

The Great Library

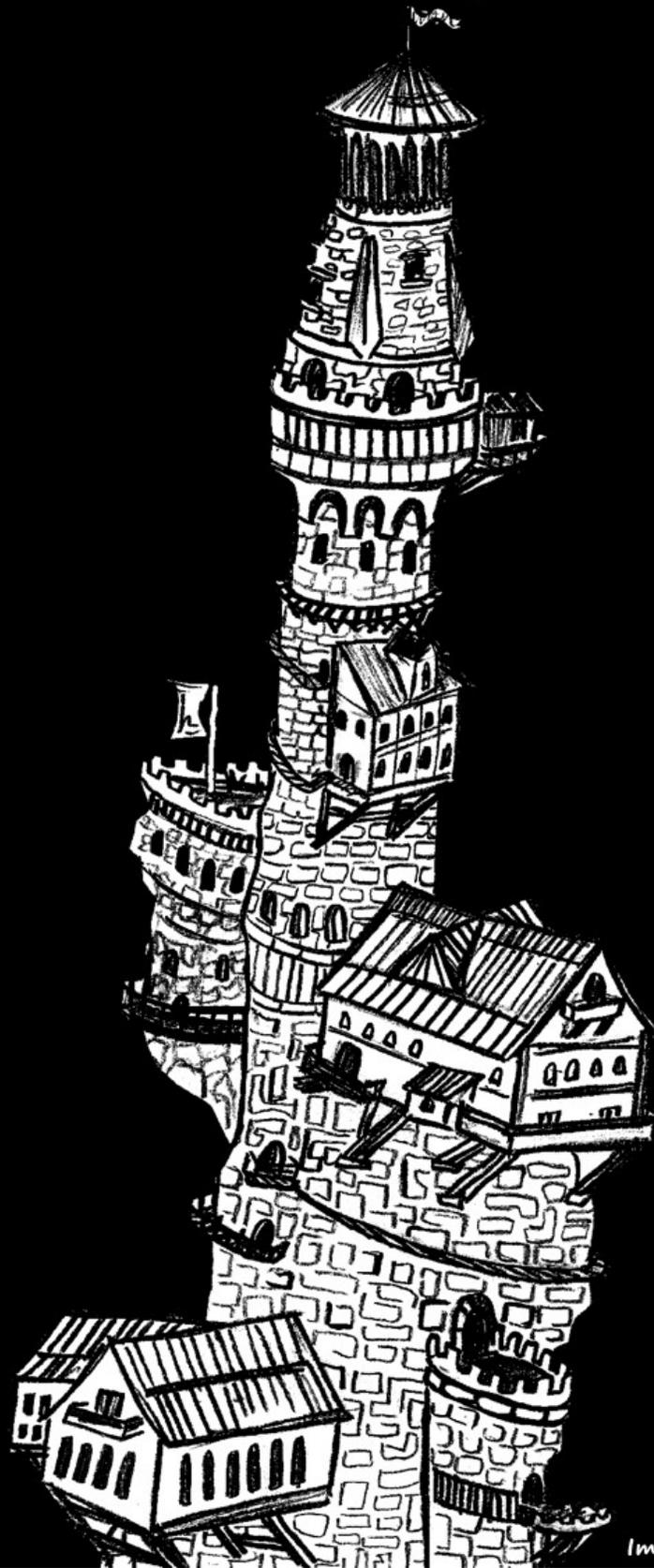


Image by Erin Prater

The Great Library

The Great Library - or as some call it, the City of Books - is a lone tower suspended in a dark, boundless void. There is no sun, no stars, no moon, or even sky in this land. What holds this acropolis aloft remains a mystery. Yet within the Tower itself, there exists a plethora of sentient beings made of paper, ink, and magic.

The Great Library is home to a special collection of books gathered from realms connected to the Forest of Doors. Their caretaker, the Great Librarian, has imbued his collection with so much of his own attention and energy that they have come to life: they have become magical creatures that can talk and even move about under their own power. As time went on, these animate tomes became more and more "real" under the Librarian's care; they grew in size and began to mimic the human form, becoming known as Page Folk: humanoid beings, who are, for all intents and purposes, made of paper and ink.

The Librarian and his creations are all that is left in the world of the Library. Whoever might have inhabited this world before have left no clues to their existence, nor any records describing their forgotten world. There are legends about the ancestry of the Great Librarian and the Library itself, and the elder Page Folk speak vaguely of their maker's origins, but most Folk regard these stories as pure fancy.

Some say there is a world outside the library, beyond the Void. Most sensible Page Folk insist, however, that anyone foolish enough to venture into the Void simply plummets forever, and that the only thing of substance in their world is the Library itself. There are others who believe that nothing existed before the library and that their world is as it has always been. They also believe if they should it ever falter in their purpose--serving the Great Librarian--the library would surely cease to exist. All understand, however, that The Great Librarian is the heart and soul of the Library. His welfare must be the chiefest concern of all Page Folk. Without him the Library would fall into the darkness of the void.

In recent years, the Librarian's strength has begun to falter under the strain of maintaining the Library. He rarely ventures down from his inner sanctum, and instead depends on the Page Folk to attend to duties for which he now lacks the power, most notably reading, cataloguing, and repairing books.

The Nature of Page Folk

It is common knowledge that Page Folk originate from magical books. Page Folk were born from the Great Librarian's care. Since the birth of a new Page Folk is a rare and difficult task, their well-being is extremely important. The residents of the Great Library cannot be healed by typical means, for the Living Books and Page Folk are creatures of paper, ink, and magic. To heal wounds inflicted upon them, they need scholarly aid to mend the damage: they need to be read, in other words.

Because of this unique process, Healing Kits cannot be used, but Page Folk must have some sort of text prop on themselves for the Scholar to read. The text the Page Folk carry should reflect their own nature, as it is an OOG abstraction of the "text" that makes up their flesh. E.G.- a Page Folk who is a dictionary should have a small dictionary on their person. Page Folk are affected by persistent conditions just like any "normal" character. In order to be treated for these conditions, the Scholar attending them uses their Research level in exactly the same way a healer uses their Treatment level, reading from the book as when applying Aid. Specialty bonuses are ignored.

Coax life is performed upon the Page Folk by the scholar reading the book out loud for five minutes, instead of using a Rejuvenator. All other restrictions and rules for Coax Life apply as normal.

Needless to say, the average Page Folk does not allow just anyone to read them, for it is just not proper for a stranger to do so. It is often a sign of trust or friendship for a Page Folk to sit with another and allow them to read the words on their flesh. Writing on a Page Folk is an even more intimate act that someone would not conduct in public.

Library Society and Everyday Life

In a Library stocked with magical books, it can sometimes be quite noisy. Magical Books are often times boisterous in their attempts to contend for attention. While it can take a rather lengthy amount of time for a book to perish from lack of attention, the average book does like to be read as often as possible. Once a book has been given its desired amount of scrutiny, they will settle into a more pliant status.

The Page Folk live simply and age slowly, much like their book brethren. They hold no fear of dying from old age as long as they tend to their pages accordingly. Younger Page Folk, who may have newly come into existence, may desire more attention than the seasoned veterans who been around for centuries. These younger Page Folk typically have a thirst for adventure and knowledge that had previously been impeded by a lack of mobility in their book form. In time, the Page Folk are able to settle into a well-adjusted routine. While it rarely occurs, Page Folk have been known to fall into lethargy when they neglect themselves.

Library Society functions quite simply. Time is marked by the massive hourglass that resides in the Library Lobby. It is considered a new day once the hourglass must be flipped. While there is no set schedule for the Library's hours, it is typical for at least a handful of the Page Folk to always be roaming the Library on guard.

It should be noted that despite being made of tough paper and enchanted ink, Page Folk are also living beings that need some form of sustenance (food and drink) as any living being requires. In giving up their Book form, Page Folk take onto themselves some of the inconvenience of flesh-and-blood creatures.

While the Great Librarian is indeed the heart and soul of the world, The League of the Scroll is an organization of elite scholarly adventures, who take on duties of administration for the Great Librarian himself. While it is a part of every Page Folks' duty to read and care for books, the League of the Scroll goes even further. Only the most talented and capable members of the Page Folk are inducted into the League of the Scroll. They are trained in combat to defend against Book Worms. They are also well versed in navigational skills to aid in their travels through the Library. Although there is an underlying order to it, the Library is vast, confusing, and labyrinthine even to its native residents.

The main segments of the Library consist of the Lobby, which holds the information desk and sorting department; the Mysteriums A, B, and C; The Big Books Section (you REALLY don't want a book from here falling on you); The Tiny Books Section (be sure to bring your magnifying glass); and the Main Atrium, which houses some of the most prestigious magical books in the Library. Most residents of the Library live in The Page Folks' Nook, while The Cloister is occupied by the League of the Scroll. High above the Main Atrium, up numerous flights of spiral stairs, is the Great Librarian's Ante-chamber and his Inner Sanctum.

While the main territories of the Library seem simple enough to navigate, it should also be understood that there are numerous alcoves, passageways, and corridors throughout the library that branch off into storage rooms, reading lounges, and other various niches. There are no direct routes from one section of the Library to the next. Since the Book Worms began to ravage the halls of the Great Library, the smaller, less frequented portions of the library have fallen into disrepair. Some sections have even been sealed off, deemed a lost cause. Their shelves have become nothing more than a graveyard filled with dead, rotting books. Because these passages are sealed off, they have made excursions through the Library even more difficult. Few Page Folk other than League members will risk venturing through the deserted portions of the Library.

Book worms themselves are shrouded in a veil of mystery. The smaller varieties are no bigger than grubs and can cause damage to books. These can easily be eradicated by any Page Folk. But in the denser, more dangerous sectors of the Library, the worms have been known to grow to massive size. Their only function seems to be the wanton destruction of books at the behest of their terrible master. The leader of the book worms, if you can call her such, is a hateful being known as Mistress Guillotine. Her origins are unknown. No one even dares to ask what could be the source of such an atrocious, immoral creature. Since her first appearance within the Library, she has brought nothing but anguish to the Page Folk.

It is known that one awful day, long ago, Mistress Guillotine burst forth from the depths of the Library with an army of book worms. She ripped through the shelves like the books were mere tissue paper and caused terrible fires.

During this first violent act against book kind, Mistress Guillotine was able to storm the Main Atrium and deliver a mortal blow to the Library's Grand Index, a book fabled to have held massive power. It nearly sapped all of the Great Librarian's power to drive Mistress Guillotine back. Her lair is rumored to exist somewhere underneath the Library in a distant dungeon too perilous to explore. No sensible Scroll member would ever be foolhardy enough to take on the mission of locating Mistress Guillotine.

In recent years, strange doors have been appearing within the Library. This only happens occasionally and usually the doors only open for a moment before snapping shut again, but not without leaving behind an interesting tidbit or two, such as books written in strange languages, describing mysterious worlds from beyond the Library...

Page Folk Quick Reference

As living books, Page Folk receive a five-point discount when buying their first level of Scholarship. Furthermore, every Scholarship specialty they take is immediately increased to the maximum level of 3.

Thanks to the maze-like stacks of the Great Library, Page Folk also receive a five-point discount when buying their first level of Survival.

Due to their solid, enchanted forms, Page Folk increase their maximum Vitality by 1. Page Folk may eat and drink as normal, and for roleplaying purposes reading any text will also help serve as sustenance.

However, Page Folk cannot be helped by the Healing skill. They instead must be tended to by someone with Scholarship. For the purposes of healing Page Folk, each Scholarship skill level exactly corresponds with a specific Healing skill level:

Scholarship 1 = Basic Examination & Aid
Scholarship 2 = Lesser Thanatology
Scholarship 3 = Improved Examination & Aid
Scholarship 4 = Greater Thanatology
Scholarship 5 = Advanced Examination, Advanced Aid
Scholarship 6 = Coax Life

Finally, any fire damage effect taken by a Page Folk also counts as a Mortal Blow, if not defended against.

Makeup & Costume Requirements

All Page Folk must wear a mask made to resemble pages of text. The text itself should reflect the character's composition.