

HARVEST NIGHT



A GUMSHOE
game scenario
by Will Hindmarch

Requires a GUMSHOE game like *Fear Itself*, *The Esoterists*, or *Trail of Cthulhu*

using this scenario

This is *Harvest Night*, a short game adventure for the GUMSHOE game system, designed by Robin D. Laws and published by Pelgrane Press. Complete game rules for the GUMSHOE system are available in the following game books, among others (click to learn more about each game):

- *Fear Itself*
- *The Esoterrorists*
- *Trail of Cthulhu*

This adventure—a modern horror-thriller scenario centering on everyday folk in an extraordinary situation—was built using *Fear Itself*'s ability list and game terms, but you can probably play this scenario if you've read *The Esoterrorists* or *Trail of Cthulhu*; you'll simply need to adapt to the simplified abilities and a few alternate game terms. Risk Factors, for example, are roughly analogous to *Trail of Cthulhu*'s Drives—they explain why characters put themselves in dramatic situations that ordinary people would probably avoid.

(**Note:** The Investigation ability on the character sheets is identical to the Investigative Procedure ability from *Fear Itself*; it covers professional investigative techniques as described in that book. The name was merely shortened to fit on the sheet.)

Scope and Style

This is a bare-bones presentation, intended for gamemasters with some experience with the GUMSHOE system. You'll find some parts of this scenario deal in cursory details and rough suggestions. This is a collection of notes, after all, written as a shorthand for GMs comfortable with improvising—it began simply as notes to myself. Ideally, you the GM feel at home revising and expanding where needed, using these notes only as a starting point for a scenario that ultimately has your fingerprints on it.

Is this a tense and suspenseful monster story, with a scarcely seen menace that only emerges fully at the end of the story? Or is this a survival-horror escapade in which a giant monster hounds our protagonists at every step? That's up to you.

The scenario requires you to work the throttle, scene by scene, to keep things moving. Ideally, this scenario represents just one solid night of roleplaying chills and thrills, so pace accordingly.

for halloween

Every year, I design a Halloween-themed game scenario for a different game system and try to run it as close to Halloween as I can. Usually the actual date of play lands a few days before or a few days after the holiday. Each year's scenario is about Halloween in one way or another. This time, it's obviously more about Samhain, the ancient harvest festival, and by extension some broader elements of Celtic mythology. Still, I tried to fit some costumes and ghosts and junk in here, for that Halloween vibe.

This year, I thought I'd share the scenario with you, to see if others might want to play it sometime down the line.

If you do play this scenario, let me know how it goes for you. Email gumshoe@wordstudio.net with notes on what you changed and what you said during play to make the adventure play out well for you. Let's compare notes. Some notes may be incorporated into this file in the future as GM guidelines and playtest advice.

This is version 10.23.10

The Characters

The characters provided were created for my own players to play, using the guidelines in *Fear Itself*. They can easily be swapped out with other characters, either designed by you, the GM, or by your players.

I built these characters to modestly interact with one another without distracting from the scenario at large. They have some things in common and they are sometimes at odds. If that emerges during play, great. If the characters team up and face outward, toward the scenario, without exploring their commonalities and conflicts, that's fine, too.

What's really important about the characters is this: No matter how many points any of them have in Driving, **none of them can fly a plane.**

The scenario comes apart if the characters can leave the haunted island at any time or, even worse, avoid landing there altogether. Beware of that.

Otherwise, the scenario should be easily adaptable to ordinary-people type characters of any stripe.

up north

When I run this game, the characters are departing Boston for rural Maine. The flight should take about an hour. I let the players know that they should start getting suspicious after the plane is still in the air almost 90 minutes later. Then I start calling for Sense Trouble rolls.

My Erin's Point is a made-up island between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, just on the Newfoundland side of the border. At high speed (about 245 miles per hour), the pilot gets the passengers from Boston to Erin's Point in about three hours, landing a little after 11pm.

(We'll see what the characters are willing to do to coerce their only pilot to turn around—they're at his mercy and he's not about to change course.)

You might change the starting spot and destination when you run the scenario, revising dates and details as needed. Disregard your instinct for realism if necessary—perhaps the flight is supernaturally accelerated by the druids on Erin's Point—and just get on with the key situation: the helplessness of flight and the creepy landing at Erin's Point.

introduction

The story begins with the characters all boarding a small single-engine shuttle plane bound for a small community airfield up north, where they intend to spend a week or so vacationing, each for their own reasons. The PCs may be the sole passengers, or an NPC or two may be included if you want them to suffer gruesome and exemplary fates later on in the scenario. (I'm including all six pre-generated characters on the plane regardless of how many players I get.)

It's sunset on October 31st when they board the plane. This is all opening-credits type action—gloss over the choices here and summarize them taking their seats and getting into the air bound for peace and quiet.

The characters soon discover, however, that they are trapped on a plane bound for some other destination—that their pilot is headed not for their vacation destination but out to sea. And why? He's not telling.

the spine

This scenario is broken down into three Acts: The Flight, The Island, and The Harvest. Exactly how long each takes depends on your sense of dramatic timing. Don't let things settle down. Once the characters or the players start to get frustrated in one Act, move on to the next. Once they feel the dread of helplessness in Act One, for example, cut to the landing of the plane—and be quick about it, because helplessness is sometimes frightening but it's not much fun in a roleplaying game.

In Act One, the characters get a chance to reveal themselves a bit, if the players want to do a little introductory roleplaying.

In Act Two, the characters investigate Erin's Point, the island where they are stranded by their pilot. Clues on the island suggest that it may be possible to fight the monster, even if the people of Erin's Point have given up trying. To change their fate, the characters must explore the island, with various locations described in different scenes. The question is, are the characters willing to trust talking crows and the writings left behind by a mysterious old man? Are they able to face a banshee and turn it to their purposes?

In Act Three, the characters do battle (such as it is) against a Fomor of legend. This Act may overlap with Act Two if you decide that the Fomor must come for the characters early to keep things lively. Nothing's stopping you from unleashing the Fomor almost immediately and having it loom over the whole scenario.

the horrible truth

The characters have been brought to Erin's Point to die. Specifically, to be carried away by a Fomor, an ancient giant from Irish legend, to pay a tax in souls that the people of Erin's Point have been paying to Bronoch the Fomorian every 50 years, since they first founded the colony in 1660.

If the characters cannot find a way to defeat Bronoch—options include mystic rites, magic spears, a banshee's wail, and explosives—they're doomed.

act one: the flight

Here begins Act One.

the errant plane

SCENE TYPE: INTRODUCTION

The flight is taking too long. After 85 minutes, the characters are still up in the air over featureless black territory (the Atlantic at night). A **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 3) lets a character realize that they are on the wrong course just by looking out the window. If asked, the pilot (Sean O'Brien), says that he's had to circle out and approach Maine from the east (which **Bullshit Detector** reveals is a lie). If pressed, he admits that he's experiencing "some instrument difficulties," which is also a lie.

O'Brien speaks with a curious brogue that **Social Sciences** recognizes as rather like that of Newfoundland.

O'Brien is under a *geas* to fly this planeload of passengers to Erin's Point. If he fails to do so, he is fated by the druids of the island to die (and then *still* fly the plane). If he succeeds, he is fated to be spared by the Fomor. Nothing the PCs do can change his mind. He's flying to Erin's Point.

Sean O'Brien's grandparents and children live on Erin's Point. He didn't believe the legends of the Fomor until he was approached and manhandled by the druids who put the *geas* on him; they convinced him that it was better to be superstitious than to have Erin's Point fall into the sea. They also quietly kidnapped O'Brien's children in the island's *broch* to compel him.

A **1-point Intimidation or Reassurance** spend gets O'Brien to admit only that "they have my kids."

If the flight is taking too long, dramatically speaking, it passes through a sudden bout of rain and lightning and then emerges, magically, above Erin's Point, faster than should be possible. Even O'Brien isn't sure what that was and has trouble getting the plane back under control at first. Likewise, if the passengers take control of the plane (despite having no one to fly it), it passes suddenly through the magical storm and arrives at Erin's Point. O'Brien's corpse, animated by the *geas*, can then land the plane. Or, if you prefer, the plane crash-lands on Erin's Point, coming to a stop near the coastline somewhere.

Otherwise, the characters have almost 90 minutes to conspire about what to do when they land.

act two: the island

Here begins Act Two. Though scenes are presented for the major locations on the island, I'm also including a master list of some clues tied to each ability in this act. (Act Two is about investigation, Act Three is about action.)

When I'm improvising GUMSHOE scenarios, I sometimes do this, referencing the Master Clue List and parsing the clues out over the course of the physical investigation as pacing for the evening dictates. This way you can move clues around, slipping one or two extras into the village or the mouths of Guisers, as needed to reward roleplaying, keep things moving, and keep characters involved in the story while they're still alive and sane.

Act Two is when the clues from the Master Clue List get parceled out. Some of them require the characters to be in precise locations, some of them represent what the characters already know—things that come to mind when the characters realize what kind of situation they're in. That is, the island of Erin's Point triggers these clues at dramatically appropriate moments, or when players think to ask.

the layout of the island

Erin's Point is a narrow, sickle-shaped sea-swept island about 9 miles in length from north to south, and about 5 miles across at its widest point. The island curves to the west, forming Bronoch Bay to the east. It takes about three hours to walk the length of the island, about 90 minutes to hustle from one end to the other. It's an easy drive.

At the southern edge of the island is a tangle of fishing huts and piers, hardly in use anymore, clustered at the foot of a derelict lighthouse.

At the northern edge of the bay is the village. At the northernmost edge of the island, on its highest hill, is the nameless *broch*.

Between the village and the fishing huts, about halfway across the island, a farmhouse stands in a gentle dell. Near the top of a nearby hill, just north of that, is the barrow. No road goes to these places.

O'Brien lands the plane on the road that runs north-south along the island's rocky highland hills, near some woods that run most of the north-south length of the island.

master clue list

Note that many of these clues may be moved around from one ability to another. (Humanities, Occult Studies, and Social Sciences share some overlap.)

Architecture: The foundations in the village date to the 17th century; most buildings there date from the 19th.

- The farmhouse near the center of the island dates from the 17th century in style but seems to have been maintained and updated over the years.

- **1-point spend:** A secret room in the village is used by the island druids as a meeting place; it contains a book with mystic spells to put a *geas* on someone, as they did with the pilot, Sean O'Brien. Photos of Sean O'Brien are on the walls here, marked up with mystic symbols.

History: English colonies brought Welsh and Irish peasants along as cheap labor in the 17th century and, when those colonies failed, the colonists were sometimes left to fend for themselves without supplies from the old world.

Humanities: The Dagda, or All-Father of Irish mythology, coupled with the Morrigan on Samhain in exchange for battle plans. He had a magic club that could kill nine men with a single blow, a magic harp that played in the seasons, each in turn, and a magical cauldron that was always full of porridge.

- The Morrigan is a goddess of battle and strife, associated with crows (especially hoodie-crows) who oversaw many great Irish victories, including that of the Tuatha Dé Danann over the Fomors of old.

- A Fomor is a giant, ancient inhabitant of Ireland, come from beneath the sea, associated with death and oppression. The ancient Nemedians, once of Ireland, had to pay a tax of milk, wheat, and souls to the Fomorians to avoid destruction.

Languages: The Guisers and druids of Erin's Point speak Gaelic.

Natural History: Hoodie-crows are not native to this part of the world and those that are following the PCs around do not show the healthy fear of humans that crows should.

- The bones of cows that lay scattered along the shoreline look like they have been gnawed upon by lots of humans and then broken in half by something quite large. The marrow is sucked out of them.

Occult Studies: A banshee is an Irish spirit that may enter the world through suffering and death. She sings when death is nigh. She is associated with burial mounds of old and may be seen as a messenger from the Otherworld, with special access to Earth on times when the barrier between worlds is thin (e.g., Samhain night). When a banshee wails the doom of a specific subject, they find the pall of the banshee over them, which rattles bones and leaves limbs numb.

- **1-point spend:** Finn mac Cumhaill sometimes bested Otherworld foes by throwing his spear into their burial mounds. Obtaining the head of a powerful burial-mound resident sometimes lent control over spirits from the Otherworld.

Research: Erin's Point was founded in 1660 and abandoned almost immediately by England in favor of other colonies nearby.

Social Sciences: Druids were ancient Celtic holy men, part priest and part bard, who went extinct prior to the Christianizing of Ireland. Anyone claiming to be a druid today is probably a neopagan and not part of any uninterrupted tradition.

- The Irish diaspora resulted in numerous small villages throughout Newfoundland, all intending to recreate traditional Irish ways. It's possible that a place as remote as Erin's Point has managed to maintain traditions—like Samhain festivals—for three hundred years or so.

- Samhain is a Celtic harvest festival marking, literally, "summer's end." It is the evening of October 31st. It's a time when the boundary between this world and the Otherworld is supposedly thin and the dead come to visit. Chairs are sometimes left out for the dead by the fire and people retire early. It's also the time of many great Irish mythological contests, such as battles against the Fomorians, who may have been sea-pirates.

Computer Science: Erin's Point is completely free of Internet access. No houses on the island appear to have satellite dishes or antennas. It's likely that there isn't a cell tower for many miles. There are no power lines outside of the village itself.

- **Photography—1-point spend:** Take a legible, persuasive photo of a supernatural creature.

- **Science—1-point spend:** Use ingredients in the village or the fishing huts to create an explosive capable of dealing +5 damage at point-blank range.

landed

SCENE TYPE: CORE

From the air, as the plane approaches, a few details of the island can be made out. For one thing, bonfires are burning here and there all over the island, about twenty in total.

Sean O'Brien lands the plane on the road and then, if he can, makes a run for it. (Keeping him on the plane requires a Scuffling contest; chasing him down requires Athletics versus Fleeing.) He runs towards the *broch*, about a 50-minute hustle away, to see if he'll be let in. But Guisers restrain him first and hold on to him, in case they need him later.

Sean O'Brien Game Statistics

Abilities: Athletics 6, Fleeing 6, Health 3, Scuffling 4

Once the plane has landed, the real creepiness starts. Begin with people in white robes and wooden masks approaching the plane with torches in hand. (These are Guisers—folk in spooky disguises—dressed up for their last night on Earth.) They may try to pull the PCs off the plane, they may simply say prayers over the fuselage and passengers through the windows, blessing them before they suffer their sad fate. Really, this scene is just about putting the PCs at unease. If they rush out to escalate to violence, see the scene, "**Guisers.**" If not, the Guisers eventually move on, leaving the PCs to be found by the Fomorian.

guisers

SCENE TYPE: CORE

The Guisers are the 44 men and women of the village who were selected (or volunteered) to be given up to the Fomorian. They are really just ordinary folk in creepy garb, albeit high on adrenaline and superstition.

Their goals: To see Erin's Point survive another 50 years. They believe paying the Fomorian is the way to do that. They're willing to give up their lives and the lives they've had Sean O'Brien fly in from the mainland, to make sure that happens.

Convincing them to fight is folly. If they fail, the Fomor will just go to the *broch*, crack it open, and take the proper number of souls from there. Or, worse, the deal is broken and the island returns to the sea. It's too risky.

Counting the PCs and Sean O'Brien, the druids have amassed 51 souls for "the Harvest." They need 50. Thus, if the PCs kill a Guiser, the Harvest can still

proceed. If the PCs kill two Guisers, the Guisers may freak out, believing either that the island is doomed or that their families are now in danger. They try to wrangle the PCs, bring them to a bonfire, and plead with Bronoch by shouting out into the night.

Only a few of the Guisers even speak English. They all speak a dialect of Gaelic. If they can be made to speak, especially using **Interrogation** (which requires tying one to a chair or something), **Intimidation, or Negotiation** ("We'll cooperate if you tell us what's going on!"), here's what they know (in addition to everything else in this scene):

- Bronoch the Fomorian comes tonight to take the 50 souls he's owed, plus cows and wheat, in exchange for not dragging Erin's Point back underwater.

- Their families are locked up safe in the *broch*, which the Fomorian can doubtless get into if motivated.

- Another planeload of five people was brought in from Canada and left down south at the fishing huts for the Fomorian. They're probably dead by now.

- Erin's Point was founded in 1660 and they've made this payment every 50 years since then. "We won't give up what our ancestors died for! This island was hard won and we're keeping it!"

- The island is looked over by Da, the ghost of an original settler, who watches over it on Samhain.

Guisers Game Statistics

Abilities: Athletics 6, Fleeing 5, Health 2 to 6, Scuffling 5, Shooting 3

Hit Threshold: 3

Stealth Modifier: +1 (out of costume), -1 (in white robes)

Weapons: +0 (clubs and long knives), +1 (shotguns)

The druids who are out and about are counted among the Guisers—they just have higher Health scores.

The Guisers are scattered throughout the island, mostly roaming the island one more time before they die. If the PCs are known to be trouble, the Guisers are moving about to interfere with them (without killing them, since they belong to the Fomorian). Which is to say, the Guisers are combat and chase encounters ready to happen when you need them. They can emerge from the woods, appear at a window in the village, come driving up in a Range Rover... whatever's necessary when you need a dose of action in the story.

CROWS

SCENE TYPE: CORE

The whole time the PCs are on the island, they find themselves haunted by crows. **Natural History** recognizes them as the same birds, following them around and around the island; these birds are not indigenous to eastern Canada but are found in Ireland. **Occult Studies** or **Humanities** recalls that crows—especially hoodie-crows, as three of these—are the birds of the Morrigan, the Celtic goddess of battle, strife, and fertility.

A **1-point spend of Second Sight** hears voices coming from the crows, rather than mere caws.

Anyone who speaks to the crows finds that they answer—in Gaelic or in English. **Flattery** gets the crows to give up clues (paced out as you see fit):

- “He has left you weapons with which to fight.”
- “Seek out the father’s house.”
- “Beware the banshee, for she is a weapon of the Otherworld.”
- “Aye, but weapons may be caught and turned around on their warriors.”
- “Where you fight determines more than where you die.”

banshee

SCENE TYPE: CORE

A banshee howls, cries, or sings in the distance. If you have an NPC available to hear the banshee and panic, fleeing into the night (and perhaps leading to an encounter with Guisers or the banshee herself), take advantage of it.

Hearing the banshee’s cry for the first time requires a **3-point Stability test**, unless she is singing her song (I’m using “Maiden in the Mor Lay” by Mediaeval Baebes), in which case it is a simple **Stability test** (Difficulty 4) to resist approaching her like a sailor to a siren. Characters who succeed on the test can restrain characters who fail and hold them still until the banshee passes. (It’s a question, then, of how many fail the test and whether this splits the party.)

The banshee can deal physical **Health** damage with her targeted cry—it’s a **Health test** (Difficulty 3) to avoid 3 points of damage. Use this sparingly.

The banshee can be summoned and made to do one’s bidding via occult rites at “**The Barrow.**”

the village

SCENE TYPE: CORE

The village, abandoned by all but Guisers, is a source for many mundane clues. It contains a small library, for **Research**, and numerous other clues, discoverable with simple searches or appropriate ability usage:

- The town square is a modest five-way crossroads, but standing there at the intersection is a stone stele and a smaller stone marker. The stele is marked in Gaelic and says the same thing the stone marker says in English: **Law** recognizes it immediately as a contract. It is the agreement between the folk of Erin’s Point, 1660, and the Fomorian, Bronoch, who has held them hostage since then.

- A map of historic Erin’s Point indicates a ruin where the oldest house on the island is: commonly called “Da’s House.” It was the first house built by the first settlers.

- If the characters discover the secret room (Master Clue List), they might get the bright idea to put a *geas* on somebody... or *something*. Casting such a spell on the Fomorian requires the following ingredients: blood of the Fomorian, a mystic cauldron (as found in the Da’s house—**Occult Studies** believes the druid’s cauldron isn’t enough to bind a Fomorian), a bone from a lawgiver (obtainable from the barrow), and a crow’s feather. Then the casters must devise the terms of the *geas*. What is it that they ban the Fomorian from doing or require it to do?

the broch

SCENE TYPE: CORE

In this scene, the characters discover the refuge of the villagers. It’s a simple, squat stone tower, three stories high, covered with moss, with three simple stone rooms for holding people safe until sunrise. Characters can attempt to parley through the shut door and shuttered window-slits, but the villagers know better than to let anyone in and they ring a bell if they feel the *broch*’s in danger of being breached.

Characters might, however, get some information from people within by using **Impersonate**, **Reassurance** or even **Bureaucracy** (the mayor and her folk are in there, after all). **Architecture** sees the structure for what it is: stout but imperfect, built in the 19th century, and capable of withstanding a lot (but not, if he’s been seen, the Fomorian).

the coast

SCENE TYPE: CORE

This scene occurs when the characters reach any coastline outside the village, but especially the fishing huts in the south. Unless you need a replacement character or two, the previous plane-load of captives is already devoured. The fishing huts have been smashed open and smears of blood are everywhere. A severed hand clings to a plank. (That's a **2-point Stability test**.)

Trying to get off the island by boat won't work. Not tonight. The Fomorian comes from the sea (he dwells deep in the Atlantic between Newfoundland and Ireland) and rises up to snatch any boat out of the water tonight. (That display is a **7-point Stability test**, if you're in the boat.)

This may well be the moment when the Fomorian reveals itself. At first, it might seem to just be a huge rock out at sea, but then it raises its goat-like head and rises to its feet, water pouring off its etched and ancient armor, and shows itself in all its terrible glory in the moonlight. This cues a **4-point Stability test**.

The coast offers little in the way of clues, but may be a fine place for an encounter with more Guisers, who are awaiting the coming Fomorian.

the farmhouse

SCENE TYPE: CORE

Whether they find it by following the map in the village or by spotting lit windows from across the island's windswept fields, the characters should eventually discover this old farmhouse, built in a traditional style (see the Master Clue List). The stone work seems hundreds of years old, but the interior seems to have been redone several times over the years (say, every fifty years or so).

A fire roars in a huge fireplace. Chairs are set out by the fire to greet guests. A pot of stew bubbles over the fire. An upright cabinet radio plays traditional Irish music, though there seems to be no other electricity to the house. Oil lamps give off bright yellow light. Photographs and etchings line the wall, depicting Guisers throughout the years. A medieval-style wall hanging shows the Morrigan above a battlefield, where (**Humanities** or **Occult Studies** recognizes) the Tuatha Dé Danann battle the Fomorians for possession of Ireland. Long bronze-and-iron spears hang crossed on one wall above the horns of a great bull.

This is the house of the founder of Erin's Point, transformed tonight (as, indeed, it is every 50 years on the eve of Samhain, when the debt is to be paid) by the Dagda into a place of refuge and strength, from which brave souls might do battle with the Fomorian. This is a safe place where characters can huddle to refresh General abilities (as described in *Fear Itself*) and eat stew from the cauldron (which heals 1d6 Health per character, once per scene, even if the character is seriously wounded). This is the Dagda's gift to the people of Erin's Point—a chance to risk it all in battle and perhaps defeat their foe.

The Guisers are told by the druids to keep away from this place, because it is "haunted." In truth, it's because the druids don't want anyone taking matters into their own hands and risking all of Erin's Point for a chance at killing a Fomorian.

The spears here deal +2 damage and can be used to coerce the banshee to sing against the Fomorian.

the barrow

SCENE TYPE: CORE

South of the farmhouse, on a grassy hillside, is a barrow built by the early settlers to honor their first fallen and give some anchor to the spirits they believed were necessary for a balanced village. They wanted to create something that would be ancient one day in a way that a simple cemetery is not.

Venturing into the barrow is creepy, but not Stability-shaking at first. Deep within, where the crows can no longer be heard, and it's too tight to maneuver a spear very well, and the bones are piled up around your ankles, things get worse. Limbs reach out from the walls to grope at trespassers (a **2-point Stability test**).

One skeleton stands virtually upright against the wall, wearing a silver torc. His head sags sadly. He should have fallen to pieces long ago, but he seems to be held up by cobwebs and dirt.

Occult Studies says a spear to his chest summons the banshee. His head, plus a total of **2-points spent** in any two of **Intimidation, Negotiation, and Occult Studies**, plus 3 points of **Stability**, are enough to coerce the banshee to wail the doom of the Fomorian. This requires taking the banshee within site of the Fomorian, but doing so raises the Difficulties of all the Fomorian's actions by 1, as if it were **shaken**, thereby effectively raising every PC's Hit Threshold against it.

conditions on the ground

The island is cold and windy—it's the North Atlantic in the first hours of November. Dead leaves blow about through the air. Your breaths is carried off on the wind in front of your face. It's all but impossible to keep a struck match lit.

Without streetlights, most of the island is difficult to see, since this scenario takes place entirely in the night. Keep the characters thinking about where their light sources are—and who else can see the light they're giving off. Difficulty ratings for spotting approaching Guisers, druids, and Fomorians should be high—6 or 7—before modifiers are considered. (The banshee doesn't glow, but she is eerily bright, as if lit by invisible candles floating in the air about her.)

This goes both ways, though. Characters looking to sneak up on people find it easy to do: Difficulty 2 or 3.

The village is all locked up, so Infiltration may also be useful for getting inside and finding things like shotguns or getting into people's cars.

(For a really grim ending, the Fomorian decides not to breach the *broch* and, instead, take the whole island, PCs included.)

Bronoch the Fomor Game Statistics

Abilities: Athletics 26, Health 30, Scuffling 25

Hit Threshold: 2

Alertness Modifier: +2

Stealth Modifier: -2 (it's huge)

Weapon: +3 (club, fists, feet, bite)

Armor: -3 (ancient armor)

This particular Fomorian is a goat-headed giant with human skulls for teeth, dressed in armor made from a dozen human breastplates hung like scales about his body. He's easily four or five stories tall, but he can move about with preternatural subtlety and stealth (reducing his Stealth modifier to a mere -2), when his wet-goat smell doesn't give him away. His eyes glow like lanterns when they're open, but he can travel the ground by scent if he needs.

He speaks. He threatens, and boasts, lies and offers up bargains he has no intention of keeping.

He fights by smashing things with his club, fists, or feet, or by snapping his powerful jaws around someone and biting them in half. He'll cram someone into his mouth, if need be.

Remember the **7-point Stability test** called for when being attacked by a supernatural monster. (That only applies the first time any individual character is attacked, in this case.)

Amphibious: A Fomor dwells beneath the waves as easily as it does on the ground. This one, in particular, has been underwater for close to forty years.

Derive Power: For every point of **Stability** the Fomor causes a foe to lose (whether by attacking outright, devouring a target's friend, or by first revealing itself in all its terribly glory), the Fomor gains a point of **Athletics**, **Health** or **Scuffling**. No ability can be raised more than five points above its Rating and points gained from this power disappear after 24 hours if not used. Don't just apply all of these points to Health, or this monster will never be beaten. Mix it up a bit.

(This ability was taken from a monster in *The Book of Unremitting Horror*.)

act three: the harvest

Here begins Act Three. Act Three begins whenever the Fomorian stops wandering the shores and finally, actually reveals himself to the PCs. Other scenes from Act Two can still happen after that, but the clock is ticking loud after this. The Fomorian is roaming the island, scooping up folk to put in his bag... or his stomach.

the giant

SCENE TYPE: CORE

Eventually the PCs will have to face the Fomorian and then either flee or fight. The odds are good that they will see him once, flee, and then face him again later for some kind of showdown.

Alternately, the characters successfully avoid the Fomorian long enough that it eventually goes to the *broch* in search of more souls to gobble up, in which case the PCs might survive the night in exchange for sending dozens more souls to their deaths. The Fomorian doesn't exactly stick to the bargain when he breaks open the *broch*.

SAM MCKEARNEY RISK FACTOR: CURIOUS

You're playing Sam McKearney, a college professor and believer in the occult.

You're a bookish academic sort known more for your research than your lectures. Thank heavens for teaching assistants, you hardly spend any time in contact with large groups of actual people.

How could you? All those auras are almost overwhelming! It's like getting lens flare off everyone you see out of the corner of your eye.

The dean of the anthropology department has sent you away to a cottage used by the college for summer writing retreats and the like, where you are to grade papers and finish your latest book (so the school can use it to drum up grant money). For you, this is an opportunity to avoid spending time with so many auras and students asking questions and TAs pestering you with their mocking questions about psychic powers and the occult. They don't believe what you believe in, but what you believe in doesn't require them to. Monsters and magic are out there—sometimes lit-

erally, sometimes not—whether your students believe in them or not.

And this new book? This is the book where you'll come right out and say it. Write about the auras you see. And to hell with the college if they won't understand...

THE WORST THING YOU EVER DID

When you were little, *something* took your little brother, David, during the night. You saw it—like a clutch of little green men—and ever since that night you've been able to see things. Auras. Spirits. Psychic turbulence. But you never told the truth about what you saw. You said you slept through it that night. Maybe if you'd spoken up, they would've found him.

SOURCES OF STABILITY

- Your Moleskine notebook, in which you log your important thoughts
- Your little amulet of protection, over which you recite "spells" that guard against evil spirits

ACADEMIC	RATING	POOL
Architecture	1	[]
History	1	[]
Humanities	1	[]
Languages	1	[]

Law		[]
Natural History	1	[]
Occult Studies	1	[]
Research	1	[]
Social Sciences	1	[]
Trivia	1	[]

INTERPERSONAL

Bullshit Detector	[]	[]
Bureaucracy	[]	[]
Cop Talk	[]	[]
Flattery	[]	[]
Flirting	[]	[]
Impersonate	[]	[]
Interrogation	[]	[]
Intimidation	[]	[]
Negotiation	[]	[]
Reassurance	[]	[]
Streetwise	[]	[]

TECHNICAL

Computer Science	[]	[]
Investigation	[]	[]
Photography	1	[]
Science	[]	[]

9	8
8	7
7	6
6	5
5	4
4	3
3	2
2	1
1	0
0	-1
-1	-2
-2	-3
-3	-4
-4	-5
-5	-6
-6	-7
-7	-8
-8	-9
-9	-10
-10	-11
-11	-12

HEALTH

STABILITY

GENERAL RATING POOL

Athletics	5	[]
Driving	2	[]
Filch	5	[]
Fleeing	9	[]
Health	9	[]
Infiltration	3	[]
Mechanics	2	[]
Medic	2	[]
Preparedness	2	[]
Scuffling	5	[]
Sense Trouble	7	[]
Shooting		[]
Shrink		[]
Stability	8	[]

PSYCHIC POWER

Second Sight	4	[]
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MIKE PALUSKI

RISK FACTOR VENGEFUL

You're playing Mike Paluski, a retired police detective.

You retired just last year after a long and tedious career. It was nothing like the cinematic experience you'd hoped for. Police work was all about routine questions and waiting around. Retirement is proving more interesting, what with the travel and the free time to work on your novel. That's what's got you coming

out to the family cabin in the woods.

In 13 years on the force, you fired your weapon exactly one time. A thief waved a gun in the direction of your partner, Douglas, and you put that thief in the ground. Not a night goes by that you don't wonder what would've happened if you'd waited... if you'd given the kid a chance to drop that weapon. Would Douglas be dead? Would he and that kid both be alive? Maybe you'll always wonder.

Time was, you could chase a suspect with the best of them. You're not in shape like you

used to be. You're only 35, and yet one of your knees is shot and you're on a doctor-prescribed vacation. Is this what the future holds for you, aches and doctors? Next thing you know you'll have to quit smoking.

THE WORST THING YOU EVER DID

You shot that thief. Didn't even give him a chance. Doug's alive but he's dead. You can't undo that.

SOURCES OF STABILITY

- Smoking cigarettes
- Your wife, Eleanor, who knows how you feel about the shooting (but couldn't get time off of work to come with you)
- Grim sense of humor

ACADEMIC RATING POOL

Architecture	[]
History	[]
Humanities	[]
Languages	[]

Law	1	[]
Natural History	[]	[]
Occult Studies	[]	[]
Research	[]	[]
Social Sciences	[]	[]
Trivia	1	[]

INTERPERSONAL

Bullshit Detector	1	[]
Bureaucracy	1	[]
Cop Talk	2	[]
Flattery	[]	[]
Flirting	[]	[]
Impersonate	[]	[]
Interrogation	1	[]
Intimidation	[]	[]
Negotiation	1	[]
Reassurance	[]	[]
Streetwise	[]	[]

TECHNICAL

Computer Science	[]	[]
Investigation	2	[]
Photography	[]	[]
Science	[]	[]

8	10
7	9
6	8
5	7
4	6
3	5

2	4
1	3
0	2
-1	1
-2	0
-3	-1
-4	-2
-5	-3
-6	-4
-7	-5
-8	-6
-9	-7

-10	-8
-11	-9
-12	-10
	-11
	-12

HEALTH

STABILITY

GENERAL RATING POOL

Athletics	4	[]
Driving	3	[]
Filch	[]	[]
Fleeing	7	[]
Health	8	[]
Infiltration	2	[]
Mechanics	4	[]
Medic	2	[]
Preparedness	2	[]
Scuffling	6	[]
Sense Trouble	6	[]
Shooting	6	[]
Shrink	[]	[]
Stability	10	[]

LUCAS STEWART

RISK FACTOR THRILLSEEKING

You're playing Lucas Stewart, a musician... and thief.

You tell people that you make your living as a session musician and by playing live music at bars throughout the metroland area. The truth is, that's supplementary.

You make your real living as a housebreaker and a pickpocket, lifting valuables and selling them to fences on the

street. It's not that you couldn't make a wage some other way, it's that you love the thrill of it—of being temporarily inside someone else's life. It's a rush and an escape. You love it.

Speaking of escape...

The police were really cracking down when you left. You needed a little vacation, a little time away from the proverbial heat, so you're heading up north for some off-season relaxation in a town where your family used to spend some of the summer swimming and fishing and watching for shooting stars.

Those were good times, and you need some good times, so why not recapture them? Maybe you'll even do a little housebreaking while you're up there...

THE WORST THING YOU EVER DID

You're a thief. The worst thing you've ever done is to break and enter into people's homes and steal their precious heirlooms. You've stolen jewelry, electronics, anything you can pawn on the street for some quick cash.

SOURCES OF STABILITY

- Playing Celtic music
- Grim sense of humor
- Your adopted mother, Maryanne Stewart, who doesn't know what you do for money but helped you rent a house up north for the week.

ACADEMIC	RATING	POOL
Architecture		[]
History		[]
Humanities	1	[]
Languages	1	[]

Law		[]
Natural History		[]
Occult Studies		[]
Research		[]
Social Sciences		[]
Trivia	1	[]

INTERPERSONAL

Bullshit Detector	1	[]
Bureaucracy		[]
Cop Talk		[]
Flattery	1	[]
Flirting	1	[]
Impersonate	1	[]
Interrogation		[]
Intimidation	1	[]
Negotiation		[]
Reassurance	1	[]
Streetwise	1	[]

TECHNICAL

Computer Science		[]
Investigation		[]
Photography		[]
Science		[]

10	8
9	7
8	6
7	5
6	4
5	3
4	2
3	1
2	0
1	-1
0	-2
-1	-3
-2	-4
-3	-5
-4	-6
-5	-7
-6	-8
-7	-9
-8	-10
-9	-11
-10	-12

HEALTH

STABILITY

GENERAL	RATING	POOL
Athletics	4	[]
Driving	2	[]
Filch	8	[]
Fleeing	8	[]
Health	10	[]
Infiltration	8	[]
Mechanics		[]
Medic		[]
Preparedness	2	[]
Scuffling	5	[]
Sense Trouble	5	[]
Shooting		[]
Shrink		[]
Stability	8	[]

JOHN SIMON

RISK FACTOR: PROTECTIVE

You're playing John Simon, a med student.

The big-city ER is just what you thought it would be like: chaotic, hectic, and alive. You feel close to the action there. You feel like you're doing real good for real people.

If you have one complaint, it's that your time at the hospital leaves you almost no time to live a real life. Your sig-

nificant other wonders where you are and, you think, might be ready to leave you. It's mostly guilt that's gotten you out of the hospital for this trip, as you've hardly seen Alice all month and you know you'll be working Thanksgiving.

So, you're heading to a town up north where she used to spend her summers, ready to meet her family and tel them stories of the big-city ER and what it's like saving lives.

What you won't do is tell people about the mistakes—the inevitable and terrible mistakes—that you've seen take lives and ruin families.

You want to talk about it but... you don't want to burden someone else with your mistakes. So you

keep your mouth shut and hope that the pain will go away.

When it doesn't, you take pills. Nobody knows that, either.

THE WORST THING YOU EVER DID

You made a mistake. You misdiagnosed an ER patient, didn't get him to surgery when he needed it... and now he'll never walk again. The docs all told you that these things happen in the ER, but you can't shake the feeling that maybe you're not up for being a doctor.

SOURCES OF STABILITY

- Your parents, John and Marie Simon, who live in upstate New York
- Vicodin.

ACADEMIC	RATING	POOL
Architecture		[]
History		[]
Humanities	1	[]
Languages		[]

Law		[]
Natural History	1	[]
Occult Studies		[]
Research	1	[]
Social Sciences		[]
Trivia	1	[]

INTERPERSONAL

Bullshit Detector	1	[]
Bureaucracy		[]
Cop Talk		[]
Flattery		[]
Flirting	1	[]
Impersonate		[]
Interrogation		[]
Intimidation		[]
Negotiation		[]
Reassurance	2	[]
Streetwise		[]

TECHNICAL

Computer Science	1	[]
Investigation		[]
Photography		[]
Science	1	[]

10	8
9	7
8	6
7	5
6	4
5	3
4	2
3	1
2	0
1	-1
0	-2
-1	-3
-2	-4
-3	-5
-4	-6
-5	-7
-6	-8
-7	-9
-8	-10
-9	-11
-10	-12

HEALTH

STABILITY

GENERAL	RATING	POOL
Athletics	6	[]
Driving	4	[]
Filch		[]
Fleeing	8	[]
Health	10	[]
Infiltration		[]
Mechanics		[]
Medic	6	[]
Preparedness	2	[]
Scuffling	4	[]
Sense Trouble	6	[]
Shooting	2	[]
Shrink	4	[]
Stability	8	[]

DARIUS WALLACE

RISK FACTOR CURIOUS

You are playing Darius Wallace, a research scientist.

You come from a family of educators and academics, but you're the first in your family to go into the sciences. Still, you think of it as being in your blood—you've always been fascinated by how things work. You've always been curious about how the pieces fit together in the world. Lately, that means simple

field research on the diet of urban animals. You're writing a book.

Science isn't just the study of how things work, for you, though. It's about making sense of a world that is almost unfathomably complex. Almost.

All of that gets put on hold, though, when it comes to your family. Your grandparents aren't getting any younger, and you seldom get a chance to go up and see them, so you're taking the opportunity while you have some vacation hours saved up and flights are cheap. You can't remember when you saw them last.

You're not crazy about flying. Hopefully gram and grampa appreciate that...

THE WORST THING YOU EVER DID

In grad school, you stole your friend Lewis's girlfriend. That ruined your friendship with Lewis and, eventually, she left you for someone else anyway.

SOURCES OF STABILITY

- Your Aunt Marjorie, who you've confided in since you were 9
- Your Moleskine notebook, in which you log your important thoughts
- Your stoicism

ACADEMIC RATING POOL

Architecture	[]
History	[]
Humanities	[]
Languages	[]

Law	[]
Natural History	1 []
Occult Studies	[]
Research	2 []
Social Sciences	1 []
Trivia	[]

INTERPERSONAL

Bullshit Detector	1 []
Bureaucracy	1 []
Cop Talk	[]
Flattery	[]
Flirting	[]
Impersonate	[]
Interrogation	[]
Intimidation	[]
Negotiation	1 []
Reassurance	1 []
Streetwise	[]

TECHNICAL

Computer Science	[]
Investigation	1 []
Photography	[]
Science	1 []

9	11
8	10
7	9
6	8
5	7
4	6
3	5
2	4
1	3
0	2
-1	1
-2	0
-3	-1
-4	-2
-5	-3
-6	-4
-7	-5
-8	-6
-9	-7
-10	-8
-11	-9
-12	-10
	-11
	-12

HEALTH

STABILITY

GENERAL RATING POOL

Athletics	2 []
Driving	2 []
Filch	[]
Fleeing	8 []
Health	9 []
Infiltration	[]
Mechanics	4 []
Medic	4 []
Preparedness	3 []
Scuffling	4 []
Sense Trouble	7 []
Shooting	[]
Shrink	6 []
Stability	11 []

ALICE HOFFMAN RISK FACTOR SKEPTICAL

You're playing Alice Hoffman, a graphic designer for a big firm in the city.

You're a hard worker. You work so hard, in fact, that your therapist thought it was a good idea to get out of town with your boyfriend, John Simon. He works as hard as you do.

So you're off to visit a town where you went to art camp, where the leaves

get real pretty in the fall and you can probably take some great photos for your portfolio. Breathe some fresh air. Drink some mulled cider. Just get away from the traffic and the clients and all the problems brought on by other people.

Of course, you brought your laptop and your camera, so you're sure you'll be able to get some work done, under the radar. The website you're building won't turn out right if you leave it to Marcy and Jim to finish on their own.

Maybe this will be your chance to write a few blog posts and get

caught up on some reading, too. Your Kindle is packed with books you've barely looked at. Just a little "you" time, at last...

THE WORST THING YOU EVER DID

You missed your mom's wedding to her boyfriend, Thomas, to get high with friends. She never forgave you and your relationship hasn't been the same since.

SOURCES OF STABILITY

- Your AA chip. You've been clean and sober for two years.
- Drawing in your sketchbook, which you keep with you all the time.
- Your biological father, Brian Hoffman, who you would have lived with if it had been your choice.

ACADEMIC	RATING	POOL
Architecture	1	[]
History	1	[]
Humanities	1	[]
Languages		[]
<hr/>		
Law		[]
Natural History		[]
Occult Studies		[]
Research	1	[]
Social Sciences		[]
Trivia	1	[]

INTERPERSONAL

Bullshit Detector	1	[]
Bureaucracy		[]
Cop Talk		[]
Flattery	1	[]
Flirting		[]
Impersonate		[]
Interrogation		[]
Intimidation		[]
Negotiation	1	[]
Reassurance		[]
Streetwise		[]

TECHNICAL

Computer Science	1	[]
Investigation		[]
Photography	1	[]
Science		[]

	10	10
	9	9
	8	8
	7	7
	6	6
	5	5
	4	4
	3	3
	2	2
	1	1
	0	0
	-1	-1
	-2	-2
	-3	-3
	-4	-4
	-5	-5
	-6	-6
	-7	-7
	-8	-8
	-9	-9
	-10	-10
	-11	-11
	-12	-12

HEALTH

STABILITY

GENERAL	RATING	POOL
Athletics	6	[]
Driving	4	[]
Filch		[]
Fleeing	10	[]
Health	10	[]
Infiltration		[]
Mechanics	5	[]
Medic		[]
Preparedness	5	[]
Scuffling	5	[]
Sense Trouble	5	[]
Shooting		[]
Shrink		[]
Stability	10	[]