



The Night Circus

Guide for Players

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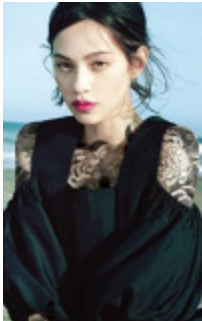
Act	Scene	Title	Description
1	1	Prologue 1. The Midnight Dinner	The circus crew meets for the first time over dinner, drinks, and dancing.
1	2	2. Arrival	The crew move in to the train compartments and circus tents they'll call home while they tour the world.
1	3	3. Opening Night	<i>Le Cirque des Rêves</i> opens and the crew perform for the public - and each other - for the first time.
2	1	4. In Motion	The crew get their first taste of life on tour when the circus leaves London, heading for St. Petersburg.
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Notable NPCs

Circus Performers & Crew

These characters perform as a part of *Le Cirque des Rêves*, and will be travelling with the player characters. They are available in-person as resources, with any questions or just general social interactions.

Tsukiko



The contortionist performing for *Le Cirque des Rêves*. Covered in tattoos of strange symbols woven in complex patterns all across her skin. Quiet, but sharp-eyed. Mysterious.

Celia Bowen



The stage magician performing for *Le Cirque des Rêves*. Friendly and fashionable, with an easy laugh.

Circus Creators

These characters were responsible for bringing the *Le Cirque des Rêves* to life, in one way or another, though they will have little to do with the circus's day-to-day operations after Opening Night, instead turning their attentions back to their day jobs when the circus has successfully launched. They are available by letter and in-person when the circus is in town near their base of operations.

Mr. A. H---



Master and teacher of learned magic, architect of the competition, and co-financier of *Le Cirque des Rêves*. Aloof, laconic, and mysterious. Deliberately (and sometimes forcibly) unmemorable. Known also as the Man in the Gray Suit. Based somewhere in England, though exactly where is unknown.

Prospero the Enchanter



World-renowned stage magician, master and teacher of innate magic, architect of the competition, and co-financier of *Le Cirque des Rêves*. Mercurial, petty, and prideful. Based in New York, though he tours the world performing.

Chandresh Christophe Lefèvre



Proprietor of the *Le Cirque des Rêves*, providing a majority of the financing and creative direction. Eccentric theatrical producer who made his fortune pushing the boundaries of entertainment. A creative, gregarious, but moody, perfectionist. Brings a theatrical sensibility to everything he does. Based in London.

Marco Alisdair



Chandresh's personal assistant. Deals with paperwork and bureaucracy so his boss can focus on his work. Polite and reserved; doesn't call attention to himself. Handles day-to-day correspondence with the circus on behalf of Chandresh, arranging for deliveries of supplies and repairs when needed. Based in London.

Ana "Tante" Padva



Highly in-demand fashion designer. Creates all of the costumes used in *Le Cirque des Rêves*. Formerly a Romanian prima ballerina, and still carries the grace and elegance of that experience. Has a wicked eye for aesthetics and provided input for the creative direction of the circus, in addition to outfitting all of the performers. A friend of Chandresh's mother growing up, known affectionately as Tante Padva by those associated with the circus in recognition in her role as, effectively, matriarch of the whole thing. Based in Paris, but visits London often.

Ethan W. Barris



Engineer and architect, designer of all of the mechanical circus attractions. Timid and polite, he usually looks out of place among the circus crowd. Based in London.

Lainie and Tara Burgess



The Burgess sisters are *not* twins, but since they do almost everything together and look so similar that few can tell them apart, most people treat them as such, regardless. Tara and Lainie have been a little bit of everything, from actors to singers to librarians, and now work mainly as business consultants, wielding their keen senses of observation. Every aspect of the circus bears input of their striking but refined eyes for detail. Based in London, but travel often, and have a summer home in Tuscany.

The Train

The circus travels from city to city by train, disguised as a long line of plain coal cars, but the living quarters for the crew are warm, inviting, and comfortable.

Private Compartments





Each crew member has a private compartment functioning as their bedroom and personal living space. Quarters are just on the cozy side of cramped, but they are comfortable and there's some space for personal touches.

Dining Car



Where the crew of *Le Cirque des Rêves* eat. A menu of simple but tasty basic staples (scones, cheese, nuts, dried fruit, sandwiches, quiche, tea, coffee, and juices) is available from the kitchen at all hours, with a more expansive buffet spread for dinner each evening before sundown.

Lounges



One of the common areas on the train that houses *Le Cirque des Rêves*. A comfortable lounge with a bar and a piano. Seems to lend itself to after-dinner conversation. Open at all times, but the bar is only staffed for a few hours after the circus closes at dawn.



One of the common areas on the train that houses *Le Cirque des Rêves*. A comfortable lounge with inlaid bookshelves and good lighting.

Current Circus Attractions

The Lightning Thief (Merritt's Performance)

Magic In The Round (Celia's Performance)

The Iron Will (Billy's Performance)

Magic Styles

Characters use one of two methods for wielding magic. The theory behind each, and their strengths and weaknesses, are described below for reference.

Innate Magic

Mentor: Prospero the Enchanter

Prospero the Enchanter's students are born with an innate (or inborn) magical talent that Prospero helps them develop through repeated practical application. Innate magic is directed consciously, using only the mental energy of the caster.

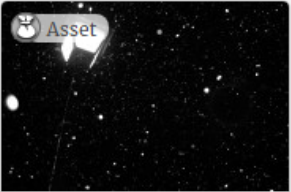
Innate magic is typically better at manipulating the physical world - for example, breaking a watch and putting it back together without touching it, turning a coat into a pack of doves and back again, disappearing objects into the ether, etc.

Innate magic users are able to manipulate inanimate objects to greater effect than living things, and more familiar things to greater effect than unfamiliar things.

Ongoing enchantments created with innate magic require ongoing mental attention to maintain. Keeping the magical machinery of the circus running eventually fades into the background of living, like breathing and pumping blood, but when unveiling new attractions, or performing large, spontaneous feats, a practitioner's bandwidth for maintaining additional loads is severely diminished.

Innate magic works without any physical anchor and must be consciously directed by the practitioner. This limits the amount of magic your character can direct at any given time, and makes their enchantments vulnerable to failing if they are hurt, incapacitated, or distracted.

On the other hand, the feats possible with innate magic are limited only by the practitioner's imagination, and can be conceived of and adjusted at will, making innate magic much more flexible than its learned counterpart.

 Asset 	 Asset 	 Asset 	 Asset 
DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION Your enchantments are vulnerable to failure if you are unable to consciously direct them - whether you are hurt, incapacitated, or distracted. [Counts as a Weakness when played on a challenge.]	HIGHLY REACTIVE Your magic style is highly flexible, allowing for feats to be performed at will, while the results are easily adjusted for optimal ongoing function. [Counts as a Strength when played on a challenge.]	LIMITED CAPACITY Your amount of magic you can control is limited to what you can consciously direct at any moment. [Counts as a Weakness when played on a challenge.]	THE SKY IS THE LIMIT The feats you can accomplish are limited only by your imagination. [Counts as a Strength when played on a challenge.]

Learned Magic

Mentor: Mr. A. H---

Mr. A. H---'s students have no inborn talent for the magical arts, and are chosen simply for having a suitable temperament. Mr. A. H--- helps them develop magical talent through extensive study.

Learned magic requires a physical conduit to perform, and can be channeled in a variety of ways.

- Weaving together physical symbols - may be drawn, carved, tattooed, etc.
- Braiding/knotting cords and ribbons, often chosen for their significance to the intended effect
- Invoking specific configurations of tarot cards
- Speaking incantations of words of power, for small or temporary magical effects
- A combination of the above, or other means entirely (you can be creative, here!)

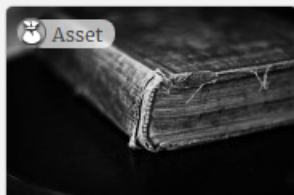
Crafting spells using learned magic involves researching how to invoke the relevant effects and then experimenting with how to effectively weave them together. Because learned magic has an external anchor, maintenance does not require the caster's ongoing effort. Spells remain in effect and stable so long as the physical conduit remains intact.

Mr. A. H---'s students are better with intangible magic - casting illusions in the mind of another, spells of protection, or binding people and things together are their specialties.

Learned magic draws a bit from from [Hermetic magic](#) (or more generally, [ritual magic](#)), so you may find the linked articles helpful.

Learned magic is focused through an external conduit, and practitioners are not limited in the number of works they can maintain at one time in the way that inborn magicians are. Spells remain stable indefinitely and are only vulnerable to failure if that anchor is destroyed.

Spontaneous feats would be limited to familiar, simple works or spells cast previously; anything complex would take time to craft. If a spell does not have exactly the intended effect, adjustments have to be made to the physical anchor. This can require trial and error in revising the spell, or restarting the casting entirely from scratch.



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BY THE BOOK

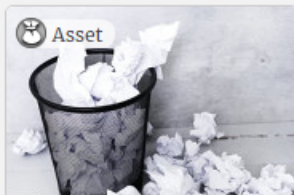
Your spells can be crafted quickly or they can be creative and complex - never both. Fast spells are simple and familiar, complex spells take time and research. [Counts as a Weakness when played on a challenge.]



Asset

EVERYTHING AT ONCE

The only limit to the number of spells you can maintain at one time is the amount of material you can acquire to anchor them. [Counts as a Strength when played on a challenge.]



Asset

RIGID ADHERENCE

Any changes to your spells involve going back to the drawing board - whether a trial-and-error ridden set of revisions to the original or starting over entirely. [Counts as a Weakness when played on a challenge.]



Asset

SURE AND CERTAIN

Once established, your enchantments remain stable and in effect until the physical anchor is destroyed. [Counts as a Strength when played on a challenge.]