

Strange LRP Rules 2.3

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Strange LRP is a live roleplay game set in the world of Susannah Clarke's "Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell". Her books, and the TV series, are the inspiration for our events. We hope to bring them to life, and provide a rich and detailed world for you to inhabit.

Set at the very end of the Regency period, inspirations also include the writing of Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, and Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe books. Real history is another important source, particularly for costume, but our focus is on the spirit of the age, instead of historical authenticity.

The player-characters are not spectators in this process. They are the key protagonists in our ongoing story. Though the world is detailed, and the tides of history still flow, the players are at the centre of that universe. The future of magic in England is in their hands, and perhaps the fate of the world, too.

The rules in this book are intended to give some structure to the game, and give you the tools to play it, but what matters most is roleplay, drama, and collaborative storytelling.

There are many outside forces at work. After years of strife and warfare against France, Europe is at peace, for now, but revolutionary forces simmer under the surface. The Ascendancy of English Magic has only just begun, and already the cracks are showing.

In the Autumn of 1823, the magicians of England have been called once more, to Hawkesworth Manor. There will be lords and ladies, and servants of The Crown, yet it is not King George who has made the summons, nor his servants who deliver it. Instead, every magician experiences the same dream, which lays bare the terrible possibilities of the coming months: invasion, pestilence, civil war, famine and poverty.

It is a clarion call, perhaps even a message of hope: The future is not set in stone, and from the ashes of the old England, a new nation will be born. It will be shaped by those with the wisdom, the magic and the will to give it life, and those with the fortitude to defend it. Doubtless, some will cling to the comforts of the past, but the world sings a new song, and only the Sisters can hear it.

Creating a Character

There are many ways to play this game, and each character has a unique experience of the world. Creating that character provides the plot team with hooks, which will link you into our tangled web of stories.

One big decision to make is the social status of the character.

Anyone may choose to be an 'upstairs' or 'downstairs' character, or someone halfway between them (and often, distrusted by both).

The Qualities, listed below, allow for a range of characters, whether you are an adventurous magician, an interfering noble, a vagabond fortune-teller, or a secretive ritualist. These Archetypes give a clear signal about the sort of character that you wish to play.

That gives you the 'what', but not the 'why'. The rest of the background information provides the depth, allowing us to connect you to characters, places, and dates. We will write some plot specifically for your character, but we can link you to lots of other narratives, if we have the right details.

If you would like to discuss your submission, please contact us by email: plot@strangelrp.org

<http://www.strangelrp.org/booking>

Please use the above link when submitting your character, and fill out the form with the following information.

The Personal Details of the character - their name, nationality, year of birth, and place of residence.

Qualities

Each character has three Qualities, which represent their skills and abilities. They offer different ways of playing the game. Choose from the list. For more information, please see Appendix A.

- Formal Magician
- Hedge Magician
- Hedge Witch
- Wild Magician

- Blighter
- Physician
- Sharpshooter
- Soldier

- Influence
- Income
- Wealth

Archetype. This should be 2 or 3 words that define the persona of the character - how they think of themselves, and what others think of them. Create a unique Archetype, or choose one from Appendix B.

Affiliation. A society or other organisation that the character is connected to. Affiliation is a loose concept - it does not imply rank or power within the organisation, but it does suggest trust and loyalty. Not all characters have an Affiliation. Please let us know if Affiliation changes. For more information, see Appendix C.

Their Greatest Ambition, a Terrible Secret, and a Darkest Fear. The things that drive the character, beneath the surface.

Last, and most important, write a short description of your character background. This can include connections, personal life, and future aims, or anything else which you feel is relevant to the character. Locations and dates are very useful to the plot team, and we are happy to discuss the submission with you.

Before the event, we will send you a character pack. The pack will include an Out-of-Character brief, In-Character documents, and in some cases, valuable possessions. You will also be issued with a Soul Card, showing your character name, and their Fortune Code. You must keep this card with you, unless it is taken from you by magical means.

Essential Rules

Where there are rules, they should be followed, but the rest of the game works on these key concepts:

- ‘Victim Decides’ – if magic, potions, curses and other effects are used, the target interprets the results as they see fit.
- ‘Always React’ – whatever the result, the target must react, whether it is a subtle response, or a dramatic one.
- ‘Keep it I’C – keep things In-Character, including spell casting. make any description part of your performance, and let the target interpret the result.

Out-of-Character calls:

- ‘Stop the Game’ – This is for suspected player injuries, and other major safety issues.
- ‘Time Freeze’ – This is for minor safety issues, and requires everyone to pause their roleplay until told to resume.
- ‘Time Out / Time In’ – Play stops, or play resumes.
- ‘Beyond the Pale’. This is the safeword for the event, to be used only if a player is not comfortable with a topic or situation OOC.
- ‘Are you in good temper?’ Check-in phrase to use if uncertain about another participant’s OOC comfort.

Ribbons

Some props have a ribbon attached. Please do not remove ribbons from props, and avoid these colours on your own costume and props.

- Gold – Artefacts and antiquities, both ancient and powerful.
- Red– Object of Interest, usually worthy of further investigation.
- Black – Do Not Move! These props need to stay where they are.
- Paper – Boxes or doors with a paper tag fixed with a black seal. These are locks, opened by the Blighter Quality.

Combat

Whenever a character receives a dramatic Hit, the player must decide whether they are Injured or Unconscious. If that character receives a second dramatic Hit, they will be Injured and Unconscious, and therefore Dying. Characters with the Soldier Quality are able to bend the rules Once per Scene.

A dramatic Hit refers to any effect which is intended to harm the target. This can include a flurry of blows, a single dramatic blow, a gunshot, hostile magic, or self-inflicted wound. The target must decide whether they are Injured or Unconscious.

If the player chooses to be Injured, they are seriously hurt, but still conscious, and capable of fighting and escape. In the heat of battle, they can carry on with only minor inconvenience, but once the fighting stops, they will feel weak and slow. They can be healed by a Physician, or by magic. If they are not treated for several days, they could die.

If the player chooses to be Unconscious, they fall down, and cannot do anything. This lasts for several minutes, after which the character will wake up (or if they were Dying, they will be Dead, instead).

If the character is Hit again, they will be Injured and Unconscious. They are now Dying, which lasts for several minutes, at which point they are Dead. Healing either the Injured or Unconscious state will stop the target from Dying – this can be done by a Physician, or by magic.



The Soldier Quality allows the player to bend the rules – shrugging off a Hit, staying conscious, or anything else that feels appropriate. This can only be done Once per Scene – the Soldier must rest for a short time before they can use their ability again.

Magic

There are several ways to cast magic, but most of them are a matter of interpretation by the target. Wild magic and Hedge potions require the caster to describe the effect, which the target responds to in a way that they feel is appropriate, from a subtle personality change through to injury, unconsciousness, and even death.

There are no methods to completely avoid the effects of magic, but characters may seek out prophylactics. Religious symbols, family heirlooms, and other objects of a rare or precious nature, can be used to defend against magical influences, if the character wielding them truly believes in their value as a prophylactic. These can lessen the intensity of a magical effect, but they cannot prevent the effect entirely.

When Formal Magic is cast, each spell has very specific effects, written on a spell scroll. The magician casting the spell will describe the effects in detail; there is less room for interpretation here, and prophylactics will not work. If in doubt, ask the caster, or a referee, for advice.

Each character is issued with a Soul Card. On this is a code, used by Hedge Magicians to tell fortunes. The Soul Card can be removed by a Formal spell called Animam Evocare, and also by Fairy magic. A Soul Card taken in this way becomes a tradable item, which can be exchanged with other characters. A referee should be informed if a Soul Card is taken.

Fairy magic is much like the human sort, but even the lesser fairies are powerful, and their magic comes naturally to them.

Downtime

After each event, the attending players submit a downtime report for their character. Downtime is intended to broaden the scope of the events, encompassing months of time, and many miles of distance. The aim is to enhance roleplay at events, not to replace it. A downtime turn is approximately 1 year. During this time, your character can pursue an Ambition, and several Opportunities.

The Ambition is a goal with a guaranteed result. Your character is assumed to spend most of the year working on their Ambition. It can be a tangible goal – for example, a formal magician searching for spell scrolls – or an intangible one, like political reform. In both cases, the Qualities of the character will influence the outcome,

which will not always be the intended or expected result. Influence is particularly useful for intangible goals, and the more people working together, the better this will be. Wealth also plays a part, through financial grant certificates.

Opportunities are not guaranteed, but several can be listed. These include holidays, visiting people, attending auctions, exploring landmarks, or anything else that seems interesting. They can be inspired by documents and conversations had at the events, or new avenues that you wish to explore.

Once downtime submissions have been made, they will be processed, and used to write the following event. Downtime is a chance to emphasise the aspects of the game that you wish to pursue.

When talking to other characters, and particularly when making deals, an agreement to work for someone for a year, or support their Ambitions during that time, should be considered the norm.

Appendix A: Qualities

Formal Magician

Formal Magicians are usually diligent students of magic. They use reason and philosophy to cast powerful spells with very specific effects. It is common for them to carry, or search for, useful equipment, such as basins, bells, candles, maps, and all manner of other objects.

Like all Magicians, they are attuned to magical energies, denoted by UV paint. Players can carry a UV lightsource, or ask a referee for assistance.

Their spells are issued as scrolls. These contain detailed information about the requirements for casting the spell, including a Handsel – this is the price that the magician must pay. The scroll should be studied, and the instructions followed, but if in doubt, ask a referee for advice.

In most cases, the Handsel will be one of the four magical consumables – Ingots of Silver, Bottled Summerdew, Murex Shells, and Wild Rosehip.

Formal Magicians must report their spellcasting to a referee, show them the spell scroll, and give them the Handsel. This can be done at any time, before, during, or after spell casting. The sooner the referee knows, the sooner the effect will happen, but many spells take effect over hours or days, and players should avoid interrupting their roleplay unless they need a quick result.

Characters who take the Formal Magician Quality will be issued with a single spell when they create their character. They can buy, borrow and steal spells from other players. They can also research a spell during Downtime.

Spell scrolls cannot be copied, and the details alone are not enough to cast the spell. The player must have access to the scroll if they wish to perform the spell.

Hedge Magician

Hedge Magicians have a gift for understanding and influencing the fate of their fellow humans. They are able to read fortunes, and they are able to curse people. Like all Magicians, they are attuned to magical energies, denoted by UV paint. Players can carry a UV lightsource, or ask a referee for assistance.

Using the gift of fortune telling, they can look at the soul of a human character, and discern their past and future. A booklet will be supplied, allowing them to interpret the code written on the target's Soul Card. A referee is not required.

Hedge Magicians may use a variety of methods to tell a fortune, which should take several minutes to complete, but they must express the results according to the booklet. Each character's code is carefully chosen by the plot team, reflecting their history, aspirations, and the vagaries of fate. However, the Hedge Magician is not required to tell the truth!

Their grasp of the Fates also allows them to lay a Curse, which will change the target's Future, The Hedge Magician is responsible for informing a referee about curses that they start or end, and which Future they have chosen.

The Curse is a narrative bond, between two people, and is particularly relevant to Downtime. As such, the Hedge Magician may only lay their Curse on one person at a time. Curses last until the caster breaks the bond.

To cast the Curse, the Hedge Magician must prepare themselves by performing a small ritual, assembling a curse bag, or whatever else seems appropriate. This can be done in private. They then make a public declaration in front of the target. eg. "I curse you with the Chariot Reversed". To end the Curse, they must make a public declaration in front of the target - no preparation is needed. eg. "I end my curse upon you".

Whether laying or breaking a Curse, the Magician can send a proxy to act on their behalf. To do this, the Magician should anoint their chosen proxy, who can make the declaration on behalf of the Magician. eg. "In the name of Joseph Wilkins, I curse you with The Tower", or, "In the name of the Duke of Norfolk, I end the curse upon you".

Hedge Witch

Hedge Witches are able to mix potions which benefit or harm the recipient. These usually take the form of balms or liquids, and must be mixed with a cauldron, pestle & mortar, or other equipment which is appropriate to the Witch.

To create a potion, the Hedge Witch must find ingredients – there are no set ingredients, but they should forage around the site for

interesting things to use. Another character can go foraging on their behalf.

The Hedge Witch may attempt all sorts of effects, and there is no set list. Descriptions of the effect should be simple, allowing the target of the effect to interpret them. Poisons can also be created in this way. All potions are either Overt or Covert.

If the Witch is seeking an Overt effect, they should explain the desired effect to the recipient, who will decide how it effects them. A referee is not required.

If they are seeking a Covert effect, they must contact a referee, who will oversee their attempt to - for example - poison a drink, and will inform the victim of the result. The victim will always decide how they are affected. Players must NEVER put anything in other people's food and drink Out of Character (OOC). The referee will set the criteria for a successful attempt.

Overt and Covert effects can be positive or negative – For example, poison might be given overtly, and a potion to calm or cure someone might be given covertly. It is very subjective. All that matters is how they wish to deliver it.

Wild Magician

Wild Magicians have an intuitive grasp of magical energies. These are unpredictable, and often inconsistent, and they take their toll on the magician who uses them, resulting in tiredness, injury, unconsciousness, or a variety of other ailments.

Like all Magicians, they are attuned to magical energies, denoted by UV paint. Players can carry a UV lightsource, or ask a referee for assistance.

When casting Wild Magic on a character, the magician must describe their intended effect In-Character (IC). When Wild Magic is cast on them, the victim always decides the outcome, so the target character will interpret the effect as they see fit. A referee is not required.

Examples include a wide range of enchantments, to calm or enliven emotions, to enhance willpower and vitality, to harm, or to heal. Spells are only limited by what can be expressed In-Character, and how the target interprets that prompt.

The stronger the result, the more the spell will harm the magician who casts it. The more dramatic the victim's roleplay, and the longer

it lasts, the more it hurts the magician. If the magician is already suffering from Combat or previous Wild Magic, then the harm will be even worse. If the magician seeks to cause injury or unconsciousness, or to heal them, the same suffering will be inflicted by the caster, upon themselves.

When casting Wild Magic on anything else (eg. an object, or a room), a referee is required. Casting in this way requires a Coven of several magicians, and the referee will advise on the harm caused to the participants. This is shared between them; large Covens are safer than small ones.

Wild Magic is flexible, but it cannot copy the effects of Formal Magic, and it cannot solve all problems. The referee will decide what is possible, and what is not, before coven casting takes place.

Blighter

Blighters are able to pick locks. Whether they have dexterous fingers, or know how to apply the correct force, they are able to open containers that other characters cannot.

A lock that can be opened by a Blighter will have a paper tag with a Raven seal in black wax. To open the lock, the tag is torn off – the player must roleplay their efforts to get the lock open.

This skill does not work for doors with real locks and keys, and some props may require specific methods of opening – never force a real lock. If there is no paper tag, then the Bliher quality will not work.

Note: In-character documents, handsels and ribboned items (red or gold) are explicitly stealable by all characters, and are provided by Strange LRP. Other in character props can be stolen, but these probably belong to the other players, and must be returned to them, or handed in to a referee.



NEVER steal out-of character possessions, or bags containing them.
NEVER steal mobility aids, such as walking sticks, even if they look in-character.

Physician

Whether gifted with a formal education, experienced in a field hospital, or apprenticed to a backstreet barber, Physicians are knowledgeable in the fields of anatomy, surgery, and other forms of

treatment. Left to nature, the body will heal injuries over weeks or months, or even die. With assistance, it is possible to solve most problems during a weekend.

The most common occurrence is an Unconscious character. Usually, they will be Unconscious for several minutes; if they are also Injured, then they will be dead after that time. With appropriate equipment, a Physician is able to wake a character from their Unconscious state very quickly, but they must not be interrupted while they work. This prevents death, but any injury will remain.

Injury is harder to treat. The process takes longer than the time it would take a patient to die, so the Physician will usually wake them from their Unconscious state, before moving them to a suitable area for surgery or other treatment. In this way, the patient can be treated, rested, and their injury healed, within an hour, but those seeking immediate treatment may need the help of a magician, instead.

Ultimately, the patient will decide on the results of their treatment, but this is collaborative roleplay, so the Physician should advise on likely results, side effects, and complications. Physicians should carry

a doctors bag, or other props that suit their character. Bloodied bandages are a good way to show the wounds and gore of a fight.

Sharpshooter

Sharpshooters are the only characters able to use firearms. While any character may use larp-safe melee weapons, the Sharpshooter Quality represents the possession, use and maintenance of a ranged weapon.

Firearm physreps must be cap-firing replicas. When shooting at another character, it can be useful to “fire an insult”, to indicate the target. This is particularly important when shooting from a distance.



Soldier

Military training, a strong constitution, or force of will, make some characters undaunted by violence and better able to survive. The Soldier Quality allows the player to bend the combat rules – ignoring a hit, staying conscious, or anything else that feels appropriate. This can only be done ONCE PER SCENE – the Soldier must rest for a short time before they can use their ability again.

Influence

Influence is a subtle thing, used over weeks and months, and reflecting the complex web of favours and friendships in a particular sphere of public life.

The spheres of Influence are: Naval, Military, Trade, Social, Political, and Criminal. Each character can only have a single sphere of Influence.

Characters with Influence receive rumours and documents at each event they attend, but their main strength is during downtime, when they can act more effectively within their sphere. Influence is less useful for simple, tangible downtime Ambitions, but immensely useful for open-ended goals.

For example, if seeking a change in law, Political is the most useful, but Social is also relevant, and the other spheres can provide indirect support.

Characters without a sphere can contribute, but their impact will be limited.

Several characters working together are likely to have a larger impact during downtime, whether they share the same sphere of Influence, or each have different spheres.

Wealth

Characters with Wealth are not just rich – they are fabulously rich. The finest things in life are always available to them, and whatever they attempt to do, money always makes things easier for them.

Wealth, however, is not ready money. Credit is extended by merchants, and friends trust one another to pay off gambling debts.



Characters with Wealth do not always have coins or goods to trade, relying on their servants to deal with such things.

Wealth does allow certain options that other characters can only dream of. Trade Deals with organisations and foreign powers can only be signed by characters with Wealth. They are also able to give grants for projects or organisations – A 1,000 grant and a 3,000 grant certificate will be issued each event.

Lastly, each Wealthy character has a main estate, amongst their many holdings. Please specify what and where this is in your background submission.

Income

Income is a common Quality for merchants, widows, and people with generous benefactors. They tend to have access to goods and small amounts of money – enough to live well, and dress well, but nothing more extravagant than that.

Each event, the character will be issued with some goods that they can trade or use. These might be common, or they might be rare. This makes them capable characters in their own right, and essential assistants for wealthier characters who need to get things done.

Appendix B: Archetypes

Certain combinations of Quality and Influence are perhaps iconic or representative of the world during the Revival of English Magic. The examples below are for illustrative purposes only, and players are encouraged to create their own combinations according to their character concepts.

Master Magician

Wild Magician, Formal Magician, Hedge Magician

You are an advanced practitioner of magic and have spent the best years of your life in pursuit of arcane knowledge. You would be relied upon for your extensive wisdom regarding matters of magic, fate, enchantment and fairies, but unfortunately your treatises and manuals are so complicated and esoteric as to be nigh-on unreadable.

Obsessive Hobbyist

Income, Wealth, Formal Magician

You might once have been considered a wastrel, foolishly squandering your family fortune on travel and hedonistic pursuits. Once you acquired your first book of magic, however, you became quite the antiquarian and have since then pursued only knowledge. Unfortunately, you have been unable to discover much more than

the rudimentary basics of magic, but you have recently deciphered an actual spell from one of your many books and yearn to try it out!

War Hero

Soldier, Sharpshooter, Influence: Politics

You were an officer in the British army and led men against Napoleon during the great battle of Waterloo. Your injury, however, prevented you from remaining in service to King and Country and you returned home to pursue a career in politics. You are a rising star in parliament, but you have not yet made your fortune.

Magical Savant

Wild Magician, Physician, Hedge Witch

You were raised in a rural area, and employed as a nanny/groundskeeper in a prestigious household. Despite your wilful nature, the lady of the house was quite taken with you particularly when you were able to use your knowledge of local plants to help her children when they sickened. The odd things that have always occurred around you climaxed when, in full view of all concerned, you managed to turn a dog threatening the children into a mouse! The lady of the house felt you were best sent to one of the magical factions cropping up around England to help you understand your strange abilities.

Thief of Secrets

Blighter, Formal Magician, Influence: Criminal

You've made enemies. It's a shame that some of those enemies include the people you stole those books of magic from! Magic is just the ticket to that big score you've craved your whole life, you just need more Spells to make future jobs that much easier. Good job you're a dab hand at "acquiring" documents.

Wealthy Dandy

Wealth, Income, Influence: Trade

Your vast wealth allows you the time to indulge in the most exquisite pleasures that can be dreamt of, and your tastes have ranged from the sublimely simple to the most decadent extreme. However, you are jaded and bored, have a reputation as a cad and keep your distance from scandal by being able to buy out any blackmailer. Your wealth is inherited, however your family have made shrewd business decisions and you therefore have a large stake in trade around the world.

Foreign Spy

Blighter, Income, Influence: (any)

Utterly loyal to your homeland, you have ingratiated yourself into the upper echelons of English society for the purpose of seeking out appropriate individuals to blackmail and discover secrets

(particularly the secrets of English magic). If you are ever discovered, it will likely spell your death.

Appendix C: Affiliation

There are many societies, factions and organisations in the world. The most popular magical affiliations are listed below. Players may specify their own Affiliation, but are best to do so in collaboration with other players; a society with one member will get less plot support than a larger organisation.

The Association of Practical Magicians is well-funded, yet known for its lack of rigour in assessing its applicants' credentials, essentially accepting anyone who can perform true magic or enlighten its members as to some new spell or magical truth. Professing to be 'Strangeites', its members are considered by some to be rather daring, and by others to be irresponsible in the extreme.

The Learned Society of English Magic have a reputation for being stuffy bookworms, bores, and obsessed with knowledge, and this is quite true. Strident Norrellites, they campaign for the regulation of magic, and are presently lobbying Parliament for licensing laws to prevent the misuse of magical arts. They abhor using magic without

good reason and their slogan may as well be ‘measure twice, cast once’.

The Sisters of the World’s Song is the most mysterious of the wellknown societies; rumour and speculation abounds as to their scandalous practices, and the society does not officially exist. Sisters do not generally admit to their membership, and they meet, study and perform magic in secret. As yet, they have not declared favour for the ways of either Strange or Norrell. While not considered to be ‘scandalous’ per se, the study of magic by women is considered by some to be unseemly.

In addition to these magical societies, there are various Royalist, Revolutionary, Magical, and Religious affiliations across the world. The members of these diverse organisations tend to band together according to their beliefs – revolution spreads like a fire, and uprisings in one country can cause problems in others.

Appendix D: An Outline of 1822

The January of 1822 is a cold one. Farmers are rarely out in their fields, seeking the solace of their fireplaces, instead. The streets are quiet, cloaked in the blanket of snow that covers all England. So

there are few people abroad, at dawn and dusk, when curious footprints appear in the snow, soon to be covered by the storm. Inclement weather might halt the English, but it barely matters to Fairies. Emboldened by recent events, they have been embraced and exalted by mortal magicians, though others might despise them. As the doorways to the Other Lands grow wider, the intrigues of the Faerie courts spill into the human realm.

Children are stolen from secluded hamlets, and their parents slain. The bridle paths lead nowhere, if the traveller is lucky, and everywhere, if they are not. When spring comes, maimed corpses of men and women are found, but of the children, there is no sign. In each county, some creature or local bandit is blamed, and the government claims that further speculation is paranoia, plain and simple.

Spring also brings a flurry of activity amongst magicians. Letters from Hawkesworth Manor proclaim that all is well there, and invite the luminaries of English magic to return to Monmouthshire in October. Hopefully, under more civilised circumstances.

In the meantime, much will happen. Rumours abound of the formation of a Society for Feminine Magic. Naturally, everyone has

opinions, most of all the existing magical affiliations, which have their own ideas of how such an organisation should be run, and by whom.

In the sculleries and back-alleys, the talk is of a different sort. It is said that a pauper queen has risen, to reclaim the North, but some say that a child king is coming to England, to do the same. Still others declare that one magician or another seeks to control the Houses of Parliament. With little evidence to call on, debates rage, but they are of the most scurrilous and vacuous manner. The better educated suggest that it is simply a time of pretenders, like the early 1500's., when there were many magicians, looking for a leader to inspire them.

Appendix E: Recent Events, 1823

The weather is grim, across the British Isles. On Sunday, October the 14th, at a quarter past three in the afternoon, the clouds diminish, and the low winter sun illuminates the land. There is a not a man, woman or child who will not swear to have seen the Crucifix shining within it, though many of them are surely liars; it shone for a brief moment, just the blink of an eye.

It was considered to be an omen of good fortune for England. A sure sign of a gentle winter to come. And yet the winter was even colder than the last. News traveled slowly, and there was little to be said of it. Parliament were promising an Act to regulate English magic, but the common folk were not scared of English magicians. They were scared of fairies.

As well they should be; the Pale Queen had declared war on England, but it was met with consternation by the government. The magicians at Hawkesworth Manor were the first to learn of it, but most of them traveled rather slowly. One, calling himself Tom Bedlam, arrived very quickly indeed, appearing from a mirror in the Palace of Westminster on the morning of Monday, October the 15th. His appearance was not welcome, and talk of fairy diplomacy was not taken seriously. There were some who nodded their heads, and perceived a gravitas amid Tom's ramblings, but the rest showed disdain, and Tom was promptly imprisoned.

Several days later, on the Friday, a herald of the Pale Queen arrived, causing panic in the streets. The thing, perhaps eight feet tall, dragged itself out of a well in Blackfriars, and proceeded towards St. James's Palace, where the King was holding an audience. Glamouring the guards, and terrifying the populace, it made it's way into the

chamber, and issued a formal declaration, including a *casus belli* involving the area of Blackfriars, from whence the creature emerged. It then returned to the well, after warning that none should come near it, or enter the boundaries of Blackfriars.

Tom Bedlam was soon released from his cell, and brought before the Cabinet. What had seemed like the rambling of a madman was revealed to be enlightened information. Though it was now taken seriously, the government were unsure how to proceed. They did not know what it meant, to be at war with a fairy monarch, or how they were supposed to respond. They could hardly declare the aggression to the rest of Europe "beset by fairies; the English are delirious".

Aside from Blackfriars, which was soon devoid of inhabitants, little else happened for the rest of 1822, except for the snow. If the winter of 1821 was bitter, this was simply suffocating. The air was still, and though the snow was gentle, it was constant. A thick blanket covered the land, and the rivers froze solid. Deaths occurred in great number, entirely due to the temperature, but there was no repeat of the murders and kidnappings of the previous year. There was no sign of fairies at all.

Until January, when the first footprints were seen. Scouts. In numerous counties, particularly in the south and in the Midlands (though neither Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire were affected), the drums of war were heard, as fairy armies appeared from the mists. Or rather, several large hosts, scattered across the country, each flying their own banners. Of the Queen herself, there was no sign; whatever happened in England, her wars in Faerie were numerous. Whenever, by misfortune, a town was found upon the main road (and particularly when there was a garrison nearby), it would be subjected to violence and enchantment, in equal measure. Always, they would be gone by daybreak, their destination clear: London.

At this point, the government were forced to act. The yeomanry were called up in every county, but the fairies routed them in short order. The army was mobilised - the standing army being small, but well equipped. It should be remembered that the fairies had not fought a war on Earth for centuries, and while the yeomanry were easy prey, the army was far advanced from the days of longbowmen, and knights on horseback. Pistols and rifles did not pose any particular threat to the fairies (except for Redcaps, of course, who died as they lived - by violence), but cannon were doubly effective - the fairies went into terrified confusion whenever they encountered them, and while they developed their composure over time, it

remained inarguable that a ball of mundane iron, travelling at 100 yards per second, was enough to make any fairy explode into smithereens.

Against this backdrop, the Bedlamite rebellion seemed inconsequential. In Derbyshire, the weather was damp, and so was the gunpowder. The rebels showed no appetite for conflict, and yet the army made no progress. A garrison was left in Belper, and the rest withdrew to the south, led by Captain Sowerby and the 'Fae 66', the latter being equipped with cold iron shot. Their successes as they traveled to London are a matter of public record. For the Bedlamites, respite had been granted. They would have another year to prepare, perhaps longer.

Aside from that county, the Pale Queen's war had a unifying effect on England. Resentments were put aside, and disputes forgotten. Many of the magicians would grant support to one side or the other, but others left the British Isles entirely, to the German Confederation, to the United States of America, and to India, each with their own schemes and ambitions. A handful would leave the borders of Earth entirely, and on a mission of utmost secrecy.