

for EABA

Nocturne™

become the architects of surreality...

 **BTRC**


greg porter

WHERE DO I FIND IT?

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INTRODUCTION

*If you open your mind for me;
 You won't rely on open eyes to see.
 The walls you built within;
 Come tumbling down, and a new world will begin.
 Living twice at once you learn,
 You're safe from the pain in the dream domain,
 A soul set free to fly.
 A round trip journey in your head,
 Master of illusion, can you realize;
 Your dream's alive, you can be the guide but...
 I will be watching over you...*

-Queensrÿche, *Silent Lucidity*

▼ **REALITY IS WHAT YOU IMAGINE IT TO BE** - There are a number of common themes in the legends and myths of mankind. Monsters and heroes, gods and devils, places of eternal reward and eternal punishment. Yet for all the obscure bits of history that have surfaced through archaeology, the vast number of people alive today and the information gathering tools at their disposal, despite all this, no hard evidence of the supernatural has ever been produced.

Yet, millions if not billions still believe, accepting on faith the existence of greater powers beyond the bounds of physical life, whether in the form of a "conventional" religion, "pagan" religion or feelings that the planet itself is somehow an aware entity.

So...why do we still believe?

Because these things *are* real. We have seen them in our dreams and forgotten them, only the barest hints tugging at the edge of our awareness and sparking our creativity. We know that there is *something* beyond the flesh, for we have gazed on it from a distance, and spoken to those who have gone before.

But the realm of dreams is as far as we may go and yet live. To reach the far side is to forever sunder the bond between awareness and the flesh. Likewise, those who have gone to what awaits them cannot return to the flesh, but can still manifest in the world of dreams.

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The majority of those who ponder the nature of the unconscious think that dreams are harmless but necessary, a way for the mind to sort through the things it has experienced while awake. And this is true to an extent. There is no danger in dreams for the **Sleepers**, those who dream and forget most of what they see. But for the **Dreamer**, it is a realm called **Nocturne**. And for Dreamers, Nocturne can be a hazardous place. A Dreamer remembers their dreams, and their heightened awareness while in Nocturne means that they can shape that reality. Since they are part of that reality, they can be shaped in turn. A Dreamer who is injured in Nocturne may suffer a stroke, heart attack or convulsions, and a Dreamer who is killed in Nocturne will not re-awaken, though this is not necessarily the end. A strong enough Dreamer can make the traumatic transition from this life to the next with some part of their psyche intact, and can enter the Nocturne from the other side of life.

Nocturne is full of Sleepers, Dreamers and other entities from diverse places. For generations it has been a largely peaceful place.

It is peaceful no more.

Events prophesied by Dreamers past are beginning to happen. Evils once weak now wax in power, pollute Nocturne with their presence, and corrupt the hearts of the Sleepers and Dreamers alike. They seek absolute power, for it is their nature. It is what they *must* do, even if it is not in their best interest. To gain this power they will go to any length, even to engineering the decline and possible extinction of humanity. No physical weapon can touch them, no army can assault the domain from which they come. They *cannot* be defeated. They never could, they never will be. But they *can* be beaten back, forced to retreat to whence they came, weakened so that they cannot return again in force for many generations.

Thus has it ever been.

And you must be the ones to bring it to pass.

▼ **UNCHARTED TERRITORY** - Nocturne is a creation of the collective psyche of everything that dreams and everything that has ever dreamed. Belief has made it real, and the nature of that belief reflects the nature of Nocturne. It is a slowly shifting landscape of deeply held beliefs, mountains and oceans anchored in memories, its surface features roiled and disturbed by squalls of popular culture. There are oases of serenity, deserts of desolation and whirlpools of dark emotion laid and overlaid on a dreamscape that mirrors the real world, or what some Dreamers call the **Materia**. When a person dies, their contribution to Nocturne slowly fades away, to be replaced by stronger and newer contributions by the living. Parts of Nocturne derived from the dreams of those who are not sentient fade almost as soon as the creature awakens, while the contributions of those strong in will and mind can be felt centuries later, if not longer.

Nocturne is a real place, but one which few can perceive while conscious. This dimension has its own rules, its own laws of nature. They are strange, but consistent, and all Dreamers will eventually learn them. The realms of existence a Dreamer is aware of are three-fold, a number that repeats many times in each realm.

The realms are the **Materia**, or the mundane world, the **Apocrypha**, those unknown regions which lie beyond life, and **Nocturne**, which reflects and is accessible from both **Materia** and the **Apocrypha**.

There are three main facets to Nocturne. Dreamers past have given them many names, but the most common are the **Pattern**, **Weave** and **Thread**. Purists may use the archaic Greek terms (**Eidos**(Idea), **Morphê**(Form), **Chrusolinon**(Golden Thread)), which was in turn derived from still older languages. Many groups still use the more recent Latin terms (**Exemplar**, **Texo**, **Ligamen**), though the implied religious associations are not to everyone's tastes. Some groups of younger Dreamers use terms more associated with the Internet (**Web**, **Node** and **Account**). Regardless of the terminology, the meanings are the same.

The **Pattern** is the whole of Nocturne. Nocturne is a combination of the **Materia** and the **Apocrypha**, and shares characteristics of both, depending on the strength of the beliefs that created it. The **Pattern** reflects the cumulative experience of all who have been to the places that make it up. That is, a Dreamer cannot go to a place in Nocturne that reflects a part of the real world that has never been explored. If there is a mountain that has never been climbed, a Dreamer cannot reach the summit of that mountain in Nocturne. Neil Armstrong was the first person to set foot on the Moon, but Dreamers followed soon after.

Similarly, the **Pattern** reflects the timeframe of the experiences that created it. The first explorer to reach the lost city of Macchu Picchu dreamt of an intact city and its last inhabitants, for its lingering **Pattern** was stronger than the dreams of that one explorer. As more and more people have seen this ruin, their dreams have shaped that part of the **Pattern** to reflect it as it is now, and its ghostly pattern of ages past is now all but lost.

The **Pattern** is the whole of Nocturne, which includes everything that has ever happened there. One can Dream of things past, and interact in ways that would seem to violate cause and effect, but the only change that can actually happen in the **Pattern** is to the **Thread** of *that* Dreamer. Since what is is far stronger than what was, true Dreaming of the past is difficult, and is limited to places and times in the **Pattern** of great change, great enough that their echoes can still be sensed, and that older part of the **Pattern** viewed and visited.

The **Pattern** also reflects the afterlife and beliefs about the afterlife. Heaven is somewhere above, unattainable even to a Dreamer with wings. Hell is somewhere below, deep in the fiery bowels of the Earth, far below the deepest mine. But both come close to Nocturne and **Materia** in specific places. Astronauts report feeling a closeness to God. They are closer to the Judeo-Christian Heaven, and can feel this in both dreams and even while awake. Though they are long deserted, visiting World War II concentration camps can give one nightmares. Hell has bubbled up close to the surface here, and this too can be felt by the sensitive.

Above all else, the Pattern *is*. It cannot be permanently altered by a Dreamer in Nocturne. If you pick up and throw a rock, the rock will stay where you threw it only so long as you stay in that place and will the rock to stay thrown. The rock in the Materia is the Pattern from which Nocturne is drawn, so when you leave, the rock will return to its proper place. You cannot change the Materia or Apocrypha from Nocturne. You can only alter the Nocturnal reflections and interpretation of these places.

The **Weave** is the local part of the Pattern where you are. The Weave *can* be affected by will alone. A person of sufficient will could dream a gun into their hands and shoot something in the Weave, temporarily destroying or damaging it. This *could* be another Dreamer. While one cannot affect the Pattern as a whole, one can *locally* affect the Weave, either by physical action or effort of will. By a long term effort, Dreamers can alter the Weave so that it has characteristics different from its Materia reflection. Just as the Materia affects the Pattern and locally, the Weave, an altered Weave *can* affect the Materia. A dark and foreboding Weave can give a Sleeper nightmares, and bring a chill even to a Waker who walks through that part of the Materia. A hostile Weave can make bad things happen more often, and similarly a beneficial Weave can bring peace to troubled parts of the Materia. While one can use Travelling skill to traverse great distances in the Pattern, one must move more conventionally within a Weave. You could fly, or run, but not simply will yourself to a spot without crossing the intervening distance. A Weave represents someone's will imposed on Nocturne, and while you may bypass a Weave, once in it, you are in a sense bound by its nature.

The **Thread** is who you are, a tiny part of the Weave and of the larger Pattern. Making changes to the Thread is a trivial task, and one that most Dreamers learn as a matter of course. Protecting your Thread from outside manipulation is a harder skill, but one that must be mastered if a Dreamer expects to encounter hostile Dreamers or other entities.

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The **Apocrypha** are all the areas that are beyond life, realms past Nocturne that only those who have completely shed the Materia can enter. That is, dying. All things that have an awareness of self can dream, and all things that dream will pass on to an Apocrypha. The Apocrypha one's essence is drawn to depends on one's belief system, and how one lives their life. *All* Apocrypha are equally valid. There *is* a Heaven, and a Hell. Also a Valhalla, an Elysian Fields, and so on. If you believe in Hell, and that you have done things that damn you to Hell, then bingo! *You're going to Hell!* If you believe that your soul will be stripped of identity, purified and sent back to Earth to inhabit a new body, then that's the Apocrypha that your soul will go to.

The transition from Materia to Apocrypha is traumatic, but those of strong will and power can make the transition and still retain their identity. Such rare individuals can enter Nocturne from "the other side". It is the nature of Apocrypha that anything you learn there stays there, so even those who return to Nocturne cannot reveal what their chosen afterlife is *truly* like. Once in Nocturne, they no longer know except in the vaguest sense.

Each Apocrypha has a primal force, a sort of super-Entity that both runs and *is* the Apocrypha. For instance, the Creator is not just in Heaven, the Creator in a sense *is* Heaven. For this reason, the Primal Apocrypha cannot leave their domains, and must forever remain separated from both Nocturne and Materia. A Primal Apocrypha is the embodiment of the nature of that place. As the embodiment of Hell, Lucifer *is* pain, regret and hatred.

Since a Primal Apocrypha cannot enter Nocturne, it must send agents or Entities to gather information and do its bidding. These Entities may be extremely powerful in Nocturne, but have no effect on the Materia. Angels and Devils literally exist only in our dreams.

▼ **DREAMERS, SLEEPERS AND WAKERS** - You already have some idea of what a Dreamer is. Anyone who can reliably Dream, remember their dreams and can locally shape the Pattern is a **Dreamer**. True Dreamers are quite rare. Only a handful in a million are Dreamers, and almost all adventurers in a Nocturne campaign will be among those rare individuals.

Many of history's influential figures have been Dreamers. The combination of will and intellect that makes a strong person also makes a strong Dreamer, and a person with these traits who can work, communicate and make coherent plans even while unconscious can have up to double the effective lifespan in terms of their ability to get things done. In primitive times, the ability to see and communicate with those in distant places was an invaluable asset, but also made one suspiciously wise to those who believed in witchcraft.

There are things out there, the Others, neither men nor beasts, but Dreamers none the less. They bear all of humanity a hatred so ancient and powerful it is written in our genes to know them and fear them on sight. They remain hidden, but they work against us when they can.

A **Sleeper** is someone who dreams, but does not Dream. A Sleeper's dreaming is the strange, sometimes fantastical sort that most of us are accustomed to. It has a "location" that Dreamers can visit at a temporary cost of 1 Fate, centered on the Materia location of the Sleeper. A Dreamer can enter these dreams and interact with them, and the Sleeper may remember some of this upon awaking, but it is not always certain. However, entering a Sleeper's dreams puts the Dreamer under partial control of the Dreamer's preconscious. By willingly becoming part of someone else's dream, your actions in that dream are bounded by the Sleeper. If it becomes a nightmare, then it becomes *your* nightmare as well. If the plot of their dream does not let you leave, you cannot leave until they awake or the dream reaches its end. Novice Dreamers are often voyeurs and would-be manipulators of people's dreams, but this usually ends after the first nightmare they get trapped in. Since a Dreamer can take actual damage from these dreams (and the Sleeper cannot), the Dreamer can be in a world of hurt when a dream goes horribly wrong.

Sleepers are visible to Dreamers, but cannot be interacted with save to try and enter their dreams.

Wakers are simply everyone in Materia who is not asleep and dreaming (or Dreaming). They are also sometimes called the Dreamless or the Pale. To anyone in Nocturne, Wakers are invisible or nearly so, at best faint representations of their self-image. They are inaudible and intangible, as are their immediate possessions and clothing (part of their self image). To a Dreamer, Wakers simply do not exist. The only exceptions are Waking Dreamers and Sensitives, both of whom can be seen and to some extent interacted with by Dreamers. A busy sidewalk in Materia is deserted for a Dreamer and a very faint swirling fog of Wakers. What would be a crowded freeway in Materia is in Nocturne a strange landscape of speeding but empty cars. Empty buses pull up to stops, open and close their doors, and move on. Dreamers can use and interact with devices controlled by unseen Wakers, but are limited by normal circumstance. A Dreamer could hop on a bus, get behind the wheel and drive somewhere faster than they could walk, but would also be limited by the normal flow of traffic. The Materia bus would continue on its normal rounds, and when the Dreamer relinquished mental control of the bus, the Nocturnal representation of the bus would merge with its Materia location again. There is a small cadre of Dreaming car enthusiasts who have pooled their money to buy some of the world's rarest and most powerful vehicles. These are garaged in pristine condition, and driven only in Nocturne.

Ironically, though they have no conscious power over Nocturne, it is the Wakers who shape it the most. The billions of Wakers generate what the Dreamer sees by their actions. A closed door is closed because a Waker closed it. A concentration camp exists because Wakers built it and a mass grave is filled because Wakers did the killing, and the site is emotionally poisoned because Wakers did the dying. Dreamers can have great power, but the Wakers have the numbers. The advantage a Dreamer has is that when they aren't Dreaming, they are a Waker as well. They operate in *both* realms, each with its advantages and limitations.

▼ **THE AWAKENING** - Something that influences the life and fate of every Dreamer is the Awakening. Though they know it not, it affects the Sleepers as well.

All Dreamers have an instinctual awareness of the Awakening, when all Sleepers of every kind suddenly become Dreamers or something more. It is an event that no Dreamer is ambivalent about. They either want it to happen as the next stage in the evolution of the soul, or dread it as an event that will corrupt, enslave or destroy us all. How it can be made to happen is unknown, though many have theories and plans to bring it about. How it can be prevented is equally unknown, but thwarting other people's plans to bring it about is a generally accepted tactic.

Those who fear or wish to prevent the Awakening are known as the Elite, while those who seek to bring it about are loosely known as the Redeemers. These two groups are far from monolithic blocks, because each group is composed of numerous factions, each with their own goals and beliefs about the Awakening.

Even the Primal Apocrypha do not know the true nature of the Awakening, only that it is a thing either destined to happen, or destined to be thwarted, depending on who you ask. Virtually all religions derive from the beliefs in and of a Primal Apocrypha, and virtually all these religions prophecy some great battle or cataclysm that is the cause, prevention, side effect or result of the Awakening, though all phrase it in allegory and symbolism. As a matter of public relations, each portrays its own side as the victors or good guys in the matter, and truly objective (or accurate) prophecies are nowhere to be found.

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The Book of Revelations predicts the Rapture of the believers, the seven years of tribulations on Earth and the final victory of the Creator over Lucifer. The Norse have the final battle of Ragnarok, preceded by three consecutive years of unrelenting winter and a complete societal breakdown. The world will be destroyed and a new world will begin. The Mayan calendar predicts the end of the Fifth Age in 2012CE, a collapse of time and the end of death. The Jewish faith has only a few splinter groups predicting end times, though one might argue they have had enough apocalypses already. Similarly, only a few Islamic sects preach an end time, a "Year of the Hajj" in year 1500 of the Islamic calendar (2076CE). By some interpretations of the Hindu calendar, the last avatar of Vishnu should make an appearance any day now to end the current dark age and bring about an age of righteousness. And the Buddhist calendar has cycles of decline and renewal, with the current decline due to turn around in 2018CE.

Who is right? We have no idea, but the fact that many of these prophecies point to something terrible, mysterious or overwhelming happening during *your* lifetime should have you worried...

The overwhelming backdrop of a **Nocturne** campaign is that Dreamers everywhere feel that things are finally happening and that the last days are upon us. Some might think this means within a year, while others do not see the final conflict as happening for another generation or more.

What does matter is that people are taking it a bit more seriously, and playing the game for higher stakes. Whatever happens, it will be important for Dreamers, Sleepers and even the Primal Apocrypha. But Dreamers are going to be the ones who tip the balance one way or the other.

