

- CHAPTER ONE -
Harry's
World

JR
'07

YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME. BILLY, NOBODY BUT YOU AND KIRBY CALL THE WORLD "THE DRESDENVERSE."

HARRY'S WORLD

For most people, Chicago is Chicago, America is America, and Earth is Earth—but there's more to the world than that.

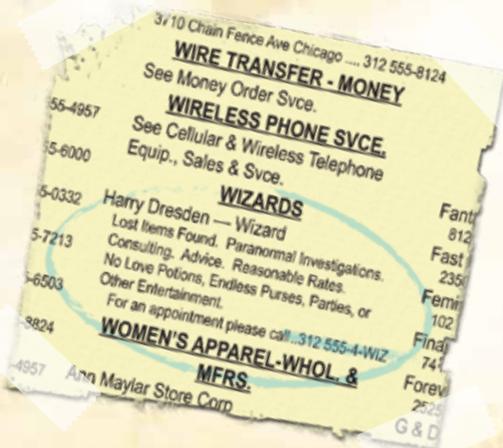
Beneath the "normal" surface of the world are things and people which most humans don't know about, don't want to know about, and will do their best to forget about if they ever come anywhere near them. That dead body with the odd toothmarks? *Attacked by stray dogs*. The traces of thirty different infectious diseases on this corpse? *Statistical anomaly*. The Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton from the museum scattered in a thousand pieces on the college lawn? *Student prank*.

People won't see things they don't want to see. Most of the citizens of Chicago would laugh at the idea of magic, even though Harry Dresden has his number and occupation right in the phone book. It's always possible for everyone, from heroes to bystanders, to turn away and not get involved. It's often the easiest thing in the world to do. You can choose between good and evil, light and darkness, possibility and necessity, taking action and going home to curl up with a good book.

The world is weirder, more wonderful, and more deadly than it seems. Some people know this. There are people who know that magic exists and know who to call when they run into it. There are humans who have been divinely blessed or diabolically cursed. There are faeries—small, big, hugely ancient and terrifying. There are dragons, although these days it's said they consider bearer bonds as well as gold for their hoards.

IT'S NOT AS THOUGH THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL CAME DOWN IN PERSON AND GAVE YOU A SWORD MADE FROM ONE OF THE NAILS THAT PINNED CHRIST TO THE CROSS AND CHARGED YOU WITH A SACRED MISSION, AFTER ALL.

(BY THE WAY, IF ANYONE OUT THERE HAS HAD THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL COME DOWN TO CHARGE THEM WITH A HOLY MISSION, GIVE ME A CALL. I'M IN THE BOOK.)



The Nevernever—the world of fae and ghosts—is just on the other side of a veil from normal life; courts of vampires divide the night among them; the White Council of wizards tries to protect the innocent and stop the misuse of magic.

All of this is going on, right under our noses. However, this is also a world where a single person, in the right place, at the right time, can do the right thing and save the people he cares about.

Here in what we often like to call "the Dresdenverse," we can choose to be people who see, who make our own paths, who do the right thing, and take the responsibility for doing it. Seen clearly, this world is full of light and darkness, with all the shades of grey between.

Join us, if only in play. Because it's only a book, a game, a roleplaying entertainment of magic and monsters.

Isn't it?

You be the judge.

MAXIMS OF THE DRESDENVERSE

There are certain themes that hold true in this world which are noticeable enough that you should take them under consideration. They can be roughly summarized as follows.

MONSTERS HAVE NATURE, MORTALS HAVE CHOICE

Almost all beings that could be considered "monsters" are, one on one, far more powerful than the average mortal. They have great strength, implausible toughness, blinding speed, and unnatural powers. What they don't have is choice.

A monster's nature is oriented towards fulfilling its hungers. Vampires need emotion or blood or death, loup-garoux need the hunt and the kill, fae literally cannot step outside their natures or break oaths. These entities have power, but they don't have the option of saying no. They are what they're made to be—and some things are simply made cruel, bloodthirsty, or just plain evil.

On the other hand, mortals have options: choice. That's their great strength and their great responsibility. Only animals and monsters can truthfully say that they can't do anything else, or that they can't be other than what they are.



MORTALS—HUMANS—ALSO HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF NUMBERS. UP UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, CALLING MORTAL AUTHORITIES INTO A SUPERNATURAL SITUATION WAS LIKE RADIOING IN AN AIRSTRIKE. UNFORTUNATELY, IN THE COURSE OF THE VAMPIRE WAR, SOME OF THE SUPERNATURAL "NATIONS" SEEM TO HAVE GOTTEN HOLD OF THE MYSTICAL EQUIVALENTS OF NUKES.

Every human being can make a decision about what to do or not do, what to accept and what to refuse, whether to kill or not kill.

That said, the situation is often grey and not clear-cut. There are those few who are part mortal and part monster: vampires who struggle to fight their hungers and do the right thing; werewolves who chose lycanthropy to get the strength to defend their community; wizards who accept help from dark sources, but hope to restrain the urges that threaten to engulf them. Choice is the overwhelming theme of these individuals' lives. Will they retain their humanity or will they become monsters? And is there any way that those who are now monsters can perhaps regain some degree of humanity, some capacity for choice?

FOR THOMAS' SAKE, I HOPE SO.

THINGS FAIL APART

The world is growing darker. Humans are choosing the worse over the better, and the monsters are cheering them on. There are trolls under the bridges, vampires running businesses behind the velvet curtains, and ghosts sucking the life from babies in maternity wards. Organized crime is strong and getting stronger; gunshots echo in the night; some policemen take payoffs. Drug use is spreading; alcohol is an answer rather than a stopgap; people lose themselves in their searches for pleasure, power, or escape.

But there are those who stand against the rising tide of shadow. Whether they are ordinary humans, secretive wizards, individuals chosen by supernatural powers, or people empowered by some other means, they will *not* let the darkness win. Perhaps all the more obvious against the shabbiness of the world around them, perhaps stained or marked by their own errors and

problems, they nevertheless hold their ground and work to protect, to support, to rebuild. They choose to use their power for others as well as for themselves. These people exist, and they haven't given in yet.

SCIENCE FAILS

The comforting rules of science and technology, the certainty that a better computer or a bigger gun will settle the problem—sorry, they don't work 'round here. Wizards and some other ~~monsters~~ cause nearby technology to malfunction simply by their presence.

Monsters aren't reliably affected by the laws of physics. They seem to treat them as "vague guidelines" more than laws. They can fly, walk through walls, tear apart steel doors, and deflect bullets (or ignore them entirely). All the carefully acquired handguns, sniper rifles, flame-throwers, computer security, and mobile phones in the world may ultimately be useless if pitted against the wrong sort of adversary.

Not only does technology not work around the wizardly-inclined, nobody can really explain why post-WWII technology doesn't work. There aren't any convenient rules. No wizard has yet attempted to catalogue his effects on technology.

Last time Butters and I spoke, he was on about something about Harry's electromagnetic field (I call it an aura) interfering with electron spin and/or phase jumps in transistors and other solid state electronics. (I think that's what he said. Technology is just another flavor of faith to me.)

Furthermore, no monster is going to publish a list of ways that it can be hurt. However, *others* can. The most recent example of such a tome, Bram Stoker's DRACULA, detailed most of the significant ways in which a Black Court vampire can be damaged or killed. The Black Court still hasn't recovered.

ALSO, BILLY, HAVE I EVER MENTIONED THAT SOMETIMES YOU SPEAK LIKE A FREAKING SUPERHERO IN A COMIC BOOK? (THAT'S NOT AN INSULT, BUT I'M NOT SURE IT'S A COMPLIMENT.)

PLEASE CHANGE "SOME OTHER MONSTERS" TO "SOME OTHER SUPERNATURAL ENTITIES"? WE'RE NOT ALL THAT BAD.

WELL, MOSTLY.

OKAY.

JUST FREAKING CHANGE IT, BILLY.

"PUBLISH A LIST" (LIKE THIS GAME). HEH. BY THE WAY, THERE'S SOME CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE THAT INDICATES STOKER WAS MANIPULATED INTO WRITING DRACULA BY THE WHITE COURT. SO WHILE NO MONSTER IS GONNA COME UP WITH A "TOP TEN WAYS TO WHACK ME" LIST, ANOTHER MONSTER MIGHT DO SO.



This dovetails remarkably well with the note above about people choosing not to see what's going on around them. The scientists who might be able to analyze data on monsters don't want to know in the first place; then their instruments go nuts, so they dismiss the cases of spontaneous combustion or bouncing bullets as statistical anomalies. With regard to the supernatural, science can't tell you what just happened, can't explain why it happened, and can't stop it from happening again.

Sure, Mr. or Ms. Sciencey-Science, your lab is spotless, filled with the tools and gear of analysis, and you have spent years filling your head with logic, knowledge, methods—but the specimen before you *refuses* to make sense according to everything you've been taught. Meanwhile, it's very dark outside, something large is moving around in the gloom, and your electric light has started flickering. The monster is getting closer, and you can't do thing one about it—or even understand what's going on.

However, this *doesn't* mean that technology can't be useful, if properly applied (and kept away from wizards who can make it go *pfft!*). Different creatures have different vulnerabilities—a flamethrower or a water balloon filled with holy water might be just the thing to even the odds against a Black Court vampire. Even if a bullet in the brainpan fails to take a monster down, extreme applications of kinetic force (such as a car at ramming speed or a crash-landing satellite) tend to have some sort of effect. Other tools of technology can be used to pass information, archive data, set up perimeters, or collect evidence. Some technology may be functional in particular ways against particular types of monster.

Assuming that a wizard doesn't accidentally fuse them, of course.

BELIEF IS POWER

Faith in itself is a form of power and a kind of magic. Strong faith in good (or evil) can act as a defense, an offense, a shield, or a guide, providing many effects which people would normally consider "magic." This could include things like a glimmer of light from a crucifix in the darkness, burning a vampire's hands as it grabs you, or a sudden burst of more-than-mortal strength.

The exact details of the faith can vary. Religious beliefs are the mainstay here: a staggering number of people have faith in God (or gods). Some people have strong faith in more philosophical beliefs—for example, the fundamental purity and goodness of magic, Tibetan mysticism, or even Communism.

The important thing is that if the person has faith in something—true, sincere, pure faith—then miracles can happen.

EFFECTIVE WORD HERE BEING "CAN"—WHILE MICHAEL, CHARITY, AND FATHER FORTHILL HAVE THAT KIND OF BELIEF IN THE GOODNESS OF GOD AND THAT EVERYTHING WILL WORK OUT TO SOME INEFFABLE PLAN...I JUST CAN'T BUY IT. NOT WITH WHAT I'VE SEEN HAPPEN.

For my part, I know that faith has power. However, I am **not allowed** to understand anything further than that, by nature and by...other issues.



MAGIC IS WHAT YOU ARE

You can't make magic do something that goes against your fundamental nature. This works on both the deliberate and the emotional levels. An utterly kind, sincere person will not be able to muster malicious hate and bitterness of a level that would allow him to summon demons or blast with hellfire—or, at least, not without very significant provocation. Likewise, a vicious and corrupt thanatologist practicing human sacrifice isn't going to have healing magic at his command—or, if he does, it may require blood and pain to make it work and will probably be more corrupting than simply leaving the open wound to fester.

At least, that's the theory. Practice has, once again, shown things to be a lot fuzzier than the clear-cut examples above. Again, it all comes back to choice and to the complexity of the mortal mind and soul. Even a kindly old grandmother has the seeds of hatred within her, and even a cold-blooded gangster has moments of tenderness and kindness.

Magic is an expression of the person who brings it forth. It comes from their beliefs, their morality, their feelings, their emotional connections, their way of seeing the world: in a word, their soul.

See, boss, William gets it a lot more than you do.

SHUT UP, BOB.

There's a reason why the **soulgaze** is the ultimate proof of sincerity between many wizards. A soulgaze happens when two people (at least one of them a wizard) make eye contact long enough to look into each other's souls and see what they truly are. In that moment, a wizard not only sees what a person is, but he also sees what their magic is—it's one and the same. For instance, if you choose to practice black magic, you dredge up the corrupt parts of yourself and make them stronger. You are what you *choose* to become, what you make yourself into. (Luckily, if you're mortal, you also always have the power to choose redemption after a slip.)

Whether it's faith or magic, all power comes from the basic nature of the mortal or monster who is using it. Evil brings forth evil, and good brings forth good. We are what we do, and we do what we are.

WHAT'S OUT THERE?

Here's a quick and dirty breakdown of the mortals, "semi-mortals," and monsters running around out in the Dresdenverse. Keep your eyes peeled, and you might recognize them.

(For further details on the political factions and recent history of these groups, see *Old World Order*, OW14. For more information on the nature of each of these types of beings, see *What Goes Bump*, OW28. For discussions of specific individuals, see *Who's Who*, OW98.)

MORTALS

First, you have true **mundane mortals**. They are unaware of the supernatural goings-on all around them.

Then you have the **clued-in**, who have experienced the weirdness up-close and personal, and may know a bit about the various people and critters involved in occult stuff. Clued-in groups include some people of faith, law enforcement officers who specialize in "black cat investigations," researchers who come across anomalous (read: supernatural) evidence, and even some members of organized crime.

Next are the **minor talents**. These are folks who have a (usually limited) supernatural ability of their own. Maybe they can cast a spell or two, know some effective rituals, speak to the dead, see the future, that sort of thing.

Sorcerers are more powerful magic-workers, often tapping the power of cults surrounding them to empower spells or rituals or to summon demons. Sorcerers usually don't have the training, power, knowledge, or ethics of **White Council** wizards. White Council members have the tools and the talent, but they must abide by certain Laws of Magic. Those who break the Laws are known as **warlocks**. (Usually, the White Council sends its Wardens to enforce the Laws, but due to the current Vampire War, their hands are a bit full.)

Lastly, there are **necromancers** who use the power of death to do magic, like raising ghosts and zombies and all other sorts of creepy business. (Playing with death magic is a big no-no to the White Council, by the way.)

YOU COULD CONSIDER NECROMANCERS TO BE BIGTIME WARLOCKS.

Harry's World

BY THIS BREAKDOWN, I'M ALMOST TEMPTED TO PUT THE KNIGHTS OF THE CROSS UNDER "SEMI-MORTAL." IT SEEMS LIKE MICHAEL OFTEN DOES NOT HAVE THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE NOT TO FOLLOW HIS BELIEF STRUCTURE AND MISSION. DOES CHOICE COUNT IF YOU CHOOSE TO ALWAYS FOLLOW YOUR NATURE?

Hey, boss:
Pot. Kettle. **Black.**

Tangentially... William, I'd consider a "classic werewolf" like yourself and your compatriots to be minor talents, based on free will.

"SEMI-MORTALS"

"Semi-mortals" are people who have a foot in the mortal world and a foot in the supernatural world. They retain some aspects of choice, balanced against their nature (see above, page 10).

These include some types of **werewolf**, **scions** of mortal-monster matings (such as **change-lings**, which are part-human and part-faerie), and the poor folks who have been half-turned—or **infected**—by a vampire. (A large percentage of the membership of the **Fellowship of St. Giles** is composed of people infected and turned halfway into a Red Court vampire.)

MONSTERS

The world is full of *monsters*. There are other types of **werewolves** than those mentioned above (four or five in total), and at least four types of **vampire** (White Court, Red Court, Black Court, and Jade Court), all with different powers, hungers, and weaknesses. Then there are **ghouls**, the hard-to-dispatch killer thugs of the supernatural set.

Add to this the inhabitants of the Nevernever who can by various means cross from there into the mortal realm; these include a multitude of **faerie** species, **spirits**, **ghosts**, and **demons**.

A couple **dragons** and **gods** are still kicking around, but we don't know much about them other than they usually don't seem to get involved in stuff and they are extremely powerful.

The Order of the Blackened Denarius is composed of **Fallen angels** bound to thirty silver coins, permitting them to possess mortal hosts; they are extremely bad news. Apparently, **angels** support the people of faith who wage war against the Denarians.

Then there are **Outsiders** and **Old Ones**. They want to consume reality. (We think.) We don't have much information on them because knowing anything about them is against the White Council's Laws of Magic.

Actually, I know there's a whole lot more going on at the moment, but what with getting married and the day job, I'm not as up to speed as I could be (we should talk about that). But for the purpose of an intro chapter, I figured that keeping it simple was the way to go. We'll get into the more complicated stuff in other places.

CURRENT SITUATION

The White Council and its allies (the Fellowship of St. Giles, the **Venatori Umbrorum**, and some mystical monasteries in the Far East) are fighting the Vampire War against the Red Court. For its part, the Red Court is using ghouls (and Outsiders in the Nevernever) against the White Council. It is also trying to bring the White and Black—and possibly the Jade—Courts in to help fight. The White Court is neutral (due to infighting and a recent major setback), the Black Court is very small, and the Jade Court is very mysterious, so they haven't joined the Reds quite yet.

The Summer Court and the Winter Court of Faerie are locked in their traditional enmity, though the violence has ramped up due to the Vampire War. The Summer Court has offered mild assistance to the White Council in the course of the Vampire War, but both are only indirectly involved.

A bunch of necromancers made a play for godlike power a few years ago. Luckily, some of the White Council's Wardens stopped it.

The Denarians continue their millennia-long rampage of evil and destruction, checked by the Knights of the Cross. While the Denarians aren't directly participating in the Vampire War, they are taking advantage of it. The Knights have aided the White Council on more than a few occasions—and have taken heavy losses.

The first "pure vanilla" mortal has signed onto the **Unseelie Accords** (see OW14), becoming the first non-supernatural Freeholding Lord. It is likely he will assist the White Council versus the Red Court.

Then, there's a mysterious faction out there—alternately called the **Black Council** or the **Circle**—that is apparently stirring up trouble behind the scenes.

Most recently, a huge dust-up happened in Chicago between the Knights of the Cross, the Archive, representatives of the White Council, and the Denarians. (There's also evidence that the Summer Court and Winter Court of Faerie were involved.) Suffice to say, it wasn't pretty.

And that's what's going on at the moment.