

Bluebeard's Bride


A HORROR TABLETOP RPG



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After several goings backwards and forwards, she was forced to bring him the key. Bluebeard, having very attentively considered it, said to his wife, “Why is there blood on the key?” “I do not know,” cried the poor woman, paler than death.

—Perrault

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BASED ON THE FAIRY TALE *BLUEBEARD*

Bluebeard’s Bride was heavily influenced by *Urban Shadows* by Andrew Medeiros and Mark Diaz Truman, *Apocalypse World* by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker, and *Monsterhearts* by Avery Alder.

This game is dedicated to those souls brave enough to seek out
TERRORS, GHOSTS, and THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT.

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INTRODUCTION

A GAME OF HORROR





WHAT IS THIS?



Bluebeard's Bride is a tabletop roleplaying game of supernatural horror set in a familiar fairy tale. The tale starts simply enough: one room in Bluebeard's house is forbidden to the Bride. She eventually falls prey to her curiosity and opens it, discovering gruesome evidence that reveals her husband to be a killer of women. The game you play with this book is different—you and your friends explore the rooms of Bluebeard's home as his Bride, creating your own beautifully tragic version of the dark fairy tale.

Each player takes on the role of an aspect of the Bride's psyche—a Sister—who guides the Bride through Bluebeard's house, armed with little more than a set of keys. Each of you takes turns speaking as these aspects of her psyche would speak, deciding what actions the Bride takes, pushing the Bride deeper into the mysteries of each room, and provoking new horrors along the way.

You and your Sisters may not always agree, mimicking the internal struggle we all sometimes feel when confronted with difficult choices.

One Sister may feel the need to rebel and push further in her investigation, while another Sister labors to regain control in the face of her fears. The Bride, and your experience in the game, is stronger for these types of conflicts and disagreements.

The rules of this game involve some negotiation and a bit of chance. Sometimes you wear Bluebeard's wedding ring and directly control the Bride's actions; other times you roll dice to determine what happens next. No single person directs this story, not even the Groundskeeper, who portrays the servants and horrors you meet along the way. The Bride's story is unpredictable and engaging, leading her down a dark path to an unknown future.

But the Bride's story is not random. Your experiences in Bluebeard's house are guided by the original fairy tale, a framework that ties your story to the many tellings of the Bluebeard story. You move from room to room, gathering tokens and encountering horrors, before eventually making your way to the final room—and sealing the Bride's fate forever. And along the way, questions will arise...

*What will you find in
your new husband's house?*

HUSBAND

What horrors will haunt you?

HORRORS
HORRORS
HORRORS

*What darkness will you find
within yourself?*

DARKNESS

But in the end, there is only one question that matters for a new Bride:

Will you open the final door?

WILL YOU WILL YOU OPEN
WILL YOU OPEN THE FINAL DOOR
THE FINAL DOOR



WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Before you play *Bluebeard's Bride*, you need to gather a few friends who want to explore the house with you for a couple of hours. The game is designed to be played in a single session, but it has replay value; if your friends are left begging for more, you can always set aside some time for another session. We included several Sisters (page 47) so players can choose a different one each time, as well as guidelines to help generate an endless array of rooms for the Bride to explore (page 76).

As you prepare to play, you may find yourself in need of the following:

- **A Dark Corner to Play In:**
Ambiance is everything when playing a horror game. Find a space that accommodates the kind of story you are trying to tell. Dim the lights and shut the door, so everyone can hear you whisper.
- **A Spooky Soundtrack:**
Creepy music and ambient noise can heighten players' involvement at the table as well as inform your play; music can build tension in a scene or accent suspenseful moments. Look to the mediography (page 110) for some of our recommendations.

To play the game, you absolutely need:



- **Players:** One person to facilitate the game as Groundskeeper and three to five others to play as the Bride (Sisters).
- **Playbooks:** Each Sister playbook is an archetype of the Bride's personality. Available online at magpiegames.com/bluebeard.
- **Ring:** A Sister who wears the ring has more narrative control over the actions of the Bride.
- **Dice:** You need one pair of six-sided dice (d6) for when things get rough.
- **Pencils and Paper:** Print the materials and grab some pencils before you sit down to play.
- **The X-Card:** This tool makes playing together fun and comfortable. Available at tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg. (See more on page 12).
- **Time:** *Bluebeard's Bride* works best when you take your time with the story. Try to set aside 3-4 hours to play the game.

WHY PLAY A HORROR GAME?

Why go to all the trouble of gathering friends when you can instead read a ghost story or rewatch your favorite horror film?

Tabletop roleplaying games allow you to explore horror directly, and to collaborate on a terrifying tale with your friends. Watching a movie allows you to passively engage with monstrosity—the storyline is fixed and unmoving, not tailored to you or your fears. Often, you can guess the tropes of a movie or a story and what the ending will be. *Bluebeard's Bride* has an ending that only you and your friends can discover through play.

Horror stories are things born of nightmares and old fears; their content is drawn from a dark place deep within our psyches. *Bluebeard's Bride* encourages, nurtures, and grows the grim and indecent part of your imagination that hardly gets exercised in the light of day.

You have permission to give voice to the darkness within, and you may be surprised at what you find there—as well as what your friends reveal. This feeling can be liberating as well as terrifying. And if you can scare yourself, you can scare everyone else at the table.

Remember, you and your friends determine the fate of the Bride—a young woman who arrives at her new home—rather than simply reading about how her story ends. As you make decisions for her, you occupy the role of both the audience and author of the story, watching and reacting as the horror unfolds around you.

Playing *Bluebeard's Bride* is a memorable experience; no movie or ghost story can match the kind of experience you and your friends can create collaboratively, whispering to each other in the dark and rolling dice at moments of horrific uncertainty.



EXPLORING
YOUR
FEARS

PLAYING SAFELY

Before you take a deep breath and step off the path into the delightful darkness in which *Bluebeard's Bride* is played, there are a few things you need to know:

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Before you begin, you and your group should discuss what kind of game *Bluebeard's Bride* is and decide whether or not it is a good fit for the group that night. In this game, the goal is not just to scare or creep out the characters you play, but to frighten you *as players*.

This kind of experience requires at least a minimal amount of buy in. You would not show up to a funeral wearing a clown suit, and you should not play a horror game when you would rather play a game about superheroes.

Bluebeard's Bride is designed to push the limits of your intellectual dark side and exercise everyone's twisted imaginations, but that means there is the possibility for some people to get emotionally overwhelmed or upset by that content. Violence against women and a lack of agency are examples of two recurring themes that your group may or may not be in the mood to explore.

We include some tools to help your group overcome truly upsetting content that may arise without spoiling anything about the game (such as the X-Card). This may not be a suitable game for your group at this time, and that is fine. This game was not designed to please everyone, and player preferences matter a lot to a game's success.

This is not to say that playing *Bluebeard's Bride* is not fun. Quite the contrary! Exploring your fears and the fears of the people around you from the comfort of your own home and in the company of people you care about can be an enlightening and rewarding experience!



THE X-CARD

The issues that *Bluebeard's Bride* raises are often disturbing and uncomfortable, so we encourage you to play with an X-Card at your table.

The X-Card, designed by John Stavropolous, is a tool that helps groups manage difficult content without setting artificial boundaries or flagging content in advance. To quote John:

The X-Card is an optional tool that allows anyone in your game (including you) to edit out any content anyone is uncomfortable with as you play. Since most RPGs are improvisational and we will not know what will happen till it happens, it is possible the game will go in a direction people do not want. An X-Card is a simple tool used to highlight and resolve problems as they arise.

To use, at the start of your game, simply say:

I'd like your help to make this game fun for everyone. If anything makes you uncomfortable—

[draw X on an index card]

—just lift this card up, or simply tap it.

[place card at the center of the table]

You don't have to explain why, it doesn't matter why, we simply edit out anything X-Carded. If there is ever an issue, anyone can call for a break so we can talk privately. I know it sounds funny but it will help us play amazing games together and usually I'm the one who uses the X-Card to protect myself from all of you! Thank you!

We have found that anything that gets X-Carded during play can be replaced by something equally horrific, twisted, and troubling that does not push our group to bad places.

We trust your collective imagination to do the same! You will always think of some other terrible thing the butcher was going to do or some other disturbing performance of self-mutilation the horror needs to perform. Do not let yourself be bound by something so mundane as the first thing you thought of in a scene.

More on the X-Card can be found at tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg.

MORE
MORE
MORE
MORE
MORE
MORE
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MORE
MORE







A STRANGE BEGINNING

CHAPTER ONE



THE TALE ITSELF

The fairy tale of Bluebeard is one of the oldest—and bleakest—to persist and was a well-known story by the time it was written down. For centuries, analogues like “Fitcher’s Bird” have taken root all around the world and you should not, dear girl, assume a *correct* or *definitive* version exists. Fairy tales persist in a state of multiplicity with new life and meaning breathed into each telling.

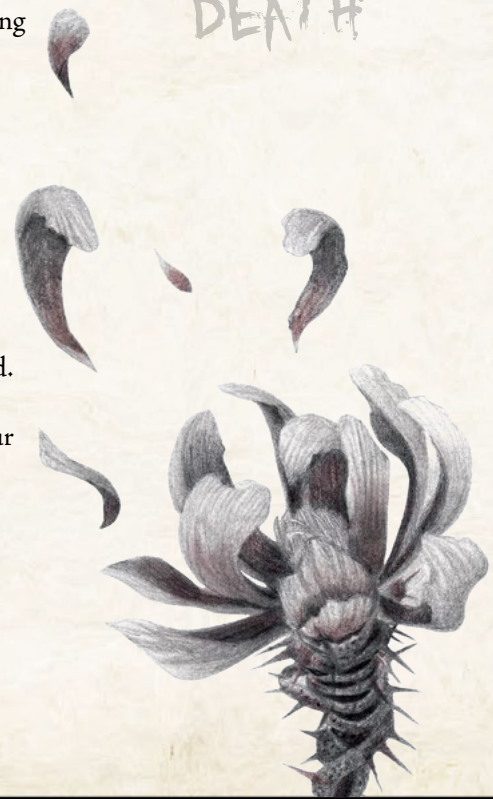
The many versions of this lurid tale are a testament to the gripping quality of what is at its core. Violence. Sexuality. Death. We know that these subjects are titillating, but like any good story there are lessons to be learned. The thread running through all these tellings paints a picture of a trap that is sprung when a wife’s curiosity drives her to disobey her husband.

Some interpretations say it is a tale meant as admonishment to women for their capricious nature. Others say it is a tale from women, for women, meant as a warning about men and their power. The following version of the tale, which we are about to share with you, is one of the many you may share at the table.

As you read and play out your own telling of this haunting story, allow yourself to connect to this feminine horror. It belongs to *you*, dear child. Your burden and your thrilling dare. There is no flinching away from it. The horror you unlock will be what it will be, and you must find your own meaning in respect to your own life. And ask yourself how that tale reconciles with your hopes, your dreams, and your darkest fears.

Remember though, it’s just a fairy tale.

VIOLENCE
SEXUALITY
DEATH



THE STORY OF BLUEBEARD

Once upon a time there lived a lord whose palace was so splendid and so richly furnished that even the Sultan's could not be compared with it. He had dishes of gold and silver, sofas and chairs upholstered in the finest silk. The walls were adorned with every kind of curious antique.

There was, however, something very odd about this lord. The color of his beard was a rich and **shocking blue**. His countenance was both distinct and unmistakable, and so he was never spoken of by his real title, which was grand and noble, but instead he was simply referred to as Bluebeard.

He was a fearsome man with deep set eyes, and he was known for having an uneven temper. Even so, Bluebeard had been married many times. No one quite knew what had become of each one of his wives in turn, as there had never been a funeral at the palace that anyone living could remember. They simply vanished, and when time passed he would marry anew.

One day Bluebeard went hunting in the countryside near his estate. With the sun high, he came upon a dilapidated farmstead and wished to slake his thirst and rest. The farmers were eager to please the powerful lord and sent their lovely young daughter scurrying to serve him tea and bread.

Bluebeard was instantly smitten with her beauty. He decided right then that he would take her as his wife. For a week he enter-

tained her amongst a cadre of other fine lords and ladies. No expense was spared. His wealth was dazzling in the way a cobra dazzles a mouse.

After that single hedonistic week Bluebeard came to call with a marriage proposal. Bluebeard scared the young woman, but she couldn't let her family languish in poverty. And besides, maybe his beard wasn't quite that **blue**. She accepted his proposal.

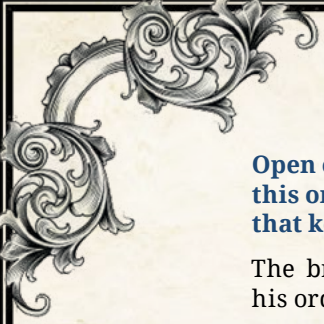
In short order they were married at the palace. Such a sight it was! A thousand white lilies decorated the pagoda for the ceremony. Delightful incense burned throughout the night.

The young bride awoke the next morning in her bed alone, her marriage yet un consummated. This caused her some amount of anxiety...yet also relief.

She was escorted by a servant to the dining hall, and there she found Bluebeard breaking his fast. He greeted her cheerily and bade her eat. Bluebeard informed her that he had received urgent news and must leave at once on a journey of much importance and would likely be gone many weeks.

To console her he kissed her affectionately and gave her the keys to every door in the house. He bade her to amuse herself in his absence.

"**Here,**" he said, "**are the keys to your new home. The smallest key, my dear, is for the closet at the end of the great gallery.**"



Open everything, go everywhere, save this one little room. I forbid you to use that key.”

The bride promised to faithfully obey his orders.

She stood waving to him from the palace gates as his caravan of camels and horses kicked up a trail of dust as they departed.

No sooner was he gone than she began to wonder what could possibly be hidden behind the forbidden door. Did he hide disturbing habits or unseemly desires? Was there some secret treasure known only to those of noble blood? Did he hide a mistress? Or was it something too terrible for her innocent mind to guess at?

She distracted herself from the idea with an exploration of the palace. She inspected the galleries, each more magnificent and splendid than the last. She tried on exotic furs and rubbed herself in priceless oils. She visited the servants in the kitchen—which caused quite a stir—and luxuriated in the steamy marble baths.

All the while her curiosity was gnawing at her. Was not the palace now her domain? Did not her husband trust her with his secrets? She idled in her bedchambers, becoming lethargic and gloomy. The splendor of her surroundings took on a sour bent, and she could take no pleasure in them. Finally she could resist the siren call of the forbidden door no longer.

In the pitch of night she took a single lamp and descended a back staircase to the gallery. Upon reaching the closet door she paused, remembering her husband’s command. She feared what might happen if she disobeyed, but the impulse of her curiosity was too strong to resist. With trembling hands she fit the small key into the lock and opened the door.

At first with the weak lamplight she could not see much. As her eyes adjusted, she realized what was in the room. The floor was covered in congealing blood, and the walls were lined with headless bodies—Bluebeard’s previous wives. A great scream tore itself from her throat, and she dropped the key.

It was a few moments before she came back to herself. In a daze she grabbed the key from the floor and rushed out of the room. She locked it behind her and returned to her chambers.

In the daylight of the following morning it all seemed like a dream, but when she examined the small key she found a stain of blood upon it! She wiped it carefully but the blood remained. Then she washed it and scoured it with sand, but to no avail.

That very evening, Bluebeard came back from his journey saying that he had received word on the road that the business had already been settled. His wife tried her hardest to appear happy at his early return but on the inside she quailed. She waited with dread

anticipation for him to ask for the return of his keys. He did so upon the next morning.

He looked through the keys and saw that the littlest one was stained.

“How comes this blood upon the key?”

“I do not know!” she faltered.

“But I do,” mocked Bluebeard. **“You have done as I have forbidden. Well, now you will go in once again and take your place among the ladies you were so curious to see.”**



The bride threw herself at her husband's feet and begged him to forgive her disobedience, but Bluebeard had a heart of flinty stone.

“Prepare for your death!” he declared.

“No. Please. Give me but a few minutes,” she cried. “So that I may pray.”

Bluebeard agreed and the bride rushed to the top of the nearest tower, hoping against hope that someone, such as her father or mother, may be approaching for a visit so that she could give them a sign to make haste. Pennants whipped silently in the sun, but nobody was coming. The bride wept bitterly.

Given no choice, the bride descended. He led her towards the tiny, horrible room. Near its entrance he bade her kneel on the rough flagstone. She obeyed, weeping, and without ceremony he chopped off her head and put her body in among the other wives.

THE END

This version was based upon *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (University of Adelaide, 2014), *The Tales of Mother Goose* (Charles Perrault, 1901), and *Fitcher's Bird* (Brothers Grimm, 1884), among others.



THE BRIDE

The original fairy tale is called “Bluebeard.” However, this game is about his new Bride, isolated in a house filled with taunting ghosts and creeping horrors.

The Bride is young, inexperienced, and haunted by the specter of generational poverty. There is much at stake for her in making this marriage work and she may decide to go to great lengths to preserve what little she has. Conversely, she may be dead set on resisting the temptation of such a beautiful lie, and search tirelessly for enough evidence to make her case to the local authorities before it is too late.

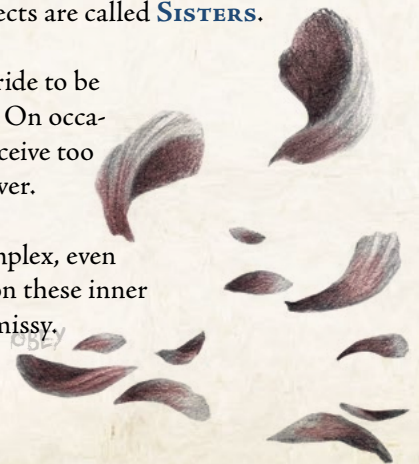
An intelligent lady already knows how this is going to end for the Bride—badly. And in the end, she is what you make of her. Quite literally. So take risks and push boundaries. What’s the worst that could happen? *What’s the worst that could happen?*

THE SISTERS

You may be wondering how all of you are supposed to play as the Bride at one time. Frankly my dear girl, you are going to have to share. The psyche of any person is complex, and the Bride no less so. Think for a moment about all of your inner voices. Is there a part of you that may be a little naïve, maternal, or deeply sexual? In *Bluebeard’s Bride* each of these aspects are called **SISTERS**.

Each player picks a unique Sister to play, but some actions may lead the Bride to be harmed through physical, mental, or emotional violence, called **TRAUMA**. On occasion, one Sister is hurt while the others remain safe, but should a Sister receive too much harm, she will **SHATTER**, losing that part of herself to madness forever.

Each Sister may view the evidence differently. Allow the Bride to have complex, even contradictory feelings about the things and people she encounters. More on these inner workings of the Bride are discussed later, so do not get ahead of yourself, missy.



THE HOUSE

The entirety of your story plays out within Bluebeard's domain. Determining what that domain is like is up to you. The **HOUSE** doesn't have to be a house at all. It can be a palace, a mansion, or an estate. The important thing to know about the house is that you cannot leave without discovering if you are a faithful or disloyal Bride.

SERVANTS

There are a number of servants within the household: maids, butlers, cooks, kennel masters, and more. As lady of the house, they are yours to command and only a slovenly wife would permit the staff of her husband's estate to allow it to fall to ruin.

Many of these servants have been part of Bluebeard's household for a long time and you may have trouble garnering their respect. Some may only grudgingly follow the letter of your edicts, while others may outright flout your authority. However, some servants may be trapped here and terrified, just like you.





KEYS AND DOORS

The house itself has a supernatural quality, a foreboding sentience. You may enter a room on the first floor, and exit that same room to find yourself on the third. You can take a morning stroll down a hallway, and by the end of it find the sun is setting. You may stare at a stained glass window, only to realize it is a mirror. You can lose time or perspective within the twisted halls of Bluebeard's house.

The ring of keys that Bluebeard has given you can unlock any door in the house. Much like the house itself, the keys are fantastical. Bone or horn or iron. Sculpted glass, liquid metal, or fluttering living wings. Let your imagination run free.

It's the middle of the game and a quiet ghost is stalking the Bride down a hallway. The Animus currently has the Bride's wedding ring.

"Ah! I want to get out of here!" the Animus says. "I want to go into a room to see if I can get away from it."

"Okay, but you better do so quickly. It looks like it's gaining on you," Whitney, the Groundskeeper, tells her. "As you sort through the keyring you find a key that looks like it may unlock the closest door. Please describe it for me."

The Animus thinks a moment. "The key is made of soft gold, and is slightly warm to the touch like it's been left out in the sun. It has designs on it that look like something from Aztec art. There are little rubies embedded along the key's spine that are reminiscent of drops of blood."

Whitney probes, "What are the teeth of it like?"

"Oh! Made of obsidian, like a ritual dagger."


"Okay, the matching door looks incredibly heavy," Whitney tells her. "Carved into it is a stylized scene of ritual sacrifice. A woman lies prone on a bed of stone at the top of the pyramid, and a priest is carving out her heart."

The Virgin chimes in, "Oh, god, I don't want to go in there!"

Whitney tells them, "The hallway is growing colder and you hear footsteps coming nearer..."

"We'll go in! I put the key in the keyhole and turn!" says the Animus.

"When you turn the key in the hole you swear you can hear the faint snapping of plant stems. The room beckons. You enter, and the door closes behind you."





TOKENS OF FAITHFULNESS AND DISLOYALTY

TOKENS are small objects or mementos that symbolize events that took place in the room. As the Bride investigates each room, she examines various objects and interacts with entities who inhabit the space. Their actions, appearance, and words should weave together to form a story about an event that took place in the room. This story includes to whom the event happened and may hint at why the event took place. The Bride will not uncover all the details of the story; some ambiguity should be expected.

The Bride's wedding ring is passed betwixt the Sisters to represent dominance over the Bride's actions. The player with the ring decides what the token is and if she supports Bluebeard as a killer or simply a misunderstood and unlucky man.

If the Bride decides a room holds proof that Bluebeard is innocent she is considered faithful and takes a token of **FAITHFULNESS**, but if the Bride determines his guilt she is deemed disloyal and takes a token of **DISLOYALTY**.

You may be surprised at the strange impulse some of your Sisters ascribe to the events that took place in the room, and sometimes you may even be swayed from your first thoughts. However, do not look to the Groundskeeper for clarification—this is your decision to make.

The Mother has the ring and is proposing the truth about the kitchen they're in; it featured a former bride who repeatedly gave birth to birds, which she then made into pies and tried to serve to guests even as her belly swelled again.

"Well, I think she died in childbirth with the babe, and she felt guilty for not providing an heir, like a proper wife should," the Mother says. "So I'm going to take a feather as a token of Faithfulness."

"Hold on now," the Animus says. "I think Bluebeard killed her and the baby as punishment for cheating on him."

"Maybe she was just trying to get our sympathy?" the Mother suggests. "She did warn us that if we weren't careful, we might end up just like her."

Marissa, the Groundskeeper, looks to the Mother. "It's up to you. You have the ring. Which kind of token do you want to take?"

The Mother hesitates, "I think I'll listen to my Sisters this time. I'll still take the feather, but I think it's a token of Disloyalty."

Indicate which tokens you take on the Bride sheet. When a token track fills up, you trigger the end of the game—and the conclusion of *your* version of the fairy tale is revealed.





A BOUNDED CONVERSATION

CHAPTER TWO





PLAYING YOUR PART

Roleplaying is as simple as having a conversation. You listen attentively, wait for your turn to speak, and stay on topic—like a *proper* lady. Some conversations have more rules than others—like a debate or a poetry reading—and *Bluebeard's Bride* is one of those bounded conversations. Learn the rules, express yourself in a becoming manner, and you will prove yourself a most accomplished role player.

INTERRUPTIONS

To keep the tension high in your scenes, the Groundskeeper might cut into the conversation to move things along to a new point in the story. Respect their facilitation and respond accordingly. You do not want to miss out on any

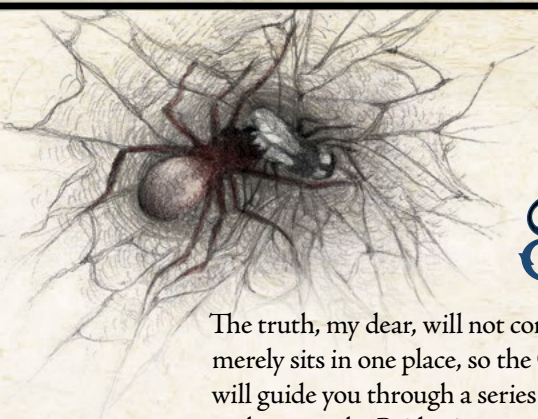
There are times in the conversation when you may speak as the Bride, as a Sister, or as a player. As the Bride you narrate what she does and what she says. As a Sister you express her internal conflicts and thoughts. And as a player, you may find yourself sharing some of the Bride's desires and fears. This conversation is guided by the Groundskeeper, but it is your job as a player to keep the story interesting and suspenseful.

new demands or consequences taking place. Be a good listener or you may miss the knock of a horror at your door. You and your Sisters may also be tempted to interrupt each other, which is fine, but be mindful of who has the ring.

THE FICTION

We refer to the collaborative story you are creating together as the **FICTION**. The fiction is the collection of everything that is happening, has happened, and can happen in your tale. Sticking to the genre and being true to the fiction demands that the Bride be allowed to make “mistakes” and get into trouble.

Sometimes you will get caught up in the moment and need to **CLARIFY** an action. If there is a misunderstanding, the Groundskeeper will rewind that scene, honor the clarification, and continue from where they last left off. However, once something is agreed upon, there is no taking it back—even when the outcome is bloody and painful. That door closes behind you.



THE ROOMS

The truth, my dear, will not come to a Bride who merely sits in one place, so the Groundskeeper will guide you through a series of rooms. Within each room, the Bride aims to propose a truth about what happened, to whom, and why. Proposing a truth allows her to collect a token of Faithfulness or Disloyalty, furthering the evidence she has *for* or *against* her husband.

As the door closes behind her, it is up to the Bride to determine the truth about the room, so it is crucial that the Sisters (and their players) be proactive about their investigation.

THE FINAL ROOM

The final room. You know which room that is. It is the one room you have been itching to open. The one room your husband forbade you to enter. The one room that will bring you pain and misery and ruin that there is no going back from.

When you have collected enough evidence for or against your husband by filling one of the token tracks, the Groundskeeper will ask you what you do next. The answer you and your Sisters give to this question determines the fate of the Bride.

If something excites you, go after it. If all seems harmless, whisper to your Sisters. Remind them what could be waiting for them if they dare get too comfortable.

The rooms are there for the Bride to investigate. There is no need for the Bride to wander the halls if all the happenings are behind closed doors. When you have made up your mind and have what you came for, leave that room and head to the next. After all, a proper lady should never outstay her welcome...

Everything the Bride has done was for this moment, playing to find out what would happen when she was faced with that locked door of the *one* room her husband, Bluebeard, forbade her to enter. Now the Bride must decide if she will open the forbidden door, merely peek through the keyhole, try to run for her very life with her questions unanswered, or if it is already too late for this Bride to avoid her fate.

The Bride has filled up the Faithful track, and the Groundskeeper narrates moving through the house to the final door.

“Can we look through the keyhole and then go inside?” the Animus asks.

“No,” Whitney tells her. “This is your decision. Your crossroads. What you do now determines how the game, and your story, ends.”

The Sisters confer a moment, then the Animus turns to Whitney. “We want to go inside.”

“Lovely,” Whitney says. “The room beckons. You enter, and the door closes behind you. This is what you see...”

OUTCOMES

“You traveled these dark halls in search of a truth most divisive. Each room provided you with all the evidence you desired to make that one fateful choice. Now you stand before the forbidden final room and you must decide...”

Faithful Bride: When the Bride proves her husband’s loving intentions, tell the Groundskeeper if the Bride enters the room or looks through the keyhole.

Disloyal Bride: When the Bride proves her husband’s malicious intentions, tell the Groundskeeper if the Bride presents her tokens to the town to try to prevent Bluebeard from killing again or runs away and starts anew.

Shattered Bride: When the Bride shatters completely, her fragmented mind now craves things it didn’t before. Tell the Groundskeeper if the Bride is obsessed with bettering herself for Bluebeard or desires to make future brides better.

And as always, my dear, you patiently wait for the Groundskeeper to tell you what happens...

TRIGGERING MOVES

Most of the moves in *Bluebeard’s Bride* do not use dice; instead they spell out exactly what kind of action should happen when the move has been **TRIGGERED** by what you say or do as the Bride. When you take the action described by the move, follow its instructions to find out what happens next.

However, you might do something in the fiction that would normally trigger a move, but you do not meet the requirements. You might, for example, urge your Sisters to **dirty yourself with violence**—a ring move—when you do not have the ring. In those cases, the Sister with the ring will decide what you do.

MOVES

The **MOVES** allow the Bride to connect with the story, walk its halls, and interact with the world in real and exciting ways. Moves are like the rules of an elegant dance—first you curtsy to your partner, then you take his hand—and your moves shape and define the fiction when the Bride takes action.

At any time throughout the game, a Sister can trigger one of the **MAIDEN MOVES**. More restricted are the **RING MOVES**, **EXIT MOVES**, and your unique Sister's **FACE MOVE**, all of which only apply in certain circumstances. In general, each set of moves covers a different array of issues:

- **Maiden moves** facilitate the Bride's investigation of a room.
- **Ring moves** permit the Bride to take direct action.
- **Exit moves** allow the Bride to exit a room and move on to another.
- **Face moves** are special actions only one Sister can perform.

"I'm going to *caress a horror*," the Fatale says. "She has my hand in hers, so I use my other hand to run my fingers over her cheek, rubbing her lower lip with my thumb."

"Great," Marissa says. "Roll the dice and add your Blood."

"I rolled an 8." The Fatale checks the Moves sheet. "It says that the horror will direct its attention to another victim in the house, and it wants me to participate. Do I need to say who it is?"

"Nope, I'll take care of that," Marissa says. "The woman smiles, and nods at someone behind you. When you turn, there's another woman, and she's smiling too. She keeps smiling, even as the first one reaches out and yanks a handful of hair from her scalp. The first woman gestures for you to do the same. What do you do?"

"Ew," the Virgin says. "Don't do it. Pull out that woman's hair instead so she knows how it feels."

"Do you want to get out of here?" The Fatale grimaces. "I reach out and take hold of a small handful of hair and I...obey."



ROLLING DICE: HITS AND MISSES

When a move asks you to roll, pick up two six-sided dice (2D6) and roll them on the table in front of you. The move tells you to roll +something (Blood, Carnality, or Resilience). To get your total, you should count up the total of your two dice and add whatever number modifier your Sister has in that stat.

The outcomes are quite plain: 7 or more is a **HIT**, any total of 6 or less is a **MISS**. In general, a hit means you accomplish the goal of the move and a miss means you may or may not accomplish what you set out to do, but something interesting *will* happen.

The move has a special condition for rolling a 7-9 which represents a **MITIGATED HIT** wherein you have to make compromises or

take a worse outcome. Overall, you are hoping to roll a 10+ when you pick up the dice.

Do try to remember that a miss is not a failure. It means that the Groundskeeper will take over and dictate what happens, rather than you or the move dictating the outcome.

The Groundskeeper never rolls the dice; instead they make their own moves when appropriate (page 68). These moves can be triggered on a miss, when another move calls for it, or, quite simply, when things get dull. This may seem constricting, but much like a stiff bone-ribbed corset keeps your posture upright and proper, these moves encourage the Groundskeeper to focus on contributing in meaningful ways.

TRAUMA

Things you encounter in Bluebeard's house may wish to misuse you. Some creatures will only hurt you a little bit—say, by clawing your skin as they rip your wedding dress from you—and this is indicated by taking one trauma. Others may have deeper lessons to impart to you, so the three trauma they inflict while wrenching your lower jaw from your face seems reasonable.

The Groundskeeper will tell you the amount of trauma you take, and ask you if you wish to share it or take it alone. There is no mechanical reason for you to do either—that all relies on what is in your heart, and how much enmity lies between you and your Sisters.

More on trauma can be found on page 88.

WHAT LIES?
?

TRIGGERS & UNCERTAINTY

Using moves may seem constraining. After all, isn't the best part about being a new Bride that your husband gave you permission to wander about freely and *do whatever you like*? Why would we want to limit what the Bride can do and why is the Sister who wears the ring the only one who can take certain actions?

Do not ask these silly questions. You are a young woman with more self-control than that of a child running barefoot in the streets! Moves are limits that promote creativity and provide a structure so everyone at the table will be on the same page. You will notice that in *Bluebeard's Bride* there are no moves for lifting heavy objects or leaving the house. You do not need moves to spell out that you are too weak to move the 1,000-year-old mahogany bureau or to remind you that your place is at home.

But when uncertainty strikes—and it will strike—moves help guide the story in those dark and frightful moments. The trick is that the uncertainty cannot be one-sided; both the Sister and the Groundskeeper must be uncertain about the outcome of the action. The Bride will frequently be uncertain as she moves through the house; the players often turn to the Groundskeeper to

find out what is going to happen, and how things look, taste, or feel throughout the house. But in those moments when not even the Groundskeeper is sure of the future...

- When the Bride wails for help in the darkness, neither she nor the Groundskeeper knows who will answer until the dice are rolled.
- When the Bride reaches out to empathize with a servant, neither she nor the Groundskeeper knows how the servant will react before she describes how the Bride shows her concern.
- When the Bride lashes out in anger and fear, neither she nor the Groundskeeper knows what form that violence will take, or if doing so will open the Bride up to further horror.

Thus, the moves we have chosen are natural places of uncertainty within our tale, places where we think you should stop and reflect on what is likely to happen next. Both the Groundskeeper and the players are all playing to find out how the story happens together, without scripting it out beforehand, so everyone can focus on staying true to the story.

CONTROL
THY
SELF

MAIDEN MOVES



Maiden moves can be called upon by any Sister at any time. There are no dice involved in these moves for a very specific reason—there is no need for the outcome to be uncertain. Not only does this allow for the atmosphere to be maintained at the table, but it harkens back to telling ghost stories around a campfire—there are no dice there. These moves enable the Bride to investigate what happened, to whom, and why while interacting with her surroundings.

The three maiden moves are: *care for someone*, *investigate a mysterious object*, and *take stock*. In this section, we explain each of the moves in detail and offer examples to help clarify how they are properly used.

CARE FOR SOMEONE

When you **CARE FOR SOMEONE** (servant or horror), you ease their suffering and bridle their torment. They may demand a demonstration of your sincerity.

The Bride usually *cares for someone* by pausing to tend to them, or to offer comfort in a naturally feminine fashion. The move is triggered when the Bride shows compassion or care towards a servant or horror whom she wishes to soothe or calm. She cannot *care for someone* who is not upset or whom she cannot help. And even if the Bride indeed holds sway over their intentions, not all terrors are so easily bridled.

The servant or horror may yet *demand a demonstration of sincerity* before allowing themselves to accept the Bride's comfort. They may believe the kindness a trap, set by Bluebeard to scrutinize their loyalty, so the Bride may have to prove her intentions, usually by helping them with their labors, fixing a problem within her powers, or whatever else your clever little mind cooks up and the Groundskeeper accepts.

EXAMPLE OF CARE FOR SOMEONE

In the bathhouse the Bride encounters an elderly servant named Cadi, who is endlessly carrying pails of water to prepare the Bride's bath. The buckets are full of rust colored water that sloshes on the floor as she walks.

When the tub overflows, the Animus reaches out and takes a pail, lighting the old woman's load.

Cadi smiles in return, finally sets down her pails, and says, "What a dear child. Is there something I can do to help you?"



INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS OBJECT

When you *INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS OBJECT* from a room, ask two:

- Whose item is this?
- What memories does this item hold?
- What about this item is odd or uncanny?
- Why did Bluebeard keep this item?

Investigate a mysterious object is for figuring out more about the room and what happened there through analyzing its contents. The move is triggered when the Bride touches, dusts off, picks up, or otherwise physically examines an object. An object is considered mysterious if the Bride notices it, and there may be more than one mysterious object in a room.

The list of questions serves to guide your exploration. Each bit of information is another puzzle piece clicking into place helping explain the room and clarify how you feel about your husband. Knowing who owns the item, what events happened around it, what makes this item unique, and how Bluebeard feels about the item may help you in your search for the truth.

EXAMPLE OF INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS OBJECT

The sunroom is full of bright green plants and birdcages with colorful songbirds. From an old-fashioned gramophone comes the sound of a woman singing plaintively in an unknown language, and there is a tea cart with a shiny silver tea service.


“This is interesting. I would like to *investigate a mysterious object*,” says the Virgin. “Those birdcages, specifically. What about this item is odd or uncanny?”

“The birds go silent, and you can feel them watching you,” Whitney tells her. “You


can see the birds reflected in the silver teapot. Only they’re not birds. Broken looking women are stuffed into those cages, looking at you. They are wearing evening dresses made out of feathers.”

“I don’t like that at all,” the Virgin mutters. “Why did Bluebeard keep this item?”

“One of the bird-women whispers to you, ‘Do you sing as lovely as we did, little Bride? Will he keep you here with us, to entertain him when he grows lonely?’”



TAKE STOCK



When you **TAKE STOCK** of a tense situation, ask one:

- What stalks the Bride from the shadows?
- What traps have been laid for the Bride?
- What does this place demand of the Bride?
- What horror here is hidden from the Bride?

Taking stock allows the Bride to reevaluate her safety and position in the room. To **take stock** the Bride must feel vulnerable or threatened; she cannot trigger the move if there is no uncertainty in the situation.

If you believe you are alone, the situation becomes tense when you hear a noise, or see something move. Walking into a darkened room with a thunderstorm raging outside is spooky, not tense. It becomes tense when you catch sight of a shadow that is not yours, or feel another's breath against the back of your neck...

EXAMPLE OF TAKE STOCK

The Bride is in a guest room covered in black satin. On the bed are two naked women fused together at the shoulder and hip. They are pleading with the Bride to join them.

"Their teeth seem to make a tacky noise as they speak but for now, they caress each other and giggle, waiting for your reply." Marissa tells her.

These questions hold a light to the danger the Bride knows is out there, but cannot quite see.

Asking them does not create peril; there is always something watching, always a risk to body and soul, always something demanded, always something you do not want to see.

The Groundskeeper will tell you what these things are, but keep in mind they may not mean you harm. They may merely seek to correct or better you as a person, so they may be approached in many different ways.

The Animus is shaking her head. "This feels tense to me; I want to **take stock**. What horror here is hidden from the Bride?"

"One of the women pulls her hand away from the other's shoulder. The skin frays, and blood runs down her hand. She stretches her palm out to you, and you can see that if she gets a hold of you it will tear flesh from bone."

RING MOVES



Ring moves supersede the maiden moves, allowing the Sister who wears the ring to trigger moves that the other Sisters cannot. Outcomes of these actions are uncertain, so you must rely on your stats, take a chance, and roll the dice. Once you make a ring move, pass the ring to a Sister who has not yet had it.

The five ring moves are *shiver from fear*, *caress a horror*, *dirty yourself with violence*, *cry out for help*, and *give up the ring*. In this section we explain each of these moves and discuss the options associated with them as well as examples of how they may show up in play.

SHIVER FROM FEAR

When you **SHIVER FROM FEAR**, name the thing you are most afraid will happen; the Groundskeeper will tell you how it's worse than you feared. Keep the ring and choose two, or pass the ring and choose one:

- It infects the Bride with its perversion.
- It has the Bride in its clutches right now.
- It speaks to you. Take one trauma... Just you, Sister.

Shiver from fear is triggered when the player of the Sister with the ring squirms in her seat, shudders, or utters words of discontent.

You can—and should—call this move on yourself if you find yourself reacting in such ways to the Groundskeeper's words. It would be impolite to keep such secrets from them.

This move applies not to the Sister you play, but to *you*, the player. While the Animus may be brave and stout hearted, the player is the one who triggers the move.

The Groundskeeper may also call this move out if they notice you reacting to their descriptions. Trust that your honesty will be rewarded with more delightful trembling.

Once you admit to your shivering fear, you now have the choice of whether to keep the ring or not; that decision is based purely on your personal desires. Do you want to keep control or pass the burden to your Sisters? You also choose how the horror reacts to your show of fear from the list—does it infect you, grab you, or speak to you directly?

EXAMPLE OF SHIVER FROM FEAR

The Bride is investigating a guest room; the Fatale wears the ring. One wall is papered over with images of beautiful women clipped from newspapers and books. When the Bride takes a step back, she can see the clippings all form a picture of a woman's face. It looks a lot like the Bride, but prettier. The Fatale scrunches down in her seat and clutches the ring tighter.

"Looks like you're *shivering from fear*," says Whitney. "What is it you're afraid of?"

The Fatale says, "I am afraid that the insane woman who hung these up is behind me and she wants my face!"

"Okay. Do you want to keep the ring?" The Fatale shakes her head and mouths *No*. "That's fine. Which option do you choose?"

"Um, infects the Bride with its perversion," the Fatale says as she hands the ring to the Mother. "Have fun."

Whitney continues. "You turn to find a woman. Her face is made up of clippings of other women's faces. The glue and blood is covered up by flaking foundation and powder. The stench of ancient clumpy makeup fills your nostrils. The woman curls her lip and tells you she's far lovelier than you. You feel your-

self nodding in agreement," Whitney says. "She is more beautiful than you. She hands over a pair of rusty scissors and you raise the scissors and press one blade into the skin at your jaw... You want to be beautiful like her, don't you?"

"No," the Mother replies.

"No, but there's a little bit leftover from the Fatale that does," Whitney reminds her. "So what do you do?"

"I don't like this," the Mother says. "Can I *shiver from fear* during the *shiver from fear* reaction?"

"No, we'll play this out first, although that tells me we're hitting about the right level of intensity," Whitney says. "Do you want to use the X-Card?"

"No, I'm okay," the Mother says.

Whitney continues, "So tell me, do you cut your face?"

"I do." The Mother mimes following her jaw line.

"You feel the warm blood slide down your neck, and the woman smiles. She tells you how good you're doing as her fingers tug at the edge of your skin."

CARESS A HORROR

When you **CARESS A HORROR**, roll +Blood. On a hit, the horror is swayed by your stroke; direct what was intended for you to another victim in the house.

On a 7-9, it will shift its attention, but only if you participate in some way.

The Bride must touch the person or thing in some way to **caress a horror**. The touch must be affectionate, gentle, sensual, or at least have a semblance of vulnerability. The Bride cannot trigger this move with simple words or by touching herself. And even if the Bride indeed captures the horror's attention with her touch, its intentions remain unchanged.

If the horror looks for another victim or shifts its attention, the Groundskeeper will provide a suitable substitute for you. Do not worry; they will exercise superlative discretion on this matter. On a hit, the horror acts on its desire, and you may stay or leave as you will. However, on a 7-9, the horror insists you help it achieve its goal; it will be clear about what you must do to keep its good will.

EXAMPLE OF CARESS A HORROR

The Bride is in a study that smells of smoke and dying flowers. There are some bookshelves and hunting trophies, but a movement catches the Bride's attention. A strapping young footman kneels in front of the fireplace, stirring the fire. He glances up at the Bride.

"Maybe he'll be helpful," the Witch says. "Excuse me, young man. Do you know the way to my bedroom? I seem to be lost."

"He grins and brushes off the knees as he rises," Marissa says. "He pushes you up against the wall of the study and kisses you roughly, tightening his grip on the back of your neck."

"That's not what I meant. Let's see. I want to try **caressing** him," the Witch says. She rolls a 10. "Great! I move his hands down to my waist and rub his strong forearms. 'You are young and passionate, but do not forget yourself; you are a servant boy and I am the Lady of this house. Go slake your passions with someone of your own station.'"

"Frowning, he lets go of you," Marissa tells her. "He storms off down the hallway where you hear a door slam, and then you hear a muffled scream. It sounds like Ahdri, the young servant you met earlier. There's the sound of ripping cloth as he gives her what was intended for you..."

DIRTY YOURSELF WITH VIOLENCE

When you **DIRTY YOURSELF WITH VIOLENCE**, roll +Carnality.

On a hit, you inflict trauma as established and choose one:

- Disable them
- Silence them
- Mutilate them

On a 7-9, choose one from below as well:

- Your vulnerability opens you up to trauma
- Your carelessness leaves you in a bad spot

A real lady would never stoop to physical violence...and yet here we are. The Bride's actions when using *dirty yourself with violence* must be specific and clear and, unfortunately, must be violent. This is not a gentle push or half-hearted attempt to flee—this is the desire to do harm to another living being.

You should narrate what physical actions you are taking, and remember that you may use the objects in the room if you wish to do more harm than your delicate fists can inflict.

EXAMPLE OF DIRTY YOURSELF WITH VIOLENCE

The Bride is cornered in the stables by a strong looking woman in hunting gear. She is forcing the Bride's head down into a trough full of water.

"I kick her in the shin with my heel as hard as I can, wrench a riding crop off her belt, and bash her in the mouth with it," the Mother says. She rolls a 9 and chooses *disable them* and *carelessness leaves you in a bad spot*.

Perhaps their words have hurt you; silencing your victim will ensure that their spittle will not land on others' tender hearts. If pure rage motivates you, mutilating your prey may purge that impulse.

When you choose to open yourself up to trauma on a 7-9, the Groundskeeper will oblige your wishes after you specify your vulnerability. So too when you choose a bad spot, the Groundskeeper will choose one as soon as you tell her how you were careless.

Marissa tells her, "The woman lets out a gurgled wail and recoils as blood wells up in her mouth. Busy gloating over her, you raise the riding crop in triumph, but you do not hear the sound of hooves scraping across the stable floor. A blood-curdling whinny pierces the cold crisp air, forcing you to turn. An enraged and emaciated horse is frothing at the mouth and dragging its hind legs across the floor towards you."

CRY OUT FOR HELP

When you break down and **CRY OUT FOR HELP**, roll +Resilience.

On a hit, a house servant comes to address your concerns and calm your hysteria.

On a 7-9, they help you, but they first need proof of your loyalty to Bluebeard.

Sometimes the Bride comes across something she may not be able to handle, a previously unknown deficiency, and this causes her to break down emotionally. This may be a new awareness of physical weakness when someone overpowers you, or perhaps a realization of limited options in response to a bad situation. It is a humbling experience to vocalize your own shortcomings, but someone will come to your aid and dry your tears.

When you cry out, a servant may respond, de-escalating the situation in some way.

EXAMPLE OF CRY OUT FOR HELP

The Bride is investigating the cellar when a pallid, loose-jointed monstrosity bites her arm, worrying it back and forth.

"I want to **cry out for help**," the Witch says. "I hate to admit it, but we need help. So I call out, 'Help, I'm scared and lost!'" She rolls a 9.

"Gizem, an elder servant with silver hair, comes out of the darkness with a candle and the thing scuttles away in terror," Whitney says.

They may ask for proof of your loyalty to your husband as, chances are, they may find you in an odd or compromising position.

Such proof will normally come in the course of explaining your needs, or by summoning sufficient gravitas to coerce them into submission.

Remember that servants are not your chaperones, young lady. You cannot leave the room with the servant, unless you trigger one of the exit moves (page 42).

"What are you doing down there, my Lady?"

"I, um, I fell," the Witch says. "And I got lost."

"Gizem frowns," Whitney tells her. "Sure you weren't meeting someone?"

"Oh, no," says the Witch. "I miss my husband and exploring his house makes me feel better."

"Gizem smiles and helps you up," Whitney says.

GIVE UP THE RING

When you voluntarily **GIVE UP THE RING**, pass the ring to the next Sister. You are immune to trauma until that Sister passes the ring.

Do not be surprised that you may wish to give up control of the body, dear girl. We are hurt through our bodies, after all, and if someone else can take that pain for you, why not pass it on?

EXAMPLE OF GIVE UP THE RING

The Bride is examining a dressmaker's dummy when she hears a wet thump behind her.

"Violence isn't really what I excel at," the Mother says. "Here you go, Fatale. Why don't you give not being nice a try?"

"I guess." The Fatale takes it. "What do I see?"

"The window blows open," Marissa tells her. "There's a shape draped in white silk, but blood is blooming where the silk touches it. It looks like a woman, and it raises its arm—"

"I don't want that touching me!" the Fatale says.

Bluebeard's Bride pays attention not only to physical harm, such as scratches, bruises, and tears, but also the invisible wounds that open your tenderest self to harsh words and horrific sights.

"I pick up a nearby pair of scissors and use them to ward it off, so I'm going to *dirty myself with violence*." She rolls a 4.

"The shape lashes out at you. The Bride takes one trauma. Do you want to take that alone, Fatale?"

"No," the Fatale says. "We're in this together. Let's all bleed."

"Okay," Marissa tells her. "Everyone mark one trauma, except for the Mother. Since she *gave up the ring*, she's immune to the harm."

EXIT MOVES



Exit moves are the only way for the Bride to exit a room. Only the Sister with the ring can make an exit move, as she is the one in direct control of the Bride. The other Sisters can and should tell the Sister with the ring how they feel about her decision, but it is up to that Sister's discretion how much she lets those opinions sway her. Once you make a ring move, pass the ring to a Sister who has not yet had it.

The exit moves are *escape* without proposing a truth and *propose a truth* about a room. This section explains the moves and discusses options associated with them and gives examples.

ESCAPE

When you attempt to *ESCAPE* without proposing a truth, the Groundskeeper will offer you a hard bargain or ugly choice. If you pay the price, you escape.

You can *escape* a room without proposing a truth, although you will not receive a token. If you are worried that a phenomena in the room is out of hand and you must flee, or you cannot stand to be here for one moment longer...you are *escaping*. Attempting to flee an emotionally charged situation can also be considered *escaping*.

EXAMPLE OF ESCAPE

The Bride is in a dark workshop. A young child is clawing her dress and pleading with her not to put out the light and let "them" get him.

"I don't want to stay here with whatever those things are!" the Virgin says. "I bolt for the door."

To trigger *escape*, you need an opportunity or opening to do so. You cannot very well expect to escape if you are in a compromising position, cornered, or when your way out is blocked. *Crying out for help*, *caring for someone*, or *dirtying yourself with violence* are all ways to create the kinds of openings and opportunities you need in order to escape.

"Okay," Whitney tells her. "You haven't proposed a truth, but you can leave...for a price. You still hear the hushed sound of thousands of 'them' all around you, but if you put out the light and let them have him you will be free to run for the door. What do you do?"

PROPOSE A TRUTH

When you **PROPOSE A TRUTH** about a room, detail what you think happened in the room, to whom, and why. Next describe the token you take that supports your interpretation of what happened here and mark it on the appropriate token track.

- If it is a **TOKEN OF FAITHFULNESS**, you are closer to proving that your trust in your husband is well placed; heal one trauma.
- If it is a **TOKEN OF DISLOYALTY**, you are closer to proving that your unkind suspicions about your husband are true; mark one trauma.

To get a token before exiting a room, the Sister with the ring must propose a truth of what she thinks happened, to whom, and why. If you decide that Bluebeard is at fault for the event, take a token of Disloyalty. If you are convinced that he is blameless, take a token of Faithfulness.

This truth can take many shapes, and the Bride will not know if her version of the truth is the real one; the Groundskeeper will not comment on the accuracy of her assumptions.

EXAMPLE OF PROPOSE A TRUTH

"I want to propose a truth about the room. I think this lady died by accidental self-strangulation in the sex swing thing with all the straps," the Animus says triumphantly. "Her insatiable appetite led to things getting out of hand. These kinds of activities need proper research or support, after all. I want one of the dirty letters she wrote to Bluebeard as a token of Faithfulness."

A proposal is a clear statement, such as "I believe a woman felt so ugly she died by ingesting the shards of glass from a mirror she shattered" or "I think Bluebeard killed this woman and her lover to punish them for their adultery" or "I think the ghost we encountered died by her own hand, using the gas oven, because she lost her pregnancy and Bluebeard made her feel so bad for it she ended up killing herself." The truth, after all, is always painfully, murderously specific.

"So you think the bride unwittingly killed herself in Bluebeard's absence?" Marissa asks.

"Yes! The letters go on about how she wanted to explore *with* him. My husband would never have let this happen to his wife if he was in the room!"

"OK. Everyone, heal one trauma," Marissa says as she marks a token on the Bride sheet.

THE BRIDE LIVES ON

Part of the fun of this game is playing it again—by choosing a new Sister to embody, exploring the rooms of a different Groundskeeper, or by inviting new friends into the mix. Just changing the roles around allows for drastically different tellings of *Bluebeard's Bride*.

Bluebeard's Bride can be played again and again, and your Bride can live on...so to speak.

Her song has been sung, but it would be wasteful to throw away the key and forget all about the Bride and her dark journey you created here tonight. Commemorate her by guiding a new group of friends through a room inspired by her story. Just like the fairy tale, your Bride can be added to the legacy of Bluebeard's house in future playthroughs of *Bluebeard's Bride*.

After all, he has had many brides before, and this one shouldn't be the last...



CHOOSING A SISTER

Bluebeard's Bride has a set number of Sisters to choose from: The Animus, Fatale, Mother, Virgin, and Witch. No Sister can be chosen by two players at the same time.

WEDDING PREPARATION

After you have selected your character, the wedding preparations begin. You will be asked to describe one physical aspect of the Bride; write your answer on the character sheet, so you do not forget it later. In addition to the question specific to your Sister, you will be asked to share your answers to some common questions.

- **Animus:** What are the Bride's hands like? What weakness do you give away when others hold your hand?
- **Fatale:** What does the Bride's mouth look like? How do others keep her quiet?
- **Mother:** What is the Bride's figure like? What do others wish was different about it?
- **Virgin:** What do the Bride's eyes look like? How do others know you want them when they gaze into your eyes?
- **Witch:** What is the Bride's hair like? How do others like you to wear it?

Each Sister answers all of these questions:

- What are you leaving behind from your provincial life to become Bluebeard's Bride?
- When you first met, what loving gesture did Bluebeard make that won you over?
- What gift did you present to Bluebeard before the wedding? Why did you choose this?
- Do you trust your generous husband, Bluebeard, or do you hold unkind suspicions? Why is that?

Take some time answering these questions, and be imaginative with the details. Remember that your answers should be evocative of your Sister's archetypal nature. You may notice the Groundskeeper taking notes while you talk, but pay them no mind. They only have your best interests at heart...

SISTERLY BONDS

As part of character creation you will establish relationships with your fellow Sisters, and they with you. On each character sheet under Sisterly Bonds there is a statement about how a Sister feels about the other Sisters in general, followed by two fill-in-the-blank statements. Choose a Sister for each of these as well. Do not fill this out all at once. The Groundskeeper will go around the group and have each of you create a Sisterly Bond one at a time.

STATS

STATS are qualities that describe the nature of the Bride and the Sisters. In *Bluebeard's Bride* there are three stats: Blood, Carnality, and Resilience. These stats affect the mechanics of the game and help to conceptually define what the Sisters are like and who they are.

BLOOD is your connection to the horrific. How closely tied are you to the darkest sides of human nature?

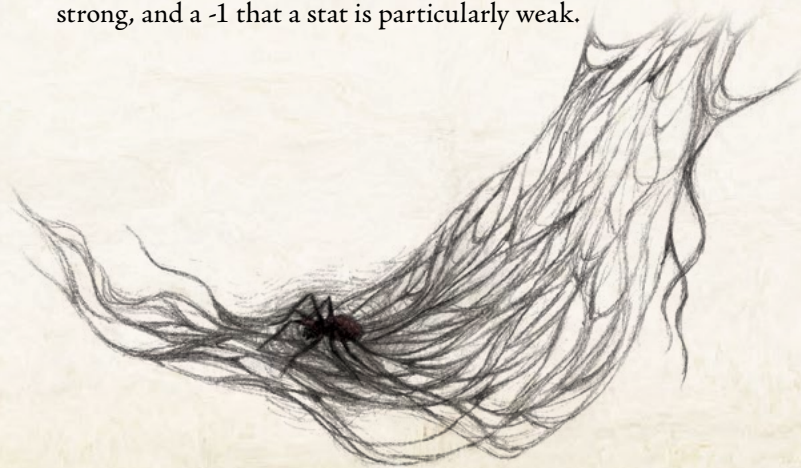
CARNALITY is your expression of the horrific. Do you weaponize your sexuality or give in to base instincts such as violence?

As you go around taking turns establishing bonds, try to make sure none of the Sisters are left out. Build a complex and rich relationship web. Do not be afraid to establish alliances or grudges with each other.

Remember to add to the fiction where you can, and encourage the Sister you are forming the bond with to help flesh out the details of that bond.

RESILIENCE is your resistance to the horrific. How much horror can you stand before you break?

Stats are measured numerically. The baseline for stats in general is 0, and typically you will not see a stat with a value of less than -1 or more than +1. A +1 means that a stat is particularly strong, and a -1 that a stat is particularly weak.





THE SISTERS' MANY FACES

Each Sister playbook has three options called **FACE MOVES**. These are moves specific to that playbook that allow the player to do something no one else can—be it ordering NPCs about, taking the ring from your Sister, or punishing those who truly deserve it.

THE FACE YOU SHOW

The face moves allow you to do something special, but they also give you hints as to how your particular Sister might react to stressful situations. Do you play the innocent, pretending not to see the horror until it is too late?

Do you gorge yourself on your Sister's pain for strength?

Look to these clues for instruction on how to conduct yourself, lest you let slip how far in over your head you are.

THE FACE YOU HIDE

You do not have to tell your Sisters which face move you choose to have in this game. The face move may affect them, but we all have our secrets, do we not? Unfortunately this goes both ways, as your Sisters may have face moves that will affect you later when you least expect it.

When it comes time to reveal a face move, you can either tell the Groundskeeper what you are doing or couch it in more poetic terms, but either way you should ensure that you are following the instructions.

ANIMUS

The Animus's face moves follow the thread of violence, command, or protection.

THE BRUTE

When you **INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS OBJECT** by breaking it, ask a follow-up question about the object. Its essence still remains, but the item can no longer be investigated by any Sister.

The Bride is investigating a comb she found in a dressing room. It is made of shell and glitters in the candlelight.

“Whose item is this?” the Animus asks.

“Part of the handle slides open and inside are small pieces of paper. On the first one is a finely sketched portrait of a woman. She has thick, dark hair like you, but hers is put up in fancy braids,” Whitney says. “What’s your next question?”

“Hmmm. Why did Bluebeard keep this item?”

“You look through the rest of the drawings, and they’re all of this same woman. Reading in the sunlight, combing her hair, sleeping, touching herself...”

“Good for her,” the Animus says. “I want to know more. I think I’ll use my Face move.” She describes how she snaps off the tines of the comb and breaks the handle. “What about this item is odd or uncanny?”

“There’s a last scrap of paper,” Whitney says. “You hold the paper close to your face to read the shaky writing. It says, ‘Why won’t he stop watching me?’”



THE ROOSTER



Mark one trauma to give a direct order to an NPC. They do it, but choose one: Your order...
... is carried out to the letter and then some.
... is overwhelming and carried out sloppily.
... is not something they can do, and a third party steps in to carry it out.

The Animus tells Nermin, a servant, to light more candles to dispel the darkness in this room, invoking her **Rooster** move. "And I think I'll choose that they carry it out to the letter and then some."

"Nermin scurries around, lighting candles," Marissa tells her.

"Soon, you can see that all those looming shapes are just furniture under dust covers. Then you can see the pattern of the carpet. It has an intricate border of stars and moons. But you smell smoke, and you look up to see Nermin is setting the drapes on fire. She smiles at you and says, 'Can you see well enough now, dear?'"



THE SHIELD



When one of your Sisters marks trauma, explain to her how the trauma she is experiencing is her fault, then ask if she believes you. If she believes you, she marks one less trauma. If she rejects your explanation, mark one trauma as you experience the shame of your own impotence.

The Bride is in a cloakroom. The Fatale just slammed the door in a leering butler's face, and hurt herself when she rammed her shoulder into a coat hook.

"You always were the clumsy one," the Animus scolds. "So busy trying to look sexy you don't even notice what's in front of your face!"

The Fatale looks hurt.

"Do you believe me?" asks the Animus.

When the Fatale nods, the Animus grins. "Then erase one trauma."

FATALE

The Fatale's face moves follow the thread of exposure, control, or entrapment.

THE DANCER

Remove a piece of your clothing to **CARE FOR SOMEONE**. That item of clothing is lost to you forever, but it feeds the appetite of the horror or servant until the Bride speaks again.

The Bride is trapped inside a dog crate. A horror shaped like a man with a dog's head prowls around the cage, snapping its rusty metal teeth at her.

"I'm going to slowly take off my glove," the Fatale says. "It's this ivory satin, with tiny pearls sewn in a pattern that looks kind of like moths are flying up my arms."

"Its eyes are locked onto you," Marissa says. "Are you triggering your face move?"

"Yes. So I roll the glove down my arm, then offer it to the dog-man. I tell it that I'm sure it's quite a good dog-man, and I'm sorry it has to live here. I reach out and wipe the slobber off its lips with my glove."

"It snatches the glove out of your hand, and rubs it all over its face," Marissa says. "But it seems calmer now. It squats down and watches you through the bars of the crate."

"Whew. That's better," the Fatale says. "Now we can figure out how to get out of here."



THE MISTRESS



You are the one really in control. Mark one trauma to take the ring from your Sister.

The Bride is in a cobalt dining room; the walls, floor, ceiling, even the picture frames have all been painted blue. A man with matte blue skin grabs the Bride and throws her on the table, forks and knives clawing at her dress.

“Nope!” the Virgin says as she scans her sheet. “I think I’m going to *dirty myself with violence*.”

“Don’t be dense,” the Fatale tells her. “He’s just a man, and we can make him do what we want.”

“You’re so gross!”

“Maybe, but at least I know myself,” the Fatale says. “I’m going to take the ring. It hurts me to do so, but I grit through the trauma because in your hands, Virgin, we are prey.”

“Go ahead and mark a trauma,” Whitney tells her. “Virgin, you’ll have to pass over the ring. So tell me, Fatale, what do you do to become the predator?”



THE SPIDER



Your beauty and charm get you what you want. When you trap a servant or horror with your feminine wiles, they will tell you a secret about either the house or Bluebeard. Mark one trauma to ask a follow-up question.

The Bride is in a kitchen with bubbling pots and kettles whistling over the fire. Meryem, a young cook, bustles around trying to prepare a meal.

“She doesn’t seem so bad,” the Fatale says. “I wanna know a secret. I get in her way, and put my arm out so she can’t get by without brushing against me.”

“Sounds like you’re trying to use your *Spider* move,” Marissa says. “You’ll need more feminine wiles.”

“Okay,” the Fatale says. “I’ll lean in and smile. I always wished I was good in the kitchen. I think it makes a woman seem so capable, so good at giving people what they want.”

“Meryem blushes,” Marissa tells her. “Well, ma’am, I have to agree. Why, one time I saw the last bride wearing nothing but an apron as she was prancing around. And Bluebeard was watching her, and he certainly seemed to be enjoying the sight.”

MOTHER

The Mother's face moves follow the thread of punishment, power, or selflessness.

THE BEAR

When a Sister provokes trauma, you can step in and punish the Sister who truly deserves it. Tell the guilty Sister to mark the trauma instead, and mark one trauma for yourself as well, as your failure to prevent this is self evident.

The Bride is in a gallery lined with glass cases that are filled with tiny living sculptures of plants and animals. The Virgin is investigating one of the displays—a cat/fern hybrid that talks—although the Animus has the ring.

“You’re a weird little creature,” the Virgin says.

“I may be weird, but at least I’m not fat,” Whitney answers for the hybrid. “It shakes itself and starts grooming its fronds.”

“What a rude beast. I think it should be taught a lesson. I’m going to hit it,” the Animus says. She rolls a 3 on *dirty yourself with violence*. “Ugh.”

“It yowls and lashes out, breaking the glass,” Whitney tells her.

“One of the shards tears through your dress and embeds in your shoulder. Blood spills down the front of your dress. Now, Animus, are you going to take the trauma alone, or will you share it with your Sisters so they feel the pain as well?”

“The Virgin is just one away from shattering, so I’ll take it,” the Animus says.

“I don’t think so,” the Mother says. “The Virgin is the one that was rude first. I want her to take the trauma, and I’ll take one myself for failing to prevent her bad behavior.”

“What? I don’t want that,” the Virgin says.

“I know, but that’s the Mother’s face move,” Whitney says. “So let’s talk about how the Virgin shatters...”



THE KINGMAKER



When you insist a male servant or horror deserves more power than they currently have and give them a gift, you have found your champion. Heal one trauma.

The Bride is in a sick room. An elderly man in his wicker bath chair grips the Bride's arm tightly. Breathing heavily he says nothing, refusing to release her.

"I tell him that he should have servants tending to him, not be hidden away," the Mother says.

"What are you doing?" the Witch asks.

"Using my face move," the Mother tells her. "I give him the wooden hair comb my nana made for me."

Marissa says, "The old man tightens his grip."

"I stay where I am and tell him that he doesn't need those. He should stand!" the Mother insists.

"He releases you, takes the comb, and stands," Marissa says. "Towering over you wearing armor made of thorns. 'You are right! What task would suit me m'Lady?'"

"See, Sisters?" says the Mother. "We have a champion... and I heal one trauma!"



THE MARTYR



You will take your love to the ends of this world. When you offer forgiveness for a Sister's sins, mark trauma, one for two, to heal that Sister.

The Bride is in a nursery with peeling wallpaper. The Animus has picked up a child they found and is trying to comfort it.

"It opens its mouth, revealing row upon row of sharp teeth," Whitney says. "It wails, then bites you. Take one trauma. You're up to three trauma, aren't you?"

"Yes. Figures when I'm nice!" the Animus grumbles.

"It's okay, Sister. I forgive you," the Mother says. "Does that trigger my face move, Whitney?"

"You could be more specific," Whitney tells her.

"Okay." The Mother thinks a moment. "Sister, you do not read these situations well, often hurting those you wish to help. I forgive you."

"Mother, mark one trauma, and Animus, heal two."




VIRGIN



The Virgin's face moves follow the thread of beauty, danger, or vulnerability.



THE LILY



Your beauty is a candle in the darkness. When you **CARE FOR SOMEONE** by showing them something beautiful, you do not have to demonstrate your sincerity.



The Bride is in a library and has hidden herself behind a sliding panel in the wall to escape disembodied whispering. Waiting inside is the voice of a boy, who began screaming when he saw the Bride.

“Shhhh, you’re okay, don’t be afraid,” says the Virgin. “Show me your face, and look at the wall over here. Don’t you think that stain looks like a bunny?’ and I reach out and pat where I think his shoulder would be. I want to use my face move, the Lily.”

“Is the stain really beautiful, though?” Marissa asks.

“Well, yes. I mean, it’s much nicer than anything else I’ve found.” The Virgin thinks a moment. “It sparkles in the candlelight, from the mineral salt on the wall. So it is beautiful.”

“I’ll accept that,” Marissa says. “The screaming stops, and through the darkness you feel something solid take form under your hand. ‘I used to have a bunny,’ the boy whispers. ‘His name was Pal and he had a crooked ear, just like that!’”



THE MOTH



When you **INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS OBJECT** by placing yourself in immediate danger, the Groundskeeper asks you a question off the list provided. Your answer is truth. Mark one trauma to earn a second question.

The Bride is in a den decorated with stuffed birds and mounted antlers. It reeks of gunpowder and smoke. There is a small girl with no face sitting in the middle of the table in front of the fireplace.

“She hasn’t moved yet, so I want to use my face move. I approach and run my fingers over the locket around her neck, so it’s easy for her to grab me.”

“Fair enough,” Whitney says with a grin. “So tell me, what about this item is odd or uncanny?”

“I open it, and inside is a faded picture,” the Virgin replies. “It makes me think of family, and in the mirror set into the other side, I see my mother.”

“Cool! Do you want to mark a trauma to ask another off the list?” Whitney asks, but the Virgin shakes her head.

“Okay,” Whitney says. “Now, you notice the smell of smoke getting stronger, and you hear a crackling. When you look at the fire your mother is standing before it. Blistered and burned.”



THE VICTIM



When you **CARESS A HORROR** by inviting it to come closer, mark one trauma to take a 10+ instead of rolling.

The Bride is trapped in the private box of a theater by a woman who has sewn jewels into her skin. The woman clicks her jeweled fingernails together as she stalks the Bride around the small area.

“I’ll use my face move and open my arms, like I want her to hug me,” the Virgin says.

“Great,” says Marissa. “Mark a trauma and then tell me how you caress her.”

“When she steps into my embrace, I trail my fingers over the gems in her cheeks and her lips,” says the Virgin. “I tell her she’s pretty.”

“That makes her smile,” Marissa says. “She pulls a giant diamond, bigger than a baseball, from her pocket, holds it up for you to admire, and then she pushes it into her mouth. She crams it in, so hard her teeth shatter, and you can see the shards jutting out from her gums. But still she tries to swallow that diamond...”

WITCH

The Witch's face moves follow the thread of magic, feeding, or lies.

THE MEDIUM

Spill your blood to commune with the horrors of the room. Mark one trauma and the Groundskeeper will share whisperings about what happened here, and might ask you a question or two; answer them.

The Bride is in a dusty attic, full of vague shapes covered in dustcloths and spider webs dangling from the rafters overhead. There is a large wooden desk under one of the beams, and deep scratches in the floor from where it was moved.

"I think I have an idea of what happened here, but let's find out more," the Witch says. "I slice the heel of my hand on a splinter jutting up from the floor, and drip the blood over the desk."

"Mark a trauma," Whitney tells her. "Now, the wind picks up until it sounds like it's moaning, and the flame of your candle flickers. As you stand there, you start to pick out words in the wail of the tempest.

'Just climb up,' the whispers go, 'and tie a knot. It's a quicker death than you'll get otherwise.'

"Ugh. That's awful," the Witch says.

Whitney nods in agreement. "Tell me, did you climb up on the desk?"

"You know, I think I did," the Witch tells her. "I don't think I even realized I did."

"Now that you're up there, what do you see?"

"I look up at the beam, and there's some golden hair caught in the rough wood." The Witch shudders. "Let's get out of this room."



THE REAPER



When a fellow Sister shatters, you feed on a piece of the Bride's soul. Heal two trauma.

The Bride is in a ballroom with a dark mirrored floor. A woman has risen from the floor, her skin also made of dark mirrors. The Animus rolled a 6 on *dirty yourself with violence*, and takes a final trauma that causes her to shatter, and she reads the back of her sheet aloud.

"You feel your connection with your Sisters fade, Animus," Marissa says.

"Is she gone all the way?" the Witch asks. "I wanted to use my face move."

"You still can," Marissa says. "Tell me what you do."

"Hmmm," the Witch says. "Oh, I know. Just as we feel that last flicker of the Animus, all the rest of my Sisters feel this tearing inside their head, and then in the back of their minds they hear me chuckle."

"That's perfect," Marissa says. "Now you get to heal two trauma. Back to the woman stalking you..."



THE VIPER



When you *CARE FOR A SERVANT* by poisoning them with your lies, they choke on your words and die.

The Bride has been talking to Sabah, an older servant they found in the laundry. She started the interaction by insulting the Bride, and the Witch was vocal about her dislike for the woman.

"Sit down here, dearie," the Witch says. "Rest your old bones. Everything is going to be just fine."

"If you say so," Whitney says. "Are you using your face move?"

"Yes," the Witch says with a smirk. "And I lean in close, patting her hand, telling her that I'm sure her children will care for her in her old age, and that it's just so much work for someone her age to take care of a house like this, and I'm sure Bluebeard has appreciated all she's done..."

"The woman starts choking. She's turning blue, and clasps your hand."

The Witch laughs. "And I just keep talking until she stops breathing."





A DARK LESSON
CHAPTER THREE





THE GROUNDSKEEPER

We're alone now. Just us. Let's have a chat.

There's no need for pretense here. The players, those silly girls, think they're ready for this game, prepared for what you might throw at them. They pore over the early pages, seeking out every little hint of safety, thinking to protect themselves with *rules*. Such simple, foolhardy creatures.

Because all of this—the design, the words that came before—is for you. It was always for you. You, the Groundskeeper.

The way the moves work, the way the Sisters perform their little flirtations—these are windows that show you what your *players* actually fear. They tell you how their Sister is unique by what she says and feels and what the Bride does. The players make decisions about how to handle the horrors in each room, and how much trauma they're willing to risk to figure out what their husband is up to.

And you will learn with every shiver, every nervous laugh. You will make them beg you to describe the horror to them, one luscious word at a time.

This is the best part of the game, when a player's eyes widen in horror. When it sinks in that they are *trapped in this house*, and they begin to sacrifice servants, then each other, as they struggle against the inevitable. And your voice caresses their waiting ears as you tell them how it is *all their fault*, how their choices led to this bed they made and must lie in, and how their actions are the gasoline soaking the very bedclothes, turning it into a funeral pyre.

Once you were the one to learn proper, lady-like behavior. Now, you will teach this lesson.

Once you were the one to entertain the careless whims of men. Now, you will share this wisdom.

This is how you run *Bluebeard's Bride*. Follow our advice, and you will do well.



WHAT WENT BEFORE

You should read the previous chapters, as there's important information in there for you as well as the players, from Sister creation to move clarification to how trauma works between the Sisters. *Bluebeard's Bride* requires a lot of trust to play and run, and making sure everyone understands the rules is the start of that.

This chapter, however, holds secrets just for you. **AGENDAS** are your overall goals in running the game, and they guide you towards the best kind of play for *Bluebeard's Bride*; **PRINCIPLES** are the best practices we've learned running the

game; and **MOVES** are specific actions to take in response to players' choices. Together, these make running the game a sleek, satisfying experience that fits the theme of *Bluebeard's Bride*.

All the tools you need to bring the house to life are here as well. There's advice on running the game for specific Sisters and instructions for creating the rooms and objects, as well as managing the servants and horrors that live within those spaces. You don't need to memorize everything here before you run the game; it's perfectly fine to refer back here as needed.



AGENDAS


As Groundskeeper, your intentions revolve around balancing the following agendas:

Make the Bride and her experiences feel real.

Fill the Sisters' lives with fear and horror.

Play to find out what the Bride chooses.

MAKE THE BRIDE AND HER EXPERIENCES FEEL REAL.



While sometimes the Bride's surroundings may be fantastical or horrible, they should always be grounded by the things our society whispers about women. The Bride is in quite an overwhelming situation, reaching milestones that carry a lot of emotional weight: leaving home for the first time, marrying an all-but-stranger, being abandoned in an unfamiliar house.

The Bride's story may be dark fiction, but it runs alongside the stories of other women. There is a truth to what happens in Bluebeard's house, and that truth is personal. The horrors in this story come from within, from the dark thoughts we don't like to admit we all harbor in the deepest parts of our minds and hearts. Draw on that to flesh out your descriptions.

FILL THE SISTERS' LIVES WITH FEAR AND HORROR.

The house wants to be known, and it's your responsibility to present it, in all its refined malevolence and with utmost honesty, to the Bride. Describe the things that scare you, and watch as that fear spreads to your players.

Remember, however, that you are not responsible for making the house ahead of time or knowing what will be too much for someone.

The instructions in *Curating the Rooms* (page 76) goes over how to make rooms, but let the horror be in the moment as well. This game comes together in whispers over a table in a darkened room, and that liminal space is where *Bluebeard's Bride* thrives.

Never let the Sisters forget what lies in shadows.

PLAY TO FIND OUT WHAT THE BRIDE CHOOSES.

You know that Bluebeard is a murderous bastard. That's not what this game is about.

It is about the Bride and what she chooses to do with the information she gathers. The players may decide early on what path they think they want to pursue; that doesn't matter to you.

ALWAYS SAY

When you run *Bluebeard's Bride*, sometimes you'll get caught between different agendas, and the way forward will seem unclear. When that happens, always say:

- ...what the principles demand.
- ...what the rules demand.
- ...what honesty demands.
- ...what moves the horror forward.

The principles are the hallways you walk to reach your agendas, and the rules are the walls and columns holding your story together.

Do not break the structure. If a Sister makes a move that will end in her marking trauma, inflict it. If a Sister misses a roll, embrace it and pour forth atrocity in response. Follow your principles and rules, and let their demands guide you.

You have many terrible, wonderful things waiting in the wings for the Bride to discover—allow yourself to trust the story and surprise your players. That moment, when you're waiting for the players to take in the horror and beauty you have laid out, is when you've really brought the house to life.

Although this is an investigatory horror game, always tell your players the truth. They are relying on you to tell them what the rooms look like and how the servants and horrors behave. Don't hold back. Although the players assign the meaning to the objects they find, they can't do that without all of the information you have to give them. And you should give it, until they ask you to stop.

And above all, focus on the horror.


Bluebeard's Bride is a game about the terrible realities of women's lives. If a Sister shows weakness, have the house birth a twisted reflection of it. If there is a perfect moment for a servant to take advantage of the Bride, have them take it, and draw out the scene to its fullest potential. This is a house of horror, and your players look to you to expose the iniquity behind every door; do not let them down.

PRINCIPLES

While the agendas are goals, principles are the path you take to get there. They are rules, just like your agendas and moves, but they work as guidelines to create the best, most horrific fiction within the game. Follow them, and you'll be rewarded by a beautifully constructed story. Ignore them, and your game will fall apart.

- Breathe unnatural life into the house.
- Address yourself to the Sisters, not the players.
- Give each inhabitant of the house a drive.
- Ask about the Bride's fears and build on the answers.
- Veil your moves with mystery.
- Hold the Bride to her wedding vows.
- Fill the house with the echoes of violence.
- Blur the line between the ordinary and the monstrous.
- Center the story on women's experiences.





BREATHE UNNATURAL LIFE INTO THE HOUSE.

This house is full of pain. It's in the grain of every board making up the floor of the ballroom, every filigree adorning the locks that guard the doors, and in the shades that have made their eternal home in every room. The Bride is never alone, even when she believes herself to be so, and it is this lingering agony that follows her every step.

Describe the rooms in detail: use scent, touch, and sound as well as sight to evoke emotion. Remember that everything here has a purpose, and nothing is ordinary or plain, unless that makes it horrifying. Each room is haunted by a former bride, although she may not be seen at first, and everything in the room tells the story of her life—and death.

ADDRESS YOURSELF TO THE SISTERS, NOT THE PLAYERS.

Although you will get a thrill out of each player's reaction to the terrible things you describe, you're not talking to them. Address the Witch, or the Virgin, or the Mother, as they stand in a room haunted by a breathing velvet couch, not the player.

This extends to what the characters can see and hear as well. They are investigating each room; describe it as if they are standing in it. You should only hide things where they can be found, and describe what is in their sightline.

The Sister is the one debating sitting on the couch, so talk to them. This prompts your players to think, talk, act like their characters.

Think of the tricks lighting can pull, atmospheric effects that may distort distances or sources, and then describe what the Sisters can perceive.

GIVE EACH INHABITANT OF THE HOUSE A DRIVE.

The former brides who now exist as horrors may have had their lives ended at Bluebeard's whim, but his control over each of his wives ended with her life. When you describe the appalling things the former brides do to themselves and wish to perform upon the Bride, you are describing *their* warped desires, not Bluebeard's.

Even so, the horrors were once people, and you should attempt to do justice to the complexity of their feelings. They are angry and hurting at being dead, and who better to take that out on than a new Bride, especially if they can justify it to themselves as a warning?



ASK ABOUT THE BRIDE'S FEARS AND BUILD ON THE ANSWERS.

Never stop asking questions. The players reveal their concerns with the objects they choose, what they lament leaving behind. They tell you where you should hone in with horror.

Take those gifts, so unwittingly given, write them down, and push further. Ask pointed and provocative questions the Sisters can't answer with a yes or no.

The players will be delighted when you reincorporate these answers in the rooms they explore. Well, they'll be delighted at first. Then you should take everything they mentioned as precious, every person they admitted to caring about, and break it, slowly and cruelly, in front of them.

Make them watch. Make them help you do it.

VEIL YOUR MOVES WITH MYSTERY.

Mirror back to the Bride her fears and insecurities, but do not cheapen yourself by resorting to coarseness. The things that you cause to happen are all the more dreadful if they sigh and whisper their message, rather than scream it.

When you use one of your moves (page 70), don't tell your players what you're doing.

It should seem to them that you're merely continuing the story, reacting to something they just said or did. Say, "Witch, you notice footprints on the floor; they're fading as you watch, but they're made of some kind of black, sticky liquid..." rather than telling her, "I'm hinting at off-screen horrors, so you see..."


HOLD THE BRIDE TO HER WEDDING VOWS.

Marriage is no small thing—the Bride promised to love, honor, and obey Bluebeard for the rest of her life, and she should be reminded of that pledge.

From fulfilling her duties in the marriage bed to ensuring a well-run, efficient house to maintaining a pleasing and modest demeanor, the Bride has many opportunities to fail.

Lasciviousness, vanity, slovenliness—these are the evils women fall into far too easily. It is not becoming for a married woman to express desire as if a common beast; nor to question her husband; nor to be anything but gracious.

Such lapses are cries for help, for correction, for instruction, and you should make sure to answer.



FILL THE HOUSE WITH THE ECHOES OF VIOLENCE.

Some of the worst parts of violent acts are how they can linger, manifesting in the most innocuous of details. As women, we are intimately familiar with pain...and the awkward questions afterwards, interrogating our own feelings of guilt or shame, and the burden of who exactly is at fault for what happened.

The sound from the corner of the room where we saw no one a moment earlier, the shifting sound betraying an unknown person close behind us, are the things that make us shiver. A closed fist may make us tense, but the remnants of something else can be so much worse.

BLUR THE LINE BETWEEN THE ORDINARY AND THE MONSTROUS.

The Bride should see herself in the spectacles you present to her. In the end, it should be clear that the thinnest line separates the Bride from the abominations that live here. Sometimes that line will blur, or disappear entirely, and you should make those moments very clear.

Tell the Bride early and often about the things at the edge of her vision, the shadows that linger just a little too long. Those forms will take shape soon, and the horrors they present will be all too familiar reflections of the desires she has brought to the house.

CENTER THE STORY ON WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES.

Bluebeard has his fingers on every object and his shadow haunts every room, but this is not his story. This is not about Bluebeard's childhood, his relationship with his mother, or even the gruesome crimes he has committed.

Never forget: this story is about the Bride and the women who live in the house, whether servant or horror. Bluebeard has touched their lives, but the women in this story have other aspects, other concerns—how they feel about themselves, their body, or their sexuality.

Root the story in the tales these women have to tell. Bluebeard is not a protagonist or sympathetic character, and should never, ever be stylized as such. There is a place and a time for pathos with this kind of villain. This is expressly not one of them.

This is a woman's story. You do not have to be a woman to inhabit it, but you should let the feminine experience be your guiding principle.



HORRIFY HER: TRIGGERING THE MOVES

Just as the Bride has moves to assist with moving the fiction forward, you have moves to answer her actions. When the Bride interacts with the house, moves give you a way to reinforce that fiction, to bring every lingering caress, every grim scene, that much closer to reality.

Sometimes the Bride engages the horrors and objects within rooms and the story flows forward smoothly as the players make their moves and, when they must roll dice, get hits (a 7 or more).

SOFTER MOVES vs. HARDER MOVES

While the Bride may show flawed judgment, as Groundskeeper you can exhibit no such weakness. You respond to her actions with either a softer move or a harder move, as your unimpeachable sense of the occasion demands.

A **SOFTER MOVE** is a warning to the Bride that things can get much worse, while a **HARDER MOVE** shows her that it's worse than she thought and there is no going back.

You answer their questions and describe what happens according to what their moves tell you. The dance between you and the Bride is known, each step following the other as smoothly.

At other times, the dance flags as the players lose the beat and look to you to bolster them. The house itself holds its breath, and it is up to you to push forward, to describe how the horrors respond to the woman encroaching on their space.

For a softer move, you can tell the Bride of the warm breath that moves the hair on the back of her neck, or how she sees in the mirror the reflection of another woman who seems to be standing behind her.

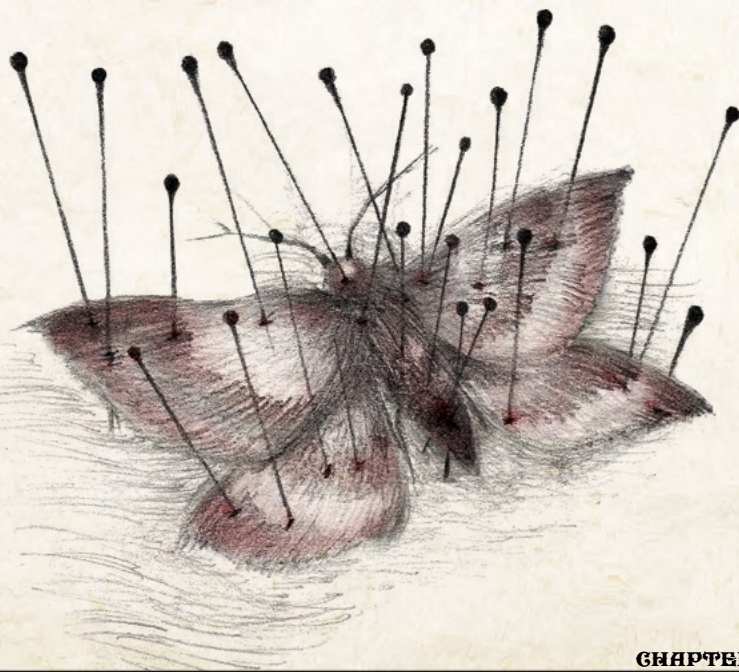
A harder move would be the woman tying the Bride down on the bed so that she cannot get free, or bringing a whip across the Bride's face hard enough to split the skin.

SPLIT
THE
SKIN

EXAMPLES FOR SOFTER MOVES

The Bride is examining an antique hand mirror with a chased silver handle. You look into the mirror and, for just a moment, your face is old and worn, like your mother's. You can see the skin hanging loose around your neck, and grey threads through your thinning hair. What do you do?

The servant Elise casts her eyes down and moves closer. In a whisper, she tells you how she thinks you're the most beautiful woman she's ever seen. She caresses your hands and shoulder, and as Elise leans in to kiss you, her breath turns foul before your lips can touch. What do you do?



EXAMPLES FOR HARDER MOVES

The Bride is examining an antique hand mirror with a chased silver handle. You turn it over to look into the mirror, and your reflection smiles and holds up a gleaming razor. The reflection presses it to her cheek, and you feel a sharp sting and blood running down your own skin. You scream and try to turn away, but your eyes are locked with your own reflection. Take one trauma. Your doppelganger raises the razor to her other cheek. What do you do?

The servant Elise casts her eyes down and moves closer. She closes her lips over the Bride's, and for a moment it is sweet. Then her breath turns foul, and you feel bursting boils rise on your lips and tongue. A whitish fluid runs from your mouth and down inside your throat; all you taste is decay. Take one trauma. As you look up, you see Elise's pretty face is now ruined, covered in weeping sores and open blisters. What do you do?



MAKING YOUR MOVES

As Groundskeeper, you make your moves—as soft or as hard as the situation calls for—when:

- ...the story of the Bride falters.
- ...a player misses a roll.
- ...a player hands you a golden opportunity.

It is your responsibility to keep the story going. If the players hesitate, you should smooth over any awkwardness with a move. You should not let the Bride's chance to learn pass due to hesitation; it should be met with horror, as soft or hard a move as appropriate, in order to get the fiction moving again.

THE GROUNDSKEEPER'S MOVES

Here is a list of the basic moves you use to reply to the Bride's actions, followed by some guiding information and examples.

- *Hint at off-screen horrors.*
- *Present evidence of other brides' suffering.*
- *Invoke the house's memories and secrets.*
- *Undermine the Bride's senses.*
- *Remind the Bride of her limits, physical and social.*

It is your responsibility to respond if a player misses a roll. Your answer will be tailored to the fiction and crafted such that it appears to spring forth from the fiction around their roll. Sometimes a move tells you what to do on a miss; follow through on what it tells you with as hard or soft a move as you judge proper.

It is your responsibility to respond honestly when one of your players hands you a golden opportunity. If a player ignores the dangers of the house, it is on you to make sure they *cannot* and *will not* be ignored; a harder move usually gets a player's attention.

- *Put the Bride in danger, emotional or physical.*
- *Inflict trauma, as established.*
- *Introduce a servant or horror.*
- *Offer an opportunity at a cost.*
- *Turn their move back on them.*
- *Make a room move.*
- *After every move: "What do you do?"*

HINT AT OFF-SCREEN HORRORS.

The house is active when the Bride's back is turned. Horrors may lurk in hallways; every room has nooks and shadows where terrible things dwell. Don't ruin the atmosphere by showing everything all at once; make the Bride decide if she *really* wants to look.

PRESENT EVIDENCE OF OTHER BRIDES' SUFFERING.

There were other women before this Bride, and what happened to them is bound up in the very foundation of this house. They lived in these rooms, for longer or shorter amounts of time, and each made their mark, no matter how tiny. Show the Bride what those lives were like.

INVOKE THE HOUSE'S MEMORIES AND SECRETS.

The house has assimilated new tenants and fashions with aplomb. It wears its off-kilter architecture proudly, showing off each new scar left by the most recent bride across its surfaces. Describe its most neglected corner with care, responding to the present with an echo of the past.

The Bride is exploring a medical ward. You pass ceramic trays filled with scalpels and saws; everything smells like bleach. Each little bed and side table has a curtain that can be closed around it. Something splatters against the curtain; there's a low moan. You grab the curtain to jerk it open—the room is empty except for the sound of something dripping to the floor behind you.

The woman rises from her bath; you look away in embarrassment. She takes your hand, her fingers cold as she leads you back to the marble bathtub and into the water. You dip down underneath the surface, and for a moment you can't breathe. Someone is holding your head under, as you watch the bubbles from your breath slow, and finally stop.

The Bride has entered an attic and is studying a crystal bottle filled with sparkling sand. You take it over to the window and marvel at the shifting colors dancing across the grains, tilting it this way and that, until the soft sands shift and reveal a small object concealed within—a perfectly preserved finger bone.



UNDERMINE THE BRIDE'S SENSES.

Sometimes women think they see something, or feel something, and they're wrong. You need to explain to them how things really are, but not how it got all tangled up in their silly heads. It's a service, really, to clear matters up, and you would think they would be more grateful. On occasion they will try to pull something incongruous into the game to help themselves—a cellphone, a weapon. Let them, then show the Bride how it's really no help at all.

The Bride stares down at the water in the bathtub as it turns to blood. You scramble out and reach for a towel, but when you look back, the water is clear. You reach for the cellphone you requested earlier, but it emits a busy tone, its screen flickering until you close it. Unsettled, you get back into the tub. The water turns to blood. You can smell the copper in the air, and it clings to your skin in an intimate way.

REMIND THE BRIDE OF HER LIMITS, PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL.

The Bride is not some stout barbarian used to smashing the things around her with a club; nor is she immune to the messages society has given her regarding proper behavior. She must abide by the limits imposed by her gender and her stature—reminding the Bride of her deficiencies can be done with a heavy hand or a delicate touch.

The Bride is crouching behind an old wooden desk as something walks heavily, wetly, around the far end. You try to heave up, to turn the desk onto the thing stalking them, but it is too heavy for the Bride to move by herself, and the steps are coming around the corner...

PUT THE BRIDE IN DANGER, EMOTIONAL OR PHYSICAL.

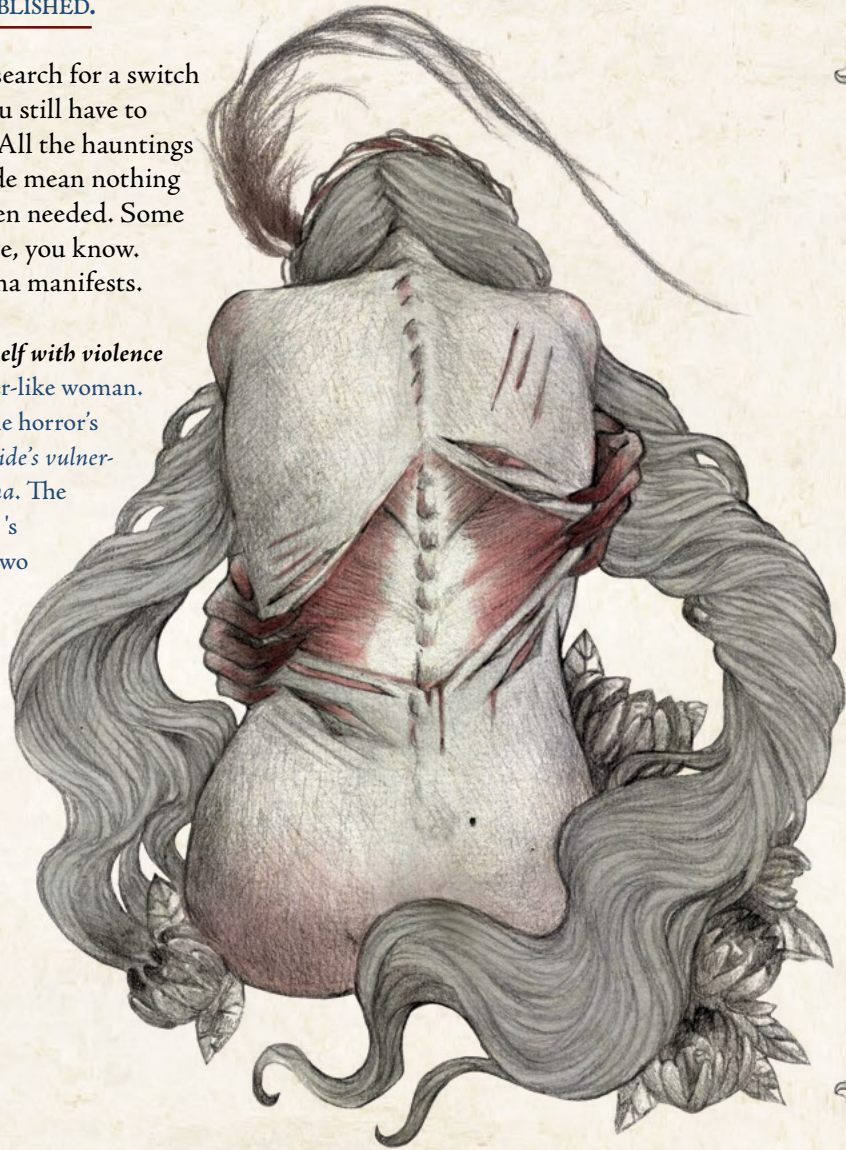
Danger can live comfortably in a bedroom or a kitchen. This is a man's world, and no woman is ever truly safe in it. That is just a lie we tell ourselves so we can sleep at night, so that danger stays at bay just a little while longer.

A former bride has manifested in a bedroom. She pushes you against the wall; mark one trauma. Yet...you feel a strange heat between your legs and your pulse races. The former bride raises her hand to slap, telling you, "I'm only hurting you so you're ready when he does it. I know what he'll do. After all, it's what he did to me."

INFLICT TRAUMA, AS ESTABLISHED.

While you may not need to search for a switch the width of your thumb, you still have to make good on your threats. All the hauntings and lessons you give the Bride mean nothing if you do not correct her when needed. Some of us women can be obstinate, you know. Tell the Bride how her trauma manifests.

The Bride chose to *dirty herself with violence* while struggling with a spider-like woman. You *disabled* it by stabbing the horror's legs with a trowel, but *the Bride's vulnerability* opened you up to trauma. The creature digs into the Bride's lower belly as it falls. Mark two trauma and passes the ring.





INTRODUCE A SERVANT OR HORROR.

The house doesn't run on its own, you know. It's full of butlers, maids, grooms, former brides, and horrors, just to name a few. Yet they're quite shy, keeping to the shadows unless you or the Bride calls for them. Then name them, consider their needs and desires, and their relationships to each other and the Bride. Then describe them.

OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY AT A COST.

The Bride will want many things: escape, help, a tiny bit of reprieve, someone to see her side. Offer it to her—with a price. Reward the Bride with a double-edged gift. Don't be afraid of tension; embrace it and make it perfectly clear what you're asking.

TURN THEIR MOVE BACK ON THEM.

Sometimes, a woman asks for what she wants. So give it to her. Give more than she can handle. The Bride breaks down and *cries out for help*? Introduce a servant that needs her help, in a very personal, costly way. The Bride fails to *caress a horror*? Now the Bride's changed her mind, and decides to join in on whatever atrocity the horror is engaged in.

The servant snatches your hand and hurries you towards the bathroom. "You must freshen up! It wouldn't do for your husband to come home and find such an unremarkable sight to warm his bed!" She runs a bath for you, and tuts over your soiled clothing. "This won't do. You don't know how to be a lady, do you? Well, I can teach you, starting with how to be clean." As she speaks, the servant's hands begin to thicken and twist into rough scouring brushes.

The horror gestures behind her, and you turn to see a wooden frame standing in the middle of the room with the servant girl Kahdri tied to it. The former bride hands you a black whip made of rough leather and nods to the girl. "Practice on her first, and then I'll tell you a secret."

The Bride has just failed her roll to *cry out for help*, and the butler, Sevilen, grins cruelly. He moves closer to you, the warm scent of spice and evergreen preceding him. He stops just shy of touching the Bride, although he leans close enough that you can feel the warmth of his body. Sevilen whispers, "Now, I want you to touch me, and I think you want to as well. Don't you?"

MAKE A ROOM MOVE.

In addition to the moves listed here, you can also use the room threats listed on page 78.

These offer a specific way to tailor your responses within a room to match the theme you've chosen.

AFTER EVERY MOVE: "WHAT DO YOU DO?"


The Bride doesn't get out of anything easily, so put the focus back on the Sisters by asking, "What do you do?" after every description.

Make them decide how to act on the things you've told them, then open up the conversation to those at the table with you.





CURATING THE ROOMS



From velvet-draped boudoirs to musky smoking rooms, each part of the house should be tailored to the players you have now, in the game at this moment. While it's fine to have a few set pieces, some touchstones to go back to when your imagination falters, overall the rooms should be created as you play. An important note—the Bride is *never* alone in the house. When she enters a room, the horrors are already there, simply waiting to be discovered.

The first step in creating a room is to have the player with the ring describe the key they're using, and then you use their description to kickstart the design process. Is the key thin and delicate? Maybe this room has a lot of glass, or fine china. Is it heavy and dark, an iron key with a lot of wear? The room is masculine, maybe a den full of heavy, dark furniture.

If the player mentions the key is cold, they may not find anything comforting in the room, or if they mention that it is battered, the horror in the room may try to inflict the same type of damage on the Bride. If the players try to describe something innocuous, they will find that twisted in some way.

The Virgin describes a clunky, badly carved wooden key that's too big for her hand. Marissa takes a moment to consider that description, and decides that the room will have to be rough and unfinished to match the key. The horrors within the room will probably not be overly sophisticated, and prone to lashing out physically.

Do not be afraid to ask for more details if the player doesn't give you enough to work with. Upon realizing that you're using the keys to come up with ideas for the rooms, some will hold back on their descriptions, which simply will not do. Press them to elaborate until something strikes you as noteworthy.

After you have a detail to inspire your design, decide on a room type. You can follow the logical order of a large house: parlors and living rooms in the front of the first level, with kitchens and storage towards the back, bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs, with maybe an attic tucked above or a cellar buried in the earth below; you can outline a surreal, dream-like order to rooms; or you can do both by starting out logically before letting the floor plan go and describing a **dreamlike state**.

Here are some examples of types of rooms, but feel free to use others if they're a better fit:

armory, artist's studio, attic, aviary, ballroom, bathroom, bedroom, butler's pantry, chapel, classroom, craft room, dance studio, den, dining room, drawing room, dressing room, family room, fencing room, furnace room, gallery, great hall, guest room, infirmary, kennel, kitchen, laboratory, laundry room, library, mausoleum, music room, nursery, observatory, pantry, parlor, servants' quarters, sex room, shrine, sitting room, smoking room, solarium, stables, storage room, study, torture chamber, toy room, utility room, vault, wine cellar.

You should describe the room in such a way that the players feel like they are there. Include all the senses, and make sure to include some objects for the Bride to investigate.

Marissa describes rough wooden planks on the floor, flaking plaster walls, and exposed beams overhead. There are piles of straw near the walls, a fire lit in a crude fireplace on one end, and a large, overstuffed armchair in front of the fireplace. The room smells musky, like many animals bed down here. The light doesn't do much to dispel the shadows here; in fact, the flickering light makes them seem to dance.

Next settle on a **ROOM THREAT** to both underlie the horrors that haunt each room and reflect the aesthetic and vulnerabilities the Bride revealed during character creation. These threats are separated into **Body**, **Motherhood**, **Religion**, and **Sexuality**, each with subsets reflecting greater refinement (see page 78).

The Virgin shuddered when Marissa described a raven/woman throwing itself against its cage until it was broken and bloody. Marissa had selected **Body** -> **Gender** for that room, and used the *Exhibit consequences of a transgressive woman* move (page 78) for the raven/woman.

When making the next room, Marissa checks her notes and sees that during character creation the Virgin's player answered "making her own choices" when asked what she gave up to be Bluebeard's Bride. Marissa selects **Sexuality** -> **Humiliation** for the new room's theme, confident that challenging the Virgin's desire for independence will result in the new room striking a similar nerve.

The players' answers during Wedding Preparation (page 45) are your guide to which room threats to choose. This is where they tell you where they're interested in exploring with this character, or what is just at the edges of comfort. This is where you want your game to take place.

BODY

This includes the many ways the world tells women they are broken and worthless, and that their only value is in their appearance.

SUBSETS

Beauty Standards:

Is the Bride maintaining her best asset?

Disability:

Is the Bride fulfilling all of her duties?

Eating Disorders:

Is the Bride able to control her urges?

Gender:

Is the Bride womanly enough to suit her role?

Illness:

Is the Bride a drain on those around her?

ROOM MOVES

- *Drug her*
- *Perform a medical procedure*
- *Shame her by introducing a perfect woman*
- *Paper the room with what society demands*
- *Showcase a flaw for all to see*
- *Exhibit consequences of a transgressive woman*
- *Give her the tools she needs to be beautiful*
- *Tempt her with gems, clothes, or delectable delights*
- *Bind her body in satin and silk*
- *Make her hair, teeth, or fingernails fall off*

MOTHERHOOD

This includes the relationship between mother and child as well as hopes and fears towards being a mother herself.

SUBSETS

Abuse:

Is the Bride a good judge of what's best for a child?

Estrangement:

Is the Bride selfish about whom she sees?

Family:

Is the Bride aware enough of others' needs?

Grief:

Is the Bride the cause of others' pain?

Sacrifice:

Is the Bride able to do what's expected of her?

ROOM MOVES

- *Challenge her domestic abilities*
- *Tell her why she should be self-conscious of her body*
- *Pamper her so she knows she doesn't deserve it*
- *Use physical discipline to remind her it's her fault*
- *Tie her down with someone else's child or mother*
- *Show her what could have been through reflections*
- *Reveal physical evidence of an abortion or stillbirth*
- *Tempt her to spill blood to save another*
- *Smother her with the needs of others*
- *Repeat phrases and relive scenes until she gets it right*

RELIGION

This includes the many ways in which religion can paint women as sinful, in need of instruction, and subservient.

SUBSETS

Instruction:

Is the Bride truly obedient?

Possession:

Is the Bride open to unholy influences?

Punishment:

Is the Bride sufficiently penitent?

Rituals:

Is the Bride interested in blasphemous crafts?

Underworld:

Is the Bride a focus of pagan energies?

ROOM MOVES

- Haunt her with former figureheads, plagues, or fluids
- Force her to confess her sins
- Educate her on how to be a pious woman
- Trigger a ritual, hunt, or initiation
- Possess an object in the room like a bed, or a dress
- Surface what is buried underfoot
- Tempt her with sinful acts: orgies, theft, or murder
- Use violence and love to teach her how to think
- Surround her with iconography that hurts or heals
- Celebrate her marriage to Bluebeard

SEXUALITY

This includes how women are taught their sexuality belongs to others, that their bodies are not their own, and how others view their body.

SUBSETS

Abortion:

Is the Bride prepared for the consequences of her actions?

Humiliation:

Is the Bride aware of her place?

Nymphomania:

Is the Bride untoward in her conduct?

Perversion:

Is the Bride hiding depravity?

Sexual Violence:

Is the Bride aware of the power of men?

ROOM MOVES

- Advance on a woman with touch, words, or display
- Impregnate her with words, ritual, or a lie
- Break her sexuality with critiques or aggression
- Show the inherent perversity of objects
- Invite her to join a promiscuous act
- Educate her on how she should please her husband
- Show what Bluebeard enjoys in art, books, and toys
- Infect someone with a sexual disease
- Condemn a partner or a child with violence or words
- Ask what she desires and parade it in public

PLACING OBJECTS

Each room should be filled to the brim with **OBJECTS**. These are the items that the Bride interacts with, investigating and collecting them so as to form a fuller picture of what has happened within the walls of the house.

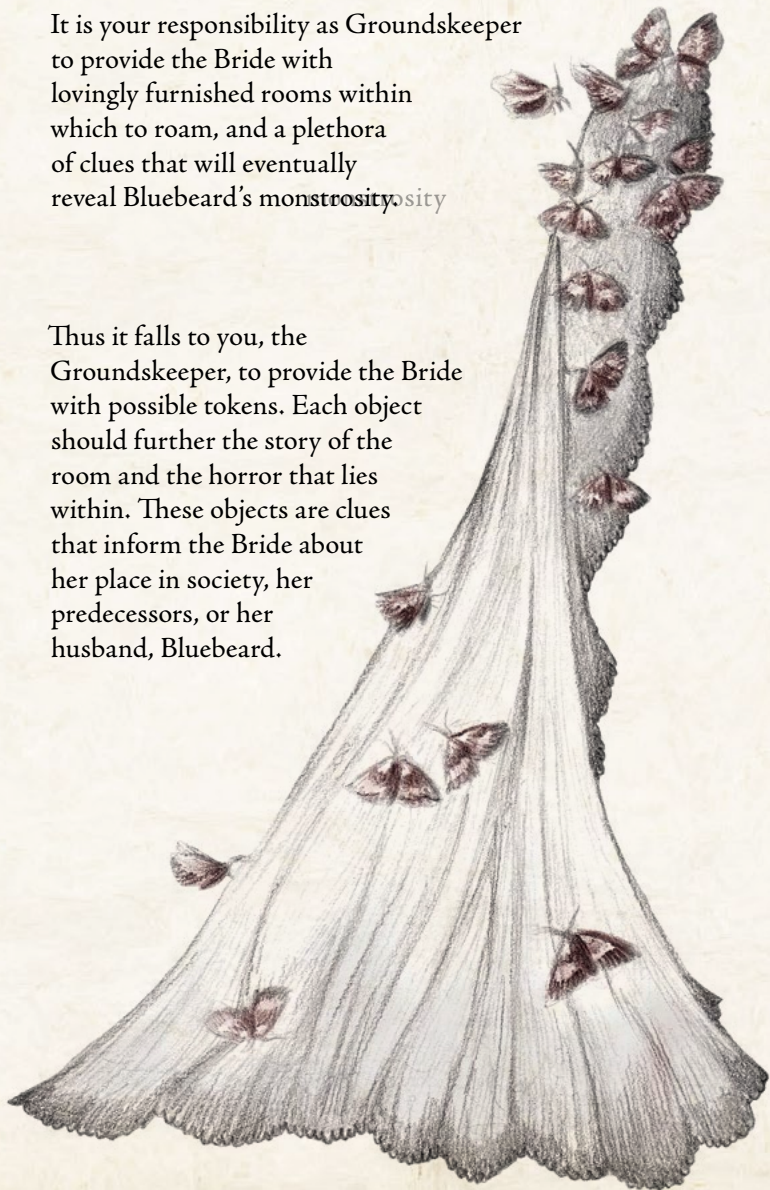
TOKENS

The Bride collects tokens of Faithfulness and Disloyalty in order to exit a room. These tokens are something the Bride takes from the room as proof that either her faith in her husband is well placed, or that she is clinging to her unkind suspicions about him. It doesn't matter that Bluebeard is actually a killer; these rooms are a test of the Bride, separate from Bluebeard's actions.

The players decide what the narrative of the room is and what qualifies as a token. It doesn't have to be something the Bride can realistically carry, nor do the players have to describe how they carry it in a wedding dress that very likely has no pockets. Objects can shrink and distort, and the only rule they must follow is that they be objects—the Bride cannot collect people as tokens.

It is your responsibility as Groundskeeper to provide the Bride with lovingly furnished rooms within which to roam, and a plethora of clues that will eventually reveal Bluebeard's monstrosity.

Thus it falls to you, the Groundskeeper, to provide the Bride with possible tokens. Each object should further the story of the room and the horror that lies within. These objects are clues that inform the Bride about her place in society, her predecessors, or her husband, Bluebeard.



TYPES OF OBJECTS

The objects are organized according to the type of room they are found in. This will assist you in imbuing these possessions with the weight of their history and alluding to the importance the Bride may assign to them. You then give the object shape, inject it with an emotion, and finally, place the object in the room.

Step 1: Select the type of room you are in.

For example, is the room's type...

- Entertainment: Guests hold unspoken invitation into these rooms.
- Intimate: A special guest could be invited into these rooms.
- Secret: Guests are not aware of these rooms.
- Craft: These rooms are not intended for guest use.
- Support: Staff uses these rooms to prepare for guests.

Step 2: Give your mysterious object shape.

For example, is it...

- alive
- anthropomorphic
- decaying
- gilded
- misshapen
- pristine

Step 3: Inject an emotion into your object.

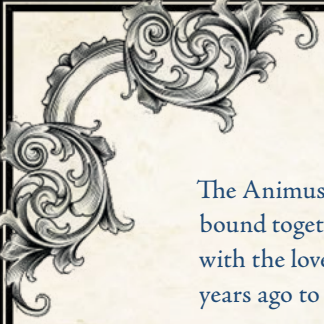
For example, does the Bride sense, feel, or see...

- hunger
- insecurity
- loneliness
- obsession
- rage
- scorn

Step 4: Place your mysterious object.

For example, is it...

- displayed
- locked away
- hidden
- abandoned
- veiled
- invisible until provoked



The Animus describes a key made of tiny bones bound together with thin paper ribbons printed with the love poetry a nun wrote a hundred years ago to a man who never knew her face.

Whitney takes a few minutes to consider what this key makes her think of. She remembers being lovesick as a teenager over a person who didn't feel the same way, and how that made her feel like the fault lay with her somehow, and how terrible that feeling was. She imagines that this nun who wrote the poetry may have felt the same, and decides that this key indicates the loneliness and cruelty of love, combined with self-castigation over unfilled desires.

Whitney decides on the room threat **Religion** -> **Punishment**, and selects the attic as the room: a tiny office where a woman could go and manage the household affairs, or try to write a novel, or write secret letters to a lover she couldn't be with. The walls would be papered with little mantras about being a better wife, and the wrongness of adultery. There would need to be a desk, and a hard, uncomfortable chair. A tiny window would give a little glimpse of the overcast sky, and there would be a small table with just enough room for a tea service.

Whitney decides that the woman who haunts this room was very devout, but hung herself in despair, and there is a sturdy rafter that the Bride could reach if she stood on the chair. It will be scratched and bowed from the woman's weight.

Whitney chooses *craft, gilded, obsession, hidden* from the item list, so on top of the rafter is a gold locket with a portrait of the dead bride's lover. Although she thinks the locket is a good item for a token, Whitney knows the players may select another object instead, in which case she will be ready to weave that object into the dead woman's story. Whitney wants to create some ambiguity in the narrative, however, so she decides the journal on the desk has an account of how much the woman loved Bluebeard. It is a false account that the woman wrote to ward off Bluebeard's jealousy. Whitney also decides to make it unclear whether the woman hung herself, or if Bluebeard "helped" her.

CRUELTY
OF
LOVE

"It's a nook, really, barely enough room to turn in your wide skirts," Whitney says, "and you bump your elbow on the back of the hard wooden chair as you come in. Your knee jostles a little table that has a teacup and teapot on it, with dried brown residue in the bottom of the cup.

“There are some bits of paper with writing on it tacked to the wall, but the light coming in from the tiny window on one wall isn’t quite enough to read it. There is a wooden desk with a drawer and some more papers lying on top, and the room smells of old tea and dried ink. As you stand in front of the desk, you glance up, and there is this rafter overhead. It’s kind of scratched up and bowed in the middle. As you stand there, there’s a flash of lightning, and then the low rumble of thunder.”

The Witch shakes her head. “That rafter sounds creepy. Let’s look in the desk instead.”

The Animus nods and picks a question from the *investigate a mysterious object* list for the desk. “I’d like to know *What memories does this item hold?*”

Whitney pauses a moment, then tells her, “It’s a very nice desk, made of heavy wood and very sturdy. As you lean over to study it, you can see that there are deep scratches in the wood floor from where it was moved. You step back until you’re at the door so you can see better, and the gouges start and stop, like whoever was moving it was too weak to simply push it over under the rafter, where the scratches stop.”

The Animus looks over the list again and chooses *What about this item is odd or uncanny?*

Whitney sees this as an opportunity to tie the desk into a room move, *Possess an object in the room*, as well as adding *alive* to its object shape.

“As you watch, the desk begins to scoot forward as if someone were pushing it. You can hear a woman making grunting noises, like she’s moving something heavy. The desk stops and you hear panting. You hear the unseen woman wail, and as the desk starts moving again, you hear her murmur a prayer:”

Saint Monica, help me be a better wife. Please help me not to sin further, and to be an example to other brides so that they do not sin as I have.

“The desk stops moving, and you hear someone climbing onto it. There’s this creak and the rafter bends a little, then you hear the woman take a breath. The desk jerks like someone kicked it, and the rafter bends more. You hear this soft, strangled breathing. Then it stops, and you hear heavy footsteps walk from the center of the room to the door. When you look back, the desk is back where it was.”

The Witch frowns. “I do not like that. Wait, if she hung herself, then Bluebeard didn’t kill her, right? Or do those footsteps mean he watched and didn’t help?”

Whitney tells her, “That’s for you to decide. What do you want to do next?”



MANAGING NPCs

Bluebeard's house is full of servants. It's a lot of work to run a large household, and most of that work takes place out of sight in back stairways and cramped, overheated rooms.

Most of these servants would be women, although not quite like the Bride, aware of their station and poised to perform their duties at the crook of a finger. This can include maids, cooks, governesses, scullions, laundresses, housekeepers, nurses, and more; all waiting on a command in between their regular duties.

There are a few men inhabiting Bluebeard's halls—grooms, stable boys, butlers, valets, footmen, pages, gamekeepers, gardeners, kennel masters and the like—but their interactions with the lady of the house would be less frequent.

INTRODUCING SERVANTS AND HORRORS

When introducing a servant or horror, remember to make them memorable, whether through their manner, activities, or appearance. All of the servants and horrors have something to impart to the current Bride, so you should reflect that knowledge in their interactions.

Women run the house that Bluebeard lives in; they know its secrets and quirks. They do the laundry, cook the meals, and clean up the mess Bluebeard leaves behind.

Bluebeard's house is also full of horrors. There are the dead brides, who have entered the final room and now live under this roof for eternity. Some resemble the current Bride, while others are fairer, but all are dead.

There are other horrors, spectral companions to the dead brides, who haunt rooms and wait for a young innocent to find them. Some are dogs, or doctors without faces, or a line of silent women, barefoot, with their eyes sewn shut; but they all perform their function in the house that Bluebeard lives in; they know its dark corners and hidden places.

And since servants can be horrors, and horrors can serve, do not trouble yourself too much as to which side of that line your creation is on. They may turn from one to the other before you realize it. Soon you may ask...is there really a line there at all?

CREATING SERVANTS AND HORRORS

The **DRIVE** you select represents what the servant or horror wants from the Bride, how they address her, how they want to hurt her. The **MANIFESTATION** of that drive can be complicated or even contradictory. But the devil is in the details and how the drive manifests itself is where your creativity can really shine.

1. When you introduce a servant or horror, pick a drive from this list:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| •→ authority | •→ honor |
| •→ curiosity | •→ loneliness |
| •→ discipline | •→ protection |
| •→ freedom | •→ rejection |
| •→ greed | •→ vengeance |

2. Next, choose how that drive manifests:

- they pervert the intent
- they physically display the need
- they prey on the Bride's sympathies
- they overtly challenge the Bride

You have the following options to show the Bride what the servant or horror is motivated by:

they pervert the intent

They take their drive to the extreme and they want the Bride to validate it. If their drive is curiosity, they may berate the Bride with invasive questions. If their drive is greed, they may take what they want from the Bride without permission.

they physically display the need


Their bodies showcase their drive, and want the Bride to interact with it. If their drive is greed, they may insert objects into their bodies. If their drive is authority, they may begin to fade from sight or lose speech if their orders are not followed.

they prey on the Bride's sympathies

They appeal to her better nature, pointing out the trouble that could befall a poor lowly servant, or how much worse their life is. If their drive is honor, they may tell the Bride how they were punished for a previous bride's behavior. If their drive is vengeance, they may show the Bride the scars they bear from Bluebeard's ill use.

they overtly challenge the Bride

Their methods are harsh, but these servants or horrors know what's best for the Bride. If their drive is loneliness, they may cling to the Bride, scolding her for every step away. If their drive is rejection, each word they use to castigate the Bride may cause her ears to bleed from their sharpness.



Marissa needs a new horror when the Fatale fails her *cry out for help* roll while investigating a billiards room. The cue sticks and rack had levitated into the air before attacking the Bride, causing the Fatale to declare that the Bride could not trust her own eyes.

Marissa scans the list of drives and selects *discipline*, then decides that the servant *physically displays the need*. She names the new servant Nadi, and gives her a physical description that is the opposite of the Bride:

“A young woman about your age enters the room. She is dressed in a pressed, freshly starched grey dress with puffed sleeves that are carefully folded up to her elbows. Her apron is spotless, and the collar of her dress lines up evenly over the top of it. A dove grey cap covers her head, but enough of her light brown hair shows for you to see the stick-straight part in the middle, as well as her tiny pearl earrings. Her left eye is blue, and most of her right is as well, except for a streak of brownish-red across the

bottom of her iris. The woman clicks her heels together, presses three fingers from each hand against her waist, and lowers her head to you.”

The Fatale laughs nervously, “I must have scared myself, wandering around in this dark house. Could you take me to my room?”

“Of course, my lady,” Nadi replies. Marissa describes the sudden frown that comes over the woman’s face, and how her fingers rise to pluck at the air in front of the Bride’s face. “But, begging your pardon, my lady,” Nadi continues, “how did your hair get such a mess? And your dress! This will not do! We must put you to rights!”

Marissa describes how Nadi’s fingers elongate, growing two extra joints as the servant begins to pluck hairs from the Bride’s head, carefully placing each one into a pocket in her apron as she follows the Bride around the room, plucking, plucking, plucking...

BEHIND THE SISTERS' VEIL

To serve as Groundskeeper, you must look beyond the Sisters as they are right now. You must see them as they will be, the pain and promise of their fears made real in Bluebeard's manse.

The Sisters Themselves

The Animus is fierce and blustery, and the most likely to resort to confrontation or violence. She is strong, bordering on egotistical and brutish, but also protective of her Sisters and willing to do what it takes to keep them from harm.

The Fatale likes to make others believe that she is in full possession of her own sexuality. She is carnal, watchful, and a tad predatory; yet she can easily get the Bride in over her head by wading into waters beyond her depth.

The Mother interjects when she feels the other Sisters need guidance, whether they want her help or not. She is determined and devoted to caring for others. But when her authority is thwarted, a darker side comes out.

To start, let us discuss their hidden faces, the secrets each Sister has buried within that must rise to the surface as you play the game. The Sisters have much to tell us.

The Virgin is unspoiled and carefree. She can make the best out of almost any situation simply because she does not know any better, and her innocence often buys her respite. However, her greatest strength is also her greatest weakness, as her vulnerability attracts those who would prey on it.

The Witch revels in the secret magic that belongs only to women. She is crafty and power hungry, yet intuitive and brave. She is not afraid to embrace the dark, explore, or take chances, but if she walks too close to the abyss it just may swallow her.

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE BRIDE

When a player fails a roll, or a golden opportunity presents itself, do not hesitate to narrate in great detail how the Bride feels, or what she does. Describe her pulse rate, feelings of coldness or a flush to the skin, sudden hunger, or even—in a purely instructional manner, of course—sexual arousal.

The Bride's body is where harm and desire meet. The players do not need you to describe the mental anguish they feel when confronted with a horrific sight, if you are describing things with detail and passion.

Use your best judgment when assigning trauma. Starting small—with one trauma for minor injuries such as hair being pulled out, skin being scratched and torn, or similar injuries—will teach the Bride the limits of her safety, and if she stretches beyond them, well, you cannot say you did not warn her.

Thus your subsequent lessons should be dealt with a heavier hand: hair-pulling turns to scalping, scratches to degloving, and these will be marked as two or more trauma at a time.



SHATTERING

As the Bride and Sisters accumulate trauma, eventually that track may fill. Trauma can be healed by taking a token of Faithfulness, but it's likely that a Sister may **SHATTER**.

Give a shattering Sister player the spotlight, and ask her Sisters to describe what the event feels like to them. Instruct the player to turn over their playbook and read the back silently at first, then follow the instructions.

The player now becomes a co-Groundskeeper of limited sorts, and will assist you in your instruction of the Bride. Each playbook contains the following instructions on the Shattered side.

The player no longer takes part in the discussions had by the Sisters, nor should you direct the horrors in their direction. Instead, ask them to assist you in describing the terrible events as they unfold.

When you shatter, read the following passage aloud. When a new Sister shatters, read it along with her:

We are no longer whole. Our connection is severed. Our mind is fragmented. Our deepest fears are exposed. Our blood feeds the horrors. And I welcome them.

When a Sister misses her roll, the Groundskeeper may look to you to describe what happens to the Bride. Use the following prompts to help describe what happens to the Bride:

- Answer with what *you* find frightening.
- Illuminate the horror in beauty as well as gore.
- Describe interesting details using all five senses.

Marissa describes the room the Bride just entered, fleeing a terrible horror that shattered the Virgin.

"It's very humid in here, and there's fog hanging in the air," she says. "There are slick white tiles underfoot, and as you step forward, you see something through the mist. Virgin—you just shattered; tell me what the Bride sees."

"It's a movement, slipping quick across the tiles," the Virgin answers. "Something silvery blue, like the inside of a fish's gill, but splayed out and grasping, slick with thick fluid."

It's up to the group whether the shattered player or players participate in the discussion on how the Bride interacts with the final room.



THE SESSION

Here you will find both the overall structure of a play session, as well as some hints on how to run *Bluebeard's Bride*. The session plays out in the following steps:

1. The fairy tale is told.
2. The Sisters are created.
3. The rooms are explored.
4. The final room is exposed.

THE FAIRY TALE IS TOLD.

You may tell the version provided on page 16 or another version of your choosing.

Tell the players that some versions of the fairy tale end with the Bride's brother saving her, others end with her mother saving her, but in some versions, the Bride died.

Remind the players also that there is a difference between the fairy tale and the game you are about to play—you will be creating the story together as they explore the house, rather than adhering strictly to the fairy tale.

Nothing is certain in Bluebeard's house...

THE SISTERS ARE CREATED.

Feel free to take copious notes as your players work out the details of their Bride during Wedding Preparation (page 45). Use these details to populate the rooms with their fears.

Does the Virgin mention how she will miss long walks in the fields once she is married? That's a signal to take away the Bride's freedom in a room. Does the Witch crave more power over unnatural forces? Show the Bride how dark magic can get.

The Sisterly Bonds are meant to expose the cracks in the Bride's facade. Their bickering will give you fuel for future horror. Walk them through the rest of their playbooks, and do not worry if this seems to take a long time. Allow them space to grow attached to their Bride.

Take note of the wedding gifts each Sister gives to Bluebeard. These are used to determine who gets the ring first and they can inform the descriptions of the rooms, particularly the final room.

THE ROOMS ARE EXPLORED.

Start them in the entryway of the house, keys in hand. The Sister who gave Bluebeard a gift that signified submission, faithfulness, or obedience during Wedding Preparation (page 45) is always his favorite, and that Sister gets the ring first. Tell them one key on the ring catches their eye, and ask them to describe it.

Each Sister should get a chance to describe a key, and an experienced Groundskeeper will tie in their wedding gift as part of the theme or description of the room. The Animus who gave Bluebeard a handmade silk tie, for example, may find themselves in a study full of aquariums containing silkworms, or a sex room featuring several combinations of silken restraints.

THE FINAL ROOM IS EXPOSED.

It's vital that your game end with the final room. If your session needs to be shorter, cross out the last two circles on the token tracks. If you find that you've run out of time in a session, present the final room as if the Bride has filled whichever track she's accumulated the most tokens for during her investigation.

After the Sisters have filled up one of their token tracks, inform them that you are starting a new part of the game. Describe how they move along the corridors to stand directly in front of the final room by reading aloud the following:

"You traveled these dark halls in search of a truth most divisive. Each room provided you with all the evidence you desired to make that one fateful choice. Now you stand before the forbidden final room and you must decide..."

- If they have filled up the Faithful track, ask the Sisters if they go into the room or merely look through the keyhole.
- If they have filled up the Disloyal track, ask the Sisters if they go into the room or if they escape. If they leave, describe the Bride fleeing from the house, then ask them if they wish to take their evidence to the town, or if they would prefer to run away in search of safety.
- If all of the Sisters shatter before reaching the final room, ask them if the Bride is obsessed with bettering herself for Bluebeard, or if she desires to make future brides better.

FINAL ROOM

CREATING THE FINAL ROOM

The final room is based on the wedding gift Bluebeard liked best as described in “The rooms are explored.” The Bride does not always get to see this room, but you know where it is in the house, what it looks like, smells like. It’s waiting for the Bride as soon as she first steps foot in the house.

FAITHFUL OUTCOME:

When the Bride collects enough evidence to prove her husband’s loving intentions as a Faithful Bride, it is time for her to make a choice...

If she **enters the room**, go around the table and ask the Sisters:

- What were the Bride’s last loving words to Bluebeard before he killed her?
- What room does the Bride’s soul reside in?
- What about the way Bluebeard displays the Bride’s dead body makes her happy?
- How does the Bride disguise the horror done to her body?
- How does the Bride punish future brides for transgressions against Bluebeard?

Once the Bride has reached the final room, go around the table and ask the players the questions listed below, based on their answer about the token track. They always have the option to go into the room, even if they have filled the Disloyal track. This wraps up their story, and your time as Groundskeeper is done.

If she **looks through the keyhole**, go around the table and ask the Sisters:

- What did the Bride lose when she saw the horrors through the keyhole?
- What loving impulse kept the Bride from going into the room?
- How did Bluebeard reward the Bride for remaining loyal and not ever going inside?
- What is the Bride’s favorite room to spend her days in?
- How does the Bride cope with the horrors she spied through the keyhole?



DISLOYAL OUTCOME:

When the Bride collects enough evidence to prove her husband's malicious intentions as a Disloyal Bride, it is time for her to make a choice...

If she **presents her evidence to the town**, go around the table and ask the Sisters:

- What did the town do to rid themselves of the Bride's disloyal ravings?
- How did Bluebeard blackmail the Bride's family into silence?
- What loving gift does Bluebeard send the Bride for their wedding anniversary?
- What new room in Bluebeard's house haunts the Bride's dreams every night?
- How does the Bride make herself at home in that perfect new room?

SHATTERED OUTCOME:

When the Bride shatters completely, her fragmented mind now craves things it didn't before, and it is time for her to make a choice...

If she **becomes a horror** obsessed with bettering herself for Bluebeard, go around the table and ask the Sisters:

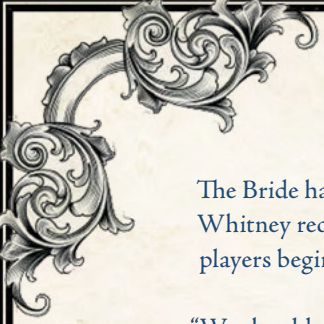
- What room does the Bride's soul reside in?
- What is the only thing the Bride can feel?
- How does the Bride display her pain?
- How does the Bride overtly attempt to better herself?
- Why do the Bride's efforts to better herself fail over and over?

If she **runs away to start anew**, go around the table and ask the Sisters:

- How does Bluebeard make the Bride's family pay for her disloyalty?
- How does the Bride convince someone else to marry her?
- Why does the Bride keep the tokens she discovered?
- What memory of Bluebeard's house gives the Bride pleasure when it shouldn't?
- What loving gesture does Bluebeard make when he finds her?

If she **becomes a horror** that desires to make future brides better, go around the table and ask the Sisters:

- What room does the Bride's soul reside in?
- How do future brides of Bluebeard see the Bride?
- What is the only thing that feeds the Bride and makes her feel alive?
- What high hopes does the Bride have for future brides?
- How does the Bride force her vision on future brides?



The Bride has filled the Disloyal track, and Whitney recites the final room mantra. The players begin to debate their final action.

“We should get the hell out,” the Animus says.

The Fatale shakes her head. “Let’s go to the town. I can convince them to listen to us.”

“Let’s go into the final room anyway,” says the Virgin.

“That will get us killed, and then he’ll just do it again,” the Witch says. “Let’s go to the town.”

Whitney looks at her Groundskeeper sheet and finds ***Disloyal: chooses to present her tokens to the town***. She reads the questions there, then goes around the table and asks each player one question from the list.

“What did the town do to rid themselves of the Bride’s disloyal ravings?”

“What?” The Animus frowns. “Oh, I see. They didn’t believe us. Well, they claimed we were mad and shut us up in the local asylum.”

“How did Bluebeard blackmail the Bride’s family into silence?”

“All he needed to do was give them money. They sold me to him to begin with,” the Fatale says.

“What loving gift does Bluebeard send the Bride for their wedding anniversary?”

The Mother thinks a moment. “A covered picnic basket, filled with wine and chocolates and grilled lamb chops, very rare. Bastard wants me to remember the cute little lamb I gave him as a wedding present.”

“What new room in Bluebeard’s house haunts the Bride’s dreams every night?”

“You mean one I didn’t see?” The Virgin waits for Whitney’s nod. “I think it’s a pretty little tea room, with blue wallpaper and comfortable chairs and a little cage with two blue parakeets in it.”

“How does the Bride make herself at home in that perfect new room?”

“After we get out?” The Witch laughs. “Why, we go in there and make our tea, and I teach those little birds to say ‘murderer’ every time they see him. And I just stir my tea and smile.”

Whitney pauses a moment, allowing herself and the players space to process the last scene. Then she smiles brightly. “Thank you all for playing. I hope you enjoyed your time as the Bride. Now your tale has come to an end.”



A NEW BRIDE

After your session is over, keep the notes you took on the Bride. You can use this Bride as inspiration for a dead bride in a future game.

Remember to thank your players, and take time for yourself as well.

If you choose to run *Bluebeard's Bride* again, stretch yourself to make new rooms rather than repeating the ones you used before. Don't let your knowledge of what may lie within a room or the final room ruin your experience of play. Remember to have fun and allow yourself to be immersed fully in the game.

And above all, remember that it's just a fairy tale.

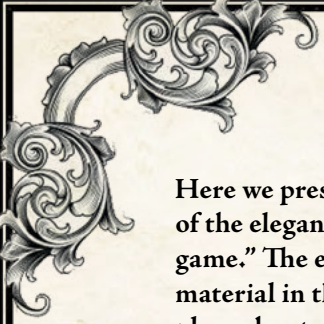




A BLOODY EXAMPLE

CHAPTER FOUR





Here we present an extended example of the elegant dance we call “playing the game.” The example draws upon all the material in the book to this point, and takes place about midway through the game.

Sarah is playing with Mark (Animus), Joe (Fatale), Megan (Witch), and Ariana (Virgin).

Sarah asks Mark to describe the next key.

“It’s simple, small, worn, and fragile.”

Sarah looks for clues in the description for what kind of room he might want to explore next; the practical nature of the key leads to a functional room that would be frequented often, like a sewing room.

Next she decides on a threat. Body’s subcategory of Beauty Standards stands out; she’s ready to break the silence.

“You turn the key over and over again, rubbing it between your fingers. You follow the dimly lit hallway, and find the door that matches this key. The key makes a soft noise when you turn it. The room beckons. You enter, and the door closes behind you.”

Ariana shudders, and Joe furrows his brow as he meets the gazes of Megan and Mark.

Sarah says what moves the horror forward, “Your eyes strain against the darkness drowning the room and you can just make out a humanlike shape...and as your eyes focus it looks as though it might be shaking.”

“I turn on a light!” Megan says.

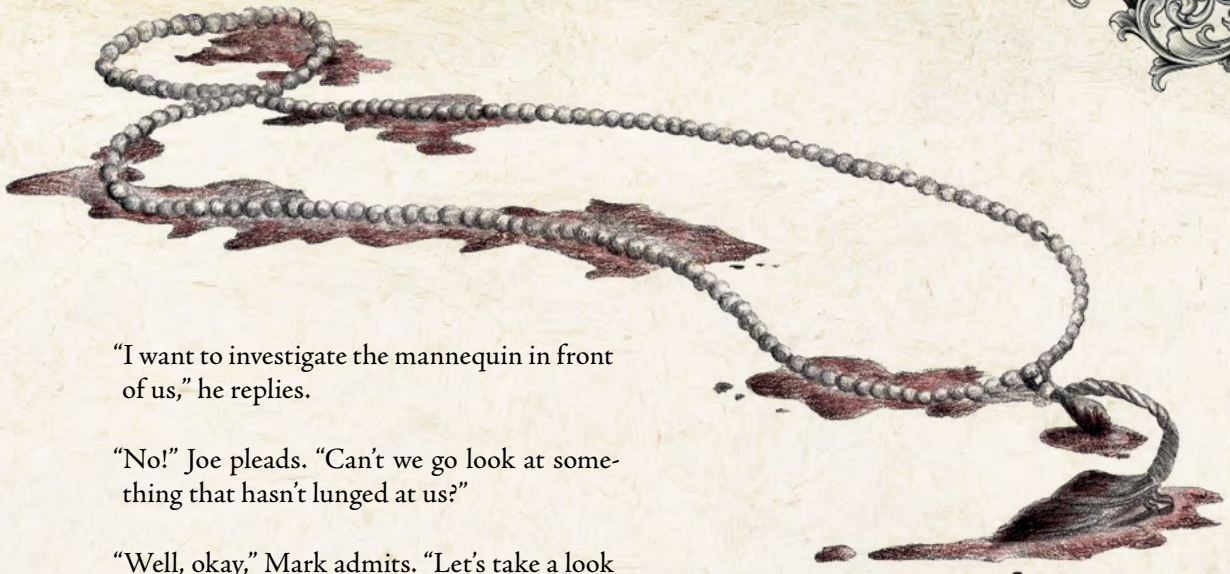
This doesn’t trigger *shiver from fear* because Mark is the one with the ring. Sarah narrates the Bride’s actions, reflecting the tone of desperation in Megan’s voice.

“You fumble with the light switch, a late addition to this wing of the ancient house, and for a split second the figure lunges for you! But the light reveals a mannequin draped in a paint-stained sheet.”

Sarah uses this as an opportunity to follow one of her principles: **Fill the house with the echoes of violence.**

“The room is covered in bright yellow wallpaper with a stain about shoulder-high the entire length of one wall. Around the room other odd shapes are draped in fabric to keep the dust at bay. A rocking chair gently creaks underneath the open window.”

Sarah turns to address Mark directly. “What do you do?”



"I want to investigate the mannequin in front of us," he replies.

"No!" Joe pleads. "Can't we go look at something that hasn't lunged at us?"

"Well, okay," Mark admits. "Let's take a look at what's underneath one of the sheets."

"The Bride walks over to another sheet. You fold back the sheet to reveal an unfinished painting of a woman lying naked across a velvet blanket," Sarah says.

Mark has just triggered *investigate a mysterious object*; Sarah asks Mark which two questions he would like to ask.

"First let's find out *whose painting this is*. I look around for a signature of some kind."

"After a moment of searching your eye finds a signature in the lower right hand corner that reads 'Elizabeth.' The loops of her handwriting are disciplined and flawless, nothing like your chicken scratches."

"And *what about this item is odd or uncanny?*"

Sarah looks to her room moves and chooses another one: *Shame her by introducing a perfect woman*.

"The woman's face is still unfinished, but as you study her body you begin to recognize your own features. She has *your* thick thighs, *your* rough hands and broad shoulders, and even *your* long and unruly hair pinned up. But it isn't just a painting of you, no, she is better. The waist is thinner, the breasts larger, dark skin lighter."

As a group, the players grimace. Joe shakes his head and mutters, "I bet she looks amazing in her wedding dress."

Sarah decides now is the perfect time to introduce a supernatural element by *hinting at off-screen horrors*. “And as you study it, you notice the canvas has been slashed apart and then sewn back together, with these straggling black stitches. The canvas around the stitches is warm, like someone running a high fever.”

“I don’t like this.” Mark squirms in his chair.

“Are you *shivering from fear*?” Sarah asks.

“The painting being warm is a little too much.” Mark looks over the options on the Moves sheet. “I’m afraid the painting is alive somehow, and it can feel what’s done to it. I think I’ll pass the ring to the Witch, and I’ll choose *it infects the Bride with its perversion*.”

Sarah leans forward, her attention still on Mark as she *undermines the Bride’s senses*. “You can’t help yourself—you run your fingers over the stitches until you get to a gap, then you work your fingernail between them. You pull...and blood blooms like flowers over the painted woman’s skin. The same holes tear in your chest, and blood flows down, staining your wedding dress. Take two trauma,” Sarah says, *inflicting trauma, as established*. “Witch, will you take that alone, or do you share that trauma with your Sisters?”

“I’ll take it alone, and I think it’s time to *dirty ourselves with violence*.” Megan picks up the dice and rolls, then adds her Carnality stat. “That’s a 7. I want to *disable her*, and I guess I’ll go with *your vulnerability opens you up to trauma*. I grab hold of the painting right at the edge and pull.”

“You hear a faint scream as the canvas comes loose, and blood gushes over your hands. It’s spilling from your skin too, as a flap of skin on your chest tears from the muscle underneath” Sarah takes her time describing the wound, ensuring **the Bride and her experiences feel real**. “Will you take the two trauma alone, Witch?”

“If I take that, I’ll shatter,” Ariana says.





“No, I’ll take it alone,” Megan says. “Okay. We know this Elizabeth probably died in here by being cut to pieces, but why? And I need to pass the ring since I used a ring move. Looks like you’re up, Joe.”

Sarah decides to keep the tension high, following the Groundskeeper principle of **breathing unnatural life into the house**. She imagines the dead bride, Elizabeth, reacting to her name being spoken.

“The light flickers, and the drop cloths flutter again, as if something walked by.”

“That’s spooky,” Joe mutters. “Is the painting still bleeding?”

“Yes,” Sarah tells him, *invoking the house’s memories and secrets*. “The blood is spreading across the floorboards, almost to your shoes.”

“I’m going to *cry out for help*. I yell out ‘Help, help! I’m lost and hurt!’” Joe rolls, then checks his sheet. “I got a 5!”

“You’re with your Sisters, but they can’t help you.” She looks over the “Servant and Horror” section and chooses *Drive: Authority* and *physically display the need*.

“You hear a door open, though, and then the tapping of heels.”

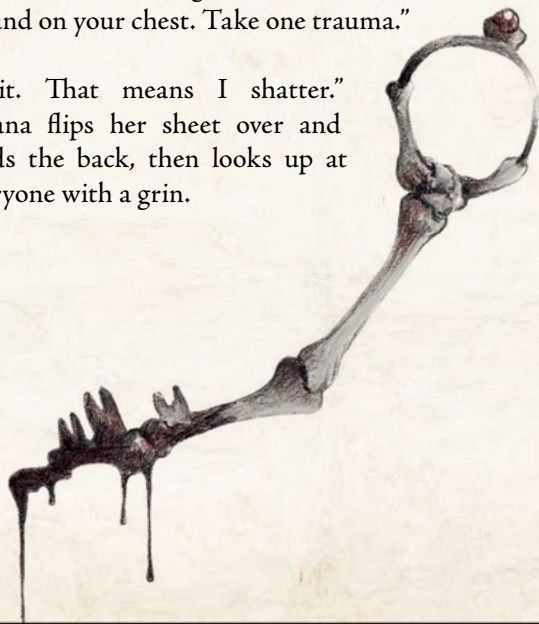
Joe hands the ring to Ariana.

“A woman rounds the corner, a candle in her hand,” Sarah tells Ariana. “She’s a little taller than you, but slimmer. ‘You must be the new bride. Lose your way?’”

“I am, and I did,” Ariana says. “Sarah, does she react to my wound at all?”

“There’s no way she missed it,” Sarah tells her, then *presents evidence of other brides’ suffering*. “You can see these stitches from the painting on her skin. ‘I told our darling husband I wasn’t a thing, and do your know what he did?’ She digs her thumb into the wound on your chest. Take one trauma.”

“Wait. That means I shatter.” Ariana flips her sheet over and reads the back, then looks up at everyone with a grin.



"Let's talk about *how* you shatter, before we get to what's on your sheet," Sarah says. "So the woman says, 'He said he'd do what he damn well pleased with what was *his*.' And with that last word, Virgin, you have a moment, just before the blackness claims you, to do or say one last thing."

"Right before I shatter, you all feel this horror, like our body is being sliced open." Ariana reads aloud, "We are no longer whole. Our connection is severed. Our mind is fragmented. Our deepest fears are exposed. Our blood feeds the horrors. And I welcome them."

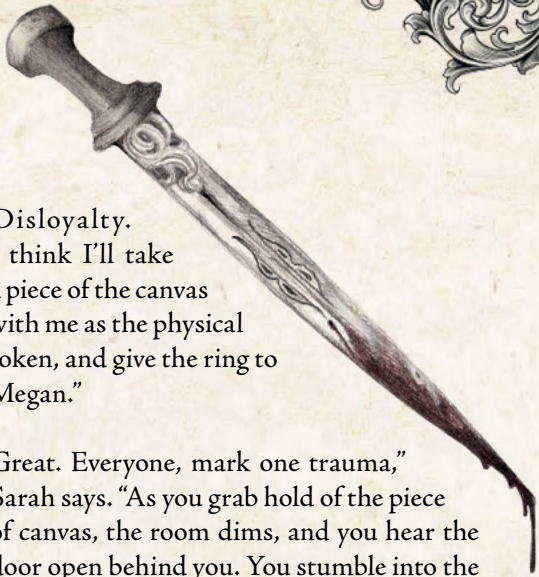
"What does that mean?" Joe asks.

"You'll see." Sarah smiles at him. "Ariana, since you shattered, who do you want to leave the ring with?"

"We've gone full circle, almost, but I think I want to give it to Joe."

"I think I'm ready to *propose a truth about a room*," Joe says. "I think Bluebeard didn't like that Elizabeth could support herself without him. So he killed her and cut her up so she'd never get away."

"And what token are you taking?" Sarah asks.



"Disloyalty. I think I'll take a piece of the canvas with me as the physical token, and give the ring to Megan."


"Great. Everyone, mark one trauma," Sarah says. "As you grab hold of the piece of canvas, the room dims, and you hear the door open behind you. You stumble into the hallway."

Sarah wants to **keep the Bride moving through the house**. "You clutch the ring of keys closer, and one of them catches your eye. What does it look like?"

"Let's see." Megan thinks a moment. "It's this thin silver skeleton key. It makes this loud hollow sound when it hits the others."

These details lead Sarah to choose a cellar. Next she decides that Religion's subcategory of Underworld is a good match.

"You see the worn silver accents of the door, and when the key slides into the lock there are tiny blue sparks," Sarah tells them. "The room beckons. You enter, and the door closes behind you."



The players glance at each other.

"You're at the top of a flight of stairs. Your heels knock against the steps so it sounds like someones keeping pace with you on the underside," Sarah says, *blurring the line between the ordinary and the monstrous*. "You can see your breath fog the air. Candlelight flickers, and it smells like damp earth."

"Do we have to go downstairs?" Megan asks.

"You turn back, but it's gone dark behind you," Sarah tells her.

"So much for that," Megan mutters. "Fine."

Sarah glances over her list of Types of Objects. This is a *support room*, and a *decaying* object would suit a cellar. She chooses *loneliness* and *displayed*, then decides to put an altar in the middle of the room.

"In front of you is an altar made of stacked stones, with several items on it you can't make out but they give you a bad feeling. There is a cabinet in the other corner. What do you do?" Sarah is *offering an opportunity at a cost*.

"Oh, we're looking at that altar," Megan says. "Let's *investigate a mysterious object*. What memories does this item hold?"

"When you walk closer, you can see that the altar holds a bundle of herbs, a silver knife, an animal skull, and a bowl. The smell hits you. You feel all turned on but nauseous. So you pick up the skull," Sarah tells her.

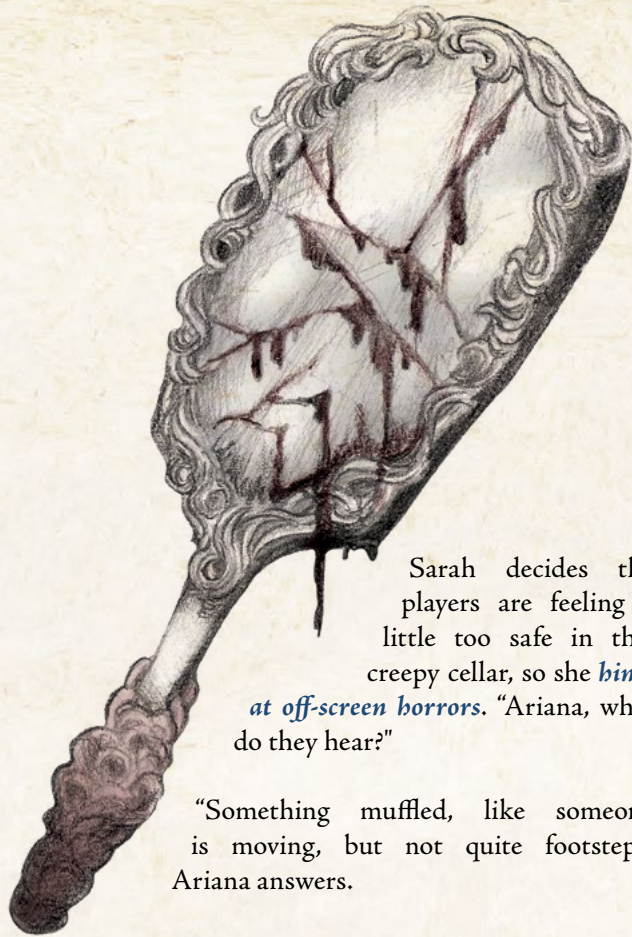
"You taste raw meat, and hear chanting. You pick up the knife, and pain shoots through your stomach, so you lean over the bowl. The coppery stench of blood hits you, but there's that new baby smell underneath, and the salt of tears, and then all you smell is blood." Sarah is *centering the story on women's experiences*.

"That's not right," Megan says. "Okay, why did Bluebeard keep this item?"

"As you stare into the blood in the bowl, an image forms," Sarah selects *surface what is buried underfoot*. "You see your husband kneeling on the stone floor of this room, the rich fabric of his coat covered in dust, and he's cradling a small figure."

"Ugh. Well. Okay," Joe says. "I'm guessing a former bride who used magic to abort?"

"Or maybe she wanted the magic to do something else," Mark muses. "Some kind of revenge? Sounds like we need more information to decide."



Sarah decides the players are feeling a little too safe in this creepy cellar, so she *hints at off-screen horrors*. "Ariana, what do they hear?"

"Something muffled, like someone is moving, but not quite footsteps," Ariana answers.

Sarah grins in response. "As you look around, you hear a shuffling in the darkness. There's this hollow knock that reminds you of your heels on the stairs, but it's deeper."

"There's something out there," Mark says. "Do we want to see what it is?"

"I think we do," Megan says. "We walk towards the darkness and—"

"Oh no you don't," Joe holds out his hand. "I'm the *Mistress* here. Give me the ring."

"You're using your face move? Mark a trauma." Sarah tells him. "Witch, you'll have to hand over the ring."

"Let's *take stock*," Joe says. "What does this place demand of the Bride?"

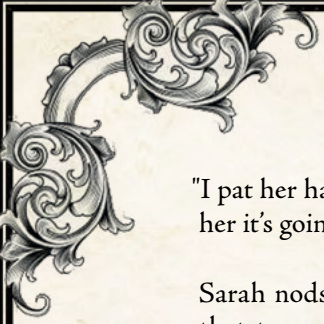
"Great." Sarah decides to use the room move: *trigger a ritual, hunt, or initiation*. "There's shifting out in the darkness, a throng watching you. A chant starts up. At first you aren't sure what they're saying but then you realize they're chanting *ours*."

"They want us to be one of them?"

Sarah nods. "You can see a little bit in the candlelight. You see the edges of dresses, the fabric is stained and torn. You see bare feet, the toenails are long and broken. "

"This whole room is just...no." Joe scans the Moves sheet. "I'd like to *care for someone*."

"One of them steps forward a little. The woman is wringing her hands, over and over, and the skin is red and chapped." Sarah is *giving each inhabitant of the house a drive*; this woman is *physically displaying the need to protect someone*.



"I pat her hands, very gently," Joe says. "I tell her it's going to be okay."

Sarah nods. "You can smell her breath, it's that too sweet smell of rot and old blood, and she nuzzles your neck."

"That's...fine," Joe says. "Okay, darling, tell me. Is there a way out of here? Or some way to stop the big bad thing from showing up?"

"The sound of hooves grating on stone rings out, much closer than before," Sarah chooses to *educate her on how to be a pious woman*. "You can see all her teeth are just stumps, rotted or broken out, but her voice is clear. She tells you that if you don't struggle, he won't hurt you *that* badly."

"That's not happening to me," Megan says. "Maybe we can figure this out before that thing gets here."

"Here's the ring." Joe hands it to Megan.

"Remember that you can't take trauma until she passes it again," Sarah tells him. "Witch, what do you want to do?"

"I want to *investigate a mysterious object*," Megan says. "Whose cabinet is this?"

"Inside are vials and jars. Some of them have herbs, others have thick, meaty pieces in fluid. The woman behind you giggles and points at one of the jars, saying, "That one is the newest. Its mother's name was Ishik. She was like you—always looking for power."

"Interesting," Megan says. "Okay, what about this item is odd or uncanny?"

"As you run your fingers over the glass, you get this tingle," Sarah tells her. "You know, deep in your bones, that if you take what's offered here, you will have power beyond anything you've dreamed—for a price."

"No, we can't do that." Joe says.

"Well, the real question is what did Ishik do?" Megan says. "I'm starting to think she sacrificed her child for power."

Sarah decides it's time to *introduce a servant or horror*. "You hear a murmuring. You can make out something, like a headdress maybe, and glowing points of red."

"Maybe we should get out of here," Mark says. "You know this doesn't end well."

"No, I want to see what's out there," Megan tells him. "Maybe it can help us."

Sarah sees a chance to use the move *put the Bride in danger, emotional or physical*.

"You're still bent over the cabinet, so you don't see who grabs you from behind," Sarah says. "You're forced back on the altar. Two of the women are holding you down, and now you can make out where *he* stands. There's shadow where his face should be, but red points mark his eyes. He steps forward, one massive hoof crashing down—"

"They're holding us down?" Joe asks.

"What are you afraid of?" Sarah is **asking about their fears** in order to **build on the answers**.

Joe frowns. "I mean, this feels like they're helping this *thing* do whatever he wants."

Sarah smiles but continues. "Shadows hide his face, but the light shows that he is definitely male, and very erect. He has a human torso, but around his hips he turns shaggy and goatish, ending in those black hooves."

"Bring it," Megan says. "He certainly seems to want to touch me, so I stretch out my legs and run my toes through the fur at his hips."

"Are you *caressing a horror*?" Sarah asks.

"I am, aren't I?" Megan rolls and checks the sheet. "I got an 11. I raise my voice and tell him I want him to use one of the others first, so he can last longer with me."

Sarah nods. "He has these huge clawed hands, that seize the rotten-toothed woman. He pushes her down on the floor. You see the horror pushing her legs apart, and some of the women help while she fights. You hear ripping cloth, and this wet cry from her—"

"I think we're done here." Megan hands the ring to Mark. "Do you want to *propose a truth* and flee the room?"

"Yes." Mark pauses a moment. "I think Ishik killed her child to call upon dark powers. I don't think we can blame our husband for that. Ishik toyed with powers beyond her understanding."

"And what token are you taking?" Sarah asks.

"Loyalty. I think I'll take the bundle of herbs with me as the physical token."

Sarah nods and smiles. "Great. Everyone, heal one trauma. Now, you leave the room and the door closes behind you..."

AFTERWORD



OUR STRANGE BEGINNING



Whitney, Sarah, and Marissa began work on *Bluebeard's Bride* at the 2014 Gen Con *Hacking as Women* workshop. During the workshop, systems coaches walked participants through a series of tabletop systems and the core elements of game design. Marissa was paired with Whitney and Sarah as their systems coach. The workshop was the first time all three had spent a substantial amount of time together, and their efforts at Gen Con created the basis for *Bluebeard's Bride*. After the workshop, they continued to labor on the project, playtesting and reworking it, until they created the final, refined version found here.



OUR BOUNDED CONVERSATION



Horror has a deep-seated emotional quality waiting to be tapped. That emotional content can be overshadowed by two-dimensional villains and overwrought set pieces, but underneath the layer of drama is fear—and everyone knows what it's like to be afraid. *Bluebeard's Bride* taps the emotional content, the *fear*, through its specific genre of horror: feminine horror, or horror from a feminine perspective that usually engages questions around autonomy, sexuality, and trust. It takes place inside and around the body, and in spaces that are assumed to be free from danger.



OUR DARK LESSON



Making *Bluebeard's Bride* has been a labor of love, and horror, and trust. It has been humbling and terrifying, rewarding and exhilarating. While the depth of darkness we found inside ourselves while making this game was unsettling at times, we continually find ourselves humbled and honored by the trust others have given us during the dark journey of creating the game. It is still amazing to us that a chance encounter at a workshop would lead us here, with a successful Kickstarter and a realized game.

We cannot thank our players, backers, friends, and partners enough.

We are proud of the nightmares this game may give voice to. We hope you find comfort in the disquiet of the horror you summon together. And we appreciate the voice we've found for ourselves, speaking from deep within, to and for our players, through this horrific story.

Thank you all again.



OUR BLOODY EXAMPLE



The final room calls.

*"She then took the little key, and opened [the door], trembling.
At first she could not see anything plainly, because the windows were shut.
After some moments she began to perceive that the floor was all covered over
with clotted blood, on which lay the bodies of several dead women, ranged
against the walls.
She thought she should have died for fear, and the key, which she pulled out of
the lock, fell out of her hand."*

—Perrault

Her decision is made.

Her fate is sealed.

But the Bride's story lives on.

*BUT THE BRIDE'S STORY LIVES ON.
BUT THE BRIDE'S STORY LIVES ON.
BUT THE BRIDE'S STORY LIVES ON.*





MEDIOGRAPHY

The books, games, music, and movies listed are ones that the designers looked to as they wrote, designed, and ran the game, and found an echo of the horror in *Bluebeard's Bride*. We hope you find something here that speaks to you as well.

BOOKS

ANGELS & INSECTS by A.S. Byatt
BLUEBEARD by various authors
CLEVER MAIDS by Valerie Paradiz
CRIMSON PEAK: THE ART OF DARKNESS by Mark Salisbury
FITCHER'S BRIDE by Gregory Frost
ON MONSTERS by Stephen Asma
THE BLOODY CHAMBER by Angela Carter
THE HANDMAID'S TALE by Margaret Atwood

GAMES

APOCALYPSE WORLD
ARKHAM HORROR
BETRAYAL AT HOUSE ON THE HILL
MANSIONS OF MADNESS
MURDEROUS GHOSTS
MYSTERIUM

MOVIES

CORALINE
CRIMSON PEAK
EX MACHINA
GIRL WITH A DRAGON TATTOO
THE CAPTURED BIRD
THE COMPANY OF WOLVES
THE ORPHANAGE

MUSIC

BARBABLU' by Ennio Morricone
BORN OF THE NIGHT ALBUM by Midnight Syndicate
BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA film score
CRIMSON PEAK soundtrack
DARKLORE MANOR by Nox Arcana
DISENCHANTED FOREST by the Grim Faeries
KOYAANISQATSI by Philip Glass
PAN'S LABYRINTH soundtrack
PRINCE OF DARKNESS soundtrack
SILENCE OF THE LAMBS soundtrack
THE THING soundtrack
APPLE PIE by Goon Moon
CHANGE (IN THE HOUSE OF FLIES) by the Deftones
REPRISE by This Will Destroy You

VIDEO GAMES

AMNESIA: DARK DESCENT
DARK FALL
DREADOUT
FRAN BOW
PAPA SANGRE II
PENUMBRA SERIES
SOMA
SILENT HILL

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THE BRIDE

"She promised to observe, very exactly, whatever he had ordered."

—Perrault



TOKEN TRACK

Do you arrive at the final room as a faithful Bride whose trust in her generous husband is well placed?
Or are you a disloyal Bride, who harbors unkind suspicions?

FAITHFULNESS



DISLOYALTY





ANIMUS

You hold onto righteousness with both hands. Others admire your strength and bow to your will.

WEDDING PREP

- ◆ What are the Bride's hands like?
- ◆ What weakness do you give away when others hold your hand?
- ◆ What are you leaving behind from your provincial life to become Bluebeard's Bride?
- ◆ When you first met, what loving gesture did Bluebeard make that won you over?
- ◆ What gift did you present to Bluebeard before the wedding? Why did you choose this?
- ◆ Do you trust your generous husband, Bluebeard, or do you hold unkind suspicions? Why is that?

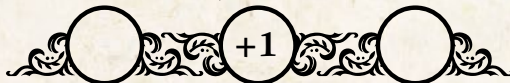
SISTERLY BONDS

You hold yourself apart from your sisters, but:

... _____ is the only one who soothes you. Explain a time they calmed your rage.

...you are envious of _____. Explain why you can never compare to them.

STATS



BLOOD CARNALITY RESILIENCE

One stat is filled out for you. Fill the other two with a 0 and a -1.

CHOOSE A FACE

THE BRUTE

When you *INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS OBJECT* by breaking it, ask a follow-up question about the object. Its essence still remains, but the item can no longer be investigated by any Sister.

THE ROOSTER

Mark one trauma to give a direct order to an NPC. They do it, but choose one: Your order...

... is carried out to the letter and then some.

... is overwhelming and carried out sloppily.

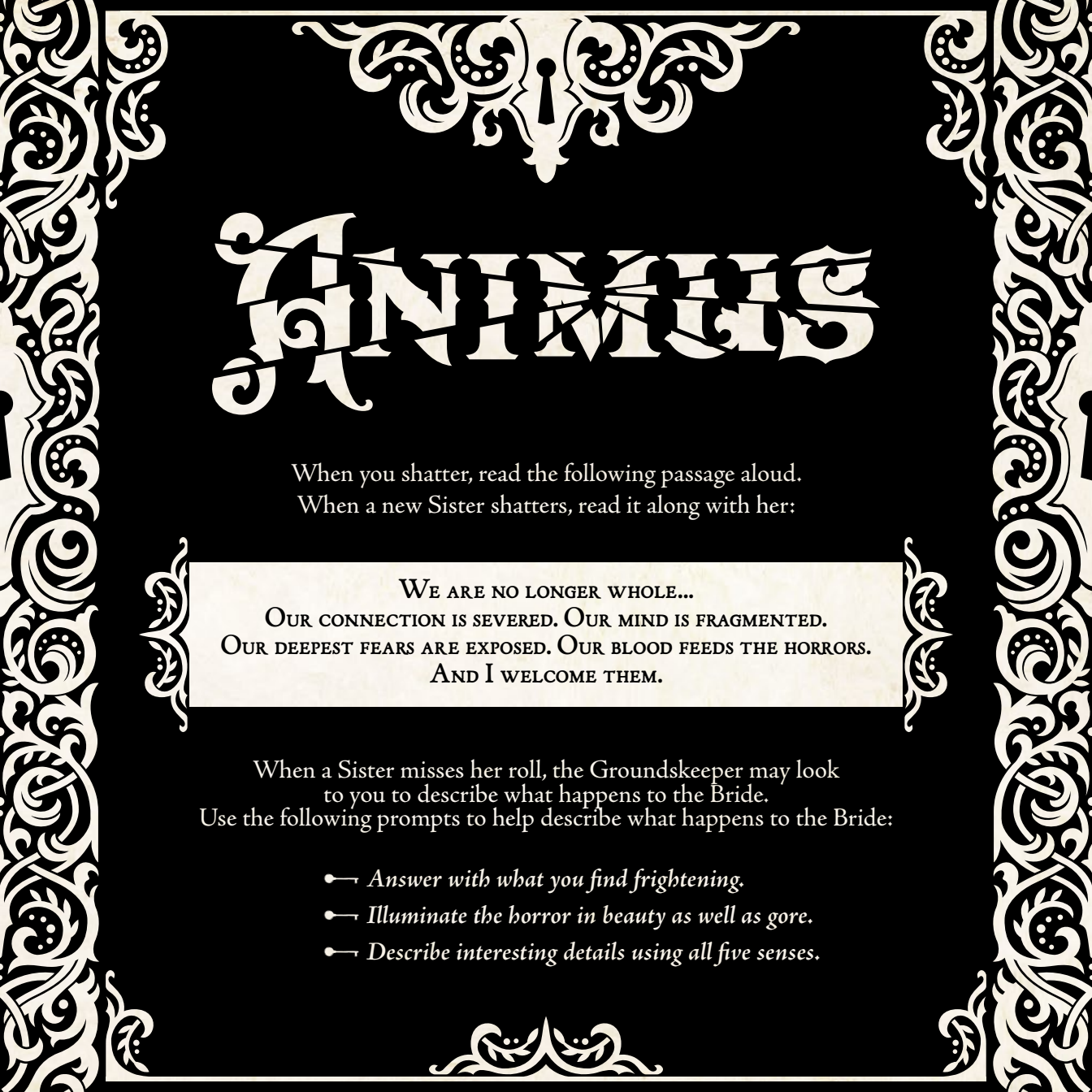
... is not something they can do, and a third party steps in to carry it out.

THE SHIELD

When one of your Sisters marks trauma, explain to her how the trauma she is experiencing is her fault, then ask if she believes you. If she believes you, she marks one less trauma. If she rejects your explanation, mark one trauma as you experience the shame of your own impotence.

TRAUMA TRACK





ANNALS

When you shatter, read the following passage aloud.
When a new Sister shatters, read it along with her:

WE ARE NO LONGER WHOLE...
OUR CONNECTION IS SEVERED. OUR MIND IS FRAGMENTED.
OUR DEEPEST FEARS ARE EXPOSED. OUR BLOOD FEEDS THE HORRORS.
AND I WELCOME THEM.

When a Sister misses her roll, the Groundskeeper may look
to you to describe what happens to the Bride.
Use the following prompts to help describe what happens to the Bride:

- *Answer with what you find frightening.*
- *Illuminate the horror in beauty as well as gore.*
- *Describe interesting details using all five senses.*



FATALE

*You drip sensuality from your lips.
Others watch your every move and crave
for you to take control.*

WEDDING PREP

- ◆ What does the Bride's mouth look like?
- ◆ How do others keep her quiet?
- ◆ What are you leaving behind from your provincial life to become Bluebeard's Bride?
- ◆ When you first met, what loving gesture did Bluebeard make that won you over?
- ◆ What gift did you present to Bluebeard before the wedding? Why did you choose this?
- ◆ Do you trust your generous husband, Bluebeard, or do you hold unkind suspicions? Why is that?

SISTERLY BONDS

Your sisters are who they are, boring and predictable. But...

... _____ has no idea of a woman's true power.
Explain why you wish to teach her.

... you try to draw in _____ with your seductive
aura. Explain how you hide your insecurities from her.

STATS



BLOOD CARNALITY RESILIENCE

One stat is filled out for you. Fill the other two with a 0 and a -1.

CHOOSE A FACE

THE DANCER

Remove a piece of your clothing to **CARE FOR SOMEONE**. That item of clothing is lost to you forever, but it feeds the appetite of the horror or servant until the Bride speaks again.

THE MISTRESS

You are the one really in control. Mark one trauma to take the ring from your Sister.

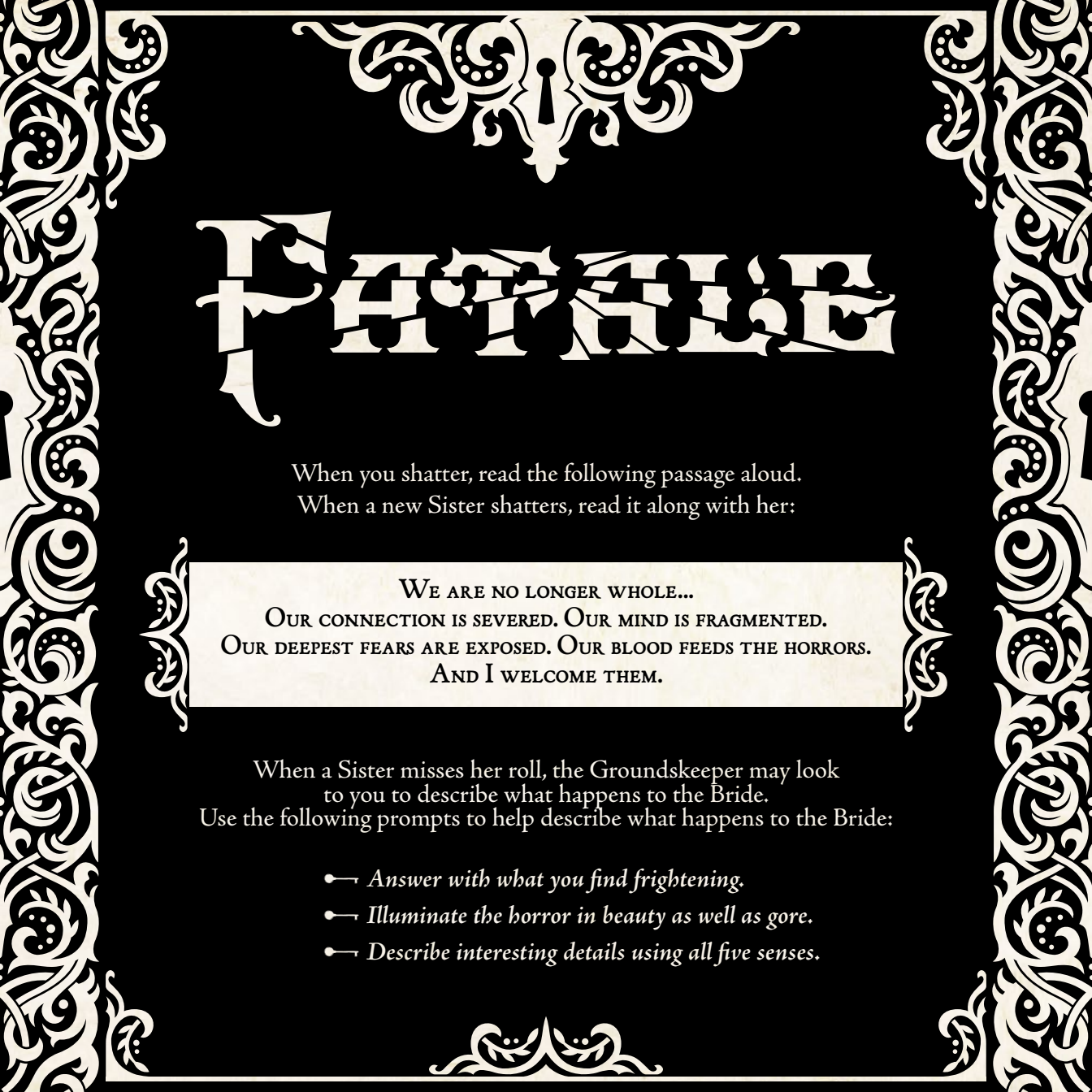
THE SPIDER

Your beauty and charm get you what you want. When you trap a servant or horror with your feminine wiles, they will tell you a secret about either the house or Bluebeard.

Mark a trauma to ask a follow-up question.

TRAUMA TRACK





Frightful

When you shatter, read the following passage aloud.
When a new Sister shatters, read it along with her:

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OUR CONNECTION IS SEVERED. OUR MIND IS FRAGMENTED.
OUR DEEPEST FEARS ARE EXPOSED. OUR BLOOD FEEDS THE HORRORS.
AND I WELCOME THEM.

When a Sister misses her roll, the Groundskeeper may look
to you to describe what happens to the Bride.
Use the following prompts to help describe what happens to the Bride:

- *Answer with what you find frightening.*
- *Illuminate the horror in beauty as well as gore.*
- *Describe interesting details using all five senses.*



MOTHER

*You walk with authority.
Others ache for your approval, and
long for you to soothe their wounds.*

WEDDING PREP

- ◆ What is the Bride's figure like?
- ◆ What do others wish was different about it?
- ◆ What are you leaving behind from your provincial life to become Bluebeard's Bride?
- ◆ When you first met, what loving gesture did Bluebeard make that won you over?
- ◆ What gift did you present to Bluebeard before the wedding? Why did you choose this?
- ◆ Do you trust your generous husband, Bluebeard, or do you hold unkind suspicions? Why is that?

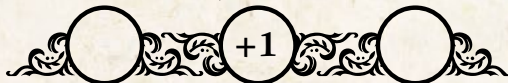
SISTERLY BONDS

You know best, and try to guide your wayward sisters, but...

... _____ irritates you with their obstinance.
Explain a time they undermined your authority.

...you trust _____ to have your back. Explain a time they supported you in a time of need.

STATS



BLOOD CARNALITY RESILIENCE

One stat is filled out for you. Fill the other two with a 0 and a -1.

CHOOSE A FACE

THE BEAR

When a Sister provokes trauma, you can step in and punish the Sister who truly deserves it. Tell the guilty Sister to mark the trauma instead, and mark one trauma for yourself as well, as your failure to prevent this is self evident.

THE KINGMAKER

When you insist a male servant or horror deserves more power than they currently have and give them a gift, you have found your champion. Heal one trauma.

THE MARTYR

You will take your love to the ends of this world. When you offer forgiveness for a Sister's sins, mark trauma, one for two, to heal that Sister.

TRAUMA TRACK



MOTHER

When you shatter, read the following passage aloud.
When a new Sister shatters, read it along with her:

WE ARE NO LONGER WHOLE...
OUR CONNECTION IS SEVERED. OUR MIND IS FRAGMENTED.
OUR DEEPEST FEARS ARE EXPOSED. OUR BLOOD FEEDS THE HORRORS.
AND I WELCOME THEM.

When a Sister misses her roll, the Groundskeeper may look to you to describe what happens to the Bride.
Use the following prompts to help describe what happens to the Bride:

- *Answer with what you find frightening.*
- *Illuminate the horror in beauty as well as gore.*
- *Describe interesting details using all five senses.*



VIRGIN

You see beauty where there is none.
Others seek comfort in your warmth
and delight in your obedience.

WEDDING PREP

- ◆ What do the Bride's eyes look like?
- ◆ How do others know you want them when they gaze into your eyes?
- ◆ What are you leaving behind from your provincial life to become Bluebeard's Bride?
- ◆ When you first met, what loving gesture did Bluebeard make that won you over?
- ◆ What gift did you present to Bluebeard before the wedding? Why did you choose this?
- ◆ Do you trust your generous husband, Bluebeard, or do you hold unkind suspicions? Why is that?

SISTERLY BONDS

You trust your sisters... for the most part, but...

... _____ blackens your innocence with her every word. Explain how she became your enemy.

... _____ often helps you play tricks on the others. Explain a time when she was your ally in mischief.

STATS



BLOOD CARNALITY RESILIENCE

One stat is filled out for you. Fill the other two with a 0 and a -1.

CHOOSE A FACE

THE LILY

.....
Your beauty is a candle in the darkness. When you **CARE FOR SOMEONE** by showing them something beautiful, you do not have to demonstrate your sincerity.

THE MOTH

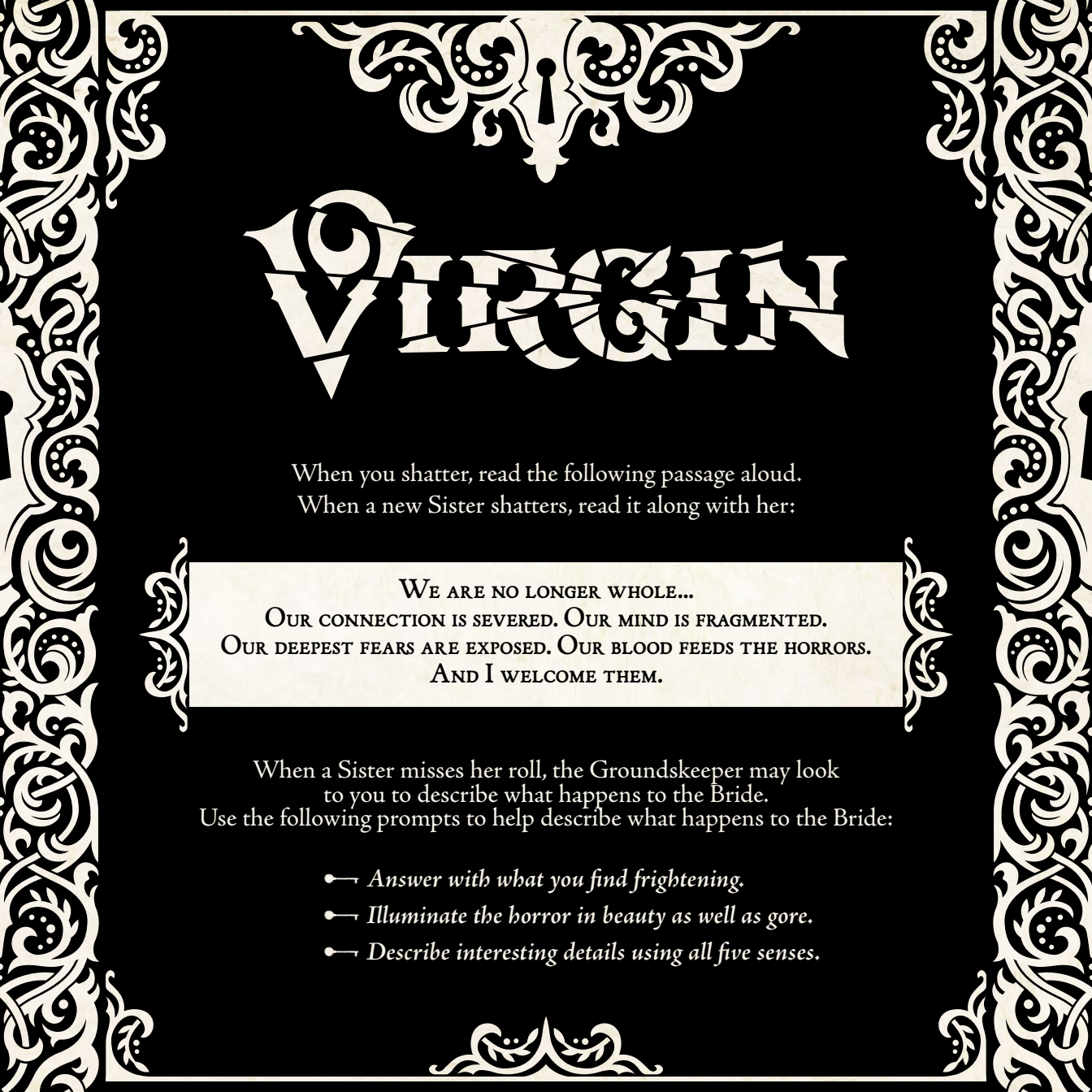
.....
When you **INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS OBJECT** by placing yourself in immediate danger, the Groundskeeper asks you a question off the list provided. Your answer is truth. Mark a trauma to earn a second question.

THE VICTIM

.....
When you **CARESS A HORROR** by inviting it to come closer, mark one trauma to take a 10+ instead of rolling.

TRAUMA TRACK





VIRGIN

When you shatter, read the following passage aloud.
When a new Sister shatters, read it along with her:

WE ARE NO LONGER WHOLE...
OUR CONNECTION IS SEVERED. OUR MIND IS FRAGMENTED.
OUR DEEPEST FEARS ARE EXPOSED. OUR BLOOD FEEDS THE HORRORS.
AND I WELCOME THEM.

When a Sister misses her roll, the Groundskeeper may look
to you to describe what happens to the Bride.
Use the following prompts to help describe what happens to the Bride:

- *Answer with what you find frightening.*
- *Illuminate the horror in beauty as well as gore.*
- *Describe interesting details using all five senses.*



WITCH

*You braid magic from shadow and blood.
Others desire a taste of your sin and
pray for your undoing.*

WEDDING PREP

- ◆ What is the Bride's hair like?
- ◆ How do others like you to wear it?
- ◆ What are you leaving behind from your provincial life to become Bluebeard's Bride?
- ◆ When you first met, what loving gesture did Bluebeard make that won you over?
- ◆ What gift did you present to Bluebeard before the wedding? Why did you choose this?
- ◆ Do you trust your generous husband, Bluebeard, or do you hold unkind suspicions? Why is that?

SISTERLY BONDS

Your sisters are not nearly as important as power, but...

... _____ is a useful tool. Explain how they helped your pursuit of blasphemous craft.

... _____ draws an evil to her. Explain what you have done to keep that evil at bay.

STATS



One stat is filled out for you. Fill the other two with a 0 and a -1.

CHOOSE A FACE

THE MEDIUM

Spill your blood to commune with the horrors of the room. Mark one trauma and the Groundskeeper will share whisperings about what happened here, and might ask you a question or two; answer them.

THE REAPER

When a fellow Sister shatters, you feed on a piece of the Bride's soul. Heal two trauma.

THE VIPER

When you **CARE FOR A SERVANT** by poisoning them with your lies, they choke on your words and die.

TRAUMA TRACK





Shatter

When you shatter, read the following passage aloud.
When a new Sister shatters, read it along with her:

WE ARE NO LONGER WHOLE...
OUR CONNECTION IS SEVERED. OUR MIND IS FRAGMENTED.
OUR DEEPEST FEARS ARE EXPOSED. OUR BLOOD FEEDS THE HORRORS.
AND I WELCOME THEM.

When a Sister misses her roll, the Groundskeeper may look to you to describe what happens to the Bride.
Use the following prompts to help describe what happens to the Bride:

- *Answer with what you find frightening.*
- *Illuminate the horror in beauty as well as gore.*
- *Describe interesting details using all five senses.*

THE FINAL ROOM

"You traveled these dark halls in search of a truth most divisive. Each room provided you with all the evidence you desired to make that one fateful choice. Now you stand before the forbidden final room and you must decide..."

FAITHFUL OUTCOME

When the Bride collects enough evidence to prove her husband's loving intentions as a Faithful Bride, she must choose to either enter the room or look through the keyhole.

Go around the table and ask the Sisters if the Bride chooses to...

ENTER THE ROOM?

- ◆ What were the Bride's last loving words to Bluebeard before he killed her?
- ◆ What room does the Bride's soul reside in?
- ◆ What about the way Bluebeard displays the Bride's dead body makes her happy?
- ◆ How does the Bride disguise the horror done to her body?
- ◆ How does the Bride punish future brides for transgressions against Bluebeard?

LOOK THROUGH THE KEYHOLE?

- ◆ What did the Bride lose when she saw the horrors through the keyhole?
- ◆ What loving impulse kept the Bride from going into the room?
- ◆ How did Bluebeard reward you for remaining loyal and not ever going inside?
- ◆ What is the Bride's favorite room to spend her days in?
- ◆ How does the Bride cope with the horrors she spied through the keyhole?

DISLOYAL OUTCOME

When the Bride collects enough evidence to prove her husband's malicious intentions as a Disloyal Bride, she must choose to either present her evidence to the town or run away and start anew.

Go around the table and ask the Sisters if the Bride chooses to...

PRESENT EVIDENCE TO THE TOWN?

- ◆ What did the town do to rid themselves of the Bride's disloyal ravings?
- ◆ How did Bluebeard blackmail the Bride's family into silence?
- ◆ What loving gift does Bluebeard send the Bride for their wedding anniversary?
- ◆ What new room in Bluebeard's house haunts the Bride's dreams every night?
- ◆ How does the Bride make herself at home in that perfect new room?

RUN AWAY AND START ANEW?

- ◆ How does Bluebeard make the Bride's family pay for her disloyalty?
- ◆ How does the Bride convince someone else to marry her?
- ◆ Why does the Bride keep the tokens she discovered?
- ◆ What memory of Bluebeard's house gives the Bride pleasure when it shouldn't?
- ◆ What loving gesture does Bluebeard make when he finds her?

SHATTERED OUTCOME

When the Bride Shatters completely, her fragmented mind now craves things it didn't before, and she must choose to either become a horror obsessed with bettering herself or a horror that desires to make future brides better.

Go around the table and ask the Sisters if the Bride chooses to...

BECOME A HORROR OBSESSED WITH BETTERING HERSELF FOR BLUEBEARD?

- ◆ What room does the Bride's soul reside in?
- ◆ What is the only thing the Bride can feel?
- ◆ How does the Bride display her pain?
- ◆ How does the Bride overtly attempt to better herself?
- ◆ Why do the Bride's efforts to better herself fail over and over?

BECOME A HORROR THAT FEEDS ON MAKING FUTURE BRIDES BETTER?

- ◆ What room does the Bride's soul reside in?
- ◆ How do future brides of Bluebeard see the Bride?
- ◆ What is the only thing that feeds the Bride and makes her feel alive?
- ◆ What high hopes does the Bride have for future brides?
- ◆ How does the Bride force her vision on future brides?

THE GROUNDSKEEPER

YOUR TALE OF BLUEBEARD'S BRIDE

1. The fairy tale is told
2. The Sisters are created
3. The Bride is left alone at home
4. One by one, the rooms are explored
"The room beckons. You enter, and the door closes behind you."
5. Evidence is gathered
6. The final room is exposed

AGENDAS

- ♦ Make the Bride and her experiences feel real.
- ♦ Fill the Sisters' lives with fear and horror.
- ♦ Play to find out what the Bride chooses.

PRINCIPLES

- ♦ Breathe unnatural life into the house.
- ♦ Address yourself to the Sisters, not the players.
- ♦ Give each inhabitant of the house a drive.
- ♦ Ask about the Bride's fears and build on the answers.
- ♦ Veil your moves with mystery.
- ♦ Hold the Bride to her wedding vows.
- ♦ Fill the house with the echoes of violence.
- ♦ Blur the line between the ordinary and the monstrous.
- ♦ Center the story on women's experiences.

GROUNDSKEEPER MOVES

- ♦ *Hint at off-screen horrors.*
- ♦ *Present evidence of other brides' suffering.*
- ♦ *Invoke the house's memories and secrets.*
- ♦ *Undermine the Bride's senses.*
- ♦ *Remind the Bride of her limits, physical and social.*
- ♦ *Put the Bride in danger, emotional or physical.*
- ♦ *Inflict trauma, as established.*
- ♦ *Introduce a servant or horror.*
- ♦ *Offer an opportunity at a cost.*
- ♦ *Turn their move back on them.*
- ♦ *Make a room move.*
- ♦ *After every move: "What do you do?"*

ROOM LIST

armory, artist's studio, attic, aviary, ballroom, bathroom, bedroom, butler's pantry, chapel, classroom, craft room, dance studio, den, dining room, drawing room, dressing room, family room, fencing room, furnace room, gallery, great hall, guest room, infirmary, kennel, kitchen, laboratory, laundry room, library, mausoleum, music room, nursery, observatory, pantry, parlor, servants' quarters, sex room, shrine, sitting room, smoking room, solarium, stables, staircase, storage room, study, torture chamber, toy room, utility room, vault, wine cellar

GIFTS

(THE BRIDE'S SUBMISSION)

Animus:

Fatale:

Mother:

Virgin:

Witch:

LOOK

(THE BRIDE'S INSECURITIES)

Hands:

Mouth:

Figure:

Eyes:

Hair:

WHAT WAS LEFT BEHIND

(THE BRIDE'S FEARS)

Animus:

Fatale:

Mother:

Virgin:

Witch:

ROOM THREATS

BODY

SUBSETS

- ◆ Beauty Standards
- ◆ Disability
- ◆ Eating Disorders
- ◆ Gender
- ◆ Illness

ROOM MOVES

- ◆ Drug her
- ◆ Perform a medical procedure
- ◆ Shame her by introducing a perfect woman
- ◆ Paper the room with what society demands
- ◆ Showcase a flaw for all to see
- ◆ Exhibit consequences of a transgressive woman
- ◆ Give her the tools she needs to be beautiful
- ◆ Tempt her with gems, clothes, or delectable delights
- ◆ Bind her body in satin and silk
- ◆ Make her hair, teeth, or fingernails fall off

MOTHERHOOD

SUBSETS

- ◆ Abuse
- ◆ Estrangement
- ◆ Family
- ◆ Grief
- ◆ Sacrifice

ROOM MOVES

- ◆ Challenge her domestic abilities
- ◆ Tell her why she should be self-conscious of her body
- ◆ Pamper her so she knows she doesn't deserve it
- ◆ Use physical discipline to remind her it's her fault
- ◆ Tie her down with someone else's child or mother
- ◆ Show her what could have been through reflections
- ◆ Reveal physical evidence of an abortion or stillbirth
- ◆ Tempt her to spill blood to save another
- ◆ Smother her with the needs of others
- ◆ Repeat phrases and relive scenes until she gets it right

RELIGION

SUBSETS

- ◆ Instruction
- ◆ Possession
- ◆ Punishment
- ◆ Rituals
- ◆ Underworld

ROOM MOVES

- ◆ Haunt her with former figureheads, plagues, or fluids
- ◆ Force her to confess her sins
- ◆ Educate her on how to be a pious woman
- ◆ Trigger a ritual, hunt, or initiation
- ◆ Possess an object in the room like a bed, or a dress
- ◆ Surface what is buried underfoot
- ◆ Tempt her with sinful acts: orgies, theft, or murder
- ◆ Use violence and love to teach her how to think
- ◆ Surround her with iconography that hurts or heals
- ◆ Celebrate her marriage to Bluebeard

SEXUALITY

SUBSETS

- ◆ Abortion
- ◆ Humiliation
- ◆ Nymphomania
- ◆ Perversion
- ◆ Sexual Violence

ROOM MOVES

- ◆ Advance on a woman with touch, words, or display
- ◆ Impregnate her with words, ritual, or a lie
- ◆ Break her sexuality with critiques or aggression
- ◆ Show the inherent perversity of objects
- ◆ Invite her to join a promiscuous act
- ◆ Educate her on how she should please her husband
- ◆ Show what Bluebeard enjoys in art, books, and toys
- ◆ Infect someone with a sexual disease
- ◆ Condemn a partner or a child with violence or words
- ◆ Ask what she desires and parade it in public



THE MOVES



MAIDEN MOVES

CARE FOR SOMEONE

When you **CARE FOR SOMEONE** (servant or horror), you ease their suffering and bridle their torment.

They may demand a demonstration of your sincerity.


INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS OBJECT

When you **INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS OBJECT** from a room, ask two:

- Whose item is this?
- What memories does this item hold?
- What about this item is odd or uncanny?
- Why did Bluebeard keep this item?

TAKE STOCK

When you **TAKE STOCK** of a tense situation, ask one:

- What stalks the Bride from the shadows?
 - What traps have been laid for the Bride?
 - What does this place demand of the Bride?
 - What horror here is hidden from the Bride?
- 



RING MOVES

SHIVER FROM FEAR

When you **SHIVER FROM FEAR**, name the thing you are most afraid will happen; the Groundskeeper will tell you how it's worse than you feared. Keep the ring and choose two, or pass the ring and choose one:

- It infects the Bride with its perversion.
- It has the Bride in its clutches right now.
- It speaks to you. Take one trauma... Just you, Sister.

CARESS A HORROR

When you **CARESS A HORROR**, roll +Blood. On a hit, the horror is swayed by your stroke; direct what was intended for you to another victim in the house.

On a 7-9, it will shift its attention, but only if you participate in some way.

DIRTY YOURSELF WITH VIOLENCE

When you **DIRTY YOURSELF WITH VIOLENCE**, roll +Carnality.

On a hit, you inflict trauma as established and choose one:

- Disable them
- Silence them
- Mutilate them

On a 7-9, choose one from below as well:

- Your vulnerability opens you up to trauma
- Your carelessness leaves you in a bad spot

CRY OUT FOR HELP

When you break down and **CRY OUT FOR HELP**, roll +Resilience.

On a hit, a house servant comes to address your concerns and calm your hysteria.

On a 7-9, they help you, but they first need proof of your loyalty to Bluebeard

GIVE UP THE RING

When you voluntarily **GIVE UP THE RING**, pass the ring to the next Sister. You are immune to trauma until that Sister passes the ring.



EXIT MOVES

ESCAPE

When you attempt to **ESCAPE** *without* proposing a truth, the Groundskeeper will offer you a hard bargain or ugly choice. If you pay the price, you escape.

PROPOSE A TRUTH

When you **PROPOSE A TRUTH** about a room, detail what you think happened in the room, to whom, and why. Next describe the token you take that supports your interpretation of what happened here and mark it on the appropriate token track.

- If it is a **TOKEN OF FAITHFULNESS**, you are closer to proving that your trust in your husband is well placed; heal one trauma.
- If it is a **TOKEN OF DISLOYALTY**, you are closer to proving that your unkind suspicions about your husband are true; mark one trauma.

WILL YOU OPEN THE FINAL DOOR?

A young bride is wed to an ugly, but powerful man with a blue beard. He invites her to explore the house... but one room is forbidden. Eventually, the young bride falls prey to her curiosity and opens it, discovering the gruesome display of former brides murdered...

Explore Bluebeard's mansion and create your own beautifully tragic version of the dark fairy tale. Experience the nightmarish memories that haunt the rooms of this broken place and discover the truth of what happened here. But it is up to you and your friends to decide whether or not you are a faithful or disloyal bride.

Bluebeard's Bride is an investigatory horror tabletop roleplaying game for 3-5 people, based on the Bluebeard fairy tale.

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POWERED BY THE
APOCALYPSE

Players
3-5

Time
2-4 hrs

Rating
Adults Only