

## Zodiac Stone

Ingredients chosen:

- Talking animals
  - Major setting element, being the thing that kicks everything off and changes things from 'normal mundane modern life'
- Astrological signs
  - Major system element.
- Artifact
  - Major setting element, being the Maguffin.
- Unique style/form of magic
  - Unique as 'the only' and also being kinda different from everything else that I can think of – major setting and system element.
- Alternate History
  - Kinda claiming this as a minor setting element.
- Halloween
  - Claiming this as a very minor setting element.

October 1983; Thatcherite Britain. Self-identified members of the AnimalLiberationFront break into a government laboratory and free all the chimps, nick something of great importance.

November 1st, 1983; Britain awakes to find their pets asking when breakfast is.

You awaken in the aftermath of a midnight chimps-are-free celebration party to find "Miss Batty" the so-called witch dead and the world changed.

You suspect that you might be in trouble.

Fourteen years pass. The world is a different place, but you're still in trouble...

==== What's The World Like? ==

Most of the world is pretty much unchanged. Air/port security is quite a bit tougher than now on importing animals - but there's still more than a few people exporting talking animals; often for illegal purposes.

Not as many people as you might hope turned to vegetarianism, though almost all the farming moved abroad.

Animals can do quite a lot of jobs, and do so. They haven't had a trade union movement yet. Those adverts of chickens running call centres? Those aren't CGI.

Whacko churches declaimed the work of satan - but most mainstream churches saw it as a chance to recruit. The manger scene is recreated all over.

Part of the government realised what it had lost. Anti-terrorism regulations got brought in much sooner, and there was a great cracking down.

This part of the world is busy having an anti-environmental-campaigner panic and terrorist clampdown.

=== Forget that - what do you "do"? ==

Ah, glad you asked. Well, you probably have a day job. But outside of that, you panic and try to stay ahead of the government. For just a few weeks more.

Because this time, you're SURE you know what made the stone work...

So, whatever you normally do - what you're going to do now is run around, protect yourselves - and hopefully change things for the better again.

## Setting

Fourteen years ago, a group of animal activists changed the world. They let animals talk.

Things went all kablooey for a while, and everything is still kinda messed up. You've got magical powers, but they mainly cause you problems.

And people are after you...

## Characters

The first thing you have is what got you going, the thing that kicked you in the pants and keeps you in the group. In the basic game this is "I was involved in that raid and the after-party."

The second thing you need is one, or more, bangs. These are things which you *the player* would like to see happen during play. You should pick things where bad things happen to your character – because that's how you charge up your magic.

The third thing is that you should have some code. Things that you won't do. Perhaps you're unwilling to cheat, or are a pacifist. Whatever – whatever you choose is a clue to the GM that this should come up in play, in a way that sticking to your guns will make your characters life more difficult. On the plus side, this powers up your magic...

Lastly, we have your attributes and skills and stuff.

A character in this game has one major thing that defines them. So I ask you:

“Hey, what's your sign?”

Pick a star sign. Any star sign. This will determine what you can do during play – though not in any way that you can predict at this point. Just pick one, ok?

The next thing you have

## System

There are two system elements to play with here.

One for the magic, and one for everything else.

The 'everything else' system first.

This system is simple:

If it isn't important to the action, then you succeed.

If it **is** important to the action – then you fail.

With one exception – if your characters horoscope for the day covers the action, then you can do it.

Your characters *can* and indeed *should* realise this, and are heartily encouraged to take advantage of it.

The magic system.

The stone gives your characters a limited ability to re-write reality, but it has to be charged up first. There are three levels of effect it can produce. (Well, four – but the fourth is powered solely by plot.)

Whenever you want to use an effect, you have to have at least that much charge – and using it uses up *all* of the charge (even if it had more than you needed).

Similarly, when something happens that would charge it up, it only gets the charge if it's more than it currently has – you can't add together small charges to make a big one.

You start the game with a level2 charge.

Level	Charge	Effect
1	Fail at something important, add to the world with your descriptions.	Steal the limelight.
2	Be hindered by your characters code, incorporate some setting element.	Even though you failed, reality thinks you succeeded.
3	Danger to life and limb, something that makes everyone go 'wow'.	Alter reality in a small area, undoing events.
4	....?	Pretty much anything.

Effect 1.

Failing at something important means “Persuading the dogs to keep a lookout for me” not “Getting a newspaper half-price”. It means it was something worth checking your horoscope for, and failure

will inconvenience you.

Stealing the limelight means moving the 'camera' and action over to you – showing what *you* are doing. What you are doing had better be either interesting or further the plot – or preferably both. But this power lets you say “*Ok, shut up talking, it's all about me for a while, now.*”

Effect 2.

You character has something(s) that they really *really* don't want to do. Whether it's a belief that you don't grass up your friends or a belief that eating meat is evil.

Well, whenever you would find life made much easier by throwing these principles to the winds – but you stick to your guns anyway – that's a level two charge.

The effect is correspondingly greater.

Today isn't your lucky day? You can't manage something? You failed?

Well, ok. You know you failed. Everyone in this strange 'blessed by the zodiac' circle knows. But reality? Reality didn't get the memo.

You failed to swim across the river? You're on the other side anyway. You didn't manage to escape the guards? Even though they're *right there* they don't catch you. They're talking to one another, scratching their heads and wondering how you escaped.

But it won't last long, so make your escape whilst you can.

Effect 3.

Life and limb are endangered. (Not liberty, someone locking you up is *not* enough to trigger this level, and there are some people out there who know this...) Someone has to be actually *shooting* at you, or at least trying to break your limbs.

But the effect...

Over a limited area, say the length of a street – and extending a limited time into the past, say about half an hour – reality is putty in your hands.

Stuff that was there, isn't.

Stuff that happened, didn't.

You remember the past – as do others blessed by the zodiac – but the world has changed and you know the new reality too.

Effect 4

The one and only time that you know for sure that this power was invoked, the person *died*. And it was halloween. And they were holding the stone.

The effect appears to have permanently *changed* reality – with a distinct break; the public *knows* it changed, though they have no idea of the cause.

And it changed it over the whole of Britain.

And the change appears to be permanent.

=== GMing this mess ==

Three legs:

# Action movie: Agents chasing after the PCs who have something they must keep away.

# Comedy: Come on, talking animals?

# Horror: There's some pretty nasty stuff on both sides of animal liberation...