

DON'T DREAM

alpha playtest version

The basics

*Times are tough in **Coffin's Mill**. They say this place is cursed. Every week, the streets are stained with some new tragedy.*

You've landed here for your own reasons. A group of outsiders, each with secrets of your own. Somehow it's fallen to you to investigate the killings that haunt this place.

What you never imagined is that in Coffin's Mill there are crimes worse than murder, and fates much worse than death.

The Game

Don't Dream is a tabletop role playing game about the forces of darkness and exploitation at work in a small town. Its aim is to produce collaborative storytelling sessions that explore mystery, horror, and surrealism through the lens of the tongue-in-cheek world of 1980's horror films.

The principles of the game are:

- You need at least 3 players and as many six sided dice as you can find.
- One of those players takes the role of the the **Keeper** of Arcane Lore and is responsible for certain parts of the story, including the world at large as well as making rules decisions when called upon and keeping action flowing where appropriate.
- The other players take the role of **investigators**, that is, they are portraying newly arrived characters in Coffin's Mill. They will create characters, roll dice, and help build the world.
- *Play to find out.* The story is found at the table through interaction and dice rolling, not planned out beforehand by the Keeper.

- Although you are solving mysteries and battling evil, there are no set solutions to the individual mysteries. It is the Keeper's job to lay down puzzling, mysterious, upsetting, or surreal imagery and events. It is the player's job to explain them.
- To do something, *do it*. The moves are triggers for when to roll and how to handle resolution and push the fiction forwards.
- Investigators are fragile. Unlike other story games, you should expect *Don't Dream* to take a heavy toll on the lives of your players.

Don't Dream is heavily inspired by (and borrows from) rules and mechanics found in the games *The Between* and *Brindlewood Bay*, both written by Jason Cordova and published by the Gauntlet. Those games in turn are Powered by the Apocalypse, which means that they use rules and mechanics created by Vincent and Meguey Baker and first published in the game *Apocalypse World*. It departs mechanically and philosophically from those games in several key ways.

Rolling Dice

In most cases, when you roll dice because a move instructs you to do so, you roll two six-sided dice, sum them, and then add the modifier from the [relevant ability](#). You then check the result against the text of the move. If a move refers to a "hit," it means a result of 7+. If a move refers to a "miss," it means a result of 6-. Moves also frequently have success tiers: a miss, 7-9, 10-11, and, rarely, 12+.

Advantage and Disadvantage

When you have an advantage, you roll three dice, keep the two highest, sum them, and then add the modifier of the relevant ability.

When you're at a disadvantage, you roll three dice, keep the two lowest, sum them, and then add the modifier of the relevant ability.

Resolving mysteries

Don't Dream differs from more traditional mystery solving and occult investigation games. There are no fixed solutions to the mysteries. Instead of providing a fixed narrative, the Keeper provides **atmosphere** and **arbitrates** the rules, while building the surreal world of Coffin's Mill in cooperation with the investigators. Each individual mystery is resolved via game procedure called [Putting the Pieces Together](#).

Abilities

Abilities are the attributes that are applied to most die rolls in the game. They each have a modifier from -3 to +3. The abilities are: Body, Composure, Library Use, Force of Will, Affect, and Power.

Body

An investigator rolls with BODY if the action involves a contest of strength, a feat of athleticism, or a particularly dextrous or physically challenging maneuver.

Composure

An investigator rolls with COMPOSURE if they are trying to do something that requires intense concentration, a steady hand, or nerves of steel

Library Use

An investigator rolls with LIBRARY USE if they are looking to do research in a book or computer, analyze some evidence, or turn up an unlikely fact.

Affect

An investigator rolls AFFECT if they are trying to charm, intimidate, or entertain.

Power

An investigator rolls POWER if the action involves using or understanding supernatural forces or the occult. A keeper can

always override the use of any other ability to call for a power roll instead.

Clues

Most of the actions the investigators will take are in service of the gathering of clues. Clues are the core of the core resources in Don't Dream. The Keeper should give out clues liberally and work with the investigators to make sure that every opportunity to gather a clue is taken. Clues are gathered through the [Gather Clues](#) move and spent during the [Putting the Pieces Together](#) move.

There are two types of Clue. **Core** clues, which are clues to the mystery the investigators are actively investigating, and **Cabal** clues. A Cabal clue is earned through specific die rolls and playbooks and is a clue related to the dark conspiracy at the core of Coffin's Mill. Each mystery will have sample Cabal clues.

Bonds

Bonds are another core resource in Don't Dream. They represent relationships that an investigator has with a character in the town where the magic is happening. Like real life relationships, these bonds can offer important support to the investigators, but they need to be nurtured to be productive.

A bond has between 1 and 3 quality points. Some moves, situations, or consequences may cause the investigators to sacrifice these quality points in order to advance the plot. Investigators can spend time [improving these bonds](#) or [building new ones](#). Investigators may also be called upon to sacrifice a bond itself, most often during [Putting the Pieces Together](#). This means removing that bond from play. The investigator and the keeper will narrate a scene explaining how that character has left Coffin's Mill.

An investigator receives three bond points at character creation time. This represents the investigator's main tie to the town that they live in when they first arrive.

An investigator can also form bonds with the other investigators. You can nurture this bond with the Backstory Move. You can sacrifice quality points from this bond but you cannot sacrifice the bond itself. If a move or rule would have you sacrifice this bond for some reason, you must instead sacrifice a health point or reality point.

Health

Each investigator has three health points. These health points are one of the core resources an investigator may use to solve a mystery in Don't Dream. Health points represent the bodily health of a character. Health points can be lost during the course of a mystery, usually during [Putting the Pieces Together](#) but they can be regained during [downtime](#).

If an investigator would lose their last health point, they are faced with a choice: narrate their death, or [sacrifice a bond](#).

If they narrate the investigator's death, that character is either retired from play or the investigator can choose to return as one of the [Unseen](#).

Reality

Each investigator starts with three reality points. These reality points are one of the core resources an investigator may use to solve a mystery in Don't Dream. Reality points represent the connection a character has to the waking world & reality. Reality points are lost more frequently than Health points but they are more easily reclaimed. They are also often used to assign magical items at the conclusion of a mystery.

If an investigator would lose his last reality point, they are faced with a choice: accept the loss of the point and narrate their character's final loss of reality, or instead [sacrifice a bond](#).

If they narrate the character's final loss of reality, their character is retired from play. A character losing all hold on reality cannot return as one of the Unseen.

Fading from Reality

In the world of Don't Dream, an investigator who loses their last reality point may become catatonic as their mind travels into some other dimension, they may die in a violent way, or they may simply leave the room and never return. If the latter happens, the town of Coffin's Mill simply forgets they exist.

Most of the time, when an investigator loses his last reality point, any other investigators present should also make reality checks.

A note on resources

There are many times in the game where you might be instructed as part of a roll to do one thing or another, for example sacrifice a bond or a reality point. These mechanics exist as fictional guardrails, but they should serve the fiction, not the other way around.

Although the core resources are not interchangeable, if it makes more sense to lose a health point than a reality point, the group should do what makes sense fictionally. If you are called on to sacrifice a bond, the intention is (generally) that this is as a consequence of your actions. A good faith effort should be made to explain this. Like a low budget horror film, not everything has to hang together perfectly, but the experience will be more enjoyable for everyone if the attempt is made.

Difficulty

Mysteries in Don't Dream has a difficulty number to indicate how challenging they are.

This number determines what counts as a success during [Putting the Pieces Together](#), as well as how many clues you need to attempt to solve the mystery.

The moves everyone has

Form a Bond

When you make an honest connection with a member of the community, name two details about this bond. Roll + AFFECT.

- On a 10+, you form a bond. Mark one quality point with your new bond.
- On a 7-9, you form a bond. Mark one quality point. Choose one: you make your new bond uneasy, or they make you uneasy.
- On a 12+, you may mark two quality points.

Harm's Way

When you do something risky, describe the worst consequence you can imagine, then roll with an appropriate Ability.

- On a 10+, you do what you intended or you hold steady; describe what it looks like. You may add a bond, a health, or a reality point.
- On a 7-9, the Keeper will tell you how your actions would leave you vulnerable, and you can choose to back down or go through with it. If you go through with it, the Keeper describes what it looks like. If you do not, make a reality check.
- On a 12+, you do what you intended or you hold steady, and the Keeper will tell you some extra benefit or advantage you receive. Describe what it looks like.

The Keeper has final say on which ability is used for the roll.

The Reality Check

When your grip on reality is threatened or one of your bonds is reduced to 0 quality points, you Roll + COMPOSURE.

- On a 10+, you lose no reality points.
- On a 7-9, you lose 1 reality point.
- On a 6-, you lose 2 reality points.
- On a 12+, you gain 1 reality point

Gather Clues

When you search for a clue, conduct research, or otherwise gather information, describe how you're doing so and roll with an appropriate ability. On a hit, you find a Clue or a magical item. The Keeper will tell you what it is.

- On a 7-9, there's a complication—either with the Clue itself, or a complication you encounter while searching. The Keeper will tell you what the complication is.
- On a 12+, you also unlock a Cabal clue.

Clues are necessary for the Investigators to solve the mysteries and killings which haunt the town. As such, the Investigators will gather clues often, and the move should be triggered liberally. It encompasses a wide spate of possible investigative and information gathering activities. The player and the keeper should work together to determine which ability is used. If there is any dispute, the Keeper will decide.

Back from the Brink

If you would lose your last reality or health point, you may instead sacrifice a bond. If you do, roll + the points you invested in that bond.

- On a 10+, you may regain one point in that bond. You and the keeper will narrate a scene explaining how your search for the dark conspiracy pushed your relationship to the limit. You may unlock one Cabal clue.
- On a 7-9, you may unlock one Cabal clue. You and the keeper should explain how your relationship with that bond has

unraveled.

Putting the pieces together

Each mystery the investigators confront will have a selection of questions and dangers that they must confront to put it to bed. The meat of the game is gathering clues towards the resolution of these questions.

Putting the Pieces Together

When the investigators have an open discussion about the mystery, and they've earned clues equal to twice mystery's difficulty, the Keeper should prompt them with this move.

Unlike the other rolls and mechanics of this game, it is resolved as a group and should be approached almost like a negotiation.

Once the investigators have decided on an answer to the mystery's core question ("where is the killer?," for example) they need to build their pool of points.

Building the pool

- Each investigator starts with 2d6.
- Add 1d6 for each clue they've gathered
- They may wager one bond to add an additional 2d6 to their pool. To wager a bond, subtract a bond quality point

The roll

Each investigator then rolls their pool. Every die equal to or over the mystery's difficulty is a success. Then, starting with the investigator who discovered the most clues, the mystery's puzzle pieces are purchased by spending those successes.

Most mysteries will have items in **bold** that must be chosen first. They can be chosen in any order. The rotation continues until a

player has run out of clues. At that point, all remaining clues are lost.

For example, the pieces for "[Sleepover Murder Party](#)", the introductory adventure in this book are reproduced below.

Cost	Piece (bold must be chosen first)
2	All investigators survive the investigation
1	The identity of the murderer is discovered
1	Where can the murderer be found?
1	Your investigator does not lose 1 HP
1	Your investigator does not lose 1 RP
1	Your wagered bond survives
1	The murderer is captured or killed
1	You uncover an additional magic item
1	Unlock a cabal clue

In the above example, **all investigators survive the investigation**, **the identity of the murderer is discovered**, and **where can the murderer be found?** must be chosen before any of the other three. If all the players have excess successes after unlocking all the pieces for a given mystery, they may continue to go around the table restoring reality, health, or bond quality points until one player has no successes left.

Downtime Moves

Indulge Vice

You can finally let off some steam. Describe how you indulge your vice. ROLL + the vice's governing resource

- On a 12+, you restore 2 points.
- On a 10+, you restore 1 point.
- On a 7-9, you restore 1 point. Sacrifice a point from a different resource.

The Backstory Move

When you reveal something hidden about your past to another investigator, ROLL + your bond with that investigator.

- On a 10+, you and that investigator mark an additional bond or you each gain a reality point.
- On a 7-9, you or that investigator each gain a reality point.

Creating an investigator

- Choose a name and a [playbook](#). Select two of the playbook moves.
- Choose one ability score to be at 2, one ability score to be at 1 and another to be -1. The others start at +0.
- Spend your bond points. You start with three. Assign one bond to a character in town and one to another Player Character.
- Choose a vice and whether that vice is driven by reality or health.

Do not spend a lot of time on your investigator's backstory. The idea is to reveal it in pieces using [The Backstory Move](#). It's best to just the broad strokes of a biography in mind and the general idea of the investigator's personality.

Phases of play

Downtime

Each investigator may make a downtime move. See Downtime moves for more information.

First Blood

The Keeper introduces a new mystery. Investigators may investigate up to 2 mysteries at a time.

The investigator with the least reality points (using bond quality points as a tiebreaker) will answer the mystery's first blood questions and together, the investigators and the Keeper help set the scene.

Investigation

During the investigation scene, each investigator will have a chance to investigate the murder and uncover the town's dark secrets.

Proceed around the table so that each investigator has a turn in the spotlight. The investigation phase continues unless the investigators are ready to put the pieces together.

Putting the Pieces Together

This is triggered by a freeform discussion about a mystery where the investigators have gathered clues equal to twice the mystery's difficulty.

Gather What's Left

There should be a short epilogue where funerals are attended, hospitals are visited, and loose ends from the mystery are wrapped

up. This is a freeform phase and a chance for general roleplaying. This is where magical items are given out, via flashbacks or any other appropriate storytelling mechanism.

A note about magical items: the mysteries in this book often specify that the “investigator who gathered the most clues” and the “investigator with the least reality points” are to receive magical items. In the (common) case that these are the same character, the items should not be given to the same investigator but resolved in a top down order based on how they are presented in the mystery.

Elsewhere

The player with the least bond points narrates a scene in town during which none of the player characters are present. The scene should be unsettling but not an actual murder. It may involve any player’s bonds or a new character or location within the town. It can be simply an evocative description, or a full narrative scene.

The Cabal

As the investigators uncover cabal clues, they advance the meta plot of the game and the saga of Coffin's Mill towards its inevitable end. The Keeper should update the Cabal sheet and play out any scenes or consequences associated with it each time the investigators unlock a new clue or advance a level.

Level 1 - Reveal the Hand of the Cabal

Unlock level 1 of the Cabal when the players would obtain their first cabal clue

To be written: A short reading that essentially sets the scene in regards to the bastards in charge of the town.

The Keeper must answer the following questions:

- What is the cabal after? What is their goal?
- Who serves as the Emissary of the cabal in town?

Level 2 - The Dark History of Coffin's Mill

The Dark History is revealed. Feel free to use these as cabal clues, or write your own dark history of Coffin's Mill.

- 1818 / Thaddeus Coffin arrives with his fortune and builds the first mills in Coffin's Mill. He sacrifices the first of many souls to the dark god Moloch, the Titan to whom he owes his many successes.
- 1825 / Coffin, now in his seventies, has become a recluse. He rarely makes public appearances,
- 1836 / A series of mill strikes lead Coffin to call in the state troopers and the national guard to spur production back into action. Things turn violent when a misplaced rock causes the

national guard to open fire into the crowd. After this, Coffin retires from public life entirely, selling his mills to a Boston firm. Curiously, there are no records of his death.

- 1931 / An movie adaptation of Booth Tarkington's novel *The Turmoil* being filmed in the old Coffin estate turns sour when a mass murder takes place during a party. A bit player named Blythe Jennings, apparently spurned by the lead actor William Gold, donned a cloak and glove adorned with knives and killed them all.
- 1940 / The Coffin estate is turned at great expense into a luxury hotel. It lasts one season before the winter caretaker, a writer from Maine, murders his family and burns much of the place down.
- 1944 / The Coffin estate is bulldozed and turned into a summer camp. It is continually open and shut throughout the next thirty years as strange and sometimes deadly incidents continuously occur.
- 1958 / The Coffin Toy Company (later renamed CTC Toys) is formed. Their flagship item, the Bawlin' Billy is immediately popular. There are a rash of complaints when several Billy's are opened and shown to contain strange occult symbols carved into the plastic interiors. The company denies any knowledge of how this could have happened.
- 1969/ The group of hippies known as the Church of the Sacred Cow sets up in a newly built strip mall. Radical evangelical Christians, they frequently take new recruits camping. When they take a few too many high-school aged girls camping, complaints from local parents turn into an all out assault, and the Church is driven out of town.
- 1977 / A group of teenagers playing a role-playing game cause a panic in the town when one of them, 16 year old Laura Marnoli, is immolated in a basement. The remaining three are unable to speak of the event. Two die in an insane asylum within the next 5 years. One remains alive, and when pressed, he can't help but

rave incoherently about a demon named Moloch who they summoned accidentally.

The Keeper must answer the following questions, and revise their answers to any previous questions if necessary.

- Who founded the cabal?
- Who do the cabal worship?
- What do you think happened to Thaddeus Coffin?

Level 3 - The Nightmaster Cometh!

Unlock level 3 of the Cabal when the investigators would obtain their 5th cabal clue

The Cabal unleash the avatar of nightmares on the town in a bid to stop the investigators from reaching the truth.

The Nightmaster, the progeny of a thousand crimes and mutilations, is the vengeful ghost of a child killer killed by the Cabal of town elders and impressed into service for an eternity. The players should be digging into the history of the town and will have attracted the attention of the town elders by now.

The Nightmaster varies depending on your game, but in general they appear as they did in life - a shabby, nondescript person with a terrible temper and a sense of humor trained on the poorest quality television.

Each investigator in order of highest hold on reality to lowest narrates a dream sequence where the Nightmaster finds them.

- What is the happy memory that you find yourself in, and how is it a little bit wrong?
- What is the fear that the Nightmaster exploits?

After each investigator has narrated their dream, they roll + POWER (again, in order of highest reality to lowest).

- On a 12+, the Nightmaster is banished. No other players have to roll.
- On a 10+, you evade the Nightmaster.
- On a 7-9+, you evade the Nightmaster, but they take a toll on your body and soul. Explain how and lose 1 health or 1 reality.
- On a miss, you do not evade the Nightmaster, and your investigator is claimed by death and insanity.

In addition to this, the Keeper should now create answers to the following questions

- What happened at the Cabin in the Woods?
- What leads the investigators there?

The Keeper should also feel free to revise the answers to the questions asked in previous Cabal scenes.

Level 4 - No More Room in Hell

Unlock level 4 of the Cabal when the investigators would have obtained their 8th cabal clue.

Things are spiraling out of hand for the Cabal. As their plans spiral out of control, the ancient powers that the Cabal have been consorting with exact their vengeance.

Vengeful ghosts of those that have died at the hands of the Cabal, during the mystery investigations, or in the investigator's backstory will torment the investigators. The Elsewhere phase will no longer be played. Instead each investigator must narrate a scene for another where a ghost will attempt to do physical or mental harm to another. Start with the investigator with the lowest reality creating a scene for the investigator with the next lowest reality and then proceed as such

until the investigator with the most reality creates a scene for the investigator with the least.

The Keeper should attempt to finalize the answers to the questions asked in previous Cabal scenes.

Level 5 - The Cabin in the Woods

Unlock level 5 of the Cabal when the investigators would obtain their 9th cabal clue.

The secret history of Coffin's Mill comes down to a cabin in the woods. At this point, there are no more individual mysteries and all the remaining efforts of the investigators are put towards unraveling the final truths of the Cabal. Using the answers to the questions asked in the previous cabal scenes, the Keeper should direct the players to the Cabin in the Woods, where they can unlock the awful truth about the town and either save it or meet their doom.

The Emissary & The Emissary Moves

Early on, the keeper should pick a member of the community to serve as the Cabal's emissary. This can be anyone, from a shopkeeper to the mayor to a frequently truant child. Once the characters have unlocked their first Cabal clue, the keeper gains access to the emissary moves (see Keeper moves).

Magical items

Certain adventures unlock magical items. These magical items serve as the advancement mechanic for Don't Dream, and can do things like increase stats, add new moves, or provide new resources of reality, bonds, or health.

They will often have rolls with specific consequences for failure. Some items are consumable, meaning they are used a certain number of times to enhance a stat or roll. Where noted, a magical item may be intended for use by a certain playbook or playbooks.

A mystery may specify that the “investigator who gathered the most clues” or the “investigator with the least reality” or other conditional situations are to receive specific magical items. In the (common) case that these are the same character, the items should not be given to the same investigator but resolved in a top down order based on how they are presented in the mystery.

For more information and context, see the sample mysteries.

Investigator Death

The rules to Don't Dream are written in such a way that it is usually possible to avoid investigator death to a degree, but the rules do differ from other storytelling games that use similar rules in that investigator death can happen unexpectedly and there is a certain amount of lethality built into every mystery.

When an investigator dies or is rendered hopelessly traumatized by all that they've experienced, time and space should be provided for that player, with the help of the keeper if needed, to narrate a short scene or an epilogue for their investigator.

At this point, there are one of two options - the game has a built-in way to keep playing with the same investigator, and that is the Unseen playbook. A player may have their investigator return as a ghost. They keep their attributes but lose access to magical items and moves, and choose two moves from the Unseen playbook as if they were making a new investigator.

If an Unseen character dies, that should be considered final for the investigator.

Unseen characters can no longer affect the physical world, and if all investigators are unseen, they can no longer solve mysteries. Using the Unseen playbook should be considered optional and certain groups may not want the complication it provides.

Special consideration should also be given to the Two-in-One. If one of the two dies, it's a prime opportunity for the living half of the pair to choose a new playbooks.

Keeper Moves

A keeper does not roll dice, but they are responsible for maintaining forward motion and assigned consequences.

When the players aren't sure what to do next:

- Introduce a complication
- Frame a new scene
- Commit a murder
- Ask a leading question
- Separate the investigators
- Make an emissary move, if available

When the players have a discussion that feels like putting the pieces together:

- Call for a putting the pieces together roll

When the characters roll below a 6-:

- Put them at a disadvantage
- Remove a health or a reality point
- Sacrifice a bond or put a bond in danger

When the players unlock a cabal clue:

- Reveal the presence of the emissary
- Change something fundamental about the town with no explanation -Turn up some piece of the town's secret history

When making an emissary move

- Have something upsetting and surreal happen
- Reveal a secret about a character or investigator in an uncomfortable way
- Have one player narrate a strange and/or frightening dream another investigator has.

Playbooks

When you select a playbook, you choose 2 of the moves.

The Beefcake

Ruler of the beach, strongman, jock, lead singer.

You look great in a swimsuit. You look great in makeup. On any given beach, you are the hero. You aren't scared of anything, but don't forget... there's always someone bigger and badder.

What about yourself are you most ashamed of?

Choose one

- You are a peak physical specimen. Take +1 to rolls involving running, jumping, or climbing.
- You've worked really hard on your body Take +1 to rolls involving charm
- You cut an imposing figure Take +1 to rolls involving intimidation

All muscle, baby

+1 to BODY

Life at last!

When you electrify those around you with your energy and charisma, Roll + POWER.

- On a 10+, every other investigator takes the advantage to Gather Clues rolls this session.
- On a 7-9, choose one investigator. They take advantage to Gather Clues this session. Choose one investigator. They take disadvantage to Gather Clues rolls this session.

The business

When you confront someone physically or emotionally, roll with the most appropriate skill. On a 10+, choose two. On a 7-9, choose one.

- Explain how you win the person you confront over. Create a bond with them.
- Ask the person you confront to reveal something they recognized about a killer or a crime scene. You successfully gather a clue.
- Ask the person you confront a question, the answer to which helps you understand where the next murder will take place. You successfully gather a clue.

Too stupid to die

If you would lose a health point, you may instead make a reality check.

The Cunning

A magician, hippie, crustpunk, traveler.

Someone has inducted you in the old ways. Maybe a drifter came through town, or it's simply an old family tradition. Either way, this town stinks of the old, bad magic and it's up to you to put things right.

What old god do you worship and what regular tribute do they demand?

A boon from the old gods

A taste of human blood can tell you the age and biological sex of the person it belongs to. Roll + AFFECT. On a hit, you can tell if the person it belongs to is dead. On a 10+, you can tell if the person died violently.

Cast the runes

When you use a traditional knowledge to perform divination, name the cost you pay and Roll + POWER.

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

- Who is the likely next victim?
- When will the next victim be killed?
- What secret about the town does this question inadvertently answer?

A great and mysterious place

If something supernatural causes you to make a reality check, roll with advantage.

The guidance of the old ones

+1 to POWER

A poultice of twine and twigs

When you use your traditional knowledge to heal someone, describe how you learned it and Roll + AFFECT. On a 10+, you may choose two.

On a 7-9, choose one:

- The recipient of your services heals a point of health
- You strengthen a bond between the two of you
- You or the recipient restore a point of reality

The Disc Jockey

What it says on the tin.

You provide the Greek chorus to the luckless souls working the third shift. When you aren't spinning the latest Eddie Money track, you are out trying to help the poor souls left guttering out in this town put their lives back together.

You left your last station in a cloud of scandal. Which person you were close with did you hurt the most when you left?

It's like a second home

When you select The Disc Jockey as your playybook, you may take a bond for free with The Radio Station where you work. This is in addition to any other starting bonds.

If you sacrifice your bond with The Radio Station, you must choose a new playbook.

Breaking news

Once per session, if the investigators are spinning their wheels, you may narrate a scene indicating the killer has struck again. Roll + POWER.

- On a 10+, the victim narrowly escaped. Describe the first hand account with the help of the keeper. You gather a clue.
- On a 7-9+, the killer claimed another victim. You or another investigator can sacrifice a bond. If you do, you gain a clue.

Good listener

Take +1 to AFFECT

Interview the experts

Once per session, you may narrate a scene where you interview someone providing context or evidence to the current case. This can be an expert providing ancillary information or a witness to the crime. Roll + AFFECT.

- On a 10+, choose 2. You gain the advantage, you grant advantage to another investigator, or you gain a clue. Describe how the interview provides important information.
- On a 7-9, you gain a clue. Describe how the interview was cut short by one of your questions.

The Doctor

A grizzled medical examiner, teacher, doctor, or scientist

You spent 10 years in medical school for this?

What terrible accident do you blame yourself for?

The Autopsy

When you examine a dead body in the presence of at least one of your fellow investigators, you gain special insight. Hold up something disgusting and Roll + COMPOSURE.

- On a 10+, you gain a clue.
- On a 7-9, you gain a clue and one of the other investigators present loses a sanity point.

Patch em up

When you use your training to heal a fellow investigator, Roll + BODY.

- On a 10+, you mark a bond point and they restore a health point.
- On a 7-9, they restore a health point. Explain how your bedside manner is somewhat lacking.

You can't keep doing this to yourself

If a fellow investigator would roll Harm's Way, confront them and Roll + AFFECT.

- On a 10+, you take the risk yourself instead. Roll with advantage.
- On a 7-9, you take the risk yourself instead.

The Dreamer

A tortured artist, psychic, and psychonaut

As long as you remember, the dreams have been present. When you were a child, they were often dreams of the long, tall man, the man whose face you couldn't quite make out. Now, they reflect the ugliness of reality. The dreams used to be a blessing - now they are more like a curse.

Describe and name the once-whimsical recurring character from your childhood that haunts your dreams in a newly nightmarish way.

Dream Warrior

When you are confronted with something threatening in your dreams, you describe how the ideal version of yourself resists this harm and roll + COMPOSURE.

- On a 10, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 3.
- The horrors are worse than you imagined. Describe how and lose 1 reality point.
- Something reaches from your mind and harms you in the real world. Describe how and lose 1 health point.
- You connect with the mind of the killer and see a greater truth. Gather a Clue. You gain 1 Cabal clue.

Express yourself

During downtime, you may describe a work of art that you create. Roll + AFFECT. On a hit you gain a reality point. On a 10+, you gain a reality point. Choose an investigator (you can pick yourself). The investigator you chose gains a reality point.

Gift of the Muses

When you reveal an insight or vision that came to you the previous night in a dream, create something beautiful and Roll + POWER. Use only once per day.

- On a 10, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1.
- Gain 1 bond point
- A companion gains 1 reality point.
- Explain the symbolic nature of the item you created. Take the advantage to Gather Clues for the session.

Seance

When you are surrounded by the ghosts of the recently or long deceased, roll + POWER. On a 10, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 3.

- The ghosts reveal something terrible. Lose one reality point.
- The ghosts reveal something beautiful. Gain one reality point.
- You allow the ghosts to speak through you. They reveal to you some mystery, but in the process offend or upset someone close to you, either by revealing one of your secrets or the secrets of someone close to you. (You gain one clue and sacrifice one bond point)
- The ghosts reveal something only they know about the killer or the crime scene. You gain one clue and lose one reality point.

The Ice Cream Man

Carefree, improviser, king of the road

You're rolling through town with a guitar, a smile... and a shotgun.
Not to mention a whole refrigerated truck full of malformed muppet shaped frozen sugar. Maybe you aren't the brightest tool in the shed, but when the chips are down there's no one better.

What do you tell yourself you aren't running from?

It's all in the reflexes

Take the advantage whenever you roll Harm's Way.

The ice cream is gonna be flying fast and furious

When you confront a crowd*, your natural instincts take over and you attempt to run the room. Explain how you do so and Roll + AFFECT.

- On a 10+, you take advantage to Gather Clues in this scene.
- On a 7-9+, you take advantage to Gather Clues in this scene.
Explain how things go wrong and create a complication for one or more of your fellow investigators. They take disadvantage to Gather Clues in this scene.

(* *three is a crowd*)

Never leave home without it

When you defy danger or press your luck, you can describe how something you always carry with you helps you succeed. This should be a lucky charm, a treasured possession, or even a weapon. It can seem magical but is not an actual magical item. Roll + POWER.

- On a 10+, you gain the advantage. You may also choose 1: grant advantage to a fellow investigator's next roll, or unlock a key to the dark conspiracy.
- On a 7-9, you gain the advantage.

The Sister

Close relative or friend of an honest-to-God monster.

The day they turned on you and your parents, you learned that evil can lurk within anyone, even those closest to you. Learning this lesson cost you a great deal. You will do your damndest to make sure no one else has to learn the same thing the same way.

You've saved something sentimental that the killer in your past gave you. What is it?

I know how they think

When you attempt to learn about or understand a killer's motivation, explain how this reminds you of your past and Roll + AFFECT.

- On a 10+, you gain the advantage for your next Gather Clues roll. You also gain a key to the dark conspiracy.
- On a 7-9, you gain the advantage to your next Gather Clues roll.

Lessons learned

+1 AFFECT

The most dangerous member of the family

If you would roll Harm's Way to avoid physical danger or do harm to another, explain how something twisted or upsetting in your background lets you roll with advantage. On a 10+, you gain a clue. On a 7-9, you gain a clue and lose a reality point.

Painful memories

When another character would lose one or more reality points, reveal how something about your investigation reminds you of your past and Roll + COMPOSURE.

- On a 10+, you and the Keeper will work together to explain how this grants you a clue. The other character gains one reality point. They suffer no penalty for losing all reality points if they will have at least one point after this roll.
- On a 7-9, the other character gains one reality point. They suffer no penalty for losing all reality points if they will have at least one point after this roll. You lose one reality point.

The Two-in-One

A crime solving duo, just past their prime

The two of you have been solving crimes since you were kids. Only at some point, it wasn't a matter of finding the lost fundraiser money that Bobby Doyle had stolen - now, you unravel murders or worse.

What has come between the two of you as adults that wasn't there when you were children?

All small towns are the same

When you attempt to solve a problem that you wouldn't find in a big city, roll + Affect. On any hit, mark a clue. On a 10+, you choose one, while on a 7-9, the GM chooses one. On a 12+ you also unlock a Cabal clue.

- Who here is hiding something?
- What is the obvious clue everyone else has overlooked?
- What is the imminent danger you realize just in time?

Just like high school

Take +1 to Library Use

Occam's Razor

When you eliminate the improbable, state the impossible that still remains. You may roll Gather Clues with advantage.

The Veteran

A former soldier, police officer, bodyguard, or security professional.

You saw things that you just can't forget. You expected when you returned home that you'd put the worst behind you, that it was a time to heal. You were wrong.

What wound wakes you up in the middle of the night?

Battlefield medicine

When you need to patch someone up fast, Roll + COMPOSURE.

- On a 10+, the person you are trying to heal gains one health point and you gain a bond with them.
- On a 7-9, the person you are trying to heal gains one health point.

Nothing I can't handle

Whenever you improvise a weapon, an explosive, a way in, or a way out, Roll + Body.

- On a 10+, you succeed.
- On a 7-9, you succeed, but something unexpected goes wrong - you hurt yourself, someone around you, or your chances.

Choose one:

- ◦ An investigator with you loses one health point.
- ◦ A bond with a non-player character is sacrificed. That bond is removed from the game.
- ◦ You lose one health point.
- ◦ You take the disadvantage for the rest of the session.

This takes me back

When you roll to gather clues, you may roll + your current reality points.

- On a 10+, explain why your experiences give you an edge in this situation. Take the advantage to your Gather Clues roll. If you succeed, you may take 2 clues.
- On a 7-9, explain why your experiences give you an edge in this situation. Take the advantage to your Gather Clues roll. Lose 1 reality point.

The Unseen

Dead or cursed, you move about the world imperceivable

Note: The Unseen has several special conditions & rules for play. The Unseen is an optional playbook and you may not want to include it in your game if you've never played Don't Dream before.

The following is true for the unseen

- The Unseen has 0 HP. If the Unseen would lose HP, they lose bonds (not bond quality points) instead.
- The Unseen has bonds with their past life. They start with 3 bonds that represent 3 of the most important memories that tie them to this existence. These bonds must be with a place or object that still exists.
- The Unseen cannot receive magical items
- The Unseen cannot communicate directly to the other investigators through speech. The Unseen cannot be perceived by any other characters, except by the Emissary.
- The Unseen can uncover clues but can't communicate them to the party except with successful rolls on applicable moves.
- All Unseen have only one downtime move, Retrace. Each Unseen chooses this move automatically, and then two playbook moves as normal.

Possession

When you speak through the voice of the recently dead or spiritually connected (The Dreamer is especially susceptible to this), roll + POWER. On a hit, choose two. On a 10+, choose one.

- You communicate the presence of a clue. An investigator present can make a Gather Clues roll.
- Your will overwhelms the body. If it's living, it loses one hit point. If it's not, an investigator present loses one reality point.

- The investigator makes a reality check.

Downtime Move: Retrace

You visit a place or object from your past life. This may be a place or object that you do not currently have a bond with. Narrate a memory from your past life and roll + BOND (0 if it's new to the game) with that place or object. On any hit, choose one. On a 10+, choose two.

- If it's a new place or object, you may create a bond with it and mark 1 quality point.
- Mark an additional bond point.
- You gain a reality point.

Tapping on the glass

When you wish to make your will known, say how you subtly manipulate the physical world and Roll + BODY. On a hit, choose one from each list. On a 10+, choose one from either.

Boons

- The investigator understands your meaning.
- You communicate the presence of a clue. The investigator can make a Gather Clues roll.

Consequences

- The investigator misunderstands you, and makes their next roll with disadvantage.
- The investigator makes a reality check.

Terrifier

When you create an atmosphere of terror or unease, roll + AFFECT and explain how you do so. On a hit you create an atmosphere of fear

in the room. All within flee in terror. On a 7-9+, all investigators within make a Reality Check or do the same.

Sleepover Murder Party

Difficulty: 3 (6 clues to solve)

An Introductory Mystery

The town is awash with news of a terrible tragedy. A slumber party with three teenage girls was attacked by a masked man wielding an ax. There was one survivor, a girl named Clarice Stephens. She is recuperating at a nearby hospital. The police (and everyone else in town) are launching a manhunt through the woods that surround Coffin's Mill.

The investigators sit in a diner in town (how's the food?) when one of the younger police officers comes in to gather volunteers to canvas the woods. People shake their heads in misery at the news - there's been a series of murders at the Stephens'.

Setting the Scene

- **First blood:** One of you (or a group of you) encounters a tall, gaunt man somewhere in town. He's shambling and refusing to make eye contact. Where was it? Did you speak to him? Why don't you get a good look at his face?
- How was Clarice Stephens kind to you when you first arrived in town?

The Killing

Described by Claire as a tall man wearing "a full leather body suit", "Elvis hair", and carrying "an ax like a knight uses." He killed two teenage girls, Lauren Quinlan and Cassandra Santos, a rookie police officer named Milo Jones, and a pizza delivery girl named Rita Brown.

The Questions

- Who is the killer?
- Where can you find them?

Locations

The Stephens House

A well-kept, large suburban home Paint the scene: What is the unlikely piece of art that hangs in the Stephens' living room?

The Woods

The police force are searching the woods outside of Coffin Hill for the killer and evidence thereof.

Paint the scene: What plant or animal is present in the woods completely out of season?

Characters

- Mr & Mrs Stephens, the owners of the house where the murder happens and the parents of the survivor, Clarice. They wear the dull smiles of the people pleaser. They are clearly grieving over their daughter, and yet they are distastefully worried about exposure from the other families.
- Chief Toomes, the town's overworked police chief. Wears a walrus mustache and indulges a bit too much in dressing like a cowboy for someone in coastal New England
- Viera Santos, the older sister and guardian of Cassandra Santos, a nurse who clearly does not care for the Stephens
- Tim "Timbo" Johnson, the owner of Timbo's Slices. An older man with a perpetually stained shirt and the body of someone who eats pizza for dinner every night, he is deeply upset about the murder of Rita Brown, whom he calls "his best delivery girl."

- Dr. Regina Clarence, a psychiatrist who was treating Mrs Stephens for many years. She is a bit of an odd duck, favoring loud hawaiian clothing and prone to conspiratorial rants.

Clues & Evocations

- In the Stephens house, there is a bag of stuffed animals sitting by the door, as if they were just packed up to be taken outside.
- An abandoned telephone repair truck. It seems to have a great deal more hardware than it needs to.
- A mental patient confined for involvement in an occult ritual that killed a young girl in the late 1960's has recently escaped nearby.
- Half of the record collection in the Stephens house have gone missing.
- A partially burnt scrap of paper found in the fireplace with a coded message that reads "I wanted you."
- A camp in the woods, recently abandoned
- The Kiss of Aquarius, an infamous true crime book about sixties cult murders with the cover ripped off
- A stack of magazines, some Renaissance Faire themed magazines, many others pornographic
- (Cabal clue) The wall inside the Stephens garage is crawling with thousands of snails.
- (Cabal clue) Stone in the woods are arranged in a meaningful pattern
- (Cabal clue) A casio keyboard that plays weirdly detuned sounds that sound like human language
- (Cabal clue) A notebook with a heart drawn on it and an arrow through it. Inside the heart is written "The Nightmaster" but it disappears as soon as any other investigator or character besides the investigator who found it looks at it.

Magical Items

- The investigator with the least reality is awarded: A record of novelty songs, recorded locally in the late 1960's. Listening to this record backwards can induce a trance. Once per session, an investigator can play the record and detail a vision of the other side. Make a reality check. This insight gives them the advantage to the next Gather Clues roll that they make.
- The investigator who discovered the most clues is awarded: The murderer's axe, which awards +1 to any rolls when used in dangerous circumstances.

Puzzle Pieces

Cost	Piece (bold must be chosen first)
2	All investigators survive the investigation
1	The identity of the murderer is discovered
1	Where can the murderer be discovered?
1	The murderer is captured or killed
1	All wagered bonds survive
1	Unlock a cabal clue

The Gobbos

Difficulty 4 (8 clues to solve)

An elderly woman, Dianne Cordon, has enlisted one of the investigators to assist her in yard work or housework. Today, they went to Cordon's house as they often do. Unfortunately, when they enter, the place is in shambles and there is no sign of Ms. Cordon.

Setting the Scene

- **First blood:** Where do the investigators find the flesh stripped skeleton? What mundane thing does it look like it's doing?
- **First blood:** Ms. Cordon was a great world traveler. It looks like she brought something back from overseas. Describe the strange vessel that sits open on her dining room table.

The Killing

Make a reality check, as the investigators discover a flesh stripped skeleton, hear what sounds like large rodents crawling through the walls of the house, and notice a pool of blood soaked into the floor near the skeleton.

Locations

The kitchen

The kitchen is dark and dated. Dianne Cordon still cooked on an antique stove and used an ice box. It reeks of potpourri and smoked fish

Paint the scene: What was left cooking on the stove?

The bathroom

The antique soaker tub is filled with ice cold water. There are flower petals scattered over the floor. The room is lit entirely by candles.

Paint the scene: You didn't know Ms. Cordon had a pet. What evidence do you find in here that she did?

The study

The study is lined with floor to ceiling bookshelves. There is a television in the corner. The floor is covered in a dark colored rug. With the curtains drawn, it's nearly pitch black in here.

Paint the scene: Ms. Cordon was a great collector of world ephemera. What unexpected items do you find in her study?

The bedroom

The bedroom has an antique four-poster bed. It is another dark room with heavy curtains and little light, and is packed with junk, bric-a-brac, and genuine valuables.

Paint the scene: Describe the painting of Ms. Cordon's dead husband that hangs on the wall opposite her bed.

The work shed

The work shed is full of ancient tools and gardening equipment. The investigator or investigators who have been helping Ms. Cordon are at least vaguely familiar with this.

Paint the scene: There is a strange antique tool that looks like it can perform murderous amounts of damage on a human body. It has trace amounts of blood on it. Describe the tool.

Clues & Evocations

- A very old folio copy of the complete poems of Christina Rossetti
- A birdcage full of the skeletons of small dead birds
- A futuristic looking heat lamp that seems very out of place given the
- A crate full of straw
- A scroll written in Chinese
- A locked room, which appears to be a perfectly preserved child's room from the 1950's.
- A broken television that shows only blue static
- An empty fish tank filled with water, sprouting a tiny leak
- A black van with bulletproof one way glass, locked, and parked outside.
- An antique camera that has been noticeably used lately
- Scuff marks in the floor, as if from the claws of some particularly frisky cat or other creature
- (Cabal clue) A jet black mirror that seems to be whispering
- (Cabal clue) A painting of one of the investigator's in 17th century clothes
- (Cabal clue) A vine grows alongside that shed that has the smell and consistency of human flesh -(Cabal clue) The name of the Emissary, if unlocked, written down on a piece of paper

Magical Items

- The investigator with the smallest grip reality is rewarded: a box that has what appears to be a large bird egg inside of it. Immediately and then once per session, as long as the egg remains in their possession, that investigator should make a reality check. The first time they fail, they come to the realization that the egg needs human blood splattered on it. Splattering the blood fills the investigator with incredibly positive feelings. Mark a bond with the egg. The egg loses a quality point each session it is not fed blood as a downtime

action. If the player does feed the egg blood, they gain the advantage to all day and night rolls for that session. If the egg has no quality points or is sacrificed, the investigator is permanently plagued by bleak nightmares of being born into a prehistoric nightmare. Every time the investigator sleeps, they must make a reality check.

- A collection of rare teas. These can be consumed for 1 HP a total of three times.
- The investigator who earned the most clues during this mystery is rewarded with: The diary of Dianne Cordon. It's a travelog of her journeys as a young woman. Once per session, an investigator can narrate or describe a passage from the journal and roll + LIBRARY USE. On a success, they take the advantage to their next gather clues roll. On a 12+, they also unlock a cabal clue.

Puzzle Pieces

Cost	Piece (bold must be chosen first)
1	How did Dianne Cordon die?
1	What is the darkest secret her house is hiding?
1	Your investigator survives the investigation*
1	The murderer is captured or killed
1	All wagered bonds survive
1	Unlock a cabal clue
1	Roll on the magical items table

* *(each investigator must unlock to survive)*

Haunted Antique Shop

Difficulty 6 / Danger 3

Establishing questions

- **First blood:** There is a new antique shop in town, a shop named Forgotten Desires that feels as though it has always been there. What do you see in the window that you both dearly miss and haven't seen since childhood? Make a reality check and record whether it was a pass or failure.
- Who is emerging from the shop looking furtive and clearly hiding something under his coat?
- What is the name (or names) of the proprietors of the antique shop, and why do they immediately strike you as untrustworthy?

The Killing

Frame a scene late that night. If the player who answered the First Blood question failed their reality check, they have an intense dream about the item in the window and wake up obsessed with having it.

The day after the characters pass through and see the antique shop for the first time, they get word that the person who emerged from the shop looking furtive has been killed. The player who describes them makes a reality check.

Locations

Forgotten Desires

The shop is packed to the gills with ephemera, Americana, and general junk from the last 200 years. Still, there are treasures here,

priced at seemingly a fraction of their total worth.

Paint the scene: Describe something incredibly rare and presumably valuable that is sitting at the bottom of a bin with a \$1 price tag.

The home of the victim

The home of the victim is a normal suburban home in most ways, except for the unwrapped plain brown paper package on the table. It's a chipped, ordinary Victorian era doll.

Paint the scene: What is the doll's name?

Father Masterson's residence

The priest of the town's main Catholic Church reports that someone has slashed his tires! His home is a small cottage attached to the church, and is mainly a home for his books and study of theology and the classics.

Paint the scene: What occult item sits on Masterson's overcrowded desk?

Characters

- The proprietors of Forgotten Desires are created in establishing questions, but they are by default a friendly middle aged couple, probably a pair of classic hippies-turned-Chamber of Commerce members. Think sandals with socks, ponytails, worn Brooks Brothers polos.
- Father Masterson, resident priest, who swears that pranks have been plaguing his church in greater and greater frequency, and getting less and less funny, since the shop opened. If Masterson survives, he may be of further use as a recurring character to the investigators, since he has a background in the occult and once served as an exorcist.

- July Mirthwell, disaffected resident, has a substance abuse problem. She's been at Forgotten Desires nearly every day.
- Jon "King" Caesar, the owner of the local car dealership. A medium fish in a small pond, he thinks he's entitled to everything he sees. A former athlete, still does his best to keep in shape, but a sizeable level of tailgating has left him with a small but growing paunch.

Clues & Evocations

- A secret room at the back of Forbidden Desires, seemingly very old, with mud walls and a single desk with an ankle chain on the floor
- A title for a brand new Corvette, all filled out except for the recipient line
- A contract, signed in blood
- A bottle of extremely rare absinthe with a French label
- A defaced statue of Jesus Christ
- A car with slashed tires
- An original copy of the issue of the Strand where A Study in Scarlet first appeared
- A tree covered in upside down crosses
- (Cabal clue) A ancient book written in Arabic that appears to be bound in human skin
- (Cabal clue) A Victorian era doll whose eyes follow you, and is never in the place that you left it
- (Cabal clue) A scrapbook packed with vintage newspaper articles describing goings-on at Coffin's Mill (the actual sawmill, not the town named for it)
- (Cabal clue) A print of the supposedly haunted adaptation of The Turmoil, filmed in Coffin's Mill

Magical Items

The investigator with the least reality is rewarded: A handwritten copy of Kitab al-Azif, an ancient Arabic grimoire. As long as the book is in their possession, that investigator gets the following move:

Consult the Void

When you are faced with something you can't explain, Roll + LIBRARY USE or REALITY. On any hit, describe the dark god who gives you a grim omen from beyond that grants you a clue. On a 7-9, describe the person from your past whose face that god wears and make a reality check. On a miss, the dark god lies. Lose 1 reality.

The investigator who earned the most clues is awarded: An ornate silver whistle with the phrase **quis est iste qui venit** carved into the side. As long as the whistle is in their possession, they take +1 to POWER. If they lose or break the whistle, they make the following move.

Pursued from Beyond

When you lose or break the mysterious whistle, roll + POWER. On any hit, you are safe. On a 10+, the whistle appears again when and where you least expect it. On a miss, inform the keeper that you are being pursued by a being from deep time. They should use this in a hard move the next time you roll a miss or give them a golden opportunity.

Everyone receives: A bottle of vintage Amontillado. As a downtime move, a player may drink a glass of Amontillado. Roll + HP. On a hit, that player may restore one health point. On a 9 or below, that player has the intense feeling of claustrophobia and must make a reality check.

Puzzle Pieces

Cost	Piece (bold must be chosen first)
I	Who is the true owner of Forbidden Desires?
I	To what end are all these terrible pranks being pulled?
I	Who killed the townsfolk described in the opening scene?
I	Your investigator survives the investigation*
I	The murderer is captured or killed
I	All wagered bonds survive
I	Unlock a cabal clue
I	Roll on the magical items table

* (each investigator must unlock to survive)

Inspiration/Appendix N

It is customary in these kinds of books to include a list of media that inspired your game. What follows is a short list of movies, books, and television shows that informed the development and tone of this game. Watch/read at your own peril. Of course, you should feel free to ignore these and take inspiration from whatever you'd like, and use this game for whatever you'd like.

- The Nightmare on Elm Street film series, specifically the first and third entries, plus Freddy vs Jason
- My Heart is a Chainsaw by Steven Graham Jones
- Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me
- Friday by Ed Brubaker and Marcos Martin
- Scooby Doo: Mystery Incorporated
- The Slumber Party Massacre II
- Texas Chainsaw Massacre: the Next Generation
- The Fear Street trilogy on Netflix
- Phantasm