

A Night with Jack

A new monster and Storytelling Adventure System scene for the World of Darkness

By Eddy Webb

Genevieve looked down the street before waving to the rest of her coterie waiting on the other side of the street. Their target was walking across the street, the artist that saw a prominent Invictus feeding in an alley last night. He was looking the other way for traffic, and hadn't seen Genevieve or the other vampires getting out of the car. All I have to do is grab him, she thought, and then Mr. Petrovsky will support my petition to the Prince to have my childe returned to me.

As her partners started to move into position behind her, Genevieve suddenly heard a loud, cackling laughter. She started to look around on the street for the source of the noise, before her face smashed into the gritty concrete when a heavy weight slammed onto her shoulders from above. The smell of sweaty leather and old sex wafted over her as she felt something whisper into her ear.

"You're a tasty little morsel, baby Dracula. Tell your friends you'll be staying with me for a while, and they can have you back when I'm done with you."

About the Storytelling Adventure System

Think of an SAS product as a story kit, as if you'd bought a piece of modern furniture and brought it home in a big flat box. You open it up, eager to be the Storyteller for your troupe, but what you find is a collection of pieces and parts (like the parts in this article). To put it together, you'll need some tools: in this case, the World of Darkness Rulebook, and any other books for the World of Darkness for the particular chronicle you're running (such as Vampire: The Requiem or Changeling: The Lost). You'll use these parts and tools to build a story together with your friends. It might not look quite like you expect it to when it's all done, but as long as everyone enjoys it, it doesn't matter how you end up using all the pieces, or even if you throw some of them away.

To learn more about the Storytelling Adventure System, be sure to read the free SAS Guide, found at the SAS website:

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A Night with Jack

Mental ●●

Physical ●●●

Social ●●

Overview

In a lull in the story as the player characters are going from one scene to another, Spring-Heeled Jack appears to torment them for his own amusement (or perhaps on the orders of another Storyteller character). It could be as the group drives across town to talk to their contacts, as they arrive at the hotel where the ghost they're following was last seen or as they're being taken to the police station after being arrested for murder. When they least expect it, Jack leaps into the scene and starts molesting or attacking characters.

Description

Things seem to be quiet for once. You've got a chance to take a breath and think about what's happened recently, now that everything isn't so hectic. You might even be able to relax. And then you hear it: faint at first, but louder and louder. You can hear laughter and the sound of feet thumping hard on the ground, coming closer and closer.

Storyteller Goals

The goal of Jack's attack is assumed to be purely to introduce a strange bit of chaos to reinforce that the World of Darkness is an unusual place, but it really depends on the needs of your story. It can be as simple as "provide a chance for the player characters to exercise their physical or social skills" or as complicated as "establish that someone is out to get them, and has the resources to send Spring-Heeled Jack as a roadblock to their activities." The tone of the attack is also assumed to be bizarre and dangerous but not necessarily lethal, but it can also be scaled between "powerful rapist without any scruples and takes whatever he wants" and "wacky monster that bounces around like a mad jack rabbit."

Jack's actions can be very random or hard to discern, but he often focuses his attention on characters with the Striking Looks Merit, trying to molest them if they are female or torment and attack them if they are male. His actions aren't often fatal to his victims, but Jack doesn't understand the consequences of his actions (due to his lack of Morality) and may accidentally injure or kill someone as he's amusing himself. His torment is usually pretty vulgar and base, consisting of jumping on people or vehicles, grabbing them and jumping away or mocking them from a safe distance as he prepares his next jump. In a fight, Jack is likely to use his claws and flame to discourage people from getting too close, and then leaping away to safety if guns become involved.

Character Goals

Figure out who this maniac is and what he wants before he hurts (or kills!) someone.

Actions

Player character can try a variety of actions to avoid or attack Jack. One of the more unusual ones they might try, though, is convincing him to leave them alone.

Persuading Jack

Dice Pool: Presence or Manipulation + Persuasion vs. Jack's Wits + Composure (dice pool 5)

Action: Contested

Hindrances: Speaker is a male (-1), player characters have previously injured Jack (-1 to -3, depending on Jack's current wound penalty), Jack is insane (-2)

Help: Speaker is a female (+1), speaker has Striking Looks (+1 for the 2-dot Merit, +2 for the 4-dot Merit)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the speaker fail to convince Jack to leave them alone, but Jack becomes enraged and starts attacking the speaker. He will do everything in his power to kill the speaker for his next action.

Failure: The speaker fails to convince Jack to leave them alone, and he continues with his current course of action, perhaps taking even more glee in it now that he knows that it bothers them.

Success: The speaker convinces Jack to leave them alone. He reluctantly jumps away.

Exceptional Success: The speaker convinces Jack to leave them alone, and he sees them as kindred spirits by his own twisted logic. He jumps away, but he may start stalking them and jumping in to protect them at opportune moments - see "Consequences" for more.

Consequences

If Jack is able to steal a kiss or cop a feel from a woman (especially one with Striking Looks), he's likely to jump away with a laugh, but he probably won't bother the characters again. If the characters attack Jack, he'll retreat when he's lost half of his Health, but he may come back in a later scene (or story) seeking revenge. If they convince him to leave them alone, he might respect their wishes, or he might become fascinated when they start stalking them, perhaps offering his own brand of ham-fisted "help" whenever he can. This could lead to a new story where they deal with Jack once and for all, creating a fast ally or new enemy in the process.

Spring-Heeled Jack

Quotes: *You think I'm the devil? I can't claim such lofty honors. I am merely a simple man named Jack, on an eternal mission to seek out and destroy boredom wherever it may be found.*

Let me get a closer look at you, pretty thing.

Oh, I'll bet you weren't expecting that, were you? (maniacal laughter)

Virtue: Fortitude. No matter what happens, Jack can withstand pressure to change his ways, since he's been doing this for over nearly two centuries.

Vice: Lust. Jack has an insatiable lust; not only for pretty young flesh, but also for vicious amusement.

Background: Very little is known about Spring-Heeled Jack's origins. The first documented appearance for him was in London, England in 1837, when a businessman returning home from work was suddenly shocked by a mysterious figure landed in his path after easily jumping over the high railings of a cemetery. After that, reports started springing up all over London, and eventually to the Midlands and Scotland: stories of women being kissed while he ripped at their clothes, or men being leapt into and severely injured. He would jump into the paths of carriages, causing them to crash. There was no rhyme or reason to his acts, except for the perverse joy he seemed to get out of them as he let out peals of hysterical laughter.

After forty years of sightings, Jack eventually disappeared from the public eye, but he appeared again at the turn of the twentieth century, and every once in a while some new person would tell a strange tale of a man in a black coat that could leap a dozen feet in the air. Each person seeing Jack since his first appearance says that he looks like a young man – either there are a number of creatures like Jack in the world, or he's an immortal monster that doesn't age. Regardless, one thing is consistent about all of his sightings: there's never an obvious reason for his actions.

Description: At first glance, Jack looks human. He's muscular, tall, thin and speaks perfect English with a hint of an English accent. He often dresses in a long black coat, with tight-fitting black or gray outfits underneath. But upon closer inspection (which Jack doesn't often give the opportunity for), the appearance of normalcy breaks down. His elongated chin, goatee beard and small horns make him look like the classic vision of a devil. He has slightly pointed ears, and hands that are as cold and clammy as a corpse (even before he summons his metal-tipped claws). His reflective red eyes look like balls of fire boring into the soul of anyone who gazes upon them, and his hysterical laughter rings from rooftops long after he's bounded away from his foe.

Storytelling Hints: Jack's background is left purposefully vague, so that you can use him in whatever way is needed for your story. Perhaps he's a changeling or servant of the True Fae that has bounced in and out of Arcadia since the nineteenth century. Maybe he's the result of a magic spell in the Victorian era gone wrong, and no one's found a way to unravel the spell yet. Or he could be some kind of genetic experiment that went crazy and escaped, and took on the name of Spring-Heeled Jack in order to explain to himself what sort of creature he really is. He might even be a very deluded vampire or werewolf, or a new form of Promethean. If you're planning to use Jack as a regular antagonist, working out his true origins can be important to determining what kind of role he'll play in your chronicle. On the other hand, if you just want a strange, chance encounter to liven up your story, you can have him just bound in and start causing mayhem.

There are two important things to know about Jack when portraying him. First, he's driven by his lust. Whether it's to molest a young woman or terrify a random stranger, Jack craves the experiences he gets from his victims. On the other hand, he's also concerned for his safety. Despite his impressive physical abilities, he's more likely to leap away from a conflict instead of staying and possibly getting hurt. His constant conflict between his passions and his cowardice can drive him to increasingly bizarre actions, such as kidnapping a pretty woman and stealing a kiss from her before leaving her on an abandoned rooftop. However, you can play him as anything from a serial rapist with unusual powers to a bit of comic relief that causes a little chaos before leaping away to safety – the severity of Jack's actions are dependant on the needs of your story.



