

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow

Gossamer Worlds: INK



by Matt Banach





Rite Publishing Presents:

Gossamer Worlds: INK

Explorer (Author): Matt Banach

Seeker (Editor): Steven D. Russell

Searcher (Cover Artist): Bion

Trailblazer (Interior Artists): Bion, Camus Altamirano,
Sara Contreras, Tarakanovich, Marek Rakuč,
Kevin Yancey

Pioneer (Trade Dress): James “Devin Knight” Hazelett

Lost Boy (Layout and Publisher): Steven D. Russell

Special Thanks to Jason Durall for his help in developing this.

Based on Lords of Gossamer & Shadow by Jason Durall

Gossamer Worlds: INK Copyright © 2015 Steven D. Russell All rights reserved. Lords of Gossamer and Shadow Copyright © 2012-2013 Steven D. Russell All rights reserved. Erick Wujcik's Diceless Role-Playing and associated marks and logos are trademarks of Diceless by Design Publishing, LLC, and are used under license. See http://Rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product_info.php?products_id=1447 for more information on Erick Wujcik's Diceless Role-Playing. Some Illustrations excluding, banners, and traddress are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 License. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/>

INK

“The catacombs splattered out from the central cavern in a blot of dead-end hollows and shallow alcoves, but in time one of the myriad alcoves led to a featureless tunnel boring straight on into darkness. Before long I came upon a Door that seemed unreal – an off-kilter rectangle of thick black lines scrawled on the dirty wall like graffiti on the very fabric of reality. It was bloody red and too bloody red at the same time. The knob was a perfect sphere of imperfect white. It belonged where it was, but it made me feel like I didn't. I opened the Door and screamed a torrent of scribble-filled word-bubbles as everything went flat and an entire dimension compressed itself out of me.”

- Yaeger's Travelogue

Description

INK is a two-dimensional gossamer world populated with illustrated life – an entire reality filled with sentient scribbles, conscious cartoons, and proud portrait civilizations, all imported from across the multiverse and given room to roam on INK's blank white sheets. This importing is the work of the mysterious Annunaki, those strange glowing diagram-beings who pop up and exert the will of the Eidolon all up and down the Grand Stair. The Annunaki have been using INK for eons as a repository, habitat, and preserve for two-dimensional life – in other words, a big zoo. Whether this zoo's purpose is

scientific research, recreational collecting, or religious obsession is a topic ripe for speculation. It seems the Annunaki have perfected a technique to 'scan' two-dimensional works in other worlds and then 'print' (or 'draw', or 'paint') those images directly onto the infinite sheets of white space which are the basic fabric of INK's gossamer reality. It is important to note that the flat, blank whiteness of INK isn't a sterile void – it's raw reality, pregnant with infinite potential, and it *wants* to be alive. These features make INK the equivalent of a multiversal doodle-book, not only recording illustrated material from a myriad of far-flung worlds and alien cultures... but also imbuing those drawings with a strange life of their own.

INK is segmented into an untold number of distinct but inter-related sheets – geometrically flat planes of existence with height and width but zero thickness. The majority of these sheets are rectangular planes ranging in size from a single room to the breadth of a small country, but at the extremes some are as small as microdots and others as large as galaxies. Some of the more esoteric sheets are far stranger; I've heard of steeply-slanted triangle-cells, curly-edged fractal-cities, and even planes of insanity scrawled on impossibly-irregular polygons. They're all flat, though. Because the archetypal sheet is white and rectangular, it is easy to think of these planes as pages of paper – I do. These planes lay either next to each other along



a single dimension, end to end, or on top of one another in a theoretically infinite stack of infinitely-thin sheets. So, while nothing has a thickness per se, it is possible to delve “deeper” in a conceptual sense by traversing up and down the dimensional stack through holes, doors, and gaps... so if you thought that navigating a two-dimensional world might be as simple as up-down-left-right, think again.

Describing how the translation of movement and space work in two-dimensional reality is tricky, especially since many of INK's denizens and objects are drawings of things from three-

dimensional gossamer realities, and viewers like us (I presume) are from three-dimensional realities ourselves. The practicalities of space and perspective are different from region to region; some sheets are drawn with a realistic sense of three-dimensional perspective, giving the illusion of three-dimensional movement and interaction, but others strictly minimalist side-scrolling nightmares where you have to go over or under everything, or blow it up in order to go through. Most speech comes out as balloon-like word bubbles, which is trippy, and can really mess with the use of sorcery and other abilities if you've never practiced your arts that way before. You



just have to get used to it, go with the flow, and try not to think too hard about what you're perceiving, otherwise you'll break your brain.

The Rendering is the reality-twisting process of translating three-dimensional beings into their two-dimensional “illustrated” equivalents, occurring whenever a being enters INK, and re-occurring whenever a visitor travels from one sheet of INK to another sheet of a different artistic “style” – e.g., from black-line sketches to full-color paintings, from side-viewed portraiture to top-down cartography, or from dot-printed cartoon to cut-out watercolor collage. I can tell you, it feels super duper weird. A

Gossamer Lord entering INK for the first time can expect the experience to be painful, disorienting, and if you're not physically or mystically strong enough to keep moving as you adapt, you might just freeze in place... trapped in still life forever.

Half-Drawn Horror

Gossamer Lords and Ladies are presumed to have enough psychic tenacity and physical hardiness to endure the rendering without incident... most of the time. However, in situations of great stress, such as undergoing the rendering while injured, attacked, or cursed, the rendering sometimes goes wrong, leaving a person half-drawn – a smeared, motley patchwork of off-color flesh and bad rotoscoping. Being half-drawn is painful and exceedingly dangerous, as it puts a body out of synch with the illustrated world around them, subject to potentially lethal contradictions in reality. A half-drawn person might find themselves impaled on the pointy caps of the unyielding waves when jumping into a cartoon ocean, or get their head smashed between two colliding word-bubbles. This traumatic condition can be remedied by leaving INK, resting, and eventually re-entering, but repeated rendering mishaps can lead to permanent damage. There are tales of pour souls who hastily left INK half-drawn... and remained that way. Moreover, the Drafters consider the half-drawn to be abominations, and will appear before long to erase the mistake.

Typical Denizens

Sketches are the most prevalent type of denizen you will find filling INK's pages – an insanely broad and diverse category of cartoon persons and line-drawn beasts copied from the comics, illustrations, and imagery of an infinitude of cultures from all up and down the Grand Stair. On a single cosmopolitan street in Panelopolis, for example, you could encounter a pair of talking finches pulled from one of Darwin's meticulous expeditionary sketchbooks, a chatty gaggle of grotesque boardwalk-style celebrity caricatures, and an entire army of happy little cartoon toasters. You'll find plenty of bold comic book heroes, wide-eyed manga-boys, and no shortage of storybook characters. There are also the stranger, “alien” works, like the sentient diagrams of summoning circles copied from the glass scrolls of Rigel IX, or the arcane tarot of another universe's fictional zodiac. Whether they're an illustration of a person, animal, or anthropomorphic object, what makes a sketch a sketch is the level of “realism”, or lack thereof, in its rendering. Sketches which are “too” realistic might be shunned by their peers as pretentious Portraits, and sloppy works which lack detail could be referred to derogatorily as Scribbles – all social judgments borne out by the denizens of INK themselves. To us, they're all just forms of illustrated life along a continuum... right?

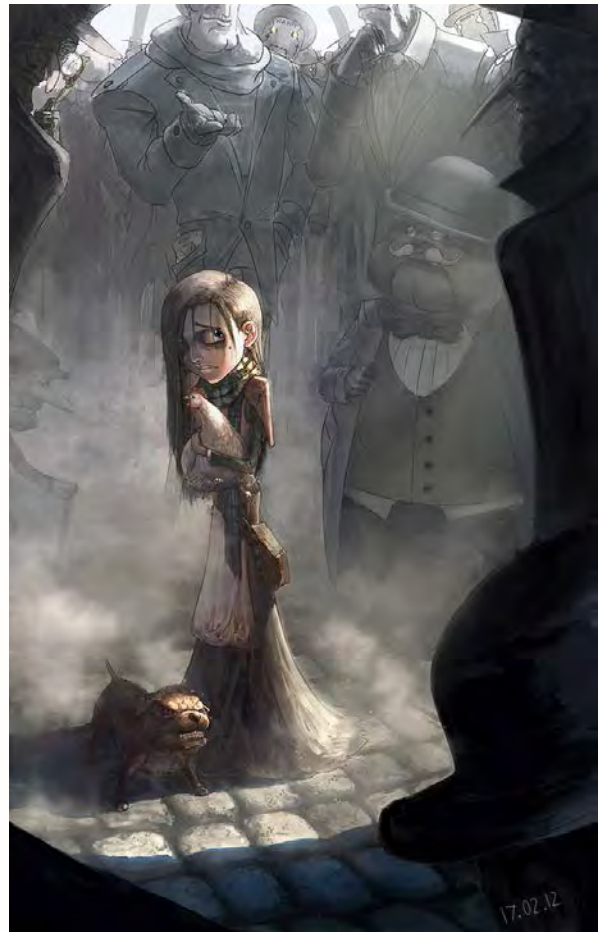
Portraits are the social and intellectual elite of INK – a rarified strata of illustrated



life comprised of only the most detailed works. Talking to a portrait isn't the same as talking to the *subject* of the portrait, because the process by which the Drafters scan and reprint two-dimensional content gathered from across the multiverse doesn't *also* glean the memories of that subject's life experiences. You might encounter a portrait that bears an uncanny resemblance to somebody you think you know, but it won't be them, even if the portrait insists otherwise. There are rumors of exceptions to the rule, but I've never confirmed that frightening proposition. Most portraits, whether they're depictions of fictional subjects or historical ones, make up grandiose titles and elaborate backstories based upon how

they appear and what they wear. There's the stern and blustery August Council of Lords Chamberlain, filled with dusty deans, steely CEOs, and grumpy governors who gather to debate serious business they know nothing about. There's the heavily-guarded Gallery of the Unseen Pantheon – a sheet filled with depictions of gods whose depiction is explicitly forbidden on their home worlds. My personal favorite is the entire legion of Dorian Gray knock-offs, each one a different age and temperament, all locked in a bizarre fratricidal (suicidal?) quest to ritually consume all other Grays until there shall be only one.

Scribbles are the downtrodden yet dangerous underclass of INK – the stick figures, the malformed aliens that look like cacti, the whorls of messy spirals obscuring something never meant to be seen. Derided as half-drawn freaks and shunned by most other denizens, scribbles look simple but can have deep and complex emotions. Consider the stick-figure man, wrought from a mere half-dozen uneven lines – from his primitive and limited perspective, how incomprehensibly grand is a rendering of a house; or, conversely, how terrifying is the sight of a “real” face's subtle curves? Scribbles prefer to hunt and forage in the mostly-blank regions of INK, harvesting dots and spearing the occasional plump circle, though some inhabit the corners and niches of densely-populated areas like scuttling urchins (or vermin). Eerily common are the Thazyu Mummies – shambling, spider-handed figures intent



on carrying out mistranslated echoes of maternal instinct, mumbling creepy rhymes about snuggly-hugs but more likely than not to rip your arm off and eat it in a burst of feral shrieking.

Threats

Drafters are the illustrators of this illustrated world – a special type of Annunaki who have mastered the nuances of INK's peculiar gossamer reality to devastating effect. Drafters appear and disappear at whim, printing beings, objects, and structures into existence with laser-thin rays of icy blue light. Despite what the name might imply, I don't think



the Drafters are artistic creators – I think they've traveled the multiverse scanning images from trillions of hand-drawn manuscripts or printed pages, and upon return to INK they print what they've collected onto the local fabric of gossamer reality. All Annunaki are terribly dangerous, but Drafters are especially so, particularly in this gossamer reality. Drafters can “summon” an infinite variety of minions and hazards by drawing them around you, add a gaping chest wound to your torso with a few quick lines, or simply vanish you by slicing open the reality beneath your feet and trapping you in a doorless sheet of blank white space. So long as visitors don't disrupt the status quo of INK too much, the Drafters seem to consider lesser beings beneath their notice, but you never know where they'll –

Drafters are advanced Annunaki exploiting the unique rules of INK, and have the following qualities:

Integral to a Power (Eidolon) [4 Points]
Immense Vitality [4 Points]
Double Speed [2 Points]
Teleportation [10 Points]
Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
Combat Mastery [4 Points]
Destructive Damage [8 Points] – *editing off foes' limbs, drawing horrific wounds into their being, or simply deleting them*
Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]
Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]
Psychic Barrier [4 Points]
Search Through Worlds [4 Points]
Mold Gossamer Reality [4 Points] – *capable of drawing nearly any creature, hazard, or environment into being*
Self Healing [1 Point]

If encountered outside of the gossamer reality of INK, a Drafter is limited to the lesser qualities of a “standard” Annunaki, plus Teleportation.

pardon the pun – *draw the line*. If you suspect that you might've smudged one of their favorite works, flee the realm immediately and may the Stair help you.

Erasers are a particular form of the reality-eradicating Erebi unique to this gossamer world. They're still rampaging monsters of pure Shadow, but here they tend to appear as howling voids of blank space. In areas of INK where pure white is the background color, Erasers can be damn near invisible until they're right up

on you and the foreground starts dissolving. Erasers also seem to be able to move through INK along dimensions inaccessible to everything else, boring through sheets like a lit cigarette burning holes in newspaper. Once upon a time these terrors were rare, but recently the rates of sightings and attacks have skyrocketed. I don't know if it is possible for Annunaki to get worried, but rumor is the Drafters are on the ropes trying to contain the menace. That can't be good.

Major Maim is a comic book supervillain turned existential nihilist and all-around pissed-off guy. He's got super strength, super toughness, and a super bad attitude. In his origin story the Major was a stock comic caricature of Panelopolis, instinctively filling his role as an over-the-top foil, but during a climactic battle with his do-gooder nemesis Stu Straightedge the two supers punched a literal hole in the fabric of INK's reality, cracking open a Door. Oops. While the loose Door was swiftly sealed by the Drafters, Major Maim was forever changed by what he saw. He hasn't gone crazy, he's just gone sane in a very dangerous way. Convinced that the gaudy world around him is a meaningless sham and that invisible puppet-masters are pulling everyone's strings, Major Maim is intent on breaking out of this newly-perceived prison and taking the fight to powers that be. He's on the scent of the Drafters but hasn't had any luck in cornering one of them for questioning – *yet*. While this might seem noble in the abstract, Major Maim tends to use his



existential quest of revelation and liberation as an excuse to inflict brutal violence on anything he perceives as part of the grand conspiracy. I have learned through personal experience that this includes well-meaning Gossamer Lords, and while *normally* I'm happy to educate newly-awakened beings on the mysteries of the Grand Stair, there's only so much super-strong face-punching a guy can take in the name of sharing the wisdom. Complicating matters further, the Umbra has chosen Maim as a champion, steadily influencing his activities and increasing his power level with every passing day. Eventually Major Maim *will* break through the borders of this carefully-curated world of pages and print, and when he starts stomping up and down the Grand Stair... we're going to have a problem.

Major Maim is a terrible toon with the following qualities:

Stupendous Vitality [8 Points] – *the angrier he gets, the stronger he gets, and Major Maim is always very angry*

Engine Speed [4 Points]

Tireless Stamina [4 Points]

Combat Mastery [4 Points]

Deadly Damage [4 Points]

Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points]

Psychic Resistance [1 Point]

Psychic Sensitivity [1 Point]

Pass Through Door [1 Point] – *Major Maim has not yet embarked upon the Grand Stair, but in theory he could.*

Rapid Healing [2 Points]

Alternate Form [1 Point] – *alter ego Melvin Milquetoast, a struggling cartoonist with a limp and a stutter.*

Granted additional power by the Umbra, Major Maim can use the abilities of *Weakening Reality*, *Warping Reality*, and *Destabilizing Reality* as if he possessed the Power of Umbra Mastery. The Major believes these abilities are innate super powers – extensions of his trademark “Raze Gaze” eye-beams. Use of these powers comes at a psychological cost, triggering hallucinations and bouts of amnesia which serve to direct him toward targets of the Umbra's choosing.

Notable Locations

The Scroll Kingdoms are a wide tableau of sheets containing illustrations from what might be considered “ancient”



scrolls, tomes, and manuscripts from a variety of gossamer worlds – some Earth-like, many not. There are gorgeous black and white vistas of INK-brushed mountains, intricate illuminations of the wars of antiquity, and dark woodcut printings of arching devils and apocalyptic doom. One desert-like sheet the color of dusty papyrus holds innumerable cartouche-tombs of alien pharaohs, each one simply-carved in appearance yet containing slumbering lords of terrible power. Separating most of these country-like kingdoms are the sepia-tone seas and relief-drawn ranges of Greater Cartographia, a vast top-down expanse of maps and charts both historical and fanciful, where entire continents and imagined coastlines sprawl beneath your feet and the admonition 'Here There Be Dragons'

should be well-heeded. The myriad domains of the Scroll Kingdoms are usually locked in perpetual repetition of the scenes they depict, so while you can visit an individual kingdom and interact with its inhabitants for a span, eventually the kingdom's internal clock will reset and nobody is likely to remember the odd stranger who once came to visit. From my perspective this is undoubtedly a good thing, otherwise I would have a few more cuckolded kings and disapproving dragons to add to my ever-growing multiversal list of entirely-undeserved enemies. The dark heart of the Scroll Kingdoms is a single incredibly tall sheet called the Tar'y'goth Tapestry – seven hundred and seventy-seven vertical layers of depictions of ancient cthonic gods and sordid hell-raising ritual, each panel depicting the historical roots of all infinity's descent into madness. Creepy.

Panelopolis is a mega-city built of stacks upon stacks of comic books, and it is every bit as weird and awesome as that sounds. Thousands upon thousands of sheets the size of skyscrapers line up side by side, each one presenting millions upon millions of smaller panels depicting the adventures and tribulations of dashing heroes and cackling villains. It's a dense place, chock full of bustling, bizarre neighborhoods. Big Little Mangatown is a tightly-packed inner-city neighborhood of small black and white panels filled with daily-life moments, wide-eyed schoolgirls, and an unsavory underworld of demons and tentacle-monsters lurking in the dark alleys of the back-pages.

Wreathing the outskirts of Panelopolis are the Funnypaper Farms – sprawling suburbs of cartoons ranging in theme from genial domestic humor to the mind-bending symbolic philosophy of Hel'Urth-1603 (not my favorite reading for a Sunday morning, but popular enough in other sections of the Stair to warrant its own bustling burg). Supermhattan is the vibrantly-colored central-most neighborhood of skyscrapers and fortresses-of-solitude, where 'BOOM' and 'KAPOW' light up the towering skyline like billboards and nobody seems to wear pants the right way. Supermhattan is the stomping ground of the ultra-dangerous Major Maim, who rains down beatings from his habitual perch – the rooftop panel of *The Weekly Wonder* building.

The Weekly Wonder is the towering central “newspaper” building of Panelopolis, publishing meta-aware captions which report the current events of Panelopolis as well as frighteningly-detailed historical footnotes and annoying advertisements. These quirky little reality-sidebars can pop up anywhere at any time, usually accompanied by the disembodied voice of an interjecting narrator. Sometimes these captions provide benign exposition or useless trivia – like an obvious statement about exactly what you're doing as you're doing it, or the specific time Major Maim last battled the Lightbox League – but sometimes the sidebar will, eerily, tell you *exactly* what you need to know.



The Scrawl is the outback of INK – a vast array of very large, mostly-blank sheets populated by predatory packs of scribbles and odd nomadic doodles. While other regions of INK are well-organized, even tidy in their boxy layout and appearance, the Scrawl is far less regimented, tending to show the influence of the Umbra in its spare, shifting terrain and oft-mutating denizens. Tribes of cave-painted stick figures hunt ochre wildebeests between strata of thin blue lines, and rough sketches haunt the wastes like half-formed ghosts. There are hazards – spiraling maze-doodles that choke the terrain like aggressive kudzu, fields of razor-sharp pentagram-stars, and splattery blots of color so pure that

they'll swallow you up as surely as a gravitational singularity. Sequestered out in the most remote expanses are hidden outposts of arcane sophistication – INK-black obelisks of alien architectural schematics, still-image prisons of intergalactic war criminals long captured, and one edenic enclave of illicitly-copied Wrighting icons where you might be shocked to see a familiar face or two. My favorite sight in the Scrawl is the super-massive flock of fluttering hearts which roves the outback like a plague-level swarm of adorable locusts; each one of the millions of hearts has its own unique soul – a translation of an echo of the melding between the pining hand which drew it and the distant love which inspired it.

Somewhere in that swarm I wonder if there's a copy of a little heart drawn for me, once upon a time, by a heartbroken hand long lost.

Final Thoughts

INK is a strange place... one that reminds me that the multiverse is not necessarily built for us – we're just accustomed to moving around in the parts where we fit. There are other places very different from and just as real as the three-dimensional halls and solid floors we traverse, yet separated from our

understanding by daunting gulfs of perspective. Also, INK makes me wonder about the phenomenon of life, and the forms it takes; if a two-dimensional doodle on a scrap of paper can, in this gossamer world, achieve substance enough to seize life for itself, then what does that say about us? Are we all just simplified copies of fifth-dimensional beings? Would we ever know if we were? But most of all, I appreciate INK for its incalculable oddity, for after all – isn't that what exploration is all about?

~ Yaeger Zane

INK Domain Table

Technology Level:	Varies
Magic Level:	Magic is Known and Believed
Security:	None
Type:	Common Ground [2 Points] (current owners: the Annunaki; other Gossamer Lords may hold minor personal domains)
Control:	Control of Time Flow [2 Points]
Influence on the Powers:	Eidolon – Powerful Umbra – Average Wrighting – Easily Used
Special:	<i>The Pen Is Mightier</i> – Art is power. Drawing utensils which have been imbued with some sort of Power have the ability to mold gossamer reality in INK. Characters wielding such implements have the ability to mold INK's reality by drawing new things or making alterations to existing works. A character could bore a hole through a mountain by drawing a tunnel opening, alter a creature's mood by drawing a smile on its face, or even summon a thunderstorm by drawing a bunch of clouds and raindrops. Such mystical drawing implements occur in roughly three tiers of power, and depending on their strength may grant the equivalent of the qualities Mold Gossamer Matter [1 Point], Mold Gossamer Creatures [2 Points], or Mold Gossamer Reality [4 Points].

How to Use INK

- INK is a spectacularly strange gossamer world, fundamentally changing the ground rules of what we take for granted as “reality”. It is one of many. Use INK as a reminder that the infinity of existence is much more than just spherical dirt-balls and boring cubicles for men of meat. Forget what you think you know.
- As an optional rule, any use of the '*The Pen Is Mightier*' special ability mentioned above should require the *player* to draw, sketch, or doodle whatever it is that their character is attempting to draw into being. Effort and enthusiasm are much more important than actual artistic merit, so don't judge harshly, however particularly inspired artwork may be rewarded with advantages or Good Stuff. Alternative mediums are also acceptable, depending on the realm they're in; a player might compose a collage of a chimerical monster out of magazine clippings, or present an ephemeral watercolor representing an emotion spell.
- Plots thicken as *The Weekly Wonder's* captions begin popping up with disturbing, disruptive, and downright seditious messages. Xenophobic propaganda promotes aggressive expansion of Panelopolis' borders. Revelations of past betrayals pit comic book heroes against each other. Screeds against the world's hidden puppetmasters incite rebellion against the Drafters. War is brewing – but to what end, and by whose design? Is this Major Maim's doing, or is he just another pawn? Perhaps the mysterious meta-intelligence behind *The Weekly Wonder* has become corrupted – or liberated – by the Umbra. Even the indecipherable Annunaki seem worried that all of INK might catch fire and burn.
- There's a theory that the overall shape of INK's gossamer reality is a super-colossal möbius strip – a non-orientable two-dimensional manifold that seems perfectly flat to its internal inhabitants yet, in totality, is something oddly twisted. The characters are tasked with testing this heretical hypothesis by finding the edge of INK (where it falls off precipitously into the abyss of Shadow), and then tracing that edge all the way around until they reach their starting point. It's a trip the length of a universe, but some wild-eyed mathematicians say it's possible.
- The Lenses of Cervani are legendary artifacts which appear to be a pair of red and blue “3D glasses” (though no resident of INK is likely to know them by such a description). The Lenses allow the wearer to see through into sheets which are “above” or “below” their current position in the potentially-infinite layered stacks of two-dimensional planes which make up INK's reality. While incredibly handy for navigating this world, the local denizens consider the Lenses cursed because they tend to drive any wearer insane with a maddening overload of information; any being with a Psyche score of 25 or more is strong enough to use them safely.

- Conceptualizing space and movement in a two-dimensional reality is an intriguing challenge, but it means you can create “terrain” for this world out of flat stuff! Lay down pieces of paper to model the planes of INK you're exploring; include blank white sheets, pages of your own drawings, and illustrations of any type of landscape, backdrop, or location. Entire books are fair game, too. Use the physical arrangement of the papers as a planar model – when two pages are next to each other, characters can cross from one plane to the next by crossing a border; when one page is on top of another, characters must find a hole, door, or other way to transfer from one layer to the one above or below them, and so on. INK is vast, with an untold numbers of layers – so a layout of a region of INK could be a room-covering sprawl of notebooks, oceans of loose leaf scrawlings, and deep stacks of gorgeous coffee table books. Spread out and dive in!

