

MONSTER OF THE WEEK

TOME OF MYSTERIES



FEATURING THE WORK OF

Matthew Aaron • Aaron Burkett • Kane Cathain • Sean Clancy • Jason D'Angelo • Bruno Dias • Felix Girke • Marek Golonka
Luke Green • Bryanna Hitchcock • Sophie Lagacé • Zed Lopez • Paul McBride • Arturo Martinez • Jamie Sands • Michael Sands
Daniel Steadman • Jacob Steele • Chris Stone-Bush • Chloe Sutherland • Mark Tygart • Michał Werder



OPEN THE TOME – IF YOU DARE!

In the *Monster of the Week* roleplaying game, hunters must solve all manner of mysteries before they can save the day. The *Tome of Mysteries* expands their options—and magnifies their peril—with a wide variety of GMing advice, essays, rules, and mysteries from the *Monster of the Week* “Roadhouse Regulars” online community.

Tome of Mysteries requires *Monster of the Week* to play.

In this supplement, you'll find:

- Eight new alternative Weird Moves that go beyond Use Magic.
- Four new Hunter playbooks: The Gumshoe, the Hex, the Searcher, and the Pararomantic.
- Support for weird phenomena type Mysteries like those found in *Fringe* or *The X-Files*.
- Tips and techniques used by experienced Keepers.
- 29 fully detailed mysteries ready to drop into your game.

Grab your friends and your gear.

It's time to unlock the Tome of Mysteries!

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APOCALYPSE**
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For those working at a copy shop and not at all sure
if this means the person standing at your counter
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This is a game where people make up stories about wonderful,
terrible, impossible, glorious things. All the characters and events
portrayed in this work are fictional. Any resemblance to real
people, real terrors, real monsters, or other horrifying realities of
your home dimension is purely coincidental, but kinda hilarious.

DEDICATIONS

Matthew Aaron: I would like to thank Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and all the blues greats who put their pain to song and gave us something truly beautiful.

Bryanna Hitchcock: To Sean Nittner and Big Bad Con for giving people like me a safe place to run and play *Monster of the Week* in person.

Paul McBride: Dedicated to Connor, Shylee, Gavin and everyone who played *The Circles*.

Michael Sands: To my family, Amanda & Zelda. Also the Monday Crew for putting up with all my gaming whims for so many years.

Chloe Sutherland: To all those at the Battle of Arcadia, and to another 8,000 years.

Mark Tygart: To some of my favorite people: Emily Tygart, Amy Caulfield, Josh "Lopez" Caulfield, Molly Caulfield, Bridget Caulfield, David "the profiler" Schniepp, "real life actor" David Dalton and our own "President for Life" Gregg M. Schwenk. This is also dedicated in fond memory of my late "spiritual advisor" Christian Slyvas, R.I.P.

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Luke Green: Thanks to my players for whom I originally created these mysteries. And thanks to Michael Sands for working with me on this project and on the Changeling playbook. And also just for making the game.

Zed Lopez: I thank all the hunters, for saving the world so darn many times.

Arturo Martinez: Thanks to my sifu Michael Aronson—I hope I never have to avenge you.

Michael Sands: To the Monday Crew (Scott Kelly, Matthew Mansell, Dennis McFaull, Andrew McLeod, Daniel Steadman, and Stefan Tyler) for all the great games, including playtesting the new rules for this collection. And to all the fans of *Monster of the Week* who wanted the *Tome of Mysteries* to exist, especially those in the author list who wrote up all this cool material for it.

Chloe Sutherland: Thanks to SAGA for getting me into this fantastic hobby in the first place—and to the revolving cast of players who participated in the initial runs of these scenarios.

Michał Werder: Thanks to my whole MotW team: to my Keeper Jacek Radzymiński, who allowed me to introduce my “The Pararomantic” prototype in his campaign and to all my fellow hunters. Especially to Marek Golonka, who helped me improve the playbook and encouraged me to submit it to this collection.



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FOREWORD

STEVE HICKEY

Bystander: Historian (motivation: to report, accurately)

HISTORY

When it's your turn to describe your relationship with Mike, pick one of the following:

- You were there near the beginning of the design work for this game.
- You admire his work ethic, but his relentless nature unsettles you. Where do you think it comes from?
- You have a constructive editing relationship: even your (infrequent) disagreements lead to better outcomes.
- You respect his hard-earned knowledge and often come to him for game design advice.

I've been looking back through old internet posts, and I suspect the first time I heard Mike talk about *Monster of the Week* was around 9pm on October 27th, 2007.

We were at Fright Night, a one-night-only horror roleplaying convention held in Wellington, New Zealand. Mike had just run *The Infected*, a game by Eric Provost, and as players we were recovering from an intense session involving some hapless eco-tourists trying to outrun fast zombies.

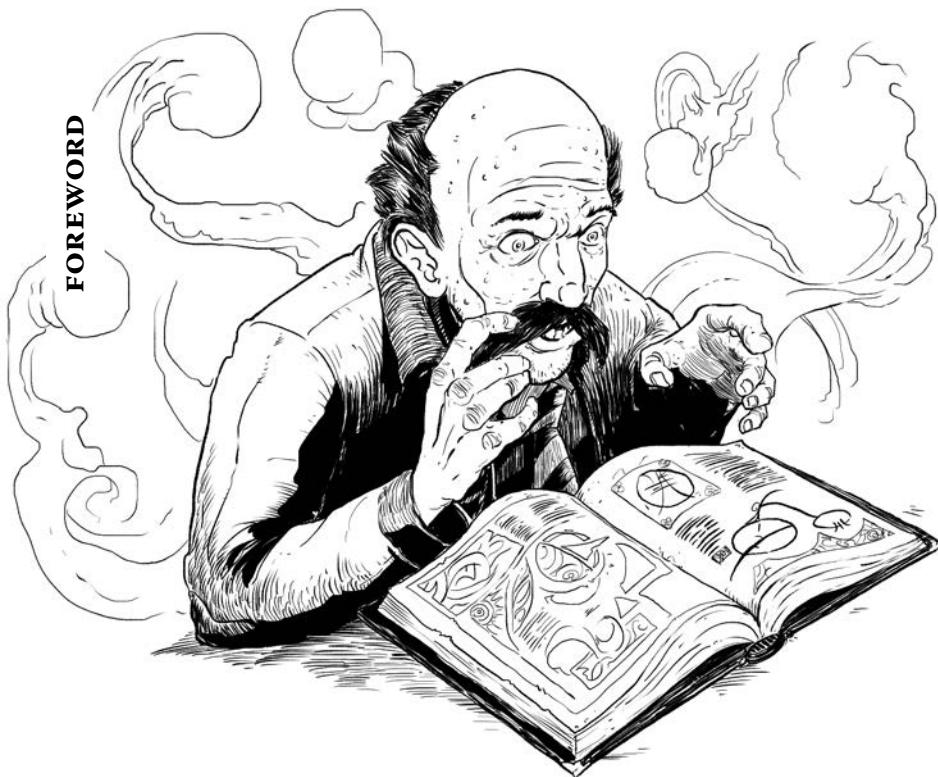
Mike mentioned he wanted to work on a game that covered more than just survival horror. He told me what he was thinking of calling it.

My immediate reactions were:

- "Of course! That's brilliant!", and
- "If you get this right, it could be one of the go-to games in the monster-hunting genre."

He also said he'd already written up a few different versions of the rules.

I nodded, thinking it'd be ready to play by Christmas.



WHEN YOU DESIGN A GAME, ROLL +GRIND

Three and half years later, Mike had tested out quite a few more than a ‘few’ different versions of the game. But none of them provided the type of play he wanted: The mechanics didn’t flow; the fights were too long and clunky.

While I hadn’t read the rules at this point, I’d played a draft version at a later Fright Night. As usual, I said what I enjoyed, unsuccessfully tried to stop myself offering solutions to fix its rough spots, and told him I’d be happy to playtest it.

My fear, though, was this would be one of those games (every designer has them) that just gets stuck. The core insight, the one that lets you solve the game and make it fun, just never arrives.

Mike didn’t seem frustrated, though. (“Oh, I wish!” said Mike, when I showed him a draft of this foreword.) He just kept revising and testing.

Meanwhile, I realised the two of us had never played an on-going game. In mid-2010, I suggested we could test out the beta version of a new game called Apocalypse World.

WHEN YOU FIRST PLAY A GAME THAT'S POWERED BY THE APOCALYPSE, ROLL +WEIRD

That first contact with *Apocalypse World* was definitely weird.

As a group, we were figuring out the implications of the rules. How tough were our characters? If I got ambushed by four resentful members of my cult, was that a death sentence? How did moves trigger and who was responsible for noticing it? Did the History rules make sense? What about advancement? What happens when you change playbooks?

It was glorious. Mike, Sophie, Simon, and I leapt into creating a world that had been fractured into multiple universes, and into conflicts between our characters that had me utterly absorbed.

But for Mike ... I don't know how quickly he figured it out, but he must have been pretty damn excited when he realised how *Apocalypse World* could map on to his monster-hunting game.

We started playing *Apocalypse World* on 3 August 2010.

He started running his own game of *Apocalypse World* about a week and half later.

Then, looking at the official Powered by the Apocalypse forums, I can see the following:

- Mike designed his first playbook (The Metal Beast, a soldier in powered armour) on 26 August 2010.
- He hit his first ‘Ungiven future’ advance in late September 2010 and created his first ‘second character’ (a savvyhead I still have fond memories of).

And then, on November 19, 2010 there’s this post, entitled ‘Monster of the Week—character playbook brainstorming’:

- “I’m rebuilding my long in creation game *Monster of the Week* as an *Apocalypse World* hack. The game is supposed to get into the zone that *Supernatural* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* inhabit.”
- “It’s going well, but I feel like I need a couple more character types in there.”

I had a pdf copy of “Monster World” in my hands by 6 December 2010.

Just in time for Christmas.

GAME DESIGN IS A CONVERSATION

It took 259 days for the game to go from its first external playtest to being crowdfunded.

It happened fast. Here are a few reasons why:

I ran the first session for my Tuesday night group, and we got all the way to the end without the rules fundamentally breaking down. That's a rare mark of success for a game-in-playtest. I've only seen it happen two other times (with *Nod* and *Monsterhearts*).

Our Tuesday night group wanted to play a second session (another great sign).

While there was a lot right with the game, there was enough wrong with it that we wanted to give lots of feedback and write about it online.

Our playtesting and posting generated more interest from other groups. And their playtesting and posting did the same. A positive attention spiral created the two most helpful things in of all in game design: fans and a culture of play.

Mike encouraged people to be creative collaborators. He asked questions about what they found fun, and built new stuff based off their enthusiasm.

And, at the same time, when Mike thought a section of the rules was achieving what he wanted he was great at locking it down. I really admire that quality in him. (Maybe it comes from his extensive experience working on IT projects?)

If you're interested in hacking *Monster of the Week* or creating your own game, here's what Mike taught me:

- Test whether the idea of your game is interesting enough that people ask to play it
- Put your game out for playtesting before it's perfect
- When you find fans, encourage them. Encourage public feedback. Create a healthy culture where people feel their ideas are valued.
- Start finalising the game when you think you're finding a balance between:
 - your vision for what you want out of the game.
 - what other people want out of the game.
 - what the game's become.

WHEN YOU DESIGN A GAME, YOUR PLAYTESTERS WILL TELL YOU WHAT YOU NEED

The Luck rules were a late addition. They came from this comment after our first playtest:

"Jamie had a little bit of cognitive dissidents: their Wronged character was a badass in their head, but fumbled quite a few rolls."

Despite Mike teasing me about the phrase ‘cognitive dissidents’, he hired me to edit the game.

That first playtest was also where I started jotting down notes about how to design a mystery.

Of all our work together, our back-and-forth about how to create mysteries and arcs in the monster-hunting genre is my favourite memory (and the section I’m most proud of). I’m looking forward to running (or, hopefully, playing) the mysteries in this collection and to applying the advice about creating mysteries on the fly.

ONCE YOU’VE FILLED FIVE EXPERIENCE BOXES, UPGRADE TO A 2ND EDITION

Mike was the first person I knew in real life who ran a crowdfunding campaign. He handled it with aplomb, remaining calm at all times while figuring out how to print and distribute a book on schedule.

Even better: the game got played.

I had the privilege of watching SAGA (the University of Canterbury’s awesome gaming club), organise a 12-week run of *Monster of the Week*. They gathered about 50 players (many of them new to role-playing). Dividing into teams of hunters working in a shared universe, they pursued different mysteries (with hunters able to swap teams every week). All of it led into a single coordinated, apocalyptic final confrontation.

We formed a constructive online community on Google Plus (‘The Monster of the Week Roadhouse’) and the game developed a reputation as a good *Apocalypse World* hack for first-time players.

Fred Hicks’ enthusiasm to make sure the game reached the widest possible audience led to the revised edition in 2015. Fred was great to work with: relaxed and professional.

I was also a huge fan of his process for running the game, especially the new mythology he created (‘The Hungry’) filled with monsters like the Editors and the Subtractors.

AND NOW WE HAVE THIS COLLECTION

Organised by Mike, it's filled with contributions from Roadhouse regulars and some of the first-generation Wellington- and Christchurch-based monster-hunters and playtesters.

In addition to advice from experienced keepers, this volume fills a big gap in the genre: it provides rules and adventures for *Fringe* and *X-Files* style 'phenomenon mysteries'. This is my favourite type of mystery: where the antagonist is a problem to solve rather than an entity to beat up or banish.

I hope you enjoy the Tome of Mysteries—Monster: Breeder (motivation: to bring forth evil). May you retire to safety.

— Steve Hickey



P.S.

I've had three realisations about running *Monster of the Week*. But first, a warning:

Be very cautious about introducing two mysteries at the same time. Solving a mystery is mentally challenging. Players have to learn about the town and its inhabitants. They have to investigate, decide what the monster is, decide what to do about it, and then do it.

Two mysteries are great, as long as you realise it'll take much longer than normal for your players to categorise the clues and figure out there's more than one monster.

And now, three things I loved figuring out:

Magic doesn't have to take the form of a spell. For my latest group, magic came from creating potions ... and I finally got to use the 'Potion Miscibility' tables from *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, to find out what happened when a hunter drank two potions at the same time.

Fred Hicks' work on The Hungry demonstrated a great thing about creating a custom mythos for your game: It throws players off-balance. They can't make any assumptions about how things work (just like the best bits of *Supernatural* Season 7).

Here's a quick way to create a mythology. Choose an existential or contemporary dread. What are three 'vectors' that would exacerbate or spread that dread? Those are the 'gods' or 'major villains.' Now: what are the reasons each of them would be in opposition to the others? Hopefully this gives you enough inspiration to create one servitor (a new type of monster) for each god. Finish off by asking yourself "What's the big secret about this mythos that nobody knows yet?" and you're good to go.

You have an unlimited special effects budget in your games. As part of running a series of cinematic 'wide-screen' games, I threw my hunters up against a dragon so enormous it seemed impossible to kill. Conventional weapons couldn't hurt it, and the hunters had to figure out the dragon's weaknesses during its attacks. My favourite thing about that game? Inspired by *Pacific Rim* and *Dragonball Z*, I gave the dragon three different forms. Every time it took a lethal amount of damage, it changed into its next form: tougher, with different stats and moves. It totally frustrated the players (in the best possible way) and lent an epic feel to the confrontation.





RULES

In this chapter you'll find optional add-ons for your game. They cover:

- ***Alternative Weird Basic Moves:*** For when **use magic** isn't enough for your game.
- ***Weird Phenomenon Mysteries:*** Mysteries where the ultimate problem is a strange occurrence to be unravelled rather than a monster to be defeated.
- ***Special Moves:*** Luck-based moves for all hunter types.
- ***Flexible Investigation:*** An alternative to the list of questions from **investigate a mystery**.

ALTERNATIVE WEIRD BASIC MOVES

By Michael Sands

These optional rules allow your hunters to have different Weird basic moves, instead of everyone having access to **use magic**. These rules are intended for games that place more emphasis on weird science and paranormal powers than *Monster of the Week*'s default occultism and magic.

If you use this rule, **use magic** is no longer a basic move for all hunters. Instead, all hunters pick a weirdness move from **how are you weird?** (See below.)

Any hunter playbook moves that change how you would normally **use magic** now apply to the new move (if it doesn't directly apply, come up with an appropriate adjustment with the agreement of your group—perhaps that hunter can now **use magic** with the modifications applied).

CASTING SPELLS WITHOUT USE MAGIC

Hunters who do not have **use magic** as their Weirdness move must treat any spell as big magic. The Keeper may wish to pick requirements towards the lighter end of the spectrum if the spell's effects will be at the level of **use magic**.

Big magic still works the same for everyone, but you may adjust the requirements so they have a more 'weird science' style when appropriate.



YOUR MYTHOLOGY

As with all custom moves, you should consider how this works with your world's mythology. Many of these weirdness moves make certain things true in your world.

For instance, if a hunter chooses **past lives** then it becomes true that some people are reincarnated and can remember their previous lives. If someone takes **illuminated**, there must be some Secret Masters out there with some plan for the world (or something pretending to be that).

Perhaps some of these options aren't appropriate. Some of these new moves might be rare. Consider that along with your concept as you pick which one is right for your hunter. Check that the whole group is on board with your choice.

HOW ARE YOU WEIRD?

Choose one of the following as your basic move for Weird:

- **Empath** (page 18)
- **Illuminated** (page 19)
- **No limits** (page 20)
- **Past lives** (page 20)
- **Sensitive** (page 21)
- **Telekinesis** (page 22)
- **Trust your gut** (page 21)
- **Use magic** (as in vanilla *Monster of the Week*)
- **Weird science** (page 23)

If none of these weirdness moves seem appropriate, use:

- **Trust your gut** or **no limits** for a relatively mundane hunter.
- **Weird science** for a curious, scientific minded hunter.
- **Sensitive** or **empath** for those with psychic potential.
- **Use magic** for anyone else.

These are the weirdness moves that have the smallest implications for your game's mythology.

THE NEW WEIRD MOVES

EMPATH

When you **open up your brain to feel the emotions of something right there in front of you**, roll +Weird:

- On a 10 or more, you gain a clear impression of their current emotional state and intentions. Take +1 forward when acting on this knowledge.
- On a 7-9, you gain a hazy impression of their current emotional state and intentions.
- On a miss, your brain is overwhelmed with emotion.

Advanced Empath. When you advance your **empath** move, add this:

- On a 12 or more, you get an impression (as for 10 or more), and you may ask one follow-up question that the Keeper will answer honestly.

You can use **empath** on anything with emotions (e.g. animals and some monsters), but the less human they are, the less it's safe for you. If the emotions are especially strong or alien, you might need to **act under pressure** regardless of how successful your roll was.





ILLUMINATED

You have become enlightened, and sometimes receive information telepathically from the Secret Masters.

The Secret Masters are the benevolent conspiracy fighting to make society (or the universe) perfect. At least, that's what they told you.

Sometimes, at the Keeper's discretion, they proactively send you information, advice, or orders.

When you **telepathically ask the Secret Masters for aid**, roll +Weird:

- On a 10 or more, the Secret Masters reveal a key fact, clue, or technique that will help you.
- On a 7-9, the Secret Masters need you to complete a task for them. Once it is done, they reveal a key fact, clue, or technique that will help you.
- On a miss, the Secret Masters' reply is terrible, garbled, or somehow dangerously wrong.

Advanced Illuminated. When you advance your **illuminated** move, add this:

- On a 12 or more, the Secret Masters reveal a key fact, clue, or technique that will help you. You may ask one follow-up question that the Keeper will answer honestly.

Keeper: Create the Secret Masters as a threat—consider using the new conspiracy ‘Phenomenon’ type (page 24). If more than one hunter is **illuminated**, the group decides if all the Secret Masters are united or at odds.

NO LIMITS

When you **push your physical body past its limits**, roll +Weird:

- On a 10 or more, your body obeys your will, to the limits of physical possibility (see below), for a moment.
- On a 7-9, you do it but choose one consequence: suffer 1-harm, take -1 forward, or you need to rest right now.
- On a miss, something goes horribly wrong.

Advanced No Limits. If you advance your **no limits** move, add this:

- On a 12 or more, you can continue acting at your body's limits for 30 seconds.

For the purposes of this move, “physical possibility” means “conceivably possible for a human.” For example:

- **Physically Possible:** Lift an SUV, Jump over a truck, Punch through a wall.
- **Not Physically Possible:** Lift a building, Fly, Punch a blast of energy at a foe.

PAST LIVES

When you **channel your previous incarnations to discover something**, pose your question and roll +Weird:

- On a 10 or more, a past life has something useful to offer. Ask the Keeper two of the questions below.
- On a 7-9, a past life has a little experience with this. Ask the Keeper one of the questions below.
- On a miss, a past life takes over for a while.

Advanced Past Lives. If you advance your **past lives** move, add this:

- On a 12 or more, a past life knows exactly what you were after. Ask the Keeper one of the questions below, and one free-form question. Gain +1 ongoing while acting on the answers.

Past Lives questions:

- What did a past life discover about _____?
- How did a past life deal with _____?
- What important hidden secret can a past life show me the way to?
- What did a past life learn too late to help them?
- What does a past life advise me to do now?

You should note down the names and time periods of your previous lives for future reference. They can't overlap in time, but otherwise may be from any time or place.

SENSITIVE

When you **open up your brain to the psychic environment**, roll +Weird:

- On a 10 or more, you gain a definite impression (a vision, tangible aura, overheard thought, etc) about something important.
- On a 7-9, you gain a hazy impression about something important.
- On a miss, your brain makes contact with something dangerous.

Advanced Sensitive. When you advance your **sensitive** move, add this:

- On a 12 or more, you get an impression as for 10 or more, plus you may ask one follow-up question that the Keeper will answer honestly.

Although you will find out something important, it won't necessarily relate to your current concerns or the mystery you are investigating right now.

TRUST YOUR GUT

When you **consult your instincts about what to do next**, roll +Weird:

- On a 10 or more, the Keeper will tell where you should go. Wherever that is, it will be important. You get +1 ongoing on the way to this place.
- On a 7-9, the Keeper will tell you a general direction to go. Take +1 forward as you explore that.
- On a miss, your instincts lead you into danger.

Advanced Trust Your Gut. If you advance your **trust your gut** move, add this:

- On a 12 or more, in addition to the usual 10+ result, the Keeper will tell you about one important thing you should investigate further.

Your gut feelings will point you somewhere important, but they do not care about your conscious concerns. To your gut, the current mystery is just one important thing amongst many.



TELEKINESIS

When you **fling something with your mind**, roll +Weird:

- On a 10 or more, you move it. Choose two options and mark 1-harm.
- On a 7-9, you move it but it hurts. Choose one option and mark 2-harm.
- On a miss, something goes horribly wrong.

By default you can move something smaller than a person. You don't have much control, and you can't move it strongly enough to hurt anything.

Telekinesis options (anything not picked is not true):

- Something is held fast.
- Something is hurt (2-harm smash).
- Something catches fire.
- You can fling something bigger than a person.
- You keep it basically under your control.
- You suffer 1 less harm.

Advanced Telekinesis. When you advance your **telekinesis** move, add this:

- On a 12 or more, choose three options. You may also choose from these advanced options:
 - Something explodes (3-harm close fire area messy)
 - Something implodes (3-harm close crush)
 - Lots of stuff is flying under your control.
 - You have perfect and precise control over exactly what happens.



WEIRD SCIENCE

When you **create or adapt a device to analyse or deal with strangeness**, say what it will do and roll +Weird:

- On a 10 or more, you pick two requirements.
- On a 7-9, you pick one requirement and the Keeper picks a second one.
- On a miss, something goes horribly wrong. You are still able to create your device, but the Keeper picks three requirements.

Weird science requirements:

- It needs a rare and/or weird material.
- It won't be very reliable.
- It requires huge amounts of power or fuel.
- It will take a long time to get it working.
- It won't work exactly as you intended.
- You'll need help (beyond the hunters on your team) to finish it.

Advanced Weird Science. When you advance your weird science move, add this:

- On a 12 or more, you gain +1 ongoing when operating the device.

PHENOMENA MYSTERIES

By Michael Sands

Phenomena mysteries give hunters the chance to investigate an increasingly dangerous source of weirdness rather than a monster.

To create a mystery centered on a phenomenon, the Keeper will need the following details:

- A basic concept (like a standard mystery) describing what is going on.
- A phenomenon type and motivation.
- What effects the phenomenon has on hunters (and other bystanders) who get too close.
- What its weakness is (this works differently to monster weaknesses).
- Custom moves for its effects (optional but recommended).

PHENOMENON TYPES

These are the possible phenomenon types:

- Alien (motivation: to be unfathomable)
- Artifact (motivation: to grant someone more power than they can handle)
- Biohazard (motivation: to infect, harm, and spread)
- Bubble (motivation: to keep inside things inside, and outside things outside)
- Conspiracy (motivation: to gather power, keep secrets, and create confusion)
- Corruption (motivation: to change the laws of the universe)
- Experiment (motivation: to unleash dangers)
- Mutagen (motivation: to transform creatures and people)
- Panic (motivation: to make people act irrationally)
- Portal (motivation: to draw things from one world to another)
- Teratogen (motivation: to turn creatures and people into monsters)
- Zone (motivation: to harm all that venture within)

Every phenomenon should have at least one custom move to describe what it does. Create custom moves for a phenomenon the same way you would for a monster, based on your concept and its abilities.



For a phenomenon, weaknesses are not what allows it be defeated or killed. Weaknesses are the secrets or discoveries that will allow the hunters to mitigate, undo, or prevent what the phenomenon wants to do. In general, create one weakness that allows the hunters to stop the phenomenon (or to stop its bad effects). If applicable, create another weakness that allows them to cure those who were affected.

For example: *The phenomenon is a time loop (type: Bubble) that has a town stuck repeating one afternoon, and prevents anyone from leaving. It is caused by strange crystals that were discovered in a nearby mine. The phenomenon's weakness is that it must be able to radiate energy to create the time loop effect—if the crystals are contained (by returning them to the mine, placing them in a special containment device, or something similar) then the effect will stop.*

You should create a countdown for the mystery as normal. However, rather than thinking about a monster's plan and how it will get worse, you should think about how the phenomenon will become more and more dangerous as it grows without constraint.

As with standard mystery design, you should create other threats. There will be bystanders and places as usual, and often minions (including people taking advantage of, or believing they control, the phenomenon). The phenomenon could even involve or create monsters—these would need to be defeated in the usual ways.

PHENOMENA THREAT MOVES

These are the threat moves a phenomenon can use during the mystery:

- Hint at its effects.
- Show its effects directly and undeniably.
- Break the world's laws.
- Increase or decrease in size or intensity.
- Create some new weirdness.
- Harm or destroy someone or something.
- React unexpectedly.
- Escape from containment.
- Hold something in place.
- Grant an unnatural ability.
- Hinder movement.
- Subvert a bystander's motivation.

Because phenomena are more varied in their motivations and powers than monsters, you should rely more on custom moves. Note down a few specific things the phenomenon might do (these might overlap with the general phenomenon moves).

For example: *The time loop example above might have these custom moves:*

- *If you try to leave the time loop area, you find yourself back in town with a short block of missing time.*
- *The crystals cause a weird subsonic buzzing feeling when you are near them.*
- *At 8:23pm, the time resets to 12:16pm of the same day.*
- *Only those who entered the town after the crystals began looping time can perceive the multiple loops. Those who were there at the start just live the same afternoon over and over without noticing or remembering previous loops.*

INVESTIGATING WEIRD PHENOMENA

In order to make the **investigate a mystery** move a bit less creature-specific, hunters dealing with phenomena may ask the following as part of the standard list of questions:

- How is this phenomenon doing this?
- What could fix it, cure it, or slow it down?
- How far does the effect reach?
- What will be affected next?

SPECIAL MOVES

By Michael Sands

Some of the hunter playbooks get a special move when they spend Luck. This optional section provides special moves for all the hunter types. I've included the existing ones so you have them all available for reference.

Action Scientist Special: When you spend a Luck, some gadget or machine near you will do something weird, malfunction, break down, or explode.

Chosen Special: When you spend a Luck, something from your Fate will come up in play.

Crooked Special: When you spend a Luck, someone from your past will reappear in your life to collect on a debt or obligation.

Divine Special: When you spend a Luck, you get word your Mission requires something difficult that must be done. By you. Urgently.

Expert Special: When you spend a Luck, you'll discover something happening now is related to something you were involved in years ago. Maybe it's directly due to your actions, or maybe someone else is dabbling in the same area.

Exile Special: When you spend a Luck, you'll find something from your original life. Maybe something good, maybe something bad.

Flake Special: When you spend a Luck, pick an aspect of the current situation. The Keeper will tell you what other conspiracies that aspect is connected to. If that aspect wasn't part of another conspiracy, it is now.

Gumshoe Special: When you use a point of Luck your next regular case will actually be a mystery for your hunter group, not a regular case at all (and the monster will focus its attention on you!)

Hard Case Special: When you spend a Luck, an enemy from your past comes back into your life. They aren't happy to see you.

Hex Special: When you spend Luck, until the rest of the mystery, backlash on your spells will be extra nasty.

Initiate Special: When you spend a Luck, something goes wrong for your Sect: an ill-advised project or a disastrous operation. It might be your fault; it could be due to the Sect's bad traditions.

Meddling Kid Special: When you spend a Luck, you will see something you weren't supposed to see. It might help you with your current mystery or it might just scare you.

Monstrous Special: When you spend a Luck, your monster side gains power. Your Curse may temporarily become stronger, or another disadvantage of your Breed may manifest.

Mundane Special: When you spend a Luck, you'll find something weird. Maybe even useful, but mostly just weird.

Pararomantic Special: When you spend a point of Luck, also mark off one of your relationship status boxes. The Keeper will bring **fate of your love** into play.

Professional Special: When you spend a Luck, your next mission from the Agency comes with lots of Red Tape. Lots.

Searcher Special: When you spend a point of Luck, your first encounter comes up in play. It could be a flashback, new occurrence, or related event.

Snoop Special: When you spend a Luck, you're going to suffer some technical difficulties. Breakdowns, communication problems, weird noises in the recordings. Anything goes.

Spell-Slinger Special: When you spend a Luck, the official council of wizards is going to poke their nose into your business. There is always some rule, tradition, or law you have bent or broken.

Spooky Special: When you spend a Luck, your Dark Side's needs will grow nastier.

Summoned Special: When you spend a Luck, another Sign of the Apocalypse will come to pass. When you have spent all your luck, the Apocalypse begins.

Wronged Special: When you spend a Luck, you find a dangerous lead on your prey. Maybe they know you're coming or they set up the lead in order to lure you in.



MORE FLEXIBLE INVESTIGATIONS

By Michael Sands

Some players find the list of allowed questions in the normal **investigate a mystery** move to be too restrictive. They're designed to focus on the immediate monster-killing needs of the hunters in the game's default style.

If you would like something a bit more open-ended, you can use this alternative basic move:

When you **investigate a mystery** with your particular techniques and skills, roll +Sharp:

- On a 10 or higher, ask the Keeper two general questions or one specific question. Based on how you are investigating, they will tell you honestly and with good detail what you discover.
- On a 7 to 9, ask the Keeper one general question. Based on how you are investigating, they will tell you honestly and with reasonable detail what you discover.
- On a miss, ask the Keeper one general question. They may answer it as they wish. Regardless of the question and answer, something bad happens.

When you advance this move, add this extra result:

- On a 12 or higher, as 10 or higher but you may ask one additional question—specific or general, your choice.

MOVES THAT GRANT DIFFERENT QUESTIONS

Many hunters have moves that grant special questions to ask instead of the usual list. To ensure these moves are still valuable, they now grant one of those special questions *in addition to* the questions granted by your **investigate a mystery** move result.

FOR THE KEEPER

In all other ways, this variant of the **investigate a mystery** move works just the same as the original.

What a hunter discovers still depends on the evidence that is (or could be) present and how they are investigating it. Hunters cannot get answers to questions that do not fit with the investigation techniques they've used, nor can they discover things if there's no way that relevant evidence could be at this scene.

It's okay to tell the player the method they are using uncovers no evidence of the type they are looking for. If this lack of evidence is, itself, an important discovery then using up a question is well worth it. If the lack of evidence is not significant, don't count the question for the purposes of the move. Let the hunter ask another.

CORRECTING COUNTDOWNS

By Michael Sands

I must now confess to an error. All my countdowns are wrong.

I designed them intuitively—poetically, even—when I picked the descriptions of each step.

And I made a mistake.

Dusk comes after Sunset. By definition.

Sorry about that!

In any case, you'll notice all the countdowns in this book have been adjusted to be correct. Please do so in your own mysteries too (although the labels are far from the most important thing).



Day	
Shadows	
Sunset	
Dusk	
Nightfall	
Midnight	



NEW HUNTERS

The following pages include four new hunter types for your games. They are:

The Gumshoe: The supernatural is just another case for this private eye to solve. A tough, ethical charmer, this shamus is in the fictional tradition that stretches from classic noir characters like Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe to the modern Jessica Jones and Lisbeth Salander.

The Hex: A witch motivated by the pursuit of forbidden power, using magic more readily—and more recklessly—than other hunters. E.g. Willow during season six of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

The Pararomantic: A hunter with a loving—but difficult—relationship with a supernatural being. Understands monsters' intentions and can earn their trust, but puts their own heart, and even mortality, at risk. E.g. Elena Gilbert from *The Vampire Diaries*, Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*.

The Searcher: After an encounter with weirdness, they dedicated their life to investigating the unexplained. Very strong investigator, especially at working out what sort of thing is going on. Not really a fighter, but has some defensive options. E.g. Roy Neary in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, or (historically) Charles Fort.

THE GUMSHOE

By Mark Tygart

"You won't understand this... When I take a case, I'm supposed to do something about it. You're supposed to do something about it whether you like it or not. You've got to pay for what you've done, sweetheart, whatever it is I might feel about you. Yes, I'll have some bad nights, but I'll still have myself."

To make your Gumshoe, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, Code, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.



LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, ambiguous, _____.
- Angelic face, unshaven face, handsomely devilish face, world-weary face, sly face, streetwise face, quiet face, knowing face, watchful face, merry face, obvious ex-cop face, hunted face, _____ face.
- Nondescript clothes, tailored clothes and sunglasses, vintage clothes, fashion clothes, fedora and trench coat, California casual, biker clothes, Pacific island casual, _____ clothes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- Charm+2, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird=0
- Charm+2, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough+1, Weird-1
- Charm+1, Cool=0, Sharp+2, Tough+1, Weird-1
- Charm+1, Cool-1, Sharp+2, Tough=0, Weird=+1
- Charm+2, Cool+1, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird-1

GUMSHOE CODE

With the agreement of the Keeper, pick a one-sentence Code that your Gumshoe adheres to.

Example Codes: *Murders must be punished. Monsters must be destroyed. Innocents must be saved. Laws must be enforced. Evil must be exposed. Contracts must be honored. Cases must be solved. The weak must be protected from the powerful. Corruption and treachery must be exposed to the light.*

This Code defines your Gumshoe. Any time you violate your code you forfeit all Code related moves (**The Postman Always Rings Twice**, **The Long Goodbye**) and the ability to spend Luck points. These forfeits last either until the next mystery or you make amends (whichever comes first). As long as you follow the Code people will sense your sincerity: you receive +1 ongoing for **manipulate someone** and you may not be possessed or charmed by any sort of supernatural, alien, or demonic entity or item.

MOVES

You get all the basic moves, and three Gumshoe moves. You get these two:

- Occult Confidential:** The first time in each mystery that you observe a monster, minion, or phenomenon in action, you may ask one question from the **investigate a mystery** list.
- The Naked City:** You have lots of personal contacts wherever you go. Pick four contact types from the following areas (or from other areas agreed to between you and the Keeper):

Academics, Accountants, Artists, Bartenders, Clergy, Conspiracy Theorists, Construction, Courts, Criminals (organised), Criminals (street), Cultists, Engineers, Espionage, Film and TV, Forensic Scientists, Fringe Scientists, Hackers, Journalists, Lawyers, Mechanics, Media, Medical Practitioners, Military, Morgue, Occult, Police (local), Police (national), Politicians, Prisons, Private Security, Property Developers, Stage Magicians, Technologists, Transportation

You can hit them up for info (+1 to one **investigate a mystery** roll) or small favours—but there may be a small cost involved. Personal contacts can provide more significant help but the Keeper decides their price on a case-by-case basis.

Then pick one of these:

- The Postman Always Rings Twice:** Twice per mystery—as long as you follow your Code—you may reroll a roll.
- The Long Goodbye:** You can't die with an open case (usually your current mystery). Specifically, you suffer all harm as normal but your death is postponed until you have either completed or abandoned the case, or you break your Code (then all bets are off).
- Jessica Jones Entry:** When you double-talk your way into a secure location, roll +Charm.

On a 10+ pick three, on a 7-9 pick two, on a fail pick one:

- You don't leave any trace of what you searched.
- You find what you wanted.
- You find something else that's important.
- You don't piss anyone off.
- You aren't recognised.

- Out of the Past:** You have a police buddy who will do you big favors. Get in touch with them when you need to redirect law enforcement attention, get a heads-up on what operations are planned, or access police files. You now owe them: expect them to collect on it soon.

- Asphalt Jungle:** You heal faster than normal people. Any time your harm gets healed, heal an extra point. You are immune to all the harm move effects under '0-harm' and '1-harm' (when the Keeper would apply these, you ignore it).
- Hacker with a Dragon Tattoo:** When you hack into a computer system, roll +Sharp. On 10+ pick two, on a 7-9 pick one:
 - You leave no traces.
 - You learn something important.
 - You can leave misinformation in place.
 - You gain access to somewhere you want to get in to.
- "Just one more thing":** When you ask a suspect leading questions, roll +Charm. On a 10+ hold 2, on a 7-9 hold 1, on a miss hold 1 but something bad is going to happen too.

Spend your hold to ask questions from this list:

- One question from the **investigate a mystery** list.
- Was that a lie?
- What is something you left out that you didn't want me to notice?
- Are you complicit with any ongoing criminal activity?
- Did you commit this specific crime?

GEAR

You get a laptop, a liquor flask, two recording devices, and one P.I. weapon.

Recording devices (pick two):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Night vision camera | <input type="checkbox"/> Cassette tape recorder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tiny digital video camera | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote-controlled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Film camera (8mm or 16mm) | camera drone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital sound recorder | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser microphone |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> SLR camera |

P.I. Weapons (pick one):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brass knuckles (1-harm hand small) | <input type="checkbox"/> Shotgun (3-harm close messy loud) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> .38 revolver (2-harm close reload loud) | <input type="checkbox"/> Switchblade (1-harm hand small) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9mm (2-harm close loud) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magnum (3-harm close reload loud) | |

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Gumshoe by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. On your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- You are on the same (or rival) bowling teams. Ask them what bowling-related disagreement rubbed them the wrong way.
- You caught them committing a crime but let them go. Ask them to describe the crime, then you explain why your Code required you to look the other way.
- They remind you of a former partner who was mysteriously murdered. Describe the unsolved case that killed your partner and how you hope to solve it.
- You first approached them for help on a case. Describe the case. Ask them to describe the key expertise they provided that solved that mystery.
- You were friends back in training, before you became a private investigator. This could be military, law enforcement, or whatever—decide the details between you.
- Ask them if they live by a code and what it is. If you approve of the code, you've always respected them. If not (or if they don't have a code), you've never trusted them.
- They hired you for a job but you were too drunk or high to take it. Ask them what they wanted, then tell them how you brushed them off.
- You first met on an unsolved crimes website. Decide together what infamous crime fascinates you both.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as just 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay Doomed

Gumshoe Special: When you use a point of Luck your next regular case will actually be a mystery for your hunter group, not a regular case at all (and the monster will focus its attention on you!)

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick “Unstable.”

Okay | Dying

Unstable: (Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes)

LEVELING UP

Experience:

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the list below.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Get +1 Charm, max +3
- Get +1 Cool, max +2
- Get +1 Sharp, max +3
- Get +1 Tough, max +2
- Take another Gumshoe move.
- Take another Gumshoe move.
- Add another harm box to your track, before Dying.
- Get a haven (your office, perhaps), like the Expert has, with two options.
- Add four additional or new contacts for your **Naked City** move.

After you have leveled up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They’re below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- Change this hunter to a new type.
- Make up a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- Turn one of your contacts into an ally.
- Retire this hunter to safety.
- Erase one used Luck mark from your playbook.

THE HEX

By Bruno Dias

"I didn't have magic fall into my lap. I'm not blessed, I'm not one of the scary children—I'm just a girl who found a way to give herself the strength to fight this war. I don't have the option of not taking this risk."

To make your Hex, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, moves, Temptation, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.



LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Woman, man, transgressing, unknown, nonbinary, _____
- Sharp eyes, angry eyes, glowing eyes, shifty eyes, serene eyes, featureless eyes, _____ eyes.
- Retro clothes, hippy clothes, trendy clothes, too-formal clothes, ill-fitting clothes, anachronistic clothes, _____ clothes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- Charm+2, Cool=0, Sharp=0, Tough–1, Weird+2
 Charm+1, Cool–1, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird+2
 Charm–1, Cool+1, Sharp=0, Tough+1, Weird+2
 Charm–1, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough+1, Weird+2
 Charm=0, Cool=0, Sharp+2, Tough–1, Weird+2

ROTES

Whenever you **use magic**, you can decide afterwards that a particular spell is a **rote** that you know. Write down in detail what the spell does, and what it requires. You know how to cast it off the top of your head, and you choose two requirements from this list:

- Magic words and ritual gestures.
- An object of power (wand, talisman, orb, staff, etc) which must be wielded.
- An expendable component such as sulfur, sage, or incense, which must be burned, blown, or scattered during the casting.
- Runes or symbols written or engraved on a surface (which must be prepared).
- A spilling of blood, which inflicts 1-harm upon you or a willing participant.

Give your new rote a name, and decide specifically what the requirements are (which words, gestures, objects, symbols, and procedures are required). Unlike regular **use magic**, a rote's cost and the consequences for failing it are known to you in advance. After you cast it for the first time, treat each rote as a custom move—a specialised version of **use magic**, which is built with the Keeper. Write down what it does on a 10+, a 7–9, and a miss. Also, a rote is a bit more powerful than a basic **use magic** spell: its glitches are less onerous and its effect may be a little bigger.

Casting a rote requires you to have the needed items at hand and the ability to physically use them. You roll +Weird to cast it, as you would when **using magic** normally.

You start out knowing up to one rote, which you can choose when creating your character or during play. You can learn more by taking improvements—when you do, you can choose the new rote right away or in play.

TEMPTATION

You have a dangerous drive that you pursue, sometimes to the exclusion of your own safety. Decide if your Temptation drove you to learn magic, or if learning magic drove you to it.

Whenever you give in to your Temptation and act accordingly, you mark experience. You need to **act under pressure** to resist giving in to your temptation, if a perfect opportunity presents itself; if you fail this roll, you don't mark experience like you would have if you'd willingly acted out your desires.

Choose one Temptation:

- Vengeance:** Use magic to inflict disproportionate retribution on someone who wronged you.
- Power:** Use magic to exert your dominance over another.
- Addiction:** Use magic to do what you could do without it.
- Callousness:** Use magic without regard for the safety of others.
- Carnage:** Use magic to inflict gruesome violence.
- Secrets:** Use magic to discover forbidden, dangerous knowledge.
- Glory:** Use magic to steal someone's thunder.

MOVES

You have three Hex moves. You have this one:

- Bad Luck Charm:** Whenever you **use magic** and miss, the backlash never affects you directly if there's someone else around to hit. It'll go for allies, other hunters, and innocent bystanders. Sometimes, every so often, it might even hit an enemy.

Plus pick two of these:

- Burn Everything:** When you **use magic** to inflict harm, you can choose to inflict 3-harm area magic obvious or 3-harm ignore-armour magic obvious.
- Cast the Bones:** Once per mystery, you may perform some kind of divination (tarot, casting the runes, reading entrails, or something like that) to glean information about the future. When you seek guidance by divination, roll +Sharp. On a 10+, hold 2. On a 7-9, hold 1. On a miss, you get some information, but it's not what you want to hear. Spend those holds to ask any question from the **investigate a mystery** move, or one of the following questions:
 - What can I gain from this person/place/thing/creature?
 - Who has touched this person/place/thing/creature before me?

The Keeper will answer truthfully, with either a direct answer or how to find out more.

- Force of Will:** When you apply your will to dispelling a magical effect, blocking a spell, or suspending a Phenomenon, roll +Weird. On a hit, momentary magics are cancelled completely, and long-lasting spells and effects are suspended temporarily. On a 10+, you can also spend Luck to instantly snuff out a powerful spell or strange effect. On a 7-9, you take 1-harm as the strain of dismissing magic unravels you.
- Luck of the Damned:** After you **use magic** or cast a rote, take +1 forward on the next roll you make.
- Sympathetic Token:** As long as you carry a personal object belonging to someone, such as a lock of hair, a full set of toenails, or a treasured family heirloom, you get +1 ongoing to **use magic** against them. You can also **use magic** against them at a distance. If you try to **use magic** against them and miss, the token is lost, destroyed, or loses its power.
- This Might Sting:** You can **use magic** to heal 3-harm, but the process is exceptionally painful. On a 7-9 it also leaves a gnarly scar.
- Wise Soul:** Whenever you **use magic**, right before you roll, you can ask the Keeper what exactly would happen on a miss. If you dislike the risk, you can stop at the last second, and let the spell fizzle harmlessly. All of the effort is wasted.

GEAR

You have whatever magical items or amulets you use to perform magic, including whatever you need to cast your rotes. You also have two wizardly weapons.

Wizardly weapons, pick two:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> .38 revolver
(2-harm close
reload loud) | <input type="checkbox"/> Athame
(2-harm hand
magic silver) | <input type="checkbox"/> Crossbow
(2-harm
close slow) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shotgun
(3-harm close
messy loud) | <input type="checkbox"/> Shillelagh
(1-harm hand
balanced) | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff (1-harm
hand balanced
large) |

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Hex by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. When it's your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- You once cast a powerful spell or curse on them. Tell them why, and ask them how it ended.
- They fear your power, or what you might do with it. Ask them why.
- You're madly in love with them. Ask them if they can tell.
- They encourage you to indulge your temptation. Ask them why.
- They keep you grounded, and are unfazed by your displays of power.
- You were part of the same cult, sect, or secret society. Decide together what horrible things you did in the name of power.
- You learned through divination that they're important and you should help them. Decide whether you've told them or not.
- They helped you out when a spell went awry. Tell them what the spell was, and ask them how they helped you.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay Doomed

Hex Special: When you spend Luck, until the end of the mystery, backlash on your spells will be extra nasty.

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay | Dying

Unstable: (Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes)

LEVELING UP

Experience:

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Get +1 Weird, max +3.
- Get +1 Cool, max +2.
- Get +1 Charm, max +2.
- Get +1 Sharp, max +2.
- Take another Hex move, or an additional Rote.
- Take another Hex move, or an additional Rote.
- Take a Haven, like the Expert has, with two options.
- Take a move from another playbook.

After you have leveled up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- Change this hunter to a new type.
- Make up a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- Retire this hunter to safety.
- Erase one used Luck mark from your playbook.
- Gain another two Rotes.
- Choose one advanced Hex move (see below).

ADVANCED HEX MOVES

When you take the “Choose one advanced Hex move” improvement, choose one of these moves. You can never have both:

- Apotheosis:** You become a terrifying fount of mystical power. Once per mystery, after you suffer loss or harm, you may enter a state where you have both immense power and zero interest in the well-being of other people. While in this state, you can fly, use +Weird to **kick some ass** instead of +Tough (using innate magic as a 3-harm weapon with whatever properties you choose), ignore the component costs of your rotes, ignore one requirement of every spell you cast with **use magic**, and you have +1 ongoing to do everything. On the other hand, you outright cannot use the **protect someone** move, you have all the Temptations, and you have to indulge them whenever a good opportunity presents itself. When you try to resist a temptation, roll +Cool. On a 10+, your apotheosis ends. On a 7-9, it ends with you doing something dangerous or cruel. On a miss, it ends only after you harm someone (or something) you love.
- Synthesis:** You manage to conciliate your dark power with your moral impulses. You lose your Temptation. Whenever you **use magic** to **help out** or **protect someone**, you mark experience. Mark a second experience if you do it at the expense of your own safety.

THE PARAROMANTIC

By Michał Werder

"I sense too much to ever be understood by normal people... and enough to be loved by something else."

To make your Pararomantic, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, fate, moves, gear, and your relationship. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.

LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, boy, girl, concealed, _____.
- Friendly face, alluring face, laughing face, trustworthy face, average face, serious face, sensual face, face, _____ face.
- Normal clothes, casual clothes, goth clothes, sporty clothes, street clothes, nerdy clothes, _____ clothes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- Charm+2, Cool+1, Sharp=0, Tough-1, Weird+1
- Charm+2, Cool-1, Sharp+1, Tough+1, Weird=0
- Charm+2, Cool+2, Sharp=0, Tough=0, Weird-1
- Charm+2, Cool+1, Sharp+1, Tough-1, Weird=0
- Charm+2, Cool=0, Sharp+2, Tough-1, Weird=0



FATE OF YOUR LOVE

There is a reason why your love with your Guide (the supernatural being you have a connection with) is forbidden or doomed. Invent this reason or leave it to the Keeper. Whenever you mark off a point of Luck, the truth of your love's Fate slowly unfolds: mark off a box in your Relationship Status track. When your last point of Luck is used it becomes clear you cannot be together. Your Guide might even end up as an enemy, depending on how things go.

Whenever you put yourself or somebody else in serious danger in order to conceal the truth about you and your Guide, mark experience.

Bond Abuse: Whenever you do something to abuse the bond with your Guide, like acting against them, or not giving them enough attention, roll +Charm:

- On 10+, your action has no effect beyond the exchange of some angry words.
- On 7-9 choose one of the bond abuse options below.
- On a miss, the Keeper may choose two of the bond abuse options below, or something worse.

Bond abuse options:

- Mark off a box in your Relationship Status track.
- You may not channel the power of your bond for the rest of the mystery.
- You gain the unwelcome attention of others of your Guide's kind.
- Someone who shouldn't know finds a clue about your relationship with your Guide.

MOVES

You get all of the basic moves, plus three Pararomantic moves.

You get this one:

- **Supernatural Guide:** You have a (most likely intimate) connection to some supernatural being who is your guide into the world beyond. Choose if your relationship is secret or not.

Determine what kind of creature your Guide is and how your relationship works. Say what kind of power they possess. The Keeper will decide how it works and define your Guide as a threat.

If your Guide is another hunter, determine together how your relationship works.

Whenever you would roll +Weird you can roll +Charm instead, by channeling the power of your bond. When you do so and miss, in addition to the usual consequences, you and your Guide suffer as when you miss a roll for **bond abuse**.

Then pick two of these:

- Bonding Time:** If you spend some quality time with your Guide instead of working on the current mystery you can roll +Charm. On 10+, hold 2. On 7-9, hold 1. Spend your hold to:
 - Erase one mark in your Relationship Status track.
 - Use a Pararomantic move you haven't picked.
 - Receive a gift from your Guide.
 - Take +1 forward.
- Dark Desires:** You may use the **manipulate someone** move on monsters, as long as you are using emotional ties.
- The Power of Love:** When you use **help someone** to help your Guide you don't have to roll +Cool. You automatically help as though you'd rolled a 10. If your Guide is another hunter, the same applies when they help you.
- Do As The Supernatural Do:** You can take an unnatural move from your Guide's playbook (if they are a hunter). If they are a monster, choose a move from a suitable supernatural playbook. The Keeper may offer you a custom move, instead.
- I Am Theirs And They Are Mine:** Whenever you are in danger, your Guide knows it. If your Guide is suffering harm (and it's feasible), you can spend a point of Luck to redirect the attack onto yourself as if you have rolled 10+ with **protect someone**. If you are suffering harm, you can decide that your Guide has protected you and is suffering this harm instead. If you choose this, roll for **bond abuse**.
- Monster Empathy:** When you try to work out what a supernatural creature desires, roll +Charm. On a 10+, hold 2. On a 7-9, hold 1. Spend your hold to ask the following questions—the Keeper will answer honestly:
 - What does it most desire?
 - What would it accept as good enough for now?
 - What would distract it?
- Spirit Touched:** Your experiences have made you sensitive to the supernatural. When you sense magical things, roll +Weird. On a 10+ you can sense them fully. On a 7-9, choose: either sense them fully but they notice you too, or you sense only impressions.

GEAR

Choose two of these normal things:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Golf club, baseball bat, cricket bat, or hockey stick (2-harm hand innocuous messy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Small handgun (2-harm close loud reload) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pocket knife or multitool (1-harm hand useful small) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly new car in decent condition |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle |

And choose one gift from your Guide. Whatever gift you choose, it must be periodically recharged by interactions with your Guide. The gifts are:

- Part of their body, e.g. a vial of blood, lock of hair, tears in a phial, fairy dust. It either helps you heal, or counts as a weakness against a specific sort of monster.
- Piece of jewelery, e.g. a golden ring, tribal pendant, silver locket. It either provides 1-armour magic or protects you from the powers of a specific sort of monster.
- A memento of the time when they were human, e.g. a portrait/photo from life, diary, favourite hat, doll, or lighter. Provides +1 on **bond abuse** rolls.
- A strange or antique weapon, e.g. a family sword, ancient staff, holy mace (2-harm hand messy). Additionally, add “magic,” “silver,” “holy,” or “iron” to the weapon.

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Pararomantic by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. When it's your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- Your best friend in the world. You trust them totally.
- You are blood-kin. Decide your exact relationship together.
- Your ex. Ask them why you aren't together anymore.
- Romantic entanglement, or fated to be romantically entangled.
- They know about some of your dark secrets, but they've agreed to keep quiet about them. Tell them what they know.
- An old rivalry has turned into a tight friendship. Ask them what (or who) you once fought over.
- Mentor from another life. Ask them what they taught you.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay Doomed

Pararomantic Special: When you spend a point of Luck, also mark off one of your relationship status boxes. The Keeper will bring **fate of your love** into play.

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Loving Broken

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay | Dying

Unstable: (Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes)

LEVELING UP

Experience:

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list.

IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Pararomantic move |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gain an ally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Weird, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Pararomantic move | |

After you have leveled up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're on the next page.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- Change this hunter to a new type.
- Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- Retire this hunter to safety.
- Take a second gift from your guide or add another property to an existing gift.
- Change your Guide, as you fall for another creature.
- Gain a second Guide. Track the relationship status tracks of both relationships separately. Both Guides initially hate each other, but this could change through play. All moves that applied to your original Guide can now apply to either one.
- Erase all the marks from the Relationship Status track.



THE SEARCHER

By Michael Sands

"There's still so much to be discovered and explained, even now. Perhaps only one event in a thousand is true weirdness—but I'll investigate them all to find it."

To make your Searcher, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, first encounter, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.



LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, boy, girl, ambiguous, _____.
- Friendly face, haunted face, thoughtful face, lined face, curious face, _____ face.
- Normal clothes, casual clothes, nerdy clothes, tweedy clothes, outdoor wear, _____ clothes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- Charm=0, Cool+1, Sharp+1, Tough–1, Weird+2
 Charm+1, Cool–1, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird+2
 Charm=0, Cool–1, Sharp+2, Tough=0, Weird+2
 Charm=0, Cool+1, Sharp+2, Tough–1, Weird+1
 Charm+1, Cool=0, Sharp+2, Tough–1, Weird+1

MOVES

You get all of the basic moves, plus three Searcher moves. You get this one:

- First Encounter:** One strange event started you down this path, sparking your need to discover the truth behind the unexplained. Decide what that event was: pick a category below and take the associated move. Then tell everyone what happened to you (or someone close to you). Then pick a category below and take the associated move:
- Cryptid Sighting:** You take note of any reports of strange creatures. Whenever you first see a new type of creature, you may immediately ask one of the **investigate a mystery** questions.
- Zone of Strangeness:** Things are not fixed. You never need **act under pressure** when supernatural forces alter the environment around you, and you get 2-armour against harm from sudden changes to the laws of physics.
- Psychic Event:** Your mind is awakened. You may **act under pressure** to use the **sensitive** weird move, or—if **sensitive** is your weird move—**empath**. See page 21.
- Higher power:** Something looks out for you. You start with an extra Luck.
- Strange Dangers:** You are always watching for hazards. When you have no armour, you still count as having 1-armour.
- Abduction:** They taught you hidden knowledge. Gain +1 to any move when you research strange or ancient secrets to do it.
- Cosmic Insight:** You have encompassed the soul of the universe. You never need to **act under pressure** due to feelings of fear, despair, or isolation.

Then pick two of these:

- Prepared to Defend:** Even truth seekers need to fight some times. Whenever you suffer harm when you **kick some ass or protect someone**, you suffer 1-harm less.
- Fellow Believer:** People understand you've also known strangeness. Bystanders will talk to you about weird things they would not trust another hunter (or a mundane official) to believe.
- Guardian:** You have a mystical ally (perhaps a spirit, alien, or cryptid) who helps and defends you. Define them, and their powers, with the Keeper's agreement. Their look is one of: invisible, an intangible spirit thing, a weird creature, disguised as an animal, or disguised as a person.
- Just Another Day:** When you have to **act under pressure** due to a monster, phenomenon, or mystical effect, you may roll +Weird instead of +Cool.
- Network:** You may gain an ally group of others who had experiences similar to your first encounter—perhaps they're a support group or hobbyist club. Detail up to five members with useful skills related to what happened to them (none are up for fighting monsters).
- Ockham's Broadsword:** When you first encounter something strange, you may ask the Keeper what sort of thing it is. They will tell you if it (or the cause) is: natural, an unnatural creature, a weird phenomenon, or a person. You gain +1 forward dealing with it.
- The Things I've Seen:** When you encounter a creature or phenomenon, you may declare that you have seen it before. The Keeper may ask you some questions about that encounter, and will then tell you one useful fact you learned and one danger you need to watch out for (maybe right now).

GEAR

You get a laptop, a car or motorcycle, a camera, binoculars, two sets of investigation tools, and one self-defence weapon.

Investigation tools, pick two:

- A bag of cameras & microphones.
- Forensic tools.
- Ghost hunting tools.
- Scientific measuring tools.
- Cryptid hunting gear.
- Historical documents and witness reports of strange events.
- Maps, blueprints, and building reports for significant places.

Self-defence weapons, pick one:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking stick (1-harm hand innocuous). | <input type="checkbox"/> Martial arts training (1-harm hand innocuous). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small handgun (2-harm close reload loud). | <input type="checkbox"/> Incapacitating spray (0-harm hand irritating). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small knife (1-harm hand messy). | <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy flashlight (1-harm hand innocuous). |

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Searcher by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. When it's your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- In your researches, you found accounts (and pictures) of someone matching their description perfectly, but long before they were born. Tell them if you have mentioned this.
- A relative. Decide between you how close.
- They were involved in a supernatural event similar to your first encounter. Perhaps it was the same event, or perhaps you investigated their event later. Ask them how the event affected them.
- You figured out a supernatural or weird secret they keep. Ask them what it is.
- You met when you were each investigating separate mysteries. Tell them what trick you used to protect them from weirdness and ask them how they saved you from a danger.
- You're both veterans of a therapy or support group or a treatment program. Work out the details between you.
- Some creature or force is stalking them. Ask them what it is. Then decide if you've told them about it or if they are still happily unaware.
- You found their pet when it went missing. Where had it gone?

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay Doomed

Searcher Special: When you spend a point of Luck, your first encounter comes up in play. It could be a flashback, new occurrence, or related event.

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick “Unstable.”

Okay | Dying

Unstable: (Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes)

LEVELING UP

Experience:

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list.

IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gain an ally. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Weird, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a second first encounter move, based |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +2 | on a recent mystery. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Searcher move | another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Searcher move | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from |
| | another playbook. |

After you have leveled up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They’re below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 to any rating, max +3. | <input type="checkbox"/> Mark two of the basic moves as advanced. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change this hunter to a new type. | <input type="checkbox"/> Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Create a second hunter to play as well as this one. | <input type="checkbox"/> Erase a used Luck mark from your playbook. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retire this hunter to safety. | <input type="checkbox"/> Erase a used Luck mark from your playbook. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resolve your first encounter. The Keeper makes the next mystery about this event, and should try to answer all remaining questions about it during the mystery (although there are sure to be new threads to investigate after...) | |



ADVICE

Here are a selection of articles with advice and suggestions for taking your game somewhere different.

Some deal with the internals of the game (the fiction and ideas for custom moves and rules), while others are focused on the actual process of running the game with other people.

FIVE WAYS A PATRON IMPROVES YOUR CAMPAIGN

By Mark Tygart

Jenkins looked down at the fried remains of what the team called a “rat-goblin,” with a combination of pride and anxiety. He had never expected the Nazi DNA virus Dr. Piper stole from the RED FACTION’s vaults to have this impact—but he was reassured by the effectiveness of the new weapon prototypes even down here in Hamelin’s medieval sewers. What nasty “favor” was the R&D department going to ask of his team in exchange for their use? Then the weird music began growing louder. “Time to pay the piper,” Jenkins whispered to Laura. She smiled, showing her fangs, as the rest of the team checked their gear was ready. If one of NATO’s covert COPPER GREEN containment teams showed up, Jenkins could only imagine the special hell mission the BLUE FACTION Director would send the team to as a punishment for “being indiscreet” ...

INITIAL BRIEFING

Monster hunting fantasy adventures are generally full of covert and not-so-covert Patrons and their organizations for hunters to join, subvert, or destroy. Where would Carl Kolchak be without his tabloid newspaper to investigate for? Or Mulder and Scully without the FBI?

This is not the default case in *Monster of the Week* simply because its primary initial inspirations were the television shows *Supernatural*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Angel*.

Supernatural is unusual. In the early seasons, Dean and Sam Winchester often have little or no support, often have to sustain themselves financially, and were routinely forced to impersonate law enforcement officers to gain resources while hunting monsters. This was usually played for laughs, and the brothers generally used celebrity names or pop culture names for their fake identities.

Buffy’s mentor Giles reported to the “Watchers’ Council” but they were usually so remote and ineffective as to be mere window dressing. Angel formed a detective agency to pay the bills, which is a sort of Patron.

Consider how much easier it is to initiate a James Bond adventure. Agent 007 has no trouble finding friends, enemies, overly elaborate plots filled with lasers, and bizarre attempts at world domination given his employment by the British Secret Service.

In terms of *Monster of the Week*, Initiates and Professionals always have some sort of Patron but any campaign can benefit from their presence. The hunters could be employed by anything from a conspiracy-investigating blog, a UFO abductees support group, or a secret zoo stocking monsters for a zany billionaire. Of course the players may soon discover that zany billionaire is a psychopath, the UFO support is secretly run by evil Lizard Aliens, and the blog has developed a virus planted by Chinese Intelligence.

A Patron can always provide two important assets: direction and resources.

PATRONS PROVIDE DIRECTION

Without a Patron supplying direction, a Keeper needs a new hook for every mystery the hunters investigate. After a while, inventing needy friends and relatives for the hunters to help out becomes tired.

It is much easier to have the hunters assigned a case by their supervisor, or a story by their editor, than to have the monster once again lurch into the hunters' favorite diner and interrupt dinner! Patron organizations do not have to be extremely well-organized and resourced for this role. A simple group of retired law enforcement officers who know the supernatural is real would be plenty to provide leads and missions.

Of course the Patron or her organization are going to make all sorts of demands on our hunters, however unexpected. Real life is a wonderful inspiration for this device. How many of us have been forced into uneasy 'social' situations due the necessity of attending 'optional' events. Maybe the psychopath billionaire monster-zoo owner decides he is the hunters' new best friend and decides to join them on a "routine" mission. Or the editor of the blog wants a puff piece about recent crocodile sightings in the local sewerage system. Worst of all, the hunters could be required to attend a rubber chicken dinner honoring them as slayers of the year hosted by the local chamber of commerce. Horrifying!

PATRONS PROVIDE RESOURCES

The more resources a Patron grants, the more it should require of its agents in return. Being a member of an international covert conspiracy should be more demanding than working for the reality television talk show *Conversing about Cryptids*. Monster hunting Agencies could also be bloated bureaucratic nightmares (see Charles Stross' thrilling, comedic Laundry novels for ideas here, e.g. "You killed a vampire? Form 56-X in triplicate with special undead termination clause filled out before sunset.")

The key is usually not to deny your hunters the specific resource they covet, but simply to make sure it comes with a demanding price. It is often fun to make this somewhat mysterious or bizarre. Indeed the mysterious nature of the hunters' Patron can become an enjoyable key element to the campaign. Why exactly is the Patron intent on controlling the world's supply of lime green jello? Or has a bizarre collection of hairless cats that require 'special treats?' Or is so eager to acquire 'fresh' DNA from the actor William Shatner?

THE PATRONS CAN DEVELOP THE MYSTERY

A fun aspect of your mythology can come from developing the backstory and secrets of a patron organization.

A demanding boss may be the hunters' best friend when the chips are down, like Deputy Director Skinner on *The X-Files*. An annoying, innocent intern could turn out to be a serial killer as happened on *Grimm*. The head of Research & Development may be uncovering dangerous truths about the universe—just like an H.P. Lovecraft character. In the best tradition of Indiana Jones, the papers the hunters just stumbled across in the archives indicate the agency was really formed by crusaders in the 12th century to find a lost artifact and they haven't found it yet.

Sometimes you have to lie to your boss. On the television show *Grimm*, homicide investigator and monster hunter Nick Burkhardt can never predict whether his superior Captain Renard will be a friend or foe from one week to the next, and your hunters can be kept in similar suspense. In early *iZombie* episodes, undead coroner Liv Moore must unmask supernatural villains by using the insight she gains from consuming the brains of murder victims while telling her Patron she is "psychic." Your hunters may have to adopt a similar cover for their supernatural abilities.



Patrons can help provide the most important plot arcs for a campaign as well. In *Grimm*'s alternate version of Portland, Nick Burkhardt comes to understand his purpose is not simply to brutally kill evil monsters (called "wesen" on the show) but also to protect good members of that monstrous community from discovery and exploitation. Liv Moore is confronted with a world hostile to the complex fact that zombies are simply people—a new minority with special dietary requirements, problems, and even children.

A PATRON CAN BE THE MYSTERY

The hunters may discover the agency they work for has an evil faction of conspirators and must be fixed or destroyed. The classic example of this is the early *X-Files* and the classic evil cabal preparing for a planetary invasion aided by shape-shifting alien bounty hunters. *Fringe* and *Counterpart* have doppelgangers nefariously subverting our universe from a parallel dimension: nobody is safe from being "replaced."

Another possibility is the Patron is so scary and ruthless that the hunters have to manipulate it or them to prevent crimes against humanity, despite the essential good work the Patron provides. The *Twenty Palaces* book series by Harry Connolly is a wonderful example of this, as the antihero Ray Lilly must deal with supernatural problems while keeping innocent bloodshed to a minimum, or be faced with his employers' more efficient methods, which may include eliminating a low-level operative like Lilly.

A third and devastating possibility is that the patron's ultimate agenda is evil. On the fourth season of *Fringe* the viewers discovered a universe where William Bell was actually the source of the evil Pattern experiments.

THE PATRON CAN BE DESTROYED

An even more devastating way to either open or climax a campaign is for the hunters to return back from a mission to find their patron has been destroyed by a mysterious entity or group. The hunters must hustle to retrieve what is left of the destroyed Agency's equipment and intelligence from their few remaining boltholes and safehouses all while being hunted by mysterious supernatural assassins. This could be devastating to a Professional or Initiate hunter, so the Keeper should carefully consider this option and have a long build-up to destruction. Of course it may only appear that the group is destroyed...

A well executed example of this idea is the classic 1970s Sydney Pollack thriller *Three Days of the Condor* wherein Joseph Turner returns late from lunch only to find all the other members of his clandestine library have been murdered by unknown gunmen. He must unravel the deadly mystery to survive. By my count, the *Mission Impossible* film series has used this plot at least twice.

A good way to end such a campaign is to have the players reform their old Agency with the hunters as the new management team.

CONCLUDING NOTES

An employing agency lets you add elements from police procedurals and espionage thrillers to your *Monster of the Week* campaign. It's a useful choice that allows for exciting plot developments as your campaign goes on.

Now excuse me: my shoe phone is calling—I have another case to solve.



A MATTER OF TIMING: PACING FOR CONVENTION GAMES

By Bryanna Hitchcock

Many Keepers struggle to end their convention games on time without rushing through their final confrontation. Delivering a rousing finish without going over your scheduled time is an art and a science. In this article we're talking about the science. Spoiler alert: a little planning goes a long way.

Pacing in RPGs can mean the ebb and flow of action in the story, but it also refers to the way a session evolves and how it treats the essential beats of a story. It's no mystery that stories need a beginning, a middle, and an end. In campaign play, this ebb and flow happens naturally as the narrative and group develop. But for a one-shot, like a convention game, the Keeper is in a pressure cooker to deliver a fun time and a complete story on a tight timeline.

There's plenty of narrative advice out there about plot points, rising action, and the like. This article provides practical advice for Keepers to end a convention game on time without sacrificing an exciting finale.



WHAT'S THE POINT?

Nobody has unlimited time to prepare for convention games. I'm no different, which is precisely why I spend the time planning—not just the details of the game, but how I will run it. It may sound tedious, but spending just a few minutes making a list or two can really improve your pacing. The two lists I recommend are an Agenda and a Timeline.

The purpose of planning is to be respectful of everyone's time, including your own. When creating an Agenda and Timeline, the goals are:

- Make sure you run the kind of game you want to run.
- Give your players a complete story.
- Give yourself time and tools to adjust the pace as you play.
- Give yourself time for a dramatic conclusion to your game.
- Clean your room for the next group who have to use it and leave on time.

It's easy to focus on the visual space of the game table. Many Keepers who are masters of visual aids and table presentation still struggle to control the temporal landscape: the time you have to play as a group. The tools I use for this are my Agenda for the game and the Timeline for my game slot at the convention. Let's look at the Agenda first.

AGENDA: GOALS & EXPECTATIONS

The Agenda is a way to ensure you set expectations for yourself and the players.

Even if you have a mystery already chosen for the game, a session is about much more than the adventure. How long is the game? Always check to see if anyone has to leave early. Is there a food deadline or convention event people want to break for? What are your table rules?

The Agenda is your opportunity to remind yourself and to inform the players about breaks, table rules, safety mechanics, and any other details that will ensure you have the kind of experience you want for yourself and your players. This also gives players who perhaps aren't hungry for the dish you're serving a chance to opt out.

Make a list of all the things you want to tell people up front. Revise this list as you plan your game.

EXAMPLE AGENDA

- A list of the gear I need to run the game.
- FYIs (for the beginning—to ensure everyone is a good fit for the game):
 - Game runs until 10pm, hard stop.
 - “There will be breaks after character creation and once more toward the end. Does anyone have to leave sooner?”
 - Trans Acceptance. Respect people’s pronouns (mine are she/her). Anyone who has a problem with that should take their leave.
 - No ball hogs. My personal pet peeve is a player who craves the spotlight at the expense of other players. I let my players know I may cut them off, but I also reward play that shares the spotlight.
 - Content Warnings: Dark Humor, Profanity, Romance.
 - Safety Off, but mind your aim—I don’t use X-Cards or explicit Lines/Veils when I run MotW. However, everyone should be kind to their fellow players and respectful of any concerns raised.
 - Cinematic style: Scenes framed like a movie.
 - Get to the heart of every scene quickly—warn that I will either push them when a scene is lagging or cut away at dramatic moments.
- About MotW & Player Experience: Find out who’s never played a Powered by the Apocalypse (PbtA) game and ask those who have to assist.
- Explain the dice mechanic, ratings, and point out the basic moves.
- Choose playbooks.
- Read your playbook’s History options first, to guide your character vision.
- Questions on character creation or choices?
- Your hunters are already a team; you have each other on speed dial; no introductions are necessary once play starts.
- Explain Luck.
- Review Basic Moves with extra attention to:
 - **Help out and protect:** Usable after the roll. You’re a kick ass team!
 - Explain **use magic** and invite players to get cinematic.
 - **Investigate a mystery:** Answers will start out general but get more specific as you get closer to the creature. You can’t exactly identify a monster just from a news article about a murder. Crime scene evidence is better, especially if you can get to the scene.
- Table Rules:
 - Cell phones: *Fine*: getting a text from family or convention roommates, briefly looking up something on the internet that will help the game be more awesome, checking the time, calls from work. *Unacceptable*: playing a video game, having a long conversation, continuous texting, etc.
 - One point of Luck for convention games.
 - Fan Mail: I provide a bowl with 1 chip per player. They can give these to each other as a reward for awesome play. 1 chip provides a +1 on any roll. Once used, chips go back in the bowl.



TIMELINE: MAPPING THE TEMPORAL LANDSCAPE

When allocating time, begin with a list of priorities. The key to crafting a timeline for your game is to work backwards based on your goals. Too often we focus on preparing for the opening of our games without thinking about the middle or end of the session.

The sample timeline below started with me noting down (in any order) my priorities and a rough guess about the amount of time each of them needed.

- Fully play out the climactic battle. 25 minutes.
- Hunter epilogues. 5 minutes.
- Debrief with players. 5 minutes.
- Clean up the game area. 5 minutes.
- FYIs and table rules. 10 minutes.

The context of your game is important. Conventions in different regions have varying expectations regarding game length. In my area, convention slots can run up to 12 hours! For me, 6 hours is the sweet spot for a *Monster of the Week* game. However, in many areas 4-hour slots are the norm. Also: for online games in the evening, 4 hours has been a solid length for me.

In this article, we'll focus on the biggest challenge: the 4-hour con or online game with 3-4 players. For blocks of play in the timeline, I use 5 minutes per PC as a rule of thumb to ensure I have enough time in each block for each hunter to have a significant scene.

No matter how much or little time you have, it's always important to give yourself opportunity to evaluate the pacing and possibilities of your game. You don't need to adhere to your break schedule exactly, but make sure you take them.



EXAMPLE TIMELINE (4-HOUR CONVENTION OR ONLINE GAME)

- 0:00
 - Get set up and give players time to show up.
- 0:05
 - Sort out who's in or out with convention roster and FYIs.
- 0:10
 - Introductions: Name and favorite monster movie.
- 0:15
 - Discuss & decide team concept.
- 0:20
 - Choose playbooks and get everyone settled.
 - Explain the dice mechanic and ratings.
 - Advise players to read their History choices early in the process.
- 0:25
 - Create characters.
- 0:35
 - History.
 - I take a good long time with this because people enjoy it and it adds a ton of depth to the game.
 - Have everyone pick one, two if the group is moving quickly.
 - Both players must consent to History.
- 0:55
 - Expectation setting, reminders.
 - House rules.
 - Tell players to imagine a brief action shot of their character during the break.
- 1:00
 - Break & Keeper prep.
- 1:15
 - Start the Show—Cinematic Framing.
 - I like to signal the move into actual play and story time with dramatic music. Each player takes a turn describing an out of context action shot of their character meant to show 'the audience' something important about who they are. This is a great chance to establish signature weapons, stylish lairs, and memorable moments from history.

- 1:20
 - Opening Scene: the Hook and the first hunter.
- 1:25
 - First Scene for hunters, where are they when they get the Hook?
 - This is another opportunity for players to go big and establish what their hunter is up to when they're contacted by the team: a dive bar with a pool game about to turn violent; an ancient tomb filled with zombie cobras; or a fashionable music festival getting their groove on. Agency really helps players invest in the game. Just make sure to resolve any entanglements in a roll or two and meet up with the team.
- 1:50
 - Group Investigation: Maybe there's a McGuffin or maybe one of the hunters has a wild hunch; it's ok to let them thrash about a bit.
- 2:10
 - Close Encounters. By this time, the hunters should be encountering minions or otherwise deep into the mystery. Perhaps a hunter gets a little too close to the truth, setting up a nice cliffhanger before the break.
- 2:30
 - Break.
 - Review the schedule and adjust.
 - Who's been getting the spotlight?
 - Ask players if there's any element or character they'd like to see more of?
- 2:40
 - Rising Action: get really free with the clues.
- 3:00
 - Confronting the minions or hitting the big break in the case.
- 3:20
 - Confronting the Big Bad.
 - Detail the setting and sense of danger.
 - Make the creature awesome.
- 3:45
 - Epilogues & cinematic final shot.
- 3:50
 - Thank your players and debrief, if they want. Ask them to help you clean up.
- 3:55
 - Leave the room in good shape for the next group.

CONVENTION GAMING TECHNIQUE

Unlike some tools for Keepers, once you've created your first Agenda and Timeline, they can be recycled and modified for future games. No matter which system or setting you run, you can provide a consistent quality of experience for your tables.

Even if you're generally not a person who makes lists or wants to carefully manage game time, taking a few moments to sketch out your goals can help you prepare for a more off-the-cuff game.

WHAT ABOUT “PLAY TO FIND OUT?”

One of the best aspects of PbtA games is the idea of “play to find out.” Even if the Keeper knows the threats, they should never plan out the course of the game in advance. We don’t have to violate this principle in order to run a tight game. Every decision you make can move the story forward. Timeline notes like ‘Rising Action’ or ‘The Big Break’ are guides for scene framing.

Once the team has assembled, let the players take their time with their investigation and banter. Make them work a bit more, with **investigate a mystery** results that lead them to new threats rather than providing straightforward answers. Later, when the finale approaches, your choices can drive the hunters more directly to the finish; don’t hold anything back.

OTHER APPLICATIONS

While the examples provided here are tailored for *Monster of the Week*, the concepts can be applied to other games. I started making timelines for my organized play of *Dungeons & Dragons* games. In the tight time frames provided, I found myself struggling to make time for the set-piece fights at the end of the scenario. There’s only so much you can do to speed up play in games with figures and tactical maps. I found it took about 75 minutes to do a big set-piece a battle justice. By planning around that, and taking some notes about how long an average turn takes, I could adjust the rest of the scenario accordingly.

When we’re rushed by the time constraints of a convention game, we risk a mediocre finale or asking players to somehow finish the game in another location. With a little planning, you can focus play time on your priorities and take command of the temporal game space.

NAIL THE LANDING

Few things were more frustrating to me as a GM than when I couldn’t finish a game strong because I ran out of time. Many great GMs I’ve met have amazing setups and visual presentations, but struggle to make their endings live up to their hopes. Like them, I want players to leave my games remembering it as a fun movie where they played a starring role. An explosive finish is an essential part of that experience.

Like my games, I’ll wrap this up with a bit of cinematic framing.

The screen goes dark, the rock music starts, and the credits roll. Thank you for reading.

GOING GOTHIC

By Marek Golonka

The Gothic is the oldest horror genre and still remains an important vein of horror aesthetics. It's easier to recognize than to define—you know it when you see it.

But how to make a Gothic *Monster of the Week* mystery?

GOTHIC IS PSYCHOLOGICAL

Some define the Gothic as a portrayal of people who are uncertain about the boundaries of self, without a clear border between interior and exterior. Evil forces may seem to be only a projection of human fears and guilt, humans can seem to be an integral part of a haunted house (or other strange space) and it's sometimes difficult to say what is real and what is not. To include this aspect of the Gothic in your mystery:

- Create a monster that represents a great fear, guilt, or shame of one or more of the hunters.
- Make the question "Is the monster real or imagined" the central problem of the adventure.
- Create a bystander or minion who has no obviously monstrous nature or supernatural abilities and yet is really creepy or does things humans shouldn't be able to do.

GOTHIC IS HISTORICAL

In the Gothic, the past persists, haunts, and won't let go. Characters are revisited by past misfortunes or their own crimes. Old emotions and deeds live on in unsettling ways. What was once done can't be undone. All sorts of dead return to un-life—dead people, bygone conflicts, forgotten crimes, and extinguished passions. To include this aspect of the Gothic in your mystery:

- Make the repetition of some old crime or atrocity a central theme of the mystery.
- Create a monster or other threat that can haunt people with their worst memories and learn their darkest secrets.
- Start a mystery with a flashback to the long-forgotten past and make the consequences of that flashback important (and really awful).



GOTHIC IS SOCIAL

The Gothic often uses the supernatural and monstrous to show real social conflicts and traumas in an exaggerated form. Monsters can be based on repressed groups and social outcasts, showing their anger in monstrous proportions but also pointing out that they are victims. At other times, the opposite happens—the monster is an exaggeration of a group that is privileged but feared or loathed. Supernatural threats faced by the heroes can have effects strangely similar to real-life oppressive mechanisms of society, family, or relationships.

To include this aspect of the Gothic in your mystery... first and foremost, be careful. This aspect of the Gothic is the most delicate to handle and has the greatest risk of being uncomfortable for the players—but if done right it can lead to a really important, deep experience. Talk with your players about their comfort zones and taboo topics. Be sure to use a safety tool like an X-card. And, maybe, use these ideas:

- Create an evil that can't be defeated as long as a social injustice remains.
- Neglect or discrimination of some people is the source of the mystery's threats.
- Make the monster a member of a privileged group and a symbol of this group's excesses.

For me, it's convenient to think of the Gothic as 'human horror' as opposed to H.P. Lovecraft's 'cosmic horror.' In Gothic stories, the human mind and soul aren't insignificant in the vast universe; they're dangerous, twisted, and labyrinthine—and it's from human minds that evil crawls into the world.

SAMPLE GOTHIC MYSTERY: A PERFECT PARK

To show how to ‘Gothicise’ a mystery, let’s start with a cliché idea and surround it with layers of the Gothic.

Idea: a werewolf hunts in the city park at night.

Let’s start with the historical and the social. Three years ago, the park was ‘revitalised’—which made it nicer and safer but the homeless living there were brutally cast out of their shelters. This creates a feeling of anger and social injustice that, in a Gothic story, can be connected to the supernatural event. So let’s assume the werewolf isn’t just a man-turned-wolf but the collective spirit of anger and desperation of people with no place to go. He attacks as a human-shaped wolf but he can be turned human by **using magic** or keeping him trapped until daylight. In human form, his looks will morph—taking on the different appearances of the cast-out homeless—and he’ll only be able to talk of feeling abandoned and despised, unable to say who he is or where these feelings come from.

To make it psychological—and thicken the plot—let’s assume that the politicians and policemen directly responsible for casting out the homeless are dreaming of this werewolf and they feel drawn to the park at night. This shows how their past misdeeds haunt them but also allows you to put them in dangerous situation or suggest that one of them is the werewolf.

Let’s add the fact that the werewolf kills anybody he encounters—he is too wrathful to make distinctions about who is really responsible—but he only takes one life for every homeless person who dies after being evicted from the park. That directly links the monster with the injustice done and also gives a potential clue: if the hunters look closely, there is always a report of a homeless person dying a few hours before an attack in the park. Besides, it allows the story to begin long after the renovation—a harsh winter is coming, the homeless are in real danger, and the spiritual embodiment of their desperation becomes really powerful and dangerous.

The ‘past’ in this sketch is really recent—three years—but in a modern Gothic story this can be fine because it’s enough for the society to forget about the renovation and its cost. We might add, however, that the city was created by banishing a group of people appropriate to the setting from their ancestral terrain. This will add a Gothic sense of repeating past mistakes while also providing additional clues.



With this sketch we have a supernatural threat, a central location—the park—and a complex social theme. That's more than enough to help a Keeper invent a cast of bystanders to populate the story and run it as an exciting mystery full of lively characters and touching social issues.

But remember: it's always touchy and requires lots of care. One player could say this story is a good reminder of how society shuns some people for the benefit of the more accepted ones and of how the anger of dispossessed groups can become dangerous. Another player could say that it's too sad to be a topic of a game or that it uses real human misery in a stereotyping way. So while designing and running such mysteries, remember to talk with your players beforehand; see what's acceptable for them (with as few spoilers as possible!); make sure to populate the story with characters instead of stereotypes; and, finally, propose a way for your players to signal that a part of the story isn't OK for them.

MONSTER HUNTING AT WORK

By Jamie Sands

I set up a casual *Monster of the Week* group with some of my workmates. We play every fortnight or so during lunchtime, or after work on a Friday over drinks. We started by spending one session on character creation and going over how their characters know each other, what the rules mean, and how to use moves. None of them had played a Powered by the Apocalypse game before.

Running in an office lunchtime setting is a very different beast to an ongoing campaign with regular three-hour sessions. You have to accept it's going to be casual—people will have meetings come up, heavy workloads, and other things they didn't anticipate. So you need to ensure the game you're running is easy for the characters to drop in and out of.

With a little less than an hour to play while also consuming food, you have to drop some aspects of the game. In my case, I dropped world building. The group decided to set the game in the city we live in: easy, everyone knows what it looks like, how many people will be nearby at any time of day or night, how long it takes to get around, and the ways people will react to weirdness.

Mystery-wise, I keep things simple: not too many bystanders to interact with (one or two, tops), easy-to-find information on the monster, and a quick-paced story. I push them to make rolls if they seem uncertain (there's very little time to sit around and puzzle out the next move). I'm flexible with the questions for **investigate a mystery** or **read a bad situation**. If none of the options on the move list look useful for keeping the pace fast, I'll get them to ask something directly, or just say "You did well enough to find out this thing."

This kind of game would also really suit the new 'flexible investigations' rules (page 29), especially since giving the players another chance to roll the dice opens up new opportunities for plot twists.

Although I frequently write monster countdowns, it's mostly so I have an idea of the kind of thing the monster is planning or hoping for—I don't use it religiously.

A few times we've gotten through a whole mystery in under an hour, but the players also enjoy it when we spread a mystery over two sessions. When splitting the mystery I try and leave it on a cliffhanger. Good cliffhangers I've used are: the team are just about to fight the monster;



they've found out an intriguing bit of information that sparks the imagination; they've just discovered things are worse than they thought.

Each session I try and emphasise the weirdness of what they're experiencing, have at least one fight scene, some investigation, and give them the opportunity to try out new things. That way we're getting the most out of the system and each character can do some cool stuff.

If they come up with what seems like a silly, plot-derailing plan then I run with it, especially if everyone at the table is laughing. We had our Flake decide that the way to get into the second-floor apartment above a dry cleaner was to take off his shirt and get it washed. The dry cleaners weren't involved with the mystery, but they did call the police to investigate the weirdo who was bugging them, thereby leaving the way clear for the rest of the team to sneak in the back way.

My biggest piece of advice is not to get your mind set on any one way a story should go. Just come up with a monster and the kind of thing it's doing and then let the players go wild. Be willing to throw out all your prep and don't worry about it; follow what the players are into and you'll all have a great time.

The point of these sessions is to have fun, and the inter-team bonding has had positive effects in our work relationships as well. Some of us are in vastly different roles in different areas of the business, but building common ground through gaming has opened up communication channels and built trust we wouldn't have had otherwise.

I've been asked to run the game twice in one week, due to the investment the players have in the game, so I'd definitely recommend giving it a go if you have some fellow office geeks.

AN OPEN LETTER TO VIRGINIA ABOUT MONSTERS

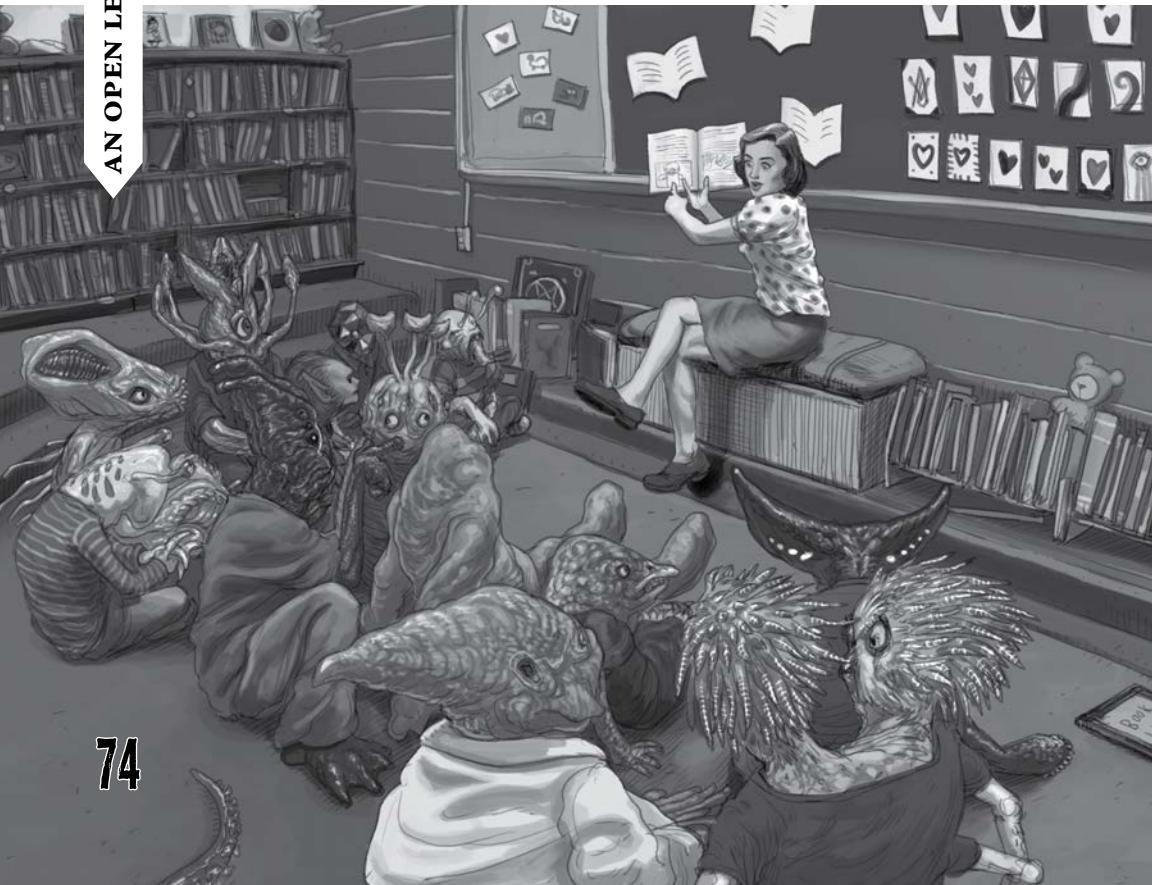
"To realize that all your life—you know, all your love, all your hate, all your memories, all your pain—it was all the same thing. It was all the same dream: a dream that you had inside a locked room, a dream about being a person. And like a lot of dreams, there's a monster at the end of it."

—Rust Cohle, *True Detective* season 1

Dear Mr. Tygart,

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there are no Monsters. I need Monsters so I can be a Keeper in the insanely cool *Monster of the Week* tabletop RPG. Papa says "If Mark Tygart says so, it's so." Please tell me the truth, are there no Monsters?

Regards,
Virginia



Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a cynical age. They do not believe except in what they see. They think nothing can be that is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be adult's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, humanity's intellect is that of a mere insect, as compared with the boundless world about us, as measured by an intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there are monsters. They exist in the finest products of our imagination, like in Michael Sands' *Monster of the Week* tabletop RPG rulebook. They exist in popular "monster hunting" television shows like *Supernatural* which inspired Mr. Sands' creation and has currently been in production for over a decade. Other classic "monster hunting" shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *Angel* can also show you many other inspirational monsters.

The truth is, Virginia: monsters are everywhere.

The key is to define your genre properly. To find really cool monsters you must look for books, films, and television shows about "monster hunting." This is any sort of story where a supernatural or alien creature exists and a special method is required to kill it. If this is true then that story can become, in some form, a *MotW* mystery. And fortunately there is no more common or celebrated type of story in human history.

Take *Beowulf* for example. I was forced to read it in college under duress. Underneath all that Anglo-Saxon gibberish (or timeless poetry) is a cool story about a monster (descended from the biblical Cain) who likes to break up noisy parties by eating people. He could only be killed by somebody with their bare hands.

Now let's expand on that great idea. *Grimm* had an episode about a monsters' fight club didn't it? How about a secret illegal fight club where people come to stab and shoot our friend Grendel for sadistic kicks? A mission idea begins to form: it's a bit like saving Wolverine from the combat bar in the first *X-Men* film. Perhaps our intrepid hunters' mission is to befriend him or defeat him so they can find out the secret information he discovered while working for a Big Bad who will feature in our next adventure. It is very doable as a mystery: you just need some stats for Grendel, special rules on Grendel wrestling and maybe befriending him, and then maybe jot down some ideas on letting him join the team as a "monstrous" addition if your hunters need some muscle.

There are so many monster hunting shows, comic books, miniseries, and mythological short stories that you can literally find them everywhere. The trick is to make that story your own mystery.

I recently sent my valorous hunters off to the Frozen North to battle arctic demons awakened by climate change. These spirits intend to stem the ecological destruction by murdering the various human intruders responsible for global warming in the Canadian Arctic. This was great fun. Soon my players were desperately trying to dodge various strange and icy demons and bizarre polar creatures along with dealing with a climate just as merciless.

How did I brilliantly design my little epic? I was directly inspired by *The Barsoom Project* by Larry Niven and Steve Barnes. In the novel the characters are playing in a futuristic LARP: an adventure where an evil shaman is freezing the planet. I had global warming awaken a powerful spirit from her icy naptime.

Reading about the Canadian North soon leads me to learn about the Lost Franklin expedition and the recent discovery of the expedition ships Erebus and Terror. With confirmed evidence of cannibalism among some of the expedition's last victims you just know there is a ghoulish mystery there. A celebrity acquaintance of mine, Jared Harris, will be starring (to my shock) in a monster hunting thriller for AMC, based on Dan Simmons' novel *The Terror*, which was based on the Franklin Expedition, so I have to throw an adaption of that in the mix. Also: with the Vikings making their forays into Canada in historical times, I just have to tie in a Norse monster somewhere. Suddenly I'm up to my highballs with monster and mystery ideas without really trying.

Monsters and monster hunting are everywhere in popular culture, my dear Virginia. And always remember, my dear Virginia: whatever you believe, the monsters believe in you.

Keep the lights on!

Regards,
Mark Tygart

SOLUTIONS FOR SOLO GAMING

By Mark Tygart

“And I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”

—Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

It's going to happen sooner or later: a spouse, a friend, or someone else is going to want to venture into the cinematic world of roleplaying monster hunting coolness that is *Monster of the Week*, when comrades are unavailable or when that person insists on a bit of privacy before coming out as an honest-to-Crom tabletop role player.

Don't fret, but be warned. Roleplaying with just one player is a whole other beast.

This is a more intense and focused experience than standard tabletop groups. Without the byplay, off-topic kibitzing, discussion, and decision-making between players, the solo player remains in focus the whole time, with the burden of investigation squarely on their shoulders. This results in an experience that feels much more like a novel than the delightful anarchy of a collaborative group game.

However, being constantly engaged can be daunting for both the player and Keeper. Here's some play advice to prepare the Keeper for dealing with the single player format's pressure and need for concentration.

Monster of the Week requires both planning and improvisation, but oddly enough I've found that single player requires more planning than traditional gaming. Without the inter-player banter, planning, and problem-solving, you have less time to improvise your way around surprises while delivering a coherent mystery. It is unwise to simply “wing it” in such a situation; it is helpful to have the spine of a good scenario to support your adventure. Here are some other tricks I've learned.

One of the things that will help a solo player is Luck and a Keeper being less stingy with those valuable Luck points than an ordinary game requires. Michael Sands advises 2-4 Luck points in a convention game. In a solo one-shot game I would generally double that number.

In solo mysteries I often give a player ‘adventure points’ which act exactly like Luck points but expire if not used during the adventure, encouraging their use. This also limits the damage to an ongoing campaign if I am accidentally overly generous!

Another trick is to make sure the player has a number of helpful ‘redshirts’. This is a term from Star Trek, where a number of red-shirted lemmings could blunder in front of the monster’s attack and protect our beloved Captain Kirk from (almost) certain doom. Redshirts are useful to have around in any *Monster of the Week* game, but especially in solo play.

Sidekicks need a larger role in solo mysteries to help our lone hero or heroine. Sidekicks also provide opportunities for low-intensity scenes of friendship and camaraderie to momentarily take the pressure off the player (and the Keeper). Optionally, granting your solo hunter one of the ally/ally team moves is also a good idea.

This is where having the player work for some sort of organisation (like the Professional’s Agency or the Initiate’s Sect) really becomes useful. The organisation can quickly help by giving the player credentials or resources but can also demand the player’s allegiance in all sorts of unsettling ways. That report on toxins in the murdered victim’s bloodstream might be on its way but it’s also paired with a ‘request’ to help dispose of both a dead body and the klutz who mismanaged the hit. Office politics can just be a killer...

If the character is going to work for an organisation, then it is in that organisation’s best interests to outfit their agent with all the sorcerous tattoos, charms, and whatnot to help shore that hunter up where they are weak. For solo hunters, high-quality gear and a generous amount of magical help should be in order. A magical tattoo that adds 1- or 2-armour is a good example.

Still, character death is really going to be something of a problem as it is the equivalent to the dreaded ‘Total Party Kill’ in a normal game and should be avoided. Instead of death, the hunter can be knocked out and left for dead or captured by the bad guys. Also, in tabletop RPGs, like comic books, death can be a new beginning.

If an ‘ordinary’ resurrection move is not an option, why not resurrect the player with a new Monstrous playbook—as a vampire, ghoul, or zombie and with a whole new set of abilities and problems when they get back their case? Popular recent monster hunting television shows like *iZombie* have embraced this successfully. If death is the end, maybe the hero can arrange a bargain with Death or some other supernatural delay (for now), and allow for satisfying catharsis when she sacrifices herself to defeat an evil monster.

The key is the creative nature of *Monster of the Week*, which allows the rules as written to be bent to provide a playing field where a solo player can survive just as well as a team of hunters. In an ideal world she would even be joined by a few comrades in a future adventure—a chance to play the game as designed. Still, solo or team-based, the reality is those monsters aren’t going to slay themselves!

Good hunting!

SPELL BOOKS

By Mark Tygart

A little magic can take you a long way.

—Roald Dahl, *James and the Giant Peach*

There is magic, but you have to be the magician. You have to make the magic happen.

—Sidney Sheldon, *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*

Magic in *Monster of the Week* can generate concern around the question of ‘everyday magic.’ Since the game is squarely based on classic monster hunting television shows like *Buffy* and *Supernatural*, players quickly understand that ritual magic allows for special events or adventures, like Buffy’s resurrection or Sam and Dean Winchester traveling back in time.

The new weirdness rules can help in games based on low magic or purely science fiction monster hunting shows like *The X-Files* or *Fringe*. That still leaves a question about running the vanilla magic rules in a game inspired by urban fantasy where magic is rare. One way the group can make magic more formalised is to limit it to a smaller number of defined spells. New spells must be found, researched, or invented rather than simply improvised in play (as with the normal **use magic** move).



SPELL FORMULAE

Every aspiring magic-using character should create a few starting spells they have learned before the game begins.

Spells should be written up with the exact effects of success and failure.

Apply the **use magic** rules as a starting point, picking specific effects, glitches, and requirements to fit the spell. If the effects are more powerful, the spell should have more potential glitches and requirements to balance that out.

You may add new requirements and glitches if you want, using the existing ones as guidelines.

For example, Gerard the Spooky wants a spell that turns him momentarily insubstantial to protect him from monster attacks. This is clearly ‘beyond human limitations’ and similar to a ‘heal’ effect, which makes it a bit more powerful than a regular spell. Gerard’s player and the Keeper agree that the spell needs a rare ingredient—a special mystic herb that Gerard must swallow—and certain arcane gestures. In the case of a glitch, it will have reduced effect (only half the harm is avoided) and attract unwanted attention (from other things that live in the insubstantial dimension Gerard is visiting). To cast this spell, roll the **use magic** move as usual, but the effect, requirements, and glitches are always the pre-agreed ones that go with the spell formula.

SPELL BOOKS

Hunters with magical backgrounds should begin with a spell book containing a core group of spells. These should be developed between player and Keeper. The payoff for the magician should be that the downside is clearly limited if it misfires. Various forms of investigative, illusion, protection, and healing magic spells are to be encouraged. Fantasy tabletop RPGs like *Dungeon World* are a good source of inspiration, with the understanding that the spells generally need to be powered down a bit to match an urban fantasy setting.

Spellcasters may be allowed to research spells—but this should often come with the same sort of serious costs associated with **big magic**. In many cases, the exact same requirements as **big magic** will work for spell research. A spell book or grimoire is a good special rare ingredient for spell research.



CHRISTIAN BOOK OF THE DEAD (ABRIDGED)

Example Playbook

Here is an example grimoire from one of my own adventures:

An exceedingly rare and powerful arcane grimoire, the *Christian Book of the Dead* is a collection of translated medieval magical rituals centered on the ‘heretical’ practice of Christian necromancy by a strange medieval Gnostic sect based in southern England. They worshipped the ‘Black Death’ and were brutally eliminated by the Inquisition. The original text is in the Church Latin of the late 13th century by a William of Baskerville but an abridged modern translation was produced in the 1920s by the writer Professor M.R. James for Red Dragon Press.

The book describes various magic spells that allow one to conjure spirits of the dead and speak with them. In addition, it contains a spell to reanimate those who died by violence: these individuals become zombies under the control of the necromancer.

All the spells involve sacrificial blood, medieval prayers in Latin, and the use of a complicated magic circle of salt to protect the necromancer if the spell fails. The spells also involve the caster focusing their will and then speaking the ‘true name’ of both the dead person and the Angel of Death.

The book also details the expensive **big magic** ritual necessary to create a ‘Hand of Glory’.

Famously, the original (but not the abridged) text also includes a complex ritual that allows for the manufacture of a musical instrument called Gabriel’s Horn. When sounded, the Horn can transform four zombies created by the book’s ritual into the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and bring about the end of the world.

HAND OF GLORY

A Hand of Glory is the dried and pickled hand of a man who has been hanged. It is usually the left (or ‘sinister’) hand, or the hand that ‘did the deed’.

Old European beliefs attribute great powers to a Hand of Glory that has been combined with a candle made of fat from the corpse of the same hanged man who died on the gallows.

When the fingers of the Hand close around this candle (see above) and the candle is lit, the Hand provides the following move:

When you walk into a building while holding a lit Hand of Glory,

Roll +Weird:

- On a 10+, choose two from the list below.
- On a 7-9, choose one from the list below.

Hand of Glory effects:

- Any locked door, gate, portal, safe, etc. that is within the candle light unlocks itself.
- Any hostile person you encounter will be paralyzed as long as they gaze directly into the candle’s light. A paralyzed hunter may spend a Luck point to escape the effect.
- The candle flares up blue in the presence of secret doors, buried treasure, etc. and its light reveals any invisible creature or item.



EXAMPLE SPELLS

RAISE ZOMBIE

When you call up the recently dead by their name to serve you, you need to wear personal clothing from the grave of a victim of violence, while chanting John 6:63 at their graveside. Roll +Weird:

- On any result, the zombie rises at midnight.
- On a 10+, the zombie you named will arise on that midnight.
- On a 7-9, the zombie will attack you unless you are protected (a circle of salt is the easiest warding).
- On a miss, the zombie rises but may not be controlled.

COMMAND ZOMBIE

When you seek to control a raised zombie, call the secret name of the Angel of Death, and roll +Weird.

- On a 10+, the zombie will obey you until the next full moon.
- On a 7-9, the zombie will attack you unless you are protected (a circle of salt is the easiest warding).
- On a miss, the zombie cannot be controlled and will likely stumble around causing violent mayhem.

SPEAK WITH THE DEAD

When you call the spectre of the recently dead, a personal item of the deceased must be thrown into a fire, and you must then call them by name. Roll +Weird:

- On a 10+, the spirit you named comes and answers your questions honestly.
- On a 7-9, the spirit you named comes and tells you some obscure things or speaks in riddles.
- On a miss, a spectre claiming to be that spirit answers your questions—but some answers are lies.

GRIMOIRES IN YOUR GAME

It is easy to imagine one or more of these texts being the basis of a whole campaign. The *Twenty Palaces* novels by Harry Connolly offer a good model: The Society is a ruthless guild of sorcerers who track down grimoires and destroy them, their users, and the monsters they create.

In my case, I recreated the satanic Pallas Society from Val Lewton's classic film *The Seventh Victim* to trouble the characters with the *Christian Book of the Dead*.

SOCIETY OF PALLAS (OR PALLADISTS)

The Palladists are a secret theistic Satanist society. The name is a cover: it comes from Pallas Athena, and is intended to bring to mind ‘wisdom and learning’. The Palladists use the owl as their symbol.

The members believe that reason naturally leads to a bizarre pacifism (“direct violence equates to stupidity”) and a worship of ‘evil’ (predatory Social Darwinism favoring Satanist aristocratic elites). They take strict vows committing themselves to these principles—and to the society—for life. Transgression of the group’s rules is punished by death.

The group can program serial killers using Cold War techniques on chosen (i.e. less useful) cult members. The society membership strongly favors old and powerful WASP Eastern elite families (think the Skull and Bones club). The cult would dearly like some actual supernatural knowledge but is currently just a bunch of depraved elites who dress up in funny hats and robes and attend seasonal orgies, as in Kubrick’s film *Eyes Wide Shut*.

The Palladists are based on a fictional Satanist group that was a famous 19th Century hoax. The Palladists also play a major role in the latter part of Umberto Eco’s novel *The Prague Cemetery*. An entire campaign can be centered on the hunters in conflict with a group like this.

OTHER WAYS TO USE SPELLBOOKS

Of course many other types of campaigns can be imagined about various types of spell books.

The hunters could inhabit Kenneth Hite’s *Bookhounds of London* setting, obtaining forbidden Lovecraftian tomes from depraved aristocrats and corrupt cultists in 1930s Britain.

Alternatively, the players could explore mysterious powers and dangerous urban spells from Fritz Leiber’s *Our Lady of Darkness* after they gain a copy of the mad scholar Thibaut de Castries’ obscure book *Megapolisomancy: a New Science of Cities*.

Or join Ash back in a medieval Britain that looks surprisingly like the Southern Californian desert to fight zombies by mispronouncing a phrase from the *Necronomicon Est*.

The hunters may be foolish enough seek the location of the very gates of Hell itself in the Nine Gates to the Kingdom of Shadows...

The possibilities are as limitless as the volumes in a library located somewhere in Rod Serling’s *Twilight Zone*. With a little thought and input from your players, your mystical hunters can be the catalyst for countless adventures.

And if all else fails, just have them stumble across a copy of *The King in Yellow* and let the madness and postcards from Lake Hali ensue.

Reading in *Monster of the Week* is fundamental, if you ask me.

STRANGER KIDS

By Mark Tygart

“When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro.”

—Hunter S. Thompson

The success of the Duffer Brothers’ Netflix series *Stranger Things* has rekindled interest in a sub-genre of monster hunting stories: playing characters who represent, in some way, our childhood selves when we discovered the hobby appeals to some older gamers like me. While a number of kids-focused monster hunting RPGs existed before *Stranger Things*, that program added the potent factor of 1980s nostalgia.

Also some of us are teaching our kids to play, and wonder whether *Monster of the Week* can provide adventures set in a *Stranger Things*-style setting, where kids can battle evil as fictional versions of themselves.

BACK TO THE PAST

“The past,” L. P. Hartley famously said, “is a foreign country,” and this applies to even the relatively recent past. A kid-centred campaign could be set in the present day, but for many the era is a powerful part of the appeal of a kid campaign.

The single biggest change is that this era (the early 1980s) is set before the information revolution. The lack of communications and information technology really contrasts with our current era: no cell phones, few computers, even fewer computer networks, research via books in libraries, etc. Where such technology did exist, it was largely out of reach of the general population: either too expensive or requiring specialist knowledge. This requires no alteration in the game rules beyond changing a few hunter gear options and modern references in the moves. Just make sure everything is kept ‘in period’ and you will be fine.

There is an old joke that those who lived through the 60s don’t remember the 60s. This is certainly also true of the 80s, as even those of us old enough to remember the decade often rewrite the era in our minds. America was a very different place back then with a political landscape being reshaped by resurgent conservatism and Cold War skullduggery, and by a rampant consumer culture driven by an uneven economic boom in the later part of the decade that drew comparisons to the ‘Jazz Age’ of the 20s. It is exactly these features that provide a great basis for the Keeper to draw from for adventures, whether it is demonic Cabbage Patch Kids dolls or a rampaging giant Marshmallow Man inspired by *Ghostbusters*.

KIDS AS CHARACTERS

Monster of the Week already has playbooks designed for kid characters: The Chosen, The Mundane, and The Spooky in the rulebook, and The Meddling Kid (available online).

A campaign modeled on *Stranger Things* can include adults as well as kids. An adult mentor associated with the hunting group—like the grumpy but lovable Sheriff Hopper or Giles from *Buffy*—works fine.

As for the other basic playbooks:

The Crooked: If you re-imagine the underworld in a kid's terms, it can work. A 'King Rat' kid who sells homework answers and forged permission slips might have fallen in with the supernatural. For inspiration, you can also look to the film *Brick*, which imagines high school as a film noir, or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* which depicts high school as a literal gateway to hell.

The Divine: A kid as an avatar or disguise is a nice fit for a campaign. Keepers may want to check out the classic Cary Grant film *The Bishop's Wife* for ideas on how this could play. Your angel needs to remain disguised to regular folk. In *The Bishop's Wife*, for example, the angel's intervention is forgotten when his divine mission is completed.

The Expert: While this character playbook suggests for an older mentor, an uber-nerd kid who knows every comic book and monster manual backwards can be an amusing substitute, with a tree house as their sanctuary.

The Spellslinger: A spellcasting version of the nerd trope could also work for a Spellslinger. Imagine a small Harry Dresden or Harry Potter playing on the hockey team or as president of the high school magic club.

The Flake: A nerd type is the aspiring journalist, Kolchak fan obsessed with the latest cryptids and conspiracy theories.

The Initiate: A cult composed of children like in Stephen King's *Children of the Corn* is one way to go here, but if you think about it, almost any strange organization could be a cult and it doesn't even have to be overtly religious. An ancient order of astrologers could be sending our young Initiate coded commands via a popular science program of the day like Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* or the local astronomy club.

The Monstrous: A child vampire or teenage werewolf is not at all difficult to imagine and there are a wide variety of tropes in movies and television to draw inspiration from. From *My Best Friend is a Vampire* to the antics of various generations of Disney's teenaged werewolves, the kid monster was a popular comedic subject. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* elevated the material further in the 1990s. The key, as with the Divine playbook, is to hide the monster in the classroom. A more comedic campaign could have the community embrace the monster, especially if that player can lead a local high school team to victory.

INSPIRATION FROM OTHER WORLDS

A whole host of kid-centered horror games can provide inspiration. Examples include *Tales from the Loop*, *Grimm*, *Little Fears*, *Bubblegum-shoe*, *Monsters and Other Childish Things*, *Dark Places* and *Demogorgons*, and *The Breakfast Cult*. While these systems have the advantage of being designed for kid-centered monster hunting, they should be used with caution. Almost all were designed for child characters, not monster hunting adolescents. Some have a focus outside where your group may want your campaign to go.

- *The Breakfast Cult* turns high school into a wonderland of Lovecraftian cultists and a place where a child Initiate might fit in just fine. It's also Powered by the Apocalypse, so its mechanics are more compatible with *Monster of the Week* than any of the other systems I have mentioned. *The Breakfast Cult* focuses on competing high school cults, so it's only going to be useful if that's a direction you want your game to go.
- *Tales From The Loop* gives you great content ideas if you want science fiction inspired adventures in an alternate 1980s USA or Sweden.
- *Little Fears* features supernatural adventures about young children. Earlier editions of the game were controversial for the use of adult horror tropes in that context.
- *Dark Places and Demogorgons* is an old school D&D re-creation with classes based on *Breakfast Club* tropes: jock, nerd, popular girl, etc.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In review, while *Monster of the Week* was not designed to be a kid monster hunting game set in the 1980s, there is no reason why it can't be. The implied setting is flexible enough to handle the challenge with a little care from an intelligent group of hunters and their Keeper.

So whether you want to revisit the Reagan era or revamp your game with children from *Stranger Things*, a little tweaking may just provide the keys to your hunters' DeLorean. Just buckle up and beware of Demogorgons!

THE STRUCTURE OF AN ON-THE-FLY GAME

By Daniel Steadman

HISTORY

My credentials for writing this? That I am categorically incapable of running a prepared game. I am hopefully a better GM/MC/ST (or whatever you want to call it) now than when I started out as a GM of such games as *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* and similar, but I had to change my style to 'freeform' early in the piece.

My breakthrough towards easier gaming came from *SLA Industries*. The reason this was different was a framing device they called a 'Blueprint News file.' This little game prop consisted of a short description of the current mission designed to prepare the players, but it did not provide any real content. I started giving players a list of jobs on offer and letting them pick their mission. I had no idea what they would pick or what would happen when they did. These little job descriptions... blew... my... mind!

Suddenly games made sense to me in a way they never had before. Stories came first with details a distant second. I didn't have to figure out in advance what would happen if they killed the lich, turned right instead of left, or wore the mysterious hat. Instead my games were fast and organic. If players needed a clue to advance the story then they found that clue. If a character was a dick to a bystander, I had the freedom to suddenly reveal that bystander to be important.

This was enormously liberating and at total odds with everything I had learned before. I could spend time during a game using the story to refer back to previous events whenever that was cool or interesting. I could assess the emotional state of players and adjust the script accordingly. Without the weight of meticulous preparation, I had more free time which left me happier and more willing to run games. I could also listen to the players' dingbat plans and, instead of sobbing as I threw away a meticulously prepared setup when they blew up the prison instead of investigating as they were 'supposed to,' I could just roll with it.

The long and short of it is that games became easier to run, took zero preparation time, could cope with the goofiest players, and got detailed and emotional whenever a scene demanded it.

HOW'S THAT WORK?

Many people aren't comfortable with this style of running games but if you are interested in trying it, then here are a few useful insights.

The first thing you need to do is come up with the two 'opening lines' to start the scenario. This should be both vague and descriptive, focusing on useless but interesting details. Don't think about how it will end, just the beginning. You are now in the same state of understanding as your players. I usually try to take two or three random things, smush them together and come up with an odd story hook. With *Monster of the Week*, an example might be: I notice something orange as I glance around the room, the word 'sharp' randomly pops into my head, and I decide wings would be cool. I write down "*Weekly World News* reports 'Orange Winged Lizard Person Found In Vivisection Horror House.' It could just as easily be "Whole Town turns orange" or "Bigfoot has an axe to grind with a flock of axebeaks."

To get your opening lines, expand on that: be detailed but not specific. "Police express alarm in Poughkeepsie" or "Upsurge in suicides; parents blame rock and roll music."

At this point you are almost done for an on-the-fly game's prep. I realise we have not given characteristics to the monster, we don't have any bystanders, and we definitely don't have any stats written down.

This is important. Once you nail down exactly what the story is about, you lose the wiggle room to drive the story and it becomes about the details.

Now deliver the Hook: describe what the hunters know (which is almost nothing). They are driving by a creepy old house in the rain when their car stops. They receive a vision of that strange old dude who was eating bacon at the diner. They see something in the headlines or the ad section of the paper. Whatever the source, give them their hook in a format that makes sense, is a clear call to action, and tells them diddly.

Then you find out what the mystery is right alongside the players. They will provide most of the story when they ask questions. The key is to rarely say "No" and instead give plenty of "Yes."

"I look for a guy that looks like he knows what's going on" leads to "Well this guy across the street has a video camera—maybe you could ask him?"

"Does anything strike me as odd about this diner?" leads to "You mean apart from the stench of death wafting through the kitchen doors?"

Be fast and loose here. Being exactly right doesn't matter. What matters is spring-boarding every event and encounter into something else cool and interesting. Very soon you will be able to create a frame-

work that events sit in, and you can start to define the main threat one word at a time. Once it all makes sense, the players will know what they need to do because they know the threat is violent, huge, and underground (or however you've defined it during play). You already know a couple of things from your two lines earlier and this is where you tie them in.

When it is obvious to you what the threat is, bring it all together. Your one-word-at-a-time definition will suggest what the monster's motivations, weaknesses, and strengths are. Call for a short break and take a moment to work those out. Then you can push the game through to the finish. Add a twist. It's really a government conspiracy, or it's all in a child's mind, or it was clowns all along, or the Ancients have awoken, or whatever.

This style of running a game relies on flexibility as you play. That can be pretty scary if you haven't had much experience! The good news is that you are never wrong: you never have to deal with players ruining your story and that makes it easier to be fans of their characters. Plus, you rarely have to stop to check your notes.

GUIDELINES FOR ON-THE-FLY MAYHEM

To make things easier, I have created a small inspiration guide to illustrate how easy this structure can be. Print out this template (or the expanded version that follows), and circle descriptors as they become relevant. You will likely find that you only need to do this once or twice before you get the hang of running games in this style.

Start with a couple of opening lines taken from things around you or previous stories. Remember to be purposely vague.

Hook the players with a call to action.

Decide if the first encounter will help or hinder the hunters. Then pick one of the following: They are attacked; Someone tells them something (is it true?); They find a clue.

Pick some descriptors:

- **What?** Unusual, odd, weird, large number of, strange, disappearances, reappearances, appearances, brutal, mysterious, unexplained, ritualistic, inexplicable, irrational, unearthly, hoax, ancient, new, unnatural, spooky, unidentified.
- **Where?** An old town, a small village, a ship, an island, a new town, abandoned, big city, prison, museum, 'haunted' house, remote park, abandoned asylum, old woods, lonely highway, farm, sorority, fraternity, lab, cave, lake, military base, old hotel, mansion, corn fields.
- **(Optionally) Who?** Missing, hitchhikers, trampers, newlyweds, teens, elderly, minority members, the homeless, misshapen, children, respectable townsfolk, rich folk, farmers, students, recent arrivals, an old family, documentary film crew.

This first encounter sets the tone but doesn't resolve the mystery. That should be easy because at this point you won't have much more than a vague idea of what the mystery is either.

An example of the plot so far might be:

"You're browsing your monster hunter social media accounts when you see a comment from @Jerry039" (opening line)

"Hey dude, you should swing by Epson some time cos I'm pretty sure that weird symbol from your second video has been showing up around town. Meet me at the Old School Diner, I'm there every day between 10 and 1." (hook)

...Nah, we ain't seen Jerry since 2 days ago. Maybe swing by his old lady's?" (more hook)

At this stage you don't need to know what's going on—so if they go back to the hotel and break out the shotguns, that's fine. If they decide to look up local witch stories at the cat museum then that's fine too.

Or maybe they decide to look for the strange signs themselves. A chill runs down someone's spine as they notice a spooky figure cloaked in shadow staring at them from an upstairs window. The figure is gone by the time they get into the house but there is a stench and a ritualistic marking on the wall. It's a map of a nearby lake (*your first encounter*).

Of course, you could instead decide that Jerry was just hoaxing them for his stupid paranormal documentary when suddenly everyone in a local retirement home got young again. Either could springboard from that initial setup just as easily.

In the second encounter, the hunters meet someone or something. Decide if this person is well- or ill-disposed to the hunters. This person will reveal something about the threat (though maybe not intentionally).

- **Who?** An authority, an expert, a witness to strange events, a kid, a homeless person, someone with power, a victim, an escaped prisoner, a zombie, a ghost, a cop, a conspiracy theorist, a priest, a pickup artist, an artist, a medium, a scientist, a monster hunter, a victim.
- Repeat the first and second encounter pattern until you (and the hunters) have some understanding of the threat. You will know by now that:
 - **It is a:** big, small, smart, sneaky, old, new, hidden, obvious, tricky, unintelligent, mindless, cunning, powerful, ancient, newly-spawned, transformed, undead, kooky, misunderstood, deceptive, tragic, arrogant.
 - **Monster type:** minion master, behemoth, assassin, creature, spirit, alien, old friend, magic, ally, summoned, possessor, trickster, butcher, mother, serial killer, mutant.

The hunters better go do something about that! While they make a plan you can take a moment to write up its powers, attacks, and weakness.



THE KEY

The key principles to keep in mind are:

- Be open to anything—don't think you know the story until the very end.
- Always say "Yes." You can always add "but" afterwards.
- Look for possibilities.
- Look for a tie-in with what has already been established.
- Be obvious—subtlety will not help you.
- Work with the players to figure out what is going on.
- Don't tell the players that you don't know, or don't have a plan. You do, it's just that you haven't thought of it yet.

EXPANDED ON-THE-FLY MAYHEM WORKSHEET

The following is an expanded version of the On-the-fly Mystery inspiration worksheet.

- Start with a couple of open lines taken from things around you or previous stories. Remember to be purposely vague.
- Hook the players with a call to action.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

Decide if the first encounter will help or hinder the hunters. Then pick one of the following: They are attacked; Someone tells them something (is it true?); They find a clue.

Pick some descriptors from these categories:

WHAT?

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> unusual | <input type="checkbox"/> mysterious | <input type="checkbox"/> unnatural |
| <input type="checkbox"/> odd | <input type="checkbox"/> unexplained | <input type="checkbox"/> spooky |
| <input type="checkbox"/> weird | <input type="checkbox"/> ritualistic | <input type="checkbox"/> unidentified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> large numbers | <input type="checkbox"/> inexplicable | <input type="checkbox"/> murder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> strange | <input type="checkbox"/> irrational | <input type="checkbox"/> bizarre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> disappearances | <input type="checkbox"/> unearthly | <input type="checkbox"/> violent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> reappearances | <input type="checkbox"/> hoax | <input type="checkbox"/> experimental |
| <input type="checkbox"/> appearances | <input type="checkbox"/> ancient | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> brutal | <input type="checkbox"/> new | |

WHERE?

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> an old town | <input type="checkbox"/> abandoned asylum | <input type="checkbox"/> corn fields |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a small village | <input type="checkbox"/> old woods | <input type="checkbox"/> a castle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a ship | <input type="checkbox"/> lonely highway | <input type="checkbox"/> a sprawling mansion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> an island | <input type="checkbox"/> farm | <input type="checkbox"/> a swamp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a new town | <input type="checkbox"/> sorority | <input type="checkbox"/> a prom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> abandoned | <input type="checkbox"/> fraternity | <input type="checkbox"/> a reality show |
| <input type="checkbox"/> big city | <input type="checkbox"/> lab | <input type="checkbox"/> a TV set |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prison | <input type="checkbox"/> cave | <input type="checkbox"/> a zoo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> museum | <input type="checkbox"/> lake | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 'haunted' house | <input type="checkbox"/> military base | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> remote park | <input type="checkbox"/> old hotel | |

(OPTIONALLY) WHO?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> missing | <input type="checkbox"/> rich folk | <input type="checkbox"/> a collector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hitchhikers | <input type="checkbox"/> farmers | <input type="checkbox"/> a librarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> trampers | <input type="checkbox"/> students | <input type="checkbox"/> a government agent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> newlyweds | <input type="checkbox"/> recent arrivals | <input type="checkbox"/> churchgoers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> teens | <input type="checkbox"/> an old family | <input type="checkbox"/> a priest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> elderly | <input type="checkbox"/> documentary film crew | <input type="checkbox"/> a spirit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> minority members | <input type="checkbox"/> an old friend | <input type="checkbox"/> monster hunters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the homeless | <input type="checkbox"/> an old enemy | <input type="checkbox"/> a gourmet chef |
| <input type="checkbox"/> misshapen | <input type="checkbox"/> thugs | <input type="checkbox"/> a twin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> children | <input type="checkbox"/> a mastermind | <input type="checkbox"/> a community leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> respectable townsfolk | <input type="checkbox"/> a scientist | |

SECOND ENCOUNTER

In the second encounter, the hunters meet someone or something.

DECIDE IF THIS PERSON IS

- well-disposed towards the hunters.
- ill-disposed towards the hunters.

Regardless, they will reveal something about the threat (maybe not intentionally).

WHO?

- an authority
- a conspiracy theorist
- a wise-cracking truck driver
- an expert
- a priest
- a stage magician
- a crazy person
- a pickup artist
- a real magician
- a kid
- an artist
- escaped kidnap victim
- a homeless person
- a medium
- sex workers
- someone with power
- a scientist
- the biology teacher
- a victim
- a monster hunter
- a mysterious stranger
- an escaped prisoner
- a victim
- a robot
- someone from another world
- a zombie
- a crime syndicate
- a doctor
- addicts
- a ghost
- a cop



MORE ENCOUNTERS

Repeat the first and second encounter pattern until you (and the hunters) have some understanding of the threat. You know by now that:

IT IS A:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> big | <input type="checkbox"/> ancient | <input type="checkbox"/> sullen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> small | <input type="checkbox"/> newly-spawned | <input type="checkbox"/> chatty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> smart | <input type="checkbox"/> transformed | <input type="checkbox"/> insecure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sneaky | <input type="checkbox"/> undead | <input type="checkbox"/> controlling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> old | <input type="checkbox"/> kooky | <input type="checkbox"/> funny |
| <input type="checkbox"/> new | <input type="checkbox"/> misunderstood | <input type="checkbox"/> a professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hidden | <input type="checkbox"/> deceptive | <input type="checkbox"/> an amateur |
| <input type="checkbox"/> obvious | <input type="checkbox"/> tragic | <input type="checkbox"/> knowledgeable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tricky | <input type="checkbox"/> arrogant | <input type="checkbox"/> tuned in |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dumb | <input type="checkbox"/> irrational | <input type="checkbox"/> omniscient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mindless | <input type="checkbox"/> angry | <input type="checkbox"/> ignorant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cunning | <input type="checkbox"/> scared | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> powerful | <input type="checkbox"/> trapped | |

MONSTER STYLE:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> minion master | <input type="checkbox"/> possessor | <input type="checkbox"/> out-of-control experiment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> behemoth | <input type="checkbox"/> trickster | <input type="checkbox"/> trap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> assassin | <input type="checkbox"/> butcher | <input type="checkbox"/> former hero |
| <input type="checkbox"/> creature | <input type="checkbox"/> mother | <input type="checkbox"/> doppelgänger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> phenomenon | <input type="checkbox"/> serial killer | <input type="checkbox"/> cultist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spirit | <input type="checkbox"/> mutant | <input type="checkbox"/> freakshow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> alien | <input type="checkbox"/> recruiter | <input type="checkbox"/> psychic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> old friend | <input type="checkbox"/> science experiment | <input type="checkbox"/> infectious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Old One | <input type="checkbox"/> mystical experiment | <input type="checkbox"/> patient zero |
| <input type="checkbox"/> magic | | <input type="checkbox"/> the second study |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ally | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> summoned | | |

The hunters better go do something about that! While they make a plan you can take a moment to stat it up.





MYSTERIES

These mysteries come from a variety of *Monster of the Week* players and cover a huge range of styles. There are a lot of monsters in here, and also some weird phenomena for your hunters to be bewildered by.

We've built them to be complete enough to use 'as-is' in your games, but not so fully detailed that you'll need to make big changes before you use them. If your hunters are limited in how far they travel, perhaps you'll need to adjust some names and places to be a little more appropriate to their territory. And of course, you can tie things in to your own game's mythology by adjusting things that are close to fitting in.

Good hunting!

802,701 A.D.

By Mark Tygart

CONCEPT

The hunters are flung into the distant future of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* and must find a way back to their own time.

This is a phenomena mystery based on the idea of a time portal.

HOOK

While investigating the new San Marcos Large Hadron Collider for signs of 'lost time' and reports of ghostly figures from the past, an experiment with 'red matter' goes disastrously wrong and transports the hunters to 802,701 A.D.

OVERVIEW

The hunters must survive nightly attacks by hostile Morlocks, and may befriend the beautiful Eloi.

The Eloi will direct the hunters to the haunted 'Green Porcelain Palace,' the ruins of a museum. At the museum, a 'ghost' (really a hologram curator) can explain that the Morlocks' reactor can be set to explode and send the party back to their own time. The reactor is deep within the Morlock Caverns.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt was a fan of the story and advised author H.G. Wells of his solution to the problem of a Morlock infestation: Shotguns!

The mystery is inspired by *The Time Machine*—both the book and the major Hollywood adaptations (the classic George Pal from 1960, and the less successful Simon Wells from 2002). In general, it follows the original Wells story (small goblin-like Morlocks, 'flower children halfling' Eloi, etc.) but the museum curator A.I. hologram was inspired by the 2002 movie. *The Big Bang Theory* first season episode homage ("The Nerdvana Annihilation") should not be missed by *Time Machine* fans.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Morlocks steal the Red Matter Reactor from the Green Porcelain Palace.
Shadows	Morlocks raid Eloi Compound.
Sunset	Morlock butcher and feast on Eloi.
Dusk	Morlocks install Red Matter Reactor.
Nightfall	Weena captured in Morlock raid and eaten.
Midnight	Morlocks burn the Green Porcelain Palace and destroy the Museum Curator.

CUSTOM MOVES

IN THE MUSEUM

When you search for a useful item in the museum, roll +Sharp:

On a 10+, you find such an item and understand its function. A solar-powered flashlight or miraculous first aid kit would be an example.

On a 7-9, you find the item but you have limited ability to use it or manipulate it due to its alien or futuristic nature. A possibility would be a talkative ray gun that refuses to be fired unless you can ethically justify the use of violence. Just as you discuss the ethical issues with the weapon, you are joined by a giant, curious prehistoric millipede!

On a miss, the item is not what you think it is... e.g. the argumentative ray gun turns out to be a children's toy that can only fire harmless colored lights and bubbles.

OVERLOADING THE REACTOR

When you set the reactor to overload, the Keeper chooses some of these things to happen before it reaches the red line:

- A Morlock horde attacks!
- You need a tool or part that isn't to be found here (but you saw one nearby).
- A premature, unstable wormhole portal opens and brings something unexpected from a previous era: a bewildered Dimetrodon!
- A blast of steam does 1-harm to a hunter.
- A group of Eloi who have followed the hunters attempt to 'help.'
- The treacherous leader of the Morlocks suddenly wants to 'parley.'
- The Morlock caverns begin to collapse.



MORLOCK HORDES

Monsters: Devourers (motivation: to consume people)

After thousands of generations of living without sunlight, the Morlocks have dull grey-to-white skin, chinless faces, large greyish-red eyes with a capacity for reflecting light, and flaxen hair on the head and back. They are smaller than humans (the same height as Eloi). They are significantly weaker than an average human, but a large swarm of them is a serious threat to the hunters, especially in the dark. Their sensitivity to light makes them reluctant to attack during the day. The Morlocks and the Eloi have something of a symbiotic relationship: the Eloi are clothed and fed by the Morlocks, and in return the Morlocks eat the Eloi.

Powers:

- See in the dark.

Attacks: **Capture** (see below), **Talons** 1-harm hand messy.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 12 (Each point represents a single Morlock).



Weakness: Light—they will flee from any illumination.

Custom Moves:

Capture: When you fight a Morlock horde in the dark, the Morlocks always choose to do one of these:

- Inflict their damage on you.
- Capture you with their nets.

If you get captured, they take you (and your equipment) without further damage to the Morlock Larder.



TIME-LOST DIMETRODON

Minion: Brute (Motivation: to intimidate and attack)

Early prehistoric carnivorous reptile. Think of it as a huge alligator with a fin on its back.

Powers:

- **Ambush:** May attack before a victim can react.

Attack: Bite 3-harm hand messy.

Armour: 1 (thick scales).

Harm Capacity: 8. □□□□□□□□

Weakness: Cold. They will quickly fall into a stupor in low temperatures and will not attack at night above ground.

TIME-LOST GIANT PREHISTORIC MILLIPEDE

Minion: Cultist (motivation: to save its own skin at any cost)

Curious giant vegetarian millipede from the prehistoric past.

Powers:

- **Acid Blood Splash:** When harmed, the giant millipede splashes an attacker with acid blood (2-harm close acid messy).

Attack: Bite 1-harm hand.

Armour: 3 (thick carapace).

Harm Capacity: 8. □□□□□□□□

Weakness: Fearful: Will flee from any attack or perceived threat. Generally will not bite unless molested.

GREEN PORCELAIN PALACE

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

The Palace of Green Porcelain was an ancient museum that has been long abandoned. The Time Traveler named it after the texture of the outer walls. Certain hallways lead down into the Morlock Caverns.

The museum is inhabited both by a helpful 'ghost' (a Museum Curator A.I.) and several curious and fearful giant prehistoric millipedes.

WHITE SPHINX

Location: Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)

The Morlock Sphinx is a structure on the surface of the Earth. Whoever built it, the Morlocks maintain the Sphinx. A sliding panel hides an entrance to the Morlock Caverns. The Morlocks can lock this door to trap explorers. The Eloi generally avoid the Sphinx (for obvious reasons).

MORLOCK CAVERNS

Location: Den (motivation: to harbour monsters)

A series of underground tunnels and passages connected by a series of wells (each with a ladder) to the surface and other structures left behind by humanity. These structures include the Palace of Green Porcelain and the White Sphinx. The caverns are normally totally dark, which is comfortable for the Morlocks. The caverns include a Morlock village and larder.

MORLOCK LARDER

Location: Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)

The grisly cages and butcher's shop where the Morlocks carefully tend their future meals (i.e., living Eloi).

The larder cages are relatively easy to escape from and the Morlocks will store the party's equipment in the same room for examination. The Morlocks are used to the harmless Eloi, but might upgrade their security methods if the hunters escape or otherwise demonstrate their intelligence.

THE ELOI

Bystanders: Victims (motivation: to put themselves in danger)

The Eloi are smaller than modern humans, with shoulder-length curly hair, pointed chins, large eyes, small ears, small mouths with bright red thin lips, and sub-human intelligence. The Eloi speak a simple language, but have no interest in learning English or in anything besides simple play.

The Eloi do not work. As in the novel, they enjoy feeding, playing, and mating. When Weena falls into a river, none of the other Eloi will help her.

Periodically, the Morlocks capture individual Eloi for food. Because this typically happens on moonless nights, the Eloi are terrified of darkness. The Eloi–Morlock relationship developed from a class distinction present in our own time: the Morlocks are the working class who had to work underground so the rich upper class could live in luxury. With time, the balance of power changed—the surface people no longer dominating the underground dwellers but instead becoming their livestock.

Additionally, Eloi seem to have some form of low-grade telepathy.

WEENA, AN ELOI

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

She is a typical Eloi of elfin beauty and puppy dog intellect, but retains genuine empathy and loyalty (unlike many other Eloi). Weena has a form of telepathy that may help the hunters in a crisis.

The hunters should be given every opportunity to save her from the river or the Morlocks. If rescued or otherwise impressed, Weena will proceed to aid the hunters to the best of her ability.

She knows the location of the Porcelain Palace (Museum) which the Eloi call “the place of ghosts,” and that the prehistoric millipedes are not harmful if treated gently. She also knows not to go outdoors at night.

ELOI COMPOUND

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

In the future, the ‘proto-Eloi’ had achieved a true utopian society. Their advanced and subtly complex technology (maintained by the Morlocks) was practically invisible. The Eloi Compound reflects this—all the necessities of life either grow (such as delicious fruits) or appear as if by magic or as a smoothly integrated part of the vaguely classical architecture. A river flows near by the compound: this is where the group will encounter the drowning Weena.

"EINSTEIN", MUSEUM CURATOR A.I.

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

A hologram projected from a computer program hidden deep beneath the Earth. The A.I. has the personality of a friendly Hollywood version of Albert Einstein, who exists to deliver helpful information. The holographic program cannot physically aid the party. Its profound intellect can tell them how to defeat the Morlocks and return home (who wish to scavenge its mainframe and museum items for parts).



ARACHNE GENESIS

By Luke Green

CONCEPT

Doctor Atsuko Popov is a scientist from a race of spider-people, called the gumo, born from the accidental release of a bioweapon in the early days of the Cold War. Her obsessive efforts to recreate the original mutation have led her to kidnap and experiment on humans and spider-people alike. Until now, her creations have been short-lived and unpredictable. She kept most of them locked up, but others were released into the tunnels under the city. After dissecting a first-generation gumo, she found the original bioweapon and is now unknowingly creating a deadly plague.

THE GUMO

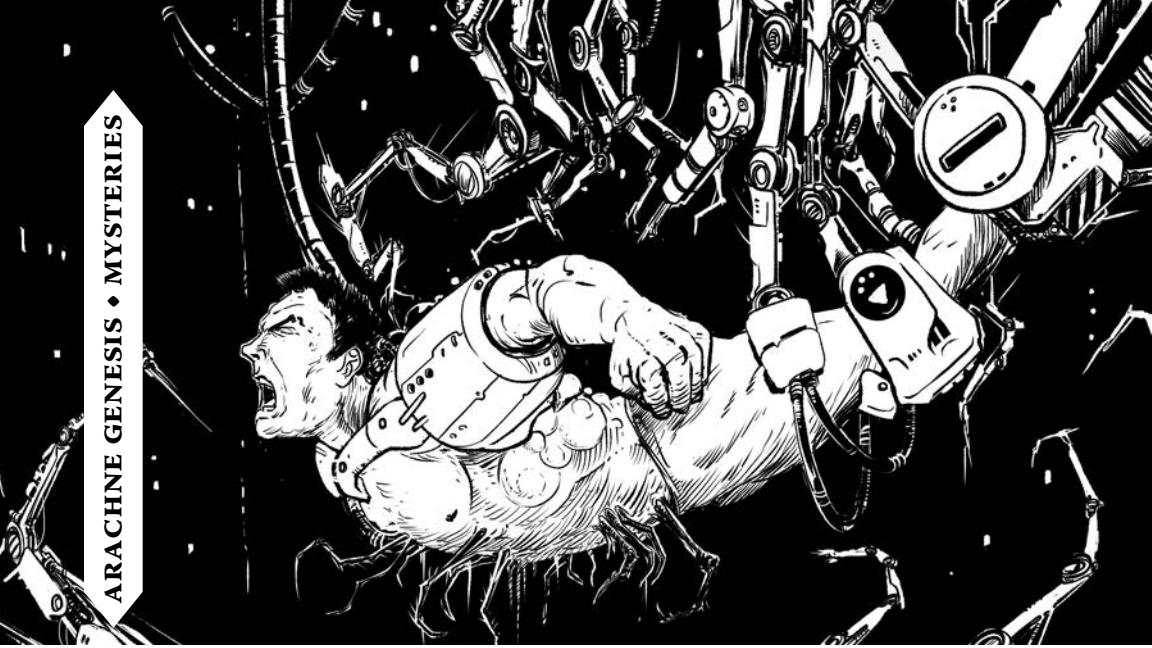
There are different varieties of gumo, some quite easily able to pass for human and others with obvious spider-like features. Their personalities and morality are in the normal human range. Mostly they keep themselves hidden, in fear of humanity's reaction. The gumo are a mortal species, but some have psychic abilities.

It is up to the Keeper whether they are a minor or major part of the setting.

HOOK

Some possibilities:

- Another team of hunters has gone missing after looking into rumors of sewer monsters.
- A series of murders in high-security buildings has police stumped due to the lack of apparent access.
- A disturbingly deformed corpse was recently discovered.
- The goddess Arachne sends dreams to one of the hunters.



COUNTDOWN

Day	Older failed experiments continue their attacks until they are captured or die.
Shadows	Dr Popov releases an infectious patient she considers too dangerous to hold.
Sunset	Survivors of arachnid attacks start turning into arachnoids over the next eight hours.
Dusk	Arachnid sightings make it to the news.
Nightfall	The authorities become aware of the arachnid plague.
Midnight	The military suppresses the infestation, with significant collateral damage.

GUMO PLAGUE

Phenomenon: Biohazard (motivation: to infect, harm and spread)

As the mystery begins, Dr Popov has recreated the mutagenic bio-weapon. She doesn't realise it yet. She took genetic samples from the first-generation gumo who survived the original bioweapon, and her own research 'reawakened' the plague.

Lifespan: As the plague mutates, each generation of infected arachnoids lives twice as long as the previous one.

Powers:

Cunning: Infected arachnoids become feral and violent, but are capable of a greater degree of cunning than the original gumos. Arachnoids can set traps and be wary of security cameras etc. Some arachnoids might start to figure out they can infect others and may seek to do so rather than kill people. The motive for doing so varies from individual to individual. Some might be trying to punish enemies while others might want to reunite with loved ones.

Infectious: If a hunter suffers harm from an arachnid bite, instead of the normal **harm** move, use this one. Roll +Tough:

- On a 10 or more, they resist the infection and gain +1 ongoing to resist the infection in the future. If they already have +1 ongoing, they are now totally immune to the plague.
- On a 7-9, the infected person starts at the Day level of the infection countdown (detailed below).
- On a miss, the infected person starts at the Sunset level of the infection countdown.

Weakness: Treating individuals one at a time takes too long to cure the plague: more victims will be infected too fast. The hunters must find someone who has become immune to the plague (perhaps one of their own number), then they can create a vaccine that can be mass-produced. This will prevent new infections from occurring and thus allow authorities to deal with the already-infected on a case-by-case basis.

Custom moves:

The Plague: The plague progresses in stages as detailed below. Danger, fear, and anger cause it to advance more quickly. The Keeper has discretion over what exactly causes the infection to advance a stage—this could be a potential consequence or choice on a 7-9 or miss result for the hunter's moves.

Infection Countdown:

- Day: The injury feels itchy and the character develops a fever.
- Shadows: The character experiences a growing headache and nausea.
- Sunset: The first visible signs of mutation appear.
- Dusk: The pain makes rational thought incredibly difficult.
- Nightfall: The character develops severe spider-like mutations.
- Midnight: The character seems completely monstrous. Rational thought is nearly impossible.

Cure: A person whose immune system is boosted by magic or science can fight off the transformation with regular **use magic** or **weird science**. Other weird moves might also apply if the hunter comes up with a good way to use them. It is not so simple to cure someone who has completed the transformation. This is a situation requiring major effort, **big magic** or a **weird science** experiment. The following elements will be needed:

- The individual to be cured must be present for the procedure.
- Some sample or representation of the person they were before: a treasured item or sympathetic token for a magical approach, or a genetic sample for a scientific approach.
- A few days to study the changes between the past and current version of the person. This could be an opportunity to **read a bad situation**.
- A **use magic** or **weird science** move.

DR. ATSUKO POPOV

Minion: Traitor (motivation: to betray people)

Atsuko Popov is a fourth-generation gumo and has one of the two most obvious forms, which means that she has to stay out of sight. Since puberty, when she developed into a half-spider, she feels she has been forced to live in a prison of secrecy. She began researching ways to reproduce the bioweapon that originally created the gumo, unaware that a goddess' interference (see Arachne on page 112) was the motivating factor. Her fixation on this idea eventually drove other gumo to avoid her. Working alone, she came up with a serum that she thought might work; unfortunately, her more human-seeming mother discovered her plans and in the resulting argument was injected. Atsuko's mother died quickly, messily, and in agony as Atsuko watched. Atsuko is now determined to succeed as it is the only way, in her mind, that she can justify the increasing death toll. Soon after, she began deliberately experimenting on humans and dissecting gumo. Some of her first victims were the undocumented workers who built her lab.

Once she is aware of the plague, Atsuko will try to insinuate herself into the investigation by hacking her name onto the list of disease experts. She will contact authorities, or the hunters if they contact her, via video call (hiding her lower half). She'll try to keep the investigation away from her lab by manufacturing a fake source for the plague. If someone she's talking to is scientifically keen, she will try to exploit that for her own purposes.

Powers:

- **Many Legs:** Allows her to climb walls.
- **Produce Webs:** If possible, she prefers she prefers not to contaminate her lab with these.

Attacks: **Syringe** 0-harm intimate sedative. **Handgun** 2-harm close loud.

Armour: *Unusual anatomy* (makes vital points harder to find): 1-armour.

Harm Capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

Weakness: None. Although not fully human, she is still a mortal creature.

THE LAB

Location: Lab (motivation: to create weirdness)

Atsuko has set up a bare-bones lab underground. It is hidden in an unused area of sewer and subway tunnels. There are holding pens for her 'guinea pigs.' The lab has two entrances, one isolated from the other. The first is Atsuko's regular way in and out. It is a stairwell leading up to an airlock door past which is a short corridor leading to a doorway leading into the basement of a private residence she purchased via agents. The corridor is quite wide (to accommodate her size) and the doorway is concealed as a wall of home improvement tools. The second entrance is connected to the holding pens and leads out into the tunnels. When an experiment goes wrong, she releases them this way. A close look will reveal the tools are so firmly secured that removing them would be inconvenient, as she didn't want them falling off every time she opened the door. The house above the basement has several hidden cameras so she can see what is happening. The property is fenced in and she keeps several guard dogs on the premises.

The lab is serene and sterile. Atsuko makes sure there is minimal contamination between experiments. She stores the bodies of past experiments and other gumo to dissect later. In a medical walk-in cooler unit, a carefully labeled rack contains blood, tissue, and prototype serum samples.



ARACHNOIDS

Minion: Brute (motivation: to intimidate and attack)

Arachnoids are former human beings who have been changed by Atsuko into tortured, pain-wracked spider-human hybrids. They often return to their regular haunts and hunt familiar faces. Most will avoid hunting close friends and family. Some can pass for human, while others have obvious mutant spider features.

The mutation process is brutal, and they will die from the changes in about a week.

Powers:

- **Spider-parts:** They can produce webs, and climb walls like a spider.

Attacks: Claw and bite 4-harm hand/close messy.

Armour: Choose: **Human skin:** 0-armour, **Light chitin:** 1-armour, or **Heavy chitin:** 2-armour.

Harm Capacity: 9. □□□□□□□□□

Weakness: No special weaknesses—although mutated, they are still normal living creatures.

Custom Moves:

Webbing: The arachnoids are capable of producing webs. **When an arachnid tries to maneuver a hunter into its webs,** the hunter must roll +Cool:

On a 10 or more, they avoid being entangled in the webs and gain a +1 Forward against the arachnid.

On a 7-9, they avoid the webbing but have to choose one of the following:

- They are placed in a vulnerable position.
- They lose something important.
- The webs are between them and the arachnid, blocking them from acting against the monster for the moment.

On a miss, they are entangled in webs and cannot move their arms or legs.

THE UNUSED TUNNELS

Location: Maze (motivation: to confuse and separate)

Depending on the city you use for the mystery, the tunnels might be sewers, subway lines, basements, catacombs, or the remnants of historical city structures.

The arachnoids that Atsuko released live in these tunnels when they're not creeping about their old places. The deeper you go, the more web-filled and cluttered the tunnels become. Dead animals, people, and arachnoids will be found tangled up in webs.

Custom Moves:

Web-Blocked Corridors: When the hunters find a blocked tunnel, they might try to navigate it carefully or just cut their way through.

If **they try to navigate the webs carefully**, they roll +Cool:

- On a 10 or more, they find a path through the webs without alerting anything. Anyone following them has +1 forward to navigate the webbing.
- On a 7-9, They get through but something goes wrong.
- On a miss someone gets stuck and something is coming for you.

If **they cut or burn through**, roll +Tough:

- On a 10 or more, they open up a path for everyone to follow.
- On a 7-9 they get through but something goes wrong.
- On a miss, you make too much noise and now something is coming for you.

Some things that can go wrong (on 7-9 or miss results):

- A piece of equipment is lost or broken.
- A hunter is attacked.
- Bad side effects of their approach (perhaps smoke or getting lost).
- The hunters get lost or separated.
- Arachnoids trap someone in a dead end.



ARACHNE

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Arachne was once human before she ascended to become the goddess of weaving and spiders. Modern myth has twisted the story to make it sound like a curse or punishment, but each god is given the privilege to create a single mortal species. This privilege can be fulfilled either by creating a species from nothing or by altering an existing species. Arachne chose to use her privilege to affect the bioweapon's effect on humans, causing it to mutate them into something viable rather than painfully kill them.

Arachne is limited in how she can interact with mortals: she can only send dreams to the hunters. Hunters with The Sight might also notice spider spirits. A Divine, Chosen, Summoned, Expert, or similar hunter might see the influence of such an entity.

ATTACK OF THE RAPID MOSS

By Jacob Steele

CONCEPT

An experimental, intelligent ‘learning moss’ has broken out from a scientist’s lab and endangers a nearby city.

HOOK

Some ways for the hunters to get involved are:

- Place the woods near the hunters’ base of operations, so it is their hometown that will be eaten by the moss.
- They are called to the woods by the scientist’s assistant, Mike, who told them something bad was set to happen. When they arrive, Mike runs out of the woods, with moss hot on his tail.
- They hear a report about a group of hikers who were attacked by ‘moss’ in the woods.

COUNTDOWN

Day	The moss is released by the corrupted scientist Dr. Cornwall.
Shadows	The moss spreads throughout most of the forest, killing a camper, Jerry Willdin.
Sunset	Mike attempts to stop Cornwall, but Cornwall kills him.
Dusk	The moss engulfs the nearby city.
Nightfall	The moss has completely covered the city, killing many people.
Midnight	The moss spreads through the region, killing thousands, with no signs of slowing down.

RAPID MOSS

Phenomenon: Biohazard (motivation: to infect, harm, and spread)

An experimental sentient moss created by Dr. Cornwall. Once released, it rapidly spreads across the ground and consumes anything it thinks could be a threat to it, which happens to be all human life, except for Dr. Cornwall (who is being controlled by the central Moss Brain).

Powers:

- **Rapid Growth:** Grows quickly and without limit. It has trouble growing up vertical surfaces. It will engulf and suffocate anyone who doesn't escape its tendrils. Hunters being engulfed should roll **act under pressure** to escape, or another hunter might **protect** them to pull them free.
- **Vines:** Vines whip out from the moss. They can attack (see below), or be used to drag people into the moss, engulfing them.
- **Strangle Structure:** Can topple trees and small structures by squeezing them tight with vine growths.

Attacks: Vines 2-harm close grab.

Armour: None.

Harm capacity: Effectively unlimited.

Weaknesses:

- The Moss Brain, located at the center of Cornwall's lab.
- Fire and weedkiller can clear out patches of it.

HILLSIDE FOREST

Location: Wilds (motivation: to contain hidden things)

The woods are where the moss was first grown. It is spreading mainly across the ground—so the hunters will have to be careful.

The forest is densely packed with large trees and has plenty of wild animals living in it.

Cornwall's lab is hidden in the center of the forest.

A camper named Jerry Wildin is camping in the woods illegally.

CORNWALL'S LAB

Location: Lab (motivation: to create weirdness)

The lab where the moss was born. Dr. Cornwall guards the lab from anyone who wants to stop the moss.

In the center of the lab is a large chamber where the Moss Brain is held.

There are many weird science materials and tools here. Some may be useful if the hunters try to defeat the moss with their own weird science.

MOSS BRAIN

Minion: Cultist (motivation: to save their own skin at any cost)

The Moss Brain is a strange, pulsating, and glowing clump of moss and tendrils. Glowing spores seep out of holes in the Moss Brain, sending and receiving signals from the moss as it expands. The Moss Brain is located in the center of Cornwall's lab. It is a psychic being that Cornwall awoke and it controls all the moss. It also uses its powers to control Cornwall, forcing him to do its bidding. Its sole desire is to spread moss out and consume everything. It can't move but can defend itself from the hunters with psychic blasts and by spawning moss children. If it is destroyed, the moss will continue to spread but without the brain to command it there will be no direction or intention.

Powers:

- **Controller of the Moss:** Can control the moss and spawn moss children.

Attacks: Painful psychic plant blast 1-harm close ignore-armour.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 5. □□□□□

Weakness: Sever its psychic connection to the moss: injecting it with a special poison is one way of doing this. Only Cornwall and Mike know how to make this poison, using materials in the lab.

DR CORNWALL

Minion: Guardian (motivation: to bar a way or protect something)

Dr. Cornwall is a 50-year-old scientist. He is short with greying black hair and a long beard. He discovered the Moss Brain and set up a research lab in the woods to study it. However, as time went on exposure to the brain allowed the creature to slowly take over his mind, corrupting him. Dr Cornwall's sole desire is now 'to spread the moss across all corners of the globe'. With the moss starting to spread, the brain now uses him as its puppet, forcing him to protect the brain with his life. He knows how to make a poison that will kill the Moss Brain and completely sever its psychic connection to its moss, stopping it from spreading. Unless the hunters can break him free of the brain's control, there is no way he will reveal this information.

Attacks: **Shotgun** 3-harm close messy loud.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 7. 11

Weakness: He is a normal human.

MOSS CHILD

Minion: Brute (motivation: to intimidate and attack)

When the Moss Brain feels threatened it will create moss children. These are strange, vaguely child-shaped clumps of moss that have been given a very small amount of intelligence by the Moss Brain.

Powers:

- **Rapid Growth:** If it grabs onto a hunter, the moss will spread across their body and try to suffocate them. Hunters being engulfed should roll **act under pressure** to escape, or another hunter might **protect someone** to pull them free.

Attacks: **Vines** 2-harm close grab. **Pummel** 1-harm hand.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 5. 8

Weakness: The Moss Brain, fire, and weedkiller.



MIKE NADERN, CORNWALL'S ASSISTANT

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information).

Assistant to Dr Cornwall. He is a 32-year-old man with short brown hair and blue eyes, who has worked with Dr Cornwall for many years. He realizes how fanatical his boss has become (and that the moss is behind it) and will help the hunters if they find him. If the hunters don't get to him, he will eventually confront Cornwall himself (and likely be killed by the moss).

He knows:

- Where the Moss Brain is.
- Dr Cornwall is being controlled by the moss.
- The Moss Brain has psychic powers.
- The Moss Brain wants to destroy the human race.
- How to make the poison that can kill the moss brain and sever its psychic connection to the moss.

JERRY WILLIN, OBLIVIOUS CAMPER

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

A 26-year-old camper staying out near the lab. He is tall and lanky with long blond hair in a ponytail. Jerry discovered the lab, and could lead the hunters to it. He is unaware of the danger of the moss.

BIG HAUNT ON CAMPUS

By Jason D'Angelo

CONCEPT

A college freshman, new to witchcraft, has summoned a spirit for a dark task. The spirit has ideas of its own and breaks free to systematically punish unfaithful lovers all over the campus.

HOOK

The annual Valentine's Party at the Triple Phi fraternity is legendary, but the bodies found on the lawn aren't usually dead. This year, basketball star Louis "The Buck" Buckner was hurled from his window during the party. His room was locked from the inside, and his girlfriend, Candy, was in the bathroom at the time. Buckner was thrown with such force he cleared the porch roof on the way to the lawn. When found, his lifeless body was covered in a thin layer of frost, although it was an unusually warm winter's night. There was no other frost nearby.

BACKGROUND

Before the winter break, The Buck had a one-night stand with Shelly Young. The morning after, filled with regret, The Buck told Young he had made a mistake and could never see her again. Young played it cool—but decided that if Buckner's long-time girlfriend were out of the picture, she and The Buck could be together.

Young's obsession reached its peak in early February, when she found a book of spells in the university library. Inspired, she gathered up supplies and attempted to summon a revenge demon. Shelly lacked the skill and experience to summon the demon she sought but but she did manage to summon something...else. Evelyn Bradshaw was murdered by Eric Clevinger in the same dorm room 40 years before. When Shelly lifted the veil, she allowed this vengeful spirit to enter our world. Mistaking Evelyn for the demon, Shelly told her an elaborate tale of Candy's infidelities and sent the spirit off to kill her. When Evelyn watched the couple, she discerned the truth and killed Buckner instead.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Shelly confronts Evelyn for not doing as she instructed. When Evelyn learns the whole sordid truth, she throws Shelley from her dorm window. Shelly's body is also found covered in the strange frost.
Shadows	Evelyn murders a female student on the quad outside the English department, sending a tree branch through her chest while the man she is flirting with looks on in horror. The student was in the middle of texting an excuse to her long-distance hometown boyfriend about why he shouldn't call her tonight.
Sunset	Evelyn goes to the English department to find Clevinger, not appreciating how much time has passed since she was alive. She kills the young professor she finds in the office, just as he finishes office hours with a female student.
Dusk	Evelyn tracks Clevinger, now old and retired, back to his home. She kills him—and masters her powers. The frost is thick where she touched him.
Nightfall	Evelyn tears through the student population. The murders come fast and furious, each one more gruesome than the last.
Midnight	The school is forced to close its doors and seek professionals to end the rampage of death. Evelyn takes her vengeance into the larger world.



EVELYN BRADSHAW, GHOST

Monster: Executioner (motivation: to punish the guilty).

Evelyn, in her freshman year, had an affair with a young married professor (Eric Clevinger) whom she loved and who she thought loved her. She became pregnant. Afraid that Evelyn and her secret could ruin his life, the professor came to her room one night, pushed her from her open window, and watched her fall four floors to the pavement. He fled and the death was presumed to be a suicide.

Evelyn is now a spirit of vengeance, punishing those who break their lovers' vows. If any of the hunters fit the bill, be sure to send Evelyn after them.

She appears as an apparition of an 18-year-old, in a faded print dress from the 70s. The back of her head is caved in from the fall that killed her, and she holds her head at an impossible angle on her ghostly broken neck.

Powers:

- **Frost Grasp:** When Evelyn reaches through your chest and grabs your heart, take 3-harm ignore-armour magic, then roll +Weird:

On a 10+, you resist and see into her soul; ask the Keeper a single question about her and they will answer you honestly.

On a 7-9, you see into her soul, but she also sees into yours; ask your question, but Evelyn will have a question or two for you as well: answer her honestly.

On a miss, take an additional harm and answer honestly the questions she asks you.

Attacks: Telekinesis: 0 to 3-harm close ignore-armour cold. Evelyn can throw objects or push victims—pick harm rating based on danger level. This leaves a frost that will melt into ectoplasmic goo.

Armour: None, but she cannot be harmed by normal weapons (except while using her frost grasp).

Harm Capacity: 8. □□□□□□□□

Weaknesses:

An apology, or **big magic** exorcism.

She will go away willingly with a heartfelt apology from Eric Clevinger, the professor who murdered her. She will claim him and the two will dramatically disappear.

She can also be exorcised by **big magic**. Possible requirements for the ritual: one or two more people than there are hunters; must be performed in the dorm room where she was first summoned; will take time and chanting, possibly attracting unwanted attention and innocents.

SHELLY YOUNG (FIRST-TIME WITCH)

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put herself in danger)

A first-year A-student. Shelly was always the good girl but she decided to reinvent herself in this new environment. She is scared and passive-aggressive.

ELLIE WINTERS (SHELLY'S ROOMMATE)

Bystander: Helper (motivation: to join the hunt)

A native to the college town and a long-time Wiccan. It was Ellie who introduced Shelly to witchcraft, though she will be horrified to learn how her roommate has used it.

She is confident, pro-active, and good-hearted.

CANDICE “CANDY” LANE (THE BUCK’S GIRLFRIEND)

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Beautiful senior majoring in Business, and a prominent member of her sorority. She works and parties hard.

She is heartbroken but self-assured.

SAMUEL ELLIS PRITCHARD (UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN)

Bystander: Busybody (motivation: to interfere in other people’s plans)

A serious scholar, fiercely protective of his collections, and a believer in the paranormal.

He’s unflappable, curious, and appears without warning.



PROFESSOR ERIC CLEVINGER (EVELYN'S MURDERER)

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

Now in his early 70s, retired from academia, and living in a suburb with his wife of 40 years. He still suffers great guilt from his murder of Evelyn Bradshaw. He can be persuaded to talk to Evelyn if convinced that her ghost is causing the troubles on campus.

Quiet and meek.

TRIPLE PHI HOUSE (FIRST MURDER SCENE)

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people together)

Three-story house where 28 students live. Louis' room is in the front on the top floor, with one door leading to the hall and the other door leading to a shared bathroom where Candy was 'freshening up' when Louis was killed.

ROSS HALL (SHELLY'S DORM)

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

Five-story institutional building from the 60s. Shelly's room was on the west wing of the 4th floor. Her body missed the scattered trees below and landed on a wooden park table.

THE McDOWELL BUILDING (ENGLISH DEPARTMENT)

Location: Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)

One of the oldest buildings on campus, made of limestone and brick. Cramped and poorly maintained.

THE KENS-SELLIS LIBRARY

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

On the east side of campus, one of the older buildings on campus, Victorian Gothic in style.

OTHER BYSTANDER NAMES

Molly Jensen, Connie Clipperman, Tara Blakely, Jessica Graves, Dustin Banks, Grant Alderfer, Gene Underwood, Jennifer Tuggenstall, Bradford Condon.

A CHURCH WITH A VIEW

By Kane Cathain

CONCEPT

Father Amhurst of St. George's church has garnered a reputation for his incendiary and hateful sermons. While repelling some parishioners, he has also drawn in a number of fire and brimstone-minded churchgoers. Whipped into a frenzy of abhorrent condemnation, the congregation has unknowingly caught the attention of otherworldly things.

The walls of the church have been absorbing all the hate and negativity and became a beacon to another reality. This realm is filled with malevolent ghosts who want to cross over into our world and cause havoc. One of these ghosts has succeeded in crossing and has pulled the church out of space and time. This ghost manifests as figures from the stained glass of the church. There is an abundance of stained glass in St. George's.

HOOK

A death by stabbing occurred in St. George's yesterday. Father Amhurst was hostile and uncooperative with the police.

The following supernatural elements were also reported, which should make the hunters interested:

- Visions of hell and ghostly forms seen through the church windows.
- Ghostly signs in the church: noises, areas of coldness, electronics misbehaving.
- Parishioners suffering nightmares of a hellish landscape.
- Figures in the stained glass moving positions.

COUNTDOWN

Day	The ghost emerges from the stained glass and kills the church caretaker.
Shadows	The stained glass ghost traps and attacks all who enter the church.
Sunset	The stained glass ghost is able to leave the church. It stalks victims in the town.
Dusk	Scores of Poltergeists follow through the breach created by the original ghost into our realm.
Nightfall	The ghost and a horde of Poltergeists attack the town en masse.
Midnight	A full-on invasion from the ghost realm spills out of the town and into the countryside.

STAINED GLASS GHOST FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION

Monster: Torturer (motivation: to hurt and terrify)

When the monster manifests as one of the figures from a stained glass window, the window stays intact, but the color is drained from it.

Powers:

- **Re-emerge:** When a manifested form is destroyed, the ghost comes out of another window in a new form of something depicted in that window. Each window may only be used once.
- **Shatter:** The monster can shatter its currently manifested form at will, destroying it and sending shards of glass in every direction (4-harm far messy).
- **Blind:** If under bright light, the ghost can reflect the light into the eyes. Roll +Cool to cover your eyes:
 - On a 10+, you avoid the light.
 - On a 7-9, you are momentarily blinded.
 - On a miss, you are blinded for at least 30 seconds.

Attacks: Sharp shards of glass 3-harm close messy.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

Weakness: Church Windows—when all the windows in the church are broken the ghost will no longer be able to manifest. There are three windows per hunter.



POLTERGEISTS

Minion: Plague (motivation: to swarm and destroy)

Following the Stained Glass Ghost through the tear in reality, these poltergeists will manifest in vaguely humanoid forms.

Powers:

- **Coalesce:** The Poltergeists can gather together into a more powerful form. This doubles their harm capacity and the harm they inflict.

Attacks: Throw anything not bolted down 2-harm far.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 2. □□

Weakness: Corporeal form—in order to attack the hunters, the Poltergeists must physically manifest. They can be destroyed by all forms of harm, just as a human would. When destroyed they melt into shadows and disappear, never to manifest again.

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, TEMPORALLY DISPLACED BUILDING

Location: Trap (motivation: to deny escape)

The church is known for its many stained glass windows depicting scenes of the battle between St. George and The Dragon of Lasia. This provides some particularly dangerous forms for the ghost to take, such armoured knights wielding swords, armoured horses ready to trample, winged angels of ill intent, saints in a swirl of sharp-edged robes, an evil-eyed Mary with a mouth of razor teeth, a vengeful Jesus ready for a knife fight, and of course The Dragon of Lasia itself.

The church is now intersects with a space between realities. Anyone who looks out the windows sees the realm of ghosts. Each color of glass gives a different view of a strange landscape and swirling mass of ghosts, each tinted by the color of the glass.

Powers:

- **Locked In:** Once the door to the church has been closed, those inside are trapped. Opening the door again reveals the ethereal landscape of the ghost world. The church returns to the normal world when the ghost is destroyed or if the hunters can pull off some appropriate **big magic**.

Custom Move:

When you smash a window, roll +Stat (usually Tough, but may be another depending on the hunter's approach):

On a 10+, the window is no more.

On a 7-9, the window is destroyed but the ghost attacks you.

On a miss, the window is broken but a new Poltergeist comes through from the other side.

FATHER AMHURST, VENOMOUS PREACHER

Minion: Renfield (motivation: to push victims towards the monster)

Father Amhurst has always possessed a mean streak and not a little bit of prejudice against those who live outside of his vindictive interpretation of the Bible.

In his twilight years, his tolerance has waned even further and his sermons have reflected this. At first his antics drove parishioners away, but after social media turned his meltdowns into a viral sensation his congregation swelled with the curious and hateful. His new audience fueled the detestable fire within him.

This has wrought the current state of affairs. Amhurst denies any of this is his fault and instead blames ‘sinners’: these events are the wrath of God coming to punish the ungodly. He will offer no cooperation with the hunters under any circumstances.

CARRIE HAYDON, POLICE OFFICER

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

The local cop on the job who has been called in to investigate what’s happening at the church. Officer Haydon thinks the murders are the work of an opportunistic serial killer. She is totally unprepared for the existence of monsters and the supernatural.

CLARK MOLINA, LOCAL CITIZEN IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

Clark Molina is an insurance adjuster. He works from his home across the street. He is curious about the commotion at St. George’s as the hunters arrive, and will find his way into trouble, possibly getting trapped in the church when the doors close.

THE CIRCLES

By Paul McBride

CONCEPT

Pavlos is a shapeshifting minotaur who needs to eat human flesh every seven years to preserve his youthful human appearance. This is done ritualistically in his labyrinth: a field of crop circles.

As the mystery begins, he needs one more meal, then he will leave to start over in a new location.

TEASER

Hendersonville, Iowa, USA: Two teenagers are looking down on a crop circle near a solitary farmhouse. They're there to spot UFOs and eventually they head down into the circle. From a distance we see lights flash deep in the circle, the corn rustles, and then all is still.

HOOK

Some options for the hunters:

- The teenagers are reported missing.
- Paddington Reynolds, conspiracy theorist and UFO expert, is convinced that extraterrestrials created the crop circles and the government is covering it up. He announces on his show that he's going to the site to investigate and will broadcast live from there.
- The hunters may be called in by relatives of the teenagers.
- The hunters may know (or know of) Reynolds and follow his investigation. Reynolds would be a good friend or rival for a Flake.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Reynolds travels to the crop circle.
Shadows	As night falls, Reynolds goes into the circle.
Sunset	Pavlos steers Reynolds into the center of the labyrinth.
Dusk	Pavlos ambushes Reynolds and devours him.
Nightfall	Nikos destroys Reynolds' equipment and burns down the circle.
Midnight	Pavlos and Nikos abandon the farm for a new location.

NOTES

This should have the pacing and style of a TV episode. It's fast-paced and should play out over a single evening timeline. If conversations and investigations are dragging on, cut the scene to offscreen badness or leverage other threats.

PAVLOS, YOUNG FARMER/ IMMORTAL MINOTAUR

Monster: Devourer (motivation: to consume people. Specifically, his seven-year ritual feast)

In human form, Pavlos is a boy in his late teens with dark features and a strong build. He is very quiet and wary of strangers. In minotaur form, he is 6'6" and 300 lbs of pure rage, with fire and smoke billowing from his snout.

Powers:

- **Transform:** May choose to appear in human or minotaur form.
- **Alter:** Change the labyrinth (crop circles) at will to confound intruders or to lead them somewhere specific.

Attacks:

- **Fire snort** 3-harm close fire.
- **Horns** 3-harm close forceful.
- **Bite** 2-harm intimate.

Armour: None in human form. 2 in minotaur form (thick hide).

Harm Capacity: 10. □□□□□□□□□□

Weaknesses:

The Labyrinth: If it is destroyed, then he can be killed like any normal human.

Cannibalism: If he does not eat his meal of human flesh in time, he will change into a weak and withered old man.

NIKOS, ELDERLY FARMER/SON AND SERVANT OF THE MINOTAUR

Minion: *Guardian (motivation: to protect Pavlos and the labyrinth)*

Pavlos is actually Nikos' father. Nikos can reveal this information dramatically ("Get away from my daddy!") when he intervenes.

Attacks: **Shotgun** 3-harm close messy loud. **Kick and punch** 0-harm hand.

Harm Capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

Weakness: None, he's just a normal human.

THE CROP CIRCLE LABYRINTH

Location: Maze (motivation: to confuse and separate)

The maze is a series of spiralling circles connected to one larger circle at the center. Hunters and victims will feel disorientated because of the twisting layout and being unable to see over the top of the tall crops.

Custom Moves:

Let's Get Out Of Here! When you enter the circle looking for the center, you find it. When you try to find an exit or someone else in the maze, roll +Sharp:

- On a 10+, you get there.
- On a 7-9, you choose: either find the center, or get where you want but something is following you.
- On a miss, you return to the center.

THE FARMHOUSE

Location: Den (motivation: to harbour monsters)

This looks like a regular farmhouse on the outside and the inside. The basement is a shrine with art on the walls depicting the legend and a statue of the minotaur. This is where Pavlos rests after feeding.



PADDINGTON REYNOLDS, UFO EXPERT

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

Paddington is determined to prove that he knows the truth and he will put himself in danger to do so. He is sure he knows more than the hunters and will try to stay a step ahead of them rather than working with them.

He will also try to capture everything he can on film as evidence.

WILSON GIBBS, LOCAL SHERIFF

Bystander: Skeptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)

Gibbs is dismissive of Reynolds and the hunters, who he views as opportunists in a situation he'd prefer to keep quiet. He thinks the crop circle is a hoax arranged by school kids and suspects that Pavlos is somehow involved—but he doesn't know how. He sees any approaches made by the hunters to Pavlos and Nikosas as disrupting his own investigation.

BILL AND SALLY DANIELS, ED AND JEAN CROSS, PARENTS OF THE MISSING KIDS

Bystanders: Helpers (motivation: to join the hunt)

The parents knew that their kids were going UFO spotting. They will head into the crop circle themselves, if necessary, to do their own investigation.

CREATURE FEATURE

By Mark Tygart

Dedicated to the memory of Leonard Nimoy (1931-2015).

"There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man... a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination."

—Rod Serling

Creature Features: "A generic title for a genre of horror TV format shows broadcast on local U.S. television stations throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The movies broadcast on the various shows were generally classic and cult horror movies of the 1930s to 1950s, the horror and science-fiction films of the 1950s, British horror films of the 1960s, and the Japanese 'giant monster' movies of the 1960s and 1970s."

—Wikipedia

CONCEPT

The hunters are trapped by an eerie mist that suddenly surrounds the small desert town of Nimoy, New Mexico.

Inspired by Stephen King's *The Mist* (story, film, and miniseries).

The hunters must find a way to avoid terrible extradimensional invaders and close a portal to another reality.

The 'Froghemoth' first appeared in Gary Gygax's classic *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* module *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*.

HOOK

The hunters are having a meal in Serling's Cafe. Maybe they are passing through on their way to follow-up another lead or to learn about accounts of a recent meteor strikes? Then an eerie green-yellow mist surrounds the town.

Soon the hunters become aware that they are now the hunted...



COUNTDOWN

Day	A transdimensional nexus opens due to a 'red matter' meteor strike and a strange mist floods the town. Cellphones and internet fail as a result. The hunters realize they are trapped.
Shadows	A froghemoth starts hunting town citizens.
Sunset	Town becomes increasingly swampy. Alien vegetation appears.
Dusk	Town citizens gather at Shatner's Hardware Store to plan defense. Froghemoth appears and devours town leaders. Citizens panic.
Nightfall	Professor Scott devoured. City now transformed into alien swamp.
Midnight	The transdimensional nexus transfers all of Nimoy, New Mexico to the Froghemoth Dimension. Remaining town citizens eaten.

TRANSDIMENSIONAL NEXUS

Phenomenon: Portal (motivation: to draw things from one world to another)

A transdimensional nexus has formed in Nimoy, New Mexico due to a ‘red matter’ meteor striking the desert landscape just outside the town. This links the town to the Froghemoth Dimension. Unless the nexus is closed, the entire town will be pulled into that dimension (and the citizens will be devoured by Froghemoths).

Weakness: Contact with mysterious ‘red matter’ (see the lab description, below).

Custom Move:

Enter the Nexus: When **someone travels into the transdimensional nexus**, roll +Sharp.

On a 10+, you can see the doorway back to the real world behind you and can escape at any time.

On a 7-9, you can see the doorway back to the real world, but a froghemoth is between you and it.

On a miss, you are lost in the Froghemoth Dimension.

THE MISTS

Location: Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)

The nexus causes an eerie green-yellow mist to surround and fill the town. The mist is the visible sign of a space-time tangle that prevents anyone leaving town. Any person attempting to leave will reappear at another point in the town—sometimes coming back in the opposite side, sometimes just appearing at another point in the town.

The mists will dissolve when the nexus is destroyed.

FROGHEMOTH

Monster: Beast (motivation: to run wild, destroying and killing)

Resembles a giant eyeless toad with a mouth covered with constantly moving tentacles. A horrifying swamp predator from another dimension, it lives in large swamps or shallow bodies of freshwater.

Powers:

- **Grab:** The froghemoth shoots its tongue out to try and grab someone. See the 'grab' move below.

Attack: Swallow 3-harm close engulf (see custom move below).

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 14. □□□□□□□□□□□□

Weakness: Can only manifest when a transdimensional nexus is open. If the nexus is closed, it becomes vulnerable.

Custom Moves:

Grab: When a **froghemoth grabs a hunter**, they roll +Tough:

- On a 10+, the hunter breaks free and may inflict harm on the froghemoth as they escape.
- On a 7-9, the hunter breaks free but suffers 1-harm.
- On a miss the hunter is engulfed (see below).

If the froghemoth grabs a bystander, pick one:

- They are swallowed, but not yet dead.
- They are being pulled inexorably towards its maw.

Engulf: When a **hunter is engulfed by a froghemoth's maw**, they roll +Tough:

- On a 10+, they force the froghemoth to vomit them forth for no additional damage.
- On a 7-9, they suffer 2-harm or the loss of a valuable item (hunter's choice).
- On a miss, they suffer 4-harm and now they are being digested.

SERLING'S DINER

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

Serling's Diner is an 'atomic cafe', frozen in time sometime in the early Kennedy era. You can get great burgers, malts, and shakes at very reasonable prices while the posters on the wall still promise victory in Vietnam and better living with the aid of nuclear power.

NICHELLE WAN, MANAGER, SERLING'S DINER

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

Nichelle thinks the froghemoth is a 'demon from hell' and only prayers at St. Jude's church can save the town.

PROFESSOR SCOTT'S LAB

Location: Lab (motivation: to create weirdness)

The lab is filled with sophisticated electronics and equipment both bizarre and wondrous. This is the only truly safe place to hide from the invading creatures, but it too will eventually be destroyed by being drawn into the unforgiving alien dimension.

DR. ALEXANDRA SCOTT

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Dr Scott knows how to close the nexus ("in theory")—by getting the sample of rare 'red matter' from her lab and throwing it into the trans-dimensional nexus.

SHATNER'S HARDWARE STORE

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

Shatner's Hardware Store is a place that could supply a mercenary army for a small coup. Pictures of horses adorn the walls while the shelves are filled with every type of firearm imaginable.

THE CRYSTAL ASSASSIN

By Luke Green

CONCEPT

Celino Adessi, a mystical assassin, summons extradimensional entities to kill for her. The creatures transform her victims into crystalline statues, which she breaks up and sells—doubling her profit. This denies the creatures any chance to feed, and they are getting hungry.

HOOK

Possible leads:

- The hunters notice that in a recent gang war, one side of the conflict has people dying but the other side's people are simply vanishing.
- A hunter with criminal ties receives a dead drop package from one of the people who has gone missing. This could be a Crooked, an ex-cop getting info from an old snitch, etc.
- One of the hunters (or someone they know) happens upon a crystal head in a pawn shop and realizes there's a soul trapped inside.
- Serenity Evans has become concerned that her pupil Adessi has gotten herself into trouble.

COUNTDOWN

Day	A local celebrity goes missing. Screams were heard, but no body was found.
Shadows	A crystal statue of the missing celebrity goes on auction.
Sunset	Adessi is caught in a major ambush in which she recklessly summons mantids.
Dusk	Adessi loses control of her mantids.
Nightfall	The mantids produce a queen.
Midnight	Mantids swarm the city.

CELINO ADESSI, OCCULT ASSASSIN

Monster: Sorcerer (motivation: to usurp unnatural power)

Celino Adessi is the daughter of a crooked businessman and a witch. She watched as her parents used their particular skills to protect their family.

However, both parents made the effort to keep the other at least partially in the dark: her mother not showing her magical talents and her father glossing over his shady dealings. Neither was aware of how closely their daughter was watching them.

She learned how to summon the mantids and considers this a wonderful find: they are stealthy and kill in such a way that the remains can be sold.

She also gets an emotional thrill out of denying her summoned mantids the chance to devour their prey. This reaffirms her control over the situation. She also has a perverse satisfaction in knowing her targets' souls are trapped in those crystals for eternity, often wondering what it must feel like to be shattered and scattered across space in different pieces.

Adessi has not faced any real obstacles in her life to date and this has built her ego to dangerous levels. She prefers 'removing' powerful or important people, as it affirms her sense of superiority. Since her actions started being discussed in the media, she felt such a thrill that she has grown more reckless.

Powers:

- **Cursed Halls:** Adessi can etch runes in a location in order to create reality- and perception-bending effects. She may transform any location into a Maze, Prison, or Deathtrap.
- **Summoner:** She can summon and command creatures from other dimensions, with the mantids obviously being her favourites.
- **Magician:** She knows other magic spells too, mostly wards and protective blessings.

Attacks: Handguns 3-harm close loud.

Armour: 2 if prepared for a fight (tactical gear and wards), 1 otherwise (normal wards only).

Harm Capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

Weakness: Adessi is a normal human being. The trick is getting past her protections and summons.

THE CRYSTAL MANTIDS

Minion: Assassin (motivation: to kill the hunters) at first, but if a Crystal Queen spawns they become a Plague (motivation: to swarm and destroy)

Crystal mantids are insectile creatures that look like a cross between a wasp and a mantis. They are the size of a large tiger. Mantids are clever predators. While they could cut through the walls of most houses, they prefer to use their mantis-like claws to open doors and slip inside quietly. Mantids are usually only encountered one at a time.

When summoned by Adessi, they must follow her orders rather than their natural desires.



Powers:

- **Flight.**
- **Stealth:** The mantids exist in a phase of reality that living eyes can see quite well but technology can only catch fragments of. On camera, the mantid might present an occasional glimmer when viewed full on, with full silhouettes being caught rarely and usually on the edges of an image. Mantids are aware of when they are under a camera's eye and will be careful when they can be recorded. If there is an active queen, they stop caring about being seen.
- **Crystallize:** Their bite transforms bodies into soul-trapping crystals. A bitten hunter becomes unstable as their body begins to crystallize and they are completely transformed once all harm is marked off. The process can only be stopped with magic (**use magic** to banish a curse), **weird science**, or some other special method. When the whole body is crystal, the soul is trapped inside (normally the mantid devours it soon after). Mantids are able to produce a queen; some suggestions for how are listed below.
- **Devouring:** When it eats a crystallized prey and the soul within, it heals 2-harm.

Weaknesses:

- High-frequency sound pulses or sonic attacks (these shatter the mantids' structure).
- **Use magic** to banish a spirit. This will permanently destroy a mantid.

Attacks:

- **Claws** 5-harm close grappling.
- **Stinger** 3-harm hand paralyze.
- **Bite** 3-harm intimate crystallize (see powers, above).

Armour: 2 against mundane harm, 0 against magical harm.

Harm Capacity: 6. □□□□□□

Custom Moves:

Totally Crystallized: What if a hunter or bystander is completely crystallized? Possible post-transformation cures include:

- Altering the crystal so the soul within can animate it. Probably a temporary measure until something better can be found!
- A **big magic** effect to revert the body to flesh. This might require studying the supernatural venom of the mantid's bite.
- Creating a clone body via science or magic and transferring the soul to the new body. This will require dissolving the crystal body in a special solution to free the soul. The risk is that once the soul is free of the crystal, it will pass on to the afterlife rather than successfully transferring to a new body.

CRYSTAL QUEEN

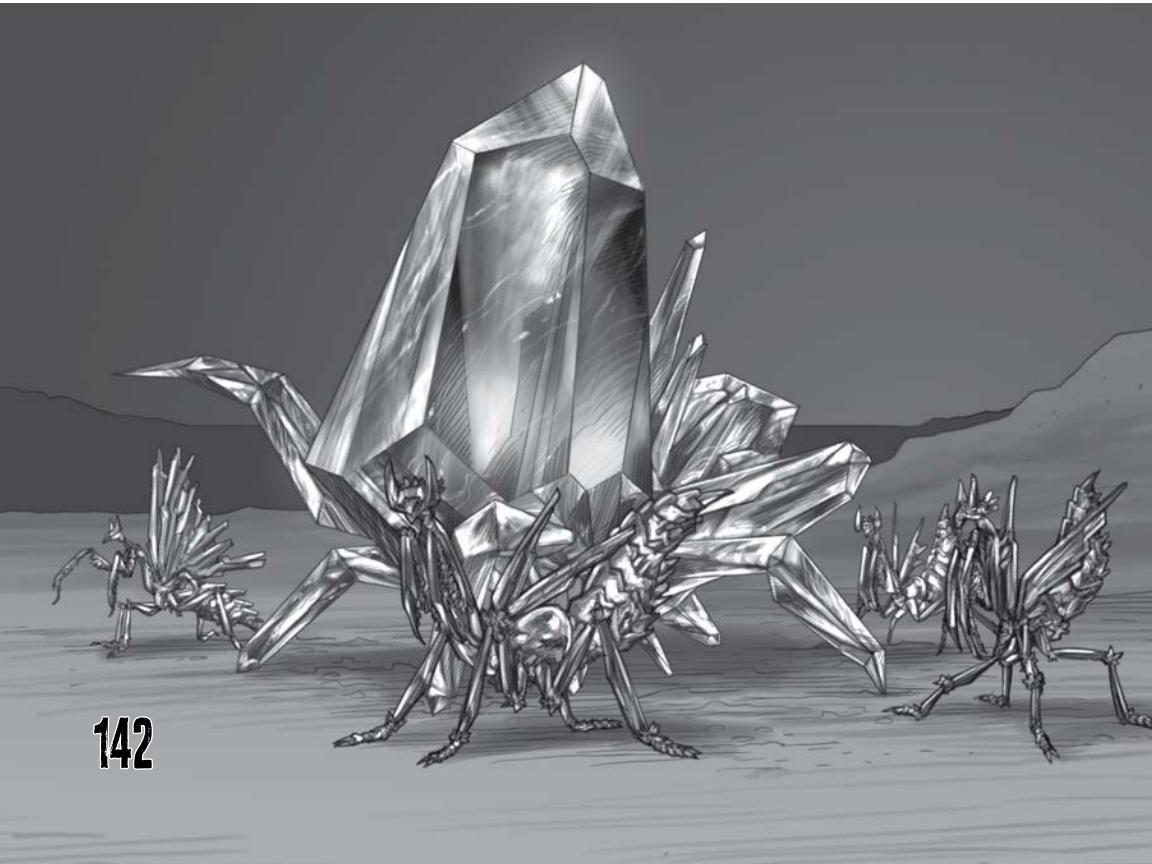
Monster: Breeder (motivation: to give birth to, bring forth or create evil)

When a crystal queen appears, the mantids are able to spawn easily. The queen is able to speak: she presents the appearance of rationality, but she only cares about spreading the mantid swarm and overrunning the world.

When four mantids are present, they will summon a queen which appears as a simple block of crystal capable of extending spines from its side to serve as limbs.

If you prefer, here are two alternate methods (you might come up with your own too):

- If the original summoner is crystallized, they become a queen. In this case, they will appear as a crystal version of themselves, but their mind and soul becomes devoted to the swarm.
- A queenless mantid becomes a queen if it devours seven souls. In this case she looks like a smaller mantid, with four claw arms instead of two.



Powers:

- **Mantid Hivemind:** All nearby crystal mantids gain focus and intelligence.
- **Spawn:** Create new mantids. The queen takes any crystallized person and converts their soul into a new mantid. This takes several minutes. The new mantid has normal abilities, but looks like a hybrid of a ‘regular’ mantid and the person who was crystallized.
- **Crystallize:** as regular mantid.
- **Devour:** as regular mantid.

Attacks: Depending on physical form:

- **Humanoid:** **Crystal arms** 2-harm hand grab. **Kiss** 0-harm intimate crystallize.
- **Insectile:** **Claws** 3-harm hand grab. **Bite** 2-harm intimate crystallize.
- **Living Crystal Shard:** **Grown spikes** 3-harm hand grapple. **Crystal dust** 0-harm intimate inhaled crystallize.

Armour: 3 against mundane harm, 0 against magical harm.

Harm Capacity: 10 □□□□□□□□□□

Weakness:

Ritual Exorcism: The queen’s body must be ground to dust and purified (otherwise the queen’s soul will soon possess another nearby mantid). The ritual involved will require the following:

- High-frequency tones. Dozens upon dozens of wind chimes encircling the dust and kept constantly in motion would be a good example. A large enough flock of birds with a high-pitched cry might also work, though getting the flock to stay for the ritual might require magic itself.
- A ritual leader and at least two helpers (the higher their voices the better) performing a chant which gives further shape to the sounds used.
- Someone might get the idea to use tech to replicate the sounds of wind chimes or record one voice and repeat it. This will only work if they have figured out the mantids are slightly out of phase from most tech and created something to deal with it.



SERENITY EVANS

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

Evans is the occultist who originally taught Adessi. She has deep knowledge but middling powers. She appears to be about 70 but is actually over 150.

In the mystic community, she is known as a crafter of sanctums, hidden places, vaults, and the like. She has also mentored a fair number of psychics.

Evans is unaware that Adessi has been using her powers for murderous ends. However, Evans periodically performs divinations to check up on her old students. Until recently, Adessi's use of summoned creatures has kept Serenity from noticing anything—but as the assassin begins to get a greater thrill out of her murders these divinations have been growing darker. Serenity assumes Adessi is in trouble and needs help. Since she has found it difficult to reach her old student, she might ask the hunters to investigate. She may or may not know of Adessi's mother, but certainly never met the woman. Note that Adessi's 'Cursed Hall' is based on perversions of spells taught by Serenity.

MARCUS EIGER

Minion: Cultist (motivation: to save his own skin at all cost)

Eiger is Adessi's fence, a position he fell into unintentionally. Previously, he was just a greedy gallery owner. When Adessi started to sell her victims' remains she determined that Eiger would serve her purposes.

He originally thought she was a forger or thief but could never track down the source of the hyper-realistic pieces she provided. He eventually recognized the face of a missing mafia figure from the news and made a foolish attempt to blackmail Adessi. She responded by sending a mantid to his gallery and crystallizing his assistant. Marcus is now utterly terrified of Adessi and absolutely refuses to do anything that might annoy her again.

The moment he can safely betray her, he will do it in the blink of an eye.

QUINCEY FRANCETTI

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

The leader of a local contingent of mafia who has been finding himself on the losing end of a gang war. After witnessing monsters turn his men into crystal statues, he's ready to leave town.

JUNOICHI KENTA

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to place himself in danger)

This yakuza oyabun first started using Adessi as an assassin after she handled a problem for him five years ago. He has never met her face-to-face. Adessi's effectiveness and secrecy is worrying him now, so he's planning to kill her.

THE CURSE-SPEECH

By Marek Golonka

OVERVIEW

In this mystery, the main threat is a language: Curse-Speech. This is a semi-sentient tongue of black magic formulas. Curse-Speech allows those who know it to use vile magic—but it also forces them to rely more and more on these foul enchantments to solve their problems. The hunters are caught in a struggle between a group of occultists devoted to this language and an ambitious businessman who learned it recently.

HOOK

Possible leads:

- Our heroes have been tracking The Circle of Curses and they catch Hans precisely when Curse-Speech abandons him, forcing a blasphemous shout out of his mouth.
- Completely eradicating Curse-Speech from Earth is needed to fulfil an ancient prophecy.
- The hunters are shopping at Salzwedel Mall when Helmut uses Curse-Speech and they see the effects.
- A contact tells the hunters about the Circle of Curses and the terrible things they do.
- A contact reports evil magic happenings at the mall.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Helmut uses the Curse-Speech to turn his mall's tenants into charmed slaves.
Shadows	The Circle learns about the Curse-Speech's abandonment of Hans, and disposes of him.
Sunset	Helmut agrees to allow the Curse-Speech to hurt Lidia as part of his next spell.
Dusk	The Circle attacks Helmut's mall with magic.
Nightfall	The Circle stumbles upon Lidia, explains what Helmut did to her, and teaches her Curse-Speech.
Midnight	Lidia imprisons Helmut and uses Curse-Speech to take over the city.



CURSE-SPEECH

Phenomenon: Artifact (motivation: to grant someone more power than they can handle)

Curse-Speech is a simple ‘language’ of about a hundred words of power and destruction. It has a bodiless consciousness, is aware of all the people who know the Curse-Speech, and can influence their minds. The Curse-Speech allows its ‘hosts’ to invoke powerful energies but the cost is always high.

Curse-Speech is contagious: anybody who learns the words can understand its true power and feels the urge to use it (if the Curse-Speech wishes). People experienced in the occult, hunters included, are at greater risk because hearing just a few words is enough to figure out how to open yourself to the Curse-Speech. It wants to sow great chaos, but its power is limited. It can be active only in the minds of about a dozen people at once. Therefore, when it finds it finds somebody with greater destructive potential it will abandon one of its current hosts—literally disappearing from their mind—and then manipulate the other hosts to teach Curse-Speech to the new recruit, whether they wish to learn or not.

Powers:

- **Unlucky Listener:** The first hunter to spend Luck during this mystery will learn Curse-Speech by accident at the next opportunity. This takes the place of the hunter's Special Move, if you are using those.

Weakness: Being banished from the minds of its hosts.

Banishing anything from a person's mind is **big magic**. Banishing the Curse-Speech when it wants to stay is really, really **big magic**. The ritual requires:

- Three participants in addition to the subject.
- A plate made from a precious material inscribed with the information that is to be forgotten.
- A fire able to destroy the plate, probably a magical one.
- The subject of the ritual must abstain from practicing any magic for a week afterwards or they will remember the Curse-Speech again.

Custom Moves:

Cursed Mind: When you first learn Curse-Speech, roll +Cool:

- On a 10+ you hold 3 and the Keeper holds 1.
- On an 7-9, you both hold 2.
- On a miss, the Keeper holds 3.

You can spend your holds to change any **cursed magic** moves into regular **use magic** instead. The Keeper's holds are used to force the hunter to cast a **cursed magic** spell in any situation when magic could help them out.

Cursed Magic: When you **know the Curse-Speech and use magic**, you must use this cursed version of the move. Roll +Weird:

- On an 11+ your magic works as advanced **use magic**. The Keeper also gains 1 **Cursed Mind** hold as the power overwhelms you.
- On a 9+, treat this as a 10+ **use magic** result.
- On a 6-8, treat this as a 7-9 **use magic** result.
- On a 5 or less, treat it as a 6 or less **use magic** result, plus you're so overwhelmed with power that the Keeper gains 2 **Cursed Mind** hold.

Choose one of the glitches listed below (in addition to any normal glitches required):

- The spell looks, sounds and/or smells evil to everyone around.
- The spell causes harm or misfortune to someone or something you hold dear.
- Somebody present learns the Curse-Speech.

If you're using alternative Weird moves, then hunters with new moves instead of **use magic** gain the ability to use magic when they know the Curse-Speech. Those with classic **use magic** get an additional +1 on the Cursed Magic move.

HELMUT SALZWEDEL

Minion: Plague (motivation: to swarm and destroy)

An ambitious business potentate, owner of the second biggest mall in the city. Clever, charismatic, and handsome but also greedy and short-sighted.

The Curse-Speech infected him knowing that he'll do much harm with its power, both to those around him and himself.

LIDIA SALZWEDEL

Minion: Traitor (motivation: to betray people)

Helmut's newly-wed wife is worthy of him: sly, manipulative, and wanting his luxurious life even more than his pretty face. Helmut considers family life to be a show of wealth and he wants to have somebody around him to impress. It won't end well...

SALZWEDEL MALL

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together), but at Dusk on the countdown, the mall becomes a Maze (motivation: to confuse and separate)

Helmut is good at tricking others into unfavourable contracts—so his mall is filled with shops and service points struggling to make ends meet, usually prioritising low price over high quality. When Helmut began using Curse-Speech to help his business, the mall soaked up the dark energies and became an incarnation of Curse-Speech. It now feeds on the life energy of customers and sometimes makes their wishes come true in a warped way.

BENJAMIN'S BISTRO

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

A cheap but clean and cozy restaurant in Salzwedel Mall. Regular customers and some employees come here to eat a reasonably priced dinner and chat.

BENJAMIN FISCHER

Bystander: gossip (motivation: to pass on rumors)

Talkative and open owner of the bistro; everybody's friend here. However, he doesn't like Helmut and loves gossiping about him.

THE CIRCLE OF CURSES

A group of black mages who have known Curse-Speech for a long time, did terrible things with it, and have learned to use it quite safely... so safely that the language left Hans (the least promising of them all) and moved on. Now the Circle are doing their best to find if there is a new Curse-Speaker. They aim to ally with him... or eliminate him.

All the Circle members have the same abilities (except Hans, who can no longer use the black magic attack).

Attacks: Black magic 2-harm close ignore-armour magic. Dagger 1-harm hand.

Harm capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

Weakness: None, just a regular human.

Below are the members of the circle:

ILSE HERSCHEWOR

Minion: Traitor (motivation: to betray people)

Ambitious, stubborn, with the darkest past of any in the Circle.

WOLFGANG DIETRICH

Minion: Guardian (motivation: to bar the way or protect something)

Silent, observant, always plotting something.

LENE JANZ

Minion: Brute (motivation: to intimidate and attack)

Loud, loyal to the Circle, arrogant.

PETER MESSMANN

Minion: Scout (motivation: to stalk, watch, and report)

Curious, well-educated, immoral.

ANNEMIEKE KAHLER

Minion: Cultist (motivation: to save her own skin at any cost)

Manipulative, unsure, older than the others, and scared of aging.

HANS GROYTERN

Minion: Renfield (motivation: to push victims towards the monster)

Wise, good memory, little ambition. Has now lost the Curse-Speech.



DARKNESS FALLS

By Chloe Sutherland

CONCEPT

A young couple realise a rash of brutal murders are connected to their young daughter, so they dip a toe into the paranormal to keep their small town safe. Their rituals keep the sadistic ghost Madame Koshmar at bay but have unintended and deadly side effects for motorists just out of town.

HOOK

Several cars crashed last night. They were discovered on the edge of the highway, close to a small rural town. It was a group of students on a road trip to a nearby festival. The crash is being treated as simple driver fatigue, but three cars at once? That seems odd.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Nika spends the evening in town with her parents. Kristina leaves early to set her wardings at the church.
Shadows	Madame Koshmar sees Kristina and realises the sleep spell is keeping people safe.
Sunset	Another large multiple car crash is reported next morning as people flood towards the festival.
Dusk	Madame Koshmar attacks the church in an attempt to reach Kristina. In doing so, she destroys the old church with Kristina still inside.
Nightfall	Madame Koshmar kidnaps Nika.
Midnight	Madame Koshmar continues her murderous trail, punishing those up late, finally uninhibited by the Delanos.



KRISTINA AND DAVID DELANO

Bystanders: Innocents (motivation: to do the right thing)

When Kristina and David arrived home after adopting Nika, a series of gruesome attacks began in their hometown—each attack happening soon after nightfall, on victims who were awake. Researching folklore, the Delanos identified the culprit as a ghost: Madame Koshmar.

The Delanos were able to fashion a ritual to hold Madame Koshmar at bay using a Russian folk song that Kristina remembered from her childhood. The ritual is carried out at Tanner's End Church (see below).

The Delanos are loving parents who will do anything for their child. They have told nobody about their actions regarding Madame Koshmar, fearing they will not be believed. They know little of the paranormal beyond what they needed to learn to keep the town safe, so they have not realised the unintended effects of their spell.

NIKA DELANO

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put herself in danger)

As a baby, Nika was the sole survivor of a brutal knife attack in an orphanage in rural Russia. She is a quiet child, currently bonded more to Madame Koshmar than to her parents. And she knows not to discuss the dark lady she sees. Many believe Nika has a rare medical condition—this is an excuse for the band-aid on her arm from the blood Kristina collects to carry out the ritual.

MADAME KOSHMAR

Monster: Executioner (motivation: to punish the guilty)

Madame Koshmar was as much a monster in life as she was in death. Years ago, she ran an orphanage in an isolated Russian township. The children were cold, starving, and beaten—none more so than when they made noise after lights out. When she died, Madame Koshmar's spirit was unable to pass on: the fear in the children's hearts called to her louder than any afterlife. Since then, her legacy has been passed down through generations of children in the form of a children's folksong (see Tanner's End Church, below). She draws power from the children who still fear her.

If the hunters attack her before learning about her link to Nika, ensure they are aware of its effects: describe a child's scream rending the air if anyone lands a hit, or the vision of a young girl standing beside her.

Powers:

- **Jinx Electricity:** Madame Koshmar has a hatred for everything electrical—something she sees as being responsible for people staying up past dark. She can shut down any electrical device: it will be unusable by normal means until dawn, or until the jinx is lifted.
- **Shadow Step:** While in a shadow, Madame Koshmar may disappear in a puff of black smoke before reappearing, in a similar fashion, from another shadow.
- **Summon Shades:** Madame Koshmar is able to summon her minions at will from nearby shadows.

Attacks: **Long curved dagger** 2-harm hand. **Shadow blast** 3-harm close magic ignore-armour.

Armour: 3 magic incorporeal.

Harm Capacity: 15. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Weaknesses:

Light: Madame Koshmar can be made corporeal by strong or magical light. This negates her armour as well. If not killed while corporeal, she reawakens undamaged the next night.

Nika Delano: Madame Koshmar has been linked psychically to Nika Delano ever since Nika was the sole survivor of one of Madame Koshmar's previous attacks. Because of this, whenever Madame Koshmar is hurt, Nika will also get hurt (and vice versa). Your players will need to separate Nika's soul from Madame Koshmar's before trying to damage the spirit. Here are some methods that could achieve this:

- Making a spell or potion using similar elements to Kristina's protection spell.
- Keeping Nika inside her mother's protective circle to disrupt the connection.
- Helping Nika be less afraid thus weakening the connection.



SHADES

Minion: Right hand (motivation: to support the monster)

Shades are dark ghostly minions that Madame Koshmar may summon from nearby shadows. They are the souls of her previous victims—blackened and atrophied from their time under Madame Koshmar's control. The Shades are capable of following simple commands from Madame Koshmar.

Powers:

- **Incorporeal:** Unless dispelled with light, Shades will quickly reform without needing to be summoned by Madame Koshmar.

Attacks: Pass through person 1-harm intimate magic. **Shadow attack** 2-harm close magic.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 4. □□□□

Weakness:

Light: Shades can be dispelled by a strong light such as a floodlight or an industrial-strength flashlight. However, in some situations it may be important for a character to **act under pressure** to successfully focus the light in the right direction.

TANNER'S END CHAPEL

Location: Fortress (motivation: to deny entry)

Each night for the past few years, Kristina Delano has stayed up reciting this chant, while carrying out the ritual in Tanner's End Chapel.

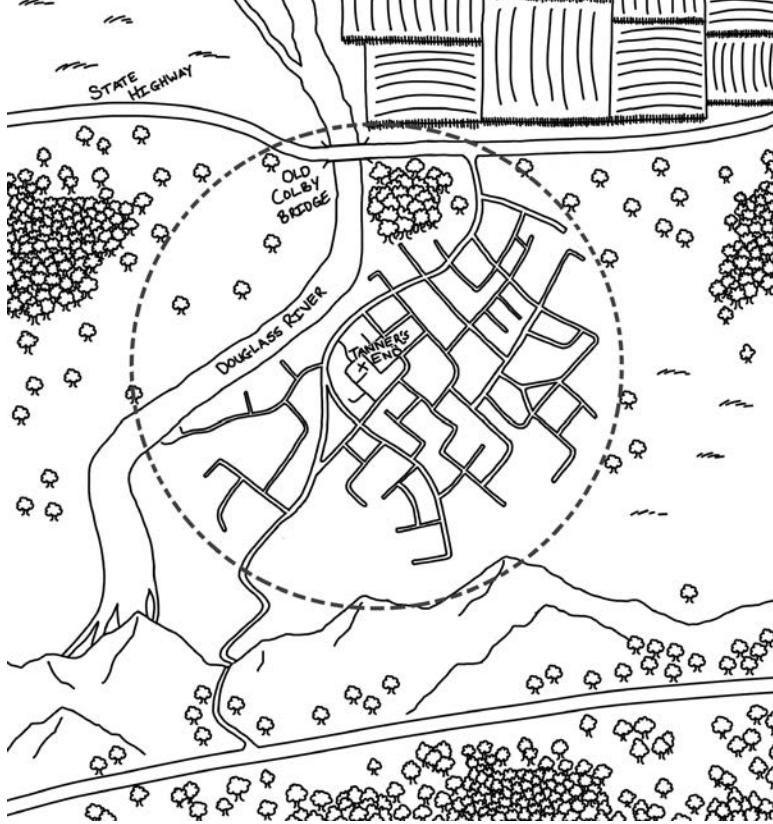
"Close your eyes and sleep, my dear. The night is nigh and she draws near. Stalking those who lie awake, with shining blade and long black cape. Swift as breath, she'll be here soon, through shadows from the waning moon. The night bird calls the hour of rest. Please hush, my child. There's no time left."

Kristina has multiple levels of warding to protect her while she carries out the ritual. These wardings include:

- A soot circle around the extent of the church property. When crossed, the sound of an owl hoot will alert Kristina to an intruder.
- Rune markings scratched round the entrances and shadowy nooks of the chapel itself. When intruders pass them, a flash of light (4-harm close magic) will send loose objects flying back.
- A protective circle carved into the stone floor: this is hidden underneath a rug during the day. Each night, Kristina reinforces the circle by pouring a small volume of Nika's blood into the grooves. Madame Koshmar cannot cross this circle unless it is first broken by something else crossing it.

The ritual is a sleep spell intended to encompass the whole city. As the spell spreads out an equal distance from Kristina in all directions, a small portion of rural highway is also affected. This is what has been causing travellers to fall asleep at the wheel. These accidents have been happening since the rituals started. The recent revitalisation of the nearby Robinson township as a cultural hub means the number of victims will keep increasing. In a matter of days, hundreds of music fans will be heading toward Robinson for a music festival.

If the hunters are inside the circle of the sleep spell's effect (or enter it) between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., they will be affected by the spell and fall asleep almost instantly. Your hunters may **act under pressure** or **use magic** to resist the effects, but Madame Koshmar has ways of dealing with children up past curfew.



ANDREW WITHERS

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

The town sheriff zealously lectures on the dangers of driving tired and has littered the town and highway with "Don't Drive Tired" signs. He will resist the hunters' efforts as he sees there being no case worth following up. Sheriff Withers knows about and has files on the string of murders several years ago (in the Delanos' neighbourhood) as well as about the accidents on both the rural highway and the significantly less-trafficked winding mountain road.

OTHER TOWNSFOLK

Bystanders: Gossips (motivation: to pass on rumours)

Most people in the town placidly accept their 9 p.m 'bedtime' as just the way it is in small-town America. Many are unlikely to respond well to suggestions that anything else is going on.

The townspeople generally mean well but are unprepared for events such as these.

ELVIS HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

By Mark Tygart

"In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, you can bet it was planned that way."

—Franklin Delano Roosevelt

CONCEPT

The hunters investigate several bizarre appearances of the famously deceased Elvis Presley socializing with also-deceased ex-President Richard Nixon in their local community.

Almost everyone regards this case as a joke: typical of the silly tabloid ghost hunting stories that the *In Search of the Supernatural* television series is famous for producing. However, it offers the hunters the possibility of some quick money for very little work.

OVERVIEW

'Presley' and 'Nixon' are actually tulpas created by Amy Caulfield—a 'tulpmancer' and con woman—who hopes to use her creation to get some money for an interview with her creations.

The problem is that Amy's subconscious has created a "Rabbit of Caerbannog" tulpa from her memories of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. This new tulpa will begin by murdering Nixon, then Elvis, and finally Amy herself before it disappears back into non-existence.



HOOK

Potential leads:

- The popular cable television tabloid series *In Search of the Supernatural* asks the hunters for their “expert consultants’ opinion” on the case.
- A Flake (or other conspiracy theorist hunter) hears about the phenomenon.
- The hunters happen to be at the bar when the tulpas first appear.
- A Snoop is called anonymously (by Amy) to join the interviewers (for a fee, of course).

COUNTDOWN

Day	Elvis and Nixon appear for another interview.
Shadows	The next night, the Rabbit appears, watching.
Sunset	The Rabbit kills Nixon when Elvis excuses himself for a ‘bathroom break’.
Dusk	The Rabbit kills Elvis.
Nightfall	The Rabbit of Caerbannog appears on its own and stalks Amy.
Midnight	The Rabbit of Caerbannog kills Amy Caulfield at the bar and all humans present at the bar. It is ruled to be a death from ‘mass animal attack’ (probably coyotes?) by the local authorities.



INVESTIGATION NOTES

- Nobody on the *In Search of the Supernatural* staff thinks the story is real, but the producers want the hunters to unearth an entertaining yarn they can broadcast. The worse the hunters' reputations, the happier the producers are to hire them (for less money).
- The tulpas only appear at the White House Bar at midnight when Amy Caulfield is present. Nixon asks for a large amount of money in exchange for interviews. However, tulpas cannot be recorded by electronic devices. The tulpas have only limited information about their historical selves: they only know what Amy knows. The tulpas always vanish by 1 a.m.
- The tulpa is a concept in mysticism and the paranormal of a being or object that is willed into existence through spiritual or mental powers. It was adapted by 20th century theosophists from Tibetan religious practices. Modern practitioners use the term to refer to a type of willed imaginary friend which practitioners consider to be sentient and relatively autonomous. The concept of the tulpa was popularized in the Western world through fiction, gaining prominence in the late 1990s and 2000s.
- Since 2009, anonymous posters on the discussion board 4chan started experimenting with creating tulpas, and the community gained popularity through the emergence of the *My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic* fandom. The fans attempted to use meditation and lucid dreaming techniques to create imaginary friends. These individuals, calling themselves 'tulpamancers,' treat the tulpas as a 'real or somewhat-real person.' Due to this unlikely connection, some *My Little Pony* websites provide useful and accurate information about tulpas when the hunters investigate on the Web.

AMY CAULFIELD, GRIFTER AND TULPAMANCER

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put herself in danger)

An imaginative unemployed middle school English teacher, and single mother who decided to support her two daughters and make her way in the world by running supernatural short cons. Amy's strong psychic abilities are largely subconscious but she can consciously summon tulpas after a few drinks (although she can't fully control them).

If there's a fight or other stressful situation in the bar, Amy might create more tulpas unintentionally. These could be any characters from fiction or history that would make the situation more chaotic or silly (that's for you the Keeper, it's not what Amy wants). These tulpas will not be under her control, but may try to protect her from what is going on.

TULPAS

Minion: Scout (motivation: to stalk, watch, and report)

A tulpa is an imaginary minion brought to life through pure will, lasting for a single hour. It is usually based on a fictional creation or historical figure with whom the creator has a strong emotional connection.

Normal tulpas only have the abilities of the person who created them. They doesn't have any special powers, attacks, or armour. They only possess the knowledge and abilities of their creator. They may be destroyed by magic and will fade back into the subconscious of their creator within an hour of their creation. If killed, a tulpa's corpse will fade from existence within an hour.

An evil tulpa will not fade after an hour. It will continue to manifest randomly (at the Keeper's discretion) to harm its creator in some way. Tulpas always manifest an item an that can take advantage of their weakness. Tulpas of any type will always disappear if their creator dies.

Custom Moves:

To **summon a tulpa** you must be able to use some sort of magic and have studied the process. A hunter trying it may have to **act under pressure** to stay focused while visualizing the tulpa. Roll +Weird:

- On a 10+, a tulpa appears, totally under your control.
- On a 7-9, a tulpa appears, mostly under your control.
- On a miss, something bad appears, e.g. a tulpa that the hunter fears, a tulpa that hates the hunter, some other terrible entity.

RICHARD MILHOUS NIXON, TULPA

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger).

An imaginary friend brought to life, this version of Richard Nixon looks how he did when he inhabited the White House but only has the knowledge about his life that is available from a Wikipedia entry. This is the comedic, somewhat lovable, drunk, kooky chief executive of popular culture rather than the deeply troubled and brilliant former president. Conversations will always somehow arrive at requests for money in exchange for an interview and whether David Frost might be available. Amy is fond of the Ron Howard film *Frost/Nixon* and sometimes Nixon will briefly blur to resemble the actor Frank Langella for a few seconds. Sometimes, Nixon will bellow out for Henry Kissinger and the former Secretary of State may appear briefly in a mirror or in the corner of the hunter's eye, looking as he did in the 70s.

ELVIS AARON PRESLEY, TULPA

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

This is the Las Vegas Elvis of popular lore in full regalia, but he is a carefree and warm hypocritical “King of Rock and Roll.” He voices his love for Monty Python, and his loathing of the scourge of illegal drugs (often while injecting himself or popping pills endlessly without effect). He often hugs President Nixon and treats him like a younger sibling, much to the former President’s discomfort. Unlike Nixon, Elvis seems to have some understanding that he is a tulpa, although he will not admit it. If killed, he will ask the hunters to have “Amy bring him and the former president back for a drink sometime,” as his dying wish.

RABBIT OF CAERBANNOG, EVIL DEVIANT TULPA

Monster: Torturer (motivation: to hurt and terrify)

This unpredictable ‘bunny’ may look cute and cuddly on the outside, but inside it is a monstrous killing machine. The rabbit is cunning and targets the vital parts of its victim’s body to make a fast kill. Its mouth is full of razor-sharp teeth, like a big cat. It is surprisingly swift, violent, agile, deadly, aggressive, bloodthirsty, and carnivorous.

When attacking multiple foes, the rabbit quickly jumps from one target to another, giving those it’s fighting no chance to stop it.

Powers:

- **Extremely fast and long jump:** After it inflicts harm on a target, it may instantly jump up to far range (including to another target).

Attack: Bite 5-harm hand messy.

Armour: 0. Soft fur, often bloody.

Harm Capacity: 5. □□□□□

Weaknesses:

- **Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch.** The Holy Hand Grenade will appear randomly in the bar whenever the monster appears. It looks like a jewelled orb with a crucifix on top, and definitely looks out of place in the bar. The ‘grenade’ does 30-harm but only to rabbits and scenery.
- The death of Amy Caulfield.

WHITE HOUSE BAR & GRILL

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

A White House themed restaurant and bar in Southern California that would make a wonderful Disneyland attraction. Kitschy, but the steaks are excellent and the ‘Oval Office’ bar is the best in the community.

DAVID DALTON, UNEMPLOYED ACTOR

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

A talented, friendly, middle-aged character actor and bar patron with a gift for comedic roles.

Dalton can testify that neither of the tulpas wore makeup and that they both strongly resembled the actual deceased historical figures when he conversed with both of them at the bar. Dalton is mystified by these events but would strongly like to meet the ‘actors’ to congratulate them on their performances.

GREGG SCHWENK, SEMI-RETired FILM PRODUCER

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

An erudite 50-year-old semi-retired producer of award-winning historical and nature documentaries. Schwenk is convinced the entire affair is “a very clever publicity stunt.” He points out that almost everyone at the bar was at least mildly intoxicated and neither Nixon nor Elvis could answer detailed or complex questions he asked about their personal lives or the era they lived in. Schwenk has a low professional opinion of the *In Search of the Supernatural* producers’ and wonders whether that show could have somehow created these events themselves...

LOCH NESS MONSTER PRODUCTIONS

Location: Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)

Low-rent local offices near the John Wayne Airport. Home of *In Search of the Supernatural*.

Low-rent local offices near the John Wayne Airport, Loch Ness Productions corporate is cheerfully chaotic, with movie posters on every wall and starstruck interns everywhere. Since no one has any authority besides the owner and Chief Operating Officer Christian B. Slyvas (who spends most of his time avoiding visitors), the hunters are likely to be ‘accidentally’ locked in a storeroom filled with old movie memorabilia and props for days if they request a meeting with this august personage or come looking for payment.



CHRISTIAN B. SLYVAS, OWNER, LOCH NESS PRODUCTIONS

Bystander: Busybody (motivation: to interfere in others' plans)

A bizarre but merry mixture of John Milius, P.T. Barnum, and William Shatner. The over 400 pounds and bald Slyvas likes to receive first-time visitors in a Confederate General's full-dress uniform (Slyvas is an active Civil War re-enactor) and ask for their opinions about the war between the States. Hunters who play along will likely pass his test as 'good eggs' and their requests will be granted; hunters who do not will be teased and pranked mercilessly in the future.

EVERYBODY GET PSYCHO

By Bryanna Hitchcock

CONCEPT

A demon haunts a CD, intent on turning unsuspecting music fans into cinematic serial killers.

Inspiration from the film *Trick or Treat* (1986), and the music of Ozzy Osbourne, Disturbed, Slayer, and Slipknot.

HOOK

A teenager murders her family with a chainsaw, exhibiting supernatural strength and ruthlessness.

COUNTDOWN

Day	A high school football star catches his parents in a horrific death trap and posts the live feed on YouTube. He booby traps the house before dying by suicide on the front lawn.
Shadows	The disk finds a new host and another teen is turned into a Silver Screen Slasher.
Sunset	Another family slain and a killer on the loose.
Dusk	Teens throw a party in the woods to play the disk, turning all of them into Silver Screen Slashers.
Nightfall	Mass murder in the suburbs.
Midnight	BAZRAEL, the Lord of Carnage arrives! (Create a new mystery: The LORD OF CARNAGE must be defeated before it murders the world).



THE DISK MOST BLACK

Phenomenon: Teratogen (motivation: to turn people into monsters)

A perfect black CD containing vaguely flickering shapes when seen in the right light. The disk is actually a haunted artifact, meant to enable the slaying of 666 people, thus summoning BAZRAEL, The Lord of Carnage, to the Earth.

Powers:

Possession: Turns a vulnerable human into a Silver Screen Slasher.

Demon Summoning: Summon a Wicked Soul or, when enough deaths have occurred, the Lord of Carnage.

Weakness: A simple banishing spell is enough to destroy the magic protecting the disk.

Custom Moves:

Summon a Wicked Soul.

Lash out spiritually.

Possess a listener.

Get Psycho: When a bystander listens to the Disk Most Black, they become a Silver Screen Slasher (see below) by the end of one song.

When a hunter listens to the Disk Most Black, they roll +Cool:

- On a 10+, the music is merely noisome and repulsive. You may ask a question from the **investigate a mystery** list.
- On a 7-9, in addition to asking a question as above, choose 1: a Wicked Soul appears to steal the disk; the music deals you 1-harm, ignore-armour; the music unsettles you and you take -1 ongoing until you take harm .
- On a miss, a Wicked Soul makes off with the disk before any action can be taken, probably triggering another tick of the Countdown.

WICKED SOULS

Minions: Guardians (motivation: to bar the way or protect something)

These little terrors resemble large mosquitos made of smoke and glowing coals (to those who can detect them at all). They exist to protect and move the Disk Most Black.

Powers:

- Invisibility.

Attack: Soul lash: 1-harm intimate ignore-armour.

Armour: 0, but ignores all but holy or psychic damage.

Harm capacity: 2. □□

Custom Moves:

Move the disk.

Find a host.

Guard the disk.

SILVER SCREEN SLASHERS

Minions: Brute (motivation: to intimidate and attack)

Brutes who seek only violence. This is a chance to bring your favorite (or most hated) movie slashers to life. The moves presented are just a sample from the typical slasher's bag of tricks. Use your hard moves to the utmost to recreate the powers and deadliness of these remorseless slayers. Slashers who take more than 3-harm will be dead once the curse is broken by destroying the Disk Most Black. The Lord of Carnage is an evil fucker.

Attack: Signature over-the-top movie slasher weapon: 4-harm hand messy.

Armour: 0

Harm Capacity: 3 (They're just kids! They change back upon death.) □□□

Custom Moves:

Attack from surprise.

Rise from the dead.

Track victims.

MATHESON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

The high school attended by the kids passing the disk around. By default, this story is set in the suburbs, but it could be anywhere that angst music thrives. You may wish to rename the school to fit the setting of your game.

Custom Moves:

Rumor mill.

Concerned teacher.

Suddenly crowded with teens.

LEONARD KILMINSTER

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

Mr. Kilminster is the history teacher at Matheson SHS. He's known for teaching his senior world history class in full costume and running competitive academic events. He's also a notorious gossip who finds youth culture fascinating, if alien. Yesterday, Mr. Kilminster heard some emo kids whispering about Bazrael, which he believes is a new drug responsible for the murders.

Custom Moves:

Gossip monger.

Nosey teacher.

JESS STRAND AND VINCE KETCHUM

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put themselves in danger)

Jess and Vince are emo kids, but they are new to the school. They desperately want to be part of the group that hangs out in the woods and listens to amazing music like that black disk they keep hearing about. They will try to get information out of the hunters about the disk. They've heard the disk is by a band called 'Bazrael'. Jess and Vince can be found at Hill's Music searching for the disk or behind the school smoking clove cigarettes.

Custom Moves:

Expert eavesdropper.

Stumble into peril.

HILL'S MUSIC

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

The local vintage music store where fans of rare music and esoteric media go to find entertainment. Yes, they still exist! And they have things you can't find on iTunes. This is where the Disk Most Black first appeared and where Wicked Souls will return it if the Disk so commands (when there is no obvious new target). One of the employees might have seen something creepy.

Custom Moves:

- Just what you're looking for.**
- Produce edgelord.**

REB WATSON (THEY/THEM)

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Reb Watson has worked at Hill's Music for over a decade. Now they manage the store and keep the inventory fresh and enigmatic. Reb identifies as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns. They are just over five feet tall, covered in tattoos and piercings, and revered by the other employees. Reb doesn't remember ordering the Disk Most Black, but has a record of its sale to the first teen victim, the girl who killed her family with a chainsaw.

Custom Moves:

- Eyes in the back of their head.**
- Cooler than you.**

THE WOODS

Location: Wilds (motivation: to contain hidden things)

Here we have the spooky woods where the teenagers hang out when they don't want to be around those pesky parent-types. While the suburbs in the western US often have forested areas nearby, this location can easily be recast as a large public park or a rundown apartment building.

Custom Moves:

- Dead end.**
- You're going in circles.**

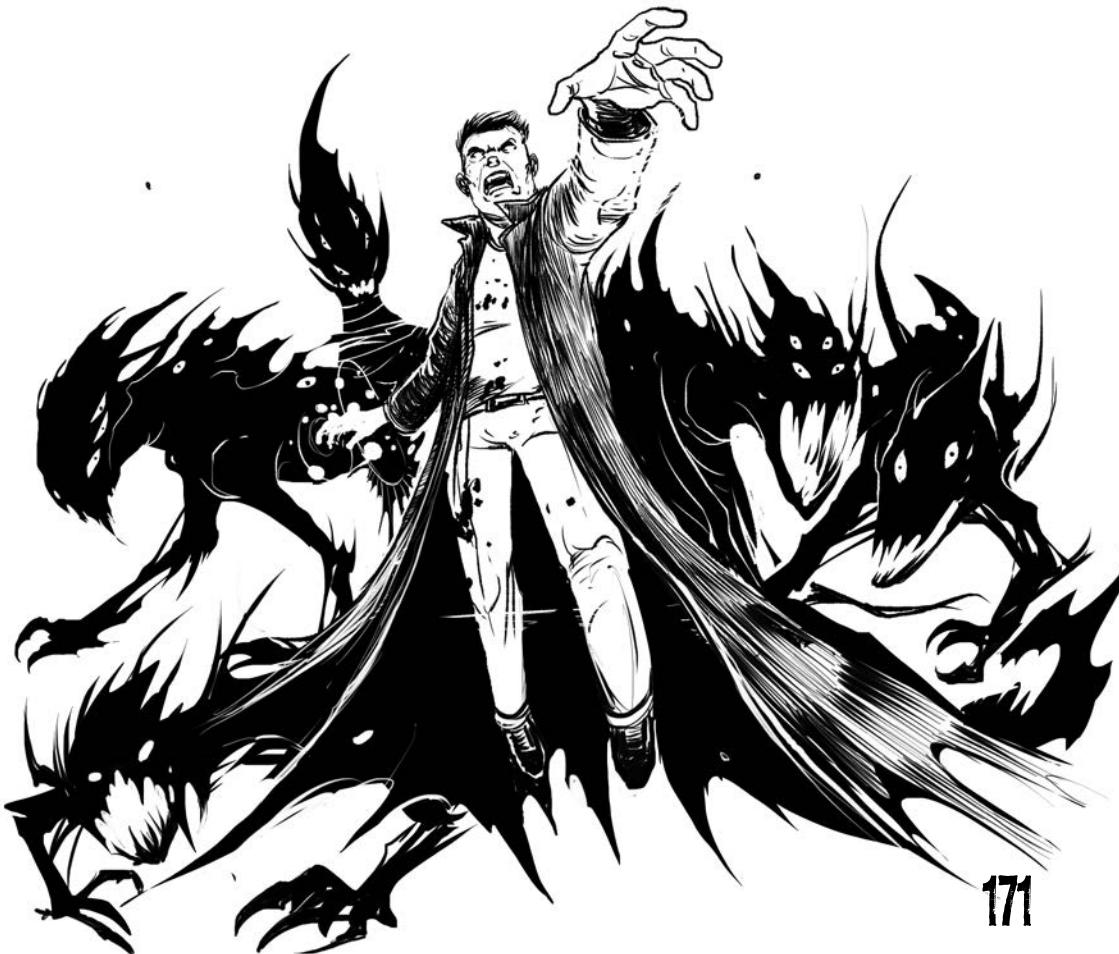
GOING TO PIECES

By Sophie Lagacé

CONCEPT

A series of animal mutilations and killings are blamed on Prego practitioners. But the latter are really trying to ward against a new threat: a necromancer preparing a ritual that will grant mastery over an army of nightwalkers (the immigrants are calling them “chupacabras”). Nightwalkers have already started hunting in the Cook County forests, where the Prego community practices their religion.

This mystery assumes the necromancer is an old foe of the hunters who was defeated and now plans revenge. Fill in the details for a suitable character from your game.



PREGO

This is a fictitious syncretic religion, built from aspects of the community's ancestral cultures and influences from other cultures since leaving their homelands (which was not always voluntary). The name comes from the Esperanto word for "prayer." Prego practices include wilderness shrines at sacred places, and some animal sacrifice.

HOOK

The hunters investigate the latest in a series of animal killings in Cook County Forest Preserves. Dead goats and chickens have been found at Oak Glen Preserve in a Chicago neighbourhood along the northern edge of the city.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Prego worshippers are blamed for animal mutilations and killings.
Shadows	Kathy Witecki is found unconscious and badly wounded in the woods. She stays in a coma.
Sunset	Billy Washington disappears, captured by the Necromancer.
Dusk	The ritual begins.
Nightfall	The victims (Billy and possibly others) are sacrificed.
Midnight	The ritual is completed and horrors are unleashed when the Necromancer summons and binds all nightwalkers within the spell's range.

THE NECROMANCER

Monster: Sorcerer (motivation: to usurp unnatural power)

He remembers when the hunters defeated him before, oh yes he does. They killed him once; he wants to return the favour. He selected the nightwalkers as his tools because they are a corrupt form of werecreatures: he plans on draining the hunters of life and having them torn to pieces by nightwalkers.

Powers:

- **Phylactery:** Keeps his soul safe.
- **Powerful Magic:** Can use any of the normal **use magic** effects freely.
- **Advanced Arcane Training:** He only needs two out of Foci, Gestures, and Incantations to perform magic.
- **Necromantic Blast, Necromantic Wall, Withering Touch, Memory Theft** (see attacks below).

Attacks:

- **Ritual dagger** 2-harm hand.
- **Necromantic blast** 2-harm close magical obvious ignore-armour life-drain.
- **Necromantic wall** 1-harm close magical barrier 1-armour obvious loud life-drain.
- **Withering touch** 4-harm intimate magical obvious ignore-armour life-drain.
- **Memory theft** 0-harm intimate magical ignore-armour 1-memory.

Armour: 1-armour (always prepared!)

Harm capacity: 12 harm, but will flee when he receives 6-harm.

□□□□□□ Flee □□□□□□ Dead

Weakness: A **big magic** ritual is required to wrench his soul from its phylactery and destroy both soul and phylactery. It must be performed within one midnight of his death (before or after) and takes six hours to cast. It requires the phylactery itself, **use magic**, and several rare ingredients that might be mysteries in their own right to obtain.

PREGO BELIEVERS

Bystanders: Victims (motivation: to put themselves in danger)

Mostly of Latinx and Afro-Caribbean descent. They might go out looking for the people really behind the animal killings, or be on the streets to patrol and defend their community. They could even regard the hunters as a threat—who are these people hanging around asking questions?

Attacks: Ordinary weapons 2-harm hand/close.

NIGHTWALKERS

Minions: Brutes (motivation: to intimidate and attack)

A couple of nightwalkers who are already on board with the Necromancer's plan, either for their own reasons or because he subdued them. They look like like large misshapen dog silhouettes made of pure darkness, bristling with spines, their red eyes glowing like embers.

Powers:

- **Night Walker:** A nightwalker can disappear into the darkness, reappearing in its den. It cannot be tracked home, as it did not walk through the intervening space.
- **Horrifying Yell:** Anyone who hears the howl of the nightwalker must take -1 ongoing unless they **act under pressure** to resist the fear.

Attacks:

- **Bite** 1-harm hand.
- **Blood-suck** (must **bite** first): 2-harm intimate.

Armour: None.

Weaknesses:

- Sunlight.
- Magic.
- Enclosure (if you can trap it within an enclosed area, it may not night-walk away and may be killed).

Harm capacity: 5 harm, but they will flee when they reach 3 harm.

Flee Dead

KATHY WITECKI

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

A retired Chicago Police Department deputy chief. She has lived near the edge of Oak Glen for 40 years. She is an older white woman with short gray hair, sharp eyes, and a fit and trim body. She sees a lot but she no longer gets paid to stick her nose in other people's business.

"Every time you see the blood, it brings a little horror back to you—you always feel for the animals, you know?"

BILLY WASHINGTON

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

Has worked in the Cook County Forest Preserves for 36 years as part of the landscape maintenance crew. Ageing black man with thinning curly gray hair, timid eyes, and gnarly knuckled-hands, of medium height and stocky frame. He's a peaceful man who loves to work outdoors, except on really cold and rainy days (snow is okay). He lets people be, but he's well aware he could be blamed for the incidents (remember the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bombing?)

"I'd just be guessing. I'm American, I don't know nothing about that ritual stuff."

DR. CRAIG O'SULLIVAN

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

A Northwestern University theology professor, who has studied Preço as part of his research. A frail elderly white man with thinning wispy white hair and horn-rimmed glasses. He can go on for hours about minute theoretical details but he stayed well away from going to look at the dead carcasses himself. That's what grad students are for.

"Preço sacrifices are strict and respectful. Prayers have to be said, the blade has to be a certain style and sharpness. It's as humane a killing of an animal as can be."

DEBRA PRIEST, ESQ.

Bystander: Busybody (motivation: to interfere in other people's plans)

A real estate attorney, NWU lecturer, and animal rights lawyer who is a former director of Chicago's Animal Control Department. A white woman with long, curly, slightly graying hair, a medium body, and a friendly attitude which turns to anger when she talks about harm to animals. She genuinely cares about animal protection, but she also deplores that the animal killings lower property values in otherwise nice areas nearby.

"Illinois' Humane Care for Animals Act is a neutral law; it's not true that we're targeting religious activity."

CALLISTA THEODORAKIS

Bystander: Skeptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)

Cook County Forest Preserves spokeswoman and former reporter at local station WCHI-TV. A trim, handsome, white but dusky woman in her late 40s, with shoulder-length brown hair, and an easy poise.

"We respect everyone's freedom of religion, but if we see someone suspicious, we'll take action under the state law."

GABRIELA CRUZ

Bystander: Helper (motivation: to join the hunt)

Runs Botanica de San Jeronimo on the South Side. An older hispanic light-skinned 'morisca' woman with a white headscarf, big glasses and a wide smile. She is short and chubby. Gabriela is a herbalist and an advocate for and member of the Preço community. She also holds a degree in Pharmacology but doesn't brag about it unless she needs to placate the law enforcement.

"A lot of people, they misunderstand us. They think we work with the devil, but it's not like that."

BOTANICA DE SAN JERONIMO

Location: Wilds (motivation: to contain hidden things)

On the South Side, Gabriela Cruz' herbal shop. Non-hispanics mostly just call the place "Botanica." The place is filled with little bottles, envelopes filled with dried herbs, an array of teapots, strainers, vaporizers, candles, statuettes of the saints, charms, calendars, etc.

FOREST PRESERVES

Location: Maze (motivation: to confuse and separate)

The first Forest Preserve the hunters will encounter is likely to be Oak Glen, but this write-up can work for most of them. Many facilities can be found near the entrances of each preserve location (over 300 sites in the district!), but the woods soon thicken with distance, especially in the locations where incidents have occurred. Some—but not all—preserves have well-marked trails, picnic tables, interpretive signs (sometimes duplicated), and even lodges. But away from these, the underbrush gets thick and the trees grow close together.

Custom moves:

When you **search in the forest**, roll +Sharp:

- On a 10+, things seem to point somewhere in particular: take +1 forward for investigating.
- On a 7-9, you can **investigate a mystery**, but then pick one of the bad things below.
- On a miss, all three bad things are true.

Bad things that can happen in the forest:

- Something is following you.
- You are lost, and your phone and GPS are not working properly.
- You stumble upon something abominable.

WOLF ROAD WOODS FOREST PRESERVES

Location: Den (motivation: to harbor monsters)

The hunters' investigation of Billy Washington's disappearance will eventually lead them to Wolf Road Woods, where the nightwalkers have their temporary lair.

Custom moves:

When you **search in Wolf Road Woods**, roll +Sharp:

- On a 10+ you find a tuft of strange hair and a well-worn work glove with Billy's initials: take +1 forward for investigating, then the Keeper will pick one of the bad things from **search in the forest** (see above).
- On a 7-9, you find the clues but all three bad things are true.
- On a miss, you are attacked by nightwalkers.

INFORMATION THAT CAN BE GATHERED

Animal parts have shown up in Cook County Forest Preserves to the west, south and northwest of the city, according to half a dozen police reports filed this year and last year. Most of the time, it's just the parts.

In cardboard boxes, plastic sacks, or at the base of a tree clustered with tokens of ritual—a swatch of red or white cloth, a little wooden box—they've been finding chicken heads with their eyes gouged out, and dismembered goats. Just last weekend, blood stains on newly-fallen snow led residents to two baby goat heads and a number of chicken parts, wrapped up in red bandanas. *Basic:* Animal remains found include chickens (both hens and roosters), goats, pigeons, rabbits, cat, skunk, and deer carcasses. *Advanced:* Only the livestock remains were accompanied by red and white cloth strips.

According to residents near various Forest Preserves, this has been going for at least 30 years.

Only once in recent memory—the incident the hunters are investigating—has a report come in of someone being caught in the act of a suspected ritual sacrifice. A few days ago, a caller reported seeing five people “dressed all in white” in Oak Glen: they appeared to be “doing animal sacrifices on chickens and roosters.” By the time the police arrived, there was nothing to see.

The Cook County Forest Preserves encompass about 70,000 acres (280 square kilometers)—11 percent of the county. About 100 officers police the area.

If the hunters correlate sites over time and area: although it's hard to discern by looking at a specific location, incidents across all forest preserves in Cook County have suddenly increased in frequency.

Live animals, possibly escaped from attempted sacrifices, have been found wandering in the woods.

Small makeshift altars have also been found in the woods, with candle stubs, wilted flowers, keepsakes, images of saints, and dried herbs. The herbs and other ingredients include tobacco, jimsonweed (*datura*), foxglove (*digitalis*), Jesuit's bark (*quinine*), garlic, velvetleaf, lemongrass, thyme, and monkshood (*wolfsbane*), honey, powdered eggshell, cocoa butter, ash, aguardiente, and water.

Investigating the magics performed at the altars requires a lot of legwork to examine many sites. *Basic:* A variety of magics were performed: blessings, divinings, intercessions, atonements, and even the rare curse; some altars show no magic at all. *Advanced:* The most recent magics have been wardings.

Investigating the attack on Kathy Witecki: *Basic:* Kathy walked away from the path that day, and towards an altar. *Advanced:* She actually checked on several spots in the preserve where incidents had been reported over the years.

If Kathy wakes up after the attack and the hunters interview her: *Basic:* Kathy has suffered from the Necromancer's memory theft attack. Her memory is affected and she can't recall much from the day of the attack, except a dark shadow with long spikes, and a man with eyes like glowing embers. *Advanced:* Even some details that she recently told the hunters have been forgotten.

Investigation of Billy Washington's disappearance: *Basic:* He was working alone at the time of the attack and was near a forest altar—tending it. *Advanced:* Close examination by a knowledgeable person would suggest Billy didn't exactly know what he was doing; he was just trying to fix it up as best he could.

RESOURCES

Forest Preserves of Cook County. <http://fpdcc.com/>

HARVEST MAZE

By Mark Tygart

“Even a mouse will get tired of a maze after a while.”

—Anthony T. Hincks

CONCEPT

The hunters investigate a couple's 'disappearance.'

This mystery was inspired by the first season *Supernatural* episode "Scarecrow," Stephen King's *Children of the Corn*, Hispanic legends about the Coco, and the tradition of eerie holiday corn mazes in the American Midwest.

HOOK

A series of disappearances—of multiple victims—around the same date every year has this small town's police worried about a possible serial killer.

Either law enforcement or family members of the victims may ask the hunters to help. A Flake could notice the cycle of disappearances or be tipped off by a crime reporter. The victims share no discernible pattern of class, age, geography, ethnic group, or religious faith. All they have in common are the dates of their disappearances.

The first missing person was notable UFO expert, right wing pundit, and radio talk show host Erica Kripke. She disappeared seven years ago while investigating crop circles. This led to claims from her associates of government conspiracy and/or alien abduction. Her empty car was found next to a cornfield.

Last year it was Fabian Giroux. A retired, gay high school teacher and Canadian immigrant who disappeared in the area while sightseeing in his Winnebago. He had several cats, all named after members of the British Royal Family. The cats and the Winnebago were found on the side of the road but Professor Giroux vanished. He left no family.

The most recent disappearance, just two days ago, was a local teenaged couple: Rebecca Selby and David Kirchner. Their car was found in a popular 'make-out' spot near the Guzman farm, with no sign of them. There were no signs of violence. They were popular, with good grades, and seen as a model young couple. Their families remain worried.

OVERVIEW

The disappearances were victims of a coco, caught in the enchanted maze it creates in a local cornfield to “celebrate the holidays” each year.

COUNTDOWN

Day	The coco, disguised as a chupacabra, begins stalking the area again for more victims and is seen by Vanessa Guzman.
Shadows	The reporter publishes a story about the disappearances which causes a local panic.
Sunset	The sheriff explores the maze and retreats after experiencing demonic illusions caused by the coco.
Dusk	Sheriff becomes deranged by the coco's illusions and becomes obsessed with searching for a one-armed criminal mastermind and Satanic cult leader.
Nightfall	Coco lures the reporter into the maze and drains them, creating a new coco.
Midnight	Coco (with new friend) departs the area until next year's holidays.



COCO

Monster: Trickster (motivation: to create chaos)

A mythical ghost-monster from Hispanic and Lusophone folklore. The coco is a murdered child who has become a shapeshifting vampire preying on the living.

The coco is an undead, murdered child that preys on the living. Victims killed but not consumed by a coco will arise as another coco within three days of being drained.

The coco's true form is hideous: a twisted, half-melted corpse child in rags. It normally appears as a cloaked figure (sometimes with a jack-o'-lantern head) or shifts to another form. It dislikes, but can endure, sunlight. It will normally not cross salt or running water.

Powers:

- **Shapeshifter:** It can appear as anything roughly between human to child-sized, but radiates its magic and evil strongly.
- **Illusions:** As well as creating spooky mazes, it can surround itself with confusing visions when attacked, forcing hunters to **act under pressure** to take action.
- **Life Drain:** See the **life drain countdown** below for the process. Hunters have a chance to intervene and stop the process after each step, if they are close enough.

Weakness: The sound of protective prayers.

Attacks: **Strike with fists** 1-harm hand. **Draining grip** 0-harm hand life-drain.

Harm Capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

Armour: None

Custom Moves:

Escaping The Coco: When you are having your life drained by a coco and try to break free, roll +Tough:

- On a 10+, you break the coco's grip. You are free!
- On a 7-9, choose to escape but suffer 1-harm and move to the next Life Drain countdown level, or resist for the moment but stay in its grip.
- On a miss, you immediately suffer the next two countdown entries.

Life Drain Countdown:

- Day: The hunter is immobilised in pain.
- Shadows: Extreme pain.
- Sunset: Pain induces 1-harm.
- Dusk: Pain induces 3-harm.
- Nightfall: The hunter is unconscious.
- Midnight: The hunter is drained and consumed by the coco.

GUZMAN FARM

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

The couple was last seen near a cornfield on the Guzman farm.

A recent immigrant success story, the Guzmans operate something that is becoming exceedingly rare: a family farm. The disappearances have been clustered around this area, as well as a largely disregarded series of chupacabra sightings by drunk local teenagers (which were the coco, of course).

When investigating the cornfield the hunters will suddenly hear a women's scream amid the corn. If the field is entered they will find themselves in a strange misty corn maze after dark (no matter the actual time).

VANESSA GUZMAN

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

A bright, attractive young woman hoping for a career in the arts, she often acts as a translator for her father Fidel in business matters (despite his long residence here, he is uncomfortable speaking English).

Vanessa is convinced the “chupacabra” is a prank, because she could hear a child laughing when she saw the “small creature” in the cornfields. She wonders whether the local kids are faking a monster to create excitement in an otherwise sleepy agricultural community.

FIDEL GUZMAN

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

A man obsessed with making his family farm a success, Fidel becomes warm and friendly if addressed in Spanish. A pragmatic man, he worries that criminals are murdering and robbing travelers, and that the local police are trying to cover this up with ghost stories.



THE COCO'S CORN MAZE

Location: Den (motivation: to harbour monsters)

An illusionary labyrinth created by the coco to 'play' with its victims. It is always night in the maze, with a full harvest moon. The stars match no known constellations. If the coco is killed, the illusion vanishes and the hunters find themselves randomly dispersed through the Guzman corn fields.

JOSH LOPEZ, NOISY REPORTER

Bystander: Busybody (motivation: to interfere in other people's plans).

Josh is a young, bright, ambitious reporter from an impoverished immigrant family. He believes a serial killer targeting Hispanics has been operating in the area. Josh is fascinated with serial killers, and believes this case could also expose an American society deeply prejudiced and indifferent to the suffering of minorities.

He will try to enlist the hunters in any number of research activities that alienate the local authorities and produce little useful information.

Josh is skeptical of the supernatural, but his childhood was full of stories of folklore, including the coco.



MOLLY GUNDERSON, SHERIFF

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

Like most local law enforcement officers, Molly Gunderson finds Josh Lopez to be highly annoying, but she secretly shares his concerns about a possible serial killer operating in the area. She is convinced that the disappearances are the work of a “Children of the Corn” satanic cult that is active among the local farm workers.

A middle-aged disappointed veteran of an often sexist rural law enforcement office, Molly has fallen victim to the consolations of a rather extreme Christian cult.

BRIDGET'S DINER

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

Everybody in this rural area meets at Bridget’s, a local institution offering wonderful middle-American food at reasonable prices. There is nothing fancy about Bridget’s but it is clean, the staff are friendly, and the pies are delicious. Sadly the coffee is not “damn fine.”

Both Josh Lopez and Melinda Gunderson are more likely to be found “talking shop” here with locals than in their respective offices.

HAUNTING AT THE OLD GRAND

By Chloe Sutherland

CONCEPT

Deep in the bowels of a historic hotel, abandoned for more than a century, awaits one of the Great Old Ones. It traps spirits in the hotel to build up its power in order to emerge into our dimension.

Our investigators are the last of a long line of victims—caught when they came to investigate the “most bloody building in the world.” They have been devoured by the monster inhabiting the hotel, and will wander the halls forever unless they can work out what has happened to them.

HOOK

The flashlight scans across the crumbling facade, eventually alighting upon the police tape wrapping around the building. A hand pushes aside the tape and the group of investigators duck under it. As one wrangles bolt cutters around the padlock, another starts riffling through a brimming case folder.

“They come in. They don’t come out. Dozens—maybe more we don’t know about. Keep your wits about you.”

Everyone steps across the threshold and is swallowed by the darkness of the hotel.

The door slams shut.

COUNTDOWN

Day	The hunters' souls are devoured, imbuing the Old One with more power.
Shadows	As the Old One gains power, the building begins to thrum and glow a dull green.
Sunset	The hotel gains more notoriety, bringing in a stream of journalists and bloggers.
Dusk	Police officers are sent in to find the growing number of missing persons.
Nightfall	The growing power triggers an earthquake, killing many people in town and creating many more souls for the hungry monstrosity.
Midnight	The Old One, having devoured enough souls, bursts forth. It destroys the tri-state area and continues on its destructive path.

KEEPER NOTES

The hunters begin as ghosts. As a result of their deaths, your hunters cannot properly remember the past week and do not realise what has happened. Pick your language carefully to support this. For example, instead of saying someone opens a book, describe the pages fluttering in an unseen breeze and falling to the right page. You might use the move **separate them** to have someone accidentally move to another section of the hotel, as they do not have full control of their ghostly body. If they fail an attack roll, describe their weapon seeming to pass directly through the target.

Your hunters' limitations may depend on what has already been set up in the world, however it is likely they:

- cannot easily interact with anything in the hotel.
- will cause magical rather than physical damage.
- will be burned by silver.
- will become trapped by salt circles.
- will float rather than walk.

OLD ONE

Monster: Devourer (motivation: to consume people)

The Old One is massive and octopus-like, spanning floors. It cannot move from the large hollowed-out cavern below the hotel, after a failed ritual caused it to become trapped in a portal between worlds. Its tentacles reach out on all sides of the portal, surrounding a large beak with multiple rows of large teeth. Once it has trapped a being inside the hotel, it drags them to the basement to devour them. With enough blood, the Old One will be able to complete the ritual properly, finally releasing itself into the world.

Powers:

- **Long Range Grasp:** The Old One has many tentacles, two of them are extra long. With these, it can pick up investigators if they are within reach (range: hotel basement) and will be a constant source of pressure within the basement.
- **Great Old Grand:** Over time, the Old One has reached other tentacles up through the floors and walls of the old hotel. This is how it is able to trap people inside and it also means it is aware of where a living/moving being is in the hotel at all times.

Attacks: Serrated suckers 2-harm far/intimate life-drain. Gaping maw 4-harm intimate ignore-armour.

Harm Capacity: 10-harm with two extra long tentacles (5-harm, each).

- Body: □□□□□□□□□□
- Tentacle 1: □□□□□ Tentacle 2: □□□□□

Weakness:

Eldritch Ritual: The Old One was brought into this realm by an eldritch ritual that was incorrectly carried out by hotel guests. This was done by carving and painting sigils around the hotel and in the basement. If these five sigils can be found and destroyed (by causing 2-harm to each), the portal will be destroyed and the Old One will no longer be tethered between worlds.



KEL PRIESTLY, WEREWOLF AND SUPERNATURAL DETECTIVE

Bystander: Hunter (motivation: to kill the monsters), later Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Kel is a hunter (similar to the Monstrous playbook) who has come to investigate the Old Grand after the hunters went missing over a week ago. Convinced he is dealing with typical ghosts, he is armed with salt bullets and will attack on sight. If they take the time, the hunters will notice Kel is less wolf-like than typical werewolves: he still stands as a human, has use of his hands and feet, and can speak (although gutturally and infrequently while fighting). If they can convince him they mean no harm, he may become an ally. If not, his supernatural PI licence and hunter's notes will be found on his body.

Attacks: Shotgun with salt bullets 4-harm close messy loud anti-ghost.
Teeth 2-harm intimate.

Armour: 1. Very tough.

Harm Capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

Weaknesses: Silver, Wolfsbane, Magic.

THE OLD GRAND

Location: Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)

Once the door closes, the hotel is no longer linked to the present. Looking outside will reveal the shadowy memories of The Old Grand in its former glory. Phone calls or radio out will connect to people long since dead, or just to the low rattling groans of the Old One.

Any attempt to leave will fail until the Old One is defeated: the hotel will only allow exit once the Old One is no longer controlling it—once the sigils have been broken and its connection with the Other World has been severed. These sigils can only be broken by physical damage.

The Old Grand sits just as it was abandoned over a century ago when cultists carried out various rituals in an attempt to bring the Old One forth. As they look around, investigators will find ritual spell books and the personal diaries of the cultists in some of the rooms, as well as evidence of the rituals carried out. The library may also contain information about the history of the location.

The investigators may find evidence of their physical selves, such as a unique item dropped around the hotel before they were killed and captured.

OTHER THREATS

Other eldritch beings may be residing in the hotel, having snuck through the open portal, their own strength waning as the Old One drains their life.

Other spirits may be briefly seen or heard around the hotel. This may include ghosts of the cultists, who have useful information but will not part with it willingly.

CUSTOM MOVES

Shades from the past: As the hunters start to realise their situation, they may get flashbacks to what happened. As they are presented with additional information, an investigator may **investigate a mystery** (using Weird instead of Sharp) to recall relevant information in the form of a vision of the lost time.

The investigators will be able to **resurrect**—see page 112 of *Monster of the Week*. The **big magic** requires:

- Their souls.
- The blood of the Old One.
- To be carried out at the site of their death (the basement).
- Only one person is needed to conduct the ritual.

HEARTBREAK BLUES

By Matthew Aaron

INTRODUCTION

The thing I love most about the blues is that, as an art form, it takes something broken and makes it something beautiful. The musicians' pathos comes through in sweet six-bar riffs of wailing guitars and a steady bass heartbeat. I take inspiration from the blues not only in writing this adventure, but also during play. I recommend playing this Spotify playlist during the game: <https://open.spotify.com/user/1262304001/playlist/6KdTrQNx5W9wilOxF1qS77>. Use it to keep you honest to the blues.

HOOK

Off the beaten path in Memphis, Tennessee, is the legendary blues joint Johnny Ray's. It was there that "Thundering" Joe Johnson played his last set to raucous applause. One of the regulars said that the music damn near tore your heart out.

When the club owner, Buddy Wolf, came in early this morning, he found Joe sitting on a black, cane-backed chair under the harsh white house lights with his head slumped forward. In Joe's hands were his '54 Gretsch White Falcon guitar and his still-bleeding heart.

There were no cuts (or even marks) on Joe's ashen chest. With no way to explain the horrible scene and fearing the cops would shut down the club, Buddy immediately called his cousin. A cousin who knew someone who dealt with weird stuff. A cousin who knew one of the hunters...

BACKGROUND

Johnny Ray's is circling the drain. Like all good things in the blues, it's one step away from destruction, but that just amplifies the highs because the lows are so desperate. Buddy is mortgaged to his eyeballs and is looking for a way to keep Johnny Ray's up and running. His dire straits are honey to the Heartbreaker: Buddy's desperation makes him easy to seduce and then to destroy. The risk involved in preying on Buddy makes the reward all the more piquant as the Heartbreaker will be weakened by the beautiful music present on the nights when someone is playing the blues.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Buddy tries to cover up the murder to keep his bar open.
Shadows	Heartbreaker tips off the cops, setting them on Buddy's trail.
Sunset	During a benefit concert to keep Johnny Ray's open and Buddy out of jail, the Hollow start tearing the place up.
Dusk	Heartbreaker forces Buddy to sign over Johnny Ray's. Buddy, losing everything, falls into exactly the kind of despair the Heartbreaker feeds on.
Nightfall	Heartbreaker uses Johnny Ray's to lure in other musicians and artists to feed on.
Midnight	The Memphis blues scene is literally killed off by Heartbreaker.

HEARTBREAKER

Monster: Devourer (motivation: to consume profound sadness)

The Heartbreaker is an oddity among the vampiric monsters in that rather than consuming blood or fear, it feasts on despair. It is not above getting its hands dirty and hurting people, but it would much rather consume pure anguish unalloyed with terror. To that end, it will manipulate situations to create the meal it craves.

The Heartbreaker has currently disguised itself as the Orpheum's new theatre manager, Jacky King.

Powers:

- **Glamour:** Always looks like a person of indescribable beauty, whatever the beholder finds most physically attractive.

Attacks: **Brawl** 2-harm hand, **Debilitating sadness** 0-harm close magic (victims take -1 forward on a passionate action).

Armour: 1.

Harm Capacity: 10. □□□□□□□□□□

Weakness: Genuine Beauty—a work of art, a pure note, anything that can be called truly beautiful.

THE HOLLOW

Minion: Brutes (motivation: to intimidate and attack)

The Hollow resemble zombies in that they are unpossessed with self-will, but they do yet live. They are the husks of those upon whom the Heartbreaker has fed, and they serve as its attendants and muscle. Aside from their shambling, arrhythmic gait, they appear totally human—they are simply empty.

Powers:

- **Mentally Reft:** Cannot be distracted—they have no mind or will of their own

Attacks: Smashing fists 1-harm hand.

Armour: 1.

Harm Capacity: 4. □□□□

Weaknesses: Loud sounds/music. Massive trauma.

BUDDY WOLF

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

Owner of Johnny Ray's, and the target of Heartbreaker's hunger. He was never able to play the blues but he sure knows a thing or two about it, both the music and otherwise.

NINA FRANKLIN

Bystander: Skeptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)

Buddy's former lover, tends bar at Johnny Ray's, knows there is something wrong about Jacky but ascribes it to lingering jealousy.

JIM "MUDDY" VAUGHN

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Barfly and musician, barely escaped the Heartbreaker while touring (it looked different then). After that encounter, he went looking for Jesus in a bottle and found him at the very bottom.

JOHNNY RAY'S

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

Legendary blues club fallen on hard times, but the bar is stocked with smokey bourbon, and the stage lights mostly work. When the music is playing the old magic is still there, but when the daylight leaks through the dusty windows the club can look almost skeletal.

ORPHEUM

Location: Den (motivation: to harbor monsters)

The Orpheum is a newly remodelled 19th century concert hall with thick red velvet curtains and gilt balustrades. But all that is just a veneer over a building that's ready to crumble. The illusion of beauty is what drew the Heartbreaker into making this her lair.

TRAVELLING JONES RECORDS

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

Travelling Jones Records is more than just a record shop, though their collection of classic vinyl is second to none. They also deal in guitars, basses, and other musical instruments. In the back is a recording studio where a number of musicians have poured their hearts into their songs.



CUSTOM MOVES

Create Art: When you channel your emotions into your talents and skills to make a beautiful work of art, say what you do and:

- If you **use your knowledge and insight into the human condition**, roll +Charm.
- If you **tap into an observation of the world around you**, roll +Sharp.
- If you **just let all your raw emotion loose**, roll +Tough.
- If you **channel your connection to magic and other weirdness**, roll +Weird.

On a hit, you make it. On a 10+, choose one from the following list.

On a 7-9, you pick one and the Keeper picks one.

- It takes longer than you thought it would.
- It costs you something precious. The Keeper will tell you what.
- You'll never make something this good again.
- You attract a lot of unwanted attention doing it.
- It's fragile and will leave this world easily.

HOLLOW LAKE

By Chris Stone-Bush

CONCEPT

For over 70 years, Katsuko Tanigawa had a deal with a kappa, a Japanese water spirit. She continued this practice after leaving Japan and moving in with her daughter's family upon her husband's death. The entity—bound by contract—relocated with her and now resides in the lake close to the edge of the family's property.

Katsuko never told anyone. Her daughter Emiko assumed the small suitengu shrine her mother asked to have built on the lake's edge was simply a way to help deal with culture shock. Since Katsuko's death late last year, no one is leaving offerings for the kappa and it has gone back to procuring its favorite food: human livers.

This mystery takes place in an affluent suburb. Most of the residents have jobs in the nearby city, and the whole community is well-off. The town is built around a large lake, with almost every property having some kind of lakefront access. Many families live here year round, though some houses are summer homes and others are expensive rental properties. The town gets bigger during the summer holidays, though residents and renters tend not to mingle.



HOOK

Samuel Voss was a retiree and avid fisherman who was a fixture of the lakeside. His corpse just washed up and is being called a boating accident. However, the coroner is baffled because the body is missing its liver and intestines, with no sign of how they were removed.

COUNTDOWN

Day	The lake committee notices an unexplained decrease in the fish population.
Shadows	A committee member mysteriously drowns while on the lake performing tests.
Sunset	News gets out that the victims have been strangled and are missing organs; state police starts investigating.
Dusk	Two more bodies turn up in the lake, one a police officer, the other Takahiro Mickleson. The town panics.
Nightfall	A house is broken into. The whole family later found drowned in the lake.
Midnight	A second family is drowned and people start moving away from the area; within a year, the town is empty.



THE KAPPA

Monster: Devourer (motivation: to consume people)

Kappa are short, ugly goblins with scaled skin, webbed hands and feet, and a thick turtle shell covering their chest and back. On the top of their heads, damp hair surrounds a shallow, bowl-like depression filled with water. Kappa often pretend to be drowning children in order to lure people out into deep water, where their victim is drowned or strangled. The kappa then eats the intestines and liver, sucking the organs out through the victim's anus. The only thing they like better than human livers are cucumbers—they ignore anything else in favor of cucumbers.

Powers:

Aquatic: With both lungs and gills, kappa can outswim any human, and stay underwater indefinitely.

Ridiculously strong: They love to wrestle, and are very good at it.

Custom Move:

Wrestling Grab: When you're grabbed by a kappa, roll +Tough:

- On a 10+, choose two of the following options.
- On a 7-9, choose one.
- On a miss, pick none; you're in big trouble.

Grabbed by kappa options:

- You remain on your feet.
- You can breathe.
- Your arms are free.

Attacks: **Webbed claws** 2-harm quick. **Beaked mouth** 2-harm intimate messy. **Strangle** (only used on people the creature has already **wrestling grabbed**) 4-harm intimate ignore-armour.

Armour: **Rock-hard shell:** 4-armour. Kappa can extend and retract both their limbs and head into their shells instantly; getting past the shell means catching them completely unaware, targeting a soft spot, or using some kind of magic.

Harm Capacity: 8. □□□□□□□□

Weaknesses:

Repelled by ginger, sesame, and iron.

Head Bowl: If the kappa bows, the water in its head will spill out rendering the kappa immobile until refilled. (The water is magical and won't spill under any other circumstances.) Common ways of getting a kappa to bow are by making formal introductions at the beginning of a sumo wrestling match or a game of shogi. If a human refills the depression of an immobilized kappa, it must uphold its end of a bargain faithfully without malice or deception.

THE LAKE

Location: Den (motivation: to harbor monsters)

Fed by an underground spring, the lake is cold, murky, and deep. It's large enough for small, single-engine watercraft, and most families have a rowboat or a canoe. A committee monitors the chemistry of the water and the health of the local wildlife, especially the fish population.

The kappa is most active after dark, when it circles the lake looking for prey. If no one is in the water, it either wades ashore or lures people close enough to ambush by pretending to be a drowning child. Its lair is a small, submerged chamber at the end of a short tunnel exiting under a large, flat rock close to the Miklesons' shoreline. Finding the monster while it's in the lake will require a lot of preparation or substantial magic—or both.

EMIKO AND PETER MIKLESON

Bystanders: Skeptics (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)

Emiko is the grown daughter of Katsuko Tanigawa and runs a pediatric clinic in the nearby city. She practices Shinto, the traditional religion of Japan, and still observes important holidays and practices. Emiko knows the folk stories of kappa and other yokai, but does not believe they actually exist. Her husband Peter is a successful real estate agent. Smart investments have left him and his family very well-off, and he now spends most of his time at charity board meetings or on the golf course. A practical man, Peter is not at all superstitious and flat out refuses to believe the deaths are anything more than unfortunate accidents.

TAKAHIRO MIKLESON

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

Takahiro is a university student who is home for the spring or summer, depending on when the mystery takes place. He spent summers with his grandmother as a teenager, where she told him all the traditional Japanese stories. He can help identify the creature living in the lake if the hunters bring him evidence or ask for his help.

If he's told what's going on, he'll assume the kappa is somehow responsible for his grandmother's death. He'll go off to deal with the monster himself and, despite knowing the creature's trick, will ultimately fail, ending up as another body floating in the lake.

KATSUKO TANIGAWA, DECEASED

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Despite Katsuko having died late last year, it is possible for the hunters to talk with her, perhaps with magic.

Katsuko was born in 1923 in Saga Prefecture, a small rural area on the northwestern edge of Kyushu. Walking home from high school one night, she was trapped by the kappa. Remembering the stories her mother told her, Katsuko politely challenged the creature to a sumo match, which it had to accept. She tricked it into bowing, forcing it to agree to a deal: she'd leave it a cucumber twice a year and it would leave the people in her town alone.

The best places to contact Katsuko are near the butsudan (the family altar) in the Miklesons' home, or at the suitengu shrine near the shore.

MINI MOVIE MONSTER MAYHEM

By Zed Lopez

CONCEPT

Ephraim Larson, Helena Lee, and their ten-year-old daughter Miri were a happy family until Helena was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

She seemed fine until she collapsed three days ago. At the hospital, tests proved the worst: osteosarcoma had metastasized to her lungs, kidneys, and brain.

Ephraim and Miri are monster movie fans; Helena is a biomedical researcher. Helena explained to Miri that the cancer was like a monster inside her, drinking her blood so it could grow.

Miri heard Ephraim, Helena, and a doctor discussing hospice care. So yesterday Miri began doing something she'd been forbidden since she was 3. She's a biokinetic, capable of transmuting flesh. It came to light during an unfortunate incident with the family cat: Miri thought she'd rather have a dog. Her parents insisted she must never do it again. Helena wouldn't even let it be spoken of and preferred to pretend it had never happened.

While Helena slept and Ephraim was out of the room, Miri has been envisioning pushing the monsters out of her mother, and it's been working. They emerge as miniatures of whatever movie monster Miri had been picturing, a few inches high. After Miri severed the connection, each scurried from the room. The process leaves Miri spent: she can only do it every few hours. Miri didn't think much about what happened to the monsters next; she had bigger things to worry about and she assumed they'd soon perish outside of a host body. But she guessed wrong... they can live and grow, but crave and need blood. They absolutely will not harm Miri or Helena, but everyone else is fair game.

HOOK

Potential leads:

- If the hunters have a hospital contact with ‘weird stuff’ experience, the contact could call the hunters. They know it wasn’t a rat that bit their ankle and ran away.
- A hunter found (or a contact sent them) an online cellphone video of a mini Wolf Man attacking a dogwalker’s corgi in a park next to the hospital. It was dark and the video is too shaky to be certain of anything, but it doesn’t look like any animal.
- There’s a weird news report that a child in a mummy costume bit someone and sucked at the wound in or near the hospital.



COUNTDOWN

Day	The morning of Halloween. A three-foot, two-foot, and one-foot monster are already active and feeding. The hospital is planning Halloween festivities in the pediatric ward with a visiting party princess and costumes for the kids. The hospital has called pest control in response to reports of bites. Ephraim and Miri return to the hospital (she's excused from school if that's an issue). Miri creates another monster.
Shadows	Noon. Pest control is discreetly setting fresh traps. Miri creates another monster. Attacks continue, and the existing monsters grow. The first fatality occurs, but isn't yet discovered.
Sunset	Early evening. Rumors begin to spread, as people keep coming to the hospital's own emergency department with bites and wounds received in or near the hospital and telling outlandish stories. The pediatric ward has its Halloween celebration with the party princess; one or more monsters attack. The first fatality is discovered and another occurs. Miri creates another monster. Existing monsters grow.
Dusk	Late evening. Panic is beginning. Police are called; journalists show up. Miri creates another monster (finally curing Helena). Existing monsters grow, bodies drop.
Nightfall	Nighttime. Pandemonium. The hospital is on lockdown, with police and multiple agencies outside. The earliest monsters are as big as tall people. Mayhem ensues. Miri realizes what she's done.
Midnight	The next day. The now giant-sized monsters no longer feel a need to remain near Helena. They roam free.

NOTES

The most challenging part of the investigation will probably be connecting the monsters to Miri or Helena so that the story can come out. Some ways that might happen: enhanced senses (a Monstrous shapeshifter ability or one of **use magic**'s "things beyond human capability") might lead someone tracking a monster by smell back to Helena. A moment of magic sensitivity might detect Miri, who's something like a Spooky hunter. If the hunters meticulously map all the sites of attacks, tell them their exact epicenter is Helena's room. They might meet Miri, who isn't spending all of her time with her mother, and is sometimes sent out of the room so her parents can talk. The hunters might see a monster run by her, noting both that it's declining to attack her and that she doesn't seem alarmed or surprised by it. **Using magic** to view another time or place might let the hunters backtrack to Helena's room.

For bookkeeping, have a card for each monster that includes their current height and harm and whether they're active, or torpid and hiding. Prepare a stack of small cards for victims. As time passes and torpid monsters go active, add height to the monster and increase the harm of its attacks. When off-screen attacks occur, stack another victim card by the monster's card, noting when and where the attack happened and the size of the monster at the time so you can keep everyone's stories straight.

POSSIBLE EVENTS

- Nurse Jill Verne, wanting to do something nice for Miri, gets Miri's parents' permission to take her to the pediatric ward's Halloween party, where a monster attacks and the hunters have the chance to make it to the scene. Miri realizes what's happening.
- Mickey Kovac, a 9-year-old in a Frankenstein costume, took advantage of the chaos in the pediatric wing to slip out and explore. The hunters see him in the distance somewhere dimly lit where obviously no child would be.
- One or more monsters find the blood bank. A potential boss fight at the climax could come after someone finds a seven-foot mini-King Kong passed out in the room and runs screaming.

INSPIRATION

A girl transforming cancer into creatures is inspired by Tina Shaw from *Progenitor*, Greg Stolze's gonzo alternate history supplement for *Wild Talents*. The Shavians she creates are very different.

MINI MOVIE MONSTERS

Monster: Devourer (motivation: to consume people, blood in particular)

Start with the Universal monsters—Dracula, the Wolf Man, Frankenstein's monster, the Mummy—but use whatever you like that an 11-year-old might be thinking of.... King Kong, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, a Triffid, the Blob, a Gremlin, Mothra, Godzilla, a zombie, the Bride of Frankenstein, a miniature giant ant, or a tiny 50-foot woman.

They don't have the traditional vulnerabilities or supernatural abilities of the monsters they resemble: they're still cancer, just independent and mobile. But they do have whatever abilities their shapes imply—flight if they have wings, attacks with horns or tails if they have them, and so on. They're unintelligent but canny predators; think shark or crocodile. They have a vague inclination to mimic the habits of their inspirations. Dracula will avoid sunlight and 'sleep' in a box; the Wolf Man is drawn to any forest or park that might be near the hospital; the Blob avoids cold.

At first, they won't stray too far from Helena (and thus the hospital). But the bigger they get, the weaker that pull is.

Powers:

- **Feeding and Growth:** The monsters start out very fast, doing 0-harm scratches or nips for drops of blood and zipping away. After feeding on any amount of blood, they find a hiding place because they become torpid as they grow. Their growth is unrelated to how much blood they consumed. By the time they're one foot tall, every time they feed, they grow another foot in about four hours. As they grow, they slow down, becoming comparable to a fast human of similar size.
- **Respawn:** If a monster takes full harm but isn't defeated with a weakness, it becomes inert and seems dead. However, within hours, another tiny monster will spawn from the the body. This can happen from even the smallest part (Keeper's choice whether a body left in pieces generates multiple copies).

Attacks: The attacks all use the monster's size in feet to determine harm amounts. **Bite** Size-harm intimate. **Claw** (Size minus 1)-harm hand.

Harm Capacity: Equal to their height in feet (minimum 1). So a three-foot monster can withstand 3-harm, and can bite for 3-harm or claw for 2-harm.

Weakness:

Disease Cures: Radiation, chemotherapy drugs, other harsh chemicals (e.g. concentrated acid, bleach, or ammonia), or magic. In particular, a successful use of **use magic** to 'cure a disease' will kill a monster of any size outright.

THE HOSPITAL

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

The hospital has a cancer treatment center. Within the hospital, there will be other areas that count as specific locations. Use the ideas below or your own, based on what feels fun (don't worry too much about getting things exactly right).

The pharmacy (where chemotherapy drugs could be found) is a **Fortress** (motivation: to deny entry).

The nursery is likely a **Fortress** (motivation: to deny entry) to protect the newborn babies.

Radiotherapy treatment rooms (where the linacs—linear accelerators—are), and the Radiology department (with X-ray machines) have restricted access. If you're not using a specific hospital in the hunters' city, it is an old hospital being modernized, and has a floor (or more) closed for remodelling. A basement full of outdated and disused equipment can be a **Maze**.

Other interesting places hospitals might have: a cafeteria, and thus a kitchen; an ICU; an emergency department; a physical therapy center (thus much of the equipment of a small gym); a psychiatric ward; a morgue (which may serve the county or other local jurisdiction, or may just be temporary storage until a body can be moved); an incinerator (where medical waste awaiting incineration could include amputated limbs); locker rooms; an on-call room with exhausted residents napping in bunk beds; a dialysis center; operating rooms; a loading dock, near which non-perishable medical supplies are stored; multiple large janitorial closets (where bleach could be gotten much more easily than chemo drugs). Any number of these could be **Dens**. Dracula would have one, but many monsters would be indifferent about returning to the same place to hide.

HELENA LEE

Bystander: Skeptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)

Rational, meticulous, and organized, used to being in control. If she were honest with herself, which she hasn't been, what upset her most about what happened when Miri was three was the violence to her worldview, not to their cat. She is struggling to hide that she's terrified of dying.

EPHRAIM LEE

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

He works in Human Resources for a bank. He's normally relaxed and casual, quick with a joke. At home, he's used to being the fun parent who suggests going out for ice cream. He's terrified that Helena's death will leave him too wrecked to be there for Miri the way he wants to.

MIRI LEE

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

She's a bright and curious ten-year-old girl, quick to grasp the things that grown-ups try to obscure, like that her mother had nothing left to lose. Her memories of what happened with the cat when she was three aren't clear. She desperately wants to save her mother, but she's also excited to finally find out some of what she can do.

SHIRLEY LANDAU

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

The hospital's director of security. She's a stout woman in a scratchy-looking suit who runs a tight ship. She's never without a clipboard. She has seen the hospital through local disasters, power outages, and a quarantine. This is just one more crisis: she'll make a plan and get through it like she always does.

IVAN LOWENSTEIN

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

One of Landau's security guards. Ivan is a big man who loves to talk and never knows what he thinks until he hears himself saying it out loud. He'd be happy to pass on rumors or invent new ones on the spot.

SERGEANT SARA ROBINSON

Bystander: Detective (motivation: to rule out explanations)

One of the pair of cops first on the scene. Robinson is one of the youngest sergeants ever in her department. When something doesn't make sense, she won't stop asking questions. She is not easily snowed.

DAVIS PHAM

Bystander: Helper (motivation: to join the hunt)

Robinson's partner. He's a gifted athlete and comfortable with the idea that in their partnership, she's the thinker and he's the doer. Evidence and theories? That's Sara's thing. Chasing suspects? That he understands.

ADAM SANTIAGO

Bystander: Busybody (motivation: to interfere in other people's plans)

Head nurse in the oncology ward. As such, he believes it's his obligation to know everyone and everything in "his" ward. He takes his obligation seriously.

ALICE KWONG

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

The oncologist in charge of Helena's care. She was once a religious woman, but being so close to so much pain and death has broken her faith. What she sees in Helena's latest lab results seems almost... miraculous.

EXTRAS

Here are names and concepts for bystanders (victims, most likely) the mystery may call for.

- Harold Almeida, journalist.
- Benjamin Wright, hospital director.
- Armie Johnston, pest control specialist.
- Oskar Bautista, security guard.
- Hildy Lawrence, nurse.
- Sam Zhou, burn patient.
- Josh Averin, radiology tech.
- Mallory Shannon, party princess.
- Amit Singh, emergency department doctor.
- Kim Segal, social worker.
- Eli Schuyler, EMT.
- Jerry Williams, fracture patient.
- Beatrice Montaigne, pest control worker.



THE MOLE KING'S BRIDES

By Aaron Burkett

Ualichu's Proclamation was created by Daniel Fowler

CONCEPT

Yudashkin is a leshii who wishes to see the world, but cannot stray too far from trees native to his home in Russia. A travelling businessman, has brought seeds to a forest park where Yudashkin has a second home now. However, this angered the local forest powers, and Ualichu the mole king has trapped Yudashkin within those woods. The mystery begins as Yudashkin puts his plan to escape into action.

HOOK

A group of teenagers camping in a state park came across a vagrant (Yudashkin) who spoke with a Russian accent. He enticed Lindsay with a handful of golden pine cones. Lindsay and the man turned into a flock of blackbirds and flew away. Dismissing the bird transformations as a drug side effect, local authorities are now searching for Lindsay.

Investigators know the state park is a weirdness magnet and has been since humanity first came here. The mountain itself has been the center of native legends and New Age beliefs.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Taylor seduces Amber. Yudashkin offers Lindsay to Ualichu as a bride, but Ualichu doesn't accept the offer.
Shadows	Earthquakes rock the park and harm searchers, as Ualichu shows his anger with Yudashkin.
Sunset	Jose Gongorra is found dead. Flocks of blackbirds follow the hunters.
Dusk	Taylor and Amber go camping, and he sells her to Yudashkin.
Nightfall	Yudashkin trades Lindsay and Amber for his freedom, opening an ongoing business relationship.
Midnight	Yudashkin is freed, and continues to spread his home forest, as well as kidnapping more women for Ualichu.

MANOVICH THE VAGRANT, AKA YUDASHKIN THE LESHII

Monster: Tempter (motivation: to draw others into evil deeds)

A spirit of dark Russian forests, Yudashkin longed to see the rest of the world. A human ally planted the first seeds of Yudashkin's trees in the 1990s. Yudashkin's presence disrupted the power balance in the forest between the goblin market and the Low Court and they trapped him within the borders of the park. To buy off this punishment, Yudashkin will offer Lindsay to Ualichu, the local fey lord, at the upcoming Solstice or Equinox.

In his natural form, Yudashkin is a tree of flesh and fronds composed of human and tree limbs.

Powers:

- **Shapeshifter:** He can appear as an elderly man, a boar, or a flock of blackbirds.
- **Tree Stride:** Yudashkin travels through the space surrounding any of his trees as if they were side by side. They're located across the park so he can suddenly appear and menace the hunters whenever it's appropriate.
- **Grant Magical Power:** He may gift a human with a magical ability. These gifts are wild and always strike back at their user in cruel ways.
- **Trapped:** As the mystery begins, he is magically imprisoned within this specific forest park.

Attacks: Primordial curse 3-harm close area magic transform (-1 forward to run away; if not magically cured, the curse eventually turns you into a tree.)

Armour: Fallen pine needles and rotten flesh: 2-armour.

Harm Capacity: 14. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Weaknesses:

Home Forest: He must maintain proximity to trees from his native forest. Destroying these trees in the park will banish him back to Russia.

His Name: Yudashkin hates the sound of his name. If you name him in his presence, roll + Weird:

- On a 10+ choose two.
- On a 7-9 choose one.
- On a miss, you make him very angry.

Naming the leshii options:

- Force him into the form of a woodland creature.
- Call down the fury of nature: deal his harm back to him.
- Provide +1 armour to yourself or someone else.
- Declare Yudashkin's vulnerability (fire, silver, cold iron, etc.) Any further damage from that source deals +1 harm and pierces armour.

THE PARK

Location: Maze (motivation: to confuse and separate)

Located east of the local interstate, the park is mostly rocky coniferous forests overshadowed by Mount Taima at its heart. The search for Lindsay is focused around the Tangakwunu Valley Campgrounds.

The valley trailhead is the highest point accessible by car terminating at the trailhead at 7,000 feet. The panoramic view encompasses Mount Taima to the east, Lake Mansi and the Litonya River to the northwest, Tatanka Mountains to the south, with the mountains on the horizon.

The Tangakwunu Valley Campgrounds are located on the western side of the highway, at the very end of the road.

THE LESHI'S GROVE

Location: Fortress (motivation: to keep intruders out)

A tightly woven stand of fir, juniper, and pines which fight against intruders with undead hands (1-harm, reduces armour by 1.) The central grove is located on a butte that drops off into Lake Mansi.

THE GROUNDSKEEPERS, PARK RANGER CULT

Minion: Renfield (motivation: to push victims toward the monster)

The park rangers have formed a druidic-style cult around Yudashkin, who they call “the Old Master.” They plant his saplings and he grants them command over the park’s wild animals.

Park Ranger Rodney Womack is the self-appointed leader. A sprig of juniper is pinned to his shirt.

Powers:

- **Beastspeak:** When a groundskeeper is attacked or spied upon, the beasts of the park warn and intervene to protect him/her.

Attacks: Deer rifle 2-harm far loud. Ritual knife 1-harm close.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

TAYLOR SHAW

Minion: Traitor (motivation: to betray people)

Lindsay's boyfriend, who now has an agreement with Ivanovich: he brings kids out camping for Ivanovich and in exchange he gets "cool" magic powers. They aren't much right now, but the birds in his dreams tell him they're just the down payment. His voice is charming, all the time.

Little does he realise, the powers will soon be too much for his body. He'll be reduced to a lost spirit, seducing others into self-destruction.

UALICHU, THE MOLE KING

Minion: Guardian (motivation: to bar the way or protect his wives)

Ualichu dwells in the Hidden City, attended by his Eyeless Brides. He rules over the primal direction Down. Wearing a cloak of human eyes and attended by giant mummies, Ualichu is a terrifying power of the Earth. With shining teeth and blackest flesh, his very presence is the weight of all the stone above and the absence of light.

Powers:

Proclamation: His word is Truth in a cosmic sense. What he says goes, literally. When you confront Ualichu with evidence of a broken proclamation, roll +Sharp. On any hit, the law-breaker is gravely weakened. On a 10+, the law-breaker is magically compelled to do one service for the wronged party: they may not avoid or delay this penalty without painful (or even deadly) consequence.



LINDSAY AWALE

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put herself in danger)

Currently held by Yudashkin (for her gorgeous eyes).

AMBER CANFIELD

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Lindsay's best friend, who procured the drugs they were tripping on when the vagrant appeared. She got them from some guy named Flim-Flam at the tent city.

WANEKIA

Bystander: Helper (motivation: to join the hunt)

This ancient giant leans on a crutch of petrified wood, her left leg atrophied.

The leshtii's grove squats on her favourite butte, and her territorial dispute with Yudashkin traps him inside the park's official territory.

She now overlooks the Tangakwunu Valley Campgrounds from an escarpment to the south.

JOSE GONGORRA, NON-CULTIST PARK RANGER

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

A friendly Park Ranger, organizing the search at the start of the mystery. He understands it's dangerous to have such a large vagrant population in the park, but times are hard and these folks have nowhere else to go. He tends to be a soft touch for them.

FLIM-FLAM THE BOGGART

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

He and his crew keep up appearances with Ranger Gongorra and the vagrants' campsite, while making sure everyone follows the rules. He opposes Ualichu, the Mole King, because of a grave slight in the past. Flim-Flam possesses the Invisible Hand, a relic that creates goblin markets overlooked by mortal eyes.

THE GOBLIN MARKET

Location: Crossroads (to bring people and things together)

A fey bazaar where you can get your heart's true desire. Also happens to be a vagrant tent city. You can find the Market in an isolated cleft, on the banks of the Litonya River.

THE HIDDEN CITY

Location: Den (motivation: to harbor monsters)

Hosts the Low Court of Ualichu and is home to giant mummies. It lies under Mount Taima, the large mountain to the east.

NECROMANCER'S GAMBIT

By Mark Tygart

"Wisely did Ibn Schacabao say, that happy is the tomb where no wizard hath lain, and happy the town at night whose wizards are all ashes."

—H.P. Lovecraft, *The Festival*

CONCEPT

The hunters investigate sinister grave robberies, but in fact the whole world is at stake.

This mystery can be used as a sequel to The Witching Hour (see page 262) and the Keeper could add literature from Sunset Prayer Group to Zenobia Bellairs' house to connect the mysteries. Zenobia, intent on gaining immortality, left the sect a few years before her death.

HOOK

Several tragic suicides by leading members of the local community have been followed by a bizarre series of grave robberies.

The hunters might be asked for help by family of the victims, local law enforcement, or a journalist covering the deaths.

OVERVIEW

The suicides were members of a local 'end times' cult currently called the Sunset Prayer Group. A small gnostic sect that has survived since the Roman Empire under many names, they are trying to bring about the end of the world by means of necromancy. The necromancer Nathan Coin will be the last member of this cult. He plans to raise the four suicides as zombies and transform them into the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. He stole the bodies after burying them at the town graveyard.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Graveyard robbery and the third zombie is created.
Shadows	Kolshak learns too much and is devoured by zombies. Her body is found stuffed with salt (Coin wants no excess zombies to rise).
Sunset	Another vulnerable cult member commits suicide at Coin's "request." Their grave is immediately robbed.
Dusk	Coin raises the fourth zombie.
Nightfall	Coin conducts the ritual to turn the zombies into the Four Horsemen.
Midnight	The Apocalypse begins.

NATHAN COIN, MORTICIAN AND NECROMANCER

Monster: Destroyer (motivation: to bring about the end of the world)

A human practicing 'Christian Necromancy.' Nathan has an unabridged copy of the *Christian Book of the Dead* (see page 81). His other hobbies include outlandish interpretations of the Bible and taxidermy.

He owns a white van.

Powers:

- **Create and Command Zombies.**

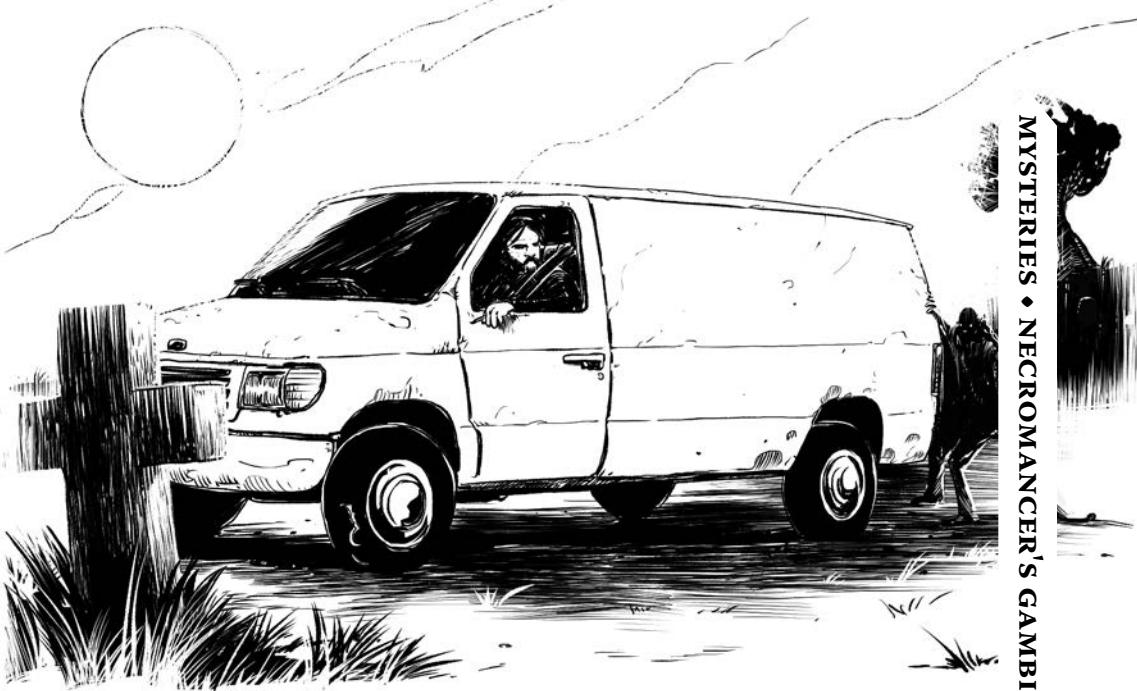
Weakness:

- Must be killed by his own zombies.

Attacks: Necromantic touch 1-harm intimate ignore-armour.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 7. □□□□□□□



THE ZOMBIES (CULT SUICIDE VICTIMS)

Minion: Assassins (motivation: to kill the hunters)

These are animated human corpses. Their numbers depend on how far Coin's plans have advanced. When the hunters get involved, there are two.

They cannot cross salt barriers or running water.

Powers:

- **Infection:** Any humans they kill will arise as a zombie under the necromancer's control, unless stuffed with salt, burned, or decapitated.

Weakness:

Romero-style: Zombies can be destroyed by decapitation, or destruction of the brain.

Attacks: Bite 2-harm intimate messy.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 4. □□□□

Note: The necromancer is always in a protective circle of salt when commanding the zombies, otherwise they will attack and destroy him. He always carries salt with him, just in case. If the zombies devour the necromancer, their curse of unlife is over and their spirits are freed.

CARLA KOLSHAK, NOSY REPORTER

Bystander: Busybody (motivation: to interfere in other people's plans)

An able, middle-aged reporter stuck writing obituaries in the dying local newspaper. Carla longs for a big break that would catapult her to stardom.

An agnostic, Carla will always discount any evidence of the supernatural, as "that is what sank my old man's career."

"BIG" BOB CARTER, POLICE OFFICER

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

Veteran officer Carter thinks the whole grave robbery thing is a cruel prank. Although always polite, he is equally unimpressed with reporters, FBI profilers, and "monster hunters" who he feels get in the way of real police work. Carter ignores the hunters, restricts Schniepp to consulting from his FBI office, and looks for vandals, goth kids, and other "lowlives" despite whatever evidence emerges.

Carter's just a bored big city cop with a chip on his shoulder due to working in a small town. He's retiring soon and he's already checked out.



SPECIAL AGENT DAVID SCHNIEPP, FBI PROFILER

Bystander: Witness (motivation: To Reveal Information)

This FBI profiler thinks a cult is at work, but doesn't believe in the supernatural. He was brought in to write a profile due to the ritualistic nature of the crimes and the fact that some of the remains belonged to a recently retired FBI agent (and cult member) who specialized in forensic accounting. Schniepp looks like a veteran FBI agent but acts more like a friendly college professor.

The criminal profile Schniepp has built states the following:

- The crimes are "ritualistic" and likely involve the practice of "necromancy" of some sort. Christian tradition largely says that necromancy is impossible at best, and any messages received from the dead are really demonic forces of Satan. Necromancy is strictly forbidden in clerical law. During the Early and High Middle Ages, however, necromancy was occasionally seen in documented practice by Christian clerics.
- The unsub (unknown subject) is a white male in his 30-40s.
- The unsub is unmarried, lives alone, and owns a van or truck.
- The unsub owns a large isolated rural property. He has worked with dead bodies his whole life and finds death comforting. This fits Schniepp's profile.
- The unsub is personally nondescript.
- These rituals represent the most important events in the unsub's life.

All of these statements are true. Schniepp suspects mortuary employees and plans to check their criminal backgrounds, property ownership, and cult affiliations. Any number of avenues could lead to the necromancer. Schniepp also suggests surveillance of local graveyards as he expects further ritual exhumations will occur.

THE GRAVEYARD

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

A typical sleepy, small American graveyard. Well, no longer so typical. An investigation of the defiled graves can reveal the following:

- Remains of a magic circle in goat's blood.
- Scratch marks from the inside of the defiled coffin with fingerprints of the dead person.
- Full handprint of the deceased man on the tombstone.
- Evidence that a single man disinterred the grave at night.
- Piles of salt.

All other evidence has been obscured by recent rain at the site.

There is a small attached mortuary service with the graveyard and the staff is eager to both help investigators and to convince everyone they are not at fault. Nathan Coin's family has operated the facility for generations.

THE NECROMANCER'S HOME

Location: Den (motivation: to harbour monsters)

This house, located on a large isolated rural property, is crammed with stuffed animals (taxidermy is a natural hobby for a necromancer), mystical texts, pictures depicting the Apocalypse, framed Bible verses, etc.

In the center of it all sits Nathan Coin, brooding on the end of the world like a spider in a web.

THE BASEMENT

Location: Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)

The necromancer generally keeps his zombies "asleep," buried in the earth in his basement. The zombies will attack if the basement is searched. He will summon them if attacked and seek to lock intruders down here for his followers to consume.

ORBITAL FUNK PRINCESS

By Jamie Sands

"OMG Orbital Funk Princess is the best game ever... EVER!!"

OVERVIEW

A vengeful fairy, angry over a real or imagined slight, has infiltrated the world, learned technology, and created the most addictive video game ever. He has targeted one town to start things off.

The game—*Orbital Funk Princess*—is so compelling that once someone picks it up, they must keep playing it. They keep playing the game to the exclusion of eating, drinking, or taking care of themselves at all. The game causes them to kill themselves through exhaustion, starvation, and related conditions such as thrombosis.

The game *Orbital Funk Princess* is present at each scene of death, in some instances still playing on the TV. If a hunter touches the physical game disc, sees it on-screen, or sees someone playing it, then they must test against the game's move (see below). On a miss, they get 'infected' with a need to play the game. It's not all-consuming—they can function and think about other things—but the need to play is like a hunger they can't ignore forever. As time progresses, they will think about the game more and more.

HOOK

Potential leads:

- People have been turning up dead from starvation/thrombosis/etc while playing *Orbital Funk Princess*. There are reports on local news networks for the town and online news sources.
- A hunter's connection was raving about *Orbital Funk Princess*: "Hey, isn't that the game that was in the news because someone played it until they died?"
- A hunter's relative has been in contact, concerned about a cousin they haven't heard from in a while. The last they heard from the cousin, they were excited about a new video game.

COUNTDOWN

Day	An bystander known to the hunters is addicted to the game. They will be distracted, distant in communications, and not reply to messages as quickly as normal. They have been playing one day.
Shadows	More discs spread through town. Report of a new death, very similar to the first.
Sunset	Several people die from playing the game.
Dusk	The game is distributed to most households. Much of the population of the town is indoors, playing the game, hypnotised.
Nightfall	Population of the town is enthralled, dying off.
Midnight	Gaibriel collects up the discs and moves on to a new town, leaving the population to waste away.

GAI BRIEL

Minion: Renfield (motivation: to drive victims to the game)

Gaibriel is a tech-savvy fairy who's angry with humanity. His vendetta began when he tried to entice some modern children away into the forest but they were too busy playing *Pokemon Go* to follow him. He's decided to use the power of video games against humankind to get his revenge.

He is unwilling to stop his plan or give the hunters any information at all, but he isn't a very tough fae and not much of a fighter. He's a trickster, hence his roundabout approach. If trapped and threatened, he will break the spell but he'll try to mess with the hunters when he does it (e.g. insisting that the counter spell involves all the hunters skipping in a circle holding hands and singing, and covering them with indelible glitter. Harmless but annoying.)

He has no official course of distribution but has been planting the games in secondhand sales at game shops, leaving them in public libraries, and selling them at a stall in a rundown flea market along with other bric-a-brac.

He was not present at any of the death scenes as he relies on the random distribution of the games.

ORBITAL FUNK PRINCESS, CURSED GAME

Phenomena: Panic (motivation: to make people act irrationally)

It's a game disc. It plays in any console, DVD player, or Blu-ray reader.

Gameplay is a straightforward first-person shooter. The animation is pretty with lots of vibrant colours and flashing lights. Galactic space scenes are frequent with classic funk playing as background music. It's *very* absorbing.

Weaknesses:

The game's curse can be cured by breaking the disc. However, the disc is magically protected: either the protective spell must be broken first, or an enchanted or holy weapon can break the disc and spell in one hit.

Gaibriel can be fought; he's physically weak, although his magic and knowledge of tech is strong. If he can be defeated, he can be made to break the spell entrancing the workers in the factory, which will stop the manufacture of the games.

Custom Move:

If you touch the game disc or see someone else playing it, roll + Cool. You get +1 on the roll if you are watching someone else play, but -1 if you play it yourself.

- On a 10+, it seems like a fun game—something is really neat about the music and images though you can't describe what exactly.
- On a 7-9, you feel a distinct urge to play more. Mark experience if you play *Orbital Funk Princess* when you should be helping the others with the investigation.
- On a miss, you are compelled to play. You must **act under pressure** to either stop playing, or if you have stopped playing, not pick up the game again.

Bystanders who see someone playing the game just get the urge to play. If they're left alone they will play until they eventually die.

THE GAME FACTORY

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

The factory is a run-down place where around a dozen entranced humans are engaged in creating the *Orbital Funk Princess* game discs.

The first part of the process is a simple pressing machine and assembly line. Once the games are in their cases, the workers' assembly line becomes a bizarre magic ritual involving dancing, chanting, and a strange otherworldly smell. The workers have been entranced for around 10 days and don't seem to be aware of anything except their mission.

They will continue to work until the enchantment Gaibriel has put them under is broken.



PITY THE CAT

By Marek Golonka

CONCEPT

During the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, Abraham Mertens was mayor of a small town, and wanted to make sure it grew big and prosperous. He was a practical man but also a dabbler in dark arts, so he made a pact with The Starry Order. The Order is an inhuman force that creeps into minds of humans and makes them more and more rational, duty-bound, efficient, and (sadly) devoid of emotions. For Mertens, this was a small price to pay for the town's prosperity.

The plan didn't succeed. An old kabbalist mystic in the town, Jacob, sensed the mayor's magic and countered it with his own. Jacob enchanted all the cats in town so that every night they would meow into the sky, creating chaos and dissonance to keep The Starry Order at bay. Everybody in town loved cats, and they were protected from people who would hurt them in order to stop the 'noise,' so this enchantment worked well.

The Starry Order kept trying to control the town because it was bound by Mertens' pact. For over a century it was repelled by the cats, but now it has another chance: The town is being incorporated into a large city. Tower blocks are being built, people are becoming busier, and they are easier prey for the Order. And, of course, they have less time and affection for their cats...

HOOK

This mystery works best if one of the hunters is somehow connected to the town and returns there after a long absence.

If that doesn't fit, use one of these:

- The hunters pass through the town and notice both the cats' strange behaviour and the unnatural constellations in the sky.
- The hunters discover Jacob's diary which describes the affair, and hear that the town is currently being assimilated into a city.
- The hunters are asked to adopt a cat because there are new anti-cat laws in the town.

COUNTDOWN

Day	The Starry Order begins influencing people of the town again.
Shadows	When the cats all meow to repel the Order, many townspeople try to chase them away or quiet them.
Sunset	Marjan and her fellow cat-catchers begin to begin catching cats that are out at night and bringing them to the shelter.
Dusk	Prisca becomes completely possessed by the Order, and forces reforms that quicken the town's access to the city and limit the cat population.
Nightfall	Marjan begins to displace the cats outside the town.
Midnight	The last cat disappears from the town, and the people become emotionless husks.

THE STARRY ORDER

Phenomenon: Panic (motivation: to make people act irrationally)

An ancient force of flawless precision and heartless rationalism. The universe is a malfunctioning watch waiting to be set correctly. The Order can intervene in human affairs only when invited (typically via a magic ritual).

When The Order is present in an area, people there become more and more rational, organized, and cold. They see no point in their life beyond performing their duties in the most efficient and precise way possible. Duties enforced by laws and contracts are felt most strongly under The Starry Order, so all the informal needs, promises, and habits are suppressed.

Oh, and the stars above the afflicted terrain form strangely regular patterns, hence the Order's name.

Powers:

- **Rationality:** Makes people act ultra-rationally and put their legal or societal obligations above all else (in particular, over their emotional obligations and needs).
- **Inception:** Can implant thoughts into the minds of people strongly affected by its influence.

Weaknesses:

Chaos: The more that chaotic, unorganized, and uneven things happen in the afflicted area, the weaker The Starry Order becomes.

Pacts: As an entity of order, it can't break pacts with other beings. It will also be severely weakened if forced or tricked into making contradictory pacts.

Custom Moves:

Order From Without: The hunters aren't free from the Order's influence. When the mystery reaches Dusk and every step thereafter, the Keeper holds 2. The Keeper may spend a hold to make a hunter **act under pressure** to do something unconnected to their Orderly obligations. And remember that, for many monster hunters, the quest is often purely a personal one.

THE TOWN

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

This town was a farming community up to the 19th century, when the Industrial Revolution gave it a railway station and a few factories. It still retained a quaint feel and a balance between serenity and prosperity through the 20th century. As a nearby metropolis grew larger, more and more townspeople started working there. The town has now decided to become a suburban district of the city. The inhabitants have mixed feelings: they look forward to better communication and more job opportunities, but also fear the town could lose its charm and individuality.

Notable places:

- Statue of Abraham Mertens.
- Suburban railway station.
- Local history museum.
- A closed synagogue.
- An old wool factory.
- Animal shelter.
- Yvonne Dierckx's coffeehouse.



THE CATS

Bystanders: Innocents (motivation: to do the right thing)

The town was always proud of its huge population of cats. They were well-fed, sheltered, and treated with love and respect. Nowadays people still like them but many residents have no time to play with and care for the little felines.

Jacob's spell still affects all the cats in the city. Every time The Starry Order tries to influence the town, the cats meow and yowl throughout the night. Nowadays, however, their cries offer a weaker protection because they are regularly drowned out by the noises of passing cars and trains.

When a cat is taken away from the town, they lose the connection to the spell. On the other hand, a cat who comes into the town will join the spell within a few days.

MARJAN CLAES

Minion: Thief (motivation: to steal for the Order)

The main cat-catcher in town works for the animal shelter. Until today, she was a gentle soul with a soft spot for cats.

As The Starry Order has widened its influence and townspeople complain more and more about the noise, she has changed her attitude, simply wanting to get the job done and not caring about the animals.

PRISCA PAUWELS

Minion: Right Hand (motivation: to backup the Order)

The current mayor of the town. She has returned from studies in a big city worried that her hometown has too little contact with the world. She won an election promising modernisation and openness. She genuinely wishes the town well and doesn't want it to lose all its charm, but she's easy prey for the manipulations of The Starry Order.

ROELOF PAUWELS

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

Roelof is an open and helpful young man who works at the local museum and guides people through the old synagogue.

As Prisca's younger brother, he will be the first to notice that something is wrong with her. He might do stupid things to try to "wake her up", like suggesting the hunters help him kidnap Prisca or throwing a cat at her.

STERRE GEERTS

Bystander: Sceptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)

An honest, hard-working woman and Marjan's partner. She isn't as susceptible to The Starry Order as her girlfriend, but she will protect Marjan from any accusations, believing she just does what's best for the community.

It will be very hard to make her believe in anything supernatural.

YVONNE DIERCKX

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

An elegant old lady who runs a charming coffeehouse at the main square. Friendly and open but also quite concerned with what's proper. She keeps a few cats in her coffeehouse but will chase them off when the Order gets to her.



THE QUIET

By Kane Cathain

CONCEPT

A movement known as The Quiet formed a small commune in the Arizona desert. Led by a man known as All-Father Stillness, the followers were dedicated to an extreme form of meditation in an attempt to free their minds from their bodies. The Quiet disappeared overnight years ago and was forgotten, with no evidence of their existence except for a smattering of concrete domes left in the desert next to the town of Alton's Bend.

HOOK

A few days ago, a visitor to Alton's Bend found the town empty. Of the residents, the visitor only found three corpses—in the gas station with rags shoved down their throats and wood in their ears.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Official (mundane) investigators are sent to the town. They will die.
Shadows	The Disembodied Quiet gather in number in Alton's Bend.
Sunset	The Disembodied Quiet and the All-Father find and start killing the townspeople who have been in hiding.
Dusk	All-Father Stillness and his followers set out from Alton's Bend to convert (aka 'silence') any person they come across.
Nightfall	All-Father Stillness gains power and influence over the minds of the living, converting them into becoming to becoming part of The Quiet.
Midnight	Religions dedicated to All-father Stillness spread across the country and then the globe.

ALL-FATHER STILLNESS, SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION

Monster: Queen (motivation: to possess and control)

Dr. Jon Hansen (or “All-Father Stillness”) gathered followers under a movement he named “The Quiet.” The Quiet was dedicated to shedding the physical world through meditation. Hansen was the first to achieve this willful separation of his spirit from his body. After this revelation, he brought the most proficient practitioners of his methods to the desert with him. After a year of training and preparation, they were cemented inside concrete domes with no doors or windows in an attempt to shut out the outside world completely. The members of The Quiet would succeed in transcendence or die in failure.

All-Father Stillness walked deep into the desert and abandoned his body, committing himself fully to walking the Earth eternally as a spirit. After a long journey, he found his way back to the commune and waited for his followers to join him in their spirit forms. Once they gathered together, they would show the world what they had done and bring their “gift” to all.

The All-Father will not show himself to the hunters until after at least two of his followers have been destroyed.

Powers:

- **Invulnerable:** The hunters must force him to manifest, otherwise they cannot hurt him with physical attacks.
- **Enforced Stillness:** He creates a zone of absolute silence in a 10-meter radius around himself. Within this zone an oppressive spectral force seeps into the bodies of the living, attacking them with **Force of Silence** each minute they are in the zone.

Attacks: Choke 3-harm close ignore-armour. **Force of Silence** 1-harm close magic ongoing.

Armour: 2

Harm Capacity: 12. □□□□□□□□□□

Weakness: Loud noises will distract him to the point that his form wavers, causing him to manifest and become vulnerable to attack.

THE DISEMBODIED QUIET, SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS

Minion: Parasite (motivation: to infest, control and devour)

The members of The Quiet achieved transcendence and have gathered-with All-Father Stillness in their spiritual form. Unfortunately they only transcended to being ghosts, trapped and unable to return to life or move on. Their only focus is to spread the “the gift” to anyone they see. Any noise provokes them to rage and to attempt to silence its source.

Over the years, the distance they are able to roam has extended from the cement structures in which they died, putting Alton’s Bend in their path. They appear as semi-transparent versions of their human form, with long hair and naked bodies thinned by starvation.

They stand still with disturbingly blank stares and will only move when unseen. Should anyone observing them turn away, or even blink, The Disembodied will suddenly be closer until they reach their ghostly hands deep into their victim’s throats.

Powers:

- **Incorporeal:** The Disembodied Quiet are incorporeal forms who should be treated as having 3-armour (against any harm) unless their weakness is being exploited.

Attacks: Choke 3-harm close ignore-armour.

Armour: 3 when incorporeal, otherwise 0.

Harm Capacity: 5. □□□□□

Weakness:

Noise: Loud noises will distract the spirits to the point that their forms waver and they become vulnerable to attack. Their bodies (inside the cement structures) are vulnerable to physical destruction, which will also destroy the spirit.

ALTON'S BEND

Location: Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)

Alton's Bend is little more than a cluster of buildings in a horseshoe arrangement, with the One Stop Gas & Grocery at the apex. The town is quite far away from civilisation: the tension can be ratcheted up by having no cell reception and the hunters' vehicle running on fumes by the time they get there (maybe they're even walking the last mile into town).

After the countdown reaches Shadows, the bodies of two state police are found in the center of town near their patrol car (which has its doors sitting wide open).

The town seems to have been hurriedly abandoned. A stroller lies on its side along the sidewalk with toys and a blanket strewn about. A cold cup of coffee and a half-eaten sandwich sit on a bench. A pruner sits next to a pile of recently cut flowers. The surviving residents are hiding, too scared to make any noise lest the Disembodied Quiet find them. A few of them have made the connection between the spirits they are seeing and the members of The Quiet who once lived in the desert.

ONE STOP GAS & GROCERY

Location: Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)

The hoses have been torn from the gas pumps, resulting in large puddles of gas soaking the surrounding gravel. Any kind of flame or spark could cause some serious damage to a large area.

Inside the building is a combination gift shop, sandwich counter, and woefully small grocery.

Dead bodies are in the kitchen and the basement. Broken pieces of broom handles have been shoved in their ears and dish rags shoved down their throats.

The Disembodied Quiet patrol here and will soon see and stalk the hunters as they investigate the grisly scene.

THE QUIET COMMUNE

Location: Wilds (motivation: to contain hidden things)

A banner hangs over what was the entrance to the commune. Now split in half and in tatters, it reads “THE QUIET IS STILL... HE MIND.”

The remains of wooden shelters can be found reduced to rubble and scattered about.

Four-foot tall concrete domes are still very much intact and are a shining white after years of being bleached by the sun. The domes are completely sealed, their entrances having been seamlessly cemented over.

Inside the domes are the naked and emaciated bodies of the members of The Quiet, who are now haunting Alton’s Bend.

A close check of the bodies reveals they are still alive. Their corporeal form has been slowed to such a point that they still possess the tiniest flicker of life, though there is no chance their spirits can rejoin them. Destroying these bodies will destroy the spirits instantly.

CUSTOM MOVES

Bring the noise: When making **noise** loud enough to drown out a conversation at 10 paces (e.g. banging on sheet metal, turning a car stereo up full blast) to disrupt the Disembodied Quiet, roll +(whichever Rating is most appropriate):

- On a 10+, all spirits in the nearby area are forced to manifest. When manifested, they are vulnerable to attack.
- On a 7-9, all spirits in the area are forced to manifest and the hunter chooses 1:
 - All spirits in the area focus their attacks on you.
 - All spirits in the area are enraged and now cause +1 harm (increasing each time this option is selected).
 - The noise disorients you (-1 to Sharp for 30 minutes—this can only be chosen once per hunter).
- On a 6 or less, all spirits in the area focus their attacks on you.



RAZORBACK

By Arturo Martinez

CONCEPT

Roughly two decades ago, a worker was fired from a pork processing plant. Filled with anger, he wore a pig mask and committed a series of murders. This resulted in the factory closing down. Rather than face justice, he (now calling himself "Razorback") vowed to "come back from hell and finish what he started" as he dragged several hostages into a roaring meat grinder and followed them in.

HOOK

The Clemonte family, who own the plant, received notice from the local police that the pig-skin mask (which somehow survived the trip through the grinder) has gone missing from police archives. Cyril Clemonte has also gone missing.

COUNTDOWN

Day	A security guard posted at the old factory has been gutted and hung on a wall hook along with Cyril Clemonte. Demonic graffiti has been found at the plant and at the family home.
Shadows	Razorback kills another Clemonte family member in their home.
Sunset	Slaughterhouse pigs begin to appear at the Clemonte home and meat plant.
Dusk	Razorback kills a couple of teens making out.
Nightfall	Pigs are wandering through the whole town.
Midnight	Razorback brings all the surviving Clemontes back to the plant where they are gruesomely murdered.

RAZORBACK

Monster: Executioner (motivation: to punish the guilty)

Razorback is a huge ogre wearing a patchwork leather pig mask and a slaughterhouse apron full of killing tools. Magically sensitive hunters notice an intense demonic aura. Everyone hears an intense buzzing of flies when he is near.

During combat, Razorback prefers to hang back and throw blades or spikes, or trigger machinery. Razorback does not run.

Slaughterhouse tools deal +2 harm to Razorback.

Attacks: **Thrown sharps** 2-harm close forceful messy. **Slaughterhouse hammer** 3-harm hand messy stun. **Machinery** 5-harm intimate messy slow. **Devour** 4-harm intimate messy life-drain.

Armour: 1

Harm Capacity: 20. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Weakness: Being ground up in the slaughterhouse machinery.

THE PIG KILLING FACTORY

Location: Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)

The plant is full of dangling ceiling hooks on conveyors, and hoppers for grinding and destruction of pigs.

Razorback can activate them, and has built traps to maim, hold, and kill his victims.

The remains of earlier victims can be found being eaten by slaughterhouse pigs.

Attacks: Killing machines: 3-harm close messy loud.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE PIGS

Minions: Beasts (motivation: to intimidate and attack)

Slaughterhouse pigs with oddly human-looking eyes are mysteriously appearing despite the plant being closed for years. They aren't violent—they are scavengers—but will defend themselves if attacked. Slaughterhouse tools brandished threateningly will keep a mob of pigs from attacking.

If many are present, they will initiate an attack on a solitary or wounded hunter.

Attacks: Pig bite 2-harm intimate messy.

Harm capacity: 3. □□□

ARCHIE CLEMONTE

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

Patriarch of the Clemonte family and owner of the family fortune. A former workaholic, a perfectionist, and a humourless bitter man who resents his family waiting for him to die. With his wife Penelope, he has a trio of children named Zachary, Sophia, and Cyril.

PENELOPE CLEMONTE

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put herself in danger)

Archie's wife of 52 years. She was once a member of a witches' coven that met secretly in the woods outside of town. She believes part of the success of the business is due to her magic dealings.

ZACHARY CLEMONTE

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

An heir of the Clemonte family, he is a martial artist, a yuppie, and a bully. He often quotes Sun Tzu when trying to impress new people he meets, plus he has a collection of oil paintings of himself in dramatic karate poses throughout his workplace.

SOPHIA CLEMONTE

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put herself in danger)

An heir of the Clemonte family, she liked to explore the mansion as a child. She stumbled across magical items in secret rooms, and she may offer these to the hunters in exchange for help. She entertains parapsychology as a hobby when she isn't administrating side ventures of the family fortune.

CYRIL CLEMONTE

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

An heir of the Clemonte family, he is the youngest of the three siblings and an introvert. Cyril is soft spoken and often bullied, but knows more about his mother's occult dealings than his father or his siblings. He has a stash of occult books he has been studying in secret and is barely hiding his excitement of discovering real (and frightening) magic.

THE CLEMONTE MANSION

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

Haunted and full of clues as to the nature of Razorback and his apparent resurgence. Local rumours say the family once dabbled in old world lore, and that the evidence is hidden in sealed-off rooms.

RED QUEEN'S GAMBIT

By Bryanna Hitchcock

CONCEPT

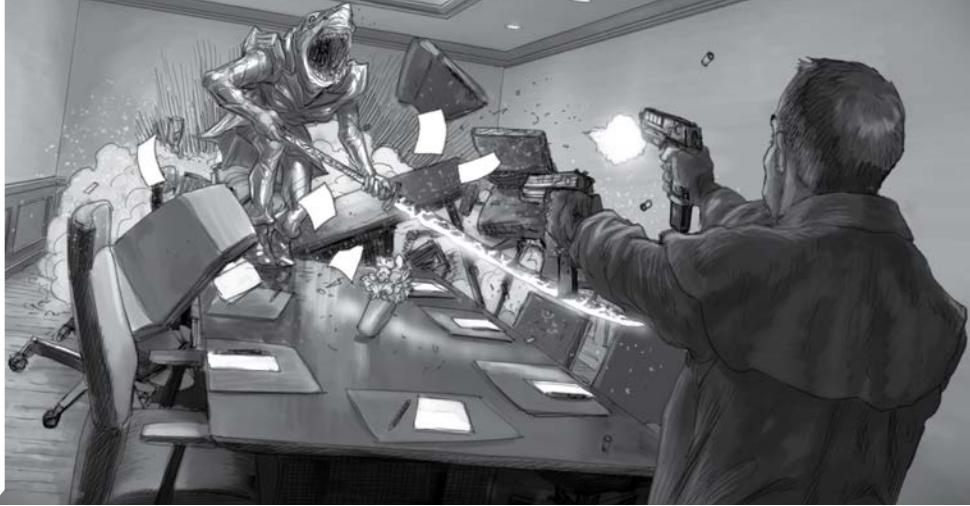
The hunters must find out what or who is responsible for a werewolf attack at a neighborhood store. This mystery explores gentrification, as embodied in a powerful infernal force.

HOOK

Last night, four people were killed at a liquor store by something described as a “werewolf.” The scant details available in the news are just enough to know these can’t be typical lycanthropes.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Another homeless person turns wolf and attacks a local smoke shop. Enough innocents have died to begin arming the Heart of Darkness. Hunters have -1 ongoing to manipulate any bystander.
Shadows	The Red Ties play on suspicions between police and protesters at the RQI building. Violence erupts.
Sunset	The Heart is fully armed. Hunters have -1 ongoing to read a bad situation .
Dusk	Authorities institute martial law in the neighborhood.
Nightfall	The neighborhood is destroyed in an orgy of violence.
Midnight	RQI buys up the neighborhood and bulldozes it to build a high-end shopping mall in its place.



THE RED QUEEN

Monster: Queen (motivation: to possess and control)

This being (also known as Belladonna Royal) is actually a shark devil. She is the CEO and controlling interest of RQI, Red Queen Industries. Her human guise is beautiful and severe, playing the fearless, high-powered lawyer to the hilt. In her true form, she has the head of a shark, polished crimson armor, and a sword of lava.

Her goal is to gentrify and profit from poor neighborhoods through defamation, police brutality, and mass murder.

If the Heart of Darkness is defeated, the Red Queen will give up (for now) and withdraw her influence from the city.

Powers:

Domination.

Wealth and vast influence.

Invulnerable to all but magical weapons and spells.

Weakness:

Love. The sound of humans sharing loving words in her presence makes her physically ill and unable to attack.

Attacks: Lava sword 3-harm hand fire.

Armour: 2, invulnerable to non-magical weapons.

Harm Capacity: 10.

RED TIES, MINIONS OF THE QUEEN

Minion: Guardian (motivation: to bar a way or protect something)

These agents of the Red Queen look like special agents with dark glasses and black suits, except for the red neckties they all wear.

Powers:

- **Red Tape.**
- **Connections.**
- **Protect the Red Queen.**
- **Call in Reinforcements.**

Attacks: Guns 2-harm close loud.

Armour: 1.

Harm capacity: 3. □□□

Weakness: Except for their devotion to the Red Queen, these minions are plain humans.

MAD DOGS, DRUNKEN WEREWOLVES

Minion: Brute (motivation: to intimidate and attack)

These hapless victims of the Red Queen's cursed fortified wine become ferocious killing machines once they've consumed enough Ruby Red.

Powers:

- **Only harmed by magic.**
- **Howl of fear.**
- **Leaping.**

Attacks: Claws 2-harm hand messy.

Armour: 0.

Harm capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

Weakness: Magic.

THE HEART OF DARKNESS

Phenomenon: Panic (motivation: to make people act irrationally)

The Heart of Darkness is a sculpture of blackened steel. It's a cube-shaped framework about a meter wide with a heart suspended in the center via spiked chains from each corner. It hangs over Belladonna Royal's expansive office at the top of RQI HQ. Once the heart begins to power up, it sends waves of panic and violence out into the city.

Reportedly, the heart was created by a noblewoman during the Middle Ages. When the ruling family executed her husband for his political writings, the distraught noble commissioned a forge and crafted the cage. The final step was to sacrifice her own life, giving her heart (full of hate for the rulers) to create an artifact of disruption and despair for the ages.

Powers:

- **Curse of Miscommunication:** Once two Mad Dogs have fed on human flesh, the heart will begin twisting communication in the city where it is installed. Apply -1 ongoing to **manipulate** any bystander. The next feeding brings a further -1 ongoing to **read a bad situation**, as it becomes harder to think. Most bystanders will give in to panic at this point and will fight, flee, hide, or freeze.

Weakness: The Heart of Darkness can be defeated two ways, but there is only one way to destroy it.

Simply put, a passionate kiss in the same room with the heart will cause it to go dormant. There must be some feeling behind it or it won't work. Once dormant, the Heart of Darkness is harmless until the elaborate activation spell can be repeated.

The chains that bind it in place can take a total of 8-harm. If the hunters try to break the installation (and it's not dormant), the Heart lashes out with black lightning (2-harm close magic lightning ignore-armour). If the installation is destroyed, the artifact loses its connection to the city and the phenomenon is defeated.

To destroy the Heart of Darkness for good, the frame must be dismantled and the heart buried with the rest of the old Countess of Winchester's body in the UK.

Harm capacity: The Chains, 8. □□□□□□□□

RQI HQ

Location: Den (motivation: to harbour monsters)

From the nearby business district, the new RQI building towers over the neighborhood. At night, the gigantic letters on the side of the building cast a bloody light on the neighborhood. At 52 floors, it's not the tallest skyscraper in the city, but its fortress-like construction makes it one of the most secure. Filled with business people during the day from a variety of companies occupying a floor or small office in the building, security is still tightly in the grip of the Red Ties. It will take a creative group of monster hunters to make their way to the penthouse office on the secret 53rd floor. There they will face the Red Queen herself, as well as the Heart of Darkness.

The RQI building provides an opportunity to control the pace of your game. Depending on how much time you have left, you can make building security a significant challenge or a trivial one.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

The neighborhood affected by the Red Queen's plot is an important location in the mystery. The nature of the neighborhood will change, depending on what city you choose to set your game in. Even if you choose a fictional city, present the neighborhood as a special place where the buildings, businesses, and families have history. From food to crafts and music, there are delicacies and delights available in the neighborhood that don't exist elsewhere in the world.

But old neighborhoods often have dark sides. Alcoholism, homelessness, and addiction are common associates of the cultural freedoms that give character to a neighborhood scene. Don't shy away from the nitty gritty of life in the city.

MAGGIE

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Maggie lives on the streets. She's dressed like an academic, but her clothing is filthy and in disrepair. Her face is wrinkled and haunted.

She saw Sammy drinking Ruby Red just before he “got all fury” and ate people in the liquor store. She says Ruby Red just came out a few days ago, but some of the other street dwellers have really taken to it. Maggie will ask the hunters more than once if they have a smoke to spare.

If a hunter has a spare smoke, Maggie will also mention that Pete's been buying Ruby Red and he hangs out by the smoke shop. This may give the hunters an opportunity to disrupt the countdown.

OTHER THREATS

- Characters in the community (homeless, hipsters, local families)
- Other locations in the community (bar, smoke shop, indie record store, liquor store, the diner, tenement buildings, family homes)

CUSTOM MOVES

Drinking Ruby Red: Ruby Red is nothing more than cheap fortified wine. But when stamped with the RQI label (really a disguised rune of rage) it becomes a potion that turns people into ravening Mad Dogs.

A bystander turns into a Mad Dog after drinking Ruby Red three times.

When a **hunter** drinks **Ruby Red**, they roll +Cool:

- On a 10+ the drink is merely disgusting, but you have a vision and may ask a question from the **investigate a mystery** list.
- On a 7-9, choose 1:
 - You grow claws and lose -1 Sharp until the curse is removed.
 - You grow fangs and lose -1 Charm until the curse is removed.
 - Sickened, you lose -1 Tough until you eat something.
- On a miss, you still get a vision and may ask a question. The Keeper advances the countdown and hints that they've gained a lot of unwanted supernatural attention. The Red Queen knows the drinker by name and face.

SPECIAL SNOWFLAKE

By Sean Clancy

CONCEPT

An alien satellite has crashed near a snow machine at a remote ski resort. Hijacking the snow machine system, the satellite has created the Squall, a killer snowstorm.

The Squall acts like the classic horror icon the Blob, but it thrives in the cold and avoids heat.

HOOK

Pick one of these:

- News reports about the impact of a “small meteorite” near Havenhills Ski Resort.
- Harry Reynolds, planetary science researcher, is seen shivering and half frozen at Marie’s Sportin’ Goods, muttering about “the event” just a few hours after the meteorite impact.
- A Flake, Professional, Expert, or other hunter with appropriate contacts might have access to NASA spectroscopy data which suggests the meteorite is made of an unknown material.
- The hunters are rewarding themselves with some R&R at Havenhills Ski Resort, when the satellite strikes nearby one morning.

COUNTDOWN

Day	The Squall kills a bystander who gets too close to the satellite.
Shadows	The satellite hijacks the other two Havenhill snow machines.
Sunset	Snow Buddies loot cellphones from the Squall’s frozen victims.
Dusk	Snow Buddies upgrade the alien satellite’s broadcast range.
Nightfall	The alien satellite begins uploading its malicious code to the web.
Midnight	Snow machines worldwide spew out killer snow, killing thousands.

NOTES

A number of the attacks in this mystery have cold ignore-armour effects. You should assess if the hunters have ‘cold armour’ based on what they describe themselves wearing. Regular winter or ski gear is 1-cold-armour and serious mountaineering gear would be 2-cold-armour. In either case, this armour applies only to cold-based harm. Supernatural or other special hunter armour may work against the cold as normal.

THE SQUALL

Monster: Devourer (motivation: to consume people)

A swarm of crystalline nanomachines, manufactured by Havenhill’s hacked snowmakers. To anyone who inspects a sample with a microscope, its snowflakes are clearly identical and artificial.

Powers:

- **Deadly Cold:** The living storm freezes anything it surrounds. Any hunter who gets close to the Squall (intimate/hand range) takes 1-harm, cold ignore-armour.
- **Formless:** The Squall can flow into small spaces and cracks, and isn’t harmed by physical attacks like gunfire or martial arts—only fire or explosions.
- **Lightweight:** The Squall can effectively fly on the wind, but not very fast.

Attacks: **Small gust** 1-harm close cold ignore-armour. **Big gust** 3-harm close cold ignore-armour forceful. **Avalanche** 5-harm far cold ignore-armour forceful area.

Armour: 0

Harm capacity: 12. □□□□□□□□□□□□

Weaknesses:

- Disabling the snow machines. Deactivating the resort’s snow machines will prevent the storm from replenishing, as will capturing or destroying the alien satellite.
- Spring. If enough time passes (1-3 days, depending on the pace of the investigation) the Squall will melt in the encroaching spring weather.



SNOW BUDDIES

Minion: Thief (motivation: to steal and deliver to the monster)

Havenhill just had its annual snowman contest: the “Snow Buddies Festival.” The Squall has animated these sculptures with tendrils of ice that form a rudimentary skeleton.

Snow Buddies are coordinated, and can perform fine manipulation. They also have a strange fixation: stacking the frozen chunks of their victims to create Snow Buddy ‘meatmen,’ which the Squall will also animate.

When they’re not sculpting, Buddies will try to collect electronic communication devices to increase the alien satellite’s broadcast range.

Powers:

- **Festive Camouflage:** Snow Buddies are difficult to spot in the storm.

Attacks: **Twiggy claws** 1-harm hand. **Icicle fangs** 3-harm intimate.

Armour: None.

Harm capacity: 4. □□□□

Weakness: Heat.

Note: Meatmen have the same stats and abilities as Snow Buddies, just... more gross.

THE MAUDSLEY HOTEL

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people and things together)

The Maudsley is Havenhill’s sprawling, shag-carpeted hotel. All guests check in at the front desk. Though in fair condition, the Maudsley isn’t built to withstand extreme weather. The main lobby’s high bay windows are prone to shattering, and the building’s size makes it a pain to heat.

PRIVATE CABINS

Location: Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)

For the well-off, a private cabin means barely having to leave the expert slopes on the far side of the resort. Each of the dozen or so private cabins are restocked weekly with food and supplies, including firewood, gasoline, and emergency flares. Sturdy, but in bad weather they're cut off from the hotel.

THE SLOPES

Location: Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)

Bystanders and hunters caught outside when the Squall flares up are going to have a rough time. There's little protection on the slopes or in the woods, and the Squall will quickly kill anyone who doesn't shelter indoors.

THE MAINTENANCE SHACK/ ALIEN SATELLITE

Location: Hellgate (motivation: to create evil)

Dawes' unofficial office is appointed with rusty tools and jerry cans of gasoline. The alien satellite will be attached to one of three 'Flurrious XL' snow machines, which are networked together and spread along the ridge by the shack. The satellite can be detached from its host machine by hand, and is easily broken once removed.

HARDEE DAWES, RESORT MANAGER

Bystander: Busybody (motivation: to interfere in other people's plans)

Dawes is desperate to get the most out of the waning ski season. He'll be hostile towards attempts to inspect or shut Havenhill's snow machines down, and will summon his security team (Carl and Carla) if he catches any hunters snooping around staff-only zones.



BRENT HAVENHILL, AFFLUENT SKI PRO

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

Brent's family owns Havenhill ("...and don't you forget it!"), and he grew up on the resort's slopes. Even when people start turning up frozen solid, Brent's going to bomb around until he's killed or sees someone killed firsthand.

ASA KAPLAN, CHECK-IN RECEPTIONIST

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

This is Asa's third year at Havenhill, but her first at check-in. She's bright, capable, and good with faces, including that of the excitable grad student who just rented a room. (That said, she's also been pulling double OT for the past two weeks.)

HARRY REYNOLDS, PLANETARY SCIENCE RESEARCHER

Bystander: Helper (motivation: to join the hunt)

Harry is a graduate student drawn to Havenhill by the meteor strike. Though he's primarily concerned with collecting data for his doctorate, at the first sign of alien activity Harry will reveal a passion for UFO-chasing.



CARL FRESNO, UNDERPAID SECURITY

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

Like, Carl's just here to make some extra scratch for the season, dude. He doesn't want to get mixed up in anything. Dig?

CARLA MONTEIRO, SENIOR UNDERPAID SECURITY

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

Carla doesn't make damn near enough, considering how capable she is. She definitely doesn't make enough to be stuck with layabout Carl as the season winds down.

CUSTOM MOVES

Warming Up Again: When a hunter warms up after being exposed to the Squall, they heal 1 cold harm for every ten minutes spent near a heat source (raging fire, radiator, electric blanket, etc.). If the hunter has taken 4-harm or more, they still need to be stabilized, as normal. Other kinds of harm (stab wounds, burns, hurt pride) can't be healed using this move.

THE TORCH COMES TO TOWN

By Felix Girke

CONCEPT

A clandestine cargo intended for the local cult chapter arrives at the port: a magical bottle. Within is an efreet—a malevolent, magical, wish-fulfilling fire spirit. When the efreet is inadvertently released, it brings a grave danger to the entire city.

HOOK

Through contacts in law enforcement or the media, the hunters learn that a few minutes ago a man was hacked to death in a disturbing and mysterious murder. Any hunter with a foresight-style ability (e.g. the move **hunches**) will feel this is an urgent matter.

The dead man is Errol Mauser, a customs agent. Just a few steps away from the entrance to the apartment building where he lived, he was cut down by assailants unknown and died on the spot. To boot, his face was eaten off, and not cleanly.

The cargo vessel Tillinghast Forward had arrived at the port a little earlier. Errol Mauser, on duty to inspect it for contraband, discovered the captain had been turned into a lichen-like monstrosity (the captain had wished he could live forever). Mauser stole the precious bottle he found by the stricken man. But the intended recipients of the bottle, members of the Scorched Ones, noticed him slipping away and caught up with him outside his house.

As CCTV footage of or witnesses to the killing reveal, the bottle falls during the struggle and its cap pops. Something hardly visible rushes out. The bottle is flung away and hovers in the air for a while.



COUNTDOWN

Day	The blood-spattered attackers eventually give up trying to grab the floating bottle as a crowd gathers. They flee to a nearby sailors' hostel, hoping to retrieve the bottle later. The efreet flies around for a while, enjoying its freedom, burns some things, and scares some people. For a few blocks, scorched pigeons litter the streets.
Shadows	The bottle is found by a homeless person who stows it in her shopping cart with her other possessions. In a side alley, she inadvertently summons the efreet who playfully turns her shopping cart into pure gold.
Sunset	The shopping cart makes headlines by evening, and the police take Ms. Oakley and her belongings (including the bottle) to the precinct. The cult tries to first infiltrate and eventually lay siege to the precinct to get the artefact back.
Dusk	Overcoming the police and reaching the evidence locker, the cultists suddenly face an internal power struggle. Two factions emerge: one controlling the bottle itself; the other, the bottle cap.
Nightfall	The two factions go to war in the streets. Meanwhile, the efreet fulfills wishes of random people it encounters in its own twisted manner.
Midnight	With the efreet finally under control, the remains of the cult begins to target other occult sects, burning their temples and strongholds and assassinating their high priests. The campaign is soon extended to organized crime: and top mobsters are killed by the efreet and their organizations taken over. Many members of the Scorched Ones arrive in town from all over the country to support the assault. After no more than a week, a third of the city is under the bloody and fiery control of the cult, who use the efreet as their unstoppable weapon with impunity.

THE EFREET (A.K.A. THE BLACK TORCH/ THE SHADOW FLAME/THE DAWN MAW)

Monster: Beast (motivation: to run wild, destroying and killing)

A roiling angry mass of superhot black plasma, the efreet only takes on a vaguely humanoid shape when dealing with petitioners or victims. As likely to burn you to a cinder as to grant your wish (if the latter, then horribly perverted), the efreet has been bottled up for so long that it revels in its freedom and will only go back into his bottle if forced. Massive amounts of water deter and inconvenience the efreet—even if angry, it will not pursue across water.

The efreet is a primordial demonic being, innately hostile to humanity and all other life. In medieval times, it rampaged across the world until stopped by the powers of a Muslim sheikh, and ever since then it has been vulnerable to Islamic prayer.

Powers:

- **Fulfill Wishes:** The efreet can grant wishes and will fulfill them in its own twisted way. E.g., turned into a lichen for “immortality,” aged 50 years instantly for “wisdom,” a global rain of peas for “peace on Earth,” hunted by the FBI and previous owners for “50 million dollars.”
- **Swarm of Scarabs:** Swarms of flesh-eating scarabs manifest spontaneously where the efreet has been. See below for the details on these critters.
- **Flight.**
- **Barely There:** When the efreet is lurking or simply flying, it becomes nearly transparent. Its real shape is awesome and terrifying.
- **Plasmic Body:** Impervious to weapons without the *blessed, magical, or silver* tags.

Attacks: Scorching ray 3-harm close/far area slow heat. **Whirlwind:** 2-harm area forceful (see **twister** move below).

Armour: 0, but refer to its **barely there** and **plasmic body** powers, above.

Harm capacity: 8. □□□□□□□□

Weaknesses:

Islamic ritual: The efreet was originally defeated and bound by a Muslim sheikh, so it fears the religion of Allah and will flee from its holy people and their prayers.

Custom Moves:

Twister: The first time you are hit by the efreet's whirlwind attack, you are surprised. Disregard the usual weapon effect and roll +Tough:

- On a 10+, you grit your teeth and stand your ground (but your hair is a mess).
- On a 7-9, you are thrown, like, 20 feet. You take 2-harm and get -1 forward.
- On a miss, you are swept up and unceremoniously dropped a block or two away. You take 4-harm and are away from the action.

Return to the Bottle: The efreet cannot attack somebody holding the bottle or the cap. It may also be trapped back in the bottle by a **big magic** ritual. Requirements for the evil ritual are:

- The bottle and cap.
- A few ounces of molten silver to seal it.
- A group of at least three people chanting a song in the language of djinns, while one person dances with two torches under the open sky (see the custom move **dances with djinns**, below).
- The bloody sacrifice of a large mammal—ideally a camel, but a horse, giraffe, or even a human would do.

Dances with Djinns: If you **dance with two torches to mesmerize a nearby efreet**, roll +Charm:

- On a 10+, the efreet will come quickly and return into the bottle providing the rest of the ritual requirements are met. Choose one consequence from the list below.
- On a 7-9, the efreet will take its time and return into the bottle unwillingly. Choose two consequences.
- On a miss, the efreet is insulted and enraged by the performance and attacks the dancing hunter. The Keeper chooses two consequences.

On any hit, the dancing hunter decides which ritual-participant the consequence is applied to (including themselves). The list of consequences are:

- One hunter's face is scarred forever. Change their look accordingly, and take 2-harm.
- One hunter is burned. Take 2-harm and permanently lose one box from the health track.
- One hunter is cursed. Delete one improvement option from the playbook.
- One hunter is enchanted. Their eyes are now literally burning.
- One hunter gains pyrophobia. In future, they will need to **act under pressure** to go near open flames.
- One hunter is touched by the supernatural. If possible, their next improvement must either be "Take +1 Weird" or a move that requires rolling +Weird.

SWARM OF FLESH-EATING SCARABS

Minion/Plague (motivation: to swarm and destroy)

A slow but voracious swarm of scarab beetles.

Powers:

- **Hide Inside Dead Bodies.**
- **Flight.**
- **Obscure Vision.**
- **Immune to Harm**, unless it is an *area, fire*, or *crushing* attack.

Attacks: Hundreds of mandibles 1-harm intimate slow.

Harm capacity: 3. □□□ That's enough to disperse the swarm so it's no longer dangerous.

Weakness: Fire.

CULTISTS OF THE SCORCHED ONES

Minion/Scout (motivation: stalk, watch, and report)

Cunning agents of the cult ready to sacrifice themselves to further its goals.

Powers:

- **Minor Spells:** Anything a normal **use magic** could do.

Weaknesses: None (they are just normal humans).

Attacks: as per weapon, usually a **knife** 2-harm hand.

Armour: none, but impervious to heat, smoke, fire.

Harm capacity: 6. □□□□□□

SAILORS' HOSTEL

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

Full of sailors from all over the world, this is where the assassins first flee to. The sailors have heard stories about the cult, although they may not take them seriously.

POLICE PRECINCT

Location: Fortress (motivation: to deny entry)

It will not be easy to get at the bottle once it's here. There are usually two dozen police in the building.

SYLVIA GAILEY, POLICE LIEUTENANT

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

Highly skilled, but has never been up against the supernatural.

CULT TEMPLE

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

If cultists get the bottle or cap, they will try to stash them in their hidden and mysterious stronghold. The two factions of cultists will eventually struggle over control of this site.

PRISCILLA OAKLEY, HOMELESS PERSON

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

She just wanted more gold than she could carry.

WITCHING HOUR

By Mark Tygart

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

—Exodus 22:18

CONCEPT

The hunters investigate a mysterious clock-filled ‘haunted’ house.

This mystery was inspired by John Bellairs’ classic children’s novel of the supernatural *The House with a Clock in its Walls*.

HOOK

Zenobia Bellairs disappeared seven years ago, and her heir has been unable to sell her house due to its cursed reputation. They have asked the hunters to investigate. Zenobia has studied necromancy to live beyond death and is now an undead monster hiding in the house. She preys on unwary tenants, armed with a Hand of Glory.

OVERVIEW

In order to defeat Zenobia, the hunters have to find and open the secret room where the undead witch resides (except when she hunts during the ‘witching hour’).

COUNTDOWN

Day	Mysterious lights and noises attract notice.
Shadows	Thrill-seeking teenagers break into house and are scared off by the undead Witch.
Sunset	An attractive neighbor is lured in by the Witch at night and devoured.
Dusk	A thief breaks into the house and is captured and then devoured by the Witch.
Nightfall	A family with three children rents the house; the Witch privately rejoices at future meals.
Midnight	The Witch devours the children; the cause of death baffles authorities. The parents indicted for murder.



INVESTIGATION NOTES

This mystery was written for a small party of ‘newbie’ hunters. Keepers with experienced or larger groups may want to modify the difficulty accordingly.

The primary threat is Zenobia Bellairs, the undead Witch. You may also add a burglar, thrill-seeking teenagers, traps, and the Witch’s enchanted human minions.

Examples of human minions who the Witch controls include a psychotic handy-man or deranged gothic cultists. Examples traps include a **bear trap** (2-harm) and a **shotgun blast trap** (3-harm). Traps inflict their harm on hunters unless found and disarmed (see below).

CUSTOM MOVES

If a **hunter looks for traps**, roll +Sharp:

On a 10+, the trap is disarmed and the hunter learns something about Zenobia.

On a 7-9, the trap goes off. The Keeper may choose one of the following effects:

- The trap is sprung and the noises alert Zenobia.
- The trap is sprung and the hunter takes 1-harm.
- The trap is sprung, separating a hunter from the others.
- The trap is sprung, alerting someone else in the house.
- The trap is sprung, making a noise, and Rose comes to investigate.
- The trap is sprung, making a noise, and Serenna calls the police.
- The trap is sprung and damages something important to the hunters.

On a miss, the trap is sprung and the hunter takes full damage.

ZENOPIA BELLAIRS, UNDEAD WITCH

Monster: Devourer (motivation: to consume people)

The corpse of Bellairs, still animated by her evil spirit.

Powers:

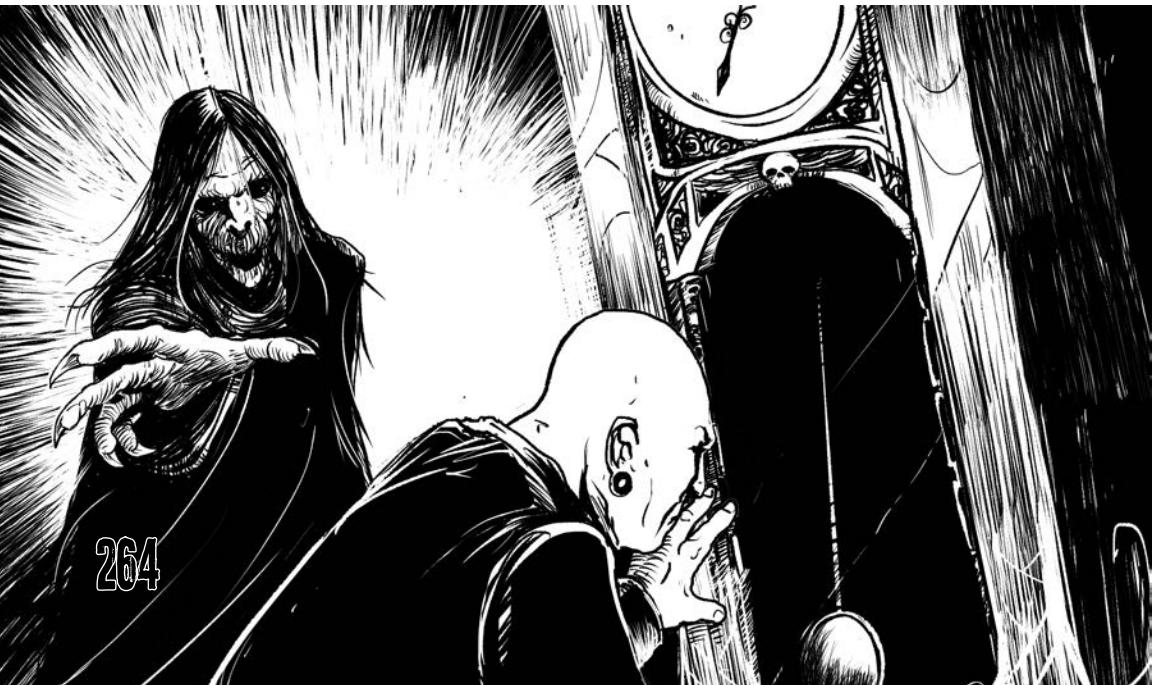
- **Consume:** Any harm she inflicts is absorbed to fuel her existence. Each point of harm caused by her life-draining touch adds one to her harm capacity. However it doesn't last forever—each year, her capacity loses one point.
- **Summon Human Minions:** When in need, she may summon human followers (at the Keeper's discretion).
- **Creature of Darkness:** She can only leave her secret chamber (her tomb) between midnight and one in the morning ('The Witching Hour'). She may not cross running water. Attacks that use rock salt will force her to return to her tomb.

Attack: Touch 1-harm intimate life-drain ignore-armour. She also has a Hand of Glory (see page 82) and will use it.

Armour: None.

Harm Capacity: 7 (at the start). □□□□□□□

Weakness: She can only be killed if the Clock of Endor is destroyed.



ROSE CHANG, ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOR

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put herself in danger)

A popular local weather person, known for her zany antics and costumes as host of the *Wacky Weather* show on a local cable news channel. This attractive and romantically inclined young woman is disposed to fall in love with one of the brave, rugged hunters.

SERENNA LANSBURY, NOISY NEIGHBOR

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

Serenna is convinced Zenobia was involved with “the mafia” and that dead “goons” are buried in her basement.

A retired, kindly elementary school teacher, Serenna is very lonely and will provide the hunters with outrageous ideas and fringe theories for as long as they will listen.

MALCOLM FORD, POLICE OFFICER

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

Malcolm thinks the whole “haunting” is hokum. The hunters are imagining things. Or maybe they’re grifters? A grumpy decorated police veteran of the inner cities, Ford is on the verge of retirement and bored with the relatively routine policing that this safe and affluent area usually requires.

LEWIS BARNAVELT, FORMER TENANT

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Lewis Barnavelt confesses to sympathetic hunters he had weird dreams of “a ghost woman with a candle” while living in the Bellairs house. A middle-aged astronomer renowned for his work on black holes, Barnavelt dreams of being the next Carl Sagan or Neil deGrasse Tyson. He is writing a popular text on black holes for a lay audience. He dreads being ridiculed for his superstitious fear of the Bellairs House.

BELLAIRS HOUSE

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

The Bellairs house is not only decorated with a massive number of antique clocks but also with multiple pictures and framed quotations of King Saul's doomed visit to the Witch of Endor in the Old Testament. In a few versions, the Witch even has a 'Hand of Glory' and the Witch is clearly Zenobia.

The sound of antique clocks constantly ticking is almost deafening.

Keepers who wish to place traps should put them in places that past tenants did not disturb, like a spooky locked room in the attic or in a dusty basement that hasn't been disturbed for years. Thieves or teenagers may break into the house on any night, and the Witch has been trying to tempt Rose over with a nightly display of spooky lights. Any commotion is likely to summon Ford to investigate.

ARCANE LIBRARY

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

This library contains many strange and troubling volumes (+1 if used for research during this mystery or in later adventures), as well as the hidden entrance to the Witch's chamber.

The secret door may be found if all the other clocks in the house are stopped, as it ticks quite loudly (only stopping during the witching hour). A false volume on the library bookshelf entitled *The Christian Book of the Dead* opens the secret door behind a fake bookshelf, revealing the hidden room. This entrance is another good place to add a trap if the Keeper wants to increase this mystery's difficulty.

A particularly enlarged copy of the painting *The Shade of Samuel Appears to Saul* hangs on the wall.

ZENO比亚'S HIDDEN CHAMBER

Location: Den (motivation: to harbour monsters)

This is a Universal monster movie backlot dream of a witch's lair. Pentagrams and skulls fill the floor, and the walls are covered with paintings of Zenobia Bellairs at various stages of her life.

The Witch's corpse usually rests in her favorite rocking chair and in this chamber, her tomb, it may reanimate whenever she desires. If disturbed, she will mentally summon whatever minions she has and try to paralyze the hunters with her Hand of Glory. It sits on the nearby desk, among candles that burn with pale green flames, a large mirror, scattered occult papers, a stuffed baboon and a shrunken head. She can light the Hand with a thought.

She may mock her victims to confuse them and buy time to gain her Hand of Glory and for her minions to arrive. She always carries her Hand of Glory when she hunts during the witching hour.

THE CLOCK OF ENDOR

The enchanted clock is not difficult to destroy but the Witch will defend it frantically and summon any minions she may possess.

It is a large grandfather clock with images of the Witch of Endor, the spectre of Samuel, and the doomed King Saul carved into the woodwork. The clock's ticking and chimes are unnaturally loud: hunters listening closely may suffer from the delusion that they are actually hearing the sound of a human heart. The chimes are deep and majestic. However, when compared to the other eldritch items in the hidden room, it seems almost reassuringly normal.

When the Witch manifests, the clock produces no noise at all, although it appears to function normally.

The best way to confound this necromancy is to burn the clock but a thorough smashing will do the job as well. When destroyed, all that is left is junk and the Witch's skull, bones, and gleaming spectacles.

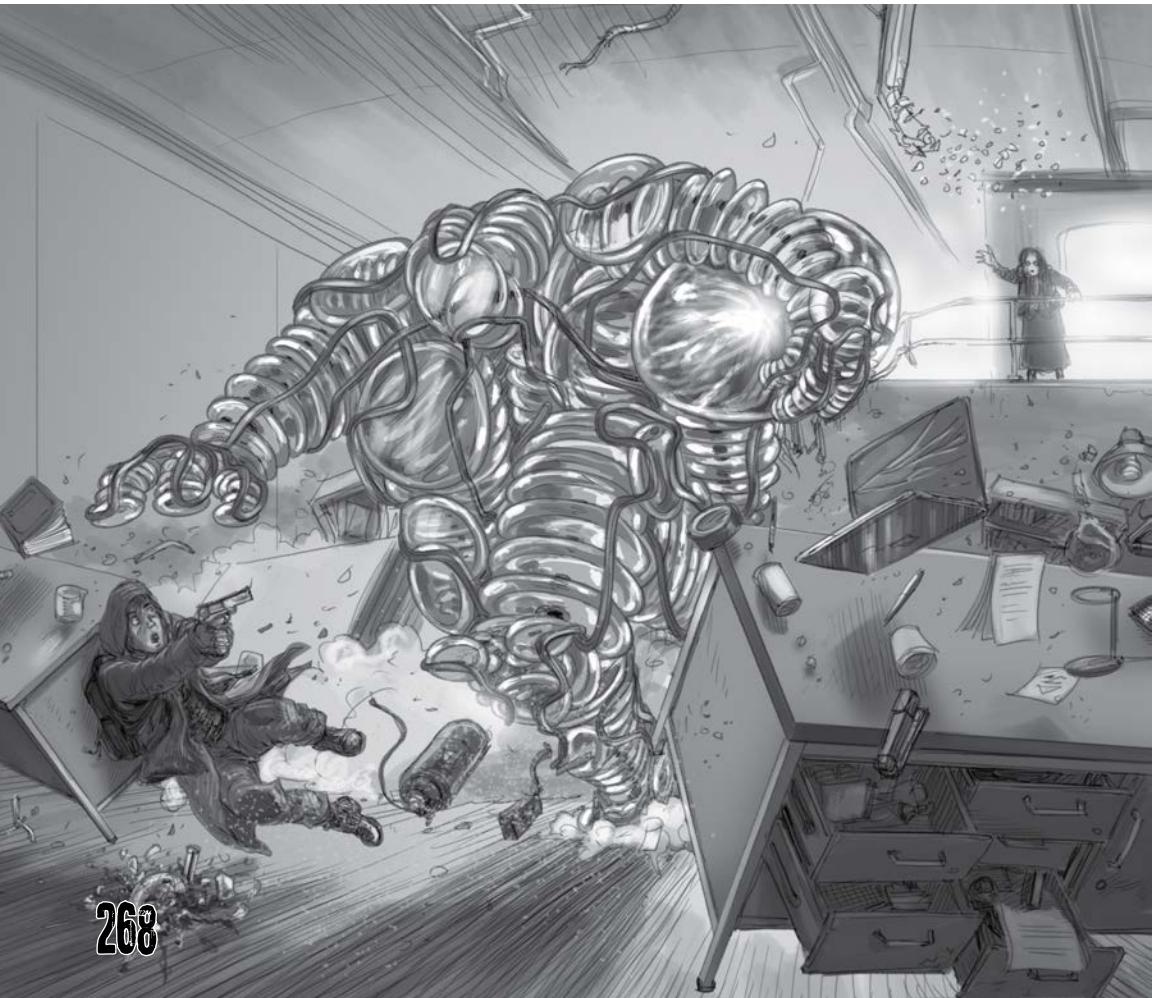
WORLD EGG

By Marek Golonka

INTRODUCTION

Lea Drittore, an occult scientist, discovered how to create 'World Eggs.' These are mystical gems that feed on auras in their surroundings and then hatch into pocket dimensions inhabited by golems.

In her lab, Drittore only managed to create worlds that echo herself and the sterile environment, so she submitted an Egg to a local gem fair. She wants it to be bought and to experience the auras of many different people and places. Then she'll get it back and explore the rich, complex artificial world that results: the ultimate goal of her research.



HOOKS

Potential leads include:

- The hunters receive a letter (or mystical transmission) from a panicked creature trapped in a pocket dimension—one of Lea’s golems.
- One of the hunters studied with Lea and is paying her a visit just as things get out of control.
- A divination predicts Lea has a big chance of starting the Apocalypse.
- By messing up with occult rituals, the hunters end up in one of Lea’s pocket dimensions.
- One of the hunters detects the presence of a powerful artefact in the city.
- The hunters are keeping watch on Maurizia, a fence who seems to read occult auras.
- One of the important characters is an old friend or enemy of the hunters.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Andreо, a thief, steals the Egg from the fair. He thinks it's just a curious and valuable gemstone.
Shadows	Maurizia, a fence, senses the Egg's power and buys it from Andreо. Lea learns of the theft and starts looking for the Egg.
Sunset	One of the golems learns Drittore's plan, escapes, causes a ruckus at the fair, and then robs Maurizia of the Egg.
Dusk	The runaway golem tells other golems about how their dimensions were made. They confront Lea about keeping them in the dark.
Nightfall	The argument with Lea escalates into a fight just as Andreо and Maurizia sneak into her lab to steal more gems.
Midnight	The Egg gets prematurely destroyed during a fight and creates a Voidmouth: a slowly expanding black hole.



THE UNHATCHED EGG

Phenomenon: Experiment (motivation: to unleash dangers)

The World Egg is sensitive to everything around it. It reads auras and compiles the data into a pocket dimension. After a month or so it 'hatches' by bursting into an immobile portal about the size of a typical door: a rip in our reality leading into the newborn world. The portal is visible in our world but usually not from inside the pocket dimension.

The more auras the Egg reads, the bigger and more complex a world it creates. Such worlds may contain life or life-like entities. Creatures created this way may visit our world if they find the portal out.

The Egg is resistant to accidental damage but if hit really hard (3-harm in a single strike) it breaks and hatches prematurely into a Voidmouth: an occult black hole that first swallows everything nearby and then gradually pulls more distant objects into itself, annihilating them. It would need about a month to swallow an entire city.

Sealing a Voidmouth requires a **big magic** ritual with the following requirements:

- Three or more participants.
- All participants must have not destroyed anything or harmed anybody for last three days.
- They must use the rituals and equipment used to create the Egg.
- The equipment must be adjusted for the ritual by a competent occult scientist.

LEA DITTORI

Monster: Breeder (motivation: to bring forth evil)

Lea has spent her entire life researching Kabbalah, demonology, and quantum physics in order to discover the secrets of alternate dimensions. She isn't so much evil as immoral and obsessed. After decades of research, she even discovered how to loosen her own anchor to our world and teleport herself.

Powers:

- **Teleport:** She can get to any place within a few miles that is not specifically warded. Teleporting normally takes a few seconds. She can do it instantly (to avoid harm) but then she ends up stunned and unable to teleport for about a minute.
- **Occult Science:** She has many strange devices that bend space and manipulate distances.

Attacks: Heighten gravity 2-harm far area forceful ignore-armour.

Harm capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

Weakness: Pocket dimensions: Her power to **teleport** doesn't work in dimensions created by World Eggs or in other places where space is disrupted. Hunters can create such disruptions with **big magic**.

LEA'S LAB

Location: Lab (motivation: to create weirdness)

Lea's lab is a cross between a high-tech physics facility and a medieval alchemist's laboratory. It's full of modern devices used for electricity, gravity, and particle observation. There's a diploma on the wall stating that Lea worked for CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research), but also runes carved on laptops and other electronics, a 'telescope' that shows a metaphorical image of the soul of the person looking through it, and a big mystical circle for rituals.

WORLD EGG GOLEMS

Minions: Guardians (motivation: to protect the lab and Drittore)

These are humanoid animate objects from the pocket worlds. Most look like people made from rare minerals, metals, laboratory apparatus, or raw energy. They are reflections of Lea's aura so they always have at least one of the following traits:

- Curious.
- Smart.
- Driven.
- Power-hungry.

Most of the golems don't know about the world beyond their dimensions and will be very angry at Lea for keeping them in the dark about it.

Attacks: **Slam** 3-harm hand messy.

Harm capacity: 8. 

Armour: 2. Made of minerals.

THE RUNAWAY GOLEM

Minion: Traitor (motivation: to betray people)

This golem is both curious and power-hungry. It knows about the outside world and wants to use the Egg to hatch a pocket dimension within another one, believing this will create a portal between all the worlds Lea has made and allow him to unite all golems under his rule. This golem looks like a bulky, short man made of glass lenses and steel beams. It has no name but will gladly accept one if someone suggests something.

Attacks: **Slam** 3-harm hand messy. **Stolen gravity gun** 2-harm close area forceful ignore-armour.

Harm capacity: 10. 

Armour: 2. Made of minerals.

THE HATCHERY

Location: Wilds (motivation: to contain hidden things)

The portals to the pocket dimensions are in a small room called the Hatchery. By stepping through one of the portals you can find yourself in:

- A giant fluid iron sigil floating in the void. Its golem inhabitants change their behaviour when the sigil changes.
- An exact replica of Lea's lab overcrowded with metallic copies working restlessly to create more of themselves.
- A tunnel full of giant balls that behave like particle parts... or maybe they really are particle parts and you shrank to the sub-sub-atomic level as you entered?
- An endless maze of mine tunnels with gem-rock golems (like the runaway one) looking for better and better techniques to mine ores and then using these ores to divine their futures.
- Other strange worlds themed after aspects of Lea's work, history, and personality.

ANDREO BRUNO

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put himself in danger)

A thief, sly and streetwise, but clueless about the supernatural. He had been casing Lea's house. Sometimes shows his loot to Maurizia.

Attacks: Knife 1-harm hand.

Harm capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

MAURIZIA DIORI

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put herself in danger)

A fence with a sense of the supernatural, she earns a living by buying seemingly worthless trinkets with occult power and selling them to those in the know.

Attacks: Thin, runed stiletto 1-harm hand magic.

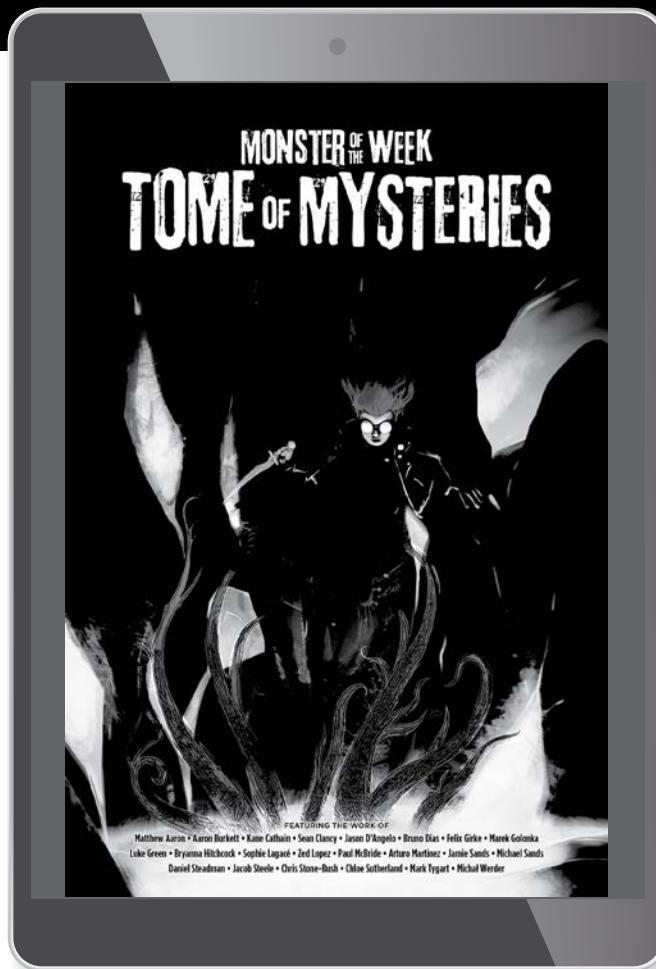
Harm capacity: 7. □□□□□□□

AFTTERMATH

After so much fighting over it, the Egg from this mystery will probably hatch into a violent world full of conflict between sly and brutal life-forms inspired by thieves and golems. It still has about two weeks until it hatches, however—so the hunters might expose it to peaceful stimuli and make it less dangerous. If they do so, the new-born dimension can become a Haven for the entire party with two or three traits determined by what has happened to the Egg.

On the other hand, if a Voidmouth is born, there might be a hellish dimension on the other side of it just as some scientists speculate that black holes can be used for hyperspace travelling. All manner of monsters, occultists and fringe scientists can be willing to explore the Voidmouth, making it hard for the hunters to seal it.

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