

Dreampunk

Xavid

Dreampunk, by Xavid

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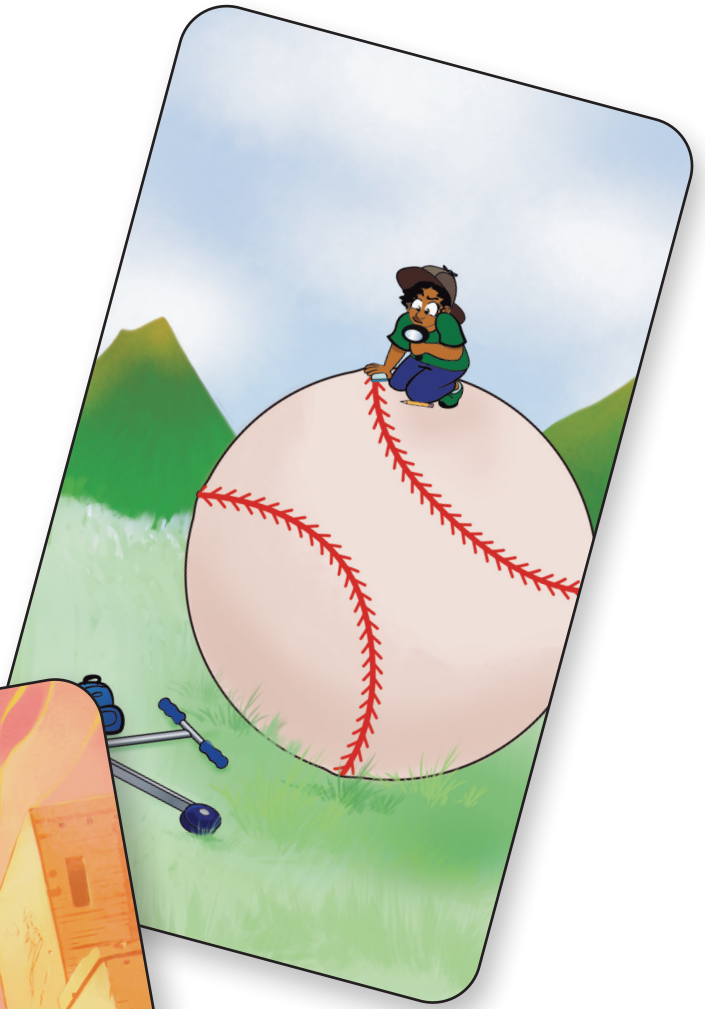
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What is Dreampunk?

At night, you sleep. And when you sleep, you dream. But these dreams are not idle imaginings, without consequence. No, through some curse or blessing, your dreams tap into something greater. What this means for you, what you will do to escape or to harness this, is for you to decide and discover.

When you sleep, without fail, you find yourself in the Dream, a persistent world where you meet others like yourself and many more entirely unlike yourself. It is a world of wonders and dangers, both personal and alien. Each night, it is your refuge and your prison. And each night, you fear you might not wake up again.

The Dream is not like the waking world. It is not solid and Euclidean. It resists attempts to scientifically determine its basic physics. It runs more on ideas and motivations than mass and energy. Nevertheless, it has cause and effect and consequence, though they can be twisted things.

For while you Dreamers have powers in the dream, abilities beyond what you may know in the waking world, that does not mean that the Dream is safe for you. For not all that enter the Dream manage to escape it. And those that do are always changed.

Tabletopping

Dreampunk is a tabletop roleplaying game, a game played by a small group, perhaps 2–6 people, who get together to collaboratively tell a certain kind of story. By default, I assume that this game will be played by friends and/or family sitting around a table together. During game, you'll all describe what characters do, what happens as a result, and play off each others' contributions.

Players

Most players will play a Dreamer, someone who visits the same uncanny world (the Dream) whenever they sleep. Something subtle ties the various Dreamers together: they'll end up meeting again night after night.

By default, one among you plays the Guide, tasked with representing the environment of the Dream and playing the non-Dreamer characters, the denizens of the Dream, also known as support characters.

The same player doesn't have to play the Guide every time; if you rotate who's playing the Guide, everyone creates a Dreamer character and the character for the player who's currently Guide happens to not show up in the Dream while they have the Guide role.

It's also possible to have everyone play a Dreamer and divide the Guide's role among the group. This possibility is discussed in "Distributing the Guide" on pg. 79.

Cards

Dreampunk is played with a deck of cards, but not a deck of ordinary playing cards. The cards should be surreal, artistic, and laden with metaphor. These can be the Dreampunk deck of cards, but other cards such as *Dixit* or *Mysterium* cards or perhaps tarot or oracle decks can also work well. Each Dreamer starts each session of play with a hand of 5 cards which will be used as a resource. Dreamers will refresh their hands back up to 5 cards when they wake from the Dream or find respite (see pg. 23).

Dreamers don't keep the same specific cards between sessions of play. Each player should return their cards to the deck when they finish playing for the day.

The Guide has moves that play the top card of the deck, but does not have a hand of cards of their own.

Safety, Meta, and Player Conflicts

The world of Dreampunk can get dark and intense. When it moves into nightmare territory, it can sometimes get into areas that may be difficult or unsafe for some players. Or there may just be directions or topics that feel unfun or unpleasant. Remember that players are more important than the game, and that everyone's safety and fun is more important than fictional concerns or strict adherence to the rules. Your characters may disagree or dislike each other, but players should practice kindness and work together to tell a story that's fun and safe for everyone.

The door is always open: it's okay for anyone to take a break from the game or stop playing at any time.

During play, anyone can say "Pause" at any time to freeze play, and that player can express what they need. This can be a practical matter like needing to use the bathroom or deal with dinner, or for safety reasons to state their boundaries or needs. If something that happened in game makes you unhappy or causes you difficulties, you can ask to change it, and you don't need to explain why. Alternately, sometimes discussing an issue without changing anything or expressing concerns about directions play might go in the future is what you want. Everyone at the table should work together to figure out something that works for everyone.

You can also use the Cut or Awaken moves (see pg. 24) as an "escape valve" to end a difficult scene or one that for whatever reason you don't want to continue.

The important thing is to prioritize players, establish the expectation that it's okay for people to ask for what they need, and live up to that expectation. Different approaches work well for different groups, so do what works for your table.¹

Before playing, go around the table and discuss people's expectations: what they're looking for in the game and any topics or elements they particularly want to explore or avoid. Also be sure to check in with each other during play as well.

The default assumption in this game is that play is mostly cooperative, with Dreamers working together rather than fighting each other. Discuss with your table how hard and fast this should be. Both Dreamer-versus-Dreamer fights being entirely forbidden and them being allowed when appropriate can work well, but if different players have different expectations this can lead to unfun outcomes.

Overall, regardless of what you choose, it's everyone's responsibility to try to make the game fun for everyone at the table. If someone's not having fun, that's an indication that you should pause the action and figure out if there's something you should change so the game works better for everybody.

¹ Some groups may find they prefer other safety tools; you may want to look at the X-Card by John Stavropoulos (<http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>) or the TTRPG Safety Toolkit curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk (<http://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit>).

Gameplay Agenda

This is a game of shared narrative, and it works best when everyone is working together to build the story. Everyone at the table should keep these goals in mind as they play to help the game work well.

Embrace dream logic. The Dream isn't a real place, with regular geometry and consistency. That's something to embrace. Don't restrict yourself to the logic of the waking world and ordinary ways of approaching problems. Don't try to understand the Dream in terms of civilizations, histories, and rules that you can pin down precisely. Instead, accept that themes, mood, and symbolism will drive what you experience.

Engage with the Dream. If events in the Dream just feel arbitrary, it's easy to feel like choices don't matter and no one can have a meaningful effect on anything. Therefore, engage with support characters and their conflicts and interactions to keep things meaningful even as the physical environment around you remains in flux.

Make everyone's contributions matter. Play off elements introduced by other players, including the Guide, and treat them as significant. If someone treats a decision as a big deal, support that in your play by making it feel consequential. If someone is interested in a particular element, consider playing with or against that element. Give everyone a chance to shine and be the focus at the table. Staying together as a group most of the time can help ensure everyone gets a chance to be involved in what's happening.

Play to find out what happens. Neither the Guide nor Dreamer players should come to game with a specific plan in mind for a plot. The Guide player does not need to prepare an extensive scenario; at most, they should bring ideas they have for characters they might introduce or things that might happen and be willing to discard these ideas based on the flow of the game. Dreamer players may have ideas on how their character progression might go, but should be flexible and willing to evolve in unexpected ways. Each player has the power to do the unexpected, to take the game in unanticipated directions. The Dreamers have as much ability to decide where the story goes as the Guide, and that is to be celebrated. In all cases, the cards may prompt new and different ideas; take advantage of this.

Media Touchstones

The Dream isn't a predefined place detailed in this book; it's a world the group as a whole will explore and define during play, with inspiration from the cards and each other. Nevertheless, here are some movies and books that inspired Dreampunk and can help you get into the mindset of the Dream.

Movies

- *Ink* (Jamin Winans)
- *Paprika* (Satoshi Kon)
- *MirrorMask* (Dave McKean, Neil Gaiman)
- *Labyrinth* (Jim Henson)

Books and Stories

- *Every Heart a Doorway*, by Seanan McGuire
- "Red Dirt Witch", by N. K. Jemisin
- *The Dreaming Place*, *The Onion Girl*, and *The Blue Girl*, among others, by Charles de Lint
- *Un Lun Dun*, by China Miéville



The Flow of Play

Dreampunk can be structured in two ways. In a one-shot, a group gets together once to play and the game is over when they finish that day. In a “campaign”, the same group gets together periodically in multiple sessions, for a series of adventures linked into an overarching storyline and allowing for more character growth.

Getting Started

Someone who’s read this book and is comfortable with the rules should explain the premise of the game, go over basic concepts, and answer questions.

Discuss who, if anyone, will play the Guide. Each non-Guide player should pick a playbook and start filling it out to create a character (see pg. 30).

While thinking about characters, also give everyone a chance to talk about what they’re looking for in the game and anything they want to avoid.

Beginning Play

Before beginning play for the first time, it can be helpful to go around the circle and introduce your characters, what they look like, what sorts of possessions they might have, and perhaps something about their motivations or situation. This also helps establish characters as distinct from players, set expectations, and perhaps prompt ideas for interactions and character relationships.

Having each Dreamer player write their character’s name on a folded index card can be a helpful indicator to help remember who everyone is.

Once everyone’s situated, start play with a new chapter.

Chapters

A chapter is a series of scenes focused around a shared situation, problem, or goal. Perhaps an antagonist appears and the group figures out how to deal with them, or perhaps you’re exploring a particular area or pursuing a particular objective. The chapter lasts until the focus is resolved or decisively abandoned; it could conclude within a single session of play or extend across several.

Chapters often start with with the Dreamers having just fallen asleep and there being a gap of time or context from whatever may have happened to them previously. Alternately, a chapter may follow directly from a previous chapter, when the resolution of one focus leads naturally to something to follow up on.

Before a chapter, discuss as a table what sort of focus you want to have. Think about any Needs you want to engage with, and what sort of focus might give you opportunities to do so. Chapters can have well-defined focuses, or they can be pretty much take-it-as-it-comes, but taking a moment to touch base can help come up with a theme that everyone’s interested in.

After you've established the chapter focus, when you're ready to begin play, have each player, starting with the Guide, play the top card of the deck and interpret it to establish something about the starting scene. (This is functionally an Explore move; see pg. 23.) Once everyone has contributed, the first scene begins and anyone can begin roleplaying and taking actions.

There generally aren't formal "turns". Dreamers can act in whatever order makes sense narratively. Everyone should work to make sure that all players get their turn in the spotlight and no one gets left out. If things get too hectic during a conflict or other exciting situation, it can be helpful to take turns around the table to make sure everyone has a chance to act and that each move can be resolved before another player makes a move. Alternately, multiple Dreamers may work together with a Joint Move (see pg. 16).

Scene Breaks

A chapter in Dreampunk consists of a series of scenes, similar to scenes in a book, play, or TV show. During a scene, Dreamer players describe what they do, the Guide responds on behalf of the world and support characters to describe what happens as a result, and both will make Moves, working together to establish the story of Dreampunk.

A scene ends and a new scene begins when the time or location of the action changes. When a scene ends, discard the cards that have been played; the table is now clear for something new.

While scenes can take place directly one after another, there are often gaps of time or space between them. This allows the story to focus on interesting or meaningful events and skip past things that happened but aren't necessary to play out "on-screen".²

Scene transitions can be triggered whenever it makes sense, often using the Cut move (see pg. 24). For example, if your character suggests going somewhere, an immediate transition to the scene when you arrive can work well.

Waking up from the Dream often serves as a type of hard scene transition that can happen after a scene that resolves an ongoing effort, one of overwhelming intensity, or when it otherwise feels appropriate. This can be proposed by the Guide or a Dreamer player. This triggers the Awaken move (see pg. 25) and then leads into a scene that may feel completely disconnected from the previous scene, sometimes serving as the start of a new Chapter. This does not mean that the events of the previous scene become irrelevant, but the disconnect might mean their relevance is not immediately visible.

In general, scenes aren't some strong and rigid structure; they're mainly noted to keep the table from getting too cluttered with cards and to avoid getting bogged down in uninteresting minutiae. Use them flexibly as fits your table.

² Whether the characters actually perceived these events or whether the flow of the Dream just assumes they happened can be ambiguous.

Moves

When playing your character, you'll want to do things. Sometimes it's something you can pretty clearly do. Then you just say what you're doing, and it happens.

Sometimes, however, what you want to do is something hard or impactful or floundering or weird. Moves establish things you can definitely do, what that entails and costs, and perhaps something of what that means.

(If someone disagrees about what you can do, work as a table to propose tweaks or compromises to find something that works for everyone. Consider “yes, and” or “yes, but” improvisational responses to add wrinkles without rejecting what someone wants to do. The Guide also has a move, Resolve Doubt, for handling situations where a Dreamer can do something but the outcome is unclear.)

Every Dreamer has a base set of moves and a few unique moves based on their archetype concept, or “playbook”. The main types of moves are Lucid Moves, which let a Dreamer play a card to reshape the Dream based on some element of the card played, and Twist Moves, which cause the Dreamer to falter or fail but let them draw a card in exchange. See the next chapter for more on Dreamer moves.

The Guide has moves, too. (See pg. 63.) The Guide tends to take moves reactively, responding to actions of the Dreamers or perhaps to their failure to take action.

In the next chapter, we'll discuss the moves all Dreamers share.



Dreamer Moves

Each player except the Guide plays a Dreamer. A Dreamer is someone from the waking world, which may (or may not) look a lot like our world, who has somehow gotten tied to the Dream. Perhaps it was a strong unfillable desire. Perhaps it was an inescapable pain. Perhaps it's the workings of those beneath the surface of shadows. Regardless, each night, when they dream, they come here.

And here, they find they have powers, uncanny and strange and fundamental. These are not abilities they have in the waking world, but something specific to the nature of the Dream, or perhaps due to their situation as foreign to the dream.

It is up to you, the player, how much your Dreamer is aware of the Dream. Some may find it fun to take a consistent analytical perspective, while others may prefer to have their Dreamer get caught up in events at times and forget that they are not awake. While Dreamers always have access to their powers, it's valid to have your character sometimes forget about them or activate them subconsciously.

But nevertheless, their powers always lurk.

Lucid Moves

Dreamers have a fundamental power here, in the Dream. Dreamers are from outside this world, and that lets them take the glimmers of the Dream and reshape them like clay. This is represented with Lucid Moves.

Every Dreamer has access to the same set of Lucid Moves, plus one special playbook-specific Lucid Move. The standard Lucid Moves are:

Manifest: Summon or create something or someone.

Invert: Turn something or someone into what it is not.

Exaggerate: Elevate a trait or quality to extremes.

Link: Make an opening in your environment into a gateway to somewhere else.

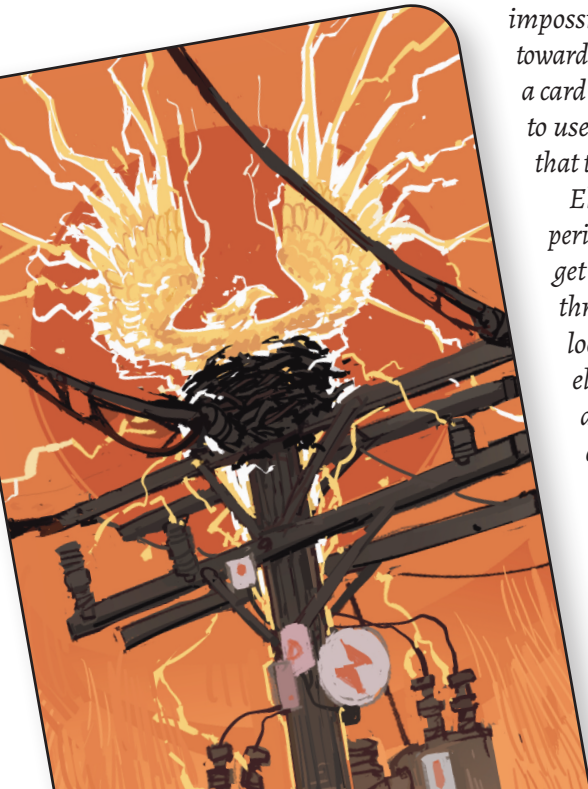
Realize: Break expectations or evoke a new perspective.

You can make a Lucid Move in two different ways. **The most common way of making a Lucid Move is playing a card from your hand.** This card stays in play until the end of the scene. Your description of your move must reflect some element of the card you played. This can be literal or metaphorical, but you as a player must believe your element is there. Creative and symbolic interpretations are highly encouraged.

Another way to make a Lucid Move is “chaining” off a card in play that was played by someone else. You must use an element of the card in play that has not been used this scene or interpret an already-used element of the card in play in a different way. In order to chain, you must discard any card from your hand.

Narin and Elif have been tossed off of an impossibly high cloud and are falling towards a field of lava. Narin's player plays a card showing a bird on an electrical pole to use Manifest and create a large eagle that they can land on.

Elif is happy to no longer be falling perilously, but wants to find some way to get back at the duke who ordered them thrown off. They decide that talking to locals is a good next step. Seeing the electric pole on Narin's card, they discard another card to chain off it and use Link to cause a gap in the smoke ahead to lead to a city bright with electric lights. Elif hopes that someone there will be sympathetic and give them useful advice or support.



Lucid Moves can affect people, places, things, the environment, and ideas. You can target anything you are currently aware of or connected to, including your overall environment or abstract concepts in the vicinity. However, moves that try to affect remote things outside your current awareness or that leave your circumstances underspecified can have surprising results, which the Guide may clarify with a Reveal or Resolve Doubt move (see pg. 63). Lucid moves don't have to be based on things it seems like your character could do and can just, e.g., create things out of nowhere, but having a move that connects to your environment or circumstances in a clever or fitting way can lend extra oomph.

Lucid moves may use card elements and your environment literally, but they can also play with figurative meanings. They can function as tricks of symbol/referent confusion, treating something as what it symbolizes or letting a label override the properties of what it's applied to. Lucid Moves that affect or use things in an symbolic or conceptual manner can be quite powerful and dramatic.

Meghan and Elif are lost in a three-dimensional labyrinth. Elif uses Realize and plays a card showing a map kiosk to turn the territory around them into a small parchment map. Now they are both no longer trapped in the labyrinth and have a map if they somehow get back there later. Of course, where they are now is under-specified; the Guide turns up the top card of the deck as a Reveal move, and play continues.

Interpretation of Cards

The semantics of a Lucid Move in relation to a card may be at times ambiguous. Is it really Invert to turn a dragon into a fox? Is a stone statue on a card sufficient justification for Manifesting a stone staircase? If someone questions the validity of an interpretation, the table may discuss it, but **the Dreamer making the move has final say**, and it's best not to get too bogged down in the technicalities.

(Remember, it's important for everyone to have time in the spotlight and to work to make sure everyone's having fun. If interpretation issues are coming up repeatedly or causing unhappiness at the table, that might be a sign to pause play and discuss expectations at the player level to figure out how to make sure the game's working for everyone.)

Elif is tired of running all over the place, so their player plays a card showing a wind-swept cloud to Exaggerate their jacket into a pair of wings. Meghan's player is a bit skeptical that this makes much sense, but Elif's player explains how when they were younger they'd run fast down a steep hill against the wind so that their jacket would catch the air and it'd feel like they were about to take off, so in the context of the wind their jacket is a symbol for wings. Meghan's player nods; even though it still seems strange to her, she respects their interpretation.

Counterproduction

Sometimes a Dreamer player may want to have something go wrong with their move to create a better story or add a fun complication, even though this may be counter to what their character wants. **When you use a Lucid Move in a way that backfires, makes things more difficult for the Dreamers, or adds an obstacle or complication, draw a card.** This is called Counterproduction. The card drawn effectively replaces the card you played or discarded to make the Lucid Move. This avoids the feel of wasting resources on something unhelpful.

A key element of this is that a Dreamer player controls the interpretation of their Lucid Move and decides whether or not it results in Counterproduction.

It can also count as Counterproduction when a Lucid Move works as the Dreamer intended but still causes problems due to interactions with the environment or reactions from support characters.

Narin's player plays a card showing a pirate and a treasure chest to Manifest enough money for Narin to buy a Flask of Mirth at the Shadow's Market. Elif's player, however, thinks that things have been going too smoothly. They discard a card to chain, and Manifest as well, saying that a pirate jumps from a tree and tries to steal the Flask as soon as they're away from the crowd. Because this created an antagonist and made things more difficult, Elif's player draws a card.

If instead Elif had created a helpful and jolly rogue, then that would not have been Counterproduction.

Joint Moves

Sometimes, multiple Dreamers may want to work together to deal with an intimidating threat or dangerous situation with a combined Joint Move. To do so, they each play a card or chain to make a Lucid Move, then work collaboratively to describe a powerful effect for their mutual effort.

An attack by the Erosive Tiger is causing the Palace of Marzipan to start to collapse into the sea. Elif, Narin, and Meghan each have an idea of how to address this. Rather than take turns and go in some sequence, they decide to work together to save the palace with a Joint Move.

Elif plays a card with a turtle to Manifest a large turtle, Meghan plays a card showing a giant to Exaggerate the turtle's strength and size, and Narin plays a card with a jar of honey to Invert the palace's foundation and turn it from crumbling and falling apart to sticking together. They describe how this lets the palace stick to the back of the giant turtle and start to slowly swim away from the tiger.

Duration

Lucid effects are generally temporary, though their exact duration is determined by the story rather than a clock. By default, the effects of Lucid Moves last at least until the end of the scene. They can last longer if narratively appropriate. The length of long-term Lucid effects on a Dreamer are largely up to that Dreamer's player, though they seldom persist past the end of a Chapter or after time awake.

Defense

Sometimes, you don't want someone else to Invert you into a frog.³ When you, something you hold or protect, or your immediate environment is targeted by a Lucid Move or a power of a denizen, you may immediately respond with a Lucid Move of your own that counteracts the first in some way.

You may alternately choose to defend yourself with a Tether, which generally requires the Unleash move (see pg. 26).

Even if you do fall victim to a Lucid effect or a denizen's power, while you remain a Dreamer you have a certain level of protected agency:

- Twist Moves (see pg. 22) are always possible.
- Nothing except running out of cards can prevent you from making Lucid Moves.
- You also maintain the ability to communicate no matter what. If something in the Dream removes your normal means of communication, you can establish a new means of communication without needing to make a move. Dreamers are encouraged to be creative in how they do so.

(Remember that even when characters are working at cross-purposes or attacking each other, players should still be working together to tell a story that works for everyone. Safety tools, as discussed on pg. 7, can be helpful to avoid a character conflict causing problems on the player level.)

Shae decides that Elif has been annoying enough, and uses Invert and a card showing a marble bust to turn Elif into a statue. Elif turns to stone. Elif may be immobile for now, but their player decides the statue is complete with a little plaque that they can use to communicate.

After a while, being stuck in place gets old, so Elif's player uses Invert and a card showing dancing children to restore their ability to move. They could have entirely reversed the turn-to-stone effect, but they feel that being a mobile statue seems more interesting, so they keep their stone skin for now.

³This is considered rude in many societies.



Standard Lucid Moves

Manifest

Manifest makes something appear. Manifest can produce things, people/creatures, and locations. In addition to physical creations, it can also generate more nebulous objects like weather or abstract concepts.

If you Manifest a support character, the Guide still controls and roleplays as that character. The Guide should try to avoid subverting your main intent, but a Manifested character may not act exactly as you expect.

One way to engage Counterproduction when Manifesting is to have it result in something that reflects what your character wants on the surface, but is actually twisted or false in some way.

Manifest can look like creating something, noticing something that seems to have been there all along, or summoning someone from elsewhere. Does it really make something out of nothing? This can be a bit ambiguous: Manifested entities often seem to have their own memories and history, even if it seems improbable. Other denizens may remember past interactions with a Manifested person, or they may have an established reputation. You can also summon an existing character that you know of or have met.

Narin and his sibling Shae are surrounded by the Wolves of False Hollows. Fearing their teeth, he decides to Manifest a weapon to defend himself with, playing a card showing a fencer to pull a longsword out of his pocket.

Shae, for their part, isn't keen on directly tangling with the Wolves, so decides to Manifest an ally. They play a card showing a hydra and describe how a three-headed monster that's sworn to protect travelers runs in from down the trail. The Guide then plays the monster as a support character. Between Narin's sword and the monster, the Wolves are chased off for now.

The Guide then has the monster ask Narin and Shae for help with a problem of its own...



Invert

Invert is a type of transformation that affects something or someone already in the scene. It turns something into something it is not, framed in terms of contrasts. This can be quite broad. The transformed form should feel like the opposite of the original along some axis, whether that's turning a dangerous manticore into a harmless snail or turning a tall tower into a wide bridge.

Invert can be used for more emotional or abstract transformations in addition to physical transformations, given a card with appropriate symbolism. You can turn someone from peaceful to angry or from clumsy to competent.

When transforming another Dreamer, be mindful of their fun as well. (Of course, a transformed Dreamer can generally transform themselves right back!)

Shae and Narin are on the run from the Wolves of False Hollows when they come to the bottom of a sheer cliff. Shae's player uses Invert and plays a card showing a chaotic array of staircases. Shae's player describes the cliff reshaping itself, turning from an impassable cliff to a convenient ladder. Shae and Narin climb as fast as they can, hoping their human forms will give them an advantage over the Wolves.

Exaggerate

Exaggerate is the partner to Invert, elevating a trait someone or something present in the scene already has to high, potentially absurd levels. This can be construed in a variety of ways, abstract or literal. You can make a knife impossibly sharp or a prince dazzlingly beautiful. It can also be used on more abstract targets: Exaggerate an argument to strengthen its rhetorical effectiveness or Exaggerate the likelihood of a possibility to make it almost guaranteed.

Elif is trying to convince a baker to reveal a friend's hiding place, but the baker has promised not to tell anyone. Despite Elif's passionate plea that they just want to help the friend stay safe, the baker still refuses to tell, but Elif can see him becoming less certain. Elif plays a card showing a precarious tightrope to Exaggerate the unsteadiness of the baker's conviction. The baker finally gives in and agrees to reveal the truth.



Link

Link is a move for portal creation, opening a gateway to somewhere else. This can be used to escape danger, to get something you need, to return to some place you've been before, or even just to explore somewhere new.

Link gives you control of your destination, but not necessarily complete control over what you find there. The Guide may establish who's present or other conditions at your destination, possibly with a Reveal move. You can also engage Counterproduction to specify something perilous or unfortunate on the other side of the gateway.

Elif uses Link in an attempt to make a door lead back to a friendly tavern the Dreamers had previously found refuge in, playing a card showing an eating establishment. However, Elif's player feels like it'd be a better story for safety to be elusive and declares Counterproduction. They say that the Dreamers find the tavern crawling with strange creatures who seem hostile to the fleshy intruders, and draw a card from Counterproduction.



Realize

Realize is a move for changing what is true in the Dream by breaking assumptions.

The most straightforward way to use Realize is to play with appearance vs reality: have something that seemed real turn out to be a fake, or take something that seemed fake and make it real. Maybe the dragon attacking you is actually a bunch of kids in a costume. Maybe your reflection is actually an independent character that just looks similar. Maybe that wasn't you that just got crushed by a falling tree, but actually a clever double you set up in advance.

Realize can be used with more abstract assumptions as well. Hearing the ocean in a seashell held to your ear, use Realize and turn around to see the ocean is now actually just behind you. In a scene you seem not to be in, use Realize and a character that seemed to be someone else turns out to be you in disguise. Break the assumption of the distinctness of individuals and merge with a statue of a manticore.

Finally, Realize can be used to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality. Borrow a spear from a character in a story you're being told. Step into a painting as if it were an open window. Hide stolen merchandise in a flashback to what you were doing yesterday.

Like with all Lucid Moves, these effects are temporary and may wear off later. It's also possible, through Counterproduction or a later revelation, for it to turn out that there's another layer of trickery, and the true state of things confounds even your revised assumptions.

Shae has been captured and is brought before an imposing figure introduced as the Duke of Tears, who begins haranguing and threatening Shae. Shae, however, plays a card showing a figure with a prominent mustache and uses Realize to declare that this isn't actually the Duke, but an impostor, and in fact his fake mustache is slipping! The guards are shocked by this revelation, and Shae manages to escape in the confusion.

Shae reaches the shoreline below the Duke's tower, but their friends' ship is still far away, and the guards seem to still be running after them. Shae, however, pocketed a telescope earlier in the adventure. They look through the telescope and then use Realize with a card showing a sequence of closely-following ants. Shae's player says that this brings the ship closer so they can get to it before the guards arrive.

Elif's player is confused and asks how this works. Shae's player explains that looking through the telescope makes the ship look closer, but the expectation is that it's just a magnified image. Thus, they used Realize to subvert this expectation and apply the closeness of the ants to the ship. Shae's player nods, and play continues.

Twist Moves

The Dream is not a friendly place. It wants you to put yourself in harm's way. Accepting the context of the Dream, giving it what it wants, tends to just make things worse. However, no one has the energy to fight the fabric of the Dream constantly, and a temporary yielding may give you the basis for a decisive action later.

Making a Twist Move represents some sort of concession or surrender to the Dream around you, or perhaps forgetting that you are a Dreamer or your powers momentarily. Twist Moves generally put you in a worse position, or at least a more complicated one. In exchange, however, **making a Twist Move allows you to draw a card**, giving you more resources for future action. They also make for good story.

Twist Moves often represent things outside your Dreamer's control. Nevertheless, you as a player are in control of when they're used, giving you agency over when your character's shortcomings get in their way and when they don't. Use them narratively to add drama to the story or to give another Dreamer a chance to shine, while giving yourself resources to use later. Dreamer players are expected to use Twist Moves regularly as part of the ebb and flow of play. Players should not interpret this as sabotaging the group's efforts: it's just part of telling an interesting story.

Every Dreamer shares one Twist Move: "Freeze and fail to act when action is needed." Using this Twist Move, you, as a player, may choose to have your Dreamer hesitate at a crucial moment and, say, let an opponent escape or miss an opportunity for a crucial shot. It's not that your character wanted to freeze up. It's not that your character couldn't have succeeded. It's that you as a player think this lapse would be good for the story, or you want to draw a card to use later, or both.

Shae's been hiding behind a pile of firewood to eavesdrop on the Thorny Advocate. Now the Advocate's approaching and seems certain to spot them. Shae could easily escape into the shadows before the Advocate gets too close. However, Shae's player wants some excitement, so they decide to use the shared Twist Move, freezing and failing to act instead. Shae hesitates, caught between possible escape routes, and when the Advocate walks past she suddenly turns her head to look Shae right in the eyes. Shae's player draws a card.

If Shae's player had instead thought it'd be more fun or a better story to learn more about the Advocate without being noticed, they would've chosen not to use the Twist Move.

Each Dreamer playbook gets two special Twist Moves in addition.

Narrative Moves

The remaining Dreamer moves deal less with your character's direct struggle with the Dream and more with the story itself.

Explore

When your character acts to seek out something unknown, play the top card of the deck and use one or more elements from the card as the basis for what you find or encounter. This can be literally finding something pictured on the card or more loosely using the card as inspiration.

The Dreamer who explored takes lead on the interpretation. (They can ask the table for suggestions.) The Guide will often elaborate on the situation afterwards.

The Explore move is commonly used when you go to a new place or search an area. It can also be used for research, given an opportunity (such as access to an archive), or trying to remember something useful when that seems plausible.

Elif leads the way into the dark woods in pursuit of the fabled Fountain of Use. They turn over the top card of the deck and reveal a dinosaur crossing a street surrounded by buildings. They consider saying that they find a road that leads towards the fountain, but decide it would be more interesting to encounter a giant lizard. The card remains in play, and any unused elements may later be used to chain.

The Guide has a similar move, Reveal, that they can use when the Dreamers encounter something new. Actively using Explore, however, gives the Dreamer more control over what they find.

At the start of a Chapter, everyone at the table takes a turn using Explore to set the initial situation.

Find Respite

You draw cards to fill your hand up to 5 cards if your characters find a sanctuary or an opportunity to recover during a chapter. You can declare this whenever it seems appropriate, whether it's sharing a cup of tea or finding a friendly fortress. However, you can only take this move as a group, when everyone's together.

Shae and Meghan have been trying desperately to hide from Prowling Eyes when they find a cave. Though cold and inhospitable, it feels safe to them. However, they can't take Find Respite because Elif is still in town, having been negotiating with the guards there. Shae's player, after checking in with Elif's player, decides to bring the group together. Shae plays a card with a figure that resembles Elif and uses Manifest to summon them. Now that the whole group is assembled, they can take Find Respite and refill their hands before deciding what to do next.

Cut

At any time, when you invoke Cut, the scene ends and a new scene begins.

Perhaps you all half-awoke. Perhaps the Dream just shifted. Perhaps there are deeper forces at work. Regardless, the curtain is drawn over what was happening, and you proceed, a bit disoriented.

This is less jarring to the Dreamers than it might seem. The Dream does not always flow from cause to effect in a logical progression of events. Sometimes, you just find yourself somewhere else, in a different situation, without knowing how you got there.

The Cut Move is open to any player, including the Guide. It's not a character ability, but a player one. If a scene stalls, or becomes difficult to engage with, or otherwise seems suboptimal, call Cut.

Choose if you want to set the scene by playing and interpreting the top card of the deck (as with an Explore move) or if you prefer the Guide to do so.

This does not necessarily get the characters out of trouble, but it may get them into *different* trouble, and that can make all the difference.

The Cut move gives players a lot of narrative control over scene transitions and framing. This is intentional, both as a safety mechanism and to empower all players to steer the game towards the fun. In some cases however, when different players have different ideas on what's worth focusing on or in which direction the story should go, this can cause friction. In such cases, players should talk this over out-of-character to figure out something that works for everyone.

Shae steps through a rotten board in an old house and falls into a basement swarming with bats. Normally, Shae's player would be fine with that, but today for some reason that's just feeling unpleasant to them. Shae's player invokes Cut and asks the Guide to set the new scene. The Guide does so, and play continues.

In another session, Meghan finds herself getting bored talking to a series of unhelpful bureaucrats trying to gain an audience with the Queen of Sandfall. She invokes Cut and turns over the top card of the deck. Depending on the card she gets, it may not let her get an audience, but it'll at least move the story on to something new.



Awaken

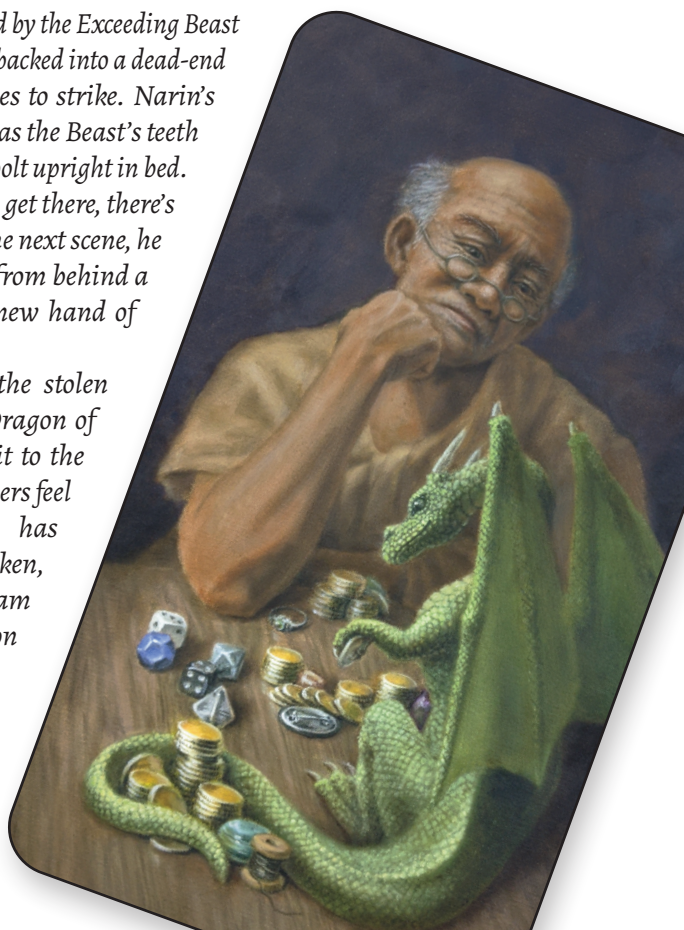
When you wake from the Dream, you discard your hand and refill it to 5 cards. From the point of view of your Dreamer character, this may often be easier said than done: the Dream can worm its way into you, entangle you, surround you. But as a player, you may Awaken whenever you deem it appropriate. Sometimes sitting bolt upright in bed can dramatically highlight a nightmarish encounter and draw the curtain right before it gets to be too much. Or sometimes after a completed adventure, it just feels natural to fade out to wakefulness.

We won't see what happens while you're awake directly. Your next scene will take place when you next sleep and return to the Dream, whether that's later that same night or after much waking time has passed. Either way, you won't reappear in the Dream until at earliest the next scene. If you wake up while other Dreamers do not, you will rejoin them after the next scene transition or when a suitable opportunity arises. Otherwise, it may not initially be clear whether much time has passed from the perspective of the denizens of the Dream.

Awaken can be a useful option in situations where you as a player don't want to continue playing a scene, but are fine with others continuing it, or when you need to step away from the game briefly for whatever reason. Play can continue, and you can naturally rejoin at a later point.

Narin has been being chased by the Exceeding Beast and is out of cards. He gets backed into a dead-end alley, and the Beast lunges to strike. Narin's player describes how, just as the Beast's teeth touch Narin's skin, he sits bolt upright in bed. When the other Dreamers get there, there's no sign of Narin. But in the next scene, he shows up out of nowhere from behind a tree, shaken but with a new hand of cards.

Later, after winning the stolen treasure back from the Dragon of Sunlight and returning it to the forest-dwellers, the Dreamers feel like this adventure has concluded. They all Awaken, and will re-enter the Dream together in a new situation with new cards.



Recenter

Recenter is a move based on your Tethers (see pg. 32). Once per chapter per Tether, you can draw a card by bringing the Tether into play. Your Tethers anchor you to who you are, and thus help to give you firmer footing in the Dream.

Using Recenter can represent a physical action with a Tether or invoking or remembering a Tether in some way. Either way, your Tether reminds you of who you are and what you are capable of.

One of Shae's Tethers is their gardening trowel. When the Dreamers are moving through a forest, they use Recenter and explain how despite the ominous woods they see flowers in the underbrush, and this reminds them that good may be hidden among darkness. This ties to their memories of gardening with their trowel, and they draw a card for Recentering.

In a later chapter, they invoke the same Tether when they use the trowel to transplant a plant spirit who was trapped in a tiny flowerpot. They again draw a card for Recentering.

Unleash

The Unleash move is based on using your Tether as a last-ditch defense. Tethers connect you to who you are, and this anchoring effect is what maintains your connection to the waking world. In a desperate situation, you may use a tether to parry an attack or shield yourself from a danger beyond its ordinary capabilities. By channeling the anchoring potential of your Tether into one mighty impact, you can block or save yourself from anything the Dream can throw at you. There is a cost, however: the Tether becomes corrupted by the Dream, and is one step closer to being an Entanglement (see pg. 33).

Spark

When someone does something particularly cool, creative, or unexpected, any player can use the Spark move to reward them by letting them draw a card.

This is not at any cost to the player granting the reward, but each Dreamer can only draw a card this way once per scene.



Acting Without Moves

Your character may make reasonable actions without making a Move, though the effect may not be as flashy or powerful as when using a Lucid Move.

What “reasonable” means varies depending on what’s established about your character in the situation. A plucky preteen girl will be justified in different actions than an enthusiastic squirrel. In general, you have authority over what makes sense for your Dreamer’s concept.

There’s also a basic assumption that things your Dreamer would expect to “always” have on hand in their waking life will often be available in the dream, in addition to their Tethers and Entanglements (see pg. 32). Your character is probably wearing shoes and may be wearing glasses. If you’re a modern human, you probably have a cell phone and keys. If you’re from a fantasy setting, you might have a dagger and a pouch of coins.

Use the “shoes and glasses” rule to make the story more interesting, not to short-circuit the story. The Dream is real, and your stuff is not. These mundane things can solve problems when used creatively, but don’t have the same level of inherent truth or strength as Lucid Moves, your Tethers, or the special powers of Denizens of the Dream. Nothing guarantees the applicability of these incidentals, either. Manifesting money with a Lucid Move probably means that it will be treated as such by the locals, but money you pull out of your pocket might be treated as worthless green paper. Denizens that have an Integrity score can generally brush off attacks not backed up with Lucid Moves (see pg. 65). Nevertheless, your miscellaneous possessions can turn out to be just what you need in a crucial moment.

Meghan has managed to capture a Refractive Jay but needs to take it to town to present to the tribunal, and she’s worried it’ll manage to escape during the long climb back. She’s running low on cards, so rather than transform it with an Invert or Realize move, she decides to unlace her shoes and use the shoelaces to tie it up. This won’t keep it from using its special power of color-devouring, but will at least keep it from flying off the moment her grip loosens.





Dreamer Characters

The Dream is multifaceted, and no less so are the Dreamers who are drawn there. A Dreamer character is based on a playbook that represents their character archetype, what their character may be in search of, and how their character may grow.

Something about what matters to you in the waking world, what problems you face, what life has done to you is reflected in your playbook. It is the foundation of the path you will walk in the Dream, the story you wish to tell.

Playbooks are not tightly constrained in terms of abilities or possible concepts. The same playbook can produce a huge variety of characters. In essence, a playbook is a set of questions you're being asked about your character, not answers you are being given.

It is the choices you make that will wrest definition from the amorphous space of possibility.

The Character Creation Process

1. Choose a Playbook

To create a Dreamer, first pick a playbook. Each playbook represents a character archetype. Think about the type of story you want to tell to help guide your choice.

It's recommended you use a formatted playbook to organize your character. These are available at <http://dreampunk.xavid.us/playbooks> for your use.

Dreamer players may choose from the following playbooks, which are described fully later in this chapter:

The Haunted: Your fears have followed you into the Dream.

The Searcher: You're searching for important things stolen by the Dream.

The Idealist: You're tied to what you wish for but can't attain.

The Dissembler: Your lies have trapped you in chains of your own making.

The Burdened: You've been forced into a role that you can't fit.

The Overlooked: Your needs in the waking world can only be met in the Dream.

The Bound: You follow unyielding rules that limit your growth.

The Prism: You're made up of multiple distinct facets you normally can't express.

The Theorist: You will use tests and observation to uncover the truth.

The Hunter: You seek to confront a target that preceded you into the Dream.

The Guardian: You defend the Dream against those that threaten it.

The Firebrand: You will save the waking world from the corruption of the Dream.

The Lightseeker: You seek an impossible treasure at the heart of the Dream.

2. Explore Your Character

Draw one or more cards to inspire your character. Use as much or as little of the card as you want. This is intended as a creativity prompt, not a restriction.

3. Fill Out Your Playbook

Give your character one to three Needs as specified by the playbook (see pg. 34). Give them three Tethers (see pg. 32). For both Needs and Tethers, think about how your character fits into their waking world.

Flesh out your character. Give them a name, a description of who they are awake, and a description of who they are in the dream.

Each playbook has some additional questions: a detail about your character's past or personality and a denizen of the Dream that's connected to them.

Your playbook also prompts you to define connections to other Dreamers. To fill these out, start by going around the table and having each Dreamer player introduce their character. Then, go around again, asking who might be a good fit for your connection questions or proposing who you think would work well. (You don't have to fill in all of them if they don't all inspire you.) These pre-existing bits of history can help prompt interesting interactions.

Your Waking World

There is more to a Dreamer than the powers they have, the actions they can take. They have a complex life in a world of solidity and stability, a waking world that may or may not look much like our own. And that has an indelible impact, gives them connections and drives.

We won't see the waking world except by implication. We won't play scenes there. It's not expected that the various Dreamers know each other there or that they necessarily come from the same world. No one, not even the Guide, is in a position to contradict anything a Dreamer says about their experiences in the waking world.⁴ The waking world does not have to be a realistic modern setting for all (or any) Dreamers. But the waking world cannot solve Dream problems.

Nevertheless, you're the same person asleep or awake, and who you are in the waking world has a big impact on who you are in the Dream: what needs tie you to the Dream, what bonds keep you from being swept away by it. It is your experiences in the waking world, more than anything else, that make one Dreamer different from another. And more than anything else, it's what you're missing in the waking world that defines you in the Dream.

Thinking about what your character's life in the waking world is like, in addition to your drawn card(s) and your playbook, can be a strong source of character inspiration.



⁴ If any of this leads to seemingly blatant contradictions, I encourage you to construe this as an interesting development rather than a problem.

Tethers

Each Dreamer starts with three things that are personally meaningful to them and tie them to who they are in the waking world, keep them themselves against all the twists and pressures of the Dream. These are called Tethers, and can be anything with emotional weight: a lucky charm, a stuffed animal, a friend or family member, your favorite subject at school, something you're particularly good at in your waking life, a memory, a promise...

A Tether is something you can always justify bringing into play. If it's a physical item, then you always have it at hand, however improbable that may seem. If it's a person, you can remember them to inspire or guide you or see aspects of them in people you meet. Or perhaps a Dream version of them shows up when you need them. If it's a talent, you can take advantage of it to solve a problem.

The first time you bring a Tether into play during a chapter, you draw a card from the Recenter move (see pg. 26).

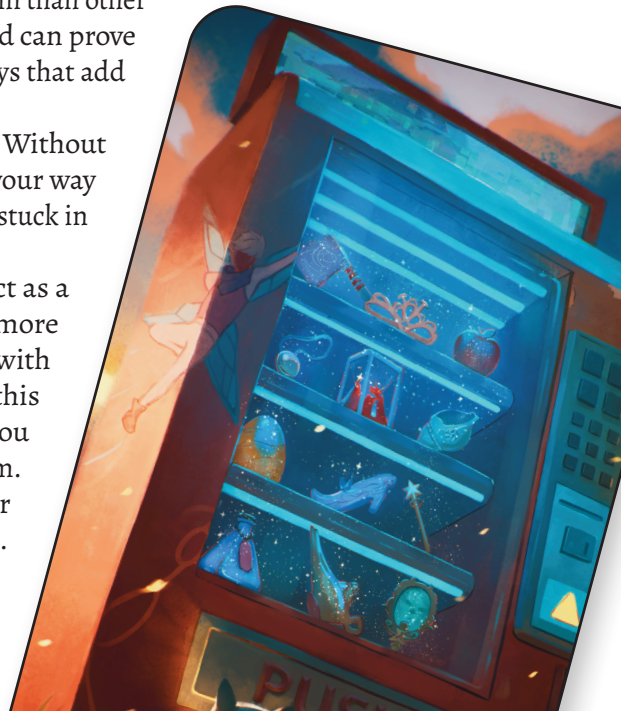
Shae has three Tethers: a trusty pocket knife, their clever grandmother, and their gardening trowel. When the group finds a mantichore tangled in a net, Shae uses their pocket knife to cut the mantichore free. This both solves a problem and gets them a card from Recentering. Later that chapter, they use the pocket knife to help start a fire. Since it's the same chapter, they don't get a second card.

Later, Shae declares that a farmer reminds them of their grandmother and isn't as oblivious as she pretends to be. In addition to the Recenter card, this invocation leads the Guide to run with this concept and have the initially-unhelpful farmer provide a useful clue.

Tethers have a stronger truth behind them than other miscellaneous items you may have, and can prove quite effective. Use them in creative ways that add to the story.

Tethers also serve a greater role. Without Tethers, you would not be able to find your way back to the waking world. You would be stuck in the Dream, forever.

You can focus this anchoring effect as a last-ditch form of protection, more fundamental even than Lucid Moves, with the Unleash move (see pg. 26). Used this way, one of your Tethers can shield you from even the worst horrors of the Dream. But this comes at a cost: exposing your Tether to corruption and Entanglement.



Entanglement

Your Tethers are key to who you are, which can provide strength but also vulnerability. Entanglement is the result of when you fail to defend against something that would corrupt one of your Tethers or poison your connection to a Tether. The more you use your Tethers, the more attention you draw to them, and the more likely the Dream is to attack them. When you use the Unleash move (pg. 26) to protect yourself, this always exposes your Tether to corruption.

The first time the Dream corrupts a given Tether, you mark the Tether, but it remains intact as it is.

The second time the Dream corrupts it, your Tether becomes forever changed by this corruption. It is no longer a Tether, but an Entanglement, something that ties you enduringly to the Dream. Cross out the Tether and rewrite it to the right as an Entanglement.

Elif has their faithful teddy bear as a Tether. They gave it to a scared child for comfort while they took up a sword to fight off creeping slithers. Meanwhile they've been ignoring the Countess of Severing, and she sneaks up with a large pair of scissors and attacks the bear. The Dreamer players could try to defend it, but Elif's player feels like it makes more sense for the slithers to distract them until it's too late. The scissors land, and Elif marks the teddy bear. It's okay for now (after a few stitches), but if something similar happens again, it will become an Entanglement.

Once per scene per Entanglement, anyone, including the Guide, yourself, or another Dreamer, may invoke one of your Entanglements to subvert or undermine a Lucid move you make. When anyone does this to you, you can chain without discarding a card once later this session.

Later on, Elif's teddy bear has become an Entanglement called the Bear of Complacency. Shae's been captured by a dragon. Elif wants to go help, and plays a card showing an armored knight to Manifest a warrior to attack the dragon. But Meghan's player wants more drama and subverts the move, suggesting that the warrior turns out to actually be an armored bear who, instead of going to fight, tells Elif that they should stay here, away from the dragon, where it's safe. Elif didn't get what they wanted, but they do get a free chain later on.

If all your Tethers become Entanglements, you are so enmeshed in the Dream that you are no longer a Dreamer. Perhaps you lose the ability to wake up or Find Respite. Perhaps you switch to another playbook, for example becoming a Twitch (pg. 50) or Beholden (pg. 56). Perhaps you dissolve into the fabric of the Dream, or something stranger happens. Regardless, you are no longer what you were.

You may continue to play your corrupted character. Alternately, you may opt to retire your character and create a new Dreamer.

Needs

Each Dreamer playbook has a certain type of Need or driving force that shapes its stories. Perhaps it is these things that Dreamers lack, these absences, that draw them from their everyday worlds and pull them into the Dream.

Each Need has two circles and a star, tracking progress towards resolving that Need.

When you overcome an obstacle connected to a Need, mark this by filling in one of that Need's circles.

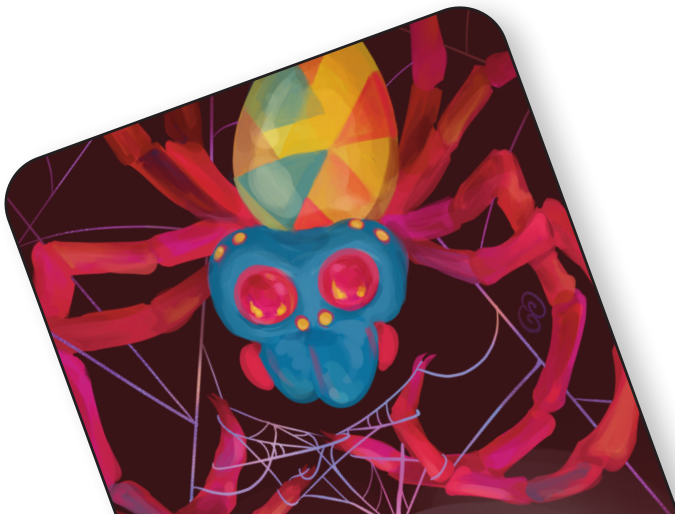
After both circles for a Need are filled, it becomes possible to later resolve that Need by doing something specified in your playbook. If you do so, fill the star for the Need and realize a Grace.

Resolving a Need should ideally feel like a meaningful arc as you travel through the Dream. Needs must be met by engaging with the world of the Dream to overcome multiple obstacles over time. You cannot just bypass this progression and jump to the end of a Need's arc with a Lucid Move (though Lucid Moves may be quite helpful for overcoming individual obstacles).

Your three Needs can be three independent goals or problems, or they can be three stages in a narrative progression. In either case, you can define all three of them when you create your character or leave one or two initially undefined to determine during play.

Elif is a Bound, constrained by Laws. Their player decides to specify all three of these Needs at character creation: always tell the truth, always put others before yourself, and never admit to weakness. They may end up wrestling with these Needs in any order.

Narin is a Haunted, who needs to face Fears. Initially, his player specifies just one Need: his Fear of spiders. When Narin successfully defeats this Fear, his player decides that his next Fear is the Unknown, a broader and more fundamental expression of what scared him about spiders in the first place. He has some ideas about a third Fear, but decides to leave that unspecified for now.



Graces

Resolving a Need makes a Dreamer stronger by allowing them to establish a new truth about themselves, a truth that becomes rock-solid. This is a Grace, and whenever you invoke a Grace you will find that it holds, no matter how unlikely it may seem and in spite of any indications to the contrary.

Whenever you invoke a Grace, draw a card.

When you have three Graces, you may find a way to escape the Dream for good, or you may realize you have other Needs remaining and switch to another playbook.

In particular, you may find, once you've realized three Graces, that you transcend from being a Dreamer into something more, someone who rises above the constraints of the Dream. Those who have done so can be called Sureties (see pg. 52), and they are rare beyond all belief.

You may continue to play your character with or without a new playbook. Alternately, if you prefer, you may retire your character and create a new Dreamer.

When Narin overcomes his fear of spiders, he realizes a Truth about himself: that he will never give up when his friends are in danger. Later, when he's trying to find a legal precedent to acquit Elif, the Bureaucrat of Inertia tries to convince him that it's futile and he should give up. Narin invokes his Grace, effortlessly deflecting the Bureaucrat's attempts and drawing a card.

Character Revisions

The choices you make for your character, the things you write in your playbook, aren't carved in stone. They represent conceptions about who you are, but such conceptions often prove false. Sometimes the character that emerges through play doesn't match the idea you had ahead of time.

If you think making alternate choices for your character would be more fun or more interesting, feel free to edit things between sessions. There's no cost or penalty for doing so. For example, if you picked a Tether that isn't coming up much, you might want to rewrite it into something more exciting. Discuss such changes with the Guide and other players to keep everyone on the same page.

Playbooks

The remainder of this chapter describes the various Dreamer playbooks. For play, it is recommended to use the fillable playbooks which are available to download at <http://dreampunk.xavid.us/playbooks> for your use.

The Haunted

If only sleep were a refuge, an escape from the worries of the day. But it's not. The things you fear follow you here. They become more powerful, taking on their own forms. They aren't nightmares. Because you can't escape them by waking up.

Needs: Fears

You have three Fears: things that terrify you in waking life that you so far have been unable to face, but will learn to face over the course of game.

When you overcome an obstacle related to a Fear, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then face and defeat a Fear, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- something that protects you
- something from the past you've held onto
- a place you retreat to
- someone who's braver than you are
- a saying meant to be reassuring
- a gift from a ghost

Special Lucid Move: Elude

Name a danger other than a Fear. Fashion something that lets you avoid it or escape its notice.

Special Twist Moves

- Something you're afraid of happens.
- Flee a situation, leaving someone else in danger.

Questions

- How have you surprised yourself since entering the Dream?
- What do you know about the **Nightmare Envoy** who follows you? The **Nightmare Envoy** could be an antagonist who represents something you fear, a representative arguing for the positive side of something disquieting, or an opportunist who sees value or power in your troubles.

Connections

- Who was doing something unsettling when you first encountered them?
- Who comforted you when you really needed it?
- Who seems like they could face anything?

The Searcher

You're here in pursuit of that which was stolen away. It may be foolish to think that you can return to the waking world what the Dream has taken. But nevertheless, you must try.

Needs: Charges

You have three Charges: things or people you feel responsible for that have, in some way or other, been lost to the Dream.

When you overcome an obstacle pursuing a Charge, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then recover a Charge, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- a secret you've kept
- a place you once found treasures
- someone you made a promise to
- a surprisingly-useful book
- a token of someone you've lost
- a feather from a rare bird

Special Lucid Move: Compass

Name something you're seeking other than a Charge. Discover something that points you in the right direction or gets you closer.

Special Twist Moves

- Unexpectedly misplace something that you need.
- Get separated from your friends.

Questions

- How were your Charges stolen away?
- What do you know of the **Uncanny Thief** who stole from you? The **Uncanny Thief** could be a suave and cryptic unknown, a former friend or confidant, or an incongruous yet manipulative figure. They may have stolen one or all of your Charges, or they may be keeping the secrets of a more subtle culprit.

Connections

- Who reminds you of someone you've lost?
- Who seems recklessly irresponsible?
- Who do you trust to guide you in the right direction?

The Idealist

You are beset by a desperate longing. You yearn for something pure, something golden. Some perfection you know is out there. Something you can't have. Not in the world of day, at least. But perhaps here, in the Dream, anything is possible.

Needs: Desires

You have three Desires: powerful longings you're pursuing as driving goals. Things that are difficult or impossible in the waking world, but that you have a possibility to attain here in the dream.

When you overcome an obstacle pursuing a Desire, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then attain a Desire, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- a tool relating to a passion
- a lucky charm you believe in
- a pet who adores you
- a place that inspires daydreams
- a fanciful poem
- a piece of an artifact

Special Lucid Move: Heartsense

Choose a denizen present. Declare something that they want, other than one of your Desires.

Special Twist Moves

- Stubbornly insist on doing what you want despite the consequences.
- Misunderstand what someone wants to unfortunate result.

Questions

- What makes things feel impossible in the waking world?
- What do you know of the **False Savior** who promises to aid you? The **False Savior** likely claims to be able to get you what you want, but is either manipulating you with false hope or overestimating their own abilities.

Connections

- Who hides a hopeful heart?
- Who seems like they could help you attain a Desire?
- Who has an unrealistic opinion of you?

The Dissembler

The truth is harsh. It's jagged and dangerous. So you construct your world of comforting lies. Build your life around them. No one will ever know. It'll never come crashing down. And it definitely won't affect your sleep.

Needs: Lies

You have three Lies: things you've built your life around, things about the world or about yourself you insist are true even though in your heart you know they're false. You will eventually end up rejecting them over the course of character development.

When you overcome an obstacle related to a Lie, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then reject a Lie, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- pretentious credentials
- an ostentatious vehicle
- someone who's benefited from your lies
- a home you've abandoned
- a trick weapon or tool
- a shimmering mask

Special Lucid Move: Convince

Specify a target. Reveal evidence or assurance that supports a falsehood you've told them, other than one of your three Lies.

Special Twist Moves

- Have a lie you've told get you into trouble.
- Have something you're counting on turn out to be false.

Questions

- What are you afraid you'll lose by admitting the truth?
- What do you know of the **Ceaseless Investigator** who's suspicious of you? The **Ceaseless Investigator** may represent someone you hide from while awake, reflect a truth you shy away from, or just be broadly distrustful of Dreamers.

Connections

- Who do you suspect is hiding something important?
- Who seems to trust you too easily?
- Who do you wish you could confess something to?

The Burdened

People think highly of you. They see you as someone capable, someone extraordinary, someone they can depend on. But that's not you. They see someone they want you to be, force you into their mold. And it's not a mold you can fit. And it's breaking you.

Needs: Responsibilities

You have three Responsibilities: requirements of a role pushed upon you that are unsustainable or unhealthy. You will reject or adapt them over the course of game.

When you overcome an obstacle related to a Responsibility, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then reject or adapt a Responsibility, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- a packed bag or knapsack
- a schedule or logbook
- someone who depends on you
- a sanctuary where you escape expectations
- an unusual assistant
- a cord woven with promises

Special Lucid Move: Assume

Accept a task unrelated to your Responsibilities. Give yourself characteristics that make you well-suited to that task.

Special Twist Moves

- Let someone down who had expectations of you.
- Fail at something you're supposed to be good at.

Questions

- Why haven't you been able to get help with your burdens?
- What's known of the **Ensnaring Rose** who offers a life free of care? The **Ensnaring Rose** is someone who feels comfortable and safe, but with a sinister undertone; they may be manipulating you with easy answers or may represent a life you wish you had.

Connections

- Who seems to understand well the nature of responsibility?
- Who helped you out when you weren't up to a task?
- Who reminds you of someone who counts on you in the waking world?

The Overlooked

Life isn't fair. Some people are born with a silver spoon. You don't know how you're going to make it through the week. There are things you need, things others take for granted that you don't have. At least here, maybe you can escape that.

Needs: Lacks

You have three Lacks: things you need to live a safe and comfortable life but lack stable access to outside the Dream. You will find ways to fill them in the Dream.

When you overcome an obstacle related to a Lack, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then satisfy a Lack, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- something broken or worn
- something you've fought to keep
- someone who has even less
- a makeshift shelter
- a password for an underground gathering
- a seed or coin a rat brought you

Special Lucid Move: Do Without

Name something you need other than a Lack. Modify yourself or your belongings to let you make do without it.

Special Twist Moves

- Be unable to find something that should be available.
- Find an antagonist to unexpectedly have something they need.

Questions

- What joyful bounty have you found in the dream?
- What's known of your **Benefactor** whose gifts have subtle catches? Your **Benefactor** may be earnest but misguided or may have a deeper agenda; they seem to have an unending supply of useful or necessary things. The source of their gifts is unclear, and the gifts don't end up working as you expect.

Connections

- Who seems to take for granted something of great worth?
- Who seems reluctant to share what they have?
- Who seems like they understand hardship?

The Bound

The world's a scary place. If you do or say the wrong thing, it could be catastrophic. Luckily, you know the rules to follow. If you follow them, everything will be okay. There's nothing to worry about. Just follow the rules.

Needs: Laws

You have three Laws: rules you constructed out of necessity or that were instilled in you by others that limit your ability to grow. You will rewrite or move past them over the course of game.

When you overcome an obstacle wrestling with a Law, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then rewrite or move past a Law, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- something you feel anxious without
- someone you idolize
- a scar from a past failing
- a place of authority
- a rhyme or song to remember something
- a chain forged of an impossible substance

Special Lucid Move: Legalism

Choose a denizen present. Declare a rule that they follow.

Special Twist Moves

- Declare a helpful or practical action unacceptable for a principled reason.
- Misunderstand local norms to unfortunate effect.

Questions

- What disaster do you fear when your Laws are broken?
- What do you know of the **Contrarian** who pronounces odd rules? The **Contrarian** is in some way like you, but follows or espouses a code that is incompatible with your own. They may encourage you to question your restrictions, or they may follow their own rules to the point of self-destruction.

Connections

- Who seems to follow a strict personal code?
- Who strikes you as chaotic and unpredictable?
- Whom did you promise something that's outside your comfort zone?

The Prism

Normality's a lie, but it's a powerful one. You need to fit in, to be productive, to seem together in order to survive. But that's all a facade. Your self is made up of multiple parts, and you need to express them all to be whole. But it's not safe to reveal your facets in waking life. Maybe doing so in the Dream will be enough.

Needs: Facets

You have three Facets: distinct identities or parts of your personality you have to repress to be accepted or safe. You will learn to safely express them in the Dream.

When you overcome an obstacle impeding a Facet, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then fully express a Facet, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- something multicolored
- something from an obscure interest
- someone you can be yourself around
- a place that brought you clarity
- a collection of names or symbols
- a lens that lets you see hidden truths

Special Lucid Move: Rotate Perspective

Choose a denizen present. Bring out an unexpected side of their personality that helps you.

Special Twist Moves

- Have internal conflict cause you to fall apart.
- Reveal a sinister side to something that seemed safe or helpful.

Questions

- What alien aspect of the Dream do you embrace or find comforting?
- What's known of the **Dark Image** that mirrors what you reject of yourself? Your **Dark Image** may seem like a part of yourself that you've cast off, or may be a counterpart or rival that brings parts of yourself you dislike to the fore.

Connections

- Who feels like a kindred spirit to one of your facets?
- Who do you see a hidden heart in at odds with their surface appearance?
- Who seems to understand well your complexities?

The Theorist

You don't have all the answers. All models are wrong. Certainly your analysis failed to anticipate the Dream. But you will not despair. You have your eyes, your determination. You will test and observe. And, even here, you will draw ever-closer to the truth.

Needs: Conceptions

You have three Conceptions: ideas you have about how the world works that are incomplete or mistaken. You will test and revise them as you play into better reflections of truth.

When you overcome an obstacle while testing a Conception, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then revise a Conception, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- a recording device
- a tool for measuring or computing
- someone whose work inspires you
- somewhere you found answers
- a secret that others dismissed
- a crystal or mechanical heart

Special Lucid Move: Insight

Name something you're uncertain about, other than a Conception. Reveal or uncover something that provides evidence illuminating a path forward.

Special Twist Moves

- Misinterpret key evidence or information.
- Take a foolish or dangerous risk in pursuit of answers.

Questions

- What have you done in the Dream that had a shocking result?
- What do you know of the **Vexing Prophet** who foresees ill for you? The **Vexing Prophet** is an ominous figure who claims to see the hidden truths; they are not your enemy per se, but see flaws in your ideas and foolishness in your plans.

Connections

- Who have you helped uncover a truth?
- Who repeatedly defies your expectations?
- Who is frustratingly prone to argue or disagree with you?

The Hunter

You are not here at random, and you are not here alone. There is someone else who preceded you. You have clues pointing in their direction. And the clock is ticking. You need to find your quarry soon, before things get worse. If you don't, the Dream will be the least of your troubles.

Needs: Leads

You have three Leads: clues or traces that will help you find or oppose your quarry.

When you overcome an obstacle following a Lead, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then make a crucial discovery to resolve a Lead, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- a favorite puzzle or toy
- something that helps you spot things
- a pet with a useful ability
- a familiar hunting ground
- an item precious to your Quarry
- an uncanny means of communication

Special Lucid Move: Deduction

Choose a seemingly-innocuous detail not directly connected to a Lead. Reveal a hidden significance it indicates.

Special Twist Moves

- Fall prey to an unexpected trap or preparation laid by your Quarry.
- Have problems in your waking world disrupt what you're trying to do. (Remember that you're the authority on what might be happening in your waking world.)

Questions

- What makes you uniquely suited to follow traces through the Dream?
- What do you know of your **Elusive Quarry**, always one step ahead? Your **Elusive Quarry** resists ordinary means of tracking and is a threat to something important to you in your waking life.

Connections

- Who has skills that could help in the hunt?
- Who has an incongruous belonging that hints at a dangerous secret?
- Who impressed you by noticing something you did not?

The Guardian

Some Dreamers come here clueless, at the mercy of the chaotic forces around them. Not you. You know the Dream, how it works. You know that there are others who seek to use the Dream, or to end it. It needs someone to protect it. Someone like you.

Needs: Threats

You are concerned about three Threats: things that are a danger to the Dream as a whole, whether they are denizens, invaders from outside, or something else.

When you overcome an obstacle pursuing a Threat, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then defeat a Threat, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- an unexpected or makeshift weapon
- a passion or hobby you keep secret
- a scientist or scholar devoted to their work
- your dream journal
- an unusual yet comfortable bed
- a device tied into the Dream

Special Lucid Move: Understanding

Choose a danger other than a Threat. Reveal a secret of the Dream that gives you the upper hand against it.

Special Twist Moves

- Refuse to take action due to possible consequences for the Dream.
- Find that damage to the Dream has made something you counted on unreliable.

Questions

- By what authority do you defend the Dream?
- What do you know of the **Aloof Meddler** who knows too much? The **Aloof Meddler** could be your superior in an organization, someone you suspect has connection to your Threats but have nothing solid on, or a claimed ally whose advice gets you into trouble.

Connections

- Who seems a worthy ally in defense of the Dream?
- Who seems infected or corrupted, or to be at risk for becoming so?
- Who might be being manipulated by powerful hidden forces?

The Firebrand

Some see the Dream as natural, an inevitable outgrowth of humanity's collective unconscious. You, however, know better. The Dream corrodes the minds of its victims, and the problem is growing worse. You must sever its tendrils and free humanity from its touch, before it grows powerful enough that even waking will be no escape.

Needs: Corruptors

You are concerned about three Corruptors: denizens of the Dream working to extend the Dream's reach into your waking world.

When you overcome an obstacle tied to a Corruptor, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then decisively defeat a Corruptor, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- an emergency survival necessity
- someone you'd do anything to protect
- a place you received training
- makeshift protective headgear
- a scar or wound caused by the Dream
- a pure ever-burning flame

Special Lucid Move: Purify

Choose something present other than a Corruptor. Free it from the influence of a denizen of the Dream.

Special Twist Moves

- Inadvertently hurt or abandon an ally in your single-minded pursuit of a goal.
- Find evidence that something innocuous is part of a Corruptor's plot.

Questions

- How did you first learn of the threat posed by the Dream?
- What do you know of the **Keen Interloper** who dogs your steps? The **Keen Interloper** claims to be no friend of the Corruptors, but knows much about them. They aren't from your world, but are quite interested in it and your efforts.

Connections

- Who reminds you why you must fight the Dream?
- Whose comfort with the Dream makes you uneasy?
- Who seems a worthwhile ally in your fight?

The Lightseeker

There's something at the core of the Dream. Something stolen, or not yet born. An impossible pearl hidden deep within the sludge and darkness. You've seen glimpses of it, hints. You know it exists. And if you claim it? You could change everything.

Needs: Sages

You need the aid of three Sages: denizens of the Dream who know secrets that lead to the truth or treasure you seek.

When you overcome an obstacle seeking or proving your worth to a Sage, mark a circle for them. When you have both circles filled and then obtain what you need from a Sage, mark the star and realize a Grace.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- an elaborate map
- a memory that drives you
- someone you seek to emulate
- a place steeped in loss
- a scrap of tangible evidence
- a piece of ancient regalia

Special Lucid Move: Contrivance

Choose a denizen present other than a Sage. Establish something they know that can aid you.

Special Twist Moves

- Find that information you were given proves to be false.
- Trigger a trap when you thought you were safe.

Questions

- Why are you so sure you need this treasure or truth?
- What's known of the **Fallen Monarch** who covets the treasure you seek? The **Fallen Monarch** may be racing you to your goal, or may be someone you can work together with, but either way your motivations are fundamentally in conflict.

Connections

- Who has seen a glimpse or hint of what you seek?
- Who do you feel understands your drive?
- Whose expertise feels threatening?

Deeper Playbooks

In addition to the standard Dreamer playbooks, there are four additional playbooks that change up the assumptions of the game a bit.

These playbooks are by default intended as options for continuing your character's journey after they've completed their initial story progression, presenting possible paths away from their initial Dreamer playbook. There are obvious mechanical circumstances where this could make sense (losing all your Tethers to Entanglement, or resolving all your Needs), but you shouldn't feel restricted to those moments. If the table agrees it makes sense, you can switch playbooks at other times, for example after making an irrevocable choice or dramatic sacrifice.

When taking a new playbook, you generally carry over as much as makes sense from your previous playbook; for example, normally you'll keep the same Tethers and Entanglements you had rather than coming up with new ones.

All that said, these playbooks don't have to be sequels. If the table's on board with it, you can start a character with one of these playbooks. Just be mindful that they have limitations and journeys that are quite a bit different from the default Dreampunk experience.

The structure of these playbooks are a bit different from the standard playbooks. Each still has Needs, but these Needs are not based on something from the waking world, and you receive something else rather than Graces for resolving those needs. Each playbook has additional special rules as well.

When creating a character for a deeper playbook, the focus is less on who they are or were in the waking world. For these characters, what's important is who they were and how they interacted with the Dream before they made the irrevocable choice or change, and in contrast who they are now.

The four deeper playbooks are:

The Twitch: You have fallen to Entanglement and become a corrupted creature of the Dream.

The Surety: You truly know yourself, and this allows you to rise above the Dream and stand unwavering against its treachery.

The Rabble-Rouser: You have formed real bonds with denizens you have met in the Dream, and now work with them to correct injustice.

The Beholden: Out of ambition or necessity, you have sold a part of yourself to a powerful denizen and are now bound to them with chains of loyalty.



The Twitch

The Dream is a place of endless struggle, where you are constantly under attack. Some manage to fend it off, at least for a time. Most fall into its clutches, sooner or later. And you? You are one of these, fallen to the corruption of the Dream. You can never wake up. Never return to your waking world. And now, your only solace is to spread this corruption to others.

Needs: Targets

You have your sights set on three Targets: Dreamers, possibly support characters, who you seek to draw into Entanglement to build your own power.

When you overcome an obstacle tempting or corrupting a Target, mark a circle for them. When you have both circles filled and then absorb the power of corrupting a Target's Tether into an Entanglement, mark the star and note their Entanglements as Victim Entanglements.

Possible Entanglement Ideas

Your Entanglements once anchored you, but now bind you to the Dream. Perhaps consider...

- something disconcertingly bright and garish
- something broken beyond repair
- someone you'll never see again
- a place where you failed at a crucial moment
- a thorn coated in distilled nightmares
- your heart's fragments forged as a weapon

Special Lucid Move: Impose Harmony

Choose something foreign or out of place. Force them to take on an aspect of the local environment or realm.

Special Twist Moves

- Find your Entanglements or your fallen nature ill-suited to your circumstances.
- Betray someone who trusts you for selfish reasons.

Questions

- What do you miss most of the waking world?
- What do you recall of the **Remnant**, your last link to your former life? The **Remnant** may be a Dreamer you once traveled with, someone else from the same waking world as you, or a denizen who reminds you of your former self or someone you once knew.

Connections

- Who do you feel a keen temptation to entangle?
- Who insists on believing that redemption is still possible for you?
- Who views you with great distrust or antagonism?

Rules for the Twitch

A Dreamer who falls to Entanglement becomes trapped in the Dream. They are no longer what they were, but a strange and corrupted denizen called a Twitch.

Since the expectation is that the other protagonists are Dreamers, this positions you, as a Twitch, in an inherently threatening way. You may be struggling against the darkness, fighting to help the Dreamers avoid your fate despite your hungers. Or you may be serving in a more antagonistic role, with deceit and betrayal waiting in the wings. In this latter case, make sure that everyone's on board with that direction. This sort of character conflict can lead to great drama, but it's a bit different than the normal collaborative feel of Dreampunk. Remember that even if your characters come into conflict you're all working to have fun as players, and make sure everyone's on the same page about their expectations.

If you play the Twitch, you are not a Dreamer: you may not Awaken and have no Tethers, only Entanglements. Otherwise, you still function as a Dreamer in terms of the game rules.

You can still make Lucid Moves; however, you must incorporate some element of one of your Entanglements or Victim Entanglements into each Lucid Move. Anyone can still invoke one of your Entanglements (once per scene per Entanglement) to subvert or undermine a Lucid move you make, but it can't be the Entanglement you incorporated into the move they are subverting. (When this happens, you can chain a Lucid move for free later this session, as usual.)

The limitations of your fallen nature are up to you and may vary from Twitch to Twitch; this may just refer to the basic inability to leave the Dream and the limitations on your Lucid Moves, or you may have additional limitations based on having become inhuman or based in your Entanglements.

You can expand your options for using Lucid moves and grow your power by corrupting other Dreamers (who can be protagonist characters or support characters). To do so, you must build up to it via overcoming obstacles tempting or corrupting your Target or their Tethers in some way. Then, you must specifically corrupt one of their Tethers into an Entanglement; when you do, you absorb the Dream power thus created and gain access to their Entanglements as well.

If you absorb power from corrupting all three Targets, discuss with the table what this means for your character and if it might make sense to switch playbooks as a result. This probably isn't a *good* outcome, but it's likely a good story. Alternately, you may remain as a Twitch and accrue additional Targets.

There may be other ways to stop being a Twitch, but if so, they likely require assistance from other protagonist characters and their Graces.

The Surety

Once you were a Dreamer, barely able to hold your own against the currents of the Dream. But it was more than just a meaningless struggle. Striving against it, you learned to understand yourself. To understand the Dream, rise above it. From your elevated point, you can see its problems in a new way. They're not inevitable. They're flaws. And they can be fixed.

Needs: Projects

You have three Projects: large-scale changes you seek to impose on the Dream.

When you overcome an obstacle advancing a Project, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then complete a Project to permanently change the Dream, mark the star and establish a Pillar.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- a sheaf of plans or blueprints
- something that mends or fastens
- someone who opened your eyes
- a place where you won a great victory
- a cloak woven from something intangible
- a perfect, unbreakable spiderweb

Special Lucid Move: Mold the Dream

Extract or manipulate an abstract quality according to your idiom.

Special Twist Moves

- Find an unexpected negative consequence to your meddling.
- Over-fixate on someone's flaws, overlooking useful or helpful qualities.

Questions

- What idiom do you use to shape the Dream?
- What made you decide to pass up your chance to escape the Dream?
- What do you know of the **Resistant Foe** that sees your plans as a threat? Your **Resistant Foe** is likely a powerful denizen who benefits from the status quo, but could also be someone with a competing vision for the Dream's potential.

Connections

- Who sees the merit of your endeavors to reshape the Dream?
- Who do you fear is too comfortable with the Dream as it is?
- Who has failed to adequately master their emotions?

Rules for the Surety

A Dreamer that attains self-understanding can reach a sort of transcendence that allows them to rise above the Dream. This most commonly happens when a Dreamer resolves all of their Needs.

As a Surety, you are largely still a Dreamer, but have a heightened independence that derives from your Graces and your self-confidence. Like any Dreamer, your Tethers are at risk of Entanglement. You already have three Graces, and like normal when you invoke a Grace, you draw a card.

Your Tethers are more self-referential than for other Dreamers; they may connect you to the waking world, but they can also be built on your mastery and deep understanding of your own identity.

Your **Mold the Dream** special Lucid Move has greater persistence than ordinary Lucid Moves. Each Surety has a personal idiom, a way they modify the Dream, for example breaking things into puzzle pieces or sculpting auras with a chisel. This idiom often derives from your Graces and colors how you mold the dream. Whatever your idiom, it's generally a flexible and powerful option.

You have three Projects, which are advanced like any Need; however, the effects of completing a project are beyond the personal, and the obstacles you must overcome in pursuit of a Project are correspondingly larger and more involved. Denizens of the Dream can sense their potential impact, and you likely face active opposition.

When you complete a Project, you establish a Pillar, a permanent new truth about the Dream or a portion of it that applies to everyone. Whenever anyone makes use of a Pillar, they may draw a card (or, for a denizen, gain an Integrity card). In effect, Pillars are Graces that extend beyond yourself and become established fundamentally in the Dream.

When you have remade the Dream to your liking, what then? Perhaps this is a task that will never be complete, and you will keep adding new Projects. Or perhaps you will find a new form, a new purpose, afterwards, taking up a new playbook. For one such as you, the possibilities are endless.



The Rabble-Rouser

The Dream's denizens are not like the people you know awake. They have strange wants, strange ways of living. But some things are universal. The powerful exploit the lowly, until the lowly band together to fight back. And you know whose side you're on. You're in this fight, not as a savior or benefactor, but as a comrade. And if the masses stand together? Then everything can change.

Needs: Allies

You know three Allies: denizens who rebel against the Dream's structures.

When you overcome an obstacle assisting an Ally, mark a circle for them. When you have both circles filled and then work with an Ally to achieve their objective, mark the star and establish a Principle for their group.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- an identifying pin or scarf
- a song that brings you hope
- someone who taught you an crucial lesson
- a place where you saw a great injustice
- a bottomless first aid kit
- a bell that drowns out lies

Special Lucid Move: Mutual Aid

Choose an Ally. In a situation not directly related to their goals, have them help you or apply something of them to your situation.

Special Twist Moves

- Get separated from your friends and find yourself overwhelmed.
- Have a heated disagreement with a companion, undermining your efforts.

Questions

- What do you know of solidarity from your waking life?
- What do you know of the **Pleasant Tempter** that offers simple solutions? The **Pleasant Tempter** seems sympathetic but pushes for less-disruptive ideas. Whether or not they intend to, they undermine your plans.

Connections

- Who do you trust to stand by your side no matter what?
- Who seems cynical about how things are likely to turn out?
- Who seems not to understand your struggle?

Rules for the Rabble-Rouser

The Rabble-Rouser works together with denizens of the Dream. By default, you are still a Dreamer, with Tethers at risk of Entanglement.

If you have Graces from a prior playbook, keep them and draw a card when you invoke them. If you came via another deeper playbook that provides other special qualities, you may keep these qualities if it makes sense in the story.

The obstacles you face working with your Allies are likely larger than with ordinary Needs, and you will probably face more active opposition in pursuit of their objectives from those in the Dream who benefit from the status quo.

Once you do resolve your Need by attaining this major objective, you will establish a Principle for the relevant group. When you or anyone in the group invokes a Principle, they may draw a card (or, for a denizen, gain an Integrity card).

A Principle is a unifying truth about the group that gives it strength, in effect acting as a Grace that applies to the entire group and everyone in it.

If you achieve success with all three of your Allies, then you likely have turned society in the Dream on its head. Will find new allies pushing for further change? Or will you undergo one more metamorphosis, take up another playbook? Or is it upon you to finally leave the Dream behind, and apply what you have learned to those struggling in the waking world? The choice is up to you.



The Beholden

The Dream holds myriad opportunities, but nothing comes without a cost. You have sold something of yourself to a denizen of the Dream. Was it for power? Was it to save yourself when nothing else would? Or were you searching for a real connection? Regardless, you serve another, now. And this service will prove riddled with thorns.

Needs: Tasks

You have three Tasks: fraught missions placed upon you by your liege.

When you overcome an obstacle pursuing a Task, mark a circle for it. When you have both circles filled and then complete a Task, mark the star and receive a Boon.

Possible Tether Ideas

Your Tethers can be anything that anchors you. Perhaps consider...

- something representing victory or rank
- something you stole
- someone who owes you
- a place that makes you feel small
- an elixir that gives a surge of glory
- a battered shield of gems and darkness

Special Lucid Move: Borrowed Might

Choose something not under the protection of your liege. Lash out at it with power given to you by your liege.

Special Twist Moves

- Have your obligations keep you from addressing your own needs.
- Intentionally or not, go against your liege's wishes, and face the consequences.

Questions

- Who is your liege?
- What do you know of the **Bright Thorn** who opposes your liege? The **Bright Thorn** may be a rival on an equal footing to your liege, an underdog rebel, or a professed ally working their own scheme. They may view you as a threat, or may seek to offer you another path.

Connections

- Who has been hurt by your liege in the past?
- Who reminds you of what you used to care about?
- Who did you leave behind when you made your bargain?

Rules for the Beholden

The Beholden is a Dreamer who has given their loyalty to a powerful denizen in exchange for something they need.

You're still a Dreamer, albeit a compromised one. You still have Tethers at risk of Entanglement; however, any Entanglements you have are now called Chains and bind you to your liege rather than the Dream as a whole. Any player can still use your Chains to subvert your Lucid Moves, but your liege knows when a Chain is invoked and this may bring them into the scene in some way.

If you have Graces from a prior playbook, keep them and draw a card when you invoke them. You can also keep other special qualities from a prior deeper playbook if it makes sense in the story.

Your Tasks function like any Need; however, instead of a Grace, they give you a Boon from your liege. You may find when using such boons that your liege learns or takes something, exerting their influence over you in some small way. They're still extremely useful, but depending on them makes it even harder to separate yourself from your liege.

If you attain three Boons, you have won great honor from your liege, perhaps a title or other priviledges. And perhaps you continue in their service as they entrust you with ever-greather and ever-more-fraught tasks.

At what point is the cost too high to bear? Can the Beholden ever free themselves from their liege? Not alone, that's for sure. But with assistance from other Dreamers and their Graces? A great many things are possible.





The Guide

The Guide plays the environment, describing the places the Dreamers explore. They also act as the denizens of the Dream the Dreamers meet, introducing and playing them as “support characters”. Their role is facilitate an interesting story that everyone creates together.

The Guide does not “play god”. They may run the game, but they don’t have sole control over what happens. Every player shares narrative control over the game. Nevertheless, when the story gets stuck, the Guide can help get it moving in an interesting direction.

The Guide is not an adversary. The Guide, like the other players, is here to have fun and tell a good story. A good story in Dreampunk requires obstacles, challenges, and opponents. But it is not the Guide’s job to make the Dreamers fail or make their goals impossible. They just work with the other players to make their choices and pursuits interesting and meaningful.

For what is there for us to do, but to create meaning out of chaos?

Principles

The Guide shapes the feel and progression of the game by describing the environment and the actions of denizens. Guiding a collaborative Dreampunk story effectively takes some care. These principles suggest ways for the Guide to give the Dream form and facilitate a strong and multifaceted game.

Facilitating Gameplay

Give meaningful choices. Make sure that choices have impact, that they matter.

Ideally, there aren't clear-cut right answers, and multiple options merit serious consideration.

Say “yes, and...”, not “no”. Dreampunk is a collaborative game about powerful characters, and nothing wrecks that more than shutting someone down when they do something cool. Lucid Moves are broad, powerful abilities, and clever and creative ideas not using moves should be encouraged too. Don't block 'unbalanced' moves or ideas that disrupt your plans. Instead, add complications to let players succeed without completely avoiding challenge or interaction. If something a Dreamer tries won't work, reveal an alternate path or give some consequence that keeps the story moving forward.

Challenge but don't thwart. Don't make it too easy to solve problems in the Dream; it's more satisfying to build up to a resolution rather than to short-circuit it. But don't make solving problems feel impossible, either. Individual Lucid Moves can address an immediate challenge but may result in unforeseen consequences and complications. Regardless, engaging with the Dream should prove fruitful or fail in a way that provides a new opportunity; you don't want to frustrate players or make their attempts feel worthless.

Hold your prep loosely. Many Guides come to a session with structure, plot elements, or characters they plan to feature. This helps make improv easier. But don't commit yourself to these preconceived ideas. Be willing to abandon your plans if Dreamers do something unexpected that disrupts them or if they focus in a different direction. Nothing not yet encountered is fixed, and even things already established can quickly change in the Dream.

Ask provocative questions. The Dream reflects the Dreamers, and one great way to make things relevant is to ask the Dreamer players leading questions that connect something in the scene to their character. This is particularly useful when you come to a new place or meet a new denizen. Possibilities include:

- Who does this person remind you of?
- What about this place reminds you of somewhere else?
- What do you expect is about to happen?
- What makes you nervous here?
- What do you hope to find here?

Worldbuilding

Build on the Dreamers' focus, Needs, and Tethers. If the Dreamers are focused on something, let that grow into something interesting that moves the story forward or serves as a twist in the story. Follow their leads. Needs and Tethers are clear indications of what the Dreamers are interested in, and bringing them into play directly or indirectly drives character progression. Have the Dream try to corrupt Tethers that come up notably or frequently in play. (See "Entanglement" on pg. 33.)

Make every situation precarious. There is no status quo: there's always something poised to happen if the Dreamers don't act. Factions are always in conflict. Things are always growing or crumbling or falling apart. There's always a side to choose, or implications for not choosing a side. There's always phenomena that will have consequences, if perhaps mysterious ones, if ignored.

Reality exists only by implication. The other players are the authority on what's going on in the waking world for their characters; you have no need to ever disagree with them or establish something they do not. The other players' characters may allude to their waking life or even theorize that their dream experiences relate to waking life in some way, but you have no part of that. Never set scenes in the waking world, and as Guide avoid asserting about what's going on there. Different Dreamers may come from different waking worlds. Denizens likely range from completely ignorant of the waking world to wildly misinformed.

The world defies expectation. No location in the Dream is straightforward. A place might be a mishmash of two different locations, a familiar location with a sinister twist, a nonsensical hodge-podge, or any other arrangement, bounded only by imagination. Make the Dream your own!

All spaces are liminal. No location in the Dream is isolated; everywhere is a passage between at least two other locations. A character can hide or obstruct these connections but can't sever them completely. How well-connected or isolated a place is depends largely on the focus of the denizen who created or rules it.

Embrace inconsistency, but not to tear down. The Dream feels no need to follow a consistent "genre" and will commonly juxtapose discordant elements or elements that don't "make sense" together. Theme and mood drive the Dream, and much of what you establish can remain unexplained or only explained in an evocative way that rejects precise logic. Dreamlike shifts of context, location, scale, or mood are common. But these are tools to help tell the story of your group of Dreamers. Don't use these to plant "gotchas" or violate expectations in an unfun way. If active opposition is using inconsistency against the Dreamers, it should be clear that this is active manipulation and that the Dreamers may be able to use Lucid Moves to fight back.

Character Interactions

Portray the Dreamers as alien. Dreamers stand out. They're not denizens of the dream, they don't look the same or act the same. They don't know the normal customs. Not everyone necessarily recognizes Dreamers or even knows that Dreamers exist. But no one thinks the Dreamers are an ordinary inkling or figment. They've got this aura of lucidity that makes them stand out, perhaps on a subconscious level for some denizens and more visibly for others. They should make denizens react: perhaps the denizens become afraid, or beseeching, or manipulative, or combative. Denizens shouldn't act like Dreamers are ordinary (unless they have a good reason).

Denizens want something from Dreamers. The Dreamers present an opportunity. They have power, the ability to solve all sorts of problems. Denizens are not, on the whole, enlightened and content: they will have some problem, big or small, they want help with, or some scheme the Dreamers could enable. A denizen interacting with the Dreamers will likely have some angle for how their presence could prove a benefit.

Denizens grow from the table. Dreamers' Needs and Tethers are good sources for denizen ideas. Also, be willing to modify your ideas for denizens based on what engages with the story at the table. Playing off the focus or the contributions of Dreamer players may require changing the form or the motivations of planned denizens. The unexpected is part of the fun!

Denizens reveal layers over time. Recurring denizens may show unexpected complexities. Their past actions may get recontextualized by later developments. Keep in mind that facades may be false, and don't be afraid to have denizens reveal ulterior motives even if you hadn't come up with such a motive in a previous appearance.

Denizens are hierarchical. Every location and context has denizens with more power and denizens with less. Power structures are central to the lives of denizens, and provide opportunities to highlight the tensions of their lives. But one who seemed to be at the top of the heap may turn out to be subject to a less-visible overlord of their own. Showing the cruelty of those in power, the precariousness of those without, or the impact of struggles to change the balance of power can help engage Dreamers in broader conflicts.



Guide Moves

The Guide has moves too. This gives you, as the Guide, specific actions you can take to drive the story forward.

Unlike the Dreamers, the Guide doesn't have a hand of cards. Instead, most Guide moves involve playing the top card of the deck and interpreting it. Embrace the twists and randomness of this as part of the nature of the Dream. Remember you can interpret cards in any way, literal or metaphorical, and use any element of the card you wish, down to details of shape or color.

Because you're not playing out of your hand, you have no hard limit on how many moves you can make. However, while there aren't formal turns, you shouldn't be making multiple moves in a row. Give Dreamers the chance to react to your moves. Make your own moves in response to something they do or when the game conversation hits a lull. For the most part, the role of the Guide is to provide consequences for the players' actions and to keep the story moving when players look to you for what happens next. After you make a move, ask the Dreamers "What do you do?"

Reveal

Play the top card of the deck to establish setting or provide a surreal revelation about the environment and/or a denizen.

This is similar to the Dreamers' Explore move, but can be used when the Dreamers aren't actively exploring or when players look to you for exposition.

Meghan is running away from the Razorweasels in a blind panic. She's not paying attention to where she's going, so she doesn't get to use the Explore move. Since the Guide doesn't have anything established or planned for her to encounter, they use Reveal and turn over a card. Seeing a card with a dock jutting out over water, they describe Meghan coming to a harbor where the sea is lemonade. Meghan'd better come up with something quick, because she's running out of land to run on!

Another time, the group is in a town and Narin has just tried to offer a townspeople a sack of jeweled ants to hide the group in their barn. The Guide uses Reveal to help inspire the denizen's personality and circumstances. Seeing a gambling raccoon, they decide that this denizen will gladly take risks for money. (Whether they're trustworthy after being paid, however, is another matter.)

Resolve Doubt

When a Dreamer attempts something and it's unclear if they'll achieve their goal, play the top card of the deck and interpret it as the outcome.

You don't need to use Resolve Doubt whenever someone tries something clever; sometimes it's better to just let something work if it makes sense in the fiction or would be fun. But, if you really don't know what would happen or want to lean into the zaniness of the Dream, Resolve Doubt is a strong option.

Shae has climbed up a tree while angry townsfolk search for them. Shae decides to take off one of their shoes and throw it down the hill in the hopes that the noise will draw the townsfolk's attention long enough for them to get away.

The Guide has mixed feelings; it could work, but having it work without complication doesn't seem all that interesting. So they use Resolve Doubt and turn over the top card of the deck, revealing a card with a burning oil barrel. They interpret this to mean that the ploy works, except that one of the townsfolk's torches catches the underbrush as they run towards the sound, complicating Shae's escape.

Wield

When a denizen proactively invokes their special power in a dramatic moment, play the top card of the deck. Use an element of the card to inspire the result. (See below for more on denizens.)

For most denizens of the Dream, magic comes naturally, so ordinary uses of their special abilities won't need a move. However, if they use their abilities against a Dreamer or in a plot-significant way, Wield can be a good way to highlight that usage and to color the effect in a surreal way.

The Dreamers have journeyed long to confront the Witch of Shattering, with the power to break anything in her realm. However, they're in her palace now, and she's not going to go down easily. The Guide judges this a good moment for her to take the initiative, and turns over the top card of the deck for Wield. This reveals a card with colorful balloons. The Guide describes how the Witch contemptuously waves her scepter, and the stones beneath the Dreamers' feet pop like cheap balloons. Unless the Dreamers come up with a response, they'll fall directly into her dungeon.

Resist

Denizens of import have an Integrity score, often 1 to 3. When such a denizen enters a conflict, put that many cards from the top of the deck in a face-down row (without looking at them). These are the denizen's "Integrity cards".

When a Dreamer makes a Lucid Move to attack, incapacitate, or otherwise impair a denizen, you may use the Resist move: play one of their Integrity cards to defend against it. Use some element of the card as the defense. This generally does not negate a Dreamer's move entirely, but allows the denizen to modify or limit the move to allow them to remain effective or even twist it to turn what was intended as an attack to the denizen's advantage.

Being able to see how a denizen is being worn down helps players understand the parameters of the conflict and steer their roleplay accordingly.

Meghan is staring down the Knight of Despair. Not fancying a physical fight with the spikily-armored knight, Meghan uses Invert to turn them into a snail, intending to make them small and harmless. This starts a conflict; the Knight of Despair has Integrity 2, so the Guide gives them two integrity cards. The Guide plays one of the knight's integrity cards to Resist. The card shows an intimidating minotaur. Rather than turning into a tiny snail, the Knight reshapes into a giant metal horned toad that fills the passageway. The Knight, however, has only one integrity card left, bringing them closer to defeat.

If Dreamers make a Joint Move (see pg. 16), you may end up making a single Resist move, but to do so requires you to play 1 Integrity card per Lucid Move made. (Draw inspiration from one or more of the cards.)

If a Dreamer does something that exploits a denizen's weakness or is particularly clever or fitting, you have the option to decline to use Resist on their behalf. Used sparingly, this can create strong story moments.

Note that when a denizen runs out of Integrity cards, they're not necessarily permanently gone. They become unable to oppose Lucid Moves for now, and are defeated for the current scene. They may vanish, fall apart, or make a dramatic exit. But denizens may have the ontological inertia to recover when lucid effects wear off or to return later even if seemingly destroyed. Permanently defeating a powerful denizen is a matter what works for the story and the pacing of your game. This may look like getting a denizen to change their perspective over a series of encounters, going on a quest to discover their weakness, or learning about their history to uncover their true motivations. Having recurring antagonists can be helpful in creating a compelling story, especially for longer Dreampunk campaigns.

If you plan to have a defeated denizen recur in the future, foreshadowing this at the point of defeat can be good to set expectations appropriately.

Shared Moves

The Guide shares a couple moves with the Dreamers as well:

Cut: Play the top card of the deck and jump to a new scene or location. You can use this to avoid content that's not working for you or to keep the story moving by skipping past less-interesting logistics.

Spark: Reward cool or unexpected play by letting a Dreamer draw the top card of the deck. (A Dreamer can only draw a card this way once per scene.)

Portraying the World

The Dream is a strange place: surreal happenings and minor and everyday uses of a denizen's magical powers don't necessarily need a formal move. Taking a photo with a cell phone might be a natural activity for a Dreamer; for a particular denizen, making a sandwich out of thin air or twisting a tree into a spiral might be just as natural. When a denizen's power targets a Dreamer, when it's important to the plot, or when the inspiration of a card would be helpful, use the *Wield* move and play the top card of the deck. But you won't use *Wield* every time a denizen does something magical. Similarly, sometimes you'll just describe the world around the Dreamers based on your image of it, and sometimes you'll use a *Reveal* move for inspiration. In essence, use your card moves when they're helpful to you in playing the world, and don't feel obligated to use them when they feel unnecessary.

Remember when playing the world that, while the characters and circumstances you describe may oppose the Dreamers and often try to hurt, entangle, or thwart them, you as the Guide are not competing with them or trying to "beat" them. Everyone in Dreampunk is collaborating to tell a good story, and while challenge and failure can be important parts of the story, ideally all the players, even those whose characters experienced misfortune during play, are happy with the flow and drama of the game.

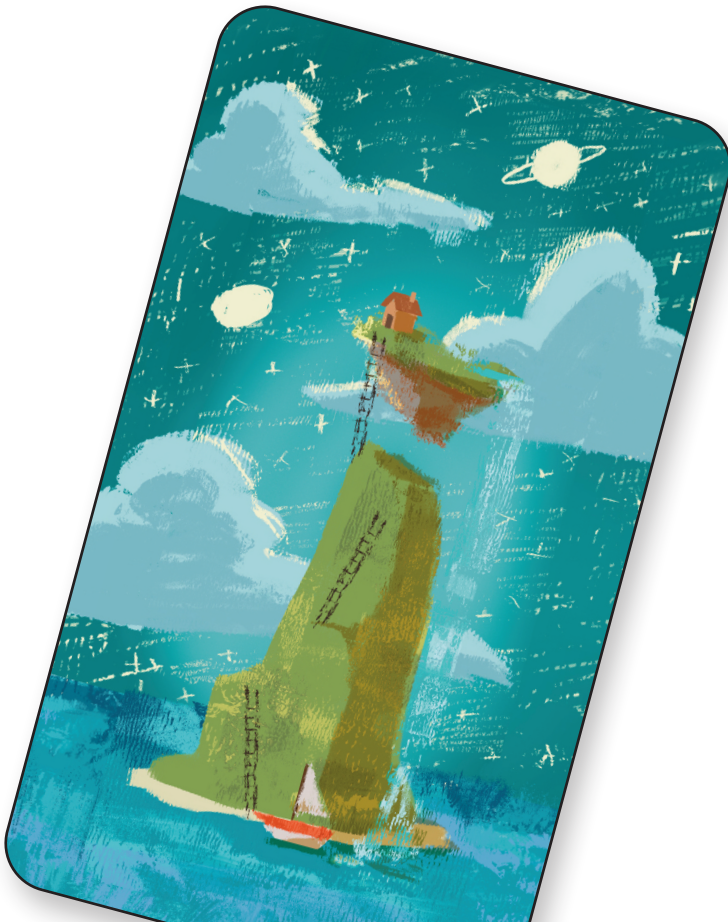
While Dreamer players have the authority to describe their moves, they may look to you for guidance on the impact of a move they make, or there may be situations in which multiple Dreamers make contradictory moves. You can serve in a facilitating role to help resolve these situations without play getting bogged down. In situations where the correct resolution is unclear to you or it seems like no answer will make everyone completely happy, handing decision-making over to a card with the *Resolve Doubt* move can be a strong option.

Dreamer players may also look to you for what happens next when there's a lull in play or when none of them have a clear idea for the next scene. Look to your *Principles and Moves* to determine what happens next. If additional guidance would be useful, the *Signposts* in the next chapter can provide additional direction for the Guide.

Coordinating the Group

Sometimes in exciting situations all the Dreamers will try to do things at once. If many Dreamers are trying to make moves on the same target at once, you have two options. You can treat this as a Joint Move (see pg. 16) and interpret multiple cards together as one very powerful action. In this case, ask the players if they want to participate in the Joint Move or if they want to take back their card. Alternately, you can suggest some ordering and apply the Dreamers' moves one at a time. In this case, a Dreamer's move is not final until it's applied, and they can change their mind and withdraw their card based on the results of previously-applied moves.

Sometimes Dreamers may have very different ideas for where a scene should go: they each have different Needs they are trying to address, or one person wants to help a denizen the other mistrusts. Roleplaying some level of disagreement in-character can be fun, but if it starts feeling too much like a tug-of-war it can be helpful to pause play and talk about the narrative direction as players. Coming to consensus as players is ideal, and proposing some compromise (e.g., we'll pursue one Dreamer's Need in this scene but have a later scene focused on the other Dreamer's Need) can be helpful in achieving this.



Starting the Game

The Guide generally facilitates the game as a whole and helps the other players through the process of character creation.

Print out the playbooks and play reference sheets, which are available online at <http://dreampunk.xavid.us/playbooks> for your use, or have paper for character sheets. Make sure that you have pencils and Dreampunk cards.

Explain the basics of the game to the other players, if necessary. This is also a good opportunity to set expectations about the setting and the generally cooperative nature of the game. Help the other players choose a playbook and assist them as they create Dreamer characters, filling in Needs, Tethers, and other character details.

When everyone has their character ready, go around and have each player introduce their Dreamer. Once this is done, encourage players to discuss what they're interested in, both for the first Chapter and more broadly. Ask what they're excited about exploring, what their character might be looking for, what sorts of conflicts might be fun to get involved with, what genres or types of stories appeal. Use this to guide play long-term and to decide the focus of the first Chapter.

Then, begin the first Chapter as described on pg. 10.

Planning

Dreampunk limits the Guide's ability to make a detailed plan in advance: the Dreamers can make drastic changes to their environments and defeat obstacles in surprising ways, and your card moves themselves are quite random, so improvisation is central to playing as the Guide. That said, having some structure in mind to guide your description and steer play can be helpful, both to make improvisation less overwhelming and to help the chaotic nature of play nevertheless result in some level of satisfying story. In essence, this structure can serve as the Guide's plot arc, as a complement to the personal arcs each Dreamer has with their Needs and/or Tethers.

Keep in mind to treat your planned structure as a skeleton and avoid fleshing out too many details. Developing things in play using your card moves, reactions to the Dreamers' focus, and improvisation can really help to play up the surreal and unpredictable nature of the Dream.

For a game played as a series of sessions, the first session may be largely taken up with Dreamer creation. Play during this first session can be mostly introducing the Dreamers and the mechanics, and perhaps introducing denizen characters. In general, however, you shouldn't have a long-term structure planned at this point. Instead, after this first session use the characters, their Needs and Tethers, and their playbook questions as inspiration for an outline for future events. Hold to your prep loosely, and don't be afraid to abandon or change things later depending on the Dreamers' focus and choices.

Sometimes, you may be facilitating a “one-shot” game, where the entire game starts and finishes on one day. This can be challenging because the Guide has no time to plan after character creation. In this case, it can be useful to sketch out in advance a basic idea of what situations the Dreamers might encounter, and then adapt it based on the created characters. In doing so, think about options for a dramatic problem you can establish early on and give the Dreamers opportunities to make incremental progress towards understanding or addressing, to increase your ability to steer towards a satisfying resolution in the available time. Have at least three or so denizens in mind for the Dreamers to encounter, and think about relationships between them. Don't worry overmuch about character development in a one-shot: while opportunities to engage with Needs and Tethers are still valuable, a one-shot will probably not be able to fully resolve Needs or entangle Tethers, and focusing on a denizen-centered plot arc rather than the Dreamers' personal difficulties is entirely appropriate.

Skeleton Seeds

Almost anything can happen in the Dream, so you may be at a loss for a plot structure to use when Guiding. Here are some very loose storyline ideas that may inspire you. The idea is for these to give you some direction while allowing you to fill in details based on your own ideas, the cards, and the choices the Dreamer players make.

- A peaceful region is threatened by a new monster or overlord who is disrupting their way of life.
- Multiple neighboring lands are in conflict, and their respective Gentry seek the aid of Dreamers to get the upper hand in this conflict.
- Two peoples with extreme and unusual cultures have come into contact and seem unable to reach common ground.
- Someone approaches the Dreamers with a mystery: they've been accused of something and must prove their innocence, or a crime has happened that they want the Dreamers to solve.
- An important person or relic is missing, and the land is doomed unless it is recovered.
- There's a strange creature or town that the Dreamers must follow or explore in order to understand.
- The land has become unbalanced or corrupted, and no one knows why.



Denizens of the Dream

There are many beings native to the Dream that may serve as antagonists, as allies, or in more nebulous roles. These are not Dreamers: they're in the Dream all the time, and they may know nothing of the waking world.

Denizens are not Dreamers and most do not get to make Lucid Moves. They exist independently of the Dreamers and have their own goals and activities that persist whether or not the Dreamers are present. They can interact with the Dream around them in ways that are natural to them, and in addition each denizen has some special power.

What makes a denizen?

When making denizens, there are two main things to keep in mind: their power and their constraints.

Each denizen has an ability we call their "special power". This may seem like a magical ability, an unusual talent, or even advanced technology. Regardless, this power is something useful or necessary for their way of life in the Dream. Denizens have immense variety in their special powers, bounded only by the alien logic of the Dream. Thus, their powers often seem strange or nonsensical to Dreamers. While these powers are broadly a counterpart to the Dreamers' Lucid Moves, they are usually much less flexible, restricted to one specific type of effect.

Each denizen is also deeply constrained by the Dream in some way, whether it's in terms of location, activity, manner, or another sort of constraint. They may or may not mind these limitations or even be aware of them, but they are a significant part of any denizen.

When shaping your denizen, it may be helpful to think about what unusual things your denizen would need to do to live within the strange constraints of their situation in the Dream. Conversely, denizens may be oblivious to things taken for granted in the waking world or the way things work elsewhere in the Dream; think about what might be beyond their awareness or experience and how the Dreamers might seem astonishing or unnerving to them.

Denizen Types

The Dream holds a huge variety of denizens. Here are some general categories for denizens you may encounter. This is a descriptive, not prescriptive, taxonomy: you should feel free to create whatever denizens fit the Dream you are guiding.

Gentry

Gentry are those within the Dream who are closely tied to a particular location or stronghold. There's some aspect or property of their realm that's central to them, and they generally work to make everything fit that aspect. Their special power is to, within their realm, reshape the environment and local Figments to their liking. They are often in conflict with neighbors and are frequently interested in making deals with Twitches, Dreamers, and others who seem powerful to gain advantage in these disputes, but also frequently distrust outsiders as possible spies and saboteurs. They seldom if ever leave their realms.

Gentry can serve as antagonists who object to the Dreamers' presence or actions, or as schemers who try to make deals with Dreamers or get them involved in their operations. They often have plans within plans, and may set things up so that thwarting their obvious plan is actually exactly what they need for a second, more subtle plan to succeed. This can be useful for a chapter that has a relatively solvable problem but then ends with a revelation that more was going on than met the eye, leading to a dramatic start to the next chapter.

Examples

- Contessa Marelle fills her realm with flowers and mistrusts anything that's not a plant.
- Lord Ned rules by fear and tries to make his realm as terrifying as possible.
- The Rookworm holds dominion over an abandoned shopping mall and traps trespassers in derelict elevators.



Figments

Figments are everyday denizens who sprang up from a particular realm within the Dream and are deeply tied to it. They largely identify themselves by a particular occupation or way of life, and have a seemingly minor power that supports their way of life and helps them overcome some obstacle of the Dream that would otherwise make that difficult or impossible. They know the ways of the Dream, at least locally, and how to ride out changes or tribulations. They can become confused, however, by denizens or problems from elsewhere in the Dream. The local Gentry wield considerable power over them, frequently in unfair or unjust ways.

Figments often serve as relatable figures that ask Dreamers for help with their problems. They can provide useful exposition about their realm and recent developments therein. Despite their often-mundane appearances, their powers can be helpful to the Dreamers if used creatively. They can also serve as antagonists if the Dreamers disrupt their way of life, if their natural role is hostile, or if other denizens have enlisted them to a cause.

Examples

- Mozelius is a farmer who grows corn and has the ability to create false sunglobes to allow his crop to survive the vagaries of time and weather in the Dream.
- Ezela is a miller who can grind anything into flour.
- Refractive Jays can interact with color as a physical object, and eat it for sustenance.



Drifters

Drifters are denizens of the Dream born of its abstract potential. They are liminal and independent creatures, refusing to be bound by others' concepts of realms and forms. They tend to keep a low profile and have no fixed abode, traveling from place to place. They follow some occupation that feels natural and right to them but, as it takes them from place to place in the Dream, may seem out of place to those around them. Their special power is related to some unique and special possession they have, and they may be willing to lend this possession for the right favor. They also tend to be adaptable and good at problem solving due to their experience with varied parts of the Dream, and are good at finding gateways and connections.

Drifters can provide aid or guidance to Dreamers who are lost or looking for something. They may sometimes decide to accompany Dreamers who are going the same way or who seem to provide a valuable opportunity. They often prevail upon Dreamers for favors, which can get Dreamers involved in local issues or politics. They can serve as antagonists if they mislead Dreamers in their favor requests or if they try to take something the Dreamers have by force or subterfuge.

Examples

- Yzeri is a tinker who has tinner's shears that can cut the imperfections away from anything.
- Perona da Camelo can use her paintbrush to restore vitality to that which has been carelessly damaged.
- The shed skin of Tunneling Snakes can show you images of places you wish to be.



Inklings

Inklings become established by the needs or desires of a specific powerful denizen and are shaped primarily by a role they are expected to fulfill. In normal circumstances, they follow the commands of their creator. It is possible, but difficult, to break an Inkling out of this pattern, often by presenting them with a better chance to fit their role. An Inkling's special power relates to their role.

An Inkling often serves as a minor antagonist, representing the will of a stronger villain. In this role, they foreshadow and provide exposition about their creator while not serving as a substantial threat. Some Inklings, however, are powerful enough to serve as notable obstacles on their own. Alternatively, they can help Dreamers who convince them the Dreamers are serving their creator's interests or who find a way to manipulate their adherence to their role.

Examples

- The Burnished Guard grew out of fear of injury and has the power to block attacks that target another.
- Drizeni Flax was created out of a star-crossed love and can pass through solid walls to deliver a message.
- Teatime-Glories were born out of a delight in hosting parties and produce nectar of any flavor desired.

Harbingers

Harbingers are denizens that are entangled with a particular emotion. They travel from realm to realm in the Dream in order to spread their emotion. They often seem unaware or uncaring about the consequences this has for the places they visit, and thus can be viewed as dangerous to Gentry or Figments. Their special power involves creating or encouraging their emotion or manipulating those who share their emotion.

Harbingers often serve as antagonists when their powers disrupt either local denizens' status quo or the Dreamers' plans. They feel entitled to spread their emotion freely and can't be easily dissuaded once they set on a course of action. They can often be manipulated by convincing them that doing something different would better inspire their emotion. They can be powerful allies if the Dreamers' interests align with their inclinations.

Examples

- Mendos Tlix is always happy and brings gifts to spread joy to others.
- Fenzor plays a song that enrages anyone who hears it.
- When a Noxio Bee stings you, it fills you with the existential ennui of being just a drone in a large corporation.

Wardens

Wardens guard points of connection: gateways, bridges, crossroads, and the like. They're also tied to a related conceptual distinction: separating fear from comfort or thirst from hunger, say. Their special power is based in this distinction.

Wardens are enmeshed in, not just their point of connection, but also the divide it bridges. In this way, they can use the Resist move to oppose attempts to cross this divide via other means that bypass the connection they protect.

Wardens often serve as obstacles that need to be bypassed but are seldom truly malicious. They often serve thematically to reflect conflicts between other denizens the Dreamers encounter, and frequently help keep realms separate by blocking the paths between them. They may sometimes be prevailed upon for help if the actions of other denizens threaten a balance they care about.

Examples

- Tesiae ferries people across a river that separates light and dark, and uses their dark-wielding pole to drive back the light attempting to seep across.
- Ryzah guards the City of Loveliness and strips beauty away from those she thinks don't deserve it.
- The Infin Hydra categorizes people according to their levels of politeness and assigns them to different labyrinths accordingly.

Glimpses

Glimpses are aware of and keenly interested in Dreamers' Needs. They usually try to be helpful, but the hollowness of their understanding means that they often are in effect cruel or manipulative instead of actually providing assistance. Their special power generally relates to illusions or facades, allowing them to provide something that seems like what you seek but is artificial or deceptive.

Glimpses can make complicated antagonists, causing problems while appearing to mean well. For Dreamers with strong emotions tangled up in their Needs, Glimpses can be quite hurtful. It can be hard to explain to a Glimpse successfully why their "aid" is unappreciated, but if you manage to do so sometimes Glimpses may attempt to make up for their actions in other ways.

Examples

- Berosie bakes pastries in the shape of anything and attempts to pass them off as what they resemble.
- Verodion can forge weapons that seem suited to any problem; they initially appear to work in casual tests, but break when they're most needed.
- Mycantha Gourds turn out to contain valuables instead of seeds, but these treasures transform into insects in the presence of strife.

Touchstones

Touchstones have a keen interest in Dreamers. They're aware that Dreamers can powerfully reshape and perhaps even create the Dream, but fear that the Dreamers are not deserving of such power or will use it to destructive ends. They have preconceptions of criteria that Dreamers should meet to be worthy of manipulating the Dream, and have a special power that lets them provide some sort of test to see whether Dreamers meet their criteria.

Touchstones initially serve as antagonists, as they insist on putting Dreamers to the test and such tests can be quite troublesome or dangerous. Dreamers that pass their tests often find Touchstones to be valuable allies. However, Touchstones will attempt to exile Dreamers that fail from the Dream or, given that that's easier said than done, simply imprison them or make their time in the Dream miserable.

Examples

- Fluxio Ghent creates moral dilemmas and evaluates how Dreamers respond.
- Raeso the Clown expects Dreamers who visit him to have perfect balance, and gives them increasingly precarious tasks.
- Lesti the Owl judges how Dreamers interact with seemingly mindless beasts.

Whirls

Whirls more than any other denizen sow chaos and disorder through the Dream. Each Whirl has a view of the world they apply wherever they go, regardless of appropriateness. Their special power represents a trick they play or a disruption they cause. Unique among denizens, when they successfully use their power on a Dreamer they force that Dreamer to discard their hand and draw that many cards. In doing this, they embody the Dream's fundamental rejection of any possibility of status quo.

Whirls tend to be antagonists, and are often completely uninterested in attempts to convince them of their negative impacts. By engaging with their worldview, however, Dreamers can sometimes steer them to cause chaos in a particular, tactically-helpful, direction.

Examples

- Haceri believes in the inevitable collapse of civilization and causes structures to crumble to dust.
- Bosil believes that attachment to possessions is poisonous and delights in stealing things their owners desperately need.
- The Axi Kookaburra believes peril is hilarious and seeks out those in precarious situations. Its mirth is contagious, forcing hearers to laugh in the face of danger (which makes it hard to do anything else).

Twitches

Twitches are former Dreamers who fell to Entanglement. They have a strong awareness of the workings of the Dream but are nevertheless fully enmeshed within it. They are incapable of waking up, and are trapped in the Dream forever. The Dream sees Twitches as an invading force and works to deny them comfort or stability in a futile attempt to drive them out. They are exceptionally powerful within the Dream because they can perform Lucid Moves, but they are limited to moves that relate to their Entanglements. Twitches are aware of others' Tethers and Entanglements and often attempt to entangle Dreamers to create new Twitches. Twitches that succeed at entangling Dreamers become more powerful and permanently gain access to their victims' Entanglements.

Twitches can be powerful antagonists, strongly motivated to pursue and entangle Dreamers. They often have multi-layered schemes in pursuit of greater power or other, stranger goals. That said, they're fundamentally quite similar to Dreamers, and Dreamers can sometimes connect to them over memories of their past lives.

Examples

- Lucy Cottage's love for her toys became corrupted; now she attacks viciously with twisted stuffed animals.
- Mark Trivoli is entangled in his failed science experiments. His Lucid Moves provide means to recreate these experiments, often with Dreamers as his subjects.
- Spot Jackerate's skills for escape became confining Entanglements. Now he creates tangled barriers around others, often asking to accompany travelers he meets with the intent of leading them into traps.



Sureties

Sureties are former Dreamers as well. They move through the Dream but are not entirely subject to it. They seem confident and unwavering, imposing and unassailable. They often seek to impose some order on the ever-shifting Dream. A Surety is one possible outcome of satisfying all of a Dreamer's Needs.

Sureties have special powers that fundamentally manipulate the structure and mechanics of the Dream in a more persistent way than Lucid Moves. With time and care, Sureties can dramatically transform the Dream around them in a way that not even the most powerful denizens can undo.

Sureties might seem to generally be allies, but more often they end up being at best unwelcoming and at worst actively hostile to Dreamers who interfere with their plans or habits. Often they have seen other Dreamers fall to being Twitches or otherwise fail to handle the Dream, and this can make them wary of forming bonds. It can feel almost impossible to change the mind of a Surety even with strong arguments, but it is a natural and not supernatural confidence the Sureties have, and the right circumstances or point of connection can enable a Dreamer to reach them.

Examples

- Robin McHenry can pierce the very fabric of the Dream with her needle to create new connections or sew existing connections closed.
- Sam Takahata can enclose the phenomena of a Realm in their bottles and move them elsewhere within the Dream.
- Polly Redbeak asks denizens provocative questions and gives those who provide imaginative answers the opportunity to change their nature.



Distributing the Guide

Some groups may decide they want to share the role of the Guide and work together to play the world. The random nature of the cards support this sort of play by discouraging detailed planning. When distributing the Guide, each player gets the ability to act as the Guide when appropriate. Each player has a hand of cards that's associated with their Dreamer and used for their Dreamer's moves, and separately can also act as a Guide and make Guide moves using the top card of the deck.

In general, to keep things interactive, don't serve as the Guide to respond to your own actions. Let one of the other players describe how the Dream and its denizens respond to things you do.

When playing as the Dream, keep in mind the Guide Principles (see pg. 60) and the basic conversation flow:

- Dreamers act.
- The Dream responds, with or without a Guide move.
- The player acting as Guide then asks the Dreamers "What do you do?"

Signposts

Signposts are Guide subroles that represents particular facets of the Dream. Each Signpost comes with additional principles that can help focus on that facet. It also has suggestions for thematically-appropriate things to consider doing when playing the world.

The four signposts are Mirror, Threat, Power, and Throng.

When playing without a dedicated Guide, each player generally holds one Signpost at a time, giving them a focus and creativity prompts for playing the Dream. Players can drop or trade Signposts based on the flow of play.

When the role of the Guide is spread among multiple players, Signposts help ensure everyone has a distinct role to play. Dedicated Guides should feel free to use Signposts as inspiration as well if they seem useful.

The Mirror

You represent the Dream as an intimate, personal realm, focused on these specific Dreamers and their real-world problems. Familiar faces, “coincidental” parallels, and denizens with uncanny insight into the Dreamers can all contribute to this.

Principles

- Ask provocative questions about what the Dreamers care about, and have the Dream reflect the answers.
- Notice or ask what Dreamers don't want to admit, and press on that.
- Make the world reflect the Dreamers' inner experiences.
- Bring back things from earlier in the Dream that Dreamers connected to.
- Make Dreamers' Tethers and Needs relevant.

Ideas for playing the world

- Introduce something related to a Tether or Entanglement.
- Have a denizen show knowledge they shouldn't have about a Dreamer.
- Shape the Dream based on a Dreamer's weakness.
- Give a Dreamer reason to question their perceptions or beliefs.

The Threat

You represent the world of the Dream as an inescapable place of nightmare that's drawing Dreamers in. As the Dreamers delve deeper, you also show the entangling nature of the Dream, the fear that you might never wake up. Keep Dreamers from getting too comfortable or feeling too in-control.

Principles

- Ask provocative questions about the dangers of the Dream, and build on the answers.
- Notice or ask what Dreamers aren't taking seriously enough, and have that end up biting them.
- Make the Dream feel inescapable.
- Make the Dreamers' Tethers frequently at risk of corruption.
- Don't let Dreamers forget their Entanglements.

Ideas for playing the world

- Reveal that something changed or vanished when no one was watching.
- Offer a false hope.
- Foreshadow a future threat.
- Reveal a hidden danger at a crucial moment.

The Might

You represent the power struggle of the political machinations of the Dream. Dreamers are a source of power, and ambitious denizens will target them in an attempt to use this. Dreamers will be forced to take sides to avoid being treated as everyone's enemy. They must exercise care lest they become mere pawns in the workings of others.

Principles

- Ask provocative questions about large-scale conflicts in the Dream and build on the answers.
- Have denizens try to lure Dreamers into taking their side.
- Make the Dreamers targets of manipulation.
- Make things the Dreamers don't want to give up essential to a denizen's plan.
- Make powerful denizens intimidating and competent.

Ideas for playing the world

- Offer an opportunity with a price.
- Give someone a resource that gives them power over others who need it.
- Have a denizen put a Dreamer in a cruel dilemma as part of a broader scheme.
- Hint at vast and cryptic politics.

The Throng

You represent the Dream as a civilization that exists independently of the Dreamers. The everyday denizens here have their own lives and relationships, their own reasons for caring about things. Making these independent existences relevant helps create the feel that the Dream is real and provides interesting interactions with support characters.

Principles

- Ask provocative questions about relationships between denizens and build on the answers.
- Notice or ask what Dreamers think of those they encounter, and play on those preconceptions.
- Give the denizens of the Dream alien motivations.
- Have denizens care deeply about things and take dramatic actions as a result.
- Have denizens demand proof or assurance of things that the Dreamers claim.

Ideas for playing the world

- Have the Dreamers encounter a community event or party with an unexpected location or theme.
- Surround someone with a crowd.
- Have a denizen's strong emotion drive them to unexpected action.
- Show the long-term impact of a choice the Dreamers made on the Dream and its denizens.



Design Notes

A Twisting Path

One might assume, based on Dreampunk's final form, that it started with Dixit cards. However, I was actually working on the game for over four years before I had that idea. (It started life as a Fate hack with normal Fate dice before spending a while as an Apocalypse World-alike.) Dreampunk never really captured the feel I was going for until we started using the cards, though. Just goes to show that you never know where your game design will take you.

While I briefly tried using both cards and dice, I ended up really wanting to focus on the cards, which were what really felt unique and compelling about Dreampunk. This caused me to think about things in a bit of a different way than I'd been used to, gradually getting rid of numerical mechanics and numbers-go-up advancement entirely to fit this new focus.

Mechanically speaking, the biggest influence on Dreampunk was *Dream Askew* and *Dream Apart*, by Avery Alder and Benjamin Rosenbaum.⁵ While they've now spawned a great variety of Belonging Outside Belonging/No Dice No Masters games, I first read *Dream Askew* before that, and I realized that its focus on player-level resource management, simple mechanics, and narrative moves worked great with my new direction for Dreampunk, using cards in the place of *Dream Askew*'s token economy.

⁵ I came up with the name "Dreampunk" before I read them, though, so that bit is a coincidence.

While Dreampunk's Lucid Moves build on *Dream Askew's* Strong Moves, and Twist Moves take the place of Weak Moves, there are a few notable areas where I broke with the established pattern.

For one, I got rid of Regular Moves, moves that don't interact with the token economy, in favor a section explicitly allowing Dreamers to act without moves. The reason for this was twofold. To start, I'd noticed an issue with some players where they felt like everything their character did should be a move, and having many moves that didn't interact with the cards risked contributing to that feeling. The second reason was my desire to leave character creation very open and to support wacky or unexpected character concepts. Leaving things you could do without interacting with the card economy open and down to fictional positioning rather than something listed in your playbook seemed to work well for both these points.

The other notable change is starting everyone with five cards in hand, rather than zero tokens. This puts much less focus on the Twist Moves, and in fact some tables may go the whole session without using Twist Moves. But as a practical matter, having multiple cards to look at when thinking up ideas for Lucid Moves just plays better. It loses some of the opportunities for vulnerability and the feeling of constraint that *Dream Askew* has, but it ended up working better with this card-focused system.

The Cards

The card art is core to the Dreampunk experience. While you can play it with other surreal art cards, I had specific goals for the art to support Dreampunk play that I worked with the artists to achieve.

The core parameters for the card images were to juxtapose multiple contrasting or incompatible elements in an illogical or strange way. (An element is anything that you could name or identify to use in a Lucid Move.) Having a variety of elements per card was important for both replay value, being able to use the same card in a different way next time you got it, and for flexibility. While three elements was the minimum, many cards went for a quite high element density. Beyond that, the strangeness of the cards was trying to help put players in a Dreampunk mindset, to encourage them to be creative and surreal both in how they use the cards and more generally, even when not using cards.

Using a variety of artists and seeking out artists from backgrounds different than mine also helped create dynamic, varied cards, and I'm super happy with how the Dreampunk deck turned out. Many artists contributed their own ideas, took my prompts in unexpected directions, and collaborated to flesh out concepts, so the Dreampunk deck is truly a group creation.

On the Purpose of Rules

Why have rules at all? You can do collaborative storytelling based on Dreampunk-style cards without formal rules, or with very minimal rules. It works! It's fun! But it wasn't the dynamic I wanted for Dreampunk. There are a few reasons why I wanted more structure.

I had a particular sort of narrative structure in mind for the Dream and what fictionalized lucid dreaming might be like, and the Dreampunk rules try to serve as a foundation to drive that type of story in particular. I wanted the game to be something more than a series of card-driven random developments.

The playbooks are important, less for their mechanical differentiation, and more for inspiring distinctive characters that want something from the Dream. I wanted to give players something to help them come up with characters that would have goals that could be pursued in the Dream and avoid characters that seemed too similar or that were just reacting to things without agency. At the same time, I didn't want to make many assumptions or establish many details about the setting, both in terms of what the waking world is like or and in terms of the Dream. So the playbooks give questions and themes, but they all leave the details of who you are up to the player.

This gets back to the Dreampunk philosophy on TTRPG rules: that they're here to inspire creative play and help you tell a story that you wouldn't have come up with on your own, rather than limiting your ideas. The playbooks and their specific questions and Tether ideas, the cards themselves, the list of Lucid Moves, the denizen types, and the Signposts are all different ways of providing creativity prompts of different types at different points.

In terms of individual playbooks, most started out as various characters or archetypes from fiction and developed from there. A lot of them came from an idea of a disconnect between circumstances and the way folks should be able to live, which is a queer theme that seemed notably relevant here. In addition to my queerness/genderqueerness, my plurality was relevant thematically, most obviously in the Prism, which is another milestone on my ongoing quest to explore plural characters in positive ways (though it can, of course, be interpreted less literally).

Why the particular list of five shared Lucid Moves, given how broad they are and the freedom Dreamers have in applying them? Dreampunk could play similarly with a single generic Lucid Move. Having specific moves is useful, though, to inspire ideas for what players can do, focusing on certain types of surreal framing that might otherwise be less likely to come up. Having separate moves also creates some room for playbook-by-playbook variation. The playbook-specific moves help push different types of Dreamer in different directions and give stronger guarantees about what a move might accomplish than a shared move.

Agency

There is a broader theme in Dreampunk of player agency. It was a goal from the beginning to give all players significant agency and avoid the risk of being constrained to a pre-determined storyline. This creates a more collaborative feel, which brings out what I enjoy most about tabletop roleplaying games.

Dreampunk follows in the footsteps of games like *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* by Jenna Moran that prioritize player agency, in part by giving characters flexible and powerful abilities in-universe. This helps avoid players getting stuck in a situation that's not actually being fun. While nothing can replace discussing goals and feelings at the table on the player level, Dreampunk both provides in-character and player-level options for shaking things up to support steering towards fun.

Earlier versions made a Dreamer's corruption something that inexorably advanced over time, but for a high-agency game it ended up working better to put this mainly under the player's control as well. Some players want to tell a story about wrestling with corruption and gradually losing touch with their humanity, but Dreampunk's not trying to be a horror game. It's fine for players to not explore that side of their character if they'd rather not.

Adding to the theme of player agency is the expectation that the Guide won't have a clear idea of where the story is going or be the main player driving the plot. The Guide's moves being based on random cards and the Dreamer-centric goals set things up for the Guide to roll with developments during play, and the surreal structure of the Dream means that plot threads can be picked up and put down without realism being a limiting factor.

These aspects combine to allow Dreampunk to support play both with and without a Guide. Agency can also help increase safety for participants by supporting a culture of checking in with each other and giving players permission to steer toward or away from particular content, whether or not formal safety mechanics are used. In-character and player-level mechanisms can support each other for better play experiences.

Visual Justification

The Lucid Moves, and Realize in particular, draw heavily from the movie *Paprika*. It's a very visual movie, using animation elegantly to convey surreal transitions and transformations in a way that feels like it makes sense to the audience despite the lack of explanation or justification. While Dreampunk does need to explain itself a bit more, I think this is related to why the visual cards help makes lucid effects work better in play: you can point to the card as a justification for what you're doing rather than worrying too much about whether it "makes sense".

In earlier Dreampunk versions where players were coming up with their lucid effects freely, it was easy for players to feel more pressure to come up with something “good” or “clever”, which could lead to overthinking that got in the way of both play and zaniness. The cards help avoid this by giving you something external to point to to justify whatever wacky idea you came up with.

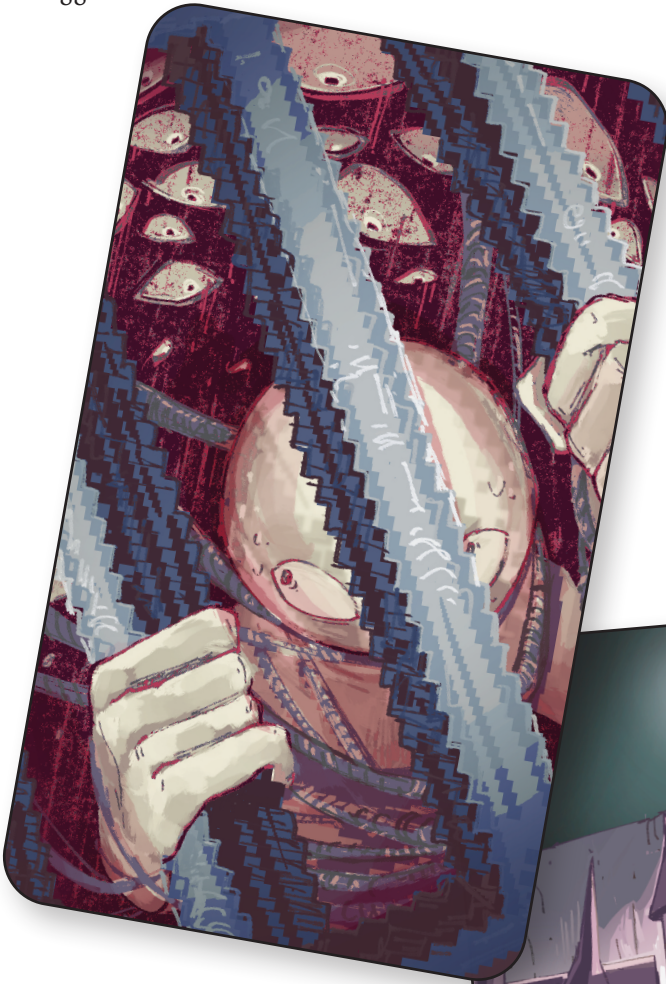
What Does Waking Up Mean?

One of the things that makes Dreampunk different than many of its inspirations, and something that may seem strange, is the ease of waking up. Dreampunk positions the Dream as inescapable in that you're drawn back every night, but it doesn't position you as physically trapped there or unable to wake up.

This is definitely a personal choice, and you should feel free to take a different approach if you're inspired to. But there are a few reasons why I went in this direction.

It ended up working well in a safety mechanics sort of way. We want to be able to put characters in nightmarish situations, but we also want to be able to cut away suddenly if a player wants to for whatever reason. Being able to wake up worked for this. It also provided a way to avoid “creepiness exhaustion”, where an improvised scene starts off being scary and ominous, but when it goes on too long it gets repetitive or the players start running low on ideas. Waking up can be a way to end a nightmare on a high note to maintain its impact.

The waking world also provides players with the freedom to frame their characters in interesting ways. I didn't want to assume that different Dreamers necessarily came from the same waking world, to allow for creative freedom and avoid needing to spend too much time in character creation talking about it. And because of this, I wanted to keep the actual play in the Dream, rather than spending session time on scenes that not everyone could participate in. One benefit of this is giving players authority over what their waking world is like. Some playbooks play this up and frame the Dreamer as being on a mission relating to their waking world. Dreamer players also have authority to establish how what they're going through reflects their waking struggles or things that they're doing while awake to try to solve what's going on in the Dream. It necessarily feels a bit hazy to establish things in the waking world this way, but I ended up liking the ambiguity of it. You're never quite sure what the deal is with the waking world or whether it matters, and that's fittingly dreamlike. Maybe the waking world is what's actually the illusion, and the Dream is all that's real.



Acknowledgments

The seeds of Dreampunk were planted long ago, when René introduced me to oneiromancy. Special inspirational mention is also due to Michael's Continuum hack.

The mechanics of Dreampunk were heavily inspired by *Dream Askew* and *Dream Apart* by Avery Alder and Benjamin Rosenbaum.

Dreampunk also owes inspiration to the cards from the party game *Dixit*, published by Libellud.

This game would not have been possible without the support of my Kickstarter backers, who put their trust in me and were instrumental in making Dreampunk a reality.

Other tabletop roleplaying games that were notable inspirations for Dreampunk include:

- *Wisher, Theurgist, Fatalist*, by Jenna Katerin Moran
- *Beyond the Wall*, by Elaine "OJ" Wang
- *Beyond the Matrix*, by Sam Freilich
- *Princess World*, by Kevin Petker
- *Dogs in the Vineyard*, by D. Vincent Baker
- *Girl Underground*, by McManamon and Ross
- *Imaginary Cartography*, by Émile St. Sécaire
- *Costume Fairy Adventures*, by David J. Prokopetz
- *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*, by Jenna Katerin Moran
- *Glitch: A Story of the Not*, by Jenna Katerin Moran
- *Wanderhome*, by Jay Dragon
- *The Story of Us*, by Emma Renault
- *Don't Rest Your Head*, by Fred Hicks
- *Nobilis*, by Jenna Katerin Moran
- *Apocalypse World*, by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker
- *Continuum: Roleplaying in the Yet*, by Chris Adams, Dave Fooden, and Barbara Manui

Art Credits

Front Cover

Pickled Mermaid, by Jhenne Tyler
Flood, by Kindred Styles
Candle, by Camille “Karma” O’Leary
Watermelon, by Finn J. Carey
Building Head, by Santiago Alzate
Pirate, by Idefix
Dandelions, by Chad Wyrwicz
Watchful, by Nathaniel Santore
Bus Driver, by steff bradley
Entrance, by Sarah Morrison
Ferryperson, by Kindred Styles
Entanglement, by steff bradley
Spotlight, by Sarah Morrison
Floating Home, by Santiago Alzate
Fish, by Idefix
Boiler Room Dance, by Jhenne Tyler
Wolves in Park, by Chad Wyrwicz
Lightning Bird, by Nathaniel Santore
That Night in the City, by Sarah Morrison
Egg Guard, by September-XYZX

Back Cover

Under the Static Sky, by Sarah Morrison
Minotaur, by Chad Wyrwicz
Present Planet, by Jhenne Tyler

Interior Art

- Ferryperson**, by Kindred Styles, pg. 4
Baseball Detective, by Jhenne Tyler, pg. 4
Under the Static Sky, by Sarah Morrison, pg. 9
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