

The Chattering Man

Chattering Man

Chattering Man

Big white whiskers,

Lives in a can;

Give him a buck

He'll treat you good

But if you're mean

He'll get you good.

A Chattering Man inhabits the same kinds of city spaces that homeless people do, and in fact these urban spirits live quite openly among the homeless. They don't exactly look very human -- they're usually about seven feet tall, for one thing; also, their stringy white hair seems to grow everywhere on their bodies except around the eyes and mouth -- but a Chattering Man typically slouches, and nobody really looks at them anyway. Particularly since they also are constantly talking to themselves, in every language known to man. It's not mumbling; you can hear words distinctly. But a Chattering Man's external-internal dialogue is almost impossible to follow.

Communicating with a Chattering Man is, however, relatively easier than it looks. They are not delusional or incomprehensible; merely strange. A Chattering Man is perfectly capable of relating facts like 'Six men just ran down that way' or 'One of them was shooting magic bolts out of a staff that turned pigeons into glass.' Asking one for an *opinion*, on the other hand, is asking for a five minute exercise in applied surrealism. On the bright side, a Chattering Man is generally receptive to bribery, cajoling, or merely common courtesy; which is good, because they get surly when insulted and downright vicious when attacked. But if you and it get along well, a Chattering Man's 'blessing' is widely and accurately considered by those in the know to be good luck. Not enough to save you from getting shot, but certainly good enough to have the bullet end up scoring your ribs instead of perforating your gut.

These spirits generally go through their existence -- they genuinely seem content to live in alleys -- without being hassled by either esoteric organizations, or counter-magic groups. In a world where every urbanized cul-de-sac or city alleyway seems to spontaneously spawn malevolent spirits dedicated to spreading bloody urban legends all over the collective unconscious, a Chattering Man is frankly a bit of a relief. It's just *there*. If you leave it alone --

as in, refrain from, say, kicking it, robbing it, molesting it, or setting it on fire -- it leaves you alone. If you're polite to it, it's polite back. If you actually try to do something nice for it, it will try to give you a little bit of good luck in return.

And, of course, if you **do** try to do vicious things to it then it's time for the old "flensing whirlwind of rotten blood and bone shards" routine. From the Secret Masters' point of view, this is an admittedly sometimes overblown, yet fundamentally reasonable defense mechanism. And easily avoidable. After all, maybe one *shouldn't* get a baseball bat and then go out to beat up a bum? -- Because people like that are the sort of people who usually fall afoul of things like a Chattering Man. The Secret Masters are fond of the phrase 'Think of it as evolution in action.' It suits their general operational style.

- © Moe Lane. All rights reserved.
- <http://www.moelane.com>
- <https://www.patreon.com/MoeLane?ty=h>