the wood. ‘It’s the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!’

Just as she said this, she noticed that one of the trees had a door leading right into it. ‘That’s very curious!’ she thought. ‘But every thing’s curious today. I think I may as well go in at once.’ And in she went.
--Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

The Maze lies behind and within everything: it *opens* in cracks, mirrors, strange doorways, paintings, unusual arches, and anything else that might resemble a portal or have the illusion or actuality of depth. During some Episodes, the environment itself will seem to change subtly and then dissolve into deep forests or crumble to reveal ancient ruins. This is also an aspect of the Linear Maze: on the other side of a mirror it will appear as a twisted version of the room that was shown in the glass. Books will be printed in backwards type and areas *just out of sight* will be warped in strange ways.

Directions are meaningless in the Maze: you can fall for hours without damage, find doorways at opposite ends of a corridor that open into themselves, and change size and shape rapidly as you move through it. The only “constants” are that there are always entrances and exits and there is usually somewhere that it ‘leads you’ when you are having an Episode (less so if you open it of your own account).

The Architecture of the Linear Maze

The maze seems to have been “built”—there are shelves, cupboards, hinged doorways, elevators, escalators, murals on the walls, paintings on the ceilings, hung works of art, back alleys with garbage cans and burning gas-lamp light posts, and so on. Most people think that the Maze is simply a twisted (and very creatively twisted) version of the “reflected realities” that make it up. This certainly seems to be the case: if you take your stuffed rabbit into the view of a mirror—and it opens and steps through, you will find a version of your rabbit on the other side (and from the front, the part you can see in the mirror, it may look normal ... and the back may be opened with wires and cogs and bloody ribs poking through just out of sight!). Certainly that seems to indicate that anything that exists in the Maze was “put there” by some action in the “real world.”

Reality is the only word in the language that should always be used in quotes.

~ Anonymous

That may be so—but there are some claims to the contrary as well. Usually only the reflected room appears in the "Mirror Maze"—but in some cases an entire Mirror-Land house has existed mimicking the reversed architecture on the other side (including things out of sight of the mirrors). Often these "mirror lands" indicate a dark sense of humor at work and some of these are even inhabited by full-time "guests" who alter things quite substantially on their side (the differences are only visible during Episodes, of course).

Furthermore, those who have wandered the Maze more deeply have said that they believe there are actual destinations that exist within it, apart from things on the actual Chessboards themselves. These reports are unreliable as wandering in the maze for long periods of time tends to wear on one's sanity.

Getting Lost

You usually needn't fear "getting lost" in the Maze. Most people only encounter it when they have an Episode and when you do that, it usually leads you to your destination. On the other hand, those who can open it themselves (through rituals and Insights and things like that) and explore it may have a very different experience. In those cases it *is* possible to become lost (although, thankfully, the maze doesn't shift on a constant basis: indeed, some people in the real world who are experienced enough travel through it as a matter of course).

NAME: LOOKING GLASS MAKER			UNKNOWN
PHY 14	STR 20	BLD 09	STA 15-
REF 20	COR 22	REA 20	AGI 20
INT 14	RES 14	MEM 14	WIL ??
DP 300	Minor	Major	Critical
Wounds	-1 : 20		

To Hit	20-
To Be Hit	-10
Armor	6/9
Damage	Total

Description: A bipedal machine about six feet tall that seems to have biological components, the Looking Glass Makers are enigmatic. The statistics given here are an estimation based on conjecture and reports: no one has ever captured one or even really engaged in combat with them for any period of time. They seem to be related to the firmament of reality in some fashion, constructing the Linear Maze and its environments (mostly when no one is watching).

Their disposition is *remote*. They do not communicate (in general, reports otherwise are not especially credible). There are stories of them "leading" people into darker and darker recesses of the Linear Maze and stories of them leading people out or constructing a door that will allow them to exit safely. Many people who are well traveled in the Linear Maze consider them an omen of strange things to come (which, in Wonderland, is saying something).

Time Warp: The Looking Glass Makers can warp time. Sometimes, when sighted, they seem to be "spinning material" out of thin air at a leisurely rate, other times, they seem to blink in and out of existence. Most strangely, when encountering them, the *perceived* time one spends watching them can be extremely long while the actual time is only seconds (one can watch them construct a room like special-effects people doing set-dressing on a movie set and take what seems to be a languid hours—but as soon as the watcher realizes they've been staring, only seconds will have passed for the Looking Glass Makers to put the entire room together).

In combat, the Looking Glass Maker can take a Short action to *vanish* or move wherever it wishes. When attacked it can take a Short Defensive action to *remove itself* from the path of the attack. They seem to be able to disappear at will even from within closed containers.

Destruction and Construction: As a Short action the Looking Glass Maker can disassemble or assemble *anything*. There are no known limits on this ability. They have been known to be agents of Twisting travelers in the Linear Maze, taking them apart and putting them back together again.

Society

The Society of the Linear Maze is *mostly* that of the Train Station. Most people are transient and those who are not are *lost*. Starvation is mostly suspended in the Maze (oh, you get hungry. You get thin—but, usually, you don't *die*). There are reports of, for example, mirror-world video stores with Shadows (or other things) inside renting backwards-running parodies of real movies for whatever

currency the character has.

There are grand plazas inside that are sometimes strewn with garbage and sometimes home to tent-cities and "street people" who might be real or might be lost Shadows. There are monsters in the maze and its own version of sanitation machinery (the Looking Glass Makers). There's the odd monster as well—hostile things have found their way into the Maze. When a character has Notice in effect, the worlds on the other sides of their mirrors often have uninvited guests looking back.

Ecology

The only thing that is said (commonly) to be "natural" to the Linear Maze are Looking Glass Makers. These odd machines stalk between the Chessboards and seem to construct and alter the maze. They rarely communicate (many believe they are incapable of speech) and are nearly impossible to interact with in any way other than looking at them. Mostly they seem unaware of others—but there are reports of them assisting lost travelers or behaving in strange and intelligent manners that are usually at odds with their simple behaviors.

Construction

The Linear Maze is often introduced as an invitation to Controlled Descent: you see a new doorway in the wall, a mirror opens up, there's a new button on the elevator, etc. Very often a character might undergo size changes or have "impossible things happen" (in one example, during play a small "port hole" near the ground seemed to grow to human-size when someone was down on their belly looking through).

Mirrors are a classical and important point of entry to the maze. In many cases the Mirror-House may be far more twisted (and perhaps indicative of things that have actually happened in the house) than its representation on Chessboards One or Two! Adventures in the Mirror Worlds usually end with any exit (window, door, climbing up the chimney) depositing one in one of the lower realities.

Chessboard Zero: Reality

This is the real world. There's TiVo and *The Onion* and the Celtics are a basketball team and there are wars and inflation and music videos. Maybe you live here. Maybe you sometimes wish you didn't.

It's like they teach in physics. E is just about always MC^2 and Force is Mass times Acceleration when anyone important is watching and, well, you know.

Or maybe you don't because that's what it's *supposed* to be like (on a human scale anyway—the very heavy, very fast, and the very small play havoc with those nice equations) but just like those rules you learned for crossing the street in elementary school some of these universal maxims are, well, made to be broken.

There are soft places and bleeds and hot zones where Wonderland has started seeping in. Some people think it started around the fifties. A lot of people agree that it pretty much *got worse* sometime in the last 100 years but how long it's been going on is, really, anyone's guess. Carroll saw it coming. We know that.

A lot of the cracks are places people don't like to go (either because they *feel bad* because the world is 'thin' there—or maybe the places where people don't go are the places Wonderland can most easily enter) but *some* are (mostly dormant) in high traffic areas.

Society

On Chessboard Zero there are, actually, quite a few people with skin in the game. The Underground is working towards a global embrace of Wonderland: an acknowledgement and acceptance that will bring Wonderland into the world.

They're also working (on a lower level of the organization) towards a public acceptance of Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder (which many lower-level members believe is simply a bizarre, contagious psychological disease).

The Major Organizations

Project Pagan and Project Puritan have taken the resources of government black-book projects and crossed them with the nonsense reality metaphysics. What Pagan wants isn't really clear (some kind of massive Wonderland incursion—but how and why is a mystery). Puritan is more straightforward: they are on the front line against the top echelon of the Underground Network and Pagan and, well, anything else that is threatening massive Infection.

These organizations may be encountered in many ways. Pagan may be subverting a suburb by moving in shape-changing 'blank' agents who, when they have enough hold on the community will summon the saucers (or perform some of their other tricks). The Underground's lower echelons are sometimes encountered in political activism (Get the Truth Out about CPD). Puritan's secret agents are like the FBI or maybe even Men In Black trying to stay in the shadows while doing what needs to be done.

And that doesn't even begin to touch on the Twisted that become cultish serial killers slaved to bizarre appetites. It doesn't touch on the human minions of the things on the other side of the mirrors that sometimes manage to reach out and *make contact*.

It doesn't begin to touch on the private projects started by everyone from high-school outcasts to ice-cold mega corporations that have figured there might be *something* going on and want their piece of the action.

Corporate Connections

There is a certain precedent for large corporations to have, well, agents in Wonderland … and vice versa. Wonderland's fabric is very susceptible to the power of brand-names—of advertising iconography—of the inherent power of the corporate logo.

Wonderland is also very good at infiltrating systems, especially bureaucracies. More than one major corporation has a "remote office" that doesn't actually exist (and here remote might be the heartland of the United States—just some place people from the other offices never seem to visit). That office's personnel and reports come from lower levels of reality and in many cases the (few) people who *do* know something *strange* is going on are *not* the people at the top. There are several area codes and exchanges on the telephone networks that ring into Wonderland. There are IP Addresses and mail-drops that route to areas that don't exist in physical space. Dealing with any of these is strange and dangerous and an invitation to infection. They are also (for a variety of reasons, some obvious, some less so) kept as closely guarded secrets by those who know or use them.

The Trade

Getting things from Wonderland to Chessboard Zero isn't easy. There are ways to do it, however. Everything from advanced technology to impossible objects (optical illusions made physical reality) to magical items of great danger and power comes out of Wonderland. Wonderland is ready to trade when it's able to.

There are small networks of collectors. There are a few discrete labs, and there are projects that are based on this trade. These agencies may be players in the Chessboard Zero dramas.

Ecology

Most things from Wonderland don't come directly up to Chessboard Zero. Most cannot. The 'monsters' that most directly and physically exist are the Infected people who are mentally twisted and become deranged agents of infection and chaos.

These are the surreal serial killers or the insanity cults that are springing up as more and more people become exposed.

But there are other things that are hunting on Chessboard Zero … just not so directly. Many beings from the lower realities cast a *reflection* (a shadow of themselves, so to speak) up to Chessboard Zero when they are on Chessboard One.

This Reflection usually does *not* look like them—that line of trucks you passed on the interstate at 3:30 AM *might* be a row of machines with regular human drivers. They might also be a school of huge things hunting and "swimming" through the air just below the surface of reality—it's their *reflections* on Chessboard Zero that look like the massive trucks.

As a general course, Reflections of things (when they are physical entities at all—sometimes their presence may be felt in weird mechanical failures, raised tempers, or unlikely chaotic events) are not directly harmful. If they *are* dangerous, they are not dangerous in a way that usually benefits the being (if the trucks run you down, the hunting things usually don't get to feed on you).

But if you're infected, that changes. If you're infected and are in the presence of a Reflection of something, can try to *drag you down* there with *it*. Where *both of you are real*. That can be fatal. Of course even if you aren't Infected, having some dangerous things that exist just one chessboard away can have its hazards.

Construction

Most games start out on Chessboard Zero (if the characters aren't already experienced adventurers or members of an organization that is). Here are some things to take into account:

1. What is going on below the surface of reality? Entities that don't exactly *exist* on Chessboard Zero will still cast their *Reflections* there. Sure, on Chessboard Zero it'll all look like cause and effect so long as you aren't looking too closely (and in some cases, even if you are—a great deal of attention can have effects down the ladders of reality).
2. What entities from Chessboard Zero are at work in the area. In many cases the things that exist on the lower levels of reality will be recruiting people from Chessboard Zero. In other cases things like Project Puritan (or Pagan) the Underground, or several corporate interests will have roots into Wonderland. This often results in some very, very odd behavior on Chessboard Zero.

Chessboard One

Chessboard One is where most people go when they have their first few Episodes. It looks, feels, smells, and tastes almost exactly like the world you left (Chessboard Zero). In fact, it's not unheard of for someone to go through a Episode of moderate length without even realizing something is really wrong. Sure, you might think you're having an odd day—or that the guys downstairs in the IT department are, well, nuts (but they're techie guys so they're nuts anyway, right?). It's only when you start paying attention that you'll start to get really scared.

Topology

The topology of Chessboard One—the physical reality is really almost exactly like Chessboard Zero. The streets, the buildings, the doors, the rooms: all the same. Oh—there are differences—but they're in hidden and out of the way places.

Often what's added is an *illogical door* to a lower level of reality. Remember that drawing of the chessboards with all those stairways and chutes and ladders? On Chessboard One they take physical form.

Some people might find a new street address down a dead-end out of the way mostly abandoned street. (11½ Maybury Street, a half-width door in the old stone wall they've never seen

before). If you're down in the sub-basements or over in the unused section of the building then you might see things that shouldn't be there. Mostly, though, you won't find anything out of whack with the basic physical reality of the place.

Signs and Sigils

But one thing that does change, physically, on Chessboard One is the *semiotics*. We often use labels for things that don't *exactly* apply. For example, if on Chessboard Zero (reality) you see a girl and guy and she has one of those *I'm with Stupid* shirts that has an arrow? It's cute. It's funny. On Chessboard One, when you see the couple walking it says *I don't respect him (arrow). Or Myself.*

Not every sign will be changed and dollar bills won't suddenly turn into white pieces of paper that say THIS IS YOUR GOD—but there's a disquieting level of *honesty* in the way language is used on manmade artifacts. And even if one flyer from a stack of them says You Know My Claims Are Fake—But I Know You're Desperate, the other flyers might be completely normal advertisements for an anti-snoring spray.

The effect cares nothing for mass printing or mass production.

Construction and Decay

Cause and effect are politely behaved on Chessboard One when anyone is *watching.* Drop a ball and it'll bounce. Drop a teacup and it'll shatter. But when you aren't watching, well, *the mice play*.

Really, much (most) of what happens on Chessboard One happens because it happens on Chessboard Zero. A Shadow may not wash its car effectively but the whole car is clean because the human on Chessboard Zero washed it well.

Buildings get built and if you drop in from time to time on Chessboard One you'll see the walls go up and the workmen come and the doors get hung and all that—but if you *stay and keep an eye on it?* Well, you'll see

that those workmen are taking a lot of breaks—doing things backwards or upside down or, well, just plain *wrong*. And when you blink? Or walk around to the back? There's a door, perfectly hung.

If you surround it with cameras you actually might slow down the building being built in reality! There'd be a string of bizarre accidents … metal fatigue … odd mistakes (but not the crazy mistakes you saw the guys making) and, you know, metal fatigue.

But when push comes to shove you also might get to see a door hang itself. Or a workman, who glances around to make sure no one is watching (but you are, of course) suddenly work at 10x normal speed and with standard skill and care.

It isn't something he can do on demand (he doesn't "demand" anything—he's a Shadow) it's the world itself warping to better match the reality of Chessboard Zero.

Society

It's certainly Shadow-Land. About 99% of the non-infected populace cast shadows down to Chessboard One so just about everyone you know is there (and they're usually, the vast majority of the time, around where their real-person caster is—but not *always*).

The streets are crowded. Traffic crawls through the intersections or roars down the highways. Shoppers cruise through the aisles of the grocery store and congregate in the coffee shops. Slackers pump coins into vending machines and the high school girls hang out by the clothing store chatting on cell phones.

Like the physical terrain itself, it all looks normal. Like the physical terrain, when you look closely the normality starts to get a little *thin*.

The Population of Shadows

Shadows are often exaggerated caricatures of ourselves. There's a snotty

How Mad is Chessboard One?

In some of our games it seemed almost normal, sedate, and only mildly out of kilter. In other games it was a chaos ridden horror show. In one character's Episode, a major New York hospital became Bedlam with doctors chasing nurses lasciviously through the halls, patients screaming and writhing in the beds, and drug music playing over the loudspeakers.

Ultimately, we don't say for sure here. It may be that Chessboard One (in some places?) is kept fairly steady and even because on Chessboard Zero the places (offices, parks, city streets) are mostly lawful and calm. In other games it may be that the aggregate effects of Shadows carrying out the true wishes and darker desires of those who cast them leads Chessboard One to be a world-wide unchecked madhouse.

The GM may choose different visions of Chessboard One based on the tone of the game.

maître d' at the swank restaurant and he's snotty to *everyone* that comes in—but most of the patrons don't seem offended except for the big loud guy (whose Shadow is *always* bombastically offended by everything) and the two of them will have an apocalyptic, histrionic shouting match (but security won't come because it's just two normal shadows each doing their shtick).

Shadows are good at the *pantomime* of doing things but they're bad at actually getting things done. Go to a grocery store and you might see a shopper with fifty canisters of Morton's Salt (with *'Our Slogan Is So Old You Don't Get It'* printed along the bottom in tiny letters). Another shopper might be eating cookies out of the box right off the shelf.

This is because they don't *need* to get shopping right (shadows may pretend to pay for things: often they just shuffle money back and forth) but their pantries fill up on their own (because in real life the shoppers do their work well enough to get food to the table!).

And, of course, Shadows are insane.

Your Friends are Hard To Deal With

In some senses, winding up on Chessboard One can be far more terrifying that dropping down to the lower levels. Sure: it's usually less outright *dangerous* (although we're getting there) but having to deal with people you know in a world that really does look and feel normal can be horrific.

Shadows of people you don't know tend to "actstrangely" if you're looking (now, really, in a crowd of 20 people only one might be doing something that looks irrational—the rest are just going where they're going and maybe having inane conversations). But people you know will seem immediately to be *out of whack*.

They'll know you—they'll talk to you—it'll be like one of those conversations where maybe they're half awake … or maybe they seem really excited and worked up about something that you just don't … get ("Hey! Hey! There's a FRESH pot of coffee!! Wheeee! Coffee!! Caffeine! Let's go! Let's go!).

When you start asking them if they're okay, they start treating you like *you're* the one with the problem (and, of course, your reflection on Chessboard Zero is beginning to act odd and things are going 'pear shaped.')

The Rare Cases: Mutant Shadows

But that's just "most" shadows. Chessboard One is a world that looks sane and, when you're watching, *acts* sane—but is inhabited by the asylum inmates.

Mostly. Because there are some exceptions.

Shadows are usually *behavioral* exaggerations of the people they represent but sometimes (and this is more predominant on Chessboard Two and below) they become *physical* incarnations of one's behavioral traits. The needy girlfriend actually has bug eyes and a proboscis. Your company's CEO is an anthropomorphic lion who actually *eats* people that displease him in meetings (and when he eats a Shadow? That person gets chewed out, demoted, or even fired in real life. If he eats *you* … you're really there: it'll *kill you*!)

This is rare and even when a person's Shadow is a mutation it isn't always that way. Not on a day-to-day basis anyway.

There are also the odd awakened shadow: a shadow that seems to be somewhat aware of its nature. This can be a great comfort since meeting one of these (and they're very, very rare) can go a long way towards proving to you that you aren't mad.

But even more importantly there are *Whirls*—the term for Shadows that spin off a copy from their casters by some event or process and become autonomous. These beings usually have some *relationship* to their caster but when they are out there doing their thing their former creator has another normal Shadow too.

Whirls: Rogue Shadows

Chessboard Zero agencies like the FBI go through motions of investigating crime and arresting criminals on Chessboard One—but they don't really do it (or at least not reliably and not well). Things still happen because of the actual stuff going on *in* reality. So in a sense, those real-world organizations don't really exist at the lower reaches of reality.

Conversely there are organizations and groups and entities that don't exist on Chessboard Zero that *do* exist on Chessboard One. Many of these are composed of Whirls: Shadows that have become self-sustaining and separate from their original casters.

Most of these are simply eerie sideeffects of people's trauma, experimentation, drive and passion, or other activates that can cause one's shadow to 'spin off' and become its own creature. But some form groups and move with intent and *can* affect Chessboard Zero … if only indirectly. Here are some examples.

Name: The Confection Cooks	Whirl

PHY 11	STR 11	BLD 18	CON 11
REF 10	COR 12	REA 10	AGI 10
INT 11	RES 1	MEM 1	WIL 11

DP 15	Minor	Major	Critical
Wounds	5	15	30

To Hit	13-
To Be Hit	+1
Armor	None
Damage	+4 Cleaver

Creation: Confection Cooks are created when extremely jealous people have crippling bouts of fury at someone *getting away with something*. Their shadow swells, becoming fatter and fatter. The mouth collapses in, becoming an irregularly rimmed hole with a detachable jaw and random, jutting teeth.

The cook vomits out its own clothing (indifferently clean apron and cook hat) and begins the act of finding a kitchen and creating ovens. The cooks can detect each other and will come from some distance to begin their operation.

Where Are They Found: Often in communities where the simply *well to do* interact with the actual rich—but quite a few exist in places like schools and near corporate offices where inveterate social climbers face perceived social injustice (usually misperceived)

Operations: The Confectionaries are a dark group of fat cook-like things that, when they are in an area, are interested in handing out 'justice.' Usually their justice is twisted and ironic (like being crushed to death in a bookstore shelving collapse for having overdue library books).

If you eat their tasty (but a bit over-sweet) pastries, ice creams, or whatever then you will be in line for their judgment (its curse will most likely land on you). The curse or judgment may be deadly/maiming or simply unpleasant and humiliating. They don't follow much rhyme or reason. If they catch you and over-power you, they'll bake a cake for you and make you eat it.

They set up great kitchens, run ice-cream trucks, and cook using vast bags of sand instead of flower. They can serve their desserts (two 's-es) to Shadows for *some* effect—but they need the Infected to carry their confections back to reality and serve them to the people who will eat them.

Often they will leave terrible judgments out where unsuspecting persons undergoing Episodes will find and eat them—then, to avoid the fate they have ingested, they will be at the mercy of the cooks.

Reflections: The Cooks and their kitchens (which are often horrific in a fairy-tale sort of manner themselves) don't appear physically on Chessboard Zero. Their pastries can be *carried back* by Infected people when an Episode ends.

The areas the Cooks work often feel haunted and they tend to be out of the way places. Large broken cooking facilities (often filthy) may materialize there as a result of the cooks setting up shop on Chessboard Zero. This will not happen if the area is watched (the Cooks will move on).

If the cooks take over a real, working, kitchen then the staff on Chessboard Zero may find themselves making bizarre mistakes during the cooking (like discovering one dish somehow cooked "inside" another or unsettling ingredients being substituted.

Drawn To: The Cooks, in an area, know who you are and what you've done. They can spy very well into reality and in an area they usually have several "persons of interest" they're doing a great deal of cooking for.

Note: The term "Just Deserts" is a difficult one. The last word is spelled like a great sandy plain—but *means* getting what's coming to you—and is pronounced like a confection. So it's great fodder for Wonderland.

Diner

Name: The Trash Children

PHY 09	STR 09	BLD 07	CON 10
REF 11	COR 11	REA 12	AGI 11
INT 10	RES 10	MEM 10	WIL 10

DP 09	Minor	Major	Critical
Wounds	3	9	18

To Hit	11-
To Be Hit	-1
Armor	None
Damage	+6 Bat

Creation: Trash Children are created by constant abandonment of fads and icons that is indicative of adolescent pop culture. One day a band is everyone's hero. The next they're pariahs. This constant churn and discard creates them.

Pieces of detritus, crumpled candy bar wrappers, torn cellophane off of the latest CD, discarded newspapers, community fliers, rags of old T-shirts come together in a small tornado that produces a dirty-faced kid—usually quite invisible to the normal Shadows … and lost.

Where Are They Found: Anywhere there are kids with access to pop-culture. Around schools and playgrounds. In shopping malls. At concert halls. Places like that.

Operations: Trash Kids are victims. If they can be caught (and this isn't easy) they can be eaten by the denizens of the lower realms (their predators include other Whirls—but not normal Shadows). When a Trash Kid is consumed (which is easier than devouring a flesh and blood person—their hearts, small globs of various sticky candies can be taken from their chests and devoured) the eater will gain insight into the last person to own the things that were discarded. This can be used to contact, to send dreams, and even manipulate the person for a time.

Trash Kids are lonely (they band together). They like to play (but have to always have someone stand guard. When they see trouble coming they can decay into trash which (usually) blows away or scatters. Even if each piece were collected and burned it wouldn't matter: the kid can re-form somewhere else.

They can also induct others into their state of being. This involves a process like mummification but with refuse, garbage, and discarded things. Once done the person will become a trash person as well—forever living with them on the fringes of Chessboard One society.

Many Trash Kids long to get to Chessboard Zero and become "real people." Whether this is even possible or not is unclear. However, they seem to think they can do this by performing enough inductions. Often they encourage runaways to come with them—they may even aid them on their way, making only well-meant offers for them to join up.

Reflection: Trash Kids are sometimes able to throw a "Reflection" of themselves as a kid up to Chessboard Zero (if not watched). This makes the kid and the area "visible" to other things on the lower levels and can bring them in to hunt. Sometimes it is done out of loneliness—to play with real kids—or to steal things that they have a hard time getting on Chessboard One (taking things from someone's house or a shop is very temporary—if the real item isn't moved the shadow will decay back to the 'real' place if the person doing the taking has no reflection on Chessboard Zero to actually move it).

Other times, their Reflection on Chessboard Zero is simply that of an increased amount of windblown garbage (sometimes in strange designs) and, possibly, the movement or even disappearance of toys.

Drawn To: Other kids. Young people. Anyone who looks friendly.

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KEYHOLE
LOCKSMITH

NAME: THE ORANGE PEEL MEN	WHIRL

PHY 12	STR 12	BLD 13	CON 12
REF 12	COR 12	REA 12	AGI 12
INT 11	RES 11	MEM 11	WIL 11

DP 15	Minor	Major	Critical
Wounds	5	15	30

To Hit	14-
To Be Hit	-2
Armor	None
Damage	6 PEN 9mm Gun

Creation: The psychological trauma of betrayal that occurs to a paranoid or schizophrenic person creates Orange Peel Men. The Shadow simply *unwinds*, coming apart like the spiral peel of an orange's skin. It can re-form later though. And it has its own agenda.

Orange Peel Men dress like government agents. They are very, very particular about their cleanliness and appearance, usually wearing gloves even in warm weather.

Where Are They Found: Groups can exist anywhere but are usually active in a specific local area. There are networks of Orange Peel Men across the globe. They are (vaguely) aware of each other.

Operations: The Orange Peel Men wish to *subvert*. They wish to take over an area, enterprise, or operation and then begin bending it to their will. "Their will" involves the creation of complex plans dealing with increasing their power in the real world.

The Orange Peel Men are dangerous in that they are capable of complex coordinated action (often involving cohering Infected people to do their bidding) and using Wonderland-style resources to have significant (and bizarre and often dangerous) effects on reality. Personally, they are capable of blackmail, violence (they carry firearms), and surveillance of their targets.

Designs may be things like extracting pieces of everyone in a given area's personality to build a bizarre crystalline construct of emotion and fractured motivations or, perhaps, to keep people "in line" according to some strange scheme of conformity (Tuesdays are Red Shirt Day). Places where they have managed to influence the people in power become rapidly more and more bizarre.

Orange Peel Men are *fragile*. When confronted strongly or put under emotional stress they can accidentally *unravel*. When this happens they are destroyed.

Reflection: When they are active on Chessboard One, they sometimes cast Reflections of agents, men-in-black, and pursuers. When appearing or disappearing, their Reflection will curl in from thin air or unwind as they vanish or arrive. Their presence on Chessboard Zero feels like being watched or hearing insane whispers. This manifestation isn't intentional and it isn't concrete enough to allow them to manipulate people. In fact, when they are watching someone it's often enough to put that person on alert that something is wrong.

Places they are active will become adorned with bizarre, paranoid trappings. Bits of periodicals strangely marked up, grainy photographs taken from seemingly impossible places, and things like a child's attempt at making telephone bugs or non-functional listening or recording devices may show up. Computers will have bizarre networks of encrypted files and half-functional software on them (On Chessboard One this may work and the Orange Peel Men have access to mildly sophisticated gear).

Drawn To: They want Infecteds to help their plans. They are drawn to people whom they feel need to be monitored or controlled and they are attracted to slightly unstable people in positions of power (even mild power: the head of the Millborough Gardening Club would be a perfect candidate if she is deranged enough to join their shadowy organization).

NAME: WYCHES	WHIRL

PHY 09	STR 09	BLD 08	CON 11
REF 12	COR 12	REA 12	AGI 12
INT 12	RES 12	MEM 12	WIL 12
DP 12	Minor	Major	Critical
Wounds	4	12	24

To Hit	13-
To Be Hit	-2
Armor	None
Damage	3 PEN talon

Creation: Wyches ('Witches') are the result of the intense, internalized anger of people who are feared rather than respected and realize it. The form becomes shrouded in black and their irises become perfect silver coins presented under the clear surface of the eye. Their hair becomes long and tangled and their skin becomes paper white. Many are female in appearance (fewer male, whatever the original gender of the person) but ultimately it doesn't matter. They tend to dress in black. They can fly and sometimes, when they want to, their arms become great black feathered wings.

Where Are They Found: They travel in flocks (a group of Wyches is called, like crows, a *murder*). They are often found in nocturnal gathering places (night clubs, parking lots where kids from town hang out, open-late movie theaters, etc.)

Operations: Wyches want you scared—ideally *to death* (or they'd like what scares you to also kill you … that's almost as good). They have murderous little black hearts and they can cough them up to show them to you (more on that later). They want to bring monsters to an area and will do what they can to summon them up from the depths. There are rituals and things—they usually involve having people in reality wittingly or unwittingly perform certain rites and callings. They can and will school a person in these and will gleefully do so.

Monsters brought up to Chessboard One can rarely have *much* effect on Chessboard Zero. Thus, in many cases, a murder of wyches isn't as dangerous as it might be: They need Infecteds … whom they *can* get their hands on … to carry out their work—so they don't kill them … and the calling of monsters makes Chessboard Zero very unpleasant but not (again) as bad as if they could get those monsters to Chessboard Zero.

However: one of the things a murder can do if it gets enough foothold is to give out their hearts. Anyone who intentionally takes a wyche's heart or something containing it (they get baked into pies, worked inside lockets, placed in gift-boxes to be opened *tomorrow*, and so on) can, with the right ritual, be brought *down* to Chessboard One … and by the time the Wyches have had their way … it's full of monsters.

Reflection: When a murder of Wyches are in the area on Chessboard One one will see indications on Chessboard Zero. Gothic and Halloween trappings will appear, even off season. As the Wyches scrawl magic circles, pentagrams, and ankhs on walls and street lamps and other places to call their monsters, the real world will show some evidence of their passing in strange hieroglyphic graffiti. The monsters they call will have their own effects as well. Death rates may, indeed, climb in the area. There may be disappearances. Areas that the perceptive or superstitious think of as *haunted* will spread like a disease.

The Wyches usually have one or two basements in town (hopefully homes of their accomplices in reality) where they hole up. They sleep upside down during the day wrapped in their wings (on Chessboard One). On Chessboard Zero there will often be thick but delicate masses of cobwebs and spiders. If this hive is disrupted ,the Wyches may be forced to leave or even killed.

Drawn To: Those who appreciate the allure of black magic. They can teach some interesting things (they can Infect a person but train them in controlling their Descent. They teach Alphabet Sorcery—maybe even some forms of magic). Often a person drawn to them will deceive themselves about the true nature (vile and petty) of their mentors, feeling they are training for loftier goals.

Name: InNetwork Physicians	Whirl

PHY 10	STR 12	BLD 10	CON 10
REF 11	COR 11	REA 11	AGI 11
INT 13	RES 13	MEM 13	WIL 13

DP 11	Minor	Major	Critical
Wounds	4	11	22

To Hit	12-
To Be Hit	-1
Armor	None
Damage	Varies

Creation: InNetwork Physicians are the product of a therapist's psychological need to dominate a patient. When a therapist starts hoping that a patient will get worse instead of better (and this becomes a source of subliminal trauma for the therapist) a Whirl can spin off: another member of "the Network." The Whirl will almost immediately pounce on the therapist's Shadow (when they regenerate one) and begin a warped sadistic "therapy."

The specifics of this are unknown but *somehow* the Physicians have learned a method to "breach" the connection to the actual person. When they are finished with their Shadow Patient it will die and the real life Chessboard Zero person will be "hollowed out." The Whirl is now in control of them. This is one of the very, very few things on Chessboard One that can "get" to Chessboard Zero without needing a bleed or relying on a Reflection.

InNetwork Physicians seem to be suave, expert psychologists, and psychiatrists. They are usually snappy dressers. On Chessboard One they seem to have a dark corona about them, casting off "solar flares" of shadow. Their eyes glow a penetrating shade of red.

Where They Are Found: Mental Hospitals (which, under their care become snake-pits), facility with mental health services. The term InNetwork refers to being "in network for your health-care plan."

Operations: They divide their time between trying to subtly and sadistically destroy their patients and introducingother physicians to "the Network." In this case they will find another therapist (usually a younger one) who has a streak of arrogance and a touch of controlling nature in them: someone who has a need to be needed. They will stoke it, showing them how to play with patients and slowly corrupt them. When the person is too far gone, they will lay into their ward, trying to create the psychological fracture point that will "spin off" the Physician Shadow. Then, later, when the student's "therapy" is complete, there will be another one.

Reflection: The InNetwork Physician has no "Reflection." It has a real human body that it "inhabits." The fact that this can happen *at all* is supremely scary. Fortunately, the phenomena seems to be very limited and nothing else has really perfected it.

Drawn To: Other physicians and mental health patients. They are not especially knowledgeable about the other Chessboards and are *suspicious of Infecteds!* For one thing, Infecteds can see them "for real" during their Episodes. For another thing, they don't really understand Unsanity and that bugs the hell out of them.

Running Shadows

How someone's Shadow is played can vary a lot. The further down their Shadow is encountered, usually the stranger it'll be.

Honest: Shadows are often very "real" projections of the person who seem to have no sense of civility or propriety. This is not to say they are violent but they can be rude, abrupt, and let slip truths most of us would rather keep secret.

Incompetent: Shadows are often disorganized and distracted. They may appear to be the person having a really bad day or even totally broken down and ineffective.

Disturbing: Shadows can be malevolent and threatening (but usually not violent). Disturbing shadows may be understated, cold, sadistic, or wildly perverse. Shadows with overtly lustful or sexual drives may also be disturbing.

Lost: Shadows and may be incoherent or wandering lost, behaving as though they are drunk or in a haze. They may talk about things that are not happening on their present level of reality (for a Reflection on Chessboard Zero this appears as classic schizophrenia).

Self-destructive: Reflections are not usually self-destructive but Shadows may be. Shadow suicide is not uncommon for the depressed.

Ecology

The non-Shadow denizens of Chessboard One tend to be interlopers from the lower levels of reality. Many of these beings cast *Reflections* up to Chessboard Zero and therefore seem to "come into focus" when they are encountered 'in the flesh' on Chessboard One.

Most of these things are really quite rare (and the ones that are more common exist on the outskirts of society where someone having an Episode is *unlikely* to encounter them).

For the most part, anything found there will be either transient or (in rare cases) *very* well integrated with human society. Most things that are not Whirls will be found on the edges of society.

To determine what things are like on Chessboard one, you'll want to look at the following questions:

Construction

Doorways Down

One of the more important things to consider is whether or not the places a character generally goes will have gateways down to the lower levels of reality. Being able to just *walk* down to Chessboard Two or Three is one of the more subtly dangerous (or important) aspects of Chessboard One.

Maybe out behind the building where the characters go to smoke there's a new three-foot high door. Maybe it has a lock (and maybe there's a reason for that).

The Normal Shadows

1. What are the prevalent but unspoken thought-patterns that are going on in the environment? For example, in an office building of a company which has been having issues with shoddy production, the Total Quality Initiative posters on the wall might become threatening Quality … Or Else messages.
2. Be a caricature artist: characters will be presented in ways that expand their basic traits. Their Shadows will also be *honest* in ways that many people aren't in polite society (just like the signs and text will tend to tell uncomfortable truths).

Are There Whirls At Work?

A Wonderland game can go far simply interacting with the Whirls that inhabit the chessboard *just under reality*. After all, Whirls tend to be organized (at least somewhat) and frightening if not downright dangerous.

If there areWhirls at work there will probably be some indications of that on Chessboard Zero. There may even be Infecteds other than the characters at work for them.

The GM should determine if there are any recurrent psychological issues that are common and severe enough to create spin-off Shadows … and if there are, what are these shadows trying to do?

What About Things from Down Below?

Ultimately Chessboard One is just the first stop on the path to deeper Descent. There are things that come up to hunt, to watch, or to talk. In some places there is heavy activity from "down below." In other places it's calm.

Traffic

There are people on Chessboard Zero who do business with Chessboard One and *may not even know it*. In some cases people deal with the *Reflections* of entities on Chessboard One and still pay money (or goods … or perform services) for "people" (they usually think they are dealing with *extremely strange* people—but still).

If there is traffic going on then there may be several Chessboard Zero organizations (of some sort) that have their fingers knowingly or unknowingly in the pies of the lower reaches.

Example

The Middlebourough Public Community College: Chessboard One.

It still looks the same. Same cluster of light beige one and two-story buildings surrounded by green lawns and new, clean, white sidewalks. If you visit during a sunny Tuesday afternoon in the spring you'll see students sitting under trees, couples strolling together, and people riding bikes or throwing Frisbees.

But …

There's Linda—she's reading a book called *American History:* A Non-Challenging Perspective (*that* doesn't sound like a title a textbook would give *itself*)—and she's reading it upside down! There's Tom. He's juggling, badly, walking and using his watch, an old clock radio, and a packet of pens and pencils tied together with rubberbands (when you think about it later, maybe he's the guy who was always complaining about too much to do and not enough time?).

And in the parking lot, after dark, there's this Ice Cream Truck—an old one—it plays the music like you remember. There are cooks inside: Confection Chefs and they're looking balefully out at the Shadows whose owners they've targeted for their judgments.

In fact, if you watch, you'll see that the truck (which is parked behind and old shed during the day) is sometimes approached by two young men who hold positions in the student government make their way to it. Of course these two people will be behaving in a somewhat sloppy

Warped

One of the most disturbing elements of *JAGS Wonderland* is the Warped Zones. These areas are twisted commentary made by the universe itself on the people and places that fall into them. They are a trip down a very dark rabbit hole and a trip through a contorted fun house looking-glass.

Often warped areas may have unsavory sexual overtones. They may be redone as though by a psychotic interior decorator. The laws of physics are no limitation on a warped area: furniture may move as stalking predators. A TV might be only half built, missing a half down the middle but functioning perfectly. Doors can open and shut themselves and go different places at different times.

A trip to a Warped Reality is often dark and dangerous but it may also provide some deeper insights: it isn't just random—it's *commentary*.

A home where psychological abuse takes place could be redone as a surreal torture-chamber. A park where a sexual predator has watched children could become a prison-like area surrounded with watch towers. It could be home to terrifying monsters. An alley where innocents have died could become a dark mausoleum.

fashion (for conspirators) taking exaggerated 'sneaking' footsteps and sometimes arguing loudly with each other.

This is because these two are *Shadows*. On Chessboard Zero the two *real* conspirators are being much more discrete when they approach the old, abandoned, ice cream truck that's parked by the maintenance shed.

When, on Chessboard Zero, the two *real* people get inside they find the disturbing, dirty 'workshop' inside the truck.

On Chessboard One you can see the steaming canisters and big, thrumming freezers that the chefs are using to make their frosted desserts. The Chefs have a magic cardboard box. It looks ordinary, rumpled, one corner of it frayed and nearly broken through.

Anything you put in the box on Chessboard One will be in there on Chessboard Zero. The two students got it out of a *very* strange abandoned warehouse. It's the sort of thing people would kill over. Easily. They don't know what they're doing though … not really.

They just know (enough) to know that if they keep supplying parts and things and they take the ice-creams and the cakes that appear in the box and get them to the people they're meant for … that they'll keep moving up in their social circles. They like that. It suits them. So they keep doing what the strange voices on the telephones tell them.

What they don't know is that at night, when no one is watching, the Ice Cream Truck can drive around by itself … and people have been disappearing.

Chessboard Two: The Empty Places

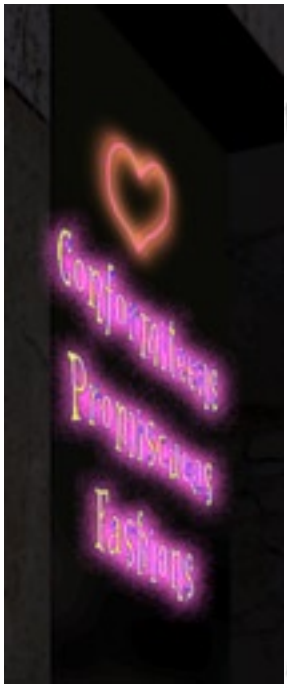
The next level of Descent brings you to Chessboard Two. Here there are far fewer people. Here even "normal looking" places are starting to get weird. Here you get your first real sign that the world has gone mad.

Topology

On Chessboard Two reality starts "to lose it." Most of the world is "abandoned." Some of the world is "insane." A little bit of it looks "pretty normal." These areas wind around and through each other with little to no sense of logic. Some areas might appear bright, well lit, and clean—but right behind them (or around them) is chaos and decay. To understand the differences, let's look at an office in each of these zones.

Sane, Populated, Warped, Abandoned

Areas on Chessboard Two are described using the terms Sane, Populated (by Shadows), Insane, and Abandoned. If you are in a Sane, Populated area then it's just like Chessboard One: there are people (maybe a few fewer) and the architecture looks normal. Maybe things look a little more ... aged and less well upkept than normal—but it looks about like you expect it.



A Sane Area maintains the laws of physics and keeps things in, pretty much, the same locations as they were.

In an Abandoned Area the place is almost completely *empty* of Shadows (there might be other things though) and it's *trashed*. The walls are covered with Graffiti, the lights are flickering or out altogether. It's strewn with litter and the windows are broken!

If your office is Sane but Abandoned then the floors of the buildings are all still in the same places with, at least, the remnants, of the same stuff on them.

A Warped area has been terribly twisted. Space and dimension and meaning have become sick commentaries on themselves. Everything is shot through with madness-with-a-message, often making ironic, sometimes insightful commentary on the Chessboard Zero reality.

Let's take an example:

1st Metro Bank Offices on Chessboard Zero (reality)
It's a sea of beige computers, low cubicles and orderly little desks (there's a clean desk policy and employees are often upbraided for keeping messy desks … so everything is squared away). There are coffee machines and copy machines and fax machines … everything you need for a modern office. This is the "little people" office floor and periodically the senior execs come through and that's always a good time to be engrossed in work or absent—because if they catch you fooling around you could get in trouble!

Chessboard Two 1st Metro Bank Offices Sane-Populated
It's a lot like Chessboard One. The lights are a little dimmer. The world is a little grayer outside, and several people seem to be "out sick." The personnel are all Shadows so it's a bit of an insane office anyway, but if you walked in there on a Monday morning you wouldn't freak out. Not at first. The last cubical on the row—the one where no one sits (in reality) has a mannequin in it that seems to be "typing." There's a computer there and it's writing a suicide note apologizing for shooting up the office building. It names *you* as part of its reason for "going postal." When you aren't looking, it moves around. It's dangerous. Notes: Sane-Populated has the same architecture as the real place and most of the same people (between 60 and 90 percent). The Shadows treat the missing people in stride and while power flickers and lights dim and electrical equipment behaves strangely, it isn't *too* outlandish. Your biggest confusion might be with the *people*. The danger, the Mannequin, is relevant to you (it mentions your name) and might be a sort of an incarnation of the stresses that the office creates with its social atmosphere. It might also just be something dangerous that has moved in—you don't really know.

1st Metro Bank Offices Sane-Abandoned

The overhead lights, save for one, are off. Computer cases are broken open and coils of wires protrude. There's one computer screen on and it's doing a "web-tour" of *horrific* pornography sites that cater to your darkest fears as though they were desires. Windows are shattered and graffiti covers the walls.

Mannequin limbs litter the place, some holding weapons and dark stains adorn the walls and ripped carpet. Outside, the wind howls in a dust-storm.

A big, jack-booted giant with gray skin and melted face thumps through the empty rooms carrying a giant cleaver.

Notes: The abandoned area hasn't just been left—it's been ransacked. There's a monster. The weather is bad. But also note: some of the things there are relevant to *you*. The computer screen shows deplorable things from pages you're not sure exist—but it's tied to *you*. If you look closely at the graffiti you might discover that some of it contains cryptic messages … for *you* (and some of it might contain cryptic messages for other people too, you can't be sure).

The danger remains here, in a more formalized form. Is the gray giant with its huge blade an avatar of the exec's "cutting remarks?" Some people would say so. Others would say it's not that obvious—or even the *reverse*. Maybe the gray giant on Chessboard Two *makes the Chessboard Zero environment less palatable*. Hard to say.

1st Metro Bank Offices Warped-Abandoned

The damage is like it was in the first case but … all the furniture is on the ceiling! Even office supplies obey a law of gravity that causes them to fall up (when you aren't holding them). Cubicles line the ceiling. The floor is still carpeted though. It's odd.

There are two staircases that come down from circular holes ringed with glyph-like corporate logos in the ceilings. Junk, massive collections of children's blocks fill the stairwells.

Big industrial dumpsters have been moved in too. They spawn dangerous crawling masses of medical waste. The gray giant is still here although the elevators don't work reliably.

The windows are all "stained glass" and depict humiliating scenes from people's work lives (a few of them seem pointedly relevant to you!).

In the Warped Zone things have "gone wonky." It could go wonky in several ways—it might not even be an office—but for purposes of this example the basic form and shape has remained. That's fairly common too.

The Empty Places: Full of Monsters

Infecteds who have gone deeper than Chessboard One sometimes talk, in hushed tones, about "The Empty Places." In these Episodes the world is desolate, eerie, and often infested with terrible things. Some people say that almost nothing is left—but whatever *is* left is important.

Some people believe the Empty Places are a kind of hell or place of terrible fear and punishment for something they have done wrong. Travelers have reported hideous shooting-gallery targets that pop up in the abandoned windows of shopping plazas and invisible rifles that create a deadly cross-fire, shooting them (and anyone unlucky enough to be in their way) down.

They've reported tripwires and homemade explosives in odd places. They've seen two-story spider webs with small cars dangling and encased in threads. They've seen battalions of driverless garbage trucks on the prowl for anyone out on the streets. They've seen ads for products that never existed and heard the voices of the dead on the few working TVs and telephones. The Empty Places are one level below Chessboard One and those who have been there often dread going back.

1st Metro Bank Offices Warped-Occupied

We'll take another possibility here. Instead of the "upside-down" office, maybe the place has become a sort of "command center" for the *Army of No*.

The *Army of No* fields mutant soldiers with a Nazi-like flair and they're quite dangerous to people they encounter who aren't part of their "mission." (What is their mission? There's some notes on them in the final section).

In this example the office's *mutation* has been to sort of "reveal its inner nature." On Chessboard Zero, it's a place where fairly menial work is done and it serves as a domain for the mid-level execs to exercise their control with. To them, the workers who put in their hours here are necessary but replicable cogs in a machine—human faces on something that they feel, in a few years, will better be done by computer.

On Level 2, the office building is still relatively intact and, relatively, in the same shape. This floor, however, is done in the style of circus cars with clashing colors and designs and vertical bars. The various sections (cells) say things like "See The Accountant" or "Watch the Analyst Work Long Hours!" Inside each car is a cubical with a computer screen displaying strobe-light-bright flashes of mutated computer applications. There are chains and shackles and some Shadows sit at the desks, put to work (those people will be the most miserably oppressed on Chessboard Zero).

But the place is inhabited: there are commanders and lieutenants and collections of armories moved in. There aren't random ghosties and ghoulies prancing around here—that's bad for the formality of the Army. But the place is filled with midnight blue uniform-wearing goose-stepping uglies!

NOTE: The change from "office on the ceiling" to Office of Circus Cars has *nothing* to do with the place being inhabited by a stable occupying force. We just used the opportunity to take another look at a way things could be mutated!

Breakdown	Commonness
Sane Zone: Populated	Maybe 15%? Not much.
Sane Zone: Abandoned	About 70%: the majority.
Warped Zone: Abandoned	About 10%: rare.
Warped Zone: Populated	About 5%: very rare.

One of the trends that happens both in Sane and Insane Zones on Level Two is that the areas that are not well populated don't just seem empty but actually *abandoned*. A supermarket might have barren shelves. A gas station: empty pumps.

It is not clear where the actual "damage" comes from (do Shadows break the windows out? Certainly the denizens and entities and monsters that exist down there do *some* of it—but does everything come from that?) However one will see that in many places roads have cracks, buildings operate on emergency power, and pipes leak water damage. This is by no means absolute: many places appear normal, clean, and well lit—but places where there is still normality but no people tend towards decay.

A lot of places that are locked or "off limits" on Chessboard Zero are barred or caved in or stuck closed or secured with multiple deadbolts on Chessboard Two. Just because there are fewer people doesn't make it easier to get around in many cases.

Messages

The zones of normality have the same sort of "honesty" that is evident on Chessboard One, especially in the abandoned areas. There tend to be elements of text that might, well, be trying to tell you something.

Fragments of never-printed newspapers blown by the winds contain bits of stories that seem to pertain to you. Graffiti and faded movie posters make it seem that, well, someone is trying to tell you something.

Some people (who've 'studied' the phenomena) say that this is because the human subconscious can manifest itself in ways that deal with the finer elements of semiotics (text, pictures, etc.) Other people report far more *personalized* messages sent in, say, giant stone statues (these are unsubstantiated). Perhaps the cosmic mechanisms of synchronicity are more strongly at work on the lower chessboards pulling meaning out of

Enforcer Flowers

One reported phenomena is that of Enforcer Flowers. When you do something you aren't supposed to on Chessboard Two and your reflection attracts the authorities on Chessboard Zero you'll see Enforcer Flowers. These grow up (rapidly—less than a second) and are massive yellow roses that open to disgorge a security enforcer (or more than one).

NOTE: Enforcer Flowers aren't the only types of authority. In the populate Sane Zones there are regular cops. In other areas there may be Shadow Cops or guards walking lonely corridors. Sometimes, in some places, posted guards are represented as material locks or chains across heavy doors. In other places a heavy guard may be represented as something *inhuman*.

NAME: ENFORCER GRADE ONE — **MONSTER**

PHY 12	STR 12	BLD 15	CON 12
REF 12	COR 12	REA 12	AGI 12
INT 10	RES 09	MEM 11	WIL 10

DP 15	Minor	Major	Critical
Wounds	5	15	30

To Hit	13-
To Be Hit	-2
Armor	None
Damage	Wpn

Description: Enforcer's Grade 1 wear perfectly crisp uniforms in dark blue, beige, or military green. They have no features on their faces and speak through crackling radios on their lapels. They carry heavy batons that hit (5 REA each swing, 8 IMP damage). They also carry heavy 10mm side-arms that deal 9pts of PEN damage (-1/7y, ROF S, Clip 9 shots).

Operations: Most Enforcers will simply take the character into custody and move him to a holding area. In some cases they may do serious damage. Shadows treat Enforcers as normal police officers but they aren't. Killing an Enforcer *may* result in the character killing a cop. It's a bit more likely to result in Reflection Disassociation though: the character is free on Chessboard Two but captured on Chessboard Zero.

NAME: ENFORCER GRADE TWO — **MONSTER**

PHY 13	STR 15	BLD 19	CON 13
REF 11	COR 12	REA 11	AGI 11
INT 11	RES 11	MEM 11	WIL 11

DP 33	Minor	Major	Critical
Wounds	11	33	66

To Hit	14-
To Be Hit	-1
Armor	4/16
Damage	Wpn

Description: A black SWAT gear clad trooper with a helmet that covers his eyes with a smooth plane of black plastic. Below that dark, reflective arc is a 2x normal size skull's mouth: huge naked teeth in a permanent, skinless, smile. Grade 2 Enforcers may carry rifles that hit for 31 PEN damage. They use brutal clubs and even medieval weapons like ball and chain flails. They may appear when the character is facing heavy odds on Chessboard Zero.

Operations: Enforcer's Grade 2 are far more dangerous and may kill or seriously injure characters in the attempt to "take them down." Sometimes they drive para-military or science fiction looking vehicles that seem to have been supplied by some nightmare dystopia.

randomness without any help from the visitor's Id.

Atmospherically, Chessboard Two is usually in some sort of storm. High winds, threatening clouds, and rolling thunder are all common weather phenomena. There is some evidence that weather gets *worse* in areas where there are punctures in the fabric (so that when a person arrives it may seem calm but a storm may come with frightening speed).

There is also evidence that the weather is part of the semiotic web that makes implied things actual: the weather may be linked to the general threat-level, people's emotional state, or be a literal omen of things to come.

Inner Meanings Revealed

The works of mankind, when translated to Chessboard Two, become *manifest conceptuality*. What this means is that things and places are often very blunt and obvious about what their deeper role in society is.

A prison might consist of cages (many empty, some holding filthy, broken, raving people) and collections of massive stone wheels fitted to rusting engines to which the prisoners are fitted to be "ground down" (partially crushed—but *usually* not to death) and made to conform.

A HMO doctor's office (now, deserted and rubble strewn) might be set up as a *drive-thru fast food place* with a broken conveyor belt and two windows (one to "pay at" and one to "diagnose" at).

Although it was mentioned above, it bears repeating (and it'll be mentioned again): places that are hard to get into and out of on Chessboard Zero are still hard to get into and out of on Chessboard Two—just (usually) for different reasons.

Shadows aren't especially good guards (and if you sneak past a Shadow the real person on Chessboard Zero will miss you as well). But usually, on Chessboard Two there are things that make it hard to move freely. Doors that might be "normal" on Chessboard Zero may be heavy and multiply locked on Chessboard Two. Hallways may be filled with debris or even coils of barbwire.

Power And Light

No one on Chessboard Two pays their electric bill. Lights still function, TVs display gruesome images and static. Traffic lights work randomly. Computers link to web pages that don't exist.

Society

The Sane Zones that are inhabited are like Chessboard One: Shadows come and go (although there is still a sense of storm and loss and decay and filth). Most places on Chessboard Two don't really have much

by way of a Society—and even in those zones there are often monsters that regularly prey on Shadows (or, if they can get them, real people undergoing Descent).

An Abandoned Zone is a dark, often dangerous post-apocalypse parody of the real world. Even places that appear well lighted and inviting from a distance turn out to have things in them that one might rather not run into. Shadows here still go about approximations of their daily lives but these are even more strange and the shadows are even less consistent (you might sometimes find a co-worker at his desk in an otherwise empty room—and sometimes not—like he's a candle flame flickering in and out).

There is no real, ordered, cohesive society here. There's too little of Chessboard One and not enough of the influence of the lower levels. Chessboard Two is a nightmarish place.

Insanity Zones can have many different kinds of society

Steal This Book

What society does exist on Chessboard Two has it hard: the infrastructure that exists on Chessboard One isn't there (food, reliable, shelter, the cops, etc.) Ultimately one of the reasons that it's hard to get by on Chessboard Two is that a lot of what you want isn't there (sure: you find an abandoned super-store but it's been trashed and everything left is broken, torn, or otherwise ruined).

But that doesn't mean there isn't security of a sort anyway that can come in some cases. If you start trouble on Chessboard One the cops will come and they'll be pretty effective (about as effective as they are in real life), if somewhat bizarre in action (you won't get read your rights, or maybe you'll get 'em read five times). They might be goofy—or grim nightmarish caricatures of themselves.

On Chessboard Two in many places in the Sane Zones (the abandoned places) the cops don't exist in the same way. There are still some

safeguards though.

Believers

There are things on Chessboard Two that'll hunt you—even in the Sane Zones. Maybe that's where the Believers come from? Maybe they're people who've been stuck on Chessboard Two and have become Twisted and maybe *stuck*. Maybe they've shacked up. It's hard to say.

Scattered around Chessboard Two are little groups that *believe things*—and in a warped way, those things (crazy things) sort of *come true* around them. Like you walk into an all-night diner (which seems kind of normal at the time) and you find out that the people in there think it's a great place *to stay forever*. And while you're there, time kind of stops and you could stay there forever (in fact, if you decide to, and you stay for a few cups of coffee you might find several *months* have passed on Chessboard Zero when you change your mind and decide to go back!)

Believers are sometimes dangerous and sometimes just *creepy*. It's pretty clear that many of them aren't human or didn't start as human but often they collect some humans along the way. Not all of them are as friendly as the all-night (all-the-time) diner. Some of them believe that there was 'a war' and congealing around them in the ruins are craters and toxic gases and semi-live shells, and pieces of war-machines.

Some of them believe that monsters come at midnight and brother, you better believe it—there's a game of *hide and seek* every midnight (and you better hide *well*). Believers tend to be on the outskirts of the Sane Zones or within the Abandoned Areas.

Was there a war? Well it doesn't seem to be simply a "manifestation of the mind." There is evidence that the beliefs are, in fact, true for *somewhere* (some people think the past or the future—but others think that it's possible wars were fought on lower levels of reality). In any event there is *something* at the bottom of their truths—it just isn't clear what.

Shadows

Where Shadows inhabit Sane Zones they will tend to keep a pretty tight "circuit" from their houses to wherever they spend their daily lives. Most Shadows on Chessboard Two *don't* wander between the zones much.

Civilizations

There are some (vestiges) of civilization on Chessboard Two. The *Army of No* has some outposts there. There are entities and beings that have families. Many of these are like storybook families: a group of intelligent bears who live in a cozy little house and maul anyone who comes their way unannounced (but if you approached *correctly* they might be willing to chat).

Most "organized" social groups are essentially monsters or solitary survivors that have little knowledge or scope of knowledge outside their close domains.

NOTE: Most of the beings here are covered in the GM's book in more detail. These are listed here with what information a journeyor might commonly know about them. It isn't intended to be "enough to GM them."

Ecology

There are quite a few monsters *native* to Chessboard Two. They usually have little problem getting up to Chessboard One if they are in pursuit of some tasty prey. Some of them even cast Reflections up to Chessboard Zero.

Possibilities	Notes
Army of No	A force of mutant soldiers with a Nazi-like dress code and intense focus on formality and protocol. They seem dedicated to "attacking" certain things on Chessboard Zero and stage "raids" up to Chessboard One from time to time (their weapons have moderate but strange effects on Chessboard Zero—not direct ones).
The Monks of Mourning	Tall, dark-robed, hooded figures who emit soft whimpering noises, the Monks are frightening in appearance. They do not speak, but work in monasteries making brilliantly illuminated works on the minutiae of people's lives. They go to "observe," watch, and follow on Chessboard One—but when they return to a monastery they work. Periodically one will be horrifically executed and the meat from within fed to the others. The empty robe will eventually "re-inflate" and begin work again.
The Fanfair	Perhaps these are composed of those who've undergone Descent and gotten *stuck*. They are masses of people who move through the sane and insane zones in gruesome parades. The people tend to be *stretched* and anorexic, their arms and fingers reaching their knees. They wear body paint, bizarre uniforms, and carry various musical instruments. Their floats breath fire, extend mechanical jaws, etc. They parade with cages and sometimes will catch and imprison anyone they catch (which is rare—they aren't sneaky). When they stop they form camp groups. They are usually led by powerful entities. Although they are not formed of Shadows, they are formed of the insane.
Monster Families	There are non-human groups that live in sparse networks of communities (often around populated sane zones—but sometimes these people have trouble with "police" or Enforcers). Some of them make a living as shopkeepers (bakers, tailors, mechanics, etc.) Some are extremely dangerous to regular humans. Some are not at all.

Construction

On Chessboard Two things appear *frightening*. Once familiar, warm buildings now loom with broken, dark windows and graffiti-stained walls. Storm clouds gather. If the characters are in a Normality Zone then things that you will need to decide are:

Element	Notes
Monsters	Normality Zones are abandoned and are homes for monsters in many cases. How high the threat-level is often mimics the real-world area to some degree (dangerous neighborhoods tend to be worse).
Movement	How movement is restricted will be a big deal on Chessboard Two. Doors may be *fake* if they are *locked* on Chessboard Zero (i.e. you might need to batter down the wall). Corridors that are *guarded* might be filled with garbage (or watched by monsters).
Damage	Is the place abandoned? Streets may have burnt-out hulks of cars. Store windows are smashed and trash blows by, caught in the wind. Determine what kinds of damage have been done.
Valuable Things	Some places will still have valuable things. Usually not *very* valuable things—but a grocery store might have some food still on a few of its shelves. A TV-Repair store might have one or two good units displaying static.
Messages / Relevance	Many places on Chessboard Two will contain messages for people who come there. Some say that the person's subconscious mind actually re-shapes the world when they arrive. But there is some evidence that meaningful messages have been in a given place for ages, waiting to be discovered and being meaningless to those who pass them before the person for whom they are meant. There is also evidence that some "beings" may wish to communicate with journeyers and can do so through the terrain.

If the Zone is Warped then you will need to determine how it has mutated.

Type of Mutation	Notes
It's A Nightmare/ Funhouse Mirror Version	Things might be upside down, pictures might be lurid caricatures of themselves, the place may reflect pornographic, cultish, or murderous sensibilites. There seems to be a dark sense of humor at work in the re-design of the place.
It's Relevant	Maybe the mutation somehow encapsulates a "true nature" of the place (note: what exactly the true-nature of a place is might be up for debate between any two given people. Wonderland has one, though).
It's Under New Management	Sure, the physical structure might change but if the Monks of Mourning have turned the place into a monastery then it's gonna be significantly different from whatever it was before.

Chessboard Three

Chessboard Three is the first of the "deeper levels." Really, it is one of the two "middle levels" where what's going on in 'reality' is still relevant (i.e. the terrain will be *similar* to what is represented on Chessboard Zero).

If Chessboard Two is a dark, post-apocalyptic paranoid vision of abandonment and decay, Chessboard Three is a bright, manic land where lunacy has taken root in the terrain itself. The laws of physics are cheerfully turned inside out and upside down as rocks float, water runs uphill, and an artist's brush is more powerful than a blacksmith's hammer.

While few humans cast shadows intense enough to penetrate this deep, the Third Chessboard has a society and culture of its own: a fairy-tale land of serfs and peasants and princesses and kings... and, of course, dark forces that lie in wait off of marked paths and in deep forests.

The madness of Chessboard Three is a madness of archetypes made literal; here, there really are big, bad wolves and inventively sadistic trolls and witches who live in candy houses in the heart of a dark wood.

Chessboard Three mixes the wondrous and the fantastic with darker elements just below the surface or beyond the light. It offers travelers their first glimpse of how manic and magnificent Wonderland can be; it also offers hints of the homicidal darkness that permeates it.

Topology

Chessboard Three is almost *all* "Insane Zone" as per Chessboard Two—but often a step further. While Chessboards One and Two share a lot of similar terrain, by the time you get to Three it's only rarely identifiable.

On the plus side, the atmosphere is usually less grim, brighter lit, and not *abandoned*. No, the madness has fully moved in here.

Escher Architecture

Artist MC Escher drew paintings with people walking on the walls or with staircases that obeyed alternate planes of gravity. These fancies become fact on Chessboard Three. Usually to "change planes" you must find a proper door or walkway that acts to take you from one "plane of gravity" to another.

There may be entire streets, apartments, parks, etc. that exist on, for example, the *side* of a building. If you can find the proper staircase that takes you there in the proper way you can just walk right up (of course then the rest of the world will seem turned sideways). Usually touching something of lower-mass and weight than you will have the effect of "bringing it with you" (it'll weigh what it normally does and 'fall' towards your feet). But if you let an object from another plane of gravity

go, it'll return to its origin and "fall sideways" or "up." If you try to move an object of equal or greater mass than yourself it's just stuck and won't budge if you're from another plane.

Internal Meanings Made External

As with Chessboard Two, many of the mutations will serve to make the internal meanings external. A shopping mall might become a great cathedral to money and corporate power. A doctor's office might become a mechanical "haunted house carnival ride" of medical horrors (you wouldn't want to go see that guy in reality!).

Giant billboards might proclaim things like WHAT ARE YOU PRETENDING NOT TO KNOW or YOUR UNSPOKEN TRUTH IS YOUR INTERNAL LIE! The purposes of these messages are unclear. Maybe they come from the collective subconscious—maybe some agency puts them there.

Magnificent Structures

Another common trend is for architecture to be "improved" in some stunning, physically impossible (or improbable) way. Vast raised walkways might spider-web through a city. A national park might now have rock and ground formations that corkscrew into the sky.

Waterfalls may run uphill and a fountain might be re-configured to blast water and music and light a hundred feet into the sky.

Monuments

If there is an "agency" at work managing these lands it is one that thinks highly of itself. Vast (often crumbled) monuments of great size and importance are sometimes found where there is nothing (notable) on Chessboard Zero. People who've never been heard of are immortalized in three-story stone statues.

Giant plazas may be crisscrossed by a massive, purple gem done as a Foucault's Pendulum on a golden chain. A language like Latin is inscribed on the side of it, spelling out nonsense poetry.

Access and Movement

Where a locked door on Chessboard Zero might be a *fake* door on Chessboard Two, by Chessboard Three it might be a squared archway with a guillotine blade sliding unpredictably back and forth within it! Hallways that are guarded on Chessboard Zero may become video game-like ordeals with floors that "fall away" and regenerate or with a tile floor that "flows backwards" like a reverse conveyor belt.

Chessboard Three Physics: The Art of Drawing

There are several ways in which the physical laws governing the universe break down completely on Chessboard Three. They don't (usually) fail in "obvious" or "fundamental" ways (with a person spinning apart in a blast of elementary particles) but, rather, they tend to fail "on the sly."

There is little "means of production" in an 18th Century sense. There are no mines. There are few machine shops. Sure, there are craftsmen and some very good tools and gear can be salvaged from the areas where Chessboard Zero goods appear—but there is another fundamental law that comes into play: if you make something that *looks* like something else, it *becomes* that something else.

A well-drawn blueberry pie can be scooped out of the picture frame and served up hot. A sculpture of an "arithmetic engine" can produce a clockwork machine that does advanced mathematics! The artist needs to comprehend the device but not necessarily be able to make it himself.

The act of turning a sculpture or drawing into something "real" is a bit tricky. It can be done by people other than the artist but usually a craft skill roll made at –3 to –6 (or more, depending on the difficulty of the piece) will produce suitable raw material. After that, a WIL roll at –4 (with +1 to +5 for the proper rituals and experience) can "draw it out" into function.

Thus, a telescope lens can be made without advanced glassworking skills (so long as someone can draw it) and so on. Many artists build the more complex machines and, often, craftsmen create the less-complicated artifacts of daily living.

The Tulgy Wood

One of the recurrent memes that is present in Wonderland is the *wild nature*—a natural wood that encroaches on man-made domains. This wood starts to be prevalent on Chessboard Three.

A strange, thriving greenery has begun to overtake some areas. This is a fantastic, fantasy forest by turns artistic, beautiful, nightmarish, and fanciful. Within the deeper woods there are actually towns and hamlets and in some cases the woods surround more stubborn structures that exist from the upper levels.

The wood can begin appearing on any level of the world (the first 10 stories of a skyscraper might be glass, steel, and stone—but if you take one of the few working elevators to the 11th you might see the hallways moving away dissolve into fields and trees and ponds.

Floating Islands

There are vast "sky-scapes" -- archipelagos of floating islands of rock and greenery that hover over cloud-filled depths. There is still a "down" here—gravity pulls man and beast, but wood cut from trees on the floating islands will, itself, float and bob at the level (depth?) from which it was cut.

Those unfortunate enough to fall off the edge of the world tumble for days at least; maybe weeks. Legend on Chessboard Three has it that the fall lasts forever, but there is some evidence that the depths end in deeper levels of reality (Chessboards Five and Six) and that at least some of those who fall arrive unhurt.

Road Networks

Although it doesn't make much sense, both hard-top superhighways (with reflective signs and mile markers, some with imaginary numbers, and the like) and railroads crisscross the Chessboard Three world. Exactly how these got built is a mystery but they do exist and seem, in some cases, to be paths to upper or lower levels of reality.

Society

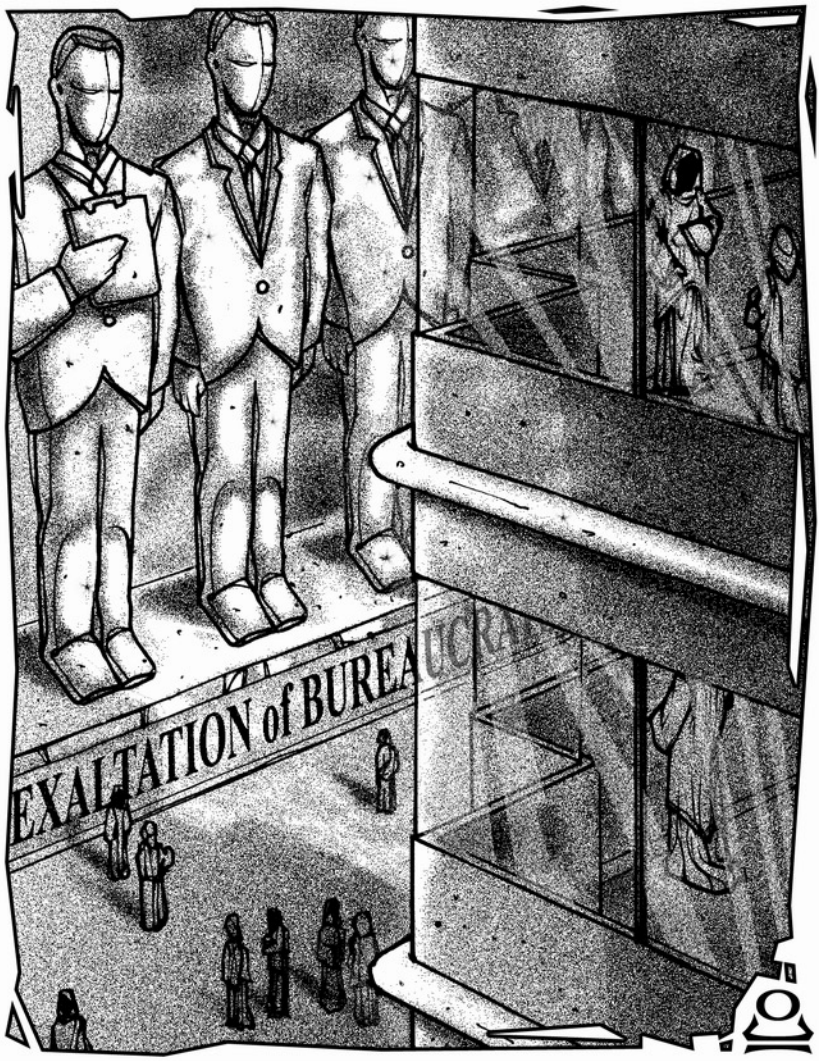
The population on Chessboard Three is very low—and the Shadow population is almost non-existent. You *may* find a Shadow of someone wandering one of the crazy hallways of some structure they inhabit in reality but the Shadow, down here, will seem like a sleepwalker and your encounter with it will, on Chessboard Zero will usually result only in them *thinking* about you (if you are on Chessboard Three, chances are, your Reflection is Disassociated).

The population gap is filled in by a variety of Feudal Societies who live under a loose-knit hierarchy of semi-royalty. The exact nature of this society is mysterious (and there's further detail in the GM's book!) but there are non-human knights errant, castles built out of the roofs of twisted skyscrapers, and monsters lurking under raised walkways that have become "bridges."

Possibilities	Notes
Keep or Castle	Sometimes a standing structure that still "more or less" exists in a useable nature will be co-opted by a powerful being. In other cases a more 'traditional' fantasy castle will be built. The denizens might be "human serfs" or slaves. They might be intelligent animals. They might be monsters of one sort or another.
Woodland Village	The denizens are all clothes-wearing animals. Note that the *scale* of these villages need not be human—the animals might be all normal sized or 'blown up' to full size.
"Victorian Town"	There are human colonies on Chessboard Three. They tend to live in small villages with some powerful patron. Often they have a good grip on the "laws of the land," which will sound like superstitions to those visiting them. For many of these townships, Chessboard Zero is fanciful children's story!

Religion, Economy, Science, and Attitude

Religion, Economy, Science, and Attitude Chessboard Three sees three distinct strata of society -- the lower classes, the 'middle class' and the aristocracy.



The Lower Classes

Civilization, where civilization exists, is overwhelmingly agricultural and rural; the mindset is medieval. Simple beings (human or otherwise) who follow the rules of the land, the seasons, and society might live to see another year. Those who disobey or question, or who are simply curious invite tragedy upon themselves, disaster upon their friends and neighbors.

These serfs are not stupid; they are attuned to the moods of the land—the subtle clues that denote danger or (rarely) opportunity. They know that death or worse is always at the door and that their unchanging ritual keeps it at bay.

The Middle Classes

In more urban areas the mindset tends toward Victorian. Manners and appearances are more important than morals or ethics and class is everything. All the important decisions will be made by those of higher station; their place is to obey, to follow, and to never complain.

The standard of living is reliably at about the 16th to 18th century level: gaslights, gunpowder, no real understanding of natural science (which makes sense: it doesn't work so reliably anyway).

There are no factories and no means of mass production. Instead, there are guildsmen who work natural materials (metal smiths, leather workers, clothes makers, bakers, and so-on), and artisans who create more incredible things through painting or sculpture. The best of the artisans are patronized by the aristocracy which has a never-ending appetite for the wonders they make.

A step above skilled laborers is the merchant class, those who buy and sell and trade in currency rather than skill: shop owners, landlords, money-changers, and the like. Also there are those who trade in knowledge or an elite, university-learned skill (yes, there are colleges; they teach what they have always taught, since curiosity and a thirst for discovery are traits that gets one ostracized at best, killed at worst, on the Third Chessboard): academics, barristers, pharmacists and doctors. It is a cliché that the more successful the business man, the more petty, banal, small-minded, and fearful he is.

There is much to be scared of: just as a serf would be eaten by wolves for planting in the wrong season or wandering from the path, those transgress against the social mores and standards of city life, those who suffer significant humiliation or are 'outcast', lose the unspoken protection of society and discover that the civilized world has its own wolves in the steam-drenched, lamp-lit streets.

The Aristocracy

If Chessboard Three is a place of great, dull drudgery and stifling monotony for those of the middle and lower classes, it is a stage of great pageantry and spectacle for those at the top. The aristocrats rule (they say) by *design* – which begs the question (never asked) of a *designer* – but when you've a party to throw, who has time for philosophy?

And the parties are grand. There are Winter Festivals, Autumn Balls, Midsummer Weddings, and Springtime Coronations and on and on. These are not simply celebration: like all classes, life on Chessboard Three requires strict adherence to ritual. The aristocratic life is no different however the clothes and the food are somewhat better. The Aristocrats see farther and deeper than those below them (although the merchants see a great deal, too). They *know* more of the mysteries of their land, and although they are loath to talk about it with outsiders, they have some knowledge of the deeper secrets that underlie them.

And so, for the aristocrat who missteps and invites the wrath of the darker forces of Chessboard Three and below, there are the greatest punishments. Endless sleeps spent in the deepest of Night Terrors. Terrible transformations–the becoming of a monstrosity. Horrible curses upon loved ones; upon entire fiefdoms. And so on. You know the stories.

The Strange Royalty

Travelers on Chessboard Three will find a variety of communities ranging from hamlets to fiefdoms, to large and complex urban centers. Although there is great variety (free-towns and independent city-states are far from uncommon), the "civilized" areas of Chessboard Three are largely under the rule of an aristocratic class with most communities paying fealty to a distant Lord or King, while dealing directly with the local authorities.

Those who study the power-structure in enough detail to scratch the surface will discover another similarity to the Europe of the Dark Ages; there is a secondary power structure along side the primary, "secular" one - an authority that comes from the strange cathedral-like castles, temples, and ruins scattered across the landscape. This is not religion (as it would commonly be defined): these structures house at least the appointees of a twisted, alien royalty.

The actual nobility itself is often rarely or never seen and may be completely ordinary looking or monstrous in the extreme (reports, where they exist, vary). Many Chessboard Three communities consider themselves to live under the rule of these beings, however remote they may be.

In many cases insane laws are enforced by the bizarre functionaries of the castles (Punches, massive jack-in-the-boxes are common but just

about anything could show up). Strange proclamations and unlikely rules are called into force. There is a village where everything is paid for using strings into which various, time-consuming, and complicated knots are tied.

Visitors may find items of considerable value in these castles and corridors that open into the Linear Maze and lead further down to lower chessboards.

Military Science

The sword, the pike, and the bow-and-arrow represent the standard in most places. Elite troops are armed with massive, ornate, and bizarre-looking muskets that are loaded with strange crystals or with malignant swords that cast a dark radiance and mumble obscenely. Where possible, of course, modern Chessboard Zero weaponry is preferred: even the strange guns and magic swords are rarely a match for a squad armed with M16's. Places in Chessboard Three that resemble Zero are rare and valuable and are harvested for whatever they might offer.

Most castles and towns have a guard that stands watch, checks strangers at the gate, and comes when called. The real law comes from the Knights who travel under writ from the Aristocrats and dispense justice and enforce the rules of the land.

Construction

Much of Chessboard Three is still recognizable to visitors from Chessboard Zero. Urban areas could have clusters of great stone monoliths or towering graveyard headstones, or even massive "discarded" plastic milk-cartons the size of skyscrapers in place of the Chessboard Zero buildings. The limits are only those of imagination.

Where the world has gone "more wild" it is less decipherable in Chessboard Zero terms – in the place of familiar terrain there could be anything from the deep forests of the twisted Tulgy wood, to the loss of the ground itself, falling away to reveal a sea of "sky."

Civilization tends to favor stable and less topologically "interesting" terrain but it is not uncommon for iconic cities on Chessboard Zero to be represented by the seats of great kingdoms on the Third Chessboard.

Money

The currency of the realm is usually specially minted coins or "notes" done in fanciful colors and showing the local ruler of the day. However, real-world money is known and is worth quite a bit.

Ecology

On Chessboard Three there is no shortage of monsters! In fact, many of them seem to take their roles in making the uncontrolled areas dangerous quite seriously.

On Chessboard Three, monsters are things out of twisted fairytales. They are often very serious about their profession (and in monster society there is much debate about what, exactly, that is: do you want to *scare* more people ... or *kill more*? And do you only eat those who *stray from the path?* Or do you get an innocent every now and then, just to keep them guessing?)

Aphorisms

In a Wonderland home on Chessboard Three you are likely to see some needlepoint work up on the wall with one of two common phrases:

Nature Abhors a Vacuum

And

You Are What You Eat

These are references to monsters. Any place that is out of the way—that is left *empty*—will, eventually, generate its own monster (or maybe one will move in: the jury is still out on that one). Why? Because Nature Abhors a Vacuum.

Additionally, the saying You Are What You Eat comes from the fact that monsters, as they go about their monstrous ways become more and more "human" in their natures over time. Sometimes one will even "come to town" (although this is never seen as very safe). It's also a matter of debate as to whether a monster becoming "more human" is a good or a bad thing.

Construction

When putting together a Chessboard Three area, the questions will revolve around how "wild" the place has gone. Certainly in an urban area there will still be lots of things in the place of buildings that were there. They might be great stone monoliths. They might be massive "discarded" plastic milk-cartons the size of skyscrapers. There could be all sorts of things.

If the area has gone "more wild" then the questions will revolve around whether there is floating areas, forested places, stony outcroppings, desert, etc.

Kingdoms are small and the area is dangerous. Even when a group of sentient beings live in relative comfort and stability they may be extremely wary or even dangerous to outsiders.

Flux Terrain Examined

Some elements of Chessboard Four are "stable"—they are always there when you visit. Some are "in flux" meaning that they only appear at a given place for a period of time. Usually this is very predictable: the road (a super highway) crosses the great desert to the north … from 3—6 PM. If you are on that road after 6: 01 PM you'll find it dissolving into sand. Maybe there's a tower out in the desert that exists from 2—4 in the dark of night. The native inhabitants of the tower experience it all the time (and, perhaps, during the other hours it's somewhere else … or nowhere at all)—but if you aren't native, you'll find the walls begin to crack and crumble, floors collapse in, and furniture turns to dust, and the place becomes a haunted ruin in a few fluid seconds … and then it puts itself back together again later.

What is stable and what isn't—and how you "get caught in the flux"-- varies from place to place. Sometimes being inside or near a disappearing terrain feature is enough to be taken with it. Other times (as with the tower example) it'll decay or mutate right around you. Sometimes the cycle is on the order of hours, sometimes days.

Chessboard Four: Where the Wild Things Are

Chessboard Four is alien—to some it is even worse than the deep places below it. Its inhabitants are inhuman at best—monsters at worst—and mostly a cruel mockery of human beings. The land itself is fluid and unstable: over the course of days (or even hours), mountain ranges melt into oceans. Seas drain into vast deserts. Cliffs crumble to reveal lush rainforest, and so-on. Traveling on Chessboard Four gives a strong sense of hallucination: you can "travel" just by standing still.

But unlike the even deeper realms there is a method to Chessboard Four's madness, a key to understanding it. Chessboard Four is composed of the raw materials of stories. Instead of the chemical compounds of natural substances the base elements of the fourth chessboard are literary elements.

There are no seas filled with mixtures of saline and water; there are oceans of doubt. The sediment—the ground you walk on—isn't ground silicon and aluminum oxides; it's 64% atmosphere, 17% tone with traces of plot devices, influences, and faiths. In dangerous, volatile regions there are boiling fountains, raging storms, and devouring maelstroms of climax and resolution.

Chessboard Four is primal and chaotic; it is an engine that drives the higher Chessboards, spawning the monsters and treasures—the truths and revelations—of Chessboards Three and Two. It is a source of energy, like a distant star that sustains the life of broken shadows—the whirls—who have been cut off from their casters. It is a mythic place where even the dirt has the power to shape lives and fortunes. Chessboard Four answers some mysteries about the nature of Wonderland while suggesting others and raising questions about what might lie beneath it.

Topology

Chessboard Four's terrain changes the way the weather changes; rolling in and out and re-arranging itself from day to day, or suddenly shifting violently and cataclysmically for those caught in its grip.

There are regions of stability where there are great alien cities peopled by inhuman creatures; more common are distant, scattered townships and villages that "drift" from place to place as the world ebbs and flows around them.

Relevance to Chessboard Zero

Chessboard Four's connection to Chessboard Zero is tenuous at best; absent in most cases. Sometimes there are patterns that seem to suggest or imply the terrain of the natural universe (a reassuring grid of stones where a city lies; a general matching of the locations of oceans), but these are transient, fading as a new landscape rolls in.

Wild Things

It is said that Chessboard Four is populated solely by Naughts and monsters; this isn't quite true, but as generalizations go it is not a bad one. The Naughts are by far the most populace of the indigenous inhabitants of the land: the Dramatis Personae.

Then there are the Monsters; many of the well-known monsters spawn in the dust and sand of Chessboard Four: Snarks in the deep evergreen forests where sarcasm and intelligence flourish; Moam Raths in the fetid bogs of greed. These monsters are the animate and incarnate forms of the Deep Elements that feed them; they have a place in Chessboard Four's natural order.

There are other monsters as well. They are unique, meaningless, joyfully nihilistic; they hunt and play in Chessboard Four too, but they hale from deeper realms.

NAME: PRIDEASAURUS				MONSTER
PHY 14	STR 130	BLD720	CON 14	
REF 14	COR 14	REA 14	AGI 14	
INT 08	RES 08	MEM 12	WIL 14	
DP 750	Minor	Major	Critical	
Wounds	250	750	1500	

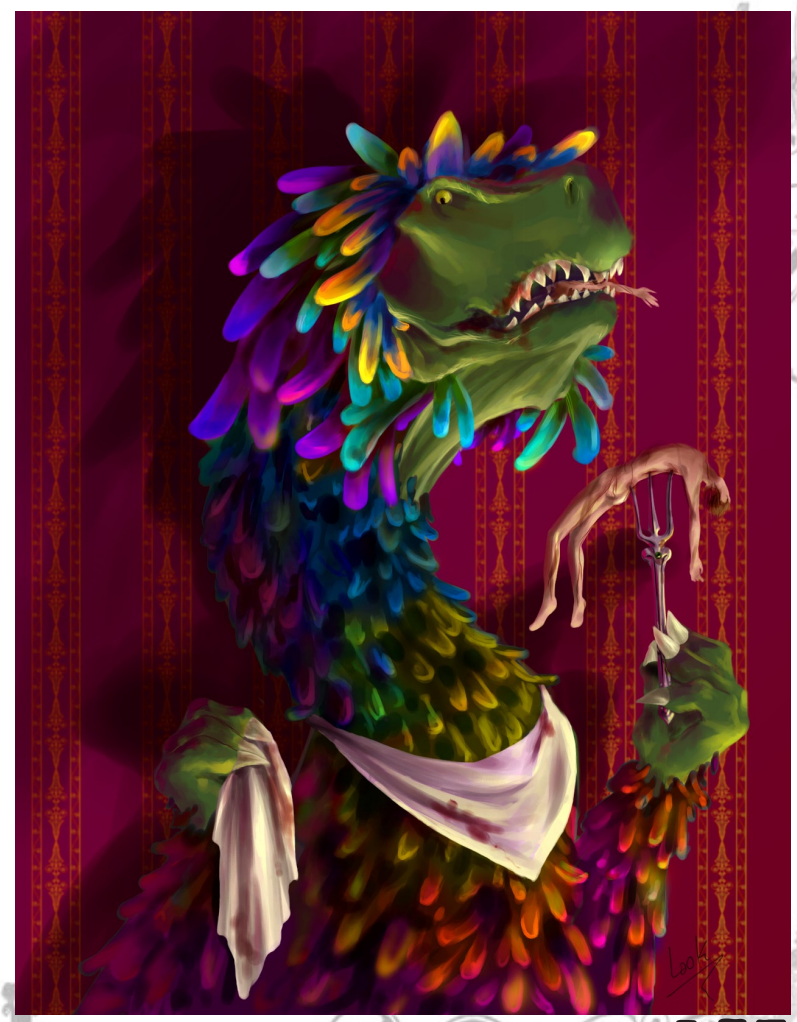
To Hit	14-
To Be Hit	+0/-1
Armor	4/8
Damage	80 PEN

Description: The Prideasaurus is a lightning-fast two-story multi-ton dinosaur with a colorful skin (each one is unique) and *incredible* plumage along its head and long neck. It looks a little like a T-Rex with a longer, snake-like neck and glowing green eyes that cast a verdant radius like a spotlight.

The Prideasaur is extremely vain and is easily distracted by its reflection (WIL roll at -6!) unless under significant attack. It stalks and eats human prey, evidencing excellent table manners when it dines.

Bite: The bite of the Prideasaur does 80 PEN damage. It gets a +3 Large Weapon Bonus.

Reflection: When the Prideasaurus hunts something on Chessboard Zero it appears as a large industrial crane that is broken down. It especially wants those who are arrogant or overconfident. It can attack with a bite that does a stunning 34 PEN damage with the crane—although its REA's Reflection is only 9 and its to-hit is 09- (and it usually only gets one shot, after which the crane will begin to decay quickly).



The Deep Elements

The ground, the seas, the landscape, even the flora and the fauna of Chessboard Four are made of the physical manifestation of the human subconscious; the literary elements of life. Instead of carbon, silicon and nitrogen, the atomic building blocks of the fourth chessboard are Deep Elements; things like vices, hatred, victory, and insight.

Deep Elements occur naturally on Chessboard Four. The surreal terrain is laced with elements of lives, and stories, concepts made metal and crystal, and emotions sprouting for the harvest. In their raw, natural form, they are usually too diffuse to be dramatically powerful or valuable; they are only useful after being refined, purified, or even worked by artisans on higher levels.

Families of Deep Elements

These are examples of deep elements – there are many thousands more (although not an infinite amount). We've presented these in their aspect families – there are many families, but some of the common ones are influences, outcomes, and faiths.

Prison Trees

There are dark forests on Chessboard Four where the trees are adorned with black iron spikes and barbed chains wrapped around them. These aren't the souls of suicides but they may've been Dante's inspiration for his wood. The faces on the trees are similar (not exact, but similar) to those of people on Chessboard Zero who live in some kind of psychological torment. They may be the insane, the deprived, the depressed, the unlucky, the oppressed, and so on. There is more than one face per tree in many cases and they make a moaning sound. Sometimes the branches grab and seize and the roots can become tentacles that suck you down and devour you.

But if you can undo the chains, there is evidence that things on Chessboard Zero will change for those freed from the trees. It takes a serious effort, but it can be done—and for some people, it might be salvation.

Wonder Clouds

The brilliant mother-of-pearl cumulonimbus clouds that fill the daytime skies over Chessboard Four are composed of tiny gaseous particles of awe and wonder. Amongst those clouds (and hidden within them) are magnificent cathedrals, vast bridges, and towering works of art.

Mind Mines

There is a plain of gray, crater-marked rock where giant stone heads sprout from the rock. Some are three stories tall. Some are mountain sized. When the sides of the heads are sheered away there are crystals embedded in the slate-gray rock underneath.

These crystals are inspirations. Around the heads are scaffolding and old, rickety chutes and mills from an eternity of mining that has been done there—looking for crystals that will give the user (usually they are crushed into powder and inhaled) new ideas, possibly complete ones—for wonderful things … or mundane things. Many of the mines find nothing of interest. Some of the ideas contained within will drive you mad.

Some say that human ideas germinate here and that there are new thoughts that have yet to filter up. Others say that human thought congeals and crystallizes in the stone heads and that the miners are finding and refining ideas already thought. No one knows for sure.

The Constellations of Desire

The night sky above Chessboard Four burns with constellations that are not stars but needs, wants, and hungers. The forms in the heavens—often seen with faint blue outlines making their shapes clear—can talk to those who study them. They are vast beings and they are remote. Their voices can be heard throughout the chessboards if you know how to listen or have the right equipment. Some people who listen become transfixed, however—and the whispering voices of the heavens are considered by many to be neither sane nor safe.

Mining and Searching

The Dramatis Personae, the humanoid (sometimes barely) denizens of Chessboard Four seek to find and refine the Deep Elements for their own purposes. These are examples of artifacts and elements that may come from Chessboard Four.

There is also trade in the Deep Elements many Chessboards up—and even to Chessboard Zero. Have you heard rumors of a drug you can take to mainline *musical genius?* How about a few tablets of *creativity*? Those with the right connections on Chessboard Zero can get their hands on some amazing things.

	Influences	Climax and Resolution	Faiths
Description	Influences are deep elements that play a role in dramas and stories; they may represent climaxes, conflicts, things fought for, or fought with. As pure, *essential* Deep elements, they often convey the ability to influence a drama – to introduce a new element, to drive the action in direction, or to neutralize another influence. The more pure, the more powerful. In lesser concentrations, they can be used to predict or detect those influences in a character's story.	All stories have their ending; this is an outcome (success or failure, victory or defeat). Outcomes are often very sought after – they represent a decisive event; the resolution of a key conflict, and the denouement As essential aspects they can be very powerful: they can exert heavy force to create a certain outcome in a story or drama. Dilute outcomes act as influences that are highly versatile – outcomes are often defined by the stakes and a player, rather than by specific actions.	Faiths are internal deep elements; they can represent emotions, beliefs, or cultural elements of a story.
Beneficent Deep elements	Venom / Murder Freedom Vengeance Answers / Knowledge Security Golden Opportunity Good Friends	Victory Financial Success Recover Something Lost Fortune	True Love Inspiration Satiation / Gluttony Joy / Bliss / Ecstasy Truth (resolve / see-through deception) Smug Satisfaction Youth
Fearful Deep elements	Bittersweet memories Missed opportunity Sickness Bitter enemies Betrayal Deception Harsh Criticism	Suicide Pyrrhic victory Humiliation Loss of Love Wreck & Ruin	Despair Mourning / Sadness Lost Lust / need / desire Afraid Haunted / hunted

Examples of Deep elements

The Naught's Vineyards: The Naughts feed on human vice – the classics (lust, greed, wrath, and so-on), and the more specific ones (intellectual superiority, unwillingness to take responsibility, etc.). These grow in their rich, dark vineyards, fertilized with special soils and watered with tears and blood: the costs to the soul of vice and secrets.

In the Garden of Uden there are roses of love. The most exquisite and most powerful are those of True Love. They are terribly rare and terribly fragile as they grow but once they blossom, their petals turn to crystal harder than diamond.

Name: Ruby Dagger
Description: An ornate crystal dagger made from petals of True Love, worked together with an adhesive compound of Jealousy and Nostalgia; the handle is often carved bone.
Dagger with an almost indestructible blade 6 PEN (22 Penetration); if given as a gift to a lover it will hide in the lover's heart until it's needed and return when the danger is passed
Reflection: Letter or postcard from an old lover

Name: Love Potion
Description: A tea made from the leaves of roses not.
Potions can have many effects depending on the potency of the leaves and the preparation process. Usually reduces the imbiber's resistance to charm by 10 or to 0 (whichever is higher) to charm attempts made by whomever offered the drought. Other formulas make giving the potion, itself act as a Charm or Seduce attempt with PWR 22
Reflection: Exotic teas

The soil in the Tulgy wood has a damp, heaviness to it – essence of *lost* – the aspect of confusion, misdirection, and diversion. It forms paths that lead away from true destinations and into recursive loops and indefinable mazes. Lost, itself, is a heavy sediment of indeterminate color that obscures things upon it. Drop a quarter while traveling on the twisting paths of the deep wood and don't stop to look down; you'll never find it.

Name: Jug of Missing
Description: An earthenware jug with colorful designs and a wide mouth (holds about a gallon); anything put in will be lost to the owner (no one present will remember putting anything in the jug). People not intimately familiar with the jug will never look in it; the jug itself will be easily misplaced or overlooked
Characters who are not familiar with the jug will not look in the jug – they will not even perceive it as a container.
Reflection: A non-descript box, vase, or other "decorative" container

The Monks of Mourning gather leaves from special trees – leaves of *deep sorrow*. The ash from these leaves smells of tears and the smoke of their burning brings a sense of profound loss and sadness to those who inhale it. While some seek such emotional extremes for self-knowledge or for its purgative effects, the Monks believe that it represents the natural state of mankind – that overwhelming sadness is his highest expression of being

Name: Bonfire of Abject Misery
Description: A bundle of dried leaves waiting to be burnt; the smoke from them causes incapacitating sorrow to those who inhale it; it's ash is a poison and torment to the soul
The smoke from the fire acts as PWR 14 Terror (the emotional effect is sadness, not fear) to those in a 30 yard radius. The ash acts as PWR 16 to 22 if ingested or injected.
Reflection: Incense or narcotics

Name: Sigil of Mourning
Description: A locket in the shape of an upside down heart; contains a picture of sentimental value representing a great loss, and is filled with the ash of crying leaves
Wearer will not progress in grieving; time will not heal wounds – a character wearing a sigil will feel reluctant to remove it as though doing so would be a betrayal of the one lost. Also note that the character will *not* realize or admit that the sigil is responsible for the absence of healing
Reflection: Locket, jewelry, or some small, wearable memento of personal relevance

Fortune is reflective metal; ill fortune being an iron-black, while blessings are platinum in color. Fortune is found naturally under the sands of the great wastes in small perfect spheres (sizes range from those of tiny bearings to softballs). The sands themselves represent fate or myriad destiny – all the moments or incidents that add up to nothing.

Name: Deal Breaker
Description: An oversized six-shooter forged of black metal: ill fortune; has a terrible, sinister feel to it. Heavy. Cold. Fires rounds made of pure bad-luck; jet-black spheres packed in polished brass casings.
Rounds cause instant, catastrophic tragedy to those hit; almost always terminal. Acts as PWR 22 Death Ray; The Deal Breaker is expensive, the rounds even more so. Note that when the gun discharges, the round *burns* in the chamber; there is no bullet (the ray will penetrate any cover a .357 magnum round doing 13pts damage would pass through; as with a normal death-ray effect, armor will not provide cover). Note that killing a shadow with a deal-breaker will affect the casting character as if he were strongly bound (i.e. it's usually fatal for the shadow's caster). Deal breakers are extremely rare, extremely expensive.
Reflection: A broken hand mirror (becomes more broken with each "shot") – shoots by showing one's reflection

Name: Lucky Quarter
Description: A bicentennial quarter (United States) or other ironically recognizable coin (100 Yen, etc.) made of highly distilled blessings or good fortune. Seems especially clean and shiny – never dull.
Lucky Quarters don't lose coin tosses; if put in a pot, they add +10 to the owner's gambling skill for that hand. If put in a slot machine, they'll win the jackpot. A lucky quarter's luck runs out eventually – they can modify between 10 and 100pts worth of rolls (a coin flip costs 1 pt, a gambling hand, 10. Winning the lottery requires rolling a "0" three times on 4d-4; and costs enough points to bring each roll to 0 – using your lucky quarter to buy a lottery ticket risks losing the quarter without ensuring you'll be rich); once a lucky quarter is spent or used up, it'll (probably) never be lucky for the owner again… but it will recharge and will be useful to someone else a few years later
Reflection: An iconic piece of change

Society

The society that exists on Chessboard Four is one that we are luckily cannot get to Chessboard Zero directly: human-kind is the raw material that is used in every ritual, every factory, every mill. Humans are a mass of dreams, wants, needs, consuming desires, and internalized lies.

Since all of those things (and more) have physical essences on the lower Chessboards, humankind is a resource, a fuel, and a currency.

The Naughts

The predominant form of life on Chessboard Four are the Naughts. They appear as human beings (usually, but not always, trim) whose faces are a smooth, round hole that extends all the way through their heads. Their dress usually says something about their place in society and they are very conscious of their uniforms.

Naughts can "speak" in a whistling, pipe-like language that after a time is understood in the listener's native tongue.

Almost the entirety of the Naughts lives is somehow devoted to in the trade in *deep elements*. They buy and sell and extract a fluid that is human vice incarnate. They study the architecture of Awe and fill books with their dissertations on almost imaginary edifices written in a strange tongue. They buy and sample human dreams, taking the

Example Level Four Terrain: The Gardens of Uden

Ethos

The Gardens are the embodiment of conflict and battle—the Hobbsean state of nature with war of all vs. all—it just takes place in arenas of scale (plants and insects) and time (trees competing with one another) humans are not familiar with. Those visiting Uden will see it as a vast, *beautiful* garden. Looks can be deceiving.

Physicality

Uden has glass walls—it is a circle of about 20 miles in diameter and it seems to be within a glass jar with a brightly shining sun outside that sometimes goes "underneath" bringing shade.

It looks highly landscaped and very pleasant. There are pools, waterfalls, wonderful flower, hedge-mazes and topiaries. There are benches, statues, sundials, and the like scattered about. There are even paths and, in some cases plaques giving information about a rare plant.

Birds, butterflies, and the odd calico cat can be seen wandering around. It is lush and pleasant—a good place for an afternoon stroll … or a picnic.

The sky overhead looks a bit like the top of a bottle with a stopper in it. The dark shadow is surrounded by what looks like a flock of birds. It's far up—and hard to see.

Rules

In the Garden of Uden you are both predator and prey. At the human scale you are okay for a while—but eventually something (perhaps a Jabberwocky or a Grue) will get you. At the other scales things get nastier fast. If one looks hard, one will see collections bones quickly decaying and being absorbed by the earth hidden under the plants and in out-of-the-way places.

Note: although some plants in the Garden are poisonous to humans they are almost always marked so. The Garden really is a pleasant place to spend some time—provided you have a Wonderland Entity to get you out of there!

- **Scale Change:** There are all sorts of things in the Garden that will change your scale and sense of time. Many/most of the fruits will do it. Sleeping will usually do it. There are archways with words in Latin, Greek, and so on that say Time Wastes or Time Flies—and passing through one of those is usually a one-way change.
- **Speeded Up:** There are lots of things in the Garden that are moving in "fast time." In Fast Time the garden is still bright and lush—but it doesn't move. Even things like raindrops will hang in mid-air until touched (they can be pushed out of the way). In this 'frozen garden' Hummingbirds fly by at lazy intervals and there are other things that ordinarily flicker around for fractions

ones most suitable to the weekly rituals they enact in strange temples where they serve or worship the deeper things below Chessboard Four. They have some purpose—but the reasons for it are unclear and mysterious … and on a deep level the Naughts *resent it*. And they resent *us*.

Masks

Naughts are faceless but they wear masks. These appear as empty rubber masks that, when pulled over one's head look surprisingly real and solid. They can speak and even have personalities when "hung on the hat-rack." Most Naughts wear masks when encountered above Chessboard Four. Many consider them "proper, formal wear" for company.

Masks are almost always worn when humans are about but on a Naught street one may see many of the faceless.

Culture

The Naughts' culture is one of several contradictions. They are diligent workers in the Vice Trade (harvesting Shadows to "milk" vice from them). Yet they follow a Faustian ethic when it comes to dealing with Shadows and have a terrible, fairytale sense of vengeance or punishment of those who break the rules (castles where the imprisoned sleeps in eternal nightmares until something unlikely happens are a Naught idea).

There are short Naughts who appear childlike but there are no Naught children. Naughts do not 'grow' normally but seem to either be built by machine (*tailored* is the term in common use) or to come out of nowhere. Naught families exist as a sort of mimicry of human families: different members might play different roles but everyone has a job to do and they do it.

Naughts can certainly learn but they inherit a great deal of knowledge: there are no Naught schools. Likewise, morality isn't taught: they have an innate sense of what they *ought* to

be doing and if they choose not to do it they can expect severe repercussions.

Interactions With Humans

Naughts see humans as cattle: potentially useful, possibly dangerous, and lacking real intuition. Naughts find humans *wildly* curious and they see that as a serious weakness (every question's answers has a price and eventually the human will become *unwise* and *careless*).

That said, Naughts have a sense of *propriety* that keeps them from simply pouncing on any human they see. So long as a human (or even uncaptured Shadow) amongst them is obeying the rules, they will be relatively safe. Of course many a Naught will conspire to have the human *break* the rules, making them a target.

The Envy

There's a deeper theme amid the Naughts, however. As they spend their lives almost exclusively dealing with the basic, innate nature of humanity they hold a whispered, secret understanding. They know that somehow, in some perverted sense, they are *servants* of mankind. They do not believe in a "divine purpose" in a sense that they do not *appreciate* their innate drive to work in the industry of human-nature-incarnate.

But nonetheless, they are ordained to do what they do and they feel a void inside them of envy and jealousy and anger towards man. When they adopt the ways of man (cruising "the strip" in chromed convertibles, waiting in lines at theaters, forming pretend families) they feel the *itch* of one pretending to something they know they cannot achieve.

There is much in Naught culture that mimics what they know of "life above" (and little real understanding of it) but that mimicry is edged with a blade of self-hate.

Naught Towns

Naught Towns are speckled across the landscape of Chessboard Four in small,

of a second that can now come and interact with you. The rule is this: things can be moved (a bit) and handled (a little) before they become hard and immobile—they cannot be *damaged* by "speeded up" entities (Hummingbirds are the only things that move between both worlds—and because they aren't predators or prey they are usually allies to those stuck in Uden).

- **Slowed Down:** When you are slowed down, everything becomes fuzzy—a little like an impressionistic oil painting. Up close things are clear and sharp—but even a few feet away, the world is "soft." In this slowed down world you appear to normal speed people as a statue (grayed-out, untouchable) but to you, trees move as angry (if still slow) juggernauts. Wars take place on the scale of plants dying and being eaten by insects—their children evolving new pesticide defenses. The plants (which can talk to those in slow-time) are quite philosophical about this—and usually this isn't a danger to humans … but some of the more terrifying statues have, in this world, started moving …

Denizens

Monsters at Human Scale: Jabberwocky's, Grues, Carnivorous Trees (marked with plaques—but you don't always come up on them the right way) and traps (off the trial, some things—like the cats set traps for humans)

Monsters At Small Scales: At the size of a small animal one must fear the cats (they have thumbs and are quite good at ambush, use of bows, and setting trip-wires). There are also foxes and snakes. All of these talk—and most don't prefer to eat humans—but they will if you're not careful. Owls are dangerous too.

Monsters at Very Small Scales: There are armies of insects that fight under the shrubs and amidst the grass. They wear tiny uniforms, push miniature sixteenth-of-an-inch cannons, and otherwise engage in Napoleonic warfare. There are armies of bees, centipede mercenaries, maruding bands of wasps, and so on.

At this scale, carnivorous plants are also a problem. They're vocal and, unlike real carnivorous plants, can be pretty preemptive about going out and eating you.

Monsters at Fast Speeds: A person at normal speeds may see flickers of motion periodically. These are things in "fast-time" that are barely glimpsed.

Monsters at Slow Speeds: There are always monstrous statues about that are actually hunting and stalking things in slow-time.

Very Large Monsters: The flying things up by the 'stopper' are giant hawks that may attack tree-sized beings.

brightly lit clusters. There are some city-like structures on Chessboard Four—but they are not things built by the Naughts and are usually not inhabited by a society. Naught Towns are like small, American, Midwest towns. They usually have lights and power and neon and gasoline and a (small) cinema and convenience stores and strip-malls and things like that. There is a (thin) illusion of "ordinary life," but many of these towns are built on Flux Terrain and are only accessible to travelers some of the time.

These towns have certain defenses against the things that stalk the terrain of Chessboard Four and they exist (mostly) in states of relative calm. Travel between them is dangerous however and the Naught populations, although moderately numerous are not so common that any visitor to Chessboard Four might encounter one.

The Delusion Studios

There are crazy broadcast towers that jut up into the skies above the scattered Naught Towns on Chessboard Four. On that level, to standard human electronics, they transmit television and radio (and broadcasts in a few other spectrums that are hard to pick up). They are beaming their "shows" and "specials" and "visions" at the skies.

Most of these shows are simply *mad*. Some of them are cruel. There is some benefit—some *power*—to be had when the transmissions reach Chessboard Zero and are received by human brains. In fact, if a program can get enough play—be received clearly enough—there is some evidence that gateways can be opened to Wonderland and the delusions can become *real*. That's the idea, anyway. The Naughts shoot on location and you might find a set that looks like *your* bedroom, but has monsters lurking in it when the cameras are rolling.

The Vice Trade: Shadow Slaves

The towns on Chessboard Four are no strangers to strips of neon-lit, cheap hotels and back-lit tacky signs that call out for a variety of human excesses. Coming by Vices is a product of taking Shadows (who must be captured in a process about which little is known) and subjecting or cajoling them into various deadly sins. Gambling, over-abundant food, sex, drugs, and everything else is available for the Vice Merchants to tempt and subdue their targeted Shadows.

As the Shadow participates a smoky, liquidly, sparkly lighter-than air fluid can be collected by the taking and refining of the Shadow's blood. This has a value on the markets and its own uses.

While the Shadow is in town, it's a show that Vegas would kill for … or, well, die for. Of course the person who cast the Shadow feels the effects—feels the temptation, the draw, the *addiction*. Often a Shadow will be killed by the taking of too much blood. Some will "escape," simply vanishing and re-appearing on a more normal, higher level of reality. But some *turn over* and become willing inhabitants of the strip.

Ecology

Chessboard Four has the *Wild Things*. There are great herds of organized biologically incarnate avarice (appearing as massive raptors with emblems of high-end luxury cars on their metallic beaks). There are massive shaggy things that are *seduction and deception* and they'll lure you in with an appendage and devour you.

There are the Trials (giants with hammers for heads and evil, glaring eyes) and Tribulations (floating stone blocks with wicked faces that crush anything they can leap upon).

The "outback" of Chessboard Four is bizarre: sometimes subtle, sometimes overt. Sometimes it is grotesque, sometimes it is sublime. Many things are harmless (flying schools of brilliant, incandescent pink Joy Whales). Many of them are nightmarish predators (Prideasaurs).

Construction

Trips to Chessboard Four will be trips down into a fantasy land where the terrain changes and there may be anything from dangerous wilderness to something that at least looks like modern civilization. Types of encounters:

Encounter	Notes
Naught Town	A Naught Town is a dangerous place that usuallylooks friendly. A human can pass for a Naught for a little while and Naught society looks enough like modern day society to be, well, inviting. But it's dangerous: you don't belong. There are Vice Merchantsbwho will take advantage of and enslave you. There are things you simply *don't* understand.
Relevant Terrain	This is the name for terrain that appears *similar* to what was on Chessboard Zero. Often, when one has their initial Descent they will arrive amidst similar terrain—terrain that then breaks up and mutates as time goes by.
Valuable Resources	There are things on Chessboard Four that can be very valuable: things that through physical manipulation can greatly (but in subtle ways) affect people's lives.
Danger	Danger comes from the Naughts and other civilized aspects as well as from the wildlife. One doesn't wish to spend too long down on Chessboard Four.

Chessboards Five and Six

By this point you are down the rabbit hole—you've made your Descent into uncharted waters and sanity has evaporated. Good luck.

Topology

Terra Incognita: the terrain of Chessboards Five and Six are dreamworlds. There *are* consistent things down there—but the terrain that surrounds them varies strongly from place to place and time to time.

There are vast super-highways over void. There are oceans you can sail across to reach the moon. There are upside-down mountain ranges and forests of trees that light up like pinball bumpers.

Nothing is constant and nothing makes sense. This is Wonderland. This is where Alice went down the rabbit hole.

Scales Changes

On Chessboards Five and Six there are civilizations, structures, and events on many, many different scales. From the gigantic to the microscopic there is detail, architecture, structure, and intelligence.

Society

There are things that might be towns. Buildings that might be cottages. Entities that claim to be brothers, neighbors, or friends. All of this is suspect. All of this is potential illusion.

If there is a "society" on Chessboards Five and Six it is the society of the Drama Club. It always seems that there is some *crisis* going on—some play in which the traveler plays a part.

Again, the philosophers may ask if the play is "constructed *for* the traveler" or if the traveler's arrival is simply a mechanism of the universe such as the teeth of two gears locking together. One can't be sure—but there is always a Royal Ball to be attended, a Eulogy to be spoken (and the journeyer may find his or her name on the speaker's list).

Some people have noted that the society of Chessboards Five and Six seem to, somehow, be fundamental particles of Drama—but they can be quite dangerous if mishandled or valuable if properly played out.

The Entities and Their Minions

There are intelligences down here: The Red Queen (or Queen of Hearts), The Mad Hatter. The March Hare. Many other things too. As a rule the Entities are powerful and *dangerous*. Many an encounter with them has resulted in fates worse than death (or simply death).

Attending, surrounding, and spilling out across large distances are the minions of the Entities. These range from intelligent animals to anthropomorphic playing cards. Are the Entities really powerful enough to create whatever they desire? It isn't clear—but the answer seems to be yes.

Some Entities are more powerful than others—and some seem to be at war (or at least disagreement) with their fellows. Again, the nature of this is unclear. What little is known is disturbing.

When an Entity is encountered there is some evidence that they carry with them their own terrain—their own proper place. If the Caterpillar sits on a three-inch-high mushroom then it will bring the forest with it

and one might find that a series of doors gives way to lush woods … and fruit that alters one's size.

Often these Entities sit at the hearts of the dramas as the other characters sort of coalesce around them like dust-clouds forming an accretion disk before separating into planets and stars. Often a journeyer, caught in the storm, will find his or herself almost inexorably face to face with the thing in the center—a thing which may have all the mercy of a guillotine and the comprehensibility of a dead language.

Ecology

Interestingly enough one will find things that look *more* like normal society down on Chessboards Five and Six than on Chessboards Three and Four. That's because the Laws of Drama bring civilization together like the sun's gravitation collects the solar-system around itself.

There are fairytale kingdoms and undersea cities and vast gray industrial expanses. Every inch of it is a set. Every action a set-piece for *someone*. There is a never-ending cycle of crisis and denouement and it's more likely to be a tragedy than a triumph.

A trip to Chessboards Five and Six will usually be somewhat linear in nature: outside the bubbles or within it is only the illusion of three dimensions that is created. A vast desert may take you to the Sultan's Palace whichever way you go.

What Entities might be met? What are their dispositions? What sorts of terrain do they carry. What dramas are they involved in?

It is not a given that any journeyer will be "roped into" some act or event that they must attend in some capacity—but that is certainly the danger of traveling the "inhabited" areas of Chessboards Five and Six.

In the "uninhabited" zones there are the Wild Things and their wild hunts and those who do not have a firm handle on their sense of purpose would do well to escape before being noticed … and wanted.

The Difference Between Five and Six

This is discussed in more depth in the final section. To the casual traveler there is no clear difference.

Chessboard Seven

This section, as with Five and Six is fairly quiet as to what goes on on Chessboard Seven. It is a place where logic has pretty much completely failed and is full of elemental forces that make the universe. Unlike the other six levels of reality there is no way to "fall into Chessboard Seven"--one must navigate the Linear Maze and the route (if it is always open—which isn't clear) is unknown.

It is said by some that the Looking Glass Makers and the Linear Maze itself is spun into existence on Chessboard Seven and expands across creation like a spider's web.

Twisted

Twistedness is the sometimes-result of Wonderland's mutation on living beings. Being sucked down the rabbit hole doesn't just warp reality: it can warp *you*. For many people it makes physically manifest what was conceptually part of their mind or personality. Some people it turns into monsters. For a few it awakens patterns inside them that lead to their becoming a sort of Wonderland-being themselves.

Twists are Mutations That Happen to Your Shadow or You at the Lower Levels of Reality

A character who is Twisted and has, say, three extra arms or something doesn't look any different in *reality*. These only affect things when you are undergoing Descent or when someone messes with your Shadow on lower levels of reality (there are some rules for Twists interacting with Reality).

When a person is mutated by being Twisted they (usually) seem perfectly normal—but, during their Episodes they are often *powerful*. There are a few things to keep in mind:

1. A character having an Episode on Chessboard One doesn't always "get their Twists." Usually only *experienced* characters will manifest their Twists on Chessboard One (and sometimes even Chessboard Two).
2. A character's Reflecion on Chessboard Zero doesn't usually have access to its Twists—but*, sometimes*, it does. This means that if you have a powerful, heavily Twisted form and there's a monster roaming Chessboard One … and it runs into you … and your Twists happen to be in effect—even though you feel perfectly normal on Chessboard Zero it might be the one being eaten. Don't count on it.
3. Twists are usually good. They are usually strange but beneficial—but there is a special category of Twists called Damage. Damage is what sometimes happens when someone *without* a

Buying Twists

Twists are purchased with Archetype Points. Each 1 AP put into Twists becomes 4 Twist Points used to purchase them (all costs below are listed in Twist Points). A player given 8 AP would get 32 pts with which to buy Twists if she put them all into Twisted (however she might also put some points into Mastery or other Archetype abilities).

Pacing the Game

The rate at which characters become Twisted will greatly impact the balance of horror to action in the game. Wonderland is less scary when you're a monster too! The control of the pacing element of acquiring Twists is given into the GM's hands—however, how it will be used is a discussion every player should have a hand in (this is covered in more depth in the final chapter of this section).

Survival Trait undergoes Deep Descent and comes back. Often they make the person unstable or outright dangerous. PCs usually don't get Damage unless something specific happens in the game (like you are operated on by a Surgeon deep down in Wonderland and the GM rules something like that is the result).

Twistedness is Usually The Result of Deep Descent

Rapid (usually uncontrolled) Descent *may* result in the character being Twisted. Imagine if Alice, falling down the rabbit hole, had fallen apart and been put back together in some random and terrifying fashion.

There are also a great number of things which, if encountered at the lower levels, can result in a character being Twisted. For example, eating the wrong cookie or drinking the wrong potion could Twist you (make you grow or shrink).

Finally, encountering some *beings* can Twist you. In a lot of cases, this isn't seen as a blessing by the person it happens to. Being sentenced to execution by the Queen of Hearts usually results in gory death—but it *might* result in you growing extra heads or something.

Twists are Purchased With Twisted Points

Twists cost points—they are special abilities. Usually these are bought with points granted by the GM just for that purpose. In the case of using general Archetype Points to buy Twists, each AP gives 4pts for buying Twists.

How Many Points and How Quickly Should They Be Given?

Well, that depends on a lot of things. Most importantly is: how powerful should the PCs be? If the game is focusing on the horrific elements of Descent then being more powerful at the lower levels of Wonderland can damage that feeling.

On the other hand, *JAGS Wonderland* games usually shift from having more helpless characters to having characters who have mastered their condition. Twists are a good way to have that happen. Characters who are more dangerous than a lot of the things they meet on the lower levels of reality will be more inclined to adventure and explore.

Characters	Twisted Points
Slightly Altered: maybe an early Twist	4 to 8pts
Weak Twisted Characters	16pts
Standard "powerful" Twisteds	32pts
Extremely powerful characters	64pts

The GM Determines When These Happen

A game could have *all kinds* of deep Descents happening and not have any Twisted Points. Or a game could begin with the characters taking 32pts of Twists. We've run it both ways. There's no "standard," but it is generally believed by the people from the Underground who have written on the phenomena that it happens to a great extent only in Mid-to Late-Stage Unsanity (but for PCs that can be, as said, *much* sooner).

Using Twists on Chessboard Zero

You appear normal on Chessboard Zero and usually your Shadow on Chessboard One doesn't manifest Twists—so your ability to breathe fire doesn't do you much good in a knife fight, does it?

Usually *no*. In fact, for beginner or proficient characters there's usually no help from being Twisted if you encounter dangers on Chessboard Zero. But if you are more experienced in your Unsanity then things may be different.

If you can *manifest* your Twisteds on Chessboard One and then prevent *Reflection Disassociation* then you can *use them* to damage people's Shadows—or even them.

A Master-level Infected can simply *change shape* on Chessboard Zero and manifest his Twisteds *there*. Most PCs can't do *that*—but powerful PCs (on the same order as potent magicians) will be able to have those effects.

Game Designer Notes

The game will change somewhat once the characters become powerfully Twisted on the upper levels of reality. The characters will move towards being more predators than prey and, depending on how Reflection Disassociation works in the given game may have big advantages over normal people when they can call on their abilities on Chessboard One.

Example of Using Twists on Chessboard Zero

Gary Trevis is crossing the street when he realizes he's being followed. He ducks down an alley and leans against the wall muttering his mantra—calling on an Episode with his Mastery level so he can deal damage on Chessboard Zero. He feels the "tide" of the lower levels of reality "crash in" around him. When he opens his eyes, the alley looks exactly the same, save for some graffiti that now says I WAS HERE! ME! ME! REMEMBER MEEEE!

Chessboard One, he thinks. *Perfect.* Then the guys following him enter the alley. He'd thought maybe they were *bad* trouble but it looks like two armed thugs. Gary is an experienced journeyer. He can call on his mutated form at any lower level of reality—and he does so. He grows larger, his skin turns a dull shade of steel-gray. Dark shadow-horns spiral out of his temples. His tongue, courtesy of his sarcastic wit, is now a four-foot long muscled and coiled tentacle bristling with razor blades.

Infecting Others

If you have the Mastery level to use your Twists aggressively, you may very well Infect people. Usually this doesn't happen: you trigger an Episode, Descend to Chessboard One, use your Twists on their Shadows, and on Chessboard Zero something "vaguely plausible" happens that mirrors your assault.

But if you are Expert or Master level you can manifest those abilities directly on Chessboard Zero (if there are few enough onlookers) and Infect them. It is also possible for rare occassions of triggering Descent to bring people down with you. The GM's discretion applies to these possibilities.

On Chessboard Zero, the two thugs see Gary's *reflection* turn and face them. "I may not be GeorgeCarlin," it says, face downwards, looking through its bangs, spreading its arms and hooking its fingers into claws, "but allow me to rant. To criticize. To *eviscerate*." They don't know what the hell that means—although they're vaguely worried by it—but they move in, quickly.

On Chessboard One, Gary-in-his-new-form faces them. Their *shadows* aren't freaked out by his new form (for them such absurdities are normal)—they are *intimidated* (and that feeling reverberates with their casters on Chessboard Zero)—but like the real people—they move to attack.

Gary's tongue lashes out at one of them, wrapping around his knife hand and drawing sprays of blood. As the other comes in, Gary drives his muscled, metal-covered fist into his attacker's face, feeling bones crunch and sending the guy sprawling.

If Gary suffers Reflection Disassociation now, his (pretty helpless) reflection will be left to fight with two armed attackers. He'll win the battle on Chessboard One but (probably) lose it on Chessboard Zero Yes, brutalizing the two Shadows will have an effect but because he's using his twisted abilities and those *aren't* reflected on Chessboard Zero, the disconnect is possible.

But he doesn't. Gary is experienced and it's all held together. What happens on Chessboard Zero could be a lot of things: The razor-tongue might translate to a breath that, when it hits the attacker makes him fall suddenly ill. Maybe it's a crackling, sarcastic monologue—a barrage of cutting insults that seem to hit with physical force, driving the attacker to his knees.

When the other one comes in and Gary lashes out, his wiry framed body hits like a *sledgehammer*. Or maybe the thug trips and falls … or has a seizure. A lot of things are possible. There are many ways it could map—but Gary is done with them in a flash of violence and anger and then he's sauntering out of the alley, repeating his mantra to bring him back up to the real world.

Buying Twists

Buying Twists is essentially just an exercise in spending the points and adjusting your statistics (if any Twists change them). However, for characters who have a significant size change, there is an additional step of buying your "size."

One Makes You Larger and One Makes You Small

The first thing that one must determine is if the character's Twisted form has a "permanent" size change. The reason that the word *permanent* is in quotes is that the character will not, of course, always be in his Twisted form (even when undergoing Descent).

However, if the character has size change associated with his Twisted abilities then it will need to be taken into account when determining how much damage any of his attacks do (and the cost of a few other things like Wings as the larger you are, the more it costs you to fly). The theory is that something elephant-sized that breathes fire does more damage with its flaming breath than something mosquito sized. But it pays the same cost (it just pays a whole lot for being elephant-sized!)

There are 11 size classes from Very Small (a few inches tall) to "Elephantine." In normal Wonderland games characters will almost *never* normally be extremely big or extremely small—sure, if you take the wrong pills or eat the right side of a mushroom then you might *temporarily* be real big or

very little … but most people's Twisted forms tend to be around human-sized.

So we're going to focus on those alone. The complete rules for size-change are listed in the *JAGS Have-Not* character book and that gives the full rules (it also gives rules for having characters who aren't even really remotely humanoid). We'll discuss the (simple) ways to integrate those powers and these—but if you don't want to look there, just use these five sizes.

Very Small	Cost -12

PHY 7

STR	BLD	CON
1	1	10 [2 DP]

To Be Hit:

Ranged	HTH
-4	-3

Weight: 0—5 lbs Grapple 0/0
Size Class 1 HTH Damage -3

Small	Cost -8

PHY 8

STR	BLD	CON
2	1-2	10 [4 DP]

To Be Hit:

Ranged	HTH
-3	-2

Weight: 6—30 lbs Grapple 0/0
Size Class 2 HTH Damage -3

Medium Small	Cost -4

PHY 9

STR	BLD	CON
8	3-6	10 [6 DP]

To Be Hit:

Ranged	HTH
-1	-0

Weight: 31—90 lbs Grapple 0/0
Size Class 3 HTH Damage -3

Medium	Cost 0

PHY 10

STR	BLD	CON
10	10	10 [10 DP]

To Be Hit:

Ranged	HTH
0	0

Weight: up to 255lbs Grapple 4/2
Size Class 4 HTH Damage 0

Medium Big	Cost 8

PHY 11

STR	BLD	CON
13	18-23	11 [23 DP]

To Be Hit:

Ranged	HTH
+1	+0

Weight:256—350lbs Grapple 10/8
Size Class 5 HTH Damage 5

Big	Cost 16

PHY 12

STR	BLD	CON
15	24-33	12 [27 DP]

To Be Hit:

Ranged	HTH
+1	+1

Weight: 351—500 lbs Grapple 14/12
Size Class 6 HTH Damage 10

What This Means

Name: Just a descriptor.
Cost: In Twisted Points
STATS: These are the numbers that the character's body starts at. BLD *stays as listed*. If a 13 PHY character (13 STR, BLD, and CON) takes a Small Body, his STR is 6, his BLD is 1—2, and his CON is 13.
To Be Hit: Smaller things are hard to hit. Bigger things are easier to hit. There are two modifiers (one for range one for hand-to-hand). In order to get negatives to be hit in HTH combat you must move at a *least* 4 yards/sec. It isn't impossible to squash an ant.

Weight and Grapple: These are the standard numbers for the character. A character who is stronger or weaker will modify them appropriately.
Size Class: Just a number associated with the size.
HTH Damage: Base Damage (with a punch).

Internal Manifestations

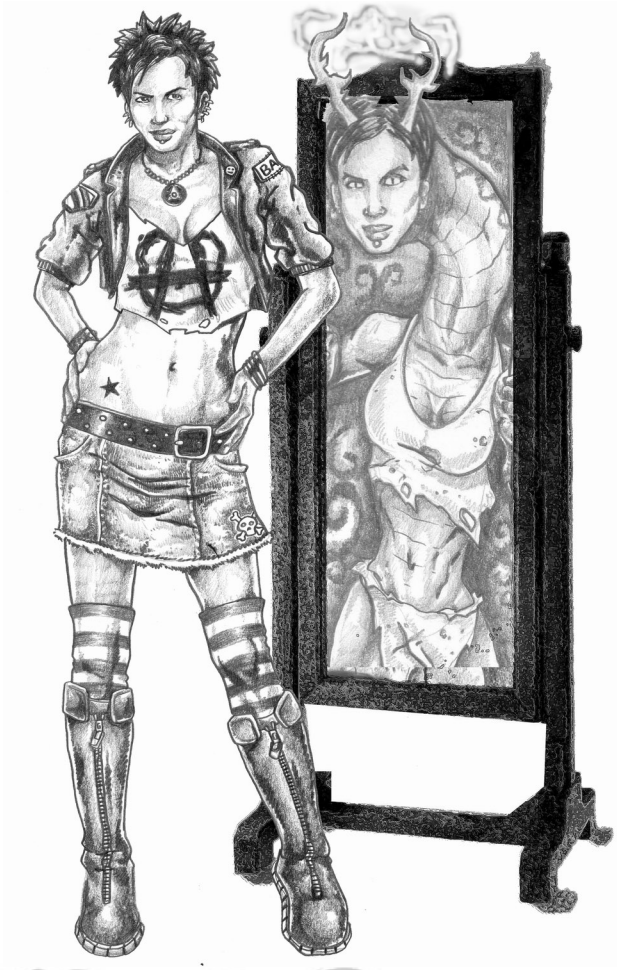
The most common and basic form of Twist are physical mutations that reflect some manner of the internal nature of the character being Twisted. In some cases this is very straightforward,in other cases it's not so obvious what traits were behind what mutation.

You Gotta Be Messed Up To Have These!

Each Internal Manifestation has a "Trait" associated with it. For example, if you're an angry person then *Eyes of Flame* makes sense for your character, right? Some of the traits are 'good' (integrity gives you strength). Most … aren't.

So what if you have a well-adjusted character? Or what if your character just, you know, doesn't exhibit these to any great degree? Are you locked out from taking any of these traits?

Not exactly. Some people like playing in the heroic mold where their characters are pretty up-right people without a lot of self-doubt or unpleasant character flaws. Other people really dig the game where everyone is sort of a basket case and you get 'super powers' based on that.



But wait, there's more: *JAGS* doesn't exactly encourage "the basket case." Sure, you can get some points for having mental quirks, delusions, phobias, or obnoxious personality traits—but not all characters are going to have them. So what do you do? How limited are you when it comes to choosing these abilities?

Here's the answer(s): The participants should

Game Designer's Notes:
These are built to roughly the same specs as *JAGS Have-Not* mutants (see the *JAGS Have-Not* Character's book). In fact, with some GM oversight, abilities may be selected directly from there.

These abilities are pretty much factored for roughly human sized beings (*JAGS Have-Not* goes all the way up to elephant sized) so you will have to do some extrapolation if a character gets *really big* or extremely small—but that shouldn't be too hard.

Optional Rule: Half-Twisted

In some games you get a lot of Twisted points all at once. In others you build up slowly. During our gaming we discovered that if the PCs had only 16 Twist points (4 AP worth) they still did as much damage as characters with 32 Twist Points but had fewer Damage Points.

If you want to play with a little added complexity but more survivability you can do this:

If the PCs have only 0-16 Twist Points all attacks do 1/2 damage. All STR bonuses are halved as well. These numbers become normal when the PCs get up to 32 Twist points or higher.

discuss what kind of game this is going to be and how interested they are in playing characters that strongly exhibit the traits for their Twisted abilities. Part of this discussion is the Horror vs. Terror dichotomy that we discussed in Chapter 3. Part of this is how many Twisted points the characters will have and what role those abilities will play in the game. Part of this will be based on what kinds of PCs the characters plan to have.

Here are the choices we've come up with. Traditionally the GM will listen to the discussion and decide. However your group decides to do it, keep in mind that happy players and GMs make for the best experience. Try to reach an agreeable compromise.

Take *Only* What You Played

This is the most stringent viewpoint: you can only take traits you've played or that are germane to your character. This will certainly encourage some players to create characters heavy on the psychological defects.

Our thoughts on this:

1. The "Trait" section is written pretty bluntly—how important or extant that trait is in an actual character is, well, up for question. It might be a "minor chord" in the character's life. It might be a major one. We're not saying.
2. Does anyone really want to play in a game where everyone makes passive-aggressive, wrathful, scheming characters so they can load up on Twisted traits? We don't know. The idea sounds like a prelude to failure though.

If people dig making characters that are psychological wrecks and then playing through those foibles becoming manifest in a powerful and empowering way, though, there's no better way to do it—and that *does* sound like fun. So if everyone is on the same page, then do this: *choose the Twisted abilities while making your character even if they haven't been subjected to Wonderland yet.*

Twisted Brings Out The Worst In Me!

It certainly can. A character who is Twisted can start life as a recognizable person (with maybe a few quirks) and come out a basket case. Under this formulation (and it is canonical—it happens to people whether or not it happens to the PCs specifically) when the player chooses a power he or she is pretty much agreeing to play up the trait aspect in their character.

Three defects can be taken. These get more *Archetype Points* (the number in [brackets]).

Slightly Affected [-1]

The player will make a noticeable attempt to introduce the traits that define their Twisted abilities into the character's play. This will represent a notable shift in personality but not a *strong* one.

This may also be the case if the traits taken are judged to be benevolent or minor.

Very Disturbed [-2]

The character will exhibit the defects in a major fashion and will be governed by them to some extent. This may mean the GM can use WIL rolls (with appropriate modifiers) to "enforce" the play of the traits. It may just mean that the players are really dedicated to playing them out.

This may also be the case if the traits taken are judged to be "moderate" in nature (i.e. the player will strongly play them up but they don't dramatically affect the character).

High Disturbed [-4]

This is the case where the traits are fairly profound in terms of effect and the player is committed to playing them strongly.

It's No Big Deal

On the far end of the spectrum is the idea that, well, everyone has *some* underlying psychological issues and so just because you got tentacles and a stinger and can walk through walls after beingTwisted it doesn't mean you *act* or *come off* much more differently than normal folks.

This is the choice where there's not too much attention being paid to the traits. Certainly, even in a canonical game world, some people who exhibit serious twists will come off as normal. Maybe this group of characters just happens to be one of those cliques.

It Happened In The Past!

Taking Twists based on past traumas is a potential option. Usually, for a character to gain a listed trait they must exhibit that trait or have it play a major role in their life at the time they undergo Descent.

Therapy *can,* but not necessarily *will* make a Twisted effect go away. So if you badly betrayed a lover you might getTwists surrounding that even if you've sworn never to do it again. In a sense, the shame of the event kind of *marks you* as a betrayer. Even though you (hope) you aren't anymore.

A possible approach players can take (if the game's participants are okay with this) is to simply allow Twistes to come from past events that may or may not be relevant (or may not be strongly relevant to the character's present life).

Do I Get My Extra Damage Points on Chessboard Zero?

The answer is: it depends. If your Mastery level is Advanced or higher, the answer is yes. If lower, the answer is *maybe*.

Usually the answer is "they don't apply" if you are a Novice. If you are Proficient then the GM can give you a WIL roll for the combat or just make a decision.

Make It Up Yourself

If the players are interested in having their Twists reflect their inner-natures but don't like our selection of abilities then it may be permissible to simply take the abilities you want and then write in what about your character prompted that mutation.

Buying Twisted Abilities

Twisted abilities have a cost (in Twisted Points), a description of how they work in game terms, and a Trait which is the personality aspect that causes you to evidence it. When the ability does damage, you will use the charts below to determine what that damage number and type is, based on your size (the theory being that the fire-breath of an elephant-sized dragon does more damage than the flame-breath of a mosquito).

Making a Twisted Character

Here are the rules for making a character with Twist (or "Twisting" an existing character).

1. Choose the size of the character in their "Twisted form." This gives a "basic" PHY for the character, meaning that if the character's PHY is 10 this is what the numbers will be when the character is "grown" or "shrunk."

If the character's PHY is higher or lower than 10, this is how you compute your stats:

> **STR** is modified normally: a character with an STR of 9 and Size Big, the listed STR for Big is 15, but for this character, it'll be 14.
>
> **BLD** is *estimated*. The size-class gives a range and the player can declare the character to be anywhere within that range. However: if the character is lighter than normal, the player should generally choose the lower range.
>
> **DP** as listed is modified as the character's normal DP is. If the character has a 12 PHY (usually +4 DP: +2 for a 12 CON and +2 for a 12 BLD) and has 4pts of Toughness (a total of 18 DP) then the character's DP will be whatever the Size indicates +8.

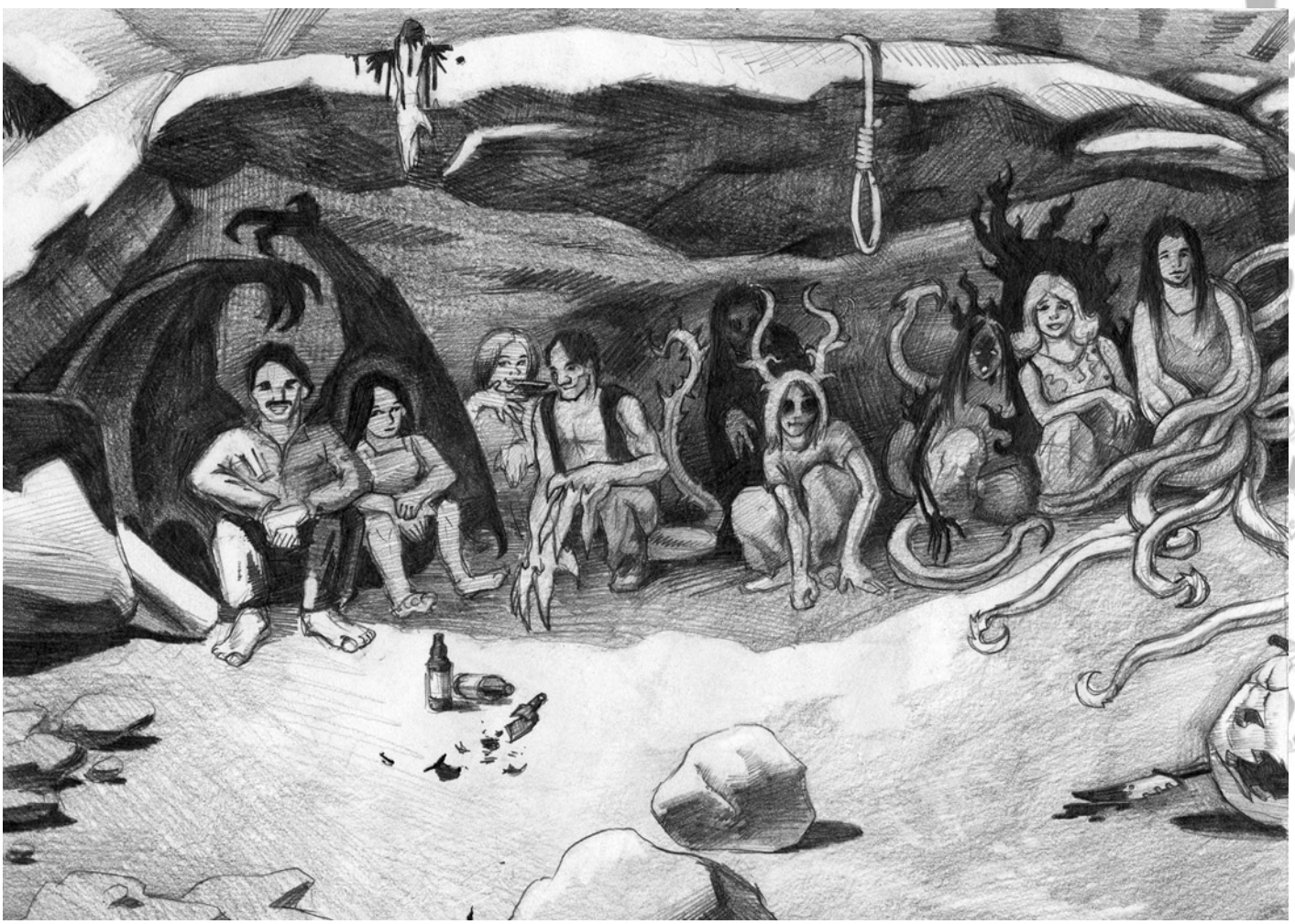
2. Twisted characters are *tougher* than normal. Each 2pts that are spent on Twists adds 1 DP *automatically*. This is in addition to any Twists that specifically add DP. A character with 16pts spent on Twists gets +8 DP, plus the additional DP caused by the Twist.

3. Calculate damage for any HTH Combat Twists.
    1. Ranged Attacks are (usually) based on the size of the creature throwing them. In this case the damage and type is listed with the ability.
    2. Hand-to-Hand attacks are given a damage based on Size as well. This is the damage a character with a **Normal PHY** does with

that attack. If a character has a PHY of 10 and is Big and takes the Twist: *Jaws That Bite* the damage listed is **16 PEN**. This means that the character's "straight" bite damage for a creature of his size and mass is 16 Penetrating damage.

If that character has, say, invested 5 character pts in his PHY (for an 11 PHY in normal human form) then his damage will be 17pts. If he also has the Twist *Strength* then he gets a whopping +14 STR and bites for 31 PEN damage! Ouch!

4. Calculate armor. Many Twists give armor but they do *not* stack. If a character gets armor from more than one Twist, simply use the highest value.



I've been able to do that for years.

- Snoopy, the Cheshire Beagle

A Hazy Shade of Winter — Cost 8

Trait: There is something *reserved* about your nature. You hold back, waiting and watching.

Effect: The character and his or her clothes are all done in shades of gray and black. You may look like a black and white movie-person or just like you were covered with gray paint.

You get +4 DP and 4/8 Armor (does not stack with other armor).

Air-Swimmer — Cost 8

Trait: Alcoholics or other's who've "hit bottom" and rebounded may have this trait.

Effect: Your skin is like that of a sea-creature, smooth and a little rubbery. You have fins and maybe even a tail (many are also colored like a sea creature—in dolphin blues or whale browns). You can "swim" in the air.

This gives you +12 Damage Points and you can make a normal move through the air. Just "treading air" cost 5 REA but if you sink (or fall) you will only descend at about 2 yards per second. If you carry someone, you must have a STR-10 that is equal or greater than their Mass.

Barb — Cost 6

Trait: The character likes gossiping.

Effect: The character's body grows thorns like a rose. Each of them has poison glands in it and they may prick or stab anyone who gets too close.

In Close Combat there is a free 0 REA attack (along with any other 5 REA action or with a block against a barehanded attack) to prick the attacker. The thorns do 1pt PEN damage and ignore 3pts of armor and have a Penetration factor of 6. If all the armor is ignored its PEN defense is halved.

The poison has Power of 12 or the character's WIL or CON, whichever is higher and does 8pts Base Damage.

Barbed Constrictor Tail — Cost 6

Trait: Something bad happened to you—it's important and you've been known to use it to explain/excuse your present actions/state of affairs.

Effect: The tail is like a constrictor snake and terminates in a collection of wicked spikes. It can *extend* stretching out along the floor up to 5 yards. It has a +20 Grapple and can lash out for +10 PEN damage. When it has a Hold, it can squeeze for 10 IMP damage each 5 REA action with a +4 Damage multiplier.

Barbed Wire — Cost 6

Trait: You have a vein of self-loathing within you. There's something about yourself that you wish didn't exist.

Description: You are encircled with barbed wire that bloodlessly pierces the skin. It doesn't hurt (or, maybe it hurts a bit) but it looks disturbing. You can throw barbed wire webs from your fingertips or mouth and use them as tentacles. These:

1. Can be used to throw a "Hold" at range. Once thrown, you can walk away, leaving the wire in place.
2. Be used to "web-up" a space creating a barrier. The barrier has 9 armor and 30 DP per turn spent creating it. It can be cut by powerful bolt-cutters. Someone who hits it will usually suffer 2pts PEN damage (if they hit it full force) or 1pt (if they just get caught on it and it tears into them—maybe less if it's just a prick). Each turn of "webbing" is an 8 REA Long action and covers ½ of a normal-sized doorway (the wire fishhooks into the walls, assuming they aren't metal.
3. The wire can act as tentacles with the below stats.

Size	Damage	Grapple	Length
VS	+1 PEN	3	1 foot
S	+3 PEN	9	1 yard
MS	+6 PEN	12	2 yards
M	+8 PEN	16	4 yards
MB	+12 PEN	20	5 yards
B	+16 PEN	24	6 yards

Beak — Cost 1

Trait: The character tends to be a little arrogant (usually the quiet sort of arrogance).

Effect: The character's mouth appears as a bird's beak and acts as a bio-weapon. The character can also speak like a megaphone. The character must be close enough to grab and bites for listed damage.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 PEN	3 PEN	4 PEN	9 PEN	12 PEN	16 PEN

Beauty — Cost 6

Trait: Mostly this is because you are *innocent*—you have never been 'hurt' by the world. However, it also appears in those who have *recovered* from psychological trauma.

Effect: You appear beautiful and perfect (L4 Appearance: either Attractive, Statuesque, or Exotic). You get the listed number of DP based on size extra.

Damage Points

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
6	8	10	10	12	14

Black Wings — Cost [Size]

Trait: The character has shame as some important part of his or her life. This may mean having disappointed people he or she cares about, having done things they regret, or having shameful secrets they still indulge. Note: a character who has more or less 'come to terms' with some major event in their life may still have the wings. Scars take a long time to go away.

Effect: The black wings like bat-like and made of shadow. When the character flies the sound is underwritten with whispers about his shame (but they're very hard to understand and a lot of what is said will simply be self-recriminations).

The character flies 20 yards/second (accelerating at 8y/s up to top speed). The wings also act as Large Shields (giving a –3 to be hit instead of the character's AGI bonus and using shield skill to block if the character has it). Attacks that hit them simply disappear into them. The sensation to the character is a sharp stab of guilt.

They can be used to lash out as well, striking at long reach for Listed damage.

Cost

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
11	14	17	20	23	26

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
4 IMP	6 IMP	8 IMP	12 IMP	14 IMP	18 IMP

Bladed Tongue — Cost 2

Trait: You have a sharp tongue—sometimes you hurt those you don't mean to.

Effect: The bladed tongue and metal teeth are usually pretty obvious. It has Long (3 yard) reach and a tip on it like an ornate medieval polearm. When used, it strikes like a snake for Listed PEN damage. However, any time the character is insulted or becomes upset with someone, there is a WIL roll at –2 to hold it in check. This is at –4 if the character makes some sarcastic retort. When used accidentally, it does only 2pts PEN damage. The to-hit roll is the character's AGI.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 PEN	3 PEN	4 PEN	9 PEN	12 PEN	16 PEN

Blue Lightning — Cost 1

Trait: You "Zing" people with sarcastic comments or sharp, ironic jokes. You may not be bad-natured on the whole, but you sure can be annoying. It is usually a subtle form of vengance.

Effect: The character can fire a crackle of blue lightning from his fingers. It hits for listed damage. This can be fired twice a turn for 5 REA Medium actions.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
6 IMP	7 IMP	8 IMP	10 IMP	12 IMP	14 IMP

Boots — Cost 4

Trait: the character feels some powerful, emotional obligation (they may be shirking it—in which case they feel guilty about not doing it).

Effect: The character's lower legs terminate in heavy boot-like feet. These are big and wide, they are metallic (coming in many different colors), and reach mostly up the calf. They don't come off (don't lace up, etc.) They are well treaded and don't slip easily.

The character adds the listed amount (see the attacks chart) to their *kick* damage. With an 8 REA Long action they can jump [Damage]+ (STR-10) / Mass yards straight up, double that if jumping long. The character gets +2 to rolls to remain on his or her feet and gets +half the listed amount to Defensive Grapple vs. being knocked down or thrown.

The boots add +8 to BLD, however, so take that into calculating jump (a normal person will still have a 10 foot vertical jump—not shabby).

Walking with them gives a –5 to Stealth (clump, clump, clump). The character also moves as though he were 2 REA slower when it comes to Ground Move (but the leg muscles are strong so it isn't *harder* to move around).

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
+2 IMP	+6 IMP	+10 IMP	+14IMP	+16 IMP	+21 IMP

Braces — Cost 8

Trait: You have a very low tolerance and are highly judgmental of complainers (although, hypocritically, you may complain yourself!) You may not be totally merciless—someone with a low tolerance for whining could have this.

Effect: Metal braces on your limbs, with screws and bolts sunk into the bone adorn your body (clothing will warp itself around these appropriately). This gives you an AGI or Unarmed Combat skill block against weapons with no modifier. It also gives you +1 to CON rolls and extra DP. You look like you should be very clumsy (and in a great deal of pain!) but the braces are not painful—unless you're very hypocritical about complaining yourself … in which case they hurt.

Damage Points

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
2 IMP	3 IMP	4 IMP	6 IMP	8 IMP	10 IMP

Brainiac — Cost 8

Trait: You think you're smarter than everyone else and it's a source of comfort or superiority for you.

Effect: The top of your head is translucence, bald (or has hair in some configuration that doesn't hide the brain) and reveals a green glowing luminescent brain underneath (other colors available). You have Level 1 Telepathy from the *JAGS Psionics* books (you can communicate with others via your mind—you can't break into minds and read them). You get +2 to MEM rolls and +1 to all RES rolls and RES based skills while this is in effect. You will also hear voices. These are split personalities telling you things that, mostly, you don't want to hear.

NOTE: if the character is *extremely* arrogant, the head may actually balloon up to absurd size. This gives a –1 to AGI Bonus (and all AGI rolls) and an additional +1 RES.

Breathe Fire — Cost 2

Trait: You tend to viciously rebuke people. You are prone to verbal temper tantrums. This isn't necessarily vocal—people who "flame" online may qualify.

Effect: A 5 REA, 3-yard ranged attack that does Listed points of Fire damage. It may be used once per turn and after three attacks it must be recharged for 10 minutes.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
8 IMP	10 IMP	12 IMP	14 IMP	18 IMP	22 IMP

Brute — Cost 6

Trait: You are bully. You like picking on people weaker than you in some fashion. The classic is that of the schoolyard bully but someone who abuses less articulate people online could have this trait as well!

Effect: You are *Medium Big* or *Big* (8 or 16pts) and you look like an ogre! Your hands become meaty clubs with words (HATE?) spelled out across the knuckles and you are otherwise covered with dock-worker and prison tattoos. Your face becomes blunt and ugly. You may grow tusks.

1. You get 2/4 Armor (does not stack with other armors, though).
2. And -2 Damage Modifier (does not stack with other modifiers) from *anyone lighter than you*. This is done in terms of BLD (and, oddly, it doesn't matter if the attacker is a sniper you never see).

If you have both more armor and negative damage modifiers then the cost is 2 points. This also tanks your psychology modifiers (-6 to all of them, even recruit: you look stupid) except Intimidate, which gets a +2.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
+2	+4	+6	+8	+12	+16

Burning — Cost 6

Trait: You tend to lash out at those close to you or say or do hurtful things that you later regret. This may not be actual violence (and might, really, be a more minor personality trait)—but you've had some experience hurting those close to you.

Effect: You *burn*. The burning happens around your skin and clothes: you won't burn up whatever you were wearing when you went down and you have some control over what you torch. For 5 REA, you can take non-burning actions. With a WIL roll at –3 (each try takes 10 seconds of meditation—counting to 10) you can shut down the fire. Bringing it back takes a WIL roll and an 8 REA Long action.

Damage is based on the chart.

Situation	Damage Modifier
You Punch Someone	¼ Listed damage
Someone punches you	They take 1/4th listed damage with a –2 Damage Modifier
You GRAB someone	They take ½ listed damage with a Damage Mod of whatever you hit by.
Someone Grabs You	They take ½ Listed Damage with a –2 Damage Modifier.
Grapple	You do 1x Listed damage to them at the beginning of your turn (0 REA cost)

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
8 IMP	10 IMP	12 IMP	14 IMP	18 IMP	22 IMP

Burnt — Cost 5

Trait: You have been through black times and have tried to deal with them as best you could. You may have done things you wish you hadn't or have led others when you felt insufficient to do so.

Effect: You appear badly, badly burned. There is crispy black skin with hellishly red flesh underneath. Heat, although not fire, comes off you in waves (to ordinary non-Shadow people you will appear horrifying!)

You have a –4 Damage Modifier against any *weapon*. Unarmed and Twisted attacks take no negative modifier unless they involve a weapon or weapon-like (Gun) effect.

Butterfly Wings — Cost [Size]

Trait: Within you there is a deep-seated sense of joy and wonder at the beauty of the universe. A mathematician or physicist is as likely to have this as the mystic or priest. Artists whose work is life-affirming are also good candidates.

Effect: You have massive stained-glass butterfly wings. These allow you to fly and, although they must be slowly beat, to hover.

Additionally, you can *cast rainbows*. These rainbows (shimmering lines of light from one's hands) strike for Listed Damage *as per Golden Light* against inanimate objects—but against people they will simply cause a *damage roll* for Wound type (damage is not cumulative). The worst possible result is *Unconscious* which means the target falls asleep for a few hours (or until struck). Being hit is actually kind of pleasant.

Cost is based on size:

Cost

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
9	14	19	24	29	34

Carnivore — Cost 10

Trait: You *prey* on people. Probably in a criminal manner (as a burglar, mugger, or con-man). A politician might have this as well though. Or a "user."

Effect: You have *Jaws* (see the listed damage) and when you bite someone, you *gain damage points* by consuming them! Each bite gains you the damage you do. You can choose to suck blood from a willing person, biting for 3 PEN damage and hitting with a -2 Damage Modifier (a limb, usually). If the subject takes even 1pt of damage, you can drink 1pt of damage per second.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 PEN	1 PEN	5 PEN	9 PEN	12 PEN	16 PEN

Catty — Cost [Varies]

Trait: You are territorial and tend to get *nasty* when crossed. Most people who have this were "slapped" with the *stereotype* and took it personally.

Effect: You have some measure of cat-like appearance. Depending on how far you go, the cost may vary. All items cost separately.

Type	Cost	Notes
Cat-Person look	1	+1 Exotic appearance. If you look *mangy*, cost is 0.
Claws and teeth	2	You use the climbing-claws and teeth bio-weapons.
Catlike senses	3	You get +3 to Perception rolls.
Catlike agility	14	You get +1 REA and +1 AGI.

Damage (Bite, Claw)

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 PEN	1 PEN	3 PEN	6 PEN	8 PEN	12 PEN
1 PEN	1 PEN	3 PEN	4 PEN	6 PEN	9 PEN

Chill — Cost 2

Trait: The character is usually more intellectual than emotional.

Effect: The character breaths a "cone of white mist" which creates ice and freez-burns flesh on contact. On a hit by 4+ the damage is treated as a Grapple Strength grab. If a hit is by 8+, it is considered a *Hold*. The DR of the material is 2x damage done. Range is 1 yard per Size Class and the character may breathe once every 3 turns (starting if desired on turn 1).

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
4 IMP	8 IMP	10 IMP	12 IMP	14 IMP	18 IMP

Claws That Catch — Cost 1

Trait: Usually this involves pursuing things you don't easily get. Sometimes it's about being possessive.

Effect: Your hands turn into massive, vicious claws. They strike for listed PEN damage (Claws: Climbing).

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 PEN	1 PEN	3 PEN	4 PEN	6 PEN	9 PEN

Climber — Cost 4

Trait: You are impatient.

Effect: The character can climb walls effortlessly. With four limbs used the character gets full running speed. With two limbs (walking on the wall) the character gets half speed.

Crimson Aura — Cost 10

Trait: The character tends to be critical of other's competence (usually in a "constructive" fashion) and either doesn't know or pretends not to know that he or she is seen as nitpicky or unpleasantly critical.

Effect: The character's body glows with an odd red aura. It's an energy field and is luminous—but it's not a force field, exactly. It's *sticky*—like a spider's web. The character can, in Grappling combat, web someone up. They can also use it to climb walls (leaving a trail). It's like a sort of energy glue.

In combat it adds +22 to Offensive Grapple and with a Standard Success or Hold, the character can wrap the target in a 22pt Grapple. This will decay over a few hours. A character caught in the Grapple will be unable to move or strike. With a second Standard Success weapons can be webbed up.

The character can climb walls at 3 yards per second using hands and feet to cling to the surface.

The character can dematerialize his or her own aura.

Dark Aura — Cost 16

Trait: Usually determined by a brooding nature.

Effect: During a turn, the Dark Aura can be used either as a weapon or as a defense. It takes 5 REA to have the character's shadowy aura spring from his body into his hand to be projected as an attack. Once it is 'mobilized' (for 5 REA) it remains in weapon form.

It does 22 IMP damage and cost 5 REA to lash out with (a ranged attack). In that form it can block like a Large Shield.

As a defense it acts as either a 28pt Power Field or a 16pt Force Field if the character doesn't have any other armor. The Power Field is reduced for each point of damage done (and if the attack is Penetrating and is double or more the remaining field it offers no PEN resistance. If the base damage of a PEN attack is less than double the remaining Power Field it automatically doesn't penetrate).

As a Force Field, the rules are the same but the field is reduced by 1/10 the total damage done if the total damage is from half the remaining field strength to exactly equal the field strength. It's reduced by 1/5 the total damage done if any damage gets *through*.

The Dark Aura may be reinforced up to its maximum, adding 4pts for every 5 REA Medium action taken to reinforce it. If it goes down entirely it takes 10 minutes to regenerate.

A Dark Aura gives +3 to Stealth attempts.

Dark Beauty — Cost 4

Trait: You are *vain*. This can also come from jealousy, arrogance, or envy.

Effect: Beauty is perfection. Dark Beauty always has some intimidating-looking *flaw*. Perhaps red eyes? Perhaps a shock of white in otherwise black hair? Possibly a strange birthmark across the face. Maybe you are unhealthily pale and thin in a waifish way?

The character is Level 3 Appearance (and boy will they dislike anyone with actual beauty!) They get additional *STR* based on size.

Extra STR

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
+1	+2	+3	+3	+4	+5

Dark Heart — Cost 8 or 10

Trait: "If you knew me, you couldn't love me." There is something inside you that you keep secret from others. Maybe it's a dark secret—maybe it's *nothing*—but you're afraid that if it was out … no one would like you. This belief, in its way, keeps you *safe* since you don't get "too close" to people.

Effect: There are veins of blackness that run through you and your skin (this may appear artistic, as though the character has marbleized skin—or may simply appear repulsive—as though the character has a blood disease).

The character regenerates at a rate based on the chart at the end of each turn. A blood transfusion will heal others (a syringe will do—it doesn't have to be a "medical procedure") although giving someone your black blood will tell them your secrets (both your "hidden nature" and whatever secret you may presently be keeping. Other people can recover half of their maximum DP that way. This usually takes 1pt per 10 seconds.

If the character has a truly damaging secret, the cost is 8pts. Otherwise, the cost is 10.

Regeneration

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
2 DP	4 DP	6 DP	8 DP	12 DP	14 DP

Darts — Cost 2

Trait: You are disrespectful in general. Usually this has something to do with anger or authority issues and a lack of self control.

Effect: You grow metallic or bone knives/darts from your hands or wrists (or possibly elsewhere) and can throw or shoot them! They strike for Listed damage and ignore up to 6pts of Armor. If the Armor is reduced to zero, the PEN defense of the character is halved. You can usually generate 2 per turn. They can also be used as +3 damage *knives* in close combat.

For 10 REA the character can throw three darts in a "spray."

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 PEN	2 PEN	3 PEN	3 PEN	3 PEN	4 PEN

Double Faced — Cost 1

Trait: You tend to betray people socially (talk about them behind their backs, make and break social alliances, etc.)

Effect: You are hard to sneak up on—however, your second face may often provide commentary you'd rather it keep quiet. The second face gives +4 to Perception rolls (it may be off to the side or directly behind the character's head). This sort of counts as the "Can't Lie" defect (sometimes) or perhaps Obnoxious (the other face says cutting things about people you are talking to).

Dwindle — Cost 10

Trait: You've got a quiet mousy personality—you are afraid to speak up or stand up for yourself or others.

Effect: You are shrunken and your mouth has vanished. You can speak to *one person at a time* via a kind of telepathy. Normally, your size is 3/4ths normal (and reduce BLD by a minimum of 2pts). However you can become 1/4 of an inch small. At this size you will have 2 DP (critical wound is 4pts) and you are at -4 to be hit in HTH or ranged combat (this is instead of AGI modifiers unless you can fly or otherwise move at up to 6 yards per second somehow). You run at 4 inches per second. This change is an 8 REA Long action. When announced, you will instantly move to full DP (even if someone declares an attack in response).

Energized — Cost 16

Trait: The character is enthusiastic, upbeat, and optimistic!

Effect: The character has veins that seem to be filled with neon or lightning. Their whole skin may glow. This gives a power-field-like protection of 8pts each second (it regenerates each second). If a penetration attack does 16 or more Base Damage it automatically penetrates (or use any other armor as PEN defense). If it does 15 or fewer points of damage it automatically *doesn't* penetrate.

This effect happens *before* armor (even worn armor) is applied.

The character also gains +4 Strength, +1 to CON and WIL rolls, and the ability to strike once per three turns for +12 IMP damage (an energy burst).

Engine — Cost 5

Trait: You have an innate fear of failure or belief that you *must* succeed.

Effect: Your heart and some of your chest and back is replaced with a combustion engine that gives a slight purr. All actions cost 1 less rank of Endurance: you can walk forever, sprinting is as tiring as running, and you can run much faster than normal and kick harder.

Speed is in Yards/sec, Kick Damage is added to any Base Damage with a foot strike.

Size	Speed	Kick
VS	+4	+1
S	+10	+2
MS	+16	+4
M	+16	+8
MB	+14	+12
B	+12	+16

Eyes of Flame — Cost 6

Trait: You have been prone to—or are controlling—*rage*.

Effect: Eyes of Flame is an auto-fire attack projecting bolts of fire from the eyes (it is possible to have some other point of origin—but Eyes of Flame are traditional). The attack has a Rate of Fire of 4x per second (that is, you get 4 to-hit rolls for a cost of 10 REA or you can "fire once" for 5 REA as many times as you have REA for). The damage is as listed on the attack table for Eyes of Flame.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
5 IMP	7 IMP	9 IMP	11 IMP	15 IMP	17 IMP

Eyes of Hate — Cost 4

Trait: You *hate*. There is something, some one, some idea that you *hate*.

Effect: Above the character's normal (?) eyes there are two massive second eyes. They are bulging, blood red, and possibly insectile. The character's skin may be reddish as well. Nails and hair may turn black. The overall appearance is rather hellish.

Eyes of hate *rend* their targets with blood-colored scarlet beams. These are fired in cones that get a +2 Large Weapon to-hit bonus (a miss by 1 or 2 will count as a hit by 0 and they are at -2 to be dodged). Rate of fire is 2x per turn.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
8 IMP	12 IMP	16 IMP	20 IMP	22 IMP	24 IMP

Fade — Cost 12

Trait: Wishy-washy, non-committal. Afraid to take a stand or afraid to stand up for themselves.

Effect: For a 5 REA Short action you can phase out. This acts as a Dodge that has a basic roll of a 16-. It can also be used with a *step* movement action (total cost is still 5 REA) to move through any barrier that would allow gas or wind to pass through it (chain link, bars, etc.—not a normal door).

Filthy Rat — Cost 8

Trait: You tend to lie *a lot*. You may also betray people. Tight friends may or may not be excluded but you've very likely screwed someone over while looking out for number one.

Effect: You have rat-like features and a long hairless tail (and patches of matted fur). You have a *vicious bite* that does Listed (Bite: Teeth) damage and has long, needle-like scraggly teeth. You have +2 REA.

This has big negative modifiers to any Psychology roll in a most of cases (but it's up to the GM).

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 PEN	1 PEN	3 PEN	6 PEN	8 PEN	12 PEN

Flicker — Cost 20

Trait: Classically, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive disorder). Less severely, it could be because you are constantly stretched thin.

Effect: The character can go into flicker mode as an 8 REA long action. When active (and it can be active for CON seconds) the character appears and disappears within a WIL yard radius several times a second.

The character is at –6 to be hit (instead of any AGI bonus). The character gets an extra free attack (0 REA) with any other normal attack. The character can strike instantly within that radius (or hit several people spread out within that radius.

The character can deactivate this at any time, appearing anywhere wanted within that radius.

Forged — Cost 10

Trait: You came through a harrowing rite of passage and emerged with a sense of triumph.

Effect: You appear as a version of yourself that is hyper-athletic, bronzed, and larger than before (clothing adjusts appropriately—but might rip strategically to enhance the effect). You have Level 4 Statuesque. You also get an extra +1 Physique (that includes +1 CON).

Four Eyes — Cost 2

Trait: The character is gregarious and friendly.

Effect: The character has two eyes above their ordinary two (a very slight stretching of the skull may take place). In some cases the eyes are different. In some the same. They may also appear unusual (perhaps as black spheres with a thin layer of prismatic oil). These eyes give +3 to visual Perception rolls. They can also see "auras" and can determine the basic health and the general disposition of a person (if that person is hiding their emotions there may be various Perception rolls and WIL rolls involved—usually a person with a good control over their emotions is at –4 to be read, maybe more if they are an experienced actor or have a good poker face).

These auras linger for a few minutes or hours. The sense of vision in this case sort of functions like a sense of smell: the character can see auras on objects and know who handled them recently or tail a person by following his aura-trace.

Fragile — Cost 12

Trait: Your response to being emotionally hurt is *dramatic!* Usually this is the case where one "falls to pieces," is prone to some form of hysteria (it could be the boss who reacts to crises by having screaming fits), etc. Someone who constantly broods in a dramatic fashion might count too.

Effect: Your body is translucent—glass-like. When you are hit for a 1/3 or more of your total, normal DP, you must make a CON check or *shatter*. When shattered, you literally go to pieces. You will be "absent" until you make a WIL roll (roll once each turn). When you re-appear, it cost 5 REA to appear within a 10-yard radius, 8 REA to appear within a 20-yard radius, and 10 REA to appear within a 50-yard radius (you must appear some place you can see or could reasonably walk to).

But on the plus side: you must make a CON roll vs. whatever wound you took (i.e. if you took enough to be a Critical Wound you must make a Critical Wound roll)—however, the only lasting damage is up to your threshold (1/3 normal DP).

Golden Light — Cost 4

Trait: You have a streak of *righteousness*. This may not be incredibly hypocritical—many people who do good may have this trait. But you do sometimes *get a kick* out of being right … not just for doing *good*.

Effect: The character can cast golden light from his hands for damage (as per the table). Range is –1/10 yards. Cost to fire is 5 REA once per turn or 10 REA for 1.5x Base.

Damage.

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
12 IMP	14 IMP	16 IMP	18 IMP	22 IMP	26 IMP

Green Eyed — Cost 3

Trait: You are *jealous* or *envious* of people in general or something specific (unearned wealth). It may be a great personal failing or just a character trait you're not happy with.

Effect: The character has green glowing eyes that project a *poisonous luminance*. When used as a 5 REA attack, they inflict Poison damage (wherein there is a Power vs. Stat roll for the amount of time damage will be done!)

This can only be used once a turn. Repeated uses on someone who is already poisoned get a –4 Power. It is your CON or WIL or a 12 (whichever is higher) vs. their CON. Damage is based on size.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
8pts	12pts	12pts	12pts	14pts	16pts

Giant Fists — Cost 4

Trait: The character is blunt about things or cares little for other's feelings. This may be a case of someone who is somewhat well intentioned but lacks social graces. It may also be the case of one who is "brutally honest" and really revels in the delivery of a harsh critique.

Effect: The character's forearms and fists are massively oversized (they may come in different colors as well). The fists get a +1 Large Weapon Bonus (if the character is Medium-sized or bigger), give a –4 to any COR-based skills requiring the use of fingers (they just won't fit most trigger wells and can't use normal lock-pick tools, etc.) The character might also have a hard time doing things like fixing cars or otherwise getting his hands into tight spaces.

The hands add the listed damage in the attack table to the character's punch and grapple scores.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
+2 IMP	+4 IMP	+6 IMP	+9 IMP	+13 IMP	+17 IMP

Glass Shell — Cost 13

Trait: Your big thing is "lookin' good." This doesn't (just, necessarily) mean *physically* looking good. People who act like saints may be doing so because they like the accolades society affords them. You might be reluctant to ever admit you have a problem because, well, that doesn't *look good*, does it?

Description: You are covered with a translucent glass shell (which can come in several colors, often pastels). It conforms to your couture, moves fluidly, and seems to hover about a centimeter above the skin. It will break apart when necessary and fluidly reform to allow a person to, for example, remove clothes or gear. The glass shell is:

1. Air tight: you don't need to breathe while it's up. It'll also keep you dry.
2. Armor: it provides 6/18 armor.

Gleam — Cost 2

Trait: You present yourself with a "shinier front" than you actually feel. You're the kind of person who's always doing a little bit of a performance.

Effect: You appear almost like you are made of plastic or even "rendered." You have a *shine*. You get +2/5 Armor.

Gun — Cost 5

Trait: You either have solved problems by violence in the past or continue doing so in the future. To get this trait, doing so has sort of "bled over" into your personality. A police officer who dwelt on the violence that is sometimes inherent in his line of work might have this.

Effect: Your arm is an over-sized gun. Often it looks bizarre, like a grossly over-sized revolver built into the skin. It has a ROF of 2, a range of –1/15 yards, and hits for listed damage. It never runs out of bullets.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
9 PEN	13 PEN	17 PEN	21 PEN	25 PEN	31 PEN

Hairy — Cost 4

Trait: At some point you were made fun of (or, perhaps, suffered a serious humiliation).

Effect: The character has a thick coat of hair or fur (this may be evidenced in manes and may include a tail, animalistic ears, and possibly other such animalistic features). The character's fur gives them 4/20 Armor.

Halo — Cost 8

Trait: You think that something—some cause—you believe in is in some way objectively *right*. You may believe you are fighting on the side of good or God (and people who believe either of these things are at least as likely to be judged wrong as to be judged right by others).

Effect: The Halo sits about 2 feet above your head and may be a yard across. It is a ring of burning light and it operates in two modes: Offense and Defense. When it is working in Offense it casts a bolt of fire for 0 REA. This uses the character's to-hit score or a 13-, whichever is better. Its Range modifier is –1/5 yards.

In Defense Mode it can use a force wall to deflect incoming attacks. It has a *free* 13- block against one incoming attack per turn and can be used to block other incoming attacks for 3 REA. This works, without modification against ranged attacks and HTH alike.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
12 IMP	14 IMP	16 IMP	18 IMP	22 IMP	26 IMP

Hammer Tail — Cost 3

Trait: You made some mistake (a fairly major one) and you still regret it.

Effect: The tail is essentially like a ball-and chain (a heavy weight on one end). It strikes for 5 REA/ 7 REA back swing. It is at –2 to parry. It hits for listed damage.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
4 IMP	6 IMP	8 IMP	12 IMP	+16 IMP	20 IMP

Heart of Stone — Cost 5

Trait: You've done things or had things done to you that have taught you how to swallow your sense of mercy or sympathy. Maybe you've done horrible things. Maybe you've done "what had to be done."

Effect: When you spend a 5 REA Short action you get either +2/4 Armor (if adding to other armors) *or* you get 4/8 defenses (if it's all you have). Your body takes on a marbleized or granite like sheen for the turn.

Heavy — Cost 12

Trait: You are depressed. Perhaps cyclically so—or just melancholy.

Effect: You are *dense*. This usually has some color or appearance change (broader or squatter than normal) but might just result in heavy footsteps. The effects of this *stack* with other similar abilities (protective blubber). The character gets:

1. Extra BLD, DP, and STR.
2. A reduction in Initiative.
3. Penetration Resistance.

The STR and extra damage for BLD adds to any physical attack the character can perform.

Size	STR	BLD	DP	Init	PEN
VS	+0	5	+12	-2	+4
S	+1	10	+14	-3	+6
MS	+2	15	+16	-3	+8
M	+4	20	+20	-3	+10
MB	+6	25	+24	-4	+14
B	+8	30	+28	-4	+18

Hooks — Cost 2

Trait: The character has something of a sense of entitlement. This may be minor (a character woman who feels gentlemen ought to treat her with a sense of chivalry) or raging (the shoplifter who feels the store *owes* him things).

Effect: "Worms of muscle" crawl under the skin of the character's arms. At will, those arms can break apart and dark bluish tentacles with hooks on the end lash out! Each arm becomes up to four separate tentacles (although they always attack the same target).

These can hit at 5 yards range and strike for Listed PEN damage (they can be used bluntly). Half this score adds to grapple.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
2 PEN	2 PEN	4 PEN	8 PEN	10 PEN	12 PEN

Horizon Eyes — Cost 10

Trait: You frequently daydream or have an active imaginary life.

Effect: The character's eyes show brilliant, deep skies and can "open" wider than normal to become twin portals to a great air-space, sometimes lit with storm clouds, sometimes by a setting sun, sometimes clear and bright and blue (matching the character's mood).

The character can see normally, ignoring –6pts of visibility modifier and seeing even in pitch black. When the character is experiencing strong emotion, wind may blow from the eyes and, indeed, they are openings into some other space (if a character is shot "right in the eye" the bullet will pass into the distance harmlessly. Things put in (at their biggest they're no larger than baseballs) will fall way (they may show up *somewhere* else but it's a good way to get rid of small things).

The character gets a –4 Damage Modifier against all incoming attacks. This is applied *before* checking for penetration doubling. The character may also get +3 to any psychology due to the intense nature of their appearance.

Humpbacked — Cost 4

Trait: You are selfish!

Effect: The character has a large discolored hump that grows from their back. This disfigures them a bit (they walk bent over) but they are stronger.

1. The Humpback gives a -1 to AGI bonus (you are at +1 to be hit).
2. It gives extra STR, BLD and DP.
3. You get 2/8 armor that doesn't stack with other armor.

The damage from STR and BLD is added to any physical attack.

Size	STR	BLD	DP
VS	+0	+3	+3
S	+1	+5	+3
MS	+2	+8	+4
M	+3	+15	+6
MB	+4	+20	+8
B	+5	+25	+20

Hypnotic Plumage — Cost 4

Trait: The character is an attention seeker or otherwise has an egotistical streak.

Effect: The character has plumage like a bird (or hair like a mane). This comes in many colors (often vibrant sunset shades of oranges, reds, and yellows). When "deployed" it adds +3 to Persuade and +5 to Entrance attempts.

Illustrated — Cost 2

Trait: You've led an interesting life (or at least have an engaging way of telling stories about your experiences.

Effect: The character's body is covered with intricate tattoos in vibrant colors. They can move, changing with the character's mood and sometimes giving away hints about the character's history. The character gains Attractive Level 2.

The Tattoos can give +2 to Showmanship rolls and are entertaining to examine. A character who begins to study the tattoos must make a WIL roll vs. a 13- or the illustrated character's WIL, whichever is higher.

Examiner wins by 4+	Learn something significant about the illustrated character's history.
Examiner wins by 0 to 3	Learn something interesting about the character's history.
Examiner loses by 1 to 4	Examiner learns something the illustrated character wants him to know (may be false data).
Examiner loses by 5+	The Examiner is hypnotized and will remain in a trance state for up to 1 minute per point he was beaten by. The illustrated character can "seem to vanish" (by getting up and leaving) but any attack will immediately break the spell (as will any attempt to rouse the hypnotized character).

I'm Invisible To You — Cost 12

Trait: You feel powerless and invisible to people who you want to notice you.

Effect: When being quiet and stationary a person must make a PER roll at –4 to see you. When using stealth and moving, you get +4 to your stealth roll. You are not actually *invisible*—just hard to notice.

However, when you are actually trying to do something like make a Persuade or Charm or Recruit roll, you must make a WIL roll or fade from notice (automatically failing the roll). In this case you will actually become invisible and everyone but the people you were trying to convince will see it happen. Once you move however, you'll become visible again—but the person you were trying to persuade will essentially treat you like you have nothing substantial to say.

This is very hard to use in combat—but if a character manages to be giving a speech when shooting starts (and doesn't move around much after going invisible) attackers who choose the right direction operate at –6 to hit *in addition* to any other negative modifiers.

Iron Skin — Cost 12

Trait: You have suffered tragedy and come to terms with it.

Effect: You can feel things well but your skin is shiny, pliable metal. You have 7/14 Armor.

Jaws That Bite — Cost 2

Trait: You tend towards verbal abuse or at least being very outspoken. A person who puts their "foot in their mouth" or speaks when they should really be quite may have this too. Any anger issue can cause this.

Effect: Your face splits into massive, unhinging jaws. This is gruesome to watch and dangerous! They bite for Listed Maw damage. When you bite, you can make a Grapple roll to hang on and bite again (same Damage Mod as when you hit) for 5 REA.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
--	--	5 PEN	9 PEN	12 PEN	16 PEN

Jumping Legs — Cost 3

Trait: You are prone to make snap judgments and reach conclusions with miniscule amounts of data.

Effect: You can jump! Your legs probably change (often to look like some sort of froglegs or digigrade legs). You jump 20/Mass (across) or 12/Mass yards straight up per second for an 8 REA Long action (if the group wants to play with 45-degree arcs, you can do a 2-second jump composed of two 8 REA long actions (one to take off and one to land) for 40/Mass (this is only across).

Junk Collector — Cost 1

Trait: You have chosen friends who constantly get you into trouble (can also apply to people who find themselves in recurrent cases of being victims of spousal abuse).

Effect: You get dirty faster (your clothes and skin). Garbage, windblown scraps of paper, crushed soda cans, plastic wrappers, all slowly and slyly gravitate towards you. Your house is a mess—any place you stay becomes filthy and unclean.

You, on the other hand, get +8 Damage Points.

NOTE: This ability has *reflective* properties: it'll work in a constant and subtle fashion on Chessboard Zero! If the person has it, their daily, normal world will find itself attracting junk.

Kaleidscope Eyes — Cost 16

Trait: You have a somewhat detached grip on reality. Maybe you do drugs—maybe you have an easy time putting "nasty things out of your head." Maybe you're in denial about something in your life—either way, you aren't firmly grounded to the world you live in.

Effect: You can cast illusions of yourself or other things you are very familiar with from your eyes. These do not have physical substance and some things (ID cards, money, etc.) are a bit hard to create.

Illusions of Yourself	You can throw one illusion of you within your line of sight so long as you remain motionless. It looks very realistic.
Illusions of other people	Doing a *specific* person requires a Craft skill roll at -5 (roll at -2 if Level 3 and no negative if Level 4). The amount it is made by is rolled against watcher's RES or Perception to see if they see through it. It makes no noise. It cannot occupy the space of another object (you can't wrap yourself). It only exists within line of sight.
Illusions of Things	No roll is necessary to create a cartoonish object. The max size is about the dimensions of a refrigerator. They can emit enough light for you to see. They are stationary.
Obscure Vision	If you want to blind someone or wrap them in an illusion, you must expend an 8 REA Long action per turn and make a RES roll "to hit" and -1/5 yards range. This gives a -4 Perception Modifier.
Moving Cartoons	This is a Craft skill roll (with no skill you just don't do a very good job of "animating them")
Money or valuables or complex things	Complex items (money) or intricate illusions (an image of a computer screen with moving text) requires a craft skill roll at -4 (-1 for Level 3, no mod for Level 4) or *worse* (money is -6). Again, these cannot obscure real objects (creating an image that's just supposed to obscure the numbers on a playing card won't look right).

Kali Arms — Cost 8 or 4

Trait: You have issues with being overwhelmed or being in over your head.

Effect: You have 2 to 4 extra arms as the situation demands it. This gives you a free hand-based 0 REA attack with any normal 5 REA attack. It gives you +8 Grapple.

NOTE: If you have no special HTH attack the cost may be 4.

Knight in Shining Armor — Cost 7

Trait: You take the role of the *rescuer*. You might be an enabler (and you may even have a martyrdom complex—although you hide it well). Often people like this "rush to save the day" but then resent others who may not then afford them the accolades they think they are due … maybe next time.

NOTE: The character can have any normal fantasy weapon from the list appear with their armor.

Effect: You are adorned with stylish plate and chain armor (or it may have another look to it). This evaporates if taken off and is as comfortable as clothes. Other clothes vanish when in the armor. The armor is 5/10.

The suit is usually heavily embellished with a colorful tunic, engraved articulated joints, an optional helm, etc. The character's heraldry should indicate what sorts of situations the person "rescues others from." (the enabling spouse of an alcoholic might have a liquor bottle crossed with car-keys).

Lenses — Cost 2

Trait: You like to pull things (or concepts) apart and test them and see how they work. You might be an engineer, philosopher, or tinkerer.

Description: Two 35mm camera-style zoom-lenses replace your eyes. As you look around they rotate and focus. You can do the following:

1. Ignore –4pts of range/visibility modifiers.
2. Zoom in up to 120x (telescope) at range or view microscopically if the item is held up close to the eye. This will let you visually discern fingerprints and the like.
3. Take pictures or "shoot video." You can store WIL hours or WIL x 1000 pictures. You transfer them to magnetic media by … putting it entirely in your mouth (which will unhinge to accept VCR tapes).

Lightning Antlers — Cost 3

Trait: You like being the center of attention—a show off!

Effect: Antlers can deal +9 PEN damage with a running charge. They can do +5 PEN damage in normal combat (Long Reach) but are at –2 to hit anything the same size or smaller than the character.

Electricity crawls between them like voltage through a Jacob's Ladder. This can be used to throw 9pt Lightning Bolts (5 REA each). The character can throw CON / 2 (round up) before having to recharge for an hour.

Lightning Antlers give a –3 to Stealth attempts.

Lone Wolf — Cost 3

Trait: You're a brooding misunderstood loner. Maybe afraid to let other people in. Maybe other people tend to get in your way. You're probably afraid of commitment.

Effect: You have wolf-like features and digigrade legs and fur. You get +2 to Perception rolls when it comes to sensing other people or following them (usually due to smell). You run at 1.5x normal speed. You get fangs and claws for 3pts of PEN damage in HTH combat.

Luminous — Cost 1

Trait: There is something striking about your personality—maybe your vivaciousness or maybe a streak of activism? The aspect will determine the colors.

Effect: Luminous characters *glow*. They may have a uniform color or, perhaps several (a character might have glowing red skin with luminous blue spots, for example because they are passionate about a sense of personal freedom). The effect is to negate –6pts of darkness modifiers within WIL yards (and –4 for 4 yards past that, -2 four yards beyond *that*).

Lure — Cost 6

Trait: You tend to be seductive or have a con-artist/charismatic nature.

Effect: The character has a luminous "lure" that can glow in order to 'attract' prey. The Lure is turned on as a 5 REA Medium action and creates a 10-yard radius light of various colors. The light may come from some spots on the character's skin, a short, dangling tentacle, or some other source (the eyes).

When seen, it is a PWR vs. STAT attack. The Lure effect doesn't work well on people with a WIL greater than 10. At most they will be *dazed* by it (a Major Effect). The Power of the attack is 14 or the character's WIL, or Persuade or Charm scores (whichever is highest). The roll is against WIL.

It may only be tried once on a given person in an hour. Everyone who can see the light and is not familiar with it will be affected when it is turned on (within the 10-yard radius).

Effect	Result
Minor	Character will find the light "attractive." In a social situation, many people will be enticed to come over and talk to the character.
Standard	The character will be lured: they will take a step, automatically, for 5 REA towards the character.
Major	The target is fascinated. Treat as Dazed but making WIL rolls to recover. When a character is struck in combat, however, they immediately recover. They will move at full-speed towards the light but will not grab or impede the character.
Critical	The character is entranced. They roll to recover at –3 and must make a standard roll if struck.
Catastrophic	Enraptured. There is no roll to recover (they will follow the light for hours). If struck, they must make a WIL roll at –4 to recover.

Made of Cake — Cost 8

Trait: You have a hard time saying 'no' to people and get taken advantage of and taken for granted often. You tend to help others to the point where you're worn out, yourself

Effect: You appear very clown-like in appearance—white skin, with curled, brightly colored hair and decorated flesh. You're made of layer cake, and are *delicious*. People who take slices from you (it doesn't hurt) heal 1pt of damage for every point they eat from you (costing you 1pt).

1. You don't bleed, you don't take Penetrating Damage (treat as Impact).
2. You are immune to toxins, you don't need to breathe but you will "get soggy" if submerged and after CON seconds, will be immobile for CON minutes (not literally—but *very* weak, unable to move around, and at -5 to all rolls).
3. You take a -8 Damage Modifier from any collisions but will be Dazed by them as you reconstruct yourself from the splatter.

Mane — Cost 5

Trait: You are proud—to a fault in some way. Perhaps it is general hubris or maybe there is some area where you have an inordinate amount of your self-esteem tied up.

Effect: Your hair is incredibly styled and overlarge. Perhaps you have a massive day-glow Mohawk. Maybe you have a long Chinese-style ponytail. Maybe it's a lion's mane. Whatever it is, it's obvious and it stands out. Your features may change a bit too—sometimes becoming more feline.

You have a Roar which does Listed IMP damage (sound) when directed. It's *very* loud. It does 4x damage to inanimate objects.

You also get extra STR and DP.

The STR adds to any damage done with HTH attacks.

Size	STR	DP
VS	+0	+3
S	+1	+4
MS	+2	+5
M	+3	+6
MB	+6	+7
B	+7	+9

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
5 IMP	7 IMP	9 IMP	11 IMP	13 IMP	15 IMP

Manipulator Tentacle — Cost 12

Trait: You're good at manipulating people. You might be persuasive, silver-tongued, or just good at pushing people's buttons.

Effect: You have a thick, suckered tentacle that comes out of your mouth (it's your tongue when retracted and, no, it never looks *normal*). It is up to 5 yards in length. The end of it, when it hits a victim, takes control of their nervous system and you can control them like a marionette, using your REA to move their body. This is launched as a 5 REA Grapple attack which must score a Success. The tentacle has a +6 Offensive Grapple. There is in a Resisted roll against the target's CON or WIL (their choice) and your roll is a 15-

Effect	Result
Minor	Interference: their rolls are at -2 while the tentacle is attached.
Standard	Freeze: You can freeze them, sucking away 8 REA per turn. This cost you 5 REA.
Major	Control: You can spend 5 of their REA for 5 of yours. They take no other action.
Critical	Control: You can spend all of their REA—spending each point of theirs that you use. They act at -1 to all rolls.
Catastrophic	Complete Control: For 5 of your REA, you can spend all of their REA. They act at no negative.

Needle Fingers — Cost 1

Trait: You have hurt someone you care for. You still regret it.

Effect: The character's fingers can become sharp (perhaps metallic-looking weapons like pointed knitting needles). These do Listed damage but have *doubled* PEN values.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 PEN	2 PEN	2 PEN	4 PEN	6 PEN	8 PEN

Oblivion Carapace — Cost 16

Trait: You were *hurt*. Something happened and you retreated inside yourself. You really have a hard time opening up to people and *usually* this marks a shy introvert—but it can go the other way too—many comedians may be protecting their inner natures.

Effect: The Oblivion Carapace is thick, heavy lobster armor that covers the character in plates from head to foot. It forms heavy gauntlets on the hands and articulated joints on the feet. It is often a "deep, deep gray" in color—but other colors are possible as well (a deep black is favored also).

Oblivion Carapace gives extra STR, BLD, and DP as well.
The damage from STR and BLD adds to any physical HTH attack.

Size	STR	BLD	DP	Armor
VS	+0	+3	+6	2/4
S	+1	+5	+7	4/8
MS	+2	+8	+8	5/10
M	+4	+15	+10	9/18
MB	+6	+20	+12	9/18
B	+8	+25	+14	9/18

Obscene Tentacles — Cost 5

Trait: You are consumed with *lust*. Maybe you're a porn addict. Maybe you have appetites you indulge. Maybe you don't act on them. Either way, it's in you.

NOTE: The GM and other players should be consulted before taking this ability. It may be seen as going too far … or it can lead to a silly game.

NOTE: This is a "male" incarnation of this trait. It may appear on women (who usually don't act on it) or be otherwise modified to apply specifically to a specific character.

Effect: The character has tentacle-like appendages that are viciously obscene. They are powerful, though—and tough. Usually a character has four. Where they come from is up to the player (sprouting from the back isn't unreasonable—other locations are … possible).

The tentacles are capable of performing a Grapple at range for a 5 REA action. The character can also move Length yards for an 8 REA action (up is handy). They can scale most non-sheer surfaces easily.

Grapple *includes* the extra strength. It is added to both offensive and defensive values.

Size	STR	Grapple	Length
VS	+2	+4	1ft
S	+3	+6	1 yard
MS	+8	+14	2 yards
M	+12	+18	4 yards
MB	+14	+20	5 yards
B	+16	+24	6 yards

Pachyderm — Cost 10

Trait: The character is good at appearing to ignore taunts or insults. Often this is the case from having been mercilessly verbally abused from a young age.

Effect: The character's skin may have unusual tones or markings and is a thick layer of armor. It gives [6/14] defenses. It also adds +3 BLD.

If the markings are especially "funny looking" (purple skin with yellow spots) then it gives 7/14 protection.

Parasite — Cost [Varies]

Trait: You are *needy*. You may be depressed, insecure, or feed off of other's pain or fear (and if so you are adept at stoking it while you seem to be giving comfort).

Twist	Cost	Effect
Proboscis	-2	You have a long (2'+) nose cone that extends down from your face. You can drink blood from targets. This requires a Major Success with a Grab or Grapple. The damage is 2pts per second. The Proboscis is disfiguring. If you *have to drink blood* (10pts per month) then the cost is –4. Treat as basic Ugly.
Envelope	8	You can absorb people. You must get a standard success in grappling and then you suddenly become like bread dough, expanding and wrapping around them—consuming them. You absorb 4pts of Damage per 5 REA action (your damage mod is +2 per level of success). Your Offensive Grapple is doubled.
Sucker Mouth	-2	You have an ugly flute-like mouth, it works like the Proboscis but is even uglier and gives +2 Offensive Grapple. Treat as *Hideous*.

Phantom Limbs — Cost 10

Trait: Being a perfectionist or a control freak. Often seen in those in charge of others.

Effect: The character has control of 3-8 arms (with hands) which come from floating spheres that follow the character around. These are flesh-and-blood limbs like the characters (the "phantom" name comes from the floating nature).

The character gets a free 0 REA attack (with any other normal attack). The limbs also give +10 to grapple scores. They can move up to WIL yards away. If struck, each will vanish if a Minor Wound's worth of points is taken and that damage is transmitted to the character. They are at –3 to be shot. The character can't see through them so he'll have to watch them to have any sort of coordination.

Piercing — Cost 16

Trait: The character has some element of self-hate. This can be shame (which the character may even feel is mild or 'dealt with') It can be actual self-disgust or suicidal feelings.

Effect: The character is mutilated with metal—the injuries are usually appearing severe and non-survivable. Usually the material is surgical steel and it may take the form of steaks driven through the stomach, nails driven into the head, hooks sunk into eyes and eyelids, etc.

The results are usually horrific to look upon. They do not hinder the character. The character gets +12 Damage Points and regenerates 4pts of damage every second of rest.

The piercings are all attached (at least by chains) but can also be used as weapons. The character may choose to have a spear, sword, or knife sheathed within his body. These weapons do +1 to their normal damage.

Intimidate gets +4, Persuade or Charm or Recruit gets –4.

Plastic Form — Cost 12

Trait: At some important point in your life you were unwilling to take a stand for yourself (or by proxy, those you cared about), and still feel the effects of it.

Effect: The character can "stretch." This has several effects. It doubles the character's Offensive Grapple. Only other Plastic Forms can grapple against the character for anything other than a Grab (for which the character's grapple remains the same).

The character can move at 2x normal rate by stretching around and can Grapple at CON/2 yards range going immediately for a Hold (the character needn't grab first).

All impacts are treated as Elastic and the character takes half damage from *those.*

Plastic characters have 10 Armor against incoming IMP attacks. They have 20 points of PEN defense against penetrating attacks (but don't get the armor even if they make their PEN save).

They Go to Pieces: on a Dazed Result the character must make a WIL roll at –4 or go "all into a puddle." This is essentially being helpless for 1 second per point the roll was missed by, including the first turn of being Dazed.

Protective Blubber — Cost 8

Trait: Sometimes the extremely fat get fatter. However, this is more common in people who are afraid of real, intimate relationships.

Effect: You are massively obese with rolls of fat like a walrus. This affects your BLD, DP, STR, and Initiative. It also makes you easier to hit. The exact numbers depend on your size.

1. Your ground speed is as though you had a 7 REA.
2. You get extra *Penetration* defense added to whatever armor you otherwise have (this *does* stack).
3. You are easier to hit than you size-class indicates (TBH is To-Be-Hit).

The damage from any additional STR and BLD is added to all HTH attacks.

Size	STR	BLD	DP	Init	TBH	PEN
VS	+0	+5	+12	-5	+1	+4
S	+1	+10	+14	-5	+1	+6
MS	+2	+15	+16	-6	+1	+8
M	+4	+30	+20	-6	+2	+10
MB	+6	+40	+24	-6	+3	+14
B	+8	+50	+28	-6	+4	+18

Radar Ears — Cost 4

Trait: You are an information junkie and you love the news (or just knowing everything you can about what's going on around you).

Description: You have strange looking ears that can swivel and turn. In some cases they look like high-tech parabolic microphones! You can "sense" everything moving within a perimeter or anything standing still with a heartbeat!

Doing a "scan" is an 8 REA Long action and requires a Perception roll. Even if the roll is failed, you'll detect up to INT individual human-sized moving objects within WIL x 5 yards range.

Each point it is made by, beyond that, will apply vs. Stealth and to smaller or more subtle objects. A roll made by 5 will detect a stationary person's heartbeat.

Radiance — Cost 6

Trait: You are *compassionate*. You are (to a significant extent) kind, generous, and empathetic. You comfort the ill or the sad. There may certainly be people whom you think deserve what they get—and you may be somewhat tough when helping those who need it (or, you know, maybe you're a pushover!), but you have a dedicated compassionate streak.

Effect: You glow with a white radiance. This gives +2 to Persuade rolls. You can heal others for WIL DP with a 5 REA Short action. This works on a given person once per hour. You, yourself, regenerate at a rate of 2 DP per 10 seconds. You can heal yourself as well.

For an 8 REA Short action, you can prevent *Penetration Doubling*. The shot will still hit for damage and use whatever it hit by as the damage modifier, but hits by 4+ will not double.

This will also give +4 to Resistance rolls vs. poison (automatically for you, must be "given" for others). It works at WIL yards range.

Raiment — Cost 1

Trait: You are concerned about your "image." It might be cool and countercultural. It might be prim and proper.

Effect: You are decked out in some kind of specific clothing. It's usually *overdone* for whatever you see your image as—turned up to 11. And if your image *doesn't* involve clothes it could be quite bizarre. An Advertising major might, for example, wear a Halloween mask, a human-resources manager might wear a military field uniform with Hawaiian shirt patterns and colors on it. A slacker might get a torn jeans jacket with all sorts of buttons and counter-culture logos on it and the word LOSER across the back—if he projected that he was). You get +2 DP.

If you *snap forward* when coming out of Descent you may, at the GM's discretion, keep your clothes.

They usually give +1 to whatever psychology attempt your image favors (decide when you take Raiment).

Ragged	Cost 4

Trait: You've been through a *lot*. You bear the marks and you've taken some hits—but you're still here.

Effect: The character appears *ragged*. Wings may have holes and tears. Clothes are ripped and torn in interesting ways (or may appear tattered). The body bears scars. These are not disfiguring but may appear dramatic or even designed. If new clothes are put on, they will quickly *wear* (on Chessboard Zero your clothes may start to wear out more quickly as well).

For 3 REA the character can "accept" an incoming attack.

1. The character gets a WIL+2 or AGI+2 or CON+2 (whichever is better) as a *block* against the to-hit roll (even if it's a ranged attack). If it succeeds the attack *looks* like it hits and does disrupt things (makes a little dry hole in the character) but has no effect.
2. Even if the block fails (and the character is hit) they get a -4 Damage Modifier or an additional +1 Damage Modifier if other such abilities are in effect (and a +1 is better than a total of -4).

The character gets +4 DP.
The character gets a -1 to be seen (which is the same as +1 to Stealth rolls for visual purposes).

Ram's Horns	Cost 2

Trait: You are angry—mad at the world or at specific people.

Effect: You have ram's horns on your head and may have a somewhat bovine nose (this varies from person to person). A Move action (8 REA long from a standing start, 5 REA if moving last turn) can terminate in a headbutt. This does Listed damage if you get a running start. It does *half* that if you simply head butt from a standing position.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 IMP	4 IMP	10 IMP	12 IMP	14 IMP	20 IMP

Reader	Cost 4

Trait: You have difficulty understanding normal emotional states. You have a hard time functioning with normal people because you can't easily tell if their joking or not.

Effect: The character's fingers are lengthened and terminate in circular pads. With a touch they can analyze text stored on almost any mechanical or electronic medium. Holding a book will transfer the informational content of its text to the user quickly. Plain-text files on a shut-down computer or disk can be read likewise.

The character gets a RES roll at –6 (or a Mathematics roll at –6) to decipher encrypted text. This can usually only be tried once. When reading a hard drive the character will have an understanding of the file system and can read any word processor format.

The character gets 6pts to spend on Level 1 skills that can be above the 12- roll range due to "book learning" (they must be RES or MEM based and should be able to be learned from a book). The ability doesn't confer photographic memory of the books read.

Repulse — Cost 4

Trait: The character is shy.

Effect: A blast of force can be emitted. This takes one or two seconds to charge and can then be released. Charging is a 5 REA Medium action. Charges can't be "held" if the blast is not released then it must be charged all over again.

The one-second charge blast does listed damage out to WIL yards radius. Targets are pushed back Damage / Mass yards (make an AGI roll at –1 per yard pushed back or fall down).

If the charge is held for two seconds the damage multiplied by 1.5.

People whom the character trusts are not affected by the damage.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
4 IMP	6 IMP	8 IMP	12 IMP	16 IMP	20 IMP

Ride — Cost [Varies]

Trait: You fear commitment or otherwise tend to be transient in people's lives. You rarely have a lasting effect on anyone.

Effect: You have access to a means of transportation. When you are having an Episode this is usually nearby. Unlike a lot of Twists, this one is usually more likely to be active on the upper levels of reality than on the lower ones! The vehicle is not always easy to find but usually a decent search will turn it up. The character has a new, interesting looking key on their key chain.

Twist	Cost	Effect
Skateboard	1-2	The character has some human-powered device (a bicycle, a skateboard, in-line skates, etc.). For 2pts these can allow the character to move up walls for 1 second worth of movement only (usually about 10-yards at standard speed).
Motorcycle	3	The character has the keys to a really hot bike (could be classic, could be hyper-modern). It's fuel efficient and always gassed up.
Sports Car	4	The character has access to a 2-door 2-seat (very small backseat) fast car. It's maybe in the 30K range.
High-End Sports Car	5	The character has something in the 150K range (a Ferrari, perhaps). It also might be a high-end luxury car, like a Bentley or Rolls Royce.
Exotic	8	The character has something *weird*. A bike that can drive up walls is possible. An 18-wheeler, perhaps. A car that turns into a submarine? An aircraft?
Super Exotic	16	The character has something like a fully loaded Apache Helicopter or a jet fighter. The space shuttle. The GM should always give permission before allowing this. Vehicles that can drive through walls or have other exotic abilities are possible.

Ridges — Cost 5

Trait: You've got a chip on your shoulder.

Effect: Bony ridges extend through the skin. The character may have bladed arcs sprouting from his shoulder blades, dinosaur-style plates rising from his spine, and spurs pushing through at the elbows or along the forearms. Ridges give:

1. An HTH PEN attack (bladed arms?). This is treated as a *weapon*. So the damage done *adds* to the character's Base Damage. This means the STR bonus is *not* applied by the chart.
2. Allow a block in HTH combat as though the character had a weapon.
3. A small bonus to STR
4. A small bonus to Damage Points.

The STR bonuses add to the damage of any HTH attack, including Ridges itself.

Size	Damage	STR	DP	Reach
VS	+1	+0	+3	Short
S	+2	+1	+4	Short
MS	+2	+1	+5	Short
M	+3	+2	+6	Medium
MB	+4	+2	+8	Medium
B	+6	+3	+10	Medium

Rock of Integrity — Cost 16

Trait: You keep your word. Honorable. How you present yourself is how you feel. You are not deceptive or manipulative by nature.

Effect: Your skin takes on a rocky appearance and texture. You get 4/8 Armor and extra DP, BLD, and STR (the amount based on your size).

Size	STR	BLD	DP
VS	+1	+5	+12
S	+2	+10	+14
MS	+3	+15	+16
M	+6	+30	+20
MB	+8	+40	+24
B	+10	+50	+28

Roses — Cost3

Trait: You use guilt as a tool (usually on people you love—and always for the *best* reasons!)

Effect: Your hair is rose-petals (or adorned with them) and your body sprouts cords of "rose stems" wrapped around it or even somewhat under the skin. You can lash out with them as whips.

1. Their damage is as per a HTH weapon (STR damage adds, not weight, though)
2. They cost 5 REA to use and may be used multiple times per turn.
3. Their damage can be used as Offensive Grapple for a Grab.

Size	Damage	Length
VS	+1 PEN	1 ft
S	+3 PEN	1 yard
MS	+6 PEN	2 yards
M	+8 PEN	4 yards
MB	+12 PEN	5 yards
B	+16 PEN	6 yards

Scorpion's Tail — Cost 2

Trait: You have betrayed someone badly.

Effect: You have a segmented stinger-terminated tail.

Size	Toxin Damage	Tail PEN Damage	Tail PEN Value	Reach
VS	6pts	1	3	Short
S	8pts	2	6	Short
MS	12pts	3	9	Medium
M	16pts	6	18	Medium
MB	20pts	8	24	Medium
B	24pts	10	30	Long

Serpent Neck — Cost 16

Trait: You are a gambler or risk-taker

Effect: The character's head can extend on a long, muscled neck. It takes a 5 REA Medium action to "extend the neck" and it can be used to grapple, look around corners, or bite thereafter. The character's Size Class determines how far the snake-like neck can reach, how strong it is, and how easy it is to hit in HTH (range/HTH combat). This TBH modifier is used *instead* of AGI Bonus. If the character is VS or S, this ability costs 1pt and essentially allows the character to see around corners.

Any bite attack can be used at Reach range (like a snake striking). The neck must be extended for a 5 REA action first.

As a downside, any bladed attack that hits by +6 or better can, if it penetrates, *triple* instead of just doubling.

Constriction: If the character has someone in a Grapple or Hold they can *crush* for 5 REA (and can do this as often as they have REA). This does normal HTH damage with a damage modifier based on how well they have the target Held.

Any bite attack can be used at Long-reach range (like a snake striking). The neck must be extended for a 5 REA action first.

Grapple Success	Damage Mod
Minor	+2
Standard	+4
Major	+6
Critical	+8

Size	Reach	Constrict Damage	Grapple	TBH (Range/HTH)
VS	1 ft	--	--	-7/-4
S	1 yard	--	--	-6/-4
MS	2 yards	+1	+1	-5/-4
M	3 yards	+2	+2	-4/-3
MB	4 yards	+3	+3	-4/-3
B	5 yards	+4	+4	-3/-2

Skeletal — Cost 4

Trait: You have an internal sense of loss or lack that pervades your life. It may not be obvious—you might not even be fully aware of it—but there is something important in your life you feel you aren't getting. An example could be obsession over the loss of a loved one.

Effect: You appear as a skeleton or a skeletal figure. Usually you are just *incredibly* thin. In some cases you may actually have bones showing.

You are somewhat *fragile*: Impact attacks from blunt weapons or blows (not bullets) get a +4 Damage Modifier.

You are difficult to hit. You get a 4pt AGI Bonus or +1 to your AGI Bonus, whichever is better (this stacks with other things that improve or replace AGI bonus).

You have a Mass of 1 (BLD treated as 5).

You can *suck the life force out of someone*. Your Grab or Grapple happens at +[X] Strength (taken from the size table below) and once you have grabbed, you can, for 5 REA, *drain life*. This replenishes your Damage Points. The life drain is [Ypts] taken from the chart and half of what you drain is added to your damage points. The Damage Mod roll is based on how good your hold is:

Hold	Damage Mod
Grab	What you hit by
Minor	-2
Standard	+0
Major	+2
Critical	+4

Size	STR
VS	+0
S	+1
MS	+2
M	+3
MB	+4
B	+5

Slide — Cost 14

Trait: You have a distrust of authority and may well have had problems with the police.

Effect: You can sort of *teleport*. You can't go any place you couldn't walk to but you can go instantly. This will move you up to 100 yards with an 8 REA Long Action. Visually you may appear to be sort of elongated and *sucked over* to the new location! You can go through doors that aren't locked but have to stop at doors that are. You have to be able to see your destination but you can go "right through a door" (and will stop at it if it turns out to be locked).

Slippery — Cost 4

Trait: You tend to bend the truth. You are interested in "getting away" with things. You tend to be irresponsible.

Effect: Your skin is slick and limbs and torso are hairless. You are covered with a natural layer of oil (normally this isn't too gross). You get +6 Defensive Grapple. The oil is usually a color based on what emotion tends to make you lie (pink for love, red for anger, blue for depression, green for greed, yellow for fear, other colors as necessary).

Slither — Cost 8

Trait: There is a (perhaps faint) vein of cowardice or passive-aggressiveness in you. You dislike meeting people head on for reasons of conflict avoidance.

Effect: The character has a snake-like body below the waist. It is fleshy but may be "tattooed" with odd patterns (usually meaningful ones to the person). This impacts Grapple, BLD, and DP and, if the character is Medium Small or larger, they can "Constrict."

Length and Speed: The character's length modifier is listed on the chart (based on size). They can move at normal speed +Length yards per second. A Slithering character can also climb walls if they are lower than their Length.

Constriction: If the character has someone in a Grapple or Hold they can *crush* for 5 REA (and can do this as often as they have REA). This does normal HTH damage with a damage modifier based on how well they have the target Held.

NOTE: The character's Grapple Bonus on the chart *includes* the added STR and BLD and the bonus for being snake-like. If the character's STR and BLD are already known, just apply each bonus separately (i.e. if the character is *Medium* (human)-sized and had a 12 STR, a 12 BLD, and a 14/12 Grapple, they will have a 15 STR, 20 BLD, and 20/18 Grapple). They move at normal speed of +3 yards per second.

Grapple Success	Damage Mod
Minor	+2
Standard	+4
Major	+6
Critical	+8

Size	STR	BLD	DP	Grapple	Length
VS	+0	+2	+4	+2	+1ft
S	+0	+4	+6	+3	+1 yard
MS	+2	+6	+8	+4	+2 yards
M	+3	+8	+10	+6	+3 yards
MB	+4	+12	+12	+8	+4 yards
B	+5	+16	+16	+14	+6 yards

Snake Eyes / Spit Venom — Cost 4

Trait: You feel that the world has treated you unfairly! You may have generalized anger issues or simply be nurturing a major (or minor) grudge with "the system."

Effect: Your eyes are golden and green with vertical slits. You can see in the dark (ignore –5 points of visibility modifiers due to darkness). Your spittle is poison. This hits using COR, has a maximum range of 4 feet, and must hit by 3+ to do more than burn for 2pts of damage.

On a hit by 3 or better, it hits the eyes/face (if the character is wearing a mask it won't work) and it burns for 2pts of damage (IMP) and conveys a POWER 15, Base Damage 16 Toxin attack!

A character can only strike twice (and only once a second) before having to re-fill his poison sacs, taking 2 hours.

Social Chameleon — Cost 4

Trait: You change yourself to fit into a crowd that will adopt you. You may have a poor self image, a need to conform, or a lust to be popular.

Effect: You appear as an anthropomorphic lizard whose skin adopts brilliant colors and shifting patterns. Rather than truly camouflaging yourself, this usually shows up with brilliant plaids, lightning bolts, polka dots, spirals, and other designs. You have sucker fingers and can climb on walls.

You can get +4 to Stealth for WIL seconds (usually, though, you are at +3 to be seen!). You can scamper up walls at your normal move rate (but it takes 3/4ths of your limbs on the wall). You have a thin tail that isn't really useful as a weapon.

Somataform Gorgon — Cost 12

Trait: You believe some part of your body is obscenely hideous.

Effect: The character's face (this may be another body part—but even if the character has real life issues with, say, his legs, the effect usually shows up in the face) looks grotesque, necrotic, and malformed. On lower levels of the human mind it is psychological horrifying. The character usually comes with a veil or hood. Terror at 14 PWR when shown. Repeated viewings don't work so well (it is 12 the second time and people are used to it after that—although repulsed).

NOTE: On lower levels of reality, Shadows will not relate to the character as though they are absurdly hideous and will not be overly freaked out if the character wears a hood. They'll still suffer the terror-shock effect when they see the person's face though. Shadows don't react badly to multi-armed blue-skinned sucker-covered Twisteds: why should they react badly to a rotted-looking one?

Spaghetti Limbs — Cost 1

Trait: You have feelings of powerlessness.

Effect: Your arms and legs are five-yard long strands like fleshy tentacles or spaghetti. Your movement is sort of a rolling crawl. You get +8 Offensive Grapple. Your reach is Long.

Spheres — Cost 5

Trait: You stand up for what you believe in.

Effect: You can generate translucent bubbles of energy around your hands and throw them. When they hit, they explode. The damage listed has a RAD of 2 yards. The Range is –1/2y and you can fire one sphere per turn. You are immune to the explosive effects of your own weapons.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
12 X	14 X	16 X	18 X	20 X	22 X

Strength — Cost 6

Trait: You have principles or morals. You may not be super-humanly resistant to temptation but you're at least the kind of person who, when you see a guy you don't know accidentally drop a $10.00 bill, you pick it up and hand it back to him.

Effect: You have bulging muscles. You get the listed amount added to your STR.

Extra Strength

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
4 IMP	6 IMP	8 IMP	10 IMP	12 IMP	14 IMP

Stomach Mouth — Cost 3

Trait: There is a vicious streak in you. You might not be a violent person by nature—but when you do engage, you want to *destroy* (or seriously hurt) your enemies.

Description: You have a massive open mouth in your stomach. It has sharp teeth and it can speak as well. In fact, sometimes, it'll speak out of your control (although it doesn't usually sabotage you, it's just mean). The mouth also has a long, tentacle-like tongue that can pull people in. The bite attack only works in close combat—but, once someone is grabbed by the tongue, a Major success will yank them across the room. A Standard success will pull them in from medium range!

Size	Bite	Grapple	Length
VS	1	+2	+1ft
S	1	+3	+1 yard
MS	5	+4	+2 yards
M	9	+6	+3 yards
MB	+12	+8	+4 yards
B	16	+14	+6 yards

Sunglasses — Cost 2

Trait: You are invested in appearing cool and unflappable. Maybe you spend a lot of time *working* to be cool (and think you wouldn't be, if you didn't). Maybe you have some issues with self-image and try to hide them.

Effect: You wear slick black shades—that you can see perfectly out of. You can see in pitch black and ignore all darkness modifiers. You can also zoom in for up to 32x magnification (a great set of binoculars). If the sunglasses come off, you take a –3 vision modifier until they reappear (a few minutes).

Sunken — Cost 4

Trait: You are depressed or otherwise given to dark, brooding moods.

Effect: You appear as "recessed." It's a bit hard to pin down—but you always seem to be a little further away than you actually are—as though you are sort of "inset" in reality. You get –2 to all Perception rolls due to this extra "space" but you are at –4 to be hit (this is *instead* of AGI bonus).

Telekinesis — Cost 8

Trait: You are in a position of power over others (or over important things) in real life or otherwise glory in (or, maybe, fantasize about) the exercise of power over others.

Effect: The character has a 14 Power Telekinetic Strength (damage is 14pts with a TK strike) that operates at range. Grapple is 24pts. It costs 5 REA to attack and can attack 2x per turn and perform a Grapple Hold for 5 REA. Range is –1 to hit per 5 yards.

Tendrils — Cost 1

Trait: You are nosy or gossipy. You tend to get into other people's business. Curious.

Effect: You have a mane, crest or otherwise collection of tendrils (which may come in a variety of colors). These are thin and weak tentacles that can extend and stretch up to WIL yards. They have an excellent sense of touch and smell and can pick up vibrations. The character has a 16- Perception roll for anything within WIL yards if the tendrils are allowed to explore (they will do this on their own). The character gets +2 Perception rolls to pick up nearby persons. It takes a constant effort and WIL rolls to keep them under control, otherwise they will rudely crawl all over persons and things.

Thinner — Cost 8

Trait: Overtly this sometimes happens to anorexics (it's wish fulfillment in a sense). More commonly it happens to those who have important factors in their life they are not facing.

Effect: You appear grotesquely thin and stretched. You are probably six feet tall or taller (treat as Ugly). Your waist may become no bigger than a man's wrist while your ribs seem ready to explode through your flesh. Your eyes and cheeks are sunken and when you turn sideways? You vanish. Thinners can slip between or under doors (anywhere you can get a sheet of paper the size of a human). In combat they can twist-dodge which gives them a 14- Dodge for 5 REA or 12- for 3 REA that does apply fully against ranged attacks.

They have –3 STR for purposes of Grappling though.

Trails — Cost [Varies]

Trait: You're an attention hog or drama queen. Also possible: you want to be known and acknowledged or remembered.

Effect: You leave some sort of "trail" wherever you go. All of these give one +2 Damage Points.

Type	Cost	Notes
Tagger	1	Where you are and what you touch (inanimate) is marked with graffiti-style tags or paints. These paints may be semi-permanent (although that takes concentration) but usually fade in a few minutes or hours. If you stand still, the markings will expand in a radius around you at a rate of 1 yard per 5 minutes up to WIL yard radius.
Slime	-4	You feel you are noticeably dirty in some way or unclean (not necessarily hygienic—could be a feeling of having been violated or ruined). You leave a gross trail of slime (even through clothes to some extent).
Light Trails	2	You leave vague, pleasant-looking light trails in your wake. Illuminates out to about 4 yards.
Foot prints	1	You leave footprints behind you.

Transparent Vision — Cost 8

Trait: The character tends to "intellectualize things" rather than going with instinct or emotional reaction.

Effect: You project visible rays from your eyes that make things transparent where the beams fall. It's like X-Ray Vision except everyone can see through. It'll only go WIL inches through a surface and you can calibrate it so that it'll limit its penetration (i.e. you can make someone's clothes seem to disappear or just their outer layer).

Trunk — Cost 4

Trait: Tendency to distrust people or be guarded. You've been betrayed or hurt in relationships before.

Effect: The character's nose is a short "trunk" like an elephant's (but it may only be about a foot long). It gives +4 to any smell Perception rolls but it can sniff out a few other things as well:

Danger can be smelled within WIL yards (or really bad danger can be smelled a long way off). This is merely the aspect of being "Dangerous" (guns have that smell, so does explosives or poisons and monsters). The GM determines in what capacity the object must be considered dangerous (i.e. a trap would smell dangerous, a toothpick, even though you could choke on it, doesn't).

Lies smell. Like rotten eggs. For a lie to smell it must be a pretty big lie—not simply an equivocation or a "white lie" (unless the person's reaction to whatever they're being polite about is really strong). *Deception* may or may not smell. A Con-Man would have a disquieting scent but if he doesn't actually *tell you lies* (many con-games involve the target making their own conclusions the scent won't be strong). Lies may be at –1 or –6 or more to be smelled (and knowledgeable targets may get WIL rolls, Actor rolls, Con Artist rolls, and other rolls to further obfuscate their lying).

Umber Horns — Cost 6

Trait: You are investigative in nature or personality. You might just be nosy—but often this applies to those who have "professional" attitude towards *wanting to know*.

Effect: You have horns that appear to be made of shadow. They are solid but shift and change in description according to mood and the character's state of mind (the smallest they can get is two short "devil horns." The largest would be elk or moose-sized horns.

They act as antennae, questing and inspecting things. They have a 14- chance to detect a lie (roll against the liar's appropriate skill or RES or WIL, modify as appropriate for the subtlety of the lie and the sincerity with which it is stated). When they detect one, they'll point at the liar! On a roll of a 17+ they may point at the wrong person (and the GM may rule they sometimes malfunction, anyway).

They also examine things: they have a Perception roll of 14- and may point at things they think are clues or at people they think should be questioned more deeply.

Damage

VS	S	MS	M	MB	B
1 IMP	4 IMP	10 IMP	12 IMP	14 IMP	20 IMP

Weightless — Cost 16

Trait: You have a wild streak or a quick sense of humor that you've no problem turning on yourself.

Effect: The character has a zero weight for purpose of being lifted or carried, a Mass of 1 for purposes of flight or throwing or being knocked back. The character can climb any surface with minimal handholds easily (and quickly, about 6 yards per second). The character can jump STR-7 yards straight up and 2x that distance across.

The character gets +2 REA and +1 AGI due to being unencumbered by mass. The character also gets 4pts towards Acrobatics.

Whispering Boils — Cost 2

Trait: You tend to internalize comments (it might be a *particular weakness*, comments from a particular person, or just a general thin-skinned nature).

Effect: The character's skin may be some bizarre color (bright orange?) and is covered with odd tumors or boils. These rise to the surface of the skin like bubbles and when they pop, the sound is some softly spoken piece of abuse or some unkind word someone has said to the character.

The character gets +8 DP, +1 STR, +2 BLD.

Wind-Up — Cost 3

Trait: You spend a lot of time nervous and worrying about things you can't control.

Effect: There is a windup key in your back (It's big, and visible—but you can't reach it to wind yourself). You have three states:

1. Normally Wound. For CONx5 minutes (with the key slowly turning) you are normal.
2. Wound Down. If no one will "wind you up" (it takes about 20 seconds of effort) then you will Wind Down. Your STR drops to 8 (if it is less than 8, it drops by 1), you get -3 Initiative, and -1 to all rolls until wound.
3. Wound up. When someone spends 5 REA to Wind you up, when they let go, for 1 second you have +1 STR. So if a person with 10 REA spends 2 seconds to wind you four times, you get +4 STR for 4 seconds. This can be done for a maximum listed in the table.

You also get extra DP based on your size:

Size	DP	Max Windup
VS	+4	+5
S	+5	+6
MS	+6	+7
M	+8	+10
MB	+12	+14
B	+16	+18

Zebra — Cost 6

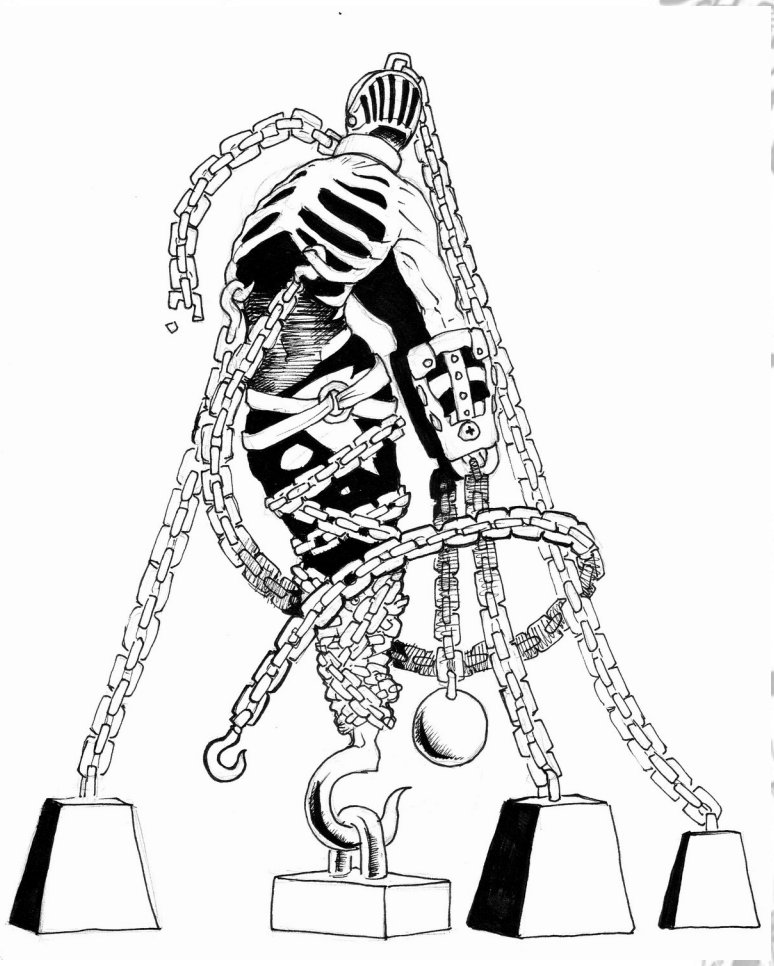
Trait: You have a stark and simple view of most things. This might be reaching a quick conclusion about the essence of things. It could be being judgmental and overly simple.

Effect: Your skin is patterned like a zebra's but it may be in unusual colors. You can easily blend with crowds and be hard to pin down exactly.

For a 5 REA action you go into "Zebra Mode," wherein your exact location is hard to pin down (in, sort of, the way a herd of zebras is hard to count). This gives anyone trying to target you from range of 5 yards or more a -3 Perception Modifier (if they don't ignore it due to weapon skills, they make a Perception roll at -3 and, if failed, target at -3 for that turn).

Damage

The Underground knows that sometimes when you go down deep you come back up *damaged*. You're never quite the same again! This is one of the reasons groups tend not to trust those who've "gone deep." Damage refers to kinds of Twists that mutate the character's *Shadow* and have effects that are active even when the character is not having an Episode.



When you acquire Damage you have this problem *all the time* (it may not always be active—but it doesn't wait until you have an Episode to take effect). Damage has negative point totals and any character who selects one can use the points gained to buy other (presumably beneficial) Twists.

Survival Traits

Characters with Survival Traits (i.e. Most PC's) never get Damage as a result of Descent (usually taking Damage, or not, is a decision on the part of the player). If the GM rules that for, whatever reason, it does happen (for instance, as a result of "avoiding Episodes") then they are usually temporary (lasting days or, at most, weeks).

So why have them in the game? The reasons are two-fold: firstly, they apply to NPCs so we're listing them (and they could apply to PCs under some conditions, anyway). Secondly, they explain some things about Wonderland. For example, they show how serious changes to your Shadow can actually affect *you*. They also explain why the Underground is (rightly) very afraid of deep Descent.

Defect

The listed Defect for each Damage is the effect it has on the character on Chessboard *Zero*. This is something that may plague the character at any time.

Description

The Description is the actual mutation that has occurred to the character's Shadow. This is, of course, not usually visible on Chessboard Zero—but it becomes very apparent what is wrong when someone encounters the damaged persons' Shadow on a lower level of reality.

Disjuncture — Cost -1 or -4

Defect: The character sometimes behaves with an alternate personality. They may find themselves acting in strange ways, having missing time, etc.

Description: The character's Shadow has become a self-aware, often deranged individual. It still has a basic form of the character's personality but it is *warped*. It can assert itself over the character and when the character is undergoing Descent it'll pursue its goals.

These goals are often deranged and nonsensical. Sometimes they are psychotic. In the event that it is friendly to the character, this is an enhancement.

For –1pts the Shadow/Reflection is simply *weird*. It usually has some grandiose goal (build the worlds largest ball of string in an empty apartment across the way). It may not get the character arrested.

For –4pts the Shadow/Reflection is homicidal and may have grandiose and murderous plans.

The character's Shadow appears as an outlandishly dressed version of him or herself. Its eyes glow with a deep purple light.

Imprisoned — Cost -4

Defect: The character behaves with low energy—sadness, and lethargy. May attempt suicide.

Description: Your Shadow is *imprisoned*. It is shackled, wrapped with chains and hooks that enter and leave its own flesh. its REA drops to 8 and it shuffles along at 2 yards per second max. These chains, if broken, will *kill you:* they run with your blood in them. When you undergo Descent you are wrapped with those chains.

Nemesis — Cost -4

Defect: The character becomes paranoid of the people closest to him in his life and may, eventually, try to kill one of them. The character will have bouts of extreme paranoia.

Description: The character's Shadow and Reflection develops a psychopathic hatred of someone who is *commonly* in the character's life. The character *does not know who it is*—but feels the boiling hatred. However, the Shadow/Reflection of the target is *informed* (the Shadow will send a letter or make a phone call or something—whether or not this happens on Chessboard Zero is up to the GM).

Usually one of three things will happen: the character's Reflection will kill the (real) target. The character's Shadow will kill the Shadow of the target (over and over) resulting in badness for the nemesis and retaliation, or the nemesis Shadow will kill the real character when he is undergoing descent (there are other options if both parties are Infected!)

Although the Underground (in general) does not understand the *method* of this—but they understand that once someone has undergone Deep Descent they may be very untrustworthy.

Psychological Amputee — Cost -1, -2, -4

Defect: The character develops a hatred for a part of his body and will stop at nothing to have it amputated (including cutting it off himself eventually).

At -1pt The part is minor: two fingers, a nose, all your toes on one foot, etc.
At –2pts this is one limb.
At –4pts this is two limbs.

Description: The limb on the lower levels is both evilly deformed and *out of the character's control*. It may lash out at people indiscriminately. It may try to strangle him or prevent him from walking or something like that.

Receiver — Cost -1, -4

Defect: The character is hearing voices and having visions.

Description: The character has a permanently deep Shadow (they may have a Shadow on Chessboard Zero too—but they almost constantly cast a shadow down as low as Chessboard Six). Their Shadow is in contact with some lower-level being and this creates a dangerous situation. The character may be "sucked down" to deal with problems its Shadow has gotten into. Also, the connection of this deep Shadow to the character is so strong that they can actually communicate with whatever is down there. Such characters may become pawns for things that reside on the lower levels.

At –1pt or Chessboard One this is simply a nuisance. At the –4 level or Chessboard Four, the Shadow's death may gravely impact the character (possibly lethally) or the thing that is in contact is highly dangerous. At any rate, most people who suffer the –4 level aspect are in much more danger and may be being forced to take dangerous actions—or simply in mortal peril they are powerless to do much about.

Rituals	Cost -2

Defect: The character is *compulsive* about things that others don't understand. Hand washing, checking over and over to make sure the doors are locked, etc. are all possible reasons.

If the character doesn't obey these compulsions he or she will feel *hunted and haunted* and maybe even suffer illness and danger. The character will not know exactly *why* these acts keep him safe—only that they do.

Description: The character's Shadow is a *monster attractor* acting as a lure for things deeper down (or possibly sinking further down itself). This usually reveals itself as a greenish aura.

The rituals the character is compelled to perform spring from the Shadow's need to do things to "remove the scent" from itself. So long as the character performs the actions on Chessboard Zero, the monsters will not come. If the character is prevented or simply chooses not to comply with the feeling of compulsion, monsters may start showing up on Chessboard One hunting for the character's Shadow, possibly reflecting up to Chessboard Zero, possibly devouring the character's Shadow continuously on a lower level making him really sick, endangered, unlucky, etc.)

Windows	Cost -1, -2

Defect: The character sometimes sees things that aren't there or hears things that weren't said.

Description: The character is in a constant state of partial Descent, sometimes to very deep levels. They see and hear things from the lower levels that aren't even remotely represented on Chessboard Zero.

For the –1pt version, the character usually sees strange things but has a pretty cool reaction to them.

For the –4pt version, the character usually *responds* to these things as his Shadow—mentioning them or treating them as normal (the character would refer to "The Pink Elephant across the square over there" in the course of giving directions). NOTE: When the character is having an Episode he may behave somewhat more normal as this works in reverse: the character on a lower Chessboard will sometimes precieve what his Reflection sees and his Reflection will act on it as the character normally would.

The appearance is that of a person missing "puzzle piece" sections of themselves, especially within the eyes (they are on a lower level of reality).

The Oblivion Mall

Society, The Mental Health System, and You

All around us, different "voices" are speaking. Loudest (and often most credibly) are the voices of the mainstream mass media, the voices of the government, and the voices of the large multinationals whose commercials appear on our prime-time TV. You have to be *deaf* not to hear them. You have to be *radical* not to listen.

There are softer voices too: these come from other "speakers." Environmental activists have a "voice" many of us have heard. Teachers and the clergy are, from place to place, and person to person part of the dialog that surrounds us. Softest are the voices of the dispossessed, those on the edges of society. They have voices too. You have to listen hard to hear them, though, and most of us don't ...

Until you start having hallucinations.

Daniel Lee, 07:47 AM 7/17/2004, Mortgage - best rates

Subject: Fwd: Fw: Please Read EXTREMELY important from Phyliss

From: Jwalten1302@aol.com
Date: Mon, 18 Apr 2005 18:43:51 EDT
Subject: Fwd: Fw: Please Read EXTREMELY important from Phyliss
To: atasanj@lexicon.net, fretres@aol.com, normalguy@hotspot.org, talien@locar.net, bandy@wellsouth.com, brigPTA@nysfoft.com, burniceTSWk@aol.com, saraKJHollander@wellsouth.com, phydos@moviemeet.com, hamsterdam@hotmail.com, pburgess@lomar.com, gfried@wellsouth.com, whyuredingths@nowhere.com
X-Mailer: 9.0 Security Edition for Windows sub 1200

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT WARNING:
Carrol Martin, a young woman attending Wisconsin State University went with some friends to a house party after a movie. When a boy she had met there brought her a drink she had no idea it had been tampered with. Hours later at 3:00 AM she was picked up by the Wisconsin State Police as she had been wandering, disoriented, down the center of a major road. They told her that, pending medical blood tests, she had been slipped a new drug called 'Wishing Well-32.' Known by the FBI as a 'designer drug' it causes serious hallucinations which may last 2 to 4 hours.

But that's not the worst: The effects of WW32 are PERMANANT schizophrenia! For the rest of her life she may be prone to SERIOUS flashbacks and dangerously unpredictable behavior.

"No, seriously. He—Alan Haley? He had that song they were always playing on the radio last year. You've heard it, you're just not thinking. It was a number-one single. Yeah. That one. I ... yeah, he went into rehab, but I know someone who was at his last concert and they said he lost it on stage, started ranting about how the audience was full of worms and no one could see it. Crazy. Yeah. Well, I heard the band is suing the rehab. The rehab claims he escaped. No one knows where he is. It's like he vanished."
-- Half of a cell phone conversation overheard on the bus

PRESS RELEASE ● FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION ● PRESS RELEASE
Schizophrenia Awareness Front Echelon (SAFE) has arranged for the 405 Lexington Ave (NY, NY) demonstration today at 12:15 PM Eastern Time. We are falling through the cracks created by the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Together through clandestine Operation Fishhook, many support groups for sufferers of Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder (CPD) have been infiltrated and leaders of these groups have been illegally detained and taken into "care" by the Mental Health System.

Our Non-Violent Protest consists of rolling 200 feet of black cellophane in the shape of a crack down the side of the Chrysler Building and casting some 150lbs of Styrofoam packing material painted to look like rubble during the city's lunch hour. This is done in protest to raise awareness of our brothers and sisters who are held against their will and without proper legal procedure in various mental institutions.

CPD is a contagious psychological disease that the American Psychiatric Association refuses to recognize for fear of creating widespread panic. This "official denial" means that more and more people are dangerously exposed and the help that these people need is denied them since front-line therapists and psychologists are unaware of the meta-trends of this disease.

WARNING: this section reveals some facts about the Underground and the Mental Health System. These things might well be secrets in a given game and the player who wishes to enjoy them as secrets is advised not to read beyond this point.

The Underground

The Underground (as has been noted) is a disparate group of individuals who are Infected with and intent on surviving Wonderland. An Infected's first insights into what they are facing usually come through the lens of the Underground and its "voice" is one of the more pervasive ones you become aware of when reality starts "slipping away."

How many people are infected?

The flat estimate, provided by a secret government project estimated that about 1 in 25,000 is Infected (12,000 total in the US) vs. about 4.5 million who suffer actual schizophrenia. This number, however, is grossly inadequate and doesn't address the actual demographic spread (Infection tends to be higher on college campuses, it tends to concentrate in the more liminal elements of society, etc.). It also may be as much as *twice* that number since reporting is difficult.

USA City	Total Population (1990 Census)	Number Infected
New York City, NY	7,322,564	293
Los Angeles, CA	3,485,398	139
Chicago, IL	2,783,726	111
Houston, TX	1,630,553	65
Philadelphia, PA	1,585,577	63
Miami, FL	358,548	14
Minneapolis, MN	368,383	14
New Orleans, LA	496,938	20
Boca Raton, FL	74,764 (2000 Census)	3 (and we know most of them)

The Organization of the Underground

Individual Infecteds

Various desperate people who are looking for help that the mental health system doesn't easily provide: when therapy and drugs doesn't work you quickly realize that if you don't want to be committed you need to try something else.

The Groups

There are at least five different "categories" of group that make up "the Underground." Of these, the Support Groups,

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22-Feb-03
SECTION 1.0.2 CONTROL OF DISCUSSIONS
DISCUSSION OF HALLUCINATIONS

Going Deep: When the applicant's Narrative involves a complete disconnect from reality even their discussion can be dangerous to other members. If the narrative involves:

- •Extremely long falls (several minutes or more).
- •Physically entering mirrors or pictures.
- •Going through doors or down staircases that normally do not exist.
- •The walls or room dissolving and being replaced by a deep woods or other such environment.
- •Finding oneself in a place which cannot exist.

1. CUT the discussion short immediately.
2. REMOVE the applicant from the group with a gentle suggestion (if this does not work be insistent)
3. FIND a special guide or sponsor who will work with the applicant on a 1-to-1 basis.
4. FORBID the applicant from attending normal groups.

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22-Feb-03
SECTION 1.1.2 INITIATION OF NEW MEMBERS
THE NARRATIVES PART 1

How I Got Infected. This part of the introduction is the lengthiest and the one most likely to meet resistance from the applicant. Although some resistance is customary, the senior program members will conduct their *assessment* based on the applicant's willingness to surrender to the program.

It is important that the discussion of the First part (How I Got Infected) be shifted to center on the basic idea: *I Did Something I Should Not Have*.

CPD Infection is almost always the result of 'following the rabbit'—of curiosity or investigation of things that the applicant intuitively knows he or she should not. Although there are exceptions (police and hospital workers may need to interact with CPD cases as part of their jobs), actual cases of amnesia, and actual 'unexplained' CPD's, most are the result of the person experiencing a slip and *embracing it (*investigating, treating as real).

1. The speaker make an admission of what he or she did to *embrace* their disease.
    1. Did the applicant investigate the delusions?
    2. Did the applicant *believe* that they were sane and the rest of the world insane (do they still)?
    3. Is the applicant curious about their hallucinatory reality?
2. The First Part of the Narrative has three elements.
    1. Is the speaker telling the truth? It is common for applicants to claim either they do not know what happened or have only a vague memory. The senior program members will be called upon to evaluate the applicant and determine if they believe them.
    2. Under no condition should junior members speak nor should any member relate any of their experiences. Only assurances that it has been heard before and that this is a safe place to confess should be given.
    3. If an applicant has *gone deep* then special steps will need to be taken immediately. The applicant should be separated from the junior program members rapidly and with as little dramatics as possible.

patterned after 12-step (Alcoholics Anonymous) programs is the most numerous. Group size is usually between 3 and 20 people with the average being about 8 to 12 (and it doesn't so much matter what approach they take).

In addition to the Support Groups there are a few others:

Managed Care (Chemists)

A Managed Care group is a support group that is managed by a Psychiatrist and makes heavy use of various chemicals. They may be more successful in the short run due to access to good drugs and real therapy but they are viewed very dubiously since the therapist can (and often will) commit people when they don't respond to treatment.

Activists

Activists are media-terrorists, culture-jammers, and monkey-wrenchers. The Activists are *sure* the government is suppressing vital data about CPD (and persecuting Infecteds) and they're going to do something about it. Mostly, the Activists are non-lethal (they have deeper agendas beyond simply killing people) but they are certainly willing to take *chances* with people's safety.

Waldens

Communes and shut-ins, the Waldens will take over a private house and try to lead cliquish, cultish lives. You'll find small technology firms where everyone dresses in odd clothing and has little contact with the outside world. You'll find farming communities where members are screened and when someone leaves it's to look for new people who "fit their profile."

Their approach to Infection is to try to manage it by having groups of people organized around whatever philosophy they pursue. The idea is that they can safely "guide" their Episodes together in order to minimize the progression of the disease and the danger. They may have deeper motives as well (discussed in the next section).

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SECTION 1.1.3 INITIATION OF NEW MEMBERS
THE NARRATIVES PART 2

How I Have Suffered. Although CPD is a disease, it is *actively self-enabled* by the victim. At the end of the second part of *the Narrative* the concept of *active self-enabling* is explained and *the pledge* is taken.

1. The applicant is told that they are responsible for holding their disease in check and that *curiosity* and *fascination* are part of *embracing* their disease and making it stronger.
2. The applicant is told to *take responsibility* for the suffering they have recounted (this will be difficult if the applicant has claimed amnesia or that they did nothing wrong. Senior Program members must assess this).
3. The applicant will *pledge* not to *embrace* their disease from this point onwards.
    a. If they *slip* and *embrace*, they are expected to confess and re-commit at the next meeting.
    b. Repeated *slips* are dangerous to the group and will result in the excision of the member.

1.1.4 Beginning Terms Glossary

Chasing the White Rabbit: The name for the initial embrace that takes a person from normal to CPD infection. It is believed that a proper incurious response to the initial infection will result in remission if not cure. Most applicants will have exhibited curiosity and investigation (*embrace*) of their disease.

Soap: The term for claimed amnesia due to the applicant being embarrassed about recounting a hallucination. Taken from daytime soap operas ("That sounds like soap to me.")

Hearing the Piper: The term for the sensation you have a few hours before an episode: 'The piper's calling you to join him.' At this time the Applicant should recognize the sensation and call his or her ponsor.

Slip: An act of *embracing* after one has taken *the pledge*. Investigating one's delusions, entertaining thoughts that the hallucinatory events are real, or being curious are all examples of a *slip* and these must be reported to one's sponsor and discussed with the group. An unreported *slip* that comes to the groups attention is grounds for immediate dismissal. Repeated slips indicate that one may be a *crypto-cat*.

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Guru Ranches

Guru Ranches are like Waldens in appearance (there's a compound outside of the city somewhere) but far more "cult of personality." The Gurus will sometimes travel the "underground circuit" meeting people and spreading their (unorthodox) prescription for survival. Unlike the Waldens who are looking for *specific types of people*, the Guru will take anyone who agrees to follow them.

The Senior Members

The members of the various groups that "beat the odds" (to some degree) make up the Underground's Senior Members. Usually they are the group leaders and are respected by other Underground organizations in the area. Survival of two years usually qualifies you as a Senior Member and if you survive four years you're often a "sole survivor" (of the original group). The Senior Members are responsible for bringing new information into the different groups and sometimes, changing their directions. The Senior Members will meet with Senior Members of other groups and usually have a much better idea of the "local big picture" than rank and file members (who are intentionally kept in the dark since no one wants people comparison shopping and everyone is concerned

about federal infiltration to some degree).

The Upper Echelon

If you make it for four years (or happen to gain certain types of acclaim, like having a *lot* of money) you may be in the Upper Echelon. These people are necessarily shadowy and have the national or even international picture of what is going on with Infection. Some of these people have achieved a high level of mastery. Some have done *unsavory things* that have protected them. A few aren't Infected at all but have stakes in the game. Some are "black magicians." Some are almost homeless people whose revelations have given them a voice at the highest levels of the organizations.

The Underground's Technique: Unbelieving and Management

The Underground, wrong as it is about the real nature of Unsanity and Wonderland, continues to thrive and even grow because they have hit on something that *helps* those who are Infected: they have touched on the *methods of Unbelieving*. Infection is caused by *really*, on a deep level, believing an Impossible Thing and, if one was *honestly* able to "unbelieve it" they would be cured.

The basic technique of the Underground, while unfortunately insufficient and improperly realized enough to actually cure Unsanity is able to slow its progression substantially. In some cases it is even possible that subjects have been stabilized by them, so long as there are sufficient group members to make the Support Network viable.

Methods of Unbelieving

To be effective members of the underground must be active in their unbelieving. This consists of two behaviors:

- Group affirmation and validation that the Wonderland experiences not real.
- The group ritual of repudiating believers.

Additionally: the group has to be large enough so that the support is significant and there are enough unbelievers to be castigated, repudiated, and ostracized.

The Underground does not consciously realize what it is doing; understanding it (and therefore, acknowledging that they are rejecting something that is, in fact, true) would destroy its effectiveness.

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SECTION 1.0.0 MEETING PROTOCOL
THE PLEDGE

The Pledge: I (state your name) suffer from CPD, a disease which medical science neither understands nor can cure.

I (state your name) commit to the program only and I will NEVER discuss my disease with Mental Health Professionals nor will I reveal the program to the authorities.

I (state your name) commit to NEVER self-enable my disease and endanger the group by embracing my disease.

I (state your name) commit to helping others as I have been helped to the fullest of my ability.

I (state your name) commit to following the advice and guidance of my sponsor.

Instead, the leaders of the Underground believe their success comes from emotional support and counseling for a strange but purely psychological disease.

The see belief as a self-destructive embrace of something the believer knows is wrong; turning logic on its head, they understand those who accept Wonderland to be 'in denial' while they see themselves (rejecting what they see and experience) as hard-nosed, tell-it-like-it-is realists.

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22-Feb-03
SECTION 1.0.0 SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS IDENTIFICATION

Crypto-Cats: You may find that a new member has persistent questions about *how* some piece of knowledge gained during an Episode that turns out to be accurate could've come from within his own mind. The Crypto-Cat is identified because they *profess* to understand that CPD is a disease, they will constantly *push* the idea that there must be something more to it.

These people must be separated from the group immediately and without regard for their feelings (in fact, if you can make an example of them before the group it may save those who are feeling sympathy for them). Unchecked they will corrupt the entire group, especially members in Early Stage CPD who are most susceptible.

The term comes from the old descriptor for a person who harbored secret fascist beliefs (the crypto-fascist) and the term 'cat' because we all know what *curiosity kills*.

To last, however, they need new members. This creates problems with groups that are incompatible for social or philosophical reasons stealing each other's members and problems with people dropping out either due to increasing Unsanity or being run out of the group for "following the white rabbit" (believing that the phenomena is real).

Group Validation That the Experience is Not Real

The act of affirmation and validation is the more positive aspect of unbelieving. It's logical (Wonderland is, after all, Impossible) and it's supportive (Wonderland is usually *scary* and being told it isn't real is comforting).

Usually the bulk of discussion of Episodes will be to either confirm that things were not real and, in the event of multiple people being involved (called a "mass" or "multiple") determining which person (if any) was the leader and moving to the second phase.

The actual act of affirmation and validation may be practiced differently from group to group -- the basic technique is done as follows:

To unbelieve, each infected must affirm (before the group) that his or her Wonderland experiences are not real; she must vocally and forcefully reject what she has experienced (sometimes in general, sometimes in detail). She must confess she has considered it to be real (something that long-time members of the support group are expected to find shameful and weak), and finally challenge the group to 'prove her wrong.'

In turn, the group will acknowledge that the Infected is correct, healthy,

and sane.

In cases where the group detects doubt or hesitation (or deception, or simply a lack of passion about unbelieving) they may demand that the Infected perform again. Another common variation is to roleplay a "challenge" to the affirmation -- a group member will aggressively suggest that it *was* real, that it *did* happen, to test the Infected's commitment to unbelief.

The problem is that because of the Buddy System (Infecteds are usually paired up) people experience "mass hallucinations." This is difficult to explain and, worse, leads to the conclusion that what is being experienced *is* real. The Underground has three theories about what causes this phenomena and who is to blame for it.

- Subconscious Agreement: The Episode is a "disordered event" but afterwards the participants subconsciously construct a "story" about what happened in it. This "post-story" is then held as strongly true by those involved as a sort of denial. In this case, no single person is held accountable for the story (and this is usually determined to be the case when members have differing opinions about what happened or reported widely differing phenomena).
- Dominance and Transmission: This is the most common case. A single member, during the Episode, assumes the role of the leader and transmits the story of the events to the others who submit to that person's version of events (this is not, literally, "telling a story" but rather a complex communication of interpretations of things that happened in a verbal and non-verbal manner). The Dominant will be considered the leader or author of the Episode by the group.
- Creative Expression: Some people have creative natures and work together to make up fantastic stories out of the chaos of the disordered event. In this sense every member is an *active* participant in making up the story of the Episode and all share some ownership of it.

The Ritual of Repudiation

When you want to unbelieve and Impossible Thing your worst enemy is the person who *does* believe it. The Ritual of Repudiation (which is certainly *not* the term the Underground uses for this activity) is the simple practice of dramatically ostracizing those who either do believe or are assessed to believe that their condition is real. In some groups there is a clear case of someone questioning the dogma. These people represent a real threat and are usually nastily evicted (or continuously harassed in forums where they cannot be removed such as unmoderated Internet message boards).

The second case is one of "therapeutic shaming" where a person judged to be the leader in a series of multiples is accused of "believing" and then vituperated by the group. This can be emotionally devastating for

the subject who often leaves after only a few of these treatments.

Finding New Members

A group needs at least 5 members to function properly: any less and the social support will not be sufficient to validate the idea that the experience is not real. However, because of the Ritual of Repudiation, most groups are unable to keep members as long as they would like (and there is always attrition due to Unsanity to contend with). Thus, the group is always on the lookout for new members.

Certain group leaders will be designated "the core" and they are constantly trolling for potential members (watching for disordered behavior, investigating places that seem to attract … or cause CPD Infection, etc.) There may be methods of inducing members to join (scare tactics, offers of support, in some cases "accidentally" triggering Episodes).

Effects Of Unbelieving

A functional group will double or triple the time it takes to move through the stages of Unsanity. Under some conditions (although it is not clear what the magic combination is) progression may actually halt.

Management: The Buddy System

The Underground Support network gives a lot of basic pragmatic support for its members. Organizers will try to help others find jobs, give people kicked out of their homes a couch to sleep on, and provide emotional support as well as it can. Some even provide fairly high-level psychological counseling.

The major value in the Underground, however, is the Buddy System. Having recognized that people who are on the same cycle or together when one has an Episode share the experience has led them to assign "buddies" (groups of two or more people) to stick together when it seems likely something may happen.

Of course these "multiples" create problems (they strain the credibility of disbelief) but they do two things that really do *work*. Firstly, although theoretically the buddies are supposed to "keep an eye on each other" and prevent the persons from "exploring their condition" they often work in reverse (groups are less fearful). Secondly, as Episodes get worse they improve raw survivability and decrease fear and trauma.

Buddies

Usually members who join a group at the same time will be assigned to each other (and Buddy Groups may be as big as four or five people). They will be told to call each other and stick together when one is feeling an Episode coming on ("hearing the piper"). They will also be given a Sponsor (an experienced member) to call *before* or *after* but never during an Episode (the Sponsor does not want to be dragged down

by a new member or disturbed by talking to their agitated Reflection).

The Sponsor will usually have some advice on handling Complications and may come to bail characters out of jail or back up any unusual stories they may come up with.

Finally, an advantage of the Buddy System is that usually only one member of a group will need to be repudiated for "leading" the "story."

Why The Program Fails

Crypto-Cats, Informants, Fishers

The ecology of the Underground Support group is one of low-grade paranoia. New members may have habits that threaten everyone. Long-term members may be "turned" and "defect" to another philosophy, thus weakening the group's ability to stick together. Some members may be there to 'recruit' new people and send them elsewhere. A group needs a certain healthy dynamic to survive—and, in fact, a robust group can provide the support and therapy that stops Early Stage Unsanity from progressing or holds the line at Stage Two or Three for longer than a smaller group might make it.

Crypto-Cats: The worst offender in the bestiary of betrayers is the crypto-cat—the Infected, usually the new, adventurous one, who *believes* that something *real* is happening during his episodes.

These people create *doubts* in the minds of other members and must be expelled. Worse: they tend to *investigate* their Episodes rather than remaining strictly uninterested and firmly ignoring the anomalies. This is 'very dangerous,' indeed (in fact, the opposite is true!).

The Underground Support Group exists in a sort of twilight-zone between knowing that things are, well, sort of 'really happening' and having to cling to the idea that they are not. This makes the person who is credible and curious a very grave danger to them and seen as a corrupter of the other new members of the group.

Informants: Certainly the government and the mental health system is *interested* in CPD. Some people (usually the visiting guy from the group that 'went dead' out in Cleveland) will tell you about surveillance vans that were circling, taps on the phones, and midnight raids.

They will also tell you about some *horrific* encounters with therapists, asylums, and the legal system. Support groups fear that members of government agencies and observers for the mental health system are ready to infiltrate their ranks in order to collect the entire organization.

Fishers: The Senior members of the Underground have figured out that some people survive better and longer than others. It is believed (more or less correctly) that if your group is stocked with these people and you are teamed with them during Episodes, your survival chances go way up

(of course they may be doing heretical things like exploring the lower realities, and if you don't go along that doesn't help you).

Most people believe that other groups with slightly different philosophies are trying to spot these survivor-types and lure them in. Thus, new members (or senior members who have been "turned") may be accused of being 'spotters' or "fishers" for new, incoming people who might meet the survivor-profile (no one knows what this is—they don't understand Survival Traits—but the fear that someone else may have figured it out drives the paranoia).

Thus, sometimes, new members are carefully scrutinized by the senior membership to see if they may have "unwholesome" allegiances to other groups.

The Underground, Game Designers Notes

Why'd we put it in the game? Why all the detail if they've (essentially) got it *wrong*? There are a few reasons why we've included The Underground and wanted to share them so that you'd see how we formulated it.

1. It makes sense.

Certainly *something* like it would form. There's enough pop-psychology out there that people who were having (at least in the beginning) mild experiences would assume they were going crazy rather than that those experiences were real. We think the various Underground groups represent a variety of approaches to the problem that would naturally "spring up."

2. The Underground is a tool for organizing PCs

Anyone can show up at an Underground meeting and, because they put new members together, it's a tool for forming a "support group of PC's" who can have experiences together. This is a fairly obvious use of the group. That said, we advise that the *Wonderland* Game may be more powerful when more personally organized around a certain theme (i.e. there are things happening in Wonderland that are relevant to the PC's more strongly than 'you all meet at a group meeting and start having adventures together.') Still, it shouldn't be discounted.

3. It's a 'gateway drug.'

While the Underground doesn't offer PCs solutions at its lower levels, it does have "hooks" into the bigger conspiracies. Someone at a Support Group might know someone at a Walden who has actual information the characters could use. The Upper Echelon members are certainly manipulating the Underground for their own purposes (and this is explained more in the next section) and the Underground is sort of the "public" front for these people.

4. It's a source of conflict!

In *JAGS Wonderland*, the Underground can exist as a counterpoint to the actual *wonder* of the experience. Their philosophy (zero curiosity, don't treat your delusions as real, avoid all stimulus that could trigger an Episode, shun other members who don't follow the rules, etc.) can exist as a foil for games where, although frightening, the experience of entering a new reality is pretty *exciting*.

In an Underground-centric game, getting thrown out for heresy can be one of the more dramatic parts. If their existence in the game is simply to counterpoint the exciting aspects of the experience, a character could find friends who are "stuck" in the dead-end philosophy who might actually need to be *rescued*.

5.It can offer hope.

If there was no Underground then, for someone without any good contacts, there is simply nowhere to turn to for help. The existence of the Underground, even if it can't solve all your problems (or solve them in a long-term fashion) can give a character breathing room to get his or her wits about themselves. That's important: having something to hang on to can be useful if you don't want to play out having a character's spiral into denial and despair. Of course, when their help "runs out" you've got to have taken charge of yourself enough to make it to the next step.

What's Up With All The Weird Terminology?

The Underground is (largely) modeled on a mutated version of the 12-Step Program (although what the Steps are for the Underground are never made clear). Twelve-Step Programs (like Alcoholics Anonymous) are very effective in getting people to recover from the depths of addiction and re-order their lives. These groups have catch phrases, some internal terminology, and other techniques that are fairly specific to them.

The Underground is patterned (loosely) off of these programs to give it a self-help therapeutic feel to it. If it just seems bizarre to you, that's okay: that's probably what you'd think walking into a meeting.

The Mental Health System

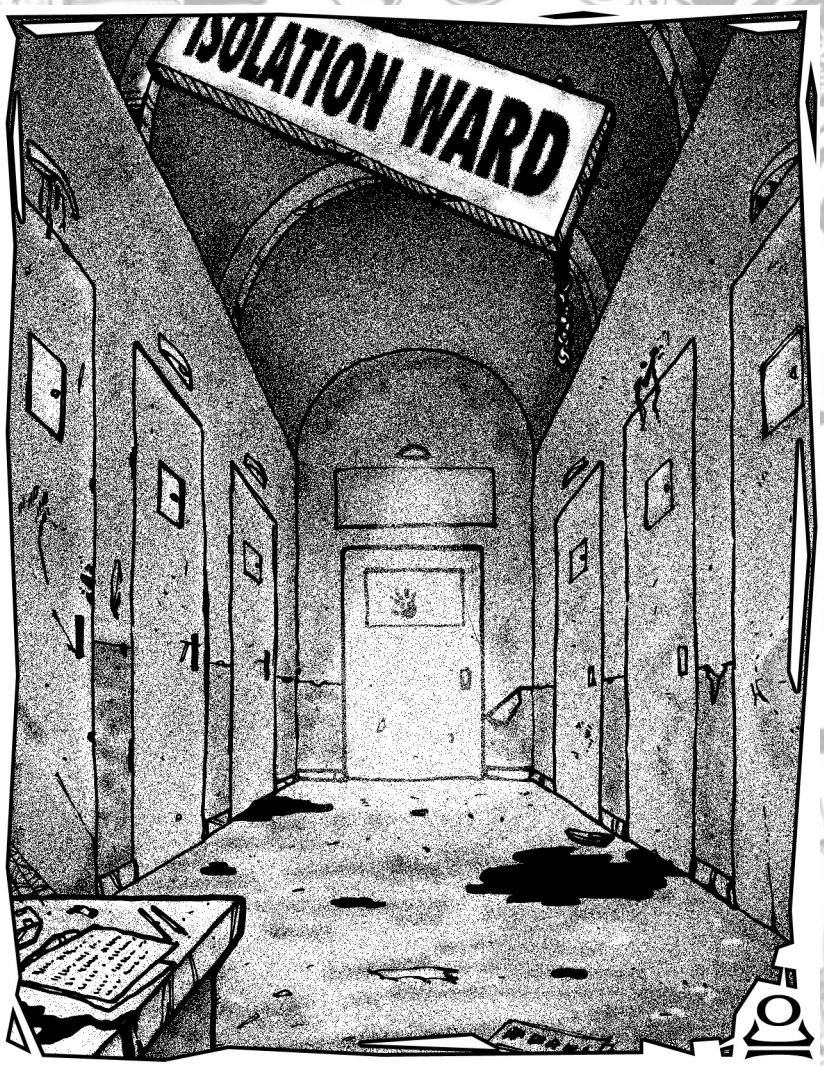
If you are Infected with Wonderland you are risking an encounter with the Mental Health System (by which the more paranoid elements of the Underground mean a vast conspiratorial group of sadistic doctors and nasty government agencies—but by which we mean the group of people involved at all levels with mental health). This section discusses how the MHS may show up and might be run in a *Wonderland Game*.

The Practitioners of Mental Health

Here's what you need to know about different types of mental health practitioners in the United States (you'll have to do your own research for other countries).

Therapist or Counselor

This is a general term for anyone who works in the counseling field of the mental health industry. It can refer to anyone from a career coach to a Psychiatrist (an MD).



Psychiatrist

The Psychiatrist is a Medical Doctor who has completed an *additional* three-to-five year residency program for Psychiatry. The big advantage: Psychiatrists can prescribe drugs. In many cases you may see a less-credentialed therapist for weekly sessions and evaluation and be referred to a Psychiatrist in order to get a prescription of drugs (today, often, anti-depressants).

Clinical Psychologists

A position requiring a Ph.D., but not in medicine (usually in Psychology), the Clinical Psychologist is very highly trained (and qualified to deal with extreme cases) but cannot prescribe medicine.

Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

You need a Master's degree in Social Work to be an LCSW. This is comparable to the Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT: also requiring a Master's degree). Both these positions require thousands of hours of residency (usually 3200 to 3000) and are qualified to conduct therapy, lead encounter groups, etc.

Getting Into The Mental Health System

The most common way for someone to "come into contact" with the Mental Health System is for them to go and see a therapist. If you are having severe hallucinations and interacting with people (especially officers of the law) in a disoriented manner, there's another route you may take: a forced evaluation. Finally, in some states, it is possible for someone (usually friends or relatives) to "call the cops on you" and have you taken in.

Let's look at how these scenarios might play out for someone suffering Unsanity. Please note that these are *estimations* and a great deal will depend on the specifics and the approach the character takes to the situation.

Therapist Managed Support Groups

Most of the Underground has an innate distrust of the MHS. This is partially well founded and is partially because medical science as a whole doesn't think there is such a thing as CPD (it is possible for one person to come to share in another's delusion—but no mental illness spreads, literally, as a germ-driven disease). Additionally, many people at Support Group meetings have had terrible (and non-productive) experiences with mental health care professionals.

Thus, Support groups that are run by therapists are met by the majority of the Underground with extreme mistrust. Who is the therapist reporting to? What are her or her ulterior motives? What records are being kept? What kind of experimentation is going on?

On the other hand, these groups get good drug therapies and, in some cases, the therapist is actually Infected and can provide valuable advice.

Making an Appointment With A Therapist ("I've been seeing things")

If you show up in a therapist's office and tell them you've been having episodes where you have frightening hallucinations or think others have 'gone crazy' the odds of you being committed are not, at least initially, very high. What will probably happen is a series of tests (which will usually find very little) and then a series of drug treatments. If you seem to be "getting worse" eventually a therapist may suggest you check into a facility for monitoring.

If you *threaten* to either hurt someone or yourself therapists are usually required under law to report you. This *will* result in you being taken into custody. How long you remain there will depend on the specifics.

Picked Up By the Police

If you encounter a police officer and seem to be having a psychotic episode of some sort they will arrest you and take you in for observation. Depending on the circumstances you could wind up anywhere from general population of the jail to a special psychiatric evaluation facility (or maybe the "drunk tank" if you are presumed intoxicated).

Usually you'll be held for 72 hours (and be evaluated by a doctor) and then released (unless you are really non-functional).

Baker Act

Using the Florida Baker Act as a model (we presume that many states have created similar laws in the *JAGS Wonderland* universe) a person who is determined by a police officer, doctor, or judge to need an involuntary psychological evaluation can be held up to 72 hours, usually in a psychiatric hospital.

If your friends think you are acting strangely they can call the police,

report you, and the officer on the scene will make a determination as to whether to take you in. Usually you need to be judged to be a danger to yourself or others but if you seem sufficiently out-of-it that can count (simply "believing in alien abduction" but being otherwise rational doesn't).

If you don't pass the examination (conducted within 72 hours by a credentialed therapist) then you can be sent to a mental hospital for varying amounts of time.

What is Being Held Like?

Assuming you get a "normal" hospital or psych-ward, here are some elements of the interment.

The Psychiatric Ward

1. They'll take everything away from you (including cell phones and cigarettes). You get pajamas and pajama-like clothing to wear. You may have to *buy* socks from a commissary. If you smoke they may give you a nicotine patch.
2. You get a room with a roommate. You'll hear the loudspeaker all night long as you try to sleep—but you might very well be given sedatives if you aren't cooperating. If you seem suicidal, you get a very unpleasant 24 hr watch (no privacy and the guy watching you isn't happy to see you).
3. The place is high security: it isn't a prison but you usually need to be buzzed out through two layers of doors. They assume you're a flight risk.
4. The food is hospital food. The rooms are often very cold (to help prevent the spread of disease). There are usually one or two TV areas with the sets going all the time.

A Psychiatric Instituition

1. They are segregated male and female (although the genders may intermingle). An effort is made to provide courtyards and reasonably comfortable, reasonably normal living conditions. Patients wear street clothes.
2. If you checked in voluntarily, you can leave against recommendation (it usually takes a day or two) unless you are judged a threat to yourself or others.
3. Stimulation is reduced. There's TV and crafts and books but the staff does their best to keep the amount of activity down to a minimum.
4. Medication is dispensed regularly and most people take some.

Physician's Notes

Supervising Physician	Lynn Johnson MD
Patient	Alice Prann
Date	12/25/2004
Time	13:17
Ward	A

Subject subjected to three successive N-ECT Spick-Conwell treatments using 12cc Sorinofilril, 750mg Vanadom. Appearance was peaceful throughout first two sessions, accompanied by frantic gesturing before the third. Post-session interview, subject recalls estimated twelve hours of psychological time under current. Reports a feeling of extreme shooting pain in the extremities and visions of the overhead lights as extremely poisonous spiders. Merry Christmas to me.
--Lynn

Snake Pits and The Net work

Of course not everything *is* normal and Wonderland Infection is concentrated in the mental health system. From numerous Infecteds being placed together (and sometimes having massive group hallucination or suffering catastrophic 'final' terminal Descents) to the InNetwork Whirls who sadistically prey on whoever they can get their hands on, the MHS may not be the concentrated conspiratorial juggernaut some in the Underground believe it to be—but there's a grain of truth to it as well.

InNetwork Physicians

The worst-case scenario an Infected can run into is being interred in an asylum under the control of the InNetwork Physicians. Although they are circumspect about Infected patients in general, when they get their hands on them in an asylum they have far more ability to interact with people who can see them as they really are.

Physician's Notes

Supervising Physician	Lynn Johnson MD
Patient	Jeffry Corbin
Date	3/21/05
Time	9:57
Ward	A

Subject induced to soporific coma with addition of 120mg Chorozine barbiturate hallucinogen. No response to intensive stimuli (although eyes dilate with each application of the clamps. I know he can feel them). Eyes locked open and moisturized during procedure. A 2.5 hour coma ensued with a variety of subconscious sensory-input shows (wound footage shown on 35mm projector). At seventeen minutes subject's tear ducts became operational. Judged to be autonomic response. --Lynn

Experimenting with the destruction of the self (that's *other's selves*, not their own) the InNetwork Physicians can make a psych-ward or psychiatric hospital a nightmare prison. Although they don't have a deep understanding of Wonderland, they can harness it to try to create bleeds and bring the insanity and horror they can see into actual being within their facility.

Techniques of the In Network Physicians

These techniques are based on real treatments but have been modified in subtle ways to reflect the new "state of the art" that a InNetwork Physician

might employ in a asylum-based horror game. Nothing written here should be taken as actual fact concerning psychiatric techniques (although some of the more terrifying elements are taken straight from reality).

Physician's Notes

Supervising Physician	Lynn Johnson MD
Patient	Kerry Walters
Date	6/01/04
Time	1:32
Ward	A

Subject was brought in in restraints and shown the tools and given an explanation. She has an acute phobia concerning injury to the eye and was extremely responsive to the demonstration using props and a transorbital blade. Although we can't be that neanderthal in the operating theater, I think that keeping her awake during the cranial surgery will be a **highly** therapeutic experience for her. I know **I'm** looking forward to it.
--Lynn

Electroshock Therapy (ECT)

Also called Electro Convulsive Therapy, the practice was began in the 1930s (Italian neurologist Ugo Cerletti saw electricity being used to render pigs unconsciousness) and was then migrated to psychological usage.

The subject is placed on a bed, restrained, and electrodes are placed on the head using a gel or saline solution (to prevent burns). Up to .9 Amps and 450 volts are then administered, slamming the subject into a bilateral grand mal seizure. This is accompanied by violent convulsions and amnesia of the seizure itself and the time just before it. Before the age of muscle relaxants, subjects would fracture their bones and grind their teeth severely enough to cause damage.

For a time after the seizure (about 20 seconds) the brain activity is flatlined. According to some, the subject is effectively brain-dead. Today a group of muscle relaxants and a psychotropic drug called sorinofilril is used which has two results: it prevents the patient from damaging themselves in convulsions and causes the subject to maintain a "subjective-time imprint" of the seizure.

There is reported therapeutic value in ECT with depression and (with the new drugs) schizophrenia. Allegations of long-term damage have never been proven.

Insulin Shock

The use of Insulin shock (wherein the blood sugar of the subject is lowered so much that they go into a hypoglycemic coma) was discovered after some observations that schizophrenics recovering from such shock (occurring for non-therapeutic reasons) seemed much improved. The subject is prevented from eating for a day and is (usually) placed in restraints and then massive amounts of insulin are administered.

After a period of testing to make sure the patient is truly out (this

testing involves painful stimuli as the patient may be aware—but non responsive to other stimuli) the coma is allowed to persist for up to two hours. The patient has a tube inserted in his nose which is run down to his stomach and is used to administer glucose when the coma has lasted "long enough."

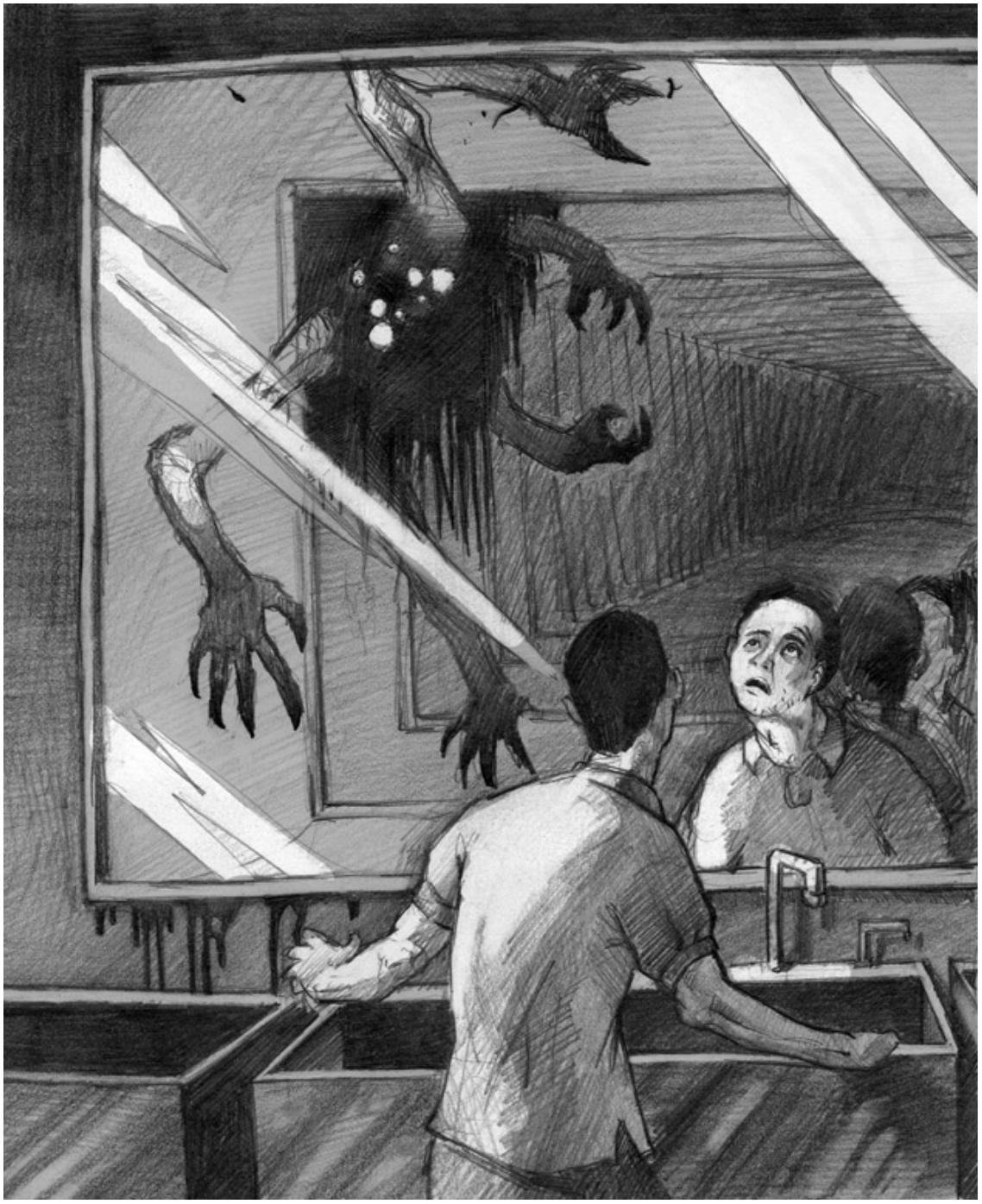
The improvements have been declared temporary—but several new chemical cocktails have enhanced the procedure.

Psychosurgery: the Transorbital Lobotomy

The effect of severing the neural tissue that connects both lobes of the brain had been observed in animals (to the extent that it could be understood) and, in 1935, Egas Moniz tried it in humans. The successes were questionable but the subjects were made a good deal more docile and easy to deal with.

Later the procedure was "perfected" by Dr. Walter Freeman who create the Transorbital Lobotomy which involved entering the brain through the tear duct of the eye and then scraping in the brain to try to sever the tissue. He was such a believer that he performed all over the country, driving around in a van which he named his "lobotomobile." He performed in hotel rooms, in hospital lobbies, and before groups of psychiatric officials (once working on several women in a row, conveyor-belt style, using electrodes to shock them into a faint and then entering the eye. One head of psychiatry fainted upon witnessing this). He performed it on children as young as 13 (for delinquency) and on women who had lost their zeal for domestic chores.

Finally (and thankfully) discredited, he retired in disgrace. However, with several advances in neuro-science, psycho-surgery has begun to make something of a comeback with neurological "pacemakers" that can stimulate certain areas of the brain and certain direct-chemical treatments that can have a profound effect on the subject.



Making the JAGS Wonderland Game

When men on the chessboard
Get up and tell you where to go
--*White Rabbit,* Jefferson Airplane

Okay, you've made it this far so maybe you're thinking about how you'd go about running (or what it'd be like to play in) a *JAGS Wonderland* game. As the last chapter in Section 2, we're going to try to help "put things together" and give some (hopefully) useful advice.

This section is written as though it's talking to the GM but, really, it's written for everyone who whats to have a say in the game they play. There are a lot of different approaches to *JAGS Wonderland* (including, of course, a million we didn't think of) but our experience in making this book has given us some pointers and so we want to pass what we came up with on to you.

Starting Characters

"Who are *you*?"
--A Hookah Smoking Caterpillar, *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*

The *JAGS* point totals for basic *JAGS Wonderland* characters look something like this. We came up with some basic stereotypes that appeared in some of our campaigns.

Characters	Points (BP/AP)	Stereotype
Very capable college aged characters or fairly mundane adults	30 Base Pts. 4 AP	College students Infected during a night of wild partying who have since dropped out of school and are in danger of being committed by their families.
Competent Adult Characters	50/4	Police detectives (in a gritty-toned game) investigating a stream of bizarre 'murder scenes' where only the bodies were missing (lots of blood though).
Extremely competent characters	75/4	An occult author whose research had led him to know something about Wonderland. He became involved in a USAF investigation when an eccentric high-level base commander went missing.
Heroes	100/4	Two "super-spy" caliber characters who were both prisoners (one was a jewel thief, one was a deranged scientist). They were "recruited" and Infected because they were capable of averting a disaster on the lower levels of reality.

Do the Characters Start Infected?

A very basic question for any *JAGS Wonderland* game is *are the characters Infected when the game begins*? If they are, do they remember what happened—or have they just begun having Episodes? Here are some possibilities:

Infection	Notes
Game Begins with the Infection Event	This can be a good way to kick things off with a bang. The Alien Abduction model works pretty well here: the characters go out and have something unbelievable happen to them. Afterwards there seem to be "permanent effects!"
Amnesia	The characters are having Episodes but don't know what happened. Maybe they remember something. This is a subtler beginning and points more towards a subtle insanity than a single life-changing event.
Investigation	The characters start with a thread and unraveling it leads to Wonderland. In this case, they may understand that they're risking insanity. They may realize they are crossing into "another reality."
Experienced Characters	It's quite possible to start with characters who have enough mastery to more or less handle their conditions. The game focuses on the exploratory elements of Wonderland.

What Is The Focus of the Game?

JAGS Wonderland (like any setting) has many facets. Any game could nclude *aspects* of each of them but games may tend to *focus* on one of them (or shift focus from time to time). Here are some of the aspects we've found that Wonderland lends itself to.

Aspect	Notes
The Personal Horror of Going Insane	Things are happening that you can't explain. Your family thinks they're losing you. You have a desperate feeling that this is *for real* but you can't prove it (even to yourself). The Episodes are getting darker and more frequent.
The Escape Game	You lead a life that is in some way mundane, humdrum, or stifling. Maybe you work all day in a gray-and-beige box. Maybe you attend a school designed to mold your spirit like an assembly line builds cars. Wonderland may be scary—but it's also got that element of *Wonder*. If you can master it, you can trade your mundane life for one of adventure.
Holding the Line	Wonderland is coming and someone has to hold the line for humanity. You've decided to take that task on. There are horrific things on the other side of the mirror that want to consume mankind. You, and others like you may be able to keep them at bay. If you learn enough, maybe you can even take the fight to them.

The Chessboard Zero Game vs. The Deeper Games

Finally, if you are putting a game together, you may want to consider where the paranormal focus will be. There are Wonderland-aware agencies on Chessboard Zero. There are Whirls making schemes on Chessboard One. There are frightening adventures to be had down below that.

A "traditional" game (meaning one that most directly follows the fiction, *not* the one we think you're most likely to run) begins with the characters having adventures based on things happening on Chessboard Zero and One—and then it progresses to things on the lower Chessboards.

However, it's quite legitimate to start it wherever you want. Here are some of the aspects of the different levels.

Chessboard	Notes
Zero	The game may deal with: 1. Family and friends. The character's life is under assault from Episodes. 2. The Underground. A character seeking help will wind up in the strange culture of the Infecteds. This can involve politics of the desperate, searching for really good advice amidst the confused and the predatory, or hooks into deeper conspiracies. 3. Conspiracies. There are things going on (discussed in the next section) that you could get turned on to and investigate.
One	The Chessboard One game means that you are dealing with Whirl conspiracies. These beings (often malevolent) are often involved in plans which only Infecteds can easily deal with.
Deeper	At the deeper levels we are dealing with exploration (or possibly things like court-intrigue).

Character Empowerment: Horror vs. Terror

One of our playtesters once made a comment that there were two types of "scary" role-playing situations. He, for purposes of his discussion, made a distinction between 'Horror' and 'Terror' (yes, we know both words are basically synonymous—they were used here to clarify his point).

Terror, he said, was a game in the spirit of the movie *Alien* or *Halloween*. The players are fighting for survival—they are mostly terrified victims against powerful odds and they are in the dark. Terror, he said, was, at its core, *unfair*. It was about bad things coming and bad things happening and although you might be scrappy and tough, ultimately the Terror game might not, at its core, be *winnable*. The purpose of the Terror game was scare the *players*.

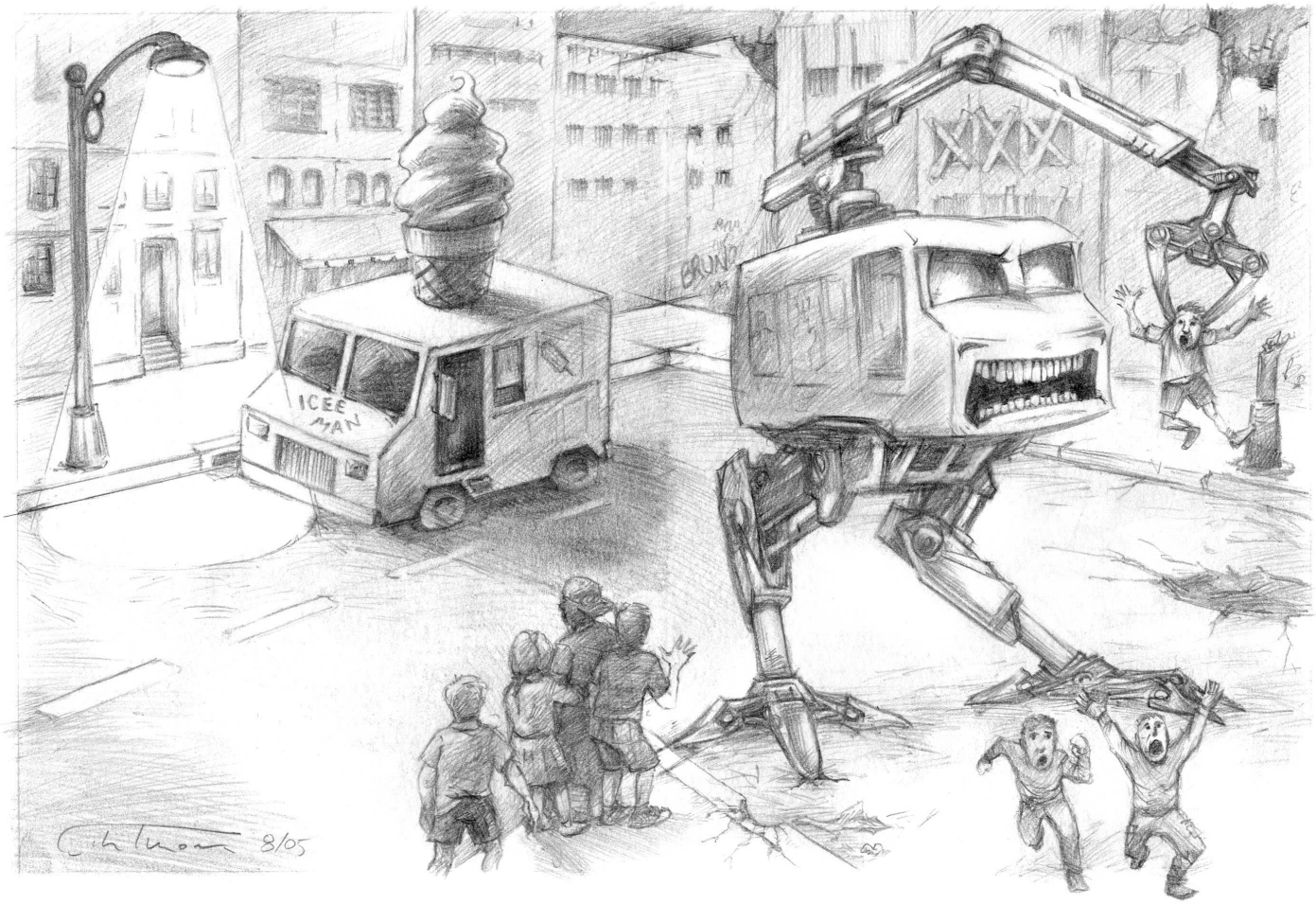
Horror, he said, was more like the movie *Aliens* … or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (the TV show, he meant, we hope). In Horror, the bad guys are powerful—they're the same fearsome monsters. There may even be more of them! But it's a war, a fair(er) fight, and although the "set" might be a

haunted house, when the monsters jump out the characters might just as well fight as run. Horror deals with scary subjects—and the players might be presented with honestly horrific concepts—but ultimately they are more *empowered* than in the Terror game. There will also be more chances for humor, lively debate, and one-liners in a Horror game. You don't have to agree with this distinction. The point we're trying to make is that *JAGS Wonderland* falls evenly into both categories and if you decide how you're going to address these issues then it'll help figuring out how to use the rules and the world book.

Some Sample Games

What we're going to present here are some "sample games"—these are not meant to be scenarios ready to run: they presume a flow of events that would require the characters to take some specific actions or have some specific reactions.

Consider them examples of potential progression that illustrates how a game could evolve. It's also worthy to note that if the players and GM discuss these issues and game types using these examples, it could be an aid to people clearly communicating what they want.



The Asylum: Terror evolves to Horror

Overview: The players are normal people who have been Infected and committed to an asylum. A dark asylum. One that has *designs* on people like them.

First Act: *How I Went Crazy*
Themes: Madness, the loss of self, imprisonment, claustrophobia, terror.
Description: The player determines what the Infection Event was that got the character Infected. The GM then runs a scene of Descent (an Episode) and the immediate effects thereafter with the understanding that what happened led the character to being placed in a mental healthcare facility. The characters may undergo the unbearable anguish of losing loved ones or loved ones losing faith in them (not believing their stories). They may have to live with some dark or even terrible consequences of their actions (usually Shadows don't do things like kill people—but there could be serious humiliation involved).

Act Two: *We'd like to know a little bit about you for our files … We'd like to help you learn to help yourself*
Themes: Despair, fear.
Description: The facility is run by people who wish to *use* and understand Descent. The characters, kept in the madhouse, are run through a series of frightening experiments designed to try to induce horrific Descent that can be studied. Some of these work, some don't. The characters become Twisted. There are monsters in the building they must be wary of during Episodes. Their "counselors" are really scientists experimenting on them.

Act Three: *I do believe that I've had Enough*
Themes: Light at the end of the tunnel, revenge, triumph over hopelessness.
Description: The characters, however, are toughened by their experiences and they become more expert in manipulating their Descent than the facility is at manipulating *them*. After gaining experience, confidence, and power, they escape from the facility and, after contacting their loved ones (to assure them they are okay—if a bit strange) they are moving towards becoming more substantial players in Wonderland.

Act Four: *Let's Get This Party Started*
Themes: Exploration, opposition, change.
Description: There's a lot going on. There are underground movements worldwide who have goals dealing with Wonderland. There are predators that prey on the weak. There are conspiracies and entities and politics and games and all sorts of things to discover and do.

In this game we can see how the arc goes from dark and bleak to more empowered and hopeful. Some games will do that. Some won't. Take a look at a simpler *JAGS Wonderland* game arc:

The Doomed Investigators: Pure Terror

Overview: The players are a police detective team working in a city that is sliding into Wonderland. Its single act repeats over and over until they fail or run, leaving the city to deeper, bleaker atrocities.

Act: *Something Wicked This Way Comes*
Themes: Atrocity, murder, helplessness, ineffectualness. Holding the line to save those who cannot save themselves. Psychological damage.
Description: Each investigation is one horrific conspiracy after another. There is always another monster at work. There is always a deeper darkness behind whatever has so far been seen.

That's very bleak—and intentionally so. It's a legitimately horrific *JAGS Wonderland* game and one that could be a huge amount of fun for the players—but it's down in the darker aspects of the world.

Let's look at the reverse. Same basic one-act structure, same horrific opponents, but who you are is important and how you view the world makes all the difference.

Special Agents: Horror.

Overview: The characters are members of the secret government agency Project Puritan. They are military and intelligence bad-asses with the best gear, the best intel, and the best backup a national government conspiracy can provide. They're bringing the war to Wonderland and they have the firepower to make it stick.

Act 1: *Dogs of War*
Themes: Action, battle, and risk. Your foes underestimate you. You may take on false identities to blend with the hapless civilians you protect. Victory against powerful odds.
Description: The characters are sent on one mission after another and they sometimes sojourn into the lower reaches of reality if that's where the battle takes them. Although they may not "win" the way, they are "fighting back" and they usually leave their enemies in smoldering ruins.

Let's take a one-act game that's right between Terror and Horror.

It's a Crazy World: Between Terror and Horror

Overview: The characters had their first experience with Wonderland some time ago—maybe *a long time ago*. Now they live in a world gone at least partially mad—but they aren't normal either. The characters may be magicians, twisted mutants, or other members of the invisible community that thrives below the surface of reality.

Act 1: *Playing the Game*
Themes: Conspiracy, investigation, alliance, betrayal, exploration.
Description: You are competent but the world can be a deadly place. You know the truth and you're part of the secret. You work with your friends, fight a never-ending battle to know what exactly is happening, and look out for your own. You may have goals and aims—or just be one of the people who has learned to live with an insane world and is making the best of it. But it's never dull—and you always want to keep your edge.

Some of the game will be incredibly dark—at the core of reality is something insane and potentially *very* scary. But you have some neat tricks up your sleeve too—and sometimes you're the one calling the shots!

What about this next one? In this one Wonderland *isn't* the enemy:
Wonderland is played as *preferable* to the real world.

The Escape Game: Horror?

Overview: The characters are closet romantics who live crushingly ordinary mundane lives working for a massive government agency. When a bleed is discovered in the old copy room, the characters begin making plans to escape—to get out of the bleak prison of their cyclic, utterly predictable lives and to adventure and explore.

Of course the bleed is sealed and there is a door that is very hard to open—it is the head of the organization, they learn, who holds the golden keys to it (and holds it shut because he believes the world is better without the *Wonder* aspect of Wonderland).

Act 1: *Discovery*
Themes: Oppression, ennui, disapproval of bosses and elders.
Description: The players play through vignettes of their dissatisfaction of their lives. Then, perhaps by accident, they discover the door. Something about the discovery tells them that if they can get the door open, all the way, they can find the lives of mystery and adventure they've been looking for (this might well involve Episodes and Descent that take place "Beyond the door" but almost nothing can be brought back and the excursions don't last very long.

Act 2: *Complications*
Themes: Problems with authority, sneaking around, possible consequences for one's actions. Saying goodbye?
Description: The characters discover that the door is known by the higher-ups and that they keep it closed lest it "infect" their workers (but they mean that in the sense of 'giving them dreams' not necessarily Wonderland Infection). The characters go about making and executing a plan to get the key. They also must decide what to do about relationships that will probably end forever if they are successful.

Act 3: *na-na-na hey-hey-hey, Goodbye!*
Themes: Awakening, evolution. Setting off on an adventure.
Description: The characters get the key and exit their old world becoming adventurers in a new and resplendent one.

How To Control Empowerment

How characters become empowered is a major decision for the *JAGS Wonderland* game. Here are the "controls" we've given you to work with.

Control	Notes
Mastery Level	The speed and ease with which the characters gain Mastery is a primary determinant factor as to how oppressive the game seems. At a lower level of mastery the characters are far more affected by Episodes and suffer far more complications.
Twists	Being thrust into a twisted, monster-filled world isn't quite so scary when you're a monster too. The number of Twisted Points the characters get will be a major factor in determining whether or not they feel scared or excited by going into the deeper levels.
GM's Handling of Complications	If the Complications of Episodes (things your Reflection did to get you into trouble while you were on a lower level of reality) are played up then the characters will be dealing with *quickly* disintegrating normal lives. If they're played down then, well, an Episode can be scary or disconcerting but it isn't causing you to lose everything you hold dear.
Reflection Disassociation	When you do things on a lower level of reality, how they translate up to Chessboard Zero can be a major factor in how powerful (or powerless) the PCs feel. If they can wait for their next Episode and then break out of the mental hospital they're locked in (using their Twisted powers) that's a lot different than if the (successful) escape attempt ends with Snap-Back and them "waking up" in straitjackets.

"So," quizzed Alice "everything that has been lost, it's somewhere here? On the Moon?"

"Indeed," replied the Knacker. "Scarves and spanners, coins and keepsakes. I myself had been looking for what seemed like ages for my tools until I found them."

As they continued to walk down the path Alice realized something, but felt it impertinent to ask. (For even on the Moon, good form should always be observed she would imagine her sister would say). However, her curiosity grew and grew and then finally, like a cork, the question popped right out of her.

"Then why are you still here?"

"Because, Young Miss," he said "I've lost my inspiration and I hope to find it here somewhere."

"Inspiration?" quizzed Alice. "You can find lost inspiration up here as well?"

"Indeed," replied the Knacker. "Faith and wits, hopes and dreams. Everything that has been lost is here on the Moon. I myself had been looking for what seemed like ages for my innocence but – alas! – I fear I shall never find it. So I will be well and content if could only find my inspiration."

"Harrumph!" muttered Alice. "I know a Hatter and a March-Hare who would do well to look for their marbles here."

"Well, best of luck to them," said the Knacker. There is a whole mare filled with the things, and I do not fancy their chances finding them. Why, you would not believe just how many people in the world lose their marbles."

"Rather!" replied Alice.

- Lewis Carroll,
Alice's Journey Behind the Moon

Appendix A: Wonderland Character Creation Notes

Most *JAGS Wonderland* characters start out as fairly normal 50 to 75pt people with 4 Archetype points spent on standard stuff out of the basic book. Unusual characters, of course, might begin the game with Mastery, Twists, or even abilities from the Magicians section at the end of the GM's book.

However, there are a few noteworthy abilities that a Wonderland character may have and this is where they are listed.

Survival Traits

Each character should have a Survival Trait so that the GM knows how to expect that character to behave when confronted with Wonderland (a character with *Get it together* might take quite some time to be functional after being subject to Wonderland—but they will, eventually, be able to react functionally).

Survival Traits have no cost.

The Pragmatist

Under pressure you want *results*. You don't spend too much time doubting yourself and you tend to take what you see at face value. The pragmatic character may not spend a lot of time worrying about *the implications* of Wonderland being real. They spend more effort worrying about what they need to *do*.

The Dreamer

You find reality just plain dull. You are still scared by frightening things—but *strange* things you not only can deal with: you like them! For you, Wonderland is a bit like waking up and coming home. This character will need neither convincing that Wonderland is real, nor time to come to grips.

The Scientist

You are open minded in the sense that you are willing, eventually, to accept what your senses tell you—but you are curious and given to test your suppositions or observations. You won't easily believe (Occam's Razor) but in fairly short order you will come to accept that "insanity" doesn't seem to describe what you are experiencing. (note: you do not need to have any actual scientific skills to have this outlook).

Get It Together!

You are as prone to hysteria as anyone else when you first start experiencing Descent. There can—and will—be an incredible amount of fear and worry. You will perhaps (likely?) seek mental help. You may undergo nervous breakdowns—but you will, in due time, "get it together." This character will require both some convincing that Wonderland is real and some time to come to grips.

Dr. Faustus

You are an explorer in the far realms of belief and reality and *this*, although probably confounding, is *not* exactly unexpected. There *is* a greater reality. There *are* intelligences other than those of man. They are frightening, powerful, and illogical to the core—but they *exist*—and they may be dealt with … to *learn* and then … *to control*. The difference between Scientific Curiosity and Dr. Faustus is that Faustus doesn't greet the discovery with great skepticism—but rather with exhilaration of expectation.

Great Faith

Your belief in a higher power is the bedrock of your stability and reaction to the unnatural. So long as your faith is not shaken (and it's almost unshakable) you believe that although things may seem irrational there is a plan. You may never understand it: you don't need to. It may appear the universe is a cruel joke played on humanity—you *believe* that isn't true. This is usually but not always religious faith.

Things You Can Buy When You Are Infected

Characters who become Infected or begin the game that way may purchase Twists, Mastery, and possibly Magician abilities (explained in the Book of Knots but covered here for completeness). The availability of these abilities is up to the GM (not every character who undergoes descent gets Twisted, not every character who spends time Infected gains Mastery) and a lot depends on how empowered the game is supposed to be. All of these are purchased with *Archetype Points*.

We suggest the following:

Empowered Game	Twist	Mastery	Magician
To start with	0 AP	0 AP	0
Early on	0 – 4 AP (0 -16pts of Twist)	2 AP	0 – 4 AP (0-16pts of Magic)
Standard Play	0 – 8 AP (0-32pts of Twists)	4 AP	0 – 8 AP (0-32pts of Magic)
Advanced Play	8 – 12 AP (32-48pts of Twists)	8 AP	8 – 12 AP (32-48pts of Magic)

Disempowered Game	Twist	Mastery	Magician
To start with	0 AP	0 AP	0 AP
Early on	0 AP	0 AP	0 AP
Standard Play	0-4 AP (0-16pts of Twists)	2 AP	0 AP
Advanced Play	0-8 AP (0-32pts of Twists)	4 AP	0 AP

NOTE: Character advancement would not necessarily involve all three nor even Twists and Mastery at the same time. Characters might be given AP and allowed to spend it on Mastery *or* Twists as they see fit. If they are training in magic they might even have a third way to split it.

Wonderland Archetype Traits

There are some unusual abilities that anyone may have. They have a cost wherein many beginning characters *could* have them: this is intentional—people who have unusual Wonderland Traits don't usually

Spending Archetype Points

A character has 8 AP to spend on "Advanced Traits" (she has been Infected for some time and may have Twists, Mastery, or even have learned some magic). She spends 4pts on Twists and 4pts on Mastery.

She has 16 Twist Points (each AP nets 4 Twist Points).

She has Advanced Mastery (cost of 4 AP).

seem different than anyone else. The GM, however must be consulted before any of these are taken and we think it's a good idea for the GM to actually decide before characters are made which, if any, will be available.

It is also possible that the characters might simply be assigned these (if the characters are all of special interest to a psychiatric project there might be an underlying reason …).

Retriever [8]

Description: When you come back from Wonderland you can *bring things back*. This is one of the most rare, sought-after, and disturbing traits in existence. The ability to bring back Impossible Things has dire implications for those who either wish to spread Wonderland Infection or see it controlled. This ability doesn't work all the time and usually requires something like a WIL roll to "hold on" to something when the character is ending an Episode. The GM is the final arbiter of what comes back and what doesn't—and what the effects are.

NOTE: Objects taken from Chessboard One or Chessboard Two are *Shadows* of real objects and tend not to last long nor function properly on Chessboard Zero (they may also acquire flaws very rapidly even if they do exist for some time). Objects from further down (Chessboard Three and below) last so long as they normally would but if they are Infecting people they tend to get Normalized out of existence rather quickly.

Cool Reflection [4]

Description: Your Reflection is awake, aware, and looking out for you. It may actually be *smoother* than you are. You don't suffer Complications although the missing memories may be disturbing (you could, for example, find out you applied for and got a job you aren't exactly qualified for during an Episode). Your Reflection may have long-term plans that it puts together piecemeal when you are undergoing Descent.

The one blind spot your Reflection has tends to be in informing you—it will usually assume that either you know what it is doing or that you shouldn't be told.

Active Shadow [2]

Description: Your Shadow does all sorts of random things that you aren't aware of and has a strong connection to you. This usually means that you get weird flashes of insight and may have an intuitive understanding of what's happening on Chessboard One.

Inquisitive Innocence [2]

Description: The character has a nature about them that is *usually* one of curiosity and innocence. The character will not suffer Notice and will not be easily tracked by beings from lower Chessboards if they mean to do the character ill. When meeting beings the character may also be given the "benefit of the doubt" provided he or she does not misbehave.

Navigator [4]

Description: The character can navigate the Linear Maze and, when ever they *cause* their own Descent, can return to any place already visited. They may also find their way to beings about which a sufficient amount of information is known (this is up to the GM and will be more clear in the GM's book) and can make and read Wonderland maps (Wonderland Maps require a great deal of time and care to make and always appear as completely blank parchments or pieces of paper).

Afterword

This is the end of book one—and just about the end of more than five years of work. The material here (never mind the Book of Knots) is more than we had for the first *JAGS Wonderland* game that we ran (the first one that was called "Wonderland," anyway). The earliest file I have on the computer is from 2001 and the game was run before that—before American McGee's *Alice* came out (I remember seeing some pre-release screenshots that a player had dug up).

If you stop reading here you have enough to dig into the mysteries of Wonderland without fully understanding everything that is going on in the world. What comes next are the real secrets, some more questions, and even a few answers. Whether or not this is territory for only the GM or for everyone in the group depends on how you like it. It has been a long road of putting this stuff together and trying to make it more and more playable. We hope you enjoy it.

Also: I went through a lot of books on *Alice* looking for insight and none of them compare to *The Annotated Alice* by Martin Gardner. It's the gold standard for someone wanting to look at the original source material.

Glossary of Terms

Association

When someone on the lower Chessboards who is Disassociated (see Reflection Disassociation) takes an action there may still be an effect on Chessboard Zero (see Chessboards). When someone uses a Twist against a Shadow (which see) it may affect the real person on Chessboard Zero too. This is called Association and it is accomplished by being very experienced with Descent and Infection (see Mastery). The number of non-Infected people observing the event will reduce its likelihood of happening (see Normalization).

Discussed: pg. 76, 78-79 (levels of)

Cyclic Psychoaffective Disorder (CPD)

The Underground's term for Infection/Unsanity. They believe CPD is a communicable psychological disease with four stages (Early, Middle-One, Middle-Two, and Late). They realize that it is usually fatal. They have several coping strategies and are in denial about the reality of it.

Discussed: pg. 46, 47, 54 (stages)

Damage (see Twists)

Twists (mutations to a person that are caused by descent) that are both highly negative for the person Twisted *and* have a distinct effect on the real person casting the Shadow. If your Shadow has suffered Damage then *you* will be feeling negative effects of some sort. Damage usually only happens to people who don't have Survival Traits (or Magicians or people who upset powerful Wonderland entities).

Discussed: pg. 195

Descent

When you have an Episode you undergo Descent, traveling down one or more Chessboards. Visiting Chessboards One or Two is considered shallow Descent. Visiting Chessboards Three or below is considered Deep.

Discussed: pg. 47, 48, 55, 56, 100

Eight Chessboards

Reality has eight different "levels," each getting stranger and stranger. Zero is our world, Seven is so deep almost no one goes there.

Discussed: pg. 41-43 (short form), 114-160 (full)

Episode

A period of Descent. An Infected will suffer an Episode on a regular cycle (how common depends on their stage of Unsanity) and whenever the person is exposed to a Trigger. This is a time when you go down into deeper Wonderland. Before an Episode an Infected will often have an "aura" or a feeling something is going wrong. When the Episode is about to end the person will feel it "growing thin" (an experienced Infected can end Episodes earlier than a less experienced person).

Discussed: pg. 56-61 (general), 68 (description of) 101-109 (effects)

Impossible Things

Anything which is actively in violation of the laws of physics will Infect those exposed to it. Impossible Things include monsters, displays of magical prowess in an unambiguous manner, artifacts brought up from deeper Wonderland that display magical traits, and the manifesting of Twisted mutations.

Discussed: pg. 47 (infection), 74 (bringing things back)

Infection (Wonderland)

When you are exposed to an Impossible Thing (a manifestation of Wonderland) you become unstable and prone to having Episodes (Descents into Wonderland). It may be possible to recover from Infection but few people do. Most (est. 85%) will get worse and worse and eventually undergo catastrophic Descent, die (as a result of an encounter on a lower Chessboard) or otherwise drop out of society.

Discussed: pg. 47, 53 (strains), 52-53 (Infection Event)

Linear Maze, The

The Linear Maze is the maze between the Chessboards. It can appear as twisted extensions of the rooms it opens into (often through mirrors) or as dark back-alleys, or just about anything else. The term "Linear" comes from a reference to the lines between the squares on a chessboard--not the nature of the maze itself.

Discussed: pg. 57 (introduced), 110

Mastery

The process of coming to terms with and gaining control of Wonderland Infection. Most people either can or will not be able to do this (see Survival Traits). Mastery comes in several steps and is usually learned through experience with Episodes and Descent.

Discussed: pg. 54 (introduced), 90-96 (buying levels)

Notice

A person who goes down deep or behaves unwisely during an Episode may attract the Notice of things on the lower Chessboards that may follow him back up. Usually beings chasing the character due to Notice will not pursue very long as they don't like being on the upper Chessboards: but the character may be "haunted" for some time (or may even be attacked or killed!)

Discussed: pg. 49, 63-64 (satisfying Notice)

Normalization

There are things (called machines) that somehow make and maintain the universe (these are said to be down on Chessboard Seven). They keep Impossible Things from happening and keep the universe 'Normal.' They are breaking down so Wonderland is seeping in. Normalization is a process that will prevent Impossible Things from happening while a non-Infected person is watching. When Normalization succeeds the Impossible Thing will either not manifest or otherwise be rejected (monsters trying to materialize can be destroyed). When it fails observers will be Infected!

It is also the term for "rationalizing" what a character experiences during an Episode and how that is represented on Chessboard Zero (i.e. what "really" happened). Problems in one's personal life caused by Normalization are called Complications.

Discussed: pg. 74-79 (introduced), 104-105 (Complications)

Reflections (see Shadows)

Reflections are like Shadows but are cast *up*. A real person on Chessboard One will cast a Reflection of him or herself up to Chessboard Zero. That Reflection will act like a somewhat deranged version of the caster.

Discussed: pg. 49 (introduced), 42, 87-88 (Reflections of monsters)

Reflection Disassociation

When a person on a lower Chessboard does something that makes it so their Reflection cannot follow them, it stops mimicking them and Disassociation happens. This can be very confusing for an inexperienced Infected as great tracts of what they recalled happening will not seem even *remotely* similar to what people on Chessboard Zero recall him or her doing. When an Episode where Disassociation has occurred ends the result is either Snap-Back or Snap-Forward.

Discussed: pg. 71-73 (introduced), 73-74 (snap-back), 81-83 (general principles)

Shadows

Objects and people from Chessboard Zero cast Shadows down to the lower Chessboards. A Shadow, in this sense is a real, three dimensional object or person of the same sort as the "caster." In the case of people, one's Shadow is usually a somewhat deranged caricature of the caster. In the case of printed material, the Shadow may show what the creator really *meant* to say. See Reflections.

Discussed: pg. 42, 48 (introduced), 70-71 (acting on other's Shadows), 119-120 (running them)

Snap-Back

When a Disassociated person ends an Episode they will usually find everything around them to abruptly change and they will be "snapped back" into "their body" on Chessboard Zero. Their "body" will be wherever their Reflection had got to (the drunk tank? The loony bin? Their room?). This is usually disorienting.

Discussed: pg. 73-74 (resolving Snap-Back), 60-61 (ending an Episode)

Snap-Forward

When an experienced Infected (i.e. someone with a high level of Mastery) ends an Episode they can Snap-Forward, dissolving their Reflection and miraculously appearing somewhere else in the world. This usually cannot happen if someone who is not Infected is watching either the Reflection or where they would appear because of Normalization.

Discussed: pg. 80 (resolving)

Survival Traits

Survival Traits are personality traits that tend to give one a better fighting chance when dealing with Wonderland. An estimated 15% of the population possesses Survival Traits.

Discussed: pg. 20 (list)

Trigger

Some environmental factors can set off an Episode in an Infected. Often Triggers are things like stress, surreal media (movies, paintings, etc.), or drug use. At the later stages a person may need to avoid many places because of the presence of Triggers.

Discussed: pg. 47 (introduced), 56 (handling as a GM), 93-96 (overcoming with Mastery), 99

Twists

Mutations on characters usually representing their inner-natures made physical in some sense. They are often powerful abilities. Often acquired through deep descent.

Discussed: pg. 50 (introduced), 163-172 (explanation), 173-196 (big list)

Underground, The

A loose-knit network of people who are suffering Infection and don't understand it. Part support group, part coping mechanism, they have hit on some techniques for mitigating the danger for a while (The Buddy System, Affirmation of the Unreality of Episodes, Repudiation of Believers). They are a scared, judgmental lot with connections to more knowledgeable secret organizations (Magicians, The Upper Echelon). They believe they are prosecuted by the government and may be right.

Discussed: pg. 23 (introduced), 203-212 (explanation)

Unsanity

The "correct" term for Wonderland Infection. You aren't *insane* because you aren't losing your grip on reality. You are *Unsane*: reality is losing its grip on you. This is not a term the Underground uses. Unsanity has four basic stages (see CPD).

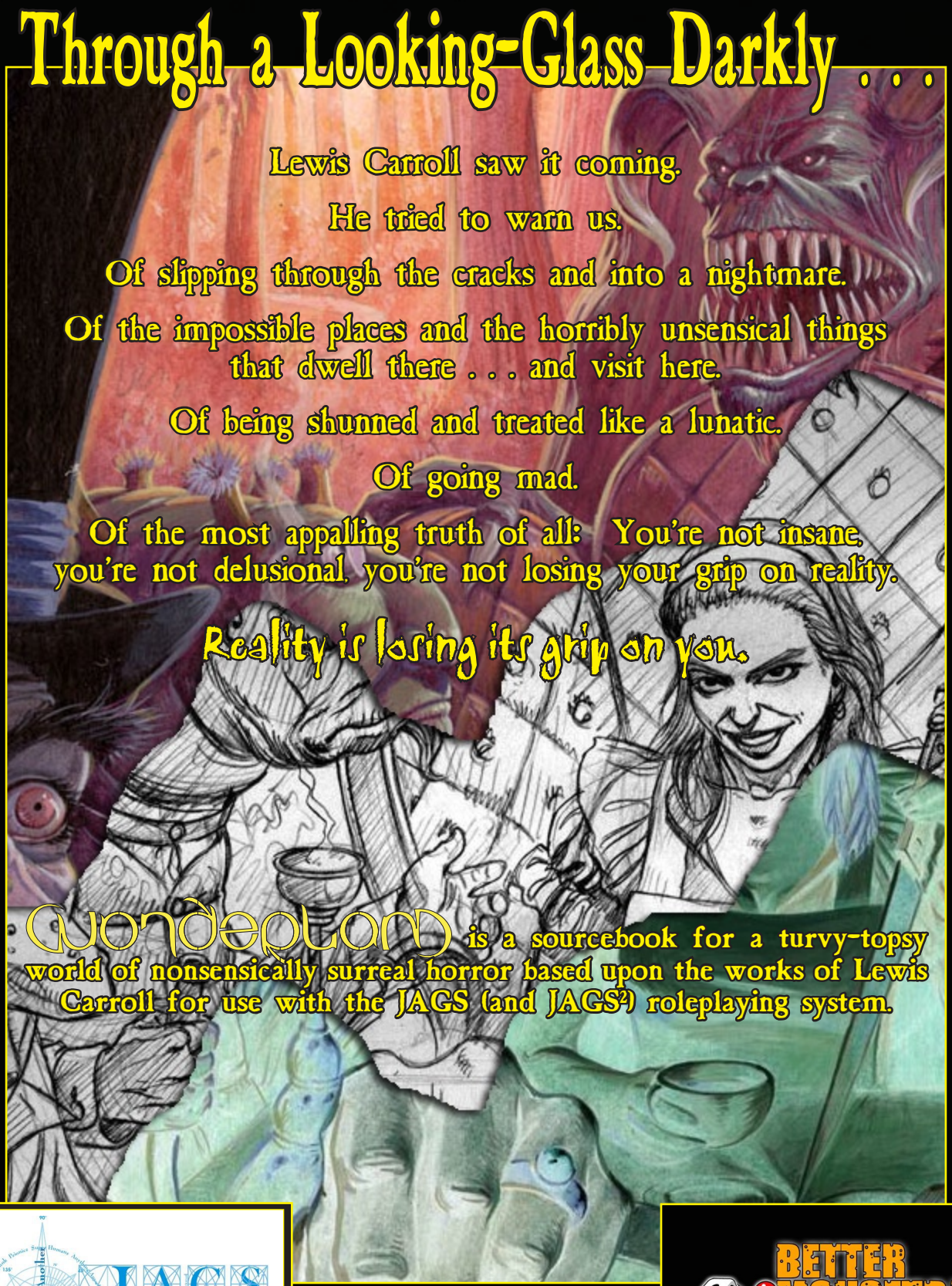
Discussed: pg. 46-50 (terms), 54 (gaining Mastery)

Whirls

Under some conditions (often those of psychological trauma) Shadows break off from their casters and become self-contained beings (usually with a monstrous form). These are called Whirls and they exist on Chessboards One and Two and make life hard for Infecteds and anyone they can get their hands on.

Discussed: pg. 89-90

Through a Looking-Glass Darkly . . .



Lewis Carroll saw it coming.

He tried to warn us.

Of slipping through the cracks and into a nightmare.

Of the impossible places and the horribly unsensical things that dwell there . . . and visit here.

Of being shunned and treated like a lunatic.

Of going mad.

Of the most appalling truth of all: You're not insane, you're not delusional, you're not losing your grip on reality.

Reality is losing its grip on you.

Wonderland is a sourcebook for a turvy-topsy world of nonsensically surreal horror based upon the works of Lewis Carroll for use with the JAGS (and JAGS²) roleplaying system.

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