

L.U.C.I.D.

A role playing game about entering someone's Dreams and stealing their thoughts.

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The Setup

In this game, you play highly illegal con men who steal information from unsuspecting people while they, and you, sleep. Using a small hand held unit called a L.U.C.I.D. (Lucid while UnConscious Interrelating Dream) device and specially made chemicals, you and your teammates will sedate The Mark without his knowledge and enter his subconscious. The Architect will create up to three layers of Dreams that the team will have control over in every way except for the people who populate it. The Mark will believe that The Dream is his own unless he is convinced otherwise and will generally not understand that he is even Dreaming. As The Dream becomes less and less stable, the team will have to work together to figure out what motivates The Mark. The players will then use that motivation against him to convince him to give them what they want - without him knowing what they are doing.

Not counting The Mark or the team, there are two kinds of people who populate The Dream: Normal Projections and Agents. The Normal Projections are part of The Mark's subconscious and may be interacted with to gain insights about him, his personality, or his past. For example, if the team questions an ex-girlfriend projection, they might find something out about The Mark's past or sexuality; however, keep in mind that all information will be from The Mark's point of view. The more specific the character of the Normal Projection is, the more specific the information that might be gained. A waiter at a diner in The Dream might bemoan his life choices and lack of education, indicating The Mark thinks highly of his own education, whereas an encounter with a mean and bossy parent might point to deeper issues. These projections will become increasingly hostile as The Dream destabilizes, to the point of hunting down and 'killing' the outsiders in a subconscious effort to protect The Mark.

Agents are projections of a 'militarized' subconscious, indicating The Mark has had specialized training to combat the types of incursions that your team is conducting. These Agents start out unaware of the team and, like any good bodyguards, will blend into the background until needed. The Mark is usually unaware of their purpose in the Dream and they act independent of him. As The Mark feels threatened and either suspects the Dream is not his own or becomes generally agitated, these Agents begin to disrupt the plans of the team. Killing the Normal Projections and Agents in no way hurts The Mark nor does it erase anything from his mind.

Since the team defines the world of The Dream (via The Architect), they can do anything they want within it. They can create endless roads that lead nowhere, M.C. Escher-like landscapes, impossible objects such as a Penrose Stairs and The Devil's Tuning Fork. Individual objects can be created or Dreamed by any team member, from guns to airplanes. The more out-of-character the objects are in relation to the reality of The Dream, the more destabilized The Dream becomes when they are used. An example of this would be using a particle beam cannon on a tank in a Dream that is set during World War II. Only The Architect can change the world of The Dream on the fly, but anyone can Dream objects. This means that

the team must work within the world The Architect defines for them. For example, only The Architect can create the roads, but the rest of the team can create cars to drive on them.

The information the team is looking for can be extracted in a variety of ways but it all boils down to one truth: The Mark has the information and he must give it willingly. It cannot be ripped from him. Taking the information will result in it being jumbled and useless while potentially waking The Mark. The team must earn their target's trust. This is achieved by finding out some issue in his life and helping him work through it while relating what they are trying to get out of him to the issue or the solution in some way. Many times the goal of the mission will be to obtain a security code or safe combination, get a formula for an unreleased drug, the names and locations of particular persons of interest, anything The Mark may know and the people hiring the team want.

A Dream of a Heist

I. Pulls

L.U.C.I.D uses a diceless system involving any block tower stacking game such as Jenga or Ta-Ka-Radi. This tower represents The Dream and its stability. The players make pulls from the tower when they do something that upsets The Mark and his subconscious defenders or alters the reality of The Dream. The GM asks the players to make pulls of between one and three blocks depending on the severity of what it is they are trying to do. As the players do more and more pulls, The Dream becomes unstable; The Normal Projections will grow increasingly hostile, going from rude to actively hunting down and 'killing' the team. The Normal Projections will tend to lash out at random, whereas The Agents will be reacting to specific threats to The Mark; their level of hostility will increase as the stability of The Dream decreases. Agents tend to respond with equivalent force - this means that if the team isn't pulling out guns and killing people, the agents will not tend to do so either unless The Dream is getting very unstable or the team has been operating unchallenged for too long.

A pull is not necessarily a combat or skill check; it is a representation of player action having an impact on The Dream outside of what The Mark expects from The Dream. An example of this would be killing the high school principal at a class reunion because he would not let a teammate perform a task. A pull was requested not to hit or kill the projection of the principal but merely because he was killed in a setting and situation where he would normally be relatively safe. The Mark does not automatically know the principal in this example has been killed unless he witnessed it, but he would feel a growing sense of unease as this is happening in their subconscious. This unease might manifest itself in The Mark becoming agitated or The Normal Projections might start taking an new and unwelcome interest in the team. Instability in The Dream can manifest in a variety of ways.

At the same class reunion set up, The Counterfeiter is trying to gain the trust of The Mark by disguising himself as his date. During this date, the other team members keep calling The Counterfeiter on her cell phone for updates and planning. Every time this happened after the first

few calls, a pull was requested by the GM because The Mark's date is being constantly disrupted.

Pull requests are made by the GM and take place after the action is declared. Success or failure of the action is not determined by the pull, only the effect the action has on The Dream. Whether an action succeeds or fails is up to the GM and the player collaborating with the general rule of whatever would make the story better for everyone as being the best choice. Generally speaking, the vast majority of the actions should succeed. If consensus cannot be reached, then the GM should quickly rule in the player's favor to keep the game moving.

II. The Dream

The framework of The Dream is created and controlled by The Architect and uploaded to the L.U.C.I.D device. The sedated Mark and team are all linked into the device via various wires and tubes. The only physically invasive part of the operation is sticking a very small needle into each participant and in turn hooking that needle, via IV tubing, to the machine. From there, the machine is activated and a powerful drug cocktail tailor-made by The Chemist is pumped into each participant. A device placed on the forehead works in conjunction with the drugs to create a shared, interactive Dreamspace.

The Dreamspace or framework of The Dream is created and controlled by The Architect. He can alter the weather, the physics, the landscape and the buildings due to his deep understanding of what he has created. The GM does not describe the world of The Dream to the players, The Architect does. When one of the players asks if there is a back door out of the building, the GM defers to The Architect. If it was established that there was no back door, the non-Architect player cannot make one short of Dreaming up some explosives but The Architect can make a pull to have a door be there. Any changes to the world The Architect has to make after the heist has started should be accompanied by a pull. Change is a destabilizing force to The Mark and his Dream.

The subconscious projections, both Normal and Agent, will fit themselves into the framework of whatever The Architect creates. If he makes a casino in Macau set in the 60's, it will be peopled by high rollers, dealers, and pit bosses in character with the times. World War I will have Doughboys fighting the Kaiser's troops. All of the projections will play their parts until The Dream starts to destabilize. Even if The Architect starts doing weird things like having stairs that wrap on themselves or whole buildings that float up into the sky or streets that fold back on themselves, inhabitants of The Dream, including The Mark (as long as he doesn't realize that he is in a Dream), will consider this normal and will continue about their activities as if it happens every day. This is because the framework of The Dream is their reality, even if that reality is changing in ways that don't exactly make a logical sense. These sorts of changes are a destabilizing force within The Dream and come with pulls, but even when The Dream starts to destabilize, they act as if everything is normal. They only start to become more aggressive as they sense a foreign element has invaded their existence, and their level of hostility grows with

the decreasing stability within The Dream.

Any of the other players can call into being any object they know of in real life. For example, only The Architect can create the back door to the building but anyone on the team can have a car waiting for them in the alley. Also, anyone can set up an explosive trap on the newly created door for the unsuspecting agents that are chasing them. These things are just there when no one noticed them before, as if they have always been there. The Mark, if properly trained and aware he is in a Dream, can call objects in a similar manner.

Subtlety is key to successfully completing the mission. If the team does something that completely and totally breaks the logic of The Dream, such as created a city-sized wall that traps all of the hostile projections on one side and just has them and The Mark on the other so they can start beating the information out of him, The Dream will collapse and wake The Mark. The team should try to integrate with the situation and blend in. The more they blend in, the harder it is for aggressive projections to find and expel them and the easier it is to gain The Mark's trust. If the people who hired the team wanted to beat the information out of The Mark, they would not have hired such expensive and sophisticated operators to get it. The Team has been hired because they are professionals who can get the job done without leaving a trace.

III. The False Awakening

The team may induce a second layer of Dreaming, a false awakening where The Mark believes he has woken up from a distantly fading Dream. They would use the L.U.C.I.D. device and chemicals necessary to sedate and induce the Dream state in themselves and The Mark as they would in the real world. The Architect would rebuild the tower, The Dream, and describe the new landscape and its framework to everyone. This has the advantage of resetting a Dream that has become too unstable or, more importantly, being able to gather information or trust from The Mark in the first Dream with the intention of using that knowledge in the second Dream. Even if The Mark is convinced that he is in a Dream in layer one, he will not necessarily know layer two is a constructed or false Dream. Concepts of trust, betrayal, love, loss, and the like will stay with The Mark even if the specifics of the events are fuzzy. The layer two Dream is not fully in the control of The Architect. If the team is wet for some reason in layer one, then it might be raining in layer two. If they have gotten dirty by setting up in an old basement, then everything might be old and covered in dust in the second layer despite The Architect's best efforts. There is always some sort of concept bleeding over from the layer one Dream into the layer two Dream no matter what The Architect does to prevent it.

IV. The Third Dreaming State

If the team so chooses, they can go down to a third layer of Dream in the same manner as getting to the second, Dreaming up a L.U.C.I.D. device and inducing sleep. At this layer, there is a large amount of bleed over from the first two layers and the GM will start to add in things from the team's subconscious. The Architect will be having a hard time keeping the different

aspects of the Dream together. The GM should make up to five pulls from this third level tower when it is created to represent its inherent instability. Also, he is now able to reinterpret the world that The Architect describes. Third Layer Dreaming is usually only undertaken by the desperate whose plans did not work in the first two layers.

The Third layer of Dreaming is very dangerous for both the team and The Mark. Normally if someone is 'killed' in The Dream they simply wake up into the previously level, free to induce themselves back when they get a chance. In the Third Dreaming state this is not so. If someone is 'killed', they cannot wake and become lost in their own mind. If the tower collapses when the team is in the third layer, it turns everyone in that layer into vegetables, trapping them within a neverending Dream within their own minds.

V. Collapse and Recovery

As mentioned earlier, the tower represent the stability of The Dream. As the tower becomes unstable, so does the subconscious of The Mark. The subconscious projections become agitated and even hostile. The Agents begin homing in on the team to disrupt their plans and even kill them. If the tower collapses, The Mark wakes up and sees himself hooked to a machine. The team wakes up at the same time. If they can manage to sedate him and induce him back into The Dream, he is going to know what is going on and will be very hard if not impossible to deal with. Since most of these jobs require The Mark to not know what was done to him in the first place, this usually means the team has failed.

If everyone is in the second layer of The Dream, they are all kicked into the first layer. The Mark suspects something; it will become very difficult, but not impossible, for the team to overcome The Mark's suspicions and achieve their goals. One way of doing this would be to convince The Mark that the team is really his own militarized projections, The Agents, and that they are trying to help him. The team can frame the real Agents as the bad guys as they operate independent of the one they are trying to protect.

VI. Death and Taxes

Injury sustained while in a Dream will not carry over to the real world. People will feel the pain of injury be it a punch or a gunshot. They will react to those injuries in the same way they would in the real world; twisting an ankle will cause that person to limp in The Dream, and running causes fatigue and breathlessness. Pain is a primal thing and affects the subconscious even if those feelings are unwanted in The Dream.

Getting killed while Dreaming will not actually kill a player or The Mark. Dying in The Dream will shock the psyche out of its Dreaming state and force the 'dead' to awaken. After a few moments of disorientation, the awoken person can induce sleep and re-enter the current Dreaming level with the rest of their team. Suicide within The Dream is a useful means of escape or way of going back into the real world to check on something. If The Mark has proper

training and realizes he is in a Dream, he might try to kill himself to wake, but he would have to be very sure he is not in the real world first.

The Normal Projections and Agents are not unstoppable killing machines. They will die just like anyone else will. They are not overly skilled or intuitive. The team is comprised of skilled operators that make a living off slipping in amongst these animated pieces of The Mark's psyche as well as fighting them off when the heat starts to get turned up. Their danger comes from a constantly growing level of aggression and numbers. As The Dream becomes less and less stable, more Agents show up, not necessarily gunning for the team but looking for something that is wrong and out of place or upsetting The Mark. Since many heists involve upsetting The Mark to draw out his problems so they can be used against him, the Agents have plenty to work with as time goes on.

The Agents are heavies, enforcers, bodyguards, mooks, whatever the Dream needs them to be to fill the role of protector of The Mark. They don't really have anything to say and don't represent much about The Mark beyond a desire for self preservation. Normal Projections do not have any extra vigilance looking for foreign invaders to The Dream, but as it destabilizes they become hostile toward the team as if they know who the invaders are even if The Mark and his Agents don't realize it. The Normal Projections are the greatest source of information on The Mark since they represent different aspects of his mind; they are also the most dangerous Dream elements in the end. Once the tower has a few pulls taken out of it, they might start acting mildly rude; as time moves on and more pulls are made, they will escalate through various stages of hostility until they become an angry mob howling for the blood of the team. This is why most teams tend to start questioning the different Normal Projections first and then take that information and put it to work on The Mark.

VII. The Minder and Waking Up

The Minder is a trusted person (usually an NPC) hired by the team that sits and watches over the sleeping team and their Mark. Since everyone must be within a few feet of the L.U.C.I.D. device for it to function, usually only one Minder is needed. They can help set up the device, make sure that the necessary drugs are administered and, most importantly, wake the team up.

The powerful chemicals used to facilitate stepping into someone's Dream go beyond simple tranquilizers. Sleep must be induced but the mind must be kept in a state just outside of full Dreaming so that it can remain lucid within The Architect's Dream. These drug cocktails combine designer sedatives and psychotropic chemicals created by the team's Chemist. This drug cocktail, no matter how well made, does not last forever. The team needs to regain consciousness and leave the scene of the crime so The Mark suspects nothing. The Minder monitors the vitals of the sleepers and then sends a signal to the team at a predetermined time before he has to wake them and get out of there. He does this by affecting The Architect in some way in the real world. He could sprinkle water on his face, causing it to rain in The Dream, or play some music that will then start playing across the Dreamscape.

The Travelers within The Dream

VIII. Making The Team and The Mark

The characters are made by each player picking a role within the team and filling out a questionnaire for that role. The questions are open ended, allowing for a lot of personalization. They are also leading questions, meaning that they are designed to get certain kinds of information from the player. The information isn't something that has a right or wrong answer, but instead allows the player to define something about the world that the GM can use. The questionnaire provided in these rules guides the players to define The Mark for the GM. It gives each of them a piece of the puzzle to create. GMs are heavily encouraged to create their own questionnaires. In this way, the GM can control how much or how little the players define the world and The Mark versus their own characters.

The Point Man – The leader of the group. He is the one who assembles the team and has final say over the plans that are made. He sees a macro view of the situation that the other characters might be unaware of. This view of things allows him to use his Burden of Command ability. Any time a player is asked to make a pull of more than one block, The Point Man can step in and reduce the number of pulls by one. For a two-pull or greater action, he may pull one for the other person. To use this ability, he must say how he is altering the actions of the other person, either physically or by communicating with them. When he uses this ability, he is not changing the outcome of the action; he is suggesting a different way to go about it or helping the other person to do it differently.

The Architect – This person creates the Dream world and everything in it. This person defines to the GM and the rest of the team what the world looks like, its size, its physics, and its rules. If The Dream is one filled with mountains and Norse Gods where people can fly around, it is The Architect that defines that. The Architect is the one who builds the tower and he can use alternative tower constructions if he likes, with GM approval. The Architect is the only one who can alter the physical landscape of the Dream and change its rules.

The Counterfeiter – This teammate is the only one who can alter his appearance to be anything he wants. He is the only one that the projections will ignore as a threat while he is disguised. His purpose is to take on the roles of people The Mark knows to gain trust and influence over him. He has the ability of Short Term Risk, Long Term Gain. This allows him to bring stability back to the Dream with his disguises. If he can convince the projections that something out of the ordinary is normal or gets the projections away from something that is destabilizing the Dream, he can take a block off of the top of the tower and insert it anywhere else within.

The Chemist – The chemist is the person who makes the sedative that puts everyone to sleep.

He is also who can create a sedative within the Dream to put people asleep again, thus creating a Dream within a Dream. He has the ability to Affect More than Consciousness. If the GM asks any player to make a pull, The Chemist can say that his drug would prevent the pull and allow the action, but he must give a reason why. He can do this once per Dream level and it will negate all the blocks in that one pull.

The Tourist - This is the non-professional of the team. Not every team has one as they tend to get in the way at worst or not know how to help at best. They can be the hanger-on that begs their way into the job looking for that big break, the 10%-er that wants to make sure the job goes well or the person who set up the job in the first place whose presence keeps everyone honest. Tourists have no special ability within the Dream world.

The Mark - In a GM-less game, one of the players should play The Mark. He is the target that team is trying to infiltrate. The players should agree on what they are trying to get out of The Mark before the game starts, and the person playing The Mark should base his character on the answers given by the other players. This player does not fill out any questionnaire nor does he get to make any pulls from the tower. He isn't allowed to Dream up any objects within the Dream until he is able to realize that he is Dreaming.

IX. Types of Games

A normal game of L.U.C.I.D. would usually consist of a GM and 4 to 5 friends but there are two variants of the game: GM Light, and GM-Less.

In a GM Light game, a player takes on the role of The Mark. If the group is using questionnaires that define The Mark, that player uses those to define his character or makes up his own if not. In this game, the GM is there to facilitate actions and arbitrate disputes. The GM and The Mark should have a private discussion before the game starts about the different motivations of the character and what the different approaches the team will have to take to succeed. The Mark will be playing all of the Normal Projections while the GM plays the Agents. If The Mark realizes that he is in a Dream, the GM can relinquish the Agents to him. Also, the GM can run any of the Normal Projections at any time to aid The Mark. The Mark never makes a pull against the tower.

The second type of game is one where you have someone playing The Mark and another person playing a Tourist. The Tourist is the client who hires the team. He might be checking on his investment or wanting to make sure he sees things through to the end. The Mark and Tourist players collaboratively create the character of The Mark. They interweave their characters and motivations creating a story for the team to unravel. If the questionnaires are designed to form the idea of The Mark, the two players then take and read over the answers and interpret the character of The Mark and his motivations.

X. The Flow of the Story

The basic flow of the story can follow the following format:

A. The Meet - Getting hired to do something very illegal

i. If one person has something of value then someone else will always want it. If that person wants it bad enough and has enough money, they can pay someone to get it for them even if that thing doesn't exist in reality. This person is called The Client.

ii. A meeting takes place between the potential employer/s and The Pointman. At this meeting the mission goals are lined out and the target is given. The plan, the team, the details are all The Point Man's problem.

iii. These meetings tend to be on the short side with layers of people between the team and actual people playing the bills. Get through this RP quickly to get the rest of players into the game.

B. Coming Together - It's all about who you know

i. The Pointman knows people as he has put together these sorts of jobs before. Unfortunately, the talent pool for this kind of highly specialised work is extremely limited. While The Pointman might have promised the best to The Client, he can only work with who is available.

ii. The Pointman starts making phone calls to get all of the people he needs to sign on. He gives them just enough information to get them interested and hooks them with a cut of his ever-shrinking pie.

iii. This is a good opportunity for the GM start setting the mood for the different characters. Take a few minutes for The Pointman to call each of the team members and get them onboard and together. For example, when The Pointman calls The Chemist, the GM can turn to that player and say something to the effect of, "You pause in the Ciro alleyway long enough to catch your breath. You think you gave those thugs the slip but you only got out of that room with the clothes on your back; luckily, your passport was in your pants. Your wallet was not, not that that is an issue since you were out of funds anyway. Your phone rings... it's the last person you expected to hear from today." While you shouldn't put every single character into a life or death situation, keep in mind these people are high stakes, globetrotting criminals. The chances of them sitting around a trailer home watching afternoon soaps in a rural Alabama trailer park is fairly low.

C. The Plan - The Who is more important than the What

i. At this point, the team should start looking into who The Mark is, what his habits are, and where they can have unrestricted access to him for a few hours.

ii. The Mark should be someone of importance like a diplomat, the head of a

criminal organization, or the head of a powerful company. They could also be attached to someone important, such as a child or secretary or spouse of one of these people.

iii. At this point, give the team some more information to work with so that they can make a practical plan of grabbing this person, learning just enough about him and his problems so that a general plan of attack can be made. The Architect can then form the framework of The Dream. This section of the game should last longer than the first two but should go on for too long. The team should only have a vague understanding of The Mark going into this.

D. The Dream - People are their problems

i. The team should be going into The Dream with only a small amount of information on The Mark. The majority of the play of the game should take place here with the team using the clues they found in the real world to start asking the right questions in The Dream.

ii. The whole plan could take place in layer one but most of the time it goes layer two. The tendency is to gain information and trust in layer one and then use that in layer two. Generally, the team is trying to get The Mark to do something they want him to do that he would not normally be willing to do.

iii. The team should be questioning and interacting with the different projections and interpreting their reactions. They should also be making direct contact with The Mark, setting up situations where he might come to trust them while they discover his fears, passions, obsessions, whatever makes him tick. All the while, they must fend off an increasingly hostile subconscious. When the team feels they have enough information or have established enough trust or even intimidation within The Mark, they can carry all of that over to layer two. They now must set up a situation to use that against him, usually in the form of making him face some sort of fear, insecurity, or trauma. For example, they may engineer The Mark overcoming this problem as somehow granting them the object of their mission. The team will usually end up helping The Mark in some strange way as a key to stealing from him. The vast majority of the game should take place in The Dream.

E. Escape - Time to wake up

i. To successfully complete the mission once the objective has been met, all the team has to do is leave The Dream, killing themselves or waiting until the appointed time when The Minder will wake them and leave the scene of the crime without waking The Mark.

ii. If the team can't get what they need in the time given, they will need to get out of The Dream before The Mark wakes up. If the tower doesn't collapse, The Minder will wake them and leave The Mark sleeping.

All of this is, of course, open to wide interpretation. There can be a huge variety of Clients, Marks, and objectives presented in countless different ways.

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Legal

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XI. Sample Questionnaire

This is a sample questionnaire designed to have leading questions that draw out personality traits of each character and link the party in some way, as well as create The Mark.

The Point Man

- 1.** Why did you leave your legitimate life behind?
- 2.** Why do you have sympathy for The Mark?
- 3.** Why did you betray The Counterfeiter on your last job?
- 4.** Who or what is Melody?
- 5.** Why did you just stand there and watch your father die?
- 6.** That thing you do, in every Dream, why do you do it?

The Architect

- 1.** Why is this your last job?
- 2.** Where were you shot?
- 3.** Why do you put the same clock tower in every Dream you make?
- 4.** How badly do you wish to embarrass The Chemist?
- 5.** Why does your Dream projection not look like you?
- 6.** Who owned the old lighter before you?

The Counterfeiter

1. Why are you working with The Point Man after he betrayed you?
2. Where does The Mark know you from?
3. When you engage a target why are you, ever so slightly, out of character?
4. Why do you love your job?
5. Why did you steal it?
6. What did you do with yourself after the divorce?

The Chemist

1. What does The Mark have on you?
2. How did you find out about The Point Man knowing your lie?
3. Why does your spouse support your illegal activities?
4. Why is being a Chemist your 2nd job choice?
5. Why did you name your 1st child Joann?
6. What made you stop drinking?