

Magical World

Version 1.2

By Ewen "**Blackbird**" Cluney

Sailor Nebula let out a long sigh as she looked at the remnants of her team. It had been a bad night. A very, very bad night. Andromeda was dead, cut down by a bladed, metallic youma, who was at best being only slowed down by their attacks. Then a trio of magical girl hunters had come out of nowhere. They'd been forced to leave Quasar behind -- she couldn't have survived that severe a case of lead poisoning anyway -- and Gemini and Nebula herself had both taken a few rounds. They were healed as much as possible and bandaged.

A grim silence hung over the group as they sat in their headquarters. The Galactic Sailors were not the most popular of magical girls. In fact, owing to who had been their leader, they were about as unpopular as mahou shoujo could get. There had been a dozen of them. Now, between youma, Dark Ones, and these damned magical girl hunters that had continued to increase in numbers, there was only the five of them left. It had been such a simple dream at first -- to protect the world from evil. Now where were they?

Nowhere, and rapidly running out of lives. Oh, a lot of the dead ones would probably return, reincarnated, but it'd be a decade at least before any of them could be much help. Assuming their souls made it back in this era at all. No, the Galactic Sailors were being eradicated, in ones and twos, until they were all dead little girls.

Something stirred outside the door. All five Sailors jumped to their feet -- Gemini was a bit slower because of the condition of her leg. Silence reigned for a moment, then the door burst open, the magically reinforced locks torn asunder. The figure that was framed by the doorway was tiny. As she stepped into the light, they could see a little girl, maybe five years old. But those eyes... No girl of any age should have eyes like that, seeking, piercing eyes that seemed to say "you can't scare me because I've seen things you can't imagine."

"Is this all that's left of my army?" There was something familiar about the voice, the accent, the shape of it.

"Who are you?" demanded Sailor Gemini.

The tiny girl grinned and pulled out a wand. It had a blue-black sphere on the end, filled with endless motes of shimmering light. Beautiful, mesmerizing. Unmistakable. "COSMIC STAR POWER!" For a moment the world was full of twinkling stars, soaring comets, suns, asteroids... And then it all faded, and the girl stood before them, transformed.

A chill went down Nebula's spine. In the body of a five-year-old, but it was unmistakably her. The most hated and feared of all magical girls, one of the two instigators of the Magical War that had ended with the advent of the first magical girl hunter, and the leader of the Galactic Sailors.

"Sailor Cosmos." breathed Sailor Comet.

Sailor Cosmos continued to smile. "I was in a bad place, a very bad place, but I learned things there. I remember now. It took time to remember. I missed you all so much."

Sailor Nebula felt the tears welling up. No matter what, this was her friend, their leader. She stumbled forwards and wrapped her arms around Cosmos, who returned the hug.

"We've been lost without you." she sobbed. "We need you." She wanted to stop crying but couldn't.

"It's alright; I'm here." Nebula had heard those words once before. Whatever else was different, it really was Cosmos.

Sailor Comet rubbed her arms as though cold. "So... what will we do now?"

The reply was one word, and a word that the world would know and fear.

"Revenge."

A Report On Post-Resurgence Earth

Your Majesty,

As you requested, I have compiled information on the state of the Earth-realm. I will warn you, it is very different from the place we knew. The past few decades have seen considerable upheaval and change taking place, and as your trusted servant, I swear to you on my honor that every word I have written is true.

The Resurgence

The Resurgence marked the return of magic to the Earth-realm. It is said that the stagnant societies of mankind came to reacquire their spirit of wonder and hope, allowing this event to occur. This was swiftly followed by the return of the forces of the Outer Kingdoms to the Earth-realm. The Dark Ones and their youma were able to thrive, but the Dreaming Ones of the Magical Kingdoms found the low levels of magical energies would slowly kill them if they remained in the Earth-realm for any length of time. To fight the Dark Ones they were forced to rely on mortal champions.

Magical Girls

I know we ourselves have made use of magical girls from time to time, but to turn them into warriors in this manner is unthinkable. But it has happened, and I do not speak of isolated cases. In the years following the Resurgence literally thousands of magical girls were recruited and empowered by the Magical Kingdoms. When I spoke to one of the more authoritative Companions, I was informed that the Dreaming Ones believed they had no other choice.

Magical War

Japan (also called Nihon) is home to the city of Tokyo (formerly Edo), which was and still is an epicenter of magical activity. It was here that the greatest of tragedies occurred. Two very powerful magical girls -- Magical Knight Mariko of Thera and Sailor Cosmos of the Star Kingdom -- came into a rivalry so great that each raised *armies* of magical girls to fight the other.

The magical girls I spoke to during my visit were often too young to know much about what became known as the "Magical War," and a number of those who remembered began weeping at its very mention, so terrible was the battle. From what I could gather, the War was long and terrible, and ended only when Mariko and Cosmos were assassinated by an unknown mortal.

Today

Although the number of magical girls does not appear to be waning at this point, popular opinion is often turned against them, to such an extent that there are a growing number of "hunters" -- mortals who murder troublesome magical girls.

Introduction

Magical World is a campaign setting quite unlike any other. There were a lot of sources of inspiration that ultimately led to its creation, but it began with watching *Sailor Moon* and wishing for Usagi's bumbling to have real consequences now and then, for an end to the Monster-of-the-Week syndrome, for enemies who were smart and vicious enough to attack before the magical girls could finish posing and shouting, and for magical attacks that actually hurt and have consequences in the real world. There are plenty of other magical girl shows out there; *Pretty Sammy*, especially the TV series, is a favorite for its character development, sweeping plot, and, just as importantly, the fact that it mercilessly pokes fun at the genre.

But I still watched *Sailor Moon* regularly, until it went into reruns. Why? The Sailor Senshi are a bunch of girls who fight an endless array of monsters. They stand up to and overcome every challenge that comes their way, not because they're super-perfect comic book heroes (though it seems that way sometimes), but because they're brave and willing to risk everything for what they believe in. If those aren't admirable traits, I don't know what would be.

Magical World is what came out of this paradoxical perspective on magical girls. It puts them into a world of high stakes and dire consequences where, as in the real world, power can be used selfishly as surely as it can be used to help others. Some hate them, some worship them, some ignore them, and a few hunt them down. It is a place where magical girls and their youma foes are ubiquitous, and a world that truly both loves and hates them. Whatever you feel about magical girls, it can happen here.

Magical girls come in countless varieties; saccharine heroines, servants of darkness, hired killers, idol singers, vigilantes and more. They can save the world or bring it damnation. The choice is yours. Strap in, have your henshin wand handy, and get ready for a bumpy ride.

Revision History

- **1.0** Original release. Imagine that! I actually finished a book completely before putting it out. What's come over me?
- **1.1** Some miscellaneous additional stuff, mostly things inspired by the *Sailor Moon RPG & Resource Guide*, directly or indirectly, along with crossover stuff for such.
- **1.2** Naturally, immediately after finishing 1.1 I came up with many, many ideas for more stuff. First and foremost, *Magical World* is now a generic game setting; there are a number of "Rules Modules" that can be downloaded separately; there is, of course, *Thrash*, as well as *Tri-Stat*, and more on the way. Setting information has also been expanded greatly.

Force of Magic

For an inside look at the *Magical World* setting, be sure to check out *Force of Magic*. This story (available at <http://www.blackbird.nu/fanpics/>) follows the trials and tribulations of Haruko, a.k.a. *Magical Girl Candy Rose*,

as she tries to cope with her new role, as well as her teammates, uncaring superiors, deadly foes, and her own doubts.

Available Rules Modules

- Thrash: The system for which Magical World was originally created, Thrash is an anime/fighting game martial arts RPG by yours truly, available on the web at <http://thrash.blackbird.nu/>. Thrash is a fairly simple system with many, many options.
- Tri-Stat: The system used for *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* and the *Sailor Moon RPG & Resource Book* from Guardians of Order. Tri-Stat is extremely simple and fast-playing.
- Others?: Other possible rules modules to be released in the future include Feng Shui, GURPS, Fuzion, and Storyteller.

Inspirational Stuff

Ideas for this sourcebook came from a lot of different places, most of them relating to magical girls in some way or another, and entirely too many of them being intended as satires of the genre.

Anime

- Akazukin Chacha
- The Girl From Phantasia
- Magical Girl Pretty Sammy: The cast of Tenchi Muyo star in a spin-off which, although basically a parody of the magical girl genre, is nonetheless very good on its own. This encompasses an OAV series (3 parts so far) as well as a TV series (available in the U.S. as "Magical Project S"; *highly* recommended).
- Magic Knight Rayearth
- Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon: In many ways the quintessential magical girl anime (in terms of popularity if nothing else), Sailor Moon was naturally a big influence on this book, in more ways than one.

Comics

- Card Captor Sakura: This cute series from CLAMP is about a 10-year-old girl named Sakura who has taken up the job of collecting the "Clow Cards." To that end, she is given magical powers, and a seemingly unending series of cute (if odd) outfits, as well as the help of Kero-chan, a weird lion-like thing with fairy wings. Especially interesting is the fact that her costumes are not magical, but rather are provided by her rich friend Tomoyo, who also insists on videotaping her exploits.
- Gen13 Bootleg: Magical Drama Queen Roxy: This comic, by none other than Adam Warren, takes the characters of Gen13 and, in an extended dream sequence, tells a scathingly satirical magical girl story.
- Kaitou St. Tail:
- Shadow Lady: This manga by Katsura (creator of Video Girl Ai, amongst others) tells the story of Aimi, a shy young lady who uses magical makeup to become the sexy and somewhat naughty master thief known as Shadow Lady.

Fanfics

- Magical Demon Hunter: This rather quirky fic is the story of Dailey Preston, who is recruited by a drunkard who stumbled upon a magical book to become a magical demon hunter, and all the madness she is made to face, from evil demons to a vengeful animated teddy bear.
- Magical Girl Hunter: This, ahem, *unique* round robin tells the story of two men who gear up with heavy firepower and hunt down and kill magical girls for a living. In their efforts, they are forced to deal with an evil corporation creating magical girl dupes, the amorous Sailor H, and countless other threats.
- Magical Princess Sharra of the Winds: By yours truly, MPSotW is the story of Natsuko, a cynical girl who wanted nothing to do with being a magical girl, but was forced into it by circumstances, and ultimately fights a battle that will decide the fate of the universe.
- Missy Foxglove: The yakuza aren't happy with the latest situation; magical girls have been turning their cocaine shipments into cotton candy, and it's caused trouble with their business partners. To deal with the problem, they've recruited Missy Foxglove, a magical girl who will serve as an assassin, to take out problem magical girls.
- Sailor Nothing: Mr. Twoflower brings us a new and highly angsty magical girl series, the story of the abandoned magical girl formerly known as Sailor Salvation who has now become Sailor Nothing.

Roleplaying Games

- Changeling: The Dreaming: Not a major source, but Changeling did provide some inspiration for the early history of Magical World. For the uninitiated, Changeling is a game about modern day fairies, trying to survive in a world that doesn't believe in them.
- Sailor Moon RPG & Resource Guide: Let me put it like this. If you're a gamer *and* a Sailor Moon fan, BUY THIS NOW. This adaptation of the anime series is exceptional, both in terms of working the game mechanics and presenting the setting. And even if you don't roleplay (which raises the question of why you're reading this), the sheer amount of info makes it well worth the price.

Web Pages

Emily's Magical Girl Page!

<http://yaoui.anime-manga.net/Magic/mg.html>

An excellent source of general information on magical girls, as well as info on several of the various series out there.

Mahou Shoujo Anime Resources

<http://whistler.cs.ucla.edu/~yasuyuki/www/mahou/>

An extensive guide to magical girl series pages.

Lexicon

The following are terms commonly used in the Magical World setting.

Age of Chaos: The time when the Magical Kingdoms and the Dark Kingdoms waged open war on each other.

Age of Darkness: The time following the Age of Chaos, when the Magical Kingdoms were all but destroyed and the Dark Kingdoms reigned.

Ancient One: The most ancient, evil, and powerful of the creatures of the Dark Kingdoms. Most have been destroyed or put into an eternal sleep, though some Dark Ones seek to awaken them.

cutekiller: Someone obsessed with the destruction of everything that is cute, especially magical girls. The most dangerous of these are former magical girls.

Dark Kingdoms: Realms of evil located outside of our world. The denizens of these places are powerful, but have poor judgment and are unimaginative.

Dark Ones: The most humanlike of the denizens of the Dark Kingdoms, who presently serve as the leaders.

Dreaming Ones: The Magical Kingdoms' counterpart to the Dark Ones.

henshin stick: See *Transformation Key*, below.

idol: Refers to pop idol singers, and especially magical girls who become singers or other types of entertainers.

I.M.G.U.: The International Magical Girls Union, an organization of magical girls dedicated to mutual support and peace among the mahou shoujo.

Love and Justice: The goal for which most magical girls strive; to create a world of happiness and peace.

Love Fighter: A magical girl whose main goal is to spread love.

magical companion: Small creatures, usually cute and fuzzy, who accompany and serve as mentors to magical girls.

magical girl: Girls between the ages of nine and sixteen, recruited to wield magical powers.

Magical Kingdoms: Realms of magic and wonder located outside our world. The Magical forces have long opposed the schemes of the Dark.

Magical Task Force X: A government organization dedicated to containing all forms of magical threats – or perhaps just a rumor?

magical toddler: Derogatory term for magical girls, especially younger ones.

magical war: The conflict that rocked the world a decade ago, when two armies of magical girls clashed in a titanic battle over a personal sleight between their leaders.

mahou shoujo: See magical girl.

mystic knight: A male gifted with magical abilities, usually with powers similar to those of magical girls, but more "gentlemanly" in appearance.

The Outer Kingdoms: A general term for the Dark Kingdoms and the Magical Kingdoms (q.v.).

Resurgence: During the early 1980s, the Magical Kingdoms resurfaced, and began a careful, tentative struggle with the Dark Kingdoms to regain their positions of power.

senshi: Japanese for "soldier" – now a common term for magical girls, especially the more combat-oriented ones.

sentai: A team of warriors, especially magical girls, usually numbering three or five.

Sorcerer: A person (sometimes a mortal, but more often a Dark One or Dreaming One) whose magical abilities consist of scholarly knowledge and powerful incantations.

Talking Pet: Derogatory term for magical companions.

transformation key: An item used by magical girls to transform into their mahou shoujo form.

youma: General term for monsters, especially from the Dark Kingdoms.

Chapter 1:

Mahou Shoujo

Into daring dreams

Go the bold

Conquering their fear

A shining ray of light

As darkness all consumes

Only the bold will break free

-- Unyielding Wish (English Version), Magic Knight Rayearth OP

What follows is an introduction to the magical girls and how they cope with the world in which they live.

Origins

Magic

Magic is a very real force, and understanding it is key to understanding those who can use it; each shapes the other. The user is affected by the magic and the magic reflects the user's intentions and desires.

Fundamentally, magic is the shaping of magical energy. This energy is known by countless names, including but not limited to chi, mana, prana, ki, and quintessence. Magical energy is believed to be inherent in the cosmos, but considerably more common in some places than others. This energy, when in sufficient concentration, can be focused by a being with the necessary ability, used to create a given effect. Although nearly all magic users must make use of some "procedure" to use their magic (such as an incantation), magic's fundamental nature is such that it is shaped by the user's will and intent.

Denizens of the Magical Kingdoms require magical energy in order to survive. Earthly scientists who've studied the Dreaming Ones have theorized that organisms from the Magical Kingdoms use this magical energy on a cellular level. Dreaming Ones, who tend to be leery of such a banal explanation, say that, as children of their respective Magical Kingdoms, magic runs in their veins, flows through their breath, and pulses in their very souls, and thus to be deprived of it is to wither and die.

Magical girls are aptly named, for they wield a form of magic, allowing them to transform and use the mystic powers. The magic of Mahou Shoujo is usually a bit different from that of Dreaming Ones and human sorcerers. The basic nature of the mahou shoujo enchantments is such that the tie between magic and the heart is even stronger than normal.

Sources of Power

There are a number of ways in which a girl can become a mahou shoujo, though being recruited by one of the Magical Kingdoms is by far the most common. These are strange and wonderful places outside of our own world, which often recruit humans to be their champions – usually girls between the ages of nine and sixteen. Why they do this is unknown, but it is believed that beings from the Other Worlds are incapable of sustaining themselves on Earth for any significant period of time, and thus must use natives to our plane to fight their battles.

Ancient Legacies: In some cases being a magical girl runs in the family. It may indeed be genetic, a spark of magical power manifesting as a result of an ancestor who was a magical being of some kind. Others pass an Artifact (see below) from one generation to the next, and in some cases the magical power itself can be separated and bequeathed to another.

Ancient Powers: While some doubt the truth of it, a small number of magical girls claim to have been granted their powers by some god/goddess or other supernatural force. Ancient spirits (including ancestor and nature spirits), deities from across the world (including, interestingly enough the Christian God), as well as places of power (pyramids, stone circles, dragon nests, and the like) have all reportedly produced magical girls. As one might imagine, the abilities of such mahou shoujo are invariably "themed" to the source of the power.

Artifacts: A few rare items, imbued with mystical power properties, can grant the powers of a mahou shoujo. These can take nearly any form imaginable. Some are keyed to specific kinds of users (young girls and/or those pure of heart, usually) and many become bonded to a specific individual, useless to anyone else so long as they live.

Magical Being/Cross-Breed: Dreaming Ones have difficulty surviving in the magic-bare realm of Earth. To shield themselves from this, some are able to hide their magical natures, becoming mortals most of the time. Likewise, should a Dreaming One and a mortal have offspring, the resulting child would similarly only occasionally be able to fully bring out their magical nature.

Reincarnation: Especially among the more powerful magical girls, repeated reincarnation is not unknown. When killed, such mahou shoujo are reborn with no memories of their past lives and no knowledge of how to use their powers, though both will gradually return over time. Rumors claim that Sailor Cosmos was such a one, and she will be back for vengeance.

Technology: Perhaps rarest of all are those magical girls who've acquired some super-technological device which has magic-like abilities. Such devices are generally rare and costly in the extreme.

Teams

Trust I seek and I find in you

Every day for us something new

Open mind for a different view

And nothing else matters

– Metallica, "Nothing Else Matters"

Although loners (usually equipped with magical companions) are common, magical girls often join together to form teams, also known as *sentai*. This is most often the result of a common origin, but that is not necessarily the case. Having such friends to rely on provides a source of support, both emotionally and on the battlefield, and in both cases can mean the difference between life and death.

Teams are usually either of three (for fairy tale cliché purposes) or five (for anime cliché purposes). Larger teams are possible, but following the Magical War they've become very rare. Especially in the case of those with a common origin, teams are often created around some theme; planets, elements, fruits, animals... you name it, it's probably been done.

Magical Girls Around The World

The conflict between the Magical and Dark Kingdoms is, interestingly enough, primarily in Japan. The reasons for this are uncertain, but it has been theorized that in Japan more than any other country females are bred to be cute, hopeful dreamers – and thus ideal magical girl material, though this doesn't explain why the Dark Kingdoms seem to operate primarily there.

Even so, magical girls are known to varying degrees in every part of the world, with the United States ranking #2 in terms of magical girl population. Magical girls from other countries tend to have only stylistic differences from their Japanese counterparts. Obviously, the uniform isn't likely to feature sailor fuku when these aren't used there.

- Africa
- Australia
- Central and South America
- China
- Europe
- The Former Soviet Union
- Mexico
- The Middle East
- Southeast Asia

Powers

"It's very rude to attack someone while they're posing!"

-- Pretty Sammy

To accomplish their goals, magical girls are given an arsenal of magical powers. These vary quite a bit in disposition, though there are many common themes. Most of these powers take the form of "spells" of some sort, which require an incantation (usually what amounts to a gibberish phrase in English), which has to be not simply uttered but YELLED as loud as possible, slowly and clearly, so that everyone can hear. Fortunately, most youma aren't too smart and will wait and listen to the spell.

The specific types of effects created by these spells vary a great deal, but elemental type effects seem to be the most common. These can be your typical fire, water, electricity, and so forth, but the most common by far are the Love Elementals.

Most people wouldn't think of Love as one of the elements, but magical girls have proven that this is so. It is a very potent power; love elementals can influence hearts as well as bringing destructive power to bear.

* Four is a very unlucky number in Japanese culture, owing to the fact that it can be read as "shi" – which can also mean "death."

Magical Items

Magical girls are known to make use of a variety of magical items. Some of these can be considered Artifacts in game terms. Others, however, are merely icons, representing the powers the characters effectively has, and as such cannot be lost or stolen. Owing to the nature of the mahou shoujo power, these typically take the form of wands, brooches, earrings, makeup kits, and other feminine trinkets. See Chapter 5 for more details.

Transformation Key: Also known as a *henshin* stick (when it takes the form of a wand), this is the most important item in a mahou shoujo's arsenal. The Transformation Key is the item that allows them to transform into said form. This item must generally be held out and a nonsensical magical phrase shouted out for the transformation to be initiated.

Disguise Key: Similar to the transformation key, a disguise key is an item that enables the character to magically disguise themselves as someone else.

The Transformation

"Sasami! I didn't know you liked to dress like that!"

– Tenchi, Magical Girl Pretty Sammy

Nearly all Mahou Shoujo have their magical abilities only part of the time; to draw upon these, they must undergo a transformation. These vary a great deal, but most will briefly pull the heroine into a pocket dimension where she is subtly transmogrified into her mahou shoujo form. This usually looks just like her normal form except for a new outfit (usually involving a very short skirt) and occasionally changes in the color of one's hair and/or eyes, though many magical girls become older upon transforming (16 seems to be the preferred age). The transformation sequence involves lots of swirling lights and some kind of theme song, which takes a seeming eternity to the viewers, even though only a few seconds pass in real time.

The resultant "uniform", although often in the form of an abbreviated sailor fuku, can occasionally be a bit more exotic. Among the more common variations are large gowns, skimpy tight-fitting outfits, and in the case of the "darker" magical girls, black leather and/or vinyl.

Specialized Magical Girls

Certain magical kingdoms create mahou shoujo with specialized powers. This has been done for a variety of reasons, though typically either because such magical girls are meant for a particular task, or because they are part of a group. A few kingdoms have taken to having their magical girl sentai contain a specific mix of specialists.

Falcon: Known by a variety of names, these are magical girls given the power to fly, either with wings that appear upon transformation, or without wings, by magical means. Falcons are usually trained to be scouts and spies, but some (also known as Eagles) are used for aerial combat.

Magical Idol: Magical Idols are magical girls who double as performers, usually idol singers. While some simply use their powers to have a career in the music industry (such performers are surprisingly popular in Japan and other countries, despite anti-magical girl

sentiments running high), many double as youma-fighters. In a few cases the power of song is augmented by magic, making it a weapon unto itself.

Magical Nurse: So named because their outfits tend to resemble nurse uniforms somewhat, Magical Nurses specialize in healing. Nurses tend to be compassionate and caring to a fault; Love makes healing magic stronger, so a loving person is the natural candidate.

Night Stalker: These are magical girls who specialize in stealth and covert operations. They tend to dress in dark colors and move silently.

Sentinel

Swordbearer: Swordbearers specialize in close-range melee combat. All are equipped with a weapon, typically a Spirit Weapon. The preferred weapon is of course the sword, whether a hulking broadsword (which magical girls wield with incongruous ease) or an elegant rapier. Swordbearers are among the most combat-oriented of magical girls, and the most able to hold their own in physical combat.

Tactician: One of the less common -- but more valuable -- specializations, the Tacticians have the ability to analyze their opponents and formulate effective battle plans. This is a role typically filled by the more intellectual magical girls, and they are usually equipped with a magical computer to assist them.

The Magical Girl Lifestyle

Recruitment

The Magical Kingdoms have had to devise a number of methods for recruiting magical girls. The tried and true method of having a companion search for a candidate, whether at random or guided by magic, is still widely used, but not as effective as it once was. Potential candidates tend to be much more wary, due to the dangers involved, coupled with the potential for being pulled into an organization falsely claiming to be a Magical Kingdom, be it a Dark Kingdom or some mortal organization.

Other forms of recruitment have been tried and met with varying degrees of success. These have included such modern contrivances as auditions, classified ads, contests, and talent scouts. Less scrupulous or more desperate kingdoms have been known to resort to outright kidnapping of desirable candidates, using mind-altering magic spells to control them.

Superiors

Most Magical Girls have to contend with superiors of one sort or another, giving them advice, orders, new powers, and so forth. Dreaming Ones (and in some cases Dark Ones) are at least as varied and flawed as humans, often with the added touch of being very literally out of touch with reality. The means by which a mahou shoujo will keep in touch with her superiors varies; some Kingdoms use magical means, some communicate through an intermediary Companion, and a few take the trouble to have a native commander appear in person.

Other superiors can take the form of a higher-ranking magical girl or mystic knight, which can be good or bad. Some, having been in the same spot themselves

once, show compassion to their charges. Others can be terribly callous.

Love and Justice

*You can't be a hero hiding underneath your bed
Got to live the life you create inside your head
So I opened the window caught the wind one night
Now I sail with the birds in their flight*
– Chisa Yokohama, "I'm A Pioneer"

Magical girls throw the term "Love and Justice" around a lot these days. It means different things to different people, to be sure. It is a battle cry, and a way of life. It means one will fight with the heart, for the heart. It means doing what's right, whatever the cost.

As high as these ideals might be, the reality is all too often a bit different. Too many mahou shoujo consider it little more than a phrase to call out in order to be like everyone else. Others disregard it completely.

Companions

"Look out, Sailor Moon!"
– Luna, Sailor Moon

Many mahou shoujo have a magical companion, a creature of some sort, often from one of the Magical Kingdoms, who serves as a mentor and companion. They give advice, do reconnaissance, and give protection; each is friend, confidant, and conscience to the one they watch over.

While they usually possess human intelligence (or at the very least, a high animal intelligence), they generally take the form of some kind of animal – and a cute one at that. The preferred forms include cats, dogs, bunny rabbits, birds, and occasionally a fictitious but very adorable animal of some sort, though nearly any type of animal is possible. Although they are the ones who deliver the magical powers to the mahou shoujo, they rarely have any significant abilities themselves.

Training

Despite the benefits, relatively few Magical Kingdoms actually take the time to provide real training to their magical girls. A mahou shoujo who understands her own powers and her enemies will be a far more effective fighter, and yet most Kingdoms simply give a new recruit a wand and send her off to battle.

Training can take on any number of forms. Smaller Kingdoms tend towards providing one-on-one "tutoring" from a more experienced magical girl or even a Dreaming One, while large ones typically have large training facilities patterned after private schools or even military boot camps. Most Magical Kingdoms tend to take a fairly gentle, lenient approach to training, but a few, inspired by military organizations of the human world, have taken to more brutal, direct forms of training.

Secrecy

Now more than every, a magical girl must keep her true identity a secret. Fortunately, even though it should be blatantly obvious who they are in most cases, the magic protects them from this. Even so, being discovered is possible, and given the sorts of people around, potentially dangerous.

Friends and Family

Nearly all magical girls retain relations with the friends and family members they had before obtaining their powers. Besides the fact that most of them rely on their parents for food, shelter, and so forth, most mahou shoujo are far too caring to simply abandon the people they love. Such people help the magical girl stay in touch with the real world, and provide a place to retreat to when the ongoing task of saving the world becomes a bit too much to bear.

Even so, the policy of secrecy must be applied even to the most trusted companions. Not only could they be made to leak information about the magical girl, but also they become potential targets for her enemies. Worse still, in this day and age, a magical girl may find that she cares very deeply for someone who despises her alter ego.

School Daze

By and large, nearly all mahou shoujo are at an age where they're expected to go to school, and the vast majority do; they need a mortal occupation to keep their sanity, and being a student is usually more than sufficient.

Attending school can mean a lot of things, however. For one, despite the pressing matters of the fate of the world and so forth, our heroines have to contend with homework, teachers, and the other students, who can be friends as surely as they can be antagonists (or anything in-between), albeit *usually* of a non-magical sort.

If you're following the usual genre conventions, the GM should build many of the plots around events at school. For some reason, youma are drawn to trying to carry out their plots at schools (some have theorized that it is simply because, at least in the case of energy collectors, there is much more power to be gained), and a few have even been known to pose as students.

Employment

And I can't stop working long enough

To wonder what life's for

What is it for?

Am I just a whore?

Who am I working for?

-- Ten Foot Pole, Pride and Shame

There are times when magical girls, like everyone else, have to worry about money. Most Magical Kingdoms don't have the ability to offer any monetary compensation to their magical girls, so when mahou shoujo need cash, they have to seek out their own means of obtaining it, and more often than not, that means a part-time job.

The availability of a part-time job for a girl aged 10 to 16 largely depends on the country. In more civilized countries child labor laws and the like prevent any but the oldest magical girls from holding a job. Of course, many in this sort of situation take advantage of a transformation that makes them look older to get a job they couldn't otherwise. In other countries it doesn't matter, though getting a job that pays more than slave wages may be another matter.

This brings up another, darker side of magical girl existence; those who are employed specifically because of their magical girl status. This can include anything from simple bodyguard duty to involvement in organized crime, up to and including unusual forms of prostitution. Most Magical Kingdoms despise such practices and will do whatever it takes to remove their agents from such a state. Unfortunately, a few are callous enough to turn a blind eye to such abuses so long as the job gets done.

The Way of the Idol

Out there in the spotlight

You're a million miles away

Every ounce of energy

You try and give away

– Bob Seger, "Turn the Page"

A few magical girls use their powers to entertain others rather than to fight evil. Some have turned their back on the fighting, while others are doing what their magical allies want them to – fighting the more subtle battle to keep Love alive on earth. A few try to do both fighting and singing (usually not simultaneously, though it's been known to happen).

In the case of Japanese mahou shoujo, the preferred medium is that of pop idol singing, as it is the style of music in which they can most easily be accepted. The major requirements for being an idol are to be young, cute, and able to sing. Unfortunately, many such performers are simply shoved into the same old mold ("Wear this dress, sing these songs, dance like this."), and they aren't paid too well either. This environment has made many idols frustrated, despite the adoration of fans and the thrill of being on the stage.

Especially in the U.S., but in Japan and other parts of the world as well, this mold is being broken. There are magical girl representatives of nearly every musical style imaginable. A surprising number of them have turned to heavy metal and hard rock (including the well-known Japanese performer, Magical Girl Hyperia), though in some cases this has made enemies of the more militant pop idol types.

Magic Media

Magical Girls have become a part of nearly every form of media and entertainment possible. Radio, television, music, movies... the list goes on and on. The popularity of mahou shoujo based entertainment regularly fluxes, but has never gone away completely. Of course, the primary target demographic is female and under the age of 12, but hardcore fans, however young, are numerous and surprisingly devoted.

For a magical girl, being a celebrity is a double-edged sword, to be sure. The exhilaration of fame, the many uses of money, and the potential for friends to be made are all-powerful lures. But a celebrity makes herself a target, for not only magical girl hunters and cutekillers, but the "paparazzi" media, tabloids, exploitation, and so on. Not only that, but to be a publicly known magical girl is to have one's actions reflect on all mahou shoujo, good or bad.

The Way of the Love Fighter

Love Fighters are one of the more curious breeds of magical girls, as they are much subtler in how they operate. Their number one goal is to spread love wherever possible, and this can take countless forms, many of which don't require any sort of special powers. The successful Love Fighter is typically an expert matchmaker, and generally skilled at finding ways, big or small, to make people's lives better.

In most cases, the magical powers of a Love Fighter are relatively limited in some way or another (most often because the transformation is difficult to maintain). The most common abilities they possess are the more subtle Love Elemental powers (see below), which are to be used as a last resort, although anyone who assumes they are incapable of acting in combat may be in for a rather painful (pink) surprise.

Romance

*When the cherry blossoms start to bloom
Meet me here in my lonely room
We'll find a passion-filled fantasy
And I know this time you'll stay with me*
– Ai Orisaka, "Dimension of Love"

Most magical girls are interested in romance to some degree. Some are a bit too young for that sort of thing, while the older ones spend entirely too much time worrying about their current boyfriend, or obtaining one. Ultimately, though, most magical girls are in search of a "True Love" – whatever that might mean, and this will generally take the form of a romance that slowly develops over the course of the entire series.

Needless to say, romantic stuff is difficult to role-play, and quite often downright awkward for all concerned. It's a topic that is very personal, and for which different people can have very different views.

Celebrity Status

Being a magical girl does not in any way ensure fame. To become a mahou shoujo is to be one of thousands, and to take on a role that, while often heroic, has a dubious reputation at best. A few do reach a level of fame that turns them into celebrities.

Some achieve fame by rising above the other magical girls and showing great valor and heroism. This means that they will be held up as an example of what a magical girl should be, which in turn means they will be a target for extremist anti-magical girl groups. For this reason, wise magical girls often try to stay out of the limelight; fame is of little comfort to the dead.

Far more of those magical girls who become famous do so by doubling as celebrities of another sort – usually as singers.

Aging

*To the wounded, the fallen, the heat, the suspense,
The perfume strong, the smoke, the deafening noise;
Away with your life of peace!—your joys of peace!
Give me my old wild battle-life again!*
– Walt Whitman, "The Dying Veteran"

Aging is something that all people face, though its significance for mahou shoujo is a bit more prominent. A magical girl is typically from nine to sixteen years old

when she begins her career. Their feelings towards growing older tend to be somewhat paradoxical. Like most children, they look forward to all the things that being a teenager, and then an adult brings, but as they grow older, the whole magical girl shtick seems more and more childish. By the age of 20, nearly all magical girls will have either retired (sometimes to residence in one of the Magical Kingdoms) or found a way to adapt their powers into something more mature. Unfortunately, the majority of those who don't are casualties.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy can be a tricky issue for Magical Girls, and even a dangerous one. The circumstances leading to a mahou shoujo becoming pregnant are often bad enough, but the physical effects of it are an even greater problem. A girl who has entered puberty but not made it into her mid to late teens will in nearly always die in labor along with the child, making abortion the only real option.

Magic further complicates things. Many Magical Girls are significantly older upon transforming -- bringing them up to a childbearing age with a wave of the wand. Undoing the transformation while pregnant may have any number of effects, depending on the nature of the enchantments involved. A developing fetus may be miscarried or simply cease to be in order to protect the magical girl, or undoing the transformation may become impossible until the pregnancy ends, one way or another. If the baby is ultimately brought to term, the exposure to magic usually has some effects, and those may be good or bad, but are always wildly unpredictable.

Death

Death is something many mahou shoujo must face though few are prepared to. As is inevitable in a war, people are hurt, and sometimes they die. Any magical girl will inevitably face the reality that they and their comrades could be hurt, possibly even killed in their line of work. While any soldier learns to accept this in a hurry, for a ten-year-old, who hasn't yet experienced life in its fullness, it can be a terrifying prospect.

Side Note: Magical "Boys"

*There is a person living in my head
She comes to visit every night in bed
I fight the demon but it just won't fall
The voices in my dungeon starting to call*
– Ozzy Osbourne, "Ghost Behind My Eyes"

The magic used to create magical girls is as fickle as it is annoying. One of the more curious aspects of it is the fact that it demands to be wielded by young females. For males who try to use it, whether intentionally or by accident, the end result is amusing at best, insanity-breeding at worst – it tends to transform them into little girls. Either that or (ugh) it puts them in the same outfit anyway. It is possible for males to become Mystic Knights (see Chapter 2), though the process involved is somewhat different.

This phenomenon, although undoubtedly in bad taste, can make for some very... ahem... interesting roleplaying experiences.

Side Note: Sexuality

As any dedicated fan of Sailor Moon knows, not everyone is heterosexual. It's relatively recently that this has applied to anime characters, but with anime's propensity for gender bending, it's not exactly surprising. Shoujo manga does this sort of thing more than most, and while American audiences aren't exactly comfortable with the concept, the idea of Sailor Uranus and Sailor Neptune – not to mention Zoicite and Kunzite/Malachite (who are both male in the

original version) – being lovers is pretty much accepted as a matter of course by most in Japan. This is *especially* true of the readers of shoujo manga.

With that said, the question still remains as to what this will mean to your campaign. Some players are more than willing to jump right into this sort of thing, creating gay, lesbian, or bisexual characters with abandon, while others want nothing to do with it. In a gaming group, however, cohesion is essential, and tension over this sort of thing can easily tear the group apart. If everyone is comfortable with the idea, then go ahead, but if not, try to be sensitive about it.

Magical Girl Societies and Camps

The Hunter Hunters: With the continued rise in the number of magical girl hunters in the world -- most especially in Tokyo -- and the mortal officials' willingness to look the other way, a small minority of mahou shoujo have decided not to take it lying down. They've seen too many friends and allies gunned down, and mean to put a stop to it. Magical girls are dangerous enough to hunters when they're not trying to turn the hunter into the prey, but these "hunter hunters" have taken to a highly organized and carefully planned style of operation. Given the typical magical girl tactics (fire off attacks and hope they work), this is usually enough to catch most hunters off guard.

The International Magical Girls Union: The I.M.G.U. is the biggest and most successful magical girl organization, owing to its relative neutrality and careful planning.

Magical Eco-Front: The Magical Eco-Front is an international organization of ecologically minded magical girls, very loosely affiliated with the IMGU and a number of ecological organizations around the world. The activities of the Magical Eco-Front range from conventional protests to magical terrorism against polluters and other threats to the eco-system, earning the animosity of those who are more concerned with having food and work than protecting the earth. These activities seem to be quietly overlooked by the Eco-Front's allies.

Mahouzoku: The term mahouzoku is derived from the "bosozoku" (speed tribes) of rebellious Japanese youth. Mahouzoku are "bad girl" mahou shoujo gangs. These groups vary in temperament, ranging from simple rebellious youth -- known for playing magical idol music too loud late at night and harassing high school boys -- up to and including all-out violent gang activities.

Mystical Entertainers Guild: The M.E.G. is a loose association of magical girls who work in the entertainment industry in one capacity or another. Allied with the I.M.G.U., they are a mutual support organization, not entirely dissimilar from the Screen Actors' Guild in Hollywood. The guild provides help with contracts, agents, finding work, legal matters, and so forth.

Mystic Knights

Mystic Knights (also know as "Kamen" -- Japanese for "mask") are basically male counterparts to magical girls. As the magical girls were originally intended to spread the power of Love, so were the Knights intended to be consorts and companions. Thus, rather than frilly cuteness, Kamen tend towards "gentlemanly" styling, sporting stylized versions of fancy suits, knightly armor, or other such variations. Kamen tend to be older than

magical girls -- 18 to 24 years old is the average -- and their transformations tend to be very subtle. For that matter, they very rarely bother shouting out the names of their attacks, though nearly all share their female counterparts' penchant for making speeches and posing.

Being a Knight is nearly as much a mixed bag as being a magical girl. Their powers tend to be more subtle, which requires them to be more cunning and intelligent in turn. Most magical kingdoms assign their Knights to a position of support, guardianship, or leadership to some magical girls. This duty can include a huge range of tasks, including doing intelligence gathering, making battle plans, and even more simple stuff like providing moral support and help with homework. Of course, this means that Knights have a reputation as pedophiles, made all the worse by the fact that it's true in some cases.

Chapter 2:

Mahou no Sekai

The Magical World setting is much like our own world, yet very different. (Was that cliché or what?) It is a world where wonder and terror alike hide in the shadows, waiting to pounce on the unwary, and where both are threatened by disillusionment and their own pervasiveness. Many of the things you thought you knew about Magical Girls are wrong, as you (and they) will quickly learn.

History

History

History is laughing at us

Plotting its discovery

– Bad Religion, "Victory"

There is much history that has been all but forgotten in this age, and much that many wish they *could* forget. The Magical Kingdoms and the Dark Kingdoms have existed for longer than anyone can remember, and the litany of their conflicts over the ages could fill a thousand books, were it not for the fact that so much of it had been lost.

Foundation of the Outer Kingdoms

From whence the Magical Kingdoms and the Dark Kingdoms arose is unknown, though some say they came from the dreams of humanity. These myriad realms, existing outside of the physical world, were inhabited by a variety of magical beings, many resembling humans, but many others far more fantastic. The light kingdoms were for a time in regular contact with each other, as was the case for the dark ones, resulting in a great deal of cultural exchange. It was an age of peace and learning, when the magical arts were refined and expanded greatly.

Age of Chaos

The time of peace, however, was not to last. When the kingdoms of light and dark came into contact, things were at first friendly, if tentative. It is unknown just what served as the spark of aggression, but an epic conflict exploded into existence shortly thereafter.

The struggles between the Magical Kingdoms and the Dark Kingdoms went on for countless ages. Most of the details of this epoch-spanning struggle have been lost, but there can be no doubt that the cost of it was terrible for all concerned. Even so, when the last spell was thrown, it was the Dark that stood victorious.

Age of Darkness

For a time, the Dark Kingdoms reigned supreme. With the Magical Kingdoms out of the way, there was nothing that could stop them – save their hatred of each other – and they began expanding their rule farther and farther into the cosmos.

The power of the Dark began to ebb, however, as more and more internal conflicts tore at the fabric of their already fragile alliances. With no common enemy, they

fell to fighting one another, and ultimately fell by their own dark powers.

The Rise of Earth

All that shimmers in this world is sure to fade

Away

Again

-- Fuel, "Shimmer"

As the power of the outer kingdoms waned, that of the mortal world, which they had long regarded as an inhospitable void, began to rise higher. The force of a billion souls reshaped reality, and tore at the already fragile worlds in which the kingdoms resided. For a time, the kingdoms, Dark and Magical alike, very nearly ceased to be, and the mundane reality of humankind prepared to eclipse the whole of the cosmos.

In this time, the Magical Kingdoms were able to maintain a tiny level of earthly activity. The lack of magical energies on Earth made it nearly impossible for Dreaming Ones to survive on Earth, so they took to recruiting human champions. The most prevalent of these were the magical girls. Young girls tended to lack skepticism and have higher levels of magical energy than most mortals, making them more receptive to enchantments.

Few today realize it, but for the most part magical girls were not originally intended for combat. Their purpose was more in line with what today are known as Love Fighters – to spread Love and make the world a better place. Mahou shoujo powers tended to be subtler, and transformations were relatively uncommon. Of course, sending them up against agents of the Dark Kingdoms was considered unthinkable; it would be akin to sending a kite out to do battle with an F-16.

The Resurgence changed everything.

Resurgence

Towards the end of what, by human reckoning, is the 1970s, something odd began to happen. In a world that had seen so much death and destruction, so much fear and paranoia, people began to dream again. Some say this was because of man's efforts to reach into the stars, while others say this was simply the crest of a wave of changes.

Whatever the cause, one thing is clear. The power of the outer kingdoms began to rise once more. For most of the denizens of these places, the mortal realm was still an antiseptic place, with too little magic for them to survive. But even so, there was far too much to be gained as well. If enough people could be brought to dream, to love, things might just be like in the days before. The Dark Kingdoms likewise formed a similar agenda, based on spreading terror and nightmares.

Changing Roles

If there's a new way

I'll be the first in line

But it better work this time

-- Megadeth, Peace Sells

With the return of the Dark Kingdoms to Earth, the battles of so long ago began anew in full force. But the Earth was still unable to sustain Dreaming Ones, as there still wasn't enough magic energy present. Human

agents were necessary, but the only enchantments for equipping mortals that worked reliably were those for making magical girls. These were quickly adapted to provide combat capabilities, but much of the original magical "programming" still remains, and the cry of "Love and Justice" is a remnant of that legacy.

Thus, the role of mahou shoujo has changed, and many say, for the worse. This terrible concession to necessity has put the lives of countless innocent girls in danger. Many among the Magical Kingdoms have tried desperately to find another way, though most such experiments have been unsuccessful. Mystical Knights are the only notable success, an adaptation of an enchantment for creating consorts to Dreaming One royalty (hence the gentlemanly styling). Other experiments have created a few unique beings, and, though few would admit it, a number of deaths.

The inhabitants of the Dark Kingdoms, for the most part, were able to withstand the environment of Earth (perhaps because the nightmares that spawned them are all too real these days), and so they usually fight their own battles.

A few have obtained the means to create their own magical girls, though the Dark Magical Girls aren't really necessary per se. Rather, they are used because they make effective fighters and have excellent shock value when combating magical girls.

Magical War

Take a look to the sky just before you die

It is the last time he will

Blackened roar massive roar fills the crumbling sky

Shattered goal fills his soul with a ruthless cry

– Metallica, "For Whom The Bell Tolls"

In 1988, the unthinkable happened. Magical girls the world over still weep at the very mention of it. Two of the most powerful magical girls – Sailor Cosmos and Magical Knight Mariko – had a disagreement (the nature of it is still unknown), which reached such a magnitude that they raised entire armies of magical girls, and engaged each other in mortal combat.

This event, known as the Magical War, wiped out fully a third of the magical girl population, even as the forces of the Dark Kingdoms looked on and laughed. Mortals who tried to intervene, at first with police batons and finally soldiers with tanks and jet fighters, found their efforts futile at best, suicidal at worst. And still the madness continued.

It was on December 24, 1989 that the Magical War came to an end. The war was raging on, as horrible as when it had begun, when it was discovered that both of the leaders had been assassinated. Just who was responsible has never been discovered for certain, but it is believed to have been the work of the first person to call himself a magical girl hunter, a man known as "The Shadow Stalker." With no leaders, the armies quickly disintegrated, though anti-magical girl sentiments ran deep in those days, and Shadow Stalker was soon only one of many hunters.

The Present

Now, a decade after the conclusion of the Magical War, things are going on as before. The mahou shoujo

and youma still clash daily in battle and, for the most part, life goes on. Hunters are more and more common, and some have even taken to recruiting disgruntled magical girls to assist them. Most people ignore magical girls and youma alike, so long as they don't do anything dangerous.

World Overview

The International Magical Girls Union

Congregating in invisible circles

Half apart and half a part

All too aware of the insignificance

Pushing on with soul and heart

-- Bad Religion, "Individual"

Last year a conference was called, to create the "International Magical Girls Union", a network of mutual support for all mahou shoujo. The I.M.G.U. has had more than its share of difficulties, however, having been attacked with words as well as weapons many times. Even so, their efforts have not been totally wasted; an estimated 72% of magical girls worldwide are members.

Based in Tokyo, the I.M.G.U. is headed up by Magical Soldier Lovely Miki, one of the oldest magical girls still operating (she's 23, having started at age 9). It provides a network through which magical girls can find allies, medical aid, and friendship. The only requirement for membership is to take an oath, the main tenet of which is to never harm another magical girl unless attacked first.

Deprogrammers

Many who see a friend or even a daughter become a magical girl have cause to become worried. One wonders just what drove them to take such a drastic step, if they've done something wrong, or if the girl in question is being controlled somehow. No matter what the reasons, there are many that don't want to see their daughters become magical girls, and will do whatever it takes to stop them, to keep them safe.

This has led to a number of specialists making a business of "deprogramming" magical girls, convincing them of the error of becoming a mahou shoujo before it's too late. It can be a very dangerous profession, as a deprogrammer may potentially have to face attacks from Dreaming Ones, youma, and even the magical girl herself. Methods of deprogramming vary, but the first step is invariably to capture the girl and remove her magical powers and companion.

Magical Girl Hunters

Killer, intruder, homicidal man

If you see me coming run as fast as you can

-- Megadeath, Good Mourning, Black Friday

In response to a growing demand, a number of people have taken it upon themselves to "deal" with the interfering magical girls. Most are independents; they hire out their services to anyone who's willing to pay. Of course, the money is often secondary; only someone truly dedicated, who knows what the mahou shoujo are capable of would take the risk of fighting them. It is a dangerous way of life, and one spent perpetually walking the razor's edge.

Their methods vary a great deal. Many are forced to rely on conventional firepower (a bullet in the brain will drop a magical girl as fast as anyone else), though the lack of magical defenses makes victories difficult and failures costly. Some obtain their own unusual powers by other means – the study of sorcery, chi powers, or

whatever. A few are even other magical girls who've turned against their own kind.

Clients can come in any number of forms for a hunter, though some are more dangerous than others. Criminal organizations, the Yakuza especially, has variously recruited, trained, and hired many hunters, and even the Dark Ones have been known to do so from time to time. Although this sort of clientele can generally pay pretty well, they're also dangerous, and especially in the case of the Dark Ones, have been known to double-cross unwary hunters.

Magical Girl Hunters

Being a Hunter isn't a job one takes because they want a long life and a nice retirement. For a mortal to have dealings with magical girls, youma, and the like is a very dangerous proposition, and bullets don't always work. The main edge hunters have is in tactics; they don't hesitate to attack while a magical girl is busy posing and making speeches. Of course, assuming that every magical girl will do this can be a fatal mistake.

The Hunters' Manifesto

The following document is attributed to Shadow Stalker, the first hunter, and has since come to be a statement of principles for most hunters.

Darkness came to our world in the form on the youma threat. Light came in the form of the Magical Girls. But too much light can blind, can burn, can kill. You may call them heroes, and perhaps some are, but too many of these Mahou Shoujo cause more harm than good. How many lives have been lost to stray blasts of pink light in the name of Love? How many tears have been shed for those who were unknowing, unwilling casualties of the cause of Justice?

The time has come to fight back, to reclaim our world from magic, from Love and Justice. You may call me a madman, a murderer of the young -- but those I have killed already have more blood on their hands than I. We cannot tolerate their careless, destructive battle raging in our streets, in our homes. I do not champion Darkness or Love; I am a champion of Mankind, and for that I will fight for the rest of my days.

The Hunter's Guild

Not surprisingly, some magical girl hunters have sought to create a mutual support organization, especially since the magical girls have had the IMGU for some time now. Dubbed the Hunter's Guild, it is still a fledgling organization.

The Hunter Hunters

A very small number of magical girls, having seen too many friends and allies killed by the magical girl hunters, have gone on the offensive. These "hunter hunters" are most common in the U.S., though they have no official organization as of yet. Rather, there are a number of informal "cells," each of which locates and eliminates its targets one by one. As with being a magical girl hunter, one has to be careful, cunning, and ruthless to survive.

Reactions within the magical girl hunter community have varied, but the general consensus is that these "hunter hunters" must be eliminated as quickly and brutally as possible.

Notable Hunters

The Sadist Senshi: The Sadist Senshi are the foremost cuteslayers in the world. They're a team of five (Sailor Sadist, Kitty Killer, Sailor H, Sexy Kiri, and Masochist Girl Pretty Mari), each former magical girls of different origins. When transformed, they wear black leather and vinyl parodies of conventional magical girl outfits, along with an assortment of bullwhips, floggers, cat-o-nine-tails, and other... ahem... implements. They go hunting nightly, and kill any and all magical girls they might come across, along with anything else sufficiently cute to attract their wrath.

Shadow Stalker: Very little is known about this, the first and best known of Magical Girl Hunters. Reports speak only of a figure cloaked in shadows who makes his strikes using deadly throwing knives, some of which have been found to be poisoned. He's also been known to leave typewritten notes stating his intentions and beliefs. The gist of it is that he believes far too many magical girls are irresponsible with their powers, causing as many problems as they solve, and the most dangerous ones he "deals with" as needed.

Usagi and Tora: These oddballs are a pair of mutant animals, a rabbit and a tiger, respectively. These two guys are also sadistic cuteslayers, whose exploits are often regarded as reprehensible even by other hunters.

Magical Task Force X

This organization, a secret division of the Japanese government, has been given the task of controlling magical forces of all sorts, good or evil, to prevent them from causing harm and costing money. As such, they are one of the more pragmatic and egalitarian of organizations; they only take out those youma and magical girls who pose a direct threat. This allows them to conserve their limited resources, and helps them keep a low profile.

Members of Magical Task Force X are recruited from all walks of life – their ability to do what needs to be done is the important thing. Among their ranks are "grunts" with heavy firepower, magical girls, sorcerers, psychics, computer experts, cyborgs, mutant animals, and so on -- a litany of every kind of oddball the world has to offer. These operatives, however eccentric, are highly effective, and well trained at being subtle when necessary.

Police M-SWAT Teams

The U.S. government has been seeking a way to contain magical threats for some time. The FBI, CIA, NSA, and other agencies have all created special divisions of varying sizes for dealing with magical phenomena. A handful of police departments in areas with high magical activity have taken to creating special police squads for dealing with such things. These are, in most cases, called "M-SWAT" teams, and can be found

in most major cities, though only San Francisco makes widespread use of these.

The methods used by the M-SWAT teams vary, though the San Francisco Police Department tends to serve as a model for these. Although members technically have to be police officers, they can include sorcerers, psychics, martial artists, and even an occasional magical girl (over the age of 18, of course), in addition to the use of a range of firearms and more standard SWAT team equipment.

Mystic Knights

He's my PRINCE, he's my GOD

But it's so complicated

He's my HERO, he's my IDOL

But I'm so dizzy of him

– Shonen Knife, "Quavers"

The few who are given magical powers without being female or becoming such upon transforming generally take the form of what some call "mystic knights." The laws of narrative causality generally force them to be loners, who end up getting romantically involved with mahou shoujo. Although their powers come from much the same source, they tend to take on a more "gentlemanly" quality, involving expensive clothes and accessories thereof, including roses and the like. For that matter, they don't have to put up with bizarre transformation sequences or anything of that sort.

Mystic Knights have an annoying tendency to work with magical girls but only serve as backup, not showing up until the girls are up to their necks in it, then throwing out an attack to distract the bad guys, giving some words of encouragement, and then disappearing before they can get his name and phone number. Despite this, they also tend to be handsome, charismatic, and mysterious, so that the girls will fall at their feet anyway.

Youma Hunters

The Youma threat is undeniable – these strange monsters from the Dark Kingdoms wreak havoc on humanity wherever they appear. Some are not content to leave the fate of mankind in the hands of the magical girls; these are the youma hunters. These mortal men and women have taken upon themselves the daunting task of fighting the youma that threaten humanity, and their services are all the more vital now that the magical girl population is in decline.

Like their magical girl hunter counterparts, they employ a variety of methods, ranging from special powers to rocket launchers. Whatever methods they choose, they generally have to go for the heavy firepower.

Notable Youma Hunters

Acetaminophen-Ibuprofen: This rather mysterious and, truth be told, somewhat lecherous old monk has wandered Japan for longer than anyone remembers, using a mixture of incredible martial arts skills, magic, and just plain dirty tricks to deal with any youma who might cross his path. He doesn't care much for magical girls, except for the more mature ones, who'd rather avoid his "attentions" anyway.

Jorge: Once a lowly janitor, Jorge stumbled upon a youma who had defeated its magical girl adversaries and was preparing to strike at some bystanders. Suddenly, something exploded inside of him, and he took up his mop and attacked the youma. After a long and difficult battle, he destroyed the infernal thing, although no one's quite sure how. Since then, he's realized that it is his destiny to fight evil, and after adopting a number of unsuccessful secret identities, he is now simply Jorge. Just how he does what he does is uncertain; his only powers seem to be uncanny luck and the ability to hit things really hard with his mop.

The Meizoku Ninja: The Dark Clan of ninja are a small and virtually unknown group who rely on their ninja skills and magic to combat the youma threat, as they have for centuries.

Prophecies of the Future

Doomsday.

Armageddon.

The Final Battle.

– Ministry, "Grace"

Over the centuries many have given prophecies of the future. With the rebirth of magic on earth, this has become surprisingly more common, though if these modern-day prophets are correct, the future could be very bleak.

One such prophet, known as Scarlet Angel, has announced that the Armageddon told of in the Bible will not be a battle of Angels and Demons per se, but in fact a final battle between magical girls and youma, too terrible to comprehend. This battle, she states, will be followed by either unending peace or everlasting torment.

Less extreme but frightening nonetheless are the predictions of one Max Stanton, a mortal who claims to gain insight from carefully observing the stars. According to his predictions, the power of magic is going to wane once again. This time, though, its loss will be felt so hard that even the lesser magical things will seemingly fade away, making the world a terrible and bleak place, devoid of joy.

Perhaps the legend that has caused the greatest upheaval, though, is that of the Twelve Blades. It is said that twelve magical swords have been scattered across the world, embedded in stone, such that only the virtuous may remove them. Each of these has a magical gem that attaches to its hilt, thereby granting the wielder incredible powers. Those who hold these blades are destined to forge a new world and a new way of life. Or destroy it.

Sailor Cosmos' Revenge

No one wants to see anything like the Magical War again. The names Sailor Cosmos and Magic Knight Mariko are spoken as curses the world over. But disturbing rumors have begun to fly. They say Sailor Cosmos is back.

This is far from impossible, as some magical girls are reincarnated repeatedly to fight again and again. The rumors point to her being around seven or eight years old, and some claim despite being so young she's already regained her full memories and powers, and is

quietly planning to take revenge on all those who opposed her, but most especially Shadow Stalker.

Chrysalia and Krystlan

These two kingdoms have been enemies for as long as anyone can remember, quarreling even during times of relative peace in the Outer Kingdoms. The magical girls and youma of the two kingdoms seem drawn to one another, destined to fight again and again, leading some to speculate that the ruler of Chrysalia, Queen Artessa, has taken steps to include a fate-bending effect on the kingdom's magical girl enchantments.

More disturbing, however, is the rumor that Chrysalia is going to launch an all-out offensive on Krystlan, crushing their ancient enemies once and for all. Moreover, the rumors say that to do this they're planning to raise an army of magical girls.

Tokyo

For reasons unknown, Tokyo appears to be the epicenter of magical activity in the world. Nowhere else has a larger population of mahou shoujo, Dark Ones, or youma, and this makes life in such a massive, sprawling, bustling city rather *interesting*. Here more than anywhere else, people are quite blasé about the presence of the magical, simply because it's so common. Until they start to cause problems, magical girls are all but ignored by most. As if that weren't enough, it seems that some of the more cunning Dark Ones have infiltrated human society and acquired great influence, with which to silence the voice of the magical girls when they become too troublesome.

Notable Places

Ginza: The Ginza is Tokyo's premiere shopping district, high class and expensive. And, if the rumors are to be believed, infested with youma. Claims to that effect have been largely ignored by the public and press, despite the number of youma that have been encountered there by magical girls. Analysts among magical girls and their allies estimate that any purchase made in the Ginza has a 20% chance of having some kind of Dark taint, though instances of these affecting people have not been reported.

I.M.G.U. International Headquarters: This building owes its existence to a very rich and lonely businessman leaving his entire estate to a group of mahou shoujo. Much of the money was donated to the I.M.G.U. in order to facilitate its inception. As such, the international headquarters in Tokyo is the largest facility that the union has in the world. It is a surprisingly plain 20-story skyscraper, labeled simply "IMGU." Within are numerous facilities for magical girls, including libraries, magical healing and research, record keeping, and so forth. It is heavily guarded, watched over 24 hours a day by a number of magical girl volunteers (usually at least 12 at any given time).

The Imperial Palace: The Imperial Palace, home to generations of emperors, is closed to the public except for certain special occasions. Regardless, it has always been guarded by the Heavenly Guardians, who are, in fact, a pair of magical girls. This position has been passed on from one generation to the next, the powers granted by magical medallions. The Heavenly Guardians are sworn to serve and protect the emperor at any cost, and further they are held up as an example of "good" magical girls. This has made them a target for being framed or assassinated on a number of occasions.

Magical Task Force X Headquarters: Located in a particularly unpleasant part of Tokyo, choked by smog even more than most, is a building labeled "X, Inc." This is the secret headquarters of Magical Task Force X. The 12-story building holds administrative people, offices, a shooting range, a magical library, a magic crime lab (with a staff of forensic experts and sorcerers), and so forth. The group tries to keep a low profile, and by and large has succeeded. This is their single largest facility; most other offices are at most three stories, and more often leased portions of office buildings.

Tokyo Tower: Many theories have been put forth as to why the Tokyo Tower has been the stage for so many magical battles of such magnitude. Geomancers have said that it is located at a major Dragon Nest, while other students of the arcane have stated that it is in some way a place to which fate is drawn. Regardless of the cause, the magical battles are too numerous to keep track of, and as such relatively few people go there anymore, for fear of being "civilian casualties."

Notable Beings

Magical Task Force X Squad 13: Squad 13 is Magical Task Force X's best known – or rather, most infamous – group. It is a band of misfits stuck together because there was nowhere else in the agency to put them, but they've become a cohesive and highly effective (if unconventional) group since their formation. It's five members are Bashiro (a guy with a refrigerator-like build and super-strength), Charlotte (a sorceress known for her ability to nullify the magic spells of others), Deadly Daisy (a sadistic cutekiller magical girl), Kaji Tetsami (a scientific genius and gadgeteer), and Saitou (a modern-day samurai of considerable skill, despite being an alcoholic).

The Sadist Senshi: Deadly cutekiller magical girls. See Chapter 2 for more details.

San Francisco

This venerable city, originally founded by the Spanish in 1776, has since grown into a sprawling metropolis, covering a densely populated 50 square miles. It is in many ways the center of the Bay Area, and is unquestionably one of the centers of magical activity, both now and during the Resurgence. While it can't compare to Tokyo for the sheer number of magical girls, it easily has the greatest concentration of magical activity in the Western Hemisphere.

Notable Places

Chinatown: While by no means the sole place inhabited by the Chinese, Chinatown has long been a center of Chinese culture in this western metropolis. It is also home to numerous sorcerers, most of them practicing Chinese-style magic, though the resulting magical community has attracted a few sorcerers of other types. The Chinatown sorcerers are known to prefer to deal with youma and such on their own, claiming that mahou shoujo simply don't have the experience or discretion to combat such things properly.

I.M.G.U. North American HQ: Located in a small, unremarkable office building near city hall is the local headquarters of the International Magical Girls' Union. Taking into consideration what happened to some of the more obvious I.M.G.U. buildings, ranging from raids by Dark Ones, youma, hunters and worse, to terrorist attacks, to opposition from the city planners, this building has been made as unobtrusive as possible. As one journalist observed, "It's the one building downtown for which no one's complained about the *outside*." Within is a small administrative staff, a squad of magical girl guards (the Fluffy Rangers), and various facilities, including first aid/magical healing, listings of magical girls looking for allies and such, and a library of information on the forces of the Dark Kingdoms active in the Bay Area.

Golden Gate Bridge: This bridge, which stretches across San Francisco Bay to Marin County, is not quite as widely used by commuters as the Bay Bridge that crosses to Oakland, but nothing else is quite so much a part of the city's identity as the Golden Gate. Ever since the Resurgence, however, it has also been a center of magical activity, in a manner similar to Tokyo Tower. Mystical power seems drawn to the massive metal structure, and countless battles have been fought on the bridge, more often than not of spectacular magnitude. Most infamous was the battle between the Shining Crystals and the forces of the Dark Kingdom of Midgar in 1988, which escalated to the point that entire west coast was put in danger.

Golden Gate Park: This massive park is a place of relative tranquility amid the bustling streets of San Francisco. It is home to three different museums, as well as the Japanese Tea Garden, several small lakes and ponds, a golf course, tennis courts, and so on. Despite this tranquil setting, it has been home to countless magical battles in recent years. It is rumored that the Moonlight Rangers (see below) have their secret base hidden somewhere in the park, but no one can say for certain.

Haight-Ashbury: The Haight is a stretch of the city that has been home to many different movements over the years, including hippie counter-culture, the beat generation, and so forth. It has also been an area of strong magical activity ever since the Resurgence. Some say it was the openness, the willingness to believe, more intense there than many other places, that drew the forces of magic to this area. There are many portals to dark and magical kingdoms here, as well as a number of sorcerers, psychics, and magical girls. Despite the encroachment of commercialism (which has sometimes been violently opposed), it is an unofficial center of mystical learning.

MagicLand: Just off the highway, to the south of San Francisco is MagicLand. This is a magically themed amusement park, which has done surprisingly well – but then, no one expected it to last at all. The rides and attractions are all based around magical girls, youma, wizards, dragons, and the like. For reasons unknown, however, magical girls and even Dark Ones and youma avoid the place. Rumors abound, but there is a strange aura over the place, something terrible enough that even the forces of the Dark Kingdoms tread lightly, if at all.

Silicon Valley: Nearly an hour's drive to the south of San Francisco lies the area known to some as "Silicon Valley," comprising most of Santa Clara county, and arguably centering around the city of San Jose, which is older and larger than SF, but much more thinly populated and boring. The area has many high-tech companies (watched over by Silicon Senshi, amongst others), and San Jose sports a small Japantown, which, amongst other things, is home to a magical girl group known as the Pretty Kamen Knights (see below).

Notable Beings

The Fluffy Rangers: These three magical girls (Bunny, Kitty, and Foxy) have been described as "too cute to live," especially since they have the ears and tails of their namesakes, and they have indeed garnered the ire of many hunters. They're relatively new, and operate mostly downtown, usually posted as guards for the I.M.G.U. building (see above).

The Moonlight Rangers: The Moonlight Rangers are one of San Francisco's more popular magical girl teams – though some claim that they are, in fact, male when not transformed. There are five of them, Moonlight Passion, Moonlight Justice, Moonlight Star, Moonlight Flame, and Moonlight Rose, and, as their names suggest, they only operate at night. The Rangers operate mainly in the area around Golden Gate Park, and are known for both being very poetic and having more discretion than most other magical girls.

The Pretty Kamen Knights: The Pretty Kamen Knights are a foursome of magical girls, and San Jose Japantown's guardians (though they've been known to operate in other parts of San Jose). Pretty Warrior, Pretty Angel, Pretty Healer, and Pretty Avenger have largely rooted out most of the youma in Japantown and the surrounding area, though their arch-enemies from the Dark Kingdom of Ares seem to have a permanent portal somewhere nearby.

The Silicon Senshi: This lone magical girl is a protector of technology and high-tech firms. Rumors say she was a hacker before becoming mahou shoujo, and this indeed seems to be the case, as many of the villains she's thwarted have been thoroughly caught and prosecuted in part due to computer evidence she has provided. Her costume is very high-tech looking, including many flashing lights, LCD displays, and so forth, and she operates mostly in the city of Santa Clara, and is in fact a friend to the high-tech crime divisions of the San Jose and Santa Clara police departments.

Chapter 3: The Magical Kingdoms

Traversing the Worlds

I can't find the real world on my own
-- Queensryche, "Real World"

Moving between worlds requires either finding a gateway or creating one by magic.

Magic gates can be found scattered across the planet, usually in secluded places whose character matches the realm they lead to, at least to a small degree. Although these were once very common, many of them were destroyed during the Age of Darkness and the Rise of Earth, such that many kingdoms are inaccessible unless the traveler has access to her own means of moving between planes.

Spells that allow moving between worlds take on any number of forms. Powerful denizens of the Outer Worlds can move between worlds seemingly at will, while lesser ones require more sophisticated incantations. Also, magical girls have been known to be able to do so when the plot required it by joining hands in a circle and concentrating.

Interplanar Politics

Relations between the Outer Kingdoms and Earth can be very complicated. For that matter, relations between different Outer Kingdoms are rarely cut and dry either.

The Outer Kingdoms are, understandably, none too popular with the Earthly governments. After all, they're bringing a war to the streets, using ordinary citizens to fight it, and leaving destruction in their wake. And that's to say nothing of their disregard for immigration and labor laws. In the U.S. and Japan only a handful of Magical Kingdoms have any real relations with the human authorities. Playing by the rules imposes innumerable restrictions and, short of a use of serious military strength, mortals are generally all but powerless to oppose magic anyway.

Those who choose to obey mortal laws usually find their magical girls to be *employees*, who must be paid, which in turn brings up issues of overtime, taxes, health insurance, and so on. On the plus side, a kingdom that can successfully implement such a program won't be wanting for recruits. Trade and immigration laws can be troublesome -- especially since they weren't made to cover interplanar issues -- but these have largely been settled, and a handful of Outer Kingdoms actually have legitimate trade agreements, which are proving to be very lucrative.

In other areas of the world, interplanar dealings have had less pleasant results. More than one dictator has made deals with a Dark Kingdom (or in some cases a more draconian Magical Kingdom). Indeed, rumors are circulating that the leaders of a few such countries are deliberately allowing Dark Ones to drain people of energy (making them more docile and easier to control) or carrying out more sinister deeds.

The issue of relations *between* Outer Kingdoms can be even more convoluted. Of particular importance is that the division between Dark and Magical is not

absolute. Some Magical Kingdoms are enemies -- Chrysalia and Thera, for example, for as long as anyone can remember -- and there are a handful of Dark and Magical Kingdoms that are tolerant or possibly even friendly towards one another.

Tactics

Agents: Both sides often use various mortal agents in their continuing war, albeit sparingly. Such allies and pawns are less likely to be detected by the enemy than any magical forces, but are often more vulnerable if discovered. Even so, the amount of information they can provide is well worth most any price.

Informants: The most common type of human agents, and the easiest to deal with, are informants. These people simply watch and listen, and report whenever anything interesting comes along.

Fronts: This is a favorite of the Dark Kingdoms; create a front of some kind in the human world to lure in mortals and work whatever nefarious magics they might want on them. The Magical Kingdoms have been known to create fronts from time to time as well, but these are usually for recruitment and/or supporting their agents (magical or otherwise) in the field.

The Magical Kingdoms

The Magical Kingdoms are realms full of magic and wonder; to a human visitor, they appear to be a mix of high fantasy and surreal dream.

The Dreaming Ones

The term "Dreaming Ones" is a catch-all for the most humanlike of the beings of the Magical Kingdoms. Even so, they can take on a great variety of forms within this. Most appear almost totally human, though there are many elves, angels, and other such beings included in this category.

Fantastic Creatures

Many of the Magical Kingdoms are home to a host of strange and wonderful creatures. Some take the form of creatures of myth -- griffins, unicorns, and so forth -- while others are of pure dream, never imagined in the world of mortals.

Notable Magical Kingdoms

Celestia: Celestia is the closest thing to heaven you'll find in this mortal coil. It is a realm of light and wonder, inhabited by beings who may or may not be angels, but certainly match the description. The inhabitants, known as the Tenshi, are pale and beautiful, with delicate white feathered wings and, in the case of the higher-ranking ones, halos. The exact goals of the Archangel are uncertain, but she has recently begun creating a number of "Magical Angels" (their term for magical girls).

Chrysalia: Chrysalia is a fairly powerful kingdom, ruled by a powerful woman known as Queen Artessa and her Eight Shining Generals. Chrysalia has been an enemy of Krylstan (see Notable Dark Kingdoms, below) for millennia, and this conflict has begun to heat up in recent months. Chrysalia's Magical Girls are fairly typical (although all of them appear to be around 16 years old

when transformed), though they tend to be a bit more powerful than most. Lately, recruiting seems to have gone into high gear, as Artessa prepares for something big.

Mirrorland: This kingdom is not too different from any other, except for the fact that every mortal in the world has a Double here, and all of them possess some degree of magical powers. A Double tends to be a sort of "purified" version of a given person, with less cynicism and malice. Mirrorland is not active in the battle against the Dark Kingdoms at this time, despite many requests for aid from other Magical Kingdoms.

The Star Kingdom: The Star Kingdom is composed of nine "stars" – small worlds – that float through a shimmering void. The peoples of each of the Stars have become allies through their mutual conflict against the Dark Kingdoms, overcoming considerable cultural differences. Today the Star Kingdom is ruled from the Star of Light, and all the peoples of the Stars are the subjects of the Queen. The Star Kingdom was among the first to jump into the recruitment of Magical Girls on Earth, but the woman who was then Queen made a grave mistake when she recruited the one who would become known as Sailor Cosmos. Since then Star Kingdom mahou shoujo have dwindled in numbers.

Thera: The realm known as Thera looks like nothing less than a landscape straight out of a high fantasy novel. Shining crystal towers form the main citadel, which is inhabited by a race of beings known as the Sidhe (pronounced "SHEE"), who resemble the elves of legend. They were among the first to begin recruiting magical girls (or "Magical Knights", as they call them), whom they consistently equip with Magical Blades.

Chapter 5:

The Dark Kingdoms

The Dark Kingdoms are realms made of pure nightmare and terror. They can take nearly any form imaginable, but are virtually always terrible to behold.

Notable Dark Kingdoms

Fashiran: The Dark Kingdom known as Fashiran is regarded by those who've dealt with its inhabitants to be the single most dangerous Kingdom in existence. This is because the Dark Ones who rule there are not only competent, but skilled schemers. They possess the means to create magical girls, and, through a front company called Asakawa Heavy Industries, they have begun recruiting schoolgirls who believe that they are serving the forces of good, even when the missions they are sent on can cause untold destruction.

Kage-Koku: The Shadow Kingdom is home to a race of Dark Ones known only as the Phantoms. They are said to have been born of pure shadow, and possess potent powers of illusion, which they are notorious for using to trick their foes into attacking one another.

Krylstan: Krylstan is home to a wide variety of youma, but it stands out in that a sleeping Ancient One known as Lady Kyra resides at its very heart. The Dark Ones who rule here have sought to gather enough energy to awaken Lady Kyra for centuries, but now more than ever, the mahou shoujo stand in their way. Should they succeed, it would likely be the end of the world.

Wormwood: Wormwood, also known as the Poison Star, is said by some to be a living creature; to stand anywhere in the cavernous depths of Wormwood is to be within its diseased flesh.

The Dark Ones

The Dark Ones are the most humanlike of the denizens of the Dark Kingdom, and in many ways the most dangerous. Following the Age of Darkness, they were effectively in command of the Kingdoms, a condition which persists to this day in most cases, and it is they who orchestrate the war against the Magical Kingdoms.

Dark Ones vary greatly, but most are far more powerful than the lesser monsters about them, though they tend to lack imagination and as such their schemes tend to draw on whatever ideas mortals can provide them with.

The powers they wield vary vastly. Many go straight for cliché dark sorcery, which tends to work better than whatever other types of villainous power they might come up with, which (again) tend to lack imagination and are sometimes downright stupid ("I know! I'll control jumbo jets to run them down! BWAHAHAHA!").

Dark Magical Girls

Beware what stalks you in the night

Beware the she-wolf and her bite

Her hidden will to kill in disguise

– Megadeth, "She-Wolf"

Only a handful of the Dark Kingdoms have the power to create magical girls; some had this form of magical all

along, while others stole it from the Magical Kingdoms. Some of them willingly serve the forces of evil, while others don't even know that their masters are Dark Ones, or are being mind-controlled or made to take on another, more evil personality upon transforming.

Corrupters

The youma collectively known as "corrupters" are the type most commonly used in the schemes of the Dark Ones. They possess a human, transform into a duplicate of them, and then lock onto one activity that that person enjoyed and/or commonly engaged in. That activity becomes the Corrupter's "focus", and when they reveal their true form, all of their powers are in some way based around it. Thus, a Corrupter who latches on to a photographer would attack the heroines with some kind of camera attack, one who used a game designer would attack with polyhedral dice, and so forth.

Monsters

These are your everyday youma monsters. They can take nearly any form imaginable, as well as some you wouldn't *want* to imagine. Quite a few are humanoid in some way, but many are not. If you need ideas for these kinds of monsters, look in any RPG monster supplement.

Greater Monsters

Greater Monsters are so named because they're basically the same as the aforementioned "Monsters", only bigger. Much bigger. Think of the star of any "giant monster smashes Tokyo movie" and you're getting an idea of the scale we're talking about. These critters are rare, and bringing them into our world is extremely difficult, but as Godzilla has taught us, they can be very effective.

The Ancient Ones

Not dead which eternal lie

Stranger eons death may die

Drain you of your sanity

Face the thing that should not be

– Metallica, "The Thing That Should Not Be"

These are the oldest and most terrible of the denizens of the Dark Kingdoms. Most of them have been destroyed or forced into an endless slumber by the lack of energies, though it is possible that some of those that remain could be revived if their servants were competent enough to collect enough energy.

Should one of the Ancient Ones ever come into play, it can take whatever form the GM desires; I recommend taking out your copy of Call of Cthulhu for some ideas. Ancient ones are powerful beyond comprehension, and the awakening of even one could potentially lead to the destruction of Earth.

Chapter 6:

Character Creation

This chapter contains information and advice on how to create and develop characters for the Magical World setting.

Magical Girls Children

Magical girls are children more often than not. Their youth and innocence is a double-edged sword in the Magical World, and it can cut deep.

Innocence perhaps best describes what separates adults and children. Kids lack the emotional restraint of adults -- the sometimes self-destructive ability to hold emotions in that is practiced daily by adults, especially men. A happy child is ecstatic, a sad child weeps and sobs, a tired child falls asleep, and so on. The barriers that exist in adults, the restraint holding back instinct and desire, simply hasn't developed yet, and whatever is felt is felt fully.

Lack of information plays a role as well. An adult has collected a massive amount of information in their heads which, while not really necessary in daily life, serves to shape and define the perceived universe. Lacking such information, the world is a very simple place through a child's eyes, and until they've learned otherwise, they tend to take things at face value; Santa Clause and the Easter Bunny are real, the moon is made of green cheese, and there's a bogeyman in the closet. Eventually things change and it's Dad who delivers presents and the moon is a big rock in space, but until then anything is possible.

Mahou Shoujo Character Questions

The following are some questions to consider when developing a magical girl character.

- How did you receive your powers? From whom and under what kind of circumstances?
- How do you feel about being a magical girl? Fighting youma?
- What goal is being a magical girl helping you to accomplish, if any? How well is it working?
- What do you think of other magical girls? Mystic Knights? Dreaming Ones? Hunters?
- Do your powers reflect who you are? Does your magical girl persona?
- What do you most fear? Why?
- Are you afraid to die? Why or why not?
- Who knows your secret identity? Who are you keeping it a secret from?
- Who do you trust? Who do you distrust?
- What do you value the most?
- If offered the chance to stop being a magical girl and live a normal life, would you? Why or why not?

Costumes

Costumes worn by transformed magical girls vary vastly. It's important to remember that the stereotypical sailor fuku is more or less only found in Japan, where it's

a result of the proliferation of school uniforms. Many Magical Kingdoms have their own standard costumes for magical girls, usually allowing minor variations in ornamentation and color to distinguish individuals. Others use magic which is shaped by the user, consciously or subconsciously, so that the resulting costume is designed by the magical girl, consciously or subconsciously (this is another reason for the commonness of the sailor fuku based costumes).

Virtually any type of costume is possible. Nearly all involve skirts or dresses of some sort; favored types of costumes include ornate, frilly dresses and futuristic plastic and metal outfits.

Side Note: If you're short on ideas for magical girl costumes, Card Captor Sakura is a good place to look, as Sakura goes through an incredible variety of costumes, each more outlandish than the last.

Character Advancement

For magical girls, experience is assigned as usual, but the form their advancements take can sometimes differ from normal characters. The main differences come in the fact that when they develop a new attack, it will typically arrive in the form of a new wand given to them by their companion or discovered somewhere or other.

Magical Girl Archetypes

The following are some of the common (and uncommon) "archetypes" of mahou shoujo. Characters need not conform to these, of course, but they can be helpful as a starting point. This list includes both the typical heroic magical girl types, as well as a few less principled ones, better suited for use as villains.

Assassin

"I am the Lovely Killer. I bring your death."

You have been raised and trained – possibly against your will – to be a killer. Your powers aren't all that different from those of the other mahou shoujo, but you use them to kill. Some magical girl assassins do their job hesitantly, while others enjoy it all too much. Most were created or recruited by some organization with dark intents. You may even be employed to eliminate other magical girls who pose a threat to the organization.

Suggested Traits: Stealth, Magical Disguise. Magical attacks should be subtle and deadly.

Bishonen

"Because, girl, you cannot compare to my beauty."

Part of the nature of the magic that creates mahou shoujo is that it is pretty much limited to females. There are a few rare "Mystic Knights" whose powers are in some ways similar to those of a mahou shoujo, but magic is nothing if not ironic, and it occasionally latches onto a male anyway, transforming them into a female in the transformation. Usually the males who have to put up with this sort of thing are bishonen types ("beautiful male") who are generally effeminate enough that in the right company they could probably get away with wearing a miniskirt anyway. Of course, there have been a few cases of some grungy, chauvinistic auto mechanic being

made to transform into a sixteen year old girl to fight evil, but this is, thankfully, *very rare*.

Suggested Traits: High Appearance and Speed.

Bubble-Head

"Whoops! Oh, I'm so sorry! Here, let me clean that up—Ooh! Sorry about that!"

The character is a typical anime ditz; a scatterbrained fluffhead who means well, but usually succeeds more through sheer luck than anything else. The Bubble-Head is, however, usually the most pure-hearted of magical girls.

Suggested Traits: Low Mind, moderate to high Soul, Divine Relationship.

Cutekiller

"It's simple. Pink frills means you have to die."

Cutekiller magical girls are rare and dangerous. For whatever reason, they've decided that cute things must be destroyed at all costs. This forces them to reinvent themselves, transforming their powers into a darker form, as little like their old selves as possible, but with just as much power. Most favor black leather and/or vinyl.

Suggested Traits: Hatred (Cute Things)

Dark Magical Girl

"What ever do you mean? I'm on his side, you know."

Some magical girls are recruited specifically for the purpose of being the bad guys. Er, girls that is. This can happen for a number of reasons; the most common is that someone from the Dark Kingdoms, with the power to do so, has need of a magical girl. They vary in disposition, but most will have at least a small mean streak.

Suggested Traits: Hate Elemental and/or Love Elemental

Dream Come True

"I can't believe this is really happening! It's so wonderful!"

Very, very few magical girls can be described by this archetype for very long. Somehow, there are those who want to be magical girls, who dream of it every day. When the chance comes along, they throw themselves at it with starry eyes, trying enthusiastically, wholeheartedly, to get the job done. This sentiment doesn't last long.

Eco-Girl

"You must stop! In the name of Mother Earth I will punish you!"

The Eco-Girl is a variation on the usual magical girl. Her concerns are more with preserving the environment than with combating youma, though the two goals have been known to coincide. Their powers vary, though elemental and other nature-related abilities are relatively common.

Suggested Traits: Elemental (any), high Charisma and Will.

Genki

"What a nice day!"

The Japanese word "genki" generally means healthy, cheerful, and so on. For the magical girls of this archetype, this is their defining trait. Such characters, insipidly cheerful and unendingly friendly, are all too common.

Suggested Traits: High Charisma.

Hunter Hunter

"For all those you've killed, for everything good you've destroyed, I'll now take revenge!"

Not all magical girls can stand by and watch hunters gun down their friends and allies. The Hunter Hunters have taken to turning predator into prey, carefully eliminating magical girl hunters. It's a very dangerous hobby, and a potentially fatal one, as hunters will seek to avenge their comrades at all costs.

Idol

<singing> "The sky melts and falls around me/and all I really need to know is/do you love me?"

Not all magical girls do the superheroine thing. Some, magically given the ability to become more mature and beautiful, go into show business. As far as Japanese types are concerned, this will most often be in the form of pop idol singing.

Suggested Traits: High Charisma, Singing, Dancing

Love Fighter

"Love can be elusive, sometimes hard, but believe me, it's worth it. Now let's see if we can't get you two together."

Most magical girls list love among their goals in some form or another, but these ones make it their first and only goal. The Love Fighter's purpose is to save the world not by fighting evil monsters, but by promoting love wherever possible.

Suggested Traits: High Charisma, Love Elemental, True Love

Magical Being

"Forgive me. I'm unfamiliar with these earthly accoutrements..."

Not all magical girls were recruited from Earth; a handful are denizens of the Magical Kingdoms, who for whatever reason have found themselves on our world. This has both advantages and disadvantages. Such a character will probably already fully understand her powers and all, but then modern technology and society will be a mystery.

Suggested Traits: High Focus, Sorcery

Misfit

"I never wanted this. Leave me the hell alone."

Not everyone who is recruited to be a magical girl wants to be one. The Misfit was forced into the role against her own will, and, much as she hates putting up with the short skirts and silly transformations, fights as hard as any of her counterparts.

Suggested Traits: Low Charisma.

Priestess

"Evil spirits, BEGONE!"

In addition to being a magical girl, the character is, by profession, a priestess. For anime purposes, this generally means she would be a Shinto priestess, with the props and wardrobe to match, as well as some additional abilities (probably disciplines and sorcery paths) to match.

Suggested Traits: High Will. Probably some minor sorcery (especially Warding).

Princess

"In the name of the Kingdom of the Crystal Towers, I will punish you!"

Many magical girls have the word "princess" in their name, and this can mean a lot of things. Most importantly, it usually means they are the leader of the group and, despite whatever shortcomings they might have, serve as strong leaders to their compatriots, and they get to have the most powerful magical attacks. That and, should they return to the magical kingdom of their origin (assuming it still exists), there is a chance they'll become queen.

Suggested Traits: Magical attacks should be exceptionally powerful.

Sadist

"Bad youma. I'll have to teach you a lesson."

A few magical girls are bad apples – the reason they're in the business is that they enjoy hurting things. While the Magical Kingdoms should by all rights be far more hesitant to recruit such girls, they are all too effective at dealing with the Youma threat. Where most magical girls are highly principled, the Sadist is almost completely amoral, and thus willing to do things that other magical girls would never even consider.

Suggested Traits: Sadism (of course)

Scholar

"You see, the Dark Ones of that kingdom have a distinctive marking. If we can calculate the geomantic resonance..."

The scholar is a bookworm and a bit of a technophile, who probably took up the mantle of being a mahou shoujo with reluctance. She is, put simply, the brains of the group, and the knowledge she possesses often proves invaluable to saving the day. Of course, she's also one of the least physical of her kind, and may be a bit lacking in confidence in anything other than her intellectual abilities.

Suggested Traits: Various knowledge-related skills, pertaining to school subjects and, to a lesser extent, magical lore.

Sorceress/Witch

"I call upon the power of the raging storm! Strike down my foes!"

Some mahou shoujo concentrate primarily on the development of magical powers. For that matter, there are characters who are magic users first and magical girls second. Such a character tends to be almost as much a bookworm as the Scholar, except that her taste

in reading material is rather different ("This? Oh, it's just the Greater Key of Solomon.")

Suggested Traits: High intelligence, skills pertaining to magical lore, Sorcery.

Thief

"Heh. If you think I'm in this for the money, you're sorely mistaken."

This magical girl isn't in it for being heroic; she's an outright thief, and uses her powers for her own greed, and, more importantly, for the challenge of making the most daring thefts possible. Of course, more often than not, she'll end up getting romantically entangled with someone who is trying to catch her thieving alter ego.

Suggested Traits: High Agility, Stealth or Art of Stealth. It's helpful to have magical attacks/powers *without* Attack Words

Tomboy

"I hate boys!"

A surprising number of magical girls are tomboys, misfits who don't act all that feminine. Of course, the mahou shoujo magic being how it is, the transformation tend to make them a lot more "girly," though no less effective in combat.

Suggested Traits: High Strength and Stamina. Skills and possibly styles to reflect being physically oriented. Will *not* have disadvantages like Compulsive Posing, Clueless and such. Magical attacks should be more direct and physical than normal.

Trainee

"C'mon! Work! Please? Oh, what was that incantation?!"

The character isn't a full-fledged mahou shoujo just yet. Rather than being given their full powers right away, they are being made to learn how to use them well first. Very few magical kingdoms bother with this sort of a thing, despite the fact that it makes for more skilled warriors with much better judgement.

Suggested Traits: As per a typical magical girl, only not as skillful or effective.

Unwilling

"Please forgive me."

For some reason or another, the character was turned into a magical girl against their will. Some may come to accept this state of being, in time, while others become disgruntled, even to the point of becoming cutekillers. A few have been coerced into the job with threats.

Suggested Traits: Unwilling Service

Valkyrie

"We will be victorious!"

The Valkyrie is first and foremost a fighter. More than any others, her goal is to fight the forces of evil. As such, she is usually pretty aggressive, and generally better than any of her counterparts at physical combat, but typically a bit lacking in social skills.

Suggested Traits: High physical attributes and combat skills. May know martial arts.

The Veteran

"No! We need a plan unless we want to be toasted. Now, here's what I think we should do..."

The Veteran has been doing this for a while now. She keeps on out of a strong sense of duty, and has honed her combat skills carefully. She gets the job done, and if at all possible lives to tell about it. She isn't the least bit impressed by theatrics and avoids perpetrating them herself whenever possible. One of the most pragmatic of magical girls, she's practical, nearly unfazeable, and will take charge if there's no one better qualified -- which there usually isn't.

Vigilante

"Halt, criminal!"

It doesn't happen *too* often, but occasionally a magical girl will get it into her head that it's her destiny to fight crime. This is rare in Japan, where a would-be magical vigilante must either do next to nothing or take on the likes of the yakuza and ninja (and thus the mahou kunoichi). In the U.S. and other countries most consider them to be even more of a menace than normal magical girls, given that their lack of discretion is combined with having normal humans for targets. But if nothing else, thieves and bank robbers are much easier to defeat than youma.

Wage-Earner

"Well... the pay's good."

Some magical girls use their powers for employment, as bodyguards, security, unique pyrotechnics experts, entertainers (in some unfortunate cases, of a less reputable sort), and so forth. Most magical girls consider this to be a pitiful, if occasionally necessary place to be. Magic wants to be free, and being chained down to a job and a time clock is, some say, the antithesis of what being a magical girl is all about.

Specific Magical Girl Types

Magical Angels (Celestia): The Magical Angels (mahou no tenshi) of Celestia resemble the angels of legend; when transformed they sprout beautiful feathered wings and are typically clad in white robes.

Magical Girls (Chrysalia): The magical girls of Chrysalia always appear to be about 16 years old when transformed. Especially in recent years, the kingdom has begun making extensive use of specialist magical girls, though more than 60% of their forces are still "general" magical girls.

Magical Girls (Krystlan): As though to spite their enemies in Chrysalia, Krystlan has begun recruiting magical girls to their cause. Krystlan magical girls typically resemble darkly-colored parodies of their Chrysalia counterparts.

Magical Knights (Thera): The Magical Knights of Thera are fewer and fewer in number each year, owing to the memory of Magical Knight Mariko, but there are still many who remain. Magical Knights' costumes typically combine a girls' dress or school uniform with magical armor, and all Magical Knights wield swords,

either full-on magical blades or an energy blade formed from their wands.

Mahou Kunoichi: Certain ninja clans have been known to employ female ninjas who are magically empowered. This is typically undertaken only in times of need, when the clan must augment its numbers by empowering its youngest members. Mahou Kunoichi are granted the skills and powers of a full ninja, further enhanced by magic; their powers are typically subtle and deadly.

Reflected (Mirrorland): Mirrorland's rare magical girls are called "Reflected," and their powers are granted by magically combining the mortal girl with her Double.

Naming Magical Abilities

Unlike some other types of attack names in anime, magical girls generally use English words even more commonly to name their moves, though, as with their counterparts from fighting games and the like, the names often refuse to make sense anyway. Even so, some use Japanese, or even nonsense words. Regardless, here is a list of some English words you can use. Note that this can also be used to come up with what the character shouts to transform.

Activation, Attack, Aqua, Archery, Arrow, Beam, Beauty, Blast(er), Bubbles, Celestial, Chain, Cosmic, Crash, Crescent, Crystal, Dragon, Encircle, Evolution, Fire, Flash, Gentle, Halation, Healing, Heart, Home Run, Honeymoon, Ignite, Illusion, Inferno, Kiss, Laser, Love(ly), Magic(al), Mint, Mirage, Moon, Mutation, Operation, Pastel, Phoenix, Pink, Power, Pretty, Princess, Reflection, Rhapsody, Recall, Release, Scepter, Scroll, Sensitive, Shining, Shock, Silver, Smash, Spiral, Spray, Star, Stardust, Starlight, Strike, Sugar, Super, Supreme, Surround, Sweet, Sword, Therapy, Thunder, Tiara, Twinkle, Uterus, Wave, Yell

Cute Silly Magical Girl Name Generator Table

Somebody might think I am mad

I only wanna be like

TOMATO HEAD

– Shonen Knife, "Tomato Head"

The following table can be used to randomly generate names for magical girls. Simply roll two six-sided dice, counting one as the tens digit and the other as the ones digit once on each column and that's it! (You may want to substitute a name whether made up or real, for the second part of the name). You can add Magical Soldier or Pretty Princess or whatever you like before that, and you're ready to go.

11	Pretty	11	Peach
12	Creamy	12	Moon
13	Wedding	13	Rose
14	Candy	14	Kawaii/Cutesy
15	Marshall	15	Apple
16	Captain	16	Cherry
21	Cutesy	21	<Insert your favorite celestial body here>
22	Silly	22	Sugar
23	Shining	23	Soldier
24	Sweet	24	Healer
25	Kitty	25	Sugar
26	Pastel	26	Princess
31	Silver	31	Tempest
32	Crystal	32	Girl
33	Lovely	33	Lady
34	Pink	34	<insert favorite letter of the alphabet>
35	Sailor	35	Knight
36	Sexy	36	Star
41	Shining	41	Power
42	Magical	42	Angel
43	Beautiful	43	Blade
44	Golden	44	Bunny
45	Shadow	45	Pineapple
46	Crimson	46	Raspberry
51	Final	51	Phantom
52	Raging	52	Cat
53	Pixie	53	Storm
54	Violet	54	Song
55	Mysterious	55	Guardian
56	Justice	56	Bride
61	Rainbow	61	Phoenix
62	Hello	62	Dragon
63	Princess	63	Unicorn
64	Happy	64	Heart
65	Joyful	65	Love
66	Avenging	66	Warrior

Chapter 7:

GM Section

This section provides advice for the Game Master, primarily concerning just how to go about setting up a campaign based around mahou shoujo.

Genre Conventions

The magical girl genre is infested by an unusually large number of genre conventions, which distinguish it clearly as having been created originally for *shoujo manga* (girls' comics). Of course, this book contains a lot of stuff intended to systematically dismantle a lot of these conventions, but if you're intending to run a more "standard" magical girl type thing, the following should be kept in mind.

- Combat should generally be very indirect. For the most part, magical girls operate by simply tossing out their magical attacks and hoping that they work. Fortunately, this usually works, since it's basically the same tactic used by most of their enemies. A few of them do use actual physical combat, but in the truly *shoujo* series, it tends not to work very well.
- The enemies they face, usually denizens of the Dark Kingdoms, invariably have some scheme by which they intend to take over the world or something equally nefarious. Luckily for our heroines, they are often severely lacking in imagination (and in some cases intelligence). The types of schemes they attempt will depend on their ultimate goals, but they'll usually try to incorporate in some way twisting something that people hold dear, whether to siphon their energy, or just to spread misery.
- One of the more unfortunate results of the tactics used by the Dark Ones is that they often will try variations on the same scheme over and over, sending a different youma to carry it out each time. This "Monster of the Week" phenomena will certainly keep our heroines busy, but that's about all.
- In-between times spent bashing youma, magical girls will, unsurprisingly, go about their everyday business, whatever that might be. Again, owing to the origins of the genre, this usually entails worrying about school, working on hobbies, and especially obsessing about whatever cute guys they might be interested in.
- The abilities of minor characters are de-emphasized nearly all the time. While they needn't (and for that matter shouldn't) lack depth, they're called minor for a reason, and will almost always take a back seat to the main characters.

Campaign Concepts

Magical World presents a lot of possibilities for campaigns; the following are some general ideas for campaign concepts.

Conventional Magical Girls

Go by the stereotypical magical girl series concept; the characters are a team of magical girls who work together to fend off the monster of the week and try to make their way through everyday life as well.

Being the Heroine Isn't Easy

In the present day Magical World setting magical girls have more problems than simply stopping the youma and romantic entanglements. They must contend with a public that is a mix of groupies, antagonists, and people who just want to live their lives free of magic. This mixes the conventional magical girl series with a lot of angst and potential danger, and can be a lot of fun.

Historical

Take whatever historical setting you choose, make an anime version of it, and throw in some magical girls, and you have the makings of a very unique game. Magical girls from other eras will likely have a look and feel drawn at least partly from that time, and it will in some ways be very difficult going for them. Being a child and a female in most societies means being doubly excluded from mainstream society, and as such trying to be a heroine become difficult, but no less important.

The Magical War

Imagine a game that takes place during the Magical War, when magical girl fought magical girl, crossing wands and fighting to the death. The PCs could be the foot soldiers, the elite warriors, or others, mortal or magical, trying to stop the madness.

Or what if a new war broke out? Whether between magical forces, or against the Dark Kingdoms, an all-out conflict makes the everyday youma fighting seem like a picnic.

World of Disillusionment

The world has taken a turn for the worst. The problem isn't an impending disaster of any specific sort; it's a rising feeling of despair and a decline in the spirit of wonder that allows magic to exist on Earth. As it recedes, so does the power of the mahou shoujo, and all over the world, they desperately try to rekindle the flame, but to no avail. There is one being, part angel, part demon, wandering the world, who can be its savior or destroyer at their whims. Can they be convinced that the world is worth saving?

World of Magic

Why not take your campaign into one of the Magical Kingdoms – or even one of the Dark Kingdoms. Rather than dealing with the mundane world, you can create your own fantastic landscapes.

Alternate Character Types

All In A Day's Destruction

No one ever bothers to look at things from the youma's perspective, do they? Of course, that's partly because most youma are too damn stupid to bother with, but suppose we dealt with some smarter than average ones as player characters? Do they like their jobs, or are they doing this simply because they have no choice? And if they can break free of their masters, what then? What kind of future can the once evil hairstyling youma hope to find?

Friends and Allies

This is similar to the premise of White Wolf's Year of the Ally series; take the friends, confidants, and whatnot of the ones who would ordinarily be the main characters, and focus on them instead. This can be a campaign in and of itself, or a secondary "troupe-style" one run alongside the main one. Both sides of the war know that mortal allies can be extremely useful, and dealing with their concerns – gathering information, staying alive, and so forth – can be a nice break from the usual youma of the week stuff.

The Heart of Darkness

So, what would it be like to be a Dark One? At the orders of the Dark Queen (or whoever), the PCs must wage a constant and often losing battle against the mahou shoujo threat. But how can you fight them without losing the hate that keeps you alive?

Darkness Reformed

Some of the Dark Ones simply cannot hold on to hatred for too long. The do-gooders finally get to them, and they find themselves becoming more and more human. It is possible, although rare, for Dark Ones to reform themselves, but this is never easy. Many are simply destroyed or recaptured by their compatriots, and many others lose most of their powers in the transition.

Magical Girl Hunters

For those of you who don't like magical girls... The PCs are magical girl hunters, hiring out their services to the highest bidder. It's a dangerous job, and some people want them to stop, but for many the satisfaction of seeing Princess Love with a bullet in her brain is more than enough compensation.

Youma Hunters

Of course, the decline in the magical girl population has caused certain problems, mainly in the form of more youma to deal with. Using whatever powers they might be able to muster – or sometimes simply whatever firepower they can get their hands on – they bravely face the evils of the Dark Kingdoms when the forces of magic fall short. It's not always an easy job, but someone has to do it, right? This kind of campaign can feature most any sort of character, and can get down to some good old fashioned superheroing (even though that's not actually a word).

Themes

The world presented in Magical World is not always a pleasant one. While it offers quite a few possibilities for adventures, certain themes run throughout it. Whether and to what extent a campaign explores these is up to you, of course.

Escape

*There is a place that still remains
It eats the fear it eats the pain
The sweetest price he'll have to pay
The day the whole world went away*
-- Nine Inch Nails, "The Day the World Went Away"

The decision to accept the powers of a magical girl can come about for many reasons. The world can often seem to be a place full of nothing but pain, and many seek a way to escape all their troubles. If magic can do anything, they reason, it can save them from everything that makes life seem painful, meaningless, or fearful. Those who take this path are doomed to fall further into despair, as the candy-coated dream is marred inside and out by the rotting filth of the dismal real world which, in reality, they never left.

Limitations and Purposes of Magic

As the title implies, magic is fundamental. It is a means by which pure mystical energy is shaped by the heart and mind into a realization of one's desires. It is also, to the disappointment of many magical girls, far from omnipotent, and in no way capable of solving all of one's problems. Magic can only do so much. The things that magic can accomplish are often beyond the reach of even the greatest technology, the most dedicated actions, but conversely it cannot grant wishes. If a magical girl aspires to be a pianist, she will find that that magic will fade before long. If she wants to make others happy, a happiness spell will only make things worse when it wears off, because its effects were never real to begin with.

Magic reflects what it is inside. That is something fundamental to its nature. Magic is always at its best when the action it is to be used for is in accord with the user's own heart; otherwise its power is lessened, often to the point of uselessness.

Loss of Innocence

*When I was a kid
I thought that I could fly
Threw myself out a window
Right out into the sky
Now that I am older
I know that I could die
Die from a depression
I would learn my lesson well*
– Millencolin, "Boring Planet"

First and foremost, it is about the loss of innocence. When a schoolgirl becomes a magical girl, whether she knows it or not, she has become a front-line soldier in a desperate, if subtle, war. Whatever she might believe it would be like, this world will, to some degree, prove her wrong. As though the battles against the youma weren't enough, there are madmen ready to do with guns what the claws and magics of the youma cannot.

Violence

*You never wanted to stop the smell of burning flesh
The hero marches alone across the highway of death
It's not a matter of rights, it's just a matter of war
Don't have a reason to fight, they never had one before*
– Ministry, "Hero"

"The War" as some call it, the seemingly endless battle against the youma, is an important part of Magical World, as well as many magical girl series. The difference is that Magical War pays more attention to the consequences of what happens. As is inevitable in battle, people get hurt. They die. And a magical girl must force herself to cope with this as well.

Shades of Gray

*Shades of truth
Between disparate lines
You don't know I'm all right
You don't know I'm all right*
– Bad Religion, "Shades of Truth"

While the magical girls of anime have it pretty easy, in Magical World they must make hard choices. Things are never completely clear-cut, black and white, and many mahou shoujo are brought to question their purpose, whether what they are doing is right, and so many other things. Some fall prey to their own doubts early on, while others fight on blithely until something comes along later to open their eyes.

Morality

Deciding between right and wrong is something everyone must do, but a magical girl is forced to make such decisions in life and death matters. For better or for worse, they are made to regularly slay youma for a living. They must confront the Hunters who would destroy them, and yet struggle not to sink into their madness. Many magical girls are highly principled.

Others, whether because of the lure of power, or simply because they never really learned in the first place, simply abandon morality and do whatever they enjoy. And if that includes killing youma, they will be all the more effective – but at what cost?

Duality

A magical girl is forced to lead a double life, halfway in a world of magic and adventure, and halfway in a world of mundane (but no less pressing) difficulties. Living two lives strains the very fabric of the soul at times, especially in a world where one of these is considered a warrant for death by some. Even as the magical girl struggles to reconcile her two halves, it is all too clear that revealing the truth to loved ones only puts them in danger.

Coming of Age

The idea of Coming of Age is a prominent theme in any magical girl series, and this holds true in *Magical World* as well. Most magical girls are at such an age that they are poised on the brink of that process which transforms child into adult, girl into woman. Especially for one touched by magic, this is a difficult time in one's life. Like any other teenager, a magical girl must forge her

own identity in the world – but she has to do all of that in the midst of the struggle to save the world.

The Call of Adventure

"May you live in interesting times."
– Chinese curse/proverb

Being a heroine is far removed from the way in which normal people live. Like it or not, adventure comes to them. It may be nerve-wracking at times, but never boring. Facing youma and being in danger and saving the day may be a harrowing experience, but many would say it's a lot more fun than doing homework all the time.

Return to Real Life?

"Let me tell you something, my Tenchi. The carnival comes and goes, but if you wait a while, it'll always come back to you."

– Ryoko, Tenchi Muyo! TV

The freedom of the fantastic is often juxtaposed with the inextricable coils of the "real world." When the battles are over with, there is only the mundane world to contend with. This can be a blessing and a curse in equal measure. Friends and family left behind are seen again, but everything boring or outright painful that had been left behind comes back with a vengeance.

Many an adventurer has had a bittersweet homecoming, and mahou shoujo are no exception. Many, upon returning, long for the adventures to begin anew, for the carnival to start up once more.

Friendship

Most magical girls have friends in one form or another, be it mundane friends, fellow magical girls, or others besides. Friends and family are vital; they help the magical girl anchor herself to the real world, and remind them of why it is that they carry on the fight against the youma every day. Without them the fight is meaningless.

Hope

"In the Light Universe I was darkness. Perhaps in the Dark Zone... I can be light."

-- Kai, Tales of a Parallel Universe

Finally and perhaps most importantly, is hope. Despite all the hate and darkness the world throws at them, magical girls, more than anyone else, must learn to see the fleeting rays of hope and love. Lacking the cynicism of adults, they can learn to look forward to a future brighter than the present, a world they will create.

The Heroine's Quest

A common thread through many of the world's myths is what Joseph Campbell called "the Hero's Quest." As a scholar of the world's mythologies, he saw a recurring tale of sorts. It is a simple yet elegant story that has been told in one form or another in nearly every culture on the planet. It is a story of a journey of many perils and a final redemption.

So, you ask, what the hell does this have to do with your campaign? That's up to you to answer. Using such a classical mode of storytelling can enliven a campaign, and the general outline is vague enough that if you don't severely overuse it, it can remain fresh to the players.

Of course, in the context of magical girls this has some rather interesting implications. In ancient cultures – and even in the earlier magical girl series – females were not as independent as they are today. In Campbell's Freudian interpretation of the Hero's Quest, the underlying meaning of said quest is the conquest and replacement of the parent of the opposite sex (which only occasionally occurred in a literal sense). In the rare cases when such a classical epic deals with a female character, she has to put up with things like being seduced by gods, and although she can find happiness as surely as the hero, it's usually a far cry from whatever bold rewards he may carry home.

Where, then, does this leave our sailor suited heroines? Again, the ultimate answer is up to you. Although it is certainly an odd medium for such, the trials and tribulations of a magical girl can make an ideal backdrop for exploring gender roles, both in mythical and real-life contexts. Spending time overcoming impossible odds to save the world tends to affect one's attitudes towards more banal aspects of life. Not only that, but a more modern girl probably isn't about to simply accept the commands of others, even if the issuer is a god or whatever.

The Hero's Path

What follows is a rapid-fire guide to the basic plot of the Hero's Journey. For a more complete version, refer to *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, or for a quick version, *Changeling: The Dreaming*. Or watch Star Wars.

1. The Ordinary World: The hero begins as a more or less normal person, in her ordinary world. This is shown to the audience briefly, to give a sense of perspective.
2. The Call of Adventure: Something happens. Something unusual that hints at the coming storm. The hero discovers some clue as to what they must do.
3. The Refusal of the Call: At first, the hero tries to ignore the Call, unwilling to leave the comfort of her ordinary home.
4. Meeting with the Mentor: A mentor of some sort gives the hero sage advice, ultimately convincing her to proceed on the Quest.
5. Crossing the First Threshold: The hero must overcome an obstacle, a Guardian, in order to proceed out of the Ordinary World and into the Fantastic.
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies: The longest part of the journey, the hero journeys towards her eventual goal, meeting many friends and enemies along the way. The hero learns more the Fantastic and comes to understand better just what is going on.
7. Approach to the Inmost Cave: At last, the hero has learned what she must do to complete the test. Everything comes together, and she ventures to the place where she will ultimately face the final challenge.
8. The Supreme Ordeal: This is the Final Battle, when all that has been said and done comes to a head, and all that has been prophesized comes true. The hero faces a great foe against the most terrible of odds.

9. The Reward: It is not, however, over just yet. The Quest is not truly complete; the outcome of the Ordeal has shown that the Fantastic has invaded the Ordinary, and something must be done.
10. The Road Back: The road back is dangerous, and the hero must hurry before all is lost.
11. The Final Threshold: The hero comes face to face with the true terror, and confronts it. This is the true Final Battle, and when it ends, the changes the Quest has wrought on the hero become clear.
12. The Return: With the Darkness defeated (for now, at least), the hero returns to her home and is welcomed back after so long, bringing many stories to tell.

Unusual Magical Girl Varieties

The traditional mahou shoujo aren't the only girls who wield magical powers and fight evil (or other stuff); the following are some of the more commonly seen types, although they'll be rare in Magical World.

- Alien: Extra terrestrial girls in anime inevitably have some kind of special powers with which they can cause all manner of trouble, and occasionally help people out. Good examples include Lum and the myriad other aliens from *Urusei Yatsura*, not to mention most of the cast of *Tenchi Muyo!*.
- Demon Hunter: Demon Hunters tend to be fairly similar to magical girls in terms of the form their powers take, except that their outfits are more scanty, and their abilities are more direct and combative.
- Esper: The character is a psychic of some kind. She needn't necessarily be into the whole Love and Justice thing; the girls from *Miracle Girls* are more into causing trouble than anything else, for example.
- Holy Warrior: While some magical girls double as priestesses, a holy warrior actually derives their abilities from some divine force. As such, they are highly religious and tend to have powers based on their deity.
- Techno-Girl: This refers to a heroine whose powers are technologically based. This can include any number of possibilities, but the most common will be androids and girls with special power suits or other items (some of which may even look something like mahou shoujo abilities!) with which they go about their business. See, for example, Cutey Honey, Dr. Slump, Moldiver, etc.