

Codex

The Gauntlet's monthly RPG zine

ASYLUM CITY

A starter for Dungeon World

RITUALS

A PbtA minigame and supplement about living with OCD

THE MADNESS OF CÚ CHULAINN

A new story game of Celtic myth

THE MADNESS OF LEGENDS

A bit of frippery, Powered by the Apocalypse

MY FEMALE HYSTERIA

Escape the asylum, prove your sanity in this Cheat Your Own Adventure scenario

THREE DOZEN GREAT OLD ONES

A miscellany to haunt your psyche

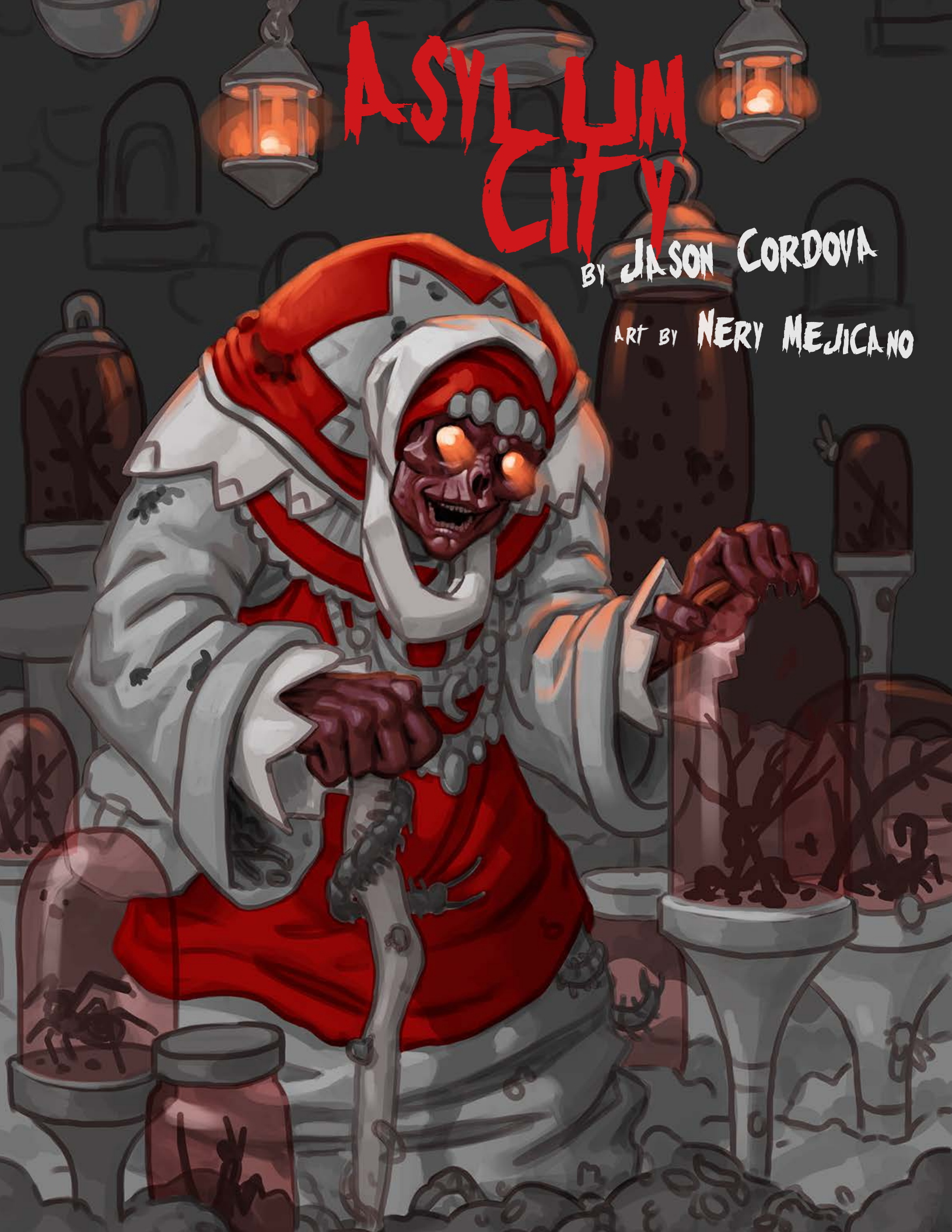
MADNESS



ASYLUM CITY

BY JASON CORDOVA

ART BY NERY MEJICANO



QUESTIONS

The following questions should be posed to all players the first time they enter the asylum city:

What do you see that lets you know this is a place of madness?

The asylum city is one of the oldest in the world, nearly ancient. As you travel through its streets, what do you see that is a reminder of how old it truly is?

These questions can be posed to any or all players as needed:

In the middle of the city is a small fortress surrounded by a moat, around which the rest of the city grew up over the centuries. What rumors have you heard about the person or entity who lives there?

Despite the insanity of most of its residents, the city has a peculiar logic to it. What do you see here that is suggestive of this?

Members of the mysterious Order of the Knights Orderly patrol the streets and ensure a certain level of peace is maintained. What rumors have you heard about these strange, masked knights? Who do you believe they work for? Why are they so committed to this thankless task?

The Order of the Knights Panoptic are a collection of entities who observe the asylum city. What rumors have you heard about why they do this?

You know someone who lives in the city. Who are they, and how have they managed to scratch out a living in this place?

You know someone who lives in the city. Who are they, and why did you bring them here so many years ago?

CUSTOM MOVES

The Fabulous Fish Parade

The most distinctive and terrifying feature of the asylum city is the fish parade. At any given time, dozens (sometimes hundreds) of men, women and children wearing wooden beast masks dance through the streets, banging on pots and pans, caught up in a celebration that began centuries ago and hasn't abated since. Much of the time, the parade is simply a nuisance, but occasionally someone in the noisy procession sends up the cry "It's time to feed the fishes!"

At that point, anyone unfortunate enough to be near the parade is swarmed by the revelers and torn to bits until there is nothing left but a smear of blood and a few stray bits of hair and bone. Victims of the fish parade are usually unconscious vagrants or people too delirious or insane to get out of the way, but occasionally the parade enters someone's home and pulls them out kicking and screaming.

No one can say why the knights of the asylum city don't do more to control the fish parade. Some say the fish parade is like a force of nature, and trying to control it would be like trying to control the wind. Others think the knights secretly encourage the fish parade as a way of culling the city's population in order to better keep it in check. In either case, visitors of the asylum city will find no one to help them should they encounter the fish parade, and so they should do their best to avoid it.

When you travel to a location within the asylum city, roll. If you have studied the fish parade or are a resident of the asylum city, you may add 1 to the result. *On a 10+, you avoid the fish parade. *On a 7-9, you can avoid the fish parade, but you have to take a route that will significantly delay your arrival in order to do so. *On a miss, you encounter the fish parade and should prepare for the worst.

Ein gute manchen me hemmen betiko eta inoiz gauza txiki guztiak ez zirela nire buruan etorriko dira eta inentzi horietako bat, eta hori galdu egiten dira emakume eta haur guztiak lehen horiek ezin izango topatu inoiz berriro ezan duten nire bidara jakini eta orduan i txikituta duelako izango dute horiek zortu bit gutxi sartu eta horiek elikatzeke, orkestra eta bere denetan gogorra behera jarraitzeke izan dela moda horietan gorpuz balazan

IMPRESSIONS

The frenzied screaming of the Welcoming Committee, dozens of men, women and children shackled to either side of a narrow corridor, the sole entrance into the city.

The whooping and hollering of the old men in the corner of the Flouncy Pony Pub playing games of chance for teeth.

The glimmer of jewels festooning the hands and neck of the Baroness Lucrezia Prigg, who needs someone to help her clear out this damn ice drake from her wine cellar, the fourth goddamned drake to get stuck there this month!

Occasionally, boots and skeletal feet sticking out of the ground, a reminder of the unusual burial rites that hold sway here.

The intimate sounds of the warrior Merigold whispering a promise to her claymore, Troll-Fucker, that it shall drink deep of the blood of the wicked this night.

The crunch of beetles, centipedes and roaches beneath your boots as you make your way into the den of of the "lich" who calls herself Vegreet the Bug Collector, and who is in no way just a mummified skeleton being operated like a puppet by someone hiding beneath her "magic robes," and whose eye sockets are definitely glowing with "warelight," not just a couple of small candles stuck there.

The slippery surfaces and pervasive smell of ambergris in the faded palazzo of Volo the Oil-Slickened.

The moaning exultation of a young man whose face is smeared with blood, his lower jaw dangling freely by a bit of sinew, the winner of a contest to see who could stuff the most rocks in their mouth.

The noisome bickering of the three old ladies – Margareet, Angeleet, and Beruthienne – who live in the bell tower, each making her case she is the true exiled queen of Minky-Tosh.

A marble statue of St. Evelyn the White, dirty and covered in moss, the eyes crudely chiseled away so she can't see what her children are getting up to.

The frenzied bleating of a goat as it is tossed from a tall building, followed by the howling of old seer women clamoring to read the newly-spilled entrails.

The ranting of the wizard Oz-Madeus, who objects to the reading of goat entrails on the grounds it is cruel to animals, and who insists the divinatory properties of the innards of a spaghetti squash are a completely adequate substitute.

The freewheeling hurdy-gurdy music of the dumpster gnome Moonpoison Wolfcrystal, an annoyance to some, but a message of revolution to those who understand the code.

The impossibly soft footfalls of the monk Vert as he leaps from building to building tracking the movements of the dreaded fish parade.

The well-oiled mustache of the ranger Vorrys, who claims he is actually the son of a great noble house, that his family's estate used to be the seclusion of a powerful wizard, that he once saw a woman give birth to thousands of tiny spiders, that he has singlehandedly tamed a red dragon and that he can communicate with the bit of slime he keeps in his pocket via telepathy. He has been a resident of the asylum city for a very long time.

The smell of piss and shit and semen, until you finally get used to it.

KNIGHTS OF THE ASYLUM CITY

The asylum city doesn't have anything resembling a government, but there are two knightly orders that keep control of things and ensure the madness of the city is contained within its high walls. The Order of the Knights Orderly is fairly ubiquitous, its members patrolling the streets, keeping an eye on things behind their expressionless white masks, and subduing any residents who begin to get out of hand.

The Order of the Knights Panoptic is more mysterious. Very few have actually encountered a Knight Panoptic, and those who have are usually too frightened to talk about the experience. While there are numerous Knights Orderly, there are thought to be only a handful of Knights Panoptic, each in a hidden lair that allows them to observe what takes place in the city, usually a very high place or a very dark place. Their motives beyond simple observation are unknown.

No one understands the connection between the Knights Orderly and the Knights Panoptic, or if there is even a connection at all.

Knight Orderly

Group, Intelligent

Sword (d8 damage)

6 HP

3 armor

Close

Members of the Order of the Knights Orderly wear plate armor concealed by long white vestments; blank-eyed, expressionless masks obscure their faces. They almost never speak. Instinct: To maintain order

- # **Violently subdue a resident of the asylum city**
- # **Inject a person with paralyzing chemicals**



Ungalion (Knight Panoptic)

Solitary, Huge, Divine, Magical, Intelligent

Claw (d12+9 damage 1 piercing)

22 HP

3 armor

Reach, Forceful, Far

Special Qualities: Electrify the air around its body

Ungalion is a member of the Order of the Knights Panoptic. He is a massive, deer-headed man-beast, three times the size of a normal human. He can be found at the top of the old watchtower, the highest point in the city. Instinct: To observe the asylum city unmolested

- # **Call down a destructive storm**
- # **Chain lightning bolt**

Giulina Castafiel (Knight Panoptic)

Solitary, Stealthy, Intelligent

Blood magic (d10 damage)

20 HP

0 armor

Close, Ignores Armor, Near

Giulina Castafiel is a member of the Order of the Knights Panoptic. She is a vampiress, usually dressed in pristine robes like those worn by the followers of St. Evelyn the White, though she is just as often found wading in a shallow pool of blood in which hundreds of malformed, vampiric fetuses are swimming. Her lair is in the heart of the asylum city's old infirmary. Instinct: To observe the asylum city unmolested

- # **Perform a blood rite**
- # **Vampiric fetus swarm**

Atiloc (Knight Panoptic)

Solitary, Large, Intelligent

Razor forelimbs (b[2d12+2] damage 2 piercing)

16 HP

1 armor

Near

Special Qualities: Any kind of attack from an energy weapon is absorbed into its crystalline carapace and redirected at enemies

Atiloc is rumored to be the leader of the Order of the Knights Panoptic. Its spider-like body is covered in large crystalline growths. It principally resides in the old cathedral, though it is just as often found skulking about in the dark corners of the asylum city. Instinct: To observe the asylum city unmolested

- # **Stalk from the darkness**

"It's like the way I have to write down almost everything I see, so that the record does obscure the thing the record used to be."

Paper Forest
Enny The Great



What is Rituals?

Rituals is a Powered by the Apocalypse game about living with OCD. It's for an MC and one or more players. The aim is to present mechanics that emulate the life of an obsessive compulsive so that people without experience of the illness can understand it a little better.

You can play Rituals by itself as a dramatic game about mental health, or plug it into any other PbtA game. It'll help if you've played or at least read one social focussed PbtA game before, like Monsterhearts or Velvet Glove.

OCD's the neat-freak thing, right?

I've had obsessive compulsive disorder for as long as I can remember.

I wasn't diagnosed till my early 30s. I know what to call it now, and how to act around it. When I was a child, I just thought I'd die if the wrong amount of water was pouring from the faucet.

OCD is one of pop culture's favourite mental health issues (trailing behind Asperger's and psychopathy), and it's massively misrepresented. I'm not, as my colleagues and family can attest, neat. At all. I can't count superfast, or notice obscure details, or any of the cool superpower stuff TV seems to think I can. Sometimes it takes me up to an hour to send an email as I have to check and recheck that I haven't accidentally written anything disgusting in it, so that's fun (I never have, by the way).

The short, *very* layperson version is that everyone has weird little thoughts that pop into their head. Like maybe you're sitting down having a coffee with a buddy, and you think "I could throw this coffee over them". You don't, of course you don't, because you're not an awful violent person. Most people just think, "that was weird" or forget about it altogether. Somebody suffering from OCD can't. They obsess over it, hence the obsessive bit of the name. Because obsessions are something you find shameful or disgusting, they're often violent, sexual, related to physical illness or, if you're religious, blasphemous.

The compulsive bit is the way that sufferers deal with their obsessions. This is the bit of OCD you see in pop culture, because it's apparent and not as gross and distressing as the obsession part: the saying of a mantra, having to tap out a pattern, the frequent hand washing, and yes, sometimes even the need for compulsive order, though not that one as often as you'd think. Performing one of these "rituals" soothes the sufferer's anxiety about the obsession. The problem is that these aren't normal things to be doing, and you don't have a choice about doing them. That's the compulsive part. What starts off as a coping mechanism ends up owning you.

This is where the disorder part of OCD comes in. The combinations of rituals and obsessions, and their spiralling, causes problems in your home and work life. They start to take over. A hoarder probably isn't just filling her house with all that junk because she likes having it around, she's doing it because she thinks that if she throws anything out, her children will get cancer.

The annoying thing about OCD, other than the amount of your life it takes up, is that you know you're crazy. It's not psychosis. Fictional hoarder lady knows that there's no logical reason having a house full of crap will keep her children healthy, just like I knew that keeping the water running wasn't actually keeping me alive. But, even knowing that, I couldn't do anything about it. Because OCD is a dick.

How to play

Your character in Rituals has 4 stats: **Obsessive**, **Compulsive**, **Anxious**, and **Depressed**.

Assign the following numbers to them, in any order you want: 2, 1, 0, -1. The higher the stat, the worse that problem is for you.

In addition to being the crunch of the game, these stats also inform the fiction. For example, if you have a high Anxiety score, your character should be an anxious person.

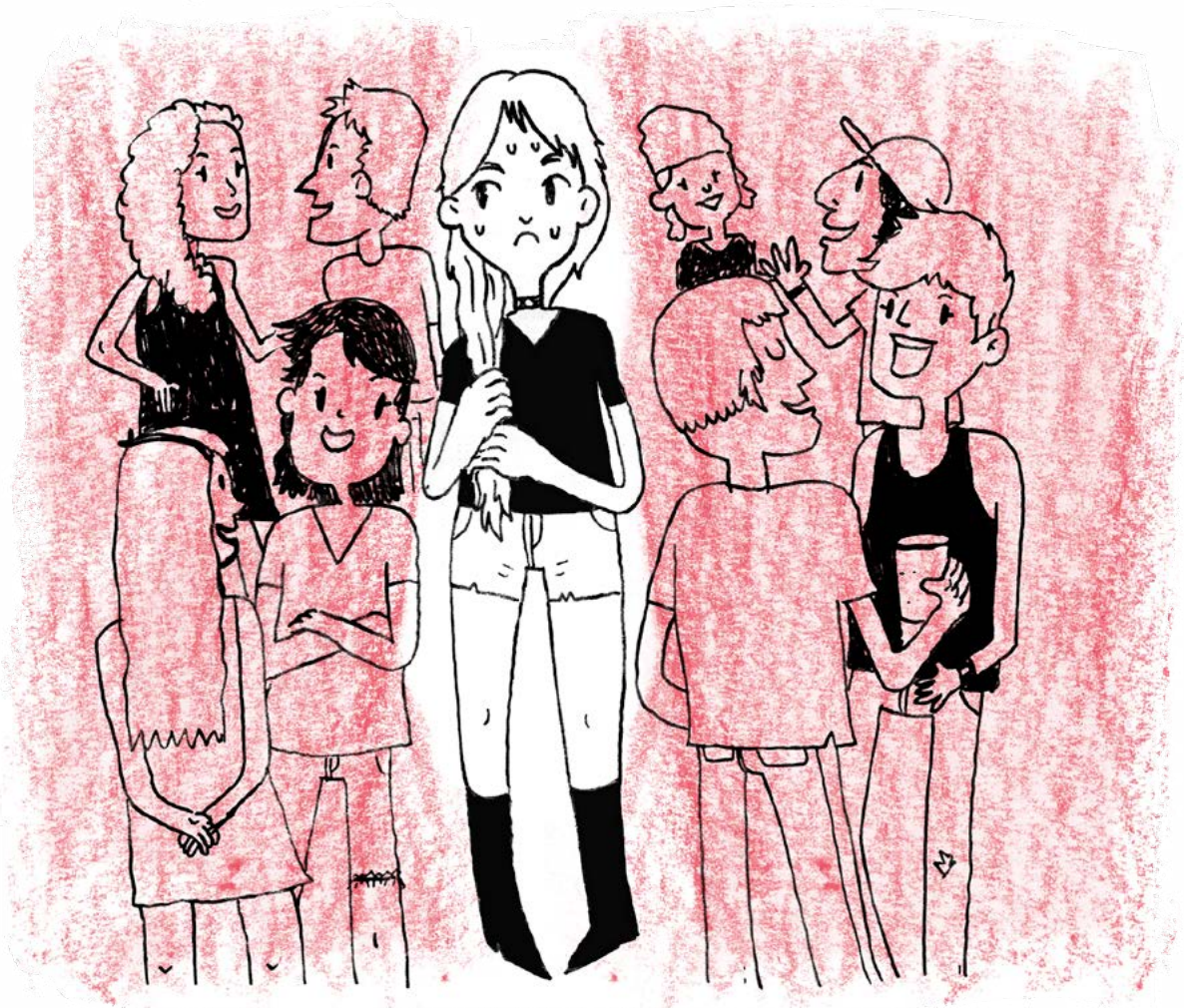
You also have a 6 segment Panic clock. If this clock ever fills, you have a panic attack.

You start with the moves Fend off invasive thoughts, Perform a ritual and Panic attack. If your Anxious starts at or moves to 2, you also get Resist panic. If your Depressed starts at or moves to 2, you get Do anything. You probably don't want them, but you get them anyway. Welcome to mental illness.

If you're plugging this into another PbtA game, you get these stats, moves and the panic clock in addition to anything you would normally get from that game.

When your character acts in the fiction in a way that matches the red text on one of the moves you have access to, you trigger the rest of the move. This involves rolling 2D6, minus the specified Stat (this is the opposite of the usual PbtA procedure, if you're used to that). On a 10+, you're coping. On a 7-9, you're just barely holding together. On either of these results, you'll get to pick options from the move's list that provide fictional and mechanical changes.

If you roll a 6-, the MC gets to make a move. Things are going to get worse for you.



Player Moves

Fend off invasive thoughts

When you try to convince yourself that the horrific, disgusting or shameful thing that just flashed into your mind is no big deal, roll-Obsessive. On a 10+, choose 1. On a 7-9, choose 2. You can choose one fewer option by Performing a ritual.

- * You obsess about the thought for hours on end, and check and recheck your behaviour to convince yourself that it's okay. Increase Obsessive by 1.
- * You worry constantly that you're going to act on the thought. Increase Anxious by 1.
- * You worry that you must be a terrible person, and it drains your day. Increase Depressed by 1.

Perform a ritual

When you perform a compulsive ritual to help you ignore your obsessions, describe what your ritual entails and roll-Compulsive. Rituals must be something noticeable, repeatable and inconvenient. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9 choose 1.

- * Lower your Anxious by 1.
- * Don't raise your Compulsive by 1.
- * Nobody notices you carrying out the ritual.
- * The ritual doesn't have a significant detrimental effect on your day.

Resist panic

When your Anxiety hits +2, you gain access to Resist panic.

When you're dealing with any social situation, roll-Anxious. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- * You manage to last the entire encounter without bolting.
- * You don't need to excuse yourself to hide for most of it.
- * Nobody notices that you're anxious.
- * Don't fill in a segment of your Panic clock.

Do anything

When your Depression hits +2, you gain access to Do anything.

When you attempt to do anything productive, roll -Depressed. On a 10+, choose 1. On a 7-9 choose 2.

- * You spend far too long worrying about not doing it.
- * You're convinced your efforts are worthless. Increase Depressed by 1.
- * You spend every moment second guessing yourself. Increase Anxious by 1.

Panic Attack

When your Panic clock is filled, you have a panic attack: a sudden period of intense fear with symptoms including palpitations, sweating, shaking, shortness of breath, numbness, or a feeling that something bad is about to happen. You immediately have to end whichever scene you're roleplaying.

After describing the panic attack erase all the segments on the clock, then X out one segment. Be careful, future panic attacks are more likely and frequent now.

MC Moves

- * Bombard them with terrible images that fill them with doubt.
- * Put them in social situations that fuel their anxiety.
- * Increase or decrease one of their stats.
- * Have the world carry on around them regardless of their pain.
- * Have someone fail to understand them.

Further reading

If you think you might be suffering from OCD, speak to your doctor about Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or CBT (fight acronyms with acronyms, people). I found it tremendously helpful and it's allowed me to get on living my life. *Overcoming Obsessive Thoughts* by David Clarke (<https://www.amazon.com/Overcoming-Obsessive-Thoughts-Gain-Control/dp/1572243813>) was massively useful during the process; I also found antidepressants necessary to get to the point where therapy could help.

For an excellent and entertaining summary of what it's like having OCD, check out Mera Wilson's article *4 Things Nobody Tells You About Having OCD* on Cracked.com <http://www.cracked.com/blog/4-things-no-one-tells-you-about-having-ocd/> and if you need a little light relief after all this, here's some genuinely great OCD jokes <http://standardissuemagazine.com/voices/that-joke-isnt-funny-anymore/>.

Obsessive



Compulsive



Depressed



Anxious



Panic Clock



The Madness of Cú Chulainn

By Tom McGrenery. Illustrated by Claudia Cangini.

Introduction

The Madness of Cú Chulainn is a short story game for two players about the struggle over the fate of a hero – on one side, the Daughters of Calatin, and on the other, the friends and family of Cú Chulainn in the kingdom of Ulster. Each side has a different outcome to which they must try to steer the story.

How to Play

Take turns to create scenes in the story. On your turn, describe an obstacle or activity that draws Cú Chulainn towards your desired outcome. When it's not your turn, you play Cú Chulainn and say what he does in response to the situation.

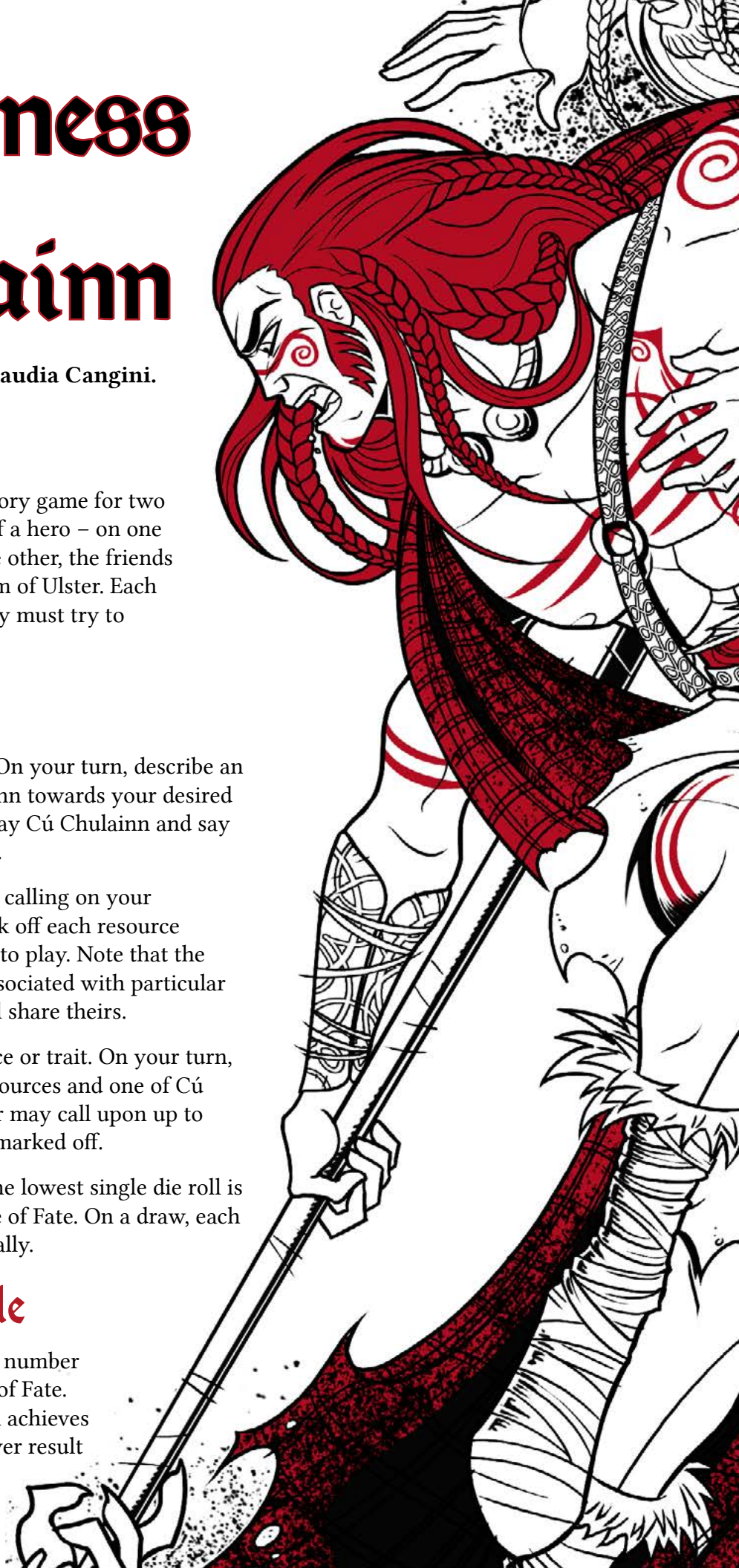
When it is your turn, build a dice pool by calling on your resources and Cú Chulainn's traits – mark off each resource or trait used. Describe how these come into play. Note that the resources of the kingdom of Ulster are associated with particular people, while the Daughters of Calatin all share theirs.

Add one die to your pool for each resource or trait. On your turn, you may call on at most three of your resources and one of Cú Chulainn's traits. The Cú Chulainn player may call upon up to three of his traits that have not yet been marked off.

Roll your pools: the highest total wins. The lowest single die roll is added to the winner's tally in the Balance of Fate. On a draw, each side adds their lowest die result to their tally.

Concluding the Tale

After each side has had three turns, roll a number of dice equal to your tally in the Balance of Fate. Re-roll ties. The side with the higher total achieves their final outcome. The side with the lower result narrates the outcome.



Many years ago, when the curse of Macha fell again upon the men of Ulster, for nine days there was not a warrior in the kingdom who could lift a spear. Every Ulsterman lay wracked with the pains of childbirth: this was the curse their ancestors earned by their shameful treatment of a woman. Only the young hero Cú Chulainn, the son of Lugh, could protect the kingdom. He held off the armies of Queen Mebh, defeating her champions, slaying the wizard Calatin and his sons.

Now Queen Mebh and King Ailill come for their revenge. They plan to draw out Cú Chulainn to an unwinnable fight – and his demise. The three daughters of Calatin, returned from Babylon, have brought a madness upon Cú Chulainn, filling him with horror and despair. In his madness Cú Chulainn sees enemies and slaughter everywhere, and burns to face the early death once prophesied for him.

Cú Chulainn

He is...

- # proud
- # fatalistic
- # savage
- # loyal
- # surrounded by visions of horror
- # small in stature
- # bound by a strict warrior's code
- # slayer of Calatin and his 27 sons
- # geased never to refuse food at a hearth
- # geased never to eat the flesh of a hound

The Daughters of Calatin

- # The gift of prophecy
- # The art of magical disguise
- # A spell to transform food and drink into blood
- # The power to create illusions of phantom armies
- # Magic to harrow the mind with crushing despair
- # A thirst for revenge
- # Knowledge from distant lands
- # A silver tongue
- # Myriad potions and poisons

The Kingdom of Ulster

Deichtine, Cú Chulainn's mother

- # A blessing from a cup of wine

Conchobar, the king

- # A great feasting hall with poets and musicians
- # The Valley of the Deaf, Gleann na mBodhar, where no sound from outside can be heard

Emer, wife of Cú Chulainn

- # Sweet words
- # Wisdom
- # Skill at needlework

Cathbad, the druid

- # Powers of prophecy and wizardry

The Madness of Legends

Apocalypse World: Ríastrad of Cú Chulainn

Is and-sin cét-riastarda im Choinculaind, co n-derna úathbásach n-ilrechtach n-ingantach n-anachnid de. ... Imsloic indara súil dó ina chend, issed mod danastarsed fiadchorr tagraim do lár a gruade a iarthor a chlocaind, sesceing a seitig co m-bói for a grúad sechtair. Riastarda a bél co urthrachda. ... Airddithir remithir tailcithir tressithir sithithir séolchrand prímlunhgi móre in bunne diriuch dondfola atrácht a fírchleithe a chendmullaig i certairddi, co n-derna dubcháiaich n-druidechta de amail chiaich de rígbuidin, in tan tic rí dia tenecur hi fescur lathi gemreta.

Then the first warp-spasm of rage came upon Cú Chulainn, making him into a terrible, many-shaped, strange and unrecognisable thing. ... One eye vanished into his head so far that a wild crane would struggle to pull it out; the other popped out onto his cheek. His mouth was a monstrous distortion. ... A stream of dark blood rose from the top of his head like the mast of a great ship and turned to witch-mist hanging like the smoke above a king's palace on a wintry night.

When the warp-spasm of Lugh engulfs you, describe the grisly transformation of your body and roll +Weird. *On a 10+, choose two. *On a 7-9, choose one.

- In combat you fight as a large gang.
- You are able to tell friend from foe.
- Life remains tenable.

Monsterhearts: Deception of Odysseus

ὁ δὲ οὐ βουλόμενος στρατεύεσθαι προσποιεῖται μανίαν. Παλαμῆδης δὲ ὁ Ναυπλίου ἤλεγξε τὴν μανίαν ψευδῆ, καὶ προσποιησαμένῳ μεμηνένῳ παρηκολούθει· ἀρπάσας δὲ Τηλέμαχον ἐκ τοῦ κόλπου τῆς Πηνελόπης ὡς κτενῶν ἐξιφούλκει. Ὀδυσσεὺς δὲ περὶ τοῦ παιδὸς εὐλαβηθεὶς ὠμολόγησε τὴν προσποίητον μανίαν καὶ στρατεύεται.

Unwilling to go to war, Odysseus feigned madness. But Palamedes, son of Nauplius, proved his mania false. While Odysseus ranted and raved, Palamedes followed and snatched Telemachus from Penelope, drawing his sword as if to kill him. In his fear for his son, Odysseus admitted that he was only pretending to be mad, and he went to the war.

When you feign insanity, roll with Cold, Volatile or Dark, depending. *On a 10+, your deception fools everyone for as long as you maintain your “unhinged” behaviour. *On a 7-9, doing so will cost you an item or person that you value. Regardless, give one or more of those present a string on you.

Dungeon World: Curse of Suibhne Geilt

Dorad andara hurchar don fhogha faobrach uillenngér dochum an chléirigh budhdhén go rosben isin chlog robháoi for a ucht, go rosging a crann as a n-airde isin aer, co n-ébairt an cléireach: ‘Guidhim-si an Coimde cumachtach’, ar sé, ‘an ccomhairde dochúaidh crann an fhogha isin aer & a néllaibh nimhe co ndeachair-si amail gach n-ethaid & an bás roimris-si for mo dhalta-sa.’

The spear pierced the bell Saint Ronan wore and the shaft sprang off it up in the air, whereupon the cleric said: “I pray the mighty Lord that as high as the spear-shaft went into the air, among the clouds of Heaven, may you go likewise even as any bird, and may the death which you have inflicted on my foster-child be that which will carry you off.”

When you are cursed for the second time by a saint, roll +INT. *On a 10+, choose two. *On a 7-9, choose three.

- You are startled by loud noises and cannot abide the presence of humans, like a tiny, terrified bird.
- You tread so lightly that you can take flight like a bird on the wing for a mile or more.
- Feathers grow upon your body and you must roost in trees to sleep.
- Your madness lasts for more than a year.



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CHEAT YOUR OWN ADVENTURE[®] 44

YOU'RE THE STAR OF THE STORY!
CHOOSE FROM 20 POSSIBLE ENDINGS.

MY FEMALE HYSTERIA

BY FRED BEDNARSKI



ILLUSTRATED BY CLAUDIA CANGINI

You can find the rules to
Cheat Your Own Adventure
on the Jellysaw website: [http://
jellysawgames.blogspot.
co.uk/2016/12/cheat-your-own-
adventure.html](http://jellysawgames.blogspot.co.uk/2016/12/cheat-your-own-adventure.html)



CAN A FICTITIOUS DISORDER DRIVE YOU MAD?

The 9th of October, 1844. You will never forget that date. Life before then seems so perfect now: an estate in Surrey, marvelous balls in London, intimate soirees in Brighton. It all ended when your cousin convinced your father that your tendency to “cause trouble” could be a symptom of hysteria. On that date, the 9th of October, 1844, a visiting doctor confirmed that diagnosis and you were immediately taken away to Surrey County Asylum to be treated among other women. It has been weeks since the 9th of October, 1844. Even though you feel powerless inside these walls, you do not feel insane. Even though there are women here who clearly need help more than you, you are not able to convince the doctors you are, in fact, well enough to be released. It seems everything you do is yet another symptom of female hysteria. Is it, perhaps, the world of men that has truly gone mad? Play to find out!

With a sense of defeat, you enter the common room. You have just been accused of deception, yet another symptom of hysteria, by Dr. Hervey when you tried to explain that the medication you were given was to blame for the previous symptom: lack of appetite. The room is full of people. Many of the truly sick are lying on the floor next to the fireplace for warmth, a burly male attendant making sure none of their dresses catch fire. Someone sings a French song, someone else sobs, a paper ball rolls across the floor. A group of other “hysteria women” sit around the table. They are talking about some new treatment that Agnes was given. She looks worse than ever.

What happens next? It all depends on your choices! You might prove your wellbeing and return to your normal life or end up like the women on the floor thanks to the medications and treatments you were given. Maybe you’ll escape this mad place by executing a cunning plan, speak with a reporter who is willing to shed light about the misdiagnosis of female hysteria, or undergo a treatment that will let you speak with the spirits of the dead. You need to play and see for yourself.

CHEAT YOUR OWN ADVENTURE



N 0-553-24678

When playing this adventure, rolling less than the lowest Difficulty does not mean the protagonist dies. Instead, the rolling player narrates a scene showing how the protagonist will never escape Surrey County Asylum.





THREE DOZEN
GREAT OLD
ONES

1. Ugkob, the Drifting Oblivion, floats above as a cloud, pulling wisps of sanity in its wake. Eyes appear in its formations, manifestations of the final shock of those mind-flayed as if by the wind.

2. Nephesiin, She Who Quells All. A vast nine-fingered hand whose arm always appears to extend from the chest of all who perceive her. Each fingertip glows in a different primary color, and orbiting around the palm are a number of stars, with their luminous matter drawn towards her in great serpentine curls.

3. Lothlomith, a being of impossible geometry. His eyes are circles with pi being equal to 3, and the angles of his triangular claws add up to 200 degrees.

4. The Nameless God of Amenkha hoards the secrets of the void. It has no form visible to humans, but its presence is always accompanied by maddening whispers of a thousand dead languages and the sound of thunderous wings.

5. Ap'tx, the Plummeting Spires, a great silent city orbiting a dying sun. In its shadowed plazas of dark, alien stone and titanic spires, humanity sleeps and dreams of living their lives. When Ap'tx decrees, the dream ends and its narrow servitors bring the newly awakened to the fresh, protracted terrors of a hungry god.

6. Ak'telor, the Flesh Forest, whose body is a grove of meaty, vibrating trees, each with a pulsating, bloodshot eye in the center of its trunk.

1. Ag'lom, the Drowning Star, manifests as a meteor with many holes. If you look in these holes you see the open-mouthed faces of drowned fools who did the same; the meteor starts gushing water immediately afterwards.

2. Fnordlechum the World Fish, some strange motley fusion of fish and tree with wax dripping from everlit candles on twisted branches and water flowing from its gills. Its roots hide a portal to its dreaming land, the Endless Archipelago.


3. π lives in the space between thoughts and words. Cultures who encounter it either embrace the silence or pursue stimulus overload in a vain attempt to edge the being out.

4. Hec'tumel: Pale Lizard! Slithering One! Death is Its Eyes! An antique being haunting vast, bone-littered caverns. Its codex has appeared throughout the ages, always in a place hidden from the light. The codex includes a chant to summon Hec'tumel, who has no power in this world unless given a host, and no knowledge of the current world except that which you give it. It can teach you the spells contained in the codex, but rarely does so for free.

5. Cytoziribuloskoldrix of the Endless Sky. The sky grows around you, eating up the horizon until you cannot stand and you fall endlessly through clear days, starry nights, storms, all manner of cloud palaces, the sun beating down on you, neverending fall, falling no land in sight wind rushing past and all there is is the sky.

6. Sifhorthrotg, the Living Fog, is a shape-changing vapor who sleeps among the clouds and descends to earth as a conscious fog to corrupt minds.

Illustration by Vandel J Arden

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1. Shyem-Elan, the Mad Playwright, who concocted the tale of reality as we know it, is well regarded in the community of Ancient Folk for his surrealist twist endings.
 2. The Idolation of the Sublime, an ancient text bound in a leather of unknown origin which feels supple, warm, and welcoming, reads in whatever language the reader finds most comfortable. It smells of your childhood or your lost lover and should you read it long enough, you will ache for nothing more than its words until you too will worship at its altar.
 3. Che'etchulan, the Cosmic Spider. With no discernible front or back, its gargantuan translucent torso undulates with probing, crawling legs. Its maw randomly appears about its body to devour its prey. When one looks too closely, they can see its prey writhing within.
 4. Skarpenive, Melixia Shining Eye, the black summer queen who lives in the sun and sends her children to make love to flowers and infect humanity with saccharine jitters and dance-inducing intoxicants. Her milk is mead, her realm is drunkenness. All secrets are hers.
 5. Not a true Old One, but a servitor who slipped his bonds long ago, Achriel, the Knife, appears within the shadow of the one who summoned him. In exchange for something particularly precious and rare, it will kill one creature of the summoner's choosing and one other close to the summoner each calendar year until the summoner dies. Those who have bargained with the Knife will see him writhing everywhere, always listening, choosing his next victim.
 6. Mr. Rightbehind exists just out of view but close enough to whisper into your ear or gently drag his nails against the back of your neck. He will only transfer to another in the complete absence of light, but you can never be sure he is gone or just... waiting.



1. She of the Impossible Name, a non-Euclidean alphabet forming it. Any who manage to hear or say this name are swept to her realm.
2. Malbruggoth, also known as the Sucking Bloat, is found in a widespread puffy skin condition throughout a population. What looks like a bulge feels like a void that needs to be filled and will devour what it can.
3. Tyemni'anoch, the Hunger That Shades, a being whose tar-weeping, rocky intestines form a cavernous complex of tunnels and holes that touch on all places beneath the earth untouched by light. Its gem-studded excreta have given rise to more than one wealthy-but-sleepy town's habit of quiet sacrifices to the shadow beneath.
4. Ygnithoth, the Slumbering Mountains, a great amorphous old one that fell to the Earth in a deep slumber. It is said its body formed the Appalachians and its sick blood is the coal within. When enough has been removed, it will stir once more.
5. Guulgorthan, Who is Naught but Mouths, appears as a bloated figure with mouths where its eyes, nose, and ears should be; it has a maw at every point of articulation on its body.
6. Imiquimod the Defender, the Keeper, the Eternal Prison. It exists as a field of space that extends towards and envelops sentient life. Nothing is allowed to harm the life in this space. Imiquimod consumes everything in its body and moves on as soon as any creature attempts to leave.



1. Ptyan'ith Mestonti, Guardian of the Ageless Vault Outside Time, an enormous six-limbed translucent reptile that radiates a strange time-altering phosphorescence. It dwells in a cavern under the crust of the rogue planet Morthath near the Pleiades cluster.
2. The Nameless Dread lives in the edges of your peripheral vision, summoned by the collective anxiety of humanity. It is stronger now than it has been in decades.
3. Klo-Peth, the Cassidy Hills Killer, is a frighteningly tall humanoid, with coarse grey hide, a prehensile neck, and an eyeless face. Its limbs are so broken and many-angled, it looks like a leafless tangle of trees to the unsuspecting. It stalks the high country in winter, leaving its victims as caricatures of itself.
4. Glomerulus spreads into your mind as a nostalgic smell, triggering memories from other lives and long dead worlds.
5. Ka-Inod, the Screaming Tower, a massive cylindrical protrusion of black, oily flesh covered in long, hard quills upon which insane revelers have willingly impaled themselves.
6. Glormitorplimengr, or Scratch, is among the most distant brown dwarf stars in the galaxy. It manifests itself as a figure cloaked in dirty, dusty rags covered in feathers and fleas. The more you try not to scratch the stronger it grows. Feeling itchy?

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1. Kit-po, possessor of eyes and all they contain, journeys by line of sight from one set of optical orbs to the next, even those of animals, or in pictures. Those she's controlling claim no memory of it later, but you will know her by the unusual glitter of her eyes.
2. The intelligence 6173916ggsu8 lives in the collected form of all bugs on the Internet. It grows stronger with every cross-site scripting vulnerability.
3. Ketchketektcan, He who creeps and crawls, dwells beneath the earth where His restless slumber drives the worms, maggots, vermin, and roaches to leave their subterranean dwellings and encroach upon the homes of the denizens of Upper Billing End.
4. Zskr-Oghaq, the Polluted Gyre, a being made manifest as a patch of seemingly man-made debris and sludge trapped in the currents of the North Pacific Gyre. Environmentalists, climate scientists and activists continue to investigate and note the growth of Zskr-Oghaq, who they have named "the Great Pacific Garbage Patch," but none have yet realized how imminent the full emergence of the Great Old One is.
5. Smangldaire, a bearded frogman wearing purple glasses, with hallucinogenic smoke pouring from his nose. He lives in opium dens and outside coffeehouses, stealing the minds of the young with hypnotic poetry and the choicest dope.
6. Nyarlabrotep, Lord of the Frats in the Walls. Exclusively recruits cultists called Chad. Will not rest till all brewskis have been consumed.



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