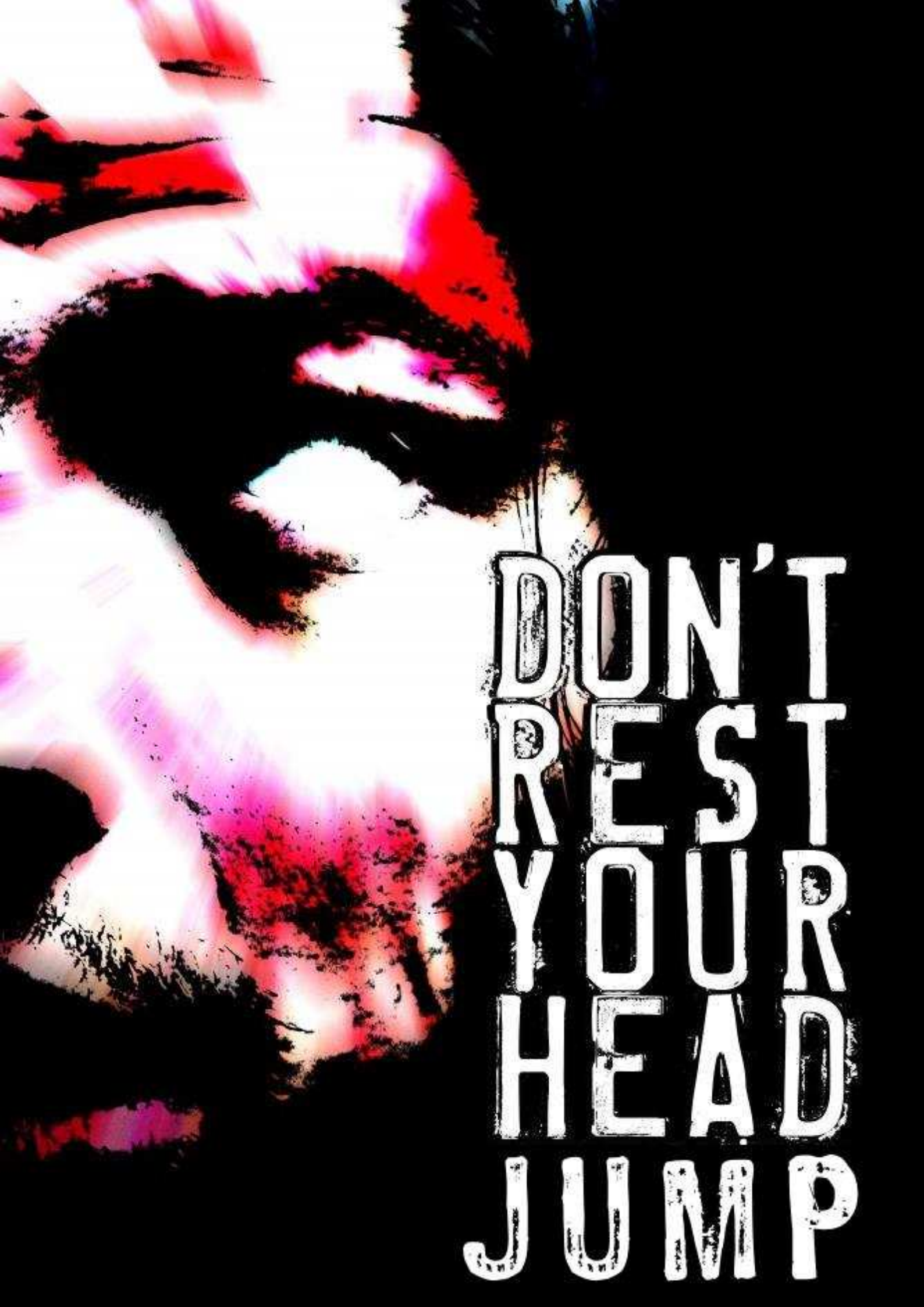

DON'T
REST
YOUR
HEAD
JUMP

What's been keeping you awake?

You can't sleep. First you couldn't, now you shouldn't. Maybe you were binging a hundred hours on getting a research paper done, maybe you spent sleepless nights on the run from the mob. Maybe you just liked your coffee (don't we all?). You stayed awake for so long, you passed through the veil of exhaustion and into the other side where sleep is a choice and no longer a need.

What just happened to you?

You started seeing things; doors appearing where once there were walls, weird fucking creatures roaming streets that never used to be there, buildings designed by some mad genius held up impossibly against all laws of reality, clocks that chime the thirteenth hour, streets leading to markets that sell laughter and indecision, and an endless city that touches all realms at once under its eternal night. Things you might have thought were nothing more than the hallucinations of a dangerously sleep-deprived brain. Something clicked in your head, but you're about to find out it was just the Nightmares flicking the safety off the gun.

What's on the surface?

But these are real. And when you started seeing *Them*, They started *seeing you*. They can smell you, hurt you. They know you're one of the Awake, not one of the mindless Sleepers who can't see the Mad City and the Nightmares within. You're chum in the water and the sharks are circling. You need to learn on your feet fast, 'cause when the clock next strikes thirteen you'll be ready or you'll be lunch.

What lies beneath?

Though the Nightmares can bring awful powers based off dream-logic to bear against you, you gained the ability to bring your own Talents to bear against them. Talents that drive you as much to madness and destruction as they might save you from a dreadful fate. And remember: Sleep is your enemy. Don't rest your head and don't lose your mind.

As one of the Awake, you receive one (and only one) Exhaustion Talent, Madness Talent, and 1,000 City Points (CP) to spend here.

What's your path?

Location:

Your age is 18+1d8. You may freely pick your gender. Nowhere is safe.

1. The City Slumbering: Lucky you! You don't get to start in the Mad City at all, but rather the world outside. You may pick anywhere on Earth to begin. Where doesn't really matter – the Mad City touches everything and reaches everywhere.
2. The Rooftop Jungle: The Rooftop Jungle is a strange place. The buildings of the Mad City and pressed so close together you could easily leap from one to another, but up here there's stranger things than that. Anything that hasn't got room on the ground, like extra doorways, passages, *lost aircraft* ends up here leading to a very bizarre maze that leads to every part of the Mad City, even when it doesn't make sense. Watch your step: the doors like to change where they lead to.
3. The Bizarre Bazaar: Did it strike the Thirteenth Hour when you entered here? You're starting in the Bizarre Bazaar, the only (relatively) safe place in the Mad City during the Thirteenth Hour, where Nightmares and Awake alike congregate to trade all manner of goods and services in an unregulated, largely open-air market.
4. The Warrens: Ah, the sewers of the Mad City. Resembling in shape and, disturbingly, function to a vast set of intestines, the Warrens lead to ten thousand nowheres. All kinds of petty kingdoms go here, fed in a way by the lost thoughts and dreams trickling down from the Mad City above.
5. The Wax Kingdom: Technically a subset of the Warrens. Despite the relatively benevolent Nightmare ruler, you don't want to stay long, lest one day you notice the wax crawling up your legs and turning you into one of the Smothered Folk – the peasantry of the Wax Kingdom.
6. District Thirteen: Formerly a part of the City Slumbering before a Nightmare coalition *ripped* it into the Mad City, District Thirteen is the administrative and justice centre. Even the locals try to avoid this place if they can, for it runs off a byzantine justice system that terrorizes all sooner or later. Although if you can fit in, the Nightmares are kept relatively in check.
7. The High School: The High School is the tallest buildings in the Mad City conglomerated into a school for turning young orphans into a special kind of Nightmare, from classes in hideous brutality and, of course, cannibalism. Mother When rules here. Get out while you still can.
8. Free Choice: Lucky you! You may pick any location in the Mad City or the City Slumbering to start off.

Discipline and Talents:

Awake (free, mandatory): You are one of the Awake now, the veil that protects the Sleepers from the Nightmares has been lifted for you. You permanently no longer need to sleep. Supernatural effects such as abusing Exhaustion may still make you sleep, and if you do sleep you will be impossible to wake for a random number of days (at least one, not more than seven), lose your Madness and Exhaustion talents, as well as most of your Discipline until you force yourself to stay awake for a number of days equal to the number you slept. Then this perk will reactivate again, and you will be one of the Awake once more.

Disciplined (free, compulsory): All Awake function at least as competently as peak of human ability at every moment, represented by your Discipline, or the almost supernatural competence at performing every task you gain simply by keeping your head together and focused on your goal. Gaining Permanent Madness involves converting your Discipline into Madness, so you're only going to remain skilled at everything as long as you keep your head together. Unlike the Talents in this section, Discipline is genuinely risk-free, and you need not worry about bad things happening solely because you relied on your Discipline. It is likely the only lifeline you've got in this hell and you better keep it close.

Exhaustion Talent (free, compulsory): Your Exhaustion talent is something you're good at that gets taken up to frankly superhuman levels. You have a lot of leeway in deciding what your Exhaustion talent is, but it should fundamentally be something mundane you take up to inhuman levels. If you were a good runner, through Exhaustion you'll be capable of matching a professional race car, or perhaps if you were a shooter you could curve bullets in physically impossible ways, and if you were a gambler your Exhaustion talent might swing your luck so hard you could win nearly any game of chance without effort. However, all Exhaustion talents come with the risk (and requirement, for the most powerful uses) of tiring you out significantly, leading to you progressively getting more and more exhausted until you can catch a lengthy break or worse, *crash,* suddenly falling asleep for days, up to a week at a time before waking up lacking all your talents and incapable of seeing the Nightmares. And being a magnet for every nearby Nightmare. Merely dying is considered a nicer fate than being caught by a Nightmare while still a powerless Sleeper. On the bright side, however, the more exhausted you are the stronger and stronger your Exhaustion talent will run and the harder and harder you can push it, making picking up exhaustion a very tempting prospect while in great danger.
This is an inherent part of an Exhaustion talent and there is no known in-universe way to escape the downside. Out of universe abilities may enable you to evade them, but remember the less exhausted you are, the weaker your Exhaustion talent is, and if you're not exhausted in the slightest your Exhaustion talent cannot be used at all.

Madness Talent (free, compulsory): Madness Talents are That Good Shit. They are your big guns, the things you can bring out to tear through practically any opposition in a suitably disturbing or mad manner. If an Exhaustion talent lets you play fast and loose with physics, a Madness talent lets you throw them right out the window. They're something fundamentally supernatural that need not obey physics, merely symbolism and narratives. Madness talents are a fundamental part of your very nature, either a power you gained reflecting a deeply traumatic event in your life or something that indirectly symbolises another core part of your personality. Suitably dramatic personality shifts (or even more horrendously traumatic events) may shift your Madness talent into something else. With the simplest Madness talent, you might turn yourself into a T-Rex, or let out those bugs you *know* are crawling under your skin, while another one might allow you to perform all the miracles of Jesus himself through bleeding stigmata, catch a train anywhere (even to the future, past, Hell, Mars), or perhaps conjure up a knife of pure sharpness that can cut not just any solid object but insubstantial ones like ideas or even

bits of history. These are extremely broad, and you are strongly encouraged to be creative in its application. Madness talents are extremely potent, even moreso than Exhaustion talents, and (ab)use of Madness can let you tangle with the most powerful forces in the Mad City – as long as you're willing to pay the price. There are three major downside about your Madness talent, however, and they function as something of a double-edged sword: A Madness talent can solve nearly any problem you come across in this world, but the thing is Madness talents are *very* good at creating *worse* problems. The difference between success and failure when going full blast with Madness is a very, very fine one.

Firstly, any time you use it, you risk Madness dominating the scene, and the more juice you squeeze out of your Madness talent the more likely this becomes. When Madness dominates, things get much more hectic, much more complicated, and not in a good way. An example would be rescuing your beloved from a Nightmare by grabbing her and leaping out a multi-storey window; you technically succeeded at what you tried but now you're in just as much, if not more trouble. Madness Talents might be potent but the more you pour into it the more you're going to be a danger to everyone, even the people you want to protect and most especially yourself. Madness talents can even be used by multiple people simultaneously to synchronise their powers and efforts but, of course, this risks Madness dominating *everyone*. This would, naturally, lead to incredible chaos as everyone simultaneously starts acting up something fierce.

Secondly, your Madness talent is, obviously, tied to the state of your mind. Letting Madness dominate too often can cause you to *snap*, running off the mental equivalent of a power-fuelled binge (fortunately, Madness will not dominate further until you come down off your mental break). What you get up to while snapping is rarely a positive step forwards and can easily harm you, again more like wasting time having a massive drug binge than working towards your goals. This is the patient who went so far out of his mind he's a danger to himself and everyone around him. His madness bled into reality it shot nitro into his brain and launched a massive psychotic episode. But worse, this snap will leave you picking up a dose of Permanent Madness…

The third is Permanent Madness. Abusing Madness until you completely snap results in you picking up Permanent Madness as your grip on reality ebbs and you start metamorphosing into something much, much worse. Picking up any Permanent Madness prevents you from ever turning your Madness talent *off* and the effects of your Madness talent bleeding into your life gets stronger and stronger the more Permanent Madness you acquire as it begins to twist your body and mind until you finally shed your humanity and degenerate/ascend into another tortured Nightmare roaming the streets of the Mad City. You can resist this transformation, keeping what shattered remnants of your humanity still exist together as long as you can, but once you've picked up enough Permanent Madness to consume you all you can do is delay it. Once picked up, Permanent Madness is very difficult to lose, and the constant bleed of your Madness talent into your life only makes it more and more likely that you'll make Madness dominate even when not actively trying to use your Madness Talent.

These are an inherent part of a Madness talent and there is no known in-universe way to escape the downsides. Out of universe abilities may enable you to evade them. And remember that unlike Exhaustion talents, you do not need to be mad at all to use them, though it certainly helps.

Perks:

You may discount one perk of each tier (100, 200, 400, 600). Discounted 100 CP perks become free instead.

Aesthetics of the Mad City (free/-100): You may, for free, change up the aesthetics of your form as long as you gain no substantial hard benefit from it. For 100 CP, you can make more substantial changes as long as they fit in with the general aesthetics of your Madness Talent. Perhaps you wish to be turned into a man-lobster hybrid fresh from a Nightmare's *Recipe for Disaster* pot, armoured in chitin and waving huge claws where you once had hands. You can change the shape and size of your body up to roughly the size of a minibus and are welcome to be as creative as possible.

Fight or Flight (free/-100): You can delay the effects of going completely bonkers by having three (total) Fight or Flight responses. When you would otherwise snap and pick up Permanent Madness you may freely check off a response and avoid gaining it, for the small cost of having your emotions dominated by the response. A Fight response would fill you with irrational rage, the kind that would make you try to punch a Nightmare to death or turn on your own allies, while a Flight response would fill you with abject terror, making you freeze up and scream or perhaps run as fast as you can away. Either way, Madness still dominates, even if you are briefly spared Permanent Madness. Responses may be recovered through periods of rest and relaxation (falling asleep counts, but is generally unwise here), therapy sessions, spending Hope (if you have them) or similar ways to recover from stress. Alternatively, any time you burn through all your Responses and snap (or crash), you fully refresh all of them as the release is rather cathartic. The free version of the perk only affects the Madness Talent you find here, the 100 CP version lets you vent off other sources of insanity under the same system.

Staying Awake (-100): You may make others Awake by forcing someone else not to sleep for around a week. They will receive their own relevant Madness and Exhaustion talents as well as the advantages of being Awake. Here, it's hard to see how this is a *good* thing, but perhaps in worlds without Nightmares you'll find it more pleasant. Note: You probably should be careful who you make Awake, or they might just end up turning into Nightmares.

Currency of Hope and Despair (-100): The first ray of light after a night of terrors. From now, any time you suffer completely a major setback (such as a sudden and shocking case of bad luck) not triggered by yourself (such as snapping via Madness or crashing via Exhaustion) you will know you've picked up a "coin" of Hope as a kind of lightness on your soul, a promise of a brief reprieve. This insubstantial currency can be spent to swing chance slightly in your favour, even cure the Madness of yourself or others if you have enough. They don't linger for long, no more than a month, so you should use them while you have them. They're also generally at best equal to the harm you suffered to get them; consider them a bandage after a beating instead of a panacea.

Puns (-100): You are good at letting out a torrent of groan-worthy puns and off-colour jokes no matter the situation. Just 'cause it's a horror setting doesn't mean it can't be *funny*. You'll always be a repository of horrible, horrible puns.

Scars for Success (-200): Failure is a bitter pill to swallow; it leaves a scar upon the soul that lingers even after amends have been made. You will find that you can draw upon your greatest failures to propel yourself to greater strengths. You have two options here; you may use the constant memory of your failures to provide a small but reliable drip of motivation that mildly hones your will and focus, or you may transform your scar to gain a more significant boost. Transforming your scar will prevent you from even using it again, but in exchange you will gain one of the following; the ability to temporarily

or permanently shift your Madness or Exhaustion talent (into something more relevant to what you are currently doing, as an example), or you can refresh your body or mind, curing your Permanent Madness or bringing you well back from the brink of crashing through exhaustion.
In both cases, you may only use your scar as long as there is a connection between the scarring event and your present situation.

Mad Architecture (-200): The myriad buildings of the Mad City have little in common with what is physically possible; buildings that spiral in among themselves, a jungle of lost aircraft that merged seamlessly into each other as they crashed. You too can build structures in ways that strictly violate three-dimensional space and can somehow stay up even despite all laws to the contrary. Anything you build will run off dream logic, not physics.

Spreading Locals (-200): Locals are those poor fools who ended up in the Mad City and stayed there while not being Awake nor Nightmares. This is normally rare, though certain events in the City Slumbering can allow locals to cross over, and sometimes certain entities in the Mad City will steal segments of the City Slumbering to add to their domain. Despite whatever reason the locals may have for ending up in the Mad City, the end result is the same; the complete loss of all memories, individuality and becoming nothing more than a hollow caricature of themselves. If a policeman were to end up a local, for example, he would do nothing but enforce the law neither taking nor needing rest or breaks. An accountant would do nothing but file papers, a journalist would do nothing but write stories… He would simply play his role forever neither changing nor aging under the march of time. They are the hollow men. Should you for whatever reason like this idea you may continue to spread it into any realms or territories you own, where anyone without supernatural powers shall be hollowed out into nothing more than the locals are here.

Mad Laws and Madder Lawyers (-400): Under the watchful eyes of Officer Tock and the Tacks Man, District Thirteen is the closest to an orderly region of the Mad City and attracts no shortage of residents who wish to escape the mostly lawless wasteland outside. Unfortunately, it remains part of the Mad City, and therefor the law is as byzantine and constantly shifting as (in)humanly possible, and prone to Nightmare-police brutality at any time. Only those with an instinctive grasp of what the constantly changing laws of District Thirteen are can hope to survive here for any great length of time. Like those residents weeded out by harsh natural selection, you too will have an instinctive understanding of what the law is presently, even under a regime that constantly shifts and changes the laws constantly, and an equally good instinct to argue for (against/on both sides simultaneously) of any legal case you end up saddled with. This will not let you evade any and all legal consequences but will make it damnably hard to pin you with something.

The City That Never Survived A Great Fire (-400): When you successfully steal something, and pull it off as a fait accompli, ensuring the other party has no reasonable method of recovering the stolen thing, you will find that people's memories will shift to provide a convenient other explanation: Things you stole were simply destroyed in an accident. Maybe fire, lightning, or just dropped it down a sewer. Anyway, you'll find people simply won't think to link you possessing your stolen goods with the thing that was lost. But even better than this, you now also know how to commit *grand* theft; you can steal bits and pieces from the City Slumbering and add them to any pocket dimension you possess. You will have to figure out an elaborate plot to pull it off – even the Nightmares had to work together on this one, and the more you want to steal the harder this will be – but if you succeed, the City Slumbering will simply invent a convenient explanation as to why a chunk of it vanished. A great fire, perhaps.

Extracting the Esoteric (-400): Like some Nightmares, and even some of the Awake, you have a way to extract insubstantial ideas from people and things and render them into a form that can be bartered, sold, or crafted from. Regain your youth by buying the years off other peoples' lives or regain your sanity by buying someone's normalcy. Steal someone's heartbeat or even their very name and pin it in your collection. But more than simply extracting abstract things, you can turn these into raw materials for your own craftsmanship. Vintage spirits of distilled Hangman's Regret are well known for selling to an exclusive clientele here, and one enterprising Nightmare has successfully kept the Wax King at bay by piping molten rage all throughout his realms that keeps the temperature too high for his minions to do anything but melt.

There Is No Impossible Here (-600): Impossible things are a dime a dozen in the Mad City. There's nothing truly impossible in a realm that runs of dream logic and symbolism. You will keep this trait with you and find that for you, the impossible is distinctly not impossible after all. To do the impossible, you will have to do something appropriately symbolic, something that fits the rules of dreams and fairy tales to pull off. Note that some things (such as opening the doors of the Mad City during the Thirteenth Hour) may have catastrophic or potentially even fatal unintentional consequences. Consider yourself warned: Think before you act.

Ready to Crack (-600, incompatible with Through the Eyes of Madness): The stink of the Mad City has sunk into your flesh and bones, and most Nightmares can smell it now. These Nightmares no longer see you as a potential victim, no, they see inside you a kindred spirit, one like them who just needs a little bit of a push to shed their humanity and ascend into one such as they. These Nightmares will even go out of their way to help you – you're almost *one of them* now. They'll roll out the red carpet for you, a kindred spirit of theirs. 'Course, while you're getting the royal treatment from them, you must remember that their real goal here is to slit you open and let the Nightmare within you crawl on out, so be wary *or not.* A Nightmare who likes you can be as bad as a Nightmare who hates you.

Through the Eyes of Madness (-600, incompatible with Ready to Crack): You once went to the very brink of madness and gazed into the abyss but came back from ruin whole again. Though most people cannot tell the difference with you, the Nightmares certain can, for now you have a look in your eyes or perhaps your body language, or some other giveaway to those who can see it. It speaks of one who has met the gaze of Evil and made It blink. These Nightmares sense it, they see it too. See it and *fear* it, for in you they can sense the very strength of character they never had, and it *terrifies* them. You have the kind of leverage over the Nightmares that lesser men couldn't hope to achieve. Lesser Nightmares will know better than to cross you, except when compelled by a greater one, and even the greatest of Nightmares will still prefer not to face you.

Items:

You may discount one item of each tier (100, 200, 400, 600 CP). Discounted 100 CP items become free. Lost, stolen, or used items respawn weekly.

Drugs (-100): Regular mental illness treatments generally aren't effective on the Awake; best case scenario they'll drug you into a drooling stupor, worst case they'll be completely ineffective. That's where drugs come in. Ever heard of reaching a drug-fuelled realisation about yourself? Here in the Mad City, getting high as balls might just help someone recover from Madness. Now you might be thinking "Isn't combining Madness and psychotropic drugs a bad idea?" and the answer is, of course, yes. It's a bad idea. But you stand about equal chances of coming to some chemical induced enlightenment that drives you back from the brink as you do at getting absolutely nothing productive done. Of course, with these drugs, you're guaranteed at least not to cause yourself any *new* problems, even while on a bad trip. You have three doses.

Gun (-100): You have a gun of some kind, perhaps it's a revolver, perhaps it's a hunting rifle, and a hundred rounds for it. Shooting someone in the face is a generally effective solution to your problems but beware those guys who can laugh off the bullet! Still, it's much better to be armed in the Mad City than not at all, for a gun at least doesn't risk sending you to crash or snap just by pulling the trigger.

Minor Kingdom (-200): Down in the Warrens, out in the Nowheres beyond the Kingdom of Wax, you hold a minor kingdom of some sort, containing mostly Local peasantry who can craft the memories that trickle down from above into food, drink, or any other substance you desire. It also has some sort of traps and protection that has so far prevented the Wax King, perhaps like The Magnificent Howler's Realm the temperature is so high wax simply puddles, or like Most Puissant Black Wind's realm yours contains air drafts of such intensity it can even extinguish the normally inextinguishable flames of the Blind Knights. Either way, this is as safe a safehouse as you can get, as long as you can get to it.

Three Simple Numbers (-200): You've got three phone numbers, and a mobile phone to call them. Calling them up will lead to either an appointment with or a direct conversation with the Mad City's premier therapists. Of course, they're all Nightmares, so none of them are safe to hang around, but they're one of the easiest ways to get your head back together if you happened to pick up some Permanent Madness. Caveat emptor.

- The Headshrinker: He's big, he wears a cardigan, and his head is teeny and shrunken. His voice is high, squeaky, and he doesn't ever shut up. His hours are very flexible and he's quite available, but if you miss an appointment his Secreterrier might come for you. He'll make you question everything about yourself and he'll analyse your ego into annihilation if you fall under his influence. But if you keep it together, you'll be in better shape mentally. He's only marginal help though, you'll need likely a few sessions to shake off the worst of the Mad City.
- The Grief Counsellor: The cheery voice on the other end of the Grief Hotline belies what a brutally gruelling session one short phone call will bring. The sunny Grief Counsellor – it's always a different person – manages to dig up every single wound, every single scar you could possibly have. You'll have to face every single regret you ever had, every single failure you ever made, every single moment of weakness, exactly as if you were right in the middle of the moment. Keep your head together the whole time though, and you can pull yourself at least halfway back from total madness.
- The Sex Therapist: An ambiguously gendered Nightmare (s/he's whatever you need), who uses sex as a way to tear down every bit of your sense of self in a total assault on body and mind.

S/he can cure all your Madness, anything short of full metamorphosis into a Nightmare anyways. If you keep your sense of self together, you'll find all your mental issues resolves. If not you'll find your mind ruined by the experience.

Tabloids of the Paper Boys (-400): You possess a curious newspaper printer with supernatural powers. It can turn anything you printed here true, as long as it is printed in the format of a newspaper and it receives sufficient coverage. More major effects will require wider and wider-spread paper coverage, and longer hours to print enough papers too. If the story can't circulate enough, it won't become true, and killing off its distribution channels can fatally weaken a story. And be warned, if you write a paper about the death of a powerful or influential figure, it's disturbingly likely they'll find your paper or learn of what you're trying to do.

The Tacks Man's Needles (-400): You have a supply of ten long needles, like the fingers of the Tacks Man himself is made out of. These things can be used to pin anything down out of someone and keep it preserved like a bug in a collector's room. You might take someone's name, heartbeat, shadow, voice, and keep it preserved until you want to use it again. Or just collect bits of interesting people, that's always an option. You must stick this into a part of someone closely symbolically connected to what you want to take from them, but curiously this won't hurt them. Unless you want it to.

A Curious Path (-600): When the clock is about to chime the first hour, you'll notice, no matter where you are, a little doorway that wasn't there before. Open it, before the clock ticks over, and you'll find yourself in back in the Bizarre Bazaar during the Thirteenth Hour, when the Bazaar does a roaring business from all kinds of folk from Nightmares to locals and Awake from the rest of the Mad City. In the Bizarre Bazaar you can find all things for sale, but with a distinct slant towards the insubstantial. It's their idea of a farmer's market, with the memory of a lover's caress bound in a scrap of perfumed silk or a guide to a lost child wound up in a broken teddy bear. The coins of the Wax King are a reliable trade, but you can barter near anything you like from your precious memories to your very sanity. Gambling for goods remains a popular method for trying to gain without pay, but if the dice come up poor you can find yourself losing more than you could ever imagine. When the Thirteenth Hour ends, the stores will close and you'll have to leave again, back out where you came from with the clock just ticking over to the First Hour. All doors in the Mad City are locked tight during the Thirteenth Hour. Do not try to open them. This is your only warning.

A Realm That Touches Everything (-600): Do you like the curious geography of the Mad City that much? You are welcome to take it with you. This item will give you a pocket dimension that has the same spatial dynamics as the Mad City. Your realm will somehow manage to connect to the entire world at different points that only a few people could possibly access. You may choose any environment common on Earth in the 20th or 21st century for this, such as a populated city, industrial wasteland, forest, or any other you wish. The realm cannot be reliably accessed through mundane methods and can only be accessed by those who can see reality like the Awake do. However, some Sleepers still might accidentally wander in or end up in your realm somehow, and if you wish you can have them hollowed out into the same Locals found in the Mad City. This realm will retain any improvements you make to it between jumps. Including bits of lands you steal from the worlds you visit.

Companions:

Imports (-200): Want to bring friends? Probably the wisest move in this world. With this purchase you may import or create up to eight companions. They receive 600 CP each and full discounts.

Canon Companion (-100): Want to bring someone along with you? I have no idea what possessed you to make you think this is a remotely good idea, but sure you can with this purchase. You may bring along any one consenting character per purchase. If anything happens to them they will come back to life in a week. This includes the Nightmares, but good luck convincing them to come along.

Henchmen (-100): You have a group of eight followers, all Nightmares. Individually, they're nothing special – a normal human might defeat one of them in a fair fight, and one alone would be outmatched by an Awake long before he starts touching Exhaustion or Madness – but you don't ever seem to run out of them. You may customise the general aesthetics and powers of the Nightmares, and are encouraged to work at least one (ideally two or more) puns into the name and abilities they possess.

Drawbacks:

No Madness at CharGen (+100): Rather than creating your own Madness Talent, with this drawback you'll receive one – you won't have any control over its specifics – within a week of entering the jump. It will come at the conclusion of a particularly disturbing, and potentially emotionally scarring, miniature adventure where you get your first taste of how frightening and disturbing the Nightmares of the Mad City can be. You will survive, of course, until your little trip is over and you've had a horrible awakening in the Mad City. No guarantees after that.

No Home to Go Back To (+100): The Mad City is strange, terrifying, and dangerous, yet it is also fresh, interesting and amazing in ways the City Slumbering could never be. For many Awake, once they've experienced their first dose of the Mad City, the City Slumbering just doesn't cut it anymore. You too will never be able to anything as much as the Mad City, nowhere you live will interest you, nor will you truly feel at home in the "real" world. You can still leave the Mad City; you just won't enjoy your time away from it.

Crazy Magnet (+200): Few Awake can hope to live a realtively normal life in the Mad City. Between Nightmares and other Awake there's always some major even going on that keeps them on their toes. You too will not have a single day's rest in your time here. If it's not a Nightmare targeting you, it's another (hostile) Awake with a massive chip on their shoulder. Solve one problem, another one pops up and it'll be your life on the line. Expect to spend your whole time flying by the seat of your pants.

A Lost Child (+200): You have a child, my dear Jumper, a beautiful daughter. Unfortunately, that child was stolen away by a Nightmare and is *en route* right now to The High School to become one of Mother When's Ladies in Hating… or perhaps one of the afternoon courses. Your sole saving grace is that the High School is not in session for the near future, you have around a month to recover your lost daughter lest you never see them again. If you had a daughter already before entering the jump, it will be her. Either way, you'll have a strong emotional connection to your child, and in the Mad City the backlash of failing to get her back just might catalyse a hideous transformation.

A Live Warrant (+300): Oh dear. It appears you were tricked into, or perhaps willingly signed, an arrest warrant from Officer Tock. Now he has the full force of the law behind him and wants you in. Fortunately, while he's a threat, he's not a huge one *just* yet. See, Officer Tock is the only Nightmare who can equal Mother When, as long as

a) He is in District Thirteen.
b) He has an active warrant out (you just fulfilled this one!).
c) It is the Thirteenth Hour.

What this means is if you value your life you should probably stay out of District Thirteen and <u>always</u> make sure you're out of the Mad City before the clock strikes thirteen. Even then, he'll continue hunting you, and bring with him waves of enough Clockwork Lieutenants to threaten even an Awake. And don't think about surrendering to the law either, prisoners don't live long in the Mad City.

Reports of Your Death May Be Greatly Exaggerated (+300): You must have really pissed the Paper Boys off, because they keep circulating stories about horrible and painful deaths that suddenly strike you. If you want to avoid them becoming true, you'll have to regularly try to stop them before they get circulated enough to make it a reality. If you manage to utterly destroy one of their papers, expect another one to pop up in a week with the same grudge against you.

At the Edge of Madness (+600): Your Discipline is nearly gone, replaced almost completely with Permanent Madness, and if you fully metamorphosise into a Nightmare this will be considered a conscious decision to stay here. Not that this will be easy, because your own Madness Talent can't shut off, it's bleeding into everything you're doing even when you don't want it. The TILT light is flashing on your machine and it doesn't take a psychologist to see something is deeply wrong with you right now – normal people are going to leg it. *Everything* you do is touched by your own, unique blend of Madness and the constant bleed is threatening to let out the Nightmare within you. Can you keep your cool nonstop for ten whole years?

Ending:

You've survived ten years in the Mad City. As a courtesy gift, all madness and traumas you may have picked up will be cleansed from you. Do you want to stay here, in this weird and scary world, return home, or continue on your chain?

Notes:

By IGanon.

Good intentions and three bucks will get you a good cup of coffee in Hell.

You are your own worst enemy.

Metamorphosing into a Nightmare inevitably involves personality death. Perks may affect this. It almost always involves a loss of power along with sanity too; the greatest Nightmares just can't throw out what a truly unchained Awake can throw down. The sole exceptions being either if the Awake really does manage to keep his last spark of humanity alight for a prolonged period of time while transforming into one (then the Nightmare becomes proportionately stronger) or metamorphosises into a Nightmare while throwing down *everything* he has available. Either way, becoming a Nightmare is always a worse deal than staying Awake. Feel free to come up with what your descended form looks like and remember the longer you avoid succumbing to Madness the stronger your Nightmare becomes.

Madness Talents are encouraged to be, well, mad. There's a strong theory they're really a curse laid on the Awake by the Mad City. You can of course pick something relatively mundane like "flight", but you could pick up something far crazier instead. They don't have to be bizarre, disturbing or otherwise wrong, but will inevitably be twisted towards the perverse. It's the nature of Madness, you see. Be creative! Examples of Madness Talents include:

- Eating any substance and excreting any other substance (specifically including edible and impossible ones, like delicious vegan mozzarella that melts like real cheese).
- Being followed around by stealthy goblins/gremlins who really do want to help you (their definition of help tends towards the violent).
- Holding a conversation with any object that exists or causing them to grow mouths and messily devour anyone unfortunate enough to be touching them.
- Cursing so loud and often you make reality louder and more awesome every time you drop F-bombs
- Speaking a language whispered to you by the moon that compels reality to obey anything you say. Be careful when you start thinking in the tongue of the moon.
- Summoning the knowledge and abilities of anyone who previously touched an object.
- Getting abducted and probed by aliens so much you end up having alien friends hang around you and give you some of their stuff
- Messing around with your own timeline; stealing your possessions from the past or future, gaining knowledge you haven't got yet.
- Conjuring up action movie ninjas – they die to the slightest bump or fall, but there's no end to them and their blades are wicked sharp.
- Turning your ribcage into a prison with your heart as your warden, capturing and holding your enemies inside.

- Being followed around by a hungry jungle full of disturbingly intelligent animals (who are down for bestiality).
- Having a teddy bear that has a sympathetic effects on the surroundings; set him alight to burn down a city block.

Game Context:

The game is highly abstracted, and this section should only be used as a loose guideline.

The game uses a highly simplified dice pool. The base pool for any situation is (Discipline + Permanent Madness + Exhaustion score). They can add additional Exhaustion and Madness dice to the pool by consciously tapping into their Exhaustion and/or Madness talents at the same time, though any time they do that they risk Exhaustion or Madness dominating the roll. Dice are generally not rolled unless failure would make for a new complication.

Most people would be throwing one, occasionally two, extremely rarely three dice at any situation depending on how skilled and capable of it they are. All Awake throw up to three Discipline dice at <u>everything</u> and can boost this further by dipping into Exhaustion or Madness; any more than three successes at any roll represents effects that transcend the possible and into the fantastic. Thus, all Awake are effectively running at peak human performance at absolutely everything until their Discipline dice start turning into Permanent Madness dice [this is bad]. Discipline dominating is one of your only ways to reduce your Exhaustion or uncheck your Madness responses (doesn't clear Permanent Madness though, that's even harder to remove). Discipline is your friend and your only lifeline in this hell that doesn't come with any strings attached.

Exhaustion talents work by rolling a number of Exhaustion dice equal to your Exhaustion score. Exhaustion dominating a roll means you add another point to your Exhaustion score and once you go above 6, you crash. You can always raise your Exhaustion score, but this is largely a desperate measure. Exhaustion is hard to remove when you can't sleep. Exhaustion talents are split into minor (automatic number of successes equal to Exhaustion pool) and major (increase Exhaustion score by 1, then gain successes equal to exhaustion pool *plus* any successes rolled with Exhaustion dice). A minor use might be using gunplay to shoot unerringly accurately all the time, while a major use would be to pull off impossible action movie bullet-curving stunts. Exhaustion talents do indeed get stronger the more exhausted you are, and the stronger they get the more likely they are to push you into crashing. It's a slippery, slippery slope.

Madness dice can be called on in any situation you use your Madness talent by adding up to six Madness dice. Unlike Exhaustion you do not have an Exhaustion score and can freely call upon any number of Madness dice in any action. Madness dominating forces you to check off Responses, then if you're out you snap, convert one Discipline into Permanent Madness and go on an extended psychotic break in some thematically and character-appropriate but likely destructive manner. Of course, when snapping you can roll as many Madness dice as you like, since all Madness dominating does when you've snapped is cause you to take a longer time to come down from your crazy high, and possibly get you into more trouble. Chew the scenery as hard as you can and throw down the biggest booms you like. When your last dice of Discipline is converted, you can no longer avert your transformation into a Nightmare, though you might retain enough of your sanity long enough to accomplish whatever last goals you have. Might.

Hope coins are harder to explain in-universe. The GM generates Despair coins whenever Pain (the antagonist dice) dominates, symbolising the way Murphy's Law works. They can spend those coins to screw you over by meddling with your rolls, but after the roll is resolved you gain Hope coins, that symbolise the rare few moments you get a breather or things end better than expected. You burn those to change dice rolls, reduce Exhaustion, uncheck Responses, and burn several at a time to convert

Permanent Madness back into Discipline, one of the only possible ways to reduce your Permanent Madness.

Incidentally, if the Awake were to truly go nuclear and throw as much Discipline, Madness, and Exhaustion dice around as possible they could theoretically overpower even the most powerful entities in the Mad City. 15 dice pool vs 12. *What happens next is usually disincentive enough.*