

MAGINATION

Roleplaying in a world of art and madness





ImagiNation

Credits and Legal

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I sit out on the beach and I stare across the water.
If I don't look up I can almost fool myself that I'm
eight again, hiding in the shade of a rock and reading
a comic while my brother and my dad arse around in
the water. That's not how it is though now of course.
If I look up then I can see the sky is on fire and I can
barely make out the image of longbow archers in the
clouds. My brother's lost somewhere in the bewilderment
across the solent and my dad's hiding out in Quebec.

I'm stuck here, trying to make sense of it all, and I
can't.

J Daves,

Reclaimer
Fort Albert, Isle of Wight

POST
CARD





Welcome

Welcome to *ImagiNation*.

This is a role-playing game not quite like any other that is currently out there. It is about the nexus between reality and dreams and between genius and madness. It is an intensely personal project for me and one that I hope people will be able to use both as an exciting and novel game and as a means to broach a difficult subject. I also hope some few find, within these pages, aid and comfort in dealing with mental illness. I don't want to belabour that point, so I will limit the explicit explanations to this introductory section.

Role-playing is a great way to explore ideas, both serious and frivolous, and to construct personal and mutual 'legends' and stories. I have designed *ImagiNation* using an updated version of *The Description System* which should be accessible and understandable even to people who aren't already familiar with role-playing games. I hope you find the game and *The Description System* helpful and easy to understand.

ImagiNation is a completely open system and game setting. Anyone and everyone is welcome to host, copy, lend, print and distribute it. To write their own material for it. To blog and host games, to create creatures, adventures and situations around it. 'Do what thou wilt, but do it for free' is the rule. I would also appreciate it if you directed people back to my company site.

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Postmortem Studios is the personal, self-publishing imprint of James 'Grim' Desborough, Origins Award winning game writer and RPG publisher for over a decade. Grim makes a habit of tackling difficult and humorous subjects and producing thoughtful, independent and grown-up RPG material even if 'mature' sometimes really means 'puerile and played for laughs'.

You can keep up with developments from *Postmortem Studios* at:

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RolePlaying

Odds are that most people reading this already know what a role-playing game is. As this game is intended to reach out to new gamers as well as old ones I'm going to take a little more time to explain what a role-playing games are, how they are played and why they're such good fun.

Role-playing, as a hobby-game, has been around since the mid-seventies and grew out of war gaming - a hobby that is represented in most people's eyes by *Games Workshop* and their *Warhammer* game these days. Role-playing is a little different though. Rather than commanding an army each player takes control of a single character and guides their actions through a story created and refereed by another player called the 'Games Master'.

This is a lot like playing games of imagination when you were children. Maybe you shouted out 'Let's play Star Wars!' and then people would take on roles: "I'm Han!" "I'm Chewie!" etc, and then - as kids - you would play out battles or re-play the stories of the film. There are three important differences when it comes to role-playing games.

1. We're grown-ups now, so we have to justify creative play to ourselves with all sorts of adult structure and waffle.

2. Role-playing games have rules. This helps prevent the sort of "Bang, you're dead!", "No I'm not!", "Yes you are!", "Nuh huh, I have a forcefield" type arguments we had as children.
3. The characters and stories are our own and, hopefully, somewhat original.

So, how do you play one of these games? That's actually pretty easy to do, but a lot harder to explain in any meaningful way. If you know anybody who already plays this kind of games then your best bet is to ask to sit in on a game or to get them to explain it to you in person. I'll do my best to explain below, but one of the main barriers to spreading the hobby is the problem of explaining it:

The Games Master is one of the players. He comes up with the story, the challenges, the opposition that the players who are taking the part of the characters have to face. The Games Master sets the scene, looks after the rules and describes the action. It's a demanding but rewarding role to take in a game.

The players create and describe their characters. These characters are made according to the rules - given later - and these descriptions determine the bounds of who a character is, what they can do and how good they are at it.

The advantage to *The Description System* is that so long as you can describe something, you can put it into the game rules. This makes it very easy to pick up and play with very little preparation or number crunching.

Here is how a little bit of one game session might go, we join the game already in progress...

The Games Master Sets the Scene: *You emerge from the underground station into the light. You think this must be King's Cross – or rather what's left of it. The station is overgrown, the floors cracked. Vines and creepers sprawl over everything and are festooned with brightly lit and sweetly perfumed flowers. Butterflies and other insects flutter and buzz from flower to flower and vine to vine. It makes the floor hard-going to walk through and here and there knots of thick vegetation block the path.*

Kerr (Played by Kyan): *"Damn, I'm glad to be out of there. Who knew so many people were afraid of rats on the underground?" Now we're in the light I brush the dirt off my clothing and check myself for rat bites.*

Juliet (Played by Karen): *"Don't relax yet, Kerr. Rats make sense at least. We knew what to do about rats. Even giant ones. What're all these plants about though?" I'll move to the nearest one and take a closer look.*

Games Master: You don't find any bites you've missed but the ones you did take look a bit nasty, angry and red. The flower looks a bit like a bluebell or a snowdrop, but bigger and glowing with a honeyed, inner light. Each flower seems to be a subtly different shade, covering the whole rainbow throughout the station.

Kerr: *"I don't trust it. Pretty things always hide something nasty." I'll sit down on the steps and use my first aid kit on my wounds. I don't want them getting infected.*

Games Master: *OK, I won't make you roll for that. Daubing on some iodine or TCP isn't exactly taxing. It's probably a good idea though. What about you Karen?*

Juliet: *"Pretty things always hide something nasty, eh? Should I take that personally?" I laugh at Kerr but I know he's probably right. I'll keep my hand on my pistol and move a short distance deeper into the station, looking out for trouble.*

Games Master: *Alright. I'm going to ask you to make a roll to see if you spot anything. Give me a moment. *He tots up the appropriate words and skills from a description of 'something' lurking in the station and rolls a die, getting a four.* OK, roll and tell me what you get. You need to beat seven (the roll, plus the opponent's total).*

Juliet: *I'm paranoid, that's usually a bad thing but I want to use it here. I also have a good eye and in our time off between missions I trained up in observation. So that gives me a total of three before I roll. If you're OK with all of that?*

Games Master: *Sounds kosher to me.*

Juliet: *And I roll a five, giving me a total of eight. That beats seven.*

Games Master: *Distantly, behind the overgrown tangle that used to be the automatic gates, you briefly catch sight of a wild-haired, naked woman carrying a spear. Naked save for three strategically placed fig leaves, that is. She ducks back down again, out of sight.*

Juliet: *"What... the... hell... Kerr. Hurry up with what you're doing. We might have more trouble."*

And so the adventure continues...

It started in Scotland, or so we're told. Glasgow they say. I was'nae hame when it happened so I canna speak to that. I was in Greece raving it up when the news started coming through. I thought it was tosh tae start wi'. Then I thought I was still high. Then I was skeert. I came back, where else am I gonnae go, eh?
Maybe I can dae somethin' worthwhile

Ronan McLeod

refugee,
Stornaway.

POST
CARD



ImagiNation

ImagiNation presents a world in which the realms of the imagination and the physical world have been brought into violent proximity to one another. The mainland of the British Isles has become infected with a nameless ‘something’ that has caused people’s nightmares, dreams, obsessions and fancies to take a very real and dangerous form, locking them within a landscape of their own minds.

Britain no longer meaningfully exists. What remains of the uninfected British population is confined to the islands around the mainland, a ‘safe distance’ across the water from where this strange phenomenon has taken place. Northern Ireland has joined up with Eire through necessity as much as anything else and the largest remaining, unaffected population is to be found on the Isle of Wight in the south.

Britain is lost. Its population is lost. Lost, but still there. The country is still there, the buildings, roads, factories and schools underneath the overlay of people’s imaginings, sometimes shaping and inspiring them. The people are still there, too – those who survive their own nightmares, drifting aimlessly, caught up in their own fictions, living, psychic batteries giving form and personality to their dreams.

Some are aware. Lucid dreamers. Able to shape the world around them. Some of them, typically children or those with particularly strong imaginations, shape the world around them much more strongly, subsuming and controlling the imaginations of others. Collectively, people’s imaginations are channelled and formed by the media they consumed before the disaster. One might find talking rabbits at Watership Down or any number of local legends and rumours brought to life from serial killers and vampires to dragons and ghosts.

Britain is blockaded by a multinational task force and ex-patriots who, if they choose to return to the islands, may never leave again. What’s left of British money and power is devoted to holding this quarantine zone and working towards a solution. The problem is that very few people are immune, only the mindless, or those who were already broken in some way.

Monstrous, terrible things are being done in the name of saving the country. Those few individuals who can enter the zone of effect without being warped, twisted or subsumed, those who can control this new, mutable, amorphous reality are particularly valuable. Sent into the mainland they search for answers, try to rescue people and just try to make sense of what has happened.

You play the part of one of these scouts. Part of a team probing the worst excesses of the collective unconscious, looking for answers, looking for a cure.

Give me my fucking pills. I don't give a good god-damn
about your fucking shortages and it dulling my fucking
edge. You get me my fucking pills before I go nutzbid and
shoot you in your smug little face. Capiche?

I'm a goddamn US citizen and a goddamn volunteer.
So give me my fucking pills.

Joe Burtze

US volunteer Reclaimer,
Newport.

POST
CARD



Depression and Creativity

Here's where this project gets personal and why I have created it. This will be the only overt lecture on the topic. I promise.

I suffer from moderate to severe depression, controlled (somewhat) with medication.

Having a mental illness is no barrel of laughs for anyone and it doesn't help that for writers, artists, comedians and other creative individuals it's an almost farcical stereotype. If you make something, write something or draw something it's virtually expected that you're going to be some sort of eccentric. This doesn't make it easier to deal with. It can, in fact, make it a lot worse because you're conforming to that stereotype and you doubt your own illness.

Still, stereotypes exist for a reason and getting ill myself made me even more aware than I already had been about how many game creators, artists, writers and other people in my peer group also suffer from some sort of debilitating mental illness.

There are a lot of us and yet, paradoxically, many of us feel alone.

At some fundamental level, mental illness and creativity seem to be linked. For me it's depression; for others it's bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. For others it's agoraphobia, anxiety, socialisation issues, autism spectrum disorders like Asperger's and other things.

These are all illnesses that it is hard to explain, hard to demonstrate and even hard to admit to yourself that you have. There's so much prejudice against mental illness, particularly if you have need to call on the health or benefits system. After all, you're not in a wheelchair or on crutches. People can't see that you're sick and find it hard to believe that you are.

Explaining what it's like to have these issues is difficult and I hope that this game will enable some people to broach the subject in a safe environment. I hope it will help them to explain and that it will give others a greater capacity to empathise. I've seen role-playing greatly help people with social anxiety issues and mild cases of Asperger's and it is my fervent hope that this game will help people with a broader range of issues – as well as just being a kick arse game. If you're a parent of a child with socialisation, communication, reading and mathematical problems, I would also urge you to play with your child. I've seen games engage children with these sorts of problems time and time again. Just don't make it sound too educational or they'll run a mile.

My concern here is not to make being mentally ill seem like a superpower. It's not – it's a drawback – but it can provide a degree of spark. It can lend a fire to your creative talents that you might not otherwise have. It's the talent, in this game, that's the superpower. Not the mental illness.

That said, there is a tiny little bit of an 'upside' to my depression which I recognise and acknowledge. It makes me extremely self-reflective. It helps me think deeply about things and consider them from every angle. This can lead to an unhealthy level of perfectionism that can make work exhausting, but if nothing else at least the ideas are well thought out and considered – to the point where I often can't bear to think about them any longer.

I think many of us find aspects to our illness that we can use. A fine balance between illness, medication and creativity that works – barely – but it is a damn difficult balance to find. You have to regularly see your doctor, adjust your medication and take each day as it comes. Accomplishing anything when you're unwell is a victory.

I hope, vainly perhaps, this game helps me, you and everyone in between.

The worst part of the job? Well, alright, not the worst part, but the part I like the least, is filing reports. The army wants to know everything you've seen, everything you've done, every single detail. It's hard to remember at the best of times but in there... everything's like a dream. The details slip by you and even what you do remember... well. It's a realm of imagination. There are things that can't be described in a meaningful way. There are colours that don't really exist. There are shapes that can't exist. There are fluorescent browns, squares that look round. How am I supposed to make sense of that in a report for people who have never seen it?

Marty Lambton

Reclamer, Cowes

POST
CARD



The Description System

The Description System, the one that this game uses, relies on a prose description of characters, items and challenging situations. These are used in order to bid various amounts of these traits which are then compared against other characters or against difficult situations – along with the roll of a six-sided die (d6) to represent the whimsy of lady luck. This determines who succeeds, who fails, who wins and who loses.

People are described using adjectives, adverbs and occupations. For example, Helen the Sculptress might be described thusly:

“Helen is *experienced* and is *lean* and *strong*, with a *wiry* frame coupled with a *friendly* attitude that tends to gets people to open up. She is a *professional* at *business* and a *novice* sculptor.”

A difficult task, like climbing over a wall, might be described like this:

“The wall is *tall* and *very slippery* with moss and slime. The bricks at the top are *fragile* and look like they might crumble away at any minute.”

If Helen tried to climb over the wall she'd have a hard time of it. She might be able to bid ‘lean and strong’ but the wall can bid four traits in total. Helen would roll a d6 and add two; the wall would roll a d6 and add four. It might be easier to smash the wall down. ‘Fragile’ would count against it then.

The military runs everything and they talk in acronyms.
Just the other day some REMF was marching through
the shanty looking for his DSM and he was SOL.
I can just about follow that but when it comes
to rationing, requests, forms and all that it's
virtually incomprehensible.

We endure because we're British and that's what the
British do in situations like this. We do our part by
putting up with the bullshit.

I'm starting to lose my patience though.

Denise Manning

Refugee
Freshwater.

POST CARD



Terminology

All this word salad can seem a little intimidating but it's fairly easy once you get to grips with it. Here's a quick guide to what it all means, most of which will be better explained later on:

Adjective: An adjective is a describing word. In *ImagiNation* adjectives are used to describe your character and these are then used to determine how good you are at doing things. Your character might be '*strong*' or '*tough*' for example. For the purposes of the game other descriptions are considered adjectives like, for example, the phrase '*good with children*'.

Adverb: An adverb modifies an adjective, so that rather than just being '*strong*' you might be '*extremely strong*', instead of '*tough*' you might be '*unfeasibly tough*'. Adverbs are used to describe multiple traits, if you have an adverb in front of an adjective then that adjective counts three times for bidding. The exception is the adverb '*very*' which is used to indicate an adjective that counts double.

Bid: A bid is the number total you have before you roll. It's the total of your adjectives and your profession bonus, the higher the better. For example, trying to squeeze down a pipe Ian bids *very lithe, flexible, squirmy, slippery* (from some oil he stole) and *novice contortionist* for a total bid of six.

Description: A description is the information used for anything in *ImagiNation* from a person to a weapon to a difficult situation. The description contains the information needed to form – or modify – bids.

Down: A 'down' is an adjective in your description that's normally a bad thing that counts against you. If a down applies then you take one away from your bid where you would normally add one. Downs can, rarely, count as a positive. A character who is *very depressed* for example might count that as a positive bid against an effect designed to make people happy.

Explode: When you roll a six on the d6, that six 'explodes'. This isn't anything bad, in fact, this is something really good. You add the six as normal to your bid and roll again, if you get another six you add one to your bid and keep rolling until you stop getting sixes, adding one each time that you do.

Games Master: This is the person nominally in charge of the game. They make the rules calls and determine the story of the game as you progress through it.

Implode: When you roll a 1 you take one away from your bid and the d6 'implodes'. This is bad. You take away the one and roll again. If you get another one you take one away from your bid and keep rolling until you stop getting ones, taking one away each time you do roll a one.

Legendary: Occupations are described as being Novice, Professional, Master and Legendary, rather than being described in the same way as adjectives. A legendary profession counts as six traits towards a bid.

Loaning: If you help someone else out with something they're doing you can loan them an appropriate trait, adding to their bid total. For example, if two people are trying to move a piano up some stairs then the one with the highest bid total makes the roll, but he could be loaned '*powerful*' by the other fellow, increasing his bid by one.

Master: Master describes a level of an occupation, the highest someone can normally aspire to. A Master profession counts as five traits towards a bid.

Non-Player-Character: A non-player-character, or NPC, is someone played by the Games Master. They can be a person in the background, an enemy or anyone else your characters run into.

Novice: A Novice is just starting out in their occupation and having the Novice level counts as a single trait towards a bid related to that occupation.

Occupation: Occupations are the sorts of things you might describe yourself as and depending on the level they're at (Novice, Professional, Master, Legendary) they add between one and six traits to your bid. A character can have multiple occupations; there's usually more than one string to someone's bow. They don't strictly have to be occupations, just a general category of something that your character is good at.

Player Character: A player character, or PC, is one of the characters played by the players of the game, the main protagonists of the story.

Professional: A professional does their occupation as well as someone who does it for their living; being a professional in an occupation counts as three traits towards a bid.

Prose: Prose is the sort of written description you will be giving your character. Rather than numerical statistics, characters in ImagiNation are described by adjectives and other words.

Roll: When you make a roll you roll a d6 and add the result to your bid to give you a final total.

That final total determines whether you succeed or fail at what you were trying to do. This gets complicated by the exploding and imploding dice rules, but not by too much.

Traits: Traits is the catch-all term for all the words that describe your character – the adjectives, the occupations and everything else that helps you do things in the game.

Up: Normal adjectives and professions count as ‘up’ traits. Things that – if they apply – add to your bid total. Rarely some ‘up’ traits can become ‘down’, or negative, traits, just as ‘down’ traits can become positive ones sometimes.

Very: ‘*Very*’ is a special adverb that, when used, makes an adjective in your character description count double. Someone who is *very fast* and gets to include that in a bid gets two points for the bid, rather than one.

Wobbly: A wobbly trait is one that can be taken as either an up or a down trait with about equal chance. A character whose description included the adjective ‘bland looking’, for example, wouldn’t normally have that trait apply in most bids and it could just as easily be a negative as a positive. That’s a ‘wobbly’ trait.

POST
CARD

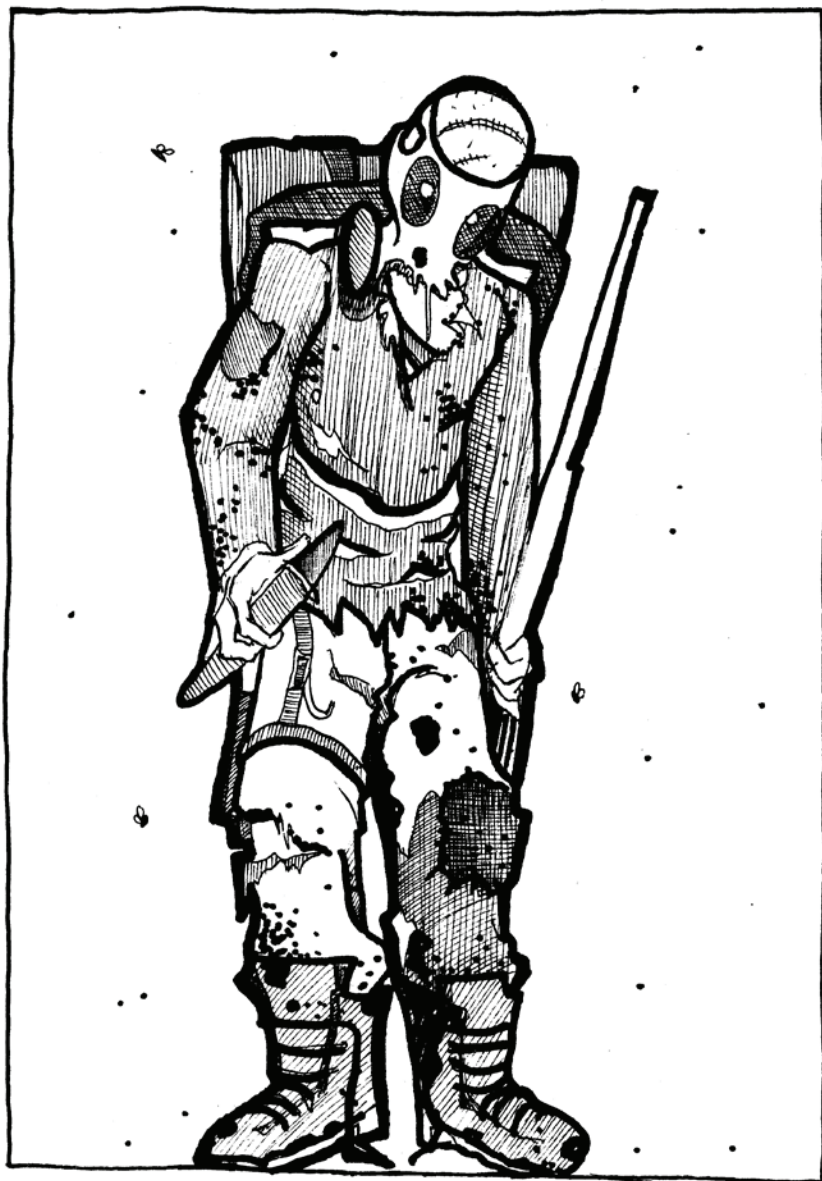


We couldn't get to the fuel cache. It was protected by a powerful Locus that had surrounded it with a moat of fire. There was a figment – at least I think it was a figment – one of many versions of 'The Boatman' I've seen here and there. To take us across he wanted The Intangible Tome of Vera Cruise, whatever the hell that was. We spent three days searching and in the end we gave up and went back, just pretending we had them.

He was happy. We got to the fuel and managed to get a tanker out. Guess if something's intangible it's hard to tell whether you've got it or not. Right?

William Foote

Reclaimer, Holyhead.



Example Adventure

A Choose Your Own Adventure

Introduction

Back in the days when computers weren't so ubiquitous, you had to get together with your friends to play any sort of role-playing game and the only thing you could really play by yourself was a 'choose your own adventure' book. This introduction to the game uses the ideas from such a book. A (very brief) adventure is described in numbered paragraphs which you can move between by making choices. This is a good way of giving you a quick introduction to the game and hand-holding you through the basics. We won't bother with some of the more complicated or hard-to-track rules in this example, but it will give you something of an idea.

You are Jonah, a depressive sketch artist who is part of the exploratory teams that make their way onto the mainland. You've been separated from your fellows and find yourself wandering the wasted suburbs alone.

Jonah is *lean* and *quick* with a *keen mind* and a *wicked* sense of humour. He also tends to take his time, which makes him a *thoughtful* sort. A *professional comic artist* before the disaster, he has taken up training in guns since becoming an explorer, though he's still a *novice marksman*. Jonah's artistic talent is *art* and he suffers from *depression*. Jonah is armed with a Browning Hi-Power 9mm and has some basic survival gear with him.

Start

You've been parted from the rest of your team during a running battle with nightmarish dogs in a graveyard that wasn't on any map. According to your GPS positioning you're somewhere in the green, inland suburbs of Brighton. It barely matches the map, though you are close to the location of a locus (a powerful centre of reality warping) so that would only make sense. Strangely the sun is shining here, though it has been raining everywhere else. At the end of this long road is a huge house which appears to have been crudely drawn with crayon. That must be the locus.

What are you going to do?

Observe for a while: Turn to 1.

Approach boldly: Turn to 2.

Approach stealthily: Turn to 3.

Number 1

It's strange. Looking through the windows the interior looks as though it has been drawn, but it's moving, like a crude animation. It's a little hard to make sense of. The interior is *obscured* and *crudely drawn*. You have a *keen mind*. The windows roll two, which with two added makes four. This is what you need to beat. Roll a d6 and add one. Don't forget, if you roll a one you take it away and roll again, taking away every time you roll another one. If you roll a six you add that on and roll again. Every extra six adds another one to the total (+1) for as long as you keep rolling sixes. That is, if you roll a six, then a six, then a one, your total is 8.

If you roll five or more: Turn to 4.

If you roll four or less: Turn to 5.

If you roll nine or more: Turn to 6.

Number 2

You stride up the road towards the crayon house with a bold step. As you reach the gate you're aware of a great, glaring eye staring down at you with a bloodshot gaze from the upstairs window. It's unnerving to say the least. You need to note that you've been *spotted*. Then you're out of sight and at the door.

Now: Turn to 7.

Number 3

It's best to be careful. You never know quite what's going on and even the most innocent and innocuous of things can be someone's nightmare. You hunker down and scurry, using what cover you can. The thing upstairs is *watchful*, but also *distracted* and rolls a two, getting a total of only two. You're *lean* and *quick* so roll a die and add two. Don't forget, if you roll a one you take it away and roll again, taking away every time you roll another one. If you roll a six you add that on and roll again and every extra six adds another one to the total.

If you get more than two: Turn to 7

If you get less than two: Turn to 7 but make a note that you have been *spotted*.

Number 4

There's something lurking at the upper window of the crayon house. Its great eye stares out a moment but doesn't seem to see you. At least not yet. The sight of it fills you with dread. It's definitely something nasty, nasty and powerful.

Now: Return to Start, but you may not observe again.

Number 5

The house seems harmless enough. You can't make anything dangerous or troublesome out through its windows. How dangerous could a child's imagination be anyway?

Now: Return to Start but you may not observe again.

Number 6

You take your time, crouching behind an overturned wheelie-bin in the road while you watch the house. Half squinting and thinking back to your own childhood you're able to make a bit more sense of what you're seeing. The perspective of the house is all wrong, as though it were gigantic. The window that seems to belong to the living room is flickering hypnotically and there's something – something horrible – lurking at the upper window. You had best be careful.

Now: Return to Start but you may not observe again.

Number 7

You reach the front of the crayon house. Spiky, bright green grass jabs at you and crude, paper flowers sway in time to a breeze that doesn't exist. The door looms hugely in front of you, the door handle out of reach. You wonder how the devil you're going to be able to get inside.

Jump for the handle: Turn to 8

Draw a catflap on the door: Turn to 9

Shoot the lock: Turn to 10

Number 8

You're *lean* and *quick* but the handle is *very high* and *out of reach*. The door rolls one so the difficulty to reach it is only two. Roll a die and add two to try and beat that. Don't forget, if you roll a one you take it away and roll again, taking away every time you roll another one. If you roll a six you add that on and roll again and every extra six adds another one to the total.

If you roll two or more: Turn to 11.

If you roll two or less: Turn to 12.

Number 9

As an artist you're able to manipulate the reality of the world using your talent combined with your mental illness. In the proper game you will only be able to do this so many times as it puts a strain on your mental resources. For now, however, you can draw the catflap easily enough, creating a space for you to crawl through.

Number 10

You don't need to roll for this. It's easy enough to shoot the lock off. You raise your pistol and pump three rounds into the door with ear-hammering bangs. Then the door swings open to reveal the hallway within. Make a note that you have been *spotted*.

Now: Turn to 13.

Number 11

You leap up and stretch as far as you can. Your fingers just barely grasp the door handle and yank it, twisting it just enough for it to pop open. It feels weird, like paper, but it's also as tough as metal. Either way it swings open, granting you access to the house beyond.

Now: Turn to 13.

Number 12

You leap into the air as high as you can and scramble for the handle. Try as you might you can't quite reach it though and land with a heavy thump on the doorstep. You've sprained something and landing awkwardly has bruised a lot of your muscle. Make a note that you are *bruised*.

Now: Turn to 7. You can try jumping again if you want.

Number 13

The door swings open to reveal the hallway within. Like the outside, it's crudely rendered, seemingly in crayon. Something feels more 'real' about it, though. The inside is more solid than the outside, more firmly imagined and understood perhaps. From your left comes the muffled sound of a television in what must be the living room. To your right is an open door to what you think must be the kitchen. Ahead of you are stairs, outsized, like those of a giant's castle, ascending to the upper floor of the house.

Go to the living room: Turn to 14.

Go to the kitchen: Turn to 15.

Climb the stairs: Turn to 16.

Number 14

You step to the side into the living room. Despite the window you could see in from outside, it's dark in here and feels like evening. There's a tired, heavy quality to the air and the television is a flickering mass of light, barely discernible faces wittering on and on and on... God, it's so boring, even if you can't make it out.

Wait and try and work out what it's saying: Turn to 17.

Get out of there: Turn back to 13.

Number 15

The room seems to distort, dizzily, as you step inside. Everything seems to stretch up and away, rising around you like cliffs. When the room stops spinning you look up at the giant chairs and the enormous table, but towering over them all is the massive, massive fridge which ascends like Mount Olympus into the sky and at the very top of it you can barely make out the form of a stuffed toy bear.

Go back to the hall: Turn back to 13.

Try and climb the fridge: Turn to 18.

Number 16

It's hard. Each step is almost as tall as you are. You have to haul yourself up and over each time and by the time you reach the landing at the top of the stairs you're pretty exhausted. You stop to catch your breath and in the relative silence while you get your energy back you hear a roaring voice from behind the door at the top of the stairs: "NO TOYS! NO SWEETS! NOTHING, YOU UNGRATEFUL LITTLE SHIT! NOTHING FOR YOU!" and then there's a loud smack.

Go into the room: Turn to 19.

Number 17

The droning voice on the television sounds almost like a newsreader, but there are no words. It's just a long, boring, hypnotic drone. You find your head nodding, your eyes closing, it's lulling you slowly into unconsciousness. You need to resist. The television is *very hypnotic* and *very boring*, all you have going for you is your *keen mind* and your *thoughtful* nature. Your *depression* counts against you because it makes you tired and erodes your will to resist. The television rolls a two, for a grand total of six. You need to beat that with a dice roll and you only get to add one. Don't forget, if you roll a one you take it away and roll again, taking away every time you roll another one. If you roll a six you add that on and roll again and every extra six adds another one to the total.

If you roll six or more: Turn to 20

If you roll five or less: Turn to 21

Number 18

The fridge towers above you. Much of it is smooth but there are stains, pictures, magnets and postcards stuck all over it which should give you a way up. The fridge is *utterly huge* and *vertiginous* and rolls five, for a total of nine. That's what you need to beat. *Lean* and *quick* count for you, so you roll and add two. Don't forget, if you roll a one you take it away and roll again, taking away every time you roll another one. If you roll a six you add that on and roll again and every extra six adds another one to the total.

If you roll nine or more: Turn to 22

If you roll eight or less: Turn to 23

Number 19

You enter the room and see a little girl, cowering in the shadow of a gigantic, ugly creature that almost looks like an ogre from a storybook – save for its shirt, tie and loafers. It twists towards you with a howl of anger and raises enormous fists, seeming to grow even bigger as it lunges to the attack.

The ogre is *very strong*, *very tough* and a *professional fighter*. That gives it a total bid of seven, plus a roll of five for a combined total of twelve. That's what you need to score to beat it.

You are *lean* and *quick* as well as being a *novice marksman*. That gives you a bid of three. Your Browning pistol gives you *powerful* and *rapid-fire* which brings your bid total to five.

If you are *bruised* or *spotted*, take one away from your total. If you're both, take away two.

Don't forget, if you roll a one you take it away and roll again, taking away every time you roll another one. If you roll a six you add that on and roll again and every extra six adds another one to the total.

If you roll thirteen or more: Turn to 24.

If you roll twelve or less: Turn to 25.

If you have the stuffed bear and want to throw it at the ogre: Turn to 26.

Number 20

You shake your head hard and give yourself a slap to snap out of it. You stagger free of the room and close the door behind you, drowning out the droning sound of the television beyond. You shake your head again, blinking, pinching yourself to try and stay alert. It isn't easy.

Now: Turn to 13.

Number 21

You stagger and fall into the comfortable seat of the sofa, eyes drawn to the flickering light of the television. Your eyes grow heavy, your body slips from your control and sinks slowly into the seat. The last thing you're aware of is darkness closing around you and the feel of dry bones crunching beneath you as the sofa swallows you up into its cushiony embrace.

The End

Number 22

Inch by inch, step by step, fridge magnet by fridge magnet, you crawl your way up the face of mount fridge. After an exhausting toil that seems to go on forever you haul yourself up over the top and find yourself standing amongst crumbs and cobwebs and next to a little stuffed bear. You can take it with you if you want. If you do, make a note. Climbing down is much easier. It doesn't seem as high or as big from up here.

Now: Turn back to 13.

Number 23

You ascend the fridge as best you can, holding on here and there to fridge magnets and lumps of blu-tac. You are around half-way up the face of the thing when the magnetic letter 'A' that you are clinging to pops free of the front of the fridge and you tumble to the distant tiles of the kitchen floor below. You land hard, breaking your leg. The bone protrudes from the skin and you scream in anguish as you lay in a spreading pool of blood. If your friends don't find you, you'll die...

The End

Number 24

You raise your pistol in anger and march towards the looming ogre, firing your pistol. Bullets slam into its body but – strangely – there's no blood. It reels and falls before your assault and collapses, flat, dead, boiling away in a murmuring cloud of blue invective.

Now: Turn to 27

Number 25

You roar and raise your pistol, firing round after round into the body of the ogre as it swings towards you. The shots are like bee-stings to the thing, enraging it. You fire and fire and fire until the hammer comes down on an empty magazine. "Shit," is all you have time to say before those great club fists smash into you. You are hurled, out of the broken window in a shower of paper-glass, tumbling face first to the road below and the dark veil of death.

The End

Number 26

Seized by a sudden inspiration, you grab the stuffed bear and hurl it at the ogre. In mid-air the bear seems to expand and grow. Its muzzle tears open in a snarl revealing sharp and terrible teeth. Its paws spread to reveal sharp and terrible claws. It grows until it is an enormous grizzly, the equal in mass and ferocity to the ogre and the pair of them clash, smashing out of the window and tumbling to the street below. You dash to the window and see the bear, victorious, tear out the ogre's throat before it starts to shrink back again. Just an ordinary, stuffed bear.

Now: Turn to 27

Number 27

The house starts to fade back to normal around you as the ogre is defeated. The little girl, snot-nosed with tears and grubby from head to foot, opens her eyes and runs to you. Awake now, the locus she formed unravels and the house turns back into the dull but ravaged suburban home it once was. She clings to you as you pick her up and carry her down the stairs and out of the house, into the street and out into the soft drizzle of the rain. You did something good here today.

The End

The Disaster

How did all this happen?

What happened to break the world and why did it only happen in the mainland United Kingdom?

What is it?

How does it take effect?

Why has it stopped?

Nobody really knows the answer to any of these questions and the whole affair is peculiarly resistant to analysis, understanding or control.

Whatever the event was it started in Scotland, in Glasgow, and spread outward rapidly until it engulfed the entire country. The disaster spread from mind to mind and city to city like an infection, taking all of two weeks to reach the capital and forcing a hasty and haphazard evacuation.

The infectious breakdown of reality spread most quickly in the cities where people were concentrated in large numbers. Where people were more spread out things were less chaotic and the spread was much slower. The capital was overrun while people were still trying to work out precisely what the nature of the event was. The government was all but wiped out, engulfed in the reality breakdown before any proper reaction could take place. The entire country was blanketed within a month.

The change period was chaotic with people's dreams and nightmares battling each other to try and find a state of equilibrium which has – now – finally been found. The country is divided into chaotic and clashing realities with the minds of most of the population swallowed up into the dream world that has changed the land forever.

British refugees are settled in large camps on the islands that surround the mainland and a security cordon maintained by NATO and EU aerial and naval assets do all they can to ensure the British Isles stay quarantined. People are allowed to travel to the surrounding islands, but not to leave again for fear the infection will spread. The refugees are supported by air drops and remote assets but investigating the disaster is down to the rump of the British nation that remains. Nobody else dares as a nation-state, though some people voluntarily join the exiles from other nations.

The barrier between reality and fantasy, between imagination and perception, has been broken down. The creatures, places and things of fiction and delirium are now real and true and to be found moving amongst the sleepwalking populace. Different imaginations have different power; some creatures are enormous and strong and others are small and weak.

Some are believed in by many, some by almost none. Imaginations and dreams clash, especially in what remains of the cities, destroying and killing, tearing apart the real and physical land that still remains beneath the veneer of dreams and nightmares, and every day a little bit more of the old country is lost.

Only those who are both creative and mentally abnormal can resist the effect of the changed world. They can enter and leave the mainland without lasting effect. They're the only hope the country has of being brought back to life, back to normality. They're the only hope for the rescue of the people trapped in their own hallucinations.

They may even be able to find a solution and to track down the cause. Whatever it is. Perhaps none of this makes any kind of sense though. Maybe it can't be fixed. Maybe it can only be coped with.

I were in London when it 'appened. On leave. I were up in the London Eye, up real high like, with me girlfriend. They was still tryin' to pretend nothin' was wrong back then but it was pretty obvious there was. I was getting called back to duty the next day but it wasn't far enough.

You could see the weirdness falling over the city like a wave, like a bubble. On one side everythin' was normal, on the other everythin' was weird. It's hard to describe. It 'urt your eyes to look, like it was twisted, like the sky is now. We got off an' ran for it. Barely made it.

Corporal Vernon Higgins,
Wight Rifles

POST
CARD





The State of Play

It has been a whole year since reality has broken down and a lot has changed. Things have settled into a new sort of equilibrium. The world has gotten used to the altered state – as much as it can – and it has moved on. Britain is considered lost and any special relationships or favours it was owed have been used up. The international community does a little to look after what remains but the scattered islands that are all that remains of Britain are under a great deal of pressure.

The Isle of Man has gone fully independent and separated itself completely from British rule. It may, or may not, end up falling in with the newly united Ireland, perhaps as part of the devolved special region that is now the former Northern Ireland. Similarly the Channel Islands have severed ties and, for the time-being, are administered by their own government, but now under the aegis of the French Republic. The Shetland Islands have joined their fate to the Faroes and the Kingdom of Denmark. Gibraltar has gone to Spain and – perhaps more contentiously – the Falkland Islands have been occupied by Argentina against the wishes of the islanders. All the other overseas territories have similarly allied with or fallen under the aegis of their local neighbours whether voluntarily or not.

The United Kingdom, as an actual territory, now only consists of the Isle of Wight, The Hebrides, the Orkneys and a scattering of other islands. Anglesey was lost along with the mainland which supports the concern of the international community that the problem can spread.

The population that still considers itself 'British' is now limited to these few remaining islands, to refugee camps on the other islands or enclaves at the sufferance of other countries, particularly those of the former commonwealth. Britain has lost all of its prestige, power and respect in one blow, to be replaced – at best – with pity.

ExPatriots

Before the disaster the UK population was around sixty-five million. Around six-million UK citizens lived permanently overseas. Tourists and refugees that managed to flee or stay outside the mainland United Kingdom brought that total to around ten million. Some fifty million people are unaccounted for on the mainland and the combined population of the remaining islands (Wight, Hebrides, Orkneys) is around one-million.

The British who were abroad when the disaster hit have largely been allowed to stay in the nations that they were visiting, especially in the cases where these were Commonwealth countries or nations with good political relationships with the United Kingdom. America, for example, has welcomed many ex-patriots.

Canada and Australia have proven the most popular settlement areas for ex-patriots and the Royal Family and what remains of the UK government resides – in exile – in Canada, presiding over the remaining wealth of the United Kingdom.

They do what they can to look after the fate of its citizens around the world but their ability to do anything is increasingly limited.

The islands around the mainland have accepted those ex-patriots who have chosen to return and to offer aid. They fall under military jurisdiction. Technically the remnants of the UK military are independent and sovereign, though in practice they are in thrall to the international task force that maintains the quarantine.

There are also non-UK citizens who, for one reason or another, choose to move to the islands. Some want to help, some are curious, some feel that science or human interest can only be furthered by studying the phenomenon. Still others are glory-seekers, artists, hippies, new-agers and the like who think that this is some wonderful new development. Many of those do not last long and those misguided enough to try and get to the mainland without sanction may get interdicted, even killed, by the quarantine enforcement.

The Military

The combined forces of the United Kingdom took a huge hit with the loss of the mainland. Soldiers used to try and contain the chaos were lost, and troops stationed abroad lost their supply chain and were no longer receiving useful orders.

The retreat to the Commonwealth has been largely orderly but the air and land forces are a shadow of their former selves. Only the navy retains any of its old power and is stationed around the Isles to maintain the blockade, while losing unneeded elements for much needed money to Commonwealth navies.

The military now runs the close-in islands and the navy claims pre-eminence. Remaining land forces are largely Royal Marines, small Territorial Army units and the remnants of forces that were stationed overseas when the disaster hit. There's not a great deal that the military can do other than to maintain order, organise the refugees and to try and support the expeditions to the mainland. Long term it's likely that the military will end up being swallowed up into the Commonwealth nations.

People can get bored of anything. We already knew that when it came to things like compassion fatigue. 'Oh, there are Africans starving again? I gave last month. Pass the hummus, Tarquin'. People stop giving a toss and even the harshest or strangest of conditions become dull as ditchwater after a couple of weeks. I mean, you'd think a total breakdown in the fabric of reality would still be top-billing news but it only took a month, at most, for the disaster to slip down the news bill. 'Oh, Britain's still an abyss of hallucinatory, magical weirdness? Could I have some more guacamole please, Tabitha?' I mean, Christ, what does it take to hold someone's attention?

Harry O'Connell

UK diplomat,
Australia.

POST
CARD



The Islands

Life on the islands is not easy for those who have found themselves there. Every inhabited island has at least doubled its population in the wake of the disaster with military, ex-patriots and refugees swelling their numbers. Places that were once tourist spots are now crowded with people and tent cities have sprung up while more permanent accommodation is organised and built – much more slowly than it is needed.

Every close island is under military rule and has been since the disaster was first responded to. Armed soldiers are found throughout the island, complementing the small island police forces to maintain order. A thankless task in the camps which are full of stressed people living in difficult circumstances where almost everyone is touched by loss.

The ‘Blitz Spirit’ has returned to some extent and land on the islands in fields and gardens has been turned over almost entirely to home-producing food. People have come together in a heartening way as much as they have turned upon each other. The remnants of the government choose to play up the good and to ignore the bad.

These home efforts have been supported by charitable outpourings from around the world but most especially from the United States and Europe. That support has started to curtail as hardships around the world, triggered by Britain’s collapse, begin to bite and governments become more interested in their own, internal problems.

Anything more than the blockade is resented by vocal factions within these other governments. The treatment of Britons abroad ranges from heroes to pitiable to pariahs.

Conditions are cramped, hard and communal and any progress is slow to come. The only short cut to better living conditions – since nobody from these islands is allowed to leave – is to join or become useful to the military. Those who are immune to the effects from the mainland are the most valuable and amongst the most rewarded – and resented.

The Blockade

Mainland Britain is subject to a huge, expensive and deadly blockade made up of remnants of the Royal Navy and Air Force and elements of NATO and European navies and other forces. The strangeness that has overtaken Britain is so feared that its entire airspace is off-limits and there is a naval exclusion zone surrounding it, out to former claims of territorial waters.

Nobody is allowed in or out save for small military expeditions under British authority. There are harsh penalties – death in almost every case – for those who transgress but that doesn't stop some people trying to penetrate the blockade and to reach the mainland for one misguided reason or another. Very rarely someone – or something – will try to leave the mainland as well.

Both cases are met with extreme force.

The cost of maintaining the blockade is a huge commitment, even on a global scale, and there are constant moves on the part of the UN to get wider involvement from non-UN, non-Commonwealth nations. Thus far these have been stiffly rebuked and many think that NATO and America in particular are seeking to find ways to use the phenomenon economically or militarily.

No blockade is perfect and a small trickle of black-market trade runs in and out of the islands. Strange items from the mainland find their way to the outside world despite the death penalty, and luxury goods make their way to the islands, off the radar. Thus far, fortunately, the phenomenon has not spread, despite these breaches.

Aerially the blockade is largely maintained by drone aircraft, supplemented by RAF remnants on the islands and the presence of the USS Ronald Reagan and aircraft stationed in Ireland, France, Iceland and Scandinavia. The whole area is also under constant satellite scrutiny and new satellite launches are planned for better observation and understanding of the phenomenon. This is currently made very difficult by the presence of the 'Monad', a cloud of 'psychic' energy that hangs over the mainland.

Base Foxtrot

Base Foxtrot is the largest of three reclamation areas, really little more than small military encampments, that have been set up on the mainland. The others being Base Whisky at Ullapool in Scotland and Base Tango at Holyhead.

Base Foxtrot is currently the largest concentration of military personnel and equipment located on the mainland and is constricted to a small area in the south of Brighton bounded by the A2010 to the west, Chichester Place to the east, and Eastern Road to the north. Base Foxtrot includes the Royal Sussex County Hospital and Brighton Pier. The pier forms the command base for operations in the south of England.

Base Foxtrot is a tense and difficult place to work. Its borders are patrolled by Lo-Bots and the area within the safe zone is kept completely clear of 'dreamers' and anyone who has been affected by the phenomenon. People are only allowed back from the base after a complete check-up and quarantine which takes place on the pier. People who are rescued, dreamers who are awakened, are also subject to the same screening before being allowed to leave the mainland. Very few people can be processed and looked after at a time, perhaps a maximum of a hundred.

Base Foxtrot is constantly being probed by the dream-offspring of dreamers further inland. Thus far the robust defence offered by drones, Lo-Bots and regular troops has kept them at bay but the constant aura of strangeness, the siege mentality and the presence of the 'Monad' overhead preys upon the minds of even the strongest people.

Base Whisky and Base Tango are in similar straits but, being in less populated areas are less problematic. They're also a lot less useful for the same reason and are mostly used as shakedown training areas for Lo-Bots and Reclaimers.

LoBoTs

Of those who weren't subsumed and became dreamers, many were driven mad by the things they'd seen, experienced or even spawned during the event. Many people lost loved ones, homes, entire families to the phenomenon and were left with nothing. Most of those who survived well were those who were already mad in some way. The creative free spirits who already sailed close to the edge of insanity and the dream lands were immune and capable, but it turned out there was another way to be rendered immune.

The lobotomised are immune to the effects of the phenomenon as are many of those who have suffered brain damage or had brain tumours removed. The lobotomy is the most predictable and 'useful' of the causes of immunity and has been used on volunteers to create a corps of 'Lo-Bots', lobotomised soldiers who can take part in land operations and stand guard without fear of contamination.

It is a controversial technique and rumours abound that Lo-Bots are not all volunteers. It is repeatedly claimed that criminals, rather than being put to death under military law, are forced to undergo the procedure and that soldiers driven mad during the evacuation were also forced to undergo the procedure. As of yet no proof of this has been uncovered but it remains a persistent concern and complaint and a topic of much debate and speculation.

Lo-Bots lose much of their personality and become slavish and weak-willed, open to exploitation by their superiors and civilians. They retain much of their training but are frequently child-like, showing dulled initiative, inappropriate humour and frequent incontinence. It is standard policy for Lo-Bots to be dressed up in gas masks or chemical warfare suits to make them less 'human' and less relatable to the rest of the survivors.

Lo-Bots remain controversial, especially outside the remnants of the UK but, so long as they are all volunteers, there remains little reason not to use them and they are an essential part of the fight-back to reclaim the mainland.

The Government

What remains of the UK government is undemocratic and really little more than a caretaker group for what assets and money the UK had spread around the globe at the time of the disaster. Not every politician made it out of the country and many remain within it. Those who were not part of the cabinet have been expunged and now an emergency cabinet rules the rump of the UK governmental structure from the British Embassy in Canada and surrounding buildings hired for that purpose.

The Queen remains the nominal head of the country, such as it is, and also resides within Canada. The Royal Family has become an important totem of Britishness and a new patriotism and nationalism – odd for a country that no longer has a nation – has risen up around them.

The government remains unpopular and is even more heavily influenced by wealthy corporate concerns than it was before the crisis. The wealthy heads of British corporations were able to extract themselves speedily, along with much of their assets.

For most British people on the islands or spread around the globe, the government is an irrelevance. Most have been offered citizenship – or dual citizenship – in allied and Commonwealth countries and have taken it to better secure their futures. The government is seen to attend to corporate and military interests and not those of the people as a whole for

whom they seem to be doing the bare minimum.

Each island has its own elected civil representatives, but the real power and authority rests with the military stationed at each island. They keep order, they dole out the supplies and they organise missions, house building and other day-to-day operations around the islands. Each is under a strict code of military justice which can be oppressive but, by and large, things run relatively smoothly.

The Dream Trade

The dream creatures don't seem to be interested in moving any further afield than the exclusion zone around the British mainland, but they can. Samples of dream material, even dream creatures (though they have not been kept) have been taken to the surrounding islands and in cases of black market export have turned up as far afield as Japan and America.

Literally anything someone might desire or want can be made real on the mainland. Many things have already been made real by the minds of those who are trapped there. Science, physics, reality – these mean little. The things that are drawn from the mainland defy them, even when removed from that locale. This means that they're treated as dangerous and that's why smuggling is banned, but that doesn't stop it occurring. The rewards are so great that many officers are willing to look the other way, especially if the people engaged in the smuggling are important personnel. They can't afford to lose a lot of people, least of all Reclaimers.

Rich and powerful collectors can offer life-changing amounts of money, security for relatives and any number of other incentives to twist how things are supposed to work. No amount of security and punishment can overcome wealth and privilege at that level and these 'magical' objects are slowly spreading, despite all the efforts made to make sure they don't.

The Dream Trade – as this black market is known – is extremely secretive, with access to people at high levels of authority. They stand to lose a lot if they're exposed and so have a great deal of incentive to keep things quiet and to get rid of witnesses. Those few in the hierarchy not corrupted by The Dream Trade are subjected to a massive amount of pressure from the international community to put a stop to it.

Reclaimers

Lo-Bots are only useful for holding ground. They lack the initiative needed to take and hold objectives or to deal with dangers that require creative thinking. Ordinary soldiers and agents sent to the mainland get swallowed up and become dreamers. There's really only one option for fighting back, exploring the mainland and trying to get a handle on what's going on, and that's the Reclaimers.

The Reclaimers is the name given to those who are immune to the phenomenon on the mainland, the creative, damaged individuals who can venture into the dream world and return relatively unscathed. There's no real choice as to who is a Reclaimer and virtually none of them are the sort to follow conventional military orders or to have appropriate training. Needs must, however, and with cursory training and basic equipment groups of Reclaimers are sent into the weirdness to try and find answers and resources, and to try and bring the world back to itself.

Reclaimers are given the honorary rank of 2nd Lieutenant in the army, regardless of their origin or original nationality. This is a source of some resentment in the lower ranks but, technically, the Reclaimers are a special-forces unit and need their rank to command respect. Reclaimers are usually equipped with side arms, webbing and basic survival gear.

They are not required to wear uniform and are given a tremendous amount of leeway, good food and good quarters as compensation for their actions.

Reclaimers are the only ones who can be sent into the mainland from the coast. Sometimes alone, sometimes in small units, sometimes accompanied by Lo-Bots over whom they have command. Missions can be engaged to rescue people from the dream world, to deal with loci, to retrieve important resources, to deal with powerful dream entities or simply to scout out the land, ready for future missions.

The Monad

'Monad' is the name given to the roiling mass of 'psychic' energy that collects over the mainland. The sky is often filled with strange visions, peculiarly shaped clouds, faces, half-formed ideas, lights and sounds. It is a constant and surreal companion to every step taken on the mainland.

The Monad is theorised to be the point of interface between the real world and the dream world that has invaded the mainland. Much like the Aurora Borealis, the radiant energy from the dreamers' minds hits the 'barrier' of the real world and bleeds off in these strange and peculiar ways.

A stronger Monad often indicates a concentration of dreamers or the presence of loci. When particularly strong the visions in the Monad can take on a reality of their own, without the need for a strong dreamer and this can result in showers of fish, frogs and other, stranger peculiarities.

What more can we do? Me and my husband, Bill, we moved out here to Australia a few years back. It cost a lot and a lot of our pensions and savings were still in Britain. We're living hand to mouth now and people's sympathy is running out. People back home are crying out for help, but we've got nothing we can give. We need help ourselves. It breaks my heart. The government should do more.

Ellen Carter

ex-patriot,
Australia

POST
CARD



Figments, Dreams and Nightmares

A lot of people have died, or so it seems, consumed by the nightmarish visions of their friends and neighbours, by fear made flesh. There are houses full of bones but it is impossible to tell if they are dreamed or real. The nightmarish creatures that lurk here, there and everywhere are certainly dangerous, more than capable of killing Lo-Bots and Reclaimers that cross their path.

Not everything that the dreamers and loci have conjured into being is dangerous though. There are castles in the sky and beloved childhood toys made real. There are rainbows, fantastical forests, jewelled caves.

As well as the nightmares, there are figments. Dream citizens made real, made alive, trying to find their own way to live. Not all of them are evil, not all of them are dangerous, but to the remnants of the UK, huddled on their islands, everything is the enemy.

Sleepers

Almost everyone who still survives on the mainland is a Sleeper. They're sunk into their dreams and delusions, their minds producing the fantastical changes, the dreams and nightmares around them. They are not as powerful as Reclaimers or Loci but there are so many more of them that as a group they are much more powerful. They wander like sleepwalkers, seemingly without the need for food or water, caught up in their own delusions and preyed upon by the spawn of so many minds.

They can be awakened, briefly, snapped out of their hypnotic state to answer questions but, unless removed from the zone of the phenomenon, they soon return to that same state and continue feeding into the strangeness around them.

The ultimate aim of the Reclaimer project, the Lo-Bots, everything that is being done, is to take back the country and to free the Sleepers but until that can be accomplished they're not a priority. They're even to be considered acceptable collateral damage for the furtherance of the main goal.

Sleepers can be found everywhere. They can be lying in bed, slumped at street corners, lying down on the back seats of cars, wandering blindly through the chaos, everywhere. After a few missions into the mainland these poor unfortunate people often become part of the landscape, impossible to relate to, benign zombies who do little more than get in the way.

Reload, you retarded bunch of useless bastards!
Base Foxtrot, we need reinforcing on the eastern
perimeter. Heavy figment incursion. Fuck, I don't know
what they are, some kind of crab-women mostly.
Unit One! Aim for that giant green wanker, twelve
rounds rapid!

Lieutenant Brigitte Alt

Base Foxtrot

POST
CARD



Loci

Loci come in two forms: those who are simply very powerful dreamers and those who have an element of control like Reclaimers. Both present a more powerful challenge for Reclaimers on their missions and are frequent targets for missions.

Powerful dreamers are centres of the phenomenon and they warp the reality around them much more strongly, replacing rather than overlaying the world around them. They can spawn particularly powerful and independent figments. Loci of this sort are often children or the mentally impaired, though this is by no means always the case. Awakening or eliminating these Loci greatly weakens the phenomenon in their area, making them a priority target for Reclaimer operations.

Creatives are the second kind of Locus and all the more unpredictable and dangerous. Immune to the effects of the phenomenon, and often unhinged, they find themselves awake amidst a nation of sleepers and able to conjure and change the world around them. In this changed landscape they are almost gods. Some Reclaimers have even gone rogue, setting up their own fiefdoms and living out their dreams. Power corrupts and the ability to shape the world makes for the ultimate form of power, and corruption.

It's weird. So very weird. The seafront is still all painted up for holidaymakers. There's boarded up sweet shops, windows full of postcards. Beach huts and deck chairs in stacks all along the beach.

Then there's the razor wire and the sea defences and they don't let you down on most of the beaches in case 'things' have washed up overnight. Kids will be kids though. Yesterday when we got up someone had drawn a massive penis in the sand.

We make do. It's just weird. I'm not sure if I'm on holiday or in prison.

Morris Ferguson

refugee, Ventnor

POST
CARD





CHARACTERS

Every player – apart from the Games Master – has a character that they play in the game. An avatar, just like a character in a computer game. This character has its own personality, characteristics and capabilities. Your character can be just about anything you want to be provided that it makes sense. You may need to negotiate a little with the Games Master but, by and large, you can make up anyone you want.

There are rules for making up a character, so that you can't start out too powerfully and so that you have places to go, room for your character to develop as they have their adventures. *The Description System* means that this is all done through description, words, that you can write up into a paragraph much as you would write the description of a character in a book.

POST
CARD



Give me another pint will you, Marcie? Yeah, bad day.
Bunch of fuckwit hippy kids tried to sail over to the
mainland from France. Don't know how they got
past the French, bribes maybe. We warned them and
they told us they were 'Indigo Children' and that
Britain was the birthplace of the 'Aquarian Age' or
some shit. We warned them again and fired a
warning shot. They still wouldn't stop so the Captain
ordered us to fire. Bye bye, pretty hippy girls.

Can I get a whisky chaser with that, love? I'll need it.

Alfie Seaman Patrick Gibbons

HMS Puncher

CHARACTER CREATION CHECKLIST

1. Get something to write your character down on.
2. Think about what sort of character you want to play.
3. Try and think of a suitable name for your character, and a nickname if appropriate.
4. Scribble down five adjectives that describe your character. You can qualify them with 'very' which means they count twice or use another adverb to make them count as three.
5. You have three occupational skills at 'novice'. You can double up for 'professional' or put them all into one skill for 'Master'. At least one skill should match your art or creative ability.
6. Choose an artistic talent that your character has. This determines your 'powers' on the mainland.
7. Choose a mental illness issue that your character suffers from and note down its effects.
8. Pick a few bits and pieces that your character might carry, have or wear as a matter of course.
9. Check things over with the Games Master to be sure nothing is missed.
10. Jot down your character description as a paragraph and come up with some background ideas.

We can't plan any sort of defence.
We can just try to deal with things as they happen.
We exhaust our imaginations trying to think of what's
going to be thrown at us and then it still takes you
by surprise. The last thing to try and retake the area
was a bright blue creeping vine that shot seeds like
bullets from exploding flowers. It's constant
improvisation so we need more supplies, more Lo-Bots
and more ideas, or we're not going to be able to hold
what we've got, let alone push deeper inland.

Captain Piers Honeycutt
Base Foxtrot

POST
CARD



Who are you?

Who is your character?

What is their name?

Where do they come from and what's their history?

How did they escape the world going mad?

Are they British? Most people involved are, though some others have volunteered from other nations. Maybe they're not an escapee, maybe they're an islander or an ex-patriot?

You don't have to write all this down but it's a good idea to think through as much as you can about your character before you set about making them up. Strong ideas make for good characters and the more excited and interested you are in your character, the more invested you'll be in the game, the character and the events. The more easily the 'hard work' of describing your character will come and the more you'll enjoy it.

POST
CARD



How do I feel? Heh. I don't know really. Everything seems kind of stupid. When I look over the sea it looks less real than it did before.

Heh, sorry, I farted.

Everything seems a little less real or important than it did. I know I'm supposed to do my duty but it's hard to remember what that is. I think I can still use my gun. I know I did this for a reason but it doesn't seem as important any more. Can you help me up? I think I peed myself.

Heh.

Unknown Lo-Bot, Newport

Describe Yourself

Your character description is made up of traits. These include adjectives, occupations and your mental illness and artistic talent.

Adjectives

Adjectives are descriptive words. As applied to your character these describe the things they're good at, the way they look and so on. You should try to be a bit more creative in your selection of adjectives rather than just describing a character as 'strong' or 'tough'. A thesaurus is very useful for this as it can give you any number of synonyms of more mundane words.

It's said that English has more adjectives than any other language, so you shouldn't have any trouble coming up with creative words. Here are some examples that all derive from the word 'strong' in one sense or another, just to show you how broad you can go:

Able, able-bodied, active, acute, aggressive, athletic, big, brave, capable, clear, cogent, courageous, dedicated, deep, draconian, durable, eager, enduring, energetic, fervent, fervid, fierce, firm, fixed, forceful, forcible, gutsy, hale, handful, hard as nails, hard-nosed, hardy, hearty, heavy, heavy-duty, in fine feather, independent, intelligent, intense, iron-willed, keen, mean, mighty, muscular, perceptive, plucky, potent, pushy, reinforced, resilient, resourceful, robust, rugged, sagacious, secure, self-assertive, severe, sharp, sinewy, solid, sound, stable, stalwart, stark, staunch, steadfast, steady, stout, strapping, strict, sturdy, substantial, take charge, tenacious, tough, unbending, uncompromising, unyielding, vehement, vigorous, violent, well-built, wicked or zealous.

Frankly, Miss Haiger, elections aren't a priority for the war cabinet. The situation is still unfolding and we have virtually no country left. A lot of our citizens are under military jurisdiction and we need the freedom to act without second-guessing every Florida-living ex-patriot spending their dotage in an alligator infested swamp.

The logistics of holding an election, determining MPs and Lords and convening a new Parliament is hardly likely to be what's on anyone's minds yet. Perhaps a few more years from now when things are more concrete. Next question.

- UK Home Secretary, Vancouver, Canada

POST
CARD



You can make an individual adjective stronger by putting a ‘very’ in front of it. This makes it count twice whenever it applies. For example, Dwight might be ‘*very powerful*’.

You can also make an individual adjective even stronger by putting a different adverb in front of it. If Dwight works out for a couple of months, perhaps he can make himself ‘*extremely strong*’ which counts three times whenever it applies.

You can also take strings of similar adjectives and they’ll all count – when it’s appropriate. You might be, for example: ‘*stout, strapping, powerful and very enduring*’ and those all be used for a test of strength.

You get five adjectives in total, ‘*very*’ counts as two, and a different adverb counts as three.

You can choose up to two ‘down’ adjectives. Things that are bad for you like ‘*weak*’ or ‘*lame*’ or ‘*stupid*’. For each one you take, you can have an extra positive adjective or make an existing one more powerful. When your ‘down’ adjectives apply you take them away from your total, instead of adding them.

What can you do?

Skills/occupations/professions are the other, big, important aspect of your character and they’re more wide ranging and applicable than adjectives. A skill is a broad description of what you do. Skills come in three main levels with a fourth that very rarely applies:

- **Novice:** Adds one to any bid where it applies.
- **Professional:** Adds three to any bid where it applies.
- **Master:** Adds five to any bid where it applies.
- **Legendary:** Adds six to any bid where it applies.

A starting character gets three ‘levels’ of skills.

They could take one skill at *Master*, two skills – one at *Professional* and one at *Novice* – or three skills at *Novice*.

Example Skills

Here’s some possible skills that a character might take:

Aristocrat, Assassin, Blacksmith, Confidence Trickster, Cook, Cut-throat, Engineer, Fortune-Teller, Guard, Guide, Hunter, Market-Stall Owner, Office Manager, Painter, Personal Assistant, Poet, Salesman, Scientist, Securities Manager, Security Guard, Thief, Writer.

Whether you take it as a skill or not, you also need to choose one of the arts that your character is focussed upon.

You don't have to have a skill that reflects your artistic ability, but it's a good idea to have one. Besides that you still need to select your art and that will inform you as to how you can twist reality on the mainland.

What Have you Got?

Everyone who is able to survive unfettered and relatively unaffected on the mainland is 'damaged goods' in some way. As well as their creative talent they all suffer some manner of mental aberration or infirmity. These issues also manifest in ways that interact with the mutable reality of the mainland, as well as having more mundane effects away from it.

Some people view their issues as a sickness, others as a benefit, still others as just something individual that marks them out as not being 'neurotypical'. Whatever the case, your character needs to have something peculiar about their mind which, combined with their talent, makes them special.

Character Profiles

You should write out your character profile according to the following example. You can make it wordier if you feel the need but it's not absolutely necessary. John's player spent his free, extra points from his down traits on an extra adjective and another level in a skill:

Name: John Ludd

Description: John is a *lean* and *wiry* individual with a *strong moral-compass* and a *rational* mind. He is *weak* and *out-of-shape* but somehow seems to manage.

Skills: John is a *Professional Writer* and a *Professional Sneak* – from several missions to the mainland.

Art: Writing.

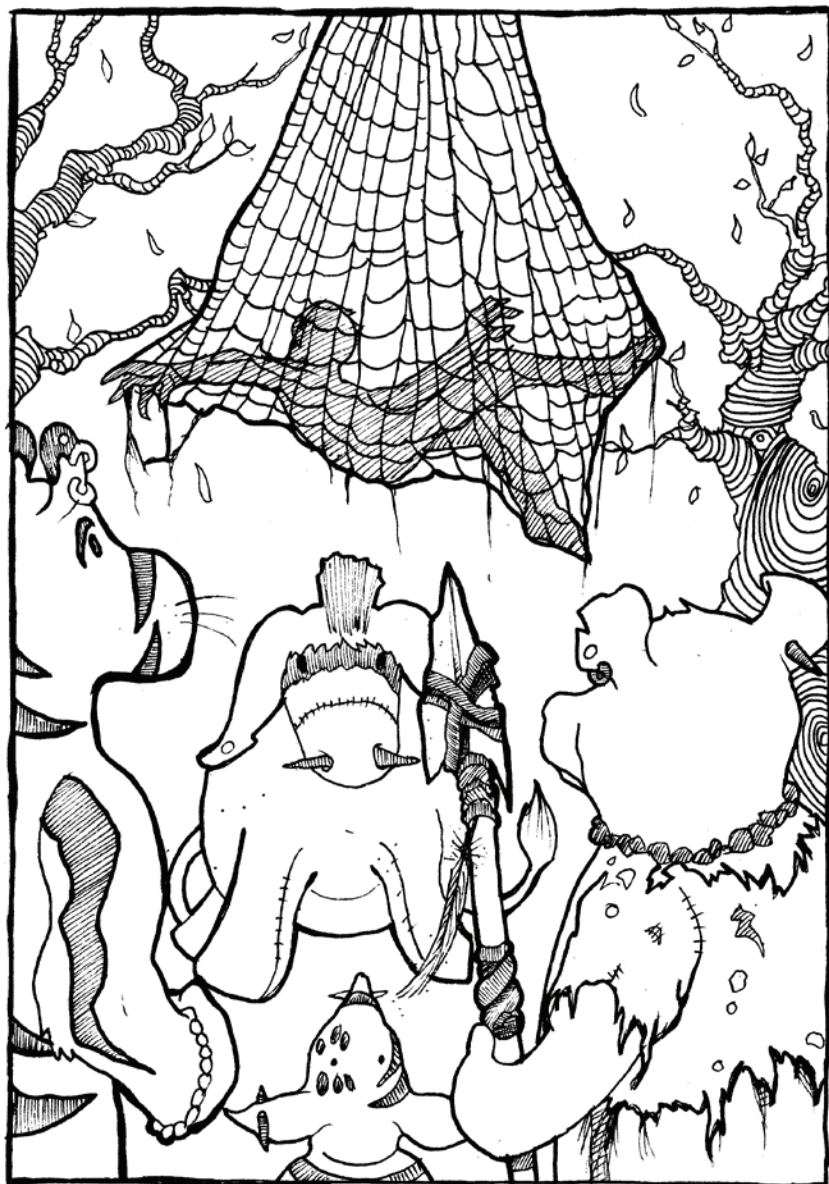
Issue: Depression.

I was a god in there. Everything I could imagine I could make real. Do you have any idea what that's like? A harem of lovers that doesn't need to obey physical reality or any moral constriction. A tower to the clouds filled with servants, any and every diversion I could think of. Then you people roll up and drag me back to this pitiful reality. Send me back. I don't want to be here and I'd rather be dead. Send me back or let me kill myself. Do you even know what porridge tastes like after amebrosia? No, you don't.

Eliza Simpson
'King Klaatu', Parkhurst

POST
CARD





The Arts

Every character who can enter the mainland is a creator of some kind. It needn't be their professional talent but rather something inside a person that drives them to create. Even people who are awful at art, or writing or poetry sometimes feel the drive to create regardless. A character who is good at their art will be more powerful and capable but it's by no means absolutely necessary. Passion is more important than skill.

The arts allow a character to shift and change and create, not just on paper or in their minds but, out on the mainland. They can change themselves, change the landscape, even conjure things out of nothing but their own thoughts.

Do I have anything to say? Damn right I do. I'm not the only person doing this and you know it. Loads of people are doing it. I just didn't want to grease the right palms. You lot, the military, you're in it up to your fucking eyeballs and don't tell me otherwise. How else are you getting the money to pay for all this? For your shiny guns and your fuel and your ammunition.
Hypocritical bastards the lot of you. I'll take that cigarette and the blindfold now.

Erin Dragg

Convicted dream trader (deceased)

POST
CARD



KILL...
DESTROY.



I LIVE TO RUIN
YOU...

Acting

An actor is able to don a mask, a face, the persona and thought structure of another person. They can lie, so well that they can even believe the lies themselves. An actor is mutable, changeable in how they present themselves and – once they enter the shifting reality of the mainland they can change themselves physically, mentally, absolutely, rather than merely pretending.

System:

An Actor has a pool of points that they can use: the combined bonus of their Acting skill bonus and any appropriate adjectives to their acting capability. During the course of a day the Actor can spend these points on a one-for-one basis to change their adjectives or two for one to add additional adjectives. They're always able to revert to their normal self.

Even drastic changes or additions are possible, an actor can give themselves claws, for example, or night vision, animal traits or more conventional changes that alter their description. They can even give themselves down traits, just like during character creation, a maximum of another two which can be spent to give positive adjectives. Multiple traits can all be shifted at once for the cost of one point from the pool and this applies to all talents.

Example:

Aaron has a pool of four. Desperate to get away from a ravening, tentacled beast that is following him he spends two points to transform his 'large' and 'intimidating' traits to 'fast' and 'quick' and another two points to pile a 'hard target' trait on top of that.

You can tell they don't like us. We're shit at taking orders. We're shit at filing reports. We don't show deference to rank. We're artists for Christ's sake. What do we know about ranks and order of battle? Bugger all, that's what. Still, we get good rooms, good money – for what it's worth – rank and privilege because we're all they've got. That means we can get away with a lot of stuff and there's nowt they can do about it.

Jon Cooper,
Reclaimer, Ryde

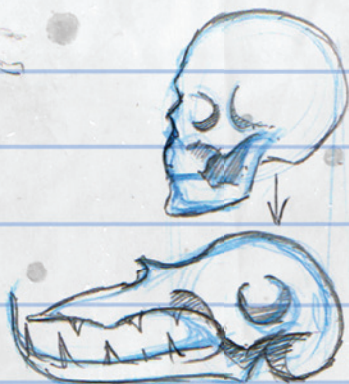
POST
CARD





TRANSFORMATION
STRAIN

WEBBING.



Most people hate it. They find it oppressive and scary, as though the gods were looking down on us from their many heavens and denying us any hope of privacy. As though they're messing with us. It is disturbing when you look up, but I've always liked disturbing things. I was a horror novelist — I would have been. I had a half dozen stories accepted to various fanzines and compilations. I like things that are disturbing. They're strangely comforting. When we get a quiet moment on the mainland I like to lie down, look up and stare the gods straight in the eye. I dare them to hurt us. We made them up like everything else here.

Julian Simpson

Reclaimer, Base Foxtrot

POST
CARD



Architecture

An architect can envision structures and understand how buildings are put together. They can envision things as they are supposed to be, how they could be and as they are. What is drawn and built in an architect's mind is often an ideal that never comes to be in reality. This was starkly shown in the 1960s and 1970s when the concrete housing blocks of British cities turned out to be much worse in practice than in theory.

System:

An architect has a pool of points equal to the total of their architect skill and any appropriate adjectives. They can conjure or change the descriptive traits of a building on a one-for-one basis. These points regenerate after a day. A strong door can become a weak door.

A dark chamber can become a bright chamber. A ruin can become pristine or the pristine can become a ruin. If they want to conjure a shelter out of their mind they can do so, describing it with their available traits. Needing a shelter at night, for example, an architect might use their ability to create a *'hidden, strong bunker, deep beneath the earth with running water.'*

They're a good person to have along.

Example:

Bella has a pool of five points. Faced with a bunker that is housing much needed military supplies she uses her ability to transform *'Completely impregnable'* to *'Completely decrepit'*, making it much easier to break into with the expenditure of one point.



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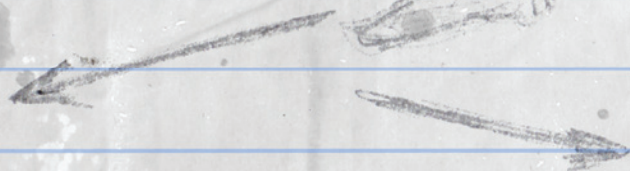
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9

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Dancing

A dancer moves to time, to a beat, they make shapes with their bodies and create a spectacle of themselves that can evoke wonder and envy. Whatever the form the dance takes it ties one into the beat of the music and when there is no music, one can create their own beat.

System:

A dancer can distort time or fascinate with their gyrations. They have a pool of points based on their dance skill and their appropriate adjectives. They can spend these points in one of two ways:

1. So long as they dance their audience can be drawn in, fascinated and rendered mute and still until such point as the dance ends. This costs one point from the pool per turn.

2. The dancer can distort time for themselves, slowing it down or speeding up by a factor equal to the points that they put in. For each point spent they can take an extra turn doing something as they slow time – provided they can work it into the dance.

Example:

Colin is desperately trying to get across a crumbling rope bridge. The Games Master describes – as he is halfway across – how the rope is twisting apart, about to break away. Colin realises he doesn't have time to make it at a sprint so spends two points from his pool. He stops time for two turns, twisting, turning, dancing to an unheard beat to get across before it collapses.

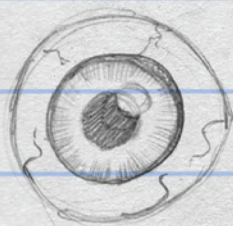
The strangest thing I've seen? The children with empty eyes whose screams sucked the colour from the landscape. The meat-puppets dancing to the tune of the lung-pipes at Smithfield. There was a bird, once, that whistled Beethoven and flew backwards. The women with arms and legs like stilts, heels of bone and lingerie made from spiderwebs. There is no 'strangest'. Everything is strange. One thing this whole event has taught me is that everyone's fucked in the head, inside.

Sanjay Venkatraman

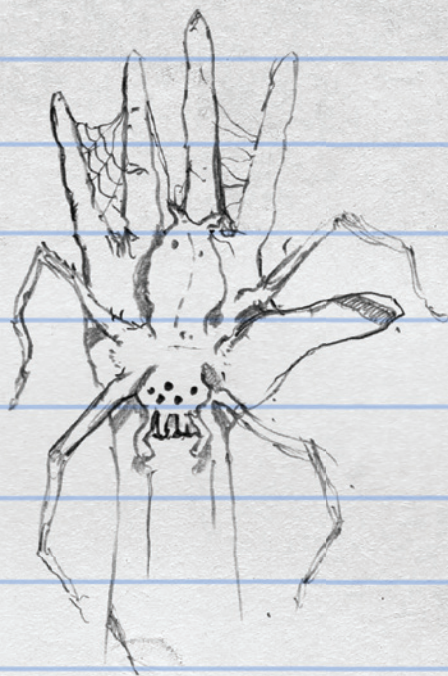
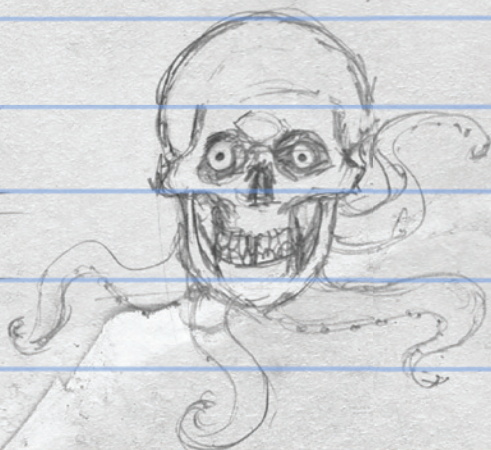
Reclaimer, Bembridge

POST
CARD





Hello George



Music and Singing

Music is one of the less powerful but more wide ranging of the influential arts. Music can make few specific changes to individuals but it can evoke mood, change mood, create or lighten an atmosphere or make it more oppressive. It plays upon the emotions and the resonance of a place in a way that can blanket a whole region.

System:

A musician, provided they have access to their instrument and can play, can use their music to alter the mood whenever they want as many times as they want. There's no limitation on how often it can be used.

When playing music the musician can alter, replace or add to the mood of a location, creating an adjective that anyone can tap into – if it's appropriate. A place that is frightening might become amusing. They might play something inspirational or courageous, sound the charge to aid people in a fight. It's a subtle, but powerful, effect.

Example:

The team have temporarily woken up a group of dreamers and pressed them into service to defend against the arachnid minions of The Spider King, a corrupt Reclaimer living on the Isle of Dogs. Donna takes up her guitar and plays a tune to put some resolve into the backs of these reluctant defenders. She gives the whole scene, the whole fight, the adjective of 'brave'.

I don't really remember what it was like. Was I really gone a year? I don't remember being hungry or tired or feeling... anything much. I have hazy half memories I suppose. Shapes and colours and I remember running from something... I don't remember what exactly. It feels like it's still following me really. I keep thinking I see it, whatever it is, out of the corner of my eye.

Maggie Snel,

former sleeper, Base Foxtrot

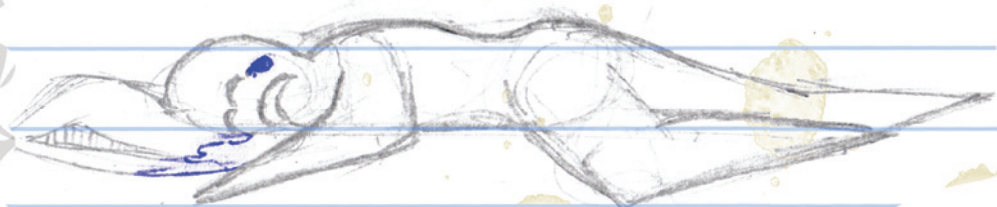
POST
CARD



HO

NH₂

IZ



Painting, Drawing and Sculpture

Those who paint and draw can create things out of their imagination and bring them to visible life. Outside the zone this is limited to paper and canvas but within the zone, so long as they can at least sketch, they're able to bring these things to genuine life.

System:

An artist has a pool of points drawn from their artistic skill and their appropriate adjectives. They can use these points to draw and create items, even creatures out of nothing.

They can also draw doors, windows or other features onto a surface and cause them to become real – at the cost of a single point. In creating something out of nothing the description is made using the pool of points available. For example one might draw out a sketch of a '*powerful, accurate handgun*' and then use that, at the cost of two points.

Example:

Edgar has a pool of five points. He's hiding in some caves that have been imagined beneath Bristol and needs to check that it's safe to get out. He conjures into being an '*intelligent*', '*talking*', raven with '*professional stealth*' and sends it off through a grille to check the area.

It's an attempt to combine the optimistic kineticism of futurism with the vibrant use of colour of the fauvists. It answers to Clarence and it likes to eat blackberries. The phones, not the actual berries. I think Clarence both demonstrates the validity of my artistic expression and will kick the shit out of those trolls.

Clive Marty

Reclamer, Old Basing

POST
CARD





Poetry

Poets have a facility for artful language and for rhyme and meter. A poet plays with language as a writer constructs it. A poet can work their words in their mind, without the need to jot them down to make them work.

System:

A poet can freely change any word in any description, even that of other people, to a synonym. ‘*Strong*’ can become ‘*powerful*’, ‘*fast*’ can become ‘*speedy*’. This is a subtle but potentially very powerful effect as it can tailor a description to very specific circumstances. For a point from their pool (poetry plus adjectives) they can change any word from a description to its rhyme. A ‘*violent*’ beast may, thus, become a ‘*silent*’ beast, a ‘*dangerous*’ man a ‘*timorous*’ man, and so on.

Example:

Filamena stumbles out into the street to be faced by an ‘*angry*’, ‘*murderous*’, ‘*torch-wielding*’ mob. Frightened to death she taps into her pool and turns them into a ‘*hungry*’, ‘*humorous*’, ‘*torch-wielding*’ mob. They charge her down and demand, over the sound of their grumbling stomachs, that she hand over her rations. Better than being chased up a windmill.

Writing

A writer has a powerful way with words and can use them to evoke almost anything, to spin the imaginary into a form people can see in their mind’s eye or to create an evocative description that can make something more real or convey it in a way even pictures cannot. Within the zone, provided that a writer can scribble down their thoughts on a scrap of paper or in the dirt, they can have a wide-ranging, but somewhat unpredictable power.

System:

The writer creates a pool of points from their writing skill and their appropriate adjectives. They can freely change words for their synonyms – one per turn – just as the poet can and they can conjure objects or creatures out of thin air as an artist can, but at a cost of two points per adjective. The most powerful thing a writer can do is to narrate. They can – within reason – describe something that happens, spend a point, and have it happen. For example: “Without warning, the roof collapsed upon the gunman...”

Example:

Graham and his friends are backing away from an amorphous beast, shooting at its pseudopods as they back up, but it’s having little effect. Graham has an inkling that fire might hurt the creature more and spends a point. “*As we back further down the corridor we pass a car, half smashed through the wall.*” He plans to hole the fuel tank and set it alight when the beast reaches it.





Chemical Imbalance

Everyone who is immune to the effect of the mainland has something 'wrong' with them, some mental aberration which, in concert with their creative ability, makes them untouchable by the vicissitudes of the imaginary forces at work.

This insanity, infirmity, this chemical imbalance, this 'fucked' state of their mind empowers them but also stands in their way. A force that can warp the mutable reality of the mainland in ways that make it more dangerous, even if they don't get lost in it.

Every character has something, mentally, 'off' about them.

Before everything went to shit there was this whole, weird, movement thing to say that us loonies weren't loony so much as these other people were neurotypical. Like that was something bad and we were the ones who won the mental health lottery.

Are you fucking kidding me? I'm not some kind of Nietzschean superman. Without a shitload of therapy and neuroleptics I can't even relate to other people. I wish I could. The only things I understand and that understand me are the things I make and they can't come home.

Sheila Chung

Reclainer, Adgestone

POST
CARD



Anxiety

Anxiety can occur as a normal reaction to fear-inducing situations or moments of importance where a lot is at stake. In the case of your character it is more pathological, a constant state of worry, fear and anticipation of the worst possible outcomes. This has the advantage of making you vigilant but the disadvantage of making you jump at nothing and exist in a trembling state of exhausting tension.

You gain the position adjective *very vigilant* and the down trait *anxious*. You don't have to use your *very vigilant* adjective in a test but if you do and you fail the roll - or there's nothing to be discovered - you become *panicked*, then *very panicked* and then have a '*panic attack*', which means you can't do anything except cower and tremble until you calm down naturally or someone snaps you out of it. That resets the 'panic counter'.

Delirium

Someone with delirium is disconnected from reality. They suffer from a short attention span, are easily distracted and often drift into hallucinations and delusions about themselves and others. Characters with delirium issues are much closer to the 'dream world' of the mainland than they are to 'reality', on the very, absolute cusp of nose-diving completely into fiction.

A character with delirium gains the down traits '*disconnected*' and '*inattentive*'. Their pool gets increased by two for using their creative powers or, in the case of music, they can create a '*very*' adjective through their music, making it much more powerful.

Depression

Depression is a persistent low mood but, unlike sadness, doesn't necessarily have a cause that anyone can point at. It goes beyond simply feeling down into feelings of weariness, self-loathing, lack of confidence, guilt and long periods of introspection, dwelling on mistakes and problems – real or imagined – in the sufferer's life. It can also manifest in physical tiredness, aching muscles and sleepiness.

A character with depression is '*careful*' and '*thoughtful*' but they suffer greatly every time they try something and it doesn't work out. Every time a depressive fails they take this as confirmation that they're useless and worthless. Each time they fail they gain one of the following down traits of their choice.

Sad, exhausted, helpless, guilty.

They can also upgrade one they already have to '*very*'. If these are exhausted (all raised to '*very*') then the character loses agency and may only react, not act. They may also be likely to engage in self-harm and/or suicide attempts, but this is up to the player.



X3 = STRENGTH

X6

SOAP



= SPEED

|| POWER



TURN 3X
SCRATCH LEFT EAR
PRESS NIPPLE



Imposter Syndrome

Imposter syndrome isn't an officially recognised mental illness but it does appear to affect a great number of creatives as well as academics and graduates. The crux of the problem is that people who are successful or talented find it impossible to internalise their success or ability and think of themselves as frauds.

Frauds who may be found out at any moment.

Characters suffering from imposter syndrome are stalked by their insecurities. These insecurities become manifest as a creature – typically an authority figure, policeman, teacher, hate mob or some vague and more fantastical manifestation of fear such as a negative doppleganger. The 'thing' that dogs them, stalks them in every session though it may or may not appear or confront them in every session. It cannot be permanently killed, only temporarily thwarted. The manifestation has the same number of adjectives as the character, but these can be anything the Games Master wants and can change from session to session.

Mania

Mania is in many ways the opposite of depression, a state of hyperactivity and abundant energy. Someone in a manic state needs less sleep, is more easily distracted and is much more likely to take unnecessary risks. This can seem like a positive thing to many people, a period of elevated mood and energy, but the aftermath of an episode can be very destructive.

A character with mania gains the adjectives '*energetic*' and '*distracted*'. Every time they try something that needs a roll and they succeed, they gain the '*foolhardy*' adjective up to a maximum of '*extremely foolhardy*'. This can put a serious dent in their performance when things are dangerous.

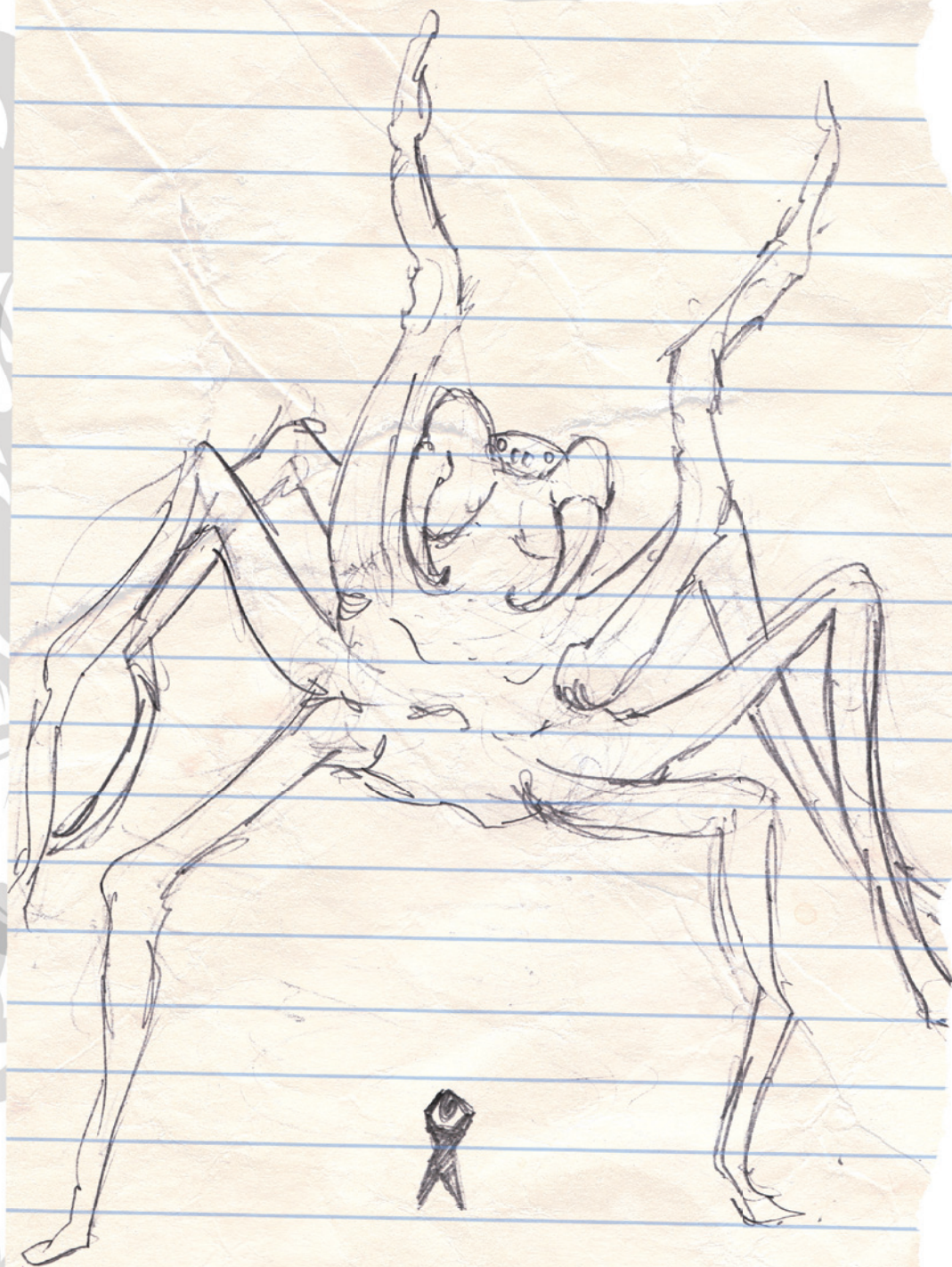
Manic Depression

For each session you play in, you must roll a d6 to see which state you are in. Whichever state you are in is the one whose rules apply during that game.

Roll

1-3: Manic

4-6: Depressive



Narcissism

Narcissism manifests as an overarching and excessive level of self-confidence and self-belief that isn't particularly warranted. Narcissists are extremely selfish, arrogant, entitled and exploitative of others. They believe themselves to be the best of the best. If anything it is the inverse of imposter syndrome.

Everything is more difficult for narcissists as they believe in themselves so strongly they're likely to leave something half done or consider a bad job to be a good job. They need to score one higher on any roll to succeed. Their self-belief does power their creative enterprises though. Anything conjured or manifested by them has one extra free adjective, even music.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

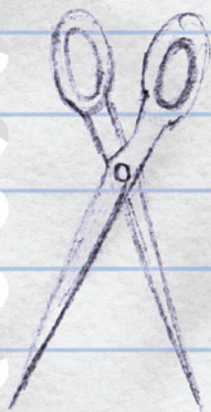
Obsessive compulsive disorder manifests in a huge variety of ways. Obsessions can be sexual, religious, obsessions with death, hoarding... almost all of human experience and interest is open for an obsession. The compulsive part comes with the rituals and behaviours that offset their obsession and make life manageable for them.

In game terms a character with OCD suffers a -1 penalty to their totals when attempting a task without being able to engage in one of their rituals first and a +1 bonus to their total if they can. The ritual must be intrusive or time-consuming in some way to be effective. Counting every bullet three times, picking up something to take back to the island or cleaning their hands before taking any action – for example. When creating your character pick three recurring rituals. These are the ones that mainly have effect, even though you may have others.

The Games Master may allow you to get bigger bonuses for engaging in even more extravagant or dangerous rituals if it seems appropriate to the game at that point.



BLUNT
SOME SCISSORS



Phobia

A phobia is an irrational and overriding fear of something. It might be heights, spiders, the dark, almost anything, but it should really be something that doesn't – normally – pose a particular threat. Spiders in the UK are not venomous or dangerous – for example – and neither are snakes. A phobic would treat them as being deadly, dangerous and/or disgusting regardless of whether they are or not and what harm they might do.

For a character with a phobia this phobia is elevated to the status of an obsession. It is not only the stimulus itself that causes the fear but the mere possibility of it. There *might* be spiders under there. It *might* be dark in that building. They *might* get trapped in that tunnel. The phobic's character must role-play their phobia and, when they express their talent, it will – one time in six – manifest as an expression of the phobia outside their control. Roll a d6 when they use their power. If they roll a one, that's what happens.

An artist trying to conjure a helpful dog from their canvas might have it become twisted by their phobia into a dog 'sack', filled with a writhing mass of spiders.

Unpleasant.

Psychopathic or Sociopathic

The concept of the psychopath or sociopath is heavily overdone in many films and other forms of fiction. When we hear the term we think of the calculating serial killer or the drooling loon chasing some poor victim down the road with a chainsaw. Real psychopaths and sociopaths aren't (necessarily) like that. Rather they are often charming and manipulative individuals with a diminished or non-existent sense of guilt and little or no empathy for others. Psychopaths and sociopaths are more likely to be found heading up large and successful companies than they are stabbing people and eating their spleen.

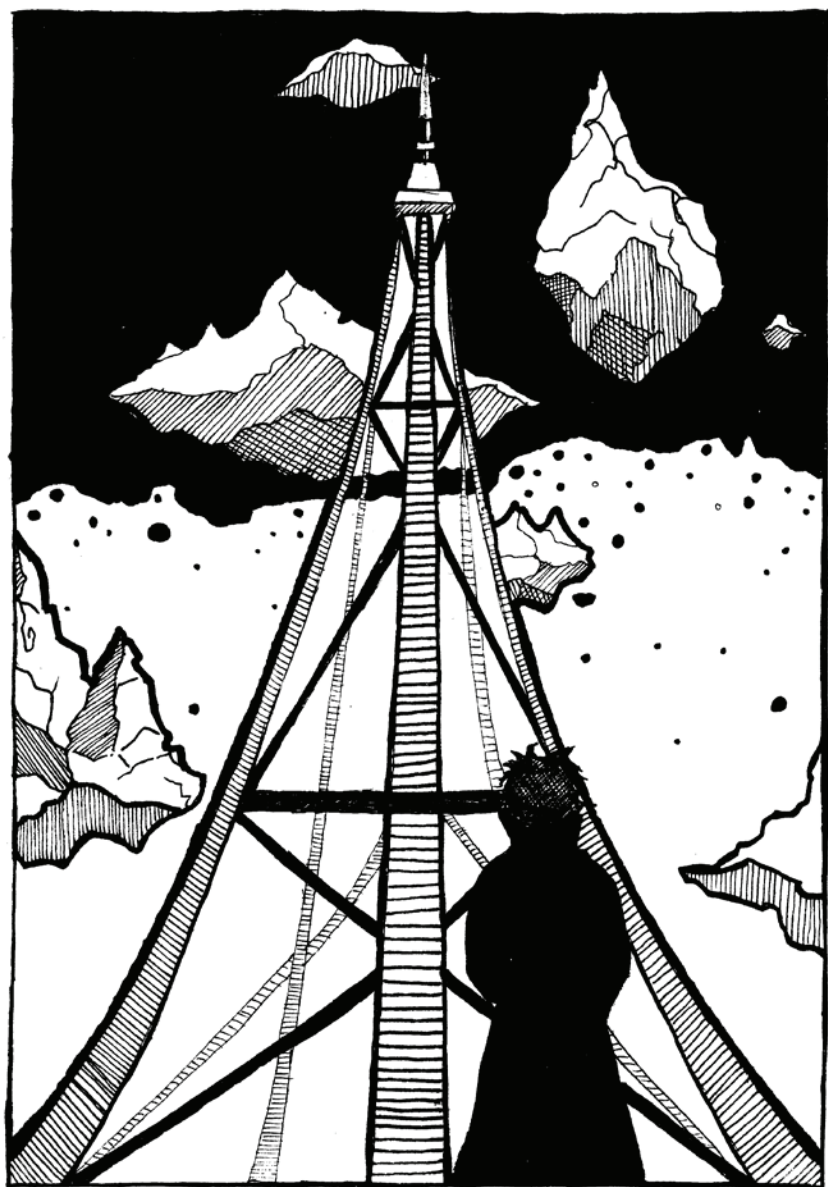
A psychopath or sociopath gains the adjectives '*cold*' and '*charming*'. When they use an ability purely selfishly, on themselves, to help themselves, they increase their total by one. When using it to help others they lower it by one.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is often characterised in popular media as ‘multiple personality disorder’. It is not. Schizophrenia need not even manifest in so extreme a form as hearing voices – though this is quite common. More properly it describes disorganised thinking, strange and incoherent thoughts and an accompanying degree of social impairment.

Characters that are schizophrenic do hear voices and are also ‘*distant*’ and ‘*distracted*’. The ‘*upside*’ to this, if indeed it is an upside, is that the source of their voices and thoughts is real, at least within the context of the mainland, and accompanies them, giving them advice and information that may or may not be correct. Not that they want their ‘host’ to die – far from it.





Rules

Sooner or later you're going to need to dip into some rules. When a character tries to do something or something happens to them you need a fair and equitable way to determine who wins, who loses, who is affected and how.

The difference between a role-playing game and a story is that the tension is *genuine*. You don't know if you're going to succeed until you try and you could easily fail and have to deal with the consequences.

Rules are what makes a role-playing game different to just playing make-believe.

The Basic Rules

Most of the time you don't need to worry about rules. If a character is opening a door, getting dressed, walking down the street or some other fairly mundane activity then they don't need to worry about making any sort of roll. It's only when you're attempting something more challenging, something with possible consequences, or you're directly opposing someone that you need to make a roll to see how you do.

In these instances you make a bid, totting up all your adjectives and occupation points (or rather the ones that apply) to come to a numerical total. The Games Master can dispute what traits you can use or can't and their word is final.

Once you have a number total you roll a six sided die:

- If you roll two-to-five, you add that onto your bid to get a final total.
- If you roll a one, you take that away from your total and roll again. If you get another one you take that away as well and keep rolling until you stop getting a one. Then you get your final total. This is called 'imploding dice'.
- If you roll a six you add that onto your total and roll again. If you get another six you add one to your total and keep rolling until you stop getting a six. Then you get your final total. This is called 'exploding dice'.

Note:

Down traits count against you. If they apply they take numbers away from your bid total. Wobbly traits can be up or down, depending on the circumstances and sometimes down and up traits become the opposite, depending on the situation. It's all down to the Games Master!

Example:

Barney is arm wrestling a hallucination in order to win a caged, flaming butterfly. Barney can bid 'very strong', 'determined' and 'beefy' to win, giving him a bid of four in total. Maybe what happens is...

1. Barney rolls a four, giving him a final bid total of eight.
2. Barney rolls a one, then another one and finally a three. This gives him a final bid of two. (Four, minus one, minus one again and the three is ignored).
3. Barney rolls a six, then a six, then a two. This gives him a final bid of eleven. (Four, plus six, plus one for the second six and the two is ignored.).

There are complications to how all this works, some of them optional. These will be described later on.

Making a Roll What Are You Doing?

When you're called upon to make a roll you need to decide – and describe – what exactly it is that you're doing. This can affect the adjectives and the occupation that you're bidding in order to make the attempt.

For example, if you described yourself as breaking down a door using brute force, then appropriate adjectives might include ones describing your strength, size or toughness.

If you decide to try and pick the lock then ones that describe how dexterous and nimble you are might be more appropriate.

You won't be able to do some things without the appropriate occupation or Knack. If you're not an electrician, then the odds of you being able to work out or fix a wiring system are... remote.

How Difficult Is It?

Like everything else in *ImagiNation* a problem is usually described by adjectives. A lock might be '*very tricky*', '*solid*' or even '*magically protected*', bidding what's appropriate to try and foil your lock picking attempts.

If you're breaking down a door it might be '*very thick*', '*seasoned oak*' and '*bound with iron*'. If the Games Master can't describe the problem in such terms then they should just pluck a suitable number out of the air.

An average challenge for a professional should have a counter bid of around five. Challenges for unskilled people should start at around a bid of two or so and creep up as they get more challenging.

Once the bid for the opposition is established, either via traits or via guesswork, a roll is added on top of that, just as if a player were making a roll.

Whoever gets highest, wins.

If the player is working against another player or one of the many opposing characters in the control of Games Master, then they make their actions and bids as normal.

What Did You Bid?

You can only bid traits that are appropriate to what you're doing but, obviously, you should try and play to your character's strengths. You can't be good at everything and you're unlikely to be able to do things the way you want all the time so it's generally a good idea to have a good spread of traits as well as a focus - something you're particularly good at.

The total bid you make in any challenge is equal to:

- Adjectives bid, plus...
- Occupation bonus (one occupation), plus...
- Dice roll value.

What Did You Roll?

The dice roll represents the vagaries of chance and its effect on whatever you're trying to do. Your dice roll adds on to or takes away from your bid to give you a final total:

- If you roll two-to-five add this to your bid total to get your final result.
- If you roll a one, take this away from your total and roll again. If you get another one, take it away again and keep rolling. Otherwise stop with your current total.
- If you roll a six, add this to your total and roll again. If you get another six, add on another one to your total and keep rolling. Otherwise stop with your current total.

The Outcome

Whoever gets the highest result is the winner whether it be the character, an inanimate object or a rival. The more you beat your opposition by the better, and if you beat them by five or more, that can be considered a pretty devastating win.

If, for example, a lock beat your lock-picking attempt by a good amount, whatever you were using to pick the lock might break. If it beats you by four or more, the snapped tool might be caught in the lock, stopping you trying to open it that way again.

Trying Again

If you fail at something, not against an opponent but against a task like picking a lock or searching through a mass of trash to find something, then you find it harder to keep going. Each time you fail and try again you get '*tired*' of doing it, then '*very tired*', then '*really tired*'. Then you can't try any more without at least a day's rest. Each tired trait bids against you when you try to do it again but only lasts against that particular task.

Helping Someone Out

Several people can work together on a task and that can greatly increase their chance of success. In such a situation one person is chosen as the leader but the other people involved can each loan them a suitable adjective to bid. This all boosts their bid total up higher, giving them the chance to accomplish things that they might not otherwise, be able to do.



Hurting People

When it comes down to hurting people, beating them in a fight, things can get a little more complicated, but only if you really want them to.

If you want to keep things *really* simple then the two opposing combatants both describe what they're going to do and what the consequences are – within reason.

Such as: *'I'm going to kick him so hard in the balls he collapses, vomiting, to the floor'.*

The person on the receiving end might describe how they dodge out of the way to escape then both sides bid traits and roll, whoever gets the highest wins, otherwise they swap around and the victim now becomes the instigator, choosing what they want to do next. They might want to fight back, run away or something more outlandish.

If you want things to be a bit more formal and to prevent people from just declaring 'I kill him' all the time, there are some more complicated but satisfying rules you can use.

Advanced Hurting People

If you need something a little more definite for when two people clash with each other then you can use the optional rules about 'Degree of Success' to do so. In this version of combat you can take away people's adjectives, replicating injuries, or give them down adjectives in the same way, or you can choose to do various other nasty things to them

- **One success** – to push someone around, manipulate them, force them into cover, to retreat or similar advantage without hurting them.
- **Two successes** – to give someone a down trait or to remove one of their up traits, that's appropriate.
- **Three successes** – to stun someone, meaning that they can only make a defensive type move on the next turn and can't take an action back at you themselves.
- **Four successes** – to knock someone out or put them out of the fight.
- **Five successes** – to kill someone outright.

Here's how this can work in practice:

Jane is pursuing a demon and decides to stop and take a pot-shot with her crossbow. Jane is '*fast*' and '*very accurate*' as well as being a '*professional arche*'. The crossbow is '*well made*', '*accurate*' and '*powerful*'. This gives Jane a total bid of nine. She then rolls five, giving her a grand total of fourteen. A very good hit. The Games Master rules, however, that if she missed, the demon will have gotten away.

The demon is '*fleet of foot*', '*very paranoid*' and a '*master flyer*'. This gives the demon a total bid of eight. He rolls a two, giving him a total of ten.

Jane beat him by four and now gets to spend her successes. She chooses to give him the down trait '*bleeding*', so he can be tracked more easily and is probably slowed down; she also eliminates the demon's '*fleet of foot*' trait, describing how she shoots the fleeing demon through the leg.

Healing

Healing times depend on the wounds and the Conductor's discretion but without any other guidance you should get your traits back, or get rid of the down traits, at the rate of one per day of in game time.

Optional Rules Degree of Success

As a rough guide to how well you beat something, you can apply these guidelines:

- **-1:** Barely failed, such a close run thing.
- **0:** Barely succeeded, just by the skin of your teeth.
- **1:** You succeed with a normal, acceptable level of competence.
- **3:** You do really well. Good work.
- **5:** Exceptional, beyond normal expectations. You were in 'the zone'.

Optional Rules Equipment

Optionally, items, weapons and equipment can loan you traits which you can bid as though they were your own. A suit of chain mail, for example, might be '*hardy*', '*protective*' and '*heavy*'.

Weapons have their own traits but remember that these adjectives have to fit what you're doing, the action you describe. You can't just throw them in anyway.

Learning New Things

People learn and grow from their experiences and teachings as they progress through life. Whatever doesn't kill them makes them stronger. Simple farm boys become Jedi masters, the peasant who never knew his destiny becomes a great king and our simple artists become something far more than they used to be. Whether they like it or not.

Every session you play, every character gets one improvement point. If it's a really long session – four hours or more perhaps – you get another one. If you're a good player and bring attention to your down or wobbly traits – or your up traits when they're against you through the game - you get another one.

You can then spend these improvement points to make your character better, stronger, faster.

- Increasing your adjectives costs a number of improvement points equal to the total value of all your adjectives thus far. For starting characters, this would normally be five. Down and wobbly traits don't count.
- Wobbly traits cost half as much, rounding up.

- You can buy off a down trait or a wobbly trait for five improvement points.
- You can buy a new occupation for three improvement points. You can raise one from Novice to Professional for five improvement points, Professional to Master for ten improvement points, Master to Legendary for twenty improvement points.

Playing for Real

ImagINation can lend itself very well to ‘salon style’ live action role-play. These are the live-action role-playing games where you get together somewhere, in costume and mostly talk, rather than running around and actually hitting each other. If you want to play this way it takes quite a bit of work to get a good game up and running, but once it is players can almost keep it going themselves.

Live Action Role-playing has different demands to normal role-playing. It can be fiddly to mess about with dice and character sheets while you’re trying to play and it can slow things down.

Some alternative systems on how to work out who wins are presented here:

- **Use dice anyway:** If you want a completely ‘true’ to the standard game feel, just carry a d6 around with you in your pocket. The system is simple and light so this shouldn’t be too much of a problem.
- **Rock-Paper-Scissors:** You can work out who wins by totting up bids and then playing rock-paper-scissors. The aggressor or challenger is the one whose bid is modified. If you win, you add one to your bid and play again. If you lose you take one away from your bid and play again. If you tie you stop and leave your bid as it is.
- **Coins:** You can carry six coins in your pocket and, when called upon to make a bid, draw these out in a handful and slap them down on the table. Each head is plus one while each tail is minus one, giving you your final total.
- **Cards:** Get the 1-6 cards from each suit and make them into a deck. When called upon to make a bid, draw a card from the deck and treat it like a die roll, complete with implosions and explosions. When you finish a bid, shuffle the cards again and put them back in your pocket.
- **Finger Counting:** You and whoever is doing the bid for the challenge or the other person put your hand behind your back and choose between one and five fingers, on the count of three you both reveal your hands. Add the total number of fingers together, if you go over five, start again at one. Add the final result to your bid and do the same for your opponent. Whoever gets the highest, wins.

- **Hitting Each Other:** Feel free to come up with your own system to govern hitting each other with latex weapons, but given *ImagiNation* has an urban setting I really don't recommend running around down belting each other or wielding toy guns. The police get really, really shirty about that sort of thing.

Playing in Fora

Playing in a forum environment can be tricky, but is very popular, especially amongst people who role-play but who don't really know about the culture of role-playing games as a whole. Playing in a forum tends to be much more free-form and a forum is unlikely to have the necessary tools for handling dice rolls or other conventions for solving problems.

If you're playing in a forum it's important that someone – or several people – are there to act as moderators or Games Masters. They will tell you who wins an encounter or challenge and by how much, determining the result via dice rolls or other techniques at home and passing the result back for the players to determine the consequences.

Forum posts should be longer and more detailed than normal role-play and, as otherwise fights and encounters can go on for days, combat encounters should try to be limited to a single roll and an appropriate outcome.

If players can be honest and accommodating with each other, there's no reason they can't post the rolls they get themselves and self-moderate their role-play. After all, winning all the time just isn't that interesting!

Playing in Chat

You can also play online in chat rooms or over Internet Relay Chat (IRC) or across instant messenger or conference calls over Skype, Google + and the like. Many dedicated role-playing chat services exist – just be careful you're not getting into a Cybersex room – and many of them have tools, or 'bots' for handling dice rolls. This makes it quite easy to play and text-chat role-playing has some of the advantages of both tabletop and forum play. It's quite easy to get into your character and suspend disbelief.

The disadvantage of computer-chat play is that people don't take it as so important a commitment and miss sessions more frequently. It also takes longer to play things out, especially if you have slow typists in your group or people whose English skills aren't so great.

Another possibility would be to set up some sort of *ImagiNation* 'sim' on Second Life, a 3D, customisable, online game world. There are all sorts of scripts, props and costumes that could be used in Second Life and public dice rolling scripts to help handle bids as well as live combat systems to handle that side of things.



The World Gone Mad

Everything is utterly changed but that just makes the points of commonality and routine even more important. Authority figures become totemic, places become symbols. People invest emotional energy into these things and see them as infallible – and damn the reality. They become willing to give up a great deal, just for the feeling of being protected and taken care of. Under such strain some places become totalitarian regimes, worshipping ‘dear leader’. In others the leaders turn back from the brink and become heroes for the ages. It’s not clear which path Britain is taking yet.

The world has been turned upside down by the events on the mainland and the few ‘islands’ of sanity. The touchstones for Reclaimers, soldiers and refugees are the people and places on the island that they can rely upon. These are vanishingly few and often have hardships of their own but they are, at least, predictable and solid.

People

The islands are crowded with people and those people do get to know each other. There are very few people who can be considered ‘famous’ but everyone knows them and they’ve even become international figures as interest in the phenomenon refuses to abate around the world and they are called upon as spokesmen in the international media to keep the cause on people’s minds.

Admiral Jonathan Hansen

Born in nineteen forty-five, the Admiral encourages the legend that he was born on V.E. Day, even though it isn’t quite true and he was born at the end of May in that year. *Extremely grizzled and elderly*, Hansen is a *veteran* of the Falklands War and really is too old to be handling a command now. Nonetheless as an *experienced* and *capable* commander he’s the best man for the job. Hansen isn’t very charismatic, but he has a certain *gruff honesty* that endears him to people who are used to a climate of spin and public relations. Hansen calls a spade a spade and makes no bones about it. A *Master Tactician and Commander* he has let his skills slide until he is only a *Novice sailor*. Hansen is not stationed on the Islands but the 75% complete aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth from which he coordinates the quarantine and military actions around the mainland.

Ambassador Henrietta Fitzgibbons

The chaos has elevated many people to positions of authority and power to the point where, thrown in at the deep end, they are forced to sink or swim. Some succeed, others fail. Miss Fitzgibbons has risen to the occasion. A *novice diplomat* and *professional bureaucrat* the *hard-bitten* Miss Fitzgibbons has made up for her *lack of experience* with a *ruthlessness* and *iron resolve* that *brooks no shit* from anybody. The *public face of Britain* – apart from the government – the Ambassador flits between Canada and the United States keeping international relations going and *badgering* governments for assistance.

Brigadier Prakash Rhence

‘The Brig’ has been given command over the refugee islands and over mainland operations. It’s a big job for a single person and Rhence is displeased at being a ‘nursemaid’ to civilians, preferring to concentrate his efforts upon the mainland bases and their operations. The Brig comes from a *proud*, Sikh, *warrior tradition* stretching back before the Raj. Rhence *works hard* and keeps himself *fit* and *healthy* despite being a *Master Officer* and being relegated to command. Rhence is also a *Master Rifleman* and practices every day. Rhence is *contemptuous* of civilians and diverts food and equipment to the soldiers which keeps him *popular* with them and, so far, the civilians have put up with it.

LoBots

The lobotomised soldiers who guard the borders of the bases and are found in military areas on the islands have paid a huge sacrifice in order to be able to fight. *Simple-minded, incontinent and slow*, the Lo-Bots are, nonetheless, *tough, strong and determined* soldiers, *professional riflemen* to a man.

Lo-Bots are armed with refurbished L1A1 SLRs, 9mm side arms and combat knives. They are not generally trusted with heavier weapons or grenades due to their slow wits and lack of care. They are issued with body armour and gas masks, the masks as much to protect people from having to see them as anything else.

Major Marjorie Pym

Major Pym commands Base Foxtrot. A *Master logistics officer* and *professional soldier* before the disaster she knows how to run a tight ship, and with *previous experience* in Iraq and Afghanistan she *knows how to make a little go a long way*. *Brisk* and *efficient*, Pym doesn’t feel respected and overcompensates with *brusqueness*, *zero-tolerance* and *standoffishness* that probably does more harm than good when it comes to the troops under her command. *Justifiably paranoid* she takes little rest and contrary to Rhence’s orders prioritises the rescue of dreamers, perhaps searching for her own family.

Susan Kelson, Reporter

There aren't that many non-Britons who have opted to enter the islands. The knowledge that they'll be unable to leave for the foreseeable future puts most of them off. An exception to this is Susan Kelson, an Australian reporter who has opted to 'embed' on the Isle of Wight and to make reports from 'the front'.

Susan is a *professional reporter and cameraman* who has made her mark by being *brave*, some would say *foolhardy*, in her efforts to get noticed and make a name for herself. A *striking* and *muscular* woman she keeps herself *very fit*, working out every single day with pull-ups and a run around the streets where she's staying. She used to run marathons and is still a *novice runner*.

Susan files reports and constantly pushes, looking for scandals, new information and ways to get to the mainland and file a report from there. Something the military is very watchful of. If she pushes any harder she may get placed under guard.

Refugees

The refugees are a motley bunch of escapees, rescued dreamers, ex-pats and tourists who have returned to the islands or have been quarantined there until such time as the mainland can be reclaimed or that the quarantine can be lifted to allow them to travel elsewhere. Refugees have one *professional skill*, are novices at '*making do*' and have three adjectives in addition to *desperate* and *ragged*.

Wight Rifles

The regular soldiers have been reassigned from their units to a group designated as the 'Wight Rifles'. Ostensibly a defence force they find themselves used more as engineers, police, anything that the island finds itself short of. Wight Rifles do not wear body armour and dress in caps or berets alongside their uniforms. They carry 9mm side arms at all times and SA80 rifles at times of high alert.

Wight Rifles are *professional soldiers*, *trained* and *calm* but *stretched* and *tired*. *Fit* and *well supplied* they are somewhat *resented* by the refugees who have to make do with less.



Places

The Isle of Wight is most heavily settled around its coastline aside from Newport which is more central to the island. The influx of refugees has at least doubled or trebled the population of the island from its normal population. It has managed to take this due to its standing as a tourist destination and thus the prevalence of hotels, hostels and B&Bs that were able to take in escapees from the mainland.

The forests and woods on the island have suffered. During the early days of escape they were stripped for fuel for fires and will take decades to recover. Now that supplies and power have been sorted out for the island that's less of a worry.

Much of the downland has been ploughed under to extend fields and to make the island more self sufficient. People are rationed and power is limited to 9am to 9pm outside of vital buildings such as the hospital and the military-run buildings. One of the few things that is thoroughly maintained is communications infrastructure and internet and mobile phone access has total coverage over the whole island.

Albany Prison

Albany prison, part of the Isle of Wight prison complex and stubbornly retaining the name, houses sex offenders and vulnerable prisoners (those who might be targeted by the general prison population). As such Albany Prison has been kept locked and under guard and no prisoners have been released.

Prisoners here can volunteer to become Lo-Bots but few have taken up on this. Some VPs with minor offences and prior good relations with the police have been made honorary guards to free up prison officers for policing duties.

There is great and ongoing debate over the fate of these prisoners and whether a country in such dire straits owes them anything at all. Military justice allows for executions but so far the authorities have resisted doing so as it would negatively impact international opinion and aid.

Alum Bay

Famous for its coloured sands, which have become more colourful and vivid since the event, Alum Bay is a quiet, pebble beach with sandy cliffs that are subject to frequent landslides. At the top of the cliffs The Needles Park amusements are closed, chained up and covered with tarps. A few refugees down on their luck or with problems in the refugee community take shelter here. The only real activity is in the form of patrols leaving and arriving from the pontoon that juts out into the sea. The glass-maker nearby works hard to make parts for paraffin and oil lamps that people use after the power curfew. The vivid sands are fenced off and considered suspect, seeming to have reacted – somehow – to whatever it is that has overtaken the mainland.

Bembridge

Bembridge is a village at the easternmost point of the island. With a pre-disaster population of nearly four-thousand it is now vastly overcrowded with a population risen to twelve-thousand, many of which are military personnel barracked at the tiny airport and the Bembridge Coast Hotel. Patrol aircraft – a seized pair of ageing Edgely Opticas – take off and land here when not patrolling the sea around the island. Patrol boats are also stationed at the lifeboat station and observers and snipers with anti-material rifles watch the sea to the east from a coastguard lookout station. Intelligence is gathered and processed here by military and civil authorities.

Blackgang Chine

A long-running and somewhat famous amusement park, Blackgang Chine is set amongst woods near to the coast and somewhat sheltered from the elements. The Chine refers to a coastal ravine, long since lost to the elements but the park remains. These days Blackgang Chine is a bizarre refugee camp for those undergoing second stage quarantine and people live in tents and prefab buildings intermingled with the giant plastic dinosaurs and the psychedelic fairyland.

Camp Hill Prison

A category C prison and the second of the three prisons on the island, Camp Hill houses category 'C' prisoners many of which have been given early release and have been allowed to join the refugee population or to volunteer for Lo-Bot treatment. Before the disaster the prison housed training and engineering programmes which has made it an important military resource with a strong army presence. People arrested for breaking military decrees on the island are imprisoned here.

Carisbrooke Castle

A sizeable, Norman-style, motte-and-bailey castle, Carisbrooke commands a good position with a view of much of the inner island. Defensive artillery is based here along with rapier missiles to deal with interlopers over the island's airspace. The castle's rooms are used for storage and for consolidating air drops of supplies and their proper disbursement to the rest of the island. The ancient earth and stone works have been supplemented with barbed-wire and armed guards.

Cowes

Cowes has been an important town for the island and as the site of the catamaran ferry services was the first point where people set foot – or tyre – on the island. Now it's one of the largest refugee camps and under permanent guard by the Royal Navy to prevent anyone trying to leave on the ferries or sailing boats.

All of the vessels save for those controlled by the military have been corralled and chained or tied together. Without maintenance they'll soon begin to become too damaged for use. Small aerospace and sailing companies were based here and their facilities have been seized by the military to support their efforts.

HoverTravel

One of very few locations where hovercraft are regularly used, the Hovertravel station near Ryde has been co-opted by the military and its three hovercraft used to rapidly transfer men and equipment to and from Base Foxtrot. A hundred soldiers and their kit are always ready for rapid deployment by hovercraft from here and guard the station to prevent refugees using the hovercraft. The initial landings that carved out Base Foxtrot were made by these hovercraft and their crews are much respected.

Isle of Wight Zoo

The zoo is closed, full of empty and overgrown enclosures. The primates and big cats that were kept here have been sent to zoos in France. The zoo is built in the location of an old fort, but it has not yet been pressed into use. The zoo's veterinary rooms have been turned into a clinic to tend to the island's greatly increased population.

Newport

Perhaps the most central significant settlement, Newport is one of the main refugee camp areas with many people living in every available room.

This has given the town a cosmopolitan, if impoverished, bustle much like areas of London used to have. Newport is most notable for having established – spontaneously – a weekly market at which people can trade rations and personal items with each other.

Osborne House

An historic royal residence built for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, this stately home has seen several uses since and now finds itself the central command and officer quarters for the island, coordinating island and mainland operations. The Brig stays here with his command staff, permanently wired into the commanders at the mainland bases and the other islands and subject to a barrage of demands and orders from the admiral and the politicians around the world. The house is well defended and a constant hive of activity, bustling with troops and drafted civilians.

Parkhurst Prison

Once one of the toughest prisons in the UK, Parkhurst was downgraded after an escape and came to hold around five-hundred less risky prisoners. The third of three prisons on the island, Parkhurst's workshops have been taken over by the military, and prisoners have been offered the chance to become Lo-Bots in exchange for commuted sentences. Those near the end of their time have been released into the refugee population and those with military experience have been drafted.

Ryde

Ryde is the largest town on the Isle of Wight with a normal population of around thirty-thousand. It now houses around one-hundred-and-twenty-thousand refugees on the north-east coast of the island. It is a crowded place and most people barracked here want to move to one of the other towns. It does have the most resources and public scale buildings though, and so the military council likes to keep it packed as full as possible to make it easier to distribute supplies. Released prisoners and chancing refugees run a black market here under the radar, manipulating the rationing system.

Sandown

Sandown is refugee free but people with professional and useful sailing skills have been resettled there from around the island. The military calls it a concentration of resources but to the people in the town it almost feels like prison. They think they're being kept there so they don't try to sail away and breach the quarantine. Ships damaged in the evacuation of the mainland have been sheltered and landed in the bay and are being broken up for salvage and materials.

Shanklin

Shanklin is a small town, south of Ryde and connected to it by a train line. This has been closed and the trains have been parked in Shanklin for use as refugee accommodation.

Shanklin is otherwise notable for being one of the places from which the Operation Pluto fuel line was used to supply the D-Day landings. The Shanklin beaches are used to try and train and break-in new Lo-Bots and draftees for landings, preparations for the establishment of more bases on the mainland.

St Marys Hospital

St Mary's has become hugely important and has been extended and expanded with field hospitals from military supplies, army medics and every doctor, nurse and orderly found from the refugees. The hospital is a constant hive of activity and under constant guard as demand for drugs and medicines still outstrips supply. The multicoloured 'ice cream cone' piece of public art, outside the hospital, has become a shrine to the missing and the dead with candles lit there to people's memories. Part of the hospital is kept more secure – the area in which the Lo-Bots are processed and checked, though there are only a handful at a time any more.

The Needles

The Needles is a formation of chalk out to sea close to Alum Bay. It is, perhaps, the most iconic sight of the Isle of Wight and one that appeared on a great many post cards. Its distinctive lighthouse has been manned again by Royal Marines, and artillery has been placed on the old site of The Needles Battery.

The sea around The Needles and Alum Bay is subject to frequent incursions by ‘things’ from the sea around the mainland, seemingly probing the defences of the island.

The Needles Battery

The Needles Battery was used as an experimental site for rocket tests in Britain’s abortive space programme and was also the site of artillery in the 19th and 20th centuries. The area is now used as a look out and artillery post, backing up the riflemen on the lighthouse with heavier gear. Plans are afoot to refit and replenish the old facilities as a stronger, defensive point.

Ventnor

At the southernmost side of the Isle of Wight, Ventnor is the place that most refugees want to be placed in and there’s a great deal of wheeling, dealing and bribery involved. Those in Ventnor don’t need to look towards the mainland and do not need to see The Monad in the sky. They can fool themselves – a little more than others – that life is normal. Ventnor is horribly overcrowded and is used to house most of the Reclaimers, to give them as much of a break as possible from dealing with the mainland. The Ventnor Brewery here has been re-opened, though mostly to produce industrial alcohol, and RAF Ventnor is fully staffed, watching for interloping ships and planes and has had its bunkers opened up to accommodate more soldiers and equipment.

Yarmouth

A tiny village and small port to the West of the island, Yarmouth looks right across the water to the mainland. People don’t like to live here and few refugees have supplemented the original population. Military observers and a strong group of Lo-Bots are present, just in case, but even the Lo-Bots find the constant glowering presence of The Monad so close, just over the water, to be wearing.



Things

Anything that can be described can be encountered, fought and dealt with in ImagiNation. It's a completely open book to the strangest things you can think of. Here's a little inspiration to get you going:

Carpet Sharks

Blade-like fins cut through the pile, parting it like water. If you don't get up onto a chair or a table quickly they'll rise up out of the carpet, bite your leg and drag you down to a fluffy grave. Carpet sharks are, unfortunately, almost as common as 'the ground is lava', both of which present a problem to Reclaimers working their way through urban areas.

The Carpet Shark is *very big*, with *very sharp teeth* and *ridiculously keen senses*. It is *strong* enough to drag a full grown man into a bath mat and swallow him whole. They are *master swimmers* and *professional predators* that hunt in packs. Beware the red carpet.

Dragon

Dragons of various kinds are found in myths and legends around the world and have appeared in a great many different fantasy worlds. Little wonder then that dragons are to be found lurking in many corners of the British Isles now that they have fallen under dream's spell. This dragon is your 'typical' fantasy dragon, but many different kinds can be found.

The dragon is *truly huge* with *enormous* wings that enable it to *fly with professional skill*. It can project *burning flames* some distance and is *immensely strong*. *Keen vision* lets it see something as small as a deer from as high up as the clouds. Head to tail it is clad in *very thick scales* that protect it from harm, though it does have a *soft underbelly*. It has *terrible claws* and *daggered jaws* and is a *legendary predator*.

Forgs

The fear of frogs is a common phobia, partially because so many folkloric superstitions surround frogs and toads. Many different varieties of strange frog are to be found in lakes, streams and sewers but the larger, more dangerous ones have been dubbed 'Forgs' by the Reclaimers.

A Forg has a *very long* and *very sticky* tongue with which it can catch prey up to the size of a person. Their skin is *toxic* and *slippery* and their tongue-muscle is *strong*. They are *professional leapers* but their *brightly coloured skin* ensures that they are not particularly stealthy.

Grasping Things

There are things, out there, under the bed, under the bench, hidden in the gratings and in the gap. If they get hold of you then you're in trouble. You could get dragged down, dragged under and then you'll never be seen again. All that's ever seen of these things is their grasping tendrils, never any bodies.

Grasping things are *masters of hiding and grabbing*. Their tentacles are *horribly strong* and as *tough as leather*. They never seem to run out of their *many tentacles*. They don't move though, they stay in their hiding place and just wait. If you get pulled beneath their *rending teeth*, beaks, whatever it is under there will tear you to pieces.

Killer Bees

Swarms of killer insects infest houses, bodies, trees, even televisions and they can burst out, angrily, to give someone a very bad day.

Insect swarms are *stinging* and *biting*, *extremely painful* and *plentiful*, able to attack anyone within their area. They're not that formidable but they are *relentless* and can be *poisonous*.

Ogre

Big, violent people – people bigger than you – are scary and dangerous. Sometimes these are monstrous giants and trolls from myth, sometimes they're repressed trauma coming out or the nameless fear of angry drunken men, muggers or rioters, or even the nebulous fear of 'yoof'.

Ogres are *huge* and *lumbering*, *very strong*, *very tough*, *unstoppable* and *powerful*. They are *professional fighters* with *big hands* and *bony brows*, *dull-witted* but *dangerous* and *terrifying*.

Slenderman

The Slenderman was made up by the internet, but that doesn't mean he won't get you, nor that he's the only 'meme' out there in dreamland.

The Slenderman is *tall*, *gaunt* and *thin* with a mouth and no other features. It wears a black suit, white shirt and tie and has strange, *elongated limbs* that bend at *broken angles*. From its back protrude a number of black tentacles upon which it can skitter at *great speed*. It can stretch its limbs great distances and is a *master of stealth*, using that capability to stalk children, dreamers or not, 'disappearing' them. No matter how many times he is killed The Slenderman always returns and always remembers.

The Slenderman's presence can cause Slendersickness which makes a victim *forgetful*, *sleepless*, *paranoid* and gives them *coughing fits*.

Spiders

Who likes spiders? Nobody likes spiders. These spiders like it that way. Gigantic, hairy things, spinning their nets between streets and coming out at night to hunt and pounce and suck you dry.

These spiders are *man-sized*, *strong* and *fast*. *Deadly fangs* are *armour piercing* and *venomous* and their *chitinous armour* makes them *hard to kill*. They are *legendary climbers* and *master hunters*.

Their webs are *sticky* and *very strong*.

The Phenomenon

The Phenomenon is a thing all of its own. It squats over the British mainland in the form of The Monad and makes dreams, fancies, figments and nightmares real. Those who come within its area and are not immune become more and more sleepy until they pass out. Then they become just another dreamer, stumbling around in a haze, dead to the world and feeding The Monad with their every passing fancy.

It can be rolled back, if sleepers are awakened, if loci are eliminated or resolved. The three camps on the mainland give people hope that they can push it back. The dream creatures push back though, constantly testing the borders, trying to push forward and reclaim the land that was lost.

Planes cannot fly over the mainland for long and those that do are attacked by flying creatures or vanish into strange clouds and fields. Satellites cannot penetrate The Monad and only the most vague details can be made out in non-visible spectra.

Armour

Equipment is described in the same way as anything else. Its adjectives can be added where appropriate and it can also be damaged and lose those traits.

Ballistic Vest: *Bulletproof, very tough.*

Gas Mask: *Filtered air, eye protection.*

Helmet: *Head protection.*

Leather Jacket: *Hardwearing, tough.*

Medieval Chainmail: *Heavy, dense, very tough.*

Medieval Plate: *Very heavy, dense, hugely armoured.*

Shield: *Defensive.*

Vehicles

Reclaimers more typically move on foot but some vehicles can be salvaged or borrowed.

Army Land Rover: *Armoured, powerful, heavy, off-road, very tough.*

Family Car: *Comfortable, spacious, fast, crash protection.*

Lorry: *Very big, very heavy, very powerful, cargo hauler, lots of inertia, tough.*

Motorbike: *Quick, manoeuvrable, efficient, small, very fast, exposed.*

Van: *Big, heavy, spacious, tough, cargo hauler.*

Weapons

9mm Side-arm: *Small, powerful, rapid fire.*

Anti-Material Rifle: *Very long range, very powerful, armour piercing, heavy.*

Assault Rifle: *Powerful, fully-automatic, controlled bursts.*

Axe: *Sharp, chopping, heavy, brutal.*

Brass Knuckles: *Small, hidden, blunt.*

Club: *Heavy, blunt.*

Combat Rifle: *Accurate, powerful, heavy.*

High Calibre sidearm: *Powerful, slow, intimidating.*

Knife: *Sharp, stabbing, slashing.*

Shotgun: *Powerful, spread shot, intimidating, brutal.*

Sniper Rifle: *Very long range, very accurate, powerful, slow.*

Spear: *Sharp, long, crude, stabbing.*

Sword: *Sharp, stabbing, slashing, swinging.*

Let's see... we hit Base Foxtrot on Monday morning and got those useless orientation reports from the staff there. We struck north that afternoon and spent the night hiding from burning owls in Burgess Hill. There was a locus around Ardingly reservoir but it took us until Wednesday to map all the space-shifts around it. You try taking on a freshwater kraken with nothing but a nine-milly and see how you do. We buried Max at the edge of Lindfield and the dead climbed out of their graves. They chased us all the way back to base.

How was your week?

Guy Morris,

Reclamer, Totland

POST
CARD



Playing The Game

What do we do?

This is a game about loss, about coming to terms with that loss and with what makes the characters both strong and weak. It's about overcoming the obstacles that stand in your way, obstacles that can seem insurmountable and about showing a difference can still be made.

Off the mainland the characters can get caught up in the politics of the island and the international community. They must follow their own conscience in whether or not they back the military, what they expose and what they support. Are they working to better the lot of the refugees or to take back the mainland?

How do they survive? How do they cope with their problems? Are they willing to destroy all the wonders of the mainland just to get back a grey and pallid reality? What price is worth paying?

All of this is behind what you do and what you do is to accomplish missions on the mainland.

Clear: Move in to an area and clear it of dangerous figments and dreamers. With that done the Lo-Bots can move in and secure the area, expanding the foothold on the mainland.

Explore: The landscape is changing. In most places the dream world 'fills in' over the existing land but the longer a place has been under, the more powerful the dreams and the presence of loci can make things really change. Satellites and planes aren't available, so Reclaimer information is the only information available.

Kill: Some figments are really powerful. These have taken on a life of their own and present a clear and present threat to the reclamation of the mainland. They have to be dealt with, as do renegade Reclaimers and Loci where no other solution is possible.

Personal Missions: The Dream Trade is always after interesting things, people are seeking their lost family. People have lost all manner of things in the mainland and they want it back. The Reclaimers are the only ones who can get it back for them.

Reclaim: Supplies, equipment, weaponry, government secrets, even food fuel and luxuries. The Reclaimers are the only ones who stand any chance of penetrating the dream world and returning with supplies the islands desperately need to sustain themselves.

Save: There are people out there, potentially important people. They may be lost in the dreams but if they can be extracted and woken up they'll add their intellectual worth to what remains of the UK.

Campaigns

A campaign is a set of adventures or missions that are strung together to form a more cohesive and overarching story. There's a number of ways you can go about this – if you even want to do it. I'm going to go over a few different approaches but you can do what you want with it. This is just my insight and advice:

Let 'em Ride: You don't need to come up with a campaign arc. The players will create their own in the relationships between their characters and the non-player characters, through their deeds and the missions that you send them on. They don't need to link up, they don't need to make sense, you just need to keep the world that you make together relatively consistent from game to game.

J.J.: In this method you come up with an overarching plot, much as you might have in a TV show. You plan for a certain number of sessions (six to thirteen if you're in the UK, fifteen to twenty-five if you're in the USA) and tease out a little bit of this bigger plot each session, building towards a climax. Perhaps they're going to liberate a whole town, perhaps they're going to take down a powerful figment, perhaps they're going to find out where all these new Lo-Bots are coming from... it's up to you.

The New-Who Method: In the J.J. Method you still allow people to engage with the overarching plot and parcel it out in sections to be dealt with. In the New-Who method (got to love pop culture references) the big plot sort of hovers, relatively untouchable, in the background. You mention it, you hint at it, you reference it but it doesn't really come in until a grand finale or a 'double episode'. Then it hits all at once. This provides the illusion of an overarching plot, without quite as much effort.

Living Game World

ImagiNation is designed as a narrative heavy game. While characters can progress, advance and develop they do so relatively slowly. This is partially done so that you can take your characters and adventures from one table to another, one Games Master to another with little to worry about. Going to the mainland and returning is like leaving for another world and there's no guarantee that the world you return to is going to be the same one you left from.

Reclaimers report strange incidents where the missions they were sent on are no longer in the record. Where people they know are 'different', or even absent. This oddness helps smooth over the cracks if you take your character into someone else's game and then return to your own. I also means you can take turns being the Games Master without having to know each other's plots.

It is my hope that people will share adventures, characters, ideas, dreams and monsters and their in-character stories to build up a rich and layered tapestry of stories that everyone can share. If you come up with anything feel free to share it. This game is completely open so you're free to blog, publish and otherwise provide materials for this game to your heart's content.

Dreamography

28 Days Later (Film)
A Nightmare on Elm Street (Films)
Abarrat Series (Novels)
Alice in Wonderland (Novel)
Alice through the Looking Glass (Novel)
Alice: Madness Returns (Video Game)
An Automated Alice (Novel)
Andre Breton (Artist)
Animal Man (Comic)
Attention Scum! (Television)
Banksy (Artist)
Blue Jam (Radio)
Carl Jung (Psychologist/psychiatrist)
City of Lost Children (Film)
Cool World (Movie)
Crossed: Wish you were here (webcomic)
Darwinia (novel)
Depression (Mental condition)
Franklyn (Film)
Friedrich Nietzsche (philosopher)
Funny Games (Movie)
H.P. Lovecraft's Dream Cycle (Novels)
Inception (Film)
Indigo Prime (comic)
Insomnia (Mental condition)
Jam (Television)
Man Ray (Artist)
Mind's Eye Theatre 1st Edition (LARP)
Monster Magnet (Music)

Monsters (Film)
Nowhere (Book)
Night of the Living Dead (Film)
Nightlife (RPG)
Over the Edge (RPG)
Perdido Street Station (Novel)
Pink Floyd (Music)
Planescape (RPG)
Psilocybin (Mushroom)
Psychonauts (Video Game)
Rene Magritte (Artist)
Salvador Dali (Artist)
Slaughterhouse Five (Novel)
Storming Heaven (Comic)
Survivors (TV series)
The Cornelius Quartet (Novels)
The Day of the Triffids (Novel)
The Doors of Perception (Book)
The Invisibles (Comic)
The League of Gentlemen (Television)
The Naked Lunch (Novel)
The Wizard of Oz (Book)
Thursday Next (Novels)
Unknown Armies (RPG)
UnLunDun (Book)
Who Framed Roger Rabbit? (Movie)
Yellow Submarine (Film)



Name: Helena Cooper

Description: Helena is a *long-limbed, thin and muscled* woman with *delicate* elfin features and a *striking* appearance. She is *big-hearted* and quite *compassionate*. Sometimes to those that don't deserve it.

Skills: Helena is a *novice sculptor* and a *professional businesswoman* who built her own businesses from the ground up several times. Just never what she wanted it to be.

Art: Sculpting (Points 5)

Issue: Mania

Background:

Helena is older than she looks. Her adult son was in the UK when the event hit, attending an important global comics convention being held in Birmingham. The event swallowed him up and she's been driven to distraction about his fate ever since.

Helena left her daughter and husband in the US, knowing she can't go back until the disaster is solved. It may never be solved. She's really just here to find her son and everything has to work towards that. She immigrated to the Isle voluntarily but took a huge risk to get smuggled to the mainland. She could have ended up just another dreamer but because of her talent she was spared and pressed into service.



Name: Charlie Ellis

Description: Charlie is a *very cerebral* person, enamoured of thinking over action. For all that he's an *industrious* soul, even though he is *physically weak*. When manic he tends to be *gregarious* and *uninhibited*, as well as a little *reckless*. When he's depressed the extra thought he puts into things makes him *brilliant* and *very meticulous*, but at the cost of being dissatisfied with his work.

Skills: Charlie is a *Professional Architect* and a *Novice Engineer*. He was a junior architect at his firm and very hands-on.

Art: Architecture (Points 8)

Issue: Manic-Depression (Roll to see which is ascendant)

Background:

Charlie grew up in a pretty town on the southern coast of England with a small, perfect beach and gently rolling countryside all around. His family ran a bed and breakfast and his childhood belonged on the kind of postcard sold along the seafront.

Aside from the occasional fights with his older brother – they always made up – nothing blotted Charlie's childhood. This just made the fact that his head was so messed up all the more frustrating and more of a mystery. He felt torn between two lives, one hectic and fast paced, the other empty and frustrated. He kept it secret from his family but with help from the doctor managed to bring things mostly under control with medication.

Charlie's obsession with architecture and design brought him out of a slump, gave him a glimmering of a time when his introspection was helpful, useful even. He graduated with a first in architecture, dependent upon his medication but coming through it all with genuine talent. He settled in, head hunted straight out of university, to a high paying job and seemed to have landed on his feet.

Then the event came. First he thought it was his own mind betraying him again, but the panic and destruction convinced him that it was real and true. Again, he's been a lucky one. Living on the coast his family were able to evacuate, one of the few to get out in their near entirety. He's still missing three grandparents, two aunts and a handful of cousins lost on the mainland. He may have a way to make the family whole again, another way to be useful, even good at what he does.



Name: Devika Marcellus-Temple

Description: Devika is *profoundly tenacious* both physically and mentally. When she sets her mind to something she will overcome anything to reach her goal. Brought up amongst a strongly artistic and polytheistic, multicultural group she has a tendency to be *wistfully dreamy* (which borders on the *very melancholic* when depressed), though this serves her ability to tell deeply emotional stories. She is generally quite *animated*, often channelling this into gregariousness, or into her work, allowing her to work late into the night.

Skills: Devika is a *professional blacksmith*, a trade learnt at her father's feet. Due to the general lack of modern day smith's she's learnt many iron-arts including artisan smithing and farrier skills. Though her mother didn't feature in her life for long she still managed to instil in Devika a love of oral history and storytelling. She is just starting to learn the Indian and Norse myths and is a *novice storyteller*.

Art: Blacksmith (treat as painting/sculpting/drawing 7 points in pool)

Issue: Depression.

Devika is a veteran of NHS care and knows more about her conditions than most doctors do. She has been on a cocktail of antidepressants, anxiolytic and other drugs to control the worst aspects before the event. Access to specialist drugs is now tricky. As such the depression and the onset of dementia have accelerated. Devika screams and swears in her sleep and can sleepwalk or attack her partners if she shares a bed.

She has problems with memory, learning, reasoning and organising her thoughts and feelings. It's early stages though.

Background: Half Indian and half Nordic, Devika was raised in an art commune. Home schooled by her teacher mother for the first twelve years of her life she apprenticed to her father after that, learning the craft of smithing. Her parents worked hard to keep her out of mainstream education and life for as long as possible. Part of a large family, four brothers, two of whom were twins, Devika was the favourite, which caused a little familial resentment.

Devika was a voracious reader and ploughed through everything that the commune had to offer. Her knowledge of smithing is not purely physical, but is also coloured by Nordic, Indic and Devonshire and Cornish mythology surrounding smiths, of which there is plenty.

Devika's mother succumbed to dementia when Devika was eighteen, dying a medicated wreck and dragging Devika's father down with her. He just disappeared. Her brothers went into science and the army – to huge acrimony – the last brother staying with her to run the forge.

Six years ago Devika started to show signs of the same illness that took her mother. Both she and her brother knew the symptoms well. When the event came Devika was travelling in India, in Uttar Pradesh, learning about Lohasur Devi, the goddess of blacksmiths. She came back right away to help, to hopefully find some remnant of her family and to do all she can in the five or ten years that she thinks she has left. Since she can run a forge without modern equipment and power, she is very valuable to swathes of the refugee community. She has a place in the 'commune', just like her childhood.



Name: Thomas ‘Tam’ Murphy

Description: Tam is a *stocky* fellow, a broad shouldered mass of muscle despite some physical infirmity, he’s kept himself trim and manages to remain a *spirited* soul and a *staunch* person to have at your side in adversity. Tam’s pretty *affable*, able to get on with most people but his brutally *honest* nature, his *impatience* and his *lustful* tendencies rub some people the wrong way.

Skills: Tam was in the military and while out of practice remains a *novice soldier*. Since he was forced to leave the military he’s become a *professional carver* and was doing alright for himself before the event. He’s gotten into a lot of brawls in the past, trying to reassert his strength and making him a *novice brawler*. He also briefly trained enough to be a *novice electrician*.

Art: Carving (as painting/drawing but through carving sigils, symbols and images, pool four).

Issue: Schizophrenia

Background: Tam’s thirty-three, just shy of six feet tall and of broad and muscular British stock. His arms are covered with tattoos of Celtic knots, barbed wire, angel’s wings and other symbology that’s important to him for one reason or another. He’s a friendly sort, but a lot of this comes from his confidence – or overconfidence – in himself.

In a lot of ways Tam is overcompensating for the things that are wrong with him. He used to be in the RAF Regiment until an incident in Afghanistan brought to the fore an aortic defect in his heart. He briefly ‘died’ and was found unfit for duty. Since his discharge he’s drifted from job to job becoming more and more paranoid, infatuated with conspiracy theories as he went from army to electrician to tree surgeon and finally to wood carver and pyrographer – before the world fell to bits.

Tam is a helpless womaniser, another aspect of his overcompensation trying to assure himself that he’s ‘still a man’. He has no ‘inside voice’ and will expound both on his own merits and the crazy conspiracy theories that have sprung up about the event, and indeed everything else, at the drop of a hat. Tam suffers from vivid, occasional, hallucinations – a manifestation of his schizophrenic ‘voices’ in the form of a hyper-sexualised wood-nymph whom he seems as his muse, but who also eggs him on in his sexual conquests and undermines his masculinity.



To convey meaning
In seventeen syllables
Is very diffie....

Name: Eddie Chambers

Description: Eddie would be accused of being OCD even if he wasn't already OCD. He's obsessed with being *accurate* and goes out of his way to be *careful* in everything he does. His eyes are always wide open, very much *aware* of his surroundings and any potential disruptions or threats. He is *intelligent*, so intelligent that he can dream up a hundred ways anything and everything can go wrong, if he doesn't do it 'right' but he is *persistent* in the face of all this doubt and worry. People are particularly unpredictable, so he can seem – and is – a bit *withdrawn*.

Skills: Eddie was a *professional editor*. A profession where an obsessive attention to detail and perfection can be a positive bonus. He can bring other people's writings to a shine. His poetry is very much a *novice* thing for him. He has a hard time getting past structure to the aesthetics of a piece.

Art: Poetry.

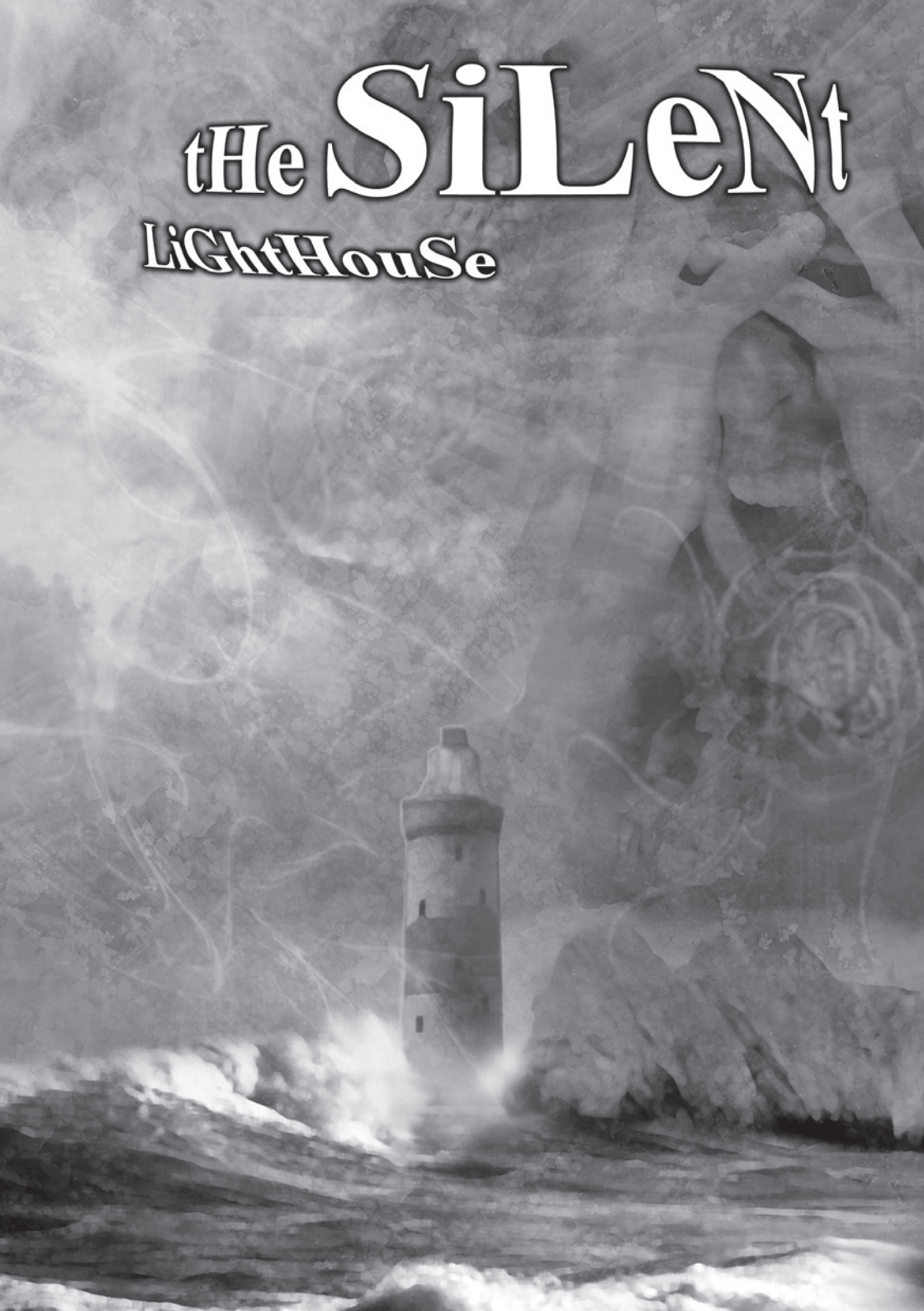
Issue: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Eddie tries as much as possible to make his poems fit accepted, standardised structures of meter and form. His two common 'rituals' are to count out the letters in the last word of a sentence that he speaks and to knock out the rhythm of a haiku (5-7-5) before passing through a door.

Background: Eddie is a poet, that's how he thinks of himself, but he limits himself to strict meter and rhyming schemes such as limericks, sonnets or haiku. He doesn't free-form. He's obsessed with the poetry he writes staying within the rules of the poetic forms he's chosen. A haiku is all right, even though it doesn't rhyme, because 5-7-5 is symmetrical. As long as poetic rules can be applied to the poetic action he can avoid anxiety. When he does rhyme he feels most comfortable with exact rhymes, ones that match in all syllables of a word. Meter is also important to him, such as stress on syllables in something like iambic pentameter.

Eddie's past is a bit of a mystery. Being so withdrawn he doesn't talk much about what happened or how he got out of the mainland. If pressed he'd be forced to admit he doesn't remember much. He's just glad he escaped and the structured military conditions on the island suit him while he tries to ground himself.

the SiLeNt

LiGhtHouSe



The Silent Lighthouse

*An ImagiNation adventure by
Andrew Peregrine*

“Put out the light, and then put out the light.”

-Othello Act V Scene II

There are few inhabited places left in the British Isles, but one has become a literal beacon of hope to those huddled on the islands around the beleaguered country. No one knows why, but a remote lighthouse has survived the disaster, and its crew has remained at their posts and ensured the light never dims. Not only has this been a valuable aid to the ships making their way to the islands, but it has also offered hope to the islanders. Each night they could look towards the mainland and see a lone lantern lit on the coast, standing strong amidst the ruins of Britain.

The lighthouse is crewed by a small team who rely on supplies from the islands. These supplies are gladly given for the dangerous service the lighthouse crew provides, and the morale boost they offer the survivors. Once a month a small boat makes its way to the Lighthouse; bringing news, supplies and thanks to the crew for their heroic work.

The last trip was a week ago, but the supply boat never returned. A day or so later the lighthouse light went out. The previous supply trip reported nothing out of the ordinary and now, people are getting nervous. Not only is the loss of the beacon a blow to island moral, but many are wondering if the ‘event’ and the Monad are finally spreading out. Has the lighthouse fallen to the event, has the crew finally gone mad or did the power simply go out? The player characters are about to be dispatched to find out why.

Running the Adventure

As this adventure is probably the first time any of your group has played *ImagiNation* it is designed to work in a simple linear way. However, a more experienced Gamemaster can easily allow the events of the adventure to shift around depending on how the player characters decide to proceed.

The lighthouse might be placed anywhere on the British coast. You may have your player group based on the Isle of Wight or the Orkneys so the lighthouse is simply across the water from where they are usually situated. The internet is full of websites detailing the places you can find lighthouses across the British Isles. The Skerryvore lighthouse may serve as a good model as it is particularly remote and isolated and also the tallest in the country

The Lighthouse Crew

One of the most important parts of the adventure will be playing the crew of the lighthouse. Their reactions to the player characters might determine much of how the adventure plays out. There are three members of the team, all of whom came to the lighthouse before the event, but opted to stay as they were among the few who didn't have to give up their homes. If the player characters think to ask, a little detail about them is available from the military records or the experiences of these who might have visited the lighthouse on a supply run. There is little personal detail, but the names, ages and skills of the crew are a matter of record.

'Old' Bill Shillingworth

Bill is a widower, having lost his wife Elaine to cancer a few years before the event. He had a lot of trouble getting over her death and decided he needed a change of scene to escape the memory of her. As an ex-naval officer he wanted to be near the sea so he chose the isolation of being a lighthouse keeper. Bill is around 50 years old and an *Old Sailor*. Getting away from his old life has helped a little but he is still a *Troubled Widower*.

Thomas MacLyle

Tom is not a conventional choice as a lighthouse keeper. He had a very well-paid job in the city as a computer specialist but the stress led to a minor breakdown. As a result he decided to change his lifestyle and 'gear down'. He joined the crew to maintain the communications technology on the lighthouse, and the mobile phone masts that had been installed there for private companies. His skills gave him a degree of negotiation with his employers so he was able to secure a third place for his girlfriend, Amanda. Tom is a *Proficient Technician*, and his time in the city has made him a rather belligerent *Alpha Male*. He has not really recovered from his breakdown though and remains *emotionally unstable*.

Amanda Gregor

Tom's girlfriend is deeply regretting her decision to join his 'great adventure'. Amanda trained as a primary school teacher, but only worked part time as Tom's city job was obscenely well paid. When the small country school she worked in closed just before Tom decided on a change of lifestyle, she agreed to go with him to the lighthouse as she had nothing better to do. She thought he would get bored of it all and had no problem with what she saw as a long holiday. Then the event happened and she found herself stuck there. With no official job to do in the lighthouse, both the men have left the cooking and cleaning to Amanda, and she is getting pretty sick of it.

With the mainland lost, most of the technology is useless, so any of the crew could perform the duties required to keep the lighthouse running. That the men have failed to take on any of what they still call 'woman's work' is a source of intense rage for Amanda. Amanda is *Good with Children* and has effectively become a *Disgruntled Housewife*.

The Loneliness

The darkness that has befallen the lighthouse is actually due to the fragile relationship between its three inhabitants finally snapping. All this time the lighthouse hasn't been entirely immune to the effect, it has simply been too remote and unpopulated to manifest a real effect. All three of the crew came to the lighthouse to escape their demons, and instead they brought them with them. Bill is still trying to get over the loss of his wife, but instead of dealing with his grief he has tried to ignore it. Tom is still recovering from a stress related breakdown and is actually getting worse rather than healing. Amanda was feeling directionless, and living on the lighthouse hasn't helped, but she has also had to cope with becoming a servant/slave to the other two and her quiet rage has grown to boiling point.

All these issues came to a head a day or two after the previous supply boat left. Left once more to organise supplies while the men had a drink, Amanda cracked and had a flaming row with Thomas. A little drunk by this time, Thomas hit her which brought the row to an abrupt end.

The couple might have got past this except that Amanda looked for some comfort from Bill as a father figure. He made a pass at her in her moment of vulnerability which soiled their relationship. When Thomas found out he had a brief fight with Bill, but as no one could leave it solved nothing. From that moment they decided to avoid each other, and maybe try and leave with the next supply boat.

The three of them essentially separated, immersed in their own feelings of hurt and anger, and it was meat for the Monad. They had all felt a little lonely, isolated in the lighthouse far from civilisation, but their reliance on each other for comfort and support kept it at bay. Once they fell out with each other their loneliness took shape. It was hungry and angry and full of shame. It knew only one thing: the crew must not be allowed to leave it here alone. So it interfered with the already unreliable communications system, cutting off the lighthouse completely.

When the supply team arrived, the Loneliness realised they might take away the crew. So, hungry for love and comfort it sucked the life out of all of them. Ashamed of what it had done, the Loneliness stole the light from the island, cloaking the place in darkness so it might hide.

The crew came to believe there were creatures outside the lighthouse looking to kill them. Little did they realise the monstrous shadow they had created was actually inside the lighthouse with them as well.

As their fears grew, they trusted each other less and their separation grew. The Loneliness has only become more powerful as a result.

The Loneliness is a creature of *Insubstantial Shadow*, although it can take the form of Bill's wife Elaine due to his connection to it and his feelings. It is full of *Sadness* and *Shame* which are its main weaknesses. However it's *Hunger* allows it to drain the life from those it can surround. It will have difficulty with the player character Reclaimers as their creative power grants them a spark of light within them that repels it.

Beginning The Adventure

The player characters will be called to their commanding officer to be assigned a mission. If this is the first time you've played the game, it is a good way to bring the player characters together. None of them need to know each other very well; they are simply assigned to the same mission.

This is also a good opportunity for the Gamemaster to describe life on the island. Ask each player what their character is doing when they get the call. Are they eating a meal, if so where and who with? They might be playing cards or gambling, in which case, how well are they doing? Maybe they are already part of the military and working there, if so what do they do? Are they training, working the motor pool or doing administration work. Take this opportunity to let the players describe who their characters are and how they relate to the other refugees.

When they answer the summons to military headquarters they will be briefed by Captain Sarah Martindale. Cpt Martindale is a *stern and experienced officer* and will accept no levity from even Reclaimers. She will explain the situation with the lighthouse, a place the player characters will already at least have heard of. She will tell them their mission is to find out what has happened, if possible rescue the crew, but most importantly establish whether or not the 'event' is moving out from the mainland. A boat is being prepared, they leave in two hours.

Allow the player characters time to gather anything they might need, or possibly get to know each other better. They should all then meet up at the docks where they will find a small fishing boat waiting to take them to the lighthouse.

Scene 1 Crossing The Water

The boat waiting for the group is a small fishing boat, not that much larger than a big rowing boat. It has a small open cabin big enough to shelter one pilot from the elements and room for another six people to sit on benches around the sides of the boat. The boat is owned by an *old fisherman* called Henry Tallbone. He can pilot the boat to the lighthouse, but if one of the player characters is able to pilot the craft he will happily let them take the boat. He doesn't want to lose his boat, but the military have all but commandeered it and he'd rather not go to the lighthouse which is obviously not a safe place to be!

The trip to the lighthouse is uneventful, although the waters are choppy and no matter what the time of day it gets darker as the boat approaches. The Gamemaster might take this opportunity to describe the Monad looming over the British Isles.

Scene 2 Landing on The Rock

The lighthouse stands on a bare rock island a hundred metres off the cliffs of the coast. At low tide a thin causeway allows you to walk to the shore, but that only gets you to the base of the cliffs. The rock itself is made of jagged black stone, about a hundred metres square. A small jetty platform has been built into one side to allow small boats to dock. It is little more than a landing stage with a metal ring to tie a boat off to. One boat, about the same size as the player character's one is already tied up on the jetty.

Around the rock and the cliffs the water gets very aggressive and if the player characters are driving the boat they should make a roll to see how well they come up to the jetty. The water is *Violently Stormy* as you get closer to the rock, and failure causes the boat to be smashed into the platform that forms the jetty. Those on board will have to make a check to avoid being thrown overboard. If the pilot badly fails their roll to land the boat they put a hole in the hull as it crashes into the rock instead. The boat will start to slowly sink if no one does anything to fix it, which might trap the player characters on the rock.

If Henry Tallbone is with the player characters he will land the boat roughly but well enough not to harm it. He will insist on staying with the boat and not put a foot on 'this godforsaken place'. It is up to the Gamemaster what happens to Henry. He might still be in the boat when the player characters return. He's used to sleeping on the boat for a night or two (as long as he still has a flask of tea he'll be happy). The loneliness won't kill him or harm the boat as it the best means to be rid of the player characters. However, if the player characters take too long to return he may decide to leave without them! Henry might try to get to the lighthouse if left for too long, but will be frightened back to the boat or killed by the Loneliness. His fate is entirely in the hands of the Gamemaster, although the player character's actions might save or condemn him!

The Supply Boat

The other boat on the jetty is the previous supply boat that never returned. After a week or so tied up here being thrown against the rocks it has sprung a hole and now sits low in the water, half flooded. Even so, it may provide spares and wood to repair the player character's boat if it's been damaged.

Inside the boat are a few boxes of supplies. The boxes are all waterlogged and any perishable foods have long since gone bad. However, there are a couple of boxes of canned goods. Along with these supplies is the body of one of the supply team. He has been dead for many days and his waterlogged body is a grisly sight.

His skin is almost bone white and his eyes are open and staring. He and the other members of the supply team were all killed by the Loneliness, which literally drained the life from them.

Once the player characters have landed the boat, the only obvious thing to do is walk towards the lighthouse. The lighthouse is the only feature on the rock and looms over the place in the darkness. Whatever time of day it is the rock seems to be in perpetual night, and it gets darker as the player characters approach the lighthouse.

As they cross the rock they will find another one or two bodies of the supply team. While they are in better condition to the previous one, they have the same white skin and empty eyes. Of the four team members, one stayed with the boat while the other three took the first lot of supplies up to the lighthouse. They were all killed before they reached the lighthouse, but the crew heard a noise and went out to find the supplies. Not knowing what to do about the bodies, and too frightened to look for the boat, the crew took what they could carry and ran back to the lighthouse. Once the light went out, soon after, they were too terrified to leave. The fourth body of the supply team was washed off the rock and now lies on the beach. It will be easily found by anyone who decides to cross the causeway, but it is just the same as the others. However, the man was drawn to the light hidden in the caves, and his dead body may point towards its hiding place.

Elaine

Walking to the lighthouse, the player characters will make out the figure of a woman standing between them and the lighthouse. As they get closer they can see she is an attractive blonde woman in her mid-thirties. The wind whips around her long hair and the summer dress she is impractically wearing. She glares at the player characters as they approach, and as they get closer she screams at them to leave. Ignoring all attempts to converse, she becomes more hysterical the closer the player characters get. Finally she will yell that “You cannot have them” and she melts into a darkness that seems to flow over the group. At this point, any light sources the player characters are using will instantly go out.

This spirit is the Loneliness using the form of Elaine, who remains as Bill pictures her. While it is able to extinguish the lights of the players, its encounter with them hurts it a little and it retreats to learn more before taking them on again. If the player characters have the right abilities they might notice this contact somehow hurt the spirit.

Scene 3 The Lighthouse

Once past the spirit of Elaine, the player characters can find their way to the lighthouse itself, although the Gamemaster might insist they make a roll to see if they can find it in the dark. Generating light in any conventional way is almost impossible, but if they use their abilities they might be able to create some form of illumination. However, it will be hard as there is definite resistance from the power of the Loneliness.

The lighthouse has only one entrance, a solid oak door at the base. They will have to knock loudly to get any form of response. Only if they persist will they hear the voice of Bill from inside asking who they are, and if they are even real. To get inside the player characters will have to either use their charm to convince Bill they are real people, or break down the *thick wooden door*.

All this noise will bring the other crewmembers down, so everyone will be assembled in the kitchen/dining room at the base of the lighthouse. Needless to say, introductions should follow. If the player characters have an idea of who the crew should be they will easily see they match the description. The player characters will have to work hard to earn the trust of the crew, and their first impression will make all the difference.

If any of the player characters are women, Amanda will be instantly drawn to them and assume they are an ally. She has been longing for some female company and a chance to let out her anger at how she is being treated. If the player characters are all men she will assume they are all misogynists and declare that she's not clearing up after anyone else.

If questioned about the supply team, the crew will say they heard something and found the few supplies they have. In truth they heard blood curdling screams and when they finally went out to look they were only brave enough to take the supplies from the bodies and beat a hasty retreat to the lighthouse. They all feel guilty they didn't bury the bodies

they found, or go out and see if anyone else needed help. They were all too frightened, and didn't trust the others to help if something went wrong.

If asked about the light the crew can tell the truth, it just went out. The power is fine, and lighting systems are fine, but nothing lights up. None of them know why and Thomas assumes the others blame him and think he's incompetent. He will take any remark in the worst way.

In all these conversations, Bill will come across as the 'sensible old timer' but it is a careful mask. Anything that pierces the veil of his casual jocularity will quickly make him defensive and angry.

Scene 4 Investigating The Lighthouse

Now they have arrived, and met the crew, the player characters will want to investigate the lighthouse. Certainly it is preferable to going outside! There is not much to see, and the lighthouse has few rooms. A long spiral stairs leads from the kitchen up to the top of the lighthouse. The stairs circle the inside of the lighthouse and the rooms, which are effectively stacked one on top of each other. This means the larger rooms are towards the bottom and the smaller ones at the top. Small windows appear at intervals along the way. Everything is made of stone and feels cold and old. Each room usually manages a small window, but only where the stairs allow, making every room a little dark and claustrophobic.

Kitchen

The base of the lighthouse is an entrance, common room, kitchen and dining room. Everything is plain and functional, but it is reasonably well equipped and neat. There is only enough china and cutlery for six people to eat at one time, which will mean eating dinner in shifts if the player characters intend to stay. There are a decent amount of supplies, although they won't last for long with more mouths to feed.

Thomas' Room

Above the kitchen is the largest bedroom which now belongs to Thomas. He used to share it with Amanda until she moved out. The room is a mess, having very much turned into a den. However, many of Amanda's clothes remain here as she hasn't the room or the time to move them. A few pictures of Thomas and Amanda will make their previous relationship obvious and possibly provide a starting point for any conversation with Thomas. He believes his relationship can still be saved, but not here, so he has given up trying until they can get to the mainland. By that time it will probably be too late.

Bill's Room

The next room up the stairs belongs to Bill. It is neat and orderly, but mostly because Bill has few possessions. The most interesting thing is that he has a picture of his late wife Elaine next to his bed. If they player characters mention she looks like something they saw outside he will tell them that isn't possible as she is dead. However he will want to know every detail. While he won't admit it, he has seen Elaine

outside too. He knows it must be a trick but he desperately wants to leave the lighthouse and join her and his resolve is weakening as his denial grows. Having not fully accepted her death, Bill talks about Elaine in the present tense, even when he is discussing how she died.

Equipment Storage

About halfway up the tower (as you might need supplies for the light or outside) is the main storage room. It is full of spares and old parts, some dating back to the 1930s. There is little here of real interest but the player characters might find useful items here.

Amanda's Room

Having moved out, Amanda has taken the only other room available. The room is tiny compared to the others and has little in it apart from some clothes and a few books. Amanda would like to gather more clothes from Thomas' room but doesn't want to get into the inevitable fight that will ensue if they are alone together. Instead she sits alone up here, reading a paperback novel she has already read 3 times.

Light Storage

This room is little more than a cupboard, and contains supplies for the light, such as lamps and wiring.

The Lamp

At the very top of the lighthouse is the lamp itself. The motors still turn the lenses but little more than a dull glow escapes the massive bulb in the centre. Player characters with electrical skills can easily see that everything is working fine, and changing the bulb does nothing.

Scene 5 Digging for The Truth

From this point the adventure could develop in several different ways depending on the actions of the player characters. It should become clear reasonably quickly that the problems are linked to the crew, and that the crew are reticent to talk. They should work to try and build trust with the crew and then get them to open up when alone. Threats are only going to make things worse.

Essentially the player characters should want to leave the lighthouse and take the crew with them. If they all leave the island the Loneliness will fade away, or perhaps lie in wait for another crew. Either way, it draws its power from the crew and cannot truly exist without them. It also cannot follow them away from the lighthouse unless they remain alone, which will be hard on an overpopulated refugee island.

There are several ways the adventure might progress; the most obvious we deal with below. It is very hard to predict what player characters will choose to do. They may cleverly deduce the entire situation from one conversation, or decide blowing up the lighthouse is the only sensible option. Expect either genius or lunacy and you'll probably be right! However, if they pick a logical path, the detail below will help you steer the adventure, or at least work out a plan if you need to improvise.

Leaving the lighthouse

The first option may be to run, and this will be tricky. The Loneliness needs the crew to survive and it knows it. It is happy to let the player characters leave; in fact it will even help them do so. However, it will use all its power to stop the crew leaving.

It will first try to warn them to leave. Taking Elaine's image again it will try to lure Bill away to separate the group. Outside the lighthouse, light sources not powered by the player character's abilities will automatically fail, and even using powers to create light will be difficult. If they decide to 'wait until morning' they will discover the sun cannot penetrate the unending cloak of night over the rock.

Initially, the Loneliness, whose senses are near omnipotent on the rock, will try and lead them into walking off the edge of the rock. Those who fall will probably get hurt from the fall, and may be swept out to sea by the waves that crash against the rock. Those who manage to remain on the rock will still have a very hard time locating their boat. The loneliness cannot move it, but even on this small island it will be easy to get turned around as the loneliness creates distractions and tries to mess with their senses. Having said that, they may find getting to the boat easy, but getting back to the lighthouse to bring the crew there difficult.

Confronting the Loneliness

The player characters may go out to directly confront the Loneliness. Even if they don't, if they manage to avoid its tricks in an attempt to leave, it will see no other path than a direct confrontation. In such a situation the Loneliness will attempt to drain the life from the player characters. However, their abilities give them a degree of natural resistance. This means they can join battle on relatively equal terms. However as a being of shadow the Loneliness is very difficult to hurt. The damage they can each do to each other will very much depend on what they choose to fight with.

Light is a very useful weapon against the Loneliness, but a lot harder than usual to create on the rock. The Loneliness also has a powerful weapon at its disposal in fighting the player characters, it understands their pain. The Loneliness knows how to get to the player characters as it knows the right things to say to undermine their confidence and self belief. In game terms this means it can enhance the severity of the player character's mental illness for each round it can talk to them.

If the Loneliness still cannot prevail it will move to more desperate measures. It will pick the most vulnerable crew member and kill them. It only really needs one to survive, but its power is diminished by the loss of any of them. Better to lose one than all three at least. It will take 2 rounds to suck the life out of one of the crew who have no defence against its power.

However, it will only do so to demonstrate its power, to help convince the player characters to leave the lighthouse alone.

Fixing the Relationships

The source of the Loneliness' power is the breakdown in the crew's relationships. While such things take time and effort to truly repair, finding a way to begin the process will significantly reduce the power of the Loneliness. How the player characters go about this is up to them and their interpersonal skills.

Bill needs to begin to get over the loss of his wife. He needs to fully understand she is gone and face his grief. He doesn't need to forget her, but he does need to properly grieve her loss and let in the pain. It is denial that is twisting the knife in his heart.

Amanda and Thomas need to settle their relationship. They either need to properly break up or get back together. Both have feelings for each other, but they also both believe they are the injured party. They need to both be convinced to make the first move and offer apology before looking to offer forgiveness. Thomas needs to recognise he needs help to get over his breakdown. This will be hard as his macho exterior sees admitting this as weakness. Amanda needs to be recognised as a partner and not a servant; she needs Thomas to really show he cares about her as a person and values her.

In general, they all need to apologise to each other for something. But it will be a long road to get them to even talk about their problems, let alone that they should be the one to offer an olive branch.

Finding the Light

The loneliness has hidden the light of the island in the caves on the beach. Those who look out of the lighthouse towards the shore might catch a glimpse of something lit across in the caves. Getting there is difficult, as it means crossing the rock and possibly facing the Loneliness. It is also only possible at low tide when the small causeway is visible. Even when revealed, the causeway is wet and slippery, making it treacherous to cross.

If they get across to the caves, the light becomes a little more obvious (and the dead body of the supply team member on the beach may point the way). The light is literally a ball of bright light that pulses with the rhythm of a lighthouse lamp. The player characters will have to think of a way to pick it up, as it is completely insubstantial. However, their powers should enable them to take control of it reasonably easily. With the light in their hands the Loneliness will have difficulty approaching them or even affecting them. Even its words seem less effective when cloaked in the light.

Using the light the player characters should have less trouble navigating the rock. With it keeping the loneliness at bay they might also rescue the crew, as long as they keep together. As they leave the island they can release the light which flies back up into the lighthouse, lifting the cloak of darkness over the island.

Once they are free of the rock, the Loneliness will begin to fade as its powerbase gets further and further away. It fades away, but may lie in wait for the next crew to come to lighthouse. One thing is for sure, it will remember the player characters and what they stole from it, and may one day seek revenge.

Afterword

Thank you to everyone who supported this project through crowd-funding and word of mouth and especially to those who sold their skills and abilities cheaply to get this charitable project done.

I would love to do more, similar projects in the future but funds are always tight and doing work that doesn't actually pay is a hit to an already fragile freelancer income.

If you liked this game and would like to see more charitable projects please lend your support via donations or purchases.

You can buy a hardcopy of this book at just over what it costs to print at Lulu.com

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Please help get this game spread as far and as wide as possible. Make copies, email them to gamers, talk about this game and link to downloads on your social media set-ups.

If you come up with something cool, blog an adventure idea or anything else for ImagiNation let us know and we'll reblog or link for you.

Cheers, have fun,

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Britain is lost to a creeping madness that breaks down the walls between reality and fantasy. Dreams and nightmares have become real and stalk the mainland while the survivors and refugees huddle on the surrounding islands.

Only those who are already broken can hope to explore the mainland and survive.



POSTMORTEM
STUDIOS