the window

second edition deluxe

scott lininger

the window

second edition deluxe

© 1997 scott lininger

table of contents

foreword

On the 10th anniversary of The Window role playing game it is a great pleasure to present the community of Window enthusiasts with this special deluxe version of the second edition rules set. Role playing games have changed a great deal since the last instalment of The Window was released in 1997 and it is a rousing testimony to the litheness and strength of the system that it still stands firm today with or without modern embellishments. In this deluxe version of The Window you will find:

- ✓ The complete 2nd Edition rules set
- ✓ Additional material from the web site not included in the original PDF
- ✓ The Stage; the premiere setting for The Window
- ✓ The character menagerie
- ✓ Bonus fan created material

I hope this deluxe edition will indeed help you step through the transparent portal into your imagination and into many hours of excellent role playing.

 - Lorenzo Rubbo-Ferraro, January 2007

the window

welcome

what it is

The Window is a transparent portal into the imagination, a roleplaying system designed with the simple belief that roleplaying is about story and character and not about dice and dick waving. For over five years now the Window has been quietly infiltrating the roleplaying community, changing and growing on the progressive edge of the hobby.

Many of the people who have started using the Window had long since concluded that the term "roleplaying system" is a contradiction in terms. Structure for structure's sake limits creativity and too many rules interrupt the narrative flow. What they wanted was a system working as transparently as possible, allowing them to build the story without concerning themselves with empty mechanics or mathematical charts. They also were looking for something that would quickly and seamlessly mold itself around their own stories and settings, a universal set of rules which could fit any genre without being generic and flavorless.

That is what the Window strives to be: simple, usable, and universal. There's not a lot to it, admittedly, but that's the whole idea. In the end, the Window is more a system of philosophy than a system of rules; if you share these viewpoints on roleplaying then you'll probably like these mechanics, and if you don't, you probably won't.

In addition to all its flighty philosophical bonuses, the Window is also free! You can take this text and do with it as you wish (for your personal use, mind you.) Make photocopies, download it, print it out, Email it to your friends in Australia, whatever you like. Please, just give us credit for the work that we have done, and include a copyright notice like the one on the credits page. (And if you think that the Window isn't worth the photons it's printed on, at least you didn't pay $30 for it like all those dozens of commercial systems collecting dust on your bookshelf!)

what it is not

a "diceless" system

The Window tries to combine the freeform roleplaying paradigm with the narrative advantages that dice provide.

a physics engine

If you are the type of person who prefers a system to have rules for any contingency presentable by Newton, then the Window is not what you are looking for.

an equipment depot

You'll notice that no information has been included on the guns, armor, ammo, clothes, vehicles, knives, explosives, or camping equipment Window characters can own. If you describe your character by the stuff he carries, you're probably describing him wrong in the first place.

a combat system

Combat in the Window is relegated to the status of just another scene, without a whole chapter of complex rules to manage it. In most stories, combat is nothing more than a fast and exciting byline to a larger plot, and it can be handled using the same simple rules used for everything else. (Every hour spent rolling dice and doing arithmetic could be spent actually roleplaying!)

a beginner's system

If you have never roleplayed before, then most of what you're reading right now probably doesn't make much sense. (Let us first say that roleplaying is NOT inherently satanic and that letting your kids do it has a better chance of swelling their creativity than encouraging them to drink blood.) Though it's quite possible that a beginner could gather some friends and use the Window to run a wonderful game, it's more likely that the lack of structure will be confusing and the story will disintegrate. If you want to get into roleplaying (I certainly encourage it), you'd do better to make a trip to your local gaming store and pick up a 2nd generation system like GURPS, Champions, Palladium, AD&D, or the like, which all include brief tutorials for starting players.

a new idea

The concepts which form the foundations of the Window have been thought before, by many people, in many places. In the mid eighties there was a thrust in the UK roleplaying 'zines about the sorts of freeform roleplaying the Window espouses, but they were never really realized. Before that, there were almost certainly visionaries quietly practicing this sort of progressive storytelling in closets and smoky backrooms, using AD&D or whatever homegrown systems they hacked together from week to week. Many believe that anyone who roleplays for long enough will naturally develop these ideas on their own.

The difference is that the Window is practical and available right here and right now. It has been playtested, redesigned, and playtested again dozens of times by people from all over the world. As roleplaying continues to evolve, the Window will evolve with it.

the state of our art

Roleplaying as a self-aware form has only been around for about three decades. In that time it's been through three distinct "generations." These generations can by no means tied to a specific system release or year... they've grown naturally as the art of roleplaying has matured. By this reckoning the Window would be considered a third generation roleplaying system.

First generation roleplaying is dice and maps and little metal figures. This is where it all began. The Game Master describes the setting room by room and typically the characters wander around with swords or guns killing things and accumulating money and ever bigger weapons. It's all very childish, but admittedly it can be fun once in a while.

Somewhere along the line, someone (probably lots of someones, simultaneously) discovered that the scope of roleplaying can be a lot larger. The systems started being more universal and the characters more unique. Tactical maps disappeared for the most part, and everyone started focusing on characterization and plot. Out of this perspective exploded a whole slew of new roleplaying genres... horror, espionage, romance, wild west. This is second generation roleplaying, where most mature roleplayers fall today.

In recent years (or considerably further back in some cases), there has been a movement to push roleplaying to yet another level, its third generation. The lines between PCs and NPCs, live-action and table-top, even Gamemaster and player, are blurring. Card tables covered in dice are giving way to candlelit dinners and dramatic background music. The stories being told are on par with "real literature," and players in a game have been replaced by actors in a very intimate drama. These people are interested in constantly trying new structure and experimenting with the potential of the whole roleplaying medium. The Window has developed out of this atmosphere.

a call to arms

The Web version of the Window is now in its second major incarnation. A couple of years ago it popped up on the Internet and the discussions began... these second edition rules have incorporated many of the best suggestions from the online Window community as well as all the feedback gathered from dozens of gaming conventions and playtesting sessions.

And there's always more holes to be filled! Right now several people are busy writing additions and settings for the Window, and we'll post them as they are completed. If you've got a ground-breaking setting or a superior rules idea you'd like to see published, here's your chance... I intend this site to be a forum for anyone who's radically minded and who's committed enough to share their creative vision.

I've dedicated myself to answering every Email personally, and it's my genuine hope that some of the extremely interesting people I've met through this Web site will continue to contribute and share thoughts with one another. So please stay in touch!

I'd like to thank you for visiting. If you have comments, good or bad, don't hesitate to give me an earful.

Cheers,

Scott Lininger
Methods in the Madness
www.mimgames.com
scott@mimgames.com

rules

the rules...

...are a necessary evil in roleplaying. On one hand they are needed to move the action along in a manageable fashion, and on the other they can very easily become too cumbersome and destroy the action altogether.

Take a moment to think about the rules in a roleplaying game. What purpose do they serve? In most systems, they first provide "balance," ensuring that the characters are not too powerful in relation to the world or to one another. Second, they provide flavor. The way in which the system describes characters naturally affects how you perceive those characters.

But both of these are somewhat secondary to the core purpose of the system: to decide which way the story will go at certain critical points. Will the troupe successfully find the secret door, or will they be trapped? Will they be able to pick the lock? Leap to the next train car? Defeat the enemy in battle? These are the times when the actors are no longer directly in control of things, and the characters choose their own fate by their abilities, luck, and instincts.

The Window provides the means of making these random plotting decisions through simple, quick, and easy to remember mechanics. The core rules can be learned in about five minutes and can be adapted to any genre you like in about ten. After reading the three precepts and the quick start page, you will be more or less ready to start playing. The majority of the sections afterward are concerned with presenting examples and discussing all the finer details.

some definitions

There are a few terms used in the Window which need to be clarified. The Storyteller is what other systems call the Gamemaster or Referee, based on the idea that the story is more important than any game or sport. The players are called actors, since that is what they truly are. We refer to the party of characters as the cast or the troupe.

In fact, theatrical and literary terms are used at all levels of the story, from a scene, to an act or chapter (one "adventure"), to a book (a "campaign," like a self contained series of acts), to the anthology or setting (all the books and characters which constitute a single world.)

the three precepts

The Window assumes that the people who use it are intelligent and mature. It is not a system meant to keep unruly actors in line or ensure that the Storyteller is fair about her decisions. This approach leaves certain pitfalls that inexperienced users can get trapped in. That is why the following philosophies need to be stated. These simple rules are the big ones, the guiding light for good roleplaying. If you follow them then using the Window will be a breeze.

the first precept

"Everything about a Window character is described
with adjectives rather than numbers."

The central idea here is that adjectives tell us more about a character than numbers can, and in a much more realistic way. Those things which define a person in real life are as varied and subjective as the universe itself. Certainly, there's only so much you can say about a person with a number.

The best we can do in the real world is to try and rate an individual's traits compared to other people, or some inexact "average," and we do this with adjectives. We say something like, "He's extremely good at driving." Never do we say, "He's a 5 at driving," but for some reason this is exactly what most roleplaying systems try to do.

As you may have guessed by now, the Window tries to more accurately represent the way that we perceive people by breaking up all their skills and traits into several levels of competency and assigning to each of them an adjective or brief description. In the above example, the character sheet would literally say "Extremely good at driving," and that would be that; we now know that this character is an excellent driver. Not only is this more realistic, but it also allows an actor to learn about a character at a glance, without knowing a thing about the system.

Always remember that a Window character is a person, described with images and personality just like a real person. Even though there are a few dice and mechanics which the Window uses as storytelling tools, these are not what the character is about. It is considered improper and backwards--against the rules, in fact--for you to describe your character in terms of dice, numbers, or other system-oriented terms.

the second precept

"It is the actor's responsibility to play their role realistically."

The Second Precept is the Window's way of addressing the "balance" issue which other role-playing systems provide with hit points, damage dice, and skill modifiers. Such rules are designed to distinctively limit the actors in certain situations, forcing them to be realistic. The Window does not use such rules: it is up to the actor to evaluate his character's situation and react accordingly.

The Second Precept is the Window's way of addressing the "balance" issue which other role-playing systems provide with hit points, damage dice, and skill modifiers. Such rules are designed to distinctively limit the actors in certain situations, forcing them to be realistic. The Window does not use such rules: it is up to the actor to evaluate his character's situation and react accordingly.

One outgrowth of the Second Precept is the assumption that the actors are willing (and hopefully pleased) to properly roleplay the effects of physical and emotional stress. So if a character is shot, he acts like he's been shot: he doesn't go leaping from building to building or wrestling alligators, for example--unless that makes sense in light of the story and his abilities.

Similarly, if a character is the victim of some severe emotional trauma they should be affected by it in the same way a real person would be. (The system obviously can't tell you what that reaction should be: only you know your character.)

Separate your knowledge and motivations from your character's. Superior stories can often be told if the actors are aware of things that their characters are not. Recognize this advantage for what it is, and stay conscious of what your character knows (and particularly what she doesn't know.)

Never forget that your character thinks like a real person with real emotional responses to the world around her. Seek out emotional scenes and get into them. Get sad, angry, despondent, loud, happy, frightened, worried, or intimidating as the story demands. Try to leave your own insecurities behind and stand boldly in the spotlight with every chance.

Always stay in character; it will make your role and the whole story come to life. Speak with your character's voice. Act on your character's beliefs. Dress in his clothes if it helps you get into the experience!

the third precept

"A good story is the central goal."

This is a big idea, though a simple one. It starts with the realization that the actors and the Storyteller are all cooperating toward the same goal: entertainment. If everyone takes equal responsibility for the quality of the story then all will benefit when it really starts working.

There are times when a good actor will let go of their own ego and let the story take precedence over their character. There are times when a good Storyteller will allow the actors to narrate scenes. The days of rival camps delineated by a GM screen are over. Though obviously the Storyteller's vision is what creates the seeds of roleplaying, nothing much will grow without the actors' input. An open, out of character dialog about the direction of the story should be maintained so that the Storyteller knows what's working and what's not.

Strive for originality in all things. Your characters, their actions, and their contribution to the narrative are totally up to you to decide, and the essence of roleplaying is a creative one. Don't allow yourself to fall back on stereotypes, and remember that what you create when you sit down to roleplay is totally unique to you and your group of friends. The story you mutually envision should be your own.

quick start page

The Window is a very simple system. You're about to learn how to use it. The first thing you need to see is an example character writeup. This is Royce Jenner, a typical character from a Victorian Horror setting. Take a moment to study Dr. Jenner's overview:

DR ROYCE JENNER

Dr. Jenner is the director of an insane asylum in London, and is well known for his books on the truth behind ghost sightings. He believes rather solidly that ghosts are simply scale hallucinations induced by improper diet and a misbalance of humors in the body. He requested the Queen's appointment to these supernatural investigations to test some of his theories. Dr. Jenner is enormously stable and able to deal with most anything with class. He is constantly stroking at his beard, with a slight smile playing on his lips, betraying his pride in the truth of science and reason.

This first section is a (much shortened) summary of his background, from his birth in early Victorian London through his appointment to the Queen's personal team of supernatural investigators. The final paragraph in this particular portion also gives you an idea of what his personality is like.

Royce Jenner has...
Below average strength. (D20)
Average agility. (D12)
Pretty good health. (D10)
Impressive knowledge of the world. (D8)
Very high sanity. (D6)
Strong powers of perception. (D8)
Average luck. (D12)

Next comes Dr. Jenner's inherent traits, somewhat similar to what other systems call statistics. Instantly, you'll see that Dr. Jenner is not a particularly physical person, though he is perceptive and intelligent. He's not any luckier than the average person, but he is notably "sane," as he tends to be very good at rationalizing the world. Hopefully all of that is clear due to the descriptive adjectives that accompany each. Here you can see the First Precept at work.

Royce Jenner is...
An expert psychologist. (D8)
A skilled medical doctor. (D10)
A former military man. (D20)
A respected writer. (D10)
A decent artist. (D12)
An amateur cook. (D20)
An average horseman. (D12)
A below average swimmer. (D20)

These are Dr. Jenner's skills, or what he "is." This section is a simple list of definitions, describing Dr. Jenner as you would if you knew him personally and were telling somebody about him. Again, each area of expertise or profession is rated by an adjective or two, allowing you to now how skillful he is without knowing anything about how the system mechanics work.

So, how does the system work? If Dr. Jenner attempts something particularly challenging during the course of the story, the Storyteller might ask for a roll. Notice that each trait or skill has a die listed alongside it in parenthesis; if you were playing Dr. Jenner in such a situation, you would roll the die listed next to the appropriate ability. If you roll a 6 or less, Dr. Jenner succeeds in his task. Otherwise he fails. If Dr. Jenner were competing directly with someone, you would again roll the die associated with the appropriate ability. Your opponent would also roll. Whoever rolls less wins. In there's a tie, there's a tie.

Congratulations! You've just learned 90% of the Window! Everything in the Window works the same, which is one way it differs from most 2nd generation systems. There are, of course, some subtleties you haven't been exposed to yet, but you have already mastered the basics.

inherent traits

Even in the real world there are some abilities which everyone has and are often challenged, things like strength, perceptive powers, and health. In a Window character, these common qualities are called traits (often known as "stats" in other systems.) Every actor on the cast will need to define these inherent traits for their character, as they will most likely be tested several times during the course of a chapter.

Following is the list of traits recommended for most roleplaying genres. They are delineated from other abilities and skills simply because they are present in everyone and are common tests for Storytellers to call for. The Storyteller should modify this list to fit their own style and the genre they are playing in.

For example, if you are playing in a very non-action oriented world where physical tests are few and far between, the Storyteller might opt to do away with strength or even agility. On the same token, it isn't uncommon for a Storyteller to add their own traits to the list to reflect the setting the characters come from. (Rules are available for several expansion traits, including luck, sanity, and magic. Check out the optionals section.)

the five basic traits

strength
This is the raw physical power which the character possesses, and it is tested in those situations where the character must lift, move, push, pull, or throw something which is unusually large or heavy. It also includes the character's ability to crush or break sturdy objects, hold down an enemy in combat, or other such trials of might.

agility
People who are highly agile are good at jumping over pits, swinging from ropes or vines, escaping from bonds, and picking pockets. It has to do with balance, manual dexterity, hand-to-eye coordination, and limberness, and it can be tested quite often in action oriented Anthologies.

health
Not only is this how good the character is at resisting disease, but also how good they are at running long distances, dealing with poison, holding their breath, etc.. Health rolls are very important should the character be wounded to determine how well they resist shock, pain, unconsciousness, and even death.

knowledge
Often referred to as "knowledge of the world," this is a general measure of how much the character has experienced and how much education they have received. Older, smarter, or more travelled characters usually are more knowledgeable, and this ability is tested when a character needs to see if they know important information on government organizations, how a steam engine works, or similar feats of experience and wisdom.

perception
Often called "powers of perception," the Storyteller will call for tests of this ability when the troupe has a chance to notice something in a scene that isn't readily apparent. This includes seeing hidden or obscure clues, hearing distant noises, or smelling that telltale whiff of poison...

skills

Any ability which a character possesses that is not an inherent trait falls into the category of a skill. Skills can be anything from knowing how to aim a bow to being an expert in a scientific field. They can be magical spells or psionic powers. A skill can be a profession which the character practices, a knowledge of a geographic area, or even something as broad as being an Native American.

Skills can cover very wide areas of knowledge or they can be minutely specific. Exactly how individual skills are defined and what they "cover" is up to the imagination and common sense of the actors and the ruling of the Storyteller. It is far more important that a skill describe a character well than be exactly clear as to what they allow them to do. For example, if your character were a private investigator, you could choose to list two dozen specific skills describing his strengths and weaknesses or you could simply put "very experienced private investigator." You should include enough detail to represent the image you have of your character without bogging yourself down with minutia.

Again, the idea behind skills is that they should accurately represent how people perceive your character and what they can do. If your character honestly knows six different ways of cooking an omelette then feel free to list them all singly; it's up to you to decide what's important toward understanding your role. When describing a skill, you can use whatever adjectives fit your vision. Following are some examples:

Professional UFO investigator. (D10)
Incredible acrobat. (D4)
Poor at math. (D20)
Fluent in french and italian. (D 10)
Able to operate a computer. (D 12)
Student chemist. (D20)
Irresistible seductress. (D6)
Chess champion. (D6)
Well trained pianist. (D10)
Loves Elvis trivia. (D10)
A crappy cook. (D30)
Expert diplomat. (D8)
Knowledgeable about trains. (D10)
Licensed helicopter pilot. (D12)
Raised Catholic. (D12)
Tireless housekeeper. (D10)
Right sexy bastard. (D8)

By now you are probably looking at those dice and wondering where they are coming from. Read on!

competency

The Window uses 7 different dice types: D30s, D20s, D12s, D10s, D8s, D6s, and D4s. Each of these dice corresponds to one of the seven "rungs" on the Window Competency Ladder below, and each rung represents a loose level of skill that your character can achieve.

As we have already explained, every ability a Window character possesses, be it an inherent trait or a skill, will be associated with an appropriate adjective or brief description. Once you've got an adjective, it should be a simple matter to decide which rung that ability falls into. Once you've got a rung, you've got a die. (In the Window, low rolls are always good, so obviously a D4 is much better than a D30.)

the window competency ladder

Incredible (D4)

This is the highest rung of competency, and it is generally reserved for those characters who are absolutely unique or singularly masterful at what they are doing. It is extremely rare to find a person with any ability at this rung. Skills of this magnitude could be described as unbelievable, grandmaster, superhuman, supernatural, or even godlike.

very high (D6)

This level is generally the highest that a "normal" human can achieve. At this rung, one may assume that there are only a small population of people with a similar trait. Einstein might have been on this rung of intellect, or perhaps Bobby Fischer would fit in here with his chess talents. An ability adjective at this rung might be termed as a master, astonishing, remarkable, amazing, stupendous, a prodigy, or unequalled.

high (D8)

This rung is where a typical "expert" would fit in. It is not uncommon to find a skill or two at this level for those people who are exceptionally practiced at their chosen profession or area of study. A few descriptive terms which work well at this level are expert, highly skilled, very good, highly accomplished, a natural, and elegant.

above average (D10)

This is the level of competence where those "good, but not particularly good" skills fall into. The typical person would have perhaps one skill (generally their profession) which would be at this rung. Abilities of this level could be described as professional, impressive, talented, skilled, proficient, or practiced.

average (D12)

This rung is the "average" level, and it could be considered the norm against which the other rungs are compared. Generally, a person will have several of these skills, mostly in those mediocre abilities which everyone has a chance to pick up as they go through life. A few adjectives which fit well could be average, competent, fair, not bad, pretty good, decent, mediocre, and commonplace.

below average (D20)

A person could expect to be at this rung on any skill they have begun to practice but not quite mastered. The normal character would have a few of these, be they hobbies, or things they did a long time ago, or skills they just can't ever get the hang of. Some good descriptions of this rung could include below average, amateur, beginner, hobbyist, struggling, and unreliable.

low (D30)

This rung is the bottom of the barrel, and usually it is only used for those abilities which are markedly horrible. Please note that everyone has almost every "skill" imaginable at this level of competency. (Even if you've never driven a car before in your life, that doesn't mean you couldn't try!) Skills here could be described as low, unskilled, incompetent, poor, crappy, nonexistent, or bungling.

dice rolls

There are five different kinds of dice rolls used in the Window, though they all work in essentially the same way. Below you'll find details about each.

success rolls

A success roll is a die roll used to "test" a trait or skill of your character. As you know, each skill a character has will have a single die associated with it. To test that skill, roll the die. If the roll is a 6 or less, you have succeeded. If roll is greater than a 6, you have failed. The lower the roll the more complete the success, or the higher the roll the more dismal the failure.

As you may notice, that means that a Grandmaster will never fail a normal test, and an average person will fail about half the time. (Well, that makes sense, doesn't it?)

However, sometimes the "target number" will be set differently than a 6 by the Storyteller. For particularly difficult tasks, the target may be a 2 or a 3. There are no charts for this or even guidelines. It's all up to the Storyteller and the influence of the Three Precepts.

For speed of play, always assume that the target is a 6 unless the Storyteller specifically says otherwise. Success rolls (or any other type of roll, for that matter) should only be made when the Storyteller asks for it. Most of the time, the course of the story can be determined narratively, by you and the Storyteller. Dice are only a tool to help guide the action when you can't decide whether success or failure would be better for the flow of the plot, or when an element of chance makes sense or adds to the fun.

success roll example

The metal catwalk before Ryla's path was slick with rain, gleaming in the torchlight. The Ogrean battle cries continued to grow bolder as the others struggled to hold back the surrounding enemy. "Move, by god!" Commanded Laerd. Ryla was terrified, but the catwalk was the only way out. With a prayer and a gasp, she teetered out over the chasm. The Storyteller interrupted the narrative. "Ryla, make an agility roll, target of 4." Ryla was no athlete. Her agility was average at best. (D12) She tossed the die... a 3. All she needed was a 4 or less: she made it. Laerd watched breathlessly as Ryla's torch swayed its way across the catwalk, her feet struggling to find purchase on the slick metal. She reached the other side and turned to look back, motioning frantically for the others to follow. The Ogrean began to charge… "I'm going to disengage and run across as fast as I can," decided Laerd. "That's not so easy, Laerd," warned the Storyteller. "Make an agility save, target of 3." Laerd was a warrior, and he had great balance (D8). He spun and dashed across the beam. The die was tossed: a 7. "Aye!!" Laerd's foot came out from under him. Ryla screamed as she watched him fall and splash into the freezing water below... He hit hard, and was swallowed into the rush. "Make a health save, Laerd" said the Storyteller ominously, "and you better not miss this one..."

contest rolls

In some situations, two characters will go head to head. They might be arm-wrestling or knife fighting or hacking a mainframe simultaneously, but the idea is the same. Whenever two people are competing directly for a similar goal, a contest roll may be made.

Contest rolls are simple: each participant rolls the die associated with their appropriate skill or ability, and whoever rolls lower wins. The difference is considered, and the Storyteller narrates the results. If there's a tie, there's a tie. That's all there is to it. As with success rolls, never make a contest roll unless the Storyteller asks for it. Many times the context of the story makes it pretty clear who's going to win.

combat

Probably the most common time for a contest roll to be called for is when a character is in combat. In such a case, the attacker rolls with his applicable weapon skill and the defender rolls with her agility die, acrobatics skill, appropriate martial arts ability, or whatever else fits the situation.

Note that with combat contest rolls, each side gets input into what happens if they win the roll. For instance, the attacker may state that she's punching her opponent straight on the jaw, while the defender may only be trying to dodge and get out a gun. Alternatively, he could try to disarm his opponent, run away, or anything else he can imagine. It's up to the Storyteller to interpret the results intelligently.

Whatever the case, combat in the Window should be fluid, quick, and exciting. Rolls should be kept to a minimum and everyone, whether Storyteller or actor, should lend their narrative skills to the action. While an actor is hunting for the proper die to make a roll, the Storyteller should be describing another part of the action. The actors should explain what there characters are actually doing, not just "I attack it..." A poorly told combat can be an immense waste of time, while a well told combat can be an extremely exciting part of the story... (though it should never be allowed to become the whole story)

contest roll example

The moonlight was dim, but it was enough for Anna to see the gleam of the scalpel in the doctor's latex-gloved hand. "It's time for surgery," he hissed, then lunged madly… Anna twisted to the side. She was extremely agile (D6), but the doctor was determined to have blood, and he could handle a scalpel (D10.) The storyteller tossed a die for the doctor, a 4. "Anna, you squint through the darkness to see the scalpel slashing for your neck." Anna rolled her agility die: a 3, just lower than the doctor. Anna frowned. "The swing goes high as I duck and roll to the side... 'Enough,' I say as I get out my gun. 'Taste this, you son of a bitch.'" Anna rolled her die, a 2. The doctor reacted too slowly, rolling a 7, and the bullet tore into his lung. He coughed violently, then fell twitching to the floor.

health rolls

Health rolls are a special kind of success roll. These come into the story when exterior forces directly threaten your character's physical well-being or even his very life. Whether bullets or flying knuckles or drowning, the rules for dealing with them are the same. If your character is hit by such a force, the Storyteller may ask for a health roll, designating a target number based on the damage potential.

The average punch or kick might have a target of 6, while a high powered rifle blast to the chest would be a 1 or so. This is not a set number according to the weapon: it is up to the Storyteller to assign an appropriate number according to who's making the attack, where it hits your character, and so on. Like always, it depends most on the context of the story. The Storyteller should be thinking about the Third Precept, and the actor should be thinking about the Second.

If you roll the target number or less, you succeed. A successful health roll means that your character is able to resist the effects of the damage, at least for a while. (The Storyteller may well call for another health roll later, after the adrenaline wears off or if you try to do something too physical.)

A failed health roll, on the other hand, can mean several things, depending on the situation. It might only mean that your character is stunned for a moment until he gets his bearings. It could mean that he's knocked out or goes into shock (this is a common one). Or, it could kill him instantly. (That would have to be be a pretty interesting scene.)

The Storyteller can also rule that a failed health roll will result in your character's health trait dropping down a rung on the competency ladder. (It would go from above average to below average, very high to high, and so on.) This reflects your character's weakening ability to deal with mounting wounds. Only after a period of rest and healing will she get it back. (See the Healing section below.)

If the damage is particularly serious, the Storyteller may also deem that more than one health roll in a row is necessary, with each failure meaning a step down the ladder. In such a case, you must attempt these rolls until you've either made one successfully or your health trait falls so far that it goes completely off the competency ladder (i.e. lower than a D30.) In such a case, your character is effectively dead...

death

Should your character's health fall completely off the competency ladder, he is at best in a coma and at worst very, very dead.

Anytime the plot reaches this point, it's up to both you and the Storyteller to determine whether it's time for your character to pass on and depart from the story as an active participant.

For good roleplayers, death is not necessarily a bad thing. On the contrary, it can often be one of the most powerful and memorable plot devices open to the Storyteller and the actors. There is nothing more beautiful than that hero who guards the way from the bad guys as the others escape, thus sacrificing his own life to save the story... There is nothing more memorable than a heroine whose light is extinguished tragically and early. Besides, after losing a character, you can always build a new one, and in the act of sacrifice or tragedy your character will be remembered and can even play on in the story through the legacy of her actions.

The Window can be the deadliest roleplaying system imaginable, or it can be extremely merciful. It all depends on what you want it to be and exactly what sort of setting you're exploring.

healing

If your character's health trait is dropped a rung on the competency ladder, don't fret; it can be recovered. The following guidelines are here to give you an idea of what your loss in health actually translates into. However, keep in mind that the Storyteller can and will modify these to fit the story. The Storyteller can at any time grant you back a rung if it makes sense to. As with everything in the Window, the best way to determine how and when these levels are regained is by intelligently considering the situation and its context in the story.

One Rung Down. Your character has suffered a relatively minor amount of damage-- a flesh wound or something similar. He can recover after a day of rest and basic treatment, or sometimes after receiving first aid.

Two Rungs Down. Your character has just has a very serious brush with the end, and she's very shaken up. This type of damage probably is accompanied by a lot of blood and shock. Healing something like this requires medical attention and several days of recuperation.

Three Rungs Down. Your character took some serious damage, and she considers this one of the most harrowing experiences in her life. This may involve shattered bones and gaping wounds. Basic recovery is going to require at least a month of serious care.

Four or more Rungs Down. The only way your character came through this is through fate, extreme luck, or divine intervention. Expect him to be in traction or a coma, be cause that's probably where he's going to be. In a case as serious as this, you and the Storyteller will need to have a frank discussion about the future of your character. Recovery is totally dependent upon finding a realistic way not to drop him out of the story.

health roll example

Elysia turned and swung her Dicessio wildly. It smashed into the cheekbone of the lunging Locura and shattered through to brain. The creature fell. But there were so many… Dancing like a dervish of flashing steel, Elysia waded through them each in each, breaking bones and ending their trapped, pathetic lives. Her muscles were weary and her reflexes grew numb... One of the young ones at the edge of the melee held a gun, and he fired. Elysia felt a chilling pain rip through into her side. "Make a Health roll, target of 4," said the Storyteller. Elysia blinked as the pain bled into her. She was quite healthy (D10), but she knew it was bad. The die was tossed: a 6. The Storyteller carefully considered the grim situation. "Everything begins to wash as your health is sapped by the pain. Make another save, same target." Elysia was weakened now, though her health was still decent (D12). She rolled a 3. The Storyteller nodded. "With a rush of panicked adrenaline, you fight through the pain, just as the final three Locura approach..."

plotting rolls

Plotting rolls are unique in that they are made by all of the characters at once. The results of a plotting roll are more abstract than the results of the other types, but they can be very useful if used properly.

Plotting rolls are called for by the Storyteller at times when the story hangs at a crossroads, and all of the characters are involved with what might happen next. For example, this could be as the troupe enters a dark and deserted house, as they career into an exciting chase, or when a deadly conflict is about to unfold…

In such a case, the Storyteller can ask for everyone to make a roll on a certain trait or skill, without a set target number. Then, the results which come up serve to give plotting guidance for what happens next.

If certain characters roll low while everyone else rolls high, they might see a pivotal warning sign before their companions. Those who roll poorly might be unable to take initiative as a combat breaks out. If everyone rolls well, then perhaps the troupe gains an upper hand of some sort or avoid an unfortunate situation. The possibilities are endless.

plotting roll example

The unrelenting wind howled past the Threat Response Team as they walked through the Gobi sandstorm. Faintly, before them, they could just make out the silhouette of a low building. The Lieutenant struggled to be heard over the maddening gale as he ordered everyone to ready their weapons. He sent corporal Shannon to reconnoitre ahead. "Plotting Roll. Everybody give me a perception save," said the Storyteller. Each member of the squad tossed their perception die and called out the results; two 6s, a 12, a 14, and corporal Shannon rolled a 2. Erupting from the building came a trio of screaming witches. Reacting with the speed of lightning, the corporal hit the sand. A burst of pyrokinetic flame tore over him and knocked down the Lieutenant (12) and the woman (14) standing next to him. The other two soldiers rolled to the side, raised their weapons, and began to saturate the entire building with heavy weapons fire. The Storyteller spoke: "Shannon, there's gunfire and explosions all around you. You raise your head and see the lead witches summon some sort of shimmering barrier between it and the rest of your team. The bullets are bounding off of it, and the wind is being deflected. But you might get a clean shot if you act quickly." The corporal didn't hesitate. He raised his 10mm rifle and said a prayer to the United States Marine Corps, where he first learned guns. "I shoot that mother in the face, man."

optional rules

The Window loves to be modified. Since every roleplaying troupe has a slightly different style than the next and any given setting poses new questions about what needs to be defined by the rules, the Window is designed to be easily altered to fit.

This section provides some of the more common rules modifications that have been used. They're in the optionals section because that's what they are. Some of these rules are a bit more cumbersome than the core Window mechanics, so be prepared to use your own judgement before instituting them in your Anthologies.

Some of these rules came out of specific suggestions from the online Window community. If you have an optional rule idea that you think could be included in this section, please email optionals@mimgames.com.

luck

Luck represents that unexplainable tendency for good things to happen to certain people without their effort or awareness. This is a rule which used to be a part of the core Window mechanics, but has now been relegated to the status of an optional rule. The reasoning behind this is that the luck trait works slightly differently than other traits...
If the Storyteller wants to use luck in her stories, she could add it to the list of traits that all of the cast members must define, or she could allow it as a skill just for specific characters. It works the same in either case.

Luck rolls are called for when chance is all that stands between two paths for the story to take, or immediately after a failed success roll to give a character that one last chance... Another use for luck is to settle minor questions which have little bearing on the story, such as whether a character happens to be wearing a hairpin or carrying a lighter.

Luck can be a character's best friend. If he makes his luck roll he can save himself after a particularly dismal die roll, a feature which allows for a certain heroic confidence when entering dangerous scenes. Luck can also be the Storyteller's best friend. For her, it can be a way to maintain the troupe's sense of hope in hopeless situations, and it provides a good way to solve many minor arguments that arise between her and the actors…

Luck rolls are identical to basic success rolls in how they work: the Storyteller sets a target number and if you roll equal to it or under, you succeed. If no target is specified, you must roll a 6 or less.

By the way, luck can also be called something else if it better fits the setting. In superheroic roleplaying, for instance, luck could be called "heroism," since those sorts of characters rely more on their extraordinary abilities to save them in times of peril. In a setting which is populated by gods or guided by astrological forces, the Storyteller could opt to call it "fate."

trading luck

There comes a scene in a character's life when he's hit bottom, when the situation has become so grave that nothing short of a miracle can save him now. In the Window, the luck trait allows one final recourse to turn the story back into his favor…

If such a case occurs where you've failed a luck roll that was really important, you may at that moment choose to "trade" some of your permanent luck to change the roll to a success. This choice causes your luck trait to drop a permanent rung on the competency ladder, but at least your character is still alive and kicking.

Trading your luck in this way can keep your character alive and on top of things for quite a while, but remember, everyone's luck has to run out sometime...

luck roll example

The Ogrean were everywhere. Laerd continued hacking into the fray as he watched Ryla cross the perilous catwalk to safety. "I'm going to run across as fast as I can," he said. "That's not so easy, Laerd," warned the Storyteller. "Make an agility save, target of 3." Laerd was in the militia and had great balance（D8）. He spun and dashed across the beam. The die was tossed: a 7. "Aye!!" Laerd's foot came out from under him. Ryla screamed as she watched him fall and splash into the freezing water below… "Make a luck save, Laerd," said the Storyteller ominously, "and you better not miss this one..." He hit the water hard. He felt the icy embrace as he was swept along. At least he was a little more lucky than the average person（D10）. He rolled: a 7. A target hadn't been specified, so he needed a 6 or less… The Storyteller raised an eyebrow. "The cold is sapping your strength. From above and behind you think you hear Ryla screaming your name. You fight madly with the waves, but the rushing stream is so painfully cold. You gasp in water... you try to cough..." "Okay, okay. I'm gonna trade a luck rung," said Laerd defeatedly. "Alright," responded the Storyteller, "your hand reaches out of the water and catches on a rock. Laerd, your luck is now down to average（D12）." Laerd climbed coughing onto the shore, then collapsed, exhausted.

sanity

The sanity trait is generally only included in anthologies which are set in a horror genre, where a character might encounter things especially frightening or disturbing. Sanity rolls are made to see how the character is able to deal with the terror and strangeness of such situations, and failure can mean bouts of uncontrollable fear, the development of phobias, or even complete madness.

Sanity rolls are similar to health rolls, only instead of your character's physical health being threatened it is her stable mental state. Sanity rolls may be called for by the Storyteller in any situation where your character sees or experiences something truly horrible.

As with other traits in the Window, sanity is a only a tool which helps the Storyteller present the story in an effective way, but like wounding, it is up to the actors to make the situation come to life. (Don't forget about the Second Precept.) A good horror storyteller will have the actors on the edge of their seat with tension and fear already... sanity is a mechanic which reflects the dark consequences of facing the supernatural in a somewhat more concrete way.

When the Storyteller calls for a sanity roll he will set a target number which you must roll equal to or under with your sanity die.

The target number itself is of course based on how powerful the horror is which is affronting your character. For instance, seeing a carcass on the road might call for a roll with a target of 6, while being surrounded by cold, rending tentacles which are sliming through your hair and trying to crawl into your mouth might call for a 2. (Trust me.)

Again, it's up to the Storyteller and the exact situation.

A successful Sanity Roll means you are able to think through the horror and keep control of yourself. Failing a sanity roll can mean several things. One of the most common effects is to freeze up and stare. Another is to flee in terror, or uncontrollable screaming. Another is to fall to the floor and roll into the foetal position. Yet another is to be cursed with a permanent phobia. All these wonderful things and more await your character should they not make one little roll. Sometimes the Storyteller will "take control" of your character for a brief period of time during their fugue, though often they will leave the exact effects of the failed roll up to you.

Oh yes, and don't forget about your Sanity trait dropping a rung on the competency ladder. That can happen, too, just as it happens with health. If your sanity should spiral down until it drops completely off the competency ladder, then your character has gone insane, which is effectively just as bad as death...

insanity

Once a character is insane, they become "property" of the Storyteller for him to do with as he pleases. Perhaps your character will run off into the corn field, only to come back in some future chapter, or simply kill himself, or maybe he'll be taken by the other characters to an insane asylum.

It is possible, with the proper care and possibly hospitalization, that your character could be brought back to the land of the sane, to be used again as your character at a later date, but that's up to you and the Storyteller to discuss.

Remember the Third Precept, and consider how interesting it can be to have one of your former characters locked up in an institution somewhere, to be visited and given fruitbaskets on the holidays. Sanity can provide very enjoyable plot twists, and when used sparingly it can help add a rich layer of fear to your horror anthologies.

sanity roll example

"Run, Damn it!" Deron Jones stood shouting at his companions, the writhing Darkness before him. His hand held his government issue .45 tightly, white knuckles on black metal, hot from the spent clip. A tentacle thrust from the mass and coiled tightly about his ankle. His mirrorshades fell from his face as he was pulled to the wet floor with the shatter of glass and plastic. The Storyteller shook his head. "Sanity check, target of 3." Deron's sanity had been damaged before, and he was already bordering on a nervous breakdown (D30). A die was tossed: a 7. Deron's eyes gleamed bright with tears. His howling was the last thing his companions heard as they fled screaming through the door and slammed it behind them. The twisting moistness was around his hand now, his neck, his face. In the pit of his mind he knew that he should struggle, to break loose from the embrace. But he could do nothing but scream. Give me another sanity roll," said the Storyteller. "Target of 5. This one's for real." Deron felt like he was dead already. It was under his clothes now, pulsing and cold. His muscles were reacting violently, spasming. A second die was tossed and came to a rest: a 14. Something inside him... snapped. "Deron's gone now," said the Storyteller. The others were to the van, cursing and swearing. The realization of their companion's fate chilled them to the bone.

magic

Concepts by Benjamin Baugh

By far the most requested rule expansion for the first edition Window was a standardized magic system. Roleplaying was born out of the fantasy genre, and no matter how far we've come from those first faltering steps, it seems that there is always something calling us back to those realms of wizardry where anything is possible. The following rules provide guidelines for using magic with the Window.

the precepts of magic

Like the Window's three precepts from which these are derived, the precepts of magic provide a core philosophy for the use of magic in any anthology. These precepts （in addition to the three essential precepts of the Window itself） help provide a practical way of dealing with magic in a mature, story affirming manner.

the first precept of magic

"Magic must be an extension of character."

Magic must reflect in all its aspects the character who invokes it, his mental state, situation, and outlook. The actor in a magically active role must be willing to take the extra steps required to define his character's power in his own terms. No two magicians will be exactly the same, and thus no two magical methodologies will ever be exactly the same. Styles may be similar, you can have any number of elementalists say, but each will have a unique take on the common magics. If magic ever begins to overshadow character, then it must be reassessed. Magic should not distract from the character's essential core, but should enhance it. The character's powers must be woven into his background and taken into account when defining his personality. Magic shapes the character and is shaped by him.

the second precept of magic

"Magic must advance the story."

Like any aspect of a maturely played character, magic must advance the story to the satisfaction of all involved. Too often actors refuse to be flexible in their interpretation of their character's actions and it destroys group coherency-- few things can disrupt a troupe faster than one member who employs his magics irresponsibility. Magic should never overshadow the wielding character and should also never overshadow the other actors. Magic has a place in all fantastic stories, and it is the responsibility of the actor and storyteller to reach an understanding of that place. The actor should be willing to adjust his character's sorcery to fit the story and the Storyteller should make allowances for well roleplayed magics even if it requires some alterations to the plot. In short, the Storyteller should be careful not to steal the character's thunder and the player should be responsible enough not to abuse her character's power.

the third precept of magic

"Magic must never become routine."

Magic must always be... well... magical. A sword will kill a man, even do it with style, but nothing is quite so awe inspiring in personal combat as Lodendrake's Cage of Spines. Magic is really just special effects, and any good movie director knows you can only use a certain effect so many times before the audience begins to take it for granted. Players should be rewarded for producing interesting, vital, and original effects with their mystic powers. Certain effects may be used repeatedly so as to deliberately make them routine, but only for a specific purpose such as to advance the Second Precept in character development, or in story development as dictated by the Third Precept.

how it works

Characters who wish to employ magic must start by defining their basic ability to use it. This is represented by an additional inherent trait which the Storyteller might call wizardry, witchcraft, sorcery, or faith, depending on the world. For the purposes of this discussion it will simply be called magic.

This trait plays an important role in the application of spells and rituals. When a magic user summons mystic power he forms it by using his natural potential (represented by the magic trait) and the techniques which he has developed through training or talent (represented by more specific spell skills). He may employ one of his old comfortable spells, or he may take risks or desperate measures and improvise an enchantment.

During character creation, the actor invents the specific spell skills. What is required is a detailed description of each and a realistic evaluation of their parameters.

Understand that there are as many possible areas of magical endeavor as there are practitioners, and many more besides. No comprehensive list is possible. It's up to the Storyteller to give you an understanding of how magic works in the world, then within those guidelines you must strive to create a character image which is your own.

For example, if you are creating a priest character you must first choose the deity your character is connected with and weave this all important choice into his background. When did the first great epiphany of connection occur? How has it altered his experiences? His outlook? Make sure your choice of deity lends itself to the character's development and is not just done for the neat abilities. Now record the sorts of spells he's mastered. When were they first realized? First used? Detail the exact relationship the priest has with his god and consider the spells in this context. Before finishing you have to define a competency adjective and rung for his magic trait and for each spell.

Once you have defined your character's magic trait and spells, you're ready to play. Spell rolls are used for activating well known effects, while the magic trait is used for maintaining spells, resisting magical attacks, and crafting variations (or entirely new spells) on the fly.

The Storyteller uses his best judgment to determine the difficulty of a given magical task, taking into account the creativity of the player, the needs of the story, and the individual situation. Following the Third Precept of Magic, it's up to you to describe your character's magic as richly as possible. When adjudicating magical conflict, the Storyteller should use the philosophy that the specific and unique will always win out against the vague and general.

exhausting magic

Just like health and sanity, your character's magic trait can drop competency rungs if she is using it a great deal or is up against a particularly draining challenge. The Storyteller can ask for such magic rolls whenever it makes sense in the story. The idea is to represent the oftentimes fatiguing nature of handling mystical power.

The means by which your character regains her magic depends on the world and her particular kind of magic.

If your character's magic drops completely off the competency ladder then she is totally drained. At that point she can still use magic, but all magic rolls are made on a D30 and any further drops in magical competency effect her health trait instead. It is very possible for a magic user to kill themselves by pushing it too far.

character experience

Like a real person, your Window character will be constantly changing. How she sees the world, what her life is like day to day, and which skills she has mastered will grow as the story grows. If you like, the following mechanic can be used to improve your character's abilities as she gains experience.

Character evolution is the bread and butter of literature and roleplaying alike. Through the course of a chapter, your character may well go through many emotional and rational stages as his life is affected by the events of the story. The vast majority of this metamorphosis is impossible to represent with rules: it's up to you to get into your character's head and understand how he sees the world and how he reacts to it. If you are truly in character, the emotions you feel will be identical to your characters. You must then take those emotions and determine how they are affecting your character's viewpoint.

The following rules are offered only to help you keep your eye on the improvement of your character's traits and skills. They are in the optional rules section because you could just as easily determine character improvement by talking with the Storyteller and making modifications only when they make sense.

In any case, the mechanics of ability improvement are simple: after each session of roleplaying, your character will be awarded a small number of experience points. Each of these points may be applied to the improvement of a single skill or trait, and when the number of experience points assigned to a given skill exceeds the level or rung of competency, the ability improves by a level, as summarized on the following chart:

> Improve from D30 to D20 = 2 points
> Improve from D20 to D12 = 3 points
> Improve from D12 to D10 = 4 points
> Improve from D10 to D8 = 5 points
> Improve from D8 to D6 = 6 points
> Improve from D6 to D4 = 7 points

We suggest keeping track of where your experience points are spent by placing stars or check marks next to the ability on your character writeup.

There are, by the way, certain limitations to how many experience points can be spent on a given skill each session. For inherent traits, you may not expend more than one point per session; this reflects the natural difficulty in making these sorts of things "get better." For learned skills, this maximum is based on whether or not you used the skill during the course of the game. For skills that didn't come into play, the limit is one point.

Now, you're wondering how many points to expect each game. This is based on your ability to answer the following two questions, which will be asked by the Storyteller at the conclusion of the session. Each of the question that you are able to give an intelligent and unique answer for gains you a point:

1.   Were both you and your character present and involved in the story? This is usually a very easy "yes." So long as you paid attention and did your best to get involved, you get this point automatically.

2.   What questions does your character have about the story or herself after to night? This is a great way to explore theories about the mysteries in play as well as promote character development. The Storyteller will evaluate your answer (if you have one) and decide whether it's good enough to earn you a point.

Finally, there is a way to gain a "bonus" experience point from the Storyteller. All you have to do is make your character instigate a notably excellent acting sequence or contribute to the story in an outstanding way. This can come in the form of cleverly deciphering a particularly difficult puzzle, taking the story in an unexpected and wonderful new direction, or even something as simple as a memorable quote. It is rare for bonus points to be awarded by most Storytellers, but it does happen, and you should strive for it if it helps improve your roleplaying.

Now, understand that all experience awarded is subject to Storyteller approval. For instance, if she feels that you should be given a free point in a given skill because of something that happened in the story, then she can do that. Alternatively, she can penalize particularly immature or out of character roleplaying by refusing to award you any points at all. (Hopefully this should never happen, though. If you're using the Window then I'd like to think you're quite above that sort of thing.)

armor

In certain settings, ranging from fantasy to science fiction, the type of armor a character wears can seriously change his combat effectiveness. If he's wrapped in scale mail then he's likely to come out unscathed from a barrage of light arrow fire. If he's wearing a magnetic repulsor belt (whatever that might be), he could shrug off bullets. It's also possible to armor a vehicle or a building, a possibility which just might be important to the story at some point.

Most Storytellers who use the Window manage armor narratively. Characters wearing heavy armor won't be asked for health rolls as often. Characters attacking foes with superior armor have to make contest rolls by wider margins to be a threat, etc... However, if you want a more structured way to manage this sometimes important consideration, you can use the rules below.

Like all else in the Window, armor is something that must be assessed in specific relation to the story if it's going to work. Only use it if it truly adds something to your stories. If it only serves to add one more layer of dice rolls to combat, then get rid of it.

how it works

Following the First Precept, define the type of armor your character is wearing in terms of the Window armor ladder below. Understand that these adjectives are relative to the "typical" type of weaponry in your particular story: "excellent" armor in a fantasy setting might only be "mediocre" in a modern setting.

When your character is in battle, this armor die can be used as a substitute for health rolls. If your character is hit and the Storyteller asks for a Health roll, roll the armor die instead. Only if you miss the armor roll do you have to make a real health roll.

If the armor roll fails and the attack is such that the armor itself could be damaged, the Storyteller could ask for an additional armor roll to see if the armor drops in quality. This works just like health rolls -- if you fail the roll the armor drops a rung on the ladder, representing its failing ability to protect your character. (Whether to ask for such rolls should be apparent in context of the scene.)

If need be, the Storyteller can also define armor to have different levels of protection against different kinds of attacks. For example, a suit of chainmail might have good protective qualities vs. physical attacks (D12) but be virtually worthless (D30) against magic. This is up to the Storyteller and the world she is using.

the window armor ladder

godlike armor (D4)

In a fantasy setting this might be protection from on-high. In a sci-fi anthology this would be some unbelievable super technology. A character in godlike armor is essentially immune to damage. Only an attack on an equally amazing level would be capable of getting through.

incredible armor (D6)

This is likely either highly magical or extremely ultra tech. A character wearing this kind of armor is invulnerable to normal attacks and most special attacks as well. Armor of this kind is inaccessible to all but the fewest fortunate souls.

excellent armor (D8)

This is the highest sort of armor a normal person could acquire, and it is only available to those with very impressive contacts and/or wealth. In fantasy settings this might include well-crafted, magical platemail, the kind reserved for kings. A character wearing such armor would be able to survive well against the majority of normal attacks.

high grade armor (D10)

This is the type of armor which would be given to elite troops or owned by nobles. In a fantasy setting this translates into full-plate or exquisitely crafted chainmail. Armor of this kind will keep its wearer alive against many physical threats, though it is not impregnable.

good armor (D12)

This is the sort of armor worn by most professional warriors. In a fantasy setting this is typically equivalent to a suit of chain or scalemail with bracers and perhaps a shield. Good armor provides solid protection, but it can certainly be bypassed by skill or force.

mediocre armor (D20)

Armor of this rung is generally the much less expensive version of "good" armor. This might be studded leather or a full suit of lighter leather in a fantasy world. Though it is definitely better than nothing, this armor provides little more than shock absorbence; it typically won't turn blows or be much use against missile weapons.

poor armor (D30)

This is the sort of thing worn by street thugs and athletes. It might provide protection in specific situations, but for the most part it will do little more than keep your elbows from getting scraped. In a fantasy setting this is perhaps equivalent to leather breeches and a pair of leather bracers.

As you can imagine, managing armor for every character can be more record keeping than its worth. Since some actors handle this level of complexity better than others, it is recommend that you playtest this rule with your whole troupe before putting it into effect.

super powers

The Window has been used for many genres, from the most mundane contemporary murder mystery to the most outlandish superheroic adventure. Below are some ways to manage those exceptional types of stories where more-than-human beings are involved, such as superheroes, dragons, or Lovecraftian monsters.

the shebang! notation

One problem which arises in representing truly amazing abilities is how to fit them onto the competency ladder. Obviously there wouldn't be much variety if the actors were sitting around rolling D4s for everything -- contest rolls would be tied too often and success rolls would be mostly pointless. The basic competency ladder only represents the levels of ability that a human being can achieve; what happens when the character in question isn't really human at all?

To address this, the Window uses a second competency ladder which is "above" the normal one. A simple system called the Shebang! notation（with a nod to Larry Wall）is used to delineate these amazing traits and skills from normal abilities. It works by placing an exclamation point（!）after the die and including more specific descriptions of what the character is able to do.

For example, a character with superpowered physical strength which allows him to lift up to the weight of a car would have the following trait listing:

> Amazing strength. Able to lift a car.（D12!）

The Shebang! lets you know that his strength is "superheroic," which means that he would never have to make a strength roll against "normal" tests; if he wanted to break down a door or carry a companion to safety he would simply succeed. However, if he were going up against a challenge that itself was "superheroic" in magnitude（perhaps he's wrestling with a powered up supervillian）, he would use a D12 to make that roll.

The idea is that superheroic or unearthly characters exist on a level all their own. They are so astonishing that competition is only meaningful if it is against someone（or something）in their own league. The important thing to do with any Shebang! ability is to describe the power sufficiently enough that it's at least somewhat clear what is possible with it. From there the actors and the Storyteller can roleplay through superheroic encounters without much slow down.

multiple competency rungs

With some powers, it is difficult to assign just one competency rung and still represent the power accurately. One such case is an ability that is extremely "powerful" but rather hard to control（or vice-versa）. Another is a power which works very well in certain situations but very poorly in others. In such a case, two or more competency levels can be used, each describing a different aspect of the ability.

For example, imagine that your character has the ability to throw fireballs from her hands. These fireballs are extremely deadly -- just about anything they come in contact with will be immediately vaporized（D6!）. However, she's not very good at getting the things to hit where she would like（D20）. Having two different rungs like this allows the Storyteller to test the aspect of the ability is in question in any given scene.

For examples of Window characters using the Shebang! notation and multiple competency rungs, check out the Window Character Menagerie.

wealth

Concept by Justin Forman

One of the goals of the Window is to free the actors from bookkeeping minor details. Who in their right mind wants to bother with encumbrance, hit points, or damage dice when there's roleplaying to be done? All that these do is add up to more number oriented thinking, and that goes against the philosophy of the first precept.

That being said, there is little in this world which is more number oriented than money, and while first generation roleplaying has a healthy tradition of recording cash down to the last copper piece, some actors would rather not bother at all. On the same token, in some settings it is important to have an idea of how wealthy a character is.

To deal with this problem, the Storyteller can choose to define an inherent trait called wealth. If a situation comes up in the story when limits in a character's monetary resources become a concern, the Storyteller could ask for a wealth roll. A success means that the character has the money available for the task, while a failure means he's short. Like always, this rule is one that requires intelligent interpretation by everyone involved.

characters

Characters who are unique and entertaining are central to good roleplaying. When characters are fully fleshed out, with personalities, backgrounds, and polished demeanors, the crude plot framework which the Storyteller lays out becomes full and alive. It is the characters, after all, who guide the interaction, and through their deeds each chapter is made memorable. The process of character creation is one of the most important aspects of how the actors add to the story.

Character creation is not at all about rolling dice to get traits, cross-referencing charts to figure stat levels, or adding up points to make sure your character is balanced. It's not about following a series of steps to fill out a character sheet. It's not a specific process at all. True character creation is that undefinable storm of creative energy where you come up with a unique, imaginary individual whom you bring alive.

Most other roleplaying systems maintain a complex hierarchy of checks and balances to pigeonhole your character into their world stereotypes and make sure he's exactly as "powerful" as everyone else on the party. If you conceptualize a character who doesn't fit into this mold you're forced to either change your character or change the rules; neither option makes much sense. The Window character creation rules guarantee that you'll play exactly the character you want.

The Window assumes that the Storyteller and the actors can take care of themselves. There is one universal alternative to any rule, and that is good roleplaying. So long as everyone follows the Three Precepts, the creation of character traits and skills ceases to be a competitive issue. How "good" your character is becomes a moot point. The question is how real is she? How does she fit into the story? How personal and truly unique is the description you've constructed for her? Playing "weak" characters can be every bit as fun as playing super-people, and most mature roleplayers are skilled enough to involve themselves in the story no matter what sort of character they're acting.

With all of this freedom, you may feel a bit directionless and not know where to start. Some roleplayers argue effectively that there are advantages to more structure in the character creation process. If you're one of those people, I tip my hat and encourage you to use whatever system modifications you think are necessary to make the Window better fit your style. However, I also encourage you to give the freeform style a try; you may find that it works for you...

how it works

Whatever means you use to come up with your character is up to you and your own creative process. Thus, there isn't a lot to this section. You no doubt have your own passions that inspire you, and all that you need to do is delve into them and come out with a character idea that interests you.

As you develop the seeds of your character, be sure you understand the world and the kind of story the Storyteller has in mind. Ask him any questions that will affect your final concept before you get totally connected to it. As you translate the character from your imagination onto paper, make sure that the Storyteller is there as you do it. He will very likely have questions which will help both of you get a firm grasp on who this person is. As your character history evolves he may offer some plot threads to help the character meld smoothly into the story and into the troupe. Though the Storyteller will never understand your character as well as you do, it's imperative that he understands well enough to tell a good story.

Some people are good at fashioning a very refined character with their first effort. Others discover that it takes them a lot of thought and often several sessions of roleplaying before they really get into their character's head. The Storyteller and your fellow actors are a great ally in achieving this goal. (The Tips and Tricks page of this section also has some ideas to help you flesh out your character.)

solidification

Once you've completed the internal process of creating your character, all that remains is to sit down with the Storyteller and define the rules part of the character, a step known in the Window as character solidification. If you've done the work of making the character real in your mind, this part should be easy.

With each inherent trait, simply come up with an adjective that matches your character image, and then fit it into the appropriate competency rung to find the proper die. To define your skills, brainstorm the list of definitions that describe your character well, set an adjective to each of them, and attach the die from the competency ladder that works best. You may have whatever skills you wish and assign whatever adjectives best fit your character image, so long as the Storyteller approves. Use the examples in the Window Character Menagerie as a guideline, and just go for it.

You're finished! Now you can concentrate on getting comfortable with your new role.

character creation tips and tricks

The following ideas are offered to help you flesh out your character. Some might speak to your style and others might be useless to you. Scavenge whatever effective bits you can. If you've discovered a worthwhile character development trick which isn't listed below, email it to tricks@mimgames.com and I'll post it for all to see.

be specific and original

Oftentimes, a few very specific notes about a character can say more than volumes of generalizations. One good metaphor can build a rich character image better than paragraphs of dry description. Don't use stereotypes, and don't just cobble your character together from books you've read or movies you've seen. There is nothing keeping you from creating your own character, one that has truly never existed before. If you achieve this goal, your roleplaying will be more personal and much more memorable. This tip comes first because it can be applied to all of the others below.

ten big background questions

Here's ten questions that can give you a good start toward understanding your character's background:

How old is he?

Where was he born?

What did his parents do for a living?

What religion did his parents practice?

What was his relationship with his parents like?

Where did he live as a child?

Was anything happening historically during his childhood?

How did he spend his time as a child?

Was he happy as a child?

How did he decide what to be as an adult?

ten big personality questions

Here's ten questions that can help you define your character's personality:

Are there any adjectives which embody his personality?

Does his personality remind you of an animal or object?

What are his goals and motivations?

How far will he go to achieve his goals?

What does he fear most?

What does he love most?

How competitive is your character in various aspects of his life?

What are his best and worst qualities?

How does he act when he first meets men? Women?

How do they react to him?

mental picture painting

Oftentimes, the visual image of a character can go a long way toward visualizing the whole character. If there's an artist in the troupe, convince them to make sketches of all the characters. (However, they must do this before the story begins... if you roleplay a character for a session or two then everyone will get a different mental picture in their head and the artist will never be able to satisfy them all.) If there isn't an artist in the troupe, then paint a picture in your head. Consider the following aspects of your character's appearance: height, build, eyes, hair, skin tone, and notable facial features.

How your character dresses can also reveal a great deal about them. We all wear uniforms, whether we admit it or not. The style, color, age, and associated stereotypes of a character's wardrobe can show allegiances, points of view, and personal self confidence.

personal connections

For each stage in your character's background (childhood, teen years, college, young adulthood, etc.), think about the people who affected her. These could be friends, relatives, teachers, enemies, lovers, or whoever. Build an image of these people, and record some details about them. Imagine how they changed your character and where their relationship lies now.

Also, define your character's relationship with the rest of the cast. Who is she close to? Who acts as her foil? Who contrasts with her? Who is similar? This is also a good opportunity to consider what is going to make the other actors like your character. What qualities make him a character they will be as interested in as you are? What qualities may make them dislike him? The answers to these questions can be pivotal in deciding how much fun you will have playing this character.

pivotal events

This is a game which can be played both by the actors and the Storyteller. Essentially, the idea is to build up an understanding of the pivotal events in your character's past. What was his first real encounter with death? With love? With betrayal? When and where did they happen? What people were involved? How did these events change his point of vierw? These events can also be roleplayed if the Storyteller would like. The supporting cast for each event can be played by the Storyteller or by the other members of the troupe... this helps everyone obtain an understanding for each character and gives the other actors a stake in the larger story.

the voice

One of the most important steps in getting into character is mastering your role's particular voice. Does your character talk fast or slow? Does he talk a lot or hardly at all? Deep voice? High voice? Does he speak with any sort of accent? What phrases or figures of speech is he

partial to? Does he view talking as a tool or as social interaction? Is his voice soft? Abrasive? Enthusiastic?

If every character on the troupe has a distinct and believeable voice, it makes complex dialogue scenes clear, especially if the actors are roleplaying more than one character. It also makes slipping into your role very easy once you've grown comfortable with it.

posture and expression

Step back and take a look at your character. How does he stand? How does he sit? How does he walk? Relaxed? Slouched? Straight? Is there a particular stance which he often falls into? If so, take a moment to assume that stance yourself and think about it. Oftentimes, putting yourself into a single pose which you associate with your character can instantly snap you into the role.

Just as a character's bodily stance can reveal truths about them, so can their facial expressions. I once saw a character played whose entire personality centered around the way the actor clenched his teeth. That one simple gesture communicated anger, impatience, and even the character's personal philosophy. It also helped the actor stay in character.

action and reaction game

This game needs another person to play, preferably the Storyteller or a fellow actor. Have this other person present you with a situation and describe how your character would react to it. These situations could be actual events from your character's past or they could be purely theoretical. They should be situations which challenge the character's views of the world and their own moral code. This is also a good exercise to help you get used to playing your character.

a walkthrough

Following is a transcript of the conversation between the Storyteller and the actor who created Royce Jenner, the example character from the quick start page. This will give you a better idea of one possible way to go about formulating your first Window character.

In this case, the actor decided that he would approach his character's history first, and allow the rest to fall into place. Thus, he and the Storyteller worked through a series of stages in Dr. Jenner's past, from his birth through to his adulthood. (This technique works well for some... You, of course, should use whatever creative process comes naturally.)

1 conception

This is moment of that first spark of life. In this brief instant, there are powers set in motion that will mold this new character throughout his life.

The actor must take a moment here to decide on the sort of character he would like to play. What is he like? He could focus on appearance and personality, as well as broad definitions such as career or specialties. On a practical level, he must decide how the character will fit into the cast. What holes will he fill? What parts of the story will he be most active in?

Storyteller: Well, the setting's like this: Victorian England, around 1890. We're setting it up that Queen Victoria has a keen interest in the supernatural, and wants to put together a group of professional ghost hunters to look into her pet cases.

Actor: So it's horror?

Storyteller: Right. Sanity will definitely be used. He, he, he…

Actor: Can we be Vampires or Witche or anything?

Storyteller: Nope, just normal people, or at least mostly normal.

Actor: Good. Well, I've been thinking that I'd like to play a scientist sort, like a real rationalist who always dresses in a nice grey suit, and he's maybe in his forties or so.

Storyteller (making a note) : Hmmm, that would certainly be interesting in this sort of Anthology. Do you have a way to get him onto the cast?

Actor: I don't know, he could be a friend of the Queen, or have an interest in the supernatural?

Storyteller: How about the director of an insane asylum? That could certainly give him some notoriety.

Actor: Yeah, that sounds cool. OK, let's make him a director of an insane asylum, and a psychologist type. Um, and he's a total sceptic, like he's investigated ghosts and stuff before but thinks they're a bunch of crap.

Storyteller: That's all good with me. The other players are gonna love this guy. You got a clean sheet of paper?

Actor: Yeah, let's get this down. I can definitely see him now, smoking his cigarettes, no wait,

his pipe, and making it clear that he knows exactly what's going on…

Storyteller: Even though he doesn't?

Actor: Of course, that's the point.

2 childhood

Dr. Jenner has just been slapped by the doctor, and is taking his first breath of air. Wait, is there really a doctor here, or was he born in an alleyway? Where is all this taking place? Is it a small town or a large one, and what is it called? What time of the year is it? Who are his parents?

There are many things to be decided in this first occasion of life. In the last step, the actor got a basic character idea in his head. Now, he must begin working toward that image and answering some of the questions above.

Storyteller: Alright, so we've got this skeptical asylum director. Got a name for him?

Actor: Uh, he's Doctor something. Jenkerman? No, how about Jenner. Dr. William Jenner.

Storyteller: Ah come on, let's get a cooler name than William, something that sounds European.

Actor: Royce.

Storyteller: Great. Dr. Royce Jenner. Where was he born?

Actor: London. His father was a schoolmaster there, very strict. And his mom died right after he was born, so his father, like, controlled his life.

Storyteller (writing all of this down) : OK, how old do you want him to be when we get started?

Actor: Um, forty-two.

Storyteller: Lets see, we're playing in 1890, so that means he was born in 1848. Sound good?

Actor: Sure. Now I want to say that he had a sort of crappy childhood. His father made him study all of the time, so he didn't really have many friends. Besides that his life was pretty normal. He did well in school and all. He knew that he wanted to be a doctor.

Storyteller: You know, I don't really think that psychology was very developed back then. I guess we should probably do some research.

Actor: Yeah, I'll check into it when I get to the library.

Storyteller: OK, Any rolemodels?

Actor: Nah, he just wanted to get away from his father. The idea is that he couldn't wait for college.

Storyteller: Wait, wait, we'll get to that in a sec. First, did he learn anything as a kid?

Actor: In particular? Well, he learned how to swim, though not real well, and I think he probably can ride a horse.

Storyteller (making a note) : OK.

Actor: Anything else you want to include about his childhood?

Storyteller: I don't know, well how about this: when you were eight you saw something very interesting.... I'm going to say that you were studying by this abandoned church near your house. It was an ancient building, crumbling beneath the weight of its own forgotten history.

You had played there many times, and it was like an old friend. Anyway, it was getting dark, so you started to go back home when you heard someone call your name from inside.

Actor: Ooooh, scary.

Storyteller: Yeah well, you went in to check it out and there was a man standing in a long coat and wearing very nice clothes. You recognized him from somewhere, though you're still not sure where. Anyway, he gave you this red ruby Catholic rosary and told you that it was from your mother.

Actor: So she was still alive?

Storyteller: No, he didn't say. He just said that she wanted you to have it. You haven't seen him since, but you still have the Rosary.

Actor: Sounds neat, but why do I get the feeling you're setting me up?

Storyteller: He, he, he. It's just something to think about. Now, what about friends?

Actor: Um, he only had one close friend, a neighbor girl named Lindsay. Let's say that when she was twelve she got schizophrenia or something and Royce had to watch his only friend descend into madness before she had even grown.

Storyteller: Okay, nice…

Actor: Anyway, it only strengthened his desire to be a doctor. Let's get on to college…

3 teenage years

A lot can happen during this part of Dr. Jenner's life. This is when he will begin to learn his skills and really decide on his future.

High school, college, first love, military service, early jobs; all of these and could occur to him in this stage. Plus, this is when it's time for the actor to start putting down some concrete descriptions of Royce's personality.

Storyteller: Now, we've got Dr. Jenner through his early years. What about secondary school?

Actor: Oh, he was a good student, of course.

Storyteller: Oh, of course.

Actor: Then, his father got him a job at a library somewhere, and that's when he started getting into science.

Storyteller: OK, right. He probably studied basic physics and chemistry and all that, but how did he get interested in insane people?

Actor: Well, remember there was his friend Lindsay, and shortly after he was accepted at Oxford, I think his dad went nuts.

Storyteller: Imagine that. So you're sending him to Oxford, eh? Was he studying medicine at that point?

Actor: OK, it goes like this: he got accepted as a medical student, and in the middle of his first semester he got a letter from his father. It was totally crazy sounding, and it basically blurted sentence after sentence about Royce's mother, saying that he had seen her…

Storyteller: A ghost?

Actor: Ahh, but that's up to you., though I guess that could be one of the reasons Royce got interested in spooks. But anyway, he never really figured it out. Before he could get home to

see his dad the old guy killed himself. After that, Royce devoted himself totally to studies, becoming the top student in his graduating class. It wasn't until after college that it all came back to haunt him…

Storyteller: Well, you're certainly making my job easy. Lesse, I'm going to make up an exact date of his father's death: it might just come into the story later on…

Actor: Wonderful. Yeah, I can see him a little better now. He's a perfectionist in some ways, and really wants to prove something.

Storyteller: An egotist?

Actor: Better believe it. I think that his belief in the "vast superiority of science" is his defining surface trait.

4 adulthood

Well, here we are. The warmup in Dr. Jenner's life in over. He is now an adult: a full member of society. Now it must all come together.

This step could be looked at like the final chapter in a good book, though it should be structured like a cliff-hanger. This is the actor's last chance to give Royce a springboard into the story which the Storyteller is preparing to weave.

Storyteller: OK, Royce, you're out of college now, with a degree as a medical doctor. You're twenty-five years old. What now?

Actor: The military.

Storyteller: What? Wait a minute, you're just looking for an excuse to put some combat skills into the guy, aren't you?

Actor: No, not really. He was recruited as a medic and he wanted to see death up close, so he could study it. By now he had developed a keen curiosity about ghosts and the afterlife and such, and he wanted to prove some of the theories that had been hatching after his father died and throughout college.

Storyteller (making a note) : Fine, fine. OK, but it's up to you to do some research and find a British war of some sort that was going on in the late 1860's.

Actor: Agreed. I can probably find something that'll work.

Storyteller: Alright, so he's a field medic for a couple years. He sees a lot of death, and probably deals with some shell-shock cases, or whatever they would have called it back then.

Actor: Cool. That's when he grew his armor, you know, how he rationalizes everything...

Storyteller: Let's not make Dr. Jenner a nutball though, OK? He doesn't do it out of the horrors of war or anything, he just uses his head.

Actor: Oh, that's what I figured, too. Anyway, after he got out he published his first book: a thesis on how battlefield stress and poor diet can upset the bodily humors, causing hallucinations of ghosts and other unearthly visions.

Storyteller: Sounds controversial.

Actor: It was, but it was noticed by a few people, including a respected director of an insane asylum in London…

Storyteller: Ahhh, I see. So naturally, after reading your book he offered you a job.

Actor: Let's call him Dr. Joseph Youngers. And yes, he offered me a great job as his personal assistant, where I stayed for the next ten years of my career. In that time, I published half a dozen more books on ghosts, and made a big deal out of visiting haunted houses and proving them silly frauds.

Storyteller: Ha! The rest of the troupe are really going to enjoy the good Doctor's comments, I can tell already.

Actor: Oh, absolutely.

Storyteller: So, how exactly are we going to get you on the troupe?

Actor: I don't know. I figure Dr. Youngers retired a few years ago and I became the new direc-tor of the asylum, where I personally treated a relative of the Queen.

Storyteller: Yeah, sounds good. Alright, then. It looks to me like we've got him in. The Queen met him on a couple of occasions, and when she started organizing this group of ghost hunt-ers, your name just naturally came up.

Actor: Great. So, can we do his skills now? I think he's pretty much done. I'll just have to play him a while to get his personality down.

Storyteller: One last thing. Shortly after you garnered yourself a position as one of the Queen's ghost hunters, you had a most disturbing dream. In it, your old mentor Dr. Youngers appeared to you. He was standing at the base of a roman column, alone in a broad, grassy plain. As you approached, he began screaming, screaming out that his digits were being cut from his hands, and begging you to stop coming closer. You ignored him, rationalizing the imagery even in your sleep. But with each step his wailing became more pronounced, and you began to see blood pouring from invisible wounds at the base of his fingers. Finally you stopped, and he thanked you. "Royce," he said. "I visit you at great pain to myself. The Lords Beneath de-manded this restitution in exchange for sending a message."

"What message?" you asked quietly, staying perfectly calm.

"Only this. The woman with the wooden teeth knows about your mother. It is important that you speak with her." And with that, he disappeared, and you woke up.

Actor: Um, okay... Is that it?

Storyteller: That's all I have. Shall we finish him up?

5 solidification

By now, both the Storyteller and the Actor have a fairly complete image of who Dr. Jenner is, and they are ready to finalize his character writeup. It only takes them a minute or two to agree upon adjectives that fit, and we are left with the complete Window character writeup that you find on the quick start page. For more example characters, check out the Window Character Menagerie.

The following characters are from one-shot stories told at gaming conventions over the past few years.

victorian horror characters

Lady Shelly Fulbright

White female, 23 years of age

Shelly Fulbright is a fairly distant relative to Queen Victoria. Her father was a Irish Baron, and she was raised in relative luxury.

She married Lord Fulbright of Kensington two years ago and became well known as a grace to the Queen's court. She soon became a regular caller to the Queen herself, as they both share a love for cards and stories of the supernatural.

One month ago, Shelly's husband was killed when he fell from his horse. She has been in mourning since, though she is finally recovering. Long talks with the Queen have helped her, and now she wants to get on with her life.

Lady Fulbright has...

Average strength. (D12)
Above average agility. (D10)
High health. (D8)
Average knowledge of the world. (D12)
Average sanity. (D12)
Average powers of perception. (D12)
Average luck. (D12)

Lady Fulbright is…

A skilled artist. (D10)
Interested in the supernatural. (D12)
Very good at cards. (D10)
A fair pianist. (D12)
A skilled equestrian. (D10)
An excellent swimmer. (D6)

Lady Fulbright is carrying...

A deck of cards.
A small makeup kit.
A handkerchief.
A diary/sketchbook and a pen.

Captain Michael Daurqban

White male, 35 years of age.

Michael Daurqban was born in Germany where his father worked as a shipbuilder. When he was 14 he went on his first cross-atlantic voyage, and he has been a sailor ever since.

Michael has been in command of his own vessel for three years, and his crew and cutter currently holds the record for the fastest sail crossing of the Atlantic.

Michael has been all over the world, and like any sailor he has his share of superstitions, which he insists are grounded on practical experience.

Michael has...

Average strength. （D12）
Average agility. （D12）
Average health. （D12）
Very high knowledge of the world. （D6）
Below average sanity. （D20）
Average powers of perception. （D12）
Average luck. （D12）

Michael is...

A master sea captain and sailor. （D6）
Skilled at navigating. （D10）
An amateur at Morse code. （D20）
A below average horseman. （D20）
An excellent swimmer. （D8）
Fluent in German, English, French, Polish, and Portuguese. （D8）

Michael is carrying...

His longpipe.
An assortment of tobacco.
A case of matches.
A small flask of brandy.

Detective Charles Ledergold

White male, 39 years of age

When Charlie Ledergold enters a bar, a hush goes over the crowd. It's not that anyone's afraid of him, it's just that Mr. Ledergold has a way of overhearing every conversation and storing away the interesting bits in his own personal file…

Mr. Ledergold can talk his way into anywhere, and he's got a way of speaking to you that makes you know when he's after you.

It's very rare when Detective Charles misses a day of work, and it's even more rare for him to botch a case.

Detective Ledergold has...

High strength. (D8)
Average agility. (D12)
Above average health. (D10)
Average knowledge of the world. (D12)
Average sanity. (D12)
Excellent powers of perception. (D6)
Below average luck. (D20)

Detective Ledergold is...

Incredibly good at recalling info. (D8)
A expert detective. (D8)
An impressive marksman. (D 10)
Very streetwise. (D8)
An OK brawler. (D12)
A skilled interrogator. (D10)
A below average swimmer. (D 20)

Detective Ledergold is carrying...

A pack of clove cigarettes and matches.
His 5 shot revolver under his arm.
A notepad and pencil.

Mrs. Pearl Oscherman

White female, 33 years of age

Pearl Oscherman is a gypsy originally from poland. Now living the the Dover region with a family of four, Pearl is the midwife for her community and considered very wise.

Pearl has a chillingly real belief in the supernatural, and she loves to tell stories about all manner of frightening superstition. However, she is far from morbid, having an easy laugh and a kind heart.

Pearl sees the world through the eyes of a simple woman, though those eyes are keen and clear.

Pearl has...

Below average strength. (D20)
Below average agility. (D20)
Average health. (D20)
Below average knowledge of the world. (D20)
Average sanity. (D12)
Average powers of perception. (D12)
High luck. (D8)

Pearl is...

Fluent in Polish and English. (D8)
A mother of four. (D8)
A professional midwife. (D10)
A master storyteller. (D6)
Knowledgeable about ghosts and fables. (D10)
Good with animals. (D10)

Pearl is carrying...

A cross on a silver chain.
Her eyeglasses.

Popey Smilts

White male, 17 years of age

Popey is a newsey from the streets of London. He is quick witted and nimble fingered, and he has been known to take an extra tip or two without the customer's knowledge.

Popey is great at impersonating people, and he's a popular comedian among his mates. He has an inherent distrust of authority, especially police, though he is quick to help out those who need it and he sees the cops like mean and stupid adversaries who do some good, but not enough.

Popey is good with a knife, though he doesn't like to fight.

Popey has...

Average strength.（D12）
High agility.（D8）
Above average health.（D10）
Average knowledge of the world.（D12）
Average sanity.（D12）
Average powers of perception.（D12）
Below average luck.（D20)

Popey is...

Very streetwise.（D10）
A professional newsey.（D10）
A practiced pickpocket and thief.（D10）
Extremely stealthy.（D6）
A great climber.（D8）
Good with a knife.（D10）
A good swimmer.（D10）

Popey is carrying…

A small, folding knife.
A pair of tight gloves.
A picklock.
A rubber ball he likes to bounce.

Dr. Francis Porthright

White male, 32 years of age.

Francis Porthright is a law professor at the University of Oxford and is an intellectual leader in the field of criminal justice. He has written a book on the subject, and he has some radical theories about the criminal mind, insisting that many social deviants are inferior in mind, body, and spirit to the intellectual class.

Dr. Porthright is a very social young bachelor who always has something to say. He prides himself on never having changed an opinion since he was 14, and though some see him as arrogant, there is no arguing that he has a sharp mind and a keen sense of vision.

Dr. Porthright has...

Average strength. (D12)

Average agility. (D12)

Average health. (D12)

Very high knowledge of the world. (D6)

Very high sanity. (D6)

High powers of perception. (D 8)

Above average luck. (D10)

Dr. Porthright is...

An expert lawyer. (D8)

A professional college professor. (D10)

A skilled writer. (D10)

An average horseman. (D12)

An average swimmer. (D12)

Dr. Porthright is carrying...

His personal case, including...

A notepad

Pens

A cigarette case and matches

A looking glass

A comb, straightrazor and shaving cream

An extra handkerchief

Half a dozen copies of his book.

fantasy characters

Elia

Elia is a mentalist with a well documented personal relationship with the royal family. She has mild precognitive abilities, and can perform various feats of might over magic. She is very friendly, and seems to have contacts all over the place.

Elia has...

Average physical strength. (D 12)

Average health. (D 12)

Average agility. (D 12)

High knowledge of the world. (D 8)

Above average perceptive powers. (D 10)

High luck. (D 8)

Strong magic. (D 10)

Elia is...

A professional mentalist. (D 10)

A great gambler. (D 8)

A lover, not a fighter. (D 10, D 30)

An average swimmer. (D 12)

Elia is carrying...

A magical map of City Stonefall.

Elia can...

Tell when people are lying to her. (D 8)

"Persuade" people to tell the truth. (D 12)

> Note that this she has to have their ear and their full attention.

"Persuade" people to do as she asks. (D 12)

> It's much harder to get people to do something they usually wouldn't, especially if it puts them in personal danger.

Tell when something bad is about to happen. (D 20)

Perform minor illusions with light. (D 8)

Fidgen

Fidgen is a elvish archer from the Western shores, and a newcomer to the City Stonefall.

Fidgen has...

Below average physical strength. (D20)

High health. (D8)

Impressive agility. (D8)

Low knowledge of the world. (D30)

High perceptive powers. (D8)

Average luck. (D12)

The ability to see in the dark.

Fidgen is...

A great archer. (D8)

A well trained martial artist. (D10)

An expert at being stealthy. (D8)

An amateur lockpick. (D20)

A practiced lutist. (D10)

Fidgen is carrying...

A magical bow.

A quiver of 20 Sunstone arrows.

A small dagger.

Ladiker

Ladiker is a member of the White Plume Circle of Paladins. He is noble, sure, and extremely experienced.

Ladiker has...

High physical strength（D8）

Very high health.（D6）

Above average agility.（D10）

Average knowledge of the world.（D12）

Average perceptive powers.（D12）

Above average luck.（D10）

A basic ability with magic.（D20）

Ladiker is...

An excellent warrior.（D8）

A good leader.（D10）

Experienced with bureaucrats.（D10）

An average archer.（D12）

A good horseman.（D10）

A great swimmer.（D8）

Ladiker is carrying...

His Elnsteel Greatsword.

A longknife.

Karji Nadim

The Karji Seluka is a warrior caste from the southern deserts that prides itself on an ancient tribal tradition going back a thousand years.

Nadim has been in City Stonefall for a year now, and has established a well deserved reputation for efficiency serving on the King's guard.

Nadim has...

Above average physical strength. (D10)

Average health. (D12)

High agility. (D8)

Average knowledge of the world. (D12)

High perceptive powers. (D8)

Very high luck. (D6)

Nadim is...

An expert guard. (D8)

Well trained in martial arts. (D10)

Knowledgeable about the Black Market. (D12)

A person who grew up in a desert. (D10)

Very stealthy. (D10)

Nadim is carrying...

His mace.

His shield.

His armor.

Praddler Quid

Pradler is a smartmouthing militiaman with big dreams. He is young, foolish, and very quick to make decisions. If it wasn't for the fact that he's sharp as a dragon's tooth, he'd have been dead years ago.

Praddler has...

Above average physical strength. (D6)

High health. (D8)

Great agility. (D6)

Average knowledge of the world. (D12)

Above average perceptive powers. (D10)

Above average luck. (D10)

Praddler is...

A skilled spearman. (D10)

A professional militia man. (D 10)

A total smartass. (D10)

An expert lockpick. (D8)

An amateur pickpocket. (D 20)

A great horseman. (D8)

Praddler is carrying...

His spear.

His round shield.

A lockpick kit.

Roszian

Roszia is a wizard, and has studied a variety of magics. His path of knowledge is one that requires him to narrow all energies into one thought at a time, and thus his magic is quite focused.

Roszian has...

Above average physical strength. (D10)

Average health. (D12)

Average agility. (D12)

Very high knowledge of the world. (D6)

Above average perceptive powers. (D10)

Low luck. (D30)

Powerful magic. (D8)

Roszian is...

A professor of Metasciences. (D8)

A knowledgeable historian. (D10)

An excellent artist. (D8)

A skilled archer. (D10)

An amateur medic. (D20)

An average swimmer. (D12)

Roszian is carrying...

His maple staff, ornate and bejeweled.

A small first aid kit.

A sketch pad and pencil.

Roszian can...

Note: Roszian can only have one spell active at a time.

Turn himself "mostly" invisible to normal sight. (D6)

Project a mystical shield in a 6' cone about himself. (D12)

See in the dark and detect "magical" powers. (D10)

Slowly "Heal" people he touches (or himself). (D12)

Float at a maximum speed of 20mph. (D10)

resources

how it began

The Window is an old idea, set forth over five years ago. It was put together purely for our own roleplaying group because we wanted something that worked for us. As they say, necessity is the mother of invention…

You see, after trying what seems like a million different systems during our own series of role-playing games (perhaps you've seen this, too) , we slowly realized that no matter what rules we were using, the interaction between the characters essentially ran the same. No matter what rules we were using, the combat always moved along with the same ultimate effects: it was just a question of how long it took to get there. Even the character creation worked in the same way, or at least was visualized in the same way.

As it was, our style had become more important to us than the system. We spent many times the creative energy developing the world and our characters than we did figuring up percentages, regardless of the genre we chose. It wasn't the individual stats and skills that made us love our characters, rather it was their actions and their personalities and how they fit into the overall story.

The only time we really noticed which rules were being used was when they somehow got in the way, as they inevitably did! That was the seed. We decided that it was time for a system that would stay in the background... be invisible as a pane of glass…

The first Window was a little goofy: the players were not allowed to see their character sheets or even know anything about the game mechanics. They knew all about their character's personality, background, and basic skills, but nothing involving numbers, modifiers, or percentages. Theoretically, we thought that this would encourage everyone to focus on the roleplaying and totally remove themselves from the cumbersome number crunching necessary for so many of the commercial systems we were using at the time. Even though we ultimately did away with the "invisible character sheets," the idea worked, and in the first few weeks of play the basic ideas that would eventually become the Window were hammered out.

Since then it's gone through some serious evolution. What you're reading right now is only the latest in a long series of revisions. And it's surely won't be the last.

- Scott Lininger

the art of storytelling

The Window is a barebones roleplaying system, without argument. Though the Three Precepts give guidelines to help everyone use this lack of structure to their advantage, the final factor that determines whether the Window will work for a given troupe is the Storyteller.

A skilled Storyteller can make any system work, no matter how sparse or complex. (T he only question then is which system is best for her story.) An unskilled Storyteller, on the other hand, needs a tremendous framework of rules to guide him along. For him the system necessarily comes first.

The Window is designed to support the Storyteller's own style, to provide just the right level of complexity for a given scene. Unfortunately, the Window can do nothing if the Storyteller has no creative vision or lacks the ability to show inexperienced actors what roleplaying is about. These are not skills which come easily. For the most part, learning to be a good Storyteller is a struggle which occurs in a vacuum. There are no manuals, no formal methodologies, and it can be difficult to find other people to talk to about the kinds of concerns Storytellers have.

Now, with that being said…

The best place to learn about storytelling, discuss storytelling, or talk about anything else Window related is on the online Forum. There's a number of folks there with a great deal of talent and experience, both with the Window and GMing in general. It's free and easy... just visit:

http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/windowrpg/

success odds table

		target number is…									
		10	**9**	**8**	**7**	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
competency is…	**D4**	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	75	50	25
	D6	-	-	-	-	100	83	67	50	33	17
	D8	-	-	100	88	75	63	50	38	25	13
	D10	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10
	D12	84	75	67	59	50	42	33	25	17	8
	D20	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5
	D30	33	30	27	23	20	17	13	10	7	3

The Success Odds Table shows you the percentage chance of rolling the target number or under. Special thanks to Martin R. Bartels for the original success odds table.

the stage

welcome

a knight's perspective

It seems like all of my life has been spent as an outsider looking in. As a young woman I found myself alone, and too often walking through those quiet places on the edge of night. I have always been attracted to solitude and repelled from the busy world that I was born into. Yet, as I grow older I am made more and more aware of the ties that inextricably bind me with that world.

My name is Susan Donelly and I serve an ancient Catholic Order known as the Knights of St. Jerome. We have existed, in one form or another, since before the fall of Rome. We have preserved knowledge that has been abandoned or simply forgotten, and for fourteen years I myself have watched a noble, stupid race grow and diminish.

Sometimes the mundane is not as innocent as it appears to be. There are countless unseen forces that thrive just beneath the bright illusion of the everyday. There are things that lurk in the shadows that have been always been there. They have followed us down through the ages, sometimes preying on us like cattle, sometimes saving us from ourselves, but always there, always waiting.

It has been a great privilege to have worked with our Order's greatest investigator, Walter De Mesnil. And I have also been fortunate in that I have witnessed firsthand the dark things and walked away unscathed. Their documentation has been my life's work. To understand me though, and perhaps to understand the Order, one must first understand who I was and how I came to be who I am.

I was born in upstate New York in 1969. My father was a practicing doctor and my mother had been a teacher before she married. Two years after I was born though, she was killed in a car accident. After her death, my father buried himself in his work.

My memories of that time, and of my father, are haphazard at best. It seemed to me that he rarely ate, and instead subsisted on cigarettes and a determined will. His practice kept him busy most of the time and when he wasn't working he read or wrote. He did anything I suppose, to keep from dwelling on my mother's death. As a result, he had little time for me when I was growing up.

I was ten when lung cancer finally killed him. It was an agonizingly slow death. He died by inches at the age of fifty-two.

I had no other family and was given into the State's care. Eventually, I ended up in a Catholic orphanage. By the time I was thirteen my father had become a dim memory.

My time with the Catholics was spent mostly in church or in school, and there were many times when the distinction between the two became meaningless. In the four years that I spent as an orphan I discovered a deep love for learning and a respect for God.

In 1983 I was sent to live with a man named Arthur Parrish and his wife Eileen. It was while living with the Parrish's that I first became acquainted with The Knights of St. Jerome. Both of them were historians for the Order. Through Mr. and Mrs. Parrish I was eventually able to enter it as well.

Arthur introduced me to a Jesuit named Walter de Mesnil who sponsored my entry into the Order. When I was eighteen I was granted the rank of Savant Knight of the Cross and made my first visit to the Vatican City in Rome. There I continued to study and train. In the summer of 1988 I became a full temple knight and began serious scholarly work for the Order. I was assigned the task of writing a general overview of the Order's activities and interests for use in the initiation of new members. After five years of research, and another four spent as an actual field researcher, I have compiled the document that you now hold in your hand.

This text is drawn primarily from my original notes, and I must emphasize that as a first draft it is far from complete. This version is organized into five sections, each of which contain descriptions of the primary organizations and individuals who have influenced them. The hidden world around us is defined by conflict. These are wars being waged over ideology and history rather than political borders.

the terminus

introduction

The Terminus is an attempt to define the actions and the goals of a select group of individuals operating in the shadows. The principle players in the Terminus are a society of precognatives known as the Juvat, a violent splinter group called the Quearo Verum, a group of mysterious beings named the Matar, and a select number of otherwise normal people drawn into the conflict because they possess the potential to change the world.

With the exception of the last group, each party is seeking to control the future. The Juvat, the Quearo Verum, and the Matar are all currently trying to affect the shape of the future by seizing control of so called "free willed" individuals. All three groups believe that while the line of the future is not preordained, most of the human populace chooses to become set in a predictable course of actions. It is this predictability which allows precognatives to "see" the future. There is free will, but it is rarely exercised. However, there are certain people who do choose free will and, as a result, act in unpredictable ways.

These people, usually called *Loci,* number in the tens of thousands across the globe and have the potential to shape the flow of history. As a result, there are elements of each group constantly trying to locate these people to insure their particular vision of the future.

Of course, just because a *Loci* acts outside of the boundary of predictability, it doesn't necessarily mean that they can be used to sculpt that vision of the future. Only a small number of them can be used or manipulated to alter certain specific points in time. These *Prime Loci* are the tools with which the Terminus is constructed.

the juvat

The Juvat are a relatively young organization when compared to the Knights Of St. Jerome. However, they have been both fortunate and successful in their evolution.

They were first established in the late 1800s by a group of mystics who believed that they could control the development of the future. The original meaning of the name Juvat is unknown, but it may be a corruption of antiquated Latin code.

The Juvat have been a source of hot debate within the Order almost since they were created. They are, in the most accurate terms, a highly rigid and structured fellowship of precognitives. They are enormously wealthy and have agents throughout the world.

juvat organization

According to research done by Walter de Mesnil, the first generation of Juvat were brought together and trained in France sometime between 1861 and 1863. These individuals became the leaders of the Juvat and named themselves the Advocates. They were all precognitives of the highest order and had the added benefit of being, apparently, Immortal.

Within the Juvat a strict hierarchy exists. Advocates occupy the highest positions with Attendant Juvat just beneath them. Adepts are highly skilled precognitives and experienced field workers. They usually are chosen to recruit Juvat cells and maintain contact with operations abroad.

One Attendant is chosen every fifteen years for the position of Attendant Director. It is this person's responsibility to coordinate the activities of other Attendants, Adepts, and Apprentices operating within cells out in the field.

Adepts make up the bulk of the Juvat. They are the ones who actually take an active hand in manipulating events in hopes that they can create a specific future. They also contact and train the majority of Apprentices.

Apprentices are new members of the organization. They are the lowest level of the Juvat. Adepts are constantly seeking out precognitives for membership, but rarely find them. As a result, many Apprentices do not have the ability to "see" the future. Our best estimate is that only a tenth have abilities useful enough to give them a chance at advancing to the rank of Adept.

juvat cell doctrine

At the turn of the century the Advocates of the Juvat discovered that our Order had been observing them and their activities since 1880. As a result they adopted a "cell" method of operation in 1905. Attendants were instructed to contact and initiate small groups of specialized individuals who believed in, and agreed with, the Juvat's principle goals. Members of these cells were to be known as Adepts and Apprentices. No one within the cell would know who was above their recruiter, or who had recruited him. They, in turn, would eventually separate and organize new cells.

The obvious advantage of such a system is the incredible security that it creates. It makes it nearly impossible for infiltrators to penetrate very far into the organization. Also, if any member of a cell is suborned, he or she is unable to betray anyone beyond their own cell.

juvat galleries

Gallery is a generic term that the Juvat use to refer to various safehouses scattered across the globe. These sanctuaries range from private homes to corporate skyscrapers. The very first Gallery was an actual art gallery located in St. Vivien de Medoc on the coast of France. It was owned by a man named Elias Talamantes and used as a gathering place for the Advocates at the turn of the century.

Every Gallery is owned and maintained by people who are sympathetic to the Juvat. They can be used at any time by members in need. If a member is in danger or in need of assistance, they are trained to find the nearest Gallery.

The Largest Gallery is in New York City and operates on the surface as a large and successful

investment firm named Cross & Associates. This the heart of the Juvat administrative network. Cross and Associates oversee all financial matters ranging from the acquisition of property to wiring money to agents in the field.

juvat advocates

In the late 1800s, a mysterious man named Gregor Petrovitch gathered fifteen men and women together in Paris, France to found the Juvat. These individuals each brought a "gifted" child with them with the express purpose of one day controlling the outcome of the Terminus. The fifteen children would later become the Advocates of the Juvat.

Not much is known about the Founders, aside from Petrovitch only a few names and some obscure records seem to exist. There is very little information available concerning them.

Gregor Petrovitch is perhaps the best documented, I have uncovered some records that may have placed him in a small Russian village that bordered the Ukraine in the year 1742. At that time he appeared to be a man barely forty years in age.

The following is a list of the various Advocate's psuedonymns (coincidentally, each name is taken from a poem titled: "Hymn to Adversity"). It is not known what significance their names may hold.

Virtue
Charity
Folly
Justice
Laughter
Pity
Noise
Horror
Joy
Despair
Prosperity
Disease
Wisdom
Poverty
Adversity
Melancholy

the matar

What are they? Where do they come from? These are the questions that every Knight begins with when studying the Matar. Prior to about 1950, we can find no record of them. It is only in recent years that they have come to the Order's attention.

I and a few others are of the belief that the Matar have an agenda roughly parallel to that of the Juvat. Like that organization, the Matar seem to be seeking control over the Terminus. We believe that they are a group of supernatural entities who have taken over certain Prime Loci and bent them to their will.

Perhaps as an unintentional side effect of the conditioning that the Matar put their hosts through, they have the uncontrollable ability to lower the mental balance of individuals near them. People who maintain close contact with the Matar for any prolonged period of time begin to behave irrationally and act out their base aggressions and desires. It is as if they lose the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. This, of course, renders them fairly easy to control with telepathy. Those unlucky enough to become the servants of the Matar are called the *Locura*. It is not uncommon to find a Matar surrounding itself with as many humans as possible. To further facilitate this, they often pose as wealthy socialites or important businessmen who always keep sizable retinues.

No one is certain if the Matar are able to "see" the future in the same way the Juvat does. However, we have noticed some of the ways in which they attempt to realize their goals.

First, the Matar are constantly seeking new Prime Loci to "possess" or "corrupt". Second, any Prime Loci that has already been reached by the Juvat is hunted and killed if possible. Third, many Matar seek lesser Loci who hold some important position of power. If possible, they are also corrupted. One example of this possession of lesser loci is the American USN Admiral, Gregory Rush.

Rush graduated from Annapolis in 1958 with honors. As a young Captain, he was the United States Navy liaison between SEAL Team-1 and the Army's Special Forces in Vietnam for most of the war. He was present at one of the greatest mysteries of the entire conflict: the disappearance of two regular Army platoons near Ha Tihn.

After Vietnam, Rush worked extensively around the world for the Office of Naval Intelligence (O N I) . He worked as a Station Head for that agency until 1985. On June 14th of that year he was traveling from the USS Puget Sound to Seattle, WA. His helicopter ran into severe weather and was forced down on the Washington coast. Although the aircraft's wreckage was recovered, the remains of its crew and single passenger were not.

The Navy listed Rush and the Puget Sound's Helicopter crew as: Missing, Presumed Dead. Two months later a retired USN Rear Admiral Gregory Evans Rush accepted the Pentagon post as Chief of Operations for the ONI. We believe that this man is the same Admiral Rush who disappeared in Washington. Family members and co-workers described Rush as a gaunt man in his early sixties, with wispy white hair. Our agents in Washington DC claim that the new head of the ONI is a man in his middle thirties with salt and pepper black hair. The physical discrepancies and the unusual circumstances surrounding the two men lead us to believe that he was a victim of the Matar. His current position within the intelligence community gives him the power and opportunity to forward the Matar's goals.

the quearo verum

In 1965, an internal power struggle took place within the Juvat. Several respected members sought to take a more proactive position against the Matar. To this end, they formed a secret cabal that they called the Quearo Verum. Operating outside the scope of their normal activities, these members of the Juvat began hunting and killing known Matar. Between 1965 and 1967 we estimate that they were responsible for the deaths of about forty-eight Matar and nearly one hundred Locura. Eventually, however, the cabal was uncovered and all of the Quearo Verum were expelled from the Juvat.

In 1982, a disenfranchised Juvat Attendant named Elisabeth Malatesta left the organization and began contacting all of the former Quearo Verum. With the aid of the cabal's old leaders a new Quearo Verum was created.

Today, they exist as a sort of underground network. The goals are the same as before, but their methods have become much more violent and unchecked. The group attracts the most volitile elements from the Juvat.

Ostensibly, Malatesta "runs" the group, but outside a small circle of former Juvat all she can really do is point the Quearo Verum in certain directions. Her agents are scattered across the globe and rarely come into contact with each other. As a result, the Quearo Verum's operations sometimes seem chaotic. Still, Malatesta's campaign of guerrilla war with the Matar has thus far proven to be very successful. The disorganized nature of the group is also its protection. No one can strike at all of the Quearo Verum.

introduction

Immortals walk among us. They cloak themselves well, but have revealed their nature to us in dreams, legends, and through their own guarded writings. The Amaranthites are the darkness at the edge of night. Responsibile for the vampire myths of Europe and Asia, they have descended the great road of history in our shadow.

Today, they still lurk in shadows, and from those shadows they reach out to grapple with a history that they are inextricably bound to. The Amaranthites represent a competitor that man is unaware of ,and perhaps unprepared for. It is fortunate that most of them are reclusive and poorly organized.

Those who have stood out have pulled the strings of history, nudging us this way and that. They have had a hand in everything from the fall of angels to the defeat of Rome. It is these creatures more than anything else that has consumed the bulk of our Order's inquiry. Yet despite the fact that we have investigated them since our inception, we still know precious little.

The Amaranthites could be the greatest windfall that man has ever known. Or they could herald the coming apocalypse. They are a variable that could prove disastrous or fortuitous. And behind every theory, every investigation of them that we undertake lurks the question: what should we do?

nature of the amaranthites

No one is certain where the Amaranthites came from, or if they were once as human as we. Yet they are one of the oldest races that have shadowed humanity for untold centuries. Mysterious and reclusive, they have nonetheless left their mark upon the world.

These beings may have given rise to the vampire myths of Asia and Europe. They are seemingly immortal and possess a wide range of supernatural abilities. We have studied them since the fall of the Holy Roman Empire, but they have existed for much longer than that. Study of these Amaranthites has always been one of our most important and hazardous endeavors. As a result, extreme caution is always taken when dealing with them. Unfortunately, this has meant that their research has been a long and involved process. It was not until the 1920s that we obtained a fairly clear understanding of them.

On January 22nd, 1921, a man named William Kanigher approached our Order with information concerning the Amaranthites. He spent several days with Knights who specialized in studying the immortal. The resulting notes and depositions that were taken eventually became the basis for the document entitled: *The Bloodless*. It is one of two texts that we use to prepare members for any project involving the Amaranthites. The following is an excerpt from Kanigher's conversations with our Knights.

Beware the eternal my friend.

It's simple really, in all its wisdom; three words. a word of truth. Beware...

I learned a lot of things from Eiran, but that's the one I remember most. "Trust is a luxury," he used to say, "don't be so quick to barter yours out. Eternity is dangerous. It's un-equaled in its potential for evil, and in its potential for power."

Luckily for people like you and I, eternity is self destructive. It's just too bad that when they go, they'll probably take us with them.

Amaranthites are a race of immortals you see. They are guilded puppeteers, living just below the surface like spiders in the walls. Of the ones left, most are openly against us, and nearly all are insane. Immortality does that to most of the you see. After a thousand years of living the same life, the days become slow torture. Eiran used to say that, "One season piles up on the next; face after face, wine after wine, lover after lover. It is difficult to continue. Some years..." But you know what gets me? Most of them who haven't been killed are obscenely rich and powerful. They disguise themselves as human nobles and profit on us. They go to great lengths of excess to amuse themselves. Only, they find that each expensive new entertainment has got to be even more twisted, unique, or danger-ous than the last. But I'll see the end of it. All of it. Some people call them vampires, or the Bloodless, or Pyreli, or Sith. Whatever you call them, don't make too many assumptions. For every rule that you think is binding my friend, there's a dozen exceptions. Sure, some don't like crosses, but you know, a lot of them a pretty religious. And those who have ac-cepted the Art of Dark and Shadow may have some problems with sunlight, but most don't.

The only thing that you can assume about them is that you know very little about them.

They hide themselves carefully. After all, they're not stupid. And after a few centuries I guess it's hard not to be good at keeping a low profile.

It's nearly impossible to tell the difference between one of them and one of us. They ap-pear as human as you or I, and their intellect is unmatched. Plus, every one of them each other on a personal level. They share information every few decades about the where-abouts of us hunters. It makes my job that much more difficult. They are also able to sense when others of their race are nearby, which makes it very difficult to hunt them if you happen to be one.

And that's where I come in. My Ordinate, Eiran, was one of them, but he was one of the twelve charged with killing them all. He understood that his best chance of getting at them was through us. And so he and the other Ordinates began training people like you and me to hunt the Amaranthites and destroy them. He understood the threat that his brethren posed to the world. He is the one you have to thank for the knowledge that I bring.
He also committed suicide a month after completing my training.

The Amaranthites appear totally human upon observation. They rarely use real their "real" names and they usually re-invent themselves every few decades. In addition to the Arts that they use, they also have the ability to slowly change their appearance if they choose, their physically forms shift at about the same growth rate as a human child. Any Amaranthite can identify any other of course, but to a human it can be nearly impossible to see the connection between one of them today and what they may have looked like a hundred years ago. They can alter skin tone, height, weight, birth marks, voice intonation--everything really. Though no one within the Order has seen it first hand, there are reliable stories that some Amaranthites will choose to mimic an actual human being. Once the resemblance is complete they invariably kill the human and take their place.

However, very few of them will tolerate anything less than a perfect form. They are unusually vain in this respect. While some Amaranthites stay in touch with the ever changing world around them, many have become attached to certain periods in history and continue to wear long outdated styles and fashions.

All Amaranthites seem to have the ability to heal wounds at a remarkable rate. A scratch might heal over in a matter of seconds, a small cut in perhaps only a few minutes. For a relatively serious injury (like a broken bone or a bullet wound), they might need a few days. However, not matter how grave the injury, an Amaranthite Lord would never seek the aid of any mortal agency.

caledonian council

The journals of Cross Knight Ross, in addition to the testimony of Mr. Kanigher, are the primary documents used to familiarize members with the "Bloodless". These two texts have set the tone of for all of our dealings with this immortal race.

Samuel Ross was the foremost Amaranthite scholar within our Order. By the time he was thirty, he had wandered all over Europe and Asia following legends and folklore to find the truth behind the mystery of the Amaranthites. His entire life was spent in the pursuit of their origins. However, for the purposes of this document, only a fraction of his researches and notes have been included. For a more detailed account, refer to the computer tape files stored in the Roman archives. What follows is mainly an account of the end of the old Amaranthite order.

> ...and so the Wards of Armere in Scotland actually go back to Roman times; to the century just before the Amaranthites called their final assembly. The wall encircling Loch Armere was constructed by order of the Roman Caledonian Governor, at the request of a powerful and influential Amaranthite named Thracio.

> Physically, the grounds surrounding Armere are nothing short of spectacular. Secluded in the highlands beyond Hadrian's Wall, the Loch is a strong focal point for potential magicks.

Oddly enough, there is no archeological evidence of Scots, Picts, or even Romans between Armere's wall and the Loch itself. An area measuring roughly two hundred kilometers extends from Hadrian's wall northward and encompasses the Loch and its standing wall. I believe that the area immediately surrounding Loch Armere was controlled and maintained by the Amaranthites for the purpose of large gatherings. Several monolithic stone Wards still stand within the deteriorating remains of Armere's walls.

These Wards act like focusing lenses for magicks. Those who can contact other minds have a particularly difficult time within the enclosure created by the Wards. Their ability is absorbed and amplified back at them by the stones. If a mage or "gifted" individual who is near the Wards does not attempt to use their abilities, then the stones merely create a feeling of uneasiness. However, anyone actively using their "gifts" or engaging in the use of magicks will have those powers directed back at them a hundred fold.

According to my research, Thracio spent nearly seventy years of study and meditation placing all of the Wards. This was done to protect those who would one day gather in that place.

At the time, the Amaranthites were essentially peaceful and well organized, with a central council called the Allegiantheum, which held an assembly every few decades. They maintained a loose policy of secrecy where humans were concerned. They also put draconian restrictions on those Arts which could only be used for destruction.

...but everything that they had accomplished was overshadowed by a current of instability that was sweeping through some of the older ranks. These Fathers and Mothers had lived in the times before Greece and Egypt, but even they could not remember their exact origins.

A long series of executions were performed by the Allegiantheum in the first century before the birth of Christ. At the time, only the very oldest were killed. Such drastic measures were deemed necessary because of the incredible powers that they possessed. A madness that gripped the most powerful was a threat that the Allegiantheum was not prepared to face.

But cutting out the roots didn't kill the spread of the vine. All of those offspring that had spread to Africa and Asia were slowly becoming aware of the disease that they carried within themselves. Thracio was one of the first to realize the possible implications of his immortality.

Five centuries later, in the year 466, the inevitable occurred. A large group of the oldest Amaranthites led by Lord Valkan declared their succession from the Allegiantheum. A full assembly was called for by the remaining Allegiantheum. The area in Caledonia known as Armere was chosen as the meeting place.

Samuel Cheever Ross Savant
Knight of the Cross 1754

valkan

One of the best documented Amaranthite Lords was an ancient known as Valkan. He was the leader of a sect of immortals called the Recreantheum who rebelled against their leaders. At one time, we had in our possession several books handwritten by Valkan himself.

According to documents stored in our Order's archives, Lord Valkan was one of the oldest and most unconventional Amaranthite Lords. It was believed until early in this century that he had been killed sometime in 900 AD by Catholic Knights in what is now northern Austria. Four of his books were obtained by the church soon after, and were eventually passed on to the Knights of St. Jerome in 1183. According to some sources, Valkan wrote as many as twenty books, though the Church has only ever uncovered solid evidence of five. The four books once held by our Order were considered so heretical by the Vatican that they were sealed and guarded from any who would seek to use them. In the early fifteenth century, however, when two of the books were destroyed it was decided that copies should be made. Unfortunately, whatever secrets Valkan recorded were destined to go undiscovered as the effort of transcribing them drove more than one monk into madness. Today, in addition to partial copies, only one of Valkan's original books is in our possession.

Most of what we have been able to piece together on the true history of the Amaranthites is based on research done by the Duke Heinrich Von Guellum before his death. Unfortunately, his main references were letters written between the Recreantheum, and obviously they learned little from the final Armere assembly, having not attended themselves. What Von Guellum did discover was that Thracio and his fellows revealed evidence of some impending peril, something that the Amaranthites were intimately linked to. Whatever the evidence was, we must assume that it was quite compelling, as the Allegiantheum agreed unanimously to destroy all evidence that their race ever existed.

According to Valkan's estimate, some twenty-seven thousand Amaranthites used the Armere Wards to take their own lives on that night, for reasons that he could not fathom.

Before the end of the council, it was decided that twelve of the most powerful of the Allegiantheum would stay behind and become Ordinates, or hunters. It would be their task to find each of the renegade Recreantheum and execute them. Once their duty was completed, or if they felt eternity pull to strong, they would take their own lives.

loch armere estate

Very few visit Loch Armere anymore. Its remote location in the Scottish Highlands prevents most from venturing into the area. But during the mid 1800s, a large estate was built on the Loch's shores. The manor and surrounding grounds were constructed at the behest of the Von Guellum family. They were minor, expatriate nobles from Austria who had lost all of their native land holdings. The Loch Armere estate remained in their possession until 1915.

Nestled within a shallow valley, and shielded from view by the mountainous nature of the sur-rounding land, a low stone wall that once encircled the Loch is usually the first feature that one notices upon arrival. Between the deteriorating wall and the Loch itself are a series of stone megaliths that we call the Wards of Armere. Each intact stone measures almost nine feet tall and three wide. On these Wards are faint impressions that the harsh weather has all but eroded entirely. They are all that remain of the runes that were carved into them by Amaran-thites sometime during the Roman occupation of Great Britain.

In 1915, Duke Heinrich Von Guellum's wife invited a group of seemingly unrelated individuals from around the world to the Armere estate. The events that transpired there are unknown, but shortly thereafter, the manor house and part of the servant's quarters were burnt to their foun-dations. Both Duke Von Guellum, and the people who were staying at the house, disappeared shortly after the fire. Because of the anti-German sentiments that W.W.I caused in Great Brit-ain, Duchess Von Guellum soon returned to Austria. To this day, no record of her where-abouts has been uncovered.

In 1942, the Armere estate was purchased by an American named Patrick Russo. He had the manor house and the servant's quarters re-built according to the original specifications. How-ever, work was halted by the outbreak of WWII. After the war, construction was never com-pleted, though the estate remained the property of the Russo family.

Today, the Loch, and the land surrounding it looks much the same as it did a century ago. The only visible clue to its age is the manor house and the complimentary buildings. While the ser-vant's quarters were fully restored, the house proper has fallen into a serious state of disrepair.

Because of the adamant denial of the Russo family, we have never been allowed to inspect the estate in depth. However, in 1943, a carpenter who had been in the employ of the Russo family, told one of our investigators that while the original house had been burnt to cinders, both the foundation and a maze-like series of chambers below it were in perfect condition. The man had left the work site because of "unusual goings on" that plagued the Loch while he was there. Two weeks later he turned up dead on a pier in Glasgow.

We believe that Duke Von Guellum was in possession of one or more Amaranthite icons or artifacts, possibly even some of Valkan's books. It may be that he stored them beneath the house in the catacombs that exist there. If this is so, then the Russo family would now be pos-session of whatever items that Von Guellum had amassed. This may explain their reluctance in allowing us to inspect the estate.

the ordinates

After the final decree of the Caledonian council, the twelve Ordinates left behind began their task of hunting the renegade Amaranthites of the Recreantheum. Even to those of us within the Order, the Ordinates seem more like mythical figures than real individuals. No Knight has ever discovered physical evidence of them. At most, all we have ever found are records, per-

sonal diaries of people who came into contact with them, or obscure folktales.

However, we must believe that they do exist. We know from Bill Kanigher's testimony that at least one Ordinate named Eiran recruited humans as Amaranthite hunters. We also believe that he, or another Ordinate, may have had a hand in the development of the American Old Families. Unfortunately we also know that Eiran killed himself sometime prior to 1921. This leads us to believe that whatever the Allegiantheum sought to end or avoid may still await them.

They do not confront the Recreantheum directly, instead choosing to hazard pawns in an old and intricate game. They use humans to draw the renegades out into the open, where they are vulnerable.

Kanigher only knew the names of three of the Ordinates, and we have never been able to discover the names of the others. The ones that we do know are: Eiran, Quintus, and Ginsal.

forces unseen

introduction

There are things in this world which defy explanation, and there are events which lie beyond our comprehension. A Host of spirits and ghosts haunt the earth.

The Angelic Choir is certainly proof of the aforementioned statement. Angels or demons? It is difficult to say. These spirits mystify us. Most ghosts and noncorporeal beings are tenuous at best. They usually lack an ordered mind or purpose. Yet the Choir is almost a society unto itself.

Masquerading as angels of Christian and Hebrew legend, the Angelic Choir wanders the earth for reasons all its own. We have had a particular interest in these beings since we first learned of them. However, we have had little success discovering what drives their actions. Witnessed on battlefields and holy ground, they manifest themselves to the faithful and faithless alike.

The Old Families on the other hand, represent the tangible aspect of the unknown. Generation after generation, each dedicated to the cataloging and pursuit of things that lie beyond the scope of our imaginings, they have inserted themselves into every aspect of the supernatural. Mystics, magicians, ghost hunters, and scholars, the Old Families have explored the unknown for almost two hundred years. These three families are bound together with the unseen forces at work beneath the surface of the everyday. They are as much a mystery in their own right as the ghosts they seek out.

These bloodlines have been considered insignificant players for generations, but in the past seventy years our Order's opinion of them has changed to one of great respect. In the years to come they may play a pivotal role.

old families

The three bloodlines known as the Old Families of America have been a source of interest for our Order since the 19th century. Although they have their origins in the American Revolution, it was not until the 1800s that they began to draw our attention.

Independent occult investigators and even ghost hunting societies are not an unusual phenomena. both have existed in varied forms for centuries. It was the appearance of not only one, but three entire families of occult dabblers and investigators which brought the Old Families to the attention of our American Knights.

Upon realizing that the Pagets, Bishops, and Harpers of New England were a unique occurrence in almost the whole of documented history an investigation was initiated. At the urging of Consular Abbot Dewitt, an open ended observation and file was begun. In addition, a separate investigation was undertaken concerning each family's origins.

Captain William Bishop, Sergeant Patrick Harper, and Colonel Richard Paget all served in the

Continental Army under Washington. However, the only other mention of them that can be found during this time period is an incidental account which would seem to place each of them at the Battle of Trenton. It is not known whether or not the three had met prior to the war, though it seems unlikely. Following the American bid for independence, the three soldiers settled down in parts of New England and each began a family.

Next to nothing is really known about these men, and it is their descendants who mainly interest us. Members of each family have served in almost every major war fought by the US. It is during these periods that they have had some of their more interesting endeavors. As a result of their "obsession" with the supernatural, the Old Families have built up quite a reputation within certain circles.

They are self styled occult experts and operators who have managed to involve themselves in some of the more bizarre supernatural events in American history.

Despite their long tradition of occult involvement, there are those who would argue that the Old Families rely more on luck than knowledge. As proof, they point to the Paget bloodline. Only four descendants of this line remain today, due mainly to the disastrous actions of the family in the 1920s.

Shortly after W.W.I, a young man named Timothy Cochran entered seminary school. He had served in the trenches of the Great War, and during that time spent in France, he had been a witness to angel manifestations. He, and a fellow soldier named Victor Paget quickly became obsessed with understanding the "angels" that they had seen. However, soon after their mutual sightings, Timothy was wounded quite badly and was sent home. Upon returning and entering the priesthood we contacted and invited him to join our ranks.

Hoping that their prior relationship would be enough to make contact with at least one of the Old Families, Presiding Abbot DeWitt sent Timothy to contact Victor Paget in 1925. It seemed like an ideal situation, using their friendship, the Order could reveal itself to the Old Families in a slow and controlled manner. The fact that Victor had essentially isolated himself from the rest of his family also meant that we would not have to worry about unwanted suspicion or inquiry. It was an opportunity that had to be taken.

Timothy was led to believe that his assignment was further study of angels, and for reasons of secrecy, was told not to tell Victor Paget anything about the Order until a later date. This would prove to be a terrible mistake.

While working with Paget, the two had made inroads into and angel worshipping cult in Africa. Timothy was certain that the cult was in possession of several books of angel "lore". We believe that this was the impetus that prompted him to attempt an infiltration of the cult. Without warning, Timothy suddenly disappeared. Alarmed, Presiding Abbot DeWitt quietly sent out an urgent message to the Catholic infrastructure in Kansas City: any information about Timothy Cochran would be wired to the Order with all possible haste.

A short time later Timothy's body was discovered in a local brothel. His body was covered with tattoos and ritual scars. The Knight that was sent to claim his body was convinced that African ritual magic had been used to kill him.

the host

The Host refers to all those non-corporeal beings that occupy what is otherwise known as the "spirit" world. With the exception of an astral projection, spectral beings are creatures of varying intelligence who do not maintain a material form in their natural state.

Our Order has investigated hauntings and other spiritual phenomena off and on since we first became aware of them. However, since the main focus of our energies is directed at beings and organizations that can be documented in a linear and inter-related way, study of the Host has been haphazard at best. Still, there are aspects of the Host which lend themselves to investigation. Those spirits who interact with one another and pattern themselves after the angels of the three Christian religions are the subject of a small but focused group of Knights.

The Seraphim, or Angelic Choir, have been of particular interest to us as they do maintain that they are actually angels. The bulk of research done in this field was the result of two different Knights in separate eras.

Thomas Magnusson was born in 1848, in Girgenti Sicily. A complete personal file for Magnusson is kept in the Order's archives at our library in Rome, and is available for inspection. His lifelong preoccupation with the Seraphim began in 1868, just as he was entering the sixth year of his studies. Although he only lived to be forty-eight, he is the Knight most responsible for their study.

In 1950, Abbot Marie de Quincey built on Magnusson's work and began to study the possible aims of the Seraphim. Her assessment and theories are the basis for the current movement within the Order that is interested in producing a more detailed analysis of the Host in general, and the Seraphim in particular.

The following is a short excerpt from the rather sizable research that Magnusson did prior to his death in 1896. The complete analysis was given to our Consular Abbots and was eventually catalogued in our French Library.

"...the Seraphim have no true shape or form. They are part of the great Host of Spirits that cling to the waking world and have no doubt given rise to countless legends and superstitions. They are ghosts and specters, but are not the shades of men. They have never been "alive", and certainly have never experienced a physicality that we take for granted every day.

Yet, the Seraphim confound me. Whereas most of the Host are little more than addled brained phantoms upon which we have foisted our fears, the Seraphim are well organized and quite capable.

shadow groups

introduction

We are not the only ones interested in the unknown. For centuries there have been societies that dedicated themselves to the pursuit of the supernatural and the paranormal. However, it is only until recently that governments began sponsoring such groups. The most notable were the Victoria's Ghost Hunters of the 1800's in England, but there were and are others.

In America at the end of the Civil War, a group of Secret Service agents briefly investigated a malignant substance called the Darkness. Although this group was short lived, it left behind a legacy that would, in time, be taken up once again.

In the early 1980s a man named Eliot Morgan brought together a group of federal agents and began investigating the Darkness once more. This group, the Shadesmen, was fated to be short lived and fraught with intrigue and tragedy.

The two groups mentioned above represent only one aspect of the government sponsored investigators of the unknown: the accidental one. Neither the 1800 or the 1980 groups were purposely designed by their governments to seek out the paranormal. They either stumbled across some aspect of the supernatural or were covertly formed with their government's finances, but not its overt knowledge. DPL agencies on the other hand, are groups formed at the express request of a government.

Since the early 1950s there have been DPL agencies. A byproduct of the Cold War and closely resembling other espionage groups of the period, DPLs seek to "neutralize" threats of a supernatural nature. The DSI in America is a perfect example. Nearly autonomous within the government it serves, it engages in covert warfare with anything that it deems of "unknown origin."

the darkness

The mysterious substance known as the Darkness was first recorded in the late 1800s by a group of Secret Service agents who had been charged with the investigation of several strange events in New Orleans. Only fragmentary information concerning these men has been uncovered, though, due to a disturbing conspiracy of silence surrounding them and their activities. By all accounts, the Darkness takes form as a viscous black liquid. Each seething tendril is an extension of the whole. To sever an offshoot or isolate a single drop is to confine an aspect of the whole. No matter how minute, the Darkness survives and propagates. A single malignant purpose guides every ounce of it.

In 1865, the same year that the American Civil War concluded, the USSS (United States Secret Service) was founded as a branch of the Treasury Department that today holds the distinction of being the oldest federal law enforcement agency of the United States government. Founded by Hugh McCulloch, with the consent of President Lincoln, the Secret Service was originally charged with combating counterfeiting, but then began protecting the President

in 1901.

The first Secret Service Chief was a man named William P. Wood. He started with only ten agents, mostly private investigators, and began tracking down counterfeiters. By 1870, there were twenty-four agents working for the Secret Service, eight of which were ordered by Wood to investigate a shipping company headquartered in New Orleans. We do not know exactly why Wood sent these agents to Louisiana, however, what they discovered went far beyond simple "boodling" (counterfeiting) .

The chief investigator that Wood sent to New Orleans was a man named Leonard Cabbot. We presume that it was because Cabbot was born and raised in Louisiana that Wood placed him in charge. Cabbot, though, was a strange man by all accounts. According to information that we have gathered about him, he was born in 1840 and although he was a southerner, records show that he enlisted in a volunteer regiment in New York and fought for the Union during the war. Afterwards, he worked at Pinkerton's Detective Agency and then in 1866 was recruited for the USSS. According to letters written between Wood and McCulloch, Cabbot was competent, but not particularly liked by other members of Secret Service. We know that Wood himself did not care for Cabbot, and his distaste for the man may have had more to do with Cabbot's New Orleans assignment than his background or investigative prowess.

According to research conducted by Walter de Mesnil in 1973, sometime in the middle of the 1860s, an Australian cargo ship registered under the name *Brittanicus* started on a journey through the Indian Ocean, from its home port in Perth to New Orleans. Sometime after its departure, the *Brittanicus* picked up a load of slaves bound for America. However, the ship never reached port as it foundered on the seas just beyond the Chandeleur Islands in the Gulf of Mexico and was never seen again. That was, until the small island of Jut in the Breton chain was purchased after the war by a group of freemasons as a retreat. They subsequently discovered the remains of the ship which had been driven into the rocks that line the perimeter of the island. What they discovered within the rotting hulk would have repercussions that extended well into the 1980s.

What they found was an inky black substance that, in Cabbot's words, *"...devours all life. It is a malign and vile substance that shows all signs of being alive and possessing of an intelligence, though by what means I do not know. Every time I think that I understand its nature, the damned stuff confounds me again. One thing is certain though, it is evil."*

Cabbot and his fellow agents uncovered a salvaging operation taking place on Jut. The freemasons who owned the island were hauling heavy wooden casks, such as one might have found wine stored in, out of the *Brittanicus'* hold, and were transporting them to a storehouse in New Orleans. Shortly after arriving at the city, Cabbot discovered the Darkness that they contained.

While we have discovered much about the Origins of the darkness in America, we have yet to determine what the real goal of the Brittanicus was, or why the freemasons were so intent on

salvaging the derelict ship. What we do know is that somehow, Cabbot convinced Wood that the Darkness was something that had to be contained and, if possible, destroyed at all costs. McCulloch was subsequently given the authority by the Executive Branch to seize the contents of the freemason's storehouse. As many barrels of Darkness as could be found were then transported by secure railroad cars to an Army fort in Vicksburg. To the best of our knowledge, Cabbot never learned the whereabouts of the *Brittanicus*.

After some examinations were made by the US Army, President Grant created a ancillary group of Secret Service agents with Leonard Cabbot as its head, whose sole purpose was to track down any Darkness in the United States.

Over the course of the next few years Cabbot had his family home in Barnett, Louisiana converted into a temporary holding facility for any Darkness that he or his men recovered.

For undisclosed reasons, in 1892, President Cleveland dismantled Cabbot's group by executive order and had all official records of its existence destroyed. All of the Darkness kept at the Vicksburg fort was transported to a secure facility in somewhere in Colorado. However, we do not believe that this included the Darkness stored at Cabbot's house.

Despite all of this, Cabbot and his former agents continued to investigate the Darkness in private. Cabbot himself disappeared in the summer of 1900 somewhere in Nebraska.

the shadesmen

One of the after affects of Leonard Cabbot's Secret Service group was the creation of the Shadesmen. In 1985 an NSA agent named Elliot Morgan organized a group of investigators for the sole purpose of continuing Cabbot's work. We postulate that he must have uncovered some documents that escaped Cleveland's purging, but he was killed in 1992 before we were able to interview him. By then, his covert activities within his own government had branded him a traitor.

The first action he took was to bring together a group of well trained professionals under his personal auspices to gather information about Cabbot. None of the agents knew each other personally. They were each carefully screened and selected from separate agencies, and they were not paid directly by the government. Using his authority as a high level NSA official he began appropriating the excess funding that his department received and started to fund his own private operation.

The first mission was to investigate certain events in Delilah, Nebraska. Our order attempted to obtain the recorded mission reports in 1993, but were deterred when we discovered that the NSA had confiscated all of Morgan's personal documents. We were able to uncover that the mission found the remains of Leonard Cabbot and the lamp that was given to him in 1891 by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Sometime during the mission, the team also encountered a man posing as an FBI agent by the name of Jackson Cage. A background check on him through the National Security Data Network traced him back to the U.S. Department of Special Investigations. We were able to interview him as part of our 1992 investigation and he told our interviewers that the Shades-men were still active, though they had severed all ties with the NSA.

dpl agencies

DPL （Dangerous Phenomena Location） agencies represent a growing trend throughout the world. Since the Victorian age there have been occasional "ghost hunting" societies that have had either the blessing or the funding of an open minded government. The VGH in Britain was one of the most renowned of these groups but it certainly wasn't the first. However, not until the early 1950s have governments themselves created special organizations designed specifically with the supernatural in mind.

These agencies differ from their predecessors in that they are not merely concerned with the investigation and documentation of the paranormal, but rather are charged with the elimination of supernatural threats. In some cases, they have even attempted to utilize such phenomena in an attempt to shift the all to tenuous balance of world power. the government sanctioned "ghost hunters" of today resemble nothing so much as cadres of highly trained soldiers, a far cry from their society club beginnings.

Every major industrialized nation on earth had created some sort of DPL agency by the end of the 1960s. This "arms race" can be seen as a byproduct of the Cold War, a time when para-noia ran unusually deep.

Just as the members of these agencies began to resemble their military brethren, so too their tactics began to mirror those of the elite special forces. Operations are conducted under the heaviest cloak of secrecy, and all too often are staged on foreign soil. One of the most active of these organizations is the Department of Special Investigations （DSI） in the United States. The United States' DSI was created by President Eisenhower in 1954 and was one of the first of the modern "ghost hunters". It was one element of a two part program code named: AVATAR. Project: Blue Book was the other half of the operation. The Air Force's half was also twofold. There was the "official" investigation of UFOs designed for public consumption, and then there was the covert investigative portion. However, It was decided by President Johnson and the National Security Council in 1968 to close down the military aspect of AVATAR. In 1969 Project: Blue Book was terminated.

The stated goal of the DSI is the suppression of paranormal activity that would in any way threaten their national security. This blanket directive has enabled them to, on more than one occasion, strike out at private citizens and engage in operations across the globe.

With the end of the Cold War and the Balkanization of the Soviet Union, the directives and mission goals of many DPL agencies have changed drastically. Many countries have disman-

tled their departments, and still others have re-purposed theirs. As a result of this political up-heaval, those agencies still operative in their original form have had to become even more secretive . Many agencies have been attempting to gain more autonomy by disguising their nature from their own governments.

the dsi

The United States is sectioned into three different regional areas of operation: East Coast, West Coast, and Central. Each region is controlled by a Field Office, there is one in Washington DC, Denver, CO, and San Francisco, Calif. Excluding the DC office, Field Offices are usually staffed by about thirty personnel and one Deputy Director. However, to cover the vast areas in each region, several Out Region Offices are established throughout the continental US. These Out Region Offices almost always consist of no more than one or two DSI agents called ROs (Regional Officers).

The ROs are the investigative arm of the DSI's Special Operations branch. They are charged with the task of rumor hunting and the initial investigation of official cases. Their main purpose is to gather information and brief their superiors, and if the case warrants it, call in the Threat Response Teams (TRT). Because of their unique and often uneventful duties, ROs usually operate under other Federal or State capacities such as Forest Rangers and Game Wardens. Their employment as low profile government agents allow ROs to operate in relative anonymity and still receive their pay from the government. Unlike TRT or clean up crews, ROs are the agents most likely to come into contact with the public, therefore, they rarely engage in "wet" or "black" operations.

Because of their isolation and wide ranging responsibilities, ROs are generally the most highly skilled operatives in the field. They are trained in several different disciplines and only become ROs after serving with one of the TRTs or clean up crews. They are the men and women who occupy the strata between the "wet" field operatives and the upper echelon staff. In fact, almost every Special Operations Executive Officer has been a RO.

As of 1965, there were three twelve man Threat Response Teams under the Special Operations branch of the DSI. One was posted at each Field Office. However, in 1966 Team-3 was lost in the Salem Seven incident.

It is the duty of the Threat Response Teams to contain or suppress threats of a paranormal nature. The TRTs are usually called in when a RO has determined that a threat exists and must be dealt with as quickly as possible.

SpecOps recruits most of its members from the top five percent of military academy graduates. These soldiers are then cross trained in several different Special Forces programs. After extensive cross training the recruits are taken to a special SpecOps proving ground somewhere in the Colorado Rockies. Here the TRT operatives are familiarized with existing and past supernatural threats.

The TRTs are, however, first and foremost fast reaction forces. Their primary function is to contain or suppress any threat of unnatural origin. However, secrecy is absolutely paramount in their operations. This restriction generally prevents them from mounting large scale operations with the use of helicopters and the like. TRTs use unmarked vans and minivans as transportation whenever possible.

The clean up crews are groups of agents who move in after the TRTs and "sanitize" areas. Their duties may include the disposal of bodies, evidence, or media black-out.

The Window is a transparent portal into the imagination...

... a roleplaying system designed with the simple belief that roleplaying is about story and character and not about dice and dick waving. For over five years now the Window has been quietly infiltrating the roleplaying community, changing and growing on the progressive edge of the hobby.

Many of the people who have started using the Window had long since concluded that the term "roleplaying system" is a contradiction in terms. Structure for structure's sake limits creativity and too many rules interrupt the narrative flow. What they wanted was a system working as transparently as possible, allowing them to build the story without concerning themselves with empty mechanics or mathematical charts. They also were looking for something that would quickly and seamlessly mold itself around their own stories and settings, a universal set of rules which could fit any genre without being generic and flavorless.

That is what the Window strives to be: simple, usable, and universal...

methods in the madness
www.mimgames.com/window