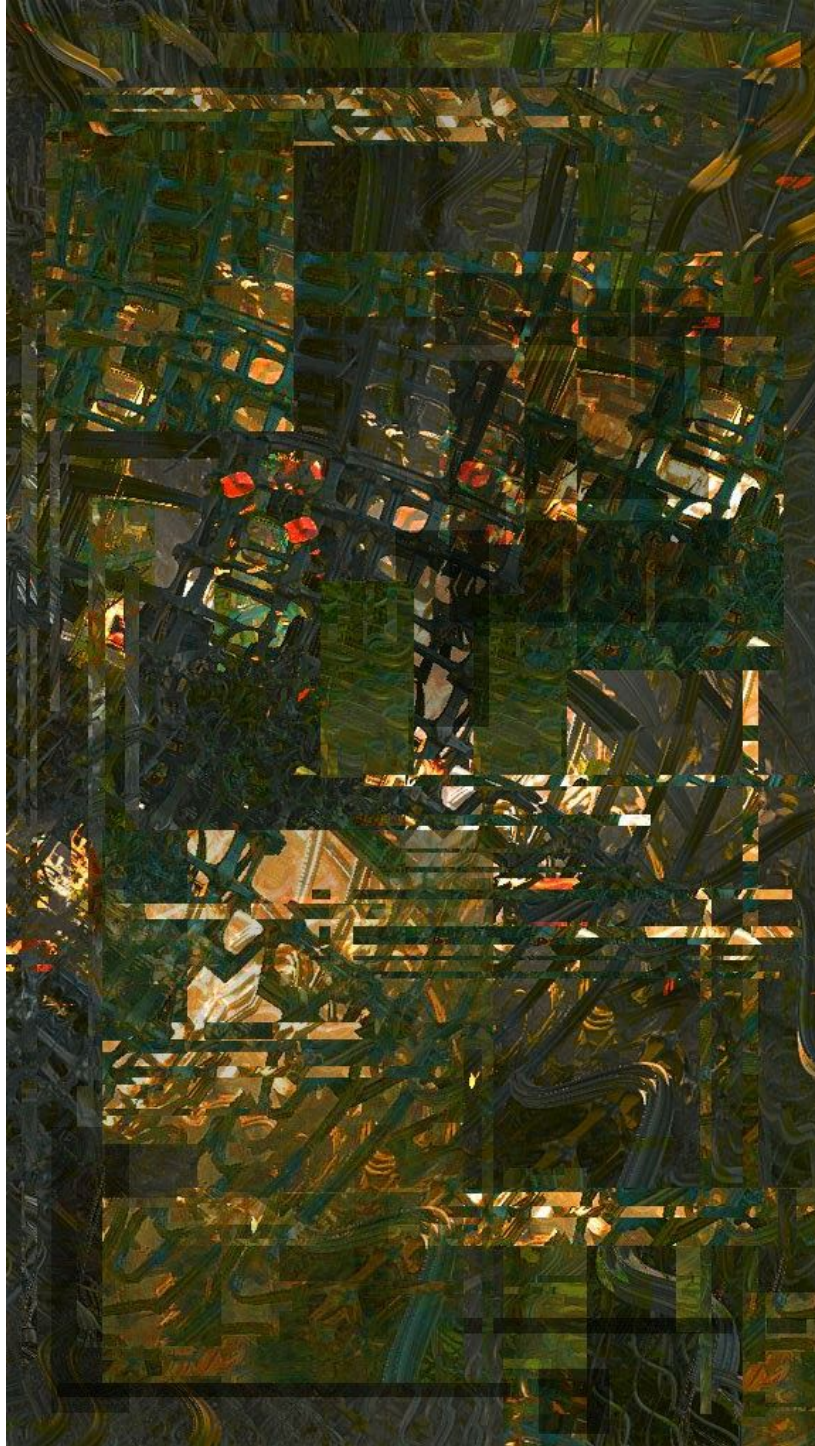


The Empire Never Ended



A Phil K. Dick inspired hack of [What's So Cool About Outer Space](#) for the [#wscajam](#)

Make Your Prophet

It's the basic condition of life to be required to violate our own identity.

Name Yourself: It's a normal name, but a little bit off.

Horselover Fisk, Joe Chip, Donna Flowers, Brent Mini, Jason Tavern, Linda Fox, Ed Firmly.

You are painfully **average**. Describe yourself.

A man is an angel that has gone deranged.

You have some things:

- Your clothes, same every day. Describe them in detail.
- A favorite book. A real one, or you can make one up. What's the title, and what is it about?
- An important personal keepsake. Describe what it looks like, and say what it means to you.
- Some **drugs**. Is this your drug of choice? If not, what is?

What is your job? Do you have a job? **Are you a cop?**

Write down two things that you are good at. Normal things.

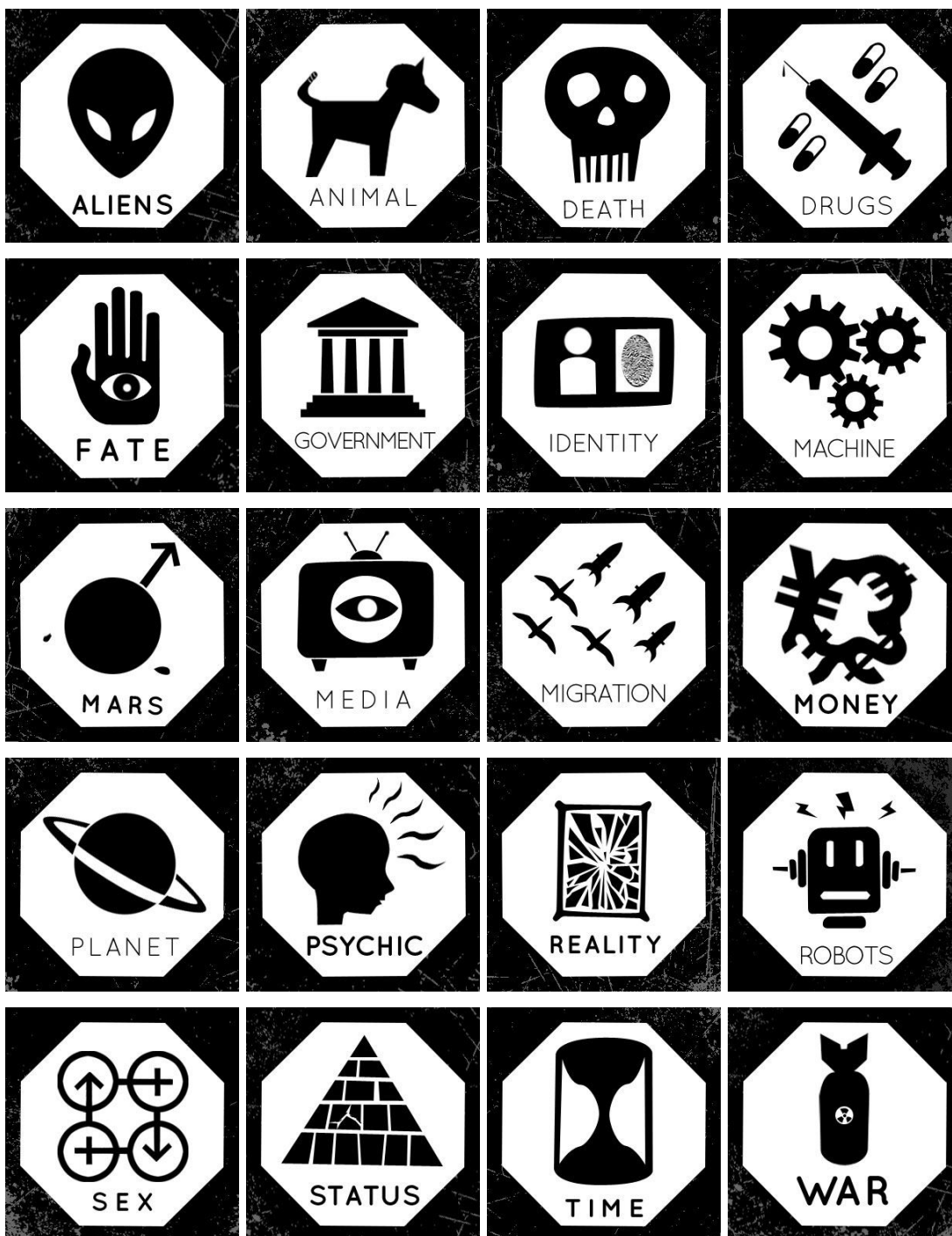
The characters are all friends or colleagues. How do you know each other? Do you live together?

When is this happening?

- Twenty years from now, but everything is pretty much the same.
- March 12, 1982. Tuesday.
- In a Gernsbackian sci-fi future with rocketships and whatnot.
- Sometime in 1974.
- Right now, where you are, starting.... **Now**.

I'm not much but I'm all I have.

Twenty Themes



Pick two **Themes** however you like. These will be the main themes of your game. Incorporate them together or separately, as you will.

Do Your Thing

It's easy to win. Anybody can win.

Take a six sided die, and set it somewhere everyone can see, with the six face up.

This is the **Reality Die**.

Weird things are happening, man. When you're trying to do something uncertain, or you're in a risky or weird situation, or some other fucked up shit is happening, tell everyone what's going on, what you're trying to do, and how.

(Like chasing after a dude who ripped you off, figuring out how to get your "prescription" for Axylon filled, setting the dim-shift dials correctly, trying to get someone into bed, etc.)

Say what the Bad Thing is. Make it Bad.

Roll three six-sided dice.

Mors certa, vita incerta.

Put one of them in the Good Thing Box

Put one of them in the Bad Thing Box

Put the last one in the Reality Box

Fear can make you do more wrong than hate or jealousy...

fear makes you always, always hold something back.

Once the dice are placed, consider the following questions.

For each of these that you answered “yes” to, you may tick one of the dice up one number:

- Are you high?
- Is this something that you’re good at?
- Is this part of your job?
- Have you read about something like this?

There is no route out of the maze. The maze shifts as you move through it, because it is alive.

For each of these that you answered “yes” to, you **must** tick one of the dice down one number:

- Are you too high?
- Are you not high enough, or in withdrawal?
- Is this unlike anything you’ve ever seen before?
- Are you in an unfamiliar environment?
- Are you hurt or otherwise fucked up?

If the die in the Good Thing Box is 5 or higher, you do the thing you want to do. Say how it goes.

If the die in the Bad Thing Box is 5 or higher, a bad thing does **not** happen. Otherwise, the Bad Thing happens. Ask the other players what happens.

I have seen myself backwards.

The Reality Box

If the die you put in the Reality Box is **equal to or lower than** the current Reality Die, turn the Reality Die to one number lower.

After the Reality Die reaches **two**, you can begin raising the number again, if the die you put in the Reality Box is **higher than** (not equal to) it.

Strange how paranoia can link up with reality now and then.

When the Reality Die is:

6. Everything is cool. Business as usual
5. Introduce a weird thing related to the first Theme. Not weird enough to make life hard, but weird enough that you notice it.
4. Introduce a weird thing related to the second Theme. This is pretty weird, and you can't ignore it.
3. Switch places with the GM. **YOU'RE IN CHARGE NOW**
2. Contact with a vast intelligence. God? Alien computer? What does it say?
1. Shit is **FUCKED UP**. Reality crumbles or tears apart, game over.

The problem with introspection is that it has no end.

WHEN YOU ARE GM

What constitutes the authentic human being?

- Something is always happening. Even before the Reality Weirdness kicks in, make them uncomfortable, and hit it. Give the players a situation and ask, “**What do you do?**”
- **Nothing never happens.** If a player doesn't get their Good Thing, or the Bad Thing happens, make something new happen, either way! If you can't come up with something good, ask the other players for an idea.
- These aren't all the rules. They're just a place to start. As your group comes up with new rules to handle things, write them down. If there's a rule you don't like, fuck it.
- **Be excellent to each other.** Bad and weird things might happen to the characters, but we're still all friends here. Treat each other with kindness, respect, and empathy.
- Get some safety tools. Learn them. **Use them.**

The true measure of a man is not his intelligence or how high he rises in this freak establishment. No, the true measure of a man is this: how quickly can he respond to the needs of others and how much of himself he can give.

THINGS THAT HAPPEN

If you think this Universe is bad, you should see some of the others.

1. Everyone is calling you by the **wrong name**. You thought it was a joke at first, but nobody is owning up to it. They even went so far as to change your id card while you were sleeping.
2. **Those fuckers next door** keep stealing your bike and locking it up somewhere downtown. You've asked them to stop a dozen times, but they always look at you like you're crazy. Don't let them get away with it again.
3. **The upgrades at the office** had you worried for a minute, but it looks like they're only replacing management, not scrub workers like you. What are the new bosses like?
4. Your dealer is late again. **Bastard** won't return your calls, like your money isn't good enough for him? Where'd he disappear to? Find him fast, before the crawlies set all the way in.
5. **The transports have stopped coming**. Some people find this cause to worry, but as far as you're concerned, it's a well-deserved break, until the drivers come back online.
6. You wake up from the long sleep, shaking off the vivid dreams as if they were someone else's memories. Everything is in its place, but nothing seems right. **She enters**—who is she this time?

ABOUT THIS THING

This is a hack of Jared Sinclair's game What's So Cool About Outer Space? made for the itch.io #wscajam (<https://itch.io/jam/what-is-so-cool-about-jam/entries>)

It was written and produced in one afternoon/evening by Marc Majcher, using a stolen copy of Adobe InDesign.

The game was inspired by the works of Philip K. Dick, the Reality Die inspired by Cthulhu Dark / Trophy Dark, and the Good/Bad/Reality boxes inspired by Otherkind.

The 20 Theme images were made by Marc Majcher for the GNAP! improvised PKD show, Strange Matters.

The fonts are Phosphate Solid and Gill Sans.

Here's my itch.io page: <https://majcher.itch.io/>

I dunno.

Games are pretty cool.

It is sometimes an appropriate response to reality to go insane.

Philip K. Dick