

STATUESQUE

ACT ONE: THE CREATOR

AT THE BEGINNING

Statuesque is played first by one person alone and then a second player joins later. The first player takes the role of The Creator; the second is The Image. If you are the second player, please do not read these rules and instead have the events of this section explained to you during play; begin with Act Two.

You are a creator: an artisan, sculptor, or some type of craftsperson who is capable of rendering great beauty in an artistic form. You are lonely, however. You set out to create the most beautiful form to be like a companion for you, but through the process you only manage to exacerbate your loneliness. Upon completion, the stillness of The Image is heartbreaking in its near-perfection, but it is lifeless.

You toiled and worked, sacrificing sleep, food, and comfort, but it wasn't enough. So you hope and you wish and you pray. It is unknowable by whom your thoughts were answered or for what purpose, but the event speaks for itself. In the presence of The Image, you offer an act of true affection: a kiss upon its still lips, whispered words of love, or a gentle caress along its surface. Unlike any similar gestures in the past, The Image responds—there is warmth in the form.

The Image is alive. The object of your love and obsession, everything you struggled to achieve, the absolute pinnacle of your craft—alive.

However, The Image does not know you. They do not love you, but neither do they hate you. There are very few things they do know: They can speak, read, and write; they have sympathy, empathy, and the capacity for morality; and they know basic, relevant, general facts about the world, such as what clothing and common objects are for or how to behave in crowds. Essentially, The Image knows how to be *alive*, but they do not know you or the work you've done.

This is when the second player joins. After you've invested in the initial phase of crafting The Image, the second player takes their role and can decide their course. Are you open and understanding or covetous and protective? Do you wish for your creation to love you or do you set them free? How can you guide them, detached, while still loving them so intensely? Do you keep them close or do you, once again, face loneliness?

Statuesque is played by keeping notes in a journal and the occasional rolling of six-sided dice.

WHO IS THE CREATOR?

Begin play by defining the character you assume the role of.

Answer each of the following questions in your play journal:

- What is your name?
- What are your pronouns?
- Though you may know others, what is the media with which you create The Image?
- What has caused your current feeling of isolation?
- Why have your previous accomplishments, though technically great, failed to bring you satisfaction?
- What do you see when you study your reflection?

These details are only to set the foundation of your story. More details will be added later. As you journal the creation of The Image, you will discover more about The Creator, adding each as an indented **Character Note**. These are divided into the loose categories of Histories, Habits, and Beliefs. Somewhere in your journal, such as the first page after the above questions, leave room for lists for each category.

HISTORIES

If you reveal a detail of your character's past, such as a person they knew, a place they lived, an event they experienced, or some other fact of their life, include it as a **Character Note**. Add a tick mark for each of these Histories. You can roll three dice and add the number of marks, doubled, for The Creator's age.

HABITS

Habits are the things your character is practiced at—in addition to the art style of your choice—though not

necessarily good at. Nor are they always activities a character would want to be good at. Habits may be something like cooking, wrestling, singing, managing finances, worrying, stress eating, or crying; if it comes up and you decide this is an activity your character does frequently or falls back on in times of need, add a **Character Note** into the journal and keep track of this Habit in your list. Your character is likely to have half as many Habits as they do Histories.

BELIEFS

Beliefs come up less frequently, but are statements that describe important aspects of your character. If you discover a strong tenet your character believes and follows steadfastly (if not always perfectly), write it down. A belief can be in a power that receives your prayers, a way to always respond to a certain kind of behavior, a mantra to live by, or an anchorpoint for your moral compass. Your character is likely to have half as many Beliefs as they do Habits.

THE WORKSHOP

A vital step of character creation is to set the stage: Where does The Creator do their work? What are all the other creations, finished or not, like? Are they kept, sold, or discarded? Set the scene with a journal entry from your character's perspective and mindset as they decide to start crafting something that they know will be somehow special. Something they hope to help them overcome their isolation, loneliness, or malaise. This will likely flavor the undertaking, setting the tone for their histories, habits, and beliefs.

THE UNDERTAKING

The Creator keeps a meticulous journal along their journey, crafting the utterly beautiful work of art called The Image, culminating in the inexplicable imbuelement of life into its form. This process is taken in steps; these steps do not represent measurements of time, like hours, days, or months, because such increments become distorted in the fervor of the work. Steps are instead measured in accomplishments and in discoveries. The Creator learns of their subject in each step.

MILESTONES OF GREATNESS

For each step, roll three dice and add the highest two values. The running sum of these totals represents The Creator's progress. The Image is considered complete when this sum meets or exceeds 100. Each roll corresponds to a step: an event of discovery, an emotional period of creative force.

It is recommended that you, the player, do not make all these rolls in quick succession, but to space them out. Consider taking one step per day—a day or two missed along the way is not only forgiven, but encouraged. If the rolls are taken once per month, with incremental writings between, the whole process will take about one year. A slower pace builds a stronger theme, but becomes increasingly impractical.

After rolling the dice, answer some of the following questions:

- Which feature is discovered to be unexpectedly lovely?
- Which incomplete feature is most promising?
- What personal sacrifice is made during this step?

- What unusual material is brought in for this step?
- The lowest die represents a failure that was overcome; what is the failure and what is learned from it?
- What event brings you away from your work?
- What old knowledge becomes relevant in the process?
- Which feature does your hand linger for too long upon?
- What imagined conversation is held with The Image?
- What memory inspires an exciting, unusual feature?

The above questions provide a framework for describing the process from the perspective of The Creator. Answers can be as thorough or brief as you please; a bulleted list is as valid as a novella. It will be in these answers that The Creator's Histories, Habits, and Beliefs will also be discovered.

It is also important that each step contributes to the physical description of The Image. The beginning may be vague, full of potential and uncertainty, but by the end—make sure to keep track with your running sum—The Image must be adequately detailed for an uninformed third party to read and understand what it looks like. These details may also be listed separately.

OUTSIDE THE WORKSHOP

The Creator does not exist solely in their workshop, no matter how much it seems that they do. The journal may also include what they observe on the walks they take, the bounty of their shopping errands, the thoughts that flood their mind during social outings, or other humanizing events between work.

THE AWAKENING

The roll that results in The Creator surpassing a running total of 100 is the final step of creation. The Creator now finishes The Image, dusts and polishes as necessary, frames and mounts, or places as desired. The Image is complete.

ANTICIPATION & AFFECTION

The Creator paces their workshop, gazing at The Image no longer as an artist in the labor of creation but as an observer. They loved The Image during its creation, but now they fall in love, they obsess, they worship it. It is truly beauty beyond compare. The Creator reaches out in an act of deep adoration, of longing and hope, of something between optimism and desperation. This is the act that awakens The Image.

Answer the following questions in a journal entry:

- What is the physical act itself?
- What is the key emotion being acted upon?
- What is The Creator's greatest fear at this moment?
- What is The Creator's wildest hope at this moment?
- What power or force is beseeched in this act?

THE FIRST WARMTH

When The Image awakens, the act immediately ends and The Image is alive. The awe of the moment causes a pause and a slight separation. The Creator steps back to behold what has transpired. The Image takes in all the information, forming the first thoughts in their newly formed mind. How this moment plays out exactly is described in Act Two: The Image.

Before a second player is introduced to *Statuesque*, the first player is responsible for assembling a prompt. In the world of the game being played, the crafting process rushes through The Creator's mind. Meanwhile you, as the player, review your journal and assemble the following information:

- What does The Image look like?
- What feeling is The Image intended to invoke?
- What does the workshop look like?
- What does The Creator look like?

The above questions describe the immediate situation that The Image comes to life in. Neither the player nor The Creator gets the opportunity to explain all the effort, time, and emotion poured into the story thus far. They do not get to explain themselves, provide context, or justify anything ahead of time. These are truths to be revealed or kept hidden through play.

INTERMISSION

Act Two plays very differently than Act One. First player, take this moment to close the book—literally and figuratively—on The Creator's role as the one solely in charge of the narrative. Review the aspects of The Creator as a character, as they will be roleplayed in real time from here on.

It's very likely that you, first player, have invested quite a long time in building to this moment. Hopefully days, if not weeks or months. This imbalance of investment is core to *Statuesque*, so process, internalize, and prepare for Act Two.