

Weird Montreal

World Document v1.0

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Overview

Bienvenue à Montréal. The city is still beautiful, but like the rest of world, it has scars from the Reveal. Magic erupted into our reality; the river itself attacked and the creatures of myth walked the streets. Now, you're just as likely to run into a Loup-garou as you are an American. The people welcome anyone (or thing) that survives crossing the river. This is the truce that was struck after the Reveal. This new Montreal is built on a shared dream of a million souls that share little else. Perhaps it always was.

Key Points

- Montreal is isolated. The aftereffects of the Reveal make it very dangerous to travel, especially since the island of Montreal is surrounded by a sentient, malevolent river.
- The mountain represents stability and safety; the river is chaos and danger. They are both overtly magical. There is no physical touchstone for the mundane in this world.
- The weird is based on our stories. Most of the magical things that are happening are based on the myths and folklore of the people that live in Montreal. However, they sometimes contradict those stories as well, making it hard for the characters to rely on pre-existing knowledge.
- The city is a collection of neighbourhoods. Each one has a unique mix of the old and the new. How they deal with getting the necessities and surviving this more dangerous world defines them and how they interact.

Map

An interactive Google Map is available here.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zK7Y9ogsCK8I.kGI4-Ea5qoPI&usp=sharing>

The core of the narrative takes place in downtown Montreal. Areas further from the centre are assumed to be desolate, flooded, or turned into farms.

Timeline

October, 2020 – The Reveal. Magic becomes real in a thousand different ways all over the world. There is enormous upheaval and many deaths. In Montreal, the most obvious change is the river, which begins to actively attack the city.

January, 2021 – The Accord. Montrealers strike a deal with the mountain, which has become a magical entity. In return for its protection, the citizens risk death if they turn away or attack anyone that has crossed the river.

February, 2022 – With The Accord in place, Montrealers are beginning to live for more than just pure survival. This is where the story begins.

For a detailed and in-character timeline: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BzGQqaBy5ANNTWxtnpxQUt2eTQ>

Guide to Weird Montreal

The Who

Merfolk

This group is a mix of different kinds of New Folk. They aren't unified in their beliefs or their goals. Generally, their commonality starts and ends with being able to live somewhat comfortably in Mertown, where the river has flooded the old city. The fear that most others (even other New Folk) have of the river means that Merfolk are rarely trusted by strangers. This makes it difficult for the Merfolk, who depend on the city almost as much as the land-dwellers. Some have banded together to form their own markets, collectives, and councils. This has only increased the suspicion others have of them.

Huddlers

A derogatory term for the Regs who insist on living like the Reveal didn't happen. The term evolved from the name of the first community that refuted the Reveal, but it is now applied to anyone, regardless of where they live. While it might seem like willful denial, they find solace and structure in their refusal of magic. This rejection of magic has allowed them to focus on what they already know about the world. As such, many of the city's best technicians come from Huddler homes.

Wormtongues

When the Reveal tore apart the old society, many of the most prestigious jobs became useless. Lawyers especially had trouble applying their skills—until it was discovered that the dead were making deals. For the price of some memories, warm flesh, or a stiff drink, the residents of Montreal's great cemeteries would give out secrets from their lives or their wanderings as spirits. Some driven lawyers now provide their services as necromancers, speakers to the dead. Unsurprisingly, this has done little to improve their reputation.

Hedge Wizards

These are the Regs who embraced magic, possibly even before the Reveal. Whether they learned from fairies, demons, or raven spirits, they discovered their magic out in the world. They aren't one unified group. However, they form cadres in different neighbourhoods, and they're often at the centre of the action. They have a reputation for overstating their magical prowess and overreaching with their spells. The phrase "like a Hedger's plan" is the post-Reveal equivalent of FUBAR.

Paper Wizards

While they call themselves simply "wizards", most of Montreal uses this term to tell them apart from the Hedgers. These are Regs who've studied

their magic, hence “paper”. However, the connotation is one of weakness, of not being able to withstand the Revealed world. They approach magic with a 21st-century eye for scientific rigour, but the frustrating contradictions in logic and causality have driven more than a few of them mad. This methodical approach has made them more aware of their limitations than the Hedgers, but their spells are less powerful than they’d like. Still, a community is much less likely to turn out a Paper Wizard than a Hedger.

Loup-garous

Werewolves. Beastmen. They are probably the most famed of the New Folk. Not only because their legends were well-known before the Reveal, but also because Regs can become Loup-garous too. While this easily could have bred anger and fear between the two groups, it has been a peaceful relationship. This is in great part due to how the werereatures fought the dark things that poured out of the Witches’ Interchange the first winter after the Reveal. Now, they are looked at as wild, rustic cousins. They have a reputation for drinking, singing together, and getting into playful (if still violent) fights with each other.

Librarians

A group, mostly of Regs, that is determined to record the past before it disappears. They are a small but dedicated group, surviving by trading their knowledge for the necessities. They regularly brave the libraries, especially La Grande Bibliothèque, to recover instructional books, histories, and mythologies. They have become skillful urban hunters, armed with the knowledge to defeat the monsters with long-forgotten weaknesses.

Catholics

Catholicism was in steep decline in Montreal before the Reveal. But its roots in the city were deep, and when the impossible seemed to occur, there was a return to the Church. With matters of safety the highest concern, the priests have become both community leaders and battlefield commanders. Some of the traditional rituals have proven effective, others not, so the clergy are working with the Librarians to learn whatever they can.

The How

Montreal is a post-apocalyptic city. Its citizens have adapted to a world with magic and without the support of an interconnected 21st-century world. Electricity, clean water, and supplies from off the island are rare. Sometimes, the New Folk have abilities that make life easier, such as a Loup-garou’s ability to sniff out drinking water. Other times, Regs have come up with clever solutions or even learned some magic. There should always be a tension between everyday life (picking up food, going out with people, dealing with your neighbours) and the weird danger in the world. Here is an example of how this plays out:

Shopping at the Goblin Market

Karina's advice, written down at a neighbourhood meeting in NuVo

So, the Goblin Market. You're going to have to go eventually, unless you plan on Huddling. Jean-Claude and I have become regulars, and here's what we've figured out.

First, be careful on your way there. You definitely want to hug the mountain. I know it would be nice to walk straight down there, but you're cutting it real close to the Teeth then. We enter through the old Complexe Les Ailes.

Once you get to the market proper, take stock of the mood. There could have just been a loup-garou fight. Those entertain the crowd but make the sellers nervous. Or maybe the trades are going fast today, and everyone is trying to close deals quickly and move on.

We always go to the actual goblins first. They're on the bottom floor. It's dark, but they can see just fine, and their hearing is sharp, so don't think you can whisper anywhere near them and not be heard. Take a look, don't commit at first, and bring out something you'd be willing to trade. See how they look at it. If you catch them tilting their wrinkly heads to get a better look, that's a good sign. Recently, we've had good luck with scrap metal, the shinier the better.

Next, go to the middle levels. There's a couple of amazing places to eat here. There's a fairy...or something... there called La Reine du Pain. She's incredible. Like you have to sit down while eating her brioches or you'll just fall over.

Once you've recovered from that, see what's moving in the middle levels. If you've got something to sell, just put out your gold and see if anyone wants it. Sorry, your gold is gold cloth. All the sellers have some on them or their stands. But be careful; one of the few rules in the market is that if you refuse to sell something while your gold is flying, then you won't be able to come back. You literally won't be able to find it again.

Up top? I don't recommend it unless you know exactly what you're looking for. The folk up there deal in the truly weird. A few weeks ago, we had to ask the Green Man for a growing song. We thought it would be simple. A few tears from me, some maple syrup, and an ivory clasp. It's what a friend told us to bring. But maybe we were wearing too much iron, or maybe he just wasn't in a good mood. Whatever it was, he was furious. He might have tossed us all the way down to the goblins if we hadn't booked it.

Key Characters

Arthur Clery

Arthur is in his mid-forties, wearing an eclectic mix of clothes that recall the ripped punk outfits he wore in his twenties. This is partly nostalgic and partly because it helps him to look a little wild. His hair is usually chin length: a scraggly mess that he only cuts once it starts getting in his way.

He serves as a shaman (or liaison, for those uncomfortable with magical terms). This means fielding questions from Regs, diffusing tense situations, and using the few scrying tricks he knows to keep people away from trouble. He's also recording the new history of Montreal, writing down the thousand weird stories he hears each week.

Arthur was in the contingent of desperate men and women that struck the Accord. On that night, he saw hope for Montreal. Nothing could return it to the way things had been; Arthur didn't even want that. But he saw a chance for it to survive, at least. He grabbed a hunk of dirt from the mountain and came down into the city with change on his mind. The dirt is now in a plastic spice jar that dangles around his neck.

Casting Choices

- Colin Farrell
- Jared Leto
- Gerard Butler

Sample Lines

“Hey, chill out. We don't want the mountain rumbling at us, right?”

“Yeah, another round. This fucker still needs to tell me about how he got away from that wendigo thing. That's a story we gotta hear.”

Amelie Trudeau

Amelie is a Paper Wizard working with the Librarians. She uses the magic she's learned to give them an edge against the twisted beasts that live in the Grande Bibliothèque. In return, she gets first pick of any texts they find. Her curiosity drives her forward, and a scrap of a new ritual or the writings of a mad monk are the rewards that keep her going. She keeps everything else in her life casual, so she sometimes seems distant or flip-pant. This is how she keeps people from learning too much about her.

Her curiosity brought her into contact with something terrible and strange when she was exploring the Grand Masonic Lodge. This entity now exists alongside her, and she fears what it is capable of. Now, her search is also driven by the desire to find a way to stop this magical force. She knows the Librarians are suspicious of the power she has. They've seen other wizards who allowed their curiosity to outstrip their caution. But she can't afford to break ties with them before she finds the answers she needs.

Casting Choices

- Emma Stone
- Elizabeth Olsen
- Alia Shawkat

Sample Lines

“Aw, c'mon. You book-hounds afraid of a little ghost?”

“A little distracted right now. Just trying not to unmake reality.”

Hecate

Hecate is ancient, probably older than even the earliest human myths about her. Whether this being is the true Hecate or some aspect of her isn't clear. She is chaotic and capricious. Sometimes she behaves just as a human would (albeit an incredibly powerful one), but other times she is frightfully alien. Her physical appearance also varies; she might appear as the mother, maiden, or crone. Or she might manifest as a hideous, three-headed, predatory thing. She demands tribute from travellers in her territory, but she seems to have little use of the things she receives. Most assume she simply likes bleeding the city of what few resources they have. She grants powerful and strange boons to those that serve her, but she also is quick to make examples of those that fail her.

Casting Choices

- Glenn Close
- Angelina Jolie
- Geena Davis

Sample Lines

“Why do I want the entrails of crows? Good question. I'll settle for yours.”

“Three roads meet, I am revealed.

And under the moon a pact we sign.

Dare to break what our blood has sealed.

Your soul, heart, and bones are mine.”

Glossary

Note: There is a tendency towards slang and jargon in this world. The intention is to make it feel modern and lived-in.

- Regs – Short for Regular. These are the normal humans of Montreal.
- New Folk – The catch-all term for everything that isn't human but can live alongside the humans. Note that the New Folk themselves don't consider themselves one big group. Werewolves don't feel like they have anything more in common with sea sprites than they do humans.
- The Reveal – October 2020. This is the poorly understood event that changed the world. All of a sudden, magic existed in the world. The New Folk that arrived were from other realities, as far as anyone can tell. But given their similarity to our myths and folktales, there must have been connections between our worlds before the Reveal happened.
- The Accord – January 2021. This was the deal struck between the people of Montreal and Mont Royal, the mountain in the city's centre. The mountain protects the city from outright destruction, either from the river or other immensely strong magics. But it doesn't defend individuals. Also, as part of the deal, the people of Montreal must not attack anyone that successfully crosses the river. If they do, the mountain revokes its protection around the people causing the problem and something usually takes care of them quickly.
- Weird – An adjective for anything that would have been impossible before the Reveal. “Magical” is sometimes substituted, but people prefer “weird” because it connotes the threat and the mystery around what they're seeing.