



**GREYER
COUNTER**
COOPERATIVE SURVIVAL HORROR

THE MOST FUN YOU CAN HAVE WHILE BEING EATEN.

AUGUST 2008 BETA EDITION

COVER TENTACLES BY GEORGE COTRONIS.

DEDICATED TO SGBOSTON AND GoPLAYNW, WITH GRATITUDE.

INSPIRED BY THESE SMALL PRESS ROLEPLAYING GAMES

CLINTON R. NIXON'S THE SHADOW OF YESTERDAY 2004

TIMOTHY KLEINERT'S THE MOUNTAIN WITCH 2005

CLINT KRAUSE'S ROANOKE 2006

D. VINCENT BAKER'S AFRAID 2006 (DRAFT)

AND THESE COOPERATIVE (MOSTLY) BOARD GAMES

JAMES ERNEST'S KILL DOCTOR LUCKY 1996

REINER KNIZIA'S LORD OF THE RINGS 2000

BRUCE GLASSCO'S BETRAYAL AT HOUSE ON THE HILL 2004

SERGE LAGET & BRUNO CATHALA'S SHADOWS OVER CAMELOT 2005

1.0 *Introduction*

Geiger Counter was designed to do two things: 1) emulate movies in which most of the main characters eventually die and 2) perform really well in single-session play, such as a pick-up or convention game. I originally aimed to replicate the fun of watching movies like *Alien* and *Scream*, but *Geiger Counter* can also create play that feels like *Jurassic Park*, *Dawn of the Dead*, *Twister*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Vertical Limit*, *Jaws*, or even sobering fare such as *Black Hawk Down* or *Saving Private Ryan*. Currently, I'm most excited about playing out movies that are too interesting to ever actually be made.

The genre traits *Geiger Counter* focuses on emulating include:

- a group of people struggling to survive against some manner of deadly menace;
- a strong emphasis on setting and dramatic scenery;
- most of the main characters dying before the end of the film;
- characters often being killed not only by the menace but also by other characters pursuing their own personal goals; and
- the menace only being overcome once the main characters discover its true nature and/or come to a greater understanding of themselves and each other.

1.1 *Why Survival Horror?*

There's something about a good survival horror movie that transcends the clichés, predictability, and limited character development of the genre. From the beginning, we – the audience – know that nearly all the characters are going to die and, if we've watched the trailer, we probably have a good how these deaths will occur (giant sharks, falling off cliffs, betrayal). *Yet we show up to watch anyway!* We are still excited to find out *exactly how* the characters will be massacred, which ones will escape, and what bizarrely improbable circumstances they will find themselves in. Survivor horror thrives on the same impulse that causes “onlooker delay,” our guilty pleasure in gruesome spectacle and cheap thrills, something that exists in all of us.

1.2 *Why Cooperative?*

In survival horror, the audience becomes invested in a group of characters, not just a single protagonist, out of which a few survivors will eventually emerge. Additionally, the audience isn't really against the menace. *We want* most of the characters to die in surprising ways and often end up rooting for the menace to take out a particularly unsympathetic character.

Consequently, it didn't seem to make sense for the dramatic tension in *Geiger Counter* to be created through tension between the players, as it often is in roleplaying games. Instead, the players are all on the same side and share the same purpose: creating a good survival horror movie.

1.3 *Overview of Play*

The players create a handful of characters and move these characters through a map of the setting that is drawn over the course of play. Each character begins with only two (2) dice to roll in confrontations with the menace or other characters, but the menace rolls up to eight (8) dice, gradually accumulated over the first part of the movie.

However, the characters can also accumulate dice – through obtaining tools, learning more about the menace, and building resolve as most of the characters are killed. After the menace has obtained all eight (8) of its dice, winning confrontations with the menace lowers the menace's dice pool by one (1). Additionally, characters can harm the menace by achieving their own personal goal, but pursuing goals leads to conflict with other characters.

Ultimately, the group attempts to manage the events of play such that one or two characters escape or destroy the menace, while the rest die.

1.4 *The Basics*

The game works best with 5-7 players. Don't forget to count yourself, since you'll be playing. If everyone feels more comfortable having a "Game Master," that might work too, but *Geiger Counter* isn't designed for that.

This game requires a bunch of six-sided dice. I use about 20-30 dice of one color for the main characters and 8 dice of a different color for the menace. You will also need a large sheet of paper (I often tape six sheets of computer paper together into a giant rectangle), copies of the play sheet included at the end of this booklet, and a small number of unique tokens to represent the major characters.

A session of play should last 2-3 hours, about the length of a movie. Occasionally, it may last as long as 4 hours. The first session is likely to be somewhat longer, as everyone gets used to the rules. There is no need to play the game over multiple sessions, since it's intended to run "one-shots," but the rules easily support making "sequels" or "prequels" to previous sessions.

1.5 *Pick-up Games*

Geiger Counter is designed to work perfectly fine as a pick-up game, with zero planning or preparations aside from one person being reasonably familiar with the rules. If you've read this booklet before, you should be able to sit down with a group of players, flip to *Pre-Production*, and take it from there.

1.6 *Planned Games & Style Sheets*

Some players may reach for *Geiger Counter* when they have a few clear ideas about a survival horror movie that they want to roleplay. Perhaps you just saw a *Final Destination* marathon on television and still can't get enough of teenagers dying in bizarre coincidences. Perhaps you want to play out a sequel to *28 Days Later* with more of an indie, arthaus feel than *28 Weeks Later*. Perhaps you want to play a serious game about a group of refugees trying to get out of Darfur alive.

When attempting something like this, I suggest using a "style sheet" to help ensure all the players are on the same page about the type of movie you're hoping to create. *Geiger Counter* style sheets are composed of short descriptions of the various elements of play that are typically brainstormed by the group during a pick-up game, descriptions which serve either as fixed pillars around which the rest of the game is brainstormed or examples of the kind of thing you have in mind. The play components generally described

in a style sheet include the overall premise, setting details, menace details, character goals, character concepts, character names, survival dice, advantage dice, and any special conditions that might be appropriate for this movie.

Right now, you might not understand what most of those play components are, especially if you haven't read the rest of this booklet or played *Geiger Counter* before. That's okay. I suggest organizing a pick-up game or playing in a game organized by someone more experienced with *Geiger Counter* before trying to make your own style sheets.

After playing a session inspired by a custom style sheet that you've created, you might want to consider revising your style sheet to make it better, incorporating the creative input of the other players. Then, if you eventually decide to use the style sheet again, it will reflect what you've learned in play.

2.0 *Pre-Production*

The pre-game portion of *Geiger Counter* involves either, in pick-up play, working with the other players to brainstorm the material that would otherwise be on a style sheet or, in a planned session, figuring out as a group how you're going to implement the style sheet for this particular session.

What follows is an outline of how I tend to do things, when organizing a game of *Geiger Counter*. You may end up doing things a bit differently. Each step in the process is followed by two example game descriptions, a pick-up game called *Starlight*, *Starbright* and a planned game called *Sky Burial*.

2.1 *Premise & Directorial Style*

The first step of game planning is choosing a specific premise, the kind of description that might show up on the back of a DVD case, and a general sense of the directorial style of the movie. What's the catchy soundbyte description you're going to give to studios in order to get funding approved? Are you filming a big-budget Spielberg movie or just filming in the woods with a handheld camera, as in *The Blair Witch Project*?

STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: Sitting down to a pick-up game, the players decide that they're interested in making a movie that combines the classic tropes of Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) with the aesthetic power of Danny Boyle's *Sunshine* (2007). Their premise is, in the year 2100, authorities on

earth receive data indicating that the orbit of the International Solar Research Station is gradually decaying. Messages to the station have gone unanswered for several days, so a team is dispatched from Mars Base, the closest human settlement, to either correct the orbit or remove all personnel and critical data from the station before it crashes into the sun. Unfortunately, given weeks of travel time, the Mars crew will arrive with less than 24 hours to complete their mission. In addition, the American contingent on the station has been conducting top secret research on blindingly luminescent solar lifeforms that are likely to spend the movie glowing, killing people, and melting parts of the station.

SKY BURIAL: I've created a style sheet for a movie I'm really excited about, inspired by Christophe Gans' bizarre martial arts / period horror film, *Le Pacte des Loups* (a.k.a. *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, 2001), Sergei Bodrov's Genghis Khan biopic, *Mongol* (2007), and Jiang Rong's autobiographical novel of his years in Inner Mongolia, *Lang Tuteng* (a.k.a. *Wolf Totem*, 2004). During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), radical groups of Han youth known as Red Guards have arrived in the the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia to destroy the "Four Olds": old customs, old culture, old habits. and old ideas. One of their first targets was a local mountain shrine to Tengri, the Mongol sky god, which they burned. They have also prevented the local Mongol people from conducting sky burials, where the bodies of the dead are taken up the mountain and left for the Mongolian wolves, the servants of Tengri. It is thought that wolves rip the souls from corpses and fly them up to heaven. However, in the days following the destruction of Tengri's shrine, people have begun to go missing, including a few of the Red Guards. The bodies of several have been found, dragged up the mountain and torn apart. To counter this, the Red Guards plan to kill all the wolves, even seizing the cubs from wolf lairs, but the more respectful locals are increasingly upset, seeing this as the wrath of Tengri and the work of vengeful flying wolves.

2.2 *The Map*

The second step of planning is to get a general sense of what the map you're going to draw might look like, to prevent clashing expectations and a jumbled mess. If the group likes, they can nominate someone to sketch out some initial locations at this point, but sometimes it's better to let these develop in play.

STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: The group decides that play will take place in the cramped rescue ship and then, once it docks with the solar research station, open up into a much larger area. One player also suggests that the distance to

the sun should be marked on the map, as a horizon line that creeps steadily closer as the station's orbit decays further.

SKY BURIAL: According to the style sheet I brought to the game, the map should center on a winter encampment, complete with Mongolian yurts, herds of sheep and horses, guard dogs to help fight off wolves, and a yurt separate from the rest, provided to the visiting Red Guards. The rest of the map can be gradually filled in with the dangerous, snow-covered terrain of the mountain and the surrounding steppe, where the killings have occurred.

2.3 *The Menace*

Next, the group should discuss their thoughts on the menace, including how much they want to pre-determine about the menace's nature before play starts. Setting some general guidelines can be important, though, to avoid a menace that seems amorphous or just a silly amalgamation of unrelated characteristics.

STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: The group is excited by the idea that, unlike monster-style menaces that lurk in darkness, the aliens are blindingly bright and can vanish from sight in the illumination of the sun. They also decide that it should be unclear whether they are actively malicious or not, since it's possible they're simply dangerous for humans to be around and are trapped in the station, trying to get out. Also, the sun itself and the dangers involved in crashing into it will be considered part of the menace.

SKY BURIAL: This game concept has more of a mystery feel, so I suggest to the other players that the true nature of the menace should probably be kept vague, at least at the beginning. Several players voice their desire for the menace to not be supernatural, such as flying spirit wolves, even if initial signs point in that direction. The group agrees that they'd rather the menace take the form of real wolves, malicious people, and the treacherous environment.

2.4 *Play Sheets*

At this point, I usually pass out copies of the play sheet included at the end of the book, which is easily copied on a single 8.5x11" sheet of paper. A PDF of the sheet is available on the *Bleeding Play* website, if you find it easier to just print copies of the sheet.

2.5 *Character Goals, Concepts, Names, & Casting*

Once the players have the play sheet in front of them, it's time to fill out the basic details about each main character in the movie. There can be an indefinite number of secondary characters who act as scenery and props, fulfill minor roles, and get effortlessly killed by the menace, but each player will also be responsible for a single main character who might, if they survive, turn out to be the protagonist who escapes or overcomes the menace.

The basic template of a main character is composed of three elements: a goal, a concept, and a name. I tend to approach them in that order, but many folks start with a concept or even a name.

Goals take the form of one or two words that represent a secret or publically known goal that, if pursued, will place a character in conflict with the other main characters. Often, I simply ask the group to brainstorm a bunch, first thing, writing them down on a scrap piece of paper. Then, once we have a bunch, each player chooses a goal that somebody else came up with.

Character concepts can also be brainstormed and assigned in this fashion. Many can be genre stereotypes (the grizzled veteran), but it's also important to have a few unusual ones, so the movie is not a complete cliché.

Names can be hard to come up with sometimes, in which case I highly recommend the *Story Games Names Book*, edited by Jason Morningstar.

As an optional step, invite the players to cast the actors that would play these characters if you were actually making a movie. This can help provide a handle on how the characters should behave and be described.

STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: The group ends up coming up with the following goal ideas to pick from: “freedom,” “destruction,” “revelation,” “super weapon,” “true love,” “respect,” “redemption,” and “the most beautiful thing.”

Presumably, each member of the rescue team is there for a reason, so the group comes up with the following concepts: “doctor,” “technical expert,” “solar expert,” “commanding officer,” “pilot,” “US army intelligence officer,” “xenologist,” and “hysterical solar researcher,” with the latter character being one of the last people still alive on the station.

Modern names from any place that could conceivably be involved in an international space mission are appropriate, so the players decide that crew members mainly go by surnames, naming the main characters Jaloud, Kitajima, Carvalho, Mizurov, Chen, and Rothschild.

SKY BURIAL: Since both the fate of the wolves and the true cause of the killings are controversial, the group comes up with the following goals: “protect the wolves,” “these outsiders,” “modernize,” “control,” “revolution,” “vengeance,” “left alone,” “survive the winter,” and “traitors.”

I suggest that the main characters be split between the local Mongol herdsmen and the Han youth from the cities, who have declared themselves in charge. Having some older characters among the Mongols would also emphasize the strangeness of having the Red Guards ordering everyone around, so the group eventually comes up with the concepts “daughter of the first victim,” “arrogant Red Guard intellectual,” “crazy mountain shaman / hermit,” “elderly clan matron,” “local production team leader / master herdsmen,” “brutal Red Guard eager to hunt wolves,” “local antelope hunter,” and “angry Communist Mongol youth.”

Chinese Mongols often go by a single name, so the players choose the names Bayer, Bilgee, Gasmal, and Cherendorji. The Red Guards and Mongol Communists refer to each other as Comrade Zhang, Comrade Uljii, and Comrade Li.

2.6 *Initial Survival Dice & Advantage Dice*

At this point, I give each player, including myself, two (2) dice from the pile reserved for the characters, not the dice for the menace.

One of these dice is their character’s initial survival die, representing their will to live. This die is attached to a brief description of why their life is worth fighting for, what makes them a potential survivor and not a mook. In general, survival dice often take the form of relationships with characters, ideas, organizations, or places. This die is placed on the player’s play sheet, in the square labelled “survival.”

The other die is their character’s initial advantage die, representing the first thing we learn about them when they come on screen, the skill, scrap of information, tool, or other trait that gives them some advantage over the menace. This die also goes on the play sheet, in the square marked “advantage.”

STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: To emphasize themes of loss, the players end up choosing survival dice that represent memories of events or people back home on earth (or Mars) that they hope to return to someday: “a day at the beach,” “holding my first grandchild,” “watching the earthrise,” “going to the opera,” “the rain.”

For advantage dice, the players agree on no ray guns or blantly unrealistic technology and eventually come up with: “blackberry,” “basic medical supplies,” “the passwords,” “I know all the failsafes,” “alien empathy,” and “killer reflexes.”

SKY BURIAL: For survival dice, the players come up with reasons why the the wolves shouldn't or won't eat them, such as “protected by the power of Mao Zedong Thought,” “I have always respected Tengri,” “scarier than wolves,” “one of their own,” “it is not yet my time to die,” and “wolves? what wolves? I don't see any wolves!”

For initial advantage dice, the players choose clues about what the wolves or other aspects of the menace are doing or special equipment: “a strange set of tracks,” “there's a bizzard coming,” “the scent of blood,” “I know the moutain trails,” “the best horse in the province,” “Soviet assault rifle,” and “the only working radio.”

2.7 *Secondary Characters*

Sometimes it's useful to discuss or jot down a few notes about what kinds of minor characters will also appear in the movie and maybe even figure out who's going to play these characters when they appear. These should be tentative plans, because it's not always clear what kinds of characters will be needed or who would be best to play them.

STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: The group decides that, aside from the alien menace, there are no secondary characters. Tentatively, the rescue crew and the sole survivor are the only characters in the entire movie.

SKY BURIAL: There are definitely other Mongol herdsmen, sheep, horses, antelope, Red Guards, and other random steppe denizens that may appear in the movie, but the group decides to mainly parse them out as necessary, with the exception of a creepy police inspector sent by provincial authorities to investigate the mysterious deaths. One player who really likes the character concept volunteers to play the inspector, when and if he shows up in play.

2.8 *Adjust Conditions*

The group should also look over the list of conditions in the bottom right corner of the play sheet and cross off or alter the description of any that they don't think are appropriate for this particular game.

STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: The group decides that “Overrun” locations can be interpreted as either swarming with aliens or succumbing to the heat and pressure of the sun, both being very deadly to human occupants.

SKY BURIAL: On the style sheet, I suggest that “Infected” be reinterpreted as being politically suspect, a counterrevolutionary that the Red Guards and local Chinese officials will feel required to capture, punish, or even execute. Associating with known counterrevolutionaries, of course, makes a person more likely to be declared a counterrevolutionary.

3.0 *Action!*

3.1 *The Trailer & Working Title*

Play begins with describing the trailer for your movie. Take turns going around in a circle and describing individual “shots” in sequence, as they would occur in a movie trailer. Feel free to have ominous movie voiceover or not, whatever seems best. You should end the trailer at an appropriately dramatic moment, after which the working title of the movie will flash across the screen. The group should quickly decide on a working titles for the movie, based on the trailer. The actual events of the trailer may end up not actually happening in play, depending on which direction play goes in, but it helps create atmosphere and get everyone on the same page.

THE TRAILER FOR STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT

Player 1 – “The trailer opens on a blazing yellow dot, the sun, but viewed from the distance of Mars, about the size of your fist. A voice squawks over a crackling radio: *Mars Rescue Team, do you have visual confirmation of Solar Research Station? Over.*”

Player 2 – “The camera gradually zooms closer to the sun, until it starts filling the entire screen with blinding light. Gradually a tiny dark speck, the rescue ship, can be distinguished.”

Player 3 – “The camera continues to zoom in, until the dark speck becomes clearer and other, much larger dark patch nearby, what first appeared to be a sunspot, materializes as the Research Station, docked with the rescue ship and clearly damaged, falling fast in a wide arc.”

Player 1 – “Repeat, Mars Rescue Team, do you have visual confirmation of Solar Research Station? Over.”

Player 4 – “The long zoom continues, coming up on one of the outer windows of the station, which is cracked, allowing gas, precious oxygen, to escape. We can see the gas, but can’t hear anything, because it’s space.”

Player 1 – “Mars Rescue Team, do you copy? Repeat, Mars Rescue Team...”

Player 5 – “Zooming up to the window now, peering straight through and on the other side there’s one or more brilliant, glowing shapes moving, but it’s really hard to make out what they are, with the cracked window and the glare from the sun.”

Player 6 – “Aaaaaaaaarrrrrrgh! The silence is suddenly interrupted by a bloodcurdling human scream.”

Player 1 – “Nice. The screen fades to a brilliant white and the remaining blurry little dark shapes come into focus as the letters of the title. What is the movie called?”

Player 2 – “Riffing on *Sunshine*, how about *Starlight?*”

Player 3 – “*Starlight, Starbright?*”

Player 2 – “Oooo, I like that better.”

3.2 *Setting Up the Map*

On your blank map paper, place sets of dice in the following groupings: one group of 3 dice, two groups of 2 dice, and three groups of 1 die. Additional dice may be added if you have eight or more players. Also, place the tokens that represent the main characters somewhere on the map.

3.3 *Prelude: The Initial Scene*

The first scene of play generally demonstrates what the threat is, often by killing one or more disposable minor characters, but it can happen in a different fashion if you like. Generally, while several players can cooperate in framing and playing out the initial scene, the scene itself is more like the trailer, being purely narration, than the scenes to come, which are more structured and can draw on other rules. If I’m the one organizing a game of *Geiger Counter*, I often take a strong hand in crafting the prelude, to help set the tone, but if someone else has a really great idea for how to open the movie, I almost always pass off to them.

Unlike in later scenes, the location of the prelude is not necessarily drawn on the map and it doesn't necessarily include any of the main characters. You can easily have a prelude like the one in *Jurassic Park*, where a mining team finds an ancient mosquito trapped in amber, somewhere in South America.

THE PRELUDE OF SKY BURIAL

Player 1 – “The movie opens on an old man,” gestures to the player responsible for the hermit / shaman, “being dragged by the neck of his coat through the icy dirt by two Red Guards.”

Player 2 – (playing one of the Red Guard characters) “*Too long have you swindled the masses with foolish superstitions! You must be struggled against, until you renounce these horrid feudal practices!*”

Player 1 – “You're actually dragging him out of the mountain shrine to Tengri, which some of the other Red Guards are beginning to set on fire.”

Player 3 – (playing the crazy old hermit / shaman) “Can I break away from them and run off into the mountains? Maybe this is how I became a crazy old hermit, because they torched my shrine?”

Player 1 – “Sure, but don't just say what you're going to do. Do it! And tell us how it happens.”

Player 3 – “Okay. I think I savagely bite into the fingers of one of the Red Guards who's holding me, drawing a bunch of blood.”

Player 2 – “*Gah! You old horse-faced demon! I'll skin your mangy wolf's skin off your rotting corpse!*”

Player 3 – “I race up the mountain, searching for somewhere to hide.”

Player 4 – “Gotta be a wolves' den around there, yeah?”

Player 3 – “Oh, definitely. I scramble inside, leaving a slight trail of the Red Guard's blood, which is still dripping from the corner of my mouth.”

Player 2 – “*Comrade Jiang! Crawl down and pull that filthy traitor out!*”

Player 4 – “This is just a random minor character, I take it?”

Player 2 – “Yeah, I figure he's probably being sent to his doom.”

Player 4 – “Great. *Are you certain, Comrade? It's dark in there.*”

Player 2 – “Dark? You’re going to let a backbone reactionary element escape the people’s righteous anger because he’s hiding in the dark? Perhaps you too are sympathetic to these superstitions!”

Player 4 – “That gets him moving. He drops to his hands and knees and cautiously squirms down into the entrance to the den.”

Player 1 – “Outside, the assembled Red Guards and local onlookers wait a long time for a sign. Too long. Something’s wrong.”

Player 2 – “Comrade Li! It’s your turn.”

Player 1 – “As the second Red Guard hesitantly peers inside, blood splatters out from within the den. But the camera only shows the grimly beautiful reddening of the snow, though Li is presumably spattered as well.”

Player 2 – “Ouch, poor Jiang. We hardly knew you.”

Player 1 – “And I think we’ll cut there.”

3.4 *The Menace Gets Stronger*

After each scene in which the menace appears on screen or is strongly alluded to, it gains a menace die. The menace starts with zero dice and can gain up to eight total menace dice. This includes after the prelude. Along with noting the new die on their play sheets, players should also make a quick note about any new information they learned about the menace in this scene.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PRELUDE OF SKY BURIAL

Player 1 – “Okay, so the menace just gained its first die. What did we learn about it in this scene?”

Player 2 – “It lives underground, in wolves’ dens, and tears people apart.”

Player 3 – “Hmm, it’s not entirely clear that it lives underground, just that it was in that particular cave. I don’t think we want to predetermine that yet, without more evidence.”

Player 2 – “Makes sense. How about just ‘tears people apart’ then.”

Player 3 – “That seems pretty apparent, yes.”

3.5 *Scene Framing, Mapping, & Movement*

During the remainder of scenes that make up play, unlike in the more freeform trailer and prelude, the players will take turns being the “director” of each subsequent scene. I generally direct the prelude myself or let an experienced *Geiger Counter* player direct it and then go around the table in a clockwise direction from that point on.

The scene framing responsibilities of a director can take a while to get used to, especially if members of your group are not familiar with other games, such as *Primetime Adventures*, which require it. In *Geiger Counter*, the current director’s job is to:

- describe the location(s) the scene takes place in, drawing them on the map if they are not already present,
- deciding which main characters and minor characters are in the scene, moving the involved main characters’ tokens to the appropriate location on the map,
- cooperate with the other players to create a sense of purpose for the scene (what is it about? what are the characters up to?)
- play the menace and, with the other players, any minor characters that are needed in the scene,
- describe the movements of the imaginary camera that is shooting this particular scene, and
- calling “cut” when the scene has reached an appropriate conclusion.

Fortunately, because *Geiger Counter* is a highly cooperative game, directors generally don’t have to worry about doing all these things at the same time or on their own. The other players should gladly be able to step in and help out if needed. For example, if the current scene’s director also needs to play a main character in the scene, another player can easily step in and play the menace. However, in the first part of the game, until all 8 menace dice have been defined, directors should avoid framing scenes that feature their own main character. That makes things a bit easier and ensures that the spotlight gets spread around.

To begin a scene, the director should choose a location for the scene to take place in and the characters that are present in the location when the scene starts. Describing the scene as if it was a scene from an actual movie is a good approach. Remember the “Rule of Three,” which says that three colorful details make for gripping imagery, while more than that becomes excess fluff.

If necessary, the current director can draw a new location on the map at the beginning of their scene. An unlimited number of locations can be defined, but a very high (15+) or very low (less than 8) number of locations can be more difficult to manage, with characters either always separated or always bumping into each other. I generally try to aim for ultimately having about twice as many locations as there are main characters, unless there are strong thematic reasons to do something different (claustrophobia!).

Locations on the map don't necessarily need to join together to make a representational picture of the setting, though it's cool if they do or at least suggest what the setting looks like. Top-down views are the most common, but, if you want to shake things up a bit, you might consider what a cruise ship, castle, or underground military base looks like in a cutaway, with multiple floors layered above and below. It can also be powerful to subdivide a previously established location (the farmhouse) into smaller locations (the master bedroom, the cellar) if the characters are going to be spending a number of scenes there.

While a scene is taking place, is the players' job to play characters, assist with description, and respond to the director's vision and goals for the scene, but directors should strive to be facilitators and guides instead of demanding taskmasters. Directors should also take their cues from what the players have already stated their characters are planning on doing. If a character says they are going to Location X, then perhaps their next scene should take place in that location or in a location along the way. However, the movement of characters' tokens is not necessarily restricted to shifting one adjacent location per scene. Movement should follow the whims of the movie, not the other way around. Sometimes a single scene may even take place across multiple locations, though it's usually better to call "cut" and pass to a new director before moving the camera somewhere else.

Scenes in *Geiger Counter* should be as short as possible, since the game tries to run at near-movie speed. It's okay to have lengthy scenes every once in a while, but most scenes should only be a few minutes long. Even though the director of a scene is responsible for calling "cut" and ending the scene, the other players may need to prompt them by making a snipping motion with their fingers, encouraging a relatively quick pace.

If players have trouble coming up with what scene to frame next, there are some suggestions in the top right corner of the play sheet, based on the steps I go through in my mind when framing scenes. I'm particularly fond of increasing the diversity of scenes by framing a 10-second scene with just some brooding visuals and ominous noises, maybe including the menace killing

a disposable minor character. It's definitely good to share participation in a scene with the other players, but sometimes it makes sense to frame a really brief scene that is just a bunch of solo description. As long as it's punchy and less than 30 seconds, it shouldn't tax anyone's patience.

THE FOURTH SCENE OF STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: PART I

Player 1 – “Okay, we haven't had any scenes with our lone station survivor yet. How about a flashback?”

Player 2 – (who plays this character) “Sweet, back before she went crazy.”

Player 1 – “At the bottom of the screen it reads, *3 Weeks Ago*. The opening shot is of an older woman in a not entirely modest bathing suit, tanning on a towel. The shot is from above and age has not been especially kind to her, but she wears a daring smirk on her face that says she doesn't really give a damn what anyone else thinks.”

Player 2 – (laughing) “No, she totally doesn't.”

Player 1 – “The camera shifts to reveal that she is not, as we might expect, on a beach, but in the lounge of the Solar Research Station, in front of a series of highly-tinted windows facing the surface of the sun.”

The framing player draws the lounge on the map, facing the horizon line that marks the surface of the sun. No other locations within the Solar Research Station have been established yet, since previous scenes have taken place on the rescue ship. This player also moves the token representing the lone survivor to this location, even though this takes place in a flashback.

Player 2 – “Awesome. She's totally leaning up on a hand-quilted pillow and sipping a space margarita through a straw while thumbing through a tattered copy of *Jurassic Park*.”

Player 3 – “Ironic much?”

Player 1 – “Shifting angles so you can now see over her shoulder, the lights in the main corridor behind her flicker and then cut off. A short while later, several people go racing past, clearly in a hurry to get somewhere... or get away from something.”

Player 2 – “Uh oh.”

Player 1 – Gradually, the corridor begins to fill with a strange brilliance. It gets brighter and brighter until finally our tanning figure here notices.”

Player 2 – “She turns around. *What are those daft Americans up to now?*”

Player 1 – “Okay, I think this is a confrontation, because you’re about to be attacked by some glowing aliens.”

Player 2 – “Sweet. Roll them bones!”

3.6 *Confrontations*

Confrontations occur when one or more characters encounter the menace or find themselves in opposition to each other. When that happens, you roll some dice and, in the end, one or both sides gains a disadvantage or may even be dead. While the majority of confrontations almost always occur between main characters and the menace, I don’t consider a given game of *Geiger Counter* to be truly successful unless there have been at least two confrontations between major characters. Minor characters cannot be involved in confrontations, because they have no dice to roll. They are scenery and props, their lives (and deaths) subject to the descriptive whims of the players.

As a general rule, a confrontation occurs...

- any time the menace attacks one or more characters,
- any time one character wants to gain a significant advantage over one or more others.

In a confrontation, each involved character and/or the menace rolls all the dice they have accumulated, adding the top two results together and comparing it with their opposition to see who triumphs. This means that the menace might not want to attack a main character until it has appeared in at least two scenes and has two dice to roll.

Characters can choose to pool their dice together to roll against a common threat, usually the menace but sometimes another character. However, if their side loses, all the characters involved are treated as if they lost individually.

Characters can only confront one character or pooled group of characters at a time. The menace is the only entity that can confront multiple opponents independently, even if they haven’t pooled their dice together. If the menace attacks a group and the characters choose not pool their dice, all affected characters must try to beat the menace’s dice, as if the menace attacked them each individually.

The menace never pools its dice with any of the main characters. If the menace attacks a bunch of characters and a particularly spiteful or villainous character wants to roll against another character instead of against the menace, that’s fine. The doubly-attacked character treats the menace’s dice

and the additional attacker's dice as if they were pooled, but the attacker automatically loses to the menace's unopposed attack.

The results of a confrontation are interpreted in the following fashion:

- the side with the highest two dice, individually or in a pool, wins,
- if there is a tie, both sides lose (this mutual destruction is actually good for the characters when the menace has 8 dice and rolls 12's),
- members of a losing side each gain a condition collectively chosen by the involved players (see below),
- if the menace loses, but has not yet gained all 8 menace dice, the characters have managed to escape from it, for now, and
- if the menace loses, but has already gained all 8 of its menace dice, the menace loses one menace die. If the menace only has 1 menace die left, it has been destroyed.

In general, you want to roll the dice for a confrontation as soon as it becomes clear that two sides are in tension and players have enough information to decide whether and how to pool their dice, if that is an option. Once the results of the confrontation have been determined and any resulting conditions or lost menace dice have been determined, finish playing out the rest of the scene, to describe how those results are achieved.

There should hardly ever be more than one conflict in a single scene. Cut to what's happening somewhere else, and then come back if necessary.

THE FOURTH SCENE OF STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: PART 2, TAKE I

Player 1 – “Okay, after prelude and two other scenes, the menace has accumulated 3 menace dice.”

Player 2 – “This is her first scene, so the researcher has only has her 2 starting dice.”

Player 1 – “We roll! Crap, I got 2, 2, and 4, so the highest two add to 6.”

Player 2 – “An 8! Take that you overgrown nightlight!”

Player 1 – “We should finish playing out this scene, then, with your character managing to get away from the menace instead of dying like everyone else on the station. The light in the cooridor keeps growing brighter and brighter, until it becomes nearly impossible to see anything.”

Player 2 – “She swings into action, leaping up from her towel, knocking her margarita over and dashing over to the wall. Since her sole advantage dice is “I know all the failsafes,” she fumbles around for a while in the blinding

light before finding the right switch, turning on a series of fire extinguisher nozzles in the cooridor and the lounge.”

Player 1 – “Sweet. We’ll have to remember those later. The nozzles blow foam all over the creatures and you can vaguely make out their outlines as the stuff hisses and bubbles off of them, vaporized by the heat of their bodies. They are hunched over, but are definitely bipeds with large, triangular heads.”

Player 2 – “Her eyes go wide, seeing the source of the problem, and she throws open a nearby hatch and throws herself inside, closing the opening behind her.”

Player 1 – “Okay, the camera stays outside the hatch, but continues focused on it. The ambient brightness has been temporarily diminished by the foam thrown on the creatures, but it’s now rising again. The final shot is of a glowing foot stepping ominously into view, right in front of the hatch. The paint on the floor begins to slowly peel back and sizzle from the heat emanating from it. Cut.”

3.7 *Gaining & Buying Off Conditions*

Conditions are mechanical impairments and thematic situations that the characters find themselves in, which both mark how far a character is from dying and place them in the sort of improbable, unfortunate circumstances that are so prevalent in survival horror films.

A character can gain two conditions without dying, but their third condition must always be “Dead.” Additionally, characters suffer from the mechanical impairment that comes with their conditions until they fulfill the “buyoff” associated each condition. Conditions that are “bought off” still count towards the three conditions that result in a character being permanently dead.

Characters are welcome to take the condition “Dead,” as their first or second condition, turning out to “not have been killed after all” once they’ve fulfilled the associated buyoff. Players whose main character is dead continue to frame scenes, play minor characters, and add additional description as normal. They should not, in any sense, step back from being engaged in play. Dying is perfectly acceptable, even encouraged, in *Geiger Counter*.

The complete list of conditions, their mechanical impairments, and buyoff conditions is in the bottom right corner of the play sheet and will not be reproduced in full here.

I would like to add a quick suggestion about “Overrun.” If multiple characters gain conditions in the same scene and more than one decides to take “Overrun” (which would be appropriate if the group is being swarmed), the -2 penalty to rolls in that location does not stack, to become a -4. Instead, for each additional character that becomes “Overrun,” pick a location adjacent to the location of the current scene to also become “Overrun.” The zombies (robots, what have you) have begun taking over!

THE FOURTH SCENE OF STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT: PART 2, TAKE 2

Player 1 – “We roll! Crap, I got 2, 2, and 4, so the highest two add to 6.”

Player 2 – “You still beat me. I got a 5.”

Player 1 – “You gain a condition! ‘Lost,’ maybe? Or ‘Alone?’”

Player 2 – “Hmm, well, she’s trapped in the maintenance shafts wearing only her bathing suit. How about ‘Unprepared?’”

Player 1 – “That’s not very interesting if you were never really prepared in the first place. You don’t have any advantage dice that are tools, things that you would have lost in the panic.”

Player 2 – “True, well, what if her ability to think clearly about all the failsafes has been rattled by this encounter with the aliens. She’s ‘Hysterical.’”

Player 1 – “That totally makes sense, since you wanted her to be a bit crazy by the time the rescue team arrives. They’ll have to calm you down if they want to mine your extensive knowledge of the station’s safety measures, which could be useful if they want to pool dice with you in future confrontations.”

Player 2 – “Sweet. She swings into action, leaping up from her towel...”

3.8 *Gaining Advantage Dice*

Remember those groups of dice we placed on the map a while back? If the characters are going to stand any chance of surviving or triumphing over the menace, acquiring those dice will probably play a critical role.

When a location is originally defined and drawn on the map, the directing player can decide whether or not to place one of these groups of dice in that location. Thereafter, if a character is in the same location as a group of undefined dice and a confrontation is at hand, that character’s player can define what those dice represent and convert them into advantage dice that the character can roll in a confrontation. If multiple players want to define

the same advantage dice at the same time, the group should find some way of ruling between them, perhaps going with the player the furthest distance around the circle from the current director. The current director can never define what undefined dice are and the menace cannot gain additional dice in this fashion.

The different groups of dice are distinguished in the following fashion:

- the single dice, in groups of 1, represent advantage dice that a character places on their play sheet, carrying with them for the remainder of the movie or until their death, and
- the larger dice groups of 2 and 3 dice represent fixed advantages that can only be used while characters are in that location, such as a computer bank, a deck-mounted machine gun, or the metal pouring equipment used in the finale of *Alien*³.

THE THIRTEENTH SCENE OF SKY BURIAL: PART I

Player 1 – “Okay, the Red Guards bring you before the local Party cadre in charge of this community, who’s a Mongol himself but sometimes seems to be a pawn of the Chinese state.”

Player 4 – “Hey, I resent that! I just know which horse to pick in this race, y’know? The Party takes care of its supporters!”

Player 5 – “Okay, my character is distraught and is totally going to let him have it. *I can’t believe you are sitting here and letting these outsiders violate all our most precious rules, destroying the animals most precious to Tengri and making all our lives forfeit in the process!*”

Player 4 – “Ha! *Clearly your feudal upbringing is to blame for such counterrevolutionary babble, but, no worries, I’m sure several months of labor reform will rehabilitate you and give you a correct perspective on the strong, modern nation we are trying to build.*”

Player 1 – “Sounds like a confrontation to me! Roll your dice!”

Player 5 – “One second. There’s two unclaimed advantage die here in the central headquarters, yes? Can I define these dice as a small shrine to Tengri that the local cadre keeps hidden in the cabinet behind his desk, hidden from the Red Guards, but demonstrating that he’s still a bit ‘feudal’ himself?”

Player 4 – “Please!..”

Player 1 – “That’s wonderful! Grab two more dice. Perhaps you’ll end up knocking the cabinet over, revealing its contents, when the Red Guards try to drag you away to a labor camp.”

Player 5 – “An 11!”

Player 4 – “You beat him. I only got a 9. Wait, though, this would be my third condition. So... I guess he’s dead? How does that work?”

3.9 *Death & Gaining Survival Dice*

When a character gains the “Dead,” condition, whether temporarily or permanently, their survival die is passed to a main character who witnesses their death, if there are any nearby characters. This die represents the additional drive the surviving character has to make it through, after witnessing the death of the other character. Priority for gaining survival dice, if there are multiple characters or no characters present, goes in the following order:

- to the surviving character who caused, directly or indirectly, the dead character’s death and, then,
- to the surviving character with the strongest relationship to the dead character.

If a character dies with multiple survival dice, their own die and one or more dice gained from previously dead characters, only that character’s own survival die passes on to a living character. Survival dice should not all eventually belong to a single, unstoppable survivor. That would be too easy.

THE THIRTEENTH SCENE OF SKY BURIAL: PART 2

Player 5 – “What if the lead Red Guard, appalled by all this foul witchcraft and superstition around him, pulls out his pistol and tries to shoot both of us, getting you first before I tackle him?”

Player 2 – “Does that mean I get his survival die?”

Player 4 – “Well, you would certainly be the one who directly caused the cadre’s death, by shooting him, but I think, in his eyes, all this is really her fault, for revealing him to be a hypocrite in front of the Chinese.”

Player 2 – “Sure, this is clearly her doing.”

Player 5 – “I need an extra die more than he does anyway.”

3.10 *Achieving Goals*

Remember those goals you came up with for the characters? Those brief descriptions are more extensively interpreted by their players, to create actual goals that the characters are invested in accomplishing, goals that will put them in conflict with other characters, not just the menace. This interpretation process can be done openly, with the other players, or secretly, revealed only if and when the goal is actually accomplished or the player is uncertain what the status of their goal is.

Accomplishing a goal to the satisfaction of the other players, assuming the menace has gained all 8 of its menace dice, diminishes the power of the menace, partially as a reward for the characters menacing each other. Remove one menace die for each goal completed in this fashion. Completing goals before the menace gain all 8 of its dice either does nothing or doesn't count as actually completing the goal. The character should aim even higher, putting themselves in even more characters' way.

THE THIRTEENTH SCENE OF SKY BURIAL: PART 3

Player 5 – “Hmm, so my goal was ‘traitors,’ and I was interpreting that as a secret desire to expose all the Mongols who’ve sold out to the Chinese.”

Player 2 – “Sounds like you’ve pretty much achieved that, by exposing the local cadre, the biggest of all sell-outs.”

Player 4 – “Definitely. Let’s mark off one of the menace dice. The menace is down to 6! Surely we can beat 6 dice!”

Player 5 – “So what do I do now, without a driving goal to focus on?”

Player 2 – “Well, in an upcoming scene, you and I are probably still wrestling on the floor with a gun, so I’d say that’s your immediate concern.”

Player 3 – “And there’s still the menace!”

3.11 *The Five-Act Structure*

Play often proceeds in the following general stages:

- “*These readings don’t make any sense,*”
- “*Something is very wrong here,*”
- “*Oh no, it’s found us!*”
- “*There’s only one way out of here,*” and
- The End.

In Act I, the menace slowly gains menace dice and the players gradually establish that something strange is happening, but the characters are not yet in a perpetual state of panic.

In Act II, the menace begins attacking the main characters (not just disposable mooks) and forcing them to gain conditions. Things begin spiralling towards disaster.

In Act III, the menace swells to 7 or 8 dice, becoming nearly unstoppable and causing havoc among the characters. Additionally, once the menace hits 8 dice, goals start really coming into play, causing more damage. One or more characters probably dies here.

In Act IV, the surviving characters begin to get their act together, gathering advantage dice and survival dice from the fallen, achieving goals and going into mutually damaging confrontations with the menace to lower its menace dice. Sacrifices are made along the way, as more characters die.

In Act V, the movie comes to an end through a final confrontation with the menace and/or with villainous characters and the epilogues that ensue, some of them potentially false (interludes before the menace returns, still alive).

Geiger Counter isn't a perfectly balanced mathematical system but, rather, a set of methods that you can actively implement to create a fun play experience. The game can be busted up pretty good if you try to subvert it, and it's up to the members of your play group to use the methods described here to create a play experience you enjoy. Aiming for the five-act structure described above is just one way to do that, but a way that I know from experience works pretty well in *Geiger Counter*.

Behaviors that help keep the characters alive include:

- defining and using advantage dice,
- having more scenes without confrontations,
- keeping the characters together and pooling their dice when they encounter the menace, and
- not strongly pursuing goals or confrontations with other characters.

Behaviors that tend to support the menace include:

- leaving advantage dice undefined or not using them,
- having confrontations in nearly every scene,
- splitting up the characters, so they can't pool their dice in confrontations with the menace,
- strongly pursuing goals and confrontations with other characters.

Hitting that sweet spot where most of the characters end up dead, but one or two of them just barely get away or beat the menace, that takes some active balancing between doing things that keep the characters alive and doing things that will kill them. That balancing act is often the core of the game.

4.0 *The End*

Endings are really important, the rocks upon which more than a few survival horror movies have foundered.

4.1 *The Final Confrontation*

At some point, it may no longer make sense to cut to a different scene between confrontations with the menace. Whittling the menace down until it has 2-3 dice left, after which the characters are forced to hunt down the poor defenseless little menace... that's not much fun and doesn't at all reflect the climactic conclusions of *Jaws* or *Aliens*.

Once the group decides to declare this scene to be the "Final Confrontation," the involved parties should keep rolling against the menace or other characters until one side is dead, having taken too many conditions or lost all their menace dice. Between rolls, update conditions and dice pool sizes, add some description of this stage of the battle, and then move right into rolling again. Ripley is battling the alien queen now!

Consider allowing the menace to escape when it only has one or two dice left and no longer seems to pose any threat to the characters. Certainly, in some cases it makes sense that the characters will attempt to destroy every trace of the menace, but sometimes you might want to allow the menace to return after a false epilogue or future sequel.

4.2 *Epilogues and the Curtain*

Epilogues, especially false epilogues, are a really fun way to end a movie. Show the surviving characters feeling greatly relieved, in relative total safety. But the menace hasn't been totally defeated! It shows up and confronts them! At this point you can choose to either:

- roll for the actual final confrontation, regardless of whether one has already been declared or not, to see who wins in the end,

- call “curtain” and end the movie as soon as the attack happens, leaving the audience in suspense, or
- demonstrate to the audience, but not the survivors, that the menace is still around, lurking in wait for a future session in which you can play out the sequel, as in *Alien vs. Predator*.

4.3 *Sequels*

If a movie is particularly successful and entertaining, certain players may decide to organize a sequel. Seeing as how most of the characters are now dead, sequel play doesn't necessarily even require the same group of players, though experienced movie-makers will clearly have a much better grasp of what happened in the first film.

This is how I would suggest modifying the starting rules: allow the menace to start with however many dice it had remaining at the end of the last movie (even if that's zero). Then, allow any returning characters to start with an additional survival die that represents having previously survived this menace or a related menace. If you want to up the stakes a bit, as often happens in sequels, perhaps you should allow the menace to gain up to 9 dice.

5.0 *How to Host a Massacre*

Geiger Counter doesn't require a Game Master, but the play group still needs someone to organize the game, explain the rules to people who haven't played before (and maybe those who have), and walk the group through the process. All the players should consider themselves responsible for making the game fun, but the player organizing the game has even more responsibility, shepherding the group through their first game. Sometimes, nobody else will be willing to throw their character under a bus or frame a 10-second scene containing the ominous sound of water dripping unless you do it first. Sometimes, folks won't realize they have reached the final confrontation with the menace or need to step up the inter-character conflict unless you make that suggestion or just have your own character flip out.

Everybody's equal at the table and you should remember you're not the Game Master, but, at least until the group gets comfortable with the rules and play of *Geiger Counter*, it's your responsibility to make it work. Often that means listening and trying to figure out what everybody else wants. Sometimes that means pushing the group in a particular direction. Good luck!

5.1 *Push the Red Button*

All competition in *Geiger Counter* is fake. This includes both the competition between the menace and the characters (both of which are portrayed by the players), and the competition between characters to acquire resources, achieve goals, avoid conditions, and survive. These competitions are like the ‘competition’ of a coin-toss or the card game *War*, an illusion that can create suspense and interest but, if taken too far, becomes not very fun.

The only reason we roll dice, instead of just arbitrarily deciding which side loses a confrontation is because the audience doesn’t always know what will happen next, though the result is strongly suggested by the needs of pacing. Preserving the fun of being the audience of a survival horror movie is one of the main goals of *Geiger Counter*. It is not intended, however, to replicate the experience of being the characters in a survival horror story. It would be hard to enjoy the game, I expect, if you really felt terrified for your life, instead of amused at the horrific, dangerous situations your characters encounter.

Basically, the spirit of *Geiger Counter* runs counter to both inter-player competition and really playing your character hard, sharing their goals and desires. If the characters come across a big red button that says “Dangerous!” by all means, before the end of the game, make sure someone, preferably your own character, pushes that button! You don’t win if your character escapes unscathed, whether your motivation is winning or just siding strongly with your character; you lose and so does everyone else in the group, due to the lost opportunities for entertainment.

6.0 *Post-Production*

This beta version of *Geiger Counter* is the result of about two dozen playtest sessions organized by myself, the members of Story Games Boston, and the Seattle-based folks involved in Go Play Northwest. Thanks everyone!

While I consider the rules of the game to be more or less finished, I am interested in learning from you, the folks reading and playing this edition, how well this version of the text helps you deliver excellent play to your tabletop. What critical aspects does this booklet not cover? How could I do a better job of showing people how to organize and play the game?

Email me (*jaywalt at gmail*) or post about your play on the internet, linking to *bleedingplay.wordpress.com/geiger* (so I can track the link and find it).

GEIGER COUNTER

COOPERATIVE SURVIVAL HORROR

GOAL

CONCEPT

NAME

SURVIVAL

THE GRISLY DEMISE OF YOUR FELLOWS INSPIRES YOU

ADVANTAGE

YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE THESE TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

MENACE DICE

framing help

- **DO THE RUNDOWN:**
 - Which characters haven't been in a scene recently?
 - Where were they last seen? What were they doing?
 - Where are they likely to be now? Doing what? With who?
 - How can you build on what someone else has said or done?
 - That's the scene.
- **CREATE A DRAMATIC MOMENT:** What would be a really powerful image or sound? Describe that, in 30 seconds or less. Then call "Cut."
- **CREATE A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE:** How can you illuminate what's happening from an entirely different angle: the perspective of a minor character or the menace, somewhere far away, a flashback, or in the future?

conditions

- **ALONE:** This character may only be framed into scenes by themselves or with the menace. *Buyoff:* Other characters stumble upon this character.
- **DEAD:** This character is dead, passing their Survival Die to another character. *Buyoff:* Another player frames this character into a scene, illustrating that they are not dead after all; this character then regains their Survival Die.
- **HYSTERICAL:** This character cannot roll advantage dice that represent skills, abilities, or personality traits. *Buyoff:* This character receives comfort or is talked down.
- **INFECTED:** Any character in a scene with this character rolls a single die at the end of the scene; on a 1 or 2, they gain this condition. *Buyoff:* This character is cured.
- **INJURED:** This character's highest die is ignored in conflicts. *Buyoff:* This character receives medical attention.
- **LOST:** This character cannot be framed into a location they have previously occupied. *Buyoff:* This character eventually finds or is shown the way back.
- **OVERRUN:** Mark the current location. Characters receive a -2 penalty in future confrontations here. *Buyoff:* Win a conflict against the menace in this location.
- **PURSUED:** This character is being chased by the menace and is attacked in every scene that they are in. *Buyoff:* This character bests the menace in a conflict and escapes.
- **TRAPPED:** This character cannot leave their current location. *Buyoff:* This character is set free or manages to free themselves.
- **UNPREPARED:** This character cannot roll advantage dice that represent physical objects. *Buyoff:* This character recovers their tools or gains new ones.

Jonathan Walton



BLEEDING PLAY
FREE GAMES THAT DELIVER