

BEWUSED™

A woman with voluminous, wavy red hair and striking green eyes. She is wearing a dark headband with a geometric pattern. She holds two glowing, ornate spheres in her hands, one in each. The spheres are covered in intricate, golden patterns. From these spheres, several golden circular frames float around her face, each containing a different symbol: a lyre, a harp, a butterfly, a leaf, and a stylized figure. The background is a dark, swirling, ethereal blue and green.

A game of doubt
and dread

Bemused™

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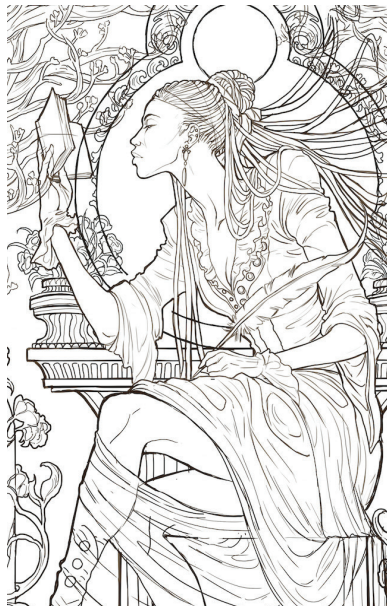
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1. Game Overview

Theme

Each player is a **muse**, a timeless being that has inspired artists since the dawn of human creativity. Each muse has chosen one **human virtuoso** as their **protégé** and seeks to elevate that virtuoso to the pinnacle of artistic glory. All the virtuosos chosen, however, have proven masterful in channeling their own muse's influence, thereby making it difficult for any one of them to outshine the others. The muses, therefore, have changed their strategy: rather than elevate their own protégé, they have decided to destroy their protégé's rivals by levying upon them **doubts** and **dreads** until they are driven mad or killed and thereby removed from contention.

Summary

Bemused™ accommodates **4 – 6 players**. *We do not advise fewer than 4 players.* As a muse, each player has a **virtuoso card** that represents their protégé. The players take turns placing **doubt** and **dread** cards on each other's virtuoso cards.* Each doubt and dread card placed on a player's virtuoso card reduces that player's score. When a virtuoso card has a combined total of 5 doubt and/or dread cards on it, the virtuoso goes **insane**. When a virtuoso card has a combined total of 5 doubt and/or dread cards on it and 3 or more of those cards are dread cards, the virtuoso dies and becomes a **fantasma**. The game ends when fewer than two sane virtuosos remain in play. Players then calculate their scores and the player with the highest score wins.

Components

The game includes:

- 1 Rule book
- 6 Virtuoso cards
- 6 Gemina cards
- 66 Doubt cards
- 18 Dread cards
- 12 Secrets

*Placing a doubt or dread card “on a virtuoso card” means placing the doubt or dread card face up on top of the virtuoso card itself or on the table next to the virtuoso card.



2. Cards and Secrets

Virtuoso Cards

A virtuoso card shows the virtuoso's **name**, thematic **color**, **symbol**, and unique **ability**. For easier reference, virtuoso abilities are explained on the back cover of this booklet.

Players keep their virtuoso's card **color side up** while their virtuoso is **alive**. Proper card orientation on the table is **vertical** when the virtuoso is **sane** and **horizontal** when the virtuoso is **insane**. When a virtuoso **dies**, turn their card to its **black and white face**.



Gemina Cards

Each player has a **gemina card** that identifies the virtuoso that is their protégé's **gemina**. A virtuoso's gemina is an artistic prodigy that the virtuoso has encountered in dreams and visions since childhood, and with whom the virtuoso holds a psychic and creative attachment. When a virtuoso's gemina is **revealed**, an imagination conduit opens between the virtuoso and their gemina. It is possible for a virtuoso to be their own gemina: such virtuosos grew up with visions of themselves! Geminas are explained in detail on page 6.

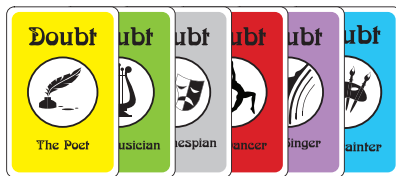


Doubt and Dread Cards

Doubt cards have color faces and display the name, symbol, and color scheme of a specific virtuoso. **Dread cards** have **black faces** and are not matched to a specific virtuoso. "Any virtuoso" is noted on a dread card. Placing a **doubt card** on a virtuoso instills in that

virtuoso feelings of uncertainty and distrust, and drives the virtuoso closer to insanity. Placing a **dread card** on a virtuoso instills in that virtuoso feelings of horror and crushing apprehension, and drives the virtuoso closer to both insanity and death.

A virtuoso may never have more than a combined total of 5 doubt and/or dread cards on it. New doubt and dread cards may not be played out of a player's hand to replace existing doubt or dread cards.



Secrets

Every virtuoso harbors a **secret**: a hidden attitude they hold toward their gemina. A virtuoso may have grown to admire their gemina, or they may have grown to fear their gemina and view them as a nemesis.

There are 12 secrets included in the game, comprised of 2 sets of 6 unique secrets so that different virtuosos may hold the same secret in a game. Each secret explains how the virtuoso feels about their gemina and the effect the secret could have on the player's final score.

Love

You cherish and adore your gemina. You get +1 point if your gemina is **NOT DEAD** at the end of the game.

Malice

You seek the ruin and downfall of your gemina. You get +1 point if your gemina is **NOT SANE** at the end of the game.

3. Setup and Play

Game Setup

1. Randomly give each player a **virtuoso card**. This is the player's protégé.
2. Shuffle together only the **gemina cards** that match the virtuosos to be used in the game. Give one gemina card at random to each player, face down. These cards are private information. Players may look at their own gemina card and use that knowledge as they wish, but keep the card face down until their gemina is **revealed** during play.
3. Give each player a random **secret card**, face down. Players may look at their card but keep the information private until the game is scored at the end.
4. Give each player **1 dread card** to put into their starting hand, then put the remaining dread cards **face up** in a pile within easy reach of the players. This pile is the **Well of Dread**.
5. Shuffle together only the **doubt cards** that match the virtuosos to be used in the game and deal 4 cards face down to each player for their starting hand. These cards are private information. Place the remaining cards **face down** in a stack in reach of the players. This pile is the **Well of Doubt**. Leave room nearby for a **discard pile**. With 4 doubts and 1 dread, each player will have a starting hand of 5 cards.
6. All virtuosos begin play alive and free of doubts and dreads. Choose a player to take their turn first, then continue play clockwise until the game ends.



Game Play

For players with living virtuosos, a turn consists of three steps: **draw**, **play**, **discard**. Modifications for insanity are on page 5. Special fantasma rules are on page 7.

- 1. Draw:** At the start of their turn, each player draws **2 cards** from the **Well of Doubt** and puts them into their hand.
- 2. Play (A):** After drawing cards, the player must **make a play**. The player must make one of the plays noted below. If unable to do so, they must choose a card from their hand and put it face down on the **discard pile** as their play.
 - **Plant doubt.** The player takes a doubt card from their hand and places it on the **matching virtuoso card** (e.g., a Painter doubt card may only be planted on The Painter virtuoso card). The virtuoso must be able to accept the addition of the new doubt card (i.e., be alive and sane).
 - **Plant dread.** The player takes a dread from their hand and places it on their choice of **any virtuoso card**. The virtuoso must be able to accept the addition of the new dread card (i.e., be alive and sane).
 - **Use ability.** The player takes one of **their own virtuoso's doubt cards** from their hand, reveals it to the other players, and puts it face down on the **discard pile** to activate and use **their own virtuoso's ability** (noted on the virtuoso card and defined on the back of this booklet). Players may use their virtuoso's ability as long as the virtuoso is **alive**, sane or insane.
 - **Instill dread.** *Only players with sane virtuosos may instill dread.* The player takes **any pair of matching doubt cards** from their hand (e.g., two Poet doubts), reveals them to the other players and puts them face down on the **discard pile**, then takes a **dread card** from the **Well of Dread** and places it on their choice of **any alive and sane virtuoso's card**. NOTE: The extra card used will permanently reduce the player's hand size.

Play (B): If a player's virtuoso was sane at the start of their turn and is still sane at the end of their Play (A) step, that player may make **one additional play** if they choose to do so. NOTE: The extra card(s) used to make the additional play will permanently reduce the player's hand size.

- 3. Discard:** After making their play(s), the player selects a card from their hand to **discard** (or picks one at random if their virtuoso just went insane). Players may not skip the discard step! Discarded **doubt cards** are placed face down on the **discard pile**. Discarded **dread cards** are returned to the **Well of Dread**. When the Well of Doubt gets low, form a new Well of Doubt by placing the existing Well of Doubt on top of the discard pile and start a new discard pile.

4. Sanity and Insanity

Sane and Insane Virtuosos

A virtuoso is **sane** (vertical orientation) when their card has fewer than a combined total of 5 doubt and/or dread cards on it. When a virtuoso card has a combined total of 5 doubt and/or dread cards on it, that virtuoso instantly goes **insane** (horizontal orientation).



Insane Orientation

Sane Orientation

Playing a Sane Virtuoso

In addition to planting doubt, planting dread, and using their ability, sane virtuosos may **instill dread** and have the option to make a **second play** on their turn. A player with a sane virtuoso may also choose to **reveal** their gemina (see page 6).

Going Insane

When a virtuoso's card accrues a combined total of 5 doubt and/or dread cards, the virtuoso immediately goes insane. Whenever a virtuoso goes insane, rotate their card into a horizontal orientation and **flip over their gemina card**: if the card is face up, turn it face down; if the card is face down, turn it face up. It is possible for a virtuoso to gain and lose their sanity several times during a game.

Playing an Insane Virtuoso

A player with an **insane virtuoso** has a normal draw step followed by a special “play and discard” step. After drawing cards, the player takes **2 random cards** from their hand, looks at them, then makes a play with one of the two cards and discards the other. The player is free to make any legal play they desire using only one of the two cards. For example, they could play a doubt matched to their own virtuoso to use their virtuoso's ability. The player **must** play one of the two cards if able; otherwise, they must discard both cards. Discarding ends their turn.

Insane virtuosos may **not** instill dread and **do not** get the option to make a second play on their turn. *Insanity limits the cards the player may use on their turn, not how the player uses them.*

Regaining Sanity

If the combined total of doubts and/or dreads on an insane virtuoso is ever **reduced below 5**, the virtuoso immediately regains their sanity: rotate their card into a vertical orientation and continue play with a sane virtuoso. Players **do not** flip their gemina card when their virtuoso regains sanity, only when they lose it.

5. Geminas

Who is the Gemina?

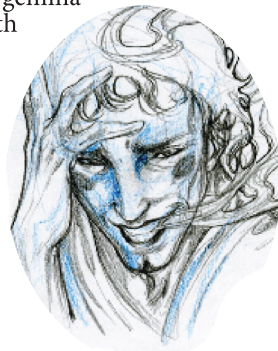
The virtuoso pictured on a player's gemina card is their protégé's **gemina**. The gemina card merely identifies the virtuoso. The term **gemina** refers to the **virtuoso** in the game pictured on the gemina card, not the gemina card itself.

Revealing a Gemina

A gemina is **revealed** when its matching gemina card is turned **face up** and remains revealed as long as the card remains face up. There are two ways to reveal a gemina: **by choice** and **by insanity**.

Reveal by choice: A player with a **sane virtuoso** may choose to **reveal** their virtuoso's gemina on their turn. This does not count as a play. The player turns their gemina card **face up**, then takes a dread card from the Well of Dread and places it on **their own virtuoso's card**. A player may only choose to turn their gemina card from face down to face up, not from face up to face down.

Reveal by insanity: Every time a player goes insane, their gemina card flips over. If their gemina is **revealed** by going insane, take a dread card from the Well of Dread and put it on the **gemina virtuoso's card**. If the gemina virtuoso is insane, **replace** one of their doubt cards with the dread card. It doesn't matter who the gemina virtuoso is: if The Poet went insane and revealed their gemina to be The Poet, The Poet would suffer the increase in dread. If the gemina virtuoso is a fantasma, ignore the dread effect.



Using a Gemina

While a player's gemina is **both revealed and alive**, the player may use **their gemina's ability** as well as their own virtuoso's ability. For example, if The Dancer revealed The Painter as their gemina, the player with The Dancer could play a Dancer doubt to use The Dancer's ability or play a Painter doubt to use the The Painter's ability! If a player's virtuoso is **their own gemina**, they gain the ability to draw **one additional card each turn** during their draw step (thereby drawing 3 cards on their turn). This gives the player the ability to more easily tailor their hand of doubts and mitigates the extra cost of instilling dread or making a second play while sane.

6. Fantomas

Fantomas are the ghosts of dead virtuosos, aware and deliberate, neither sane nor insane. A virtuoso **dies** and becomes a fantasma the moment their card has a combined total of 5 doubt and/or dread cards on it and 3 or more of those cards are **dread cards**. Virtuosos that are sane when killed pass through insanity and flip over their gemina card as they die. When a player's virtuoso dies, that player discards all cards in their hand and all doubts and dreads on their virtuoso, then flips the virtuoso's card over to its **black and white side**. Doubt and dread cards may not be placed on fantomas. Fantomas keep their **secrets**.

Fantomas take their turn in their normal turn rotation. On their turn, a player with a fantasma draws one dread card from the Well of Dread and must **either plant that dread card** on their choice of any *living, sane* virtuoso or use that dread card to **replace a doubt card** on their choice of any *living* virtuoso. Replaced doubt cards are discarded. Since a fantasma's score is based on the number of fantomas in play, it behooves fantasma players to make as many new fantomas as possible. However, because fantomas keep their secrets, they may find it more beneficial to place their dreads in keeping with those secrets.

7. Winning the Game

The game **immediately ends** when *fewer than two sane virtuosos* remain in play. The players calculate their scores as shown below, then reveal their secrets and modify their scores accordingly. The player with the highest modified score wins. Players may tie, but **sane virtuosos win ties with insane virtuosos** and **fantomas lose ties with living virtuosos**. Players may also play "campaign style" and award the ultimate win to the player with the highest cumulative score over multiple games.

<u>Virtuoso is...</u>	<u>Player's point total is...</u>
Sane	10 – 1 for each doubt – 2 for each dread on the virtuoso card
Insane	9 – 1 for each doubt – 2 for each dread on the virtuoso card
A fantasma	2 + 1 for each fantasma in play (4 player game)
	1 + 1 for each fantasma in play (5 player game)
	0 + 1 for each fantasma in play (6 player game)

What happens if a sane virtuoso wins?

The virtuoso's muse is lauded as the most influential and powerful of all muses. The virtuoso's artistic output is revered and their art form becomes the cornerstone of artistic expression for generations to come. Classicism in sculpture and Baroque music are examples.



What happens if an insane virtuoso wins?

The virtuoso's madness unexpectedly opens their muse's mind to new vistas of creativity and imagination. The virtuoso's strange works and eccentric visions eclipse conventional norms of artistic expression and dominate the art world for a generation. Surrealism and Cubism are examples.

What happens if the fantasmas win?

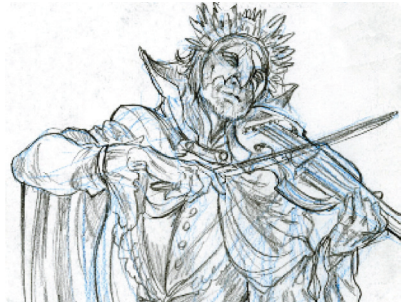
The muses are thrown into stunned disarray as the fantasmas usher in a sea change in artistic representation and appreciation. Old aesthetics are destroyed, conventional norms are shattered, and a completely new era of artistic representation is born. Examples include installation art and multimedia art.

"I've always been driven by powerful imagery and how it can affect a person in a moment of time or over a lifetime. I strive to challenge normalcy with my work, to provoke thought in my audience by offering different perspectives of the world. As an artist, I find the act of creation to be quite humbling: to me, it is at once the most frustrating and rewarding of experiences."

~ Tani Pettit, *Insane Virtuoso*

"My aim as an artist is to create a sense of mystique, whimsy or humor with my work. I'm always looking for the small moments in my illustrations, the small details which really open up and describe a different world. Be it a detailed, knotted piece of wood many hundreds of years old, or a row of intricate gems telling a magical history as with the 'Bemused' cover."

~ Naomi Robinson, *Sane Virtuoso*



8. Mood and strategy

Flavor

Bemused™ is a game well served by a full intent to engage in **shameless table talk**. Lie, cajole, wheedle! It adds an element of Machiavellian intrigue to the struggle when players make and break deals or barter the use of their virtuoso's abilities for favors. It can also be quite entertaining to "role play" when planting one's doubts and dreads. For example, a player might plant a dread on The Thespian with a comment about inviting a particularly nasty critic to their next performance...

Abilities

It is helpful to be aware of virtuosos in play with **complementary** abilities. For example, The Musician can remove doubts and The Poet can change dreads into doubts. In exchange for removing one of their doubts, The Poet might change one of The Musician's dreads into a doubt that they can then remove.

Players may also find it helpful to suffer a dread card and **reveal their own gemina** early in the game, especially if either their virtuoso or their gemina has the ability to remove that dread. Even without that ability, it may be worthwhile to **reveal one's own gemina** for the extra card draw.

Play Style

Two play styles that new players tend to adopt are **piling doubts and dreads** onto a single virtuoso and **spreading doubts and dreads** evenly over all the virtuosos. Although piling onto one virtuoso can quickly deprive them of their sanity, it can also quickly spawn a fantasma. Early in the game, this can wreak considerable havoc and lay the foundation for a fantasma win. Evenly distributing doubts and dreads keeps fantasmas at bay, but can set the stage for a swift cascade of madness when geminas start to flip.



Virtuoso Abilities



The Painter



Move doubt: Remove a doubt card from any living virtuoso and place it directly on your choice of any living and sane virtuoso. The doubt does not need to match the chosen virtuoso.



The Dancer



Move dread: Remove a dread card from any living virtuoso and place it directly on your choice of any living and sane virtuoso.



The Musician



Remove doubt: Remove a doubt card from any living virtuoso and put it face down on the discard pile.



The Singer



Remove dread: Remove a dread card from any living virtuoso and return it to the Well of Dread.



The Thespian



Change doubt to dread: Replace a doubt card on any living virtuoso with a dread card from the Well of Dread, then put the replaced doubt card face down on the discard pile.



The Poet



Change dread to doubt: Replace a dread card on any living virtuoso with the top doubt card from the Well of Doubt. The doubt does not need to match the chosen virtuoso. Return the replaced dread card to the Well of Dread.

Taking a Turn

Sane Player*

1. Draw 2 cards.
- 2a. Play...
 - ...Plant doubt.
 - ...Plant dread.
 - ...Use ability.
 - ...Instill Dread.
- 2b. Play again (Option).
3. Discard a card.

Insane Player

1. Draw 2 cards.
2. Take 2 random cards from your hand, play one of the cards...
 - ...Plant doubt
 - ...Plant dread
 - ...Use ability
3. ... discard the other card.

Fantasma Player

1. Take a dread card from the Well of Dread.
2. Place that dread card on any living virtuoso, either directly or to replace a doubt.

* May reveal their gemina.