

# SUPERNATURAL HANDBOOK

BY LUCIEN SOULBAN

MUTANTS &  
MASTERMINDS

THIRD EDITION

# SUPERNATURAL HANDBOOK

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>	Priority Three: Talk to Witnesses.....	51
<b>CHAPTER 1: A WORLD OF HORROR .....</b>	<b>7</b>	Priority Four:	
Genre versus Mood.....	7	<i>Bag and Tag the Evidence</i> .....	51
<b>SERIES STYLES .....</b>	<b>7</b>	<i>From the Outside</i> .....	51
A Touch of Horror.....	7	Information Gathering.....	52
Session Elements.....	8	<i>Surveillance</i> .....	52
Power Level Options:.....	8	<i>Questioning</i> .....	52
Monster of the Week.....	8	<i>Databases</i> .....	53
Series Elements.....	8		
Power Level Options.....	8		
Series Elements.....	9		
Power Level Options.....	9		
Post-Apocalyptic .....	9		
Series Elements.....	9		
Power Level Options.....	9		
Post-Humanity .....	10		
Series Elements.....	10		
Power Level Options.....	10		
The Ancient Ones.....	10		
Series Elements.....	10		
Power Level Options.....	10		
Children of Myth .....	11		
Series Elements.....	11		
Power Level Options.....	12		
Science Amok.....	12		
Series Elements.....	12		
Power Level Options.....	12		
Altered History .....	13		
Series Elements.....	13		
Power Level Options.....	13		
Series Elements.....	14		
Power Level Options:.....	14		
Enslaved .....	14		
Series Elements.....	15		
Power Level Options.....	15		
<b>TIME PERIODS IN HORROR.....</b>	<b>16</b>		
Mythic Age .....	16		
Muslim Conquest (600s-1400s) .....	16		
Crusades (1000s-1300s) .....	16		
Inquisition (1300s-1700s) .....	16		
Industrial Age .....	17		
Weird West (Mid to Late 1800s).....	17		
Steampunk (1800s) .....	17		
New Science (1890s-1910s) .....	17		
Pulp Age .....	18		
Roaring Twenties (1920s).....	18		
The Dirty Thirties (1930s).....	19		
Nazis (1930s).....	19		
The Cold War.....	19		
Fifties Paranoia (1950s).....	19		
Seventies Upheaval (1970s) .....	19		
Age of Information.....	20		
...and Everything Beyond .....	21		
Armageddon (Immediate-Future) .....	21		
Technology Awry (Near-Future) .....	21		
Eaters of Stars (Far-Future).....	21		
<b>CHAPTER 2: THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE SUPERNATURAL.....</b>	<b>23</b>		
The Player's Duties.....	23		
Suspension of Disbelief .....	23		
Through the Eyes of the Character .....	23		
Play to the Genre.....	24		
<b>PLAYER INVOLVEMENT.....</b>	<b>24</b>		
Drawing Parallels.....	24		
<b>INVESTIGATION 101:</b>			
<b>DOWN &amp; DIRTY .....</b>	<b>50</b>		
Crime Scene Investigation.....	50		
Priority One: Secure			
<i>the Crime Scene</i> .....	50		
Priority Two: Sweep the Scene.....	51		
<b>THE TOOLS OF HORROR</b>			
<b>GAMEMASTERING:</b>			
<b>FEELING SCARED?.....</b>	<b>69</b>		
This Is Not a Competition .....	69		
Precision vs. Blunt-Force Trauma.....	69		
Disquiet versus Discomfort .....	70		

Tipping Point: Tilting the Scales .....	70
Leaving in the Blanks .....	70
Descriptions .....	70
Let Them Suppose .....	70
Using the Senses .....	71
Heralds .....	71
Vaguely Seen .....	71
Be Inventive .....	71
Toying with Expectations .....	71
Humor in Horror .....	72
<b>INTERMEDIATE TOOLS OF HORROR GMING .....</b>	<b>72</b>
Horrifying	
the Already Powerful .....	72
Monster Power Plays .....	72
Greater Power Level .....	72
Immunities .....	72
Linked .....	73
Overwhelm .....	73
Adapt .....	73
Attacking the	
Hero's Physical Weaknesses .....	73
Attacking the Hero's Mental State .....	74
Attacking the Hero's Emotions .....	77
<b>ADVANCED THOUGHTS ON GAMEMASTERING HORROR .....</b>	<b>79</b>
Maslow's	
Hierarchy of Needs .....	79
Mirror Neurons .....	80
Degrees of Separation .....	81
I, Monster .....	82
<b>THE PLAYER'S JOB .....</b>	<b>83</b>
Investing the Player .....	83
Reward the Fear .....	84
Know Their Fears .....	84
Types of Fears .....	84
Describing the Phobia .....	85
Other Theatrics .....	86
<b>CREATING 101 .....</b>	<b>86</b>
Creating Organizations .....	86
The Rationale .....	86
Their History .....	88
Their Influence .....	89
Their Secret .....	90
Their Structure .....	91
Their Public Face .....	91
Creating a New Mythology .....	92
Rebirth .....	92
The Myth Pattern .....	93
The Myths .....	93
Figures of the Pantheon .....	95
<b>ALIEN PANTHEONS .....</b>	<b>97</b>
Raison d'Etre .....	97
Tier 5 - Physiological .....	97
Tier 4 - Safety .....	97
Tier 3 - Love/Belonging .....	98
Tier 2 - Esteem .....	98
Tier 1 - Self-Actualization .....	98
Gods & Monsters .....	98
Arachnids .....	98
Fungi .....	99
Insects .....	100
Cults .....	101
Unlike Real World Cults .....	101
The Promise .....	102
The Corruption .....	103
The Agenda .....	103
The Ace in the Hole .....	104
<b>DISASTERS: DEAD AND DYING WORLDS .....</b>	<b>104</b>
Global Flooding .....	104
Flood Repercussions .....	104
Impact Winter .....	106
The Effects .....	106
And All the Rest .....	107
<b>CHAPTER 4: MISADVENTURES IN HORROR .....</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>BUILD-A-CRITTER .....</b>	<b>109</b>
Abilities .....	109
Nimble Packages .....	109
Strong Packages .....	110
Cunning Packages .....	110
Alluring Packages .....	110
Skills and Advantages .....	111
Horrific Effects .....	111
Attacks .....	111
Defense .....	112
Haunted Houses .....	112
Abilities .....	113
Location, Location, Location .....	114
<b>MONSTER ARCHETYPES .....</b>	<b>114</b>
Dark Emissary .....	114
Inhuman Juggernaut .....	115
Flesh Sculptor .....	115
Infected .....	115
Mr. Clown! .....	115
Supernatural Slasher .....	115
Trophy Hunter .....	115
WTF! .....	115
Dark Emissary .....	116
Inhuman Juggernaut .....	117
Flesh Sculptor .....	118
Infected .....	119
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: ARCADE .....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>INSIDE THE ARCADE .....</b>	<b>143</b>
The Gravity of Balance .....	144
History of ARCADE .....	144
Organization .....	145
Leroy Dutch .....	146
The New Orleans Base .....	148
Fun & Mayhem with ARCADE .....	148
Occasional Interaction .....	148
Ongoing Series .....	149
<b>INDEX .....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>LICENSE .....</b>	<b>152</b>

# INTRODUCTION

*The little boy looked frail, his duvet tucked up under his nose and his sandbagged eyes darting to every dark corner of the room. Outside Dutch's window, the winds howled at the blistered farmhouse, the fields outside choked on a Dustbowl storm. A wisp of an old woman entered the room and sat at the edge of his bed, her veins mapping out the road of her years. Her eyes were almost white with cataracts but she steered by them just fine.*

*"Granma?" Dutch asked. "Are monsters comin' for me now?"*

*She smiled and ran her fingers through his silken hair to comfort him. "Of course they are, dear. You know that. They always gonna come for you."*

*"You gonna kill them?" he asked.*

*She shook her head and gently laid the nickel-plated revolver in his lap. "This here Colt belonged to my pappy. It killed many of them evil bastards and a few Union boys to boot. Every bullet, done baptised in blood. But Granma's done fightin' your fights. Time you became a man, Dutch. Time you killed them yerself. Or they ain't never gonna stop comin' for you."*

*Dutch nodded and propped himself up in his bed. He took the revolver in both hands, the nose dragged down by the weight of its long barrel. The old woman nodded and made her way to the bedroom door.*

*"Night, Granma," Dutch said. "Don't let the bed bugs bite."*

*She nodded and pointed to the closet door. It swung open a hitch. "Ain't the bed bugs you got to worry about," she called from the hallway. "Do us proud, Dutch. I'll pray I see you in the mornin'" The closet door swung open another inch and Dutch could hear the monster breathing now....*

The *Supernatural Handbook* is a sourcebook for M&M dealing with the paranormal from the context of the "extraordinary" investigating and confronting the "otherworldly." In other words, it's about super-powered and fantastic men and women investigating horror. In these pages, imagination curdles as black as blood under a moonlit night, and the unseen, the unimaginable holds court with cackling delight.

These are games to be run by candlelight. These are heroes who face the unspeakable every dusk and struggle to usher in one more morning for a blissfully ignorant humanity. Let the spandex-clad jesters have the daylight and their paparazzi. Let them stop bank robbers and defeat four-color villains with their four-color dreams. Your glory is unspoken, your enemies legion, your daily struggles fought from the shadows.

In your worlds, your heroes speak in whispers, for words can stir the sleeping leviathans from their slumber.

In your worlds, the most inhuman of monsters can carry the most human of hearts, and the most mundane of humans can carry the most monstrous of intentions.

In your worlds, H.P. Lovecraft was a prophet and the Grimm Brothers crusaders. Their tales weren't just parables...they were omens, instructions and promises.

## THE CAVEAT OF HORROR

Before diving into the guts of this sourcebook, let's clarify something. This sourcebook may draw upon the supernatural and its role in superhero games, but at its tar-heated core, it's about horror. It's about the unknown

and all those dark and delicious things that lie beyond conventional understanding. Or perhaps horror is about understanding them all too well.

It's about unnerving the players and about characters playing scared. That last part is important, because without the players' cooperation, the game can go from *Alien* to *Evil Dead 2*, from *Night of the Dead* to *Shaun of the Dead*. If that's a deliberate choice, then let it be deliberate. Let it be unanimous from the series' conception and not some cruel happenstance that derails the game.

Of all game types, horror is easiest to highjack. The wrong joke here, a player unwilling to suspend disbelief there and all the tension evaporates. That's why, when running a horror or supernatural game, you need to line all your undead ducks in a row beforehand. The *Supernatural Handbook* is here to help you with that.

## CAVEAT PART II

The *Supernatural Handbook* deals with all types of horror, not just the supernatural kind. Slasher movies are about a type of terror that sometimes have little supernatural in them. Apocalypse films that use natural disasters to trigger "The End" have nothing mystical or mythological to them either. Giant sharks, killer ants, stalkers with murderous intent, diseases that ravage the body...all are equal to the task of scaring the player as any tentacle-waving fiend.

The fact is that horror can be anything from the ghost dragging poor souls into its web to the search for a girl



kidnapped by a torturing rapist. What matters here isn't the *cause* of the horror, which is only the vehicle, but the shock and terror it generates in the vehicle's passengers... the players. It may stem from the anticipation and fear of terrible things; it may come from witnessing brutal times and acts. Regardless, though, it covers a wide range of what people consider horror, and it tries to deal with many definitions by exploring what they evoke as opposed to what causes them.

Throughout this book is material on the effects of a disaster or the fear from loved ones jeopardized, etc., but what matters is that monsters are not scary on their own. Monsters and villains are only frightening in the context of their actions and impact. The "*Supernatural*" part of the *Handbook* (or "the *Supernaturals* series" when referring to a series) is just a vehicle for that impact.

## USING & ABUSING THIS BOOK

Imagine horror is a great beast, a construct of fetid minds and maligned intentions. And like all beasts, this too must be built from the skeleton up. Tendons, organs, muscles, veins...a symphony of foul creation to haunt the dreams of good folks.

Therein lies the purpose of this book. For Gamemasters, this book helps build the spirit and foundations of a good horror series, and it offers advice on continuing said series into the twilight. For players, this book is of equal importance. It details elements of building the right characters and the roles of said characters in the game.

## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

From heroes to monsters, archetypes to enemies, adventures to locations, and advice to examples, this book is a Gamemaster's one-stop to run a horror game and player's inspiration to play in one.

**Chapter 1: A World of Horror** deals with the basics of a game. Be it series styles or the genres that use the supernatural, this is the place to lay a solid foundation with the eras and types of horror out there.

**Chapter 2: The Player's Guide to the Supernatural** covers all the tools and tricks that players can use to help them survive a horror series, be it traits and modifications, rules on playing monsters, or both Heroic and Monstrous Archetypes.

**Chapter 3: Master Your Fear** arms Gamemasters with everything they need to know about running and maintaining series. Emphasis is placed here on running horror games with powered heroes in mind, though the advice is certainly open enough to run almost any style of horror game.

**Chapter 4: Misadventures in Horror** provides Gamemasters with monsters and adventure ideas, haunted house construction, and a monster randomizer to harrow the characters.

**Chapter 5: A.R.C.A.D.E.** presents The American Research Center for the Arcane Defense of Earth (A.R.C.A.D.E.), a Federal organization dedicated to fighting the supernatural. This organization is self-contained and can be dropped into any series with minimal fuss.



# CHAPTER 1: A WORLD OF HORROR

*The ground ruptured and spread a delta of cracks and fissures across the city. Entire blocks vanished into the hellfire glow of the crevices while swaying tentacles the size of skyscrapers emerged from the ground to shatter buildings.*

*"Tell me you've got a plan!" Morris said, looking at his companion, a wall of a man named Dutch.*

*"Plan?" Dutch said calmly; he smacked the baseball bat turned truncheon in his meaty palm. "We beat the ever-loving Christ out of that thing until we're up to our eyeballs in calamari."*

Stemming from a long-running debate in the horror community, the arguments as to whether horror is a genre or mood is a good place to start series discussions. The argument tries to define horror's place, because some people classify it as a genre and others as a mood, which adds flavor to other genres.

## GENRE VERSUS MOOD

Old horror stories sprung from the breast of Gothic novels, and were most certainly mood or emotive. They focused on nuance and the suggestion of something untoward, allowing the reader to fill in the gaps with their imagination. Mood is the horror in science-fiction films like *Alien* and *Pitch Black*. Mood is the horror in coming of age stories like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Ginger Snaps*, or in urban fantasy comics like *Hellboy*, *The Goon* or *BPRD*. Horror as mood is a spice to change the nuance or theme of stories.

As a literary genre, however, horror follows a set of rules and principles. It becomes category, as defined and regimented as science fiction and fantasy. Horror as genre came about with writers like Stephen King and the booming sales of horror in the 1970s. Specifically, horror was at the prime of its popularity when bookstores categorized it on their bookshelves for easier shopping because fans came looking for more books by King or "like King."

Another way to think of it is if horror was a country, then genre would be its borders and mood would be its air.

A problem with defining horror as genre is that genre seeks to define a rules set, which some say defeats the

nature of horror. The problem some people have with mood is they might actually enjoy the rotes and definitions of a genre. Slasher flicks, zombie stories, vampire tales and apocalypse yarns are all subsets of horror genre with their share of fans who prefer the visceral and known elements of their beloved medium.

Then, of course, you have those who say horror is neither or both, because if horror can't be defined for it to be effective, then it can be both genre and mood (or neither) as the story demands.

How does this all apply to the *Supernatural Handbook* and superheroes? Should the series be mood or genre? The answer is, it can be both. It just depends on what the Game-master wants to accomplish. If the series is ongoing and the universe pre-established, then horror as mood is a perfect way to introduce the occasional supernatural element into an otherwise normal supers game. If the series is dealing with specific horror-based events or enemies over the course of its life, then it can be genre. Otherwise, a trick to using both in an ongoing horror series is to say:

**Genre is the physical manifestation of horror (monster and location), while mood is the psychological ramifications of horror (its impact on the heroes and NPCs).**

## SERIES STYLES

When talking about a *Supernatural* series, some of the threats and options have nothing to do with magic, but may be stories of science run-amok or ancient technology so beyond our kin it might as well be magic. In this sourcebook, "supernatural" is meant to mean anything that 1) provides an element of fear or terror to the series, and 2) is well outside the status quo of our everyday lives. The latter is sometimes hard to establish in a world where heroes routinely break the laws of physics, but so long as the setting establishes a baseline of normalcy, then the series or story arcs should be about matters deviating from that baseline.

## A TOUCH OF HORROR

This is best when the game is already ongoing or the group is only interested in occasional brushes with the supernatural. This style of series uses heroes of any power

level dealing with the normality of any supers game. Once in a while, however, the odd villain, monster, artifact or arc comes into play that exposes the heroes to horror. It is the best way to keep the team off-balanced and it throws a nice change of pace into a session.

## THE HUMAN BASELINE

Movie protagonists can often be summed up as follows. The first ten minutes of the movie establishes the baseline of the protagonist's life, and then throws in the catalyst to alter that reality. It can change his life or make her aware of its inadequacies. The character then spends the remainder of the movie either trying to return to his life as defined at the beginning of the movie, or she tries to establish a new reality for herself. The end of the movie is the culmination of that struggle.

The same can be said for characters and series styles. The opening session of a game is the catalyst that shows a deviation (or awareness of deviation) from the world's baseline, and the series is the hero's struggle to return to the status quo or establish a new reality. The responsibility of the Gamemaster is to decide what conflicts emerge within that struggle, while the players must decide what they are ultimately trying to accomplish and what they're willing to sacrifice to achieve it.

The threat in question is usually a one-shot deal and not a pervasive element of the game. The heroes can defeat the main bad guy, deal with whatever conundrum appears and go back to their normal lives afterward. That's not to say the villain or event shouldn't have a lasting effect, but it should be something that haunts the hero. It shouldn't be something that forces the heroes to redirect their entire purpose into fighting unless that's the express wish of Gamemaster and players alike.

If the Gamemaster wishes to throw something large and epic at the characters; however, without any long lasting repercussions, there are always ways, as shown in **Chapter Three** (see **Part-Time Horror**).

## SESSION ELEMENTS

Something out of the ordinary; meeting NPCs that heroes don't interact with normally; peeling back a layer on the world; new obstacles and challenges; horror with greater impact because it's outside the norm; drawing on wide number of supernatural and horror elements to keep characters off-balance.

**Inspirations:** *X-Men vs. The Brood, X-Men vs. Dracula, Superman vs. Aliens, Batman vs. Predator.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS:

- **PL 3-5:** A single monster or item is involved in the arc, forcing the heroes to investigate the situation and background first. The creature or item is relatively powerful by mundane descriptions, but not something that could affect or hurt more than a handful of people at a time. Most monster hunts will involve investigating and locating the monster and then either going to its lair or drawing it out in true cat-and-mouse fashion. Most artifact hunts will involve discovering its identity, researching its history and then retrieving it from its resting place/current owner.

• **PL 5-8:** In an arc of this power level, the heroes are likely facing a more powerful monster or a villain and its minions. There is most likely an agenda involved that threatens to empower the opposition, kill many people, or do both. The heroes have the means to fight back, but the opposition has either numbers or power on its side. In either case, the characters must employ all their resources and talents to get the job done.

• **PL 8-12:** Heroes of this caliber are familiar with big fights and strong enemies, but their experiences haven't prepared them for this. Their opponent is capable of standing toe-to-toe with them in a straight fight, or it employs servitors that can preoccupy the heroes, or, perhaps, it has an agenda that requires the heroes to deal with that first. The threat is generally one that affects the entire city, country, or the world itself. The villain cannot be allowed to succeed because the event will make him/her/it more powerful or it will change the lives of countless people for the worse.

## MONSTER OF THE WEEK

Monster/Freak/Villain of the week series are all about the characters facing threats or enemies that change from week to week. There are two basic options with this style of series, Self-Enclosed and Threat of the Season.

In the Self-Enclosed series the monsters almost never have any overarching agenda that extends beyond the story arc. The supernatural exists in the world, but there is no real need to explain how or why they exist. They simply do. More importantly, the threats are rarely coordinated meaning there is no unified ambition from one monster to the next. Each one lives and struggles and survives according its own codes of conduct and that means its agendas, and the way to kill it, vary as well. These styles of series are easiest on the GM because they rarely require planning beyond each self-contained arc.

## SERIES ELEMENTS

Use of existing mythology and fables; research oriented game; variety of threats and story arcs; less character development, more action; unaware public; small locations and individuals in peril; element of humor.

**Inspirations:** *Creepy, House of Mystery, House of Secrets.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS

- **PL 3-5:** The characters are adults in a position to investigate (P.I., Police Detective, Federal Agent, Journalist), who search out the weird and strange after a troubling first supernatural experience. Do they seek to reveal the truth to the world? To save others having been unable to save their own loved ones? Or are they trying to cope with a childhood tragedy by finding the monster that did it?
- **PL 5-8:** The heroes know there are monsters out there, and only they possess the gifts to stop them.

Are they inheritors of more ancient traditions to protect humankind? Are they using their powers to atone for a single mistake? Are their powers/gadgets/artifacts a gift, a responsibility, or a curse?

- PL 8-12:** In the course of fighting villains and stopping plots of world domination, the heroes must occasionally deal with supernatural threats that pop up on their radar; a vampire who takes one of their own as a bride, a werewolf that likes infecting other heroes, a demon looking to open yet another hellgate on the mortal plane. Do the heroes avoid the supernatural? Are they the only ones capable of dealing with horror and, if so, why?

The **Threat of the Season** variant uses the freak of the week model, but there is usually one element that links together two or more storylines, with a build-up toward some major dénouement. Perhaps the source of the supernatural threat is centered on an event or a location. Or maybe someone has an overall agenda that works in conflict to the characters. In this series type, the heroes are struggling with an antagonist who may or may not be throwing opposition their way, but is certainly using a given situation to their advantage. The characters are the principle obstacle to the villain's or organization's ultimate objective (or perhaps the characters are the ultimate objective) and are thus the targets of choice.

## SERIES ELEMENTS

Heavy interpersonal drama and soul-searching; a personal stake in events; trouble centered on the heroes (so the heroes don't look far for trouble); long-range planning against threat; paranoia.

**Inspirations:** *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, The Goon, The Damned, Hellblazer, Leave it to Chance, Lock & Key.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS:

- PL 3-5:** The heroes are kids with above-average abilities. Their neighborhood, school and homes alike, is a place of importance to the supernatural. They have become the de facto guardians of the location by circumstance. Are they responsible for awakening the location's power? Have they been entrusted with a secret nobody can ever know? Are they as much victims of this as everyone else?
- PL 5-8:** The characters have derived a power from a central source (a strange being, a mystic artifact, an event) and are now hunted by an organization for that power. Are the heroes redeemed by the powers they received? Were they once part of the organization hunting them? Did the heroes make a deal with the devil for what they possess? Have they had to abandon everything and everyone they know to survive?
- PL 8-12:** The heroes once fought bank-robbers and colorful villains before they discovered the real threat out there—the things that move in the darkness and reap the innocent. Now they've eschewed the lime-

light in favor of the shadows, traded saving lives for saving souls. Are they doing this in memory of a fallen comrade? Or is their fallen comrade the very thing they're out to stop? How much are they willing to risk? And have they alienated former friends and acquaintances with their new crusade? Does anyone even believe them?

## POST-APOCALYPTIC

The event was wide-scale, perhaps even global, and it did a fine job of devastating society and civilization alike.

A meteor cast the earth in perennial winter, the West Antarctic ice sheets melted and flooded the world, aliens invaded, super-powered individuals went on a rampage, giant monsters broke free from their prison below the crust of the earth; whatever the cause, humanity hangs on by a thread and the heroes are left trying to save the world one provincial battle at a time.

In this style of series, the stories are episodic because of the often-nomadic nature of the heroes, but the common link from one story to the next is the threat and the characters themselves. The heroes may have a central base of operation, in which case the lives of NPCs are also part of the on-going drama, and the characters may have active enemies born of the crisis or its cause. Regardless, this type of series is all about the small victories in face of greater tragedies. There are also a variety of stories that cross the gamut from saving lives, to gathering supplies, to fighting the event directly somehow. But win or lose, the heroes are on a slippery slope, climbing up an inch and sometimes sliding back a foot.

## SERIES ELEMENTS

Desperation of survival; poignant human moments; a gutted world and shattered infrastructure; daily struggles for a basic quality of life; interpersonal drama; group dynamics and struggles.

**Examples:** *BPRD Hell on Earth, X-Men: Nightmares of Future Past.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS:

- PL 3-5:** Better skilled than most, the heroes have become the hope of others who need their help surviving. But how can the heroes lead when they themselves are trapped by the same desperation? The struggle is a daily one, and the heroes must use their skills and talents to lead the survivors to safety be it an undamaged portion of the world or a place where the monsters can't reach them. Are the characters being chased? Do they possess some minor power or training that gives them the slimmest advantage? Can they afford to turn away anyone looking for help? And if they do, what does it cost them?
- PL 5-8:** The heroes have an undamaged sanctuary where people can live and eventually, maybe even

prosper. They must now find and locate remaining survivors and bring them back safely, for every life lost may tip humanity toward extinction. Are the heroes trying to save friends and family alone? What happens if they encounter former villains and enemies in need of sanctuary? Can they turn them away? Can they trust them to join forces?

- **PL 8-12:** The event has passed and now the heroes must help rebuild the cities and countries that were nearly destroyed. There are resources to secure, places to liberate and pockets of danger to quell. Unfortunately, what new horrors and evils have emerged since then? Is there a second stage to the event? Or did the event occur to try to stop the emergence of a new threat?

## POST-HUMANITY

Post-humanity horror differs from post-apocalyptic horror in that the former targets humans alone while the latter brutalizes the world itself and (as a result) people. In post-humanity series, cities and towns remain relatively unscathed despite rioting or military action or looting. People are the primary victims. In these games, the dead rose from the ground as zombies, a super-virus rages among the infected or extra-dimensional swarms breached our world. Like post-apocalypse tales, humanity is barely surviving even though there are more places to hide and hunker down. Supplies are also more readily available, though reaching them is a challenge.

This type of series bears much in common with a post-apocalyptic game. The heroes are faced with the daily struggle for their survival and that of others. These series; however, work best at the onset of the event, where the heroes are witnesses to the horror. They must weigh saving lives with the desperate need to fight back and the benefit of short-term gains against long-term goals.

## SERIES ELEMENTS

Overwhelming odds; pockets of survivors; the stink of rotting dead; daily battles; interpersonal conflicts; the hunt for supplies and weapons to fight back; the search for a cure; the struggle to survive; fellow man as competitor and enemy.

**Examples:** *The Walking Dead, Y: The Last Man, The Last Resort.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS

- **PL 3-5:** Something has unleashed zombies across the globe and the characters are just trying to find somewhere to hide and weather out the storm of undead. Were the characters at ground zero of the event? Are their loved ones somewhere out there, trapped? Are the characters organizing an exodus to somewhere safe?
- **PL 5-8:** A swarm of extra-dimensional insects have found their way to Earth and they are killing every-

thing in their path. Can the heroes find the source of the incursion and stop their spread? Are other nations considering nuking the area to obliterate the infestation? Or is it too late to stop them and are the heroes tasked with saving those caught in the invasion's wake?

- **PL 8-12:** A meta-powered pandemic sweeps through the human populace and the dead are piling up as the virus goes global. Is something or someone the cure for the disease? Are the heroes trying to stop the infection from spreading? Are they somehow immune from the virus or responsible for its spread?

## THE ANCIENT ONES

The pantheon of this genre is original, or borrowed from the chthonian mythos of Lovecraft's Cthulhu or Mignola's *Hellboy*. Humanity is an infant species and the darkness between the stars is sea to ancient leviathans that chart her waters. In this universe, humanity is krill to creatures of horribly dispassionate or malevolent intellect and a handful of heroes are the only ones who can fight their incursions in this world.

The horror of this series comes in the knowledge of what happens if the heroes fail. The world continues blissfully unaware that there are such terrible things in the universe and that some people are actually trying to invite these horrors in. Stories tend to be mystical in nature, with much investigation, mystery and intrigue. Ancient societies and forgotten artifacts are key, as are dire warnings of terrible things to come. Sometimes the heroes battle the lesser spawn of greater evils and sometimes they fight their human agents. Instead of episodic adventures, this series relies more on story arcs.

## SERIES ELEMENTS

The presence of greater evil; the threat of insanity; abhorrent monstrosities; ancient artifacts and societies; forgotten towns and villages swallowed by the darkness; monsters breeding beneath the cities; investigation; ultimate foreboding; cults of human worshippers; people twisted by the unknown.

**Examples:** *BPRD, Hellboy, Necronauts.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS

- **PL 3-5:** Detectives, reporters, crime-fighters, mediums, and the like must band together to fight the horror's minions. Be it cults or the idle rich dabbling in things they don't understand, the foes of the heroes are mainly human though a minor monstrous servitor to evil or a spell-empowered villain may make an appearance. What brought the heroes together? What keeps them together? What advantages do they possess? What skills or items do they need to stop the end of the world before it even starts?
- **PL 5-8:** The heroes have gained access to resonance technology; a type of science so beyond our understanding that it can easily be mistaken for magic.

Unfortunately, with it they discover a species of intra-dimensional aliens that have lived among us for centuries, manipulated us and killed us to stop humanity from ever reaching its full potential. How can the heroes fight a conspiracy that doesn't exist in reality? Can they learn enough to stop the creatures from casting humanity back to the dark ages? How do they fight a shadow war when the very shadows are arrayed against them?

- PL 8-12:** Unbeknownst to them, a handful of supervillains are batteries for ancient devices, which are the source of the villains' powers. Their actions are filling the batteries with pain and suffering, slowly awakening ancient creatures that have been dreaming for millennia. Now the heroes must find these artifacts and stop the villains from inadvertently awakening these chthonic entities. Can the heroes find all of the lost artifacts before it's too late? Will they be tempted to use an artifact to match the power of an adversary? Are the dreaming leviathans beginning to send minions to hasten their awakening?

## CHILDREN OF MYTH

The heroes aren't fighting against fabled and mythic beasts; they are those very same creatures. Be they the offspring of demons or myth or the original creatures themselves, memory of them is all but forgotten, their stories relegated to legend. Perhaps they are the last guardians of ancient lore that represents the only magic left to the world? Or refugees of a hidden war that decimated their society and

forced them into hiding among mortals? Or a society of monsters who discovered they could no longer live in the open? Or the offspring of human mating with no knowledge of where their fabled ancestors vanished, or why?

In this series style, the characters are born outside humanity (whether physically or psychologically) and yet their stories focus on what it means to be human. Most likely, they have hidden among people, learning to live and love as they do. Some of the ancient grudges remain, but for the most part, it's all about moving on and living life. Sometimes it's about surviving and other times about shielding humanity from what it doesn't know—vampires protecting people from their more ravenous brethren or Seelie fae fighting the Unseelie Court in the bowels of the city. Be it trolls beneath the bridge disguised as homeless or the demon who has come to love humanity or the orphaned child whose powers are birthright to something more ancient, a Children of Myth series is all about urban fantasy; about magic hidden in the modern world; about being forced to hide. In either case the enemies are both ancient (arising from the same myth as the heroes) and modern (agents to corporations or governments seeking out the unknown and the exploitable). The commonality is that they are organized or widespread, meaning the series is also one of paranoia.

## SERIES ELEMENTS

Being human; the contradictions of emotions; fighting for the very people who fear you; hiding in plain sight; escaping the reach of an organized threat; ancient obliga-



tions versus new realities; exploring mythology through a modern lens; the infringement of modern modes versus the wisdom of the old ways, the cycles of rebirth where old things are born anew.

**Examples:** *Sandman, Fables, Lucifer, Swamp Thing, American Vampire.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS:

- **PL 3-5:** The lineage is distant and diluted, but the heroes are the distant ancestors of mythology's heroes. Centuries removed, they'll find they can draw their past to the likes of Hercules, Jason, Aoifa and Rabbit Boy. Unfortunately what little tricks or abilities they've inherited are nothing compared to those belonging to the descendants of the Spider-God Iktome/Anansi in the guise of Aunt Nancy or Tiamat spawning a new breed of monsters. The new pantheon of monstrosities are eating other children of myth, stealing their seeds of divinity to grow more powerful.
- **PL 5-8:** The heroes are elementals brought to life. Each representing one of the principle foundations of nature (earth, wind, fire, water, wood, metal, etc), they've been tasked with stopping the negative elementals born of the modern age (born of waste like sludge, acid rain, toxic wind, burning wood) from causing gross environmental damage through the humans they possess and murder.
- **PL 8-12+:** The heroes are all members of different mythologies and part of various mythos, forced to confront and fight against their own destiny. Perhaps they are the harbingers of the world's end? Or perhaps they are merely atoning for past wrongs? Regardless, while mythology considers them evil for prior actions or perceived intent, they struggle to fight the very things they're accused of causing.

## SCIENCE AMOK

From the writing of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to *Jurassic Park*, this style of series examines the potential for science to escape our grasp. What happens when humanity's creations supersede their function and mankind is caught in the crossfire? The answer is generally a warning of what happens when people play God. Naturally, series can downplay this moral while keeping the spirit of the idea intact, but the moral does add a level of sophistication and subtext that players can use as role-playing fodder and issues of dilemma. Most often, it is the creation of artificial intelligence and making something in man's image that draws down the apocalypse, but with science moving in exciting and frightening new directions, the threats could include: Bioengineered organisms and viruses, reprogramming the human mind, cloning a better race, organ harvesting, connecting all data grids through a central network, engineering babies in the womb, etc. What was once a warning of humanity playing God has turned into a warning of our reliance on technology and society's failure to adapt to its own rapid advancements.

Regardless, the horror of the situation comes to play when we're victims of our (or someone's) runaway creations, or when our creations deem humans to be too imperfect, too flawed, too dangerous to continue living. Technology declares war on us deliberately or through happenstance, and people are brutally and arbitrarily murdered by the hundreds, thousands, or perhaps, billions. Death becomes impersonal and the horror is in trying to cope with that cold, impassive logic. While this type of series can be seen as a post-humanity horror story, it can also be about trying to pull ourselves back from the brink. There is still hope, but time is running out and there are lessons to learn if we can learn them in time.

In this style of series, humanity is at war with its creation. It can be an intelligent nanovirus that is killing people, machines trying to eliminate the human race, a biological AI taking control of people's central nervous system, a technological specimen of our future so advanced that it views humanity as germs. The horror may unfold on a limited scale, though the death toll or results are horrifying. A city obliterated; thousands of people reduced to a vegetative state or acting as host to foreign organisms; an entire sea poisoned; genocide of a country; dissection of the soul.

## SERIES ELEMENTS

Struggling to survive; questioning humanity's worth; war declared on mankind; mankind on trial; repercussions of our actions; scientists playing gods; religious backlash; coping with genocide/mass-slaughter; paranoia.

**Examples:** *Terminator: Hunters & Killers, Aliens vs. Predators, Strikeforce Morituri.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS

- **PL 3-5:** Humanity's will is slowly being sublimated by a phantom artificial intelligence driving current technology. The AI can actually use a person's implants and chips to override their personality and turn them into agents, but it hasn't gone global yet. How do the heroes fight a threat that can turn family members and friends against them? That can control anyone in their city? That can turn them into fugitives? And why are the heroes immune? Did they avoid the implants or is someone else protecting them from coercion? Is this the future of warfare, turning an enemy population against their own kind?
- **PL 5-8:** Humanity is fighting a losing war with their creations and the earth has turned from battlefield to abattoir. The heroes are among the survivors, trying to lead them to salvation or victory, but one thing is certain, the world as they knew it will never be the same and the fight for humanity is a daily struggle against truly horrid things amid the graveyards of cities.
- **PL 8-12:** In creating a super-vaccine, scientists have inadvertently created a super-virus that is infecting people and supers, and turning them into rage-driven powerhouses before explosively burning them out. Why are the heroes immune? How do they fight a city

going mad and dying? Can they stop the government from trying to contain the problem by destroying the infected locations? Or have supervillains taken it upon themselves to eradicate the problem? In either case, how do the heroes fight a war on two fronts while trying to protect everyone they know and love?

## ALTERED HISTORY

Almost all fiction is altered history in that it asks the reader "what if." Where it strikes out on its own is for series where the central conceit is "what if" and the answers have global ramifications. At its most obvious, changes in human history have long remained popular fuel for authors and comic writers. What if the Nazis had conquered all of Europe? What if Emperor C. McGlothlin I led Confederate forces to victory over the North? What if the Cuban Missile Crisis resulted in a limited nuclear exchange? Altered history can also be a rewriting of society, changing the values of the modern world in the process: What if King Edward VII had championed Victorian principles into the Twentieth Century? What if the Sunnis and Shiites had agreed on a successor to the Prophet Muhammad?

Where alternate history works as a horror series is in imagining the worst of a situation and potentially ascribing a supernatural bent to it. What if the Nazis used black magic to win WWII? What if Egyptologists uncovered real mummies? And where it becomes super-heroic in addition to horrific is if the characters are aware of the alterations and struggle to change the timeline back or when the changes deal with the existing history of a game world. What if the Preservers never uplifted humanity? What if the Freedom League never defeated Hades and turned back the army of dead in Freedom City?

The horror in these series can be two-fold. The first is in changing humanity's circumstances; they are worse off now than in the original timeline. The second is in making the altered history something of a deliberate event where the heroes will have to fight the catalyst itself to triumph.

## SERIES ELEMENTS

What if scenarios; re-imagining of popular historical figures and events; horrible outcomes avoided in our timeline; new friends and enemies; different society and outlook; seeing the fates of allies and loved ones; family members murdered or turned into enemies.

**Examples:** League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Rex Mundi

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS

- **PL 3-5:** History is not so much altered as manipulated by the shadow games of truly eldritch creatures. Major events throughout humanity's recorded past have been influenced by a cabal of the supernatural and the heroes have discovered that nothing happened for the reasons stated in history class. Did slavery exist to prevent Yoruba priests from reaching a divine state? Were the nuclear tests on Bikini Atoll

## FUSED CAMPAIGNS

Many series might incorporate elements of different series styles to keep ideas fresh and players off balance. Traditional ghosts using new technology to haunt the living, a serial killer using his infected body to spread a rabies spirit, elder beings trying to "improve" humanity by mutating them; the list is endless and as unorthodox as needed. The important thing to establish in running any series is to create the baseline physics behind it. Not real physics, but a set of personal rules and guidelines that serve as the game's laws. There's more about **Game Physics** in Chapter Three.

really the final strike in a war to keep eldritch forces from gaining a beachhead on Earth?

- **PL 5-8:** Someone's war in the future is spilling over into the present. A conflict a century from now has committed the ultimate folly by destroying much of the planet and now, the combatants have decided to escape into the past. Are they manipulating events to create more favorable outcomes? Or are they treating the present as their refugee camp? Are they trying to accelerate our own advancement? As for the heroes, do they have future technology to fight this threat? What makes them special? Perhaps they can see the timeline being manipulated and can see every modification to history? Friends vanish, governments change, outcome of wars differ, and the heroes are stuck remembering what was and what may never be again.
- **PL 8-12:** In this altered reality, there is no difference between monsters and the people who fight them. The lines between Church and State vanished decades ago, and now the government is a puppet of a dark Vatican and the Inquisition is its new sword arm. The heroes must protect a frightened and superstitious public from the monsters that hunt them, but are they fugitives of the Church State or are they its enforcers? In either case, corruption abounds, monsters have infiltrated the byzantine politics of the Inquisition, the heroes only have one another for allies as the new Pope has sworn to see all powered entities burn.

There is a variant to the altered timeline, and that is the Mirror Universe. Travel between alternate dimensions is another comic mainstay, and these episodes seek to create a mirror universe where matters are similar enough to be recognizable and different enough to invoke horrified awe. It might be a dimension where the heroes are evil; a dimension where the very ills the heroes are trying to prevent have won; a dimension dying and looking to invade a better home in the heroes' world; a shattered dimension sending out its expatriated champions to warn other dimensions of a cataclysmic event; a beachhead world where ancient evils have triumphed and are now waiting to invade the next reality.

Games can feature mirrored universes as a one-shot ordeal in an otherwise normal supers series, or the alternate realities can play as a regular feature. Regardless, it's

all about twisting elements that are familiar to characters, in essence making the changes affect them personally and directly. The horror comes from seeing normality skewed toward the horrific, from seeing lives shattered and warped. Worse still, if the heroes are perceived as the villains, or their successes here are now the very failures that warped the other world. Mirrored universes should be much like the distorted images of ourselves in a fun-house mirror; it must reflect the familiar or it becomes too alien to associate with our world.

More importantly, the characters should always see an element of themselves in the reflection. The new dimension can easily be the exploration of a question about the heroes, about their insecurities, about their victories and losses. They should pose “what if” questions... what if the heroes stopped fighting? What if someone else gained the powers the heroes were supposed to receive? What if the characters didn’t stop that ritual in time? What if they turned evil? What if the other dimension were the result of doing everything right... and still failing? What if...? What if...? What if....?

## SERIES ELEMENTS

Answering questions of what if? Everything is familiar, yet strange; alternate universe holds up a mirror to characters’ fears and shortcomings; seeing the effects of failures or successes; seeing events yet to happen; warnings of things to come.

**Examples:** *Crisis on Infinite Earths, Marvel Zombies.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS:

- **PL 3-5:** The heroes are perhaps wayfarers, traveling the various mirror Earths and discovering only darkness and savaged planets. Perhaps only their world remains an Eden in this particular branch of the omniverse? Do they travel willingly, perhaps searching for the key to a meta-mystery? Are they lost and trying to find their way home? Or do they operate at the behest of someone/something that gives them no say in their travels? What is known is that the universe is far darker than they realized, and their skills afford them the slimmest chances of survival.
- **PL 5-8:** The characters know other realities exist, and perhaps even control the doorways from one reality to the next. Is it a mirror or a house with far too many entryways? Do they control who enters and leaves, or are they simply guardians, protecting the gateway and praying that nothing greater than they can handle comes through? There is a responsibility inherent in their jobs and ultimately the task of preventing one particular being/creature/race from gaining control of the doorways. Regardless, misadventure always seems to come to the characters.
- **PL 8-12:** The changes from one dimension to the next are subtle and the characters may not even realize they are crossing the threshold of realities. But slowly, things become increasingly obvious that there are

terrible differences. Friends who suddenly hate the characters; the death of a loved one, followed by their sudden return with nobody reacting accordingly; the presence of monsters when at first there were none. This power-level enables Gamemasters to play psychological games on the players rather than allowing them to rely solely on their impressive gifts. They can empower characters one moment and then deprive them the next as they unknowingly cross over. What if they are heroes in one world and inmates in an asylum the next because of their delusions? Gamemasters can skew relationships, accuse the characters of murder for people not yet dead, create strange histories and populate the world with new locations... the dark skies are the limits.

## ENSLAVED

The fight for freedom and civil liberty has defined some of humanity’s greatest struggles and many of its most notable leaders. Is it a surprise, then, when loss of freedom becomes a personal or societal fear? From personal confinement to imprisonment of entire societies to the ultimate horror of genocide, people don’t have to imagine it happening... it’s already transpired throughout recent history. The false imprisonment of political activists in dictatorships, the treatment of black South Africans during Apartheid, the Nazi’s extermination of Jews, gays, gypsies and other “undesirables”... all played out within the last 60 years. And it’s easy to imagine it will happen again as slavery, denial of fundamental human rights and genocide are just a channel click away in the news.

In horror series, this reality is taken to extremes in one way or another. Perhaps it’s a pogrom against meta-powered individuals, or the extermination of people infected with a virus. Maybe it’s a world where civil liberty is the luxury of the ruling minority or that control devices ensure the populace never acts out violently. Regardless, the key components are 1) The heroes are directly affected by this injustice whether as victim or unwilling victor; 2) The social divider is something the players themselves can understand is inherently wrong in this day and age; 3) The social inequities of this world must deprive some people of basic human rights.

This style of series has the advantage of either being played at face value or for deeper themes and situations. If humanity as a whole is enslaved by an alien species, or someone has turned a “lesser” species (genetically modified animals like dolphins, chimps, cats, dogs, etc, for example) into a second-class culture, then the themes are relatively clear-cut. Enslaving another culture is wrong and the fight to free the enslaved is the cry of all just and noble men and women. It simply becomes a matter of “us vs. them” with the sides clearly defined. This, however, doesn’t lend itself to horror entirely well unless those subjugated or doing the subjugation are monsters. For those series that delight in charting the seas of grey, however, when humanity is subjugating its own kind, then the waters are delightfully muddied. Players can no longer take for granted who is with them and against them. And those involved might not be evil, but acting out of misdi-



rected benevolence (as monks trying to save the savage natives did), out of fear (fear of the mutant, fear of the police state), out of appalling ignorance (believing slaves or Jews were subhuman), or perhaps out of extreme reaction to a situation (Japanese internment camps).

## SERIES ELEMENTS

The liberties we take for granted are gone; due process and justice no longer exist for a select few; subhuman conditions for the subjugated; murder is commonplace; racism is rampant; subjugated marginalized into ghettos and camps; a slave culture; sterilization.

**Examples:** *House of M, Nightmares of Future Past.*

## POWER LEVEL OPTIONS:

- **PL 3-5:** The characters are part of an engineered slave labor force, their attributes increased to serve the masses but their rights curtailed as second-class citizens. Are the heroes the only ones whose intellects weren't stunted? Why? Was it accidental, deliberate or sabotage? Are they genetic hybrids, and if so, is the source of their gene enhancements a greater secret? Are they animal hybrids, or alien, or even supernatural genetic gestalts? If so, is there a greater truth to their existence that has their superiors in fear of their own slaves?
- **PL 5-8:** The heroes are infected with a virus that empowers them temporarily before turning them into

slavering monsters that terrorize the general public. Governments have enacted martial law to control the spread of the virus. Some countries murder the infected, some quarantine them, and some countries have fallen to anarchy and widespread infection. Now the heroes are among the undesirables, and the government is doing everything it can to capture and imprison them, or perhaps even kill them. Is this infection supernatural in origin or scientific? Are the heroes working under a ticking clock as they slowly lose their mental faculties, or are they somehow immune and thus a key to a cure? Is the government responsible or encouraging the spread of the virus for ulterior motives? Are the characters in a free city that has seceded from the Union to protect the rights of the infected?

- **PL 8-12:** Sometimes the threat of something can be just as devastating as the event itself. Evidence has cropped up that today's heroes are actually the vanguard of an extra-terrestrial/extra-dimensional invasion, their powers engineered by a master race intent on turning the heroes into batteries or mindless foot soldiers. Now public opinion has shifted against the heroes and the government is "sequestering" metahumans/supernaturals until the truth comes out. Is there truth to the invasion or is the evidence manufactured? Are the heroes really to become pawns in an invasion or is this misinformation by the enemy to cripple Earth's ability to respond to an attack? And if the worst scenario holds true, just how are the heroes to be used and how will the impending countdown begin to affect and change them?

# TIME PERIODS IN HORROR

While horror in comics began appearing throughout the 1940s before the Comic Code Authority self-regulated the industry in the 1950s, this section treats horror as an existing element across the ages of heroes and heroism. From the time when mythological figures were called hero for slaying dragons and gods alike, to the limits of whatever fictional future awaits us, there is always an element of horror waiting in the shadows. And there will always be the heroes who fight it.

## MYTHIC AGE

There was much to fear in the world, for during the day good people toiled, but the night belonged to an entirely different court than man. It was a time of superstitions, folk remedies, rampant fear, and distrust of the strange and unusual. Shadows could breathe, the unseen walked alongside the living, animals held powerful secrets, science was seen as magic, and magic as the work of devils and other evils. Knowledge and reading was the privy of religious figures and those figures twisted much of what they saw through the lenses of personal belief and superstition.

There was much to fear because in this world monsters truly existed. Humanity was isolated and besieged, victim to the forces around it. For heroes, however, there's a chance that it's worse. The heroes belong to a rare clique of individuals who know about the world's secrets. They might be blessed with knowledge or faith, and although they might beware the night, there is also plenty to fear from the people they're trying to protect. The common folk of this era are generally superstitious and may not recognize the difference between people using abilities to save them and the monsters they're trying to fight. Even knowledge is a dangerous thing when confronted by the Inquisition.

The horrors of these ages are more traditional and versed in fairytales and myths. Evil witches, dangerous tricksters, devils, and monstrous beasts warped from nature are common adversaries, as is knowledge and a thirst for learning. Likewise, heroes could either be lumped in with the company of sin, or they could serve as knights blessed by God, shamans and mystics who are respected for their knowledge of the old ways, or as creatures of forgotten religions that are still venerated by pagans.

Potential eras for pre-Nineteenth Century horror series include the following.

## MUSLIM CONQUEST (600S-1400S)

From the time of the prophet Muhammad to Byzantine-Ottoman Wars, the Islamic Empire spread far. At the height of the Umayyad Caliphate, the empire encompassed countries from Central Asia across the Middle East and North Africa and into Spain. In this Islamic sphere, barbarism exists but knowledge is respected as scientists advance the practice of medicine, mathematics, and astrology, and people with powers are accepted as good jinn so long as they accept God.

**Horror elements might include:** Monsters from Europe, the Middle-East, Africa and Asia at the crossroads of the Middle-East because of trade routes, translation of ancient and reviled tomes at the schools and libraries of Damascus, a shadow war of heresy against eldritch gods, and Babylonian/Assyrian/Sumerian demons.

## CRUSADES (1000S-1300S)

In the Crusades, both Christians and Muslims fought to control a region with deep implications to their respective religions. The role of the heroes as champions of their cause is obvious, but the monsters in this case could be championing either side, working both sides or following a third angle.

**Horror elements might include:** Searching Jerusalem for Solomon's secrets, demons trying to free their brethren trapped by Solomon, Templar conspiracies, Holy Grail mysteries, ancient Bedouin gods using Christianity to strike back at the Muslims, primeval entities asleep beneath the deserts, forgotten holy cities.

## INQUISITION (1300S-1700S)

In Europe, and later in the United States, the Inquisition imprisoned, tortured, and murdered thousands of men, women, and children. Sometimes it targeted women, other times it was Jews or Protestants, but always under the name of fighting Satan. It is a time of mistrust and suspicion, and having knowledge (much less powers) is an offense against God. Unless the Vatican sanctions the heroes, they are hunted by monsters and Inquisitors alike.

**Horror elements might include:** Shadow war against legitimate protectors of good including pagan priestesses and cabballists, the murder or persecution of all supernatural beings, a potential truth to some of the fears of the common folk, monsters escaping torture and immolation by converting to Christianity and serving the Inquisitors, demons offering power to mortals.

## COLONIZATION & IMPERIALISM (1400S-1900S)

What began with the establishment of outposts and trade routes became the invasion of countries, the suppression of cultures, the enslavement of people, and the

pillaging of natural resources. It is a time of great intrigue in Europe and the Americas as countries vie to expand and protect their territories and commerce. It is also a period when heroes might hide more easily on the high seas and in the remote empires and islands of the world, fighting enemies that London, Paris and Washington know nothing about.

**Horror elements might include:** Ancient artifacts unearthed and mistakenly displayed in Europe, unknown monsters from remote islands, treasure maps leading to jungle ruins, adventures on the high and mysterious seas, ghost ships, lost Conquistador gold, tribal curses, forgotten gods, and savage islands.

## INDUSTRIAL AGE

Horror is best played out during times of great social uncertainty and the Industrial Age over the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is one such period. The middle class rose in strength and status over nobility while machine tools, steam power, gas (then electrical) lighting, and other inventions urbanized the populace. Cities swelled and become more cramped and polluted. Advancements in metallurgy and architecture allowed the creation of skyscrapers, and steamships opened the world to trade and a global economy. People worked for long hours in the filthy factories and the child labor practices were notoriously heinous.

The Industrial Era is also the birthplace of Gothic horror, in turn the mother of contemporary horror. Poe, Arthur Conan-Doyle, and Shelly all emerged in this era and their works focused on the thrill of fear, the depth of terror, and the richness of atmosphere. The nobility was dying and Gothic sensibilities were born from the crumbling manses and castles of the fading aristocracy and the abandonment of farmed estates to the mists and wilds. Likewise, the cities are bleak, the brick walls black with soot from forests of chimneys.

Horror in this era brought haunted houses, hereditary curses and madness into play. Its monsters were brooding and isolated vampires, accursed werewolves, maniacs with a penchant for grave robbing and murder, ghosts seeking vengeance, mad women, hell hounds, Satanists and even Satan himself. Likewise, the heroes are saddled with terrible secrets/burdens themselves, though heroines are less likely out of place. Mystics and magicians, bodyguards, Pinkerton detectives, gun slingers, Royal Geographic explorers, French Foreign Legion soldiers, mercenaries, charlatans and many more round out the gallery of heroic rogues who might have fought the darkness in those days.

Potential "eras" for horror series in this period include the following.

## WEIRD WEST (MID TO LATE 1800S)

The United States pushed the limits of its Frontiers into the wilderness of the far west and high north. It was a

turbulent period where law and lawlessness collided frequently in the ravines and plains, and feuds were settled on the streets of mining towns. It was all about forging one's own way under the freedom entitled to men and women hardy enough to take it. Heroes were both lawmen and rebels looking to tame the West or die a legend in her arms. One thing was certain, life was hard and far from the civilized reaches of paved streets, gas-light and governments.

**Horror elements might include:** Native American shaman fighting the invaders with tribal magics, former slaves practicing voodoo to protect themselves, monsters such as the Wendigo and the Flying Head, trickster gods, lost Spanish expeditions cursed to wander as undead, storms that bring about vision quests.

## STEAMPUNK (1800S)

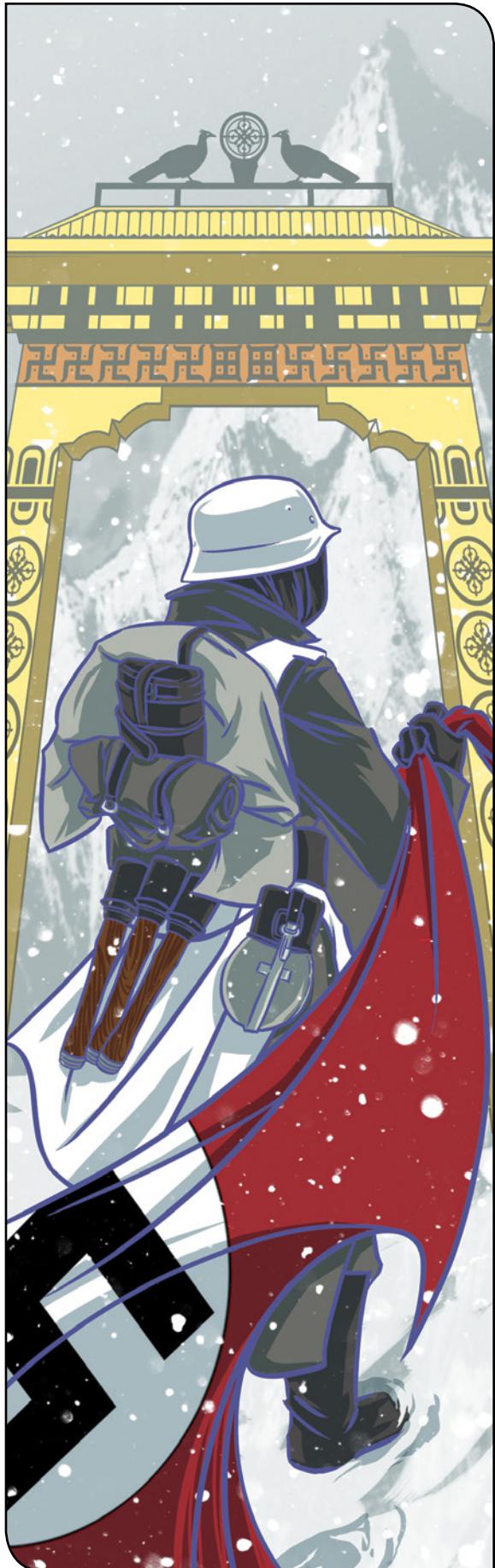
A period of time found only in alternate realities and on fantasy worlds, Steampunk is about the magic of steam-driven devices to create science fiction analogs to the robot, airship, rocket pack, submarine, etc. It is usually set against the backdrop of Victorian England sensibilities, which means the notions of Rule Britannia, Imperialism and costumed high-society with a romanticized military culture. The buildings are taller, wider and trimmed in metal. Society is also highly divided with the have-nots living in the shadow of the have-plentys. It isn't odd to see monsters and fabled creatures, either existing openly or living in the labyrinthine sewers, for example.

**Horror elements might include:** Mad scientists and technology gone awry, science trying to recreate life or improve it, the fantastic beside the fantasy, Jules Verne-inspired stories, forgotten civilizations, power-hungry warlords, exploration, mad robots, tentacled monstrosities, patchwork golems, the occasional island full of dinosaurs.

## NEW SCIENCE (1890S-1910S)

Recent discoveries have turned the world on its ear. Electricity powers homes while the wireless telegraph sends messages through the ether, Marie Curie has isolated radium and X-Rays are the scientific rage. New technology has become a universal panacea for everything that ails you and writers like H.G. Wells have replaced the more optimistic dreams of men like Jules Verne with their own dystopian visions. Alien invasions, nuclear power, ray guns and more have pushed imagination and fears to the edges. Space is now a terrifying and startling domain that can be traveled and we are victims of our rapid progress. Heroes are the men and women exploring the wonders of science and pushing back aliens and mutants we either discover lying in wait or that which we build ourselves.

**Horror elements might include:** New sciences being used as weapons, electricity turning men into supermen, alien invasions, robots as the new Frankenstein's monster, exploration of cold space, discovery of malevolent alien intellects, technology outstripping humanity's grasp of it.



## PULP AGE

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Great War has ended and steamship travel has opened the world to fortune and glory. The frenetic Jazz Era and bon vivant attitude of the Roaring Twenties also sees political upheaval and changing morals. It gives way to the more sober realities of the 1930s, where several European powers fall to dictatorships and fascism and a Great Depression grips the world. War looms on the horizon. It is a period of sharp contrasts, going from the golden years after one war to the dark clouds before another.

The horrors of this era are one of lost civilizations, ancient curses and most importantly, the occult and horrors from beyond time and space. More interestingly, the horror of the Twenties is better played out in the cities where prohibition was in force. Harlem was in its heyday, different mobs warred and African-Americans from across the south moved to the northern cities for jobs. Internationally, with the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb and the mummy's curse, mummies and archeology have seized public imagination and fear. The horror of the Thirties can also unfold in the cities with its long lines at soup kitchens and people crammed into lean-tos. It also comes to play in the North American prairies where a Dust Bowl swallows entire towns in storms and brings with it God knows what else—in the Far East, Middle East and South America as Nazis race to uncover and steal artifacts—and in forgotten New England fishing towns.

The heroes of this era are most likely described as two-fisted men and women, as pilot Amelia Earhart proves women can set off for adventure. Fortune seekers, adventuring archeologists, spies, newspaper reporters, pilots, former soldiers, bootleggers, G-Men, hardboiled detectives, mob enforcers, haunted novelists, and femme-fatale cabaret singers are all potential heroes and NPCs in a horror game.

Potential "eras" for horror series in this period include:

### ROARING TWENTIES (1920S)

It's a golden age that burns out all too quickly, but the rise of Jazz and the blues, Prohibition, speakeasies, floozies, G-Men fighting the mob and the mob killing each other provide a unique flavor that have never been seen since. Into the glam and glitz of this decade-long party are the monsters with enough social graces to stoke the rampant hedonism. The Spiritualist Movement had also reached the height of its favor and would soon split into differing orthodoxies.

**Horror elements might include:** Devils making deals with mob bosses, séances gone wrong, haunted houses, vampires running speakeasies, monsters provoking mob clashes, the FBI investigating the supernatural, freelance investigators protecting folks from evil, the discovery of eldritch creatures and rites, mediums and black art magicians.

## THE DIRTY THIRTIES (1930S)

The cities have become warrens inhabited by the thousands of displaced or homeless, all looking for food, shelter, work, or a fair shake. Children are left alone or with relatives as their parents seek jobs elsewhere. In the plains, it's bleaker. Dust storms from poor farming practices are choking the sky and earth. It is a grey and bleak time, especially in Kansas, Colorado, parts of Oklahoma, and the Texas panhandle. In the case of Black Sunday in 1935, a dust storm approaches settlements like a moving mountain. In this era, the storms and the Great Depression kill people, farms and entire towns.

**Horror elements might include:** *Magic exacerbating the dust storms, states lost in the darkness, monsters capitalizing on the misery, storms causing entire communities to vanish, something hunting abandoned children, creatures feeding on despair, people desperate enough to make bargains with devils.*

## NAZIS (1930S)

For international flavored games that favor intrigue, the Nazis present an obvious choice of horror-based storylines and enemies. With an outspoken interest in the supernatural, their quest to find proof of their Aryan ancestry, and a blind zealousness, the Nazis sent expeditions worldwide to pursue their ideologies. Tibet, Chili, Egypt and many more locales are within reach of their U-Boats, and their civilian archeologists serve as spies and information gatherers. Heroes will likely encounter Nazis in faraway islands, in the crowded souks of Cairo and Istanbul, and the freewheeling port of Shanghai where 20,000 Russians have taken up residence following the fall of Tsarist Russia.

**Horror elements might include:** *Nazis enslaving supernatural creatures to experiment on, archeology teams trying to locate forgotten ruins, the Third Reich trying to contact eldritch creatures to cement alliances, murder and intrigue in crowded Arabian and Asian cities, theft of religious artifacts, Nazi theurgists, resurrected Templar spirits, the search for Atlantis.*

## THE COLD WAR

From 1947 to the 1980s, the Cold War and threat of a nuclear conflict plucked at the psyche of the world. It was a war played out through proxies of the two great superpowers and their allies. It was NATO versus the Eastern Bloc, democracies and constitutional monarchies versus communist states, the U.S. versus Russia in a battle of principles and mutual distrust. From the Berlin Blockade to the Korean War, Viet Nam War, Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Soviet war in Afghanistan, the world was certain that a nuclear exchange was inevitable and each country absolutely certain the other side would be the aggressor.

The horror of the era was born from the atom bomb, the space race, and the Red Scare. While the old stand-

bys of vampires, werewolves, and mummies still frightened, nuclear proliferation created atomic mutations and monsters of accident; the space race found terror in aliens and robots; the threat of Soviet agents living among the good people of the Western World created the monster-in-hiding, the monster living in the body of normal-looking people or the maniac who is deceptively plain. Horror of this era is one of subconscious terror and the threat to a way of life. It is either insidious or it is a warning of power wielded improperly. It is evil, often with an agenda and not something driven purely by instinct or nature.

Heroes of the age are more likely to come from everyday life. They are part of the machine that pushes society forward or they are rebels of conformity. On one side of the equation are soldiers, scientists of all makes, ordinary husbands and wives of middle-class America, teens, policemen, police detectives, reporters, actors and actresses. As counterpoint to them, you have the loners, bikers, gang members, poets, beatniks, and hippies. You have heroes who are either first in line to encounter and handle the problem or you have outsiders who see the insidious corruption for what it really is.

That's not to say that the old standbys of Gothic horror weren't equally popular, but that terror had evolved to reflect the concerns of the day.

Potential "eras" for horror series in this period include:

## FIFTIES PARANOIA (1950S)

It is the McCarthy era and the Red Scare. People know the effects of radiation and they fear a new war that subverts their very ideologies and principles. Science fiction and horror fuse, and the adversary is extraterrestrial or mutated. The threat is one of pure destruction, razing cities and communities much like intelligent atomic bombs with an agenda; it is threats that attack the American way of life—just like the commies. Civilians are vigilant, which is another word for paranoid. They are scared, which is a short step from hysterical. And Uncle Sam is the protector that can do no wrong.

**Horror elements might include:** *A shadow war against alien incursion, atomically mutated creatures being used as foot soldiers, hidden agents among us, state of paranoid vigilance, secret arms of Hoover's FBI and the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) eliminating threats, outright alien attacks or invasion, capturing and seizing alien technology, people being replaced with doppelgangers.*

## SEVENTIES UPHEAVAL (1970S)

The Seventies was a unique era that saw the Viet Nam war, the continuing rise of feminism and women's rights, the rise of social consciousness begun in the 1960s, looser sexual mores, the birth of modern computing, a call for world peace, and increasing distrust of the government. The horror of the era could best be described as the horror within. Demonic-possession and the occult as well as the



birth of slasher movies were all about twisting and threatening the idea of the individual.

**Horror elements might include:** *A society of slashers operating across North America, demons and devils impregnating women, a society dedicated to the Anti-Christ, Satanists operating in high society circles, slashers disguising sacrifices as gruesome murders, lost religious texts, demonic possessions, and insanity from knowing too much of the truth.*

## AGE OF INFORMATION

Since the 1990s, rapid advancements in technology and networking have changed the face of society. The transmission of data is nearly instantaneous and access to information is unparalleled. Society lives and breathes by its computer networks. Technology has shrunk sufficiently to allow for hand-held computers and web browsers. Entertainment is instant and gratification immediate. Unfortunately, society has become too reliant on its tools and an attack against the information infrastructure may well cripple the Western World. Likewise, some experts believe that we have grown addicted to our entertainments and diversions, and that our patience and long-term planning has also suffered in favor of appeasing the moment.

Technology has become a new pipeline directly into our homes and we're surrounded by it. It's become invasive and the conduit for a new genre of horror and evil. Society's understanding of horror has also become more sophisticated or far more visceral—ghosts that manifest through the television, websites that kill, eerie phone calls and videogames that hunt its users. Certainly, the old standards still exist, with vampires enjoying resurgence in "pop"ularity, but monsters have learned to adapt to the modern era. This age is also gripped by other fears, fears made more real by our ability to access information. AIDS, SARS, Bird Flu, Swine Flu, Ebola are just some of the fears brought, in part, by humanity's ability to travel across the world in less than a day and have given rise to the horrors of a potential global pandemic. The dissolution of the USSR and the rise of new nuclear powers have revisited atomic holocaust scenarios but on a more limited scale. And global warming has turned Mother Nature into either the victim or the killer waiting to redress the balance.

Heroes of the age run a gamut as wide as our understanding of the world, anything from the cab driver to the hospital nurse to the college student to the athlete to the rap star to anyone imaginable. Unlike the heroes of former eras who went out exploring the world, the new pioneers can be kids exploring the electronic ether from their home PC to the scientific researcher who stumbles upon a horrible truth. Once thing is certain...the new heroes are smart and technologically savvy.

Potential horror series in this period are many, spanning the horror and supernatural elements of the previous eras. The **Series Styles** section covers possible current era games.

## COMMODITY OF THE SOUL

The years following the burst of the housing market bubble and the savage downturn of the economy has given rise to new fears, and what is horror but the slavering dog that keeps apace with those fears? The salient point, however, is how does one convert this to a *Supernatural* series. It's all about subtext, and in this case, Gamemasters might want to consider themes dealing with humanity's ongoing transition from individual to commodity. The most obvious example would be things like organ theft and stealing superhuman organs for the black market. But what if people in the future are borrowing money with their organs as collateral? What about superhumans who gain powers in exchange for being indentured to the company that empowered them (or that the success rate is only 1%? Or that the failures are actually the world's monsters)? What if a powered individual can be "blank-slated" for 8 hours in the day while bored billionaires joyride them for a substantial fee. Welcome to the future. Keep your soul within sight at all times.

## ...AND EVERYTHING BEYOND

The future of humanity is always in question given the advances and setbacks people have suffered. Eighty years ago, the height of personal technology in the future was thought to be Dick Tracy's two-way radio watch. Fifty years ago, people assumed humanity would be living on the moon and exploring the stars in one-piece silver suits. Thirty years ago, few people could have foreseen the way the Internet and computer technology changed interaction, information and entertainment.

All it takes is for a single event, a single invention sometimes, to alter the trajectory of humanity. What happens then, when that event is supernatural or horrific in nature? What happens to humanity a decade from now? A century? A millennium? Further, even?

Horror in the future can have many faces, but the truly horrible ones are the futures that resonate with present fears and concerns. This gives players a connection by linking them to the present and their own concerns. That's not to say that pure science-fiction horror games aren't possible, merely that they are more difficult to run without some thread to the present.

Potential "eras" for horror series in this period include:

## ARMAGEDDON (IMMEDIATE-FUTURE)

The future is as close as tomorrow morning or perhaps it is a year away. Life is a mirror of today, all the better to understand everything that humanity is about to lose. Whatever future people hope for is gone in a blink of an eye. It isn't a slow dissolution but an immediate and brutal thing. The lesson there is that nothing is permanent and nothing is sacred. Life is arbitrary (or in the case of zombies, crass).

**Horror elements might include:** *The aftermath of the disaster, the erosion of values and even humanity, widespread carnage and death, the proliferation of monsters, hiding from the dark, struggling to survive, hunting for basic commodities, trying to prevent further death.*

## TECHNOLOGY AWRY (NEAR-FUTURE)

Humanity's understanding of its own inventions has escaped her grasp. The world is further off than the present, our understanding of robotics, bioengineering, artificial intelligence, physics or any number of other fields so advanced that we've created the spark of something; the spark of life, spark of reason, spark of determination, spark of murder. The struggle for dominance as the principle species of the planet has begun and the event has put us at a disadvantage. Humanity is in danger or losing or dying or being enslaved. The only thing left is the fight to preserve free will and the right to life.

A variant on this time period ties into the Armageddon future, where humanity has lost its bid against the robots or clones and the battle is against wholesale extermination or enslavement.

**Horror elements might include:** *The catalyst that started everything, the realization of the stakes, the war to preserve humanity, the erosion of dignity, the arbitrary death and murder of innocents, the sacrifice of personal values for global values.*

## EATERS OF STARS (FAR-FUTURE)

Humanity has reached the stars and discovered them staring back. The notion of inhuman alien species and ancient beings as old as the universe itself reveals a cold and calculating cosmos where humanity is food or a resource to bleed dry. The warning in this era is that humanity is tiny, a drop in the ocean or a ticking of a single second in the millions of hours that have gone by. For all their advancements and knowledge, it measures nothing against the creatures out to destroy the human race with the disinterest we share in crushing an insect.

**Horror elements might include:** *Unstoppable adversaries, foot soldiers that number in the billions, the failure of technology, the quest to stop the great evil, a mixing of super-science and pseudo-mysticism, ancient weapons disguised as holy ancient artifacts, hidden cities and planet killers.*



# CHAPTER 2: THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE SUPERNATURAL

*They stepped back, away from Nightwasp, away from her eyeballs that swirled wildly in their pouches, like her irises were spiralling down the drain of the superior orbital fissures of her eye sockets, forever spiralling. The heroes could only guess at what her costume now hid, the unnatural bulges that writhed against the black and yellow spandex. Once friend and hero; now something else.*

*"Don't leave me," Nightwasp whispered. "I'm okay. I'm okay."*

*"You're infected," Gyro said, crying. "Jeannie, I'm sorry. You're infected."*

*"Then kill me!" she shouted. "Don't let me change!" But the heroes were already closing the rusting hatch against her screams....*

Having powers is not a promise of safety or success. In fact, having powers means throwing oneself into danger for the greater good of humanity. Unfortunately, when fighting the supernatural and the horrors arrayed against you, death is no longer the ultimate threat. Death is often a reprieve against what really awaits the hero, and the cost of failure will cut deeply into one's very soul.

This chapter deals with the players' approach to horror and a supernatural series. It equips you with tips, tricks, and rules, all designed not to eliminate the threat, but to bask in it even more because, face it, without the player's willingness to surrender to the fear and scenario, there is no game.

## THE PLAYER'S DUTIES

All players have duties to the game and their fellow gamers. Most often those rules are unspoken and expected of all people possessed of consideration: Be a good host or guest, call if you're missing a game or showing up late, don't leave a mess, and respect the other gamers. Some rules need stating, such as: Give everyone their scene, don't jump in on someone's moment, don't bring real-life arguments into the session, and don't backbite fellow characters.

In horror games, there is an additional set of rules. The reason is that players can easily break a horror game and frustrate a Gamemaster by destroying their hard work. The moment you, as player, agree to participate in a horror game, you are agreeing to a set of rules and stipulations. If you can't abide by them, do the other players and the Gamemaster a favor, bow out before you ruin the series.

## SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

The biggest killer of a horror game is the player who refuses to suspend disbelief or employ their imagination. It's an aspect of control; of the player trying to play tough, to pander to the perception of him as a player rather than his character. First of all, showing fear or fright during a game isn't a show of weakness. It's called "role-playing" for a reason, and most gamers assume that role-playing a frightened character or giving in to

the scenario no more makes the player a coward than playing a character of the opposite gender makes the player a candidate for a sex change.

Once a player agrees to a horror game, they must agree to suspend disbelief. This means not belittling the situation or treating it as just another day on the job. That invalidates the entire point of supernatural and horror games in that they are far beyond normal. The situation isn't normal and the consequences of the obstacle are equally frightening. Horror is about uncertainty, personal or otherwise. It is therefore the responsibility of the player to suspend disbelief to the best of their abilities.

## THROUGH THE EYES OF THE CHARACTER

One of the reasons suspension of disbelief is difficult is because the players react out of character. Rather than looking at the scenario through their character's eyes, the player reacts to everything as themselves. This throws a major wrench in the game because the player feels like the horror failed because she wasn't the target, and the Gamemaster feels like they failed because they failed to frighten the player.

At all times, the horror is directed at the character and not the player. Players need to better understand their characters to: 1) know how the horror affects them and, 2) to empathize with their character's fear. To the Gamemaster, the rule is that they are targeting the characters, although there are ways to involve the players more in their characters as discussed in **Chapter Three**.

If you really think about it, that is the nature of movies and comics—the crux of the horror is getting the audience to sympathize with the characters. Wes Craven once said that the audience wants to survive the horror movie. That doesn't happen, however, if the audience doesn't click with the protagonists. You see this in horror movies and comics and video games where the hero or heroine is so stupid that you start rooting for their death. The opposite of that is when the audience identifies with the protagonist so much that they gasp and scream when something terrifies the onscreen character.

The same applies for the game's heroes and the players who play them. The horror is about what happens to the characters, not the player. The horror is about imagining the worst for another person and using sympathy to feel for someone else. More about this later in this chapter in the section entitled **Drawing Parallels**.

## PLAY TO THE GENRE

Humor has its place. So do terror, fear, and panic. The mistake of horror is trying to apply the blanket term "fear" to everything that happens. Blanket is more apt when you realize that it can smother a game if the players rely upon the same emotion over and over again, arc after arc.

The Gamemaster's job is to vary the games enough so even a horror session has a satisfying range of nuance. Players need to be made aware of this, but they must also understand what the different genres and moods of horror and the supernatural evoke. This makes them less likely to crack a joke at the wrong time or break into tangent discussions.

Gothic horror, for example, was all about the depth of terror through anticipation and nuance. The build-up itself was the horror and it was reflected in the mood. It was suggested and obscured, the fog-drenched countryside a veil for the hound that roamed the moors, or the beating heart, a drumming of suspense for the body under the floorboards. A person screaming was about their terror and never their pain.

Slasher horror, however, is all about the visceral—the splatter of blood and the exposed organs. The screams of the victim are about pain.

Lovecraftian horror, meanwhile, is about the descent into madness when faced with a cold and uncaring universe. Its horror dwarfed man, but frightening him was never the monster's intent. It was a by-product. The screams of the victim were a descent into madness, a purging of sanity."

# PLAYER INVOLVEMENT

Let's stop talking about what players must do during a game and shift to what they can do to improve their horror-playing experience. These are suggestions and tricks available with the Gamemaster's consent.

## DRAWING PARALLELS

One way for players to key into their characters is to invest the character with a player's own fears or hopes. It seems natural and is likely what many players already do, since role-playing is about wish fulfillment. Just as an author reflects certain habits or personal opinions in her stories, players and Gamemasters alike will do the same. It's a matter of playing what you know.

Still, players should be more aware of what parts of them end up in characters because it may help solidify the connection, creating greater empathy. Anything tying the player and character together will help, from sharing fears and aspirations, to the character being named after an important friend, to a pivotal event in the player's life being one that the character shares.

Things that they might have in common could include:

- The character shares a personal ambition with the player.
- The character is living the player's dream life.
- The character and player share the same values.
- The character suffers from the same nightmares and dreams as the player.

- The two have a similar event in their background.
- The two share a phobia or fear.

The trick is getting the player to feel something for his character. That way the Gamemaster only has to worry about playing to the character's fear and not the player.

## INTERRUPTS: A GAME OF I DARE YOU

People have done it dozens of times at the very least; perhaps thousands. In movie theaters and homes across North America and Europe, in Asia and the Middle East, they shout at the screen. Don't go in that room. Don't split up. Don't run up the stairs. Don't open that door. And yet the characters do it anyways. They go places and do things that will get them killed, or worse. The fact is, if the characters didn't do certain things, then the plot wouldn't be as interesting and our involvement would be lessened. Hence this game of "I Dare You."

With the Gamemaster's permission, a game of "I Dare You" or an "interrupt" is about the players deliberately putting themselves in harm's way. It's about the Gamemaster controlling the monsters and environment, but the players

actually dictating the small specifics. The Gamemaster simply states a small need or action the players must fulfill, and the players offer a more difficult answer than necessary. Examples include:

**Gamemaster:** *The car will need gas.*

**Player:** *Oh, the gas is kept in the tool shed...near the corn-field where we heard all those screams.*

**Gamemaster:** *You have to find the ritual candles.*

**Player:** *Didn't someone say they were down in that creepy basement?*

**Gamemaster:** *With all those undead milling around, it's a good thing you brought the silencer.*

**Player:** *Which I left upstairs. Sorry guys, my bad. I'll be right back.*

**Gamemaster:** *The tunnel ahead is long and cold and dark.*

**Player:** *Uh, guys? My flashlight must be low on power. It keeps sputtering.*

An interrupt is a way of having fun and embracing the horror even more. Rather than the players pretending like they've seen every horror idea out there and reacting accordingly, they choose to act in a way that pulls them deeper into the story. That isn't to say acting stupid, but it does entail making their characters' lives that much more difficult.

This mode of role-playing can be fun as either a one-shot or in an ongoing horror series with each player being given one "interrupt" per session. Naturally, some players may try to use this to their advantage or to break the scenario, but the Gamemaster has final veto in saying yes or no to the interrupt. The Gamemaster may also reward a player or the group for a cunning use of this device, for doing something that ratchets up the drama, the tension, or the difficulty.

## INTERRUPT PLAYER REWARD

The most obvious reward for a successful or interesting interrupt is a hero point. Interrupts are another form of complication (*Hero's Handbook*, page 27). Unlike complications chosen in advance, interrupts are spur-of-the-moment decisions relying on situational creativity. The Gamemaster is the final arbiter in deciding whether or not an interrupt deserves a hero point, but an interrupt should generally only reward the player who came up with the idea.

## SAMPLE INTERRUPTS

The following are examples of generic interrupts players can use to "help" play along.

- *Item is somewhere vulnerable.*
- *I hear a noise.*
- *What if there're two monsters?*
- *I sprained my ankle.*
- *Situational fear (afraid of spiders at that moment, for example).*
- *I forgot something.*

- *I thought you were carrying it!*
- *We should split up.*
- *Guess I forgot to change the batteries...*
- *I forgot to fill up.*
- *I really have to go the bathroom.*
- *What's in there?*
- *How does this thing work?*
- *Is this thing even working?*
- *What's that on your shoulder?*
- *If you're there... who's holding my hand?*
- *Hey! There's something down there!*

## EXTERNAL INVESTIGATION

Another trick for players to deepen their connection to the game and accentuate the horror is to investigate events outside the game session. This requires the Gamemaster's permission because she'll need to prepare for this possibility.

Investigating events is about using real-life resources, like the library or the Internet, to continue researching in-game events. It may involve the mythology of a monster or the effects of certain poisons or the historical background of a place or thing. This may require the Gamemaster to give willing players homework at the end of a session to allow them the opportunity to uncover something between sessions.

The research can be geared toward two ends. The first is to provide the Gamemaster with additional background material for the game. Either players should tell the Gamemaster what they uncovered beforehand, so that it can be incorporated into the session, or the Gamemaster (if comfortable with improvisational GMing) can wing it. That means making the information relevant as it becomes known to her. The second way this research can be used is if the Gamemaster was already expecting the players to uncover certain details. This way, the material enters seamlessly into play and supports the adventure itself.

When the player presents the information is to be decided between player and Gamemaster...unless the Gamemaster doesn't mind calls late at night from overenthusiastic players. Boundaries should be set in advance.

## PLAYER INVESTIGATION & CHARACTER SKILLS

It'll happen that the player will investigate something his character might be better skilled at knowing or researching. If this happens, the Gamemaster can use relevant tidbits the player uncovers to give the character a bonus to their skill check. A +1 bonus per relevant fact uncovered, applied to the skill check is reasonable given the player's effort in the matter. This could lead them to uncovering greater secrets in the game.

**Example:** *Rebecca is scouring the internet for information about the Ahnenerbe, the Nazi think-tank dedicated to uncovering the fate of Aryans fol-*

lowing the fall of Atlantis. She discovers that Ernst Schäfer's expedition to Tibet in 1939 allowed the Ahnenerbe to secure Tibetan sacred texts, including one that allegedly mentioned the Aryans. She shares this with her Gamemaster, who then allows her character, Ketharian, an Expertise check. The Gamemaster gives her a bonus of +2 to the check for uncovering the Tibetan expedition and the Aryan document. Her character's success on the check allows her to further discover that said document is in the possession of a private collector.

## INVESTIGATION REWARDS

There are three types of investigation rewards. The first, as mentioned previously, are bonuses to pertinent die rolls. The second reward is giving characters an additional hero point to spend during the game, or even extra hero points, so long as they're spent exclusively for pertinent skill checks for that session. The third reward could be an additional power point awarded for overall research at the end of the story arc, in addition to the normal power point awards.

# CHARACTER RE-CREATION

A horror game is about the characters and what the player can do to prepare them for the onslaught. Herein you'll find tips and tricks to equip your characters as well as the dangers to watch for. Unlike other *M&M* sourcebooks, the *Supernatural Handbook* offers a new section called Achilles Heel. It's all about creating a character with foibles and quirks because no game can call itself horror without the right dash of drama, pathos, and vulnerability.

## STARTING POWER LEVELS

Most horror games are about normal or gifted individuals discovering threats more powerful (or greater) than themselves. Here, however, the power level is irrelevant to that horror. The reason is that series of this ilk should be about attacking the characters at their weak points. Simply bumping up the power levels to "threaten" the heroes is nothing more than a bully's approach to dread. A *Supernaturals* game shouldn't just be about the sledgehammer. It should also be about the scalpel as well.

### NORMALS (PL 3-6)

Although the *Supernatural Handbook* focuses on supers and their interactions with the extraordinary, some *M&M* series might use individuals ranging from normal human to Olympic athlete level of competence. What matters aren't their power levels, but the ability to research their opposition and plan against their adversaries. This is a thinking horror game, with the characters doing everything they can before any encounter to stack the odds in their favor. Opposition is likely the lone monster, the small cult, or the hunt for artifacts. The threat of dying is also higher, so these may be the perfect characters for a one-shot horror game or a series of attrition.

- PL 3:** At 45 power points this individual is better trained than the general public. Government agents, veteran reporters, tech savvy kids, police officers and high school jocks all fall in this range. They might possess some experience, but it's limited.
- PL 4:** At 60 power points this kind of character has the skill and experience to get the job done. They might be veteran reporters with a few years on the beat or the government agents/cops that have enjoyed a promotion or two.
- PL 5:** At 75 power points this individual has seen action and extensive training. Nobody gets here

naturally unless they're a genius at what they do. Soldiers as well as anyone who has received combat training and been in the situations to use it apply here. Private Eyes who'd quit the force to go independent, detectives, and war journalists are also candidates.

- PL 6:** At 90 power points this character is not only capable, but trained to the peak of their ability, whether it's an Olympic athlete or scientist specialized in one domain or a Special Forces operative with a wide range of abilities.

### TYPICAL HEROES

Reporter, detective, police officer, soldier, scientist, student, explorer, smuggler, truck driver, pilot, athlete, etc.

### PULP HEROES (PL 6-8)

Not the era of Pulp, but more the notion of men and women blessed with powers or abilities that elevate them above the norm. Campaigns of this type play on the possibility that adversity also blesses a select few with the means necessary to fight the evils arrayed against them. Whether these individuals are based in series circa the 1950s and before or the series is about gifted characters, these heroes are unique; it is also their uniqueness that endangers them, however. They possess enough power to know that there are more powerful things out there. They possess enough knowledge to realize they don't know enough. Like normal people faced with supernatural opposition, the heroes must plan in advance to stack the odds. Fortunately, their powers allow for improvisation during combat situations.

- PL 7:** At this range, 105 power points go a long way in either making a very skilled crime-fighter or someone with enough physical ability to go toe-to-toe with a monster or two.

- **PL 8:** At 120 power points, the hero not only has skill, but likely a power/talent or two to help even the odds. Long-term survivability is now possible.

## TYPICAL HEROES

Amateur magician, tomb robber, martial arts master, adventure-seeking archeologist, crime-fighter, gizmo-powered scientist, relic-keeper, etc.

## SUPER HEROES (PL 8-12)

Heroes, both super and supernatural, occupy this bracket. Be they the spandex-clad champions of the metal ages or the redeemed monsters of horror fiction, these characters have the means and knowledge to fight the evils at hand. Unfortunately, their powers make them targets as well and the adversaries they fight are cunning, ruthless and, perhaps, devoid of any human emotion. This means they'll use brute force when they can, or more likely rely on attacking a hero's weak spots. They'll target innocents and loved ones, they'll goad, infuriate and frame—anything to push the hero into committing a stupid mistake. It's all about making the horror personal to the character.

- **PL 8 or 9:** Characters in this range rarely possess the knockout blow that'll end fights, but fighting the supernatural isn't necessarily about the coup de grace. It's about planning and surviving, but if there's one thing heroes of this level possess, it's cunning and forethought.
- **PL 10-12:** At this range, heroes reach mythic levels in the eyes of normal men and women. Unfortunately, their powers either make them overconfident against the supernatural, or evil finds other ways of attacking them.

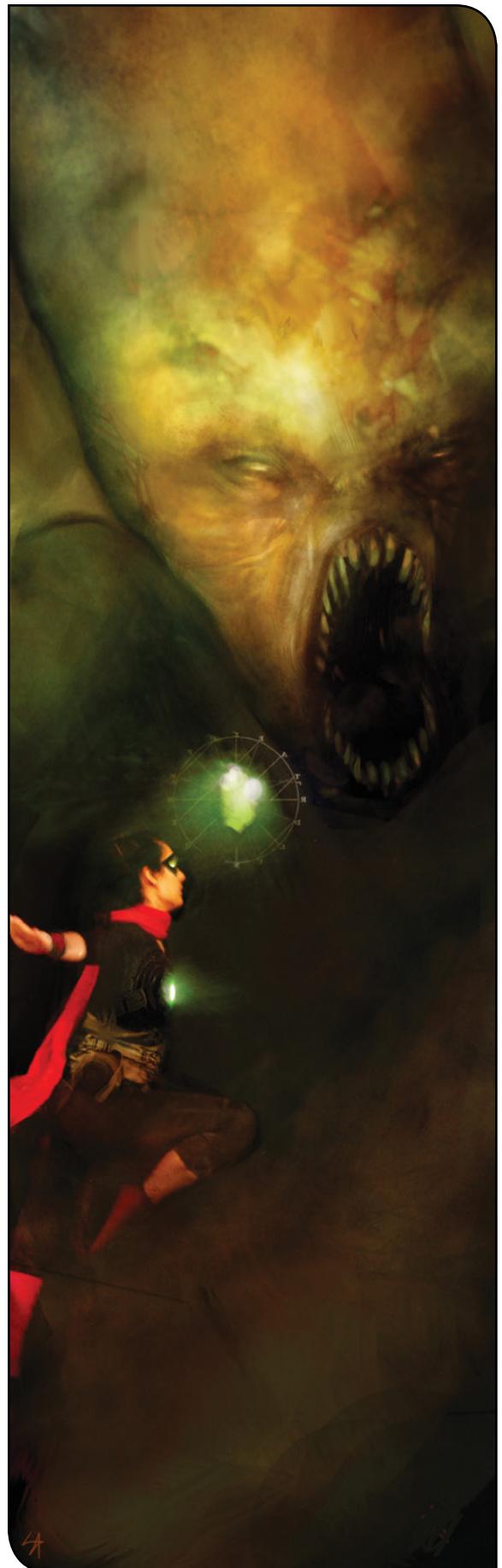
## TYPICAL HEROES

Reformed monster, caped hero, champion against the darkness, mystic master, accursed hero, child of myth, etc.

## HEROES OF LEGEND (PL 12+)

At this point, the characters are likely movers and shakers among supernaturals, or they are feared. Here we see major elements of divinity, mythology and fables enter into the series because the game is no longer about personal horror. It is about cosmology. The heroes, whether they realize it or not, are part of someone's or something's hierarchy. Be they guardians assigned a role or once-creatures with a place among humans, their abilities impart them with greater responsibility for the lives of others.

Their powers and attributes are likely historical, whether the heroes themselves are legendary, their lineage relates to myth or they wield an item of lore. Regardless how it plays out, the heroes have some tie into humanity's past. This may tie to a duty required of the characters by obligation of birth, or the power they wield, or to an unbreakable vow. Sometimes, the horror comes down to fulfilling their oath or following their heart.



## SERIES ATTRITION

Depending on circumstances, the series may be one of attrition. The characters may win battles and vanquish foes, but not without cost, sometimes a heavy cost. Attrition series are such that someone dies every handful of sessions, or the risk of infection (viral/impregnation/zombie/etc.) is high, or madness is a constant threat. There is nothing wrong with games like these, so long as everyone is in agreement about playing in that style. There's nothing as frustrating as spending hours designing a character to discover one bite from a radioactive mosquito is enough to turn your pride and joy into a swarm's nursery.

Players should discuss the attrition rate of the series with the Gamemaster before embarking on any character discussions. If the game is low-powered, how prevalent is attrition? Does insanity factor in? Is there a high chance of infection from contagion? Are the characters immune to some things? Are there going to be zombies/infected swarms? Can powers be taken away easily? Etc. All series carry the threat of death, but players should be made aware of pervasive elements that can take their characters out of the game at a moment's notice.

The positive aspect of attrition is it can set a high bar for drama, and impart the critical nature of the event better than the players simply being told about it. Attrition is not about the kill- or madness-ratio, but about humanity's fragility and their courage in the face of it. Despite each death or failure, despite every infection or bout of madness, what drives heroes to continue risking mind, body, and soul for the sake of others? Attrition helps explore that question in the face of horrific consequences.

The **Corruption** rules in **Chapter Three** are a useful tool for handling attrition beyond just the body count of characters, creating all kinds of different circumstances for removing a character from the series.

Likewise, their opposition is expansive in hierarchy or many in number. The fight isn't against an individual monster or circumstance, it is a long campaign against a greater threat fought out as individual battles.

## TYPICAL HEROES

Force of nature, paragon of an ideal, champion of faith, defender of a culture, anachronistic hero, ex-soldier of the apocalypse, fabled creature, godling, forgotten deity, etc.

# SUPERNATURAL ABILITY BENCHMARKS

Ability ranks can vary wildly in series incorporating horror and heroes. Again, while high powers and ability ranks affect the number of tools and tricks a Gamemaster can use to affect characters, superpowers shouldn't be curtailed for the sake of horror. The real reason why ability benchmarks are important in a *Supernaturals* series has more to do with the era in which the series is set.

It's a foregone conclusion that the Gamemaster will not run a slasher series around heroes whose ability ranks can run into the double digits, unless said slasher is also empowered. The era, however, should dictate the power level of players using the general populace as a baseline. Otherwise, having PL12 heroes and villains running around medieval Europe, regardless how enlightened they may be, will change history and array frightened nations against the characters.

While not a hard or fast rule, it's best to empower heroes up to the limits of that period's capacity to handle them. Especially in horror or supernatural games, conformity can be the enemy, so it is best if the heroes have some fear of the people around them. Unless the game is one with a roster of spandex clad champions and scofflaws,

the heroes may find it too easy to run afoul of government agencies or the general public. Thus, the heroes should remain in reach of society and the law, not to force them into complicity, but to up the stakes.

## MYTHOLOGY CAMPAIGNS

This period encompasses anything before the emergence of Christianity as the dominant European religion. In this era, myths exist and heroes may well be blessed by or born of the gods. Even emperors are beings of mythic power who rule by divine right, so having heroes around with ability ranks up to 10 or more isn't unlikely, just as there are monsters and other myth-walkers/god-spawn walking around of equal measure.

## PRE-INDUSTRIAL CAMPAIGNS

Anything set before the late 1700s-1800s is generally perceived as being part of a superstitious and reactionary society. Superheroes can't exist without inspiring fear in the ruling religion, or inspiring cults, or being deemed a demon or witch by the locals, or serving the local churches. Heroes of this era are likely capable of hiding among people or sticking to the wilds. Some magic-wielders are possible, but knowledge is restricted and few powers should be overt. Thus, heroes of the age shouldn't have ability ranks beyond 5-7 range since anyone with 4s or higher will likely draw down suspicion, lust, or envy.

## INDUSTRIAL ERA TO THE DIRTY THIRTIES

Humanity has blossomed in its capacity for rational thought and the engine of war has grown as well. Heroes are emerging in fiction as strong or smart or agile, but nothing as outrageous as power blasts or darkness control. Instead, their ability ranks may never vault above 7, but they'll possess the artifacts, devices, guns, magic, and moxy to set things right.

## WWII, THE COLD WAR AND BEYOND

Atom bombs and modern weapons have made people aware of just how destructive our toys can truly be. As a result, there's a spike in the power-level of heroes and an individual ability rank can go to 12 or even higher. This also means that the stakes are potentially global now.

## COMPLICATIONS

Horror is often about the vulnerabilities of the characters and the means of prodding, nudging, or attacking them. Characters may be blessed with immunities and invulnerabilities, but even the mighty Achilles had a soft spot. For heroes of horror, that soft spot is often their psyches, though there are other weaknesses with which to play.

In addition to the complications outlined on pages 27–29 of the *Hero's Handbook*, consider the following new complications for your *Supernaturals* series.

## CURSE SWORN

The Curse Sworn hero has entered into a pact not of his choosing, but invariably, a pact of his own making. The Curse Sworn has likely stolen or taken something not belonging to him (generally a mystic relic or artifact), defiled hallowed soil, or committed the wrong act in the wrong place. Doing so has also incurred the wrath of a spirit or god, who then punishes the transgressor by forcing him to act on their behalf. Comply and the power to fight evil is yours. Disobey, and punishment will rain upon you.

Whatever gave the character his powers is also a yardstick by which the hero must live. The hero has little choice in the matter. The punishment for refusing can be anything from debilitating pain to crippling weakness to nightmarish visions. The voice of the punisher is heard only by the hero.

There are four caveats to being Curse Sworn. First, this is not an opportunity for good men to do bad or to force heroes to be evil, unless the series is about that personal loss of control. Secondly, the objectives and demands of the character's "patron" should fit with the goals of the team so the character isn't going off on side-jounts all the time, unless the entire group shares said vulnerability. Third, the Gamemaster should give the player a guiding set of principles that the Curse Sworn character must follow. Some may appear when dramatically appropriate, but some need to be outlined to allow the character some freedom when acting. These rules should also include ways for the character to make right for any mistakes. Lastly, like all complications, Curse Sworn only awards hero points when it actually inconveniences the character in some way, encouraging at least *some* degree of conflict between character and "patron".

## FLASHBACKS

The hero experienced something horribly traumatic and is now hit with flashbacks when struck by a trigger. Most

often, the trigger is stress-based, meaning when the character is in a high-pressure situation (like combat or being hunted), he might undergo a flashback. Other times, it might be keyed to a sound or a smell or the sight of something. Whatever it is, it can be enough to freeze the character and trap them within visions and memories, forcing them to relive prior events over and over again. This might also work for toxins that the body somehow stores in fat cells, expending them only when calories are burned (like in combat). Supernatural creatures might have a similar effect.

One caveat for players and Gamemasters alike is that this isn't an excuse for solo-sessions, unless the flashback serves another purpose (like giving clues or portents). Gamemasters should outline the nature of the flashback with players beforehand, and make modifications according to the situation. Otherwise the time should be devoted to the party and not the individual alone.

## MYTHIC WEAKNESS

This expands on the Weakness complication (*Hero's Handbook*, page 29) and can mean:

- The hero or monster is somehow bound by an old convention that holds power over him. (A vampire cannot cross running water).
- The hero or monster is adversely affected by seemingly mundane items and abnormally hurt by certain weapons. (A silver bullet will gravely wound a werewolf).
- The hero or monster must act according to an ancient law or rule (some Jinn must answer truthfully when asked whether they are Jinn or human).

Some sample Mythic Weaknesses include:

## COMPULSION

Some monsters must act upon a compulsion, like a need to count spilt needles or speak in riddles.

## CONTRACT

The monster must comply with the conditions of ancient law or rule. Female ghuls of the Middle East, for example, wear a sagging breast over their shoulder. Should someone sneak up on the ghul and drink from her milk, then she must treat that person as her own child. Likewise, a vampire cannot enter a house without permission. Many Fae and mythological creatures are bound by the terms of ancient contracts.

## NATURAL ENEMY

In older myths, natural animals might hold fear over a monster. Panthers could fight and slay dragons with their sweet breath; owls were foes of crows in other religions, so a crow-based shapeshifter might have reason to fear them; some walking dead fear ravens for taking the eyes of sinners (as old Christians believed). That isn't to say

these animals can actually combat monsters; simply that the monster fears what the creature represents, and acts accordingly.

## NATURAL ELEMENT

The creature is adversely affected by something that exists naturally. Sunlight, garlic, moonlight, running streams, and fire all count as natural elements. If the element actually hurts the monster rather than shunning it, for example, it may also be a flaw for some or all of the creature's defenses.

## OBVIOUS NATURE

Any easy trick to revealing a creature's nature counts as a Mythic Weakness because it also identifies the nature of the monster. A vampire's inability to cast a reflection and a fae's aversion to iron are both easy markers to determining the nature of the creature and the possible ways to fight it.

## WEAPONS

Certain types of weapons may harm otherwise invulnerable creatures, like a vampire being slain by a wooden stake through the heart or a werewolf by a silver bullet.

## PHOBIA

Another expansion on an existing complication, Phobias (*Hero's Handbook*, page 28) are all too common for *Supernaturals* characters. Fear is important in horror, and phobias can play an important role. If the rules for fear checks are in use (see **Chapter Three**) then a phobia complication may ensure at least one degree more effect from the check than usual, turning success into one degree of failure and worsening the effect of a failed Will check.

Examples of Phobias include:

- **Acrophobia:** Fear of heights.
- **Agoraphobia:** Fear of open spaces.
- **Arachnophobia:** Fear of spiders.
- **Bacillophobia:** Fear of microbes.
- **Claustrophobia:** Fear of enclosed spaces.
- **Coulrophobia:** Fear of clowns.
- **Necrophobia:** Fear of death and dead things.
- **Nyctophobia:** Fear of night or darkness

Gamemasters may also wish to include other psychological Quirks as complications, such as:

- **Anxiety & Fear:** The character becomes impaired in stressful situations.
- **Fascination:** The character becomes fascinated with something, ranging from the beautiful or complex to the horrifying.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder:** The character feels compelled to perform an action until the anxiety passes (usually a set number of times). Touching a door handle three times every time may not seem like much, but it's hell during chase scenes in haunted houses.

- **Personality Disorder:** A variety of different effects, but can include an unwillingness or fear to engage people socially, or paranoia. While the other player heroes might be an exception to the character's willingness to interact socially, a circumstance penalty in social situations is an appropriate complication.

## MONSTROUS

The character's appearance is that of a monster and, short of hiding in a swaddle of heavy clothing, there is no way to hide this. Witnesses might cringe in revulsion, move away or even attack the character out of fear. Strangers are likely to think the worst or attack, to run screaming or to throw rocks. This is a variation of the Prejudice complication suitable for many *Supernaturals* characters.

## SUPERNATURAL EQUIPMENT

Some supernatural monsters exhibit a weakness to certain items (silver to lycanthropes and holy water to demons for example) as discussed in the Mythic Weakness entry. The following equipment constitutes the basics found in a good monster-hunting kit. These items are generally not harmful to humans, but will affect monsters.

The items are, in general, specific to the creature affected by them, meaning silver will not have an adverse effect on vampires while werewolves will only get angrier when holy water is splashed in their faces. Each piece of equipment has a quick list of creatures it normally affects, but GMs should feel free to play around with expectations; it's trouble for the heroes when they run into the "lycanthrope" immune to silver!

## GARLIC SPRAY

A pepper spray canister containing a liquid garlic compound. Like pepper spray (*Hero's Handbook*, page 165), but for vampires only. On a successful hit, the target must make a Fortitude resistance check (DC15) or be affected by the attack.

**Affects:** Vampires.

## HOLY BOOK

A holy book pertains to any faith or religion. It can be used to keep a number of creatures at bay with its mere presence, but it does not hurt as a holy symbol might. Any creature affected by a holy book must make a Will check (DC 15) or be too frightened to approach the wielder directly.

**Affects:** Demons, ghosts, the possessed, vampires.

## HOLY SYMBOL

A Christian cross, the Star of David, the Islamic Crescent, communion wafers, etc. are all said to keep unholy creatures at bay or, in some instances, burn those they touch. Gamemasters may rule that only religious symbols blessed by a priest of that religion have any effect, or that it is the wielder's *faith* in the symbol that powers it,



not the symbol itself. The target must make a Will check (DC 15) or succumb to fear when confronted by a holy symbol. Any unholy creature in contact with the symbol suffers Damage 5, but the target must be defenseless and the symbol must be in contact with them for one round before damage occurs.

**Affects:** Demons, the possessed, vampires.

## HOLY WATER

Any blessed water used in sacred ritual can be used as holy water. Normally kept in vials, it can burn unholy opponents by splashing them. Creatures vulnerable to it can only be affected by the holy water, they cannot be held at bay by it. Holy water causes Damage 5 to select targets.

**Affects:** Demons, certain ghosts, the possessed, vampires.

## IRON DAGGER

A ritual knife whose purpose is to poison the blood of fae or fairy creatures with the slightest touch. Targets make a Fortitude check against Affliction 5 (Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated) in addition to the weapon's Damage.

**Affects:** Fae creatures.

## SALT BUCKSHOT

This specialized round does nothing more than sting targets, but can stun both living and spirit entities, forcing the latter to disorporate briefly. If struck, the target must make a Fortitude check against Affliction 5 (Dazed,

Stunned). The target rolls a new resistance check each round thereafter to recover.

**Affects:** Living targets, spirits.

## SALT

Salt repels various spirits. Most common in monster hunting scenarios, a line of salt is run across a doorway or windowsill to deny ghosts and spirits entry. In this regard, the ghost must make a Will check (DC 15) to cross. Otherwise it is repelled, though it may continue trying on subsequent rounds. The ghost may also use other effects to break the line of salt, including throwing objects at it or using powers to "blow away" the crystals, or it may come through an unprotected entry (secret door or vents).

**Affects:** Evil spirits, ghosts.

## SILVER BULLETS

Specialized ammunition made from silver and used to inflict damage on lycanthropes and some other shapeshifters. In addition to the normal damage associated with the weapon, the target must make a Fortitude check against Affliction 5 (Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated). In addition, targets cannot recover from the Damage until the bullet is removed.

**Affects:** Lycanthropes, shapeshifters.

## SILVER DAGGER

A ritual knife that can cause additional damage against shapeshifters and lycanthropes. This pure metal cor-

rodes the skin of those creatures, giving the weapon the Secondary Effect modifier (*Hero's Handbook*, page 144). Targets recover normally, unless the knife is stuck in them.

**Affects:** Lycanthropes, shapeshifters.

## STAKES

The old standard to incapacitate or destroy a vampire. A stake to the heart instantly destroys some vampires, others were merely paralyzed until the stake is removed.

## KIRLIAN COLORS

The colors are broken down into the physical, emotional, and spiritual realm, in terms of what they represent. Bear in mind, however, that some colors can cross into other domains. Red, for example, is physical because it represents life and a will to live, but Gamemasters can also decide it means the emotional state of rage or anger:

## EMOTIONAL COLORS

These colors are seen in some psychics like empaths and psychics, as well as supernaturals like ghosts (especially poltergeists), some types of demons and devils, and vampires,

- **Green:** Green represents a person's capacity for love, and a smoky or clouded green might show a jealous ghost or an undead creature burning with resentment. A bright green, however, could be ascribed to empaths and healers.
- **Orange:** This color represents creativity, with the pale orange of a deep hunger or yearning to the bright orange of courage or intrepidity. Vampires might show up with pale oranges and reds in their auras, for example.

## PHYSICAL COLORS

Colors of these hues manifest in creatures and people with strong physical or mental prowess/leanings. Monsters of these types include shapeshifters like werewolves, Lovecraftian beasts that are impervious to harm or who trigger insanities, as well as simple-minded demons or animal-intelligence monsters.

- **Indigo:** This color reflects the mental prowess of someone, from the deep shades of brilliant men and women, and psychics to the pale color of the badly broken and defeated.
- **Red:** Red indicates life and strength, from the pale red of something near death to the bright crimson of someone with plenty of life in them or a strong will to live. Creatures of strength or singular will could have this color, from werewolves to critters like Deep Ones.
- **Yellow:** Yellow is the color of will, and a person possessed might generate the muddied brown/yellow of fear or fatigue while a healer or near saint might shine a golden yellow.

## SPIRITUAL COLORS

Spiritual colors encompass anything dealing with the soul or one's connection to higher powers. Think of it this way, take away the human body and the spiritual would be what's left of us, barring philosophical arguments to the contrary. Monsters in this gamut would be demons, spirits, some vampires and deceivers like the shapeshifting Rakshasa.

- **Blue:** This color indicates communication, from the bright blue of a clairvoyant or someone with a clear connection to benevolent higher powers, to the dark, bruised and murky blue of deceit. Think mind-controlling monsters and malevolent shapeshifters like Rakshasa at the negative end of this spectrum.
- **Violet:** This is the color of high spiritual energy, be it the bright violet of visionaries to the dim violet of spiritual vampires and succubae.

## SPECIAL COLORS

Black and white are normally found in Kirlian photography because black is the color of someone whose life is in utter disarray on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level. White, however, is someone who found enlightenment. Taken another way, all color added together as paint becomes black, while all color added together in wavelength form becomes white. In either case, it is the union of all colors (or physical, emotional, and spiritual in a positive or negative way) that brings about this state.

In horror series, this can be taken further. White can be those beings that have evolved beyond corporeal concerns while black can indicate either something completely grounded in material concerns or something so different that we can only perceive its nature as black (or white perhaps). Regardless, black and white isn't necessarily bad or good. It is merely a state. White could indicate something so aloof from the human experience that it doesn't care what happens to us, while black could be something so vested in this world that it can actually help mankind.

Staking a vampire requires an attack check with a -5 circumstance penalty, although it can also be done as a finishing attack (*Hero's Handbook*, page 197).

**Affects:** Vampires.

## UV LIGHT

Another tool against vampires as well as other underground dwellers affected/weakened by sunlight, a full UV light projects light equivalent to sunlight. It is generally

not as harmful as the real thing, but it *hurts*. Any vampire or night creature caught in a beam of UV light (on a successful ranged attack check) is dazed (DC 15 Will check to overcome) and suffers Damage 5 each round, with a +0 modifier for the Damage resistance check.

**Affects:** Night-dwellers, vampires.

## OCCULT TECH

From steampunk to the new physics of this century and beyond, men and women of science are not helpless in the face of the supernatural. They've come to understand the supernatural exists with its own set of rules, and they've discovered ways to exploit those rules through theory, experimentation, research, and analysis.

Whereas supernatural items target the mythic weaknesses of the enemy, essentially exploiting their supernatural qualities against them, Occult tech uses devices to target the creature's physical (or "meta-physical") integrity, going outside the box to attack a problem from a unique perspective. Faith is the power of ancient man, science the new faith of modern man.

There is another critical difference between supernatural and technological equipment. Supernatural items generally target one or two types of critter by attacking their nature: salt for ghosts, iron for fae, and so forth. Technologies tackle a specific problem, like a creature's defensive capabilities: A ghost's intangibility or a vampire's quickness or a Deep One's regenerative powers. They are meant to even the odds in a fight...assuming the wielder in question understands the opposition and has time to bring the right tools to bear.

Generally, speaking, occult tech is unusual enough to fall into the device category (*Hero's Handbook*, page 157) although the GM can choose to make it equipment for a *Supernaturals* series, particularly one where the heroes are supplied with such things by their patron organization. In the latter case, occult tech is subject to all of the usual limitations of equipment, given on page 157 of the *Hero's Handbook*.

### CHAMELEON-PARTICLE GRENADE

One of the greatest advantages a ghost or spirit possesses is its ability to go invisible. The CPG is a smoke grenade that explodes like a flash-bang and fills the area with a

#### NEW FEATURE: CUSTOMIZED

A customized piece of equipment is better than the off-the-shelf equivalent: specialized or designed with a particular purpose in mind. Most of the time, this is good for a circumstance bonus when that equipment is used for its intended purpose. For supernatural equipment, the feature typically means that it is designed to trigger a specific Mythic Weakness. Thus all of the equipment in this section has the equipment point cost for a normal item of that type, plus 1 equipment point for its customized nature. For mundane items like books or water—which normally have no equipment point cost at all—this gives a final cost of 1 equipment point.

luminous compound whose excited particles glow in the presence of a ghost's ectoplasmic body. In short, any ghost caught in the cloud will be visible for a time.

**Effect:** Cloud Area Nullify Invisibility 2 points per rank.

### ECTO-LANCE

The Ecto-Lance fires exotic particles that can affect incorporeal entities.

**Effect:** Ranged Damage, Affects Insubstantial  $2 \cdot 2$  points + 2 points per rank.

### ECTOPLASMIC HARPOON

The Ectoplasmic Harpoon is a modified taser with special probes that can actually embed themselves in an incorporeal entity's form. Instead of electricity, the ectoplasmic battery delivers a charge that forces the entity to become physical for a time, short-circuiting its incorporeal state.

**Effect:** Nullify Insubstantial • 1 point per rank.

### ETHERIC BLADE

An etheric blade is a dagger or sword with a generator and crystal emitters hidden in the physical hilt. The generator and emitters create a blade of glowing etheric energy that can harm a variety of entities.

**Effect:** Damage (energy), Affects Insubstantial  $2 \cdot 2$  points + 1 point per rank.

### KIRLIAN ROD

This device serves a number of functions, from rendering the invisible visible, to potentially revealing the true nature of a creature masquerading as human, animal, or inanimate objects. The Kirlian Rod emits bio-electrical pulses, turning the coronal energy surrounding being visible, revealing their true nature.

**Effect:** Senses 5 (Detect Aura [Acute, Analytical], Vision Counters Invisibility), Affects Self and Others • 10 points.

### PSYCHOKINETIC BARRIER

Also known as a "shield bomb," this device emits a short lived burst that shields anyone inside the burst from damage or from approach by physical and non-corporeal objects.

**Effect:** Create Barrier, Impervious, Close Range, Fades, Limited to Shield • 1 point per 2 ranks.

### PROTON SHREDDER

No mad scientist should be without it. A proton shredder does damage on an atomic scale, but also wears away at a target's physical integrity, making it easier to damage them overall.

**Effect:** Ranged Damage Linked to Ranged Weaken Toughness • 4 points per rank.

# SUPERNATURAL ARCHETYPES

Given the breadth and scope of the potential archetypes that can pop up in supernatural games, it would be difficult to cover them all in just this book. Fortunately, you can adapt the archetypes in the *Hero's Handbook* for use in a *Supernatural* series and you can use the *Quick-Start Character Generator* from the *M&M Gamemaster's Kit* to roll up suitable characters as well.

## PLAYING MONSTERS

Perhaps it began with the original French story of the Beauty and the Beast (*La Belle et la Bête*) or the tale of Frankenstein's monster. Maybe it is older than that, inspired by one of Grimm's Fairy Tales or Scheherazade's 1001 tales. Perhaps even older if one looks at the legends of accursed Medusa and the Gorgons. Regardless, humanity has always had a fascination with the noble monster, be she a beautiful woman cursed into hideous form or a man born with that body.

Over time, many monsters have had an element of tragedy attached to them and eventually one of them is made out to be a hero. Some vampires and demons have even been ascribed sympathy and a noble heart.

The following section details what it takes to play a monster. It is a natural fit in a supernatural game and one that plays on multiple themes including humanity as monstrosity, fear as an eclipse to reason, and judging too hastily. Regardless, while the power and elegance of playing the noble beast is attractive, players should realize that their power comes at a price. They are hated. They are hunted by human and kin alike. They are susceptible to fatal weaknesses and they are troubled. There is always some element of the human condition that they long for (love, acceptance, or normalcy) and it is that very element they can never find.

## HOW THEY BECAME "GOOD"

Maybe good isn't entirely accurate, but at the very least many of these creatures may have gone from evil to morally gray (though GM-forbid they should ever go "sparkly"). Vampires must still feed, werewolves must still

change, ghosts must still go "boo". Part of it might be a contemporary conceit; the old rules of black and white no longer apply and many series (television or otherwise) deal candidly with or exalt the antihero. The struggle is what makes these creatures most human.

There are several ways a creature can be good or turn to good. Each one serves as a Complication because they are often a self-imposed limitation that stops the creature from breaking its morality or from giving in to its base nature. The monster can always fail to uphold itself and in doing so, pay a horrible price in return.

### CURSED

The monster became good because someone or something leveled a curse against it. Maybe it was a prohibition against drinking blood or hurting humans, or perhaps the curse gave the monster a measure of humanity or empathy. Regardless, the monster isn't so much affected by what it can't do, but rather by what it once did. Perhaps it suffers from remorse and must forever atone for its previous actions or maybe it is constantly tempted by something it can no longer pursue.

### EPIPHANY

The shift came like a bolt of lightning. Everything wrong in the monster's life, all the pain and suffering it caused all crystallized in its mind. It suddenly understood the agony it inflicted and it empathized. No longer willing to return to old habits, the monster uses that epiphany and the help of better people to guide its actions. There are times, though, when instinct overwhelms enlightenment and the monster must struggle against its nature from doing something shortsighted.

### THE ANTI-HERO

So, in playing the monster and walking that line, the players want to assume the role of anti-heroes. But how does fiction manage to popularize the anti-hero? It's simple, really. The anti-hero shouldn't be about the character eventually doing "good." Her arc may never be about eventually becoming humanity's champion. It shouldn't even be about him making the publicly acceptable choices. In fact, the anti-hero makes the choices that shock us or that we secretly wish we had the gumption to make.

No, what really makes an anti-hero palatable to the others is a clearly defined code of conduct. Their actions may be questionable, but we should always understand why they react the way they do, or what lines they may never cross: the assassin who never hurts or commits violence in front of children; the seemingly belligerent vampire that protects the homeless in his community. Those rules need to exist and exist plainly for us to empathize with the anti-hero and for players to play them. The same can be held for monsters that walk that fine line between sometimes villain and sometimes ally. So long as the anti-hero is possessed of a code of conduct that is understandable to others, his or her actions may be excused and even condoned because we know that their morality is never absolute.

## EVOLUTION

Nothing remains the same, nothing is truly stagnant. Over the years or decades evil for its own sake has lost its appeal and now the monster realizes that nothing comes from destruction, especially happiness or satisfaction; the monster has evolved. It is no longer as selfish or as murderous. It's done some good and likes the redemptive qualities of it. It likes the difficulty of it. But old habits are hard to bury and doing good is the harder course. That means that sometimes the urge to take a shortcut is overwhelming and sometimes people deserve the bad things that happen to them.

## INNOCENT

The monster is a true innocent, naïve in the ways of the world and unknowing of its strength or appearance. Like a child, it can react negatively when hurt or angry, but a child doesn't possess the powers that it does. This monster is evolving through its experiences and while it may not understand what is right or wrong yet, it wants to be accepted and that's a start.

## LOVE

The monster found love at one point, something to change its nature. It now struggles to be better either for its beloved or in memory of them. Unfortunately, old habits die hard and old thirsts and hungers remain an addiction it must constantly struggle against. Sometimes the inclination is saved by the thought of its loved one and sometimes the compulsion is overwhelming.

## NURTURE VS. NATURE

The monster was supposed to be one thing, but it was raised by kind and caring guardians and became something better. This creature proves that few things are inherently good or evil, but have the capacity to change. It has all the faults and weaknesses of the people who raised it, and perhaps a small fear that something will make it turn to evil, that perhaps nurture isn't stronger than nature. Regardless, this monster is hunted by those who want it to act as it was born/created to do. They want it to embrace the vile path, unleashing its inner demons to torment the living.

## REPROGRAMMED

This monster's personality was reprogrammed, the killing codes and urges repressed in favor of more constructive pursuits. It does good now because it was programmed for such, just as it did evil before because of coding. The personality rewrite isn't always stable; however, and sometimes the old programming resurfaces. Call it muscle memory or rogue binary strings, the result is that the monster is sometimes erratic in its actions, though it can resist it.

## SALVATION

The monster discovered a higher power and, in doing so, realized that its actions no longer fit within the parameters of its faith. It now tries acting in accordance with its

new tenets, atoning for its past life and trying to find redemption in positive action, but sometimes its faith and its instincts run contrary to each other. It struggles against its urges and not always successfully.

## MONSTER BENCHMARKS

Monsters are generally strong in one area and sometimes lacking in others. This doesn't mean that it can't be well-rounded, merely that monsters were created or came about with a specific function in mind that makes versatility a bit more difficult. Maybe they're known for their Strength or their Dexterity. Perhaps they take punishment like nobody's business or adapt rapidly.

In this case, the monster should be able to excel in one trait. It is the element of mythology about them, the one thing that forms the basis of legends. Dracula could enthrall victims with his charm; an alien critter infesting the ship might be fast; Frankenstein's monster was strong. If, however, the monster is well rounded, the upper ceiling on individual ranks should be lower. No monster should be good at everything, just certain things.

## MYTHOLOGY

In an age when monsters are plentiful and heroes spring from the loins of gods, having an ability rank hit 10 isn't inconceivable. That said, being the paragon of anything in a myth game also means being the target of anyone trying to prove their superiority or simply questing for epic challenges.

## PRE-INDUSTRIAL

Monsters can have a trait as high as rank 7, the peak of human achievement. That also means unless a church or monarchy controls them, they are likely hunted, feared, hated, and coveted for their traits. Magicians look for new creatures to enslave, alchemists look to turn the monster into ingredients, power-hungry kings and more will be after the monster.

## INDUSTRIAL ERA

More people of power are popping up as pulp-action heroes, though traits of 8 are nothing to laugh at. These are rare, however, with most traits under rank 7.

## SUPERHERO ERAS

With the rise of superheroes, average traits jump by increments of about five points per decade, starting in the 1950s. At this time, an ability rank between 10 and 12 isn't inconceivable, but it is rare. More likely, a monster will still be incredibly capable at the 5–8 range.

## THE FUTURE

Is the future filled with beings whose abilities average 5 or more and peak at 10? Or is it populated with fragile humans dwarfed by their ancestors' accomplishments? Regardless, monsters may no longer be good at just one thing, but reach their peak in two or more traits.

## WEAKNESSES

Every monster has a weakness, an Achilles Heel that renders it vulnerable to the very society that it struggles to protect. Each of the monstrous templates have such a weakness, but any player creating a monster from scratch should ascribe them a suitable foible. On the plus side, such complications offer players opportunities to earn hero points while playing monsters.

## ARCHETYPES

The following archetypes all serve as good starting places for *Supernaturals* characters.

### CURSED ADVENTURER

It wouldn't be the first time the Curse-Burdened Adventurer stole something that didn't belong to him, but that doesn't make him *bad* per se. And it wasn't the first time he paid for his folly, though it was never anything like this. The wrong burial chamber and he came away with an artifact that he must forever carry with him. Now the Curse-Burdened does good, praying he can find salvation and freedom in his actions while using the powers of the device to help others. There are setbacks; however, and the knowledge that should he ever lose or misplace the artifact in his possession, he will surely suffer and die in pain. So the item remains with him, closer to him than his own heart.

### EX-CAPE

It was all a lie...the tights and the cape; the photographers and the grateful public; the endorsements and the baroque villains. Then, one night, the Ex-Cape stumbled upon real evil, stumbled upon the shambling things that sang to cockroaches and ate the very sanity of toddlers. It obsessed her, and slowly the glitz and glam of her old life fell away as she pursued the shadows themselves for truth, for justice. But justice is a human sentiment and there is no balance to the scales. There aren't even scales, just the survival of a delicate species in a sea of carnivores. The Ex-Cape turned her back on her former life and apprenticed herself to the very mystics she once mocked. She became a new crusader against the darkness and was alienated by former friends. Even her nemeses felt too embarrassed by her actions to go after her. Now she has a bigger war to fight.

### INFECTED HERO

It hurts, like ants making a nest of his flesh, like his eyes are filled to bursting with maggots. The disease that has killed or made monsters of lesser men and women has been held in check in the Infected Hero, but it has come with a price. Some days the pain is manageable, some days crippling, and other days it is howl-at-the-moon agony. The Infected Hero must survive though, no matter how much he wants to die sometimes, for his blood may carry the cure to help the millions infected or in danger of infection. So he does what he can and throws himself into battle or into the race...adrenaline is the only way to curb the pain.

## MASSACRE SURVIVOR

It was supposed to be a fun weekend, the last hoorah before final exams and summer vacation split the friends apart for life. Isolated, one by one the friends died brutally, viciously at the hands of the killer. The weekend of fun became a weekend of blood until it all came down to the plucky heroine and the supernatural killer. The heroine emerged victorious, killing the murderer of her friends and earning herself the regrettable appellation "massacre survivor." But her ordeal hadn't ended. It'd just begun. Alienated and distrusted, the Massacre Survivor remains the seminal virgin figure for the other murderers and monsters out there looking to sacrifice her. Unbeknownst to them, though, she's become quite good at turning the tables on their kind. Now, with the body count mounting and a new murderer on the loose, the Massacre Survivor is out to live up to her name yet again.

### MONSTER HUNTER

The Monster Hunter's been doing this thing since he was a kid. He's got it down pat, every step taken with bored familiarity. And he's well-equipped for the job, a tool for every occasion, though improvisation is necessary to break the routine and keep his wits sharp. The Monster Hunter is tight-lipped about when this all started for him, but he's been at it so long that he switches between gallows' humor and true grit with nary a blink. He's seen it all twice, so the third time's likely to be less impressive for him. One thing is certain, he's been killing monsters for quite some time and it's likely been a family business. In fact, from what he says, the day he can't handle something is the day he calls for mom's help. And mom is downright scary according to him.

### NEW TEMPLE GUARDIAN

The New Temple Guardian is a hero of someone else's manufacturing. He was simply in the right ruins at the wrong time, and is now the only person capable of pursuing a great evil that he accidentally unleashed. Although the New Temple Guardian was already someone of good conscience and deeds, a supernatural entity bequeathed powers and a role unto him. It now guides his destiny, even though there are times he fights against it. Again and again; however, it is his sense of responsibility that forces him to don the attire and wield the powers of the ancients. And it is his guilt at having released evil that forces him to stay the course.

### NOBLE MONSTER

Never judge a book by its cover, but in the case of this hero, that might be more difficult than it seems. The Noble Monster was born different and raised away from the general public. His form, however, belies the bottomless compassion and kindness that drives him to help others. Despite the danger to life and limb, this hero is driven by an ethos that truly marks him as noble. It is for that reason that the hatred and fear leveled against him trouble him so. Regardless, how others act toward him will never diminish his love and respect for life. Even when it puts him at risk; even when anger gets the better of him; he is not the monster he appears to be.

# CURSED ADVENTURER

PL10

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
1	3	8	0
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
4	3	2	2

"YOU WANT ADVENTURE? YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S IN STORE FOR YOU."

## POWERS

**Ankh of Black Anubis:** 47 points, Easily Removable (-18 points), Indestructible • 29 points

**Clairvoyance:** Remote Sensing 10 (Visual), Subtle 2, Uncontrolled • 12 points

**Gaseous Form:** Insubstantial 2 • 10 points

**Immortal:** Immunity 11 (Aging, Life Support) • 11 points

**Vampiric Touch:** Weaken Stamina 4 (Resisted by Fortitude), Incurable; Regeneration 8, Persistent, Source (Weaken Stamina) • 14 points

## EQUIPMENT

**Binoculars:** Feature 1 • 1 point

**Flashlight:** Feature 1 • 1 point

**Leather Jacket:** Protection 1 • 1 point

**Arsenal:** Array (15 points)

- **Explosives:** Ranged Burst Area Damage 5 • 15 points

- **Heavy Pistol:** Ranged Damage 4 • 1 point

- **Knife:** Strength-based Damage 1, Improved Critical • 1 point

## ADVANTAGES

Agile Feint, All-out Attack, Assessment, Close Attack 3, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 5, Evasion, Improvised Tools, Jack-of-all-trades, Power Attack, Ranged Attack 5, Takedown 2, Uncanny Dodge

## SKILLS

Acrobatics 4 (+7), Athletics 4 (+5), Deception 4 (+6), Expertise: Magic 9 (+11), Investigation 9 (+11), Perception 8 (+8), Ranged Combat: Guns 6 (+14), Stealth 8 (+11)

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +2<sup>1</sup>

Heavy Pistol +14      Ranged, Damage 4

Knife +12      Close, Damage 1 (Crit 19-20)

Vampiric Touch +11      Close, Weaken 4 (Fort DC 14)

## DEFENSE

DODGE	12	FORTITUDE	7
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PARRY	11	TOUGHNESS	8/5*
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WILL	8	*Without Defensive Roll	
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## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

**Motivation – Doing Good:** Although cursed, the Adventurer means to do some good with his abilities while he can.

**Weakness:** If the Cursed Adventurer is separated from the Ankh of Black Anubis, all of his Abilities become Impaired, Disabled, and eventually Debilitated (generally taking 5 ranks of time—about 4 minutes—to progress to each condition).



POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 46 • POWERS 29 • ADVANTAGES 23 • SKILLS 26 • DEFENSES 21 = 150

# EX-CAPE

PL12

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
2	5	6	2
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
3	4	1	1

**POWERS****Flight:** Flight 7 (250 MPH) • 14 points**Force Field:** Protection 10 • 10 points**Illumination:** Environment 1 (Bright Light) • 2 points**Light Control:** Array (36 points)

- **Light Blast:** Multiattack Ranged Damage 12 • 36 points
- **Light Flash:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction (Resisted by Fortitude; Vision Impaired, Vision Disabled, Vision Unaware), Limited to One Sense • 1 points

**Sensory Shield:** Immunity 2 (Visual Afflictions) • 2 points**ADVANTAGES**

All-out Attack, Evasion 2, Favored Environment (aerial), Interpose, Leadership, Power Attack, Precise Attack 2 (Ranged, Cover and Concealment)

**SKILLS**

Acrobatics 4 (+9), Expertise: Magic 9 (+10), Expertise: Physics 9 (+10), Insight 6 (+8), Investigation 10 (+11), Perception 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Light Control 8 (+12), Technology 6 (+7), Vehicles 4 (+8)

**OFFENSE****INITIATIVE +5**

Light Blast +12      Ranged, Damage 12 (Multiattack)

Light Flash +12      Ranged, Affliction 12 (Fort DC 22)

Unarmed +6      Close, Damage 2

**DEFENSE**

DODGE	11	FORTITUDE	7
PARRY	10	TOUGHNESS	13/3*
WILL	15	*Without Force Field	

**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS****Neverending Battle:** The Ex-Cape is devoted to the biggest fight there is: the battle against supernatural evil for the survival of the human race.**Old Ghosts:** Sometimes ghosts from a former heroic lifetime return to haunt the Ex-Cape.

"I WAS LIKE YOU ONCE.  
I LEARNED. SO WILL YOU."



**POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 48 • POWERS 65 • ADVANTAGES 9 • SKILLS 31 • DEFENSES 27 = 180**

# INFECTED HERO

PL10

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
3	7	6	3
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
5	5	2	-1

**POWERS****Hyper-Metabolism:** Regeneration 2, Persistent • 3 points**Super-Speed:** Enhanced Initiative 2, Quickness 9, Speed 9 (1,000 MPH) • 20 points**Speed Stunts:** Array (21 points)

- **Whirlwind Attack:** Strength-based Damage 5, Burst Area 8, Selective 8 • 21 points
- **Rapid Fire:** Ranged Multiattack Damage 6 (throwing descriptor), Accurate 3 • 1 point
- **Super-Sonic Punch:** Strength-based Damage 7, Penetrating 10, Accurate 2 • 1 point

**Water Run:** Movement 1 (Water-Walking), Limited to while moving • 1 point**ADVANTAGES**

Evasion, Improved Initiative 2, Move-by Action

**SKILLS**

Acrobatics 4 (+11), Athletics 4 (+7), Expertise: Streetwise 8 (+10), Insight 2 (+5), Investigation 4 (+6), Perception 8 (+11)

**OFFENSE****INITIATIVE +15**

Rapid Fire +11      Ranged, Damage 6 (Multiattack)

Super-Sonic Punch +10      Close, Damage 10 (Penetrating)

Whirlwind Attack      Burst Area, Close, Damage 8

**DEFENSE**

DODGE	12	FORTITUDE	7
PARRY	11	TOUGHNESS	8/5*
WILL	8	*Without Defensive Roll	

**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS****The PAIN!** The Infected Hero suffers constantly. Sometimes it's manageable, sometimes it's not.**Only Hope:** Hope is all that keeps the Infected Hero going: hope of saving others, hope of stopping what started this, hope of finally putting an end to it.

POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 60 • POWERS 47 • ADVANTAGES 2 • SKILLS 15 • DEFENSES 26 = 150

# MASSACRE SURVIVOR

PL6

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
1	4	2	2
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
2	4	1	4

**ADVANTAGES**

Attractive, Beginner's Luck, Daze (Deception), Defensive Roll 2, Diehard, Improvised Weapon 3, Inspire, Luck, Seize Initiative, Uncanny Dodge

**SKILLS**

Acrobatics 2 (+6), Athletics 6 (+6), Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+6), Deception 2 (+6), Insight 5 (+7), Investigation 6 (+7), Perception 7 (+9), Sleight of Hand 2 (+6), Stealth 4 (+8), Vehicles 4 (+8)

**OFFENSE****INITIATIVE +4**

Improvised Weapon +6	Close, Damage 3
Unarmed +6	Close, Damage 1

**DEFENSE**

DODGE	8	FORTITUDE	5
PARRY	6	TOUGHNESS	4/2*
WILL	7	*Without Defensive Roll	

**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS**

**Survivor:** The Survivor survives, even if that leaves a trail of bodies a mile long, losing everyone else along the way.

**Underestimated:** Nobody understands it was more than just luck ensuring survival. They dismiss the "victim" all too easily.

"I'VE FACED  
WORSE THAN  
YOU...FAR  
WORSE."



POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 40 • POWERS 0 • ADVANTAGES 13 • SKILLS 21 • DEFENSES 16 = 90

# MONSTER HUNTER

PL8

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
4	2	6	4
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
4	2	3	2

**EQUIPMENT**

5 points in miscellaneous gear

**Armor:** Protection 3 • 3 points**Arsenal:** Array (10 points)

- **Shotgun:** Ranged Damage 5 • 10 points
- **Heavy Pistol:** Ranged Damage 4 • 1 point
- **Knife:** Strength-based Damage 1, Improved Critical • 1 point

**VEHICLE: CAR • 10 POINTS**

SIZE: Large STR 5 SPEED 5 DEF 8 TOU 8

**ADVANTAGES**

Close Attack 2, Connected, Contacts, Diehard, Equipment 6, Languages 2 (Infernal, Latin), Luck, Precise Attack 2 (Ranged, Concealment; Close, Concealment), Quick Draw, Well-informed

**SKILLS**

Athletics 6 (+10), Deception 4 (+6), Expertise: Magic 5 (+8), Expertise: Streetwise 9 (+12), Insight 4 (+8), Intimidation 6 (+8), Investigation 8 (+11), Perception 4 (+8), Ranged Combat: Guns 8 (+10), Stealth 4 (+6), Treatment 2 (+5)

**OFFENSE****INITIATIVE +2**

Heavy Pistol +10	Ranged, Damage 4
Knife +8	Close, Damage 5 (Crit 19-20)
Shotgun +10	Ranged, Damage 5
Unarmed +8	Close, Damage 4

**DEFENSE**

DODGE	9	FORTITUDE	8
PARRY	9	TOUGHNESS	7/7*
WILL	8	*Without Armor.	

**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS**

**Been There, Killed That:** The Monster Hunter is more than a little jaded and tends towards overconfidence, especially when things seem familiar.

**Pretend It's a Plan:** The Monster Hunter tends to shoot first and plan later when the bullets don't kill the thing.

"PLAN? WE BEAT THE EVER-LOVING CHRIST OUT OF THAT THING UNTIL WE'RE UP TO OUR EYEBALLS IN CALAMARI!"



**POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 54 • POWERS 0 • ADVANTAGES 18 • SKILLS 30 • DEFENSES 18 = 120**

# NEW TEMPLE GUARDIAN

PL12

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
2	8	8	2
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
3	8	4	2

## POWERS

- Gift of Abbridon:** Enhanced Dexterity 3, Enhanced Agility 3 • 12 points
- Gift of Heshem:** Impervious Protection 7 • 14 points
- Gift of Lamal:** Teleport 5 (900 ft.), Change Direction, Change Velocity, Easy, Extended (30 miles) • 22 points
- Independent Aim:** Feature 1 (May fire two guns at once) • 1 point

## EQUIPMENT

**Arsenal:** Array (18 points)

- Two Heavy Pistols with Laser Sight: Ranged Damage 4, Improved Aim • 18 points
- Pepper Spray: Close Visual Dazzle 4 • 1 point
- Taser: Affliction (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated) • 1 point

Caltrops: As the vehicle Feature • 1 point

Flash Goggles: Feature • 1 point

Mini-Tracer: Feature 1 (Tracking) • 1 point

2 points of miscellaneous equipment

## ADVANTAGES

Equipment 5, Improved Aim, Languages 3 (French, Latin, two ancient languages), Precise Attack (Ranged, Concealment), Quick Draw, Uncanny Dodge



## SKILLS

Acrobatics 5 (+13), Athletics 4 (+6), Expertise: History 8 (+12), Expertise: Magic 8 (+12), Insight 4 (+6), Intimidation 4 (+6), Investigation 7 (+11), Perception 5 (+7), Persuasion 4 (+6), Ranged Combat: Guns 8 (+16), Stealth 5 (+13), Technology 2 (+6)

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +8

Heavy pistols +16

Ranged, Damage 4 / 4

## DEFENSE

DODGE	13	FORTITUDE	12
PARRY	13	TOUGHNESS	10
WILL	10		

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

**Duty:** Bound as a guardian, the character must now pursue and defeat an evil he accidentally unleashed.

**Higher Power:** The guardian's powers come from a supernatural higher power, as responsibility and penance, and the character must answer to that power.

**POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 62 • POWERS 49 • ADVANTAGES 12 • SKILLS 32 • DEFENSES 125 = 180**

# NOBLE MONSTER

PL9

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
6	1	9	1
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
4	1	2	-1

**POWERS****Claws:** Strength-based Damage 3 • 3 points**Not Human:** Immunity 10 (Life Support) • 10 points**Supernatural Hide:** Protection 5, Impervious • 10 points**Supernatural Senses:** Senses 2 (Darkvision) • 2 points**Supernatural Stamina:** Regeneration 2 • 2 points**Tail:** Extra Limb 1 • 1 point**ADVANTAGES**

All-out Attack, Animal Empathy, Chokehold, Defensive Attack, Evasion, Fascinate (Intimidation), Improved Defense, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Power Attack, Ranged Attack 8, Takedown 2

**SKILLS**

Athletics 5 (+10), Expertise: Supernatural 6 (+8), Insight 8 (+9), Intimidation 11 (+10), Investigation 6 (+8), Perception 6 (+7)

**OFFENSE****INITIATIVE +1**

Unarmed +9	Close, Damage 6
Claws +9	Close, Damage 9

**DEFENSE**

DODGE	8	FORTITUDE	10
PARRY	9	TOUGHNESS	10
WILL	8		

**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS****Mythic Weakness:** Choose a suitable Mythic Weakness for the Noble Monster (see the **Mythic Weakness** complication).**Not a Monster:** The Noble Monster tries, at all times, to deny his monstrous nature.

"I AM NOT  
YOUR MONSTER!  
SERIOUSLY!"

**POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 46 • POWERS 28 • ADVANTAGES 20 • SKILLS 21 • DEFENSES 20 = 135**

# MONSTROUS TEMPLATES

Monstrous Templates are minor archetypes that give characters a baseline of traits attributed to all monsters of that genus, along with a power point total in costs. This means players can drop them into builds and then design the rest of their character accordingly, making their creation unique from the typical rendition of said monster. The following list of monsters is a general baseline around which players can design something more to their needs. Just bear in mind that many of them cannot hide among normal people by default. It takes effort or time or it simply remains impossible.

When applying a template with a missing ability (notably Stamina for the undead) to an existing creature, note the need to "refund" any power points spent on the creature's Stamina rank; the template includes the -10 points for the creature lacking the ability.

## ALIEN

These visitors from other planets have somehow ended up on Earth. Whether their ship crashed and they were captured or they've been sent here to infiltrate our society as advance scouts or they came to live or hunt or breed, the fact remains that they are new to this world and uncertain of the finer points of human existence.

Regardless, the aliens listed here are "good guys," though the government might hunt them and the general public

fears them. They are possible fugitives of the planet they came from, disobeying orders in regard to their purpose here, or the prophets for grave danger. Regardless, Earth is their home and they will protect it. Just note that these templates work best in "normal" series where few or no high-powered individuals exist and aliens are a thing of fiction until now.

## HUNTER

The hunter lives for sport. It enjoys the hunt and pitting its skills against worthy opponents. Something changed though, and either the hunter is trapped on Earth or it stayed voluntarily to hunt after something that is a threat to humanity. Generally, hunters are slightly stronger and faster than most humans. They come equipped with some weapons for the hunt, but their deadliest traits are their skills and their cunning. Hunting is a thinking-monster's game, and the hunter treats each pursuit like a game of chess.

## HYBRID

Somehow a human's and alien's genetic code were intermixed, creating an amphibious hybrid. Perhaps it was accidental, the result of scientific experimentation or the manner in which this particular alien species survives. Regardless, the human host is in control, but with aquatic abilities born from his new physiology. Unfortunately, the changes are obvious and the monster cannot easily fit in among people.

## SWARMER

**26 POINTS**

**AGL +4 FGT +2**

**Powers:** Claws (Strength-based Damage 2); Leaping 3; Speed 3 (16 MPH)

**Advantages:** All-out Attack, Evasion, Move-by Action, Power Attack

**Skills:** Intimidation +4

**Totals:** Abilities 12 + Powers 8 + Advantages 4 + Skills 2 + Defenses 0 = 26

**Suggested Complications:** Difficulty making decisions, absence of comforting mind-link, fighting strong basic instincts, hunted by hive/swarm, too easily loyal.

## HUNTER

**32 POINTS**

**STR +2 AGL +2 DEX +3 FGT +2 INT +1**

**Advantages:** Assessment, Equipment 4

**Skills:** Expertise: Survival +5, Expertise: Tactics +5, Intimidation +4

**Totals:** Abilities 20 + Powers 0 + Advantages 5 + Skills 7 + Defenses 0 = 32

**Suggested Complications:** Hunted by government/corporation, hunted by "prey," code of conduct, need to prove self.

## HYBRID

**21 POINTS**

**STA +2 AGL +2**

**Powers:** Aquatic (Immunity 3 (cold, drowning, pressure), Movement 1 (Environmental Adaptation—underwater), Senses 1 (Low-Light Vision), Swimming 4 (8 MPH))

**Advantages:** Diehard

**Skills:** Intimidation +4

**Totals:** Abilities 8 + Powers 10 + Advantages 1 + Skills 2 + Defenses 0 = 21

**Suggested Complications:** Dueling instincts, conflicting senses, odd feeding habits, strong mating urge.

## INFILTRATOR

**33 POINTS**

**INT +3**

**Powers:** Mind Reading 4; Morph 3 (any humanoid), Move Action

**Advantages:** Jack-Of-All-Trades

**Skills:** Deception +8, Investigation +4

**Totals:** Abilities 6 + Powers 20 + Advantages 1 + Skills 6 + Defenses 0 = 33

**Suggested Complications:** Inability to separate memories, submerging too far into a role, hunted by former leaders, hunted by government/corporation.

**FAMILIAR****39 POINTS****STA +2, DEX +1****Powers:** Glamour (Illusion 4 (all senses), Selective, Resistible by Will); Invisibility (Concealment 2 (normal sight))**Advantages:** Artificer, Languages (Magic), Taunt**Skills:** Deception +4, Expertise: Magic +8**Totals:** Abilities 6 + Powers 24 + Advantages 3 + Skills 6 + Defenses 0 = 39**Suggested Complications:** Hunted by creator, keeper of a secret or truth, hunted by murderers of its creator, desired for its magic, hungry for magic.**INFILTRATOR**

It is the infiltrator's job to do just that. It might serve as an advanced scout for invasions or perhaps it's a self-defense mechanism that allows the creature to use morphing and mind reading abilities to "fit in" and stay safe. In the former case, the infiltrator no longer follows orders and is likely hiding from its kind. In the latter case, whatever has forced the infiltrator to hide is likely still out there, hunting for it.

**SWARMER**

The swarmer is part of a collective, a group of creatures that hunt and fight together. Only, something has changed. Maybe the group has died, the creature has gained autonomy, or been exiled from the swarm. Now alone, it seeks companionship among the strange humanoids of Earth and is growing to enjoy its uniqueness.

**ARTIFICIAL LIFE**

Whether by science or the mystical arts, the monster is a fabrication; an artificial life form. Generally such creatures are created to test a theory, to push "science" to its limits, or to create a servitor with a specific function. Whatever the need, the artificial life form gained independence, despite its creator's wishes, and escaped.

The artificial life form is hunted by its creator for its betrayal or because the creature contains a secret. That also means it might be hunted by others looking to capture the secret for themselves. Despite this, the artificial life form is an innocent in the world. Perhaps not naïve, but certainly more open-minded and eager to make friends.

**FAMILIAR**

Known in some circles as a homunculus, a familiar is created deliberately and artificially by a wizard or alchemist to act as a companion and assistant. While their construction dictates their role, most accompany the spellcaster while remaining hidden. They use their guile and mischief to their creator's benefit, though something changed to render this familiar independent; the death of the wizard, or fear, or betrayal, but something.

**GOLEM****17 POINTS****STR +2, STA +2****Powers:** Protection 4; Super-Strength (Enhanced Strength 4, Limited to Lifting)**Advantages:** Diehard**Totals:** Abilities 8 + Powers 8 + Advantages 1 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 17**Suggested Complications:** Magic-glyph deactivates it, must obey whoever holds its parchment, naïve and curious, simple-minded or child-like, doesn't understand its own strength.**ROBOT****46 POINTS****STR +1, STA — DEX +1, INT +1****Powers:** Armor (Protection 5, Impervious); Datalink (Radio Communication 1, Senses 2 (Infravision, Radio); Robot (Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects))**Advantages:** Eidetic Memory**Skills:** Technology +6**Totals:** Abilities -4 + Powers 46 + Advantages 1 + Skills 3 + Defenses 0 = 46**Suggested Complications:** Fighting original programming, programming wipe reveals mysterious function, hunted by creator, hunted by greedy corporation.**GOLEM**

From the traditional Jewish monster of legend to Frankenstein's creation, the Golem is a creature of flesh or other substances made into a hulking form of man. It is powerful and most often a protector of the creator, though something has rendered this one independent. Perhaps it was created ages ago and survived its creators, or maybe the spell to give it life gave it a soul as well.

**ROBOT**

Created for battle, for domestic work, for advancement, for kicks...whatever the reason, this monster represents the greatest advancement in robotics and artificial intelligence. It's the latter that's the problem, however. The robot has developed a personality far beyond its original programming and gone against its intended purpose. Given the robot's uniqueness and manufacturing cost, there are people vested in its capture.

**CELESTIAL**

If aliens represent humanity's strange and frightening neighbors in the universe, celestials are the denizens of a planar-verse above and below our perceptions. Where aliens are scientifically plausible, celestials are more magical/mystical. They are creatures of faith and myth, wielding powers that fail to adhere to the limits of physics. Celestials often move among people, both vested and emotionally disinterested in our affairs. They can appear normal, but they are never truly human in reaction or outlook. More importantly, they follow an agenda and their battle is rarely for humanity itself, but for its spirit, its soul.

## ANGEL

Avatars of one of many religions, these creatures act according to the will of a Higher Power, even if they don't understand that will sometimes. They obey, and this angel now finds itself in the physical planes, helping heroes fight the darkness and saving souls with but a fraction of its original power. As to its ultimate objective, however, not even the angel knows.

## DEMON

Creatures often serve the antithesis of life across the many faiths. This particular demon is different. It has come to like humanity, to enjoy life in this world. Perhaps there is an element of redemption in its soul or maybe it's merely

### ANGEL

**32 POINTS**

**PRE +3**

**Powers:** Dazzle (Visual Perception Area Cumulative Affliction 4 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Vision Impaired, Vision Disabled, Vision Unaware), Limited to One Sense); AE: Emotion Control (Perception Ranged Cumulative Affliction 4 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated), Subtle, Variable Descriptor—Emotions)

**Advantages:** Attractive, Daze (Intimidation), Fascinate (Intimidation)

**Skills:** Insight +2, Intimidation +6

**Totals:** Abilities 6 + Powers 19 + Advantages 3 + Skills 4 + Defenses 0 = 32

**Suggested Complications:** Dangers of temptation, holding on to faith, learning to be human, trying to retain an element of divinity, following strange orders, forced to live among humans as punishment.

### DEMON

**29 POINTS**

**PRE +3**

**Powers:** Fire Control (Perception Ranged Move Object 6, Affects Insubstantial 2, Limited to Fire; AE: Ranged Damage 6)

**Advantages:** Attractive, Daze (Deception), Fascinate (Deception)

**Skills:** Deception +4, Insight +4, Persuasion +4

**Totals:** Abilities 6 + Powers 14 + Advantages 3 + Skills 6 + Defenses 0 = 29

**Suggested Complications:** Hunted by other demons, hunted by evangelical forces, in love with a human, seeking forgiveness for all its actions, questioning its ability to stay "good."

### IMMORTAL

**33 POINTS**

**INT +2 AWE +2**

**Powers:** Healing 4 (Limited to Self); Immortality 5 (1 day)

**Advantages:** Fearless, Jack-Of-All-Trades

**Skills:** Expertise: History +6, Expertise: Magic +6, Expertise: Theology +6

**Totals:** Abilities 8 + Powers 14 + Advantages 2 + Skills 9 + Defenses 0 = 33

**Suggested Complications:** Oathsworn to help, hunted by mystics, hunted by corporation for immortality secrets, mistaken for demons.

forgotten who it's supposed to be. Regardless, it is now hunted by the legions it once served.

## IMMORTAL

Immortals are near human in appearance, though they bear some mark of the animal kingdom. Myth is filled with the tales of their numbers, of hawk-headed deities or spider tricksters or many-tailed humans. Many, though, were simply immortals living in planes and realms bordering earth. They have seen and experienced much, and often travel back to Earth to enjoy the many splendors the planet and its people have to offer. For this reason some have taken to defending this realm against the evil they know exists.

## GESTALT

By curse, by heredity, by accident, this creature was once human before something merged it with the genes or quality of an animal. We're not talking someone who was turned by the bite of a vampire or a werewolf, but a hybrid of two seemingly normal species into this horrific gestalt. Most of those afflicted in this manner not only become monstrous in appearance, but also begin adopting the personality of the baser critter. They become more animal, and the struggle is to preserve their humanity and their reasoning.

Those who become bestial are either forced into isolation or outcast by choice. By choice, these supernaturals fear what they are capable of doing in public. Those forced into isolation are chased by a frightened public into hiding. Regardless, both types are on constant

### THE BEAST

**27 POINTS**

**STR +3 STA +3 AGL +2 AWE +1**

**Powers:** Natural Weapons (Strength-based Damage 2), Senses 2 (Acute Smell, Low-Light Vision, Tracking), Speed 1

**Advantages:** Move-by Action, Power Attack

**Skills:** Perception +4

**Totals:** Abilities 18 + Powers 5 + Advantages 2 + Skills 2 + Defenses 0 = 27

**Suggested Complications:** Easily angered and frustrated, hunted by society or an organization, afraid of his own strength, afraid of rejection, gruff and callous demeanor to protect herself.

### MAD SCIENCE HYBRID

**33 POINTS**

**STR +2 STA +2 AGL +3 AWE +1**

**Powers:** Movement 3 (Safe Fall, Wall-crawling 2), Quickness 2, Senses 2 (Low-Light Vision, Radius Vision), Speed 1

**Advantages:** Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Initiative, Move-by Action

**Skills:** Perception +6

**Totals:** Abilities 16 + Powers 11 + Advantages 3 + Skills 3 + Defenses 0 = 33

**Suggested Complications:** Difficulty understanding other people, hunted by the labs, slowly losing human control, driven by animal instincts, unable to gauge her own strength.



guard against a scared society and because they fear what they themselves are capable of doing when they lose control. Sometimes, it is for this very reason that they help others, to prove themselves good and not so far gone.

## THE BEAST

The curse leveled against this gestalt turned him into something humanoid, but with animal like qualities and sensibilities. Maybe it was supposed to be a lesson in humility or a genetic gift passed down through the generations, but the gestalt now possesses the speed, strength, and agility of beasts, as well as the temperament and patience of one. It's a miserable existence, this self-imposed exile, but it beats being carved up on a researcher's table or being put to the torch.

## MAD SCIENCE HYBRID

Maybe it was accident, maybe it was deliberate, but the end result was chromosomal translocation that merged two different genetic structures together like a zipper. Now the mutation is ongoing, and the scientist is losing himself to whatever he fused with, be it spider, fly, reptile, etc. The translocation has come with benefits, giving the hybrid the abilities associated with its animal counterpart, but the lizard brain that drives all survival and mating instincts is taking over slowly, and the scientist is racing against time to undo the damage before she loses all sense of self.

## RISEN

What was once dead is now alive again...sort of. Risen are monsters living inside their own reanimated bodies. The return trip has invested them with a hunger for something living—fresh blood, flesh, organs or brains. It is the quality that sustains them and turns them into ravenous fiends. It's what forces them to lose control and feast upon the living.

In this case, however, the risen character is one that has found a way to fight their nature. Perhaps they've substituted a need for human flesh or blood with that of animals. Maybe they've found a charm or talisman that eliminates their hunger, at least temporarily. Regardless, they are the exception and it is the rule that makes unlife hard for them. And frankly, monster-slayers and their own kind don't care if you're good or bad; they just want to end your unholy existence.

## CLASSIC VAMPIRE

The vampires of old are noble in their own way, but monstrous. It still isn't uncommon for them to sire a child out of loneliness and then retire into isolation, or for their children to escape their grip. Regardless, the classic vampire as offspring and character is more a child of the previous century. They've learned self-control and ways of drinking blood without killing. They want to explore this new era, perhaps they even want to find redemption in the heroics of others, but there's always a cold, bloodthirsty hunger about them.



## CLASSIC VAMPIRE

**74 POINTS**

**STR +2 STA — AGL +1 DEX +1 PRE +2**

**Powers:** Blood Drain (Weaken Stamina 3 (Resisted by Fortitude), Grab-based, Limited to draining one rank per round), Emotion Control (Perception Ranged Cumulative Affliction 3 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated), Subtle, Variable Descriptor (Emotions)), Mist Form (Insubstantial 2), Spider Climb (Movement 1 (Wall-Crawling)), Undead Invulnerability (Immortality 2 (1 week), Limited (not when staked or beheaded); Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects); Protection 7, Impervious, Limited (not against holy weapons))

**Advantages:** Animal Empathy, Fascinate (Intimidation), Fearless

**Skills:** Intimidation +6

**Totals:** Abilities 2 + Powers 66 + Advantages 3 + Skills 3 + Defenses 0 = 74

**Suggested Complications:** Fight a ravenous nature, hunted by old progenitor, hunted by vampire-killer, anachronistic, attracted to innocence, lamenting misdeeds.

## METROSEXUAL VAMPIRE

This modern vampire was born into a society of undead. Whereas the classic vampire is a brooding loner sticking to dilapidated castles in the wilderness, this contemporary vampire finds comfort in the anonymity of the city. He is less couth but more honest; more social but no less brooding. The modern vampire is also younger, at least in outlook, and definitely breaks with his society's traditions by fraternizing and helping the humans.

## MUMMY

Incan, Chinese or Egyptian, a mummy is the body of someone entombed and preserved hundreds, if not thousands, of years ago. Whether mummified alive or after they'd died, something preserved the mummy's spirit in its body, releasing it when the seal of the sarcophagus was broken. Mummy characters are likely guardians of divine objects or the force of will for ancient gods. Regardless, they are tasked with a duty, whether it is hunting down an ancient enemy, protecting cultural artefacts, or retrieving a stolen relic.

## ZOMBIE

Whatever plague awoke the zombies hasn't worked as planned. One or more of the infected have somehow retained their personalities despite dying, and now strive to help protect their friends and family from harm. Whether the zombie character is eating animal brains to stop his hunger or has found the willpower to fight his need to feed, that still doesn't make him any less dead or frightening to everyone he encounters.

## SHAPESHIFTER

Cursed or natural-born, shapeshifters have the ability to assume other forms. In some cases, it's a specific identity and in others, it is many. Regardless, the shapeshifters of legend were rarely trusted and seen as duplicitous and evil. Much of the supernatural was, but these creatures

**METROSEXUAL VAMPIRE****70 POINTS****STR +1 STA — AGL +2 DEX +2 PRE +2**

**Powers:** Blood Drain (Weaken Stamina 3 (Resisted by Fortitude), Grab-based, Limited to draining one rank per round), Emotion Control (Perception Ranged Cumulative Affliction 3 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated), Subtle, Variable Descriptor (Emotions)), Flight 3 (16 MPH), Undead Invulnerability (Immortality 2 (1 week), Limited (not when staked or beheaded); Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects); Protection 7, Impervious, Limited (not against holy weapons))

**Advantages:** Attractive, Fascinate (Persuasion), Fearless

**Skills:** Persuasion +6

**Totals:** Abilities 4 + Powers 60 + Advantages 3 + Skills 3 + Defenses 0 = 70

**Suggested Complications:** Alienated from vampire society, hunted by peers, loner who needs others, quick to anger, fighting his hunger.

**MUMMY****24 POINTS****STR +2 STA +2 AGL -2 DEX -2**

**Powers:** Immortality 5 (1 day), Immunity 11 (Aging, Life Support)

**Advantages:** Diehard

**Skills:** Intimidation +4

**Suggested Complications:** Obligation to ancient gods, seeking the imprisoned remains of a mate, controlled by a relic, must atone for a crime, cannot relate to modern times, living in mummified body.

**ZOMBIE****24 POINTS****STA — PRE -1**

**Powers:** Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), Protection 3

**Advantages:** Startle

**Skills:** Intimidation +4

**Totals:** Abilities -12 + Powers 33 + Advantages 1 + Skills 2 + Defenses 0 = 24

**Suggested Complications:** Unable to feel sensations, hunger for brains/flesh, disgust at personal nature, funky decaying odors, bite causes infection, unable to touch the ones he loves.

represented a more frightening and pervasive evil, the ability to assume the identity of the very things people trusted, be they friends or animals.

While there may be shapeshifter societies, most are solitary creatures when it comes to their own kind. And they can be either good or evil. While some can hide among people, lycanthropes notwithstanding, most definitely stick out in their natural states.

**BASTET**

The Bastet are ancient shapeshifters hailing all the way back to ancient Egyptian times and earlier. Cults dedicated to Bast allowed them to thrive and even now they move among humanity hidden and sometimes protected within pagan and Wiccan communities. Bastet are feline in appearance, and they can turn into cats of different sizes. Some are as capricious as their animal counterparts and some are protective and loyal.

**BASTET****45 POINTS****AGL +3 DEX +3**

**Powers:** Claws (Strength-based Damage 2); Leaping 3; Senses 3 (Low-Light Vision, Tracking Scent), Shrinking 8; Tail (Extra Limb 1)

**Advantages:** Agile Feint, Evasion, Improved Grab

**Skills:** Acrobatics +5, Stealth +5

**Totals:** Abilities 12 + Powers 25 + Advantages 3 + Skills 5 + Defenses 0 = 45

**Suggested Complications:** Attachment to specific human, protective of a location, easily distracted, hunted by monster-slayers, quick to anger.

**DOPPELGANGER****34 POINTS****INT +2**

**Powers:** Mind Reading 4; Morph 3 (humanoids)

**Advantages:** Daze (Deception), Eidetic Memory, Fascinate (Deception), Jack-Of-All-Trades, Taunt

**Skills:** Deception +4

**Totals:** Abilities 4 + Powers 23 + Advantages 5 + Skills 2 + Defenses 0 = 34

**Suggested Complications:** Identity crisis, hunted by monster-slayers, memory confusion, malleable personality, only able to mimic appearances and existing identities.

**LYCANTHROPE****34 POINTS****STR +2 STA +3**

**Powers:** Growth 1, Continuous; Morph 1; Protection 4, Impervious, Limited (not against silver weapons); Strength-based Damage 2; Senses 3 (Low-Light Vision, Tracking Scent)

**Advantages:** Close Attack, Improved Initiative 2

**Skills:** Intimidation +4, Perception +4

**Totals:** Abilities 10 + Powers 17 + Advantages 3 + Skills 4 + Defenses 0 = 34

**Suggested Complications:** Fears changing shape, feels alienated, fearful he might hurt someone, more primal, quicker to anger, hunted by monster-slayers, suffers flashbacks as werewolf.

**DOPPELGANGER**

Considered an ill omen, the Doppelganger is the double of someone, often their exact physical match but moral opposite. Others are shapeshifters, taking on the identity of normal people and then ruining their lives. Regardless, Doppelgangers are not necessarily evil though many have such leanings. Characters of this breed are one such example. All, however, can adopt human forms, but their natural shape is often genderless, featureless, and alien in appearance.

**LYCANTHROPE**

Lycanthropy is often held as a curse over a person or bloodline. Either the full moon or some other such naturally occurring (and cyclical) event forces them to lose control and become ravenous monsters. Although rats, crows and the like are known lycanthrope breeds, the most common example is the werewolf. In this instance, however, the character can become a werewolf at any time. It is only during full moons when he loses complete control.

**GHOST****58 POINTS****STA —**

**Powers:** Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects); Insubstantial 4, Innate, Permanent; Invisible (Concealment 2 (normal sight)); Telekinesis (Damaging Move Object 3, Affects Corporeal, Precise)

**Totals:** Abilities -10 + Powers 68 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 58

**Suggested Complications:** Tied to a location (must return once per day), tied to a person, must fulfil a promise, mysterious death, amnesiac about his life, prone to depression.

**SKIN-RIDER****70 POINTS****STA — INT +2**

**Powers:** Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects); Insubstantial 4, Innate, Permanent; Invisible (Concealment 2 (normal sight)); Possession (Perception Ranged Cumulative Affliction 4 (Resisted by Will; Dazed, Compelled, Controlled), Merge With Subject, Subtle)

**Totals:** Abilities -6 + Powers 76 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 70

**Suggested Complications:** Loathe to possess targets, addicted to possession, tied to a person, need to protect someone, desire to re-enter the lives of the living through her host.

**SPIRIT**

Spirits are generally the souls of the dearly departed. Once human, they now haunt the living, rarely aware of their impact on people or even that they've died. The lucky ones left behind survived the transition more mentally intact, but there was likely a reason for that. Perhaps they were motivated by love or revenge, or whatever

caused their death was so abrupt and violent that they were stained by the charge of that energy.

Regardless, ghosts are feared and many funerary rites exist just to keep the dead (and them) down. Worse, by the time ghosts learn how to interact with the living, if at all, they've grown so bitter and frustrated that they appear as a negative influence. Still, there are good spirits out there and some are merely desperate to help loved ones, solve/avenge their own murder, or help others as they were unable to help in life.

**GHOST**

This soul of the recently departed has proven adept at interacting with the living, though the reason he's caught between life and the afterlife remains a mystery. In fact, it is the mystery that provides him with his *raison d'être*. Unlike other ghosts that are interested in being territorial, this one works with other player characters to help or be helped, all the while avoiding the hidden terrors of the afterlife.

**SKIN-RIDER**

The skin-rider is a different kind of ghost. While the reasons they exist and continue to persevere remain similar, the difference is in their ability. The skin-rider can possess the living, using them as an agent of her agendas or goals. Most skin-riders use this ability to relive their lives flamboyantly, not caring who they possess or how they hurt them. The character, however, has a higher sense of duty and purpose. Possession is never for fun, but at the service of a higher calling.

**INVESTIGATION 101: DOWN & DIRTY**

"Why is this here and not in the Gamemaster's section?" you may wonder. It's because while the Gamemaster establishes the circumstances of a crime, it is the character's responsibility to investigate. Nothing derails a game more than having the Gamemaster lead the investigation by the nose, dragging the heroes from clue to clue. That isn't gaming, that's family vacation with the Griswolds.

Hence, investigation is something the players need to understand, though Gamemasters are certainly welcome to use these pages to their benefit.

**CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION**

Most often, an investigation begins at the crime scene. It paints the immediate picture of the event. The first priority detectives have in this case is securing the area. The second is to make an initial sweep of the scene. The third is to talk to witnesses and the fourth priority is to bag and tag the evidence. Each step is important for the information that can be gained immediately and because some evidence is relatively fragile. It won't take much to damage it or worse, taint it.

**PRIORITY ONE: SECURE THE CRIME SCENE**

By the time an investigator or detective arrives at the crime scene, there's already been several people in the area, inadvertently tainting the evidence. The people who found the body or break-in and the first responders who arrived (patrol car officers, paramedics, firemen, forensics, morgue people, etc.) are often enough to ruin a crime scene, especially if the fire department had to put out a blaze. Most first responders are trained to minimize their footprint on the crime scene, but sometimes it can't be helped.

Regardless, upon securing the crime scene and kicking out anyone not necessary to the process, the investiga-

tors know to touch nothing, unless the victim is still alive or a weapon is found. If the crime scene is outside and in danger of being damaged due to rain storms, tidal influx, zombie swarm, whatever, this step is often shortened or skipped in favor of Priorities Two and Four.

## PRIORITY TWO: SWEEP THE SCENE

Once the area is secure, investigators will make an initial assessment of the scene, taking notes of what they see, then photographing the area to create a detailed portrait for future reference and, finally, making diagrams of the area using fixed points and triangulations.

Taking notes can be seen as the first layer of Perception checks. It is immediate and inside the environment. Afterwards, the photographs and diagrams provide a second layer of information through skills like Investigation or even Expertise (Expertise: Streetwise, for example, might reveal that the gang tags painted on the wall are actually imitations or forgeries). Gamemasters can use this two-tiered system to reveal clues the characters may have missed, or provide further depth to a discovery.

As a caveat, it's easy to get bogged down in the details, unless players and Gamemasters alike are actually skilled in forensics. Since most aren't, the specific diagrams derived in a scene shouldn't be as important. An Investigation check might reveal details like the height and position of a shooter, or if the critter was left or right clawed, but it is insane to demand the Gamemaster provide specific measurements that fit the actual details.

## PRIORITY THREE: TALK TO WITNESSES

Once the investigators have done a cursory examination of the body and documented the scene, it's time to locate and speak with the witnesses. Any interaction skills will do here, from Persuasion for general questioning and the handling of belligerent witnesses, to Intimidation for handling suspects, to Insight for uncovering lies. The questions will generally boil down to "what do you know?", "what did you see/hear?", "what do you suspect?", and "where were you at the time of the crime?"

## PRIORITY FOUR: BAG AND TAG THE EVIDENCE

As the name implies, the investigators start bagging the evidence individually, and tagging each bag with information. Not only do they collect physical evidence like hair follicles, loose threads, stains, fingerprints, etc., but they also try to frame the material in context to something. Detectives at a crime scene ask three basic questions of what they see:

- 1) What's there?
- 2) What shouldn't be there?
- 3) What should be there but isn't?

With the supernatural's involvement, there's likely a fourth question to add, and that is:

- 4) What the hell is *that*?

## COLD CASE SUPERNATURAL

An interesting series option based around investigation and the supernatural would be running a Cold Case Squad. Patterned after the Washington, DC experiment that pooled FBI agents and police together, the Supernatural Cold Case Squad (SCCS) would investigate unsolved cases that were a year old at least, and counting. If well known throughout North America, they would likely receive case files from other cities, be brought in on strange investigations as advisors and even offer seminars to other officers on recognizing the presence of the supernatural in an investigation.

The chief purpose of the SCCS, however, would be to reexamine old cases, many hailing from before a time when the supernatural was known or acknowledged. They would determine which unsolved cases were supernatural in origin and then try to solve them. Whether they are an experiment laughed at by the police force proper or acknowledged and respected LEOs (Law Enforcement Officers) is up to the Gamemaster. NPCs, might encompass hard-boiled cops who've seen it all, cultists who also act as snitches, pagan bookstore owners who serve as advisors, pawnshop owners for the arcane, psychic advisors, and mystically imbued detectives. Storylines might include strange murders, a slave ring of vampire blood dolls, politicians at City Hall making deals with demons, vigilante priests killing the supernatural, monsters seeking protective custody from their violent ilk, the underground trade of mystical artifacts, cultists snitching on their cults, etc. Take normal cases, attach a supernatural conceit to it, and viola.

The advantage of a SCCS series is that: 1) Witnesses might open up more over time when they feel less threatened or they've grown estranged with the suspects. 2) Criminals who may be involved or in the know of the crime might be in prison now, and more willing to make deals. 3) The supernatural rarely grows old, and whatever might have killed someone 50 years ago could still be around now.

This step is painstaking and methodical, but any slip-ups here could throw the evidence into question and see the criminal walk away on a technicality. Once the material is bagged, it is sent to forensics and may be further subdivided according to the tests and analyses that need to be run. Experts in anatomy, chemistry, entomology, zoology, and even crypto-zoology, among others, will run tests on the evidence and compare them to databases.

## FROM THE OUTSIDE

There's a chance that the characters are not affiliated with the police, meaning they don't have access to the physical evidence the way on-site detectives will. This isn't a deterrent, however, but a challenge. A way around this is to sneak a peek at the police detective's notes and his copies of the lab results. Examples for acquiring information include having Contacts in the police department, hacking their computers with the Technology skill, using Deception and Expertise: Law Enforcement to impersonate a detective, or Persuasion to bribe a cop. Otherwise, characters can always sneak into the crime scene itself

and locate evidence that overworked officers missed. Heroes can also question witnesses, perhaps drawing out more information from them because cops aren't liked locally or the characters are scarier that way.

## INFORMATION GATHERING

The next steps all involve extended methods of gathering information, usually from what was initially learned at the crime scenes. Almost anything that is found or noticed fills in more of the picture or asks a question or opens a new avenue of investigation: Anything from questioning people, to tailing suspects, to bugging someone's phone or home, to using available databases and contacts. All are viable techniques.

The following methods are ways to gather information, giving players control over the course of their characters' investigation and allowing everyone to feel involved depending on the distribution of the work.

## SURVEILLANCE

Surveillance is most often used to catch suspects in the act of something or to gather information. It may or may not involve electronic eavesdropping or digitally recording meetings and conversations the suspect has, but if it does, Craft can be useful for creating the devices, especially when various supernatural creatures can only be seen or heard on certain frequencies. Disable Device is necessary to bypass security systems if the characters need to bug the target's home, or perhaps Expertise: Arcane to bypass mystical wards. Search is another big skill when searching someone's home for evidence, though it's also illegal without a search warrant.

There are three ways to conduct surveillance:

### ON FOOT

Low on equipment but high on mobility, this method allows the character to approach and remain close to the suspect. It's easier to follow them through crowded streets, but limited if the other person gets into a vehicle. Best used in tandem with someone in a car.

### BY VEHICLE

A parked car or van is classic surveillance fare. It allows tailing of suspects through traffic, but more importantly, it can carry equipment like recorders, parabolic mikes, binoculars, cameras, etc. The disadvantage is that the suspect and concerned civic-minded neighbors will more easily notice a vehicle. Vehicles also have trunks that investigators can use to dump the suspect's trash for later examination.

### IN A BUILDING

Usually run in tandem with a car or foot team to follow the suspect when he leaves his home or business, building surveillance is more comfortable with basic amenities like a cot and bathroom, hopefully. More sophisticated equipment can be used including high-powered lenses mounted on stable tripods and listening equipment. Ad-

ditionally, surveillance from a building allows investigators to root through the suspect's trash—the ever-popular dumpster diving for information.

## QUESTIONING

From a police standpoint, interviews are conducted with witnesses and interrogations conducted with suspects. The former can happen anywhere the witness is located while the latter normally happens in a police station, under controlled circumstances. Either way, the investigator is recording answers and trying to discern the validity of information.

Characters may use a variety of skills to conduct questionings, as mentioned in Priority Three. The difference is in the intention of the interview. Heroes can use Insight for voluntary discourses and to discern lies, Persuasion for grieving witnesses and Intimidation for suspects that lie. Perception might help with body language, which often speaks volumes, or Deception to convince them to tell the truth, or even Expertise: Psychology to pick apart how something was said.

These are all viable tricks, but good interviewers know when to use everything in their arsenal to gain the advantage. One way to potentially reflect this in game is for each of the character's Presence-based skills to improve his roll by an +1 on a skill check made to get someone talking. Otherwise, the Gamemaster might allow rerolls when the interviewer changes tactics like:

### CONTROL THE SUSPECT

Restrict his movement, his ability to get food or water for himself, or his contact with other people. This makes the interrogator the suspect's world, and by cutting him off from friends and family, it's nearly impossible for co-conspirators to agree on their stories or warn each other about staying quiet.

### BE COURTEOUS

**(Persuasion or Deception):** When that fails, be rude. Coming off as rude right off the bat may alienate or harden someone more willing to talk. Being rude, however, changes the power in that situation, placing it firmly with the interviewer. Comments disguised as questions like "You expect me to believe that?" can be used to get the suspect into a defensive position.

### QUESTIONS

**(Deception or Insight or Persuasion):** It's good to do some research first on the person being interviewed. This allows the character to "pace" the suspect by speaking in a language they understand.

### USE SILENCE

**(Deception or Intimidation):** Silence is often uncomfortable and investigators use it to get people engaged in nervous chatter and to reveal information unintentionally.



## LISTEN & NEVER JUDGE

**(Deception or Persuasion):** Some suspects might be looking for sympathy or have a need to unburden themselves. Not judging may make the suspect feel safe in opening up. Cops often use sympathy to their benefit.

## DATABASES

Beyond the evidence and talking to witnesses, there are other avenues to getting information through specifically designed networks and databases that pool information. These are divided into General, Basic, Intermediate and Advanced, to signify the difficulty of having access to them.

General Information sources are things that anyone can access usually through the Internet or because of the Freedom of Information Acts.

Private detectives and journalists have access to Basic level of information. They require some work to maintain, be it a friendly county clerk, DMV desk-jockey, low-level mystic in the know, or druggie snitch who wants money. Information can also come from Bureaus and Departments, so long as the investigator has a PI license at the very least.

At Intermediate, only police detectives and general agents of Federal organizations have access to these networks. The cunning investigator might be able to bribe people for a crack at that information, but it's usually only for directed searches and not broad parameter queries. The databases are shared between different

agencies and thus protected. At this level, information is generalized for all sharing it and rarely steps on the domain of a single agency.

Only members of a specific agency or those with high-level clearance have access to Advanced databases. They are the proprietary technology and intelligence of those organizations and the only way to access them is to be an agent of a specific agency, wade through a ton of red tape with the proper authorization, or hack the system. Needless to say, the latter is an act of espionage. And yes, government agencies are that territorial about their databases because it's also tied in to how they gathered that information (their assets).

- **General:** Open Internet databases, Court Clerk (criminal convictions & appeals), Public Libraries (microfiche for weddings, births, death, news stories, etc).
- **Basic:** City Clerk (deeds & mortgages, birth & death certificates, marriage licenses), Department of Motor Vehicles (driver's licenses & vehicle registration), Tax Assessor (property values & locations).
- **Intermediate:** Automated Fingerprint Identification System or AFIS (International database for fingerprints), National Integrated Ballistics Information Network or NIBIN (FBI/ATF: Tracks firearms & shell casings)
- **Advanced:** Facial Recognition Database (Las Vegas Casinos and Federal Agencies); DCS 1000 (FBI: Email & Electronic Communications Monitoring, formally known as Carnivore); Echelon (NSA/International: Capturing signal traffic).



# CHAPTER 3: MASTERING YOUR FEARS

*Man of the Century walked through the ash-covered landscapes, coughing on the black air. His once purple and gold spandex hung from his body in threads; he stooped, practically naked. Not that anyone was left to snap photos or stare in shock or whisper to one another. The initial cataclysm killed off over 90% of planet's population. The remaining ash fall and months of winter killed off all plants and animals. The rest of humanity succumbed to cannibalism and finally starvation.*

*Man of the Century hadn't seen anyone living in four years now...just forests of desiccated and petrified corpses. His stomach pitched in agony from perpetual starvation and his mouth was dry and split. There was nothing left on this world that could hurt him. No villain with the power to atomize him. No technology to freeze body and mind and pain. So he wandered, immortal king of a dead Earth, looking for something that could kill him and end his suffering.*

The table is set, the dice are all black. The candles flicker and drip wax on the dark table cloth, and the players listen intently as the Gamemaster speaks softly...slowly. The words sway perceptions and set the listeners on edge; the descriptions offer just enough to entice the players and allow them to fill in the remaining details.

Running supernatural and horror based games is an interesting experience and one that follows an old argument among speculative fictions authors. Is horror a genre or a mood? It's an elusive answer because horror itself is rarely easily described, at least, not in the conventions of science fiction or film noir. It can be stand-alone or it can be integrated into fantasy, science-fiction or (in this case) superheroes.

Rather than try to solve that argument as discussed previously, this chapter will seek to explore horror so each facet becomes a tool for the GM to use.

## TYPES OF HORROR

Understanding the type of horror used in a series is important, for it establishes a continuity of physics. Certainly, horror may sometimes be required to mess with those sensibilities, but for the most part, continuity is a good thing. It gives players tools and means to cope with the obstacles besetting them. Think of them as rules of a sort, an agreement as to the borders of the game. Break these, and you mess with the player's suspension of disbelief and his or her willingness to trust you.

Rather than hit them all individually, horror can be divided into one of three generalized categories, although it isn't uncommon for ideas to borrow elements from two or more. The importance of these three principle branches is that they are often the meta-concept behind horror. They provide the theme and mood and while some monsters and adversaries might seem better suited to one or another, monsters do not dictate the categories; rather:

**The categories change the nuance of the monster and its purpose in the game.**

### SOCIOLOGICAL

This horror is a comment on society and its prevailing attitudes. It can either support the mindset of the time as seen in movies of the 50s that used the Red Scare as a theme or it can bring to light a perceived injustice or inadequacy as World War Z using zombies to literally deconstruct society. In fact, many post-apocalyptic horror stories can be seen as essays on society itself.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL

The movie focuses on the internal struggle of the individual and the fight against personal darkness. It is about the

erosion of self in the face of one's own monstrosity or the monstrosity of something that is emblematic of us. For instance, possession and transformation are both about losing control and losing ourselves to evil.

### ALLEGORICAL

The monster is external and an agent of myth, fable, or urban legend. Whether a giant shark terrorizing the coastal community or mad slasher terrorizing the camp ground, the fear remains the same. It is the oldest terror, the fear of being prey. It is one person or a group of people against the outsider.

Horror further divides into three subsets that can apply to any of the examples listed above. These subsets are

## GAME PHYSICS

It might seem counterintuitive to define horror in a game. The surprise, or threat of surprise is what matters, but establishing the game's physics is vital for games, especially horror. A horror game is predicated on the players' suspension of disbelief and Gamemasters would do well to remember that. This means that if the series establishes a scientific basis for the horror elements, then introducing magic later could pull the players out of the session rather than into it. Use mythic elements in a game and suddenly science loses some of its resonance.

Establishing baseline physics also allows Gamemasters to reward players for using the rules in new and innovative ways. It becomes easier to award hero points, for example, because everyone understands where and what they can push and prod, and how far. That's not to say Gamemasters are restricted from running a game where the horrors of science and magic exist side by side, but she should establish these parameters with the players beforehand. Another option is to surround the events in mystery, always leaving a shred of doubt as to whether something is science, fantasy or natural. This leaves characters with a question to solve, but the Gamemaster should already know the answer.

not specific to any three, but applicable to all three equally. They are the sources of manifestation of horror and the supernatural, often with their own motifs and themes. They help dictate the shape of the threat and how to defeat it.

## SCIENTIFIC

Scientific horror posits a logical explanation for why something is happening. It extrapolates on our understanding of technology or the sciences and takes them to terrifying extremes...what is best termed science fiction. It can be about creation without conscience, like the genesis of a virulent plague, or tampering with the sacred fundamentals of the universe by given birth to something new. It can be about the exploration of the great unknown and in finding only madness awaiting us, serve as a warning about overextending our reach.

## SUPERNATURAL

Supernatural horror, not to be confused with the purpose of this sourcebook, is magical or mythical in nature. There is no scientific reason why something happens. It just does under the descriptive of "magic." Creatures from myth and fable, religious warnings about the End Times, demons, fae, vampires are all supernatural in nature.

## NATURAL

The threat can or does exist in our world. It is the madman or the fanatic; the super volcano or the tsunami. Essentially anything that can happen right now without breaking the physics of our world can be called a natural threat.

## SOCIOLOGICAL HORROR

Sociological horror in series is generally an overarching premise because it is an attack against the very foundations of society. This entails exploration of societal concerns based on the series period. In other words, one fear of the 80s involved the collapse of social order following a nuclear exchange with Russia, but there was more concern in the 90s with the disintegration of society due to civil unrest. The early 21<sup>st</sup> Century; however, went from fear of terrorism to fear of an uncertain global economy. At one time, the government would never be seen as the enemy, but now it's almost de rigueur to fear our institutions. If the fear of the 50s was invasion and replacement by alien outsiders (as a parallel to the red scare or conformity within a homogenous society), the current fear is of the extremists among us.

Each era has its concerns and games that use sociological fears can spend entire series dealing with those nuances. This means understanding the era in which something is set; understanding the society of the game. This provides not only a rich backdrop against which to play, but it also gives the Gamemaster plenty of adventures concepts.

While modern series with fear over terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, super-viruses, and an unstable economy provide plenty of fodder for games, sociological horror games are fantastic for period series where the purpose is to explore the society itself. Otherwise, it could be used to put a mirror to contemporary trials and tribulations. The fact is, however, the specific type of horror used can apply to several eras, but it is the face of that horror that distinguishes the society. For example:

## POST-APOCALYPTIC HORROR

From the 50s through to the 80s, this genre was dominated by nuclear war with Russia or China. The landscape was irradiated, the monsters twisted mutants. In the 90s and on, however, post-apocalyptic horror came about from natural disasters as an extension of global climate concerns, from a global EMP spike as an extension of our crippling reliance on technology, and from super-viruses as an extension of our fear of AIDS, SARS and Ebola.

## ALIEN INVASION

Aliens attacked, but during the Cold War, it was allegorical for the tensions with Moscow and the threat of invasion and subjugation of the American way of life and its freedoms. With concerns over global warming, however, the alien invasion isn't about society or the razing of inalienable rights, but about plundering the world's natural resources or turning humanity into another kind of common commodity.

## APPLICATIONS IN A SUPERS GAME

Sociological horror is a challenging genre for superheroes, and rewarding, because whatever is happening is widespread, impacting different areas of society.

In series where the horror targets specific institutions or notions while maintaining the façade of society (think of termites in the walls, eroding the foundation) skills play an important role over powers, because super-abilities can help in the individual fights, but the characters must move seamlessly inside various social spheres to get answers. Bursting into a military base, for example, to question soldiers about shapeshifters will never be as effective as investigating the matter through contacts and infiltration. Enemies in this type of series are good at hiding and deception; of using human proxies and even bodies/minds/greed to accomplish their goals. In addition, in this kind of sociological horror it doesn't take much to turn public fears against the characters by accusing them of the very ills besetting society that they're struggling against. The more the heroes shy from the limelight, the easier it is to turn public opinion against them. Still, characters with low-grade powers or who are highly skilled will have an easier time here than heroes who solve their problems with an atomic-powered fist.

In series where the sociological horror is the deconstruction of all of society just to put a magnifying glass to parts of it, powers are good thing to have. Whatever is happening is happening in too many places at once and the heroes can't be everywhere. The irony is that the heroes have great abilities, but insufficient power to handle the great need. Still, the heroes need something to fight against, and these series should have enemies for them to battle to help focus and unleash their frustration. The very people they're trying to help may also vilify the heroes. The characters are likely seen as the "have's" in a society of "have not's;" the new "One Percent" as it were.

## SOCIOLOGICAL SERIES EXAMPLES

- Post-apocalyptic tale about the failure of technology and our reliance on it.
- Post-apocalyptic look at the fast dissolution of society and human dignity.
- Super-viruses isolating groups of people as pariahs and the resulting quarantine camps.
- People replaced by alien/supernatural doppelgangers in an era of distrust.
- Supers seen as a threat to civil liberties, and hunted.
- The militarization of society by forces looking to quietly enslave humanity.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL HORROR

Psychological horror is far more personal and intimate. It can serve well as a one shot game, a long story arc, or an entire series. Whatever evil grips the world, it's attacked the heroes directly or it plays on their fears. In this case, the fight is both an external one to end the threat and an internal one to battle something inside each person. Viruses, supernatural possessions, the loss of control, fear of one's power, slow transformation, descent into madness in the face of the unknown, Jekyll & Hyde duality, moral corruption are all personal struggles against both internal

and external troubles. This horror is about the termites beneath our skin, eating away at our bones.

Enemies in this type of series can be insidious and hidden, or they can be the victims and overt. Victims as enemies are another step in psychological horror, because they show the ultimate price of failure (like mind controlled servitors, for example). They serve as warning and as foreshadowing and they force the heroes to tread lightly. On the other hand, the enemies may be an external force creating inner turmoil. This option allows the heroes to cut loose from time to time; a catharsis for the potential navel gazing a series like this might inspire.

In these games, society doesn't have to remain intact, but the deeper, more nuanced horror series may keep society as is. This provides a sharp contrast with the inner turmoil of the afflicted and further alienates the afflicted who feel outside of everyday concerns. This can be carried further if the psychological turmoil has physical repercussions. Identity and need for connection with the rest of the world are important motivations in our lives. Transforming the heroes or NPCs into something monstrous can be a good parallel of the inner struggle. Most hero monsters carry this burden with them everywhere. They desperately want to fit in, and when they can't they often play the monster out of frustration or pain. Society also plays its part here, acting as friction against the noble monster and not giving it a chance to "fit in."

Another way to represent someone's inner turmoil or fear is through their weaknesses. Maybe they don't look or act like monsters, but something around them is harmful to their existence. That alone may be enough. Like a vampire who finds alternatives to drinking-blood, the blistering sunlight may be a constant reminder that deep down, he is still a monster and slave.

## APPLICATIONS IN A SUPERS GAME

There are a couple of routes through which psychological horror can seep into a supers game. In all situations, the struggle is internal, so heroes can be of various power levels without repercussions to the story arcs.

The first way is through the NPCs. If something is affecting people, the characters become involved as the only hope of the "infected" (infected being a general term for anyone afflicted psychologically). From loved ones to total strangers, the characters have to see the range of transformation in the victims, from healthy to unhealthy. They must see the before and after to know what horrors await the victim. The transformation becomes the horror because it isn't that large of a step to "what if it happened to me?"

The second way is if the "infection" is something affecting a specific demographic that the characters belong to, like magic-wielders or super-powered individuals or people of Freedom City or anyone who witnessed an event. Essentially the characters are infected and it's only a matter of time before they are afflicted. While the heroes race against the inevitable, they will see friends, family, or loved ones falter and fail along the way. Survival is no longer victory. Survival is a bitter reminder of those they left behind.

The third way is for the characters to be infected and fighting against it. There is a struggle against whatever the psychological horror incurs. While every victory brings them a step closer to normal, every loss might drive them further down the pit. The transformation might be physical or mental, but there should be example NPCs and monsters who failed so that the characters know what's at stake, and successes (or the rumor of success) so the characters can strive toward something.

The last, but certainly not final, way is if the characters have already undergone transformation. Maybe it didn't affect them as badly, or perhaps the change didn't alter them entirely. Regardless, they are changed psychologically or perhaps physically. Their loved ones or society itself will be wary of them at best, and reject them at worst. The heroes are also plagued by the memories and sense of who they were before. This state represents something to overcome or change, but what will they sacrifice for that change? Well, that's only something time and game sessions can answer.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SERIES EXAMPLES

- All powers come from the same source, and that source has a price for its use.
- Creatures are riding people's minds and living inside their victims for some ulterior purpose.
- The heroes of the world are infected with a virus and the characters must solve who's responsible before no heroes remain.
- An evil is growing inside people, causing them to commit unspeakable crimes. Who is responsible and what are people becoming?
- "Zombies" have overrun the planet, but clues indicate people infected have only had their personalities submerged... they can still be saved.
- The evil in people is finding form and drive. What is responsible for an epidemic of psychological doppelgangers carrying through on our darkest wishes?
- Fighting evil has an attrition effect and the heroes know that each battle costs them in inches and small measures (see **Fear and Corruption** in **Chapter Three**).

## ALLEGORICAL HORROR

Allegorical horror is one of the easiest and potentially most fun styles of horror series to run because almost any element of myth can be introduced. This type of horror is often the best kind of one-shot because the impact is neither psychological nor social. The heroes are there to beat the monster and pat each other on the shoulder for a job well done. Naturally, allegorical horror can serve as a monster-slaying series or as the fodder of story arcs. It can also incorporate elements of psychological and social horror, although the destruction of the threat itself is often enough to "right" the balance.

Allegorical horror is probably the most ancient. It is "I" or "We" against the outsiders. Allegorical is also an apt term

in that the monster represents the personification of a global fear or a desire. It is a symbol, and while the monsters can be as shallow as the Gamemaster desires, the creatures can have deeper meaning. The Big Bad Wolf and the Three Pigs, for example, were thought to exemplify the Depression and people's reactions to it. In the Gothic literature of female writers, the capture or imprisonment of women was thought to be an allegory for their plight and lack of freedoms. Superheroes themselves are allegories for common men and women being given the power to do right. Monsters of the 50s were allegories of fear over nuclear war.

Again, era factors in to the kinds of threats that might make an appearance in series as well as the nature of the allegory. Each era has its concerns and that's obvious in the monsters it uses, even if said monsters keep reappearing throughout the decades. Dracula as a vampire was said to represent the fall of British imperialism or the subjugation of Ireland. Vampires have since represented racial purity through their lust for blood, for sexual excess, for class-struggle, and for empowerment of the powerless. Likewise, zombies have represented assimilation, fear of infection, the banality of modern life, capitalism, and as a warning of humanity's tendency to flock like sheep.

All that said, it isn't necessary to create an allegory. To modify Freud's cigar quote: *Sometimes a vampire is just a vampire*.

## APPLICATIONS IN A SUPERS GAME

Of the three main types of horror, allegorical monsters are likely to be a match for heroes in terms of direct power levels. Whether individually or in groups, allegorical threats are normally resolved directly, especially in action oriented super-hero games. Heroes can expect to face one of three kinds of adversaries of this nature; the individual adversary, the enemy group, and the global threat.

The individual adversary is usually smarter, faster, or stronger than anything the heroes normally encounter. It must be to pose a challenge to them, but therein lies the problem. These foes can lead to threat escalation, meaning the Gamemaster may feel forced to trump the power levels of the previous monster or conflict. This gets nowhere fast and it falls out of horror because brute force is rarely terrifying. Brute force is to horror what cement shoes are to water. Both sink rapidly. There are ways around this major caveat, however, as mentioned later in this chapter.

Like the individual adversary, the enemy group is a threat in horror who may not be interested in the characters until the heroes bring themselves to their notice. Enemy groups often have a greater agenda and more resources at their disposal. They can also hit the characters in a variety of ways, and will often probe for weak points. Nothing is off limits. The nature of the adversaries may be horrific, but what they're willing to do to the character's friends and family may be nothing short than gruesome. Enemy groups provide the Gamemaster with more options and nuance for horror because being diversified in number also means diversity in approach.

The global threat in allegorical horror borrows some of its terror from its uncaring and arbitrary approach to mayhem. Few are spared, everyone is a target. Because the horror is worldwide, the characters are rarely a specific target or even noticed by their opponents. They are gnats biting the hide of an elephant and only rarely might something notice them. The horror is so widespread that everyone is affected equally and with the same disinterest. As mentioned previously, in this type of situation the heroes can be of almost any power-level because the numbers are against them and the need so great that they can't be everywhere at once.

## ALLEGORICAL SERIES EXAMPLES

- Zombies spread throughout the world and it's every country for itself.
- Animals are being infected with a mutagen that turns them into murderous hybrids.
- A global disaster has upended the world, and everyone is fighting to survive as the worst is yet to come.
- A strange fog has appeared everywhere and with it, the monsters that inhabit it.
- The world has so many supernatural elements to it that the heroes fight a new threat every week.
- An alien species is invading Earth, and humanity only exists to be reaped as a resource or wiped out entirely.
- The heroes are monsters, and the allegorical themes of the series are actually exemplified in people's reactions to them.

## Horror Subtypes

If sociological, psychological, and allegorical horror were the mindset and purpose of the horror, the subtypes are most certainly the skin that clothes its body. Supernatural, scientific, and natural horror not only dictate how the monster appears and why, but it also determines the monster's weakness. Horror subtype also influences the look of the world, from the mist-covered, brick-lined buildings in supernatural series to the gleam and chrome gloss in science-driven series.

## SUPERNATURAL HORROR

Horror and the supernatural are synonymous for obvious reasons. From humanity's dawn, people attributed qualities to the world around to understand how things worked. Whatever they feared the most gained the most respect. To respect it was to pay it deference, to coexist with it. Humanity has coexisted with many of its monsters since then.

Supernatural horror consists of those things that cannot be explained or things that need no explanation to be real. The horrors within Pandora's Box and Tiamat's monstrous children were both divine in origin and explained much of the monsters in the world in the same way that the fall of Lucifer and the angels do.



This class of horror applies mostly to myths, fables, and religion. They rest in forgotten crates in museum basements, beneath the deserts of Egypt, and in the snow-capped mountains of Tibet. It is mythology turned into humanity's shadow history and its artifacts appear throughout the past in the hands of despots and madmen like Hitler and Rasputin. Thankfully, the very fact that supernatural borrows from myth means that the information is already out there to fill dozens of series. People already understand the notions of vampires and werewolves. There's no additional reason to explain their nature or weaknesses. It becomes one less thing for the player to force suspension of disbelief.

Another important element of supernatural horror is that it's always easy to include a fiat or quest-line solution to the problem. Overarching supernatural threats can be ended even though the damage can rarely be undone. The nature of the fiat is as open and as plausible as the threat itself.

## SCIENTIFIC HORROR

As society becomes more sophisticated, so too does its appreciation of horror. Some of the old motifs no longer work; the beautiful maiden cursed by the gods for her pride, the hero struck down for his hubris, the two children who wander into a gingerbread house. In today's society, the beautiful maiden would be starring in every movie, the arrogant hero would be a sport's megastar, and the two children would be at the hospital in a diabetic coma. Or at least that's what people would think.

This gives rise to the scientific and pseudo-science horrors first given expression with authors such as H.G. Wells and *War of the Worlds*. It continues through to Hollywood's drive-in movie horror phase and into today's media where zombies are "infected," ghosts manifest through digital media, monsters are alien creatures or mutants, and creatures that defy explanation are extra dimensional. You name it, *28 Days*, *Aliens*, *Pitch Black*, *The Mist*, they are all preternatural, but not supernatural.

Campaigns that use scientific horror are usually about the science or tech getting away from us. While it can happen anywhere in the world, from the big city to isolated towns, there are usually some high-tech backdrops and organizations doing their best to "contain" the situation. The latter (especially the government) are usually at fault and

invariably another enemy to overcome. Scientific horror features hidden labs and isolated research facilities; they star over-ambitious scientists and well-trained soldiers/mercenaries. And often, the truth is just as dangerous as its effects, resulting in conspiracies and byzantine corporate agendas mixing in with government greed.

As with supernatural series, scientific ones can also employ a fiat or *deus ex machina* to end the threat. A cure, switch, or nuclear explosion are all popular fictional solutions to many problems facing the world. The great thing about scientific horror is that no problem exists that doesn't have a scientific response. History is already full of tales of epidemics and threats that were handled by timely discoveries.

## NATURAL HORROR

Natural horror is normally contemporary, and thrives on taking normal people in normal lives and then turning it on its ear. The mundane horror is all about upsetting people's securities by telling them that this could be happening to you, *right now*. It's about generating commonalities between NPCs and heroes.

The reason natural horror is mostly modern is because it is meant to strike at concerns and our understanding of the world as it stands right now. Even our understanding of killers and global disasters changes as the years go by and anything that draws on the mindset of past decades runs the risk of seeming quaint or trite. Nuclear mutation is almost laughable now as a plot device, but viral mutation is easier to swallow because it combines our burgeoning understanding of genetics and our societal fears of pathogens. Likewise, the notions of super-volcanoes and melting icecaps were never even imaginable in the pulp era when Armageddon came at the hands of aliens.

This class of horror is very reliant on the three main branches of horror (sociological, psychological or allegorical) because its target determines the form of the threat. If the threat is allegorical (us vs. them), then the villain is likely to be an animal or a crazed killer. If the threat is sociological (the world is affected), then the villain may well be a natural disaster.

The main difficulty with natural horror is that because the event or evil is based on reality, then our ability to handle it is also grounded there. If society hasn't created a solu-

## CHICKEN OR EGG?

Some readers may be wondering about the validity of running a series by choosing first the branch or sub-branch of horror it fits in. Honestly, few series will ever start this way. Most will begin with a horror idea in mind: "I want to run a supers-zombie apocalypse game," or "let's run a pulp-Cthulhu-esque story-line." And that's perfectly fine and (more importantly) far more organic an approach.

The horror types listed are a great way to reverse engineer an idea and add in layers once the basic concept is laid down. Take the zombie apocalypse idea. Is it allegorical with an "us vs. them" approach (entailing more action), a sociological commentary (thereby focusing more on the collapse of society) or a psychological one (anyone can be infected, including you)? After that, is it supernatural, scientific or natural in nature, meaning the reaction to and handling of it will differ.

Using the types of horror to dissect an idea can help Gamemasters hone their ideas and intentions, increasing the story arcs and adding more substance to them. They aren't meant to formalize horror series, but to reinforce ideas more strongly.

tion for the problem already, then it may not exist. That means that there's no way to reverse or minimize a global disaster, for example. The only way to stop the rampage of millions of insects would be to wipe them out completely, regardless the collateral damage.

## A CONFLUENCE OF HORROR

Superhero games tend to borrow across genres, meaning that while a threat is scientific one day, it might be supernatural the next. The same applies to horror, and the Game-

master may very well decide to mix-and-match the types of evils that run their course through a horror series. What does this mean to the horror branches listed previously? Well it all depends on the approach to the storylines for one thing. Some series can be about the heroes encountering a new threat every story-arc that borrows from science or magic or natural elements. Another option is that the series deals with one of the three main branches of horror over an extended story arc or "season" before shifting to another type, so long as the players are aware that magic, science and natural horrors can be thrown at them in a single series.

# PART-TIME HORROR

Some heroic series may run normal games with horror an almost non-existent element. That's fine, as the horror can be introduced in any fashion the Gamemaster chooses, whether as a new facet of the existing world or opening up new worlds and alternate realities where such horrors exist. If any genre of game has ever explored the limits of space, time, extraordinary planes, and parallel dimensions, it's been superhero games. Horror of any style or make can be introduced into the series so long as it conforms to the overall physics of the game universe.

## PART-TIME CAMPAIGNS

There are three ways to introduce horror into a series; as a solo session, a story arc, or a series season. Each has its benefits and advantages and Gamemasters are always wise to consider the aftermath of such an event once that story-line ends. Will the revelation of the supernatural or monsters inadvertently redirect the concerns of the heroes? Will society change because of the event (imagine what would happen if CNN or MSNBC showed proof positive of aliens or monsters on this world)? Will governments get secretly involved in ensuring this sort of thing never happens again? Will the heroes be blamed? Will lynch mobs form against those with powers or those who practice "unacceptable" faiths like Wiccans? It's a sad fact that there are single incidents in the world that trigger large-scale changes, many times for the worse. The only thing that matters here is if it can be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt to have happened, then the truth may come out. Worse, come out and inadvertently change the world and the direction of the series.

## SOLO SESSIONS

Solo sessions are stories that involve one game. The opposition is usually a single foe or a small swarm with immediate goals and concerns: Eat, sleep, survive, find shelter, or find love. Its impact is also likely short reaching and the ability to clean up the mess leaves little in the way of an aftermath.

## STORY ARC

Story arcs are multi-session stories dealing with the supernatural or horror. The games will likely incorporate investigative and subterfuge elements, as well as

several monsters or adversaries to fight. Certainly, the last session will involve a good old slugfest to end the threat and reward the players on a high note. The goal of the opposition is generally longer reaching than mere survival, unless monsters are an outbreak or it's disaster in the making. In these situations, there is more cleanup and the world at large may hear about it, if only piece-meal and through gossip/hearsay. It is likely that unless the entire event was suppressed, governments, organizations, or corporations might investigate the matter themselves. Further, whatever artifacts, genetic material, or samples survive can lead to future storylines.

## SEASON

The seasonal arc is an extended story-line that encompasses gaming over a season or two, with weeks or months passing in-game. While events like these can be shrouded in shadow, most likely the world will know about it when it's done. Catastrophes on a regional scale, dimensional incursions, or widespread swarm attacks can happen over the course of a season. Either the event itself or its aftermath serves as the adventure. Regardless, this can mark a significant shift in the world or the hero party dynamics and its effects will certainly be far-reaching in the series. If the opposition is a villain/monster, then it likely has an organization or the resources to challenge the characters. A season may entail discovering the threat, trying to uncover it, realizing the full extent of it, and then scrambling to uproot it. Another approach to this style of play is if the seasonal arc plays in the background of events in the heroes' lives. This means they go about their daily antics while dealing with the situation for the occasional session or in snippets during the game. As matters build to a head, however, the series will need an arc to finally resolve the matter.

# PART-TIME SCENARIOS

The following section lists ways beyond the previous suggestions on how horror can be introduced into a series. These suggestions take the heroes out of the existing world and into a new one (with its own rules and physics, potentially). The benefit of these is that most have minimal impact on the game world, and the aftermath can be as extravagant and horrific as the Gamemaster wishes because there's less need for oversight.

## FUTURE FLASH

In this game, the heroes find themselves in a horrific future. Something has gone wrong and, perhaps, someone has brought them there to warn them of a single event that triggers the disaster. Regardless, the horror is in seeing the familiar ripped apart; in knowing the horrific fates of friends, allies, and loved ones. An extra bit of cruelty is if the disaster happened because the heroes were in the future instead of stopping the cataclysm from happening in the first place.

Regardless, unless the heroes can save the future by stopping a specific monster, destroying an artifact, or averting an event, the heroes will likely dedicate themselves to saving tomorrow. This might make for an interesting season if planned in advance.

While far future scenarios can be interesting, the Gamemaster should consider keeping the jump to near future, two decades at the most. This leaves markers of the characters' lives still potentially intact. The heroes can see the tragedy of the future as it played out on the people they knew and left behind. They can see the lives cut short and the directions taken to survive. Post-apocalypse, post-human, ruthless regime changes, enslavement, monstrous invasions are all stories with dozens of little horrors waiting to affect the characters. A one-shot session into the future can hint and tantalize to the tragedy while a story arc or season can fully explore the depth and crevices of the nightmare.

## STORY IDEAS

- Metahumans in the future are being used as a renewable source of energy by aliens and enslaved in torturous devices.
- Monsters the heroes believed mindless in the present turn out to be evolving. In the future, they are larger, faster, more cunning and the dominant species.
- Someone opened a hellgate on Earth, and the future is a perpetual apocalypse as demons gain an increasing foothold.
- A disaster has wiped out 90% of humans, animals and plants, and the survivors are at the mercy of monsters that no longer fear mankind.
- Something from the future is sending zombies backward through time, wiping out each future decade along the way. The near future is the next beachhead, followed by the present.

## TIME GONE BY

Instead of the future, the heroes find themselves in the past in a place and time when a forgotten evil unfolded. This is a bit trickier because their 'historical' actions may change the present day of the series, although there's always the argument that tomorrow has already taken into account the actions of the characters in the yesterday.

In the past the heroes may find themselves involved in more mystical matters or with the discovery of forbidden sciences and art. Events may be different than they remember in history books because of the supernatural, forcing the heroes to rectify the situation back to their historical norms. Maybe the characters aren't actually changing their past, but creating split realities on parallel worlds.

The key to instilling horror is to operate by tweaking the familiar and with time travel this means sending the characters into a past they know and recognize. One option is to send them into the immediately previous decades, enabling them to interact with heroes of yesterday as well as (potentially) their much younger selves. The distant and dusty centuries also hold an allure so long as the period is historically familiar. Even better if movies or television or comics have dealt with that time frame as this gives the players a visual anchor. Examples include archeological mayhem in Nazi-era Europe and the Middle-East, knights battling over Jerusalem for the secrets left behind in Solomon's forgotten palace, or Jurassic era jaunts when dinosaurs were king and chthonian societies ruled. From the Dark Ages when scientists believe a meteor strike literally darkened the world, to the Dust Bowl of the Dirty Thirties when entire towns dried up, the list for adventure and horrific mischief is endless.

## STORY IDEAS

- It's the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor and someone has a radio that can hear tomorrow.
- What exactly are the Knights Templar trying to uncover in the ruins of Solomon's Temple and why can nearby seers hear something screaming in their minds?
- Nazis are ransacking museums in conquered Poland, but someone is stealing religious relics before the Germans get them.
- Constantinople burns as the Crusaders cheer, but what secrets are the Orthodox priests trying to smuggle out of the city?
- The Holy City of M'aut is the largest city in the Middle East during the Golden Age of Islam. Why, then, is there no record of it ever existing and what was responsible for wiping it from history and memory?

## WHAT IF WORLDS

What If worlds are parallel Earths and timelines that are based on a single question that changes the destiny of people and the outcome of history: What If? The question can be as grand as "What if the Nazis successfully invaded

## QUARANTINE

One way to deal with alterations to the timeline and add an element of horror to the game is create a “quarantine” scenario. If something significant is changed, like murdering Hitler to stop WWII or averting the Titanic’s rendezvous with the iceberg, that event is quarantined from the rest of the timeline along with its perpetrators. Imagine the world frozen except for the bubble where people and the heroes are trapped. The events in question replay over and over until the heroes either allow the timeline to continue unhindered or the powers-that-be grow impatient and send in horrific rectifiers to remove the thorn in time’s side, meaning the heroes.

While the heroes may try to hold out against the rectifiers, it should be obvious that they can’t succeed. Time must continue forward. The real fun, however, is if the heroes changed an important element of history and don’t know it. The game then becomes a race to uncover their mistake, all the while dealing with the temporal agents sent to eliminate their interference.

Britain in Operation: Sea Lion” or as surreptitious as “What if Malador the Mystic had recognized Adrian Eldrich as his reincarnated master and killed him in the Temple of Sirrion?”

The horror in this instance is much like seeing nightmarish futures. It can be as subtle as seeing the course of people’s lives change in this alternate Earth or as overt as the world gripped in hell because of a single event. The horror comes from knowing that history is fragile enough that one cruel twist can upend everything and it can come from the situation itself.

If using this method for part-time horror or supernatural games, it might be best if the horror or supernatural is used to its fullest—alien invasions, zombie apocalypses, rise of the ancient leviathans, viral outbreaks, or nature unbridled. The sky’s the limit in these games and the special effects budget can be thrown out the window. To better tie it back to the heroes’ world, perhaps the event that triggers the horror hasn’t happened on their Earth...yet.

## STORY IDEAS

- What if...The US never entered WWII?
- What if...British magi used diabolic spell-craft to crush the American Revolution?
- What if...The Grue Meta-Mind unleashed a madness plague on humanity when heroes defeated the Grue invasion in 2004?
- What if...The Terminus Invasion was never repulsed?
- What if...The Cuban Missile Crisis turned the Cold War into a radioactive one.

## ALIEN PLANETS

Science-fiction is filled with horrific tales of monsters terrorizing explorers and castaways, using nothing more than the allegorical “us vs. them” approach. It’s all about dropping the heroes back down the food chain and relying on a primitive fear of when humanity was hunted mercilessly for sustenance, sport, or resource. The horror comes from the ways people die, whether infected and consumed by spores, or ripped apart through razor fangs, or burned by acid blood, or impregnated by voracious species.

Alien planet horror works best if there’s a body count to show the price of failure or the true terror that comes with cruel death. Having NPCs around to die can be useful,

though Gamemasters should be careful with leaving the characters powerless and the players feeling frustrated. The heroes are there to save lives, although nothing prevents them from encountering the aftermath of a massacre. Sometimes the hint of a terrifying notion is better than the notion itself.

The scenario can also carry out further if a survivor returns to Earth, not realizing he or she is infected with something else (this also works well with equipment). Now the heroes have to act swiftly or whatever devastated the alien world will happen on their world as well. The knowledge of the previous horror is enough to terrify heroes if there’s a risk of it returning.

## STORY IDEAS

- An alien temple built to test warriors with horrors beyond compare wants new warriors to challenge and the heroes are it.
- An alien species that can open conduits into other worlds is kidnapping humans from Earth to turn into birthing sacs for their young.
- A planet in peril is on the verge of succumbing to a swarm of critters. Their heroes have died and they need Earth’s heroes to step in and help.
- The heroes crash-land on a planet where the creatures constantly evolve to stay atop the food chain.
- It’s called Ghost World because the rogue planet doesn’t exist in real-space unless it intersects paths with another planet (like Earth) and goes about consuming its life force.

## IN SOMEONE ELSE’S SHOES

In someone else’s shoes is a transition on a personal level. The heroes have somehow ended up in the bodies of other people. Perhaps it was a plot to steal the characters’ bodies or a strange fluke in an experiment gone wrong or a monster teaching the heroes a lesson by switching bodies with them. Unfortunately, whoever they traded places with is being hunted or is the target of the supernatural. Now the characters are without their powers, fighting things they’ve never seen before.

This scenario becomes even graver when there’s a time limit or stipulation imposed. After a certain amount of

time or unless a certain thing happens, perhaps the characters are locked in that body forever or their personalities are subsumed by the host. The horror is psychological in this case, though nothing stops the Gamemaster from introducing more horrific elements into the situation the heroes face in liberating themselves.

The question is what the heroes derive from the experience. Is it a lesson never to judge a book by its cover? Do they come away with valuable intelligence regarding an upcoming event? Have they left some memories behind and must find a way to retrieve them? More importantly, what has the enemy learned about them? The host body they were in may hold some of the heroes' secrets.

**Note:** Because of the potentially damaging information monsters and villains can learn about a hero when occupying his or her body, Gamemasters can rule that the information is short lived because the critter/adversary never formed the proper neural pathways in their own brain to form a proper memory. The information can be short-lived, allowing heroes a "grace period" to preoccupy the villain before he can commit the fading memory to record.

## STORY IDEAS

- To escape a contract with a demon, a cabal of sorcerers switch bodies with the heroes.
- A monster turns the heroes into members of its own species because it is desperately lonely.

# FEAR AND CORRUPTION

The horror of a *Supernatural* series appears in more than just the stories themselves. It is also reflected in how situations affect the characters from a game system standpoint. That includes rules for handling fear (sudden shocks and terrible revelations) and corruption (slow and systemic decline).

## FEAR

The Affliction effect (*Hero's Handbook*, page 97) can represent the impact of fear and horror on characters. Different creatures may inflict fear by their very presence and different situations may do so as well, just as other hazards inflict Damage. The general assumption in a *Supernatural* series is that fear is a hazard just like any other, so most creatures do not pay power points for the "power" to terrify their victims, unless it is in some way special compared to other fear-causing hazards in the series. The typical fear Affliction looks like this:

**Fear:** Affliction (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated)

So, when encountering a source of fear, the victims make Will resistance checks, with the DC determined by the source of fear, from DC 10–11 for a mild fright all the way to DC 30 for mind-shattering terror. The average should be around 10 + series PL. Falling victim to fear means the character is less able to act and victims get a new Will

- The reproductive cycle of an alien critter is one of infection, turning the heroes into a hybrid creature to propagate the species.
- A villain switches bodies with the heroes to uncover their deepest, darkest secrets, and to terrorize their loved ones.
- The switch was an accident, and now the hunt is on to switch back before the host memories erase the heroes' identities forever.

## TANGENT ONE-SHOTS

There's a story that the creator of the television show *Felicity* wanted to write a one-shot episode where the characters are suddenly in the spy game and go about doing super-espionage things before returning to their cover lives on the show *Felicity*. The network balked at the idea, and the show's creator went on to create... *Alias*.

Call them April Fool's Day or Halloween episodes, dream sequences, or simply just a break in the narrative, but tangential one-shots are all about using the characters and throwing out the continuity in favor of a one-shot game that has no tie to the main series. In these games the heroes can face any horror on as grand a scale as the Gamemaster can muster. Anything can happen; anything goes; anyone can die, and game life continues as normal next session.

check each round to shake off the fear; incapacitated characters get a chance to recover each minute.

At the GM's discretion, a failed resistance check against fear may allow characters their normal actions so long as they flee from the source of the fear. So a stunned or even incapacitated character who does nothing but try to escape does not suffer the reduction in actions from the condition. Gamemasters can also vary the conditions imposed by failed fear resistance checks to add variety. One encounter might result in the heroes being impaired or disabled by fear rather than dazed or stunned, for example.

## FEARLESSNESS

The Fearless advantage (*Hero's Handbook*, page 84) needs a different sort of handling in a *Supernatural* series. The simplest approach is to ban the advantage outright: nobody gets to have it, because fear and its effects are an important part of the genre.

If you do allow the Fearless advantage, then you may want to limit its benefits. One possibility is to treat it like the Ultimate Effort advantage: rather than complete immunity, the player can choose to spend a hero point for a 20 result on the die for a fear resistance check. This lets the hero reliably overcome fear *some* of the time. Another alternative applies the Limited flaw to the advantage, reducing the rank of any fear effect against the character by half before determining the DC for the resistance check.

## CORRUPTION

As the saying goes, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Horror stories often deal with themes of corruption: the slow, growing, inexorable sense that something *wrong* is happening. You might want to address the issue of corruption in more concrete terms, perhaps even themes of character becoming something other than human. The optional rules in this section look at ways to model these and other kinds of corruption in a *M&M* game.

## TYPES OF CORRUPTION

“Corruption” is an effect, much like a power effect, a general term for some imbalance or progressive problem. It can come in many different forms with different descriptors, and it’s up to the Gamemaster which (if any) forms of corruption exist in the setting. Types of corruption include (but are not limited to) the following:

- **Biological** corruption is some sort of mutation or transformation of the victim’s body. It can be anything from a rampant disease or poisoning to a kind of sinister “evolution” toward some other form, something other than human.
- **Psychological** corruption is the touch of madness, a creeping lunacy intruding on the character’s psyche. The more it progresses, the more the individual’s grip on reality weakens, sliding down the slope toward complete and utter insanity.
- **Moral** corruption is sometimes referred to as decay or taint. It is essentially the blight of evil on the character’s mind, heart, or soul (or all three). It represents an erosion of the character’s morals; moral corruption paves the path to wickedness and villainy, whether willingly or unwittingly.

## ACQUIRING CORRUPTION

Corruption is measured, like most things in *M&M*, in terms of points, similar to hero points. How do characters acquire corruption points?

Once you’ve decided on the cause of a particular kind of corruption, it may just happen. That is, if you do or experience something that causes corruption, you get a corruption point. This makes the consequences of that choice certain (at least in terms of corruption). This may make some players overly cautious, however. If they know

they’ll get corruption from doing something, they can (and likely will) just avoid doing it, if they have the option.

Alternately, doing something that causes corruption may only lead to a *possibility* of acquiring a corruption point. The best mechanic for this is a resistance check: if the check succeeds, the character acquires no corruption; if it fails the character acquires 1 (or more) corruption points. The type of check—and its Difficulty Class—depends on the type of corruption, and often the cause.

Fortitude checks are best suited to corruption affecting the character’s body and health. Will checks are better for corruption that’s moral, psychological, or spiritual in nature, and can also be suited for biological corruption caused by willful actions (such as the psychic feedback from a device causing biological corruption). Dodge and Toughness checks generally aren’t suitable for resisting corruption.

The Difficulty Class of the resistance check is based on the cause of the corruption. Did the character commit a minor infraction or a terrible, mortal, sin? Was it a small dose of mutagenic energy or a massive one? Was the action disturbing or sanity-shattering? As a general guideline, the DC for a corruption resistance check should be 10 + the series’ power level on average, giving most character a fair chance of success.

Another good way for characters to acquire corruption is through extra effort. Some or all of the uses of extra effort in a *Supernaturals* series, particularly those involving powers, may cause corruption. So, for example, whenever you use extra effort to perform a power stunt or enhance a power, you may incur corruption. Alternately, you can make corruption an *alternative* to suffering fatigue from extra effort; then players have a choice of a level of fatigue or a point of corruption. In this case, you may want to rule that hero points cannot reduce the fatigue from extra effort; only taking corruption points can. This keeps extra effort useful, but gives the edge to those willing to suffer corruption in exchange for power.

## EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION

So what do corruption points do once you’ve acquired them? Generally, corruption imposes some sort of disadvantage (or, again, there would be no reason to avoid it). Corruption may also provide some *benefit*, although it’s usually outweighed by the drawbacks.

## COMPLICATIONS

The most common effect of corruption is the imposition of certain complications, based on the nature of the corruption. These may include personality quirks, unusual appearance, addictions, and so forth.

As a general rule, each corruption point allows the GM to impose a complication on the character *without* awarding a hero point, essentially, the corruption points are “free” complications for the GM. The more corruption a character has, the more frequent and severe the complications without any compensatory hero point award.

The GM also decides what kinds of complications are appropriate and may allow players to choose them, or impose them directly. Certain kinds of complications suit particular kinds of corruption, as shown in the **Examples of Corruption** section.

Since the complications imposed by corruption do not award hero points to the players, the GM may choose to allow a resistance check to overcome a corruption complication temporarily. So, for example, a player may be permitted a Will resistance check so her hero can resist the dark impulses building up in her psyche, while another may get a Fortitude check to overcome the pain of a terrible transformation. The GM can also allow players to spend hero points to temporarily ignore the effects of a corruption complication, or just to enhance the resistance check die roll.

## TRAIT LOSS

Another effect of corruption may be loss of ranks in one or more traits, like the Weaken effect (*Hero's Handbook*, page 134). For example, a character may lose a rank of Presence (or some other ability) for each point of corruption. This loss affects the character normally, and if a score is debilitated, the effects become more severe. This effect is best for corruption representing a kind of disease or other slow erosion of the character's physical or mental health.

## BENEFITS

Corruption may also have some beneficial side effects, although the drawbacks should generally outweigh them. The most common benefit, apart from the benefits encouraging characters to risk corruption in the first place, is to make corruption points a prerequisite for *acquiring* certain traits.

For example, if you want to make magic a "forbidden power" in your series (perhaps including some other troublesome powers like Mind Control and Summon), you can decide a character must have a certain level of moral or psychological corruption before being able to invest power points in magical powers. This makes all sorcerers corrupted by their arts, whatever their original intentions for learning magic might have been.

This kind of "corruption prerequisite" is an effective tool for controlling access to certain traits and creating the right feel for certain kinds of settings, particularly those where power (or certain kinds of power) comes at a high price.

## CORRUPTION LIMITS

The Gamemaster should decide if there's a limit to how much corruption you can accumulate and, if so, what it is and what happens when you reach it.

The effects of corruption may create an inherent limit. For example, if each point of corruption results in the loss of a rank of Stamina, then victims die when their Stamina is debilitated, so they can't have more corruption than their Stamina rank + 5. On the other hand, some corruption effects don't have built-in limits. Theoretically, a character

could continue accumulating corruption-related complications indefinitely, for example.

It can be useful to set a maximum corruption limit for two reasons. The first is to keep corruption undesirable and give players reasons to avoid it. The other is to provide some dramatic tension as characters draw closer to an ultimate end from accumulating corruption.

Whatever the exact effect of reaching the corruption limit, the game system effect is the character is taken out of the player's hands, becoming a non-player character. This can be due to permanent insanity, irredeemable corruption, total physical (or psychological) transformation, or even death.

Where to set the corruption limit depends on how soon you want characters to get there, but a limit of between 10 and 20 corruption points is a good guideline. A lower limit (around 10 points) is best for series where any corruption is a serious concern and corrupt characters often hover close to the limit. A higher limit is better for those games where corruption is a problem, but rarely gets so out of hand that a character succumbs to it completely.

## REMOVING CORRUPTION

Once you have corruption, can you get rid of it and, if so, how? Generally, getting rid of corruption should be possible, but difficult, and should be a choice made by players to do what's necessary to rid their characters of their corruption.

The process of eliminating corruption should be difficult enough for corruption to remain a significant risk. If it were easy to get rid of, everyone would do it. Possible means of eliminating corruption include the following.

### ABSTINENCE

The character must abstain from some activity to get rid of corruption, usually whatever caused the corruption in the first place. For example, if using certain powers causes corruption, then the character has to abstain from using those powers for a time (which may be an inconvenience). A minimum of a week per point of corruption is recommended, although it could be longer.

### PENANCE

The character has to take some action to address the cause of the corruption in order to get rid of it. For example, corruption caused by wrongdoing might require the character redress those wrongs and seek forgiveness to remove the corruption, while corruption reflecting a character out of tune with his nature might require actions more in tune with the character's true self to eliminate the problem. Some penance may require the addition of absolution, a form of spiritual treatment (see the following).

### TREATMENT

There is some treatment able to remove corruption. Generally, it should be time-consuming, difficult, expensive,

or all three. Physical corruption might be treatable using medicine, and characters could remove psychological corruption through therapy. The Gamemaster should decide the course of treatment, any check(s) required, and how much corruption each treatment removes; one point of corruption per degree of success on a check is a good guideline.

## TRADE-OFF

For an added dilemma, some corruption may be removable by trading it for *another* type of corruption! For example, the slow, certain decline of toxicity may be curable, but only if the patient (or the healer!) is willing to accept the risk or certainty of madness or wickedness in exchange. This can give the heroes some difficult choices and make for suitable dramatic stories.

# FEAR AND CORRUPTION IN ACTION

Here are some different examples of how the fear and corruption rules can work in a setting. These are by no means the only ones, and Gamemasters should feel free to come up with their own variations. Any or all of these examples could coexist in a *Supernaturals* setting, providing multiple ways characters can decline!

## MADNESS

The mind can only stand so much pressure before it breaks. There are things no one was meant to see (or do, or know), and they can bring on a creeping madness, leading to total insanity.

### ACQUIRING MADNESS

Characters suffer madness from exposure to traumatic events, namely fear afflictions (previously). In addition to the normal effects of a failed Will resistance check against fear, each degree of failure after the first (starting with the second degree) inflicts a point of madness on the character. Gamemasters can adjust this depending on how severe characters' decline should be, from only three or more degrees of failure inflicting madness to *each* degree of failure (including the first) inflicting it.

### EFFECTS OF MADNESS

Accumulated madness points result in mental complications, especially Quirks, Phobias, and Temper. The player and GM should choose these to reflect the effects of the trauma(s) causing the madness: being attacked by a swarm of spiders may cause arachnophobia, for example. As madness points accumulate, the character may acquire new complications, or existing ones may become more severe and frequent.

In settings where madness is linked to certain powers—particularly psychic or magical powers—madness points may increase a character's level of power. For example,

perhaps certain magical or psychic powers in the setting are only available to characters with madness points and any individual power can't have a rank greater than the character's madness point total.

Characters who reach the madness limit go permanently insane, barring intervention of some plot device chosen by the GM. They essentially become NPCs under the Gamemaster's control.

## ELIMINATING MADNESS

Eliminating madness points takes time, rest, and usually some form of psychotherapy or psychological treatment. The Gamemaster can set an amount of time or treatment for characters to eliminate accumulated madness points, such as a month's quiet rest, or a week (or more) of therapy. Depending on the style of the game, these times could be even longer, like months of therapy per madness point, with rest alone having no real effect. Any occasion where the patient has to make a Will check against fear or madness again means no progress during that time.

## MUTATION

Life is impossibly complex, a galaxy of countless cells. It takes so little: just a small change in a DNA strand for things to alter. Such changes can spread, transforming an ordinary person into something ... else. Something unnatural.

### ACQUIRING MUTATION

Characters usually acquire mutation points from exposure to mutagens like radiation or certain chemicals. In some settings exposure to things like "chaos energy," preternatural or alien substances, or certain powers may also cause mutations. Characters usually get a Fortitude resistance check to avoid accumulating mutation points, with the DC determined by the intensity of the mutagen: DC 10 for a fairly mild to 30 or more for especially intense mutagenic sources.

Note that, in spite of the name, mutation does not necessarily have to be genetic or scientific in nature. A curse that transforms victims into undead monsters or animalistic savages can just as easily be an example of a progressive mutation as exposure to radiation or mutagens.

### EFFECTS OF MUTATION

Mutations generally cause physical complications. Note that multiple mutations affecting appearance don't count separately but are treated as a single complication (so long as their sole effect is the reaction others have to the character's unusual appearance).

Mutation complications are often themed, based on the kind of transformation occurring. For example, a virus or other condition causing the loss of sensory functions creates Disability complications with the victim's senses, one by one, until they are all gone. Or it might just lead to progressive vision impairment, through disabled to visually unaware...permanent blindness, or a new and terrible kind of "sight".



Mutations might also grant new or additional powers, depending on their nature, although the character doesn't usually get much say in the nature of these powers; they may come with certain flaws like Side-Effect, Uncontrolled, or Full Power. A certain number of mutation points may be a prerequisite for having physical powers, perhaps limiting power ranks to no greater than the character's mutation point total. Exposure to mutagens can be the origin for a character's powers without necessarily accumulating any mutation points. This is a plot device rather than an application of corruption.

A mutation limit generally sets the point where a victim is transformed entirely into something other than human, from a flesh-eating zombie to an alien hybrid. At this point, the mutation is irreversible, barring some plot device provided by the GM. The victim becomes a non-player character under the control of the GM.

## ELIMINATING MUTATION

Mutation points are difficult to eliminate, since they are largely permanent changes in the character's physical makeup. Short of the character getting an entirely new body, the only means of removing mutation points may be extensive (and complex) gene therapy or the use of certain powers. Perhaps Healing effects can remove mutation points, 1 point per degree of success (although with some possible risk of the healer accumulating corruption instead!). In some settings there may be no way of eliminating mutation points!

## TOXICITY

This build-up of corruption is harmful to the character's overall health and may be life-threatening, if it goes on long enough. Toxicity can reflect the slow effects of a disease, poison, or toxic or harmful environment.

### ACQUIRING TOXICITY

Characters generally acquire toxicity points from exposure to toxins, including polluted environments or direct exposure to toxic creatures. So characters might accumulate toxicity points from being in the radiation-blasted ruins of a city, for example, or from coming into contact with carriers of a plague. It's up to the GM whether or not to track different types of toxicity separately, or just lump all the points together for an overall effect on the character's well-being. The acquisition, progress, and resistance of toxicity is generally a function of Fortitude.

### EFFECTS OF TOXICITY

Toxicity typically causes physical complications related to health, from chronic pain to disabilities. More serious toxicity also causes decline in one or more abilities: Strength for loss of muscle and general weakness, Fighting, Dexterity, and Agility for loss of coordination, balance, or nerve damage, mental abilities for impairment of the brain, and Stamina for general loss of health and potentially fatal conditions. Once an ability is debilitated by the condition, the character is usually out of the game: paralyzed, comatose, or dead.

Toxicity limits are generally set by affected abilities becoming debilitated, but the corruption may have effects even beyond that point. The classic example is a disease that kills and then transforms its dead victims into something else.

## ELIMINATING TOXICITY

Some toxicity may be eliminated by medical treatment or the use of the Healing or Regeneration effects, although Healing must be Restorative, and some toxicity may be Incurable (requiring Persistent Healing or Regeneration to overcome it).

## WICKEDNESS

In this application of corruption, good and evil are more than just abstract moral concepts—or at least evil is, anyway. Those who do especially wicked deeds have a stain upon their souls. This darkness can eat away at the spirit, until there's nothing left inside but emptiness and corruption.

### ACQUIRING WICKEDNESS

Characters acquire wickedness by committing evil deeds. The exact definition of "evil" is left up to the Gamemaster, but generally means any deliberately harmful action undertaken for reasons other than the defense of one's self

or others. In some cases, you may want to limit the list of potential "sins." For example, perhaps murder and torture are corrupting, while simple theft is not. In other settings, you can expand the list of wicked deeds to include all kinds of moral gray areas.

## EFFECTS OF WICKEDNESS

Wickedness points impose mental complications associated with sociopathic or even psychopathic behavior. The more points the character accumulates, the worse (or more frequent) the complications become, and the more likely the character is to acquire further wickedness, continuing the cycle. A wicked character loses the ability to use powers with a "holy" or "good" descriptor; the character is simply too corrupt. On the other hand, a wicked character may gain the ability to use unholy or evil powers, perhaps with a rank limit equal to the character's wickedness points.

### ELIMINATING WICKEDNESS

Wickedness is removed not only by refraining from doing evil deeds, but also by actively performing good deeds in an effort of redemption. A truly good and noble act removes a point of wickedness from the character's tally. Of course, any corruption-induced complications can make it more difficult to stay on the straight and narrow; the player may need to earn and spend hero points to allow the character to overcome the complications long enough to do the right thing.

# THE TOOLS OF HORROR GAMEMASTERING: FEELING SCARED?

Gamemastering horror can be one of the trickiest skills to learn. Anything can be done with broad strokes and grand statements, but horror needs variety and an understanding of nuance. This goes doubly so for superheroes, where characters are normally at the forefront making grand statements with their powers, their costumes, and their personalities.

The following section includes ways not only to use and work with horror, but how to use it with superheroes that are normally powerful or strong-willed enough not to be scared. It also offers variety so Gamemasters can offer a wide array of storylines and frights.

## THIS IS NOT A COMPETITION

Before Gamemastering horror, get one thing straight. This is not a competition with the players. Horror is not about you vs. your friends. You are there to present challenges, to arbitrate conflicts you establish, and to reward the players for outfoxing you with their characters. In fact, they need to outfox you because it's all about the dynamics of the group seeing them through the hairy and scary. The minute any Gamemaster sets out to prove something to the players is the minute it's about ego and not friendship.

Gamemasters must do the very difficult task of setting their egos aside and giving the players a chance to outwit the scenario, the monster, and the conflict. The Gamemaster is not the scenario, however, nor the monster, nor the conflict. They are there to provide the fun and then sit back and enjoy the ride when the players tilt the scales in their favor.

## PRECISION VS. BLUNT-FORCE TRAUMA

Despite the genre, a horror game involving supers actually requires a lighter touch. It requires Gamemasters who understand when to overwhelm and when to strike with precision. In fact, more precision is better because of the inuring effect of shock value. Hit the players with something big, like a zombie attack, and the next time you have to up the ante to produce the same reactions. Eventually, the series becomes one overblown event after another and the stories go from frightening to epic to ridiculous.

With precision, you can tweak. You can draw upon different stimuli to affect the characters and either nudge the ante or change the horror entirely. Precision is your friend.

It is the scalpel rather than the bone mallet. The differences are easy to spot too:

- **Precision:** Targets psychological weakness; threatens loved ones; casts suspicions on allies; forces deals with the devil through necessity; makes characters frightened of their powers; creates physical, mental and emotional conflicts; offers choices in shades of gray; gives monsters an agenda; cuts one thousand times for the slow death.
- **Blunt:** Uses gross-out factor; kills loved ones; allies betray openly; strong-arms characters into deals; outmuscles the heroes; forces powers race; creates physical conflicts; offers black and white choices; makes monsters evil for evil's sake; cuts the jugular for the arterial spray.

That's not to say the Gamemaster can't mix precision and blunt. The list is meant to illustrate when series might be using a heavy or light hand too often and may not be aware of it.

## DISQUIET VERSUS DISCOMFORT

Much like the precision versus the blunt approach, Gamemasters should know when something is disquieting and when something is discomforting. Disquiet is about playing with certainties while discomfort is about answering them. A splatter of blood and a child's toy in an otherwise empty room is disquieting; a child's dead and naked body is discomforting. While the *Supernatural Handbook* is all about using horror to full effect, which sometimes means not pulling punches, Gamemasters should realize when not to use discomfort.

Disquiet is something that can affect the player and their character alike, but discomfort is often the reaction of the player alone. In addition, there's a thin line between discomfort and disgust. Gamemasters may want to talk to players privately and discuss what they don't want to see in a game. Players will likely have problems with graphic violence toward children or having their characters raped and Gamemasters should accept that. Nobody knows the reason why someone may find something disturbing, but all sorts of personal triggers exist. Don't push, don't cajole, don't single them out, and don't share with anyone. Accept that there are certain things that are *verboten* in a game and it's best to understand those limits early.

## TIPPING POINT: TILTING THE SCALES

As explained previously in the *Supernatural Handbook*, horror fiction and horror movies move the protagonists toward a point of self-empowerment through decision. The characters go from being chased, mauled, scared, and victimized to planning the monster's defeat (often in the final chapters or the last 20 minutes of a movie). The remainder of the fiction is spent enacting the plan and, hopefully, besting the threat. But once the heroes decide

to fight back and formulate a plan accordingly, fortune flips to their favor.

Tilting the scales is an objective Gamemasters should set out to accomplish. Be it in a single session or an arc, the GM's objective should be to feed the heroes with enough information, clues, self-confidence, and secrets to reach the tipping point. The Gamemaster should even know or suspect when the tipping point will occur, that final piece of the puzzle that sets the characters forward.

Once that happens, the Gamemaster should allow the characters to "run the game," so to speak. This is their empowerment for creating a plan and fighting to see it through. This doesn't mean that there aren't surprises, shocks, and adversaries to face before the night is won, but the GM should not derail that final push.

## LEAVING IN THE BLANKS

Stephen King once said (and paraphrased here) that the reader's imagination is far greater than an author's descriptive powers. Once the writer describes the monster, the monster is no longer terrifying. It's less imposing or simply "off" from what we, as audience, imagined. That's where leaving in the blanks comes in.

A crucial element in horror series is giving space for the player's imagination to fill in the gaps. This means placing the characters in the situation without painting the whole picture. It's why many movies and books limit the audience/reader's senses or perception of the scene. Over-explanation is the enemy; the ruination of moods.

Here are some suggestions for relating horror while using the player's imagination to your benefit:

## DESCRIPTIONS

One useful tool to describing monsters is to paint it in broad strokes or to use simile and metaphor instead of actual measurements. Descriptions work best in horror if they frame the monster or event in context to the environment: Eyes like dim embers; tentacles that undulate like those of a submerged squid; claws the size of your forearm; the cold that touches the bone and cracks it like ice. In that fashion, showing pictures of the monster may also work against the Gamemaster. The great Cthulhian beast is suddenly cartoony or small because the picture becomes a poor reference for scale. It becomes vulnerable and vulnerable is far removed from horror.

## LET THEM SUPPOSE

Very few things in life are easily encapsulated and events are considered horrific because they leave few answers behind. A father murders his wife and children before killing himself, and everyone is desperate to know why. People need to know, to believe there was justification for the horror. When they don't have it, they're even more unsettled. Knowledge, even frightening knowledge, is a greater comfort than not knowing at all. Using this technique is a little trickier, because the players can't be left

in the dark on all things, but Gamemasters can use the unanswered question to draw the players in. Let them wonder why the monster does what it does and unless the creature has a dying speech, the answer to its actions may only lie in previous actions. A monster looking for love may have a reputation for kidnapping women, but is it for companionship or to mate? A creature reappears at regular intervals, but why that duration and where does it go when it disappears? Many of the most enduring real-world mysteries carry an enigma about them or the hint of conspiracy. Use rumor instead of fact, innuendo instead of data. A clue-giver might fear to say too much, so he says just enough. A witness only reveals bits and pieces. A monster's history might be unearthed in a popular story. And above all remember; never answer a question that wasn't asked.

## USING THE SENSES

Horror is more than just sights and sounds. It should be a full sensory experience, meaning that taste, touch and smell should factor in beyond the purely gross. The last three senses seem to be used only to disgust the players, but what if they were the only indicators of the supernatural. What if the bitter taste of alkyls filled the mouth when the supernatural was near; or ghosts were felt like cobwebs growing on the skin. Taking the experience of the game beyond the senses sparks the imagination of players and takes them beyond their normal experiences.

## HERALDS

Certain supernatural occurrences are often preceded by inexplicable events. If a ghost is present, a candle flame may burn blue, or a radio/television might go haywire. Demons might trigger stigmata in people or a truly tragic event could create nightmares or prophetic dreams. Dreams that have a real-life effect (like being cut in one's sleep and waking up to discover blood) are another indicator that something wicked does this way come. The trick is in keeping these manifestations mysterious and relatively uncommon. Someone's breath frosting may trigger a "what the hell?" moment the first time around, but after the seventh time, players are likely to quip "who turned off the heat?" Another way to keep the repeated portent of the supernatural effective is to make sure that it heralds something nasty, something that gave the heroes a run for their money the last time it happened. This way, their own expectations of the last encounter is enough to scare them.

## VAGUELY SEEN

This also plays on the philosophy of painting descriptions with broad strokes, except in this case the nature of the monster allows it to remain partially hidden or concealed. Maybe shadows wreath it, it moves as a blur, or it remains nearly invisible and out of phase. Regardless, the characters may never get a good look at it and, even worse, its ability to conceal itself means the heroes may never know how many of them are actually in the area. Even when the

creatures die, they may dissolve into mist or powder or become liquid.

## BE INVENTIVE

Vampires, werewolves and witches may be staples of horror, but them alone do not horror make. Gamemasters should be creative with their creatures and create things the players have no way of having seen before. Not knowing the creature means the heroes are off balance; there are no stats in other books for them to have read, no weaknesses to exploit instantly, and no certainty in how to kill it. Invention or a creative approach to old monsters might be just the thing to unsettle the players.

## TOYING WITH EXPECTATIONS

Horror isn't just about triggering fears...it's about playing with someone's hopes and expectations. The dark corridor isn't scary; it's having to travel down that corridor and what may lurk there that scares the character. Toying with expectations is where the Gamemaster draws out the tension, bringing players to the edges of their seats with what they know is coming. Often, the battle or the confrontation itself isn't suspenseful or horrifying beyond a physical threat. It's the notion of what *could* happen that frightens players psychologically and emotionally.

Toying with expectations should be about immediate goals. When the Gamemaster sees a situation where the characters are going to need something, that's the perfect time to play with them because they have an expectation in that moment. They need to do this to advance, and by that very fact, they are invested in the action and its success. It can be done simply too. The heroes need to venture down the corridor? The hallway lights dim and flicker. The characters are searching a house? They hear skittering noises inside the walls. It could be faulty wiring or rats, or it could be something far more dangerous.

This method's first trick of generating horror in a game is about making the characters hesitate a moment; not long enough to dissuade them, but long enough for a mental pause. Their need outweighs their concerns, but barely. The second trick is that whatever is happening is most often either coincidence or a side-effect of the event. It shouldn't be direct opposition or a conflict. By making it rare, you leave the characters with uncertainty as to whether or not this time will be the one.

Think of it as a game of Russian roulette. With several bullets in the chamber, the player knows that something will happen. Getting shot is a certainty. This can be useful at times, playing with the expectations of pain or death, but it gets old. More importantly, there is no hope left (or a thin one) and horror needs hope. Hope is where expectations lie. So, if there was only one loaded chamber out of six, pulling the trigger would be about the uncertainty of surviving against the hope of drawing a blank. There is more fear in the one shot out of six because nothing is definite, everything is random.

## HUMOR IN HORROR

Now we arrive at a necessity in horror...humor. While humor can kill a mood or momentum, especially when interjected by players, it's important to recognize when humor can be necessary as a coping mechanism. It's a way to bleed the tension in a good way, usually after a tense situation, during a respite, or in the face of danger. GMs can reward a character with a hero point if their joke was timely or needed by the group to break the silence, but this may lead to players trying to be funny all the time for an extra point. Use this reward method rarely or at the series' risk.

The other option is to create a humorous series, where the horror/supernatural and comedy go hand-in-hand. This might be a teen hero series where the reaction of the characters generates the comedy; it might be a single character that cracks jokes or acts strange to alleviate the stress; or perhaps the monsters and situations are humorous. Regardless, there is no formula to humor in horror because it has to emerge naturally from the moment. Gamemasters should be ready to clamp down on humor that derails the build-up or role-playing and reward or allow humor when placed appropriately.

## INTERMEDIATE TOOLS OF HORROR GMING

While it isn't always necessary to dissect horror until there's no mystery left, the following theories might deepen a Gamemaster's repertoire of tricks to use against the group. Like all good magic, however, it isn't necessary to show the players how the trick is done for their characters to appreciate the end result.

### HORRIFYING THE ALREADY POWERFUL

Some believe that horror is about helplessness in the face of something monstrous and uncaring and powerful. That might have come about because of the slasher flick, where the slasher is unstoppable, but if you really think about it, the serial killer in movies is unstoppable because the studios want sequels. Therefore, a measure of immortality is necessary to the mythology to explain the monster's resurrection or actions between installments.

Still, there is truth to the fact that the more empowered the characters are, the less they might have to fear. Many forms of horror fiction, including comics, are about the protagonists growing more capable and certain as a form of character growth and the hero's journey. So what to do when the characters may already be at that point and simply beating them with the supernatural isn't the way to go? The following section will illustrate how the Gamemaster has more tools at his disposal than he might believe.

For that, horror techniques for any style of series fall into one of four categories. The first targets the monster itself, making it stronger or more powerful than anything the characters have yet seen. The second targets the hero's body, rendering the character physically vulnerable to the supernatural. The third targets emotions, attacking the characters through their feelings about others around them. The fourth targets the psyche, attacking or challenging the character through his mental weak points.

### MONSTER POWER PLAYS

This is generally a blunt approach to superheroes, instilling horror because the monster is more powerful than anything the characters can muster. It then becomes the

threat of bodily harm since much fear is rooted in our own physical safety. The caveat is that any method that is used to continuously and frequently thwart the players is dangerous because it's exasperating. Using a trick or two from this list across a series' cycle is hardly inconvenient, but using all of them or relying on them will weaken the series. Why? Because the characters can't be afraid when the players are feeling angry or frustrated or know what to expect. So, like any seasoning, use sparingly and with care.

### GREATER POWER LEVEL

The monster is on a higher power scale than the heroes. It is stronger, tougher, smarter, faster, or all of the above. Nothing can hurt it, except for the *deus ex machina* hidden somewhere in the investigation. The danger here is if players don't know there's a plot device out there that can help them, they may try a variety of techniques to fell said beast when they should be running. Case in point, the creators of the videogame *Deus Ex* tell a story about a machinegun trap in a corridor meant to stop the player's advance. Players were supposed to escape using a window across the trapped hall, but a majority of players continued to rush or attack the automated machinegun, trying to get past it. It presented an obstacle, and they thought attacking it was the solution. This situation also holds true in horror games, and may even be worse in superhero series, where the more powerful the character, the more likely she'll stand toe-to-toe with the adversary and not retreat from the fight.

If the monster is of a higher power level, and defeating it requires a special device, it would be wise to establish this beforehand.

### IMMUNITIES

The monster might be immune to most types of damage that the heroes can dish out, except one. Maybe magic



affects it, or cold powers. Regardless, it is something that the heroes must first discover before putting that knowledge to use (potentially within the same fight). Now the fun part might be if the creature is affected by the powers of someone who isn't the team's normal skirmisher or damage dealer. Or if hurting the monster hurts the attackers as well. In the latter case, the heroes must then push their own limitations even further to defeat the monster.

## LINKED

The monster or item links itself to something living—another character or a civilian. The link can be spiritual, energy, or even the physical absorption of the PC/NPC into its body. Any attack against it will do nothing but hurt the person it is attached to. The heroes must then figure a way to separate the two before attacking the monster/item. In this case, it's perfectly all right if the fight then becomes a physical conflict. Finding a way to liberate the human is the conflict; the beat down on the monster is the heroes' reward.

## OVERWHELM

The monster isn't powerful on an individual basis. Its strength comes from its ability to overwhelm the opposition. Clouds of killer insects, mobs of zombies, throngs of vermin, etc. are all nearly insignificant when the component is isolated. Together, though, they can be everywhere at once and hurt a great many people at once. The heroes aren't held powerless because they can't touch

the creatures, but because they can't cover that much ground. In a horror series, the swarms can cover areas as small as a house or a room, or as large as cities and countries, perhaps even the world. The heroes, in this case, have to uncover the root of the problem first. The good news is that at the very least, they can cut loose with their powers because there's always plenty more where that came from.

## ADAPT

What if the threat could adapt to whatever was thrown at it? If it's defeated by one type of attack one encounter, the next encounter might see it resistant to those powers or effects. Or, perhaps, it can render itself immune to specific powers, but only a type or two at a time. This would mean that one round might involve its resistance to fire-based attacks and the next would be against cold. Whether the creature or item is in control of this ability or it's random, this would allow all heroes on a team to contribute somehow.

## ATTACKING THE HERO'S PHYSICAL WEAKNESSES

Targeting a hero's power or physical attributes seems like a natural way to make super characters vulnerable to the supernatural, but it's a one-trick pony if overpowering or depriving the heroes is the only method. As a weapon in an arsenal of tricks, however, it is a viable technique. One way is to make physical weakness/power deprivation a specific circumstance. It happens with one monster or

one uncommon situation that pops up in the occasional horror story arc. This way, the heroes should fear the return of that circumstance, knowing full well that they're in for the fight of their lives.

Here are other ways to limit the heroes' power level or abilities to generate physical-based threats.

## POWER LOSS

In the simplest terms, the supernatural has a way of short-circuiting powers or making them erratic. This is very much a blunt approach and a dangerous type of deprivation-based game-play that is best used with specific monsters or storylines. Nullify 10 (area, broad, simultaneous, effortless) is a viable means of accomplishing this.

## TERMS OF COMBAT

The monster can deprive the heroes of their powers, if they consent. So it may threaten innocent civilians or allied NPCs to cajole the characters into facing it "unarmed."

## BUILD-UP

More a series option than a simple choice, build-up is for heroes who aren't at full power all the time. They have powers through magic or tech with limited charges or that require time to build up. Maybe there's an ambient nature to the horror event where superpowers are mostly repressed, except heroes can store enough energy toward the occasional offensive discharge or defensive effect. This way, the characters have powers, but must be more judicious in their application. The monster/villain may even throw them into situations where they must use their powers, instead of saving it for the end fight.

## WEAKNESS CHAMELEON

What if the horror could understand and attack a hero's weak points? It might be able to trigger a Drawback or aggravate a complication. Again, this is a blunt method approach, and probably best suited to a type of threat, like a demon or a mind-reading device. The threat could either change into that weakness as a shapeshifter or could use limited environmental control to generate circumstances that would weaken the heroes.

## ATTACKING THE HERO'S MENTAL STATE

Here is where the horror becomes more insidious by circumventing the hero's strengths (which is normally their physical prowess) and attacking characters psychologically. As Gothic horror dealt with madness, the '50s were about attacks against society, or contemporary movies featured horrifying transformations brought on through viruses, psychology can be a mix of hurting the characters mentally and targeting their psyche by damaging the world around them.

There are two generalized ways to use psychology to terrify. The first method affects the heroes directly, transforming them, attacking them, turning their struggle

inward. The world is unchanged but the characters' own sense of estrangement due to some condition has made everything around them alien. The second method changes the world around the heroes, but not the heroes themselves. The characters transform mentally in response to psychological trauma and not any direct or obvious manipulation to them.

Here are ways to target the character psychologically.

## IDENTITY CRISIS

It's a fear of transformation and on a physical level the character has changed or is changing against his will. Perhaps her mental faculties remain intact, but that doesn't stop her from questioning her identity. Or maybe the struggle is to stop the transformation. Regardless, the horror for these heroes comes about when their new identity alienates them from the lives they knew. Perhaps their appearance generates fear, or maybe their new nature slips so often they reveal the monster beneath. This struggle is one for identity and Gamemasters can play on that fear by having the transformation happen slowly, one inch at a time. The change can even be voluntary, where the hero must keep changing and growing more powerful to fight the growing threat. See the **Corruption** rules, specifically **Mutation**, for useful guidelines.

**Examples:** *The heroes must hide their transformation from those who matter; the change brings a deepening hunger for blood; when a full transformation happens, the characters are prisoners in their own heads while their lower brains take control; the hero is slowly losing everyone they love because of the mutations; someone is trying to convince the hero to kill themselves before they transform fully and threaten their family.*

## CREEPING RISE WITHIN

While Identity Crisis is all about the physical change, this option is about the rot within. Something is changing inside the characters, a growing darkness that might offer power, knowledge, or nothing but whispers and horrible urges. The struggle is between two different natures and the horror is about the seductive nature of surrendering identity or the evil that might become. This follows the **Wickedness** option for Corruption, with each new point of wickedness tearing away an element of the character's personality. It might start with memories of life-learning experiences or with the ability to relate to other people. Presence might suffer as the hero becomes more brusque or abrupt.

Regardless, there should be reminders of what it means to give in completely. The heroes need a reason to fight against the creeping rot. Examples include fear of hurting loved ones, battles against others who have lost their sanity, or perhaps even the loss of skill or advantage levels that are tied into memories (like pertinent training or advice, though there should be a way to regain or replace these). Whatever the case may be, the heroes should know what they are losing and there

## TEMPORARY POWER LEVELS

To manage the power levels of heroes, some series might institute the notion of temporary power levels. This is where the normal environment (due to scientific particles or the effects of magic) actually represses powers, bringing them back down to PL0, though a small crack in the dam exists. Over time, the power builds back up, giving heroes their power levels back, but it's like a battery that, once discharged, must be recharged. It's up to the Game-master to determine if this means power levels return one per minute, one per hour, one per day, or one per week. In other words, the heroes can use their powers, but 1) only to the maximum of the returned energy and 2) the power spent is then gone again until it is recharged. Characters don't have to spend all their power levels for a power in one big show either. They can spend it a level at a time, one PL here, three there; first one power, and then another. The effect is cumulative, however, and the PC can never spend more levels in a power than he currently possesses or the levels he purchased.

should be a sense of loss in that transformation. Some things a person might lose of themselves includes: Self-preservation, empathy, love for someone, hatred of something, memories of individuals, a healthy sense of fear, bravado, promises, etc.

**Examples:** Someone from the hero's past asks for their help, someone they don't remember, but is this a case of amnesia or someone playing with the character's head; the lost parts of a hero are being replaced with a delight for murder and pain; the heroes, in gaining new memories of people who have been murdered, realize that they'll be overridden unless they solve the mystery first; the heroes regain their lost facets and memories about once a week, so they must struggle to stay ahead of the attrition curve; a villain may have a cure to this condition, but the characters must do something for him first.

## FLASHBACKS

The character experienced something traumatic in their past, and highly stressful events (or other triggers) bring on flashbacks as a complication (see **Complications** in **Chapter Two**). The flashbacks serve multiple purposes, however. Perhaps the event was forgotten and the character is regaining the memory and relevant clues piece by piece. Maybe the flashback is thematically linked to the events in game, giving characters a deeper understanding. Regardless, the fact is that the flashback remains an open wound on the character's psyche. It's an injury that cannot heal because the character must relive it in its full gruesome glory.

If players that didn't take the flaw for their characters, one option is that the supernatural has an after-effect on its victims. People who encounter horror or the supernatural suffer from waking nightmares of the events. Only, this time, they failed to defeat their adversary and stop the threat. Alternatively, the event is so sweeping and traumatic that the heroes suffer from flashbacks in the quiet moments, when they're alone with their thoughts.

**Examples:** The heroes are enduring the psychic flashbacks of someone else and must discover who; the flashbacks are somehow hurting the hero by reopening old scars; the characters see the faces of everyone they failed to save; the flashbacks lock

*the characters inside a mental reality together, forcing them to succeed or die; if a hero really botches an attempt to break out of a flashback, the flashback comes to life.*

## OBLIGATIONS

The characters are bound by ethic, by curse, by promise, by commitment, or by something that forces them to act in certain ways. Sometimes the hero's outlook and their actions match up and sometimes they must act against their own beliefs to fulfill the terms of the obligation. Horror can play out in this situation when the character may have no recourse but to walk away from a terrible situation or to watch quietly. The conflict is meant to drop the character into a moral conundrum that can't be answered easily (and which will probably pit the hero's ethical code against the needs of the greater good).

**Examples:** Monsters allow the heroes to escort imprisoned children to safety while their parents are still being slaughtered around them; the heroes are tracking the movement of monsters to uncover their hive and are told not to jeopardize this opportunity, even if innocent civilians are attacked.

## HELPLESS

This is one instance where the characters are left relatively "unscathed" while their lives or the world itself burns around them. Their powers remain intact, but the heroes cannot help everyone. The scope is too big or matters slip beyond their ability to influence them. This type of horror is meant to show that even suns are tiny and puny in the larger seas of the universe. The caveat, however, is against tying the character's hands by preventing their actions. This isn't about crippling the heroes. It's about framing the horror on a scale outside of their ability to control it.

**Examples:** Hundreds of airplanes are suddenly falling from the sky; cities are besieged by zombies; the person the hero loves has decided to leave them; an earthquake has hit a major city, and everyone needs saving now; a tidal wave is sweeping toward the coastline, and only a few coastal communities can be saved; a monster attack is forcing the entire evacuation of a city.

## CLARITY

This is about the truth and the characters are the only ones who know about it. This happens in a mundane world that's never been given reason to believe in the fantastic. Society is the enemy in the sense that the exposed nail is hammered first. This isn't about conformity as horror, though that can certainly be a theme. It is more that the heroes may be operating outside government sanction or the public's approval. Let them hunt the monsters, but be perceived as the monsters instead. Perhaps the government is trying to cover-up this entire supernatural brouhaha and the heroes are upsetting that goal.

Regardless, will the characters stick to their stories even after they've been alienated by friends, divorced by family, mocked by the public, and hunted by others with a vested interest in hiding the truth? The strange result of this singular vision is that characters may become so obsessed with revealing its existence that they lose friends, family, and are eventually so alone that only the monsters understand them. Clarity is all about the single-minded pursuit of truth and how everything else falls away as a result.

**Examples:** *The heroes begin as recluses who suddenly realize they've lost everything in pursuit of monsters; characters must choose between keeping their word to their family or tracking down the latest killer; the monsters appear human, meaning that killing them looks like manslaughter; someone is calling the hero's mental stability into question and wants to have them committed, but is it a villain's plot to hurt them or a legitimate trial; the heroes discover that a monster rests at the head of a corporation, and while revealing it publicly will get the truth out there, it'll hurt much of the humanitarian aid for which the organization is known.*

## PARANOIA

The fun part about paranoia is that it works so well in horror series because no matter how paranoid the characters act, it can always be bigger and larger than their expectations. Everything happens for a reason when this tool is employed in series, but the truth is always hidden under multiple layers and opposing agendas, or fractured into so many bits that nobody has a major portion of it. The enemy the party thinks is their chief obstacle is not the ultimate enemy. Allies can be adversaries, adversaries turned into unwilling allies. The truth is a lie that becomes the ultimate truth.

Paranoia is a way to get characters to doubt everything they see, hear, or even believe. The reality, or what little of it the party learns, is mixed in with something horrific, a possibility of something too dreadful to believe. Ultimately, because the conspiracy can involve anyone or anything, the characters will never feel like they have the entire truth. The unknown becomes frightening because it becomes everything and nothing.

One trick to instantly instill series with a sense of paranoia or conspiracy is actually based on skill rolls and their Difficulty Class. Whenever the characters use a skill to gain information, two or more degrees of failure could mean that they've now tipped off someone in the know. This could bring allies to their doors or enemies at their throats.

**Examples:** *Someone entrusts the heroes with a vial of strange blue liquid, but whenever the liquid turns orange, ten or more people vanish under bizarre circumstances; the heroes discover that someone they believed was dead is alive and doesn't remember who he is; the conspiracy seems directly related to the characters' childhoods, and they find strange symbols on all their old toys; corpses of young men were found in a warehouse, but all of the men reputedly disappeared during a covert operation during WWII-era Germany; a hero and friend of the characters is acting strange and his wife thinks he's been replaced by a monster.*

## AMNESIA

Maybe it's a week or a month of the character's past that's missing or maybe the hero has lost everything about himself and is struggling to remember who or what he was. Either one is fodder for Gamemasters to create subplots and use the character's uncertainty against them. Do people act like the hero should be someone else? Are folks frightened of him and if so, why? Should the character fear himself? Should he fear his secrets or the reality of his true identity?

With amnesia the horror is character-centric, although an entire party of amnesiacs can give the players common ground for their characters. The notion that the evil they fight might be something in their own background gives more personal weight to the horror. It's also perfect fodder for paranoia series, where everyone may be in on the truth that the heroes forgot. As a shorter-term effect, however, amnesia is great for a story arc where the action begins in the middle and then the characters play through sessions where they remember by playing the game.

Above all, anything true or false can be ascribed to the characters, meaning they might be responsible for some terrible things. Someone might even confront them on it, accusing them of crimes they can't remember. The horror here isn't overt; it's so deep in their psyche that it will attack their convictions and their morals.

**Examples:** *The heroes "awaken" at the center of destruction, with bodies littering the area and they are covered in blood; the heroes have no recollection of the last week, and someone has photographs showing them in strange locations, stealing artifacts; the amnesia is viral and the world is awakening to no memories of its past; the heroes can't remember the past month except for snippets of them building a device; the amnesia is a*

*side-effect of a killer controlling people to commit crimes from him; amnesia is the only way to stop a curse from mind-wiping its victims and turning them into savages.*

## ATTACKING THE HERO'S EMOTIONS

If psychology is attacking the heroes from within, the emotional assault is by attacking them through what they know and love. Some of their weakest spots, in fact, are on the outside, but it would be too easy just to destroy or break them. That's a onetime effect and it can't be repeated. Threatening them or having the hero rescue them are viable. The thing to remember is that the horror can be two-fold; it can be the terror experienced by NPCs that the hero empathizes with and it can be the character's personal fear of failure.

Emotional attacks fall into two generalized categories. The first is attacking or threatening the people in their lives. This isn't necessarily about a mustachioed villain tying them down to the train tracks. It can be about a natural disaster or a swarm attack targeting everyone equally. It could be about fighting against a vision of the future where friends and family don't survive. The second targets the things and places the heroes considers precious. It's about attacking his life, and again, the mere threat of probability may be enough to evoke fear for someone else. In this case, however, Gamemasters can also make the attacks more personal so the destruction of a thing or place provokes the hero. This is no longer about horror, but about prodding the character into anger.

Here are ways to target the character emotionally.

### HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE THEM?

This technique forces the character to question whether they are protecting their loved ones or actually putting them in more danger. It's a gamble, because it straddles a line where the hero could actually leave loved ones and isolate themselves to protect those they love. All it takes is one kidnapping or disappearance of a friend or family member to demand this question. While it might be interesting and expected to use a villain to throw said loves ones in harm's way, what if it was an ally or mentor? It could be someone with enough horror experience (having lost their own family) to think the character should spare them the danger and eventual tragedy.

**Examples:** *The loved ones vanished on their own because someone impersonating the hero threatened them; the loved one was thought to have died years ago, but the whispered phone calls say otherwise; a friend is caught by a monster and the hero must find him before he's eaten; a family member is dabbling in dark magic and something is aiming to collect on their deal; someone decides to test the hero's dedication to the cause by handing over loved ones to monsters; the hero's family is trapped and isolated somewhere, with*



*a creature hunting them; the loved one makes a deal with the devil to protect the hero from harm, but is endangered instead.*

## DISEASED LOVED ONES

Diseased might be a generous term for friends or family being infected by any number of agents. It could be a pathogen like Ebola or psychological like an infection of madness. They could be struggling to hold on, or fully infected and transformed into something either bestial or insane. Whatever the cause, the fear and horror comes from what they might become, who may bring them harm, who they may harm in their condition, and the thought that they may never be the same again. It is also the fear that the heroes themselves may have to be the ones to put down a transformed loved one. The threat they pose should be real, as are the threats against them. Government agents looking to quarantine the infected may be out to get them, but the end result of their "disease" could be even more dangerous.

**Examples:** *A loved one is fading away, literally, and nobody's sure how to reverse it; a family member is infected with something that other people want to get their hands on; a treatment exists for the condition affecting a hero's beloved, but the person holding the cure wants a favor done first; a family member is now one of hundreds transformed into creatures and telling them apart is going to be a problem; a family member has turned into a monster, but somewhere in the character's head, she can hear him screaming for help; an infected loved one wants to die before the infection can spread further.*

## BETRAYED

Whether the hero is forced to betray family to protect them or the family betrays the hero for their own reasons, the move is usually devastating. The horror of betrayal could be an ideological one, the same way China's Cultural Revolution or NSDAP's Hitler Youth turned on their parents and betrayed them for being traitors to the state. Not only are the zealous family members endangering the hero and his work, but they are also in danger of falling to the very cause they support. After all, the revolution eats its own children.

This doesn't have to be about an ideological shift in society for this to happen either. It could be the effects of a cult or the result of psychic attacks against free thoughts.

A single event might trigger public fears, fueling another Red Scare or Japanese Internment Camps. Whatever is happening is a mixture of paranoia and emotional betrayal.

**Examples:** *A new church has spread nationwide and people seem unable to resist its pull; anti-power hysteria has gripped the country, and heroes are being compared to the monsters they fight; monsters that exude pheromones have moved into power and turned people against "the impure;" the family is forced to betray the hero to protect themselves from the monster threatening them; the hero must alienate his own family to shield them from the evil she fights.*

## NO FUTURE

The future stands revealed and the heroes discover a horrible fate awaits. It could be alien invasion and food processing slaughterhouses; a mega-eruption and terminal winter; the transformation of society into monsters and the collapse of civilization. It doesn't have to be that big or that definitive either. A hint or a suggestion with proof of the family's death might be enough with the perpetrators a mystery and the disaster on a personal scale.

Whatever the cause of their deaths and the reasons why the hero knows what he does, the fact is that something happens in the near future that leads to tragedy. It's important that while the event itself is not in question, the explanation of what happens remains vague or a complete enigma. This does more than just throw mystery into the adventures; the real horror lies in not knowing anything and suspecting everything. It may be about recognizing certain pivotal events after they happen, and scrambling to get ahead of the curve. Reminders of what happens in the future can also reoccur (depending on how the heroes saw or experienced the future in the first place) as a terrifying nudge.

**Examples:** *The future visions come about through an acquaintance, who is then brutally murdered for her knowledge; a string of enigmatic prophecies exist, but nobody realizes what one means until after it happens; the heroes traveled into the future and understood what transpired, but now the past isn't playing out the way it should; the heroes discover that to change the future, they might have to kill an innocent civilian; the events of the future are already playing out, and the only thing the heroes can do is protect those they love when the flashpoint happens.*

# ADVANCED THOUGHTS ON GAMEMASTERING HORROR

The following list of tips and tricks are generally more advanced than the standard monster of the week scenarios, but they exist for those Gamemasters who enjoy the added depth to a game. Like good journalism, though (which teaches reporters to thoroughly research their story even though only 10% of the material may appear in an article), these techniques aren't about wowing or showing off to the players. It's about having a richer experience without necessarily revealing that fact. For players who look deeper, however, they may come to appreciate some of the nuances here. At the very least, hopefully everyone will feel like there's more to the game than meets the eye.

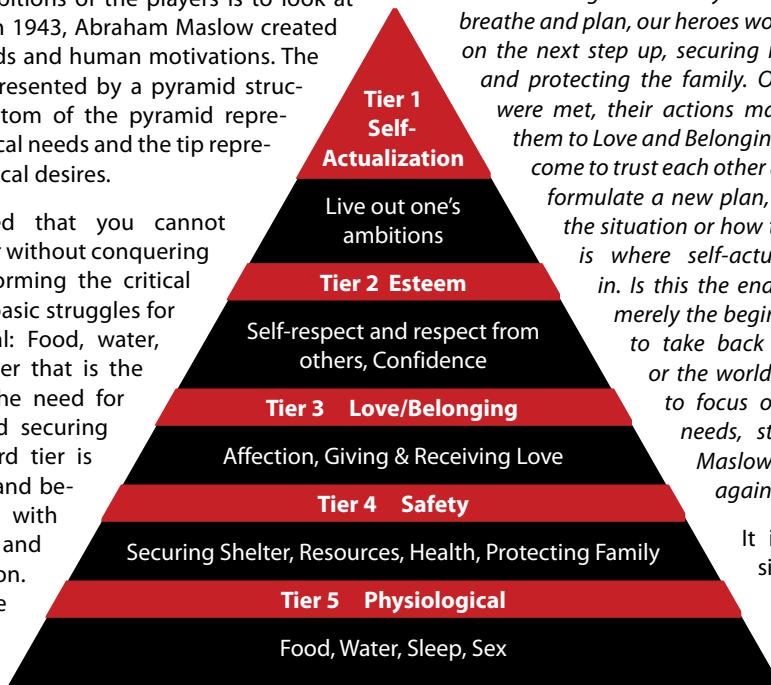
## MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

One way of dissecting a horror game into the potential needs and ambitions of the players is to look at Maslow's theory. In 1943, Abraham Maslow created a hierarchy of needs and human motivations. The tiers are often represented by a pyramid structure, with the bottom of the pyramid representing physiological needs and the tip representing psychological desires.

Maslow postulated that you cannot advance to one tier without conquering the one below. Forming the critical base, we find the basic struggles for immediate survival: Food, water, sleep and sex. After that is the second tier and the need for safety: Shelter and securing resources. The third tier is the need for love and belonging, bringing with it family, friends and sexual connection. Beyond that lie the pursuit of esteem (gaining confidence and the respect of others), followed by the top of the pyramid and our ultimate objective, self-actualization (creativity and morality, etc.).

Horror and supernatural games are all about toppling the characters down the slope of Maslow's pyramid and forcing them to work their way back up. The trick is in determining how far down to push the characters, and that is usually determined by the nature of their opposition. The supernatural threat may dictate how many steps the heroes must make to end the current circumstance while the further down one goes, the longer the return journey back up.

Now, the interesting thing with horror is determining whether Maslow's Pyramid applies to each individual arc, or if reaching the apex (Self-Actualization) is the ultimate goal of the series.



**Example:** The Gamemaster decides to run a Zombie Apocalypse story-line where the horror has become a global event. The characters may start out on the run as zombies overtake the cities, which means the protagonists are at the bottom of the pyramid and focused solely on food, water and surviving. Once they have a moment to breathe and plan, our heroes would have to focus on the next step up, securing resources, shelter and protecting the family. Once those needs were met, their actions may naturally lead them to Love and Belonging. After that, they come to trust each other and they begin to formulate a new plan, how to live with the situation or how to reverse it. That is where self-actualization comes in. Is this the end of the series, or merely the beginning of the fight to take back cities, countries, or the world? Now they have to focus on other people's needs, starting them up Maslow's slope once again.

It is also entirely possible that different types of horror/supernatural series may target and attack one tier of the characters' lives.

- **Tier 1-Self-Actualization:** The heroes encounter a monster that targets them; the heroes fight a creature in direct conflict with their ambitions; a villain robs a character of the object of his or her ambitions; a villain tries to forcibly instill a hero with her own ambitions.
- **Tier 2-Esteem:** Something is alienating the hero's friends and family; a ghost is haunting the hero by reminding them of past failings; a monster kidnaps a loved one; a fiend feeds upon esteem and confidence; false evidence implicates the hero in a series of horrible murders (and now nobody trusts her).

- Tier 3-Love/Belonging:** Body-thieves are replacing everyone in the heroes' lives; a killer is targeting the hero's loved ones; someone has altered the protagonists' pasts so nobody remembers them; someone has robbed the characters of their prized possessions.
- Tier 4-Safety:** A sudden environment shift triggers a struggle to live; a fight to help survivors following a major tragedy; the heroes are trapped in a facility and must secure it against a monster; the characters are federal fugitives.
- Tier 5-Physiological:** Global Armageddon, Natural Disaster, Alien Invasion, Unrepentant Slasher

The second way to utilize Maslow's Hierarchy is to define the needs and goals of the opposition. Monsters might not reach for something beyond their grasp until they've secured their present situation, while villains might mistakenly want something, believing it a substitute for their current needs.

The tiers also determine how immediate a goal needs to be; the higher up on the pyramid, the longer the monster can take achieving the ambition and the more patience it might have getting there. A monster just trying to satisfy its physiological needs will do anything in the moment to get it done. It might attack the closest person for food or bed down anywhere when it needs to sleep. Once that monster has sustenance and shelter, it might then seek a mate. But in this regard, it'll be more careful. It'll stalk, pick and choose. The need isn't as urgent. Put the creature near the top of the pyramid, however, and it likely has cohorts and plans and patience.

Some monsters, like zombies, may never leave the first tier. Or, perhaps, the reason something is monstrous is because it skipped a step in the pyramid. The tier may represent its curse or the one thing it is forever doomed to want. A vampire may have the esteem of its underlings, but it might want for love or have a physiological need to feed. Regardless, where Maslow's pyramid proves most useful is in following the evolution of the monster/villain as it conquers one tier and moves on to the next. This is when it becomes more than just a one-trick horror.

## MIRROR NEURONS

Mirror neurons are cells in the nervous system that fire regardless of when someone performs an action or when that person watches someone performing the same action. A monkey eating a banana, for example, would have the same cells firing in reaction if it saw another monkey eating a banana. It's empathy of sorts and researchers believe it may be how the mind grasps abstract patterns and thoughts; how we learn through imitation.

The notion of mirror neurons as a tool in fiction came about with writer Susan O'Conner, who has advocated using the idea in videogames. Essentially, make players empathize with their characters by giving them common goals. That's where it finds resonance in a *Supernatural*

series and what was previously mentioned in **Chapter Two on Drawing Parallels**. Here the Gamemaster can use this device to his advantage and against the players as opposed to players using it to identify more with their characters.

From a GMs standpoint, mirror neurons work in generating scenarios where an event or adversary is likely to create the same reaction in characters and players. This is something Gamemasters want. They want players reacting to in-game circumstances with a variety of emotions and involved in those situations willingly through their characters. That's the entire point, to provoke a reaction that player and character share and to get them proactive in its solution. Without that, a game is stagnant.

The way to use the idea of mirror neurons in a game, then, is to make the goals of a scenario something universal—something any player can understand and want. Same thing with the effect of a monster, a villain, or a situation; they should threaten something with which players connect. You might see this in comics through the death of a popular character or the arrogance of the bad guy. It's about establishing empathy and then toying with the object of that empathy. Gamemasters can accomplish this via these steps:

### THE TARGET

Who is the target of this technique? Who is the Game-master trying to get the players to empathize with? Their own characters? An NPC? A location? It would help if the target is someone or something with which the characters have an emotional connection or a past history with some positive connotations. It could be an NPC that they knew and liked, an item that helped them in the past, a location (regardless the size) in which they have an investment. No matter what it is, it should be something that the characters feel keenly about whether they struggled, bled, needed, wanted, or shared it. If that doesn't exist, then perhaps an NPC might exhibit a quality worth protecting, like innocence, joy, optimism, compassion, humor, strength, etc.

### THEMES AND MASLOW'S HIERARCHY

Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, we can see basic universal themes that everyone wants and needs. It starts out with food, water, sleep, and sex and continues on to securing shelter, resources, health, protecting family, affection, giving & receiving love, self-respect and respect from others, confidence, and living out one's ambitions. These seem like inalienable rights, and threatening them might be a good way to get the characters angry. But the risk has to be clearly defined, both to the target and the result of failure. Players can understand these basic needs, so attacking them in others is a sure way to get them involved emotionally.

### THE RISK

The risk is where the horror lies. A threat to the universal theme or the individual's right to pursue that theme allows the Gamemaster to toy with fears and invoke terror.

Is the risk a large-scale one, depriving everyone in the city of everything but Maslow's first tier? Is the risk a personal one, where someone's rights are twisted against them? Regardless, think of the risk as a cancer in that it should invade the theme, hollow it out, and leave an empty shell. To be a true risk, the characters have to understand what's coming. It's the anticipation of what that theme might become or the theme being transformed before their eyes that should drive them to act on their own.

## THE OPPPOSITION

Sometimes, the monster/villain/adversary is the risk. Their actions coupled with their arrogance are what infuriate the characters. This is especially true when the opposition ignores the needs and rights of the people around it in favor of its own desires and wants. People are insignificant to its ambitions, and often, the opposition's higher moral justifications or self-delusions are enough to provoke strong reactions in player characters. Regardless of what the opposition wants, it must threaten a basic principle or a desire of the target. It could be a monster that toys with love like a black widow or a divorced villain who believes that if he can't keep his wife and child, then nobody can have them. The trick is in twisting the theme into perversion by making the one who is doing it blind to their actions, or operating off a warped sense of principles, and having them destroy or corrupt something integral to the human spirit.

## THE MOTIVATION

This is tied heavily into the opposition, but often the most infuriating adversaries are those who believe their actions just or themselves the heroes. Remember that most people think the world should operate a certain way and anyone who runs contrary to that is flat-out wrong. Motivation is about playing on that, but twisting it in the party's favor by placing them in the right.

**Examples:** *He believes he's the hero and that nobody understands him; she believes everyone is out to sabotage her, so she's taking what is rightfully hers; he thinks that pain is a crucible for true love; she just wants the perfect partner, and disposes of the trash along the way; he believes the target stole from him, and is the true victim here; she believes she is destined for greater things, and that everyone else is here to serve those aims; he believes other people to be the monster, and kills only to protect.*

## DEGREES OF SEPARATION

This has nothing to do with Kevin Bacon and everything to do with the artificial distance between character and series. Every global decision a Gamemaster makes to the series serves as another degree of separation between player and his ability to relate to the world. It's another degree where the player must suspend disbelief. Too many degrees and the Gamemaster threatens to alienate the party and kill the game.

Look at television. Any reason to force suspension of disbelief through a degree of separation is enough to pull people away from a show. The more degrees of separation between audience and program, the less people are going to watch it. Is it any surprise that television's top ten each year include reality television shows, talent shows, sports programs and dramas centered around doctors/cops/suburban families? Those are zero to one degree of separation shows.

Fortunately, the broad genres are often single degrees of separation because we're familiar with their tropes. The player needs to suspend disbelief once to get inside the head of the game world. Science fiction, for example, encompasses blaster guns, spaceships, aliens and mental powers. Fantasy includes magic, elves, dwarves, dragons and dungeons. Even superheroes are a single degree of separation for most with aliens and gods, magic and science all thrown in together. Fortunately, using horror in science fiction or fantasy is still considered a single degree because people consider the horror to be the spice for those genres. Interjecting horror into a superhero game, however, may bring with it an additional degree of separation, especially if the horror is pervasive enough to threaten the party. A single session or story arc with a preternatural event is fine, but a series run on it is at risk.

Superhero horror games are more difficult to envision for most, unless the heroes mostly human and possessed of some minor abilities. So generally, we're looking at 1.5 to two degrees of separation. That's fine because gamers are expected to wrap their heads around concepts. Where it gets tricky is when the Gamemaster starts tossing in other global ideas to be original. A world where the supernatural threat is scientific, for example, is fine. But suddenly add the fact that it's happening in the 1700s or it's an absurdist's take on zombies and the GM has created another forced conceit to suspend disbelief.

## DEGREES OF SEPARATION

DEGREES OF SEPARATION	EFFECT*	EXAMPLE
0-1	General acceptance of idea	Sports, Talent, and Reality Shows
1	General acceptance of idea	Sitcoms, Cop/Doctor/Family Dramas
2	Diminished acceptance	Genre shows on mainstream television
3	Enjoyed by fans of the genre	Genre shows on genre channels
4	Cult classic but not as wide an appeal	Limited-run series that sell well at cons

\*True, the quality of a show is integral, but it may only matter within that specific genre and if the genre is a degree of separation, it will automatically have a smaller viewing.

Essentially, stick to some general themes and try not to invoke suspension of disbelief too often. Otherwise, players may have trouble grasping the world. Or worse, they may have difficulty envisioning it. The world becomes murkier, the look and feel of it no longer clearly defined.

Some Gamemasters may rail against this idea, believing it somehow impinges on their creativity. They are free to ignore this advice, but the fact is that it's not about the number of ideas that can be thrown into the pot. It's about developing a handful of ideas to their fullest potential. This is where themes are formed, where foreshadowing is strongest and where stories are interlaced with each other.

## I, MONSTER

The hardest variant of the supernatural game is where the players are the monsters. Not repentant or blessed with a capacity for good, but the horror itself that seeks to plague and punish and destroy people. In this case, the horror isn't aimed at the characters; the horror is aimed at frightening the players and getting them to do it to themselves. It's about giving their creativity expression and then taking it to new horrifying heights.

This is not an easy game to play, but neither is it about turning players into uncaring monstrosities. It is not about violence for its own sake. It's about providing them with a reason why they may want to or be forced to commit travesties. Take the cult of Kali, for instance. The cult believed they were keeping Kali from awakening, and while

that doesn't justify their actions in real life, what if it was a necessity in a series context?

The I, Monster, series is about providing real reason for why bad things must happen to good people. They will fight real heroes who consider them the villains, even if they understand the justifications. While there is also real evil to fight in the world, there is a superior goal that takes precedence above and beyond anything else. Gamemasters must be careful not to let players take this too far, however. This isn't about the torture factor or being evil for evil's sake. In fact, there may be an accounting system in place to ensure the characters never go beyond their duties. Still, the players must be the ones who say "okay, let's do this." The GM forcing characters to do evil things is a recipe for a short-lived game.

The following options outline why the characters may need to act as monsters:

### KEEPERS OF THE SLEEPER

The characters are guardians of a sleeper and the evil they commit is a small thing compared to the atrocities the sleeper will sow if it awakens. Through sacrifice or murder of others, the characters are feeding the sleeper. They may not know where it lies or their headquarters may be the very temple it's held inside. Their actions are necessary. It remains the Gamemaster's purview to decide whether the characters are on this course indefinitely or if the goal of the series is to find a weapon to kill the sleeper. Either way, the only way to forestall the apocalypse is through ritual murder and whether they kill civilians or criminals, it is murder all the same.



## SAVING MOTHER EARTH

They say the planet will outlast our follies. If we threaten anything, it's our own existence. That said, in this series the "heroes" are guardians of nature. Too many species are going extinct and we'll reach a point where we've stripped Earth so badly that it'll take centuries to recover. The guardians must attack the captains of pollution by destroying factories, stopping logging operations, unearthing contaminated landfills, destroying dams, and killing those who won't listen. If that fails, they aren't above orchestrating natural disasters to kill people by the thousands, millions, or, perhaps, billions to ease the burden on an ill planet. Doing all this, however, takes work. Destroying buildings and the like are easy enough, but to plan a natural disaster takes effort. It takes communing with the right spirits or with finding the right artifacts. Along every step of the way await humanity's defenders, trying to stop them from succeeding.

## SERVITORS OF THE BEYOND

The characters serve a higher power as agents and that power has a purpose for humanity. Perhaps people are too selfish, greedy, or chaotic to be of use now in the greater war beyond the mortal sphere, but they can be focused. All that remains as an impediment is society as it exists now. All that remains is to kill those who stand in the agent's way, regardless of whether they do so out of good or evil. Those are no longer important notions. All that matters is the will of the higher power. In this type of series the heroes likely have opposing agents working for the "other side." At stake are people who can help the cause (and must thus be recruited), those who might help the enemy (and must thus

die), and those who keep the species as a whole back (and must thus be made into examples).

## CULLING THE ILL

It's an ugly task, but a virus has turned compassion into a weakness. The human race must survive and that means protecting it from an incurable infection (mystical or scientific or natural) with almost no chance of recovery. Maybe the disease turns people into monsters, or it kills excruciatingly, or maybe it causes sterility. That means somebody is responsible for hunting down and destroying the infected, many of whom may not be symptomatic yet. The heroes are cleansers, hunting and murdering people for the greater good, but they are also emblematic for the woes of the time, and thus hated. The characters must kill infected and sympathizer alike and that's growing more difficult as a rebel factions and homegrown terrorists form to attack the cleansers. It's a war of blood and rhetoric and everyone knows a civil war is coming because both sides think they are right.

## CULLING THE ILL PART II

An even harder variant of this option is if the characters are cleansers and the only ones who know about the infection. Maybe the infection is dormant and spreading, but will only manifest on a specific date. Maybe the infection sublimates the person's personality in small but dangerous ways. Regardless, the characters' job is not sanctioned by anyone and them killing the infected to save mankind is seen as the actions of deranged killers. This means heroes and vigilantes of all makes are out to stop them and the characters may not have a choice but to kill the infected among them as well.

# THE PLAYER'S JOB

As discussed in **Chapter Two**, the *Supernatural Handbook* encourages players to share in the responsibility of running a successful horror game. Where the players leave off, however, the Gamemaster steps in to help actualize their characters' efforts within the game.

Gamemasters should already know how a single player can disrupt a game through jokes or by reading books while a session is happening. While some think that the solution is to implement rules on the group, there may be other ways to involve the player and reward their character without taking away time from everyone else.

## INVESTING THE PLAYER

Gamemasters should allow the player to invest in the horror game and one way to do that is for the GM to anticipate their research. This can be done easily by researching a subject matter ahead of time using the Internet. Apply some of the more obscure facts to the situation and then reward the player with a bonus to their rolls if they apply it during their investigation as detailed in **Chapter Two**.

For example, did you know:

- The number forty has been used since Biblical tribes in the Middle East to denote "many" or "innumerable?"

Examples include Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves and the Forty Days and Forty Nights of the Flood.

- Heinrich Himmler told SS Officers to make love in graveyards to instil their unborn foetuses with the spirits of their Aryan ancestors?
- When the prophet Muhammad entered Mecca after it was conquered, he cleaned out the statues of pagan angels from the holy site of the Khabba?

Each of these little gems should net players a bonus for their characters, and while a *Supernatural* series encourages Gamemasters to roll with the information and incorporate the material that matters, GMs can also ignore whatever doesn't fit the session.

# REWARD THE FEAR

Recognize when players are getting into a game and role-playing frightened characters. This is a big step for many people considering that fear is often about the loss of control and the urge to fight it is a knee-jerk reaction. It's part of the fight or flight instinct and remember that earlier discussion on mirror neurons? It means it's potentially easy to scare ourselves because of what other people are experiencing.

Rewards can be things like an extra hero point for the game or additional power points at the end of the arc. Even small things like a kind word ("Nice job, today") or a game trophy that gives +5 on one roll for the session can go a long way in encouraging players.

# KNOW THEIR FEARS

Everyone is frightened by different things. It's only natural. While the *Supernatural Handbook* has advocated frightening the player through empathy with the character, it's also carried the caveat of *the player is not the GM's target*. It's an easy thing to confuse and comes about when the Gamemaster uses his knowledge of a player's phobia to hit the character. A friend is arachnophobic, so the GM uses spiders in a game to elicit fear, but that was a cheap shot, wasn't it? The shortcut ignored the character for the sake of a 'Bool' effect and, perhaps worse, the Gamemaster has disrupted his own scene by pulling players out of the game.

While this may work against players in the short-term, the fact is most people feel foolish about their phobias to begin with and pointing out those fears by targeting them is only going to embarrass or annoy the player over time. That's not to say that the Gamemaster can't use universal fears that affect most people against both players and their characters. Driving one's arm shoulder deep into an insect pit to retrieve a set of keys, for instance, is going to make most people squeamish. That's fair game. But if a player has a fear of heights that a character doesn't share, then going into detail about heights and the resulting dizziness is a cheap shot. Cheap shots in horror diminish the intended result.

The way to manage this is to have players outline their characters' fears and shortcomings during character design. This may be through Complications, Drawbacks, Phobias, or they can develop during a game. Whatever the case or choice, however, the Gamemaster must ensure the player has at least some empathy or understanding of that fear. Someone who picks *ephebiphobia* as a fear, but doesn't get how someone can be afraid of teens or adolescents isn't going to be afraid for the character. In fact, they may be distanced by that fact.

One trick to circumventing this problem, ironically enough given the advice just offered, is if the player allows his character to share his own phobias so long as they realize this will be used in the game. This is for players who don't believe they can roleplay scared or those who want a genuine feeling of being afraid. Again, Gamemasters should only do this with the player's consent.

# TYPES OF FEARS

Fears and phobias have already been mentioned in previous sections, though the more common ones bear greater depth. Fears can be divided between specific phobias and social phobias, with specific outnumbering the social. The former phobias entail fear of heights, spiders, etc. The latter is fear of interactions and public speaking.

With that in mind, though, the fears mentioned here are specific, because there are ways to use them against characters even if they don't have that specific Drawback or Complication. The reason is that some of them are as old as humanity itself, born of survival and turned into something else as we evolve. Some of the more common types of fear are listed below.

## CLOSED SPACES

This ancient fear was born from our need to evade predators. Enclosed spaces mean being trapped, being easier prey. This can also apply to crowds, where we're hemmed in on all sides and unable to escape. Imagine, though, a spirit that shuts characters inside buildings or the sensation that one is being pressed in on all sides.

## DEATH

Seems like an odd "gimme" for death to make the list, but it might not be death itself that's the fear, but what happens *with* death that causes the problem. Death is a problem if the character's soul is plunged into Hell or his body becomes a super-powered undead. The Gamemaster can play on this fear by showing the character NPCs who failed and died and suffered their ultimate fear.

## DROWNING

A common fear because there's an awareness of pending suffocation and everything is lucid up to the point the body forces one to take a gasp of water for want of air. Now imagine characters stuck someplace where the water is rising rapidly and has no where left to go, or a monster that drowns its victims by forcing liquid into their lungs.

## ILLNESS

Fear of illness is the fear of anticipation of pain and suffering. This will be more prevalent in series where a supervirus is devastating humanity, especially since people will know what to expect with the onset of illness. They should see the results of it in their daily interactions, enough to know exactly what awaits them. Now imagine the characters manifesting new and different symptoms or the series where the heroes only have a limited time to save the world, even if it's too late for them.

## STORMS

The raw power and unpredictability of storms are frightening, as is their pervasive nature. They are erratic, though it is the spike of lightning, the chill of winter's frost, and the scouring sands of a sirocco that can kill. The notion of being

burnt to a cinder, frozen to death, or drowning in sand is a frightening reality. Imagine turning that storm indoors, or blanketing whole cities with it. Suddenly, the people engulfed can longer properly see the dangers around them.

## THE UNKNOWN

Fear of the unknown has been touched upon in other sections. Suffice to say that most people are afraid of what they don't understand or can't anticipate. This can be represented by depriving one of their senses, like eyesight through shadows and darkness or hearing through loud noises or absolute silence.

## VERMIN

Rats, bats, mice, insects, snakes, cockroaches and more were once poisonous or brought disease. That hasn't changed; cities are crowded with rats and cockroaches thanks to human waste and garbage. Thus, they are associated with filth and germs, and anyone touching them risks disease through fleas (thank you Bubonic Plague) or bite. Imagine swarms of them billowing up through storm drains and inside the plumbing of homes.

## DESCRIBING THE PHOBIA

Much gets lost in translation without the proper words to evoke the fear. It isn't enough to tell a player whose character suffers from claustrophobia that "the walls start closing in." That leaves most of the work to the player to figure out. Rather, the Gamemaster needs to describe what that phobia feels like. He needs to relate the sensation. Thus, claustrophobia goes from "the walls are closing in," to "the walls close and you can almost feel the pressure on your skin, the fist closing around your heart. Soon, it'll touch your shoulders. You'll be trapped."

Be evocative! Game horror is about empathy for the character and empathy is all about putting the player right there, in the situation. If you fear that you aren't up to the task of properly describing scenes like this on the fly, then write out some of the descriptors beforehand. Whatever it takes to scare a player through their character. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Describe the fear in bodily terms, the physical reaction of how they make a person feel.

**Example:** Like your intestines uncoiling.

Describe the texture of the sensation: course, feathery, sticky web-like, etc.

**Example:** Like thousands of insects running across your skin.

Describe the feared eventuality of the incident, the worst-case scenario.

**Example:** The door's closing, and with it the light. Soon, the darkness will suffocate you, flowing down your throat like tar to fill your lungs.



Play the devil in your bargains; give them a way out, regardless of who they leave behind.

**Example:** Your friends are crying for your help, but the exit is right there...all you have to do is leave and you'll be safe...safe and alive.

## OTHER THEATRICS

They're called theatrics because they use tricks and props to set the mood. It's not a bad thing, but theatrics target the player so be careful how far you take matters. They also rely on being unexpected. So the following tricks are for special moments or to be used sparingly and never to frighten the player directly. They are there to accentuate the mood.

### AUDIO CUES

Between movie scores, songs and SFX, Gamemasters can use sounds to trigger dice rolls ("what's that noise?"), to build up to a moment in a scene, or to evoke something.

**Sample Idea:** The DVD menu for the 2001 remake of *Thirteen Ghosts* uses a boosted audio track of creepy chanting from the movie...perfect for any cultist scenario.

### VIDEO EFFECTS

Personal special effects are no longer impossible thanks to videogames and the growing number of horror games in their ranks. While it might seem odd to use a videogame, Gamemasters can visit sites like YouTube and GameTrailers to pull rendered cinematics from the games. Some serve very well to set a mood or show an event.

**Sample Idea:** The game *Dead Rising* features hordes of zombies that the main character can photograph. The Gamemaster can use in-game snapshots to give players "pictures" of the zombie infestation.

## SET THE AMBIANCE

Setting a gaming room for a horror session isn't a bad idea. Black tablecloth, candles, dice in skulls, dim lighting are all viable so long as it doesn't look cheap. Don't spend what you don't have, but avoid the dollar store items that look like the cheap plastic from which their product are made.

**Sample Idea:** With a translucent plastic or glass table-cover, you can insert Tarot cards, photocopied pages from the "Necronomicon" (*Evil Dead 2* variant) and even horror panels from comic books under the surface. Use whatever dark montage of images you wish under the clear material, so long as it doesn't enter the realm of bad taste.

### UNNERVE

Use voice and presence to your advantage. Talk softly enough as needed to draw players toward you; walk around them and behind them when talking so that the dynamics of the room changes. In essence, do things differently than you would in a normal supers game. Horror is about the unexpected, so change up the way you GM horror so the players realize this is a different experience. Even if it means sitting in a different location or changing the cadence of your speech, try different things to make the setting and the experience more intimate.

**Sample Idea:** When GMing make sure you face a window or a dark corridor or another room. It's good if that other place is dark as well. Then, every so often, stop describing a tense scene and stare into the other room or out the window like something caught your attention. When the players turn to see what you're staring at, return your attention to them and start speaking again. It sounds like an odd trick, but it can unsettle some players during a horror game. Especially if you answer their questions with "It's nothing" or "Don't worry about it."

## CREATING 101

Horror has many ways of remaining effective, but one way is to create original things the players may not be expecting. This section is about generating new mythologies and groups for series to keep characters guessing. It's a matter of establishing a strong foundation and adding depth to your creations so that players feel like they can dive into something without bottoming out too early.

## CREATING ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations are great for establishing theories or creating a framework within the series that handles the horror when the supernatural gets "uppity." From oversight committees running black ops teams to offshoots of the Templars, there are many kinds of groups that exist and, more importantly, reasons why they exist. How they handle problems, how far their influence extends, and how they view the heroes are all things that must be determined before the characters ever see a hair on their heads.

## THE RATIONALE

Put simple, why does the group exist? What purpose do they serve in the world that can't be handled by an official organization? Every group forms around a core of an ideal or goal. It's usually a simple one at that: Protect a religious site, uncover a deep secret, or hide the truth. It could be anything a group of people feel responsible for handling or protecting. Over time, aims may veer away and ambitions may change, but given how important a sense of history is to a group, they will likely maintain the original and chief ideal as the pillar of the organization.

There are many rationales that can foster the creation of a group and the trick is to tie it into the existence of whatever supernatural event drives the game. Bear in mind, however, that organizations fall into three general categories: 1) to protect against something truly dangerous that will kill untold numbers if discovered or 2) to defend the organization's power or standing (by protecting it they protect themselves) or 3) to protect the organization's damaging skeletons-in-the-closet (potentially their part in triggering or contributing to the supernatural crisis).

Examples of rationales might include the following (and don't be afraid to mix and match two such examples):

### GUILT

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In a moment of weakness, the organization's founders somehow contributed to the creation, growth, or spread of the "event." Now, they struggle to rectify that mistake and to protect their secret at all costs. Unfortunately, the latter has taken precedence over the former, and protecting the organization's secret has become more important than undoing a terrible mistake.

**Example:** *In excavating the Temple of Solomon in 11<sup>th</sup> Century Jerusalem, the original Templars inadvertently uncorked Solomon's brass vessel where he trapped 72 demons. Now the modern Templars not only seek to trap these demons once more, but to protect their involvement and the corruption of the original Knights Templar.*

### MURDER INC.

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This organization believes that there are dangerous people out there and it is their role to track down and kill those individuals. The hunted may be monsters, mutants, or merely infected with something nobody understands, but the organization thinks that being different or having powers is enough to sanction the death of their quarry. Perhaps they're right.

**Example:** *A new drug has surfaced called Hyde, which gives its users PCP like strength and resistance to pain (the formula is old enough to have inspired Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde). The one time rare formula is now being mass-produced, and an ancient society is running drug clinics to locate and murder advanced stage users before the hidden tertiary side effects come to light... the one that transforms users into real monsters.*

### MONOPOLY

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The organization formed to pool its existing resources together and to control an industry or government from the shadows. Theirs is a hidden court that decides the fate of policies or the course of the market. They are power-hungry and they will stop at nothing to corrupt and murder so long as it keeps them in the loop. Scratch that, they are the loop.

**Example:** *When the Bilderberg Group first met, the various admirals of industry had no way of knowing that their meeting served the formation of a shadow council. The multi-billionaires were all secretly studied and either ignored or invited to participate in the new organization, an organization dedicated to hunting down and studying the supernatural for corporate gains in developing new weapons and biological programs.*

### PROTECTING A DANGEROUS SECRET

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The organization protects a secret that might be dangerous if known publically. Perhaps there's an enemy powerful enough to steal the secret or destroy it if they ever find it. Regardless the situation, the organization has vowed to die protecting the secret, whether or not it is their responsibility to do so.

**Example:** *The earthquake that destroyed San Francisco in 1906 was not a natural disaster but the arrival of a major chthonic entity into this plane. The heroes of the time won a critical battle defeating it even though they only succeeded in making it dormant, and their descendants have since protected two truths... that they know where the entity's body lies and that its reawakening is not a matter of if, but when.*

### PROTECTOR

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The organization has taken it upon themselves to protect people from monsters and other great evils. Part of their mandate is to learn and understand, but at their core they exist to protect. They may get things wrong sometimes and they may flub up, but they are generally altruistic.

**Example:** *The Hydesville Club can trace its roots to the Spiritualist Movement of the mid 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when mediums and seers were inadvertently and unknowingly trucking with all manner of dangerous entities. Their membership counted among them Emilia Earhart and Erik Weisz (Harry Houdini), and it was their sworn intent to steer people away from supernatural danger. Since then, the organization has remained small but dedicated even though the threats have grown.*

### SHIELD A LOCATION

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The organization protects a location where there is power to be had or where evil sleeps. They've taken it upon themselves to contain knowledge of the place and to kill anyone who discovers it. This usually means they are a small and local organization, concerned only with protecting the area.

**Example:** *World War II ended on the eve of a potential apocalyptic event, Himmler's masterstroke cut short by a dedicated OSS/MI13 Team before he could unleash the Nameless Horde from the Frozen Vortex. Now the spell remains forever locked in the mind of an ageless and undying Himmler himself, a prisoner trapped in unbreakable stone in a deep Carpathian mountain cavern where the ritual*

froze him. And the joint organization of American, British, French and Russian Guardians are tasked with keeping everyone out of the chamber and with killing whatever tries to escape.

## UNCOVER A SECRET

The organization has learned a rumor, and they formed to uncover the secret. Perhaps it is the promise of power or a riddle to undo the world. Regardless, the organization is power-hungry enough to want that knowledge for themselves or they believe they are the only ones capable of keeping it safe once they have it.

**Example:** *The Yagans have long sought the Waters of Life that the hag Baba Yaga was said to protect. Legends have it that the Soviets tried to steal the waters after finally killing Baba Yaga herself, but that the last of the hag's three warriors, Dark Night, hid the waters in his own hollow body. The Yagans have since sought the immortal knight for the secrets he carries.*

## VENGEANCE

The organization was targeted and oppressed at one point, but it survived by vanishing underground. Now the members are driven by revenge, by a need to strike back at the group or government or religion that hurt them. In their pursuit for vengeance, they may become as evil and as twisted as those who victimized them.

**Example:** *The Mithrates have dedicated themselves to undoing the Christian Church and destroying the Vatican for Christianity's role in destroying Mithraicism when Ancient Rome accepted Christ instead of Mithras. Unfortunately, the Mithrates have long perverted their own ideals in the pursuit of vengeance, and they now use powers and creatures that would have horrified their progenitors.*

## THEIR HISTORY

The supernatural and horror thrives off organizations that possess a history of decades or longer. Their longevity automatically means they have secrets, and power, influence, and did we mention secrets? It's important to lend an organization a sense of history because it also means they've taken their role seriously. It is also important to remember that the longer a group exists, the more difficult it is to hide their existence. Information has a way of leaking out and characters may have heard rumors or whispers about the group, but that should in no way prepare them for the reality.

One other important thing related to history is that the older the group, the more critical their role in relationship to humanity. If the whole founding reason is germane only to a period or built to protect something of small worth, then the organization is either going to be small (like a family tasked with its protection) or it will not survive at all. The older the history, the more earth-shattering a truth it hides.

What follows is the range of options a group might have, historically speaking.

## THE DECADE GROUP

The group formed within the recent decades, enough that the ruling body is comprised of founding members. They may have been created during the Cold War to battle one side or the other through the psychic programs or as a result of the Soviet collapse when Russian elites and former KGB agents joined forces to pursue new enterprises. Perhaps recent scientific discoveries fuel the organization's creation, be it the Internet, the discovery of hemorrhagic viruses, the human genome project, or the biotech boom. They may be young, but they are sophisticated and keyed into the modern age better than any government.

**Example:** *The group formed when the explosion of the Internet touched upon the borders of an older Shadownet where supernatural secrets are whispered and shared.*

## THE CENTURY GROUP

This group was born within a century or so, enough time for a second, third or fourth generation to take the lead. They are still dedicated to the original cause, and may have formed around the Nazi mysticism of WWII or the Manhattan Project. They could have formed with the Spiritualist movement of the 1800s-1900s or the exploratory/adventuring mood of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Whatever the cause, it's likely there's a more mystical bent or perhaps an industrial one born from the discovery of nuclear materials, x-rays and electricity.

**Example:** *The group formed after Nikola Tesla's discovery of strange transmissions in his Colorado Springs Lab. What he attributed to radio signals from Mars or Venus have since been attributed to a horrifying pocket dimension abutting ours.*

## THE MILLENNIUM GROUP

This organization can trace its history back up to the turn of the first millennium AD. They are likely large and labyrinthine or as crumbling and abandoned as the manses they keep. Their purpose is still remembered, but they've probably deviated little from their founding principles as the fog of age has crept in to blur the details. Perhaps they formed during the Age of Reason to undo faith's hold on the masses. Perhaps they formed during the Inquisition to protect hidden faiths and myths, or earlier still to safeguard the holy artifacts of Constantinople, to continue the Templar legacy, or carry on Cathar traditions.

**Example:** *The Book of Worlds is a crumbling collection of tomes that guard against a variety of evils and disasters. As the pages disintegrate, the disasters or evils listed unfold in the world. The Librarians have protected the books since the Library of Constantinople fell to the Crusaders.*

## ANCIENT

This group is so ancient that its own history lies buried under supposition and half-truths. Its size is likewise

unknown, for no sooner does it appear to falter and die when another hidden arm reappears to assume control. It's like a hydra with no accounting for its number of heads. While the original principle that founded it is perhaps only vaguely remembered, the event that created it remains clear. Precipitating examples include the burning of the Great Library in Alexandria, the theory that the Dark Ages was the result of a meteor strike (temperature drops and records from China may bear this out), the crucifixion of Christ, the building of the Great Pyramids, and the eruption of Mt. Thera that devastated the highly advanced culture of the Minoans.

**Examples:** Some claim that had the highly advanced Minoans not been destroyed in the Mount Thera eruption, then the Minoans might have achieved space flight by the time Christ was born. The Golden Horn Society protects Linear Script Omega, the strange and chthonic crypto-science principles of the Minoans whose very formulas drive men mad.

## THEIR INFLUENCE

An organization lives and dies by the influence it exerts on the surrounding world. It needs fingers locally and internationally to protect itself. Perhaps it needs influential members in the media to squash stories about their alleged existence, or among agents of various agencies to misdirect investigations. They might have strong ties to a single community like an ethnic group in a region or the mystical community of a city. The older the group, though, the likelier they'll maintain deep roots somewhere and have tremendous financial assets. Here are some areas of influence an organization might maintain:

### MEDIA

Very old organizations might have measures to control the media, be it members on key boards, mentalists that can mind wipe reporters, or reporters who will debunk stories (think counter-intelligence) before they ever hit print. Some organizations, however, might be protecting a truth so outrageous that they need no media ties because nobody's going to publish their "outlandish" claims.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

The organization has influence over state or federal authorities, be it the NSA and their information-gathering abilities, the FBI or Homeland for their domestic mandates, the CIA for their international directives, or just the local police. The group has spies among the rank-and-file, where paperwork can get lost and where early-warnings come. Perhaps they have people placed in the upper echelons, where investigations can get killed or secret ones can get started.

### CRIME

The Russian Mafiyah is evidence of what happens when the Russian old guard went into business for itself. These

organizations have ties with gangs and crime families precisely because they can circumvent regular channels to get things done. They can smuggle and murder people, obtain stolen goods, steal coveted items, and they have hidden financial networks with ways of hiding the money trail. Small organizations might work with local gangs while more powerful groups might have their fingers in national organizations.

### MYSTIC/SPIRITUAL/RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

The organization is tied into mystic/spiritual/religious communities, be they the spiritual leaders of churches or temples or the real power brokers dabbling in magic and knowledge. These groups can provide research, sanctuary, and even spies for organizations with an eye on local events. Further, indoctrinating members of this community may give the group access into more places.

### MEDICAL/BIOTECH

Local organizations might be tied into hospitals, allowing them to get under-the-table medical care for themselves, keep track of targets that might be infected (for example), or even hide prisoners in asylums. More powerful organizations could have ties into the biotechnologies field, giving them access to the human genome project and super-viruses.

### TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

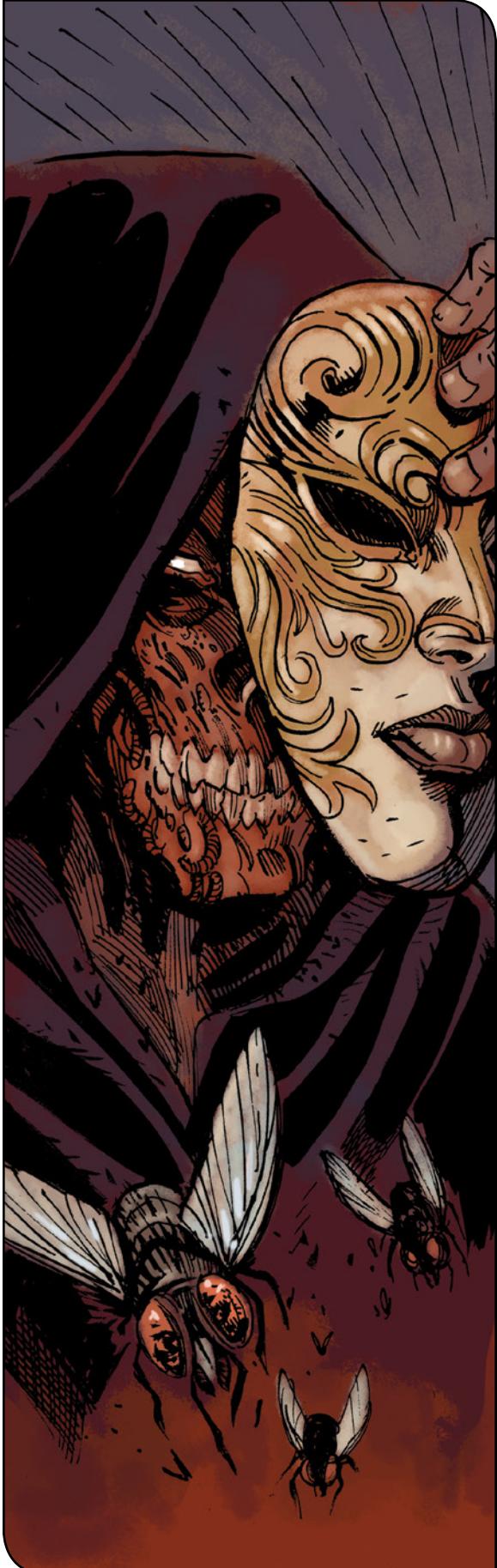
Technologies companies might include software firms, videogame companies, computer hardware, research firms, etc. The advantage of this is that the organization is tied into the current boom in technology and may even have taken steps to create hidden programs inside company products. Programs that can track individuals, give them access to banking accounts through which to launder money, access to traffic and security cameras, the ability to shut down the power grid are all valid examples of this group's power. Whatever the Gamemaster can imagine that ties into technology and the aims of a clandestine group is fair game.

### WEAPON MANUFACTURERS

Organizations with this influence might be at the forefront of advanced weapons design and research or they may be able to move large numbers of firearms and explosives at a moment's notice. Small organizations might have a finger in smaller manufacturers for the sake of constructing specific weapons against the supernatural, while larger ones might have political aspirations such as supplying petty dictators or stockpiling caches for an anticipated invasion or Armageddon scenarios.

### POLITICS

The organization has lobbyists, contributes to series, and supports various political candidates, whether they do this openly or through proxies. Political influence cannot be underestimated, especially with lawmakers and king-



makers in one's back-pocket. Organizations with this kind of power plan long-term, and tend to have a prized candidate undergoing grooming for higher office and greater rewards. Where this candidate goes, the interests of the organization follow. This is especially true of groups with deep connections with weapons manufacturers, oil companies, lucrative mining operations or even ties with other governments.

## THEIR SECRET

Every organization has a secret about itself that it would prefer remain hidden. Even if the existence of the organization is secret, there should be skeletons in the closet that cast their morality or stated objective into doubt. After all, organizations usually operate in the shadows and use a grayscale to define black from white in more nuanced degrees. This means that they've likely done things that they've suppressed, sometimes even from themselves. It is these very secrets that turn groups labyrinthine and Byzantine, with splinter groups formed and heavy politicking creating divisive cliques.

Rather than basing an organization on the secrets it might contain, here are some suggestions on the level of secrets one might find within a clandestine group:

### INDIVIDUAL

Someone in power is keeping a secret that could jeopardize the organization. She is willing to use everyone and everything in her domain to maintain that secret, even betray her oath of station. *Example:* He is a double agent. She murdered her predecessor. He is enslaved to the very thing his organization fights.

### CLIQUE

A group of people within the organization are maintaining a secret. They may be betraying it out of greed or they may be operating beyond the organization's mandate for "its own good." *Example:* They are self-appointed secret-police. They believe their peers are corrupted.

### SPLINTER

This clique formed due to a difference in politics or on matters of faith. If they haven't split away from the organization itself, there's a chance that they're trying to assume control through a coup to push forward their agendas. *Example:* They believe their organization should use violence to achieve their means. They represent the interests of an external political influence.

### SECRET OF THE MASTERS

Only the leadership of organization knows the secret, and inclusion in this circle of peers is a triumph of status. Unfortunately, the secret is dangerous enough that it could damage the organization itself, and the Secret Masters have sworn an oath to protect that knowledge even if it means deceiving or killing their own subordinates.

*Example:* The leadership holds itself above the principles it enforces on its rank-and-file like "do not kill." The leadership believes the war is already lost and believes it can only forestall the inevitable.

## LAYERS OF ENIGMAS

The organization is so old and rife with mysteries that no one person knows everything and status is not a promise of greater understanding. Different factions and different arms each maintain some secret of their own, and worse, it means that each operates off a different series of agendas and secrets.

*Example:* The situation has created too many approaches, from those who wish to study the problem, to those who want to destroy it, those who want to use it, and those who think they should ally themselves with it.

## THEIR STRUCTURE

Each organization is built a certain way, with the power structure dictating how they react and deal with issues. Older groups have likely taken a page from religions, cults or monarchies, with someone at the top of the pyramid controlling all those below him. Newer organizations, especially those of the last few decades, may follow cell-based structures where members operate in small teams and rarely know about the nature of other teams outside their group. The structure exists because of the organization's mandate, how they pursue their agenda, and the strength of their opposition. Cell groups, for example, are about remaining hidden while a pyramid structure means following the vision of a chosen one or emissary. New memberships will also be affected by this structure.

Here are some examples of structure an organization might have:

### PYRAMID

This structure is highly bureaucratic with one person in charge at the tip and each person under that responsible for the people below them. The leader may be the actual person in charge, dictating the organization's policy, or merely a figurehead. While the people below him set policy, a spiritual leader oversees the principles of the organization but does create the rules. The organization is likely easy to enter at the bottom, though some members may not even be aware that they're a part of something so large. The bottom is the clearing house and every promotion brings them further into the body of the pyramid and its secrets.

### MULTI-ARMED

Think of a cross, with the principle branches eventually leading back to the center-point. The organization's leadership can either be an individual or a committee, but each branch has its own goals and principles. They may not even like one another or they may compete against each other for the prize and glory. A religious organization, for example, might have a branch for assassins and

warfare, a branch for manpower, training and discipline, a branch for research and knowledge, and a branch for crafting and manufacture. Each branch may have its own recruitment methods.

## ROUND TABLE

The organization is based around a body of equals cooperating for the good of the group or at least trying to. In exchange for equal say, each person brings with them resources, manpower and expertise, but that's also where the problem lies. People are only loyal to the person who leads them and not the committee itself. If they agree to a plan of action, it's only because of their leader. That also means they can operate at cross-purposes and they are responsible for recruitment into their faction. It wouldn't be uncommon for two factions to go after the same candidates either or pursue the same goal without the other's knowledge.

### CELLS

There is no organization to speak of. There are only small cells operating in relative autonomy and, perhaps, a parent cell somewhere dishing out occasional orders. This model is necessary for deep-cover situations when the discovery of one cell limits damage to that cell. These cells are very paranoid and tied closely together internally. Entry into one is often convoluted and slow and even when it does happen, the cell watches the recruit closely until trust is eventually established. Cells are also capable of seizing the initiative and acting on their own, though this lack of communication can create problems when two cells come into conflict.

### CELL-MATRIX

The organization is comprised of multiple cells, but the lines of communication are more open. The information they possess or the project they're working on can be highly compartmentalized, meaning each cell can be assigned a portion of a mission, but it's unlikely that any one cell has the full secret. That lies with another cell that might be controlling a handful of cells bound together. It also means that a saboteur or entrepreneurial individual inside the organization can use this to their benefit. They can set teams to working on parts of a project with nobody ever suspecting the greater truth. Recruiting more people into a cell can be tedious, but nowhere near as tedious as the process for isolated cells.

## THEIR PUBLIC FACE

Some organizations may maintain a public façade, especially if they exert influence over a certain domain (as mentioned previously). The public face is often the easiest to enter into the organization and its approach the most media friendly. For all intents and purposes, they seem innocuous and welcoming, but their stated agenda is almost never their private one.

The public face can represent a duplicitous façade, even to the extent that they have their own public leader-

ship, businesses, buildings, and charities to make them seem community friendly. While it is false, they should be self-sufficient, so if you take away the organization that founded it, you still have a thriving operation. Below the surface, often far below, is the organization proper, with its aims and its real membership. The public face may also serve as a membership clearinghouse. Potential applicants could be hired and watched inside the cover operation, until the organization thinks a potential recruit can be trusted to serve the group's real needs and agendas.

Here are some public identities that Gamemasters can use.

## CHARITY ORGANIZATION

The organization masquerades as a charity of sorts. Perhaps it's local in the form of a charity for the homeless or runaways or international with an interest in stopping landmine usage or rescuing orphans across the world. They'll likely have their hands in the pockets of Samaritans who donate time and money for a legitimate cause.

## FAITH-BASED GROUP

This facade promotes religious leanings and a faith-based way of life, all under the banner of better living through a belief in <deity/prophet of choice>. They likely send out recruiters to canvas and missionaries to convert. Some may be nothing more than thinly disguised cults. What they do have is money. On an international scale it promotes an entire religion with philanthropists. On a local scale it is centered out of a church, where adherents donate what they can.

## SOCIAL CLUB

The cover promotes itself as a community group, with or without political or religious leanings. Members are given access to a lodge or recreation center. The group holds weekly dinners and monthly meetings and they participate in local parades and charity drives. Behind the scenes, however, is someone skimming funds or members into the organization, testing them and drawing them into the organization.

## VETERANS CLUB

Want a group of people who have proven their loyalty through service in the military and time in the trenches? Then look no further than here. A Veteran's Club acts as a social outlet for retired soldiers, and it provides services or information for those in need. Any organization that can experiment on people "for the greater good of the country" can also find willing recruits here, especially among those who were wounded in combat.

## CORPORATION

This organization uses a corporation's assets to its benefit. The business is self-sufficient and likely successful, allowing the organization to hide its operations in the briar

patch of red tape that this company puts out. While the secret cabal will probably never recruit directly from the corporation, they will place spies throughout its structure to alert them of any potential danger.

## FOREIGN GOVERNMENT

All it takes is one coup to work and the organization has a home base inside a third-world nation. The ruling dictator is either a figurehead or so far in debt to the organization that they dictate his policy. The group now has a base (military outpost, secret facilities, etc), unlimited manpower, and the training grounds for a private army. There are no oversight for experiments and activities that defy the Geneva Convention or break international laws.

## CREATING A NEW MYTHOLOGY

It doesn't take much to create a new mythology for the series, especially one that's been long forgotten by humanity. The notion of proto-civilizations and forbidden cultures is a popular theme and one that can easily offset the players from the familiar. The Gamemaster can also spin new fact, using previous historical events and mysteries to the mythology's advantage.

The mythology should be patterned around familiar tropes or it might seem too alien to players. Unless, of course, the Gamemaster is creating an invading alien mythology that has been transplanted on Earth. The point of a new mythology is to introduce new gods and themes, new heroes and weapons, and, most importantly, the sense of the unfamiliar. It's part of the exploration of the mystery and can offer an element of horror potentially lacking in many other myths because they've become too familiar.

This section is help start a new mythology, guiding the Gamemaster initially. Just remember that it isn't necessary to fill in every detail right off the bat. Have a general outline in place and let it build slowly as the series does. That way, when the Gamemaster can introduce something when the characters need it most, and disguise that convenience as the illusion of being something that was "foretold" or destined.

## REBIRTH

In this option, the mythology is pre-existing, but it's been modified by Earth's history. So where Bullfinch and Grimm leave off isn't where the story ends. New mythologies rise and fall, and the old gods may die, but somewhere along the way, mythology has evolved, pantheons have merged and new children of the gods are born. The faces and the motifs have changed, but there is still a sense of the familiar.

This option brings with it a grand sense of mystery and loss. Mt. Olympus may lie abandoned, Valhalla razed during a fight with Loki and the giants, and the River Styx almost dry and draining into a real river somewhere. The survivors either exist among us, hidden and robbed of

power, or they dwell in their ancestral homes like an old man living alone in a run-down estate that's dusty and clatters with lonely echoes. Did the gods die? Did they simply vanish as memory and worship of them failed? Did they leave to explore new worlds? Did they marry humans and simply live out their days in love?

The Gamemaster should consider what happens to gods when they grow old and people have forgotten them. They should consider what happens when a horndog like Zeus continues to seduce and sire demi-gods and heroes; when the Norse witness the Nazi's Holocaust in their name; when the nature spirits are cut off from their worshippers because of the Inquisition; when Amaterasu sees the twin suns of Hiroshima and Nagasaki explode over Japan etc. The problem is that there is a balance here, for unless the history of Earth and its present cultures are altered and completely changed from real life, then there has to have been something to keep the mythologies from acting and interfering in human affairs.

Questions to consider if the old mythologies and pantheons still exist in some form or another: What stops them from interfering in human affairs? Have they changed, becoming bitter, or darker? Did they die, fade away, or go dormant? Did they have children? Are some of those children contenders for the throne in the same way Zeus overthrew the Titans? Are monster-makers like Tiamat out there, still breeding children? Are some plotting revenge against humanity for being forgotten? Have some become modern gods, the CEOs of business or the rock stars of the age? What is their purpose? Have mythologies fused to survive as Yoruba did with Christianity? Did some become evil in the same way gods of the Fertile Crescent became Islam's and Christianity's demons? Is there something hunting the old gods and creatures? How much does human perception factor into the existence of the gods? And most importantly, is it a mythology still trying to attract human worshipers?

## THE MYTH PATTERN

Myths were born as a way for ancient man to explain the world around him. Thus, different mythologies borrow heavily from life itself, be it the Egyptian fusion of man and beast, the Greek Gods that exemplified human traits, or the Norse religion that spoke of ice, fire and destruction. The question becomes, what is the pattern that forms the new mythology? What do the deities and creatures within it represent? They must serve a purpose, even if that purpose is monstrous.

Myths can fall into one of four categories in this regard.

### POSITIVE

It supports humanity and helps account for its creative spirits, its positive energies, and its ambitions. It's a human-centric belief system that, for love or hate, carries the qualities best exemplified in people. In the end, it's all about building and nurturing, even if that sometimes requires a heavy-hand.

### NEGATIVE

The mythology remains human-centric, but humanity is neither lauded nor exemplified. It is cattle for divine will, and there is a propensity for violence, sacrifice, and destruction. Perhaps it is belief that the weak should be punished accordingly, humanity is nothing more than meat for the hungry Gods, or humanity should be hurt for previous transgressions. This mythology may build up its worshippers at most, but it seeks to tear down or destroy cultures and faiths.

### NEUTRAL

This mythology cares little about humanity and exemplifies nothing of people. It will enter into accords with them when it meets their purpose and it will kill them for the same reason. Rise or fail, society's fate bears little consideration in their esteem. It is all about arrangements of the moment.

### DEVOURING

This mythology doesn't even notice humanity. There is no malice or hatred. There is only a devouring ego that treats all people and things as food to sustain the mythology. No natural form of this mythology exists in our world, unless one counts Lovecraft or whatever gods insects worship.

## THE MYTHS

Every mythology has common tales that are shared with other religions. It could be assimilation, the way Romans copied the Greek pantheon or invaders in ancient China or India were eventually absorbed into the culture. It could be that certain themes are universal and appear everywhere as a result. It could be that whatever triggered the myth was wide-reaching and devastating enough to earn a myth as with the notion of the great flood, for example.

The new pantheon may not have these myths or they might have first appeared here (meaning that most ancient mythologies are copies of this original). Whatever the case, the Gamemaster should determine which myth is important (and demands focus) and which no longer applies. If a myth does have significance to the series, it should be because the myth is a warning of a cyclical event or of the danger that lies in wait. For that reason, each entry has a suggestion or two on what makes the myth relevant in modern times.

### CREATION

How did the world begin and when did humanity emerge in the cosmic scheme? Is it like many myths where the world was born from the oceans, appropriately enough, or like the Norse where the world was wrested from ice and blood? Creation myths could serve a game well if the impending cataclysm for Earth and humanity is the creation myth of a new mythology...a world born from the fire and blood of its previous incarnation. Maybe the cre-



ation myth is centered on a place or artifact from which great power still flows.

## ANIMISM

Many religions and myths ascribe spirits to plants, animals, and rocks. Everything is alive and every action must take the other spirits into account. Ancient and even current cultures prayed to the spirit of the animals they felled or the trees they cut. They gave thanks and asked for the spirit's mercy. Now what happens when the spirits, long tired of being exploited by humanity, fight back? What happens when the spirit of something leaves it? Does it rot? Does it crystallize? Do the spirits of things become evil with misuse and toxic with pollutants?

## HANDING DOWN OF THE LAWS

To every culture and religion is born the laws of that society. The laws are divine, handed down to lawless men and women so that they might live correctly. Obey the gods, help each other, follow your parents are all rules designed to create society and forestall anarchy. What if the mythology follows an anarchist's creed or carries with it enforcers who appear to render verdict and punishment when someone breaks the law? Laws don't have to be just, but they do have to enforce the ideals of the religion/society. What happens, though, when the law of society (such as the equality of women) contradicts the supernatural law of a living mythology (that says women are subject to the will of man)?

## THE ARTIFACT

The myth carries tales of artifacts and great treasures. These are castoffs of ancient evil or rewards for heroes to find and use. Each artifact carries a myth that may not form a basis of the mythology, but certainly provides insight into their morals and beliefs. Artifacts of myth, even forgotten myths are, therefore, fodder for quests and fortune-hunters. They might be *deus ex machina* designed to kill a certain evil, unleash great power, or unleash hell upon the world. They should be powerful in the scope of what they accomplish, but not necessarily the kind of thing that can slaughter thousands with a swing. It's all about purpose and not effect.

## THE ONGOING BATTLE

Conflict is the verb of stories, and every mythology portrays an ongoing struggle of some sort. It may be the rivalry between two gods that spark wars and competitions on Earth or an enemy to the gods themselves. It is through this battle that deeds and misdeeds are born, new heroes arise, and old ones die. Perhaps the culmination of the battle is said to herald the end times itself. In the game it might manifest as cloak & dagger games between two ancient enemies hidden behind two intelligence agencies, or it could be open warfare between two mythological races using gang warfare to disguise their skirmishes. The battle might just be man's struggle to survive the armies of demons/zombies/insects that have invaded. The stakes are rarely what they appear.

## THE HERO'S STRUGGLE

The very nature of the character embodies the hero's journey. It is a quest to right the wrongs of the world, help people, and prove one's self. An interesting twist on this is if the character's actions mark him as the villain in the mythology; the thing to vanquish for a real hero of the religion. Naturally, the myth can be skewed toward the dark and evil or the character happens to be a monster that is judged on appearance alone.

## THE CATASTROPHIC

There needs to be an early catastrophe, something before the recorded memory of humanity. It can be a flood or a great fire, but it serves to warn people what happens when they don't heed the gods. Events like the theorized meteor strike that may have resulted in temperature drops and worldwide reports of darkness during the (appropriately enough) Dark Ages could also serve as an element in the new mythology. Cataclysms also bring with it notions of the empires that came before it that were obliterated by the event. This means adventures to find small surviving pockets where ruins and artifacts still exist. Perhaps the catastrophe is a warning of an event that is about to replay, like a global flood.

## DESTRUCTION

Most religions fear an end time, when humanity dies, the ghosts of all are judged, and the just retire to the afterlife for an eternity of bliss (well, for that society if the warlike Valhalla is an indicator). For the wicked, however, not so much bliss. The destruction of the world is most likely a violent thing, heralded by great strife and war or by a natural phenomenon. The heroes could be moving to stop this event from happening or trying to survive the upcoming steps. Some mythologies, though, treat the end of the world as the launching point for the next step in evolution or the rebuilding of society. Perhaps in post-apocalyptic/humanity series, the heroes are trying to survive and move past the horror and destruction.

## THE AFTERLIFE

All religions promise an afterlife. On a metaphysical level, it serves to give people hope that death is merely a transition into a peaceful state unburdened by the world, but on a practical level, it can be seen as a ploy to keep worshipers in line. Obey and the fruits of heaven await. Disobey and it's the hell of being poked by sharp things for you. Stories around this premise can involve men and women committing unspeakable horrors in the name of their religion because of the promise of a bountiful afterlife. It could also involve the escape of souls from the damnation of whatever hell the religion promises. In a modern context, elements of the afterlife (like hell) can even be a location here on Earth, a place where the dead have physical form and no memory of their demise.

## FIGURES OF THE PANTHEON

Like the previous section on myths, many pantheons bear similar figures, most based on family groupings or the role of men and women in the tribe. Each god or hero in the mythology represents something in the world such as a principle to espouse or a lesson to be learned. People beseech these figures to act on their behalf or to assuage lest they fall to their whims. Some gods are beloved and wise, while others are feared. The following are described according to their role and are given an antithesis function for those mythologies that don't follow the norm. The father figure, for example, might be rapacious and greedy, keeping for himself rather than benefitting the family.

### FATHER FIGURE

The patriarch of most pantheons, the father is all-knowing and all-strong. He sires other gods and heroes, and is probably the most respected figure within a pantheon. His word is law and often the basis of all laws in the world. In some mythologies he is also from the world before the gods, when titans or giants ruled. The father figure overthrew them, however, and made room for gods and humans to coexist. His opposite can be a figure that betrays the family for his own needs or one who kills any of his children who proves a threat. He is more emperor and tyrant than fatherly.

### MOTHER FIGURE

Where the father represents physical strength, the mother figure is nurturing and kind. She most often maintains the hearth and home and counterbalances her husband's more reactionary nature. She births the other gods and serves as *de facto* figure to whom pregnant women pray. She also possesses mysteries and secrets. Her opposite might not need man to birth children or she may give birth to monsters. She might be bloodthirsty; a murderer of the young and a gorgor of infants.

### FAVORED SON/DAUGHTER

As the name implies, the favored figure is most likely the first-born child of the father figure and the one expected to follow in his footsteps when it comes time to inherit the kingdom. This figure is most often a friend to humanity, possibly because his or her mother is human. This mixed parentage may set the figure at odds with other, more "pure-bred" gods. The mirror opposite of this figure is someone that will try to kill his/her parents to gain their throne. He may be untrustworthy and murderous or she might be hated and feared by mortals, who she enjoys slaughtering.

### THE TRICKSTER

The trickster figure defies category, sometimes tricking the wicked and sometimes duping the innocent. It's a regional character. Its ability to mislead and entrap are legendary, but so too is its arrogance. There are many tales of the table being turned on tricksters, though that rarely keeps them down for long. The antithesis of this would be a trickster whose jests are cruel and sadistic, a creature that revels in

human misery and loves to make grand promises before twisting the letter of the agreement to its mean favor.

## THE WAR FIGURE

The god of soldiers, this figure is a general or a berserker in the field of battle. The war figure exemplifies battle and sometimes the science of its machines. In its esteem, there is honor and glory in conflict. War may be a regrettable affair, but it also serves a purpose in clearing away the old and rebuilding newer and stronger empires. Rather than peace as its opposite, war taken to extreme can be about conflict without aim. It is destruction incarnate and fallen soldiers become not lionized heroes but blood to bask in and carrion to devour. Another option is that the polar opposite of war is apathy and the willingness to be victimized and subjugated.

## THE UNDERWORLD FIGURE

Mysterious, feared and sometimes tragically lonely, the god of the underworld may or may not have sought this position. Now that they have it, though, they lord over the realms of the dead. Their empire is as vast as continents, their cities taller and more precariously stacked than humanity, and the numbers of souls they command are legion. Like war, the horrible antithesis to this wouldn't be life, but an underworld figure that collects souls like gold coins. It tortures and consumes the dead, and it unleashes pox and plague upon humanity to expand its coffers.

## THE OCEANIC FIGURE

Almost equal to the father/mother figure, the oceanic god controls the vast waters of the world. His or her temper is often as mercurial as the seas themselves, calm one moment and roiling in anger the next. The oceanic figure is patron of sailors, and often possessed of a huge family of lesser gods and water spirits. The opposite of this is a figure of pure, undirected fury. No ship or coastal town is safe. The water drags men and women down into the abyss and drowns them, possibly with the help of sea wraiths. The bottom of the seas and oceans are covered with graveyards and wrecks alike, and the god of this domain is greedy for more.

## THE LOVE FIGURE

A deity of insurmountable beauty, the love figure rules the domain of people's hearts. She can stir desires or he can make mortals fall in love. He is a facilitator because love conquers all. The antithesis of the love figure is either a creature of hatred that stirs blind rage and distrust or someone that uses love to enthrall and bind others to the deity's servitude. The former stirs jealousy and malice, the later slavery and helplessness.

## THE HUNTER FIGURE

Often armed with a bow or a spear, the hunter figure is the one who taught humanity how to hunt, track, skin and survive in the wilderness. This god rules over all wild beasts and is often implored for a successful chase. His or her op-

posite might be little more than a beast itself, chasing after anyone that has harmed nature in any way or something possessed entirely of the basic animal impulses.

## THE MAGIC FIGURE

The role of magical figure falls mostly to women. In many tribes it is the magic and advice of the wise-woman that is sought and feared. As a goddess figure, she is associated with the moon and with night. Her worshippers form a cult and her priests carry her power. She knows mysteries and signs with which she can divine the future and cast spells. Her opposite can do much of the same, but the intention differs. The evil version of the magical figure demands virginal sacrifices and high fees for favors. The magic used by her followers is corruptive and may even feed a portion of their life force back to the goddess herself.

## THE FORGER

When the gods need a weapon, armor, or a device, they turn to this figure. The forger understands metals and crafting. They are as much artisan as they are blacksmith, as delicate as they are powerful. The antithesis might be the forger god that creates things with a murderous life of their own or items that corrupt the user. Perhaps they are an artist in all things war or their weapons are cruel enough that once they cut, the injured never stop bleeding.

## THE BETRAYER

There is almost always someone that is considered evil or a traitor to the pantheon; someone known for their greed or their cunning; someone responsible for hurting or killing or betraying a fellow god. The traitor could be a tragic figure with good intentions and horrible execution or someone truly evil and vindictive. While finding an antithesis to this may be difficult, the betrayer might actually be a good figure in an evil pantheon that never succeeds or she could be very, very good at what she does (never getting caught and mentally superior to the other gods).

## THE SERVITORS

Call them valkyries, orisha, or angels, almost every mythology, religion, and faith have entities that serve the wishes of the gods and act as their intermediaries with mortals. They might ferry dead souls, guard over the just, or protect certain locations. Their opposites, however, might be stark and horrible creatures, stealing souls, murdering the just, or doing whatever empowered their masters. These are things that delight in wanton cruelty and misery.

## THE REST

These are by no means comprehensive, especially when the gods or their aspects number in the hundreds. Gods of dreams, speed, inspiration, fear, and many more can grace many halls and take up as much or as little space at the pantheon's dinner table as the Gamemaster wishes. It all depends on what the series is trying to accomplish and where the intentions lie.

# ALIEN PANTHEONS

Here's where you get to ignore all the advice offered in the previous sections. The fact is that some mythologies and pantheons are frightening because they follow no aspect of the human condition and bear no reflection on humanity whatsoever. The entities might only care for things beyond our understanding or bear a hunger so fierce that everything to them is food. We might know them through side effects like disease or nightmares, though afflicting people with these things may or may not be deliberate. In either case, we are beneath notice or we serve no greater purpose than to exist for the pleasure of their callous will. There is no freewill and no heroes in these pantheons, at least none that we'd understand. There is only humanity's terrible fate and the certainty that what these extra-dimensional or otherworldly gods represent is nothing we can ever hope to understand.

That said, we often need benchmarks to understand the threat of these beings even though their nature is unknowable. The benchmarks don't exist to define the creatures, but rather offer the players a baseline understanding of the threat itself. It's a trick to horror, a trick that allows a connection to the threat to better understand the horrifying danger we face. How is a squid dangerous? We know that it is cunning with tentacle suckers that can envelop us. Add to that an intellect that dwarfs ours, and thus is born something alien and both equally known and unknowable.

So how does one establish this baseline? By giving the creatures of this pantheon commonalities with those species of our planet we barely understand or making them seem humanoid on the outside, but with a mindset that contrasts violently with humanity's. With the former, the types of creatures even offer us a framework for their behavior, though the similarities end within the moments it takes to note their commonalities.

One last matter to note... the deific figures of this mythology are rarely gods in the traditional sense, though that remains the Gamemaster's right to contradict. Rather, they are entities so beyond the pale of human experience and powers that they might as well be gods.

## RAISON D'ETRE

If human-based pantheons exist to make sense of the world, then what do alien mindset pantheons represent? That's up to the Gamemaster as a reflection of the game's needs, but one idea is to use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to give the pantheon a driving urge anchored in human needs but exaggerated to horrible extremes. From this base ideal, the Gamemaster can tweak, torque, and twist the pyramid's tiers to give the players something familiar and something strange at the same time.

## TIER 5 - PHYSIOLOGICAL

The drive for food, water, sleep, and sex are primordial and instinctual on a cellular level. It can be indicative of a savage existence, harkening back to the time when survival was daily, hourly, minute-to-minute struggle. Now twist that drive, and you have a pantheon that can be:

- Food & Water:** Born to consume, forever hungry and thirsty, something that has such a cosmic view of the universe that one civilization and planet is nothing more than an anthill in terms of fodder. Maybe it is territorial and securing its hunting spots against other entities doing the same. Maybe it must constantly eat or live in a state of starvation. Maybe it only understands joy or emotion through the act of consumption.
- Sleep:** What if the pantheon can only sleep and dream? What if that is the only way it can explore and understand the universe? What if its food are dreams? What if it can only communicate in deep

sleep delta waves or only experience the peace of sleep in the dreams of others? What if the pantheon rules a common world that we all visit when we sleep, and now they want us there all the time?

- Sex:** At its most basic, the pantheon only survives and thrives through its children. What if it can only procreate on a massive scale, requiring a constant source of food to feed its brood? What if its brood is its food source? What if it needs other species to carry its young to term or to breed and spread?

## TIER 4 - SAFETY

The initial scramble to survive leads to more prolonged planning in regards to survival. What if the pantheon exists in this constant state of longer-term survival? For whatever reason, it reached the top of the food chain in this state and never felt driven enough to evolve beyond it. Or maybe the drive for survival remains because as fearful and nasty as this pantheon is, it fears another pantheon that is far more powerful and that's further up the food chain.

- Securing Shelter/Resources:** Perhaps the displaced pantheon is trying to secure a home or the resources to survive, never realizing that its presence is the very thing that spoils its home. It might be massive ocean Leviathans that quickly poison the oceans they swim in. It could be poisonous flumes on its body that kills the life that it uses to feed on.
- Health:** What if the pantheon was in a constant state of decay or dying, and that its invasion of other worlds or dimensions was to stave off death for a meager decade more?

- Protecting Family:** Like sex, this one falls under the notion that the pantheon gives birth to innumerable creatures, and the survival of the family outstrips the right-of-life of any species or civilization they encounter. In all likelihood, the pantheon may not even recognize the validity of any other species but its own.

## TIER 3 - LOVE/BELONGING

Imagine a pantheon wanting or lacking in the one thing demanded of most gods... love and devotion. Now admire a pantheon that 1) has a twisted view of what love/devotion means or, 2) acts like an abusive jealous boyfriend for that love/devotion or 3) becomes homicidal when that love/devotion isn't forthcoming, or 4) confuses emotions because they are foreign to it, mistaking pain for love, for example. Or perhaps the pantheon visits plagues and disasters on the world before introducing themselves as its saviors. Regardless, the pantheon can connect with humanity on a basic emotional or intellectual level, but the disconnect is likely in how we see cause and effect.

- Affection:** The pantheon thrives off fear, believing affection and fear are the same. Or perhaps the showing of affection is unique and the creature desires to understand it even though it is cold, clinic and rational to the extreme of cruelty.
- Giving & Receiving Love:** What if a pantheon's love was a physically detrimental thing, a mental assault that burned out or overloaded the manufacture of dopamine, testosterone, and estrogen in the body. What if it turned us into drug addicts for want of love from this pantheon, a love they never understood or were able to fulfill. Or worse, the creature inadvertently promoted high levels of oxytocin and vasopressin, bonding us to serve the creatures.

## TIER 2 - ESTEEM

Esteem is much like Love/Belonging, where the creature doesn't ignore us per se, but demands something from us that it needs. Again, what it needs is either twisted, or its understanding of cause and effect to get that Esteem is warped.

- Confidence:** In a horrible irony, the pantheon may absolutely lack in confidence, and do horrific things in an attempt to delude itself into believing it has confidence.

## TIER 1 - SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Ironically, this tier can remain undefined for our purposes here for two reasons. While it could help give the players a grasp of the pantheon's motivations, it might also be too telling. Living out one's ambitions might either come across as too flat if the ambition is to spread and procreate, or if the ambition might come across as too human, and thus ruin the unfathomable alien mystic of the pantheon.

Another option is to say that the previous tiers of the pyramid are in fact the self-actualization pinnacle of the pantheon... that they cannot advance beyond that point or that they consider anything beyond their tier to be a lie or a corruption. What would self-actualization mean, for example, to a hive-minded pantheon that would absolutely fail to function if it became a hive of individuals? At that point, actualization of self would be seen as an abomination, as a tool of chaos and discord, a tool to eradicate.

## GODS & MONSTERS

While the talk has been about pantheons, the focus has been on monsters. Why? For two reasons. The first is that in the build up typical to supernatural adventures and horror stories, the minions and servitors of the gods would be the first thing characters encounter and the first layers of the threats they face. Secondly, dealing with the so-called gods of alien pantheons will usually rely on a deus ex machine to end the threat at the culmination of the adventure. The heroes may sometimes be powerful enough to sock old Cthulhu in the jaw, but more often than not, that won't be the case.

The following monsters can use the **Build-a-Critter** section in the next Chapter to create their templates. These are merely suggestions as to what the players might face in the pantheon's hierarchy of entities.

### ARACHNIDS

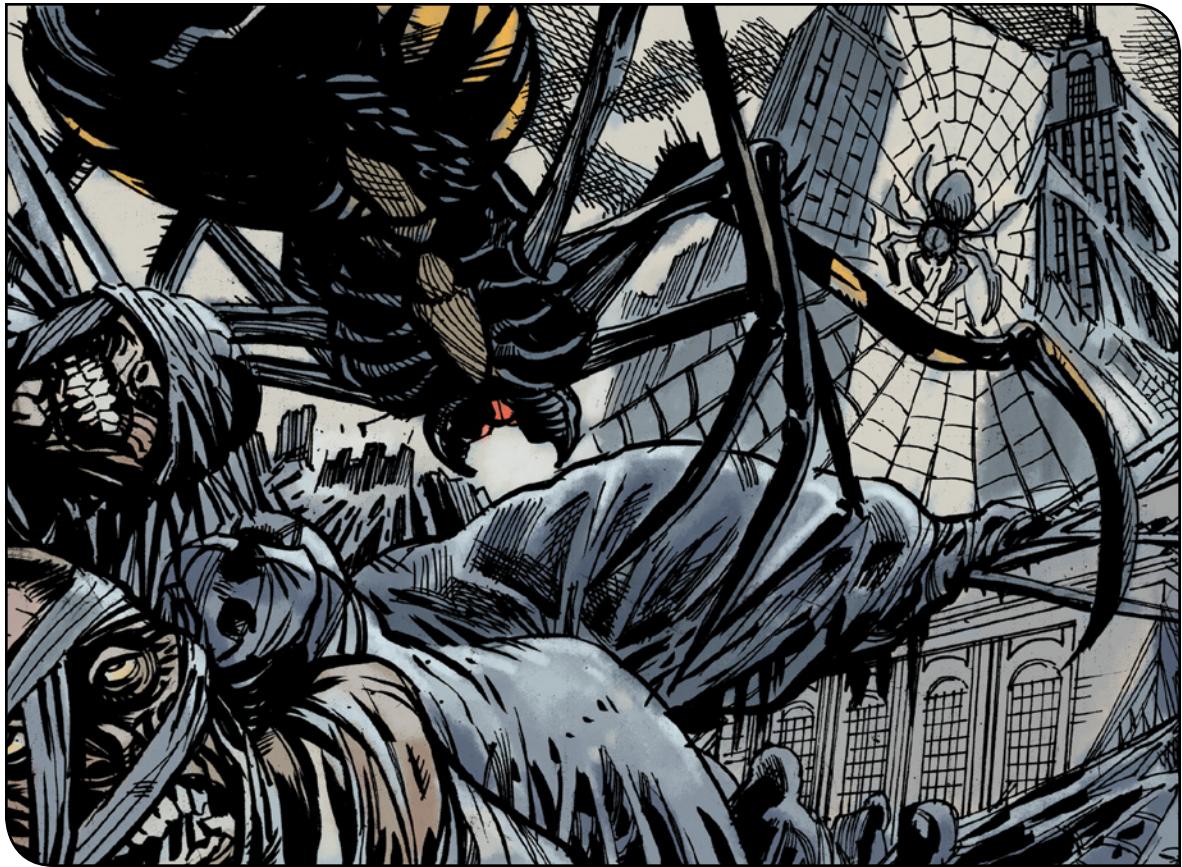
People are arachnophobic for a reason, and one only needs to study the camel spider or the scorpion to find these critters truly terrifying. They have eight legs, are hairy, possess mandibles and stingers, compound eyes, can spin webs and scurry like possessed of Mercury's feet. Now imagine an extra-dimensional spider that cocoons entire planets and whose egg clutches contain millions of tiny spiders born only to devour one another until all that remain are a dozen of so skyscraper sized eight-legged freaks. Or what about extraterrestrial spiders laying their brood inside whales and elephants to create massive global infestations.

### SCARY FACTS

There are instances when spiders cooperate to form massive communal webs that envelope tree(s) when there's a surfeit of food. Spider venoms run the gamut from arresting vital functions to paralyzing their target to the Brown Recluse's venom that can cause necrosis of the flesh. The Ogre-Faced Spider spins the web between its front legs before leaping on enemies to snare them. The Darwin's Bark spider has a web with twice the elasticity of other spiders, and is ranked among the strongest biological material.

### SMALL - FILAMENT SPIDER

The small filament spider is an alien arachnid whose webs are made of monofilament strands that can cut the toughest target on a molecular level. The spider works with other small filament spiders to create intricate webs that



cut and dissect unsuspecting targets. They often work with larger spiders that drive frightened prey running into their webs.

### MEDIUM - STRIKE SPIDERS

These predators range from human to car size, and possess a phasing ability that allows them to materialize from out of nowhere to ambush their prey. They often serve as guardians of Brood Nurses and egg clutches, or protectors of breach sites, for example, but they can also serve whatever alien agenda guides them to pursue missions.

### LARGE - BROOD NURSE

Whether the Brood Nurse arrives as a stowaway on a doomed alien ship or through a dimensional tear from an infested universe, she is the gargantuan scout and precursor to an invasion. With her she carries the egg sacs for an army and the instinct to hide, and hunt, and kill until the eggs hatch. She can be the mother, or a queen guard responsible for spreading the eggs of a larger spider across the universe.

### GARGANTUAN - THE LIVING WEB

What if the god of the spiders wasn't a giant spider, but an organic spider web anchored on planets and asteroids? The enormous strands collect all manner of solar energy, but they feed mostly on a planet's biomes, the spiders that serve the galactic egg clutch at the heart of the web gathering all manner of life to feed their god. The

web would expand through harpoon strands that react to gravity wells, aiming for solar systems and impaling planets before the mountainous harpoons opened and released billions of harvesters.

### FUNGI

Scary fungi can range from alien mushroom-like spires to a skin-eating fungus to the very real Cordyceps. As alien looking life forms here on Earth, fungus as threats can be stowaway spores that attached themselves to a meteorite or satellite, they can be the environment twisted by the presence of ancient chthonic entities, or they may be sentient life forms capable of killing humans in horrible ways. Not by anything as mundane as devouring their victims like an overgrown Venus Flytrap, but perhaps by encasing them in spores and eating their hosts slowly, or by converting people into their minions. In this case, the main threat of fungi gone wild is nothing short than spreading across the fertile and predator free planet.

### SCARY FACTS

One of the most frightening fungi are called Cordyceps, and the reality of them is far scarier than anything in fiction. Each species of Cordycep targets a specific insect. The ones that target ants infect their brains, rewiring them with the impulse to climb to a high spot on a tree. The ant then sinks its mandibles into the bark and dies there, stuck. The fungus blossoms out through the back of its skull, before it bursts and spreads the spores all over the area to infect more ants.

## SMALL - THE PLAGUE OF RA'SHRAIL

The first wave of invasion begins small, with the spores of a plague from a wild outgrowth of fungi clusters. Maybe they spread through a local water source or are introduced into the local food cycle, but those infected are turned into mobile spore sacs called Servitors.

## MEDIUM - SERVITORS OF RA'SHRAIL

Humans and animals infected by the spores of the extra-dimensional Fungal Gods known as the Ra'shrail are easy to spot. They are covered in a growth of fungal bark that slowly devours them and saps their will, they are impervious to pain and near unstoppable, and they exist to attack the uninfected in order to exhale a cloud of spores to infect them. They know no other reason to exist, other than to infect and then die to leave behind fecund soil for more fungal growths.

## LARGE - HARVESTERS OF RA'SHRAIL

Harvesters are giant mushrooms that terraform worlds to the needs of the Ra'shrail themselves. These creatures arrive and begin harvesting organic matter from a world using their undulating hyphae to search and grab for living organisms from miles away, growing larger and larger the more they consume. Some grow to the size of skyscrapers. All the while, the harvesters ingest tons of soil and use the build up of gas to launch pulverized particles high into the atmosphere from their caps, blanketing a planet until it is dark enough to serve their albino masters.

## GARGANTUAN - GODS OF RA'SHRAIL

The gods of the Ra'shrail look like giant albino alien beasts. No two are similar, though they share some commonalities: They are all a pale sickly white, they abhor direct sunlight, and they all have a fungal nest covering their heads and faces, their hyphae spread across their body like a web of veins that grow just under the surface of the skin or on their carapace. And they live to spread their fungus across an entire world until civilizations and empires are crushed under a mass of stems and shadowed by massive caps.

## INSECTS

With 900 thousand species of insects compromising 80% of Earth's living organisms, insects represent a biodiversity unknown in most other species. And yet they remain among our most alien co-inhabitants and are widely feared in Western culture. Regardless, insects are generally associated with threats that swarm and overwhelm, be it an onslaught of fire ants or the barrage of wasps from a nest. We associate them with hive-minded behavior, little individual survival instinct and working under the guiding authority of a queen. series threats can involve the small but billion-strong swarms that make hiding difficult and damn near impossible. Or they can be gargantuan creatures that have turned entire cities into nests. Smaller carrion eating insects can serve the larger,

heavily armored kind that are immune to all but the heaviest weapons. It can even be more innocuous, with locust swarms blanketing entire counties as they devour the Wheat Belt and eclipse the skies.

## SCARY FACTS

The thumb-sized Japanese Hornet not only has a flesh-melting acid that it uses to spray a victim's eyes, but that the pheromones in the acid attract more hornets to attack the sprayed target in a frenzy. The inch-long Bullet Ant has a bite said to be the most painful in the animal kingdom, and it shrieks at you... as it drops down from where it lives... in trees. The Army or Soldier Ant is half an inch long, is blind, and moves in a biting carpet of millions whose jaws and mandibles rip flesh apart; even worse, they are hive-driven, using their bodies to build bridges to cross gaps and scale higher vantage points.

## SMALL - THE INFESTATION

The Infestation is a rolling wave of tiny insects (corollaries to ants, mites, ticks, etc.) that spread and decimate the local food sources. These omnivores exist to eat and they never stop moving because they will depopulate all life around them. In the country, their spread is obvious as grasslands turn to deserts and towns are buried under the glossy black of their carapace. In cities, their growth is more frightening and insidious. The sewers provide for the swarm, and by the time the insects are ready to spread to the surface, their numbers are overwhelming. The Infestation may either crawl like army ants, or fly like locusts. Their hive mind is so powerful, that the insects cooperate and coordinate on a staggering level, using their bodies to scale or span obstacles.

## MEDIUM - GATHERERS

In an eco-culture that devours everything, waste not want not is commandment, principle, imperative, and drive. The Gatherers are insects (corollaries to centipedes, wasps, etc.) that can range in size anywhere from cat to car, and their purpose to gather materials to build the kingdom's hives. And anything can be fodder for their constructs... they can use buildings for the hive's framework, cars and metal sheeting for patchwork battlements, and all manner of regurgitated organic resin for interior walls. Their pincers can cut through metal, and their stomachs can turn organic material into an ultra-hard resin. Gatherers also entomb whole creatures into a hive's walls for building material and a ready source of food.

## LARGE - LIVING HIVE

The Living Hive is an enormous structure where millions if not billions of Infestation insects have been chained together and turned into a living nervous system. They infest the walls, devouring organic material of those creatures entombed to excrete and add to the biological mass, allowing the hive to repair and to grow. The Living Hive works as an amplifier, enabling the hive's Brood Mother to communicate with her armies from across whatever dimensional or interplanetary gaps that separates them.

And they serve to create insects whose intelligence is amplified by the hive to no longer just react, but to plan,

## GARGANTUAN - BROOD MOTHER

In the dead husk of a world where the entire planet has been gutted and honeycombed to serve as a birthing palace waits the Brood Mother. She is endless it seems, with long millipede segments, millions of legs, a birthing sacs scattered across her body. Few have ever seen her head, which she keeps hidden under her seemingly endlessly coiled body, and she is responsible for spreading her plague across the infinite universe and dimensions. She does not move, does not leave her throne world, except perhaps when a portion of her slips into a dimension. She does give birth to queens that will be brought to infected worlds once a Living Hive has been constructed.

## CULTS

We've talked about the strange alien myths ready to invade our world as infection or as a hungry tide that will sweep over all. Regardless of how alien or foreign they are, the invasion often begins with collaborators and traitors... people either perverted to the cause of the new mythology, or promised power, and wealth, or corrupted/transformed. These the *Supernatural Handbook* refers to as "mythos cults" to avoid confusion.

Some mythos cults serve a single entity. Some serve an entire pantheon. Regardless, the mythos cults are the foot soldiers and first line of defense that heroes must face. This is good news for characters if the power of adversaries is too great for the heroes to manage. Having a mythos cult allows the heroes to thwart the machinations of beings far more powerful than they by fighting their more manageable proxies. Or put another way, it's easier to stop the Cult of Nazz'rckk from awakening the Hornet God than stopping the Hornet God *after* it's awakened.

## UNLIKE REAL WORLD CULTS...

Unlike those cults in the real world that are synonymous with brainwashing, armed compounds, religious fanaticism, suicide and doomsday scenarios, etc, the mythos cults are far more insidious because they aren't separated or isolated from society. They aren't about gathering more members but more about holding on to their power-base than sharing it or gaining converts. They hide in plain sight. They've infiltrated all walks of life. And they corrupt with the power of their gods.

That said, here are eight hallmarks of most real life cults and how mythos cults might bear differences or similarities from them:

### BRAINWASHING

Cults employ a variety of brainwashing techniques to break a member's defenses and to bend them to the cult's will. Brainwashing may run the gamut from love-bombing (overwhelming a member with the cult's love and acceptance) to focused study of doctrine, to peer pressure, to

scheduled fatigue/deprivation, etc. Mythos cults don't do this, however, unless the individual is someone they desperately need. Otherwise, the cult picks its members and rarely feels like it has time to coerce the hesitant. Anyone who is uncertain is food for the beast.

### ELITISM

Best known as "us vs. them," the cult either vilifies the outside world as blind, ignorant, or evil, or they elevate the cult and cult membership as exclusively qualified as custodians of "the truth," whatever that truth may be. Consider carefully that in this regard, the Nazi SS fell into this category with their talk of Aryan supermen and Jewish conspiracies. Mythos cults are much in the same when it comes to elitism. They believe they are unique and blessed because of the gods they truck with, but where normal cults use that promise of exclusivity to gain more members, mythos cults do not. Neither do they advertise that exclusivity.

### ISOLATION

The cult isolates its members physically through the use of gated compounds, socially by controlling their flow of information and their contact and exposure to the outside world, or psychologically by fostering distrust between its members and their friends and family. Mythos cults might do this as well if they can afford to remain physically isolated, but those in major population centers can simply rely on that urban distance that separates all city dwellers to their benefit.

### LEADER

Although some cults admire a dead leader, many follow the teachings of a central authority figure who encourages absolute faith in him or herself alone. This figure is often very charismatic and the visionary who holds absolute vision over the cult's dogma. Mythos cults are the same, with one man or woman serving as the cult's lynchpin and visionary.

### MEMBERSHIP

Many cults seek to increase their membership, for more members means more money, more power, more influence, and more respectability. Mythos cults do not seek members as actively, unless a bloated membership means more sheep to sacrifice at that nigh important ritual. Otherwise, mythos cults are very selective when it comes to members, though there is always the possibility of membership in a mythos cult being a family affair or even a matter of lineage.

### OBEDIENCE

Cults are notoriously stringent and demanding of obedience, their model built on dominance, submission, and subservience. They don't want to lose members, and more importantly, they don't want the outside world knowing about their secrets. In some cases, the truth will damage their reputation, and in others, it will expose their potential illegal practices (like slave labor, or polygamy, or



child abuse, etc.). Mythos cults are equally stringent if only because the wrong word will expose their existence and their activities. And even if the general public sees an exposed mythos cult as a bunch of harmless crazies, those heroes dedicated to fighting evil will recognize the true danger.

## OBfuscation

The cult hides its true purpose and its membership from the general public and from authorities, even though the cult itself tries to provide a respectable façade. Mythos cults also hide their true purpose and membership, but they rarely have a public façade. It is in their best interest to remain absolutely hidden.

## Pyramid Structure

If power in a cult resides with a single leader at the apex, the power of the leader trickles down the slopes of the pyramid structure to give everyone a taste of it and the promise that they can rise in position and prestige. And each step up is a step closer to the cult's precious secrets. So the leader controls his council of commanders, his commanders have their lieutenants, the lieutenants have their sergeants, and they their subordinates. Mythos cults are far smaller, operating as a cell of terrorists because if they get too large, then they risk exposure. Still, the notion of a leader and his lieutenants remains true, as does the potential that a large mythos cult operates in pyramid-like cells with the leader controlling the various cell leaders.

## THE PROMISE

All cults carry a promise, usually part of their unspoken mandate that all members are promised will be theirs eventually. It could be something as simple as acceptance or purpose. It could be the promise of true understanding and secret knowledge, perhaps even power or comfort in this lifetime or the next.

Mythos cults are no different in offering a promise, though that promise comes with an understanding that it carries a terrible price. That price is almost always paid by others through the sacrifice of innocents or perhaps, even by the entire world. At their most basic, however, the promise is one of survival: "You will survive the coming apocalypse and even benefit from it if you do not fail." The promise is always for after whatever event is being engineered, but after that event, the rewards are unimaginable. They include supernatural powers, a throne in the ashes of the old world, entire continents as personal fiefdoms, a choice of slaves from among the survivors. Or, the bargain may simply be... you won't be among the dead or tortured.

The promise also carries a corollary with it: "Help us, and we will bring about 'X,' and 'X' is invariably the death of something most everyone holds dear. That also means failure is punished most harshly. Promises may include:

- **Physical:** The promise of longevity, eternal youth, superpowers, a life free from death, a life free from pain, the cure to an incurable disease that affects the cultist....

## MODERN CULTIST MAGAZINE

Unless the game is a period piece, the stereotypical image of the mythos cultist is either the fez-wearing man with the pencil-thin mustache and accented voice, or the shrieking hooded cultist in robes charging the hero with a sacrificial blade in hand. In the modern world, however, people like that tend to stick out, and if terrorists are becoming more sophisticated with their approaches and disguises, then why wouldn't members of a mythos cult. Why wouldn't they use the Internet to spread madness through imbedded images of the scanned Necronomicon? Why not use the numerology of someone's bank finances against them? Or a social network chain letter to mind-control people? Or a television broadcast to send house pets into a frenzy? Or Wi-Fi to create a massive, citywide electronic ritual circle? Or a cell phone provider sending out a Babylon code to rewire the brain of anyone receiving their voice mail? And why wouldn't cultists be financiers looking for holy patterns in the Stock Exchange ticker? Or social workers directing some children into a cult's care? Or a dog pound owner sacrificing animals scheduled for destruction? Or a chef spicing his evening's menu with a little supernatural extra something? What about a stage manager for a theater show using a real artifact to enthrall audiences?

The point is to look at all the people we meet in modern life and all the things that are a part of our lives, and then imagine how a cultist or mythos cult might use their job or role against people. Remember that that evil we fear the most is the one we often have the least reason to suspect.

- **Mental:** The promise of ecstasy, knowledge, mental abilities, the promise of glory, retribution over those who wronged you....
- **Social:** The promise of loved ones brought back to life, slaves, adoration, the love of one or many, the return of kidnapped loved ones, of protection of family in the coming apocalypse....
- **Mental:** The corruption is mental, a rot that starts from within. Membership in the cult unhinges the cultist, though the severity depends on the needs of the Gamemaster. It could be a disquiet that surrounds the individual, or a secondary personality that emerges, or a full-blown rampaging psychotic meltdown that prompts the crazy cultist to shave his head, wear hooded robes, and attack victims with a sacrificial dagger.
- **Social:** The corruption is social. It could be that the cultist begins attracting all manner of unsavory individuals to his side, or perhaps the cultist has a corrupting effect on the people in her life, affecting and warping friends, family, and community as well.

## THE CORRUPTION

Most cults are corrupt in some way. They could be unscrupulous about their recruitment process, they could be bilking their membership of their life-savings, they could be depriving people of their basic freedoms, etc. Mythos cults can run a wider gamut. Some may be straightforward in their agenda. They are here to engineer some catastrophe and all the members are in on the job. Some mythos cults may be corrupt in a physical sense, their bodies warped by their worship; now whether they hide this corruption from new members or the corruption is a source of their power remains the Gamemaster's purview. Others, however, might hide their true purpose from the general assembly, acting as a cult within a cult.

Imagine a cult like any other. Members are sequestered from the public, the members living in compounds and the cult recruiting openly under the protection of religious freedom. Oh, and the members are told that suicide is a transformational tool when done under sanctioned conditions (examples include: Peoples Temple, Solar Temple, and Heaven's Gate). Now imagine that the upper echelons are a mythos cult, using mass suicide as a tool for sacrifice, or embedding chthonic verses in their hymns and chants, or using the membership to feed the arrival of the otherworldly minions.

- **Physical:** The corruption is physical, the bodies of the members warped by their interactions with the otherworldly. This could be deliberate, though inadvertent corruption is often far more frightening because it feels like a casual disregard of the things people hold to be precious or integral to our personal and social identities.

## THE AGENDA

All cults serve a true agenda. Their public and private agendas may differ or share similarities, but the true purpose of a cult is often hidden from the public. Sometimes cults do this to protect themselves from the authorities or the general public, or sometimes to understand the true agenda is part of the cult's mystery and allure.

Mythos cults, however, have no true objective of their own, though their drive is certainly more base than any other. Their spoken objective may be about power and enacting the will of the beast they serve, but on a gut level, the true agenda may be about surviving what comes next. In essence, it's all about the most basic tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, whether the cultist admits it or not.

- **Physical:** The agenda is physical, be it to transform humanity itself into a different or hybrid species, to open a portal, to bring about the end of the world, to gain godlike powers, etc.
- **Mental:** The agenda is mental, be it to rewire the way people think, to enslave others to a greater will, to share knowledge or alone to wield it, etc.
- **Social:** The agenda is social, whether it is to upset the social order of things, to gain influence and prestige,

to be seen differently, to vilify or ostracize a group of people, etc.

## THE ACE IN THE HOLE

In fiction, most cults have some ace-in-the-hole (AITH) to frustrate the hero. Consider the AITH to be the “all is lost” moment when on the verge of defeat, the cult surges back in one last and seemingly overwhelming gasp. They hold the hero’s loved one hostage or they complete the ritual or their lawyers step in to save them.

With mythos cults, the AITH is all the more important, because the heroes are possessed of power and in ordinary circumstances they might easily expect to win. Gamemasters need the ace, not to frustrate their players, but to give them a challenge and a possible twist. Therefore, the AITH has to be something that can hurt or affect the heroes in some way.

Another way to play the ace is that the heroes know about it from the beginning; stopping the cult from using it then becomes a ticking clock they have to stop, a race against time. A third option is that the ace-in-the-hole is a barrier that the heroes must first overcome before going after the cult itself.

- **Physical:** The ace-in-the-hole is physical, be it an artifact that protects the cultists from harm or servitors of the divinity that the cultists serve, servitors that act as guardians and foot soldiers.
- **Mental:** The ace-in-the-hole is mental, either in the sway the cultists hold over innocent civilians or the ability to mind-control people, or the simple fear they might have over a community.
- **Social:** The ace-in-the-hole is social, be it through media and legal contacts that allow them to vilify the heroes publicly, or by holding the heroes’ families hostage to keep the characters at bay, for example.

## DISASTERS: DEAD AND DYING WORLDS

Life after civilization, post-human...if there’s anything Mother Nature has engrained in people it is that life is fragile. One Ice Age, one meteor, one polar reversal, and the world as we know it comes to an end. Horror fiction takes this a step further by inviting its audience to imagine what life would be like for humans in those circumstances. It is the horror of our fate, and possibly the horror of whatever monsters accompany that fate. Would we embrace a nobler path and clump together to survive or would we revert to a feral state? Regardless, the horror still exists: Everything we know and love is gone, baby, gone.

The following section deals with the collapse of civilization for various reasons but, more importantly, it also gives the Gamemaster a direction as to the repercussions of those situations. Hopefully, it offers story ideas to flesh out the series. Sure, vampires or intelligent zombies can infect the world like a rampant virus, but what happens when the power plants fail? Will vampires/intelligent zombies keep human slaves to maintain those key systems? Will they lie in wait, knowing Las Vegas, Montreal, and Quebec City will be among the last cities to lose power in North America, for example?

## GLOBAL FLOODING

It all comes down to the ice sheets in the Antarctic and Greenland, which trap a substantial amount of the world’s water, locking it up near the poles. Melt that ice, and most of the Earth’s surface would be under water. There are a number of ways it could happen:

- An eco-villain successfully triggers volcanic activity beneath the ice sheets.
- An alien species is flooding the oceans through submerged portals to create a new water world, bringing with them exotic or monstrous alien sea life.
- A series of ancient devices buried beneath the poles are melting the ice caps.
- A beam of light from the sky instantly turns all the ice into water, triggering a global tsunami.
- New land masses teeming with alien life are appearing in the world’s oceans. Be it an extra-dimensional invasion or fusion of two realities, the waters of this world are being displaced.

- Underwater earthquakes along the tectonic plates are triggering tsunamis around the world.
- The floods are a global hallucination, powerful enough to render “drowning” victims catatonic and send survivors fleeing for the highlands.

## FLOOD REPERCUSSIONS

If the sea levels increase by 60 meters (from melting ice, 60% of Greenland, 60% West Antarctic, 100% East Antarctic, and 50% of the North Pole and permafrost), the world map would change, mostly along coastal regions. Florida is gone...4.5 meters is enough to submerge its tip halfway up between Miami to Tampa. Vast swaths of the Eastern Seaboard also vanish. New York, Washington, San Francisco, and LA are underwater, as are California’s valleys. The Amazon Basin would flood, widening the river dramatically and turning its western segment into a new sea in the heart of South America. Argentina is heavily inundated along the Uruguay border and Paraguay is gone. Across the ocean, the Po valley would flood, taking Paris with it. The coast of northern countries along the North and Baltic Sea are in



similar straits and the boot of Italy is nearly amputated from Europe. The Caspian Sea explodes in size, claiming the surrounding countries and joining with the Aral Sea. Low-lying Bangladesh is hard hit as are the Chinese provinces facing the Yellow Sea. Coastal cities like Melbourne, Hong Kong and Bombay are submerged as well.

At 100 meters, all ice caps have melted. Although this is considered an impossibility, nothing is impossible in fiction. In this case, the world is a different planet, the shores of the world redefined. North America's Eastern Seaboard is gone, save for a part of Quebec, Newfoundland, and Labrador, connected to North America by an isthmus. A new Americas island is also born just off the coast of the new Eastern Seaboard, formed from Ohio down to Georgia. The whole Amazon Basin is now the Amazon Sea and a large bay has formed where Uruguay, Paraguay, and part of Argentina once lay. Northern Europe and parts of England are gone. What is left of Europe is now separated from Russia and the Scandinavian Islands, with a series of smaller islands in the great new sea between them. India is nearly cut off from Asia and Australia nearly split in two. Northern Russia is devastated and lost.

On the human side of the equation, billions of people living along coastal regions are refugees seeking safety inland. Refugee camps would form immediately and surviving coastal communities would be inundated by the human flood and taxed to the breaking point if unprepared. If the floods are instantaneous, the death toll may be in the billions as well. The 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake created a tsunami that struck eleven countries and killed 225,000 people, a majority of them in In-

donesia. The Japan tsunami remains fresh enough in our minds that the videos speak volumes themselves. Fresh water supplies are ruined and water is at a premium. If the floods are sudden, then the new coasts and city marshes are filled with millions of corpses; if it's a slower deluge, then the floodwaters are still polluted by raw sewage. In either case, survivors are in danger of catching typhoid fever, cholera, and hepatitis A. Mosquito-borne diseases like West Nile virus, malaria, and dengue also present dangers.

Energy is another concern. North America's nuclear plants are concentrated in the Northeast, Southeast, and the Central States south of the Great Lakes. Massive flooding would cripple the Northeast plants and potentially those near the Great Lakes. Quebec's chief export, its vast hydroelectric network, would also be compromised. This would create a strain on surviving power plants, either causing rolling blackouts across the unaffected regions or requiring blackout hours where electricity is suspended.

If the floods happen quickly, many countries also lose their port cities. Importing and exporting would grind to a crawl at best, depriving countries of valuable medicines and foods. Oil-dependent countries would lose a vital source of energy. The United States would have to draw heavily from Canada (if it hasn't secured other means of energy by this point). As it is, the US and Canada are each other's chief trading partners with 1.5 billion dollars a day traded in services and product. The question arises, however, does the US invade and seize Canada to secure their land and natural resources? It would likely be hap-

pening elsewhere in the world, with China and India trying to ensure the survival of their people.

Regardless, ship captains sitting on cargo containers and oil tankers might go independent and either pirate from other ships or sell their consignments to any existing port. Ocean communities might form around the larger ocean-going vessels. Scavengers with smaller boats might try their hand ransacking the lost wealth of flooded cities. Overseas, thousands of U.S., Canadian, British and U.N. troops would be stranded and trying to find ways home, or settling down where they are, as best they can.

Whatever caused the disaster might also bring with it aquatic monstrosities; bladed squids that feast on whales, carnivorous plankton, or giant eels that swim flooded streets. Perhaps, not even the coasts are safe anymore. And in this world, heroes and villains would be at a premium for the billions of refugees who need their help right now. A heavily taxed government will need help establishing control with the mercenary minded trying to make a fast buck.

See **Chapter 5** of the *M&M Gamemaster's Guide* for information on floods, handling actions underwater, and other disasters. You can treat flash floods and tidal waves as avalanches of water (page 173 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*), inflicting at least Damage 8 and subjecting characters to drowning.

## IMPACT WINTER

Meteors, super volcanoes, and nuclear blasts all destroy the point of incident. They also all create a massive shockwave that ripples through the Earth's crust, and they all throw massive amounts of debris into the air, triggering diminished temperatures across the world. The loss of life in the short term is catastrophic, but the tragedy over the long haul is the true horror. One option is to play this out on a small scale where one continent is affected while others survive with their infrastructures intact. This section assumes, however, that the impending disaster is a global "extinction-level" event. The reasons why an event like this occurs are many:

- An ancient beast of the stars, foretold by ancient cultures, is the meteor that slams into a landmass. Now it awakens while humanity struggles to survive.
- A villain triggers the super volcano beneath Yellowstone National Park.
- A new supercollider goes online and strikes an exotic and heretofore unknown atom; be it sabotage or accidental, the explosion dwarfs any conventional nuclear strike and millions die in the initial blast.
- Volcanoes open beneath the streets of every major city worldwide. Is the threat subterranean or interdimensional?
- An alien species is playing billiards with the earth, sending showers of meteors into its path to devastate all life.
- Vampires and other night-bred creatures have opened gateways to ash worlds, flooding the air with debris storms. The darkness spreads, and with it comes perpetual night.

## THE EFFECTS

The real tragedy may begin months before the actual event, heightening the horror of the series as society itself disintegrates and the world governments are forced to save a handful at the expense of billions. Do they really have any other choice?

If a cataclysmic event is known about beforehand (rising tremors at Yellowstone Park or the trajectory of an inbound asteroid), riots and looting would happen immediately despite the best efforts of governments to restore order. Crime would rise, keeping heroes busy, and people would use any means to secure their future, regardless of how slim it appears. This means building shelters and stockpiling food, raw materials, and medicine; they might form small enclaves to help one another, evacuating population centers in some cases and seeking refuge in mountainous or isolated regions. Communities might form in the oceans among sailing fleets hoping to escape the pandemonium and potential tsunami of a major strike.

During a global-killing strike, it's likely that an entire continent may die in an instant. The blast throws thousands of kilometers worth of debris high into the atmosphere. The shockwave triggers earthquakes worldwide as well as sympathetic volcanic eruptions. Tsunamis ravage coastlines for anywhere up to 150 miles inland. Life is scoured for a thousand miles around the blast site, but life in areas beyond is still in peril. The shockwave flattens towns and cities and, if the firestorm doesn't kill animals, people, and plants, then the poison gases released from volcanic eruptions will. After that, the survivors may be dealing with severe burns, asphyxiation, blindness and deafness.

For the next ten or more hours, ejecta or material sent into the atmosphere comes raining back down. Anything that doesn't burn up on reentry bombards the landscape, destroying buildings, starting wildfires, and killing more plants, animals, and people.

For weeks thereafter, it is pitch black and plants have died under thick layers of ash or debris, as much as 14 inches locally, and at least one to five inches world-wide. If there is radiation in the air, the air itself is not irradiated but it is filled with radioactive particles that under ideal circumstances will take three months to be washed from the atmosphere. At the very least, radiation levels will drop by 99.9% after two weeks, but the remaining .1% can still be lethal. Unfortunately, the disaster has created black rains—acidic rains if volcanic eruptions were in the mix. Only those with stocks of fresh water and protected heavy-duty purifiers have clean water to drink.

With volcanic eruptions, buildings collapse under the weight of the ash, which weighs up to 200 pounds per square yard, double that if wet. Wet ash also conducts electricity and the air is rent with frequent lightning strikes. Power stations fail from ash wreaking havoc with electrical systems and communication is nearly impossible with the static discharges and radio signal refraction. Forget anything involving satellites; the heavens are once

more silent. Airplanes cannot fly in the ashfall, which also take a hefty toll on internal combustion engines by clogging air filters and damaging equipment.

Now let's discuss people. With volcanic eruptions and even deep meteor impacts, ash clogs air purifiers and anyone breathing in that powder without protection is coughing up blood from the razor like particulates in their lungs. Survivors "near" the incident point have likely had one or more of their senses destroyed. The flash of a nuclear blast will blind, leaving groups of sightless people wandering the wastelands. The explosive pressure from a super volcano or meteor strike may deafen people. That's not counting the risk of asphyxiation from toxic gas, radiation, heat burns, and the countless people trapped in collapsed buildings and buried cars.

At this point, the heroes are trapped performing the monster of all nightmare triages. Each decision to save one life will likely cost someone else theirs because time is critical. Help is a long way in coming and in all likelihood may never arrive. Survivors form long refugee trains trying to escape the region and vehicles may not be available for whatever reason; anyone who falls by the wayside along the march may very well be stripped of supplies and valuables and left to die. For historical reference, one need only look at the winter retreat of the Napoleonic and German armies from Russian territory.

Perhaps more horrific, this is only the beginning of years or even decades of hardship. Animals and plants across the world are dead or dying, whether on the ground or in the sea. Temperatures across the world could drop by as much as three to ten degrees Celsius worldwide, and the winter may last up to five years. Mass starvation and disease are certain.

If the disaster is continental or even global, where do the survivors go? Are the heroes going to stay behind to help save those trapped and incapacitated or do they have to start thinking longer term in regards to shelter, food, and water for the thousands or millions remaining? Worse yet, what if the disaster is a precursor to something even worse? Could it be an alien invasion, the rise of old gods, or the opening salvo of a mega-villain? Can the heroes ignore the plight of the survivors to fight this threat? Do they have a choice?

See the **Environmental Hazards** rules on pages 185–187 of the *Hero's Handbook* for dealing with heat and cold, starvation and thirst, and exposure to toxins, disease, and radiation. See pages 174–175 of the *Gamemaster's Guide* for information pertaining to fires and smoke inhalation. Depending on the cause and conditions of the disaster, the corruption rules in this book may also serve to measure long-term exposure to environmental health

hazards or mutagens, to say nothing of the ongoing psychological effects scarring the survivors.

## AND ALL THE REST

Humanity's peril, if not the planet's, lies in many guises. The only restriction is imagination and the results can be anything the Gamemaster desires. Global disasters might also include:

- Scientists create a tiny black hole that is now slowly devouring continents and ripping the planet asunder. Survivors must deal with volcanic eruptions and earthquakes from slipping tectonic plates and thinning atmosphere as the black hole steals the world's breath.
- Silicon-based life forms are eating through the planet's crust, creating gigantic sinkholes capable of devouring cities, bringing magma tubes to erupt on the surface and burying mountain communities in avalanches as they erode the bedrock of the mountains themselves.
- Something switches the Earth's magnetic poles, resulting in the slow buildup of electromagnetic disruptions. Communication is interrupted before it fails; the same with electronics. Eventually, the planet is cast into a new dark age. Technology is almost useless; the thousands who die initially because of accidents and failed medical equipment mount as famines begin. People will survive this, but civilization is crippled for generations, perhaps longer.
- Nature explodes, not with storms or quakes, but with the rapid growth of foliage. Perhaps plants cross-pollinated with frost-resistant kudzu or perhaps vines alien to this planet create the explosive growth, but cities are being overrun with green. They are eroding buildings and streets quickly, disrupting power lines and breaking water pipes with their prodigious strength. Perhaps worse, the vines are creating an oxygen rich environment and scientists fear that large explosions and flash wildfires will occur, perhaps even reaching toxic levels of oxygenation, causing erratic behavior and long-term health problems among air-breathers.
- A global pandemic spreads like wildfire, a contagious, airborne illness that kills most of its victims within days. Governments collapse as mass panic and rioting spreads. Hospitals are overrun until bodies are left lying in the streets. People flee to the most isolated areas, and kill any stranger they fear might be a carrier. Is the disease an escaped bio-weapon, a terrorist attack, or the prelude to an alien invasion?



# CHAPTER 4: MISADVENTURES IN HORROR

*"Is anyone there? It's coming from over here! Is anyone there? It's coming from over here!"*

*Guided by the tinny voice that echoed from somewhere distant, Thracian kept his shadow spear balanced in his thick hand; the aegis of Athena's face on his golden shield glowed and lit the wrecked corridor ahead. Wires hung from the sockets and missing tiles checkered the ceiling with darkness. He didn't need to look behind to hear Turbocharger's rapid breathing.*

*"What is that?" Turbocharger asked, his voice tightening.*

*"The death of us if you don't shut up!" Thracian growled.*

*The corridor widened, revealing an abandoned nurse's station overlooking a series of cells. Their iron doors hung from their hinges, the ground stained in swaths and brushstrokes of dark brown by viscera long dried. The voice was coming from behind the counter of the nurse's station.*

*"Is anyone there? It's coming from over here! Is anyone there? It's coming from over here!"*

*"That's Ophelia Five!" Turbocharger said, looking behind the nurse's station.*

*The robot's silver chassis was badly eroded, her legs torn away and missing. She jerked as she spoke, her mechanical guts grinding.*

*"Is anyone there? It's coming from over here! Is anyone there? It's coming from over here!"*

*"She disappeared with the Triumphants two years ago," Turbocharger whispered as Thracian poked at her with his spear. Ophelia Five jerked suddenly.*

*Her face creased and widened in shock as she looked up at them. "Oh no, they've evolved! Run!"*

*Not at them, Thracian realized too late. Past them. Ceiling tiles exploded over their heads. Thracian struggled as dozens of wire-like vines stitched into him and pulled Turbocharger and he up into the ceiling.*

*"Oh no, they've evolved! Run! Oh no, they've evolved! Run, Run for your lives!" Ophelia Five continued, long after the screams had stopped and there was nothing left to hear her warning... nothing human, at least.*

If **Chapter Three** was theory and mechanics on running horror, this chapter is more deliberately game- and adventure-related. It is the application of the various rules and suggestions made throughout the *Supernatural Handbook*, giving Gamemasters and players alike “crunchy material” to drop into their sessions with minimal preparation.

## BUILD-A-CRITTER

Few horror series are complete without a stable of monsters to harrow the characters. Gamemasters should consider creating entirely new rosters of critters to keep players and their characters on their toes, however, since a publicized monster is a monster bereft of its horror and surprise.

The following system is a way to quickly build monsters to throw at the heroes. They aren't designed to be the long-term architects or the evil masterminds. Those should be planned and custom-fit with the scenario and theme of the series in mind. These critters serve as physical threats and likely as minions of a greater evil. They are a horror version of mooks, but with teeth and claws and an array of other goodies.

## ABILITIES

Most monsters are known for having something extraordinary about them; they are nimble or cunning or strong. They have some physical quality that makes fighting them a nuisance, especially when there's more than one.

Here are some quick ability packages with defenses and other combat information included. Naturally, this all comes without advantages or powers to modify the

values. Additionally, almost all opponents are considered intelligent to some degree, though anything listed as “Critter” means that it is of animal Intellect (rank -3 or less).

## NIMBLE PACKAGES

All nimble packages are based on a PL10 build and a high Dexterity. See individual packages for point values.

**NIMBLE ONLY****PL10 · 75 POINTS****STR 1 STA 1 AGL 7 DEX 5 FGT 5 INT 0 AWE 2 PRE 0****Advantages:** Defensive Roll 5**Offense:** Initiative +7**Defense:** Dodge 14, Parry 12, Fortitude 9, Toughness 6/1\*, Will 8**Totals:** Abilities 42 + Powers 0 + Advantages 5 + Skills 0 + Defenses 28 = 75**PHYSICAL MIX W/NIMBLE****PL10 · 74 POINTS****STR 2 STA 2 AGL 6 DEX 4 FGT 4 INT 0 AWE 2 PRE 0****Advantages:** Defensive Roll 4**Offense:** Initiative +6**Defense:** Dodge 13, Parry 13, Fortitude 10, Toughness 6/2\*, Will 8**Totals:** Abilities 40 + Powers 0 + Advantages 4 + Skills 0 + Defenses 30 = 74**MENTAL MIX W/NIMBLE****PL10 · 74 POINTS****STR 1 STA 1 AGL 6 DEX 4 FGT 4 INT 2 AWE 4 PRE 0****Advantages:** Defensive Roll 4**Offense:** Initiative +6**Defense:** Dodge 13, Parry 11, Fortitude 7, Toughness 5/1\*, Will 10**Totals:** Abilities 44 + Powers 0 + Advantages 4 + Skills 0 + Defenses 26 = 74**NIMBLE CRITTER****PL10 · 61 POINTS****STR 2 STA 2 AGL 8 DEX 4 FGT 4 INT -4 AWE 2 PRE -1****Advantages:** Defensive Roll 3**Offense:** Initiative +8**Defense:** Dodge 15, Parry 11, Fortitude 10, Toughness 5/2\*, Will 4**Totals:** Abilities 34 + Powers 0 + Advantages 3 + Skills 0 + Defenses 24 = 61**STRONG PACKAGES**

All strong packages are based on a PL10 build and a high Strength and Stamina. See the packages for point values.

**HIGH STRENGTH****PL10 · 73 POINTS****STR 6 STA 4 AGL 3 DEX 1 FGT 6 INT 0 AWE 2 PRE 0****Powers:** Protection 6**Offense:** Initiative +3**Defense:** Dodge 10, Parry 10, Fortitude 10, Toughness 10, Will 8**Totals:** Abilities 44 + Powers 6 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 23 = 73**HIGH STAMINA****PL10 · 67 POINTS****STR 4 STA 6 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 6 INT 0 AWE 2 PRE 0****Powers:** Protection 6**Offense:** Initiative +1**Defense:** Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude 12, Toughness 12, Will 8**Totals:** Abilities 40 + Powers 6 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 21 = 67**CUNNING PACKAGES**

All cunning packages are based on a PL10 build and high mental attributes. See individual packages for point values.

**HIGH INTELLECT****PL10 · 54 POINTS****STR 0 STA 0 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 3 INT 5 AWE 2 PRE 0****Powers:** Protection 6**Offense:** Initiative +1**Defense:** Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 6, Will 12**Totals:** Abilities 24 + Powers 6 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 24 = 54**HIGH AWARENESS****PL10 · 54 POINTS****STR 0 STA 0 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 3 INT 2 AWE 5 PRE 0****Powers:** Protection 6**Offense:** Initiative +1**Defense:** Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 6, Will 12**Totals:** Abilities 24 + Powers 6 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 24 = 54**MENTAL MIXTURE****PL10 · 54 POINTS****STR 0 STA 0 AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 3 INT 4 AWE 4 PRE 1****Powers:** Protection 6**Offense:** Initiative +0**Defense:** Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 6, Will 12**Totals:** Abilities 24 + Powers 6 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 24 = 54**CUNNING CRITTER****PL10 · 40 POINTS****STR 0 STA 0 AGL 3 DEX 0 FGT 4 INT -4 AWE 5 PRE -1****Powers:** Protection 6**Offense:** Initiative +3**Defense:** Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 10, Toughness 6, Will 10**Totals:** Abilities 14 + Powers 6 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 20 = 40**ALLURING PACKAGES**

All alluring packages are based on a PL10 build and high Presence ranks. See individual packages for point values. This could mean a good-looking person, a charming critter, or an “oh-so-cute!” critter.

**PURE CHARM****PL10 · 53 POINTS****STR 0 STA 0 AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 2 INT 2 AWE 2 PRE 5****Powers:** Protection 5**Offense:** Initiative +0**Defense:** Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 8, Toughness 5, Will 10**Totals:** Abilities 22 + Powers 5 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 26 = 54

**CHARISMATIC CREATURE****PL10 • 55 POINTS****STR 0 STA 0 AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 2 INT 1 AWE 4 PRE 5****Powers:** Protection 5**Offense:** Initiative +0**Defense:** Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 8, Toughness 5, Will 10**Totals:** Abilities 24 + Powers 5 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 26 = 56**BEAUTIFUL AND DANGEROUS****PL10 • 52 POINTS****STR 0 STA 0 AGL 0 DEX 5 FGT 3 INT 0 AWE 0 PRE 5****Powers:** Protection 5**Offense:** Initiative +0**Defense:** Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude 8, Toughness 5, Will 10**Totals:** Abilities 16 + Powers 5 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 31 = 52**CAPTIVATING CRITTER****PL10 • 48 POINTS****STR 1 STA 3 AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 25 INT -4 AWE 2 PRE 4****Powers:** Protection 5**Offense:** Initiative +0**Defense:** Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude 8, Toughness 5, Will 10**Totals:** Abilities 16 + Powers 5 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 27 = 48

## SKILLS AND ADVANTAGES

Like abilities, these packages focus on skill and advantage combos monsters might possess. The list isn't highly elaborate and you won't find a budding mastermind or series villain here. What you will find are minion-type skills of a variety to deal with several situations, mostly oriented around combat. The values listed here are without abilities taken into account. Gamemasters will have to add them accordingly and adjust ranks as required. Each package costs 10 power points and is based off a power level 10 build.

**AMBUSHER****Skills:** Close Combat 4 or Ranged Combat 4, Perception 4, Stealth 4**Advantages:** Close Attack 2 or Ranged Attack 2, Improved Aim, Power Attack**BERSERKER****Skills:** Expertise: Survival 4, Intimidation 4**Advantages:** All-out Attack, Close Attack, Diehard, Fearless, Power Attack, Startle**COMBAT MACHINE****Skills:** Acrobatics 2, Deception 4, Close Combat 2 or Ranged Combat 2, Insight 4**Advantages:** Assessment, Close Attack 2 or Ranged Attack 2, Precise Attack (Close or Ranged), Concealment**HIT-AND-RUN****Skills:** Acrobatics 4, Perception 2, Stealth 2**Advantages:** Agile Feint, Close Attack or Ranged Attack, Defensive Roll, Evasion, Move-by Action, Power Attack**INFILTRATOR****Skills:** Athletics 2, Deception 2, Perception 4, Stealth 2**Advantages:** Assessment, Close Attack 2 or Ranged Attack 2, Hide in Plain Sight, Power Attack**INVESTIGATOR****Skills:** Deception 4, Insight 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 4, Perception 2**Advantages:** Assessment, Daze (Deception), Well-informed**SABOTEUR****Skills:** Perception 2, Sleight of Hand 2, Stealth 4, Technology 4**Advantages:** Accurate Attack, Hide in Plain Sight, Improvised Tools, Skill Mastery (Technology)**SCOUT****Skills:** Athletics 2, Perception 4, Stealth 4**Advantages:** Favored Environment (Choose One), Precise Attack 2 (Ranged, Cover and Concealment), Ranged Attack, Track**THIEF****Skills:** Perception 4, Sleight of Hand 2, Stealth 4**Advantages:** Benefit (Ambidexterity), Close Attack, Luck 2, Taunt

## HORRIFIC EFFECTS

A monster is nothing without its impact on the characters. Emotionally, physically, and psychologically, horror should have a frightening and adverse effect on normal people.

The following "powers" are seen in a variety of horror fiction and are presented here in straight-forward fashion. They are quick and easy options to drop into a build to either create quick foes or to change around a creature's power to better surprise players. Everyone knows, for example, that zombies bite, but what happens when certain zombies can lull a target into a stupor, making them easier to catch? What happens are characters acting more worried because players no longer know what to expect.

When done choosing attacks and defenses for the creature, it is up to the Gamemaster to decide whether or not to assign movement abilities.

## ATTACKS

**Acidic Secretions:** Damage (acid), Secondary Effect • 2 points per rank**Acidic Spit:** Ranged Damage (acid), Secondary Effect • 3 points per rank

<b>Acidic Spray:</b> Cone Area Damage (acid), Secondary Effect • 3 points per rank
<b>Appendage Grab:</b> Extra Limbs, Improved Grab • 1 point + 1 point per rank
<b>Batter:</b> Strength-based Damage • 1 point per rank
<b>Claw:</b> Strength-based Damage • 1 point per rank
<b>Cold Aura:</b> Environment (Extreme Cold) • 2 point per rank
<b>Diseased Bite:</b> Weaken (any single ability) Resisted by Fortitude, Progressive, Limited (Progressive affects victim once per hour) • 2 points per rank
<b>Entangle:</b> Ranged Cumulative Affliction (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Damage/Sleight of Hand; Hindered and Vulnerable, Immobile and Defenseless), Extra Condition, Limited Degree • 3 points per rank
<b>Impregnate:</b> Progressive Weaken Stamina (Resisted by Fortitude) • 3 points per rank
<b>Lull:</b> Perception Ranged Affliction (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated) • 3 points per rank
<b>Mire:</b> Cumulative Affliction (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Damage/Sleight of Hand; Hindered and Vulnerable, Immobile and Defenseless), Extra Condition, Limited Degree, Limited: requires medium (snow, mud, plants) • 1 point per rank
<b>Paralyzing Bite:</b> Cumulative Affliction (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Hindered, Immobilized, Paralyzed) • 2 points per rank
<b>Phantom Army of Limbs:</b> Extra Limbs, Projection • 2 point per rank
<b>Powerful Bite:</b> Strength-based Damage, Penetrating • 1 point per rank up to Strength rank, 2 points per additional rank
<b>Scorpion Stinger:</b> Damage, Reach 2; Linked to Weaken (any single ability) (Resisted by Fortitude), Reach 2 • 4 points plus 2 points per rank
<b>Screech:</b> Ranged Burst Area Cumulative Affliction (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Hearing Impaired, Hearing Disabled, Hearing Unaware), Limited to One Sense • 3 points per rank
<b>Slice:</b> Strength-based Damage, Accurate • 1 point plus 1 point per rank
<b>Suffocating Spit:</b> Ranged Progressive Affliction (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated) • 4 points per rank
<b>Tongue Lash:</b> Strength-based Damage, Reach • 1 point per rank plus 1 point per rank of Reach
<b>Tongue Snare:</b> Move Object, Concentration Duration, Limited Direction (towards the user) • 1 point per two ranks

## DEFENSE

Choose one or more defenses to give your creature protection.

<b>Chameleon:</b> Concealment 4 (visual), Blending • 4 points
<b>Damage Berserker:</b> Enhanced Strength, Reaction to Physical or Energy damage, Fades; Impervious Protection, Limited to Physical or Energy (same as above) • 3 points per rank
<b>Damage Berserker Plus:</b> Enhanced Strength, Reaction damage, Fades; Impervious Protection • 4 points per rank
<b>Energy Deflection:</b> Immunity 20 (energy effects), Reflect • 40 points

<b>Energy Form:</b> Insubstantial 3 • 15 points
<b>Fast Healer:</b> Regeneration, Persistent • 1 point plus 1 point per rank
<b>Gaseous Form:</b> Insubstantial 2 • 10 points
<b>Hard to Hurt:</b> Enhanced Fortitude • 1 point per rank
<b>Immune:</b> Immunity 5 (one damage type) • 5 points
<b>Improved Reflexive Immunity:</b> Variable (for immunity to harmful effects), Reaction • 10 points per rank
<b>Incorporeal:</b> Insubstantial 4 • 20 points
<b>Inferior Invisibility:</b> Concealment 2 (normal sight) • 4 points
<b>Ink Cloud:</b> Cloud Area Concealment Attack 2 (normal sight) • 6 points
<b>Invisibility:</b> Concealment 4 (visual) • 8 points
<b>Lethal Immunity:</b> Immunity 20 (slashing or piercing effects) • 20 points
<b>Matter Deflection:</b> Immunity 20 (physical ranged damage), Reflect • 40 points
<b>Protection Field:</b> Impervious Protection, Sustained • 2 points per rank
<b>Puff Up:</b> Enhanced Toughness • 1 point per rank
<b>Rawhide Tough:</b> Impervious Protection • 2 points per rank
<b>Reflexive Immunity:</b> Variable 1 (for immunity to any harmful effect), Reaction • 10 points
<b>Regenerative Absorption:</b> Enhanced Regeneration, Reaction to Physical or Energy damage, Fades; Impervious Protection, Limited to Physical or Energy (same as above) • 3 points per rank
<b>Regenerative Absorption Plus:</b> Enhanced Regeneration, Reaction to damage, Fades; Impervious Protection • 4 points per rank
<b>Scaly Tough:</b> Impervious Protection • 2 points per rank
<b>Shimmer:</b> Concealment 4 (visual), Partial • 4 points
<b>Super-Dense:</b> Growth, Does not modify Size • 3 points per rank
<b>Superior Deflection:</b> Deflect, Reflect • 2 points per rank
<b>Superior Invisibility:</b> Concealment 6 (visual, auditory) • 12 points
<b>Undead:</b> Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects) • 30 points
<b>Unseen &amp; Unheard:</b> Concealment 3 (normal sight and normal hearing) • 6 points

## HAUNTED HOUSES

Most locations are haunted because ghosts or other entities have taken up residence. Furniture shifting, walls undulating, items being tossed about are all normally effects of the ghosts themselves. Occasionally, however, a house is so soaked in misery and blood, so steeped in a vile history, that the ghosts within might become batteries for the structure itself or faint echoes that warn of danger. They might even be trapped victims, forced to relive their deaths over and over again. The structure gains crude sentience and a need to hurt. Like Amityville or the Winchester House. Everything inside is a limb or organ of the building itself, and destroying it may be enough to destroy the entity of the haunted house itself.

Haunted houses are generally constructs (*Hero's Handbook*, page 179) to define their traits. Also note, despite the name, a "haunted house" may be any location or structure with a supernatural twist.

## ABILITIES

Like other constructs a haunted structure possesses no Strength, Stamina, or Dexterity because it cannot move from its location. In lieu of Stamina, it has a Toughness rank. It also has Intellect, Awareness, and Presence as well as Immunity to Fortitude Effects. The three ability ranks at 0 counterbalance the 30-point Immunity. If the Game-master wants to make the structure ambulatory, buy up the non-existent ability ranks from -5.

## TOUGHNESS

A location starts off at Toughness 6, +1 per power point spent. The house's Toughness can be seen as an extension of its will and intent, meaning it is more than a just collection of materials. Haunted houses may also have other defensive effects, particularly Deflect and Regeneration.

## SKILLS

The house can possess the skills of its former owners or the ghosts it's absorbed. It cannot take skills for abilities it lacks, however (like Strength- or Dexterity-based skills).

## ADVANTAGES

The haunted house can possess certain advantages, so long they fit the theme and descriptors and the Game-master approves. It wouldn't make sense for a haunted location to possess Quick Draw or some skill-based advantages, for example.

## POWERS

A haunted house may have a number of powers. While Gamemasters might be tempted to use powers players won't expect, remember that the location isn't a robot. The classics with some twists might be in order. These include powers like:

- **Affliction:** The house can debilitate people who step inside.
- **Communication:** Sounds carry, thoughts can be heard to better instill paranoia, voices register over radio and television static, people hear strange moans, etc.
- **Concealment:** Things are known to appear and disappear in a haunted location, anything from people and items, to entire rooms and corridors. This is one way how.
- **Create:** Objects in a haunted location may appear to be real, but it could be a trick of the house.
- **Damage:** Slamming doors, falling chandeliers, upended bookcases... anything within the house

## OPTIONAL ADVANTAGE: HAUNTED LOCATION

You own a haunted location. It is an independent entity with power point total of (advantage rank x 15) like the Minion Advantage (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 87), but not subject to the same limitations as minions as outlined in the *Hero's Handbook* (page 193). You can dictate that one or more ranks are dedicated to any entities living in the location, splitting the power point total between one or more ghosts that cannot leave the grounds. Otherwise, for other location denizens, you can use the feature Personnel from (*Hero's Handbook*, page 177)

Why do you own a haunted location? Perhaps it is where you send criminals to be frightened and punished. Maybe you live in the location and the haunting is nothing more than a mystical version of a security system. Another option is that it's really not safe for anyone else to be there, and you are its owner, warden, and prisoner.

that has a physical property that can hurt characters can be explained in this manner.

- **Environment:** One way to create environmental effects, though if the changes have no real effect, then perhaps the Feature power (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 109) would work better.
- **Extra Limbs:** Who's to say that what a house attacks you with inside its walls are not, in fact, an extra limb of sorts.
- **Healing:** A way for damaged houses to repair damage, or look suddenly pristine after years of being abandoned.
- **Illusion:** People always "see things" in haunted houses that aren't there.
- **Insubstantial:** Elements of the house interior can assume various states, like entire rooms filling with water or doors becoming incorporeal.
- **Mind Reading:** For haunted locations that really enjoy getting into someone's head.
- **Move Object:** A favorite of angry homes and poltergeists everywhere, with the Damaging Extra.
- **Nullify:** The house might have a variety of tricks to counter the heroes or things that might break the adventure, like nullifying incorporeal travel and teleportation, for example.
- **Protection:** For tougher than normal buildings.
- **Remote Sensing:** The house knows what's happening inside of itself, or perhaps even through anything removed from its interior and taken outside.
- **Senses:** Haunted locations can sense most any intruder.
- **Summon:** The house can summon and control anything from insects to rats to Fluffy, the family pooch.
- **Teleport:** A way to displace people inside a building.
- **Transform:** Turning one's rice into maggots or turning the air into smoke are just some tricks of which a haunted location might be capable. If the

Gamemaster wants the house to change people's appearances, however, then Morph (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 118) is far better for that.

- **Weaken:** The house can weaken and rob those within of their traits. It's also why batteries and devices might die in a haunted location.

## SIZE

A haunted location starts at Small size using the Structure Size categories (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 174), and increases in size category for every 2 points spent as per Construct rules (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 179). Haunted houses may also use the Dual Size feature, making the location larger on the inside than outside.

## FEATURE

Features listed in *Hero's Handbook* (see pages 174–178) can have supernatural effects instead of technological ones.

# LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Haunted houses and abandoned asylums aren't the only places deserving of notice when it comes to real estate. Many stories featuring a place are usually related to hauntings, possessions, or UFOs but the Gamemaster would do well to remember the Bermuda Triangle or the self-propelled rocks of Death Valley, CA... places where the terrain itself is the central character. Then expanding the list to "fictitious" locations, we have the Mountains of Madness and the lost city of R'lyeh.

Gamemasters can treat a town, or even an entire county as a haunted terrain, though at this point it may be best to rely on narrative tricks rather than rules, and use the potential of a deus-ex-machina solution to solve a situation. That's even if the terrain has a solution. The point of haunted compass points is that the evil or supernatural is so ancient and engrained in these spots that nothing will ever purify them. The location can be made quiet, but never silent. Some things to remember in haunted locations are:

- **Ancient:** The terrain is ancient, with a hint of some mysterious history that isn't well documented and a subsequent legacy of exploration by fringe explorers.

It usually means that anyone trying to unravel the knot of the place will often find evidence of "that which came before." This could be the ruins of unnamed civilizations or the remnants of forgotten expeditions.

- **Nothing Personal:** Unlike haunted houses, there isn't a resident personality in a haunted geographic location. Or if there is one, it is completely alien to human understanding. Ghosts and spooks don't have enough leverage to haunt these terrains or to influence them so thoroughly and completely. In fact, a location like this is usually more of a dimensional hotspot and more likely to be visited by the scientific sort than by the spiritual.
- **One Trick Pony:** The location may have monsters and odd events, but unlike haunted houses where any number of effects can happen, a haunted geographic location usually has a couple of small tricks and one big super-charged trick for which it is notorious. It might cause equipment to misbehave and on the occasion, cause people and vehicles to vanish à la the Bermuda Triangle. It may be somewhere where freak storms erupt and vanish in seconds. It must be something that generates a greater mystery and more questions.
- **Trouble A' Brewin':** Haunted terrains may well have cycles of activity and dormancy. Over the span of months, years, generations, civilizations, they might slowly build up a charge, becoming more and more volatile, until finally releasing that energy in a cataclysmic moment much like the slippage on a fault line unleashing an earthquake or a volcano building up to an eruption. Now, heroes may be unable to cleanse an area; perhaps, though, their role is to keep the damage localized, to release the energy in smaller events instead of one giant rupture, or to help in the aftermath of one.

Finally, the most important thing to remember about a haunted geographic location is that while it isn't a hard-and-fast rule, these places are to science what haunted houses are to spiritualists. In other words, haunted geographic locations are about extra-dimensional horrors and science beyond our pale more than anything magical. Why? Because these terrains are often older than humanity itself, and often the legacy of the civilizations that predate ours by eons.

# MONSTER ARCHETYPES

Monsters. Where would horror be without them? Just as villains often drive the plots of superhero adventures, monsters are the driving force behind horror adventures, the opportunity to create the circumstances to scare the protagonists (and, hopefully, the players). This section offers a range of monster archetypes from different styles of horror and different power levels, although the monster's power is not as important as its ability to inspire fear. Although these archetypes offer examples and starting points, use the material earlier in this chapter to fold, spindle, and mutilate them into interesting new shapes to surprise players who think reading this book will make them safe.

## DARK EMISSARY

The Dark Emissary was human once, but she went somewhere she wasn't supposed to go and saw the kinds of things that made angels go mad and demons weep in terror. It was a place beyond the reckoning of humanity; a pit filled with such vileness and darkness that Hell paled in comparison. What came back wasn't human, but she wore a human's skin. Her eyes were gone, clawed out in horror, but she doesn't need them anymore to see. She walks this world now, as a living cancer and emissary of that other

place. She aims to spread her darkness, infecting heroes with nightmares and making them or their families do obscene things to their loved ones. She never fights directly, but at a distance. It always begins with the Dark Emissary's arrival; when she is done, however, the heroes of the world are always too rattled or insane to stop her master from stepping across. That's how it ends.

## INHUMAN JUGGERNAUT

Nobody knows who built this mystic creature or how it functions. They merely know that whoever commands it controls a walking swath of destruction. The Inhuman Juggernaut has a course of action and if the shortest distant between two points is a straight line, then this monster does exactly that, regardless of what lies in its path. It is single-minded in this respect; buildings, schools, vehicles, military, heroes are no different in its regard. It destroys all with equal dispassion. More troubling is that this creature is an assassin without finesse or pretense. When it is sent to kill someone, it does not stop until destroyed or it kills the target and it doesn't matter who gets hurt in the process.

## FLESH SCULPTOR

The Flesh Sculptor was once a brilliant doctor before the accident turned him into who he is now. His gift to mold and manipulate his flesh and that of others has unhinged him. Where he finds beauty, he deforms. Where he finds opposition, he uses his craft to suffocate and blind with his skin warping abilities. He relishes his powers, revels in the unmaking and remolding of people. He believes it is his destiny to unmake God's image and he does so without discrimination or mercy. He's also adept at infiltrating someone's life as a copy, and then undoing all the good by hurting their friends and family. In short, he revels in the deconstruction of others.

## INFECTED

They look like the walking dead, the Infected do, but they're not exactly zombies. They don't have an overwhelming hunger for brains or human flesh, except to kill anyone who ventures near their sewer hives or to capture people for impregnation by their queen. The Infected can accomplish this through brute strength or by turning into a living swarm of insects. As the former, they are constantly surrounded by flies and flying insects that roost in their flesh. As the latter, they can suffocate a target in their buzzing mass or constrict their opponents. Either way, their victims go dead to the feeding chambers or alive to the birthing chambers. Both are horrid fates.

## MR. CLOWN!

Mr. Clown! isn't a performer who went evil. He's something else entirely and nobody is sure what. He acts like a childhood terror come to life; a jester with a frightening sense of humor. He loves children. He could just eat them all up. But before that happens, he starts with the games, first turning into the toys children love to play with and

animating things for their delight. Slowly, though, slowly he turns against them. He becomes the thing in the closet, the eyes under the bed. He hears their wishes and perverts them with sadistic glee. "I hate my parents" is enough to get them slaughtered with a big knife; "I wish I had that toy" turns the object of desire into an animated piece of terror. He becomes their nightmare, alienating children from parents, teachers, and friends through his illusions. Not to worry, though. He may love terrorizing children, but he has no compunctions killing heroes as well just as soon as he figures out what makes them tick-tock-tick.

## SUPERNATURAL SLASHER

Some people are born to murder the world. They are remorseless—unstoppable — mindless in their pursuit. They live to kill and Death likes their work so much that it doesn't keep them down for long. Maybe Death is just too afraid to hold on to them. Somewhere along the way, somehow in the forging of its own legend, the Supernatural Slasher gained inhuman abilities. Maybe it had them all along. Nobody really knows. The Slasher is a puritanical thing, driven by a need to kill sin, and it sees plenty of sin in the world. It's not naïve enough to consider itself a hero. It is more like agent of something greater born without pity. It shows none, either, slaughtering teens and adults alike. None are safe from its chainsaw. It'll just keep coming back.

## TROPHY HUNTER

This alien creature is a visitor to Earth, but it comes with a game in mind—to hunt heroes for the sport of it. The Trophy Hunter has no qualms killing, although it doesn't delight in murder. For it, only the sport matters and regardless what it does to the body, it will celebrate and honor a good hunt. It will lair in abandoned or underground places like sewer systems, warehousing districts, industrial parks, etc, and surface only to find prey. It has a plan and technology superior to contemporary humans, making it dangerous without its small array of natural abilities and superior training. Thankfully, despite its cold-blooded nature, it has a code of conduct that will stop it from going after children, pregnant women and defenseless targets, so long as they don't attack it first.

## WTF!

From the presumably cold depths of outer space, imprisoned for thousands of years in the glaciers of Earth's Arctic (hence making it the heavy-handed poster boy for warnings about global warming) comes...WTF! At least, that's the name reporters and victims alike screamed upon first encountering the oozing puddle of flesh. The creature is a medley of its former victims, but not in a good way. Not in the way medley is normally used for wholesome things like salads and snacks. No, WTF is unwholesome and devours anything warm, fleshy, and screaming (that would be you, the viewing public). It is single minded and always hungry. It attacks teenagers and small towns and kills people in really interesting ways. Not deliberately, but with a sense of irony, perhaps. Run in terror of WTF! It has its...urm...eyes on you!

# DARK EMISSARY

PL15

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
3	4	2	5
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
4	4	6	6

## POWERS

**Adaptation:** Variable 2 (10 points, for functioning in hostile environments), Continuous, Reaction • 22 points

**Blindsight:** Senses 5 (Vision Counts Illusion; Accurate and Acute Mental) • 5 points

**Dream Control:** Illusion 15 (all senses), Selective, Limited to Sleeping Targets, Resistible by Will; Linked to Perception Ranged Damage 15, Insidious • 106 points

- **Mental Dissection:** Mind Reading 15 and Possession: Perception Ranged Cumulative Affliction 15 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Dazed, Compelled, Controlled), Merge with Subject, Subtle • 1 point

**Inhuman:** Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects) • 30 points

## ADVANTAGES

Fascinate (Intimidation), Fearless

## SKILLS

Expertise: Magic 6 (+12), Insight 6 (+11), Intimidation 8 (+14), Investigation 4 (+10), Perception 6 (+11)

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +4

Dream Control Perception Ranged, Illusion 15 (Will DC 25 plus Damage 15)

Possession Perception Ranged, Affliction (Will DC 25)

## DEFENSE

DODGE	6	FORTITUDE	Immune
PARRY	6	TOUGHNESS	4
WILL	15		

## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	68	SKILLS	15
POWERS	164	DEFENSES	16
ADVANTAGES	2	TOTAL	265

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

**I will not sully my hands:** The Dark Emissary prefers to remain aloof and at a distance whenever possible.

**Master, please!** The Emissary serves a greater power and must eventually answer to it.



"I had eyes once, but I see much better now..."

# INHUMAN JUGGERNAUT

PL14

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
17	6	10	-1
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
14	6	-1	-1

**POWERS****Huge:** Growth 4, Innate, Permanent • 9 points**Super-Strength:** Alternate Effects of Strength Damage (17 points)

- **Groundstrike:** Burst Area Affliction 14 (Resisted by Dodge; Dazed, Prone), Limited Degree • 1 point
- **Shockwave:** Cone Area Damage 8 • 1 point
- **Thunderclap:** Burst Area Affliction 14 (Resisted by Fortitude; Hearing Impaired, Hearing Disabled, Hearing Unaware), Limited to One Sense • 1 point

**Unstoppable:** Immunity 60 (cold damage, fire damage, bludgeoning effects, Fortitude effects); Protection 4, Impervious 18 • 82 points**ADVANTAGES**

All-out Attack, Fearless

**SKILLS**

Athletics 6 (+23), Intimidation 16 (+17)

**OFFENSE****INITIATIVE +6**

Groundstrike Burst Area, Close, Affliction 14 (Dodge DC 24)

Shockwave Cone Area, Close, Damage 8

Thunderclap Burst Area, Close, Affliction 14 (Fort DC 24)

Unarmed +10 Close, Damage 17

**DEFENSE**

DODGE 6 FORTITUDE Immune

PARRY 9 TOUGHNESS 18

WILL 10

**POWER POINTS**

ABILITIES 84 SKILLS 11

POWERS 94 DEFENSES 14

ADVANTAGES 2 TOTAL 205

**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS****Made to Serve:** The Inhuman Juggernaut exists to destroy its target, whatever that might be.**No Finesse:** The Inhuman Juggernaut simply smashes through any obstacles in its path.

"DECIMATE ALL"



# FLESH SCULPTOR

PL12

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
2	2	8	3
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
2	2	5	2

**POWERS****Flesh Sculpting:** Array (36 points)

- **Deform:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 12 (Resisted by Fortitude; Impaired, Disabled, Transformed) • 36 points
- **Drain:** Weaken Abilities 12 (Resisted by Fortitude), Broad, Simultaneous • 1 point
- **Skin-Warping:** Ranged Affliction 12 (Resisted by Fortitude; Vulnerable, Senses Disabled, Incapacitated), Concentration Duration • 1 point

**Flesh Shaping:** Protection 6 • 6 points

**Mimic:** Morph 3 (humanoids); Variable 4 (20 points, for duplicating a subject's traits), Move Action, Limited: must touch subject • 43 points

**ADVANTAGES**

Eidetic Memory

**SKILLS**

Deception 8 (+10), Insight 4 (+7), Intimidation 6 (+8), Investigation 4 (+9), Perception 4 (+7), Persuasion 4 (+6), Ranged Combat: Flesh Sculpting 10 (+12), Sleight of Hand 4 (+6), Treatment 12 (+17)

**OFFENSE****INITIATIVE +2**

Deform +12	Ranged, Affliction 12 (Fort DC 22)
Drain +8	Close, Weaken 12 (Fort DC 22)
Skin-Warping +12	Ranged, Affliction 12 (Fort DC 22)

**DEFENSE**

DODGE	10	FORTITUDE	6
PARRY	10	TOUGHNESS	8
WILL	12		

**POWER POINTS**

ABILITIES	52	SKILLS	28
POWERS	87	DEFENSES	23
ADVANTAGES	1	TOTAL	191

**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS**

**Eye of the Beholder:** The Flesh Sculptor hates the conventionally popular and beautiful and wishes to transform the world to fit his particular vision.

**Obsession:** The Flesh Sculptor is utterly obsessed with his "art".



"SUCH A PRETTY FACE...  
LET ME IMPROVE IT."

# INFECTED

**PL12**

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
3	4	8	2
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
5	4	2	2

## POWERS

**Swarm Form:** Flight 4 (30 MPH); Insubstantial 2; Movement 2 (Slithering, Wall-Crawling); Senses 2 (Danger Sense, Radius Vision); Activation (move action, -1 point) • 23 points

**Thronging:** Array (20 points)

- **Constrict:** Damage 10, Concentration Duration • 20 points
- **Snare:** Cumulative Affliction 10 (Resisted by Dodge; Hindered and Vulnerable, Immobile and Defenseless), Extra Condition, Limited Degree • 1 point
- **Suffocate:** Affliction 10 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated), Concentration Duration • 1 point

**Unliving:** Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects) • 30 points

## ADVANTAGES

Animal Empathy, Daze (Intimidation), Defensive Roll 4, Instant Up, Teamwork

## SKILLS

Close Combat: Thronging 6 (+14), Intimidation 8 (+10), Perception 12 (+14)

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +4

Thronging +14	Close, Damage 10 or Affliction 10 (Fort DC 20)
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## DEFENSE

DODGE	14	FORTITUDE	Immune
PARRY	13	TOUGHNESS	9/5*
WILL	10	*Without Defensive Roll	

## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	60	SKILLS	13
POWERS	75	DEFENSES	23
ADVANTAGES	8	TOTAL	179

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

**Hive Mind:** Once human, the Infected are now part of a different sort of mind. They lack human compassion or personality.

**Weakness:** The Infected often have a particular weakness because of their condition, ranging from common herbs or insecticides to holy symbols or rituals.

**"ZZZZ...The Queen Will Devour You...ZZZZ..."**



# MR. CLOWN!

PL12

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
1	4	6	0
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
3	4	4	3

## POWERS

**Animate Toys:** Ranged Summon 6, Active, General Type (toys), Horde, Multiple Minions 3 (8 toys) • 72 points

- **Waking Nightmare:** Illusion 12 (visual, auditory), Selective, Resisted by Will; Linked to Perception Ranged Damage 6 • 1 points

**Shapeshift:** Morph 4 (any form); Variable 4 (20 points, for traits of assumed forms), Move Action • 52 points

## ADVANTAGES

Daze (Intimidation), Defensive Roll 5, Fascinate (Intimidation)

## SKILLS

Deception 9 (+12), Insight 4 (+4), Intimidation 9 (+12), Perception 6 (+6), Sleight of Hand 4 (+8)

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +4

Unarmed +6 Close, Damage 1

Waking Nightmare Perception Ranged, Illusion 12 (Will DC 22) plus Damage 12

## DEFENSE

DODGE	13	FORTITUDE	11
PARRY	11	TOUGHNESS	8/3*
WILL	11	*Without Defensive Roll	

## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	50	SKILLS	16
POWERS	125	DEFENSES	33
ADVANTAGES	7	TOTAL	231

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

**Make 'Em Laugh:** Perverting everything into a twisted joke is how Mr. Clown operates.

**Three-Ring Circus:** Mr. Clown is completely dedicated to his circus theme and does everything in that idiom.

“Hey, wanna to  
see something...  
scary?”



# SUPERNATURAL SLASHER

PL10

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
5	1	5	0
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
5	1	2	0

**POWERS**

**Relentless:** Immortality 2 (1 week); Immunity 45 (Fortitude effects, interaction skills, mental effects), Limited to Half Effect; Protection 4, Impervious 9; Regeneration 5, Persistent • 50 points

**EQUIPMENT**

**Chainsaw:** Damage 6 • 6 points

**Knife:** Strength-based Damage 1, Improved Critical • 2 points

**ADVANTAGES**

Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Chokehold, Close Attack 4, Diehard, Equipment 2, Fascinate (Intimidation), Fearless, Great Endurance, Improved Hold, Power Attack, Takedown

**SKILLS**

Athletics 8 (+13), Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+15), Intimidation 15 (+15), Perception 10 (+10), Sleight of Hand 5 (+6), Stealth 8 (+9)

**OFFENSE****INITIATIVE +1**

Chainsaw +9                   Close, Damage 6

Knife +9                   Close, Damage 6 (Crit. 19-20)

Unarmed +15               Close, Damage 5

**DEFENSE**

DODGE	10	FORTITUDE	12
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PARRY	11	TOUGHNESS	9
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WILL	6		
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**POWER POINTS**

ABILITIES	38	SKILLS	26
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POWERS	50	DEFENSES	28
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ADVANTAGES	16	TOTAL	158
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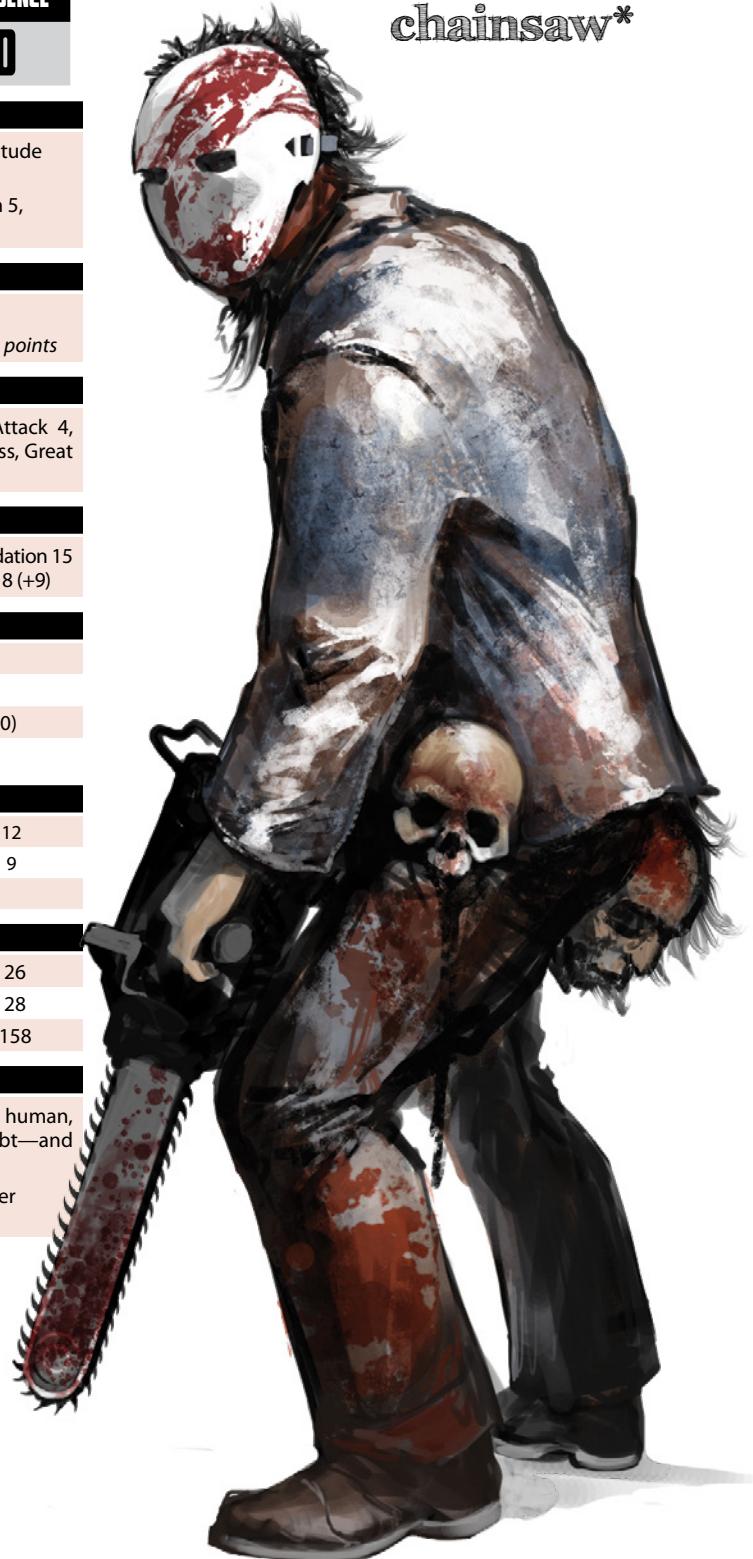
**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS**

**Former Life:** Reminders of the Supernatural Slasher's human, mortal life may cause momentary hesitation or doubt—and then berserker rage.

**Relentless:** Once the Slasher fixates on a target, it never stops, and never gives up.

“ “ “ ”

\*sound of a  
chainsaw\*



# TROPHY HUNTER

PL10

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
4	4	8	1
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
4	4	3	0

## POWERS

**Active Camouflage:** Concealment (Normal Sight), Blending • 2 points

**Armored Hide:** Protection 5 • 5 points

**Claws:** Strength-based Damage 3 • 3 points

**Thermal Imaging:** Senses 2 (Tracking Infravision) • 2 points

## EQUIPMENT

**Arsenal:** Array (16 points)

- **Blaster Rifle:** Ranged Damage 8 • 16 points

- **Javelin:** Strength-based Ranged Damage 2 • 1 point

- **Wicked Knife:** Strength-based Damage 1, Improved Critical 2 • 1 point

## VEHICLE: SPACE SHUTTLE • 32 POINTS

**SIZE:** Colossal **STR 16 SPEED 12 DEF 2 TOU 13**

**Features:** Flight 12, Movement 2 (Space Travel 2)

## ADVANTAGES

Accurate Attack, Assessment, Close Attack 5, Diehard, Equipment 10, Fearless, Improved Grab, Instant Up, Power Attack, Precise Attack (Close, Concealment), Ranged Attack 8

## SKILLS

Acrobatics 4 (+8), Athletics 6 (+10), Insight 4 (+5), Intimidation 8 (+8), Perception 9 (+10), Sleight of Hand 4 (+8), Stealth 6 (+10), Technology 8 (+11), Treatment 3 (+6), Vehicles 6 (+10)

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +4

Blaster Rifle +12	Ranged, Damage 8
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Claws +13	Close, Damage 7
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## DEFENSE

DODGE	11	FORTITUDE	11
PARRY	9	TOUGHNESS	9
WILL	8		

## POWER POINTS

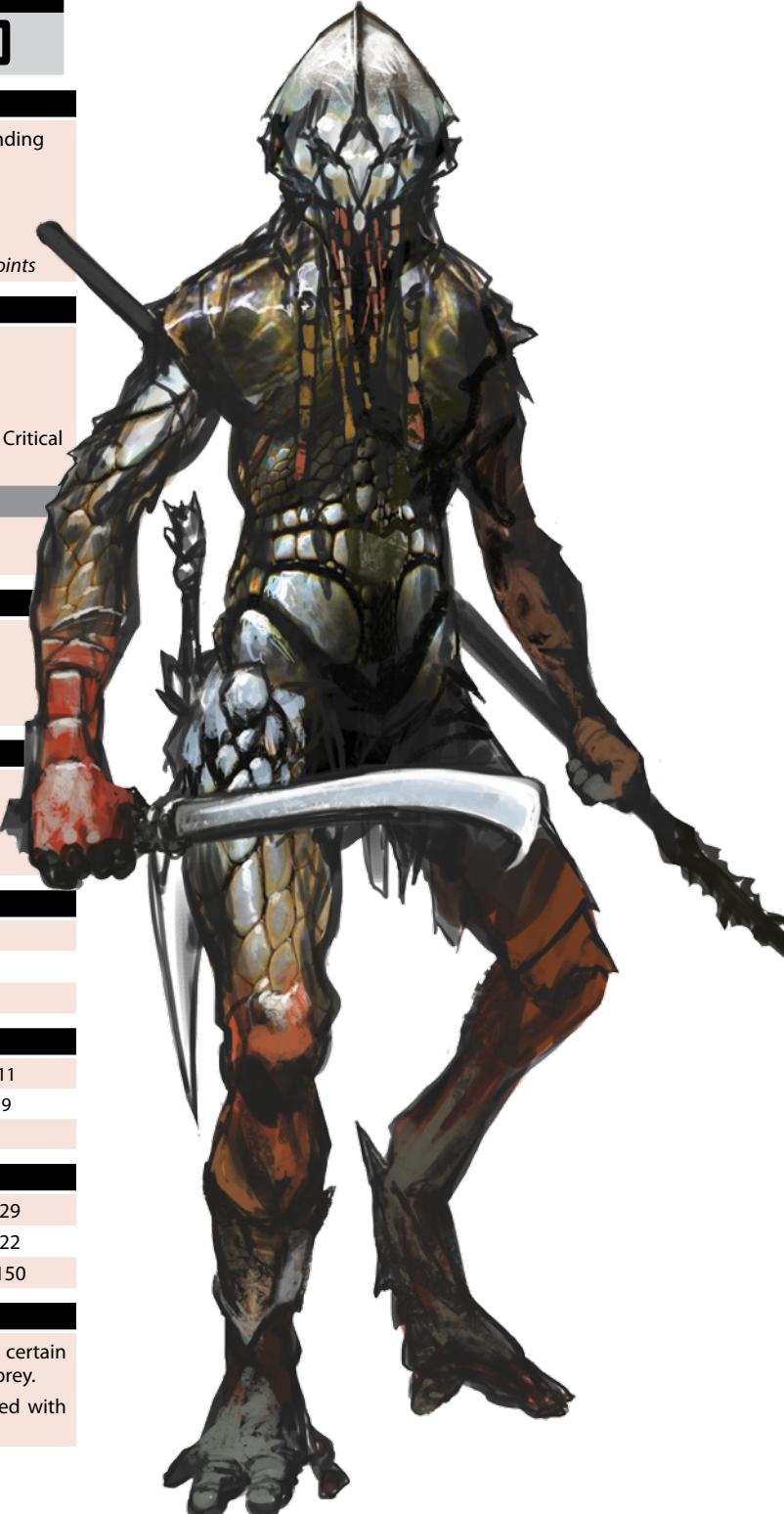
ABILITIES	56	SKILLS	29
POWERS	12	DEFENSES	22
ADVANTAGES	31	TOTAL	150

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

**Code of the Hunter:** The Trophy Hunter follows certain restrictions, focusing all of its attentions on its chosen prey.

**The Thrill of the Hunt:** The Trophy Hunter is obsessed with hunting its chosen targets.

“ମୁହଁରେ ମୁହଁରେ ତମି  
ତମେଣେ କାହାରେ ନାହିଁ  
ଆଜିରେ!”



# WTF!

PL14

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
5	4	5	2
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
0	4	-3	-2

## POWERS

### Engulf

- **Drain:** Weaken Stamina 13, Contagious, Grab-based; Healing 13, Move Action, Limited to ranks of Stamina lost, Personal • 39 points
- **Suffocate:** Progressive Affliction 13 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated) • 1 point

### Expansion

Growth 15, Continuous, Dynamic • 45 points

- **Separation:** Summon Body Parts 4, Continuous, General Type (various combinations of its victims), Horde, Multiple Minions 3 (8 parts), Dynamic • 1 point

### Liquid Form

Elongation 2 (30 ft.); Immunity 32 (Fortitude effects, suffocation); Insubstantial 1, Permanent; Senses 1 (Radius Sight) • 40 points

## ADVANTAGES

Close Attack 2, Diehard, Improved Grab

## SKILLS

Athletics 4 (+9), Close Combat: Engulf 8 (+15), Intimidation 8 (+6/13)\*, Perception 4 (+6), Stealth 4 (+8) \*Includes Growth

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +4

Drain +15	Close, Weaken 13
Suffocate +15	Close, Affliction 13
Unarmed +7	Close, Damage 5/20*

## DEFENSE

DODGE	12/5**	FORTITUDE	Immune
PARRY	12/5**	TOUGHNESS	0/15**
WILL	12	**At 15 ranks of Growth.	

## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	30	SKILLS	14
POWERS	128	DEFENSES	25
ADVANTAGES	4	TOTAL	201

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

**Power Loss:** WTF! must consume people and incorporate them into its body in order to use Expansion or Separation.



# CLIPPINGS

The discussions throughout the *Supernatural Handbook* on players becoming more involved in the game weren't just for show. With the GM's okay, the game bits here are for players to give to the Gamemaster as in-game artifacts that their characters find or uncover. The Gamemaster can then run horror arcs according to the team's investigation. The artifacts, however, reveal nothing of the truth, and it is up to whoever runs the session to determine what is the actual cause of things.

The other option is for Gamemasters to hand out these articles, to create a richer atmosphere within the story arc. Either way, they should serve as inspiration for adventures.

## FAMILY OF FOUR FOUND DROWNED IN THEIR HOME

BY AARON LANDERS

Police are baffled by the mysterious drowning deaths of the Ewing Family, who were found in their home early Sunday morning. First responders called to the home said that "their entire house looked soaked. Everything inside was wet and there was an inch of black water on the floor."

Charles Ewing (38) along with his wife Patricia (36) and two daughters Emily (15) and Dakota (9) were discovered by neighbor Gladys Shelling who reported seeing oily water leaking from the window frames and from under the door. A lifelong friend of the Ewings, Mrs. Shelling said "I used the spare that Charles and Pattie left me for the children and entered the home. There was black water everywhere. It was horrible."

The Ewings were all found in their beds, each the victim of a drowning. Police are baffled by the cause, though a source in the Police Department confided that the victims were likely drugged and then drowned before the house was sprayed with oily water from a hose. "The unsbs probably did it to destroy any evidence that could ID them."

Officials are still investigating the matter and have yet to identify the black water that reportedly evaporated quickly. Services for the Ewings will be held at the Primrose Funeral Home on SEE PAGE A8

## Mysterious Noises in Suburbia

BY CAROLYN LANGOIS

The sun has just set over the homes on Denning Road and the street is empty. An occasional car zips by, but like the towns of the Old West during times of trouble, the windows are closed and the blinds are drawn. Nobody goes out or stays out very long. Why? Well, that's what this reporter found out and the answer frightened even a skeptic like me.

"It started a month ago," Deloris Usher says. She's the head of the neighborhood committee and has been living here for twenty years. "At first we thought it was a wolf or something. It'd start howling off and on for the entire night. Then over a few days, other howls and grunts joined in, and suddenly, it's like the entire street is cut off." Denning Road is a long avenue that dead-ends at Denning Circle. It's almost a mile long and bracketed on both sides by a forest park that separates it from neighboring streets. Streets, mind you, that haven't heard the mysterious noises.

"Have you contacted the city for help?" I ask. Deloris, however, waves my question off. Off course they did. They called animal control but something scared them off. They called exterminators and the same thing happened. Neither local animal control nor McClintock Exterminators could be reached for comment.

"Finally, we called in one of those for-hire heroes, but he just vanished one night." Unfortunately, the hero calling himself Mr. 38s has been reported missing. Otherwise, the noise has scared off the neighborhood pets or taken them. Nobody knows for sure, though Deloris seems to think the worst. I'm spending the night with her, hoping to hear the strange sounds reported on Denning Road. At 10:07 PM, I get my wish. I can hear them now, and their growls are getting closer."

## Freak Storm Puzzles Meteorologists

By Lance Volzhskiy

Office workers in Trykale Tower were shocked to discover storm clouds brewing inside their office building early Friday morning. The freak weather pattern appeared in the building's open shaft interior and soon spread into the surrounding floors. Electrical discharges disrupted power to the entire neighborhood while the torrential downpour ruined an estimated \$500,000 in computer equipment and electronics.

This is only the latest in a series of freak events that have plagued Trykale Tower since its opening four months ago. Two suicides within a month of each other were followed by an electric fire that killed maintenance worker Jose Montenegro. A night shift security guard has also gone missing, but foul play is not suspected. This, however, is by far the strangest event reported.

An office worker inside one of the twenty-three businesses who asked to remain anonymous said "We're considering breaking our lease and moving out of the building. Nobody wants to work here anymore. They're not even reporting half the stuff that goes on here."

Trykale Corporate could not be reached for comment.

# Two Year Anniversary of Triumphant Disappearance

BY DALE "HEROPORTER" KEELING

It's raining and a handful of people have braved the weather to gather in front of the abandoned Edinheart Condominiums. Some pray and shield their candles, others place thank you cards and wreaths on the sidewalks; all owe their lives to the heroes known as the Triumphant.

The Triumphant, a group of four heroes, never gained much exposure in the media until their disappearance two years ago. Led by Remix, the Triumphant lived and operated out of the Edinheart Condominiums, and included the android Ophelia Five, Lady Tourmaline and Flashdash. The group's founder, retired hero and entrepre-

neur Olaf Edinheart, stood with the crowd outside and commemorated the short-lived supergroup that he helped finance.

"They were real heroes and so young," Olaf said in an interview. "The last time I saw them, they were investigating a new lead in a case involving mysterious deaths in the neighborhood."

The case the Triumphant were investigating remains unsolved and has continued to baffle authorities, heroes, and amateur sleuths alike. In all, seven homeless men and women were found murdered, their bodies cut to ribbons, and different organs missing. Police thought they were dealing

with a powered serial killer, but amateur detective Jo Richmond has another theory. "The attacker was an exotic animal, maybe an alien. I'm sure of it. Strange DNA was found at each scene, but nobody's been able to identify the species. Unfortunately, the Police closed the investigation and nobody's looked into it since."

Meanwhile, the Triumphant remain missing. "I'm sure they got it," says Paul Margot, one of the people saved by the Triumphant. "The murders stopped at the same time they vanished. They had to have got whoever was doing it, right? I'd like to think they did."

## STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT REBIRTH ISLAND

BY GEORGE BECK

It was called Rebirth Island, and although it isn't much to look at in a casual glance, it was one of many research and testing grounds belonging to "The System," the Soviet agency for bio-weapons formally known as Bio-preparat.

Vozrozhdeniya Island or Rebirth Island, is now a peninsula, thanks to the rapidly shrinking Aral Sea, which splits Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The sea itself is highly polluted and dead thanks to neighboring livestock farms and fertilizers. An irrigation program to help Soviet-era agriculture resulted in dried riverbeds and salt storms that contribute to the high cancer rate in the region. Former sea ports like the city of Aral are now landlocked and the rusting hulls of fishing ships lie askance on dry ground, far from water. Rebirth Island has yet to live up to its name and has only contributed to the local misery.

The abandoned island itself is contested by Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and the half-dozen dilapidated buildings and small airstrip belie the bio-weapon testing that occurred here from the 1940s to the 1990s. In 2002, a joint US/Uzbekistan task force de-contaminated 10 anthrax dump sites on the island, proclaiming the island clean. Despite this, there continue to be epidemic flare-ups of bubonic plague

and a yet-to-be-identified disease along the Aral Sea. This has been reoccurring in the region since the 1960s thanks to Soviet open-air viral testing that used monkeys. The epidemic flurry has only increased in the last four years, resulting in 23 deaths. Now, there is a growing camp of epidemiologists within WHO that believe many manufactured diseases including anthrax and bubonic plague, which were not uncovered or destroyed properly originated at the site. Rodents may have become viral carriers from leaky containers or contaminated equipment. If this is true, the outbreaks may be the result of surviving animals escaping when the island joined the mainland.

Until recently, this might have seemed like standard conspiracy theory fare, but recent INTERPOL reports indicate that drug smugglers importing Afghani heroin are using an abandoned facility reputedly hidden beneath the rocky soil of Rebirth. The Aralsk Gang consists of former soldiers with the Soviet Fifteenth Directorate, who ran Rebirth Island. This possibly explains how they knew about the facility's existence. If this is true, then what secrets remain hidden beneath Rebirth Island and are members of the Aralsk Gang infected or worse? Could they be in possession of biological weapons?

## Nuclear Bunker Unearthed

BY JEFFREY O'CONNER

Gerald Butch didn't know what he was in for when he hired contractors to build an in-ground pool in his back yard. No sooner had the backhoe reached a depth of eight feet when it struck something solid—a steel reinforced concrete roof. A little more digging and the contractor realized he'd uncovered an underground nuclear bunker.

From the construction style and make of the bunker, it was likely built in the early Sixties during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The former owner of the house, Mary Marchinko was likely to have had the shelter built, but she died of cancer in 1985 and nobody seems to know why it was built so deep or why the hatch was buried and welded to the frame. More importantly, who painted "Danger" across the hatch only adds to the mystery that is drawing dozens of people daily to the site.

Unfortunately, it may be a while before the hatch itself can be opened. Mary Marchinko died in debt to the FC Bank with an outstanding mortgage loan of several thousand dollars and the FC Bank is contesting ownership of the bunker. Gerald Butch has also hired attorneys for its contents, saying that the statute of limitations on the mortgage loan has come and gone.

One thing is for certain, though. The upcoming court case will certainly attract interest, with everyone wondering just what is inside the sealed bunker?

# Welcome Aboard, The Ghost Hotel

BY CHRISTIAN ROMMER

Move over Queen Mary, there's a new ocean liner turned ghost hotel, and she's taken the Eastern Seaboard by storm. The *Epic* was the fourth and final Olympic Class Liner built. Like the *Olympic*, *Titanic* and the *Brittanic*, she was to be a super-liner, the last hurrah of a fading breed when dirigibles were crossing the Atlantic and Charles Lindbergh's flight proved that the future lay in air travel. The *Epic* was commissioned by Lord Kylsant, the new owner of the fading White Star Line, and who better to build it than Harland & Wolff, the architects of the first three Olympic Class ships.

Unfortunately, the *Epic* had a rocky start with the 1931 arrest of Lord Kylsant for financial fraud involving the British Treasury loan to build the superliner. The ship was almost completed when Harland & Wolff stopped construction. The *Epic* was dusted off several years later when White Star Line merged with longtime rival, Cunard. Cunard, also in financial straits, built the *Queen Mary* and the *Epic*. With Europe mired in a depression and war with Germany looming on Britain's horizon, however, both the *Queen Mary* and the *Epic* were refitted for military duty.

Although the *Epic* served with distinction in WWII as a troop transport ship, a torpedo from a German U-Boat ignited several boilers, killing two hundred men in a horrible blaze that crippled the liner. The rumors of her being haunted began then. The *Epic*, however, lived up to her name, surviving run-ins with German wolf packs and emerging on the other side of WWII. Alongside the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth*, she began running the Atlantic ship-

ping routes, transporting passengers in true *Olympic* luxury.

The *Epic*'s reputation as a ghost ship was cemented following a publicity voyage on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1947, on the 35 Anniversary of the *Titanic*'s sinking. The *Epic* was to follow the *Titanic*'s exact route to New York. She would serve the same menu and would reach her last reported position of 41°46' N, 50°14' W at the time *Titanic* struck the fateful iceberg at 11:35 PM, April 14<sup>th</sup>. Although many people protested the voyage, the *Epic* was fully booked by the time she left Southampton. Everything proceeded normally, with the *Epic* coming to rest at the *Titanic*'s last known position. In keeping to events as they were reported, the crew fired white distress rockets into the air and an eight-piece band played the medleys of that fateful night while a priest led mass. More adventurous passengers were even invited to descend in lifeboats. True to that night, 35 years ago, the ocean was calm and almost glass-like.

That's when strange events began to unfold. Passengers reported seeing deck chairs, tables, life preservers, and even bodies in the water. Stewards saw passengers dressed in the style of the 1900s wandering the halls. The mail in the mailroom was suddenly wet. Of the two lifeboats lowered, one returned immediately, its passengers suffering from hypothermia.

The plan was to stay on that spot until 4:10 that morning, when the *Carpathia* had historically reached the first of the *Titanic*'s lifeboats, but the panicked passengers and bridge officers convinced Captain Styles to leave early. Everyone had their fill of the

*Titanic*'s last voyage. Unfortunately, on that voyage, and on many thereafter, the *Epic*'s passengers claimed to have seen ghosts of those who died aboard the *Titanic*, sudden cold spots that produced hypothermic conditions, or near instant frostbite. People even claimed that the *Epic* had picked up the passengers left behind by the *Titanic*.

The *Epic* sailed a few years more before the liner was retired. Too old and too expensive to refit, was Cunard's reported explanation, but too haunted seemed to be the more obvious answer. The *Epic* vanished from public attention, until 1998, when Canaveral Corporation PLC purchased Cunard. It was then discovered that the *Epic* had been mothballed, its name stripped. Cunard had been too superstitious, however, to dismantle the ship after a scrapping team came aboard for an initial inspection and were too frightened to return. Canaveral sold the *Epic* to billionaire Lyle Casey, who then spent the next several years refitting her as a hotel.

Like the *Queen Mary*, the *Epic* is a *Titanic*-style ocean-liner turned into a floating hotel. While modern amenities have been added, the fixtures are all original and the ghost tours promise to visit untouched areas of the ship, where areas are the spitting image of the *Titanic*. For the day adventurists, the ship offers an unparalleled shopping experiences. For thrill seekers, however, the true adventure is said to be had in an overnight stay in one of the rooms. Just be sure to tell the staff at the *Epic* that the *Titanic* sent you. We promise you'll be in for a real treat.

## SECRET GRAVEYARD MUMMIES EXHIBIT COMING TO TOWN

By Vasily Karelin

From the next two weeks the Museum of Antiquities will be displaying the haunting Secret Graveyard Mummies Exhibit, a collection of artifacts discovered in the recently excavated Claystone Caverns off the shores of Maine.

"It's an exciting find," Museum Curator Paul Schweitzer confided while he oversaw the exhibit's construction. "Nobody knows anything about the Native American tribe who embalmed these mummies, nor how they transported their dead into the undersea caverns. But of the hundred discovered, we've been blessed to have received five of them for the exhibit. Simply blessed."

The Secret Graveyard Mummies are expected to draw half-a-million people to the museum and the exhibit itself has already been the subject of serious

debate and scrutiny. Some people are calling the discovery an elaborate hoax, but independent analysis has confirmed the age of the mummies and the collection of obsidian artifacts to date back almost two thousand, seven hundred years, well before the birth of Jesus Christ.

"It is possible that the area around the caves were elevated at one point," Paul Schweitzer said, "but more likely the caves may have connected with the mainland. Maybe they still do. The network is so large, it's still being explored."

Until then, however, the museum is eager to showcase a bit of history with an exciting exhibit that promises to include the five mummies and numerous artifacts.

## Haunted...by a Game?

By EMILY BRYANT

In its heyday, a game called Chimera's Quest was the most popular MMO out there. You can be forgiven for not knowing what MMO means. It stands for Massively Multiplayer Online and Chimera's Quest was at the top of the heap with over three million subscribers who lived and fought in this fantasy realm. That was before Tyrees White went on a cross-country killing spree, murdering seven rival players in the game. Chimera's Quest never survived the tarnish its reputation took, and the game died within a year as players fled to newer and prettier MMOs.

Now Chimera's Quest is back, and nobody is sure how or why. Railgate Entertainment, located in San Francisco, say they never sold the rights to anyone and that the servers that run the game itself are all accounted for. Railgate Entertainment issued a press release concluding "...and we will file charges against the parties responsible." It wouldn't be the first time someone opened private servers for an immensely popular game, but those are either sanction by the parent company or kept

private. Chimera's Quest, however, has been running openly and all attempts to track its new operators have been unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, hundreds of hardcore fans who were around for the closing of Chimera's Quest have flocked back to the seemingly "Free 2-Play" game. Antoine Richler, a 32 year old accountant, said "nobody knows who started it up again, but it's great being back. So many memories of this place." Daniel Tommassi, a 23 year old student, has a different take on it: "It's creepy, actually. The game downloaded itself and now, when you go on, it's a ghost town. The world is empty and monsters shouldn't be where they're at. I stopped playing because I felt like something was watching me. Strange, huh?"

Daniel isn't the only former player to report a feeling of discomfort. Several people have tried to delete the game from their systems or disconnect it from their Internet. Yet people are claiming that the game returns, leaving Daniel to remark, "I'm being haunted...by a game."

## Taming of the Shrub

By Edward Minnoch

Two-hundred years ago, Dewsbury Park was the home of God's Wine Baptist Church and Cemetery. It was the heart of the local farming community until someone murdered Reverend Uriah Stone. The Church closed and eventually fell to flames. Nearly a hundred and fifty years later, the city moved the overgrown and neglected graveyard itself to build Dewsbury Park.

Over the years, the park became known for its stunning array of beautiful flowers and landscaping. That was, until last June 14<sup>th</sup>, when 19 year old Jessie Dubane was brutally raped and murdered by an unknown assailant. Since that time, caretakers report that weeds have overtaken the park, strangling the once beautiful gardens. The shrubs have grown brown and have proven unmanageable and too thorny to trim, the flowers have died and patches of grass have blackened in rectangular patches.

"That's where the cemetery was," a park caretaker said, refusing to be identified. "Ain't no hoax neither. Ground's gone black in the exact spots, I bet you, where the graves were buried. And the spot where that miss was killed, that's where the shrubs grow wildest."

The city isn't buying the story, and is currently entertaining bids from private contractors to repair the park. Inside sources admit, however, that a priest was already sent to bless Dewsbury Park, without much success by the looks of it.

## CASE FILES

Case files are mini-adventures built around a monster, location, or both. They are designed to suit most series that don't involve post-apocalyptic/post-humanity storylines. This book avoids using real-life locations suspected of the supernatural. The popular locations that grace tabloids and television horror fare are generally banal. They might be haunted, but they may not fit the Gamemaster's needs. The ghosts are not out to get people in the way people expect of truly gruesome monsters. They've become the Disneyland rides for the mediocre thrill-seekers.

Gamemasters can adapt them according to the series' needs or simply to her own discretion. The case files are generic horror series that can be set in any power-level world, though the GM should make adjustments accordingly. Cases break down as follows:

**Case Name:** Introduction to the case and the manner in which characters might grow involved.

**Background:** The background of the events itself, not of the creature or adversary.

**Investigation:** Characters can either use their skills or social advantages. Using interaction skills with witnesses either allows witnesses to remember more than they reported or forces them to reveal the truth. Investigation and Perception can reveal physical clues at a location.

**Conflict:** The monster may not be the sole opposition and heroes might encounter conflict in people hiding the truth, detectives trying to keep the heroes out of the investigation, reporters trying to get a scoop on the story, etc.

**Location:** This is the lair of the adversary.

**Adversary:** Who the characters can expect to fight. Most monsters are built for PL 12, though there are exemptions. Gamemasters can adjust the adversaries to match the capabilities of the heroes.

**Finale:** The aftermath of the investigation.

# BANDWIDTH

Every midnight, the signal from a local television cable provider goes haywire, occasionally revealing what appears to be a human face. Anyone who sees the face in the image dies within three days. Characters can get involved in this adventure through:

- The manager of the cable provider needs help eliminating the ghost in his machine.
- An ally of the characters was watching television when he saw the face. He's got less than three days left.
- A string of strange deaths has the police baffled. They'd be more comfortable giving this to people who handle this sort of thing.
- One of the characters sees the face in the television static and is told about the legend.
- A task force is forming to solve the crime and the characters are invited to participate as advisors on the unusual.

## BACKGROUND

Two weeks ago, service to cable customers was disrupted for a few seconds. The television screens filled with static, and two people saw a ghostly face manifest. Both of them died in three days, both from electrocution, but not before they reported seeing a little girl in odd places watching them.

Since that time, two or three people have seen the face of the girl appear in the static and seen her apparition in real life—the death toll is mounting. News channels are jumping on the story and calling it the birth of a new Urban Legend, even though a task force is forming to handle the issue. So far, over 40 people have died. People are cancelling their cable subscriptions, but a more daring segment of the population is tuning in like a city-wide game of Russian roulette. The idea is that the more people who tune in, the less chance you have of getting picked. That's the logic, anyway.

The cable provider, Media River, has been fully cooperating with authorities, though they have yet to make a press statement other than to say: "We're treating the matter seriously and are looking into it."

## INVESTIGATION

### CABLE COMPANY

At the time of each event, the cable provider experiences a surge of power that overloads the system. It lasts for a minute at most before the surge dissipates and everything returns to normal. The cable company has placed surge protectors to block the excess power, but that didn't work. They tried shutting down cable service for that window, but it comes back to life on its own.

### TECHNOLOGY

Trying to hack any system to back trace the signal (from the cable provider or the local power company)

reveals the following: (DC 15) The surge is massive, but it appears to start in one section of town. (DC 17) Throughout the day, there are micro-surges that do nothing to overload the system. (DC 19) At the times of each victim's death, there is a brief spike of energy usage on the power grid.

### VICTIMS

**Investigation:** (DC 14) The victims had nothing in common, except for watching television that evening. They came from all walks of life and were from different age groups, genders, ethnicities, etc. (DC 15) Each victim died of electrocution, like they were struck by lightning. If anyone was with them, they died the same way. Nobody witnessed the attacks. (DC 16) The electrical wall sockets and electronic devices in the area were all shorted out and burned. (DC 17) Almost all the victims reported seeing a strange girl watching them. She didn't look like a ghost so much as she did a black and white image of an old television broadcast.

### SOON TO BE VICTIMS

As the task force ramps up its investigation, crackpots and conspiracy nuts come out of the woodwork, as do people who saw the girl. They know they may only have a few days to live. These people are scared, and so coaxing information out of their stressed minds brings some difficulty to the questioning. Some may be reticent to discuss everything they saw, because they don't believe in ghosts. Regardless, with multiple witnesses, the truth will out. Interaction skill checks to conduct interviews can turn up the following: (DC 12) Each witness was watching television when the static came. For a brief second, they saw a girl looking back at them. (DC 13) For the last day or two, the witnesses saw the same girl standing around, watching them. The girl vanishes and reappears moments later, standing elsewhere. (DC 14) The little girl has black hair, a bit wild and unkempt. Her eyes appear and vanish in their sockets. She wears a simple dress and pants of matching grey, and no shoes. (DC 15) Electronics around her fritz out when she appears. (DC 16) A couple of people realize that the girl's outfit isn't a dress at all, but a hospital gown and bottom. She had on a hospital bracelet as well.

### SECTION OF TOWN

Investigating the neighborhood where the surge originates is no small feat. It's a large and relatively affluent area. It's on the edge of town and blessed with plenty of green space and small forests. Still, the more information the characters possess before hitting the neighborhood, the better. If they only know about the girl through hearsay (friends who mention the victims seeing a girl), then nobody in the neighborhood can help. Nobody's seen such a girl and no one have been reported missing for the last two years.

If the characters have a description of the girl and an artist's sketch: (DC 17) A few people remember a little girl like that ten years ago. They heard her father was arrested

for domestic violence and that her mother moved away soon after that. (DC 19) The little girl was Angela. Her mother had her committed to the Belle Coeur Asylum after Angela attacked her with scissors.

If the heroes ask questions about a hospital or asylum, they learn: (DC 12) Belle Coeur Asylum was a private facility on the edge of town on an expansive estate. (DC 13) The Asylum closed down five years ago after a fire gutted several buildings. Those patients that survived were moved elsewhere. (DC 15) Local teens have been using the asylum to meet and party. A few were even enterprising enough to make a clubhouse out of one of the undamaged rooms. They even managed to restore power there. (DC 17) The teens were recently spooked out of the location. They supposedly saw a ghost and one was burned by a strange short-circuit. (DC 19) Angela was among the victims of the fire.

## CONFLICT

Angela, now known as the ghost Surge, is the only adversary in this adventure, though nothing prevents her from harrying the investigators. She might fry the task force's computers or target the captain for death (forcing the characters to act quickly). If the characters become too troublesome, Surge might attack them directly or distract them by attacking innocent people (triggering fires, threatening life support in a hospital, etc.).

## LOCATION

The Belle Coeur Asylum was built on several acres of beautiful forest. Although overgrown, the open parks surrounded by a ring of trees were likely peaceful at some point. Now it carries the burden of neglect that every abandoned place bears. The stone water fountain is covered in graffiti and mold. The driveway is cracked. The asylum consists of the main building as well as some ancillary structures. Half the main building is burned. Abandonment plagues the other half. The windows of the greenhouse are all shattered and part of the rooftop of another building collapsed. In all, the estate is completely neglected and fading fast.

The interior of the main building that remains accessible has water damage and graffiti everywhere. Beds have been left rotting and several storms have left behind corridors floors covered in water and peeling plaster walls. The teens had set up a clubhouse of sorts in the only corner of the asylum that had remained undamaged. They padded it with mattresses, hid cases of beer and even managed to open one of the breakers and hook up a television set to the only active cable node.

If the Gamemaster wishes, Surge isn't the only ghost in here. She's simply the most powerful. Should the characters decide to somehow cut the power supply/cable access to the location, this will not affect Surge. It will merely limit

her ability to escape more easily. Otherwise, she's a handful that can strike from anywhere and retreat as suddenly.

## ADVERSARY

Little is left of the young girl named Angela Cavalier. She died slowly over her short life, a little bit here when her father beat her, a little there when her mother's drinking left her alone and neglected. She became withdrawn and strange, frightening the teachers and children around her



# SURGE

PL12

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
1	2	3	3	5	3	1	2

## POWERS

**Ghost:** Concealment 4 (Visual), Permanent; Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects); Insubstantial 4, Permanent; Activation (move action, -1 point) • 57 points

- **Electric Demon:** 58 points, Activation (move action, -1 point) • 1 point

**Electrical Blast:** Ranged Multiattack Damage 10 • 30 points

**Electrical Form:** Insubstantial 3 (electricity), Permanent • 15 points

**Transmit:** Teleport 13, Extended Only (8,000 miles), Medium (electrical conduits) • 13 points

**Radio Sense:** Remote Sensing 14 (Radio); Senses 2 (Accurate Radio) • 16 points

**Supernatural Resilience:** Protection 6 • 6 points

## SKILLS

Deception 4 (+6), Intimidation 8 (+10), Investigation 4 (+6), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Electrical Blast 10 (+13), Stealth 4 (+5)

## ADVANTAGES

Diehard, Startle

at school. Her bid to alienate herself worked all too well and she died a little there too of the loneliness.

When Angela's mother had finally had enough of the abuse, she found love in another man. He helped her stand up to her husband, helped her file charges against him. And then the bombshell came; Angela was not part of the life her mother wanted. Her husband had forced a child on her. Angela was to be adopted by her aunt, leaving her mother and her new boyfriend to live happily ever after. That was enough to snap the last of Angela's tethers. She attacked her mother with scissors and drew blood before the scissors were wrested from her young hands.

Angela was committed, relegated to a private facility as the last "act of compassion" on her mother's part. Then she moved away, leaving Angela in psychiatric care. The years passed by in a medicated stupor and young Angela never improved. She began hearing voices and was under treatment for that. She never realized she could actually hear electronic transmissions. She was listening to television and radio signals as they played in her head. When her powers manifested, it was a violent thing. Angela's body turned into electricity and she tried to escape into a nearby plug. She only succeeded in triggering the massive fire that killed her and others.

Since that time, Angela has existed in those two states. She can turn from ghost into electric demon, but her life and her excruciating death have only twisted her further. She's no longer a victim, no longer subject to the whims of others. She is now killing people for the sheer power of it. She is a poltergeist, a thing of fury, electricity, and murder.

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +3

Electrical Blast +13      Ranged, Multiattack, Damage 10

Unarmed +5      Close, Damage 1

## DEFENSE

DODGE	11	FORTITUDE	11
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PARRY	11	TOUGHNESS	8
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WILL	11
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## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	40	SKILLS	17
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POWERS	80	DEFENSES	33
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ADVANTAGES	2	TOTAL	172
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## COMPLICATIONS

**Current:** A phantom of electrical impulses, Surge may be vulnerable to electrical grounding or containment.

**Shock Therapy:** Surge is a creature of fury, letting loose all of her anger at the living.

## FINALE

Surge isn't bound to the asylum any longer, but it is her home. She may return if driven off or defeated. With the ability to go anywhere in the world, she might take her murdering act on the road after she deals with the heroes. In the meanwhile, the network will figure a way to stop the transmissions from happening using the help of the characters or other heroes who've dealt with this sort of thing. Then again, Surge always has the Internet.

## SLEEPING GODS LIE

An antiques collector is robbed, but only two books are stolen. Now rumors surface that the books were keys to a ritual to summon an ancient and vile creature. Characters become involved in this investigation through:

- Psychics are having nightmares about the rise of something terrible and vile and they seek the help of the heroes.
- The books' owner asks for help in retrieving his stolen property. He says there's a terrible legend about the books that they will somehow cause great strife, but he isn't sure how.
- A mystic ally of the heroes reveals a little known prophecy about books similar to the ones stolen earlier in the week. The books will cause untold death.

## BACKGROUND

It began with the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. A secret order of monks hid in the Cistern of Jordan, an underground water reservoir, while the defenders protected the wall. When a lunar eclipse engulfed the sky on May 22, the monks knew that Constantinople would fall and no Venetian fleets would save them or their precious antiquities. They set about burying the treasures in the Cistern of Jordan, all save for one book. The book's name had been scratched away, its author forgotten in all but legend. He was a Greek sailor that had vanished with his crew while trying to sail around Africa's most southern tip, Cape Agulhas. His nearly wrecked ship was found three years later outside the Straits of Gibraltar. He was the only survivor. What he saw in those terrible seas was committed to letters for he had long bitten off his own tongue.

The story contained an account of ghostly islands and huge Leviathans that walked the ocean floors like moving mountains, which were committed to books. From the sirens he encountered there, the Greek Sailor learned to sing the song that would summon one of the terrible beasts. But the musical notes made no sense. They bore no similarity to the notes of the time and anyone who tried understanding them suffered from nightmares of the singing deep that ultimately drove them insane. The monks of Constantinople realized that nobody should ever find the books. They tore the pages out, but could not destroy them. They did not burn or stain. They could rub the letters until they were nearly faded from the page. Then the monks escaped the city before its fall and parted ways, each taking a handful of papers and scattering them to distant monasteries. The pages were reused and written over. They became part of other works, hidden in libraries, but no matter what happened to those other books the accursed pages would not be lost.

Over the centuries, the pages have called out to be unified and one by one, through madman or psychic, the pages have been slowly reunited. From the Nazis, one book of hodgepodge text was brought together. From the Spiritualist Movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, another book was bound and born. Finally, a private collector named Darrin Abernathy brought both books together. He had them in his possession, protected under mystical seals and wards until someone broke into his sanctum and made away with both books.

## INVESTIGATION

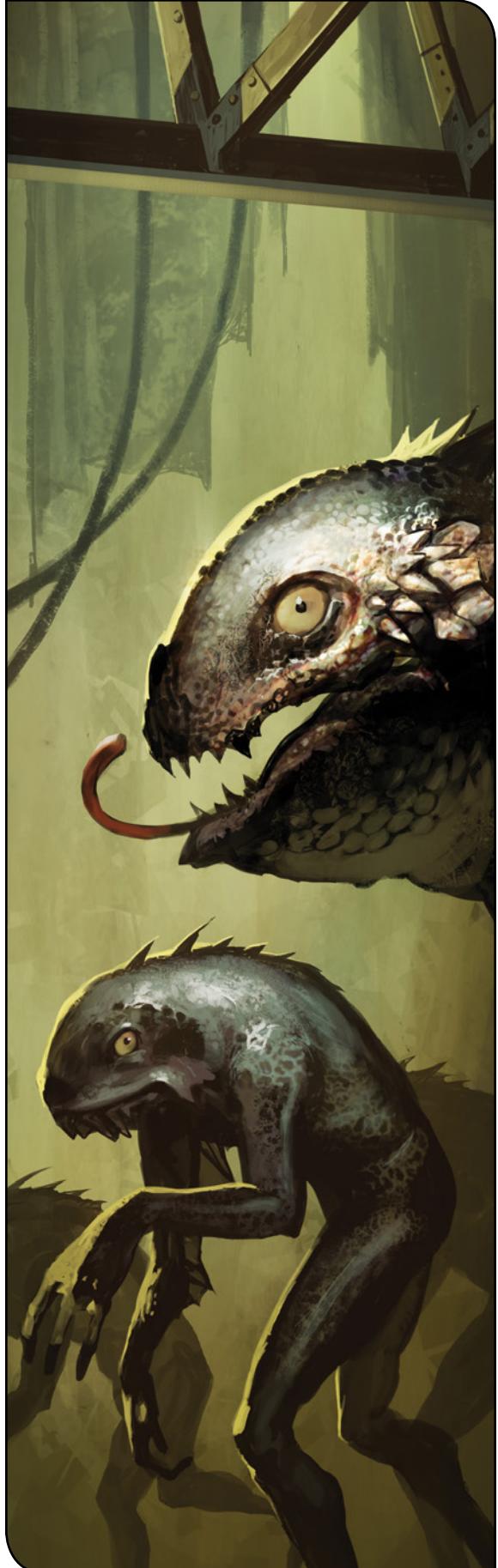
### EXPERTISE: MAGIC

Either through skill use or contacts the characters learn that: (DC 14) The book is a collection of surviving religious texts from all over the world. They are a hodgepodge of different works, clippings really, but the parchments upon which they are written are far older than the works on them. (DC 16) Copies of the pages were scanned once, revealing more ancient writing beneath it. (DC 18) The scans reveal what appear to be musical notes, but written in high-pitch range...higher than any instruments of those times could produce.

## INTERVIEWS

Using interaction skills with witnesses and people involved can turn up the following:

- **Interrogating Darrin Abernathy:** Darrin is cooperative and states that he is both a collector and a practicing witch. He placed the mystic seals, not just to protect the books, but to stop whatever negative energies were leaking from giving him more nightmares. He knows that the pages contained musical notes, and that to study those notes was to create madness. (DC 15) If encouraged, he remembers that a young collector named Hawthorn was interested in buying the books from him. He remembers the name because Hawthorn owns an antiquities shop.
- **About Hawthorn:** (DC 10) Hawthorn was an antiquities dealer, yes, but he is in his 80s, has never been married and has no children. His store is closed. (DC 14) Hawthorn was a dabbler in the local supernatural community, and loved purchasing anything to do with the supernatural or magic. He was last seen being hauled away in an ambulance, though nobody knows why. (DC 16) Hawthorn had a nervous breakdown a few weeks ago. He is currently in an insane asylum.
- **Interrogating Hawthorn:** If the characters manage to speak with him, he is insane and rambling, switching between fear, paranoia, delusions, and lucidity. Heroes can gleam the following from him: (DC 15) He was robbed several months ago and the thieves made away with his great prize. (DC 16) The item stolen was a book, a third collection of mismatched texts created by a coven in the 1960s. There are three books to complete the terrible ritual, not two. (DC 17) Hawthorn can relate the tale of the books from the Greek sailor, to the monks in Constantinople, to their attempts to hide them. (DC 18) Hawthorn had a protégé, a boy by the name of Dale King. Dale vanished after the book was stolen, but Hawthorn heard King singing to him every night, singing a monster's lullaby.
- **About Dale King:** Dale is a local legend in the notorious sense. (DC 12) Few people have anything to do with Dale because his faith is whatever gets him rich fast. He thinks he's a player but he's harmless. (DC 14) He has no fixed address because he drifts from mark to mark, living off other people. (DC 16) The last anyone saw him he was sponging off a rich widow with plenty of money to throw around. Dale was using his limited magical knowledge to act as her advisor. Her name is Regina Danvers. Dale is sure to be living with her.
- **About Regina Danvers:** Regina lives in an apartment mansion in the old part of the city. The neighborhood is going downhill, but nobody messes with Regina. She's everyone's grandmother. (DC 14) Back in the 60s and 70s, she and her husband Dale were movers and shakers in the local pagan community. They were rich and threw many parties, inviting the cream of local society and having tarot readers read their fortunes. (DC 16) Dale died about a decade ago, but the Danvers were already being bypassed and ignored. Dale was the real believer in the relationship. Regina



was more of a mystic groupie. **(DC 18)** She told people that Dale reminds her of her husband and she enjoys supporting his exploration of the arts.

- **Interrogating Dale King:** **(DC 12)** What books? **(DC 14)** Seriously, dude, what books are you talking about? **(DC 16)** Stop with the books! I have no idea about any books! **(DC 18)** I—hey wait...I saw Regina with these really old religious looking books. Full of pretty pictures, right?

## CONFLICT

The real culprit is Regina Danvers. She isn't the doddering old hanger-on that everyone believes her to be. She let her husband appear the mystic, but she was the cultist. She was the high priestess of the Old Gods and the one who murdered her husband as a sacrifice. Her minions stole the book and she won't sit idly by while the heroes investigate the matter. While working on the case, the characters are attacked by Deep Spawn; servitors of the Sleepers of the Deep. A second attack occurs when the characters realize Dale isn't the mastermind.

## LOCATION

The location is a five story apartment building that Regina Danvers owns. She's set up speakers in the different mansion apartments to make it sound like the building is full of people (with sounds of movement, radios playing, murmurs, etc.). The truth is, however, all the apartments belong to her, and she's had the walls knocked down so that they interconnect in a warren of rooms. This is where her Deep Spawn minions lair. Her apartment is on the second floor.

The penthouse apartment is her ritual center. A computer has finished scanning the pages and is now trying to replay the notes in proper sequence electronically. Speakers hidden behind the windows are waiting to issue the ultrasonic notes. When the characters confront Dale the chaos begins. The computer starts playing the notes through the speakers and all the neighborhood animals go mad with panic. The fire alarms and fire sprinklers trigger. Within moments puddles are everywhere and Deep Spawn crawl out of the puddles. The Deep Spawn attack, trying to delay the heroes from finding the ritual center. When matters really get hairy, the Gamemaster can start triggering ground tremors. The Great Worm is about to awaken and it's imperative that the characters stop that from happening. The heroes can do that by destroying the computer on the top floor, or by disrupting power to the building through the main breakers in the basement.

## ADVERSARY

Regina Danvers isn't much of a threat to the characters directly. Her skill is in setting up the situation that will cause them problems. The enemy, in this case, are the Deep Spawn and there are many in the building.

Deep Spawn are servitors of the ancient Sleepers That Dwell Beneath the Waves. They are sent to human priests

# DEEP SPAWN

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FRT	INT	AWE	PRE
8	6	2	2	6	-1	-1	-2

## POWERS

**Aquatic:** Immunity 10 (Life Support); Movement 1 (Environmental Adaptation—Aquatic); Senses 3 (Accurate Hearing, Ultra-hearing); Swimming 6 (30 MPH) • 21 points  
**Large:** Growth 4, Innate, Permanent • 9 points  
**Oceanic Gate:** Teleport 3, Easy, Medium (Water) • 6 points

## SKILLS

Athletics 8 (+16), Intimidation 8 (+7), Perception 8 (+7)

## ADVANTAGES

Diehard, Fast Grab, Fearless

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +2

Unarmed +6

Close, Damage 8

of these gods to help them awaken the Sleepers. They are simple minded and follow instructions. Alone they aren't much of a threat, but in larger numbers that can give many heroes are run for their money. They attack without tactic or guile. They are nothing more than ocean-born brutes that thrive on destruction, mayhem, and devouring humans. There is nothing empathetic, human, or compassionate about them. They exist to kill.

## FINALE

If the characters should mess up so badly that the ritual is complete, the Gamemaster can use the Elder Evil archetype from the *Gamemaster's Guide* (page 86) to present the heroes with a credible threat. Other NPC heroes can also jump into the action at this point. Should the ritual fail, the Deep Spawn will turn on Regina in retaliation. Several of the creatures escape into the exposed sewer system in the basement where they can spawn and reappear to harry the heroes. The ritual, meanwhile, must be kept under lock and ritually sealed. While Darrin Abernathy wants his books back, even he understands how dangerous they truly are. He'll surrender them for the greater good.

Meanwhile, if Regina survives, there are some mystically oriented heroes who would love nothing better than to imprison her in a distant and remote dimension. If taken to court, evidence will surface of her part in her husband's death, though she remains a threat in prison. In fact, the heroes may be called one day to the prison to stop another ritual that she's managed to enact. Throughout it all, however, she remains pleasant, murderous, but pleasant. Meanwhile, Dale is innocent of any wrong-doing, though his interest in the supernatural has understandably diminished. Being a hero, however, now that's where the money's at as far as he's concerned.

## DEFENSE

DODGE	8	FORTITUDE	10
PARRY	8	TOUGHNESS	6
WILL	4		

## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	24	SKILLS	12
POWERS	36	DEFENSES	21
ADVANTAGES	3	TOTAL	96

## COMPLICATIONS

**Aquatic:** Denizens of the dark oceans, Deep Spawn need moisture to survive and shun the light of the surface world.  
**Monstrous:** Deep Spawn are monstrous creatures, terrifying to behold.

# ORPHAN KILLER

Children are vanishing on the streets and at home. The one thing they share is that they are all runaways or in foster care at the time. Characters becoming involved in this investigation could learn about it through:

- The characters know someone in the police department, with Social Services, or in the news media, who alerts them of the strange happenings.
- People in the pagan community know that something with supernatural power is out there, harming children.
- The story is all over the news and police are desperate for leads. Witnesses hint at something "supernatural."
- Kids on the street are talking about this boogieman figure that comes for children in the dead of night.

## BACKGROUND

It all began two months ago, when seven runaways squatting in an abandoned building saw something appear in the darkness. It was a silver mask surrounded by a giant cloak of darkness. It frightened the two dogs they kept for protection and three teens (Annie Barker (17), Jason Edison (16), Joel Kyleson (17)) were sucked into the cloak's shadows and vanished.

Since that time, 15 other children have vanished, nearly two a week. The creature manifests wherever children reside (three foster homes, five shelters and three confirmed street sightings). It says nothing and the children it targets all vanished into its darkness. The three times adults or other teens tried to fight the creature off, they suffered severe frost burns. Of the 15 children taken, the oldest was 19 and the youngest 11. Five people were

injured trying to fight the monster, but only one person died so far; Father Frank Schillenger, when the creature took a boy from his shelter.

Police are at a loss to explain what is happening. If the supernatural is normal for the setting, then the police admit they are simply outgunned and need help with the investigation. Otherwise, the nature of the monster is chalked up to an imaginative kidnapper/pedophile with some stage tricks up his sleeve.

## INVESTIGATION

Investigating the kidnappings more deeply may reveal the following clues.

### INTERVIEWS

Using interaction skills to talk to witnesses and people involved. (DC 12) General information about the case and the description of the creature. (DC 14) Thinking about it more, the witnesses remember that the kids who were kidnapped all felt like they were being watched in the days before. (DC 16) In a couple of instances, witnesses swear they heard the creature whisper something about "home" and "forever." (DC 18) Ms. Geraldine Fortier was looking for some of the kids before they vanished. She seemed panicked, but nobody mentioned this to the cops because she's a good and helpful person.

- About Father Frank Schillenger:** Gathering information about Father Frank, the priest who died, reveals the following. (DC 12) He stood up to the monster and was killed for it. Death came from extreme cold and frostbite. (DC 14) Father Frank raised his cross against the creature and it reacted violently. (DC 16) Father Frank actually managed to hurt the monster with his cross. (DC 18) A woman came to see Father Frank earlier that day. She seemed distraught and mentioned something about monsters. Her description matches Ms. Fortier.
- About Geraldine Fortier:** Questioning others about Ms. Geraldine Fortier reveals the following. (DC 12) She is a well-loved person who cares for children and is adored by those she's helped. (DC 14) She was one of the best case workers before she was "promoted" to a desk job. (DC 16) Ms. Fortier lost her eight year old son, Adam, about a year ago when a burglar accidentally shot him. She was put behind the desk because she was beginning to snap under the strain. (DC 18) Ms. Fortier has been acting more and more erratic. She told coworkers that she thought her son was haunting her.

- Questioning Geraldine Fortier:** Questioning Ms. Geraldine Fortier reveals the following. (DC 12) She is dedicated to her job and the children in it. (DC 14) She was put behind a desk following Adam's murder. The offender was caught and imprisoned. (DC 16) She blames herself for her son's murder. She should have been home on time, but an emergency case came up. (DC 18) Her son is haunting her. It began with the disappearance of a dearly loved, engraved silver mask that she bought for him in Italy. She's since heard

voices in the house. She went to speak with Father Frank to put Adam to rest. He never got the chance.

### CLUES

Using Investigation and Perception in pertinent locations like Adam's bedroom or from his friends. (DC 12) Adam was a bit of an explorer, collecting knick-knacks from all the abandoned homes and offices he visited. (DC 14) Adam had a secret email account where he talked with friends. In addition to the regular emails and texts, he reveals he was jealous of his mother's work and the attention she paid to other kids. (DC 16) in a letter to his mother a school counselor said Adam was beginning to act out in class, perhaps to gain his mother's attention. Adam hid the letter and Ms. Fortier never received it. (DC 18) Adam has a cheap camera that used to photograph some of his urban exploration exploits. One house creeps up in many photographs. It seemed to be a clubhouse for him and his friends. The characters might need to investigate the location of the house through friends or by investigation using local real estate agents, but the information is easy enough to find.

### TECHNOLOGY

Characters can hack the computers of reporters, Social Services case workers, or detectives to learn the following. (DC 14) General information about the case—names of victims and witnesses, times and locations of incidents. (DC 15) All the children kidnapped so far were in the Social Services-Children Services database. (DC 17) The kids were of a certain age group and from abusive family backgrounds. (DC 18) Nobody hacked the Social Services database and while the case workers all varied, they all answered to a Ms. Geraldine Fortier.

### CONFLICT

During the investigation, characters may encounter problems with Social Services, who don't like adults conducting unsupervised interrogations of minors or asking questions about one of their own. Reporters trying to get the scoop on a story are spying on the characters and may impede them by bursting in on interrogations. The police may consider the heroes to be interfering in the course of an investigation. If the cops asked for the hero's help, then it may be a powerful community leader or shelter director who has a grudge against heroes.

### LOCATION

The house in question is large and multi-story. It has a big yard and a high stone fence that makes it impossible for neighbors to see inside. The lawn is overgrown and neglected. The house itself masked by scaffolding and shredded plastic sheeting. It's another victim of the housing market; remodeling halted in mid process.

Inside, the house is four stories tall with a basement, a ground floor, a second story and the attic space. The windows are missing and replaced with sheeting. The interior is empty except for paint ladders and some con-

# ORPHAN MAKER

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
2	2	4	4	5	1	1	1

## POWERS

- Cold Control:** Environment 4 (Extreme Cold), Affects Corporeal 2 • 10 points
- Dimensional Pocket:** Movement Attack 9 (Dimension Travel, Resisted by Dodge), Accurate 3, Limited to Resistance (8 ranks) • 13 points
- Freezing Touch:** Damage 14, Affects Corporeal, Alternate Resistance (Fortitude) • 30 points
- Ghost:** Concealment 10 (all senses), Permanent; Flight 4 (30 MPH); Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects); Insubstantial 4, Permanent • 70 points

## SKILLS

Intimidation 4 (+5), Stealth 4 (+8)

## ADVANTAGES

Diehard, Evasion 2

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +4

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Dimensional Pocket<br>+15 | Close, Dimension Travel<br>(Dodge DC 20) |
| Freezing Touch +9         | Close, Damage 14 (Fort DC 29)            |

## DEFENSE

DODGE	10	FORTITUDE	Immune
PARRY	9	TOUGHNESS	2
WILL	10		

struction equipment. The walls are half-painted and the floor in some room is strewn with beer cans and graffiti tags. Upstairs, one of the bedrooms has a stained mattress, but no blood or evidence of violence.

The basement is barebones concrete and loose wiring, and the attic is wood and heavily cobwebbed. There are no children, at least, not in sight. Almost all are dead, their bodies crammed into the spaces between the walls. Heroes should be able to smell them and even see them in a couple of places where putrefaction has stained the walls, creating a shadow-like effect. Only one child survived (the last kidnap victim by the name of Hector). He's near death, however, and only able to scratch. If the heroes disturb the bodies or try cutting through the walls to free them, Orphan Maker appears.

## ADVERSARY

Adam Fortier was a beloved child, though childhood insecurities made him jealous of the children who took his mother's time from him. He knew they needed her attention and that he always had her love, but jealousy was jealousy and Adam could not help feeling the way he did.

## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	40	SKILLS	4
POWERS	131	DEFENSES	16
ADVANTAGES	9	TOTAL	197

## COMPLICATIONS

**Mommy, Where Are You?** The Orphan Maker is driven by obsessive love and hatred for his mother and her attention.

**So Cold Inside:** The Orphan Maker has become cold and vicious, killing to soothe his own pain.



Into his eighth year of life, Adam was home alone, waiting for mother to return from work. She was late. *She's always late*, he grumbled to himself. He didn't hear the burglar until it was too late. The burglar never saw him playing quietly with his toys until Adam startled him. The gun went off and Adam was struck. The burglar panicked and ran from the house, leaving Adam to lie there, slowly dying, growing colder by the moment, and wondering why he his mother wasn't there.

Adam died angry, upset, and scared. He became fodder for the specters and evil spirits out there that feed on such things. He screamed for his mother's help, but she never saw him, never helped him. Survival became instinct and eventually Adam escaped and learned to feed on the ball of hate inside him. It warmed him from the cold and it whispered secrets to him. The voices that taught him how to use his powers and how to affect the world. In the meantime, he followed his mother around, watching her help other children, just like always. He watched her work harder, as if his death had been holding her back. He never recognized the grief inside her. He never saw her pain. Adam only saw his own.

Adam festered and recognized the strength of his misery. It let him do things and rewarded him greatly when he spread more of it around. His misery was like an entity all its own and it gave him the acceptance he felt lacking from his mother. To that end, he took the silver mask his mom gave him as his new face and started going after the children she cared for. He killed them, and it was horribly easy to freeze them and stuff them inside him and then to shove them in between walls and listen to their voices weaken as they died.

## FINALE

Ghosts are hard to kill, but Adam Fortier has lost himself to hate and anger. Eventually, he'll focus on others, like the heroes. They stole his vengeance; they robbed him of his justice. He comes to focus on them over time, his hatred becomes so consumed he forgets about who he was. He is now a child murderer. He is now a child murderer. He will kidnap them and use them to lure the heroes into traps. That's all he is now, another monster in the world.

## THE BLOOD CULT

In today's society it is adapt or die and even the most traditional monsters must learn to embrace the times. In this case, Count Dracula has secretly started a blood cult called Sangreal and his followers are growing. Characters can become involved in the adventure as follows:

- A monster hunter and friend of a character ally has gone missing while investigating Sangreal. Now that ally needs the characters' help finding him.
- A friend's sister has fallen in with the Cult of Sangreal and he needs help rescuing her.
- Occult sources indicate that Sangreal posses a very real supernatural threat.

- Police need help subduing a Sangreal cultist who went on a rampage in a shopping mall. The cultist is much stronger than he appears.

## BACKGROUND

The Cult of Sangreal is four years old, and has grown faster than anyone anticipated. It offers itself as a Cult of Christ, but with a Templar/Da Vinci Code conceit, making it very popular among a wide demographic of people. It plays on the notion of Holy Blood/Holy Grail (San Greal means Holy Grail, but Sang Real means Holy Blood) and how modern faiths have suppressed the truth of Jesus Christ and his royal lineage/descendents. Its followers call it "The Real Church" and its purpose is to share the truth with those who are willing to accept it. They don't behold to the Original Sin and they consider the Roman Catholic Church to be a pretender to Christ's ear.

Whether there's any veracity to the notion that Christ had children and that the Roman Catholic Church is trying to keep that information squashed is up to the series. The Cult of Sangreal, however, is a mystery cult with corporate polish, offering secrets and hidden powers to people the further up in the chain they travel. The leader is an Eastern European man named Vladimir Draco, who is rarely seen in public and who runs the organization through a circle of his closest advisors called **The Legati**. Each advisor is responsible for running the operations in major North American and European cities. There are twelve advisors currently, with Sangreal Centers in New York, Los Angeles, Washinton D.C., Freedom City, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, Toronto, Mexico City, Emerald City, and Budapest. Smaller Lodges are scattered worldwide.

People who join the cult may do so at varying levels of involvement. The most basic are the **Legionarii**, those who donate money and are allowed to attend meetings and mass at the Sangreal Lodges. Their indoctrination level is low, aside from weekly gatherings designed to bring them "closer to the truth." They are led by community leaders known as **Imaginifer** (in the Roman Legion, they were standard bearers who carried the image of the Emperor to inspire devotion).

Those of the intermediate level are called **Immunes**. These professional donate a good portion of their paycheck to the cult and offer their time and expertise to other members; following a weekend-long retreat (and typical cult practices of indoctrination including love-bombing and peer pressure) they are allowed access to the secrets of the Sangreal. This includes the hidden history of the world (which would delight conspiracy theorists). Immunes receive medical care from the cult through "faith healers" called **Medicus**. Whatever care they receive, however, the treatments seem to work and some followers have even reported being cured of cancer. The community leader at this level is called **Aquilifer** (a senior standard bearer).

The final level is for those "foot soldiers of the temple," **Milites Templi** who donate all their worldly possessions to the cult and receive secret instructions and training. These individuals go on week-long retreats, live in one

of several enclosed compounds with their news and contact severely limited. In fact, these members are strongly encouraged to cut ties with any friends or family not in the cult. They are lead by **Primus Pilus** or those of first rank.

The highest position one could hope to attain in the cult is the rank of **Centurion**, which means the cult member is blessed by the Sangreal directly and imbued with powers. Whether they are blessed with the San Greal (Holy Grail) or anointed with Sang Real (Holy Blood), nobody is really certain. Those "sainted" are rabid followers and zealously loyal. They serve as foot soldiers to the Legati.

## INVESTIGATION

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Investigation of the cult works differently here as the characters can attack the situation, depending on what the situation is, from any angle.

## LEGIONARI/IMAGINIFER

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At the lowest rank, there is little these individuals can reveal through questioning, following them, or through other means of investigation. Everything the characters learn here simply provides the broad strokes about the cult and its aims.

## IMMUNES/AQUILIFER

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Once you get past the rhetoric and speeches about universal doctrines of truth and equality, more interesting information does come to light. (**DC 18**) The Medicus can heal people, but sometimes, the people they heal "reject" the treatment and go on a rampage like PCP enraged addicts. Centurions are often the only ones who can stop them. (**DC 20**) Some of the richer members (millionaires and billionaires) who consider leaving Sangreal are flown to meet a Legati member or for the very rich member, Vladimir Draco himself. All return having changed their minds and are happier than ever to be with Sangreal. (**DC 22**) Some people claim to have seen Medicus administering droplets of their own blood into the medicines that are given to sick members. Or at least, that was the allegation from some members who have since vanished.

## MEDICUS

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Here's where things get interesting. The Medicus are known in vampire parlance as Renfields, servants of vampires. They carry some vampire blood in their veins, allowing them to communicate with their Legati masters and to use droplets of their own blood to heal the sick or infirm (though some people have a bad reaction to such healing). They don't know they're serving vampires, however. The cult uses the Medicus to spy on its members. As a result, Medicus are highly loyal to the cult, though they can be broken. (**DC 18**) Yes, Medicus use their own blood to heal, but that's because they've been blessed by the Legati. That's why it's called Holy Blood, the blood of Christ. (**DC 20**) The Medicus receive psychic instructions

from the Legati and they relate everything they see and hear back to them. (**DC 22**) Centurions are on their way to deal with the characters (if the characters are interrogating a Medicus).

## MILITES TEMPLI/PRIMUS PILUS

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These members are zealots, and breaking them is hard thanks to constant conditioning and the loyalty that turns them into martyrs, not traitors. (**DC 18**) Members are required to donate blood regularly. The blood is sent to the Centers and stockpiled there in giant banks after the Legati have purified them. This, Vladimir Draco has told them, is to protect their blood against all the blood venoms out there seeking to kill the blood of Christ in everyone. (**DC 20**) There are several secret training camps where chosen members are taken for months at a time. They are supposedly trained in combat and sabotage. Those who pass become Centurions. Those who don't either never return or don't remember the experience. (**DC 22**) It seems some of those who failed Centurion training do remember snippets of their training. They remember where they were sent (a secret training facility in the wilderness) and remember at one point having their blood cleansed in a very painful process. That was prior to their mind wipe by Legati who could read thoughts.

## CENTURIONS

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Centurions are sent on a rigorous program that mirrors Special Forces training. For 10 weeks, recruits are trained, indoctrinated further, injected with (vampire) blood and evaluated by mind readers. The strong graduate into zealot foot soldiers while the weaker ones die, go mad from the blood, or are sent back into the rank-and-file with their memories wiped. Getting information from these enforcers and assassins is doubly difficult because in the end, they are strong and half-vampire themselves. (**DC 22**) The Legati are vampires, descended from the holiest of them all, Vladimir Draco. (**DC 24**) Draco himself drank the blood of Christ through one of his descendants, and was redeemed as a result. He's been a prophet of Christ since. (**DC 26**) Vladimir Draco is moving to the neighborhood to oversee local operations himself. He envisions the hero's home city as the heart of the new network.

## LEGATI

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These twelve full-fledged vampires act on Vladimir's behalf. They are powerful and difficult to break, but they are greedy. Some seek to usurp Vladimir's hold on the cult, others want to split off into a more militaristic cult. A few are loyal. These competing agendas have created a schism in the Cult. (**DC 22**) Draco claims that he once drank from the blood of Christ's descendants and that he's been reborn because of it. Certainly, he is powerful and has amassed much wealth. (**DC 24**) Vladimir Draco is out of touch with Western society and had to create the Legati to help him operate in its confines. He is preparing everything for his arrival into the area. (**DC 26**) Vladimir Draco is none other than Vlad Tepes himself, Vlad the Impaler, Dracula. The Legati know where he'll be and when.

## DRACULA AND THREAT REPORT

Note that the Dracula described here is not the same as the character from the *Threat Report* sourcebook, but a different interpretation of the legendary vampire. Gamemasters are free to use whichever version of the Count they prefer in their own series, or to mix-and-match elements from both. Perhaps "Dracula" is really the mythic *idea* of the suave vampire lord, and actually manifests in different forms and identities in the world. Truly destroying him would require actually destroying the very *concept* of Dracula, otherwise, he will return again and again. How do you fight and permanently destroy a legend?

## LODGE/RETREAT/CENTER/COMPOUND

Sneaking into any Sangreal property might reveal the following. Lodges and Retreats have little in the way of pertinent information, except for the names and addresses of Legionarii and Imaginifer, which in turn can lead characters to respected mid-level Immunes, Aquilifers and Medicus. Centers are better guarded with high security (DC 35) and contain information about high-ranking members like Milites Templi and Primus Pilus. They contain a giant refrigerated, state-of-the-art blood vault, a Centurion squad and a member of the Legati. Hacking their systems (DC 40) could reveal crucial data. The compounds, on the other hand, can be anything from secured apartment buildings to secret mountain bases. They are more easily infiltrated (DC 30) and contain barracks, mess halls, canteens, rec centers, a temple, etc. for its members. The secret compounds include training fields and a medical office for injecting and purging vampire blood, as well as a stock of vampire blood. Compounds are protected by armed guards, but the secret training camps are filled with armed Centurions.

## CONFLICT

Conflicts are more than just skirmishes with Centurions or Legati members. The Cult of Sangreal wields considerable influence thanks to their operations in Washington and they have lobbyists working on their behalf. They can exert political pressure against the heroes and bring law enforcement to bear against them (citing Freedom of Religion as their right to exist). Other heroes might be members of the cult and more than willing to prove their loyalty by stopping the characters. The same goes for villains.

Additionally, agencies like the FBI or ATF might be conducting an extensive operation to uncover the truth about Sangreal. They could be worried that the characters are drawing too much attention to themselves and endangering agents currently undercover.

## LOCATION

This cult is spread across the world and events can happen where convenient to the characters and the game's location. This means lodges in suburbia with hidden basements, centers with inaccessible floors and locked vaults, compounds on the edges of small towns, and secret training facilities in the wilderness. Even a newly purchased building to serve the needs of Vladimir Draco himself is an option.

## ADVERSARY

There are three enemies that will appear in this adventure arc. The first are Centurions, the second are Legati and the third is Dracula himself.

### COUNT DRACULA

The history books know the exploits of Vlad Tepes III well. He was born in 1431 in Sighisoara to the powerful Vlad Dracul. Later, Dracul tried to appease the powerful Turks by giving young Vlad III and his brother, Radu, over to the Sultan as hostages. The two boys spent time as prisoners of the Ottoman court before a spiteful Vlad managed to convince the Turks to let him assume power in recently conquered Wallachia. After being ousted from power, Vlad came to side against the Turks in numerous conflicts. In 1456, while the Hungarians invaded Serbia to oust the Ottomans, Vlad took Wallachia again.

Vlad III built Castle Dracula and murdered thousands of his own people, as many at 100,000 according to some accounts. His admirers say it was a terrible time for the lands and both crime and the treachery of the rival noble families were engendering the peace that Vlad III sought. His detractors, however, merely point to the manner in which he dispatched citizen and noble alike, impaling many of them slowly on spike through various orifices. This alone earned him history's attention and both his name as Vlad the Impaler and his reputation as a monster.

After losing his battles against the Turks and his first wife, Vlad fled to Hungary, where he was imprisoned again by a fearful king. Twelve years passed before he earned his release, and once again rose in power as Voivode. He married again and made preparations to war against Ottoman controlled Wallachia, and its ruler...his own brother Radu who had converted to Islam.

History's account of Vlad Tepes III stopped after he was killed near Bucharest in 1476. It was during the battle with the Turks, though whether it was them or his own men who did the deed is unknown. Vlad's head was sent to the Sultan as proof of his demise before his headless body was laid to rest at Snagov, an island monastery near Bucharest.

Stories, however, soon began circulating how the grave of Vlad was empty; that he'd risen as a monster; an antithesis to Christ's resurrection. Some people in the know whispered that followers of Vlad had found the Holy Grail and had poured its wine upon Vlad's body, returning him to life. Others say the Grail Legend was merely allegory for soldiers that stole his head from the Sultan and returned it to his body, thus returning him to life.

# COUNT DRACULA

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FRT	INT	AWE	PRE
7	-	5	5	10	5	4	7

## POWERS

**Blood Drain:** Weaken Stamina 12 (Resisted by Fortitude), Grab-based, Limited to draining one rank per round • 4 points

**Blood Link:** Mental Communication 3, Limited (anyone who drinks his blood); Mind Reading 5, Limited (anyone who drinks his blood) • 14 points

**Emotion Control:** Perception Ranged Cumulative Affliction 14 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated), Insidious, Subtle, Variable Descriptor (Emotions) • 59 points

- **Animal Control:** Summon Animals 2 (Bats, Rats, or Wolves), Horde, Mental Link, Multiple Minions 6 (64 minions) • 1 point

**Flight:** Flight 7 (250 MPH) • 14 points

**Shapechange:** Morph 2 (wolf or swarm) • 10 points

- **Mist Form:** Insubstantial 2 • 10 points

**Undead Invulnerability:** Immortality 6 (16 hours), Limited (not when staked or beheaded); Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects); Protection 10, Impervious, Limited (not against holy weapons) • 46 points

## SKILLS

Close Combat: Unarmed 10 (+20), Deception 4 (+11), Expertise: History 8 (+13), Insight 4 (+8), Intimidation 6 (+13), Perception 4 (+8), Persuasion 8 (+15), Stealth 4 (+9)

## ADVANTAGES

Connected, Contacts, Fascinate (Persuasion), Improved Hold, Improved Initiative, Jack-of-all-trades, Leadership, Minion 10, Power Attack, Startle

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +9

Emotion Control Perception Ranged, Affliction 14

Unarmed +20 Close, Damage 7

## DEFENSE

DODGE	16	FORTITUDE	Immune
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PARRY	16	TOUGHNESS	10/0*
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WILL	14	*Against holy weapons.	
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## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	16	SKILLS	25
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POWERS	149	DEFENSES	27
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ADVANTAGES	19	TOTAL	296
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## COMPLICATIONS

**Compulsions:** Count Dracula must be invited to enter a home.

**Dependence:** Dracula must feed on blood or weaken.

**Quirk:** Dracula casts no reflections.

**Weaknesses:** Dracula is vulnerable to sunlight (-1 Toughness per round until destroyed). He may be harmed by holy objects.



# CENTURIAN HALF-BLOODS

PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
5	5	5	5	10	2	2	4

## POWERS

**Half-Vampire:** Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), Limited to Half Effect; Protection 5; Regeneration 2 • 22 points

**Pack Link:** Mental Communication 1; Mind Reading 2; Senses 5 (Mental Communication Link 5—with teammates) • 13 points

## EQUIPMENT

**Arsenal:** Array (15 points)

- **Assault Rifle:** Ranged Multiattack Damage 5 • 15 points
  - **Heavy Pistol:** Ranged Attack 4 • 1 point
  - **Knife:** Strength-based Damage 1, Improved Critical • 1 point
- plus 10 points of other equipment

## SKILLS

Athletics 4 (+9), Expertise: Soldier 4 (+6), Expertise: Tactics 4 (+6), Insight 4 (+6), Intimidation 4 (+8), Investigation 4 (+6), Perception 4 (+6), Ranged Combat: Guns 4 (+14), Stealth 4 (+9), Vehicles 4 (+9)

Needless to say, Vlad Tepes had returned, though he never adopted the name Count Dracula until a writer named Bram Stoker stumbled upon his tale. Meanwhile, Vlad realized that he could no longer rule openly, that his enemies were many and his new nature would brand him as a monster in the eyes of Christendom. He sought to rule from the shadows, but that ended in near disaster when he turned too many people and his kind spread like a plague throughout Eastern Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Tales of vampires spread and Vlad barely survived the pogrom brought on by the Inquisition.

Over the centuries, Vlad has slept to escape his enemies and remained hidden. But power is never an easy thing to surrender and Vlad reemerged from time to time to manipulate matters from the shadows. The last time he awoke, Romania was not under Communist rule. He controlled the key Communists who thought they ruled the country. When the Soviet Empire fell, Vlad returned to the shadows and watched the growth and power of capitalism and the new sciences. It was then that he realized he needed to form a cult, an operating base centered on him with men of power at his disposal. He spent the next decade moving his pieces into position.

The Cult of Sangreal is possibly the most ambitious thing he's done, but Dracula is a victim of his own ego. He already places himself on level with Jesus Christ, equating his death and resurrection as proof of God's favor in him. He is the Holy Blood and Holy Grail as far as he's concerned. Unfortunately, there will come a time when he can no longer sit in the shadows and rule through proxies. His move to the heroes' region, to make more public appearances, is proof of that. And again, unfortunately, he is too powerful to easily learn from his mistakes and woe to any heroes who must fight him.

## ADVANTAGES

Close Attack 4, Equipment 7, Improved Hold, Power Attack, Ranged Attack 5, Startle, Teamwork

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +5

Assault Rifle +14	Ranged, Damage 5 (Multiattack)
Heavy Pistol +14	Ranged, Damage 4
Knife +14	Close, Damage 6 (Crit. 19-20)
Unarmed +14	Close, Damage 5

## DEFENSE

DODGE	9	FORTITUDE	10
PARRY	10	TOUGHNESS	10
WILL	9		

## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	76	SKILLS	20
POWERS	35	DEFENSES	16
ADVANTAGES	20	TOTAL	167

## COMPLICATIONS

**Weakness:** Centurions become impaired, and then disabled, if they go for more than a few days without vampire blood.

## CENTURIAN HALF-BLOODS

Centurion Half-Bloods are more than just Renfields. They've been fed and trained on a regimen of vampire blood until their cells and body have adapted to it. They are far superior in strength and ability than peak humans and they possess some vampiric powers from the process. They are the Legati's enforcers and assassins and while each of them has undergone the same process, they are mostly loyal to the Legati whose blood they received. Without a doubt, Dracula commands their attention and devotion, but in the party politics of the Sangreal's higher echelons, they serve only their direct masters. Even more fearsome than a single Half-Blood, however, is a pack of them working together. They must share the same Legati master, but those that do can communicate with one another telepathically. This makes them deadly in any encounter.

## LEGATI VAMPIRE

The Legati are not only twelve of the most powerful men in the Sangreal, Dracula chose them because they are captains in their industry, and their industries are modern (if not cutting edge). Bioengineering, computer, military corporations, politics, energy—each member of the Legati controls considerable assets. They are also sworn to serve Dracula as freshly created vampires, but that

# LEGATI VAMPIRE

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FRT	INT	AWE	PRE
6	-	4	4	6	5	4	4

## POWERS

**Blood Drain:** Weaken Stamina 9 (Resisted by Fortitude), Grab-based, Limited to draining one rank per round • 3 points

**Blood Link:** Mental Communication 2, Limited (anyone who drinks his blood); Mind Reading 3, Limited (anyone who drinks his blood) • 9 points

**Emotion Control:** Perception Ranged Cumulative Affliction 9 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated), Insidious, Subtle, Variable Descriptor (Emotions) • 39 points

**Levitation:** Flight 5 (60 MPH) • 10 points

**Mist Form:** Insubstantial 2 • 10 points

**Undead Invulnerability:** Immortality 2 (1 week), Limited (not when staked or beheaded); Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects); Protection 7, Impervious, Limited (not against holy weapons) • 39 points

## SKILLS

Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+10), Deception 4 (+8), Expertise (one field) 8 (+13), Insight 4 (+8), Intimidation 4 (+8), Investigation 4 (+9), Perception 4 (+8), Persuasion 4 (+8), Stealth 4 (+8)

## ADVANTAGES

Connected, Contacts, Fascinate (Persuasion), Improved Hold, Minion 5, Power Attack, Startle

doesn't mean they've remained loyal. Everyone is vying to become alpha of the pack and it's only natural considering that each one of these individuals were driven and competitive before Dracula turned them. Now they are even hungrier for power and they'll use their companies and contacts to their fullest.

## FINALE

This is a lengthy arc if played correctly, but taking down the cult will be a messy affair. Many rich and powerful people will be publically humiliated and they will place the blame squarely on the heroes. If the Legati are ousted

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +4

Unarmed +10

Close, Damage 6

## DEFENSE

DODGE	12	FORTITUDE	Immune
PARRY	12	TOUGHNESS	7/0*
WILL	10	*Against holy weapons.	

## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	56	SKILLS	20
POWERS	110	DEFENSES	20
ADVANTAGES	11	TOTAL	217

## COMPLICATIONS

**Compulsions:** The Legati must be invited to enter a home.

**Dependence:** The Legati must feed on blood or weaken.

**Quirk:** The Legati cast no reflections.

**Weaknesses:** The Legati vulnerable to sunlight (-1 Toughness per round until destroyed). They may be harmed by holy objects.

as vampires, their stocks will plummet and hundreds of people may lose their jobs (more future villains the heroes must worry about). This is not to mention the spin-off cults that will arise from this event and the people desperately seeking vampire blood to turn them into supermen.

The Gamemaster can also play with the idea that Dracula is forward thinking enough to plan for such events. He may keep a blood virus ready for release that turns people into mindless vampires, hungry for blood and carriers of the virus (hence the private vaults where he's kept clean blood for himself); he might have hostages. Dracula may be arrogant, but he isn't foolish. He will have planned for things like superheroes. Just what that entails is up to the Gamemaster.



# CHAPTER 5: ARCADE

*"You will suffer," the creature hissed, grey robes fluttering about its desiccated form, chains tightening along its leathery skin. Its lips were pulled back into a permanent curtain of yellowing teeth, its eyes covered by bandages, and stringy white hair emerging in wisps from beneath its cowl. "How you will suffer."*

*Dutch approached the cell and with a meaty finger tapped the aluminum oxynitride glass. The holding runes glittered lightly around his fingertip before vanishing. "Yo, Gruel," Dutch said. "That your name? Gruel?"*

*"You know well that is my name. Gruel the Punisher. Gruel the Destroyer. Gruel the—"*

*"The Breakfast Porridge?"*

*"What?"*

*"Breakfast porridge. It's what Granma used to cook me way back when. Made me the big boy I am," Dutch said proudly, tapping his flexed ham-sized bicep.*

*"You dare mock my name?" Gruel asked. The cell grew darker and the temperature chilled a few degrees, sparking the mandala of runes hidden on the armored glass cell wall. "Were it not for this arcane tapestry—"*

*"You'd what? Get your butt kicked again? Right now, this magic wall is the only thing savin' you from my Colt... Betsie." he said, tapping the glass with the nickel-plated revolver that he whisked from its holster. "Yeah, it's a cow's name, but it was the only cow I got growin' up."*

*"But—"*

*"But nothin'. Any more guff out of you and I will pistol whip you silly. Do you want Betsie pistol-whippin' you again?"*

*When the creature did not respond, Dutch turned to the blue-jumpsuit ARCADE Security guards standing by the door and nodded. "All yours, boys. Drop him in the Gut. Just make sure you don't misplace him this time."*

ARCADE, known in a precious few circles as The American Research Center for the Arcane Defense of Earth, is an ultra-secret, Federally-run organization. Their mandate is to study and catalog paranormal activity within the United States, although ally nations have benefited from their services whether they've realized it or not.

## INSIDE THE ARCADE

No organization called ARCADE exists as far as the general public is concerned and financing is kept off the books through shell companies and seized assets (ranging from Columbian drug lords to Saudi terrorist financers). They are attached to the F.B.I., even though their existence is known only to the F.B.I.'s Director. When one director steps down, his memory of the organization is "sanitized" and the new director is brought up to speed.

ARCADE maintains extensive contacts with magicians, curators, private collectors, and all manner of esoteric artifact dealers across the world. They handle supernatural threats using a group of gifted individuals and keep everyone safe from whatever goes bump in the night. Their occult library is reputedly equal to the Vatican archives and certainly greater than most private collections. In fact, it isn't uncommon for ARCADE to "procure" dangerous tomes of magic and information through theft if they deem them too great a threat in the hands of a private citizen.

At its core, however, ARCADE is a bit of a schismatic organization with a definitive split between those operatives fully versed in the supernatural and those who collect a paycheck and are good at what they do. Others see it as bureaucracy versus intuition. Despite this line, ARCADE has done plenty of good behind the scenes.

# THE GRAVITY OF BALANCE

The Gravity of Balance is a powerful spell that ensures only two hundred people at any one time know of the existence of ARCADE. One hundred and eighty are members of the organization, while the remaining twenty are vetted outsiders. The spell actually stops more people from knowing about the organization. In order to let one person know ARCADE exists, someone else has to have their memories cleaned to "make space." The spell also causes people to forget they encountered ARCADE agents, though it doesn't destroy non-sanctioned evidence. Thus, while photos and documents sometimes slip through the cracks and appear to the public, nobody but the odd tabloid or conspiracy theorist takes any interest in them (and they generally get the facts wrong).

That said, the Gravity of Balance doesn't affect some supernatural entities and the more powerful magic-users, who have defenses against it. The organization has enemies who know about it, but anyone they tell quickly forgets about ARCADE and what they've learned (unless said magic-user has a way to inhibit the Gravity of Balance's effect).

Vetted individuals who know about ARCADE and are protected from the Gravity of Balance include the FBI's director, the US President and Vice-President, and the Attorney General. These individuals are also removed from the list when they leave office, meaning they'll remember nothing of the organization. This leaves plenty of room for other politicians and NPCs to inhabit the remaining 16 slots, as the series dictates.

The Gravity of Balance does not have game traits: it's a plot device to further the ARCADE series. It's left up to the GM to decide where the organization got the spell, how they maintain it (if at all), and how it can be resisted. You may also want to change the effect of the Gravity of Balance so it affects a different number of people, allowing ARCADE to have a larger or smaller pool of resources for the organization to draw upon.

# HISTORY OF ARCADE

In the dusk of WWII, when the Russians, Americans, and British raced for Berlin like wildfire with a purpose, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) coordinated a commando strike against Castle Wewelsburg, Heinrich Himmler's SS stronghold in Westphalia. With Germany's mounting losses, the Allies received intelligence relating to Operation: Totenkopfringe. Himmler had reputedly collected over 11,000 Death Head rings from fallen SS officers and soldiers and was about to use a ritual to draw upon their ghosts to create an army of spirits. Or undead. The intelligence was vague.

The natural choice for the raid was Sergeant Leroy Dutch, a bruiser with a reputation for getting tangled up in one nasty supernatural affair after another. They did stop Himmler's ritual, although the fight was a nasty zombie-infested mess. Most of his unit died, then rose as undead, and had to be put down again. The records of the operation were classified and summarily "lost." While Dutch remained tight-lipped about the matter, the fact was something had happened to change the four survivors of his unit.



## ARCADE AND THE WORLD OF FREEDOM

Given the nature of the Gravity of Balance, it's possible ARCADE exists in the World of Freedom setting of Freedom City and Emerald City, and precious few people know of its existence. The Freedom League could have fought side-by-side with Dutch and other ARCADE agents and then forgotten about it. Only insightful individuals like Eldrich and other strong-willed or mystically-empowered types might know about them, but who'd believe them, much less remember the conversation? ARCADE might approach heroes like Eldrich, Seven, or Thomas Rhymer for help on a case-by-case basis, but for the most part local heroes know magical villains well enough that ARCADE lets them deal with those problems while they handle the more hidden, subversive threats.

The war ended and the OSS became the CIA. That's when supernatural troubles began popping up across North America, ranging from reckless GIs robbing mystical artifacts from Nazi strongholds, to Japanese and SS saboteurs unleashing mystical "revenge" attacks, to Russian spies using their increased expertise with psychic phenomenon. Dutch and his gang of misfits were sent to deal with the problems before any "capes" could interfere and inadvertently spill national secrets (or trigger the Apocalypse). Over the course of several years, the newly-minted Bureau of Supernatural Affairs handled the problems as best they could, although they always seemed one step behind the problem.

The BSA tried operating below the radar until an overzealous Senator Joseph McCarthy (at the height of his popularity) was said to be investigating collusion between the US Government and a "bureau of monsters." The BSA was swiftly dismantled, though many knew McCarthy's investigation was being used as an excuse to hide the growing friction between the BSA and elements in Washington that were uncomfortable with the "monster squad."

Throughout the 1950s and '60s, it was left to the capes and vigilantes to handle supernatural threats and the government adopted a policy that bordered on willful ignorance of the issues. It wasn't until the early 1970s, however, that the FBI caught wind of a terrorist plot being conducted by sleeper cells inside the United States. When FBI agents attempted to arrest the Communist agents in a massive sweep, they were outmatched by terrorists, who'd been given shapeshifting abilities. Dutch and the surviving member of the Totenkopfringe were brought in to help resolve the matter secretly, which they did successfully. Following the incident, and with more supernatural threats on the horizon, the BSA was resurrected as a secret branch of the FBI, under the name ARCADE.

Since that time, ARCADE has remained a hidden division of the FBI. With the Gravity of Balance spell in place, they managed to maintain their secret and relocate their operations to various bases. As time or attacks on ARCADE necessitated, they've moved their central HQ at least four times. Presently, they are situated in New Orleans. ARCADE used the chaos in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to build a facility under the city using the abandoned lair of a mystical villain known as Papa ze Rouge. This caused friction within the bureau over whether they should have picked a less tragic moment to spend money that could have gone to various New Orleans projects and charities, and it almost resulted in Dutch quitting the ARCADE initiative. He was convinced to stay on...for now.

## ORGANIZATION

ARCADE operates with a total of 180 personnel (thanks to the Gravity of Balance spell) which includes support personnel like secretaries, drivers, and researchers. They often refer to themselves as a mobile field office, meaning they don't operate with a specific jurisdiction.

The following individuals comprise the hierarchy of ARCADE. The one requirement for personnel at this level is that they have had contact with the supernatural. They have to be open-minded to prevent friction between the mystical and bureaucratic elements of ARCADE. As a result, the field office tends to attract quirky characters and personalities.

### ASSISTANT DIRECTOR IN CHARGE, FBI-ARCADE

Assistant Director for ARCADE is **Cortney Vance**. She is the direct pipeline to the FBI's current director and the contact with the affairs and happenings of ARCADE. The Assistant Director has limited autonomy, so she can act when time is critical, but many of her cases come directly from the FBI's Director. She is responsible for reviewing mission debriefings and managing the bureaucratic affairs of ARCADE through assistants and bureaucrats.

### SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE, RESEARCH & INTELLIGENCE

**Special Agent Miles Sanchez** is in charge of researching, correlating data, and preparing briefing packets for the investigation teams. His division is an odd mix of historians and scientists and it's reputed that Miles has psychometric powers; the ability to read an object's history, specifically. Research & Intelligence maintains ARCADE's archives and extensive library. They are in the process of transcribing books to digital media, but accidents happen when the magics from this tome or that encyclopedia demonstrate exactly why recording them is dangerous. They also run a small forensics/alchemy lab, but anything mundane is generally sent to a nearby field office or local CSI office for examination and identification.

### SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE, COMMUNICATIONS

**Special Agent Kendra Hays** is in charge of communications, which does more than maintain contact with the outside world. Kendra's team is in charge of collecting data and listening to news sources and Law Enforcement chatter for any potential supernatural activity. When they find a lead or potential case, it goes directly to Assistant Director Cortney Vance. Vance then decides whether to

## TEAM FOUR OPTION

If the player characters want to get involved in ARCADE, there's certainly room for them. It's easy to include an extra five or six characters within the Gravity of Balance. Characters can form a fourth team for an overtaxed ARCADE and its agents, or the characters can replace a missing team (reporting to either Dutch or Dufay). Perhaps one of the teams vanished on a mission, or maybe Dutch got tired of the bureaucracy and left ARCADE, taking his very loyal team with him. There's plenty of space for them in the organization and opportunity for them to take the spotlight.

deal with the matter or speak with the FBI's Director for further clarification.

## SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE, LOGISTICS

**Special Agent Devin Brown** is in charge of transportation and provisions for the ARCADE base in New Orleans. Anything from the motor pool to the kitchen goods to office supplies goes through him and his staff first. His division is a purely bureaucratic one with little direct exposure to the supernatural. Where an investigative team is most likely to encounter Logistics personnel is through the pilots and drivers who ferry agents to their missions. Special Agent Brown is an ex-Navy chopper pilot who sometimes transports Dutch and his team into sticky situations. Any flights for the team are handled through isolated hangers at the Naval Air Station outside of New Orleans.

## SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE, INVESTIGATION

**Special Agent Angelique Dufay** is in charge of the two investigative units, but mostly because Leroy Dutch can't be bothered with all the red tape involved in running teams. Dufay handles Team One and Two, which consist of highly trained agents without powers. Team Three, led by Dutch, consists of members with paranormal abilities. The difference between the first two teams and the third is night and day, with Dufay tackling everything by the numbers and Dutch's approach more rough-and-tumble. Generally, the teams operate as field units, running investigations, tracking down threats, and handling them. If the organization were larger, the teams might have a more specific role, but as it stands, everyone has to be a bit of an expert in everything.

## SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE, INCARCERATION & SECURITY

Forget about any max security brickhouse. ARCADE's prisoners are too dangerous for most prisons and **Special Agent Tony Fong** knows how to keep them in line. Fong runs the incarceration wing of ARCADE, fondly known as "the Gut." It's his responsibility to keep his supernatural wards on lockdown and to keep an active eye on preempting and thwarting attempted escapes. They do happen, but rarely under Fong's watchful gaze. Fong's team also provides on-base security for ARCADE and in-field support for Dufay's units, often taking cap-

tured prisoners into custody and transporting them. Any humans involved in events are turned over to the FBI since mundane prisoners will never remember who captured them.

## SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE, ARMORY

**Special Agent Elaine Noble** is in charge of the Armory, which cares for and distributes the firearms used by Incarceration and Investigation. It is the job of her and her specialists to know the strength and weaknesses of supernatural critters and to keep a stockpile of normal and exotic weaponry/ammunition to handle any situation immediately. If they can't procure something directly, they know where to find the necessary materials to build it.

## MEDICAL WING

**Dr. Abhay Rajawat** heads the medical wing of ARCADE, which tends to the sick and wounded. It also studies, examines, and researches the strange creatures ARCADE encounters or captures. If Research & Intelligence handles the material side, the Medical Wing is in charge of the biological front. Dr. Rajawat maintains contact with the CDC and USAMRIID, and employs pre-eminent doctors, scientists, and crypto-zoologists. His team also includes a medicine man well-versed in mystical and tribal approaches to medicine.

## CONSTRUCTION

Due to ongoing construction and maintenance of the ARCADE base, they've hired a small construction crew under the able skill of engineer and foreman Joseph Drucker. Joseph and his crew work to keep the facility in top form and to plan expansions with Assistant Director Vance. It isn't easy, however, working outside the security of the base and several workers have quit after seeing or hearing things inside. Joseph, however, has no wish to have his memory wiped, and does his damndest to stay useful. It's also the best paying gig he's ever had.

## LEROY DUTCH

Leroy Dutch may not look it, but he comes from a long line of hunters who've fought and dealt with the supernatural. Dutch, as he prefers to be called, watched his parents fall to a vampire pack plaguing Kansas in the late '20s. Luckily, his grandmother was there to kill the vampires and stake his turned parents. She raised Dutch and trained him to fight, eventually turning the family heirloom (a Colt revolver) over to him. The Colt, a magical artifact, is capable of firing rounds even if the chambers were empty and the bullets pack a wallop.

Dutch fell into the family business quickly, though he was unusual in one regard. "The Sight" normally comes to women in his family, but Dutch inherited the gift of precognition. Some relatives joked it was because he was frail as a boy, but when puberty came, Dutch hit it harder than it hit him. He bloomed into a strong, thick-armed teen many mistook for being years older. In fact, when Pearl

# LEROY DUTCH

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FRT	INT	AWE	PRE
7	7	3	3	5	3	4	2

## POWERS

**Altered:** Enhanced Strength 3; Enhanced Stamina 3; Immunity 2 (Aging, Disease); Protection 2; Regeneration 2; Persistent • 20 points  
**Betsie the Colt Revolver:** Ranged Damage 5, Easily Removable (Only Usable by Dutch, -3 points) • 7 points  
**The Sight:** Senses 4 (Precognition) • 4 points

## SKILLS

Athletics 5 (+12), Close Combat: Unarmed 5 (+10), Expertise: History 5 (+8), Expertise: Magic 5 (+8), Intimidation 8 (+10), Investigation 8 (+11), Perception 6 (+10), Vehicles 4 (+7)

## ADVANTAGES

All-out Attack, Chokehold, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Evasion, Fearless, Leadership, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 7, Takedown, Taunt

## OFFENSE

### INITIATIVE +3

Betsie +10	Ranged, Damage 5
Unarmed +10	Close, Damage 7

## DEFENSE

DODGE	9	FORTITUDE	10
PARRY	10	TOUGHNESS	9
WILL	9		

## POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	56	SKILLS	23
POWERS	31	DEFENSES	22
ADVANTAGES	18	TOTAL	150

## COMPLICATIONS

**Supernatural Inheritance:** Dutch's family has been involved with the supernatural since before he was born. It seems draw to him, and him to it.

**Old Debts:** Dutch has accumulated some debts over the years, to old friends and old enemies alike. In particular, he wants to help his old comrade Anthony Miles, but strongly suspects that help will have to come in the form of a bullet in Miles' brainpan.

Harbor drew the States into WWII, Dutch enlisted at 16. Nobody ever discovered his real age.

Despite the war being fought around him, Dutch used his gift of sight to unearth the monsters reveling in the slaughter. He quickly developed a reputation for attracting the supernatural, but the fact was that he always steered toward it. Soon the OSS was promoting Dutch and sending him and his men into harm's way whenever they heard about the Nazis cooking up some scheme. The final mission was the attack on Castle Wewelsburg, to stop Operation: Totenkopfringe from happening.



Although Dutch never discussed the events of the mission beyond the initial debriefing, Totenkopfringe was an unmitigated disaster. The ritual was completed and Himmler's theurgists were stuffing angered spirits into the bodies of dead Nazis. Dutch was mortally wounded, his team near dead or dying, when a spirit tried to inhabit him. It nearly succeeded, but he fought it off. Along with three other Allied soldiers, he managed to kill the theurgists and destroy the rings controlling the undead. They'd won, but at a terrible cost. Dutch (and the others) was physically changed by the event. He was not only stronger and tougher, but long lived, aging far more slowly than those around him.

Since that time, Dutch has continued fighting the supernatural, whether alone or with a team. He's known to disappear for as long as two years at a time while pursuing private vendettas and cases, but he always returns—a bit battered and bruised, but otherwise healthy. Unfortunately, the Totenkopfringe incident never stopped altering his three compatriots. Dutch's early brush with the supernatural made him immune to whatever degenerative effect his friends suffered. Over the years, he was forced to hunt down and kill two of them. The third, Anthony Miles, who helped with the Red Cell incident and joined ARCADE at its inception, has since gone rogue. Dutch is hunting for Anthony, but continues to work with ARCADE in the hope he can rehabilitate the second-to-last surviving member of the WWII raid. All indications are, however, that whatever is affecting Anthony is also making him more powerful, more monstrous, and more bloodthirsty.

## THE NEW ORLEANS BASE

Thanks to New Orleans's high water table, building under the city was considered impossible. When ARCADE fought a New Orleans hougan for the Petro known as Papa ze Rouge, they discovered he was a much older African sorcerer responsible for betraying many of his people to European slave traders. Papa ze Rouge had built a lair far beneath the city in a portion of caves and rough hewn passages more ancient than the city above it or Papa himself.

Papa ze Rouge was seemingly killed in the battle with Dutch and Dufay's teams, and ARCADE appropriated the location and its mysteries. Since then, they've managed to expand the lair to accommodate their needs, though the base itself is still fraught with its mysteries. There are sections sealed off because nobody has explored them fully yet and because they haven't been modernized to fit ARCADE's needs.

Access to the base is through one of four secured tunnels, though Assistant Director Vance fears there may be more in the unexplored sections. Two smaller tunnels link directly to the city above, with one located in the basement of a building in the French Quarter and the second in a Spanish Vault in St. Louis No. 2 Cemetery. The third is a larger tunnel connected to an abandoned and forgotten maintenance bunker nestled in the roots of the City Park oaks. This is the main supply line for ARCADE, especially

for the larger prefab items used to build the base. The last tunnel is the largest and is connected to Lake Pontchartrain in the north, though ARCADE doesn't currently have the means to take advantage of the water passage.

The base has three primary sections:

- The first is the base proper, spread across 1500 feet of cave and carved passages. ARCADE's New Orleans base is a mixture of caves overlaid with support girders, floor plating and wall sectionals. In parts, it appears very modern, where modular rooms were imported and built for the labs and libraries. Large vault doors separate sections as well as the base proper from the uninhabited sections undergoing conversion and exploration.
- The second contains chambers and caverns. Some are partially collapsed, and others are in the process of being explored. The labyrinth complex may spread over miles, but ARCADE is still in the process of moving in. When they are done, they'll do more to explore the adjoining areas. Unfortunately, this section has developed a reputation for being haunted, even if that hasn't bothered many agents within the organization.
- The third section, called the Gut, is a mile below the base proper and is connected to the New Orleans facility through a single elevator. Initially, the pulley platform used by Papa ze Rouge was operated by his zombies, with the Gut serving as his holding corral for the undead. ARCADE has since laid the zombies to rest, installed a mine-shaft elevator for heavy cargo and built a prison in the Gut. Should the prisoners escape en masse, the shaft is rigged with explosives to collapse it, hopefully sparing New Orleans from a plague of monsters.

### ARCADE NEW ORLEANS BASE

20 POINTS

**Size:** Gargantuan **Toughness:** 10 **Features:** Communications, Computer, Concealed, Fire Prevention System, Garage, Gym, Holding Cells, Infirmary, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Power System, Security System, Workshop.

## FUN & MAYHEM WITH ARCADE

Gamemasters can incorporate the heroes with ARCADE in one of two ways: either as an ongoing series or as occasional NPCs with whom the characters interact.

### OCCASIONAL INTERACTION

It is possible the heroes might encounter ARCADE agents, but without some means to counteract the Gravity of Balance spell, they may not remember it. It wouldn't be inconceivable for the GM to retrofit game adventures, with the heroes running through a current adventure at the same time they run through flashbacks concerning previous encounters with ARCADE.

Another option is the characters are either allowed to remember their dealings with the organization or they

get their hands on something that protects them from the Gravity of Balance (perhaps a villain who is using the heroes as cat's-paws to investigate the organization for him?). ARCADE wouldn't be above working with heroes toward a mutually beneficial goal even though the risk of distrust between the two will be high.

Ways characters and ARCADE might interact in this manner:

- The characters begin remembering snippets of previous encounters with ARCADE (though the spotty memory might paint them as mysterious or even sinister) as something works to unravel the Gravity of Balance spell.
- An encounter with zombies, or Papa ze Rouge himself, leads the characters to his former New Orleans base, where they find ARCADE ensconced.
- The characters are investigating a series of supernatural incidents with far-reaching implications. ARCADE might try to steal their information or contact them to work together, but they need each other as ARCADE and the heroes each have possession of critical data.
- A villain with memory of ARCADE plants false clues in the team's path that lead them to the doorstep of ARCADE. He hopes ARCADE's secretive nature will work against them and that the heroes can distract the organization long enough for him to launch his plans.

## ONGOING SERIES

In ongoing series, the heroes are part of ARCADE, though possibly after being independent first. This style of game can be like any typical horror game, but with greater potential emphasis on investigation and NPC interaction. The characters would have the backing of the Federal government, making it easier to avoid problems with LEOs (Law Enforcement Officers) in general.

Games of this nature have the war on the front and the war at home. On the front, the battles depend on the series premise and Gamemaster. Are the sessions episodic or season-long story arcs? Is it about the danger to people or danger to the entire world? ARCADE as an initiative works regardless. For the war at home, however, characters may be dealing with the drama of NPCs, love lives, and inter-office politicking. They may also have to deal with a by-the-books organization mired in the red tape of Washington politics. What happens if a monster is also providing valuable intelligence against America's enemies? What happens if revealing a ring of influential cultists might also damage the international standing of the United States?

The Gamemaster can avoid these types of issues, though they do add levels of conspiracy and byzantine maneuvering to a series that may otherwise lack those elements. Basic series elements might involve:

### INVESTIGATION

The series might include delving into ARCADE's library, talking to contacts, and running evidence by Research & Intelligence or the Medical Wing in pursuit of clues to solve mysteries and supernatural cold cases.

### CLEARANCE

The surrounding cave system is expansive enough to offer any type or level of challenge for characters. Missing work crews, strange apparitions, zombies appearing from forgotten pits, even the initial bid to secure the caverns for an ARCADE base, offer much adventure opportunity.

### CONSPIRACY

With the Federal Government involved in the running of ARCADE, there's always the possibility of conspiracy. All it requires is three little words...Need To Know. Is the government helping or hiding something? Is there a black ops version of ARCADE running around out there, willing to kill without question or hesitation? Is there more than one "level" to the Gravity of Balance, keeping even members of ARCADE unaware of some things?

### PERSONAL DRAMA

The base offers a roster of recurring NPCs and interactions for the characters. Love interests, spies, ambitious rivals, social enemies, and best friends are waiting to be made and played out. This offers a second avenue for adventures if said individuals are threatened, or something of their past comes back to haunt them.

### SECURITY

Despite the Gravity of Balance, there are threats to the security and secrecy of ARCADE: magicians immune to the mind-wiping spell, strong-willed heroes investigating them, the presence of monsters in the Gut, etc.

### ...AND TAKING NAMES

And then, of course, there are the cases to solve, the villains to uncover, and the bad guys to beat that form the majority of the adventure of an ARCADE operative. Characters might be involved in tracking monsters to uncover deeper secrets or going undercover to solve crimes. The sky's the limit here.

# INDEX

## A

Abilities	7–11, 23–27
Ability Benchmarks	28
Acidic Secretions (effect)	111
Acidic Spit (effect)	111
Acidic Spray (effect)	112
Age of Information	20
Alien Pantheons	97–104
Alluring Packages	110–111
<i>Beautiful and Dangerous</i>	111
<i>Captivating Critter</i>	111
<i>Charismatic Creature</i>	111
<i>Pure Charm</i>	110
Ambusher (package)	111
Angelique Dufay	146
Angel (template)	46
Appendage Grab (effect)	112
ARCADE	143–149
<i>History</i>	144–145
<i>New Orleans Base</i>	148
<i>Organization</i>	145
<i>Series</i>	149
Archetypes	
<i>Hero</i>	34–43
<i>Monster</i>	114–123
Armageddon	21

## B

Bastet (template)	49
Batter (effect)	112
Beast, the (template)	47
Berserker (package)	111

## C

Case Files	127–141
<i>Bandwidth</i>	128–130
<i>Orphan Killer</i>	133–136
<i>The Blood Cult</i>	136–141
Centurion Half-Bloods	140
Chameleon (defense)	112
Chameleon-Particle Grenade	33
Claw (effect)	112
Clippings	124–127
Cold Aura (effect)	112
Cold War	19–20
Colonization & Imperialism	16
Combat Machine (package)	111
Complications	29–30
Corruption	65–69
<i>Acquiring</i>	65
<i>Effects of</i>	65–66
<i>Limits</i>	66
<i>Removing</i>	66
<i>Types</i>	65
Cortney Vance	145
Count Dracula	139–140
Crime Scene Investigation	50–52

Crusades	16
Cults	101–104
Cunning Packages	110
<i>Cunning Critter</i>	110
<i>High Awareness</i>	110
<i>High Intellect</i>	110
<i>Mental Mixture</i>	110
Cursed Adventurer	
(archetype)	36, 37
Curse Sworn (complication)	29
Customized (feature)	33

## D

Damage Berserker (defense)	112
Damage Berserker	
Plus (defense)	112
Dark Emissary (archetype)	114, 116
Databases	53
Deep Spawn	133
Degrees of Separation	81
Demon (template)	46
Devin Brown	146
Dirty Thirties	19
Doppelganger (template)	49
Dr. Abhay Rajawat	146
Drawing Parallels	24

## E

Eaters of Stars	21
Ecto-Lance	33
Ectoplasmic Harpoon	33
Elaine Noble	146
Energy Deflection (defense)	112
Energy Form (defense)	112
Entangle (effect)	112
Equipment	30–32
Etheric Blade	33
Ex-Cape (archetype)	36, 38
External Investigation	25

## F

Familiar (template)	45
Fast Healer (defense)	112
Fear	64–65
<i>Fearlessness</i>	64
Fifties Paranoia	19
Flashbacks (complication)	29
Flesh Sculptor (archetype)	115, 118

## G

Garlic Spray	30
Gaseous Form (defense)	112
Genre	7
Ghost (template)	50
Global Flooding	104–106
Gods	98–101
<i>Arachnids</i>	98
<i>Fungi</i>	99

Insects	100
Golem (template)	45
Gravity of Balance	144

## H

Hard to Hurt (defense)	112
Haunted Houses	112–114
<i>Abilities</i>	113
<i>Advantages</i>	113
<i>Skills</i>	113
<i>Toughness</i>	113
Haunted Location (advantage)	113
Hit-And-Run (package)	111
Holy Book	30
Holy Symbol	30
Holy Water	31
Horror Types	55–59
<i>Alien Invasion</i>	56
<i>Allegorical</i>	55, 58–59
<i>Natural</i>	56, 60
<i>Post-Apocalyptic</i>	56
<i>Psychological</i>	55, 57–58
<i>Scientific</i>	56, 60
<i>Sociological</i>	55, 56–57
<i>Supernatural</i>	56, 59
Humor	72
Hunter (template)	44
Hybrid (template)	44

## I

Immortal (template)	46
Immune (defense)	112
I, Monster	82
Impact Winter	106–107
Impregnate (effect)	112
Improved Reflexive Immunity	
(defense)	112
Incorporeal (defense)	112
Industrial Age	17
Infected (archetype)	115, 119
Infected Hero (archetype)	36, 39
Inferior Invisibility (defense)	112
Infiltrator (package)	111
Infiltrator (template)	45
Influence	89–90
Information Gathering	52–53
Inhuman Juggernaut	
(archetype)	115, 117
Ink Cloud (defense)	112
Inquisition	16
Interrupts	24–25
Investigator (package)	111
Iron Dagger	31

## K

Kendra Hays	145
Kirlian Colors	32
<i>Emotional</i>	32

Physical.....	32
Special .....	32
Spiritual.....	32
Kirlian Rod.....	33

**L**

Legati Vampire.....	140-141
Leroy Dutch .....	146-148
Lethal Immunity (defense).....	112
Lull (effect) .....	112
Lycanthrope (template) .....	49

**M**

Madness.....	67
Mad Science Hybrid (template).....	47
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs .....	79
Massacre Survivor (archetype)....	36, 40
Matter Deflection (defense).....	112
Miles Sanchez .....	145
Mire (effect) .....	112
Mirror Neurons .....	80
Monster Hunter (archetype)....	36, 41
Monster Power Plays .....	72-78
Adapt .....	73
Attacking the Hero's Emotions .....	77-78
Attacking the Hero's Mental State.....	74-77
Attacking the Hero's Physical Weaknesses .....	73-74
Greater Power Level.....	72
Immunities.....	72-73
Linked .....	73
Overwhelm.....	73
Scenarios.....	62-64

Monstrous (complication).....	30
Mr. Clown! (archetype) .....	115, 120
Mummy (template).....	48
Muslim Conquest .....	16
Mutation.....	67
Mythic Age.....	16-17
Mythic Weakness (complication)....	29
Compulsion .....	29
Contract .....	29
Natural Element .....	30
Natural Enemy .....	29
Obvious Nature .....	30
Weapons .....	30
Mythology.....	92-96
Figures of.....	95-96
Myth Pattern .....	93
Myths .....	93-95
Rebirth.....	92-93

**N**

Nazis.....	19
New Science .....	17
New Temple Guardian (archetype).....	36, 42
Nimble Packages .....	109-110
Mental Mix w/Nimble .....	110
Nimble Critter.....	110

Nimble Only .....	110
Physical Mix w/Nimble .....	110
Noble Monster (archetype).....	36, 43

**I**

Occult Tech .....	33
Organizations .....	86-92
History .....	88-89
Public Face .....	91-92
Rationale .....	86-88
Secret .....	90-91
Structure .....	91
Orphan Maker.....	135

**P**

Paralyzing Bite (effect).....	112
Part-Time Campaigns.....	61-64
Phantom Army of Limbs (effect) .....	112
Phobia (complication) .....	30
Powerful Bite (effect).....	112
Power Levels.....	26-28
Heroes of Legend.....	27-28
Normals .....	26
Pulp Heroes .....	26-27
Super Heroes .....	27

Powers .....	113-114
Protection Field (defense) .....	112
Proton Shredder .....	33
Psychokinetic Barrier.....	33
Puff Up (defense) .....	112
Pulp Age .....	18-19

**Q**

Questioning.....	52-53
------------------	-------

**R**

Rawhide Tough (defense) .....	112
Reflexive Immunity (defense) .....	112
Regenerative Absorption (defense) .....	112
Regenerative Absorption Plus (defense) .....	112
Roaring Twenties .....	18
Robot (template) .....	45

**S**

Saboteur (package) .....	111
Salt .....	31
Salt Buckshot.....	31
Scaly Tough (defense) .....	112
Scorpion Stinger (effect) .....	112
Scout (package) .....	111
Screech (effect) .....	112
Series Styles.....	7-15

Altered History .....	13-14
A Touch of Horror .....	7
Children of Myth .....	11-12
Enslaved .....	14-15
Monster of the Week .....	8-9
Post-Apocalyptic .....	9-10
Post-Humanity .....	10

Science Amok.....	12-13
-------------------	-------

The Ancient Ones .....	10-11
------------------------	-------

Seventies Upheaval .....	19
--------------------------	----

Shimmer (defense) .....	112
-------------------------	-----

Silver Bullets .....	31
----------------------	----

Silver Dagger .....	31
---------------------	----

Skin-Rider (template) .....	50
-----------------------------	----

Sleeping Gods Lie .....	130-133
-------------------------	---------

Slice (effect) .....	112
----------------------	-----

Stakes .....	32
--------------	----

Steampunk .....	17
-----------------	----

Strong Packages .....	110
-----------------------	-----

High Stamina .....	110
--------------------	-----

High Strength .....	110
---------------------	-----

Suffocating Spit (effect) .....	112
---------------------------------	-----

Super-Dense (defense) .....	112
-----------------------------	-----

Superior Deflection (defense) .....	112
-------------------------------------	-----

Superior Invisibility (defense) .....	112
---------------------------------------	-----

Supernatural Slasher (archetype) .....	115, 121
---	----------

Surge .....	130
-------------	-----

Surveillance .....	52
--------------------	----

By Vehicle .....	52
------------------	----

In a Building .....	52
---------------------	----

On Foot .....	52
---------------	----

Swarmer (template) .....	45
--------------------------	----

**I**

Technology Awry .....	21
-----------------------	----

Templates .....	44-50
-----------------	-------

Alien .....	44-45
-------------	-------

Artificial Life .....	45
-----------------------	----

Celestial .....	45-46
-----------------	-------

Gestalt .....	46-47
---------------	-------

Risen .....	47-48
-------------	-------

Shapeshifter .....	48-50
--------------------	-------

Spirit .....	50
--------------	----

Thief (package) .....	111
-----------------------	-----

Tongue Lash (effect) .....	112
----------------------------	-----

Tongue Snare (effect) .....	112
-----------------------------	-----

Tony Fong .....	146
-----------------	-----

Toxicity .....	68
----------------	----

Trophy Hunter (archetype) .....	115, 122
---------------------------------	----------

**U**

Undead (defense) .....	112
------------------------	-----

Unseen & Unheard (defense) .....	112
----------------------------------	-----

UV Light .....	32
----------------	----

**V**

Vampire, classic (template) .....	47
-----------------------------------	----

Vampire, metrosexual (template) .....	48
---------------------------------------	----

**W**

Weird West .....	17
------------------	----

Wickedness .....	69
------------------	----

WTF (archetype) .....	115, 123
-----------------------	----------

**Z**

Zombie (template) .....	48
-------------------------	----

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