

tremulus

by sean preston

a storytelling game of lovecraftian horror



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special thanks

To All Our Kickstarter Backers!!!

*We are here to laugh at the odds and live our lives so well that
Death will tremble to take us.*

- Charles Bukowski



We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are.

- Anais Nin

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Origin Story

Strange as it may sound, these sorts of introductory bits are most often the last things placed into a book. And are, just as often, one of the last things written, so it may ring most clearly and relevantly to the audience.

Curiously, published words feel far more dated now than they even did a year or so ago with the ubiquitous proliferation of instant media outlets. While such things have been around for a long time, most everyone has a news feed they tap into (other than the television we've all grown up with).

This is not to be curmudgeonly, though I suppose it could be viewed that way. Even as I write these words, I feel the dust beginning to gather on them. One way to avoid this is to step into another era, a simpler time when technology was not yet rampant, and the fear of the unknown lurked within the shadows scattered across the lands. And where players rolled dice and told each other stories...

tremulus, as many things are wont to do, began as a niggling idea back in the corner of my mind. Something to which I gave little attention, as I was deep in the throes of other game design projects. I wanted to create a game with more emphasis on narrative and story that was a departure from past works. This wasn't intended as a commercial venture; it was something I secretly worked on, a surprise for my crew. If I only knew then...

This particular work is based largely off of Vincent Baker's *Apocalypse World*, and has been tweaked and smashed and spindled and mutilated to create all the words you're now reading, to create this little slice of dark chocolate in which you're about to indulge. It is designed to delight you. It is designed to scare you. It is designed to offer up a different type of experience than the attendant one most of us are accustomed to when playing or running a Mythos-centric game.

I don't want to spoil any of the surprises in store for you. Just turn the lights down low, kick off your shoes, and let your mind wander for a bit. Don't mind the noise at the windows, nor the strangely shaped tentacles descending from the corners of the room. Surely, they must be no more than the wind in the trees causing a bit of noise and those ominous shadows no more than a trick of the light...

A Prefatory: Not Essential but Helpful

What Is Lovecraftian Horror?

It's a subgenre of horror fiction which emphasizes the cosmic horror of the unknown (in some cases unknowable) over gore or other elements of shock, though these still may be present.

—Dan Harms, *Encyclopedia Cthulhiana: A Guide to Lovecraftian Horror*

This creative space allows a lot of room to explore the dark corners of the human condition. To reach inside one another and discover gut-wrenching, intimate, and personal stories of horror... but with more quiet elements in the foreground, as things lurk not only beyond space and time, but just across the threshold from one room to the next, or even from one glance to another. *tremulus* is collaborative storytelling, using Lovecraftian horror to work together to create this creepy experience. For further expansion on approaches, check out the **TIPS AND TRICKS** section.

Where Are the Tentacles and Mad Gods?

tremulus is not about the Mythos. But, it can be. If you're an avid fan of H. P. Lovecraft, you know he developed a full mythology of dark, alien gods, and there's a lot of material out there. Do a quick search on Google, typing in "lovecraft mythos," and you'll get around 198,000 hits as of this writing. Or, better yet, ask that creepy guy sitting over there in the corner, wearing the olive green T-shirt covered with weird runes and stains—I bet he knows all about it. Or read further and see what wondrous horrors lurk within the seemingly normal and mundane world around you.

The Mythos in a Minute

Lovecraft never referred to his creation as *the Cthulhu Mythos*. That came later from August Derleth, who used the term to describe the shared universe stories Lovecraft created that their common circle of friends then began exploring. Their stories detailed weird and fantastic things, dealing with indifferent alien gods (and lots of tentacles and madness) and exploring the hopelessness of the human condition. Many of the protagonists simply go insane... and those are the lucky ones.

Focus on the Fringes

The point of this work is to enable you and your friends to get together and play through a story. This story may well be a quieter one, focused on small details and continual revelations of weirdness, until you find the characters caught up in inexorable events and circumstances spiraling out of control. A thump in the basement or a rat in the wall can be every bit as terrifying as a cultist in a clearing (unless said cultist also runs the boarding house you stay in). Remember: you're creating and telling human stories with inhuman elements.

Drinking From the Well

Some of Lovecraft's stories were rather subdued while retaining his distinct shade of strange, inspired by the likes of Edgar Allen Poe, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, Gertrude Barrows Bennett, Oswald Spengler, Robert Chambers, and Clark Ashton Smith. These influences led Lovecraft to create some amazingly bizarre stuff, powerful stuff that gets under your skin, resonates within your psyche and latches onto it like an alien parasite. Certainly, these other writers were no slouches either, spinning some fantastical and oftentimes disturbing tales as well. Don't blame me, oh jaded one, if you wind up sleeping with the lights on or double-checking your locks before bedtime.

Starting Out

You need at least one person other than yourself to play *tremulus* (it flows best with smaller groups, but can be played with up to six comfortably). One of you takes on the role of the Keeper and is the person responsible for facilitating play, creating the framework (story outline), and directing the collaborative storymaking experience. Everyone else selects a playbook and takes on the role of that particular individual over the course of the story, whether it is one session or more. How the Keeper gets the game set up is explained in more detail in the Keeper's Section (see *Embracing Darkness*, pp. 95-99).

Dark Corners of the Earth

tremulus is a storytelling game of Lovecraftian horror where you take on the role of a person who has been destined to live an interesting life, one touched by blood and bile, dark revelations, and horrible sacrifice. The weight of the world is upon your shoulders as you strive to drive back the darkness threatening to drown it out.

What Is a Storytelling Game?

A storytelling game is a game where two or more folks get together and tell a spontaneous story within a framework of some sort. Most require no dice or game master. *tremulus* is a storytelling game incorporating Haiku.

What Is Haiku?

Haiku is the name for our in-house system and philosophical approach to the storytelling game. Haiku is based upon Apocalypse World, and influenced by other systems and games such as FATE and *Fiasco*. Ultimately, it's best described as a mechanized narrative where uncertain outcomes are decided by dice rolls. As with traditional roleplaying games, each player plays a character, with another person acting as the Keeper, whose roles and responsibilities include creating the playspace, interpreting the rules, and facilitating progress through the story. The characters in Haiku contribute to the narrative space through their actions, each guiding the story in directions which most interest them.

There are complementary subsystems of rules: the characters are governed by sets of moves they can perform, as is the Keeper. The construction of hazards, frameworks (the structural parameters of a scenario), and even creatures have boundaries as well. All rolls of the dice are "player-facing," meaning that *all* the rolls in the game are done exclusively by the players. At a minimum, the group will need only two six-sided dice, although it's better if each player has his or her own pair.

Much as the poetry for which it is named, Haiku is simple, elegant and powerful, as you will soon see.

What Am I Really Getting Into Here?

tremulus is a game of darkness, misery, doom and death, punctuated by the greed of man and monster. You will take on the role of one of the unfortunate souls forced to confront the hidden secrets and horrible monstrosities that lie ever beneath the placid surface of the world, sometimes rippling over into our own...wait...no, don't go! It gets much, much worse...



Doomed

You have been marked by fate to be wrapped up in mystery and misery for the remaining days of your life. You can either try to flee from your cruel misfortune...or summon your inner strength, defiantly sticking your thumb into the eye of the mad, laughing gods and dark forces that seek but to use the world—*your* world—as their private playground.

Decisions, Decisions

Look over the following list and choose a playbook that interests you. You are this person, and no one else in your group can be. Talk about who wants to play whom. Then pick what you want anyway, so long as no one else chooses it first. If this is your first time playing, go with your instincts, and select the one that speaks to you most strongly. Leap in with reckless abandon. What does it really matter? Odds are you're all going to go mad or die anyway, right? Right?

Alienist

You are well educated and study to treat the mind.

Antiquarian

You study history through the objects and relics from past days.

Author

You dream and write and explore the corners of your mind.

Detective

You are a private eye, a mind for hire, well versed in the fine art of unraveling mysteries.

Devout

You are committed to spreading hope and restoring people's faith in humanity.

Dilettante

You are rich, usually idle, and often indulge in pastimes the poor only dream of.

Doctor

You are a trained, rationally minded physician, capable of treating the illnesses and injuries of the human body.

Heir

You are an everyman who has recently come into a windfall.

Journalist

You are an investigative reporter with a keen eye and nose out for the next big story.

Professor

You are a teacher, a speaker, a walking body of knowledge.

Salesman

You are a peddler, huckster, a smooth-talking trader.

Defiant to the End

Don't worry. You're not expected to go down without a fight. You have a few tricks of your own. You've become aware of the weirdness in the world around you, and have learned to channel the darkness and glean insights from it. You can take what you've learned, this Lore, and use it to perform special maneuvers known as Lore moves. Everyone starts with one. You might learn more—if you survive. If you play your cards right, are very, very careful, and get exquisitely lucky, you *might* make it out alive. Just don't count on it.



The Touchstone: Your Nexus of Knowledge

Though the rules are concise, some of the terms *might* throw you off at first, as well as how or when to apply them. No one wants that. When you need clarity, look here first.

Attributes

Each character is defined by the following attributes. Primary attributes may increase with experience earned, or be reduced through injury or insanity. In general, they remain largely static over the course of a mystery.

Primary

REASON: Knowledge, education, rational thinking, calmness.

PASSION: Instinct, empathy, intuition, emotional strength.

MIGHT: Aggression, physical strength, force, muscle.

LUCK: Fate, fortune, destiny, kismet.

AFFINITY: Charm, attraction, looks, general affability.

Secondary

WEALTH: An abstraction of money, Wealth typically comes into play to adjudicate atypical expenditures that can impact the storyline, like buying a car or several guns, as opposed to a cup of coffee or a newspaper.

LORE: An abstraction of accumulated arcane and occult knowledge each character channels in a special way. Characters begin with 0 Lore unless their playbook indicates otherwise or they choose it as an option (which only some of them have).

TRUST: This is the strength of your relationship with the other characters. You will have a separate value for each character in your group, ranging from 0 to +3. They will have the same for you, and your values may be quite different.

The Lexicon

CHARGED SITUATION: Any scene wherein a character decides to take a move.

CONSEQUENCES: A negative outcome resulting from a failure.

DAMAGE: Physical or mental pain inflicted upon another character, creature, or thing.

DARK INSIGHT: A *natural* roll of 12. You gain a point of Lore (and may gain additional situational benefits).

FAILURE: A failed roll, a modified 6 or less, a miss.

HARD MOVE: A move made by the Keeper that happens without the possibility of character intervention (usually as the result of spending hold).

HARM: Physical damage.

HAZARD: Any threatening or potentially threatening person, place, or thing.

HOLD: Stored currency gained by performing various moves. It is often expended on a particular move, but may be reserved in some instances (especially by the Keeper).

KEEPER: The *tremulus* gamemaster. Collaboratively works with the players to see how events play out.

MISS: A failed roll, 6 or less, typically has consequences.

MOVE: The basic character action in *tremulus*.

... OF IMPORT: Any NPC or item upon which a move is attempted.

NPC: A non-player character, i.e., anyone in a story not played by a player, brought to life and played by the Keeper.

PLAYBOOK: The sheets detailing out your specific character info (attributes, gear, special moves, etc.)

SANITY CHECK: An **ACT UNDER PRESSURE** roll made when a character discovers/encounters something disturbing.

SHOCK: Mental damage.

TAGS: Aspects of an item which further define it (valuable, unreliable, safe, and so on).

+1: Shorthand for **+1FORWARD**.

+1FORWARD: Add +1 to your next move (usually a specific one).

+1ONGOING:: Add +1 to all moves (usually related to a particular thing).

-X: Subtract a given number from a particular move or set of moves. Is often conditional and ongoing.

2D OR 2D6: Two six-sided dice (used to determine the outcome of your actions).

PARTIAL SUCCESS: A roll of 7-9 (typically results in a “Yes, but...” situation).

ROLL+ATTRIBUTE: Rolling 2d6 and adding the attribute in question (as defined by the move).

SUCCESS: A roll of 10+ (typically results in a “Yes, and...” situation).

Types of Moves

BASIC MOVES: Actions available to all characters.

KEEPER MOVES: Moves restricted to the Keeper, detailed further in the Keeper's Section.

LORE MOVES: Moves powered by the expenditure of Lore, allowing the characters to do some extraordinary things.

SPECIAL MOVES: Each character has unique moves available only to them (found in each playbook).

Fiction First

Take the action to get its effect.

Narratively decide what you're going to do, determine the most appropriate move, and roll the dice. If you decide to look through some dusty boxes in the attic, you **POKE AROUND**. Simple as that. Roll and see what happens. Don't think of things mechanically. Always think of things in terms of what your character would do in any given situation or circumstance, not what move you will take next.



Using Basic Moves

Whenever you need to see how any given move works in play, check here.

ACT UNDER PRESSURE (ROLL + REASON)

WHEN TO USE: whenever the character is under the gun, trying to maintain composure, or wanting to flee.

EXAMPLES

Amy needs to find a particular book at the library before it's too late. Sheridan is fleeing through the woods with a ravenous wolf in pursuit. A horrible monster leaps at the characters from out of nowhere.

CONVINCE (ROLL + AFFINITY)

WHEN TO USE: whenever the character is in non-violent situation and wants to bring an individual around to her way of thinking, avoid a fight, or get someone to reveal a personal detail.

EXAMPLES

Amy persuades the sheriff to protect the suspect. Turnbull explains to Sheridan that walking through the ancient forest is quite safe in his company. Jack flirts with the farmer's daughter to find out where her father keeps his truck keys.

HELP/HINDER (ROLL + TRUST)

WHEN TO USE: whenever the character wants to help out another character or prevent them from doing something.

EXAMPLES

Amy throws a rock to distract a thug, so Turnbull can catch him with his guard down. Turnbull sees Sheridan shooting at a cultist Turnbull would rather capture and knocks his rifle away. Sheridan and Amy help Turnbull canvass the barn for a lantern or pitchfork.

POKE AROUND (ROLL + LUCK)

WHEN TO USE: whenever the character wants to explore a new area, check for danger, or look for clues or items that are not obviously evident.

EXAMPLES

Turnbull enters the old shed in hopes of finding some sharp, pointy thing. Sheridan throws a rock into the clearing to see if there are creatures about. Amy looks through her aunt's attic for a clue to her disappearance.

PUZZLE THINGS OUT (ROLL + REASON)

WHEN TO USE: whenever the character wants to piece together disparate pieces of information, draw conclusions from a clue, read an enemy, or figure out a group dynamic.

EXAMPLES

Amy attempts to decipher a scrawled note she finds under the attic floorboard. Turnbull ponders why there would be the bust of an Egyptian pharaoh in the old shed. Sheridan wonders which wolf pursuing him is the pack leader.

READ A PERSON (ROLL + PASSION)

WHEN TO USE: whenever the character is engaged in conversation with someone and wants to figure out what's really going on in their head or if they're lying.

EXAMPLES

Amy wonders why Miss Peterson keeps going through her personal effects. Sheridan wants to know if Turnbull was really in the war. Davidson eyes the bartender, wondering what it will take for him to spill the beans on his boss.

RESORT TO VIOLENCE (ROLL + MIGHT)

WHEN TO USE: whenever the character has decided that the definite use of force is the only way to accomplish his ends.

EXAMPLES

Amy smashes into the crazed cult leader and takes the glowing relic from his hands, even as he slices her cheek.

Jack shoots the leaping pack leader and is knocked prone, even as the rest of the wolves scatter into the woods.

Davidson blocks the brunt of the brute's punch, and squarely delivers an uppercut, sending him reeling.

THREATEN (ROLL + MIGHT)

WHEN TO USE: whenever the character makes a promise of violence he is not afraid to keep.

EXAMPLES

Amy finds herself cornered in the library by a sneering man with a dangerous visage and brandishes her pistol.

Turnbull yells menacingly and smashes a bottle on the table as a bar fight erupts around him.

Jack cracks his knuckles, sizes up the guys before him, rolls up his sleeves, and beckons them forward.

Using Lore Moves

Characters may expend a point of Lore to use their Lore Move. Each playbook has a unique Lore Move the character begins with. The Lore Move allows you to push yourself farther and perform tasks normally beyond your abilities. Using your Lore *may* come with a secret cost that unfolds in play.

Character Creation

Creating your character is quite easy. It looks like a lot, but it's not. Have no fear—you'll be dealing with squamous evil in no time.

CHOOSE A PLAYBOOK: You may select any character from the ones in this book. Check with the Keeper to see if any of them are restricted, or if there are any optional or variant ones available. Remember: pick the one you find most appealing, as long as no one else already has chosen it.

CHOOSE YOUR NAME: Pick one from your playbook. If you're really creative, come up with your own. (Keep in mind this is what you'll be called throughout the game by the Keeper and the other players.)

CHOOSE LOOK: Pick one from each category of the choices provided.

CHOOSE ATTRIBUTES: Pick a set that works with how you plan to play your character. (If you're unsure, then go with the most even distribution available.)

CHOOSE GEAR: Pick the stuff which best reflects your character. Certain things, like weapons, may be difficult (or impossible) to get in play, so factor that carefully into your decisions.

CHOOSE SPECIAL MOVES: You get two. Choose wisely.

REVIEW LORE MOVE: See what your uniqueness is all about. Who knows? It might save your life. Briefly.

ESTABLISH TRUST: You begin with a number of Trust points to distribute equal to the number of players (not counting the Keeper) present. Assign a Trust score (from 0 to 3) to each character. You may *not* start with negative Trust in another character, though it may arise during play. Each Trust score represents your character's faith and belief in the particular character, and serves to quickly establish relationships. **INTERSECTING LIVES** (p. 16) suggests relationship ideas and offers up additional Trust variants. Your Trust in others is used when you **HELP/HINDER** them, so if you have **TRUST +2** in Meg, and she has **TRUST +1** in you, you'd **ROLL+2** to **HELP/HINDER** her while she would **ROLL +1** to do the same for you.

Playbooks begin on page 49.

Death Is Not the End

Just because your character dies before the story ends doesn't mean you're getting out of it that easily. Grab another unused playbook and create a new character. To soften the blow, your new character begins play with all the accumulated Lore and Wealth (but not gear, sorry) of your previous character in addition to the new one. Consider this your inheritance. In return, relate how you knew the recently deceased or hopelessly deranged character, and how or why you're up to speed on current events (maybe you received their journal, telegrams, or what-have-you).

Bodies Piled High

When your group has exhausted all the existing playbooks, either through death or madness, with no one left... well, darkness, evil, and alien horror win and you have no one but yourselves to blame.



Intersecting Lives

Just like sea moss gathers amidst the nooks and crannies of weathered rocks along the shoreline, your character is tied to the other characters in the story in ways both mundane and strange. Consider for a moment the other playbooks in play and ask yourself two questions: how and why your character would know each of them? With these thoughts in mind, dole out your Trust points accordingly. After doing so, the group should reveal them, and begin making connections. Remember: the question is never *if* one character knows another, but how and/or why?

Some thoughts to get you going:

The How (Obvious Reasons)

ACADEMIC TIES: Colleagues, rivals, or student/mentor.

PROXIMITY: Same home town, same alma mater, or same employer.

RELATIVES: Parent/child, siblings, spouses, or distant cousins.

SOCIAL CIRCLES: Uppercrust, charity, political, religious, or recreational.

The Why (Personal Connections)

DURESS: Battlefield buddies, rescuer/rescued, or outsiders.

ROMANTIC: Love at first sight or unrequited love.

SHARED INTERESTS: Astronomy, the occult, or others more mundane.

SIMILAR FIELDS: Academic or professional.

Shared Visions

After everyone assigns Trust with a general idea of how and/or why they know each other, one player gets the ball rolling, explaining her connections to each of them. This should be informal, with give and take between the players. It's important to make certain each player in a relationship is agreeable with the connections. It's particularly engaging to see when characters have radically different Trust values with each other, such as The Salesman who thinks The Professor hung the moon, while The Professor remembers him as a student who didn't live up to his potential.

What Trust Means

- 3 Wouldn't sleep in the same house as them.
- 2 Wouldn't turn your back on them.
- 1 Find them shifty.
 - 0 Casual acquaintance. No real opinion positive or negative.
- +1 A good friend, trustworthy.
- +2 Close friend, trust with important personal matters.
- +3 Inner circle, trust with your life.

Group Dynamics

You may increase your Trust in someone by 1 at the end of each session. If you do, you must reduce your Trust in someone else by 1 as well. Whenever you survive a story arc (whether you succeed or fail), you increase your Trust in a fellow survivor by 1 (without reducing your Trust elsewhere) or gain 1 Lore. This ebb and flow of Trust should be reflected in the narrative.

Secrets

When your Trust in someone will exceed +3/-3, the player must tell you a secret truth about their character, and you gain a point of Lore. Reset Trust to +1, 0, or -1 based upon what you learn (as you view them a bit differently now). You're under no obligation to keep their secret. If you ever reveal it, and the confider finds out, they reduce their Trust in you by one.

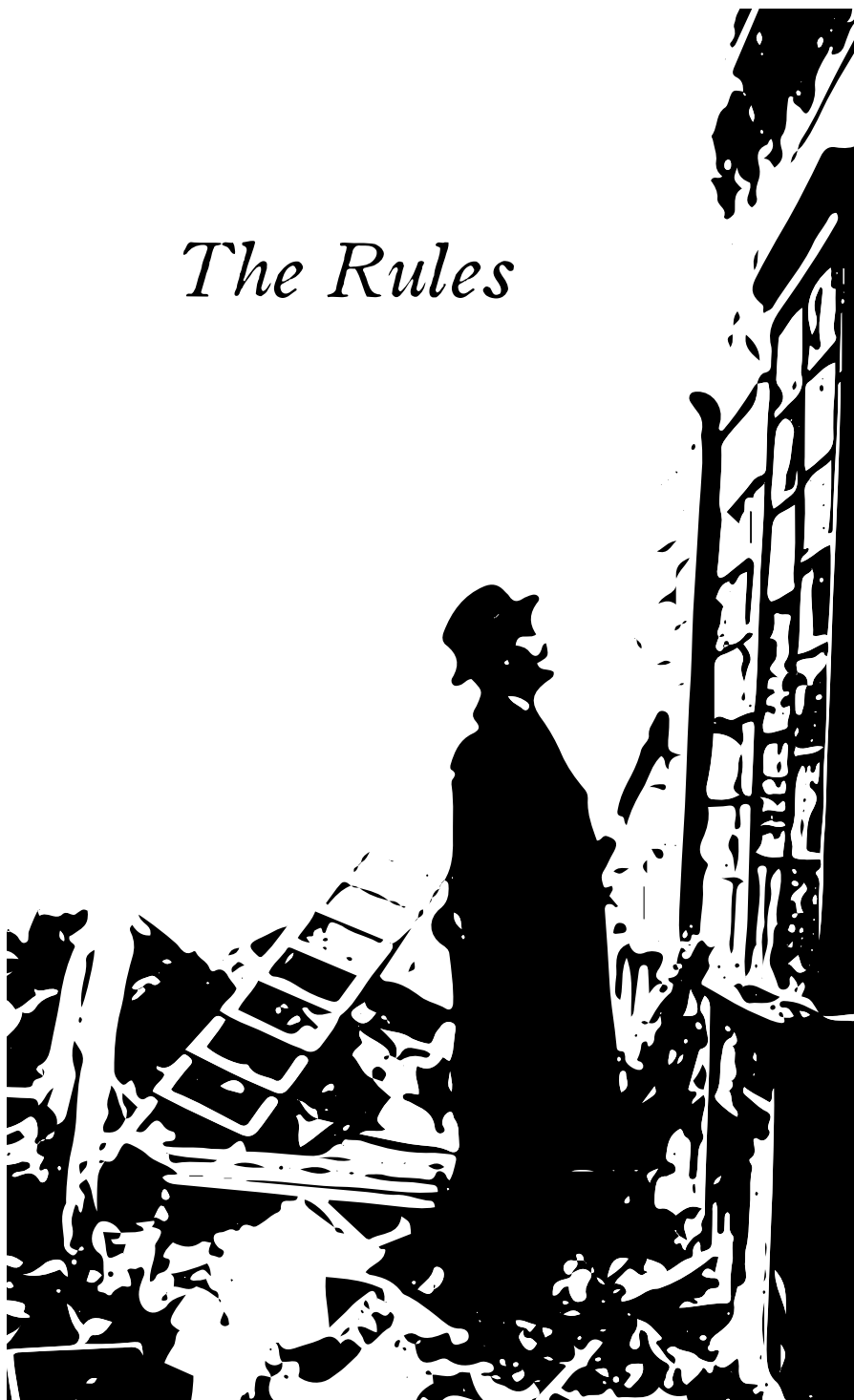
The Circle of Life

When a character dies (or goes horribly insane), each character may reassign any or all of their Trust points, as they reevaluate their present relationships with those still living. This should happen during a narrative lull, not in the middle of a charged situation. Anytime a new playbook is introduced into the story, they may reassign Trust as well.

Reservations

The default Trust mechanic helps establish immediate relationships, and works well for diving into the game headfirst. Some groups don't wish to rush into things. If you are planning on a sustained story, you may dole out Trust over the course of the first session, but should have all Trust assigned by its end. Any Trust not assigned is either lost or may be stored as Lore, at the Keeper's discretion.

The Rules



An Overview

tremulus is governed by the use of moves the characters make throughout the game. These moves are broad and flexible enough to cover all aspects of play: from gunfights and car chases, to flipping through an ancient tome while a leathery-winged beast smashes against the window, trying to get through. The concept of moves may require an adjustment in how you may be used to gaming. Sit back. Don't worry—this'll be quick and painless.

When you make a move, you roll two six-sided dice and add an attribute. A 10+ is great, meaning you're completely successful at whatever you were trying to do. A 7-9 usually means you were successful, mostly, but something else also happened, usually something you won't like. A 6 or less means you failed, definitely something you're not going to like. And it's the Keeper's job to make sure you won't.

The Paradigm Shift

As noted above, *tremulus* is a player-facing game. This means that the Keeper will never roll dice. Potential Keepers may be scratching their heads at this, or may even be disappointed at not being able to roll the bones. Don't worry; you'll have plenty to do. (And we'll more fully explore your role and responsibilities in the **KEEPER'S SECTION**.)

The Power of Narrative

Whenever a move takes place, it doesn't happen in a vacuum. The player should describe what their character wishes to do, and the Keeper will explain what transpires, based upon the result of the player's roll. Conversely, if a player says they do it, then they do it. Roll the dice, and deal with what happens. While success is clear-cut, things can get *quite* interesting on a partial success. And failure is *always* interesting.

Basic Moves

Every character gets all the following basic moves.

ACT UNDER PRESSURE (ROLL+REASON)

When you hurriedly flee, are doing something quickly and precisely, or are trying to resist something frightening, **ROLL+REASON**.

ON A 10+, you do it.

ON A 7–9, you flinch, hesitate, cave, or stall.

The Keeper will offer you a worse outcome, a hard bargain, or an ugly choice (as per p. 171).

CONVINCE (ROLL+AFFINITY)

When you have something someone wants, you can use your charm, wit, or wiles to get them to do something for you first, **ROLL+AFFINITY**.

FOR NPCs:

ON A 10+, they ask you to promise something first, and then do what you ask once you promise.

ON A 7–9, they need some concrete assurance first, otherwise they refuse.

FOR PCs:

ON A 10+, the target chooses one of the following:

- If they do it, they gain a point of Lore.
- If they refuse, they must **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**.

ON A 7–9, the target chooses one of the following:

- They can choose to do it for no gain.
- If they refuse, they must **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**.

ON A 6 OR LESS, they lose a point of Trust with you.

What they do then is up to them.

HELP/HINDER (ROLL+TRUST)

When you help or hinder someone making a move, **ROLL+TRUST**.

ON A 10+, they take a +2 (help) or -2 (hinder) to their move.

ON A 7-9, they take a +1 (help) or -1 (hinder) to their move, and you expose yourself to danger, retribution, or other consequences.

ON A 6 OR LESS, they lose a point of Trust with you or the Keeper holds one to use as a hard move (your choice).

NOTE: How many people can help in a given situation is determined by the Keeper, and you must narratively state how you're helping. Keep in mind, even if the person you help succeeds (gets a total of 10+), you could still suffer a consequence if you only get a partial success (7-9). Your Trust in others is used when you **HELP/HINDER** them, so if you have **TRUST +2** in Meg, and she has **TRUST +1** in you, you'd **ROLL+2** to **HELP/HINDER** her while she would **ROLL +1** to do the same for you.

POKE AROUND (ROLL+LUCK)

When you poke around a place physically looking for things, roll+luck. Additional attempts to search the same area are made at a cumulative -1 unless the Keeper informs you something substantial has changed.

ON A 10+, **SELECT 1 OF THE FOLLOWING:**

Find 1 good item (Keeper's choice)

1 minor item (your choice)

1 clue (+1 ongoing when acted upon)

or pick one from 7-9 table.

ON A 7-9, YOU MAY:

Find hidden area/threshold (in/out) (Keeper's Choice)

Find minor item (Keeper's choice)

Determine a physical hazard present (if none, you find that out)

ON A 6 OR LESS, there is either nothing else in the area or the Keeper may hold 1 to use as a hard move at any time and you may attempt to search further.

PUZZLE THINGS OUT (ROLL+REASON)

When you face an intellectual dilemma, learn a new piece of information, or discover a clue, you may roll+reason to attempt to puzzle things out. On a 7+, you get to ask one or more questions. Whenever you act on one of the Keeper's answers, take +1ongoing.

ON A 10+, ask 3 from below OR gain 1 Lore.

ON A 7–9, ask 1:

- What is this?
- What does this mean?
- How can I get in/out/pass?
- Who's in control here?
- Which enemy before me is the most dangerous?
- What is its weakness?
- What should I keep an eye out for?
- How does _____ fit into _____?

Of the most common questions that will arise, this is just a small sample. The Keeper should allow for some situational flexibility. Whenever the characters get new information, or seem to be stuck, you can call for one of these rolls. A character cannot attempt to **PUZZLE THINGS OUT** more than once until further information is gained.

When you gain Lore, you might think you are missing out on those delicious questions—and you're right. The Keeper is free to tell you what they will, or let you ask questions, or give you some Dark Insight based upon your background (an Alienist might recall a patient talking about some relevant thing, or a Detective might remember a particularly gruesome case with eerie similarities), or tell you nothing at all. You have the choice to take Lore or ask the questions. When you gain Lore, you never know exactly what you're going to find out—that is all up to the Keeper.

READ A PERSON (ROLL+PASSION)

When you want to figure out what someone is thinking or feeling, roll+passion.

ON A 10+, hold 3.

ON A 7–9, hold 1.

While you're interacting with them, spend your hold to ask questions about the character, 1 hold per question:

- Are they telling the truth?
- What are they really feeling?
- What do they intend to do?
- What do they wish I would do?
- How could I get them to _____?

RESORT TO VIOLENCE (ROLL+MIGHT)

When you cast aside all pretense of civility and wish to harm your enemy regardless of personal safety, then you roll+might as you resort to violence. You may wrest control of an item or situation from another in this manner, whether it be with fists or feet, or a more proper weapon, but you do so with malice in your heart. There will likely be pain, if not bloodshed, on both sides, as you attack. You *will* likely take damage in this exchange, regardless of the outcome. With at least a 7-9, you can opt to decrease the damage suffered by 1 point. 0 damage can still prompt a damage move in this circumstance.

ON A 10+, choose 3 from 7-9 below.

ON A 7–9, choose 2:

- You take definite hold of the target item.
- You suffer little harm (take -1 harm).
- You inflict terrible harm (cause +1 harm).
- You impress, dismay, or frighten your enemy.

An impressed, dismayed, or frightened NPC enemy *absolutely must change their behavior*, but it's up to the Keeper how they do so.

For PCs, pressing an attack when they're impressed, dismayed, or frightened requires them to **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**.

THREATEN (ROLL+MIGHT)

When you threaten someone or something, roll+might. You are physically engaging them, with the deadly promise of violence.

ON A 10+, *they* have to choose 1:

- Force your hand and take whatever damage you inflict, or
- Back down and do what you want.

ON A 7–9, *they* can instead choose 1:

- Hurriedly get out of your way.
- Barricade themselves securely in.
- Give you something they think you want.
- Back off calmly, hands where you can see.
- Tell you what you want to know (or what you want to hear).

Consequences

Every time you attempt some action, it's like trying to skip a stone across the water. You may get three or four skips. It might skip only once. It might slip out of your hand and hit your friend in the face. Or it might even bounce off a tree branch and hit the windshield of a passing police car. Or you might slip and fall into the water. Who knows? And the stone might sink to the bottom, causing some eldritch horror to stir in its slumber. Keep this in mind as you decide what you'll do next.

Mortality and Madness (and the treatment thereof)

Odds are you are going to get hurt sometime. These things happen, usually to people like you doing the things you do. You might even get squirrely and inflict some pain of your own to a creature, cultist, or other obstinate obstacle in your path.

Dealing Damage

The two basic moves allowing you to deal damage are **RESORT TO VIOLENCE** and **THREATEN**. Both are resolved by a **ROLL+MIGHT**, but operate a little bit differently from one another.

When you opt to **RESORT TO VIOLENCE**, you *will* bring the pain (if you so choose), even on a partial success. However, expect to take some in return. Things tend to get a bit messy.

Harm inflicted is based on the weapon. Unless you have a special move, **YOUR CHARACTER'S FISTS DO 0 HARM**. To inflict damage with your bare hands, you'll need to **RESORT TO VIOLENCE** and choose to *inflict terrible harm*. This increases the damage to **1 HARM**.

When you **THREATEN** someone, *they* can back down, run away, or take the harm, depending on whether you get a success or partial success. *They get the option.*

Narrative Combat

The flow of time in combat is at the Keeper's discretion. **RESORT TO VIOLENCE** largely encompasses the whole of combat, and while most people are readily able to accept taking damage when engaged in melee, they are less prone to accept that they shot someone way over there and are still injured in the exchange. **RESORT TO VIOLENCE** is not static; the target is dynamic, and how it responds is based upon the roll. Is it possible for a character to shoot a zombie twenty yards away and still be hurt? If there is a roll, there's a chance. Sometimes, a roll isn't necessary. If a character is atop a building and shooting at an unaware target, the target may just fall dead, or the character may need to **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**. The best way to assure not being injured while still wishing to do damage is to **THREATEN**, but that leaves the decision with the Keeper, doesn't it?

Basic Harm Scale

These guidelines give a general idea of the amount of physical damage things cause. Specifics can vary and are left to the Keeper's discretion. A parenthetical ap (ap) indicates the damage is armor piercing and any armor is ignored when calculating the amount of harm suffered.

0 HARM

Grappling, dragging, physically restraining someone.
Children throwing rocks at you.

1 HARM

Adults throwing stuff at you.
Inflicting terrible harm with your fists.
Clocking someone with a poker.
Getting pushed down stairs. (ap)
A ricochet.
Stuck in a swamp on a hot day with no potable water. (ap)

2 HARM

Using a hammer, a knife, a handgun, a submachine gun.
A one-story fall onto your back. (ap)

3 HARM

Shooting someone with a shotgun or hunting rifle.
Falling two-stories onto the pavement (ap)
A glancing hit from a car. (ap)

4 HARM

Being next to a car when its gas tank explodes.
Caught in a hail of gunfire.
A three-story fall onto your head. (ap)
Getting hit by a bus. (ap)

5 + HARM

A really big explosion. No, even bigger than that.
Getting hit by a train. (ap)
Tied down by cultists, and ritually sacrificed with wicked knives.
Drowning. (ap)

Driving Harm Home

Harm can be either general or specific. A light tumble down the stairs is likely general (the whole body is banged up), while a fall from a window could result in a broken leg, back, or worse, neck. The question of how this is handled narratively is left to the Keeper, the players, and common sense. A broken hand makes some things difficult (like loading a revolver), and others downright impossible (like playing a piano). In many cases, things can still be done with some effort (and more slowly) if the injury is 3 harm or less. The character may be required to **ACT UNDER PRESSURE** (such as getting dressed in a hurry if his arm is in a cast) when performing normally mundane tasks. When injuries are more severe (or localized), it is ultimately left to the Keeper's discretion, and should always serve to drive the narrative forward.

Basic Shock Scale

This information is found in the **KEEPER'S SECTION** under *Oh, the Horror!* (p. 116).

As a player, you get to discover how shocking things are the hard way, through trial and error.

Seeing a Friend Die or Go Mad

If another character dies in front of you, or you find their corpse, or they go insane, you must successfully **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**, or take an amount of shock equal to your Trust with them.

If your Trust in that character is negative, you do not recover shock if horrible things happen to them, but you don't have to shed tears either.

You may reassign Trust (as found under *The Circle of Life*, p. 17) when the Keeper indicates you may do so.

Conditions

You have a Health Track and Sanity Track each consisting of six segments. Each time you take harm or shock, you knock off the next open space on the appropriate track. Harm affects your health. Shock affects your Sanity.

Will go away naturally with time:

FIRST SEGMENT: Scuffed/Startled

SECOND SEGMENT: Bruised/Shocked

Will neither worsen, nor improve without treatment:

THIRD SEGMENT: Battered/Disturbed

Will get worse if untreated or not stabilized. Requires treatment for improvement:

FOURTH SEGMENT: Broken/Traumatized

FIFTH SEGMENT: Grievous/Hysterical

SIXTH SEGMENT: Dying/Deranged

Over six: Not coming back. Dead/Insane. An ex-Character. Grab a new Playbook.

THE DAMAGE TRACKS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

	HEALTH	SANITY	
1	Scuffed	Startled	1
2	Bruised	Shocked	2
3	Battered	Disturbed	3
4	Broken	Traumatized	4
5	Grievous	Hysterical	5
6	Dying	Deranged	6
+	Dead	Insane	+

Suffering Damage

Damage is suffered in two forms: harm or shock. Whenever it is taken, the character rolls on the following table. If damage suffered is 0 (or is reduced to 0), the Keeper *may* still call for a roll (based on the situation and circumstances). For example, a big bruiser might tap your skull, doing no serious damage, but knock you out cold.

Damage Moves

When you suffer damage, **ROLL+DAMAGE** suffered (after subtracting any protections you may have). *No other modifiers come into play.*

ON A 10+, the Keeper can choose 1:

- You're out of action: unconscious, trapped, incoherent, or panicked.
- It's worse than it seemed. Take an additional 1 damage.
- Choose 2 from the 7–9 list below.

ON A 7–9, the Keeper can choose 1:

- You lose your footing.
- You lose your grip on whatever you're holding.
- You lose track of someone or something you're attending to.
- You miss noticing something important.

ON A 6 OR LESS:

The Keeper can still choose something from the 7–9 list above. If they do, damage suffered is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 0).

Recuperation

Simple Recovery

BED REST: Recover 1 damage per week (if lightly injured or in shock); choose which one if suffering from both harm and shock.

Simple Aids

A PROPERLY APPLIED BANDAGE: Eliminates 1 harm.

A GOOD STIFF DRINK (OR EQUIVALENT): Eliminates 1 shock.

NOTE: A character may only benefit from *one simple aid for each category once per day*. Simple recovery and aids only work when the character has *two or less segments of damage* in a particular category.

Is There a Doctor in the House?

If there is not a Doctor or other such type in the party, the Keeper determines whether there is a doctor, hospital, or clinic available in the local community (generally there should be—if not, why not?). An NPC can heal a character per the rules found in the **PHYSICAL WELLNESS** and **MENTAL HEALTH** sections.

A doctor's visit costs the character 1 Wealth per stock the doctor uses to treat their injuries (minimum 1 up to 3).

Light damage (1-2) requires 1 stock. Medium damage (3-4) uses 2-3 stock. Serious damage (5+) uses 3 stock. Naturally, a character can request more or less care (e.g. stock) depending upon their personal finances.

An Alienist is unlikely to be found in a community without an asylum of some kind nearby, but would follow the same guidelines if available.



Physical Wellness

Certain characters, notably the Doctor, may treat people who are suffering harm. Those trained to use medical supplies may spend 0–3 stock.

To treat a character with three or more harm, **ROLL+STOCK** spent.

ON A 7+, the subject stabilizes (eliminating all harm beyond the second segment), but the Keeper chooses 1 (on a 10+), or 2 (on a 7–9):

- They need to be physically stabilized before you can move them.
- Even sedated, they fight you; you're **ACTING UNDER PRESSURE**.
- They'll be in and out of consciousness for 24 hours.
- Stabilizing them eats up your stock; spend 1 stock more.
- They'll be bedridden, out of action, for at least a week.
- They'll need constant monitoring and care for 36 hours.

ON A 6 OR LESS, they take 1 harm instead.

To use medical attention to speed the recovery of someone with one or two segments of harm, don't roll, just spend one stock. They choose: spend 4 days (segment 1) or 1 week (segment 2) sedated, immobile but happy, or do their time like everyone else.

To use medical supplies to revive someone who's **DYING** (at the sixth segment, not beyond): **ROLL+STOCK** spent.

ON A 10+, they recover to **BROKEN** (segment 4).

ON A 7–9, they recover to **GRIEVOUS** (segment 5).

ON A 6 OR LESS, you've done everything you can, but they're still dead.

Mental Health

Certain Characters, notably the Alienist, may treat people who are suffering shock. The patient must be in a place he feels safe. At the very least, he must be removed from the locale/source/presence of his discomfort(s).

To treat a character with three or more shock, **ROLL+STOCK** spent.

ON A 7+, the subject stabilizes (restore Sanity to second segment), but the Keeper chooses 1 (on a 10+) or 2 (on a 7–9):

- They need to be physically restrained before you can move them.
- Even sedated, they fight you; you're **ACTING UNDER PRESSURE**.
- They'll be in and out of consciousness for 24 hours.
- Stabilizing them eats up your stock; spend 1 stock more.
- They'll be bedridden, out of action, for at least a week.
- They'll need constant monitoring and care for 36 hours.

ON 6 OR LESS, they take 1 shock instead.

To use medical supplies to speed the recovery of someone with one or two segments of shock, don't roll. They choose: spend 1 day (segment 1) or 1 week (segment 2) sedated, immobile but happy, or do their time like everyone else.

To use medical care to revive someone who's **DERANGED** (at the sixth segment, not beyond): **ROLL+STOCK** spent.

ON A 10+, they recover to **TRAUMATIZED** (segment 4).

ON A 7–9, they recover to **HYSTERIC** (segment 5).

ON A 6 OR LESS, you've done everything you can, but they're still insane.

Variations of Play

By default, *tremulus* should be played with the constant threat of mortality and madness looming; this style is called **BLACK**. When you suffer harm or shock, it cannot be mitigated by selecting debilities (for Health) or disorders (for Sanity). On the other end of the spectrum, you can play **WHITE**, where the character may choose to stave off death or insanity by selecting a debility or disorder. A mixture of the two styles (Black and White) is called **GREY** with the White damage axis called out in parentheses. This gives a total of four play styles, none of which are particularly kind.

BLACK. All damage is suffered without recourse or remedy.

WHITE. All damage may be mitigated with physical debilities or mental disorders.

GREY (HEALTH). Health (White) and Sanity (Black).

GREY (SANITY). Health (Black) and Sanity (White).



Physical Debilities

When the character's harm exceeds—or will exceed—Battered (three or more segments), the player can choose to mark a debility. Taking a debility stops harm at Broken (segment four). Once the character exceeds Broken, they can choose to take a debility instead of any more harm. *Debilities are permanent.*

THE DEBILITIES ARE:

- Shattered: -1 Reason
- Broken: -1 Passion
- Crippled: -1 Might
- Unfortunate: -1 Luck
- Disfigured: -1 Affinity

Mark the debility, adjust the attribute, and deal with it.

It's always the player's choice whether to take a debility, no one else's.

The only time a player should take a debility is when their character would be otherwise killed, and it would be better to be messed-up than dead. Sometimes, though, dead is better. Your call.

Mental Disorders

When the character's shock exceeds—or will exceed—Disturbed (three or more segments of shock), the player can choose to suffer a mental disorder, and the shock stops at Traumatized (segment four on the Sanity track). Once he's past Disturbed, he can choose to take a disorder instead of suffering any more shock (or increase a lesser disorder to a greater one).

The player and the Keeper should select an appropriate disorder from the Mental Disorder List for the character based upon the surrounding circumstances and events. *Mental disorders are permanent*, until eliminated/reduced with an advance.

LESSER TO GREATER

A character may convert a disorder from lesser to greater by choosing it a second time. A greater disorder should do at minimum both of the things listed under minor disorder.

A greater disorder can be reduced to a lesser disorder with extended therapy (an advance).

OTHER MADNESSES

Look to the Mental Disorder List first. If none of them seem to fit, the players and Keeper can work together to sort out the appropriate mechanical details based upon variations found on this list. Ultimately, getting a mental disorder is better than going completely off the rails. Isn't it?

ROLL MODIFIERS

Each roll modifier (positive or, more likely, negative) is ongoing until said disorder is eliminated. For example, a -1 or a +1 is, in fact, -1ongoing or +1ongoing.

Mental Disorder List

AMNESIA

Lesser: The character mentally blocks out the memories of whatever caused the trauma, but suffers from occasional flashbacks. A character should note the event which caused this. If reminded of the event in the future or confronted with similar circumstances, she must roll+reason to see if the repressed memories flood back in.

ON A 10+, the mind's barriers hold. The character recalls nothing.

ON A 7-9, the character unclearly remembers fragments. She is -1 until the situation passes or she is allowed an opportunity to regain her composure.

ON A 6 OR LESS, the character is dismayed as past events momentarily flood back into horrifying clarity. She is -1 for the scene and immediately suffers 1 shock.

Greater: The memories become harder and harder to shut out, and events get confused. The roll+reason to keep memories repressed is now made at -1.

DELUSIONS AND HALLUCINATIONS

Lesser: The character begins to hear voices, catch movement out of the corner of his eye, or see fleeting glimpses of things that are not present. He can't be certain if what he sees is real or just the product of his own troubled mind. He has a -1 to **POKE AROUND**.

Greater: He has a -2 to **POKE AROUND**.

DEPRESSION

Lesser: The character loses hope for the future and ceases attaching emotional importance to certain aspects of life. She has a -1 to **CONVINCE** and **READ A PERSON**.

Greater: She has a -2 to **CONVINCE** and **READ A PERSON**.

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

Lesser: The character suffers from a variety of physical and emotional symptoms such as jumpiness, twitches, expectations of doom, and hyper-vigilance. He jumps at shadows and is always looking for danger. He is -1 except for **POKE AROUND**, where he suffers no penalty.

Greater: He is -2 except for **POKE AROUND**, where he suffers no penalty.

MANIA

Lesser: The character's mind is constantly racing, and she has difficulty focusing on anything in particular. She suffers -1 on all rolls requiring concentration.

Greater: She suffers -2 as her concentration worsens.

NIGHT TERRORS

Lesser: The character's sleep is tainted by the horrors he has seen. Each time the character sleeps, he must roll+passion on the table below, as his dreams are drenched with nightmares.

ON A 10+, the character has horrible, vivid visions. He takes 1 shock and gains 1 Lore.

ON A 7-9, bad dreams. The character is -1ongoing for the day.

ON A 6 OR LESS, the character is -1ongoing for the day and cannot gain any Lore.

Greater: The character gains +1 to his night terrors roll.

OBSESSION

Lesser: The character becomes obsessed with something or someone, investing strong emotional bonds in it, or gaining a sense of security from possessing it or being near them. The object of the obsession can be almost anything: a good luck charm or teddy bear, a person, or even a place. The character must keep the object of her obsession close by at all times (or themselves near the object/place). If the item is removed from the character for any reason, she must always **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**.

Greater: The character is -1 to **ACT UNDER PRESSURE** when not near the target of her obsession.

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Lesser: The character develops a set of rituals and nervous responses he must perform. These could range from simply washing his hands repeatedly to very complex patterns of behavior. This unsettles people around him, giving the character a -1 to **CONVINCE**. If the character is prevented from performing his rituals (which take several minutes), he is -1 ongoing until he is able to complete them.

Greater: In addition to the above penalties, the character **ACTS UNDER PRESSURE** when unable to perform his rituals.

PARANOIA

Lesser: The character becomes convinced that enemies are everywhere, believing others are plotting against her. She reduces the Trust she has with other characters by 1. She must be **CONVINCED** to take the **HELP** move or to share Lore.

Greater: The character reduces her Trust with other characters by an additional 1. Even if **CONVINCED**, she will never willingly share Lore, or surrender a weapon or item of import to another.

PHOBIA

Lesser: The character has a strong, unnatural fear of some particular object or situation, suffering a -1 when in the presence of his phobia.

Greater: The character must **ACT UNDER PRESSURE** when around his phobia.

PSYCHOTIC EPISODES

Lesser: The character suffers occasional psychotic episodes during which she becomes detached from reality. She may see terrifying hallucinations, suffer delusions, become manic and rant wildly about the horrors she has witnessed, or simply curl up into a ball. Any time a character **ACTS UNDER PRESSURE** and fails, she may suffer an episode of some sort (Keeper's Choice).

Greater: The character is -1 to **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**.

PSYCHOSOMATIC CONDITION

Lesser: The character has a mental malady impacting his physical performance. He is -1 to one of his Attributes and, though it manifests as a physical impairment, it is all in his head and cannot be rehabilitated through the treatment of the body.

Greater: The character's condition worsens and he is an additional -1 to the same attribute (for a total of -2).

SOCIOPATHIC TENDENCIES

Lesser: Some horrors are so great they force a character to become emotionally detached from the world around her to insulate her from what she has witnessed. Such individuals seem strange to better adjusted folk. Other characters reduce their Trust with her by 1. The character is -1 to **CONVINCE** and +1 to **THREATEN**.

Greater: The character grows more violent and anti-social. Other characters reduce their trust with her by an additional one. The character is -2 to **CONVINCE** and always tries to inflict as much harm as possible when she engages in a physical confrontation, regardless of personal safety.

WEAK MIND

Lesser: The character suffers a -1 when they **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**.

Greater: The character suffers a -2 when they **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**. His ability to **CONVINCE** is at -1 as well, as he exhibits nervous twitches and other erratic behavior.

Rituals, Rites, and Whatnot

Attempting any ritual requires knowledge of the ritual, the proper ingredients, and the expenditure of at least one point of Lore. Each ritual has a Power level, indicating the amount of Lore necessary to fuel it without the risky prospect of a roll. If you have enough Lore, you can spend the requisite points to activate the ritual without rolling. Otherwise, you must **ROLL+LUCK (-POWER) + LORE** expended.

ON A 10+, the ritual is successfully cast and the character takes half damage.

ON A 7-9, the ritual works, with complications. The character takes half damage and chooses 2 from the Backlash table:

Backlash

- A new hazard is introduced by the Keeper.
- Physical debility (Keeper's choice).
- Mental disorder (Keeper's choice).

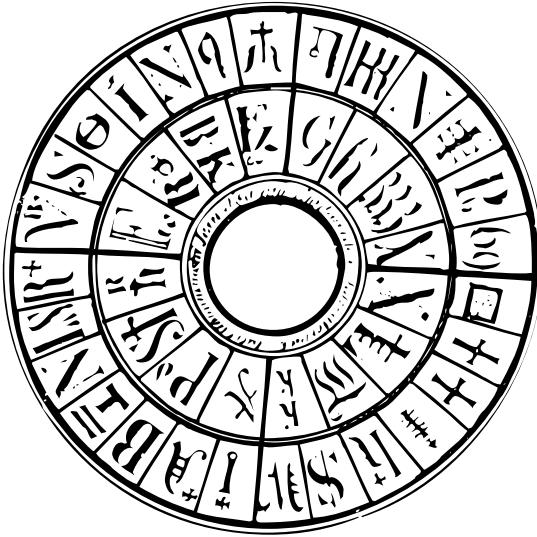
ON A 6 OR LESS, the character fails to cast the ritual, takes damage, and the Keeper chooses one from the table above and holds one for a hard move.

BASE DAMAGE: Equals the ritual's Power.



Pooling Lore

When a group of characters wish to work together to perform a ritual, one character must choose to lead it. Others may offer Lore to the process, giving the casting character an amount of Lore up to their Trust with that character (providing they have any). If the characters are still in a deficit, the leader must roll, and she is the one who suffers any fallout.



Dabbling with Dark Forces

When a character attempts to perform a ritual with insufficient Lore, she takes an amount of damage based upon the ritual's power. The character suffering the damage may distribute it as she sees fit between her harm and shock.

EXAMPLE

Amy attempts a ghost summoning. The ritual is Power 7, meaning it requires 7 points of Lore to fuel it without rolling. Amy has Lore 2. She has luck 0. Amy must spend a minimum of 1 point of Lore to attempt the ritual, but spends both Lore points to give her the best shot of success. She **ROLLS+LUCK (-7 POWER) +2 LORE**. The best she can hope for is a partial success. Let's say she does so. She chooses to take half damage (for 4 points), suffers a mental disorder, and notices that besides the ghost, something else comes through...

Tags

A tag is a descriptor for an inanimate object or a thing, providing a shorthand method for indicating some distinct power or property belonging to it. An item without a tag is typical of its category (and should therefore have all the pertinent tags implied).

Tag Glossary

N ARMOR: Protects you from harm and absorbs damage. When you take damage, subtract your armor from the total. If you have more than one item with N ARMOR, only the highest value counts.

+N ARMOR: Protects you and stacks with other armor. Add its value to your total armor.

+N DAMAGE: Particularly harmful to your enemies. When you deal damage, you add n to it.

+BONUS: Modifies your effectiveness in some particular situation. It might be “+1 FORWARD to PUZZLE THINGS OUT” or “+1 ONGOING IN COMBAT.”

N PIERCING: Goes right through armor. When you deal damage with n piercing, you subtract n from the enemy’s armor for that attack.

N AMMO: Counts as n ammo for appropriate ranged weapons.

N USES: Can only be used n times.

APPLIED: Only useful when carefully applied to a person or to something they eat or drink.

AREA: May effect targets in the same general vicinity.

AWKWARD: Unwieldy and tough to use.

CLUMSY: Tough to move around with. -1ongoing while using it.

DANGEROUS: Easy to get in trouble with it. If you interact with it without proper precautions, the Keeper may freely invoke the consequences of your foolish actions.

FORCEFUL: Can knock someone back a pace, maybe even off their feet.

LOUD: Can be easily heard a distant range outside or within a given structure. The range is reduced to long if there are intervening barriers.

MESSY: Does damage in a particularly gruesome way, ripping people and things apart.

RELOAD: Requires taking a specific action to reload or reset it before it can be used it again.

REQUIRES: Only useful to those meeting the requirements, working weakly (if at all) for those who don’t.

SLOW: Takes minutes or more to use it.

TOUCH: Used by touching the target directly (skin, scales, or the like)

TWO-HANDED: Takes two hands to use it effectively.

UNRELIABLE: Doesn’t always work. If you roll a natural 2 while using it, it breaks down or quits working.

WORN: Must be worn in order to use it.

Range Tags (From Nearest to Farthest)

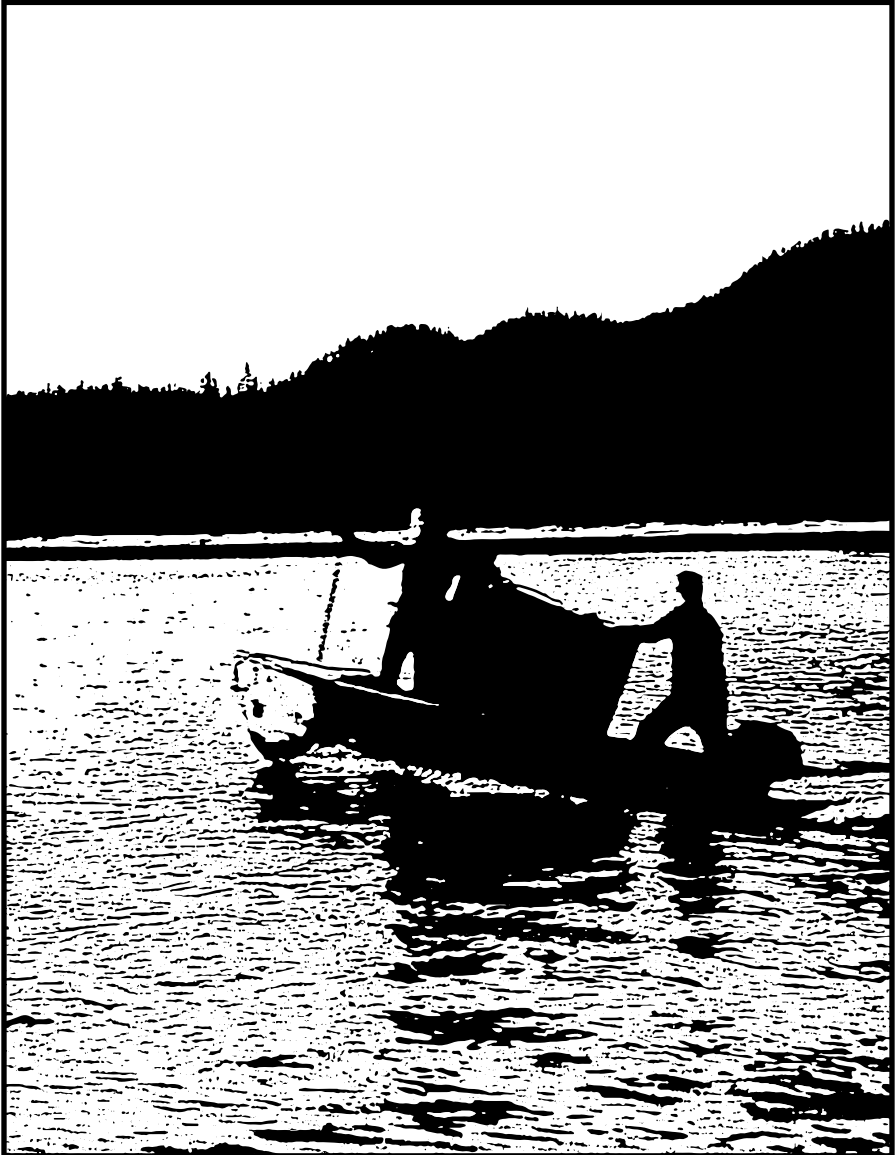
TOUCH: Can hit someone within arm's reach.

CLOSE: Can hit someone at arm's reach plus a foot or two.

SHORT: Can hit someone several feet away, maybe as far as twenty.

MEDIUM: Can hit someone within shouting distance.

LONG: Can hit someone several blocks or more away.



Equipment and Such

Each character begins with gear she has accumulated over her life up to the point where the story begins. Getting more stuff is not the focus of this game, but certainly some of your players may feel the need to get a weapon or some such to give them the illusion of safety. Depending upon the era and location you have chosen to play in, weapons could be as common as raindrops in a thunderstorm or as rare as hen's teeth—the Keeper decides.

The Cost of Things

As Wealth is an abstraction, decide upon the economy of the place where you center your stories. In general, a ranged weapon should cost harm+1 Wealth, e.g., if someone wants a small pistol, it would cost 2 Wealth. Melee weapons should generally cost half their harm, if that. Any applicable tags are at the Keeper's discretion.

Simple Weapons

- small (1 harm)

brass knuckles, large knife, poker, sap, small pistol, or fist-sized rock

- medium (2 harm)

medium pistol, sledgehammer, or light rifle

- large (3 harm)

greatsword, shotgun, large pistol, or heavy rifle

Sample Firearms

- derringer (short, 1 harm)
- .38 revolver (medium, 2 harm)
- 9mm (medium, 2 harm)
- hunting rifle (long, 2 harm, two-handed)
- sawed-off shotgun (short, 3 harm, two-handed, forceful, messy)
- shotgun (medium, 3 harm, two-handed, messy)
- tommy gun (medium, 2 harm, two-handed, area)

Every firearm is *loud* by default. Round out weapons with additional tags as necessary. Assign *reload* and/or *n ammo* (as serves the purposes of your story and your play style).

Other Weaponry

- pocket knife (touch, 1 harm)
- butcher knife (close, 1 harm)
- baseball bat (close, 2 harm, two-handed)
- crowbar (close, 2 harm, messy)
- dynamite/grenades (short/medium, 4 harm, area, loud, messy)
- machete (close, 3 harm, messy)
- sword cane (close, 1 harm, 1 piercing)

Other Gear

Suggested costs are listed. The Keeper is final arbiter of the economy of the story, and may adjust as he sees fit.

First-aid kit (recover 1 health, 1 Wealth per 3 uses), ROLL+LUCK

Sedatives (recover 1 shock, addictive, 1 Wealth per 3 uses), ROLL+LUCK

Off-the-rack clothes (1 week's worth, 1 Wealth)

Nice outfit (1 Wealth)

Tailored outfit (2+ Wealth)

Heavy coat (1 armor, 1 Wealth)

Lantern (unreliable, refuel, 1 Wealth)

Flashlight (1 Wealth)

Camera (unreliable, 1 Wealth)

Instamatic camera (2 Wealth)

Tent (cramped, 1 Wealth)

Old car (unreliable, 2 Wealth)

Old car (reliable, 3 Wealth)

Car or truck (4 Wealth)

Camper (5 Wealth)

Sports car (6 Wealth)

Small house (6 Wealth)

Farmstead (7 Wealth)

Large house (8 Wealth)

Small plane (8 Wealth)

Basic Wealth Scale

Following are some general ideas of how much things cost. As long as a character has at least 1 Wealth, he is able to interact with the economy (e.g., buy food, toiletries, and other everyday necessities) without keeping track of minutiae. Should a character expend all his wealth, he is destitute and must rely upon charity, friends, and the kindness of strangers.

- 1: An expensive meal, something the character needs, something otherwise ordinary but in limited supply, cross country bus travel, bribing a clerk, doorman or bartender.
- 2: A glorious night on the town, footing an expensive meal for a group, entertaining a special someone, air travel, bribing a hotel manager or beat cop, upkeep in a boarding house.
- 3: A new car, a diamond ring, bribing a sheriff or lower-echelon government official, upkeep in a nice hotel.
- 4: A fur coat, renting an apartment long-term, buying a handful of tailored outfits.
- 5: An exotic piece of art, bribing a mayor, chartering a plane, chartering a ship.



Buying Goods

When a character goes into town looking for some particular thing to buy and it's not obvious whether she should be able to just buy that particular thing, ROLL+REASON.

ON A 10+, she can buy it without any problem.

ON A 7-9, the Keeper chooses one of the following:

It costs 1 more Wealth than expected, and:

- It's available, but only if she meets with a guy who knows a guy.
- I had one, but I just sold it to Farmer Brown...maybe she can buy it off him?
- Sorry, I don't have that, but maybe this will do instead?

ON A 6 OR LESS, the locals know you're looking for something, which may or may not be a good thing.

When a character *spreads the word* she wants a thing and drops money to speed it on its way to her, the player ROLLS+WEALTH spent (!).

ON A 10+, it comes to her, no strings attached.

ON A 7-9, something pretty close comes to her.

ON A 6 OR LESS, it comes to her, strings very much attached.

Haggling

When you want to trade your stuff for other goods, ROLL+PASSION.

ON A 10+, a person is willing to trade at -1 Wealth.

ON A 7-9, is willing to trade at -2 Wealth.

ON A 6 OR LESS, no one is interested in your stuff, and people know what you are looking for.

For example, if you have 3 Wealth of goods you wish to trade, on a 10+, you can trade them for 2 Wealth worth of stuff. On a 7-9, trading the same goods you can get 1 Wealth worth of stuff.

Advancement

Characters in *tremulus* are generally static. Don't worry about keeping track of experience. Just count yourself lucky if you've managed to keep one character alive through to the end of a story. Your Keeper will tell you when it's time to advance; just keep track of the number of advances you earn.

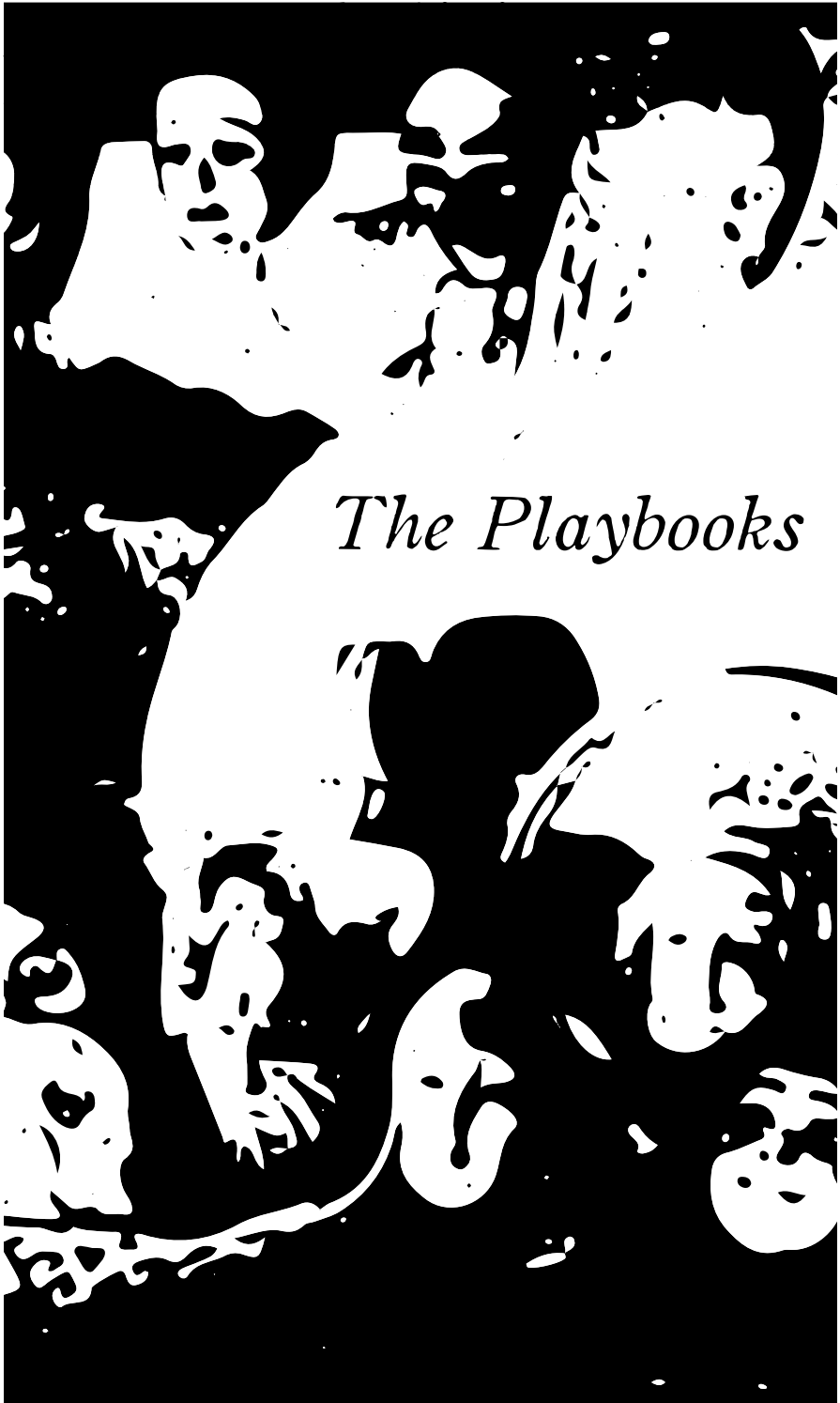
When you advance, choose one of the following:

INCREASE ANY OF YOUR BASIC ATTRIBUTES BY ONE. Any attribute can be increased over play by up to +2, to a maximum of +3. For example, if you begin play with a Reason -1, you can eventually increase your Reason +1. If you start with a Might +2, you can increase to Might +3.

SELECT A NEW MOVE ON YOUR PLAYBOOK. This is now part of who you are and what you do.

ELIMINATE A MENTAL DISORDER. While physical disabilities are forever, your mind can be healed by overcoming the horrors you face. You may elect to get rid of one of these at the end of a session you advance (with Keeper approval).

SELECT A MOVE FROM ANOTHER PLAYBOOK. Upon your sixth (and any subsequent) advance(s), you may opt to select a move from *any* playbook not in use by another player (with Keeper approval).



The Playbooks

The Alienist

You have studied at fine universities the world over. You know the inner workings of the human mind, and have a knack for uncovering people's darkest secrets and deepest desires. You help to heal the soul, much as a doctor heals the body.

Creating the Alienist

To create your alienist, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Doctor Harmsworth, Hermann van Cleef, Simon Blackford, Dr. Gunther Hesse, Mariam King, Annette Cushing, Dr. Cassandra Nabokov

Look

GENDER: Man, woman, or androgynous.

CLOTHES: Tailored suit, wrinkled attire, worn fine, or outdated formal.

FACE: Plain, round, smug, friendly, or condescending.

EYES: Mesmerizing, exotic, clever, inscrutable, or close-set.

BUILD: Bony, slender, corpulent, energetic, or graceful.

Attributes

CHOOSE ONE SET:

- Reason +1 Passion +2 Might -1 Luck 0 Affinity +1
- Reason +1 Passion +2 Might 0 Luck -1 Affinity +1
- Reason +1 Passion +2 Might +1 Luck -1 Affinity 0
- Reason +2 Passion +2 Might -1 Luck -2 Affinity +2

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 2d6 Wealth .
- Valise with 6+d6 stock (sedatives and the like).

And choose two:

- A motorcycle (fast, reliable).
- 4d6 accumulated wealth in valuable metals or a small sidearm or sword cane.
- Diary of a madman; may be studied a d6 hours each day. roll+reason. On a 10+, gain 1 Lore. On a 7-9, gain one clue. On a miss, -1ongoing for the day (disturbed).
- Wealthy patron. Gain +1d6 Wealth per month.
- Clipping service. Make a roll+luck at the start of each session, on a 10+, gain 1 Lore. On a 7-9, gain one clue. It costs 1 Wealth each month to maintain.

Alienist Moves

You begin with

THERAPY: You may restore people's Sanity through talk and the proper administration of sedatives. You may **ROLL+STOCK** to heal the mind. See **MENTAL HEALTH**, p. 32 for details.

Choose two special moves.

COTTAGE: You have a small cottage in town where you can treat patients. It is a safe place. You may have a loyal assistant (Oswald or Sheryl?) as well. You earn a d6 Wealth per month it is in operation.

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS: You may use **ROLL+PASSION** to **PUZZLE THINGS OUT**.

EMPATHIC: You may use **ROLL+PASSION** to **CONVINCE**.

QUID PRO QUO: When you successfully **READ A PERSON**, you may ask additional questions (up to your **REASON**) by answering one posed by the target first. You must be completely honest and open in the exchange.

STUDENT OF HUMAN NATURE: You gain **+1** to any attempts to **CONVINCE**.

Your Lore move is

SHOCK THERAPY: You may quickly attempt to snap someone out of a mental fugue without being in a safe place. **ROLL+REASON** and check the following:

10+: Heal 2 segments.

7-9: Heal 1 segment.

6 OR LESS: You may choose to either not heal, or heal 1 segment, and the Keeper gains 1 hold to use as a hard move at any time.

The Antiquarian

You have spent your life studying antiquities, turning your interest into your occupation. Over the years, strange items have come into and out of your possession, and you know some things out there are truly evil. You fear what may happen if they fall into the wrong hands, and direct your energies into locking them away from prying eyes and dark dispositions.

Creating the Antiquarian

To create your antiquarian, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Thurmond Mastiff, Jodi French, Roy Kellogg, Peter Strand, Jessica Norbert, Miss Kensington, Franklin Hale

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man, woman, or ambiguous.

CLOTHES: Worn suit, rustic casual, rustic fine, or outdated fine.

FACE: Plain, round, gaunt, or pensive.

EYES: Sharp, beady, wide, or watery.

BUILD: Wiry, stooped, hunched, emaciated, or fat.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason: +2, Passion: 0, Might: -1, Luck +2, Affinity: 0
- Reason: +1, Passion: +1, Might: 0, Luck: +1, Affinity: 0
- Reason: +2, Passion: -1, Might: 0, Luck: +1, Affinity: +1
- Reason: +1, Passion: +1, Might: -2, Luck: +2, Affinity: +1

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 1d6 Wealth
- 1d6 Wealth of knick-knacks (you decide what).

And choose two:

- A walking stick
- 1d6 worth of more knick-knacks (you decide what, if weapons, they have a tag of old or unreliable).
- Eyeglasses (+1 Reason when worn, if needed, -1 Reason when not worn).
- Reference Library (+1 Reason for one topic, you choose. When used requires a d6 hours).
- +1 Lore.

Antiquarian Moves

Choose two special moves.

ANTIQUÉ SHOP: You have a small store filled with bric-a-brac, and perhaps an assistant (Chester or Jennifer?) who runs things when you're out and about. You may use **ROLL+REASON** to **POKE AROUND** your shop once per day. Your shop generates d6 Wealth per month.

FORTUNATE: Things tend to fall your way, +1 Luck.

HORSE TRADER: With your glib tongue, you may swap items with people instead of wealth for goods or services. roll+affinity.

10+: You make a favorable trade—your goods are worth +1 Wealth.

7-9: Even trade.

6 OR LESS: You may either make the trade at -1 wealth or renege on the deal, gaining a -1 forward with the person/place you're dealing with.

IDENTIFY OBJECTS: When you use **PUZZLE THINGS OUT** on an item of import (your call), you may ask one additional question.

SHREWD DEALER: You are able to analyze people through your insight and experience. You use **ROLL+REASON** to **READ A PERSON**.

Your Lore move is

PROVENANCE: You know a *lot* about the item in question. You can spend Lore to ask *three* questions about an item.

The Author

You are a writer of no small acclaim who devotes most waking moments to pondering the strangeness of this world, so it is no wonder you often have strange dreams that fade with the morning light. Your lustful curiosity has led you to come across occult texts filled with awfulness, only to discover such horror is real.

Creating the Author

To create your author, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Matthew Chadwick, Arthur Niles, Daniel Lewis, Sylvia Blair, Rhonda Langford, Claire Davis

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man, woman.

CLOTHING: Worn suit, worn dress, rumpled casual, or fine old.

FACE: Refined, haggard, somber, thoughtful, or plain.

EYES: Faraway, clever, red-rimmed, tired, or probing.

BODY: Emaciated, full, corpulent, thin, or lithe.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason +1 Passion +2 Might -2 Luck 0 Affinity +2
- Reason +2 Passion -1 Might -1 Luck +1 Affinity +2
- Reason +1 Passion 0 Might -1 Luck +2 Affinity +1
- Reason +2 Passion +2 Might 0 Luck -1 Affinity 0

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 1d6 Wealth.

And choose two:

- Writer's Circle (2d6 members).
- Royalties (gain +2d6 Wealth per month).
- A bicycle.
- A small sidearm.
- A pet (you name it and decide what it is) only you can love, cheap and loyal.
- Eyeglasses (+1 Reason when worn, if needed, -1 Reason when not worn).
- A small room in a boarding house (costs 1 Wealth/month).
- +1 Lore.

Author Moves

Choose two special moves.

AUTHOR-IN-RESIDENCE: You have been put up by the local college as a feather in their cap and given a small cottage near the campus. You are expected to make an occasional appearance on campus, which earns you 2d6 Wealth per month and **+1 AFFINITY** with the academic community and those who appreciate the arts.

BOOKISH: You may **ROLL+REASON** when you **POKE AROUND** a library or similar place (county records office, and so on.)

CREATIVE THINKER: You may **ROLL+PASSION** instead of **ROLL+REASON** when you **PUZZLE THINGS OUT**. When you achieve at least a partial success in this manner, you gain **+1 QUESTION**.

HARD TO RATTLE: You have a tough mind. Whenever you suffer shock, you take one less.

STRANGELY INTENSE: When you **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**, **ROLL+LUCK** instead of **ROLL+REASON**.

Your Lore move is

NOVEL EXPERIENCE: The place reminds you of something from one of your books. You may spend a point of Lore to get +2 to **POKE AROUND**.

The Detective

You've found missing heirs, lost children, and brushed up against more than a few weird things in your hunt for the truth (and a steady paycheck). You've been banged around a lot over the years. It comes with the territory.

Creating the Detective

To create your detective, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Richard Lacy, Tommy Stone, Jackie Boy, Sharon Speed, Miss Brooke, Eleanor Pickford

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man or woman.

CLOTHES: Cheap suit, cheap dress, rumpled suit, or outdated skirt.

FACE: Hard, rugged, pretty, honest, or soft.

EYES: Sleepy, smoldering, clever, or piercing.

BUILD: Lanky, sturdy, lean, lithe, or fat.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason +1 Passion -1 Might +2 Luck 0 Affinity +1
- Reason +2 Passion +1 Might -1 Luck -1 Affinity +2
- Reason +1 Passion 0 Might 0 Luck +2 Affinity 0
- Reason +2 Passion +2 Might +1 Luck -1 Affinity -1

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 1d6 Wealth.
- A medium sidearm.
- A cheap change of clothes.

And choose two:

- A nice hat (+1 Affinity when worn).
- A hunting rifle.
- A shotgun.
- A cheap automobile (unreliable).
- A contact in the community (you choose who they are).
- A client from the City (generates a d6 Wealth per month, as long as you show some results).

Detective Moves

Choose two special moves.

LONER: You work better on your own. You gain a +1 to *all* rolls connected with one attribute (your choice), but *never* gain any benefits from anyone helping you.

METHODICAL: When you take your time to **POKE AROUND**, you may use **ROLL+REASON** instead of **ROLL+LUCK**. You may choose to find a clue on a 7+, instead of a 10+.

ROUGH AND TUMBLE: You've been in more than a few fights. You gain +1 **MIGHT** and are treated as having +1 **ARMOR** at all times. You also get a set of brass knuckles, a blackjack, sap, or some other small bit of handheld nastiness for dealing with trouble.

SMOOTH: You gain +1 **PASSION** and may spend one hold earned to gain a clue when you successfully **READ A PERSON**.

STREETWISE: When you **READ A PERSON**, you may ask one additional question on a 7+ and may **ROLL+AFFINITY** to *spread the word* when buying goods.

Your Lore move is

DEDUCTIVE REASONING: You may spend a point of Lore to reveal one hazard or gain a +1 ongoing with an NPC. Whenever you discover a clue, gain 1 Lore.

The Devout

You have been called to minister to a flock of souls who have lost their path. You have encountered evil in its many guises and know it falls upon those of strong heart and conviction to stay the course.

Creating the Devout

To create your devout, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Father Brown, Brother Michaels, Rabbi Luca, Joshua White, Mother Jones, Sister Janice, Teresa Hollister

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man or woman.

CLOTHING: Formal vestments, worn vestments, robes, habit, casual clothes, or missionary clothes.

FACE: Open, pinched, friendly, calm, ascetic, serious, or honest.

EYES: Bright, piercing, peaceful, or accusing.

BODY: Slim, full, trim, heavy, or angular.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason 0 Passion 0 Might 0 Luck +1 Affinity +2
- Reason +1 Passion +1 Might -1 Luck +1 Affinity +1
- Reason 0 Passion 0 Might +1 Luck +2 Affinity 0
- Reason +1 Passion +1 Might -1 Luck +2 Affinity 0

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 1d6 Wealth.
- Symbol of your faith.
- Bible or other book of faith.

And choose two:

- A relic (weird) handed down to you by your old mentor.
- A small sidearm.
- An old pickup truck (unreliable).
- A cane.

Devout Moves

Choose two special moves.

DIVINE INSPIRATION: You may engage in lengthy meditation or prayer to think upon serious matters. When you do, you *may* ROLL+LUCK instead of ROLL+REASON to **PUZZLE THINGS OUT**.

EASY TO TALK TO: You gain +1 Affinity.

GRACE: You gain +1 to all Luck-related rolls.

PLACE OF WORSHIP: You have a small church, synagogue, temple, or converted house where you tend to your flock. You have a room above it where you sleep and keep your personal effects. Of the congregation, you have ten loyal souls you can call upon as the situation demands. You earn d6 Wealth per month.

SANCTIFY: You may perform rituals or rites using holy water, incense, prayer, and the like to make a dwelling or individual safe from otherworldly affairs. This uses d6 supplies. (If it's a big place, or has many points of egress, probably 2d6.) Should you not have enough on hand, all supplies you have used are wasted, and you'll have to begin anew. Should a malevolent force be present, you'll be **ACTING UNDER PRESSURE**. Otherwise, ROLL+REASON.

Supplies cost 1 Wealth per six. You start with 2d6 supplies.

Your Lore move is

SMITE: You may spend a point of Lore to ROLL+LUCK instead of ROLL+MIGHT when you **RESORT TO VIOLENCE** or **THREATEN**.

The Dilettante

Born with a silver spoon in your mouth, you are filthy rich and jaded beyond your years. Your idle hours are filled with the pursuit of exotic entertainments, each more fantastic than the last. Your wealth allows you indulgences others only dream of.

Creating the Dilletante

To create your dilettante, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Amelia T., Miss Duvall, Michelle Winslow, Emily Gordon, Jack Windsor, Peter Hamilton, Eric Von Braun III

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man, woman, ambiguous, or concealed.

CLOTHES: Tailored dress, fine suit, fine casual, leather jacket and slacks, or riding gear.

FACE: Plain, refined, aristocratic, clever, condescending.

EYES: Sharp, milky, appraising, bedroom, or weak.

BUILD: Bony, full, trim, energetic, or graceful.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason +1 Passion -1 Might +2 Luck 0 Affinity +1
- Reason -1 Passion +2 Might 0 Luck +1 Affinity +1
- Reason +2 Passion -1 Might 0 Luck 0 Affinity +2
- Reason 0 Passion +1 Might +1 Luck +2 Affinity -1

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 2d6 x 2 Wealth.
- Weekly stipend: 1d6 Wealth.
- Expensive changes of clothes (valuable).
- An automobile.

And choose two:

- A small pistol or sword cane.
- A trunk full of books.
- 2d6 worth of jewelry.
- Fur coat (valuable), +1 armor.
- A pet (valuable, alive), your choice and yours to detail.

Dilettante Moves

Choose two special moves.

ATHLETIC: You are healthy and hale; add +1 Might. Whenever you must physically **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**, you get a +1 to your roll.

DEEP POCKETS: You have a regular reserve of wealth you can tap into at any time. If you need to access cash, you can go to a bank once per day, and with a successful **ROLL+LUCK**, you get the following:

10+: You can withdraw 2d6 Wealth.

7-9: You can get d6 Wealth, but people will gossip about your large withdrawal.

6 OR LESS: The bank is unaccustomed to such large transactions, and doesn't have that much on hand. You can either wait d6 days to try again, or get a letter of credit for the amount. If the latter, it has to be made out to a particular party, they must be willing to take it, and people are going to know your business.

READY FOR ANYTHING: At the beginning of a session, **ROLL+PASSION**.

ON A 10+, hold 2. Spend 1 Hold at any time to gain a **+1 ONGOING** for a scene.

ON A 7-9, hold 1. Spend 1 Hold at any time to gain a **+1 ONGOING** for a scene.

ON A 6 OR LESS, the Keeper Holds 1, and can spend it to have you "caught out" (i.e., ill prepared and -1 for a scene).

SUMMER HOME: Your family has a place in the area, perhaps unvisited since your childhood. It is a fine, old mansion, and you have sent ahead two of your attendants (perhaps Strickland and Alice, a butler and maid?).

UPPER CRUST: People naturally defer to your grace and bearing (or maybe just your money?). You can drop your name and station to persuade people to do or say things they might not normally. **ROLL+AFFINITY**.

10+: They've heard of you and are willing to help. Hold 1. You can spend this at any time to get them to do pretty much anything they'd do normally. If it's something against their nature or they wouldn't otherwise do, it's going to cost you 2d6 wealth. If you don't have the money on hand, they won't do later.

7-9: They'll help you out or answer questions, but it's going to cost a d6 wealth. And it has to be legal and non-harmful to them.

6 OR LESS: Who do you think you are throwing your weight around? The Keeper gets to hold 1 and may spend it at any time to take a hard move against you.

Your Lore move is

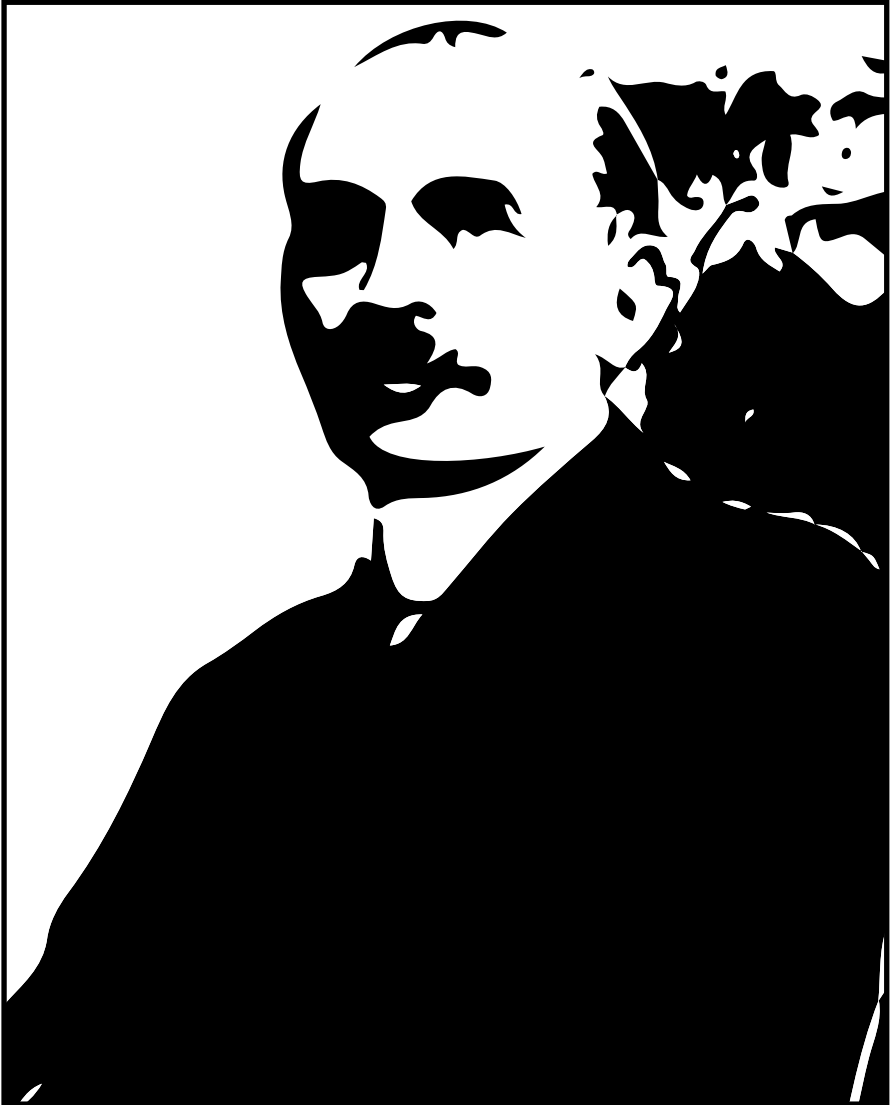
YOU'VE DONE THIS BEFORE: You can spend a point (or more) of Lore to gain a **+1 FORWARD** to *any* Move. You get **+1 FORWARD** for each point of Lore expended (up to +3). If you would've succeeded without spending *any* Lore, you don't spend any.

The Doctor

You have more than a calling, you have a gift. You are a skilled healer who has decided to leave the grind of the big city behind in search of greener pastures.

Creating the Doctor

To create your doctor, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Doctor Jameson, Old Doc Smith, Franklin Woodard, Dr. Jacqueline Atway, Carla Wells, Doctor Sheila Kensington

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man, woman, or ambiguous.

CLOTHING: Worn suit, rustic casual, rustic fine, or outdated fine.

FACE: Plain, round, gaunt, or pensive.

EYES: Sharp, beady, wide, or watery.

BUILD: Slim, pudgy, fat, or rangy.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason +1 Passion +1 Might -1 Luck 0 Affinity +2
- Reason +2 Passion +1 Might 0 Luck -1 Affinity +1
- Reason +2 Passion -1 Might +1 Luck +1 Affinity 0
- Reason +2 Passion +2 Might 0 Luck 0 Affinity -1

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 2d6 Wealth.
- A medical bag with 6+d6 stock of medical supplies.

And choose two:

- A sword cane.
- A small or medium sidearm.
- Eyeglasses (+1 Reason when worn, if needed, -1 Reason when not worn).
- Reference Library (+1 Reason for one topic, you choose, when used requires d6 hours).
- An average automobile.

Doctor Moves

You begin with

MEDICAL TRAINING: You are a trained physician capable of dealing with cuts, scrapes, and broken bones. You may **ROLL+STOCK** to treat injuries. See **PHYSICAL WELLNESS** (p. 31) for details. You may use any medical supplies with **ROLL+REASON**.

Choose two special moves.

BEDSIDE MANNER: Gain +1 Trust with a character when you successfully treat them. If you roll a 6 or less when treating them, lose 1 Trust. If you treat an NPC successfully, gain +1 **ONGOING** with them or -1 **ONGOING** with them on a 6 or less.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE: You have a small home with a clinic where you can treat patients. You may have a loyal assistant (Jane or John?) as well. You have a stock of pharmaceuticals and other medical supplies on hand to treat people. You earn d6 Wealth per month it is in operation.

FIELD MEDIC: While you are caring for people (not fighting), you get +1 **ARMOR**.

FORENSIC EXPERT: When you **POKE AROUND** corpses, you may use **ROLL+REASON** instead of **ROLL+LUCK**. On a 7+, you gain 1 clue in addition to anything else. You also gain +2 to **PUZZLE THINGS OUT** about causes of death, and anatomy related questions.

TRUSTWORTHY: Your position makes people innately inclined to confide in you. You gain +1 Affinity, and may ask one additional question when you successfully **READ A PERSON**.

Your Lore move is

EMERGENCY TRIAGE: You may quickly attempt to heal a wounded person in any situation. Spend 1 Lore and **ROLL+LUCK**.

10+: Heal 2 segments.

7-9: Heal 1 segment.

ON A 6 OR LESS: You may choose to either not heal or heal 1 segment. If you choose the latter, the Keeper gains 1 hold to use as a hard move at any time.

The Heir

You have always felt apart, different, as though you didn't belong anywhere. You attended university, got a nice job, and found a place where you could live out a mundane existence. Somewhere deep within, you knew it couldn't last. It began with the letters from a place you never heard of, but you felt strangely called to it. You let them languish, unopened and unread—afraid of what they might contain. You had been warned to always avoid *that* side of the family. Then the man came, an attorney with a briefcase, a ticket, and the deed to your ancestral home. You felt a sudden release, as though you'd been holding your breath all these years, and decided to see for yourself if there was really a future for you somewhere else in a place less ordinary, a place where you might belong, a place you could call your home.

Creating the Heir

To create your heir, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Samuel Hale, Franklin Weed, Benjamin Blackwood, Amanda Leach, Teresa Wilkinson, Eleanor Radford

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man, woman.

CLOTHING: Nice casual, worn casual, nice rustic, worn suit, or simple dress.

FACE: Plain, friendly, innocent, or honest.

EYES: Bright, clever, wide, tired, narrow, or almond.

BODY: Slim, athletic, full, lithe, or angular.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason +1 Passion +1 Might -2 Luck +2 Affinity +1
- Reason +1 Passion 0 Might -1 Luck +1 Affinity +2
- Reason +1 Passion +1 Might 0 Luck +1 Affinity 0
- Reason +1 Passion +1 Might -1 Luck +2 Affinity 0

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 1d6 Wealth.

And choose two:

- A beat-up roadster (valuable, unreliable).
- A small trust fund set up for you, d6 Wealth per month.
- A good item of your choice (up to 3 wealth), inherited from the dearly departed (weird).
- Contact: the town attorney (perhaps Vincent Miller?), or the only friend of the deceased.

Heir Moves

Choose two special moves.

ANCESTRAL HOME: You have a large, crumbling, remote manor that has seen better days. It is filled with an assortment of oddities your ancestor collected. It is a **WEIRD** place, to say the least. You may **POKE AROUND** the old place once per day.

ON A 7+, you may choose to find one good item of your choice or two clues (or choose from the normal choices).

ON 6 OR LESS, the Keeper may Hold 2 to use as hard moves.

If you don't initially choose Ancestral Home, then the house is still tied up in probate, boarded up, and you can't use it. Sorry.

CERTAINTY: You are certain there is some reasonable explanation for the weirdness you witness. You aren't delusional; you know strange things exist. You just know they must have logical underpinnings to them. Reduce any shock taken by 1.

FRANTIC: After you are harmed, you may use **ROLL+LUCK** instead of **ROLL+MIGHT** to **THREATEN** your assailant. On a hit, you deal 1 extra harm.

HOW BAD IS IT?: After a fight, you may **ROLL+LUCK** to recover from physical injury.

ON A 10+, heal 2.

ON A 7-9, heal 1.

ON A 6 OR LESS, your wound is worse (suffer 1 additional harm).

SENSITIVE: Increase your Passion by +1. You sometimes get strange vibes. Whenever you roll a natural 12, immediately make a **ROLL+PASSION**.

ON A 10+, you get 1 Lore.

ON A 7-9, you get 1 clue.

ON A 6 OR LESS, you suffer a horrible vision and take 2 shock.

Your Lore move is

LUCKY: You may spend a point of Lore to turn *any* partial success into a success. You can use this for rolls made by other characters, provided you are close by (within shouting distance) and *you* trust them (Trust +1 or greater).

The Journalist

Your passion for digging deep to find stories has given you a reputation as a muckraker and a no-nonsense sort. You're just willing to look where others aren't...or won't. You turn over rocks, look for skeletons in closets, and are concerned first and foremost with the truth. You discovered early on the truth is often ugly and harsh, and something most don't want to hear. In this pursuit, you've learned a few unsettling things, things downright strange and weird, and you've collected those notes in a box for when you write your memoirs. Until then, you get your byline when you can.

Creating the Journalist

To create your journalist, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Nash Anderson, Fredrick Sheridan, Patrick Hansen, Shelby Brooke, Alexandria Woodard, Margaret Storm

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man or woman.

CLOTHING: Worn suit, antiquated casual, slightly out-of-date fine, or worn formal.

FACE: Haggard, vibrant, plain, bearded, or refined.

EYES: Faraway, clever, red-rimmed, tired, or probing.

BODY: Corpulent, thin, energetic, full, or bony.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason +2 Passion +1 Might -2 Luck 0 Affinity +2
- Reason +2 Passion -1 Might -1 Luck +1 Affinity +2
- Reason +2 Passion 0 Might -1 Luck +1 Affinity +1
- Reason +2 Passion +2 Might 0 Luck -1 Affinity 0

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 1d6 Wealth.
- A room in a boarding house (costs 1 Wealth per month).
- A decent camera (unreliable).

And choose two:

- An old jalopy or motorcycle (either unreliable).
- A small sidearm (unreliable).
- A couple of local gossips who are sometimes good for a story (+1 ongoing with them).
- +1 Lore.

Journalist Moves

Choose two special moves.

FAMILIAR WITH DEADLINES: You gain +1 to rolls when you **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**.

NOSE FOR NEWS: You gain a +2 bonus from clues, instead of the normal +1.

SNAPPY COMEBACK: You have a knack with a camera and a sharp eye. No camera is unreliable in your skilled hands. You may snap photos and later **POKE AROUND** them to see if there was anything you may have missed. Of course, to get any of those things, or more knowledge about them, will require you to go back to where the pictures were taken.

STAFF REPORTER: You have a small desk located in the office of the local rag. You earn d6 Wealth per month and may **ROLL+LUCK** once per day. On *any* success, you get a story lead (a clue). On 6 or less, you have to wait d6 days before you can try again.

UNDAUNTED: When you fail to **Convince** an NPC you may **ROLL+LUCK** to try another angle.

10+: They will do it, if you keep their name out of things.

7-9: They tell you about a guy who knows someone who may know.

6 OR LESS: They wonder why you won't take no for an answer. The Keeper may give you **-LONGOING** with the NPC or hold 1 to take a hard move against you at any time.

Your Lore move is

LOCKS ARE SUGGESTIONS: You may spend a point of Lore to get quickly and quietly into or out of any mundane place.

The Professor

Learning is your greatest love, and you happily share your knowledge through teaching. You have taught in various colleges and universities across the country. Over the years, you have learned life is strange and history is often hysterical.

Creating the Professor

To create your professor, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Professor Thomas Mince, Professor Grant, Trent Banks, Professor Cynthia Adams, Professor Black, December Green

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man or woman.

CLOTHING: Worn suit, antiquated casual, slightly out-of-date fine, or worn formal.

FACE: Haggard, vibrant, plain, bearded, or refined.

EYES: Analytical, distant, clever, red-rimmed, tired, or probing.

BODY: Heavysset, thin, energetic, full, or bony.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason +2 Passion +1 Might -2 Luck 0 Affinity +2
- Reason +2 Passion -1 Might -1 Luck +1 Affinity +2
- Reason +2 Passion 0 Might -1 Luck +1 Affinity +1
- Reason +2 Passion +2 Might 0 Luck -1 Affinity 0

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 1d6 Wealth.
- A small home (or faculty housing).

And choose two:

- Two fellow academics.
- Tenure (gain d6 wealth a month).
- A bicycle.
- A small sidearm.
- A pet only you can love (you name it and decide what it is), cheap and loyal.
- Eyeglasses (+1 Reason when worn, if needed, -1 Reason when not worn).
- +1 Lore.

Professor Moves

Choose two special moves.

CLEARHEADED: When you **PUZZLE THINGS OUT**, you may ask 1 additional question on **7+**.

EXPERT: You gain **+2 ONGOING** with all rolls relating to *one* topic (your choice). When you **PUZZLE THINGS OUT** on this topic, you may ask one additional question on a **7+**, and gain a point of Lore in addition to your other choices on a **10+**.

LOGICAL: You think things through. **+1 REASON**.

SAGE ADVICE: When a character comes to you for advice, tell them what you honestly think the best course is. If they do it, they take **+1** to any rolls they make while following your suggestions, and you gain a point of Lore.

SOUND ARGUMENT: You may use **ROLL+REASON** instead of **ROLL+AFFINITY** to **CONVINCE** someone. For NPCs, on a 6 or less, you have **-1 FORWARD** with them.

Your Lore move is

LEARNED: Spend a point of Lore to gain **+1 ONGOING** regarding one topic of study (chosen by you) for yourself or someone else.

The Salesman

Others may consider you a wheeler-dealer, a huckster, or a peddler of snake-oil, but you know better. You don't just sell things, you sell dreams. You help put a product in someone's hands to make their lives better, and the world better to boot. Sure, you've knocked on a few doors and have encountered more than your share of strange people in your travels, and you know every now and then you have to hightail it out of some place when you've worn out your welcome, but hey, that's all part of doing business. What's wrong with turning a little profit while you save the world?

Creating the Salesman

To create your salesman, choose name, look, attributes, moves, and gear.



Name

Traveling Jason Freely, Mister Mack, Doc, Miranda McLane, Candice Fairview, Sylvia Collins

Look

Select one from each category.

GENDER: Man, woman.

CLOTHING: Worn suit, crumpled casual, slightly out-of-date fine, or worn formal.

FACE: Vibrant, sharp, bearded, honest, or refined.

EYES: Friendly, sharp, clever, probing, or appraising.

BODY: Energetic, full, spare, or trim.

Attributes

Choose one set:

- Reason 0 Passion +1 Might -2 Luck +2 Affinity +2
- Reason 0 Passion +1 Might -1 Luck +1 Affinity +2
- Reason +1 Passion 0 Might -1 Luck +1 Affinity +2
- Reason +2 Passion +1 Might -1 Luck -1 Affinity +2

Basic Moves

You get all the basic moves (pp. 20-24).

Gear

You get:

- 1d6 Wealth.
- A pickup (reliable, awkward) with a camper on it for sleeping.
- 2d6 Wealth worth of useless bric-a-brac (you decide what).
- A cracked, wooden baseball bat you've had to use once or twice (unreliable).

And choose two:

- A small sidearm.
- A flashlight.
- Camping equipment.
- An old book (weird) you've picked up in a trade somewhere.

Salesman Moves

Choose two special moves.

A MILE IN THEIR SHOES: You are able to get inside the heads of other people and think what you would have done in their place. You may **ROLL+PASSION** when you want to **PUZZLE THINGS OUT**.

DEVELOP RAPPORT: Whenever you successfully **READ A PERSON**, you get **+1ONGOING** when reading them in the future.

HAVE I GOT A DEAL FOR YOU!: You can get nearly anyone to put down hard coin for anything you own. You may **CONVINCE** people to buy your stuff.

10+: They will pay you Wealth+1 in cash.

7-9: They will pay you its value (or offer to trade you something of roughly equivalent worth), Keeper's choice. Depending upon the person targeted, it may take them d6 days to come up with the money.

6 OR LESS: The Keeper can choose that they don't want it or can't afford it, or will give you value-1 for it, if you do them a favor first.

MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE?: You are able to **CONVINCE** a crowd of folks to do something you like. If you miss the roll, however, they don't take kindly to your interference and become hostile towards you.

MY WORD IS MY BOND: You can attempt to **CONVINCE** anyone, anytime, to do something for you, even if you have nothing they might want.

10+: They don't really expect you to come through later and will be happy if you do (**+1FORWARD**).

7-9: They will be upset if you don't come through in the next d6 days. Failure to deliver will either create bad feelings (**-1ONGOING** to **CONVINCE**), a bad reputation (where you can't use this move again until you make things right), or the Keeper may hold one and decide some badness for you later.

6 OR LESS: They've heard this sort of thing before, and you have -1forward with them in the future.

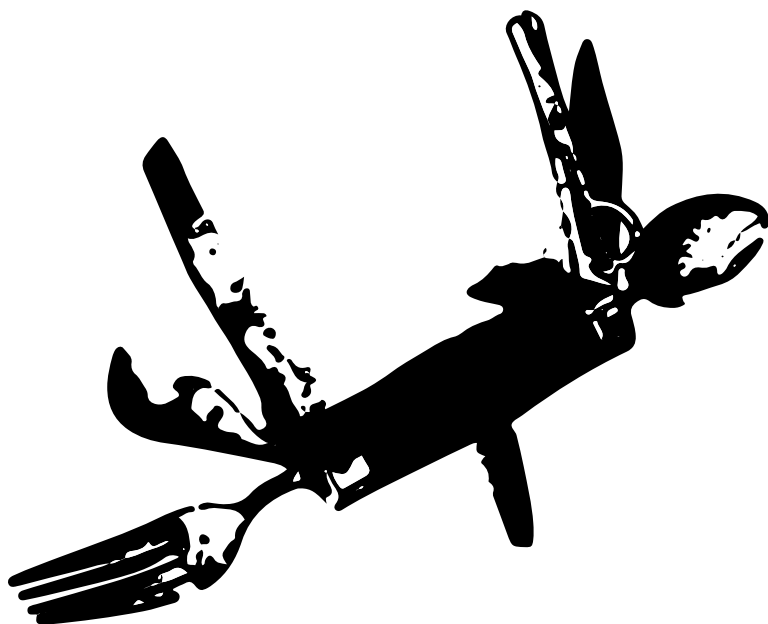
Your Lore move is

JUST THE THING: Spend a point of Lore to produce a specific minor item of your choice. **ROLL+LUCK** to determine how good it is.

10+: It is of good quality.

7-9: It is unreliable.

6 OR LESS: Whatever it is, it will work one time or only for a short duration. A key will work once and then snap off, a flashlight will last a scene (maybe), and so on. It can be repaired, but may cost as much as a new item to get fixed.



Actual Play Examples

Here are excerpts from various playtests conducted during the development of *tremulus*.

Amy is a librarian, being played by a brand new player. She's playing solo and is a bit hesitant about exploring, so starts off keeping close to the library where she works.

AMY: "I finish straightening up downstairs and go upstairs to check out the second floor. Anything unusual?"

KEEPER: "You see the usual shelves of books you'd expect to see. The windows are grimy, as is the floor, and you note the shelves are dirty. You knew the library had been shut down for years before you accepted the position."

AMY: "I know, but I wasn't expecting to pull janitorial duties. I want to see if there is anything particularly unusual up here."

KEEPER: "You want to **POKE AROUND**?"

AMY: "Sure. That's **ROLL+LUCK** for me, right?"

KEEPER: "Yep. Remember if you miss completely, I get to hold."

AMY: "Okay." Undaunted she rolls. "I get a 9. What can I do?"

KEEPER: "You can find a minor item, determine danger, or find a hidden area."

AMY: "Hmmm. I don't think there's any danger around here, and the library is already so big, I'll take the item. Do I get to choose?"

KEEPER: "No. I do, but is there anything you were looking for in particular?"

AMY: “Nope. I’m just on the lookout for anything interesting while cleaning up.”

KEEPER: “Fine.” Thinks a moment. “You find an old key hidden under a book while you’re straightening up. And about an hour’s passed since you started looking around.”

AMY: “Interesting. What does it look like?”

KEEPER: “It is an old brass skeleton key that is remarkably clean, as though it has been used recently.”

AMY: “Hmmm. It’s kind of like the key to the front door of the library. Right?”

KEEPER: “Similar. Yes.”

AMY: “I want to see if I can figure out anything out about it. Is that **PUZZLE THINGS OUT?**”

KEEPER: “You got it. That’s a **ROLL+REASON.**”

AMY: “Reason? Right? Cool. I’ve got a high reason. I roll an eleven!”

KEEPER: “You can gain Lore or ask three questions.”

AMY: “I don’t trust what you want to tell me. I’ll ask some questions. Hmmm.” She looks over the list. “What is this?”

KEEPER: “As you examine it closely, you realize it must be the key to the restricted area upstairs. A place you haven’t explored yet.”

AMY: “Okay. I want to know why it was under the book.”

KEEPER: “Cool. I’ll consider that a variation of ‘*what does this mean?*’ You conclude that it was hidden there by someone who has surreptitiously been going into the restricted book area.”

AMY: “Interesting. Now I’m a little nervous. Can I ask questions based upon the answers I’ve gained?”

KEEPER: “Maybe. Let’s hear what you’ve got and see if it makes sense that you could figure it out.”

AMY: “I want to know who’s in control here.”

KEEPER: “That’s not something you can determine at this point. You’ve barely explored the town. Right?”

AMY: “Okay. Fine. I had to try. Do I lose the question?”

KEEPER: “No. It’s not that kind of game. Have another question? You could ask something like what should I keep an eye out for, or even how does the key fit into the mystery of the missing librarian?”

AMY: “Hmmm. I see what you’re trying to do there. I’d like to know what I should keep an eye out for.”

KEEPER: “You can tell the key has been used recently. Right? So someone else must have a key to the library and is pretty good at covering their tracks. You definitely want to keep an eye out for trespassers and becoming too complacent in the apparent safety of the library.”

AMY: “Thanks. It’s not as if I wasn’t already paranoid...”

* * *

Another group of experienced gamers get together online. There is Jake the detective and Lilly the antiquarian, who are cousins, and then Doctor Wilhelm, an alienist, who is Jake's old friend. They suspect the town doctor, a nice enough chap by the name of Strong, is up to no good, and they decide to visit his office after hours.

JAKE: "I see a light on, so I knock on the door."

KEEPER: "A large, brutish man opens the door a crack. He tells you to go away, and starts to close the door. Behind him, you see a number of folks either asleep or passed out from heat exhaustion in the waiting room."

WILHELM: "I step forward and give the man a winning smile. Please? Could you just let me in a moment? I believe I have left something from my visit earlier?" (He attempts to **CONVINCE** the man, rolling an 8.)

KEEPER: "He's not completely sure about whether to let you in or not. He eyes your nice watch. 'You let me hold onto that, and you can come in. You bother the doctor, and I'll keep it.' He opens the door enough for you to come in, and gives a cold stare to your companions."

LILLY: "I stop him from closing the door." (She **ACTS UNDER PRESSURE**, rolling a 10, and slides her foot sideways into the door with ease.) "Now, I give him a smile and ask him if I can come in as well. I need to, hrrmmm, use the facilities." (She rolls a 9 to **CONVINCE**.)

KEEPER: The man sighs heavily. "Fine. Same deal as your friend. What do you have?"

LILLY: "I rummage around through my huge purse and pull out a knick-knack, a mirror. 'This is quite collectible. See the duck pattern around the handle? Very popular.' " (He relents, and she walks in.)

*Cut outside to Jake who couldn't convince the brute to let him in—he wanders into the alley to **POKE AROUND** for anything of interest and discovers a good item, a strange map which comes into play later.*

Cut to Wilhelm who is snooping around the back area of the clinic and hears strange sawing sounds coming out of one of Strong's examination rooms. It is about this time that Lilly approaches him and draws the attention of the brute.

KEEPER: “The brute glares at the two of you. ‘You’re nosing around where you shouldn’t. You need to go now.’” (The characters begin to talk and the Keeper takes a hard move against the alienist, who suffers 2 harm as the brute pummels him with trained precision. He then turns towards Lilly.)

LILLY: “I begin to scream.” (The brute grabs for her. Lilly, failing to **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**, is caught up in his meaty arms.) “I bite him.” (The players have an epiphany as they discover Lilly can deal with the brute in three different ways: she can **ACT UNDER PRESSURE** to wriggle free, **THREATEN** him with her bite, or **RESORT TO VIOLENCE** and chomp down hard, likely getting a fist in her face for her trouble. She chooses to bite (**THREATEN**) and rolls a 7.)

KEEPER: “You bite his forearm and he’s surprised. He lets you go and steps back away from both of you. ‘Get out!’ he snarls, dropping into a fighting stance. You caught him off-guard once. It’s unlikely you’ll do so again.

WILHELM: “I pull out the sword from my sword cane and flourish it at him. ‘No brute dares lay a hand on Doctor Wilhelm! I attack!’” (The character **RESORTS TO VIOLENCE**. He rolls a 5. It’s just not Wilhelm’s night.)

KEEPER: “The brute easily dodges your slash—you must be a bit out of practice—and hits you hard in the abdomen with his meaty fist.” (They check the damage: Wilhelm has taken 4 harm at this point.) “You hear a rib crack, and fall back.”

LILLY: “I glare at the brute. ‘We get the message. We’re leaving.’ I help him outside. ‘Come along, Doctor Wilhelm.’”

A bit later, Jake and Lilly decide to explore the Washburn Estate. Doctor Wilhelm decides bed rest is probably prudent, after his landlady bandages him up. The action commences just as they have hiked up the trail from the main road where they left their car, to the high outer wall of the Estate.

JAKE: “So, I’m examining the front gate. Is it open?”

KEEPER: “No. It’s not that easy. Washburn is a private man. Though it appears only in fair condition, it is very sturdy.”

JAKE: “Hmmm. I’m pretty strong too. What do you think we should do, Lilly?”

LILLY: “I think we should look around the outer walls for another way in.”

JAKE: “Sounds like a plan. I’m going to help her look.”

*Lilly decides to **POKE AROUND** and with Jake’s **HELP**, they find a servant’s entrance gate on the side, which is rusty and slightly ajar. They pry it open and squeeze through.*

KEEPER: “You’re inside, and you see a massive wall of hedge in front of you. There is a narrow passage—too narrow for either of you to easily navigate—to your left (in the general direction of the manor) and to the right.”

JAKE: “This must be the maze on that weird map I found.” (Jake had **POKED AROUND** earlier and found a good item. The Keeper decided it was an enchanted map to the Washburn Estate.)

LILLY: “You first. I’m not even sure why we’re out here, cousin.”

JAKE: “There is something strange about this heat wave, and I’m certain Washburn is behind it. I try to squeeze through the hedges to the left.”

KEEPER: “As you enter into the hedge maze, you see it tangle about you, trying to hold onto you. What do you do?” (The maze is a landscape hazard with the subtype of prison. The Keeper is taking a move.)

JAKE: “My, oh, this isn’t what I was expecting. I try to pull myself away.”

The Keeper could either rule it was a roll+might as he physically pulls himself away, except this is strange, and rules he is **ACTING UNDER PRESSURE**. Jake gets an 11 and staggers back, a bit rattled, but unscathed.

LILLY: “You can’t fit? Let me try.”

JAKE: “It moved. It tried to grab me!”

LILLY: “Don’t be silly. You’re just a big man.” She moves into the hedge.

KEEPER: “The tendrils shoot out at you. Jake was right!”

LILLY: “I pull myself back.”

(She ACTS UNDER PRESSURE and rolls an 8. The Keeper grins.)

KEEPER: “Here’s where things get interesting. I’m going to give you a few choices. You get to decide what happens. You can lose your glasses to the hedge. You can take 2 shock or you can take 1 harm.”

LILLY: “None of those choices are good, but you’re NOT going to get my glasses that easily! I’ll take the point of harm.”

KEEPER: “As the hedge surrounds you, one vine in particular catches on your calf, tearing into your flesh as you pull away. Several vines threaten to rip away your glasses. You manage to beat them back with your purse, and now stand beside your cousin, breathing hard. It’s been awhile since you’ve been so active.”

JAKE: “See, I told you they were alive.”

LILLY: “Great. Now we have to get through a whole maze like this? I’m going to wait in the car.”

JAKE: “C’mon. People are counting on us.” He pulls out the map. “Let’s see if we can figure out what to do next...”

Let's return to our beginning player after she's gotten a better sense of the system and setting.

Amy (now a bit more seasoned, and far more suspicious of the locals) goes into the diner to talk with her acquaintance, Laney, who runs the place.

AMY: "How's it going, Laney? Any news about the coal mine collapse?"

KEEPER: "Her brow is a bit furrowed. 'I don't really want to talk about it, sugar,' she says, and starts to go back to work."

AMY: "C'mon, Laney, you can talk to me. I ran those errands for you the other day. I'm a friend!" (She rolls to **CONVINCE** with a **+1 ONGOING** she earned earlier, getting an 11.)

KEEPER: "Laney sighs and says, 'Yeah, I know, you're right. I'm just so worried about Big Jack, and it's got me not thinking straight. He was working down there when the thing collapsed. He shouldn't have even been there. Should've been behind his counter in the hardware store. Clark Lewis needed his help though.'"

AMY: "I'm trying to figure out what she's thinking." (She rolls **READ A PERSON** and with her +1, gets an 8.) "Oh well, I thought I'd roll better than that. Hmm. I know! I want to know how I can get her to tell me what Jack was doing down there?"

KEEPER: "You know that if you offered to ride to the mines with her, she'd tell you on the way."

AMY: "Super. That's what I do. 'Laney, I see you're baking a lot of pies to take down to the mines. Would you like some company?'"

KEEPER: "Laney looks slightly relieved. 'That'd be great, hon. Help me load them up and I'll tell you what fool business that man got himself into this time...'"



The Keeper's Section



IF YOU PLAN TO BE THE ONE TO
ORCHESTRATE, ORGANIZE, AND FACILITATE PLAY,
PLEASE TURN THE PAGE.

Proper Preparations

The Keeper Should...

Set Aside Preconceptions

Let go of any habits of complete autonomy and control you may have when running a game. This is a collaborative experience. Trust your friends to work with you to tell a compelling tale of horror and intrigue. They want to do it as much as you do.

Read the Book

You may want to leap right into running a game, and that's cool, but make certain you read through the whole book at least once, not just the Keeper's Section, being mindful of examples.

Place Fiction First

This is important to keep in mind. You're creating a collaborative story with your friends, and you should be enjoying the tale unfolding before you. Don't get hung up on the details of the rules or let them get in the way of a good story. Go with the flow, and learn as you go.

Encourage Narrative Thinking

Make certain your players don't get hung up on the rules either. Yes, they have a playbook, but they should be spending more time engaged with you and each other than mulling over said playbook. Encourage them to embrace their role and decide what they would do in the present circumstance, *then* you can work out what specific move (if any) comes into play.

Nudge New Players

It takes some folks a while to wrap their heads around this type of game, and you want to help them. Be willing to step through the use of Keeper Moves and playbook moves a few times as you progress, rather than just expecting them to 'get it'. When asking them what they do, suggest options *narratively* (then point out the move).

Embracing Darkness

A Sense of Purpose

You're wanting to tell a tale, and you don't know where to begin. You can use a playset, a framework, or start *nearly* from scratch (with a looming mystery). A playset is essentially a questionnaire presented by the Keeper to the players, and their choices determine the framework(s) and hazards of the story. A framework is akin to a rough outline of a story and can be quickly prepared. While you can start with nothing, a looming mystery helps as it provides a big idea of what the story is going to be about. While all stories should have a looming mystery, a creative Keeper can walk in with just that, or have one suggest itself as the players reveal a bit about their characters.

The First Session

The Keeper has three major choices when establishing the story. Do you use a playset? Do you create your own framework? Do you start from scratch and bring everyone in from the outset with no foreknowledge whatsoever? There are advantages and challenges to each.

Using a Playset

The easiest way to immediately jump into play without any formal preparation is with the use of an existing playset (such as Ebon Eaves).

BRING TO THE TABLE: printed copies of the playbooks, reference sheets, and one or more copies of the playset questionnaire.

THE FLOW: Each player selects a playbook, and then the Keeper proceeds directly to ask the playset questions of the group. Once the choices are made, the Keeper fills out the worksheet with its hazards, while the players flesh out their playbooks (choosing their attributes, special moves, and gear). Trust values should be assigned privately, with an eye towards relationships (as outlined in **INTERSECTING LIVES**, p. 16). The Keeper then presents the investigator notes to the players, and they then proceed to figure out what gets them involved in the storyline.

THE MOTIVATION: What gets the characters involved in the story? Reasons can be varied from the simple to the complex: a change of scenery, a job opportunity, visiting the old summer home, or something more intimately connected to the mystery such as an interest in ghosts, researching a novel about strange lights, or somehow tied into their relationships with the other characters. This should be explored over the course of play. Many of the playbooks have ready hooks waiting to be incorporated, whether through their special moves (that are location moves, in effect) or their odd and unusual gear choices (relic, diary of a madman, and the like).

THE CHALLENGES: If you're not conversant with running games on the fly, then you'll want to take about fifteen to twenty minutes creating frameworks of the existing hazards, tying them into threads and the like (as described in **ARCHITECTING NIGHTMARE**, beginning on p. 147). Keepers find it particularly useful to do this while the players are detailing out their characters and sorting out their backstories a bit. If you're comfortable with running games on the fly, you'll still want to pay attention to pacing. Depending upon the amount of time allocated for your story (be it one session or multiple), you'll want to allow the characters to explore the game space (be it the small town of Ebon Eaves, a remote research station, or a luxury liner) before the mystery properly envelops them.

BENEFITS: The playset is established during the first session of play and lasts for the length of the campaign, creating a broad sandbox for you and your friends to build upon and explore. Various threads which arise during collaborative play can be further investigated, and details can be easily added as your story grows.

TIPS: Contact your players ahead of time and have them pick their playbooks and make their choices about the town, and then you can have everything formalized and ready to jump into right away when it's time to game.

Using a Framework

Building a framework strikes a happy balance between using a playset and starting completely from scratch. Creating a framework should generally take between fifteen minutes and an hour, depending upon your experience with the system.

BRING TO THE TABLE: printed copies of the playbooks, reference sheets, and your framework, of course.

THE FLOW: Each player selects a playbook and then establishes their relationship web as normal.

THE MOTIVATION: The Keeper can help personalize characters' motivations, using his framework and their playbook choices as a guide (or at least present them as options for getting into the story). Otherwise, they can present their own reasons for getting drawn into the mystery.

THE CHALLENGES: Depending upon how the framework is prepared, the characters still need a place for things to transpire. If the framework is something like a haunted house, then it still needs a time and place. If it takes place in a larger area, like a town, the Keeper will likely need to be ready to develop details with his players on the fly.

BENEFITS: Taking the middle road between no preparation and a playset, the environment can be readily tailored to suit the sense and sensibilities of the group. A forest can be established on the outskirts of town. An asylum can spring up in the old hills, and so on.

TIPS: Don't try to detail every little bit of your framework. Resist the urge to answer questions beforehand. Whenever you really want to know the answer to something, instead make it a question you want to see come up during play. Create hazard tracks with ticking bombs to drive the story forward, and assist the players in being active rather than reactive. You can also use a time and place you and your players are familiar with to make it easier for you to bring your own weird stories to life.

Starting from (Nearly) Scratch

Coming to the table with no preconceived ideas whatsoever sounds daunting, but offers up its own secret rewards.

BRING TO THE TABLE: printed copies of the playbooks, reference sheets, and an open mind full of questions (and perhaps, a looming mystery?).

THE FLOW: Each player first selects a playbook, after which the session begins with an open conversation between the players and Keeper as they establish where and when they are, and how and why they know each other.

THE MOTIVATION: There is invariably going to be some sort of looming mystery, but it is a vague thing at best. The motivation of the characters doesn't lie so much in the future, at least starting out, but goes back to the past. The Keeper wants to discover the characters and learn revelations about them, as they move through the last bits of normalcy they may really experience before the story starts in earnest.

THE CHALLENGES: There are few, if any, boundaries when using this approach. The Keeper and players must be ready for anything. This unready state requires real cooperation and a sense of trust at the table. Everyone needs to be willing and able to look through the fragments of facts brought to the fiction of the story and piece it together to collaboratively create a whole. The Keeper needs to follow the Maxims and not let the game devolve into a character study. Things need to be happening. Weird things. Strange things.

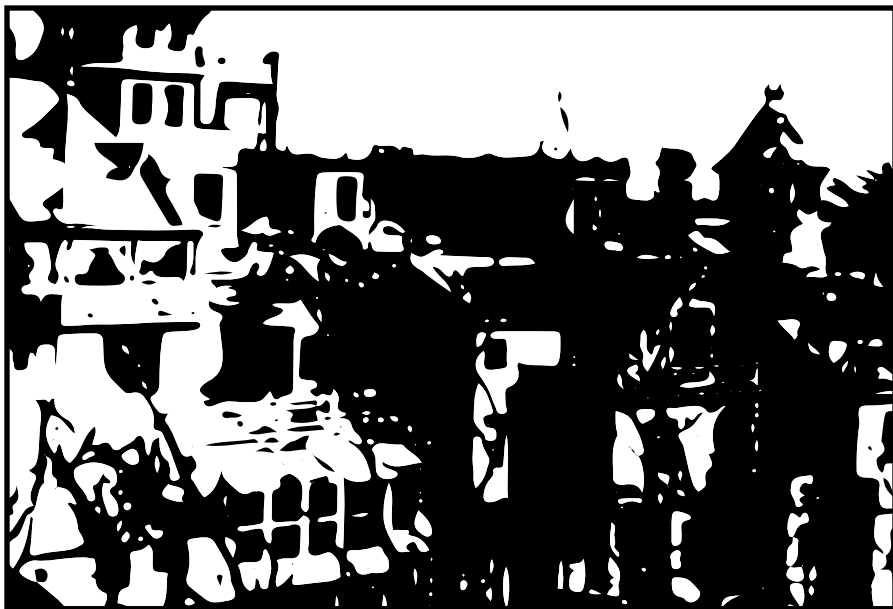
BENEFITS: Leaving things largely open can allow for stories to emerge that none of you may have thought possible.

TIPS: Come to the table with at least one looming mystery. Something that can serve as a broad question that helps suggest other questions (and gives everyone something to build upon). Explore establishing questions right away. Get some concrete details going, ask provocative questions, and encourage players to do the same with each other as Trust relationships are being built. Work towards getting buy-in from all the players, and help instill in them the sense that you're all in this together, because you are.

The Looming Mystery

Whether you're planning for one session or an ongoing storyline, it's recommended you start off with one big, broad question to get the creative juices flowing. It could be something as simple as "Who killed Jane Archer?" or "Why did the oil company abandon Sargasso Flats?" This is a question you can bring into the open directly and immediately (but what fun is that?), or one intimated indirectly as play progresses (yes!).

NOTE: If you're starting from scratch, you should probably throw it out as a completely open and inviting question for everyone to gnaw upon during your first session.



Moving Forward

Beyond the first session, you can refine, build out, and adjust your frameworks, hazards, and hazard tracks based upon what has taken place. The story should be a living, organic thing (with nothing set in stone). Think about how the session went and where things are going. What needs to be answered? What do you want to find out? What do the players want to find out? And (most importantly) what would be cool and scary to find out?

Apart and a Part

The Keeper has many duties and responsibilities. Like the players, you have certain rules by which you must abide, rules that are specifically designed to help you work with the players to create an entertaining and suspenseful storytelling experience for all involved. Although these maxims might first seem like constraints, you will soon see that they not only provide you with a powerful set of tools to guide your group's flow of play, but also enable you to deeply explore emotion-rich, personal stories of nightmare and dread.



The Maxims

As the Keeper, you must adhere to a *strict code* when you play this game: this is essential and cannot be stressed enough. You might wish to steer the ship in some other fashion, or modify and tweak the interaction of Moves and play in a way that more closely represents other games you're familiar with. But don't. Resist the temptation and just play the game as presented. Doing so will provide you with a certain freedom found only when adhering to a form, and you will discover that there is more going on here than you might have seen at first glance.

As the Keeper, hold carefully to the following maxims and do not deviate. You'll soon find you and your players are really enjoying the form and flow of the experience, and a circle of trust and deep storytelling will develop with each passing session as a result of your collaborative efforts.

The Agenda

1. Make *tremulus* real.
2. Make the characters' lives interesting.
3. Play to find out what happens.

The Execution

Always say:

- What the principles demand (and follow through).
- What the rules demand.
- What your preparation demands.
- What honesty demands.

The Principles

- Introduce the strange, the weird, and the alien at every opportunity.
- Address yourself to the characters, not the players.
- Make your move, but misdirect.
- Make your move, but never speak its name.
- Look through a cracked lens of madness.
- Name everyone, make everyone human.
- Ask provocative questions. Build upon the answers.
- Successes should be bittersweet at best, with rewards few and far between.
- Be a fan of the players' characters.
- Think about what is happening elsewhere as well.
- Sometimes, put the decisions in the players' hands.

Managing the Maxims: Expanded Insights

The maxims are comprised of three major parts: the agenda, the execution, and the principles.

The Agenda

The three major tenets should be adhered to at all times. Doing so will result in a rich experience for everyone involved.

1. MAKE TREMULUS REAL.

This may sound strange in a game revolving around the weird, but it's important to maintain verisimilitude in your story. Have NPCs work towards their own ends. Provide necessary detail to make things real. Make the world around the characters appear to operate according to the normal laws of the universe, so when you throw in the peculiar and strange, it has even more impact, and they are willing to accept it.

2. MAKE THE CHARACTERS' LIVES INTERESTING.

Keep them on their toes. It shouldn't be too difficult. Not everything has to be completely drenched in malevolent evil. You should be constantly exploring the depths of their personalities, and providing them with situations where they can be reactive as well as proactive. Use your hazards and moves to push them outside of their comfort zones whenever possible.

3. PLAY TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS.

Within every *tremulus* story lies another mystery waiting to be uncovered. Do *not* have the answers ready. Instead have questions you want to see answered. Make these secret questions interesting and engaging for everyone involved.

The Execution

Your role as Keeper is to reveal the truths and darkness of the mystery as the characters explore the story space. As such, it is essential you communicate this clearly during play.

ALWAYS SAY...

WHAT THE PRINCIPLES DEMAND (AND FOLLOW THROUGH).

Adhere to the tenets of the principles as you progress through the story, and do not compromise your actions or let your conviction waver.

WHAT THE RULES DEMAND.

If someone **POKES AROUND** and decides they find a hidden area/threshold, it is your responsibility to let them do so. It's exact nature is up to you, but if a character gets any degree of success, you should present them with the options available, and let them choose. Likewise, should a character be on the verge of madness and another character he is close to dies before his eyes, you should not let him slide. His mind should shatter like ice dropped from a great height upon a sidewalk.

WHAT YOUR PREPARATION DEMANDS.

Your framework serves as a compass to guide you through the story, with your hazard tracks pushing the story forward. Use them. The narrative demands it. If the characters are injured (or have been idle), and they are supposed to be attacked by hostile villagers on the third day, then let the chips fall where they may, even if they are recuperating or lounging.

WHAT HONESTY DEMANDS.

You will be tempted to keep secrets back from the characters. Don't. If they **PUZZLE THINGS OUT**, they get truthful, generous answers. Don't shortchange them. By the same token, if they manage to derail a hazard track, good for them. Don't compromise your integrity by having it proceed as planned because "it would be so cool" to play out. There will certainly be another opportunity to present the death cult scene in a future storyline.

The Principles

These rules help you follow the agenda and guide you in your execution of your responsibilities as the Keeper.

INTRODUCE THE STRANGE, THE WEIRD, AND THE ALIEN AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

There should be no truly normal people or events within your story. Everyone should have their tics and idiosyncrasies. When the characters stop at a gas station, why is the attendant playing a violin and singing in Latin? Why does Miss Peterson collect picture books of the dead? The rain last week dropped Roman coins. Oddments should be regular and expected.

ADDRESS YOURSELF TO THE CHARACTERS, NOT THE PLAYERS.

Very important, both for yourself and your players. This heightens the level of investment in your story and greatly personalizes things.

MAKE YOUR MOVE, BUT MISDIRECT.

You should never reveal your machinations. When you take a move to separate the characters, you could have them lost in a swirl of mist or pulled into different conversations. Don't come right out and say you're separating them. Let the story suggest the ways your chosen move can be integrated into the narrative.

MAKE YOUR MOVE, BUT NEVER SPEAK ITS NAME.

Always bury the move beneath the fiction. Don't say the landscape reveals something to someone. That's boring at best. Use phrases like "while out for your morning walk, you notice a tantalizing bit of tarnished brass sticking out from Mourner's Hill..."

LOOK THROUGH A CRACKED LENS OF MADNESS.

Don't be afraid to think the worst of NPCs. Have them wrapped up in yet undiscovered weirdness of their own. What if the innocent Miss Wilkins turns out to be more sinner than saint? Don't hesitate to kill them off, either, if it serves the story. Each can die as readily as the next. Present even the mundane in a disturbing fashion. Describe a slice of cherry pie with the juices trickling out like the blood of a fresh kill.

NAME EVERYONE, MAKE EVERYONE HUMAN.

Personalize the NPCs at every turn. It's not the used bible salesman, "it's Harry Carver from the big city who passes through town around this time each month, and everyone knows he has a crush on the mayor's wife."

ASK PROVOCATIVE QUESTIONS. BUILD UPON THE ANSWERS.

Don't ask simple yes or no questions. The characters' initial relationship webs should give you some material to work with at the outset. What did they study at university? How did they first meet? Ask them about their first brush with weirdness. What drives them to fight? What does it feel like to kill a man? What are you afraid of? Use these details to help inform and shape your story. If someone studied Egyptology, for example, you should certainly incorporate some Egyptian motifs somewhere along the way.

SUCCESSSES SHOULD BE BITTERSWEET AT BEST, WITH REWARDS FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.

The world is not a kind place. There will be misery. There will be loss. There is tragedy everywhere. Success should come at some cost, whether it be a loss of life or limb, the disappearance of someone or something, or a character forced to compromise or sacrifice himself for the greater good, in either word or deed, like a pacifist taking a life or holding back a horde, so his companions can flee. Survival with mind and body intact can often be victory enough.

BE A FAN OF THE PLAYERS' CHARACTERS.

While the world and its weirdness may be out to get them, you should not be. Always give them the benefit of the doubt, especially new players. Work with them.

THINK ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING ELSEWHERE AS WELL.

While your attention should be focused on the events playing out, keep a close watch on what your hazards are up to. Hazard tracks are especially handy for you to keep an eye on the big picture and what is going on at any given time.

SOMETIMES, PUT THE DECISIONS IN THE PLAYERS' HANDS.

Players love pitching in to actively form the fiction. Ask them for names of people, if certain places are present in the town, and if the person they shot will survive or not. There are always dark sides to every decision, after all.

Keeper Moves

There are two classifications of moves: general and situational. General moves can be used at any time. Situational moves should be contextualized and make sense given what is happening. They are used when the characters are either in a threatening situation (often involving a hazard), or when a character successfully **POKES AROUND** or **PUZZLES THINGS OUT**.

NOTE: *When a Keeper Move is immediate, unpleasant, and irrevocable, it is referred to as a 'hard move' to help build a sense of dread among the players.*

General

- Separate them.
- Capture someone.
- Put someone in harm's way.
- Announce trouble elsewhere.
- Foreshadow future trouble.
- Take away their stuff.
- Make them buy.
- Activate their gear's downside (hitting tags is especially useful for this)
- Tell them the possible consequences and ask.
- Offer an opportunity, with or without a cost.
- Turn their move back on them.
- Let the dice decide. Call for a roll+luck.
- Make a hazard (obstacle) move (from your framework).

Situational

- Trade damage for damage.
- Inflict damage.
- Present items and clues.
- Reveal knowledge.

After every move: **ALWAYS** ask the players *"What do you do?"*

Making Moves and Spending Hold

As the Keeper, you make a move:

1. Whenever there's a pause in the conversation and everyone looks to you to say something.
2. As a consequence of a character's failure (someone makes a move and gets a 6 or less on their roll).
3. At *any time*, when you spend a point of hold.[†]

In any case, to make a move, you simply select one, and do it.

Remember the principles. Remember to address yourself to the characters, remember to misdirect, and remember to never speak your move's name. Say what happens to the characters as though it were their world that's the real one. After each move, be certain to ask them "What do you do?"



[†]Hold is either spent to take hard moves against particular characters, or against the entire group (depending upon how it was gained). Whenever possible, it's more genre appropriate to take your move against the party/parties involved in giving you the hold in the first place. You should make certain your hard moves against an individual are particularly unkind. Players quickly learn the consequences of their actions in an uncaring Lovecraftian universe.

Moves in Action

Keeper Moves in Perspective

When you make a Keeper Move, it should always:

1. Flow from the fiction.
2. Allow for character intervention
3. Set up future moves.

This means you describe what happens, but pause just before the outcome is known. At that point, you ask the players what they do.

The creature leaps out at you from the rafters. *What do you do?*

The Mayor rises to usher you out of his office. *What do you do?*

The chanting rises to a crescendo and something begins forming within the mystic circle. *What do you do?*

Remember

There is a long list of Keeper Moves, and you may find it daunting at first. You may think you need to memorize them all, but that's not the case. The list simply codifies what experienced Keepers do in play anyway, and should serve to inspire and refine your ideas, rather than limit and constrict. The more you play, the more the moves become second nature.

Keeper Moves should continually drive the story forward (that's what setting up future moves is all about) and make things interesting and engaging for everyone involved.

For example, you could let them see a couple of men carrying a body out of a house, a body covered in strange pock marks, towards a beat-up pickup truck (foreshadowing future trouble). *What do they do?*

Hard Moves in Perspective

A Hard Move:

1. Flows from the fiction.
2. Cannot be interrupted.
3. Is to be feared by the players.

This means you describe something from start to finish and it happens *before* you ask the players what they do.

The creature leaps down from the rafters and you take 2 harm as it bites into your neck. *What do you do?*

The Mayor ushers you out of his office, closes the door, and you hear it lock firmly behind you. *What do you do?*

The chanting rises to a crescendo, something forms within the circle, and the slavering beast tears three cultists asunder as the rest run screaming past you. *What do you do?*

Remember

Not every hard move has to be horrible and violent. The main takeaway is that it is something that happens *without* the characters being able to intervene. Whether it's someone jumping from the clock tower to their doom or a door slammed in their face, it happens, and that's that. After it takes place, you *then* ask the players what they do.

The ability to hold hard moves is a powerful tool in the Keeper's arsenal. Holding hard moves serves to build a continual sense of impending doom and rising tension as the story moves forward. This is not to say you need to hoard them, but when the players know you have some tucked away (as a result of their failures), they are torn between treading carefully and rushing towards a resolution of their present predicament (and/or their inexorable fate).

General

SEPARATE THEM

USE TO: heighten tension, send them in different directions, and diminish resources.

EXAMPLES

As Amy moves along the passageway, the ceiling suddenly collapses behind her. Nash is forced to take another route.

The window is large enough for Sheridan to squeeze through; Turnbull must look for another way in.

CAPTURE SOMEONE

USE TO: put one or more characters in danger and separate the group.

EXAMPLES

Turnbull gives Sheridan a lift over the high wall, and hears a slight metallic click behind him. He turns to see the groundskeeper pointing a rifle at his mid-section.

Running through the forest, Nash screams in surprise as a snare whips him into the air.

PUT SOMEONE IN HARM'S WAY

USE TO: really shine a spotlight on a character, often to see how they act under pressure. This is also good to ramp up the energy or change the pacing of a session.

EXAMPLES

Turnbull finds he is unable to pay for his meal, having mislaid his wallet, and must contend with the manager's nephew who is easily twice his size.

Amy lets out a startled yell as three menacing figures emerge from the fog around her, knives in hand.

ANNOUNCE TROUBLE ELSEWHERE

USE TO: underscore how horrible things are at this very moment.

EXAMPLES

The snarling and screaming in the yard meant three things to Sheridan: Rabbit, Hightone's dog, had gone rabid, broken the leash, and found Hightone's sweetmeats.

The chanting behind the door ends, and the sweet smell of incense cannot mask the sudden, overpowering stench of rotting fish.

FORESHADOW FUTURE TROUBLE

USE TO: give a glimpse into how horrible things will be.

EXAMPLES

The weatherman said the storms were sweeping across the Great Plains and moving in fast, cutting a swath of destruction before them.

Old Gnarl is a good bartender, but a bad driver. As he heads off, he hits a squirrel, and doesn't even bother to swerve or stop, only slightly slowing to take another sip from the bottle nestled between his body and the car door.

TAKE AWAY THEIR GEAR

USE TO: deprive them of necessary resources to amplify the tension of a situation, increase potential dramatic conflict, or to get them in a position where they have to buy.

EXAMPLES

Jake stumbles going down the stairs and grabs onto the rail to keep from falling. The borrowed flashlight flies from his hand, and cracks on the hard basement floor. Seamus isn't pleased.

Amy leaves the Hangdog Saloon only to discover her bike has been stolen.

MAKE THEM BUY

USE TO: get them to interact with the locals, use some of their wealth, or realize nothing is free.

EXAMPLES

Sheridan realizes he used up the last of the shotgun shells, and decides he'd better hoof it into town before nightfall.

Amy asks Seamus if she can borrow his flashlight, and he tells her she'd be better off getting her own.

ACTIVATE THEIR GEAR'S DOWNSIDE

USE TO: increase tension, reveal the frailty of man, and underscore the situation.

EXAMPLES

As Turnbull entered the chamber, the cheap flashlight flickered and went out. He sighed and felt about his pockets for matches, hoping he hadn't used them all up.

Nash leapt into the seat of his car and jammed his key into the ignition. The engine failed to turn over. He doubted the creature chasing him would kindly give him a few moments.

NOTE: Hitting tags is especially useful for this.

TELL THEM THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES AND ASK

USE TO: present them with some clear choices, honestly and directly.

EXAMPLES

Turnbull can get the drop on the doctor by smashing through the window, but everyone on the estate will be alerted to his presence. Or he can take his time and carefully pry the lock open, though the doctor shall likely be elsewhere in the house by then. What does he do?

The slaving hound leaps at Nash. He can dive out the window, suffering great harm, or may hold his ground and smash it in the face as it bites him. What does he do?

OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY, WITH OR WITHOUT A COST

USE TO: give them a clear choice while knowing exactly what they're getting into.

EXAMPLES

Amy can slip through the small window easily. Of course, she'll have to leave Nash behind.

The ancient book emanates evil. If destroyed, Amy will suffer shock and unleash evil, yet the dark priest's power will be largely diminished. What does she do?

TURN THEIR MOVE BACK ON THEM

USE TO: show them what happens when they miss their rolls.

EXAMPLES

Sheridan is poking around in the basement of an old manor and fails his roll. He cuts his hand on a bit of broken glass (suffering 1 harm) as he discovers a collection of worthless mason jars.

Amy asks Laney to share the local gossip and fails her roll. Amy may either take action on Laney's rumors or suffer a -1forward if she doesn't.

LET THE DICE DECIDE (CALL FOR ROLL+LUCK)

USE TO: determine things which are of little general import (at least on the surface).

EXAMPLES

*Does Amy, despite having an umbrella, get soaked by the freak rainstorm?
Does Sheridan have any gum in his pocket?*

MAKE A HAZARD MOVE (FROM YOUR FRAMEWORK)

USE TO: remind them of the weirdness of the world; demonstrate directly or indirectly, what they are up against.

EXAMPLES

The Hanging Tree seemed to sigh as Jillian passed beneath its creaky branches.

Sheridan awoke in the night to see a trail of slime lead from the open window into the closet where he could hear something shifting about.

AFTER EVERY MOVE:

ALWAYS ASK THE PLAYERS “WHAT DO YOU DO?”

Situational Moves

TRADE DAMAGE FOR DAMAGE

WHEN TO USE: As a result of a HAZARD MOVE or when a conflict has arisen.

EXAMPLES

The farmhand rushes The Detective who is standing with a baseball bat, ready and waiting. He inflicts 1 harm and takes 1 harm in return.

The Heir picks up the small, weeping child, and its skin sloughs off revealing a slimy, chitinous shell beneath. The Heir takes 2 shock, and the young abomination's spine cracks as it is thrown against the far wall in turn (taking 1 harm).

INFLICT DAMAGE

WHEN TO USE: As a result of a HAZARD MOVE or when a conflict has arisen.

EXAMPLES

Milly crawled into her bed in the strange old house and had horrible dreams that she can scarcely remember. She takes 1 shock.

Turnbull followed Knack into the narrow clearing and let out an exclamation as Knack lurched back and collapsed, clutching at the arrow piercing his throat.



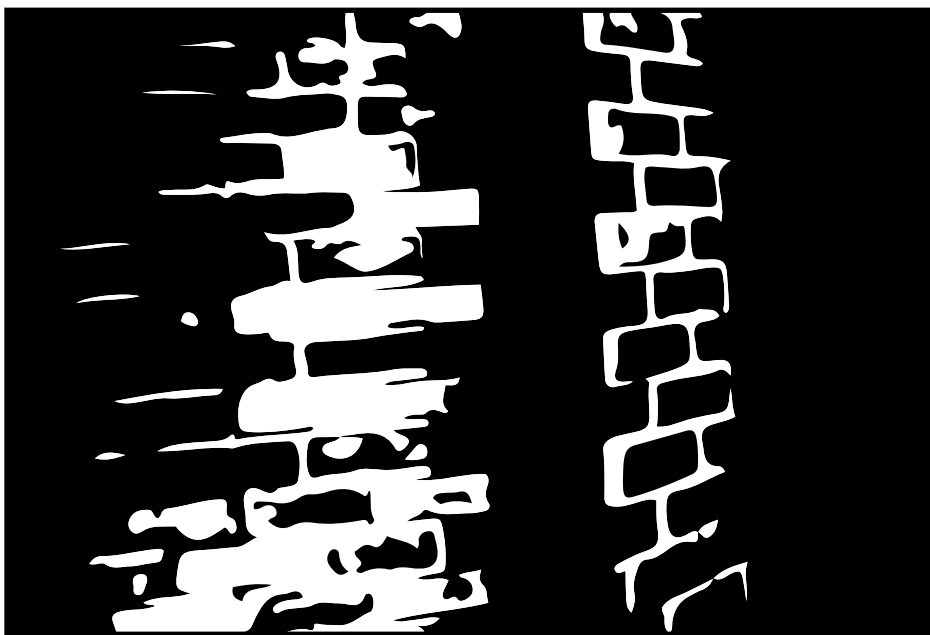
PRESENT ITEMS AND CLUES

WHEN TO USE: As a result of the characters using the **POKE AROUND** or **PUZZLE THINGS OUT** moves.

EXAMPLES

Amy spends the afternoon researching the Manley family lineage in the attic and discovers Joshua Manley is over 200 years old. She earns a clue about him, giving her +1forward with other rolls regarding him.

Nash decides to poke around the old cemetery and discovers a good item (Keeper's Choice). He finds the groundskeeper's lantern, well cared for and full of oil.



REVEAL KNOWLEDGE

WHEN TO USE: To flesh out existing mysteries, to propel the story forward, or to heighten tension.

EXAMPLES

On the drive back from the mines, Laney tells Amy how the Manley Moon is bad luck. Nothing good ever happens when it's hanging in the sky.

The book on the pedestal is instantly recognizable as the Necronomicon, a cursed book said to be of great evil and import.

Oh, the Horror!

When a character sees something terrifying or potentially startling (and thus, could reasonably cause shock), he must immediately **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**. You can refer to this as a **SANITY CHECK**. It is a **ROLL+REASON** (unless they have moves that indicate otherwise).

ON A 10+, they take 1 less shock and may act normally.

ON A 7-9, they take 1 less shock but are -1forward.

ON A MISS, they take full shock and are either **-1ONGOING** (for the scene) or the Keeper holds one (Keeper's choice).



Basic Shock Scale

These guidelines give a general idea of the amount of shock things and situations can cause, and are left to the Keeper's discretion. Specific creatures (those defined by the **ASH SCALE**, p. 156) have defined scores, and are exempt from this scale.

0 SHOCK

Finding a rotting corpse.
Someone leaping out of the darkness.
Discovering a book is bound in human skin.

1 SHOCK

Discovering the corpse of an acquaintance.
Seeing a stranger killed.
Watching someone lose their mind.
Being faced with a wild animal.
Finding a skeleton in a closet.
Killing someone.

2 SHOCK

Seeing a ghost or mysterious apparition.
Seeing a close friend killed (or discovering their corpse).
Discovering a fine meal is human flesh.
Seeing an object move of its own accord.
Finding a twisted fetus in a jar.

3 SHOCK

Making mental contact with a lesser alien entity.
Seeing a trusted friend killed (or discovering their corpse).
Observing interspecies relations, or evidence thereof.

4 SHOCK

Being the sole survivor of a horrific event.
Seeing a loved one tortured to death.
Having to cut off one of your own limbs.
Forced to participate in unnatural acts.
Killing a companion, trusted friend, or relative.

5+ SHOCK

Making mental contact with a powerful alien entity.
Seeing a town destroyed.
Releasing a powerful evil into the world.

The Price of Friendship

Remember, if a character dies, their corpse is discovered, or they go insane, other characters must make a **SANITY CHECK (ACT UNDER PRESSURE)** or take an amount of shock equal to their Trust with the dearly departed/mentally absent friend.

Fine-tuning Fear

The Keeper is given a great deal of latitude in how often to force the issue of Sanity checks. In fact, its nebulousness allows you to tailor the game to suit personal sensibilities. Whether characters are required to roll the first time they see a particular horror or every time they confront one or more similar horrors (like a single deep one as opposed to many) gives the Keeper a powerful choice. By adjusting this, it can easily make the game range from slightly unsettling to absolutely mind shattering. There is nothing preventing it from varying within a particular story, either.



Terror is in the Eye of the Beholder

Just because something doesn't normally cause shock (based upon the scale), doesn't mean it can't. This is at the Keeper's discretion, and the character's background can be taken into consideration. If you want, you may call for a **SANITY CHECK**. Failure can cause a point of shock (with additional consequences as determined by the resultant damage roll).

Hazards

There are five main types of hazards. Every hazard falls into one of the following categories:

ELDERS: Community members in positions of power.

TOWNIES: Groups bound together by common interests/goals.

LANDSCAPE: Natural, unnatural, or man-made.

WEIRD: Twisted people, entities, or things.

DOOM: A danger coming or an event already taking place.

Defining hazards in this manner gives the Keeper an easy way to keep track of the essential moving parts of his framework *that are at odds* with the characters. It is perfectly normal and natural for other parts of the environment to arise through discourse—NPCs, buildings, and landmarks—that are not initially hazardous, but more or less serve as either window-dressing or enable the Keeper to make either a general or situational move. Over the course of play, however, as the story progresses these innocuous elements may (or should) become hazards in their own right.

The Nature of Hazards

A hazard is further defined by its subtype, which is nothing more than giving it an easy handle which defines its impulse. This impulse serves to reveal its motivation, driving force, and purpose in play. A hazard *may* act in a contrary manner on the surface, but it does so as a means to an end and will always, eventually reveal its true nature over the course of the story. Leopards cannot, after all, change their spots.

Broad and Narrow

Just as hazards have categories, so do hazard moves. For example, an Elder move is a hazard move specific to Elders.

Hazard Types, Subtypes, and Related Moves

ELDERS

A member of a community in a position of some sort of power. He/She need not be in office (though they often are). An elder could just as easily be the barber, the mechanic, the sheriff, or the town gossip. An elder hazard is the elder plus any people/entities under his control:

Choose subtype

- **COLLECTOR** (IMPULSE: to own)
- **DICTATOR** (IMPULSE: to control)
- **PROPHET** (IMPULSE: to denounce and overthrow)
- **PROTECTOR** (IMPULSE: to maintain the status quo)

Elder Moves

- Outflank someone, corner someone, encircle someone.
- Attack someone suddenly, directly, and brutally.
- Attack someone cautiously, holding reserves.
- Seize someone or something, for leverage or information.
- Make a show of force.
- Make a show of discipline.
- Offer to negotiate. Demand concession or obedience.
- Claim territory: move into it, blockade it, or assault it.
- Buy out someone's allies.
- Make a careful study of someone and attack where they're weak.

Elders act primarily *through their people*, acting directly themselves only when cornered or caught out in the open.

TOWNIES

A townies threat is a group of people, often with an informal leader, linked together through some common bond or goal.

Choose subtype

- **CULT** (IMPULSE: to victimize and incorporate people)
- **ENFORCERS** (IMPULSE: to victimize anyone who stands out)
- **FAMILY** (IMPULSE: to close ranks, protect their own)
- **HUNTING PACK** (IMPULSE: to victimize anyone vulnerable)
- **MOB** (IMPULSE: to riot, burn, kill scapegoats)
- **SYBARITES** (IMPULSE: to consume someone's resources)

An individual person within a group of townies might not share the group's impulse, and might even fight against it. It's the group's impulse, not necessarily any individual person's motivation.

Townies Moves

- Burst out in uncoordinated, undirected violence.
- Make a coordinated attack with a coherent objective.
- Tell stories (truth, lies, allegories, homilies).
- Demand consideration or indulgence.
- Rigidly follow or defy authority.
- Cling to or defy reason.
- Make a show of solidarity and power.
- Ask for help or someone's participation.

LANDSCAPE

A landscape hazard can be natural, unnatural, or man-made.

Choose subtype

- **BREEDING PIT** (IMPULSE: to generate weirdness)
- **FORTRESS** (IMPULSE: to deny access)
- **FURNACE** (IMPULSE: to consume things)
- **MAZE** (IMPULSE: to trap, to frustrate passage)
- **MIRAGE** (IMPULSE: to entice and betray people)
- **PRISON** (IMPULSE: to contain, to deny egress)

Landscape Moves

- Reveal something to someone.
- Display something for all to see.
- Hide something.
- Bar the way.
- Open the way.
- Provide another way.
- Shift, move, rearrange.
- Offer a guide.
- Present a guardian.
- Disgorge something.
- Take something away: lost, used up, or destroyed.

WEIRD

A weird hazard is a twisted person, entity, or thing belonging firmly within the strange and alien. It may appear altogether normal and innocuous on the surface.

Choose subtype

- **CANNIBAL** (IMPULSE: craves satiety and plenty)
- **DISEASE VECTOR** (IMPULSE: craves contact, intimate and/or anonymous)
- **MEGALOMANIAC** (IMPULSE: craves mastery)
- **OUTCAST** (IMPULSE: craves restitution, recompense)
- **PERVERSTY** (IMPULSE: craves overthrow, chaos, the ruination of all)
- **SADOMASOCHIST** (IMPULSE: craves pain, its own or others')

Weird Moves

- Display the true weirdness of its world.
- Display the contents of its heart.
- Attack someone from behind or otherwise by stealth.
- Attack someone face-on, but without threat or warning.
- Insult, affront, offend, or provoke someone.
- Offer something to someone, or do something for someone, with strings attached.
- Put it in someone's path, part of someone's day or life.
- Threaten someone, directly or else by implication.
- Steal something from someone.
- Seize and hold someone.
- Ruin something. Befoul, rot, desecrate, corrupt, or alter it.
- Tell stories (truths, lies, allegories, homilies).

DOOM

A doom isn't a person, but a horrible danger to come, because of something that people are doing, an event taking place, or something that has already come to be.

Choose subtype

- **BARRIER** (IMPULSE: to impoverish people)
- **CONDITION** (IMPULSE: to expose people to danger)
- **DELUSION** (IMPULSE: to dominate people's choices and actions)
- **DISEASE** (IMPULSE: to saturate a population)
- **MYTHOS** (IMPULSE: to destroy/dominate)
- **SACRIFICE** (IMPULSE: to leave people bereft)
- **TRADITION** (IMPULSE: to promote and justify violence)

A doom is any bad practical circumstance. The town's water filtration breaks down? The roads are iced over? There's not enough food to get through the dry season?

Doom Moves

- Someone neglects duties, responsibilities, or obligations.
- Someone flies into a rage.
- Someone takes self-destructive, fruitless, or hopeless action.
- Someone approaches, seeking help.
- Someone approaches, seeking comfort.
- Someone withdraws and seeks isolation.
- Someone proclaims the doom to be a just punishment.
- Someone proclaims the doom to be, in fact, a blessing.
- Someone refuses or fails to adapt to new circumstances.
- Someone brings friends or loved ones along.
- Someone dies.

The "Someone" in these Moves should generally only be the NPCs.

Making Hazard Moves

In this section, you shall find detailed examples of all the hazards, and how to use their particular moves within your stories. Its express purpose is to aid you in navigating through the dark corners of nightmare, and inspire you until such time that everything falls into place. And it will with frightening speed. While it may appear quite mechanical on the surface, remember there is an ebb and flow dynamic taking place during your stories, and your moves are as much active as reactive. Don't forget moves should feel natural, and not forced.



Elders

Collector

IMPULSE: To own.

EXAMPLES: Antiquarian, rich recluse, business owner, or farmer.

Dictator

IMPULSE: To control.

EXAMPLES: The mayor, the sheriff, cult leader, or wealthy business owner.

Prophet

IMPULSE: To denounce and overthrow.

EXAMPLES: Religious zealot, visionary, drifter, out-of-towner, or scientist.

Protector

IMPULSE: To maintain the status quo.

EXAMPLES: The mayor, the sheriff, community leader, or favored son.



REMEMBER: *Elders rarely act directly; they prefer to use other agencies to do their dirty work.*

Elder Moves

OUTFLANK SOMEONE, CORNER SOMEONE, OR ENCIRCLE SOMEONE.

EXAMPLES

As Amy approached the mayor, his guards gathered around him and suggested she move along.

Nash turned off his office light to see a man waiting near his car with threatening eyes.

ATTACK SOMEONE SUDDENLY, DIRECTLY, AND BRUTALLY.

EXAMPLES

Turnbull saw the sheriff nod slightly just a moment before the deputy's nightstick caught him in the ribs.

Nash knew Mr. Masterson was too genteel to get his hands dirty. His assistant, Jennings, had no such compunction. Nash woke up later in a ditch, resoundingly thrashed, but glad to be alive.

ATTACK SOMEONE CAUTIOUSLY, HOLDING RESERVES.

EXAMPLES

Sheridan heard the cult leader call out something in a dead language. One of his undead servants shambled slowly towards him, while three more hung back, watching with blind eyes.

The sheriff sent one of his men to subdue Turnbull. The other two shifted uneasily, readying their shotguns just in case.

SEIZE SOMEONE OR SOMETHING, FOR LEVERAGE OR INFORMATION.

EXAMPLES

Amy heard a crash of glass upstairs, reaching the second floor in time to see a figure exiting the window with her journal.

Milly received a phone call from the sheriff. Jake had been taken in by the police for questioning.

MAKE A SHOW OF FORCE.

EXAMPLES

Amy heard a gunshot and rushed outside the library. Smoke curled from the sheriff's gun. Nearby a songbird lay, little more than blood and feathers. Dr. Nabokov knew the mayor abused his position, but having a parade in honor of his birthday revealed how narcissistic he truly was.

MAKE A SHOW OF DISCIPLINE.

EXAMPLES

Deputy Connors was a big man with a big heart, a black eye, and a swollen lip. The sheriff huffed and rubbed his forehead with a dirty handkerchief. "Man comes in late for his shift, he's gotta learn."

The mayor's aide requests an immediate accounting of Amy's recent neglect of her duties, else she faces the prospect of possible dismissal from her post.

OFFER TO NEGOTIATE. DEMAND CONCESSION OR OBEDIENCE.

EXAMPLES

Nash was ushered in to Professor Stem's office. On the desk was a brown envelope the old professor slid towards him. "Kill the story, and there's more where this came from."

Sheridan saw the look in the farmer's eye as he gutted the pig with a single, forceful stroke. "Maybe now you'll think twice 'fore you trespass on my land again."

CLAIM TERRITORY: MOVE INTO IT, BLOCKADE IT, OR ASSAULT IT.

EXAMPLES

Amy noted all the recently abandoned shops were being bought up by Franklin Pharmaceuticals.

Milly arrived home to find an eviction notice on her door for failure to pay back taxes. Through the window, she saw several burly men loading up her belongings in boxes.

Townies

Cult

IMPULSE: to victimize and incorporate people.

EXAMPLES: corrupted church congregation, a secret society, or a criminal enterprise.

Enforcers

IMPULSE: to victimize anyone who stands out.

EXAMPLES: local authorities, outside authorities, militant church group, or community group.

Family

IMPULSE: to close ranks, protect their own.

EXAMPLES: local family or community sector (agricultural, blue collar, white collar, farmers, musicians, etc.).

Hunting Pack

IMPULSE: to victimize anyone vulnerable.

EXAMPLES: troublemakers, teenagers, local authority, or criminal organization.

Mob

IMPULSE: to riot, burn, kill scapegoats.

EXAMPLES: locals, outsiders, protestors, or those for/against change.

Sybarites

IMPULSE: to consume someone's resources.

EXAMPLES: carousers, tourists, or subset of locals (blue collar or white collar).

REMEMBER: *An individual person within a group of townies might not share the group's impulse, and might even fight against it. It's the group's impulse, not necessarily any person's motivation.*

Townies Moves

BURST OUT IN UNCOORDINATED, UNDIRECTED VIOLENCE.

EXAMPLES

As Amy walked down the street, she saw people throwing glass bottles, tipping over cars, and setting fires. “Some of the locals get excited when the Dodgers beat the Yankees,” Nash remarked.

Turnbull ducked behind the bar as two shifts of miners got into a brawl. The older bartender grinned toothlessly and hunched down beside him as a glass smashed on the wall above them. “It’s always about a girl.”

MAKE A COORDINATED ATTACK WITH A COHERENT OBJECTIVE.

EXAMPLES

The Brothers of Liberty and Life pressed the stage as Senator Alford approached the podium. When Chaff gave the sign, they began throwing bottles. Jake had seen this sort of thing before—the senator was in trouble. Nash watched from the rooftop. The tip indicated the Homer boys were going to make a run at the Capriccio family for trying to set up shop in town. Right on cue, the boys pulled up in their town car, and a moment later he heard tommy-guns erupting inside the small diner.

TELL STORIES (TRUTH, LIES, ALLEGORIES, HOMILIES).

EXAMPLES

Miners gathered around Nash. Scotty, the shift leader, began telling him how they’d seen some sort of creature in Tunnel 5, and that Johannes was reported missing

Brother Jones smiled and approached Amy. His friends milled around behind him, handing out papers. He began telling her how he prophesied the end days recently in a dream.

DEMAND CONSIDERATION OR INDULGENCE.

EXAMPLES

Reverend Williams heard the knock on the door from his rectory. He answered it and a dozen sets of eyes glared at him from the rain. "This is the only place in town with power. Can we come in?" Though he knew his quarters would be cramped, he invited them within. Laney entered the library with a group of women chatting behind her. "Would you mind so very much if we had the Ladies' Auxiliary Auction here tomorrow night?" she asked Amy.

RIGIDLY FOLLOW OR DEFY AUTHORITY.

EXAMPLES

During the mayor's birthday parade, the band suddenly began to play "Ain't We Got Fun?" as they passed the grandstand. Nash noticed the mayor glowering as he stomped off the stage. Amy asked the miners if she could see their supervisor. They shook their heads and reminded her that only workers were allowed on the grounds.

CLING TO OR DEFY REASON.

EXAMPLES

The strange, translucent cloud receded into the woods. Amy looked around at the crowd. "What happened?" she asked. "Nothing dear," an elderly woman said, "it's just the Hanover fog." Nash saw the crowd was anxious and trouble was brewing. He didn't expect it when they began to chant for the head of the reporter who broke the story, as they began pulling out small crescent knives.

MAKE A SHOW OF SOLIDARITY AND POWER.

EXAMPLES

Amy, Nash, and Turnbull were stunned as their car was suddenly surrounded by the weird children. They could either drive through them or get out. It got worse when the children began throwing rocks. Turnbull and Sheridan saw Ames handing out hoes and scythes to the other farmhands. "We'll do what we can to hold those things off while you look for your friends."

ASK FOR HELP OR FOR SOMEONE'S PARTICIPATION.

EXAMPLES

One of the volunteer firemen ran over to Nash with a bucket. "Hurry!" he exclaimed. "The church is on fire!"

Blackwell and his boys entered Alex's Antique shop. Alex paused in his reading and looked up. Blackwell swallowed hard and spoke. "We can't get it to leave. Can you help?"



Landscape

A landscape hazard can be natural, unnatural, or manmade.

Breeding pit

IMPULSE: to generate weirdness.

EXAMPLES: an old landfill, a toxic lake, a deep cave, or a catacomb.

Fortress

IMPULSE: to deny access.

EXAMPLES: an old mansion, a manor, a scientist's lab, a forest, or an asylum.

Furnace

IMPULSE: to consume things.

EXAMPLES: a lake, a park, a factory, an old manor, or a forest.

Maze

IMPULSE: to trap, to frustrate passage.

EXAMPLES: a forest, a cemetery, catacombs, factory, or old mansion.

Mirage

IMPULSE: to entice and betray people.

EXAMPLES: a forest, a candy store, an antique shop, a canyon, or a park.

Prison

IMPULSE: to contain, to deny egress.

EXAMPLES: an asylum, a forest, a manor, or a museum.

Landscape Moves

REVEAL SOMETHING TO SOMEONE.

EXAMPLES

*As Amy passes the lake, she sees a cracked bottle washed up on the shore.
Turnbull pushed through the forest to discover the crumbling ruins of an old house.*

DISPLAY SOMETHING FOR ALL TO SEE.

EXAMPLES

*The lights in the manor flickered to life, and the pair could see something moving past the upstairs window, something not quite human.
The stairs led them to an ancient chamber where the still-glowing coals of the brazier indicated someone had been there a short time ago.*

HIDE SOMETHING.

EXAMPLES

*Seamus stumbled into the bedroom, slipped on the rug, and his flashlight tumbled out of his hand and under the chifforobe.
The fog in the forest grew thick. Soon, they could not make out the horseman's trail and were forced to return back to their rooms in the boarding house.*

BAR THE WAY.

EXAMPLES

*The front door of the manor was securely locked. They sought another way in.
As they went to leave town, they found that the old bridge had been washed away by the torrential rainfall.*

OPEN THE WAY.

EXAMPLES

The forest wall seemed to be solid until Turnbull noticed a small gap in the undergrowth, where a few deft flicks of the machete would grant them easy ingress to the ruins.

The avalanche revealed a hidden tunnel, one leading into the hillside's depths.

PROVIDE ANOTHER WAY.

EXAMPLES

Nash found a way in through the cellar door. Hopefully, it would connect to the house proper.

Though the bridge was down, Amy could see the ferry boat coming down the river. Soon they would be across.

SHIFT, MOVE, REARRANGE.

EXAMPLES

The drawing room was different. Something had changed. Seamus realized the desk had been moved to the opposite wall, closer to the fireplace.

As Turnbull approached the far corner of the attic, he realized it was not the best idea, as the rotted wood gave way beneath him.

OFFER A GUIDE.

EXAMPLES

Turnbull had wandered around the old woods for over an hour until he saw an old man fishing by a creek. "Sure, I can take you to the stone circle...if you really want to go there."

The gas station attendant finished topping off the tank while Nash puzzled over the map. "If you want help getting around Piney Woods, I know it like the back of my hand. Come back around in about half an hour."

PRESENT A GUARDIAN.

EXAMPLES

Sheridan heard something rustle in the leaves behind him. He swung up onto the low-hanging branch above him just as the wolf pounced.

The cave smelled like an admixture of rotting fish and bile. The scum-covered pond rippled ever so slightly, but Amy noted it, and the blackish-grey webbed hand rising from the surface to pull itself onto the cave floor.

DISGORGE SOMETHING.

EXAMPLES

Nash approached Amy excitedly. “Those slight tremors last night? They uncovered that monolith we’ve been looking for!”

Turnbull heard a flapping overhead, coming from the direction of the caves. It was an abomination. Its blackish-green skin shimmered in the moonlight as its leathery wings sliced through the air. He saw its uncaring eyes regard him for a moment before returning to its unknown errand.

TAKE SOMETHING AWAY: LOST, USED UP, OR DESTROYED.

EXAMPLES

Nash emptied his clip into the creature as it bore down on him. It didn’t stop. The creature grabbed his gun, crushing both it and his hand before disappearing up the chimney.

Amy found the cave system beneath the old house continued for miles. Her lantern flickered, reminding her she had nearly used up her reserve. She needed to get to the surface before she was forever lost in the labyrinth.

Weird

A weird hazard is any strange person, place, object, or creature (living or undead) beyond the realm of the norm.

Cannibal

IMPULSE: craves satiety and plenty.

EXAMPLES: an old hermit, a pleasant mailman, the family secret, a plump church lady, traveling salesman, or butcher.

Disease vector

IMPULSE: craves contact, intimate and/or anonymous.

EXAMPLES: the preacher's daughter, a flapper, a playboy, or an unliving creature.

Megalomaniac

IMPULSE: craves mastery.

EXAMPLES: a cult leader, the mayor, a preacher, old family retainer, or a washed-up celebrity.

Outcast

IMPULSE: craves restitution, recompense.

EXAMPLES: an abandoned child, a laboratory experiment, a disowned person, or the town drunk.

Perversity

IMPULSE: craves overthrow, chaos, the ruination of all.

EXAMPLES: the mayor, a cultist, a mad scientist, an insane preacher, or the druggist.

Sadomasochist

IMPULSE: craves pain, its own or that of others.

EXAMPLES: an ex-boxer, disgruntled factory worker, a drifter, a bartender, or lounge singer.

Weird Moves

DISPLAY THE TRUE WEIRDNESS OF ITS WORLD.

EXAMPLES

Amy could hear a thrumming from the back of the cave and saw the creature standing atop a black crystalline pedestal, calling to a faintly glowing light that pulsed in reply.

Nash walked into the ruins and it was then a fierce chill wind blew up. Through his wind-stung, teary eyes, he saw the altar, restored, knowing the stains were from the blood of countless sacrifices made to alien gods over the centuries.

DISPLAY THE CONTENTS OF ITS HEART.

EXAMPLES

Pigeon's room was a mess. On the walls were faded photos of the missing girls and newspaper headlines. Sheridan gagged when he found the jar of small teeth, dried eyeballs, and pale ribbons on the nightstand.

The doctor sloughed off his skin in the shadows and oozed towards Turnbull. "I have shed the petty constraints of man," it gurgled. "Why don't you join me? It all makes sense now."

ATTACK SOMEONE FROM BEHIND OR OTHERWISE BY STEALTH.

EXAMPLES

Turnbull followed the creature into the sewer tunnels against Amy's advice. He couldn't pinpoint its movements. Sounds of splashing echoed about him until one fierce claw, and then another brought him low.

The lab was empty, abandoned, and covered with layers of dust. Suddenly it swirled around Seamus, and he saw the outline of Professor Leary as he brought the sledgehammer down.

ATTACK SOMEONE FACE-ON, BUT WITHOUT THREAT OR WARNING.

EXAMPLES

Miss Peterson began clearing the table, piling up the plates and collecting the silverware, until she reached Nash, suddenly stabbing him in the face. Sheriff Osgood thanked the men for helping out with the manhunt. After they dispersed, he approached Turnbull. "You have caused enough heartaches for this family," he said, and promptly shot him in the mid-section.

INSULT, AFFRONT, OFFEND OR PROVOKE SOMEONE.

EXAMPLES

The town drunk laughed at Nash as he walked off. "You think you're doing the right thing? That's what I thought too."
Gnarls poked Turnbull in the chest. "You're a waste of space. Get out of my bar."

OFFER SOMETHING TO SOMEONE, OR DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE, WITH STRINGS ATTACHED.

EXAMPLES

"I know what you need," cackled Professor Leary, "And I'll get it for you, if you can procure the blueprints to the electrical grid."
Farmer Brown looked through the closed shutters. "If you want the whole story, bring the cash back tomorrow."

PUT IT IN SOMEONE'S PATH, PART OF SOMEONE'S DAY OR LIFE.

EXAMPLES

Nash met Snitch at the usual place, the abandoned rail yard outside of town. Two dogs were fighting over some scraps of meat. Nearby lay what remained of Snitch's foot.
When Seamus went to his workshop, Rembrandt, the town drunk, was curled up near the fire, sleeping soundly, a carved bone clutched in one hand like a club.

THREATEN SOMEONE, DIRECTLY OR ELSE BY IMPLICATION.

EXAMPLES

The sheriff paused in the doorway. “You should leave town soon. I hear strange things happen around the old Windsor house. Ugly things.”

Gnarls looked Turnbull over. “Last time someone came poking around my place, I shot ’em. I’ll do it the next time too.”

STEAL SOMETHING FROM SOMEONE.

EXAMPLES

The gray, dead thing thrust Amy aside, grabbing the ancient tome from her desk.

Jake looked over his room. It was neat, but something was out of place. He checked under the pillow, finding a few spatters of black mud where his pistol had been stashed.

SEIZE AND HOLD SOMEONE.

EXAMPLES

The dark priest barked something in ancient Sumerian and Turnbull suddenly found himself paralyzed.

Amy ran through the forest and heard Nash scream. Looking back, she saw two of the ghouls had caught him and were dragging him away.

RUIN SOMETHING. BEFOUL, ROT, DESECRATE, CORRUPT, OR ALTER IT.

EXAMPLES

The pond had been beautiful the day before. Now, the water was covered with an oily sheen which the sunlight could not penetrate.

Amy opened the cell door in Leary’s lab. The man chained to the wall was little more than a rotted husk. His arms had been cut off, as were his feet. He made a mewling, whimpering sound. His tongue was later discovered sewn with great care to the top of his mouth. And he was quite mad.

TELL STORIES (TRUTH, LIES, ALLEGORIES, HOMILIES).

EXAMPLES

Professor Leary sat in the darkest shadows of his study. "I will tell you how it all began. Every. Last. Thing."

The strange creature skittered over to Amy, Turnbull, and Nash, with its arms raised. "You wish to kill me, perhaps? Shall I tell you the fate of the last who tried?"



Doom

A doom isn't a person, but a horrible danger to come, because of something that people are doing, an event taking place or something that has already come to be.

Barrier

IMPULSE: to impoverish people.

EXAMPLES: avalanche, landslide, volcano.

Condition

IMPULSE: to expose people to danger.

EXAMPLES: heat wave, blizzard, heavy fog, rainfall.

Delusion

IMPULSE: to dominate people's choices and actions.

EXAMPLES: a mesmerizing spell, a growing movement, possession, alien control.

Disease

IMPULSE: to saturate a population.

EXAMPLES: a horrible plague, a flu epidemic, a corrupting influence.

Mythos

IMPULSE: to destroy/dominate.

EXAMPLES: sleeping god rising, earth colonization, a dark ritual.

Sacrifice

IMPULSE: to leave people bereft.

EXAMPLES: cult activity, madness, entity attacks.

Tradition

IMPULSE: to promote and justify violence.

EXAMPLES: local custom, the company way, the Mayor says so.

A doom is any bad practical circumstance. The town's water filtration breaks down? The roads are iced over? There's not enough food to get through the dry season?

Doom Moves

SOMEONE NEGLECTS DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, OR OBLIGATIONS.

EXAMPLES

Jake realized he had forgotten to check the fluid levels of the car, as it overheated somewhere around Black Gulch.

Nash noticed the spike in crime since the sheriff had been bedridden.

SOMEONE FLIES INTO A RAGE.

EXAMPLES

The spoiled milk had somehow altered Stout's system. The friendly hardware store owner yelled at everyone to get out so he could concentrate on his crossword puzzle.

Johnny saw the creatures all around him, though no one else could. He ran to his father and began hitting him on the chest. "Why can't you stop them?" he wailed.

SOMEONE TAKES SELF-DESTRUCTIVE, FRUITLESS, OR HOPELESS ACTION.

EXAMPLES

Farmer Brown stared out from the hayloft window, watching as the rain washed away his crops and all hope of saving his farm. He stepped forward, falling downward until the noose around his neck broke his fall.

The sheriff charged into the burning building without thinking of his safety. Jake shook his head. He almost liked the guy.

SOMEONE APPROACHES, SEEKING HELP.

EXAMPLES

Stout approached Amy. "Laney never made it into the diner. It's the fog. Can you help me find her?"

Knack, bloody and broken, fell at Turnbull's feet, reaching out with one trembling, scabrous hand.

SOMEONE APPROACHES, SEEKING COMFORT.

EXAMPLES

Miss Peterson wept and threw herself into Sheridan's arms. He patted her lightly on the shoulder.

Seamus heard a light tapping on the window of his workshop. Stout stood calf-deep in the snow, a bottle in his hand. "I don't like to drink alone," he said, after Seamus let him in.

SOMEONE WITHDRAWS AND SEEKS ISOLATION.

EXAMPLES

Ever since her sister Stephanie came to town, Miss Peterson never left her room much.

The sheriff, never much one for the heat, had retreated to his place on the lake, leaving his inept deputy in charge.

SOMEONE PROCLAIMS THE DOOM TO BE A JUST PUNISHMENT.

EXAMPLES

Pastor Turner stood at his pulpit and motioned everyone for silence. "That rain? That's angels' tears, shed to drown out the sinners amongst you. Get on the right side of the Lord or learn to swim."

Judge Taylor shook his head at the hungry folks standing outside his general store. "Everything's gone. Sold out. You should've stocked up like I told you."

SOMEONE PROCLAIMS THE DOOM TO BE, IN FACT, A BLESSING.

EXAMPLES

Shepard looked at the smoke roiling off the mountain. "The fire's gonna kill off the deadwood. You'll see. Everything's gonna grow back better than ever."

"The lack of water is teaching people to conserve," said Mary as she pulled her hair back. "It might be rough until the drought breaks, but it's really bringing the community together."

SOMEONE REFUSES OR FAILS TO ADAPT TO NEW CIRCUMSTANCES.

EXAMPLES

Franklin was found frozen in his shack, beneath a stack of blankets. “He refused to ever get a proper stove in this place,” said Doc Hollinger, sighing as he tried to pry the stiff corpse from the bed.

Sweat dripped down the sheriff’s face as he entered Laney’s. He mopped his forehead with a greasy cloth. “Old fool won’t ever wear nothing but his old uniform, even in this wretched heat,” Laney commented.

SOMEONE BRINGS FRIENDS OR LOVED ONES ALONG.

EXAMPLES

Amy met the sheriff at the station. He waited inside with his wife and two small children. “Need to bring them with us,” he said. “Who knows when that thing will strike next?”

Turnbull was surprised to see Mandy sleeping in the back seat of Laney’s car. “She only had a bike. We’ll be lucky enough as it is to outrun the storm. Hop in.”

SOMEONE DIES.

EXAMPLES

As the thing leapt past Amy, the store manager recoiled too late—bits of his face hit the floor before he did.

Franklin clutched his chest and collapsed on the floor of Stout’s Hardware. Stout checked the man’s pulse and shook his head. “Looks like this bake oven heat wave just claimed another one.”

The “Someone” in these moves should generally only be the NPCs.

Architecting Nightmare

A good horror story revolves around underlying questions, with terrible secrets waiting to be discovered. Herein, the tools you need to create tales both dark and weird are at your fingertips, limited only by your imagination.

The Building Blocks

The Framework

A scenario typically formed by two or three threads.

The Thread

A thread is the basic element of a framework comprised of three or four hazards bound together in some way.

The Linchpin

The linchpin is the central hazard of a thread. Each thread may have many hazards, but should only ever have one linchpin. While destroying a linchpin can disrupt a thread, the fallout from its destruction results in an existing hazard becoming the new linchpin, or may even result in an altogether new thread or even the introduction of a new linchpin.

Remember, any hazard can be the linchpin, be it the mayor, a social club, an old manor, an ancient relic, or an oppressive heat wave.

The Texture

Every thread has a texture. The texture defines the type of story that thread wants the characters to tell. This revolves around the linchpin in some way, shape, or form.

TEXTURES

ASCENT: A rise to power.

DESCENT: A fall from power or grace.

ESCAPE: Getting away from someone or something.

FORBIDDEN LOVE: Romance gone awry, often dark, twisted, or between human and alien entities.

LOVE: Romance through a weird lens (Obsession? Eros? Alien?)

MATURATION: Someone or something is growing up.

METAMORPHOSIS: Someone or something is physically changing.

PURSUIT: Someone or something seeks to get away.

RESCUE: Someone or something must be restored to its proper place.

REVENGE: A past slight redressed or a murder in the making.

RIVALRY: Competing with another agency for the same objective.

TEMPTATION: The promise of something someone desires.

TRANSFORMATION: Someone or something is changing on a subtle level.

WRETCHED EXCESS: Someone or something goes beyond the bounds of normalcy.

All scenarios ultimately revolve around mystery and discovery. Textures serve to further refine and define the mystery.

The Cat's Cradle

Interweaving frameworks together creates a miasma of possibilities, allowing for more complex stories to be told. This is not simply having two (or more) frameworks running in parallel fashion, but by the Keeper intentionally connecting the frameworks together during their construction or allowing bleed over to occur naturally based upon the direction the players are taking the story. Playsets establish two (or more) distinct story threads which can be brought together to create something greater than the sum of its parts. Often the connections appear obvious (such as with dark forces at play in one or more story threads), while other times less so (which can be every bit as intriguing, if not more so). These are questions waiting to be answered in the course of play, as your stories unfold.

Putting the Pieces Together

Now that you've got a handle on the basic concepts, let's dig deeper into their practical application.

THREAD CREATION

1. Choose three or four hazards.
2. Choose a linchpin.
3. Choose a texture.



Example

The group is due to arrive in a half-hour, and I need to cobble something together for them, something brand new. I choose three hazards: elder, landscape, and weird. I decide the elder will be the linchpin of this thread. I decide the texture of this thread will be “descent.” That takes just a few minutes. We’ll call this “Thread A.”

Turning a Thread into a Framework

Now that we have Thread A, the generic choices we've made don't tell us a whole lot. If we can't get a grip on them, how will the players? We need to particularize.

The elder becomes the mayor. The landscape becomes the old manor on the edge of town. The weird becomes an antique sword newly arrived in the local museum. Now, we're getting somewhere. We still have the texture that can radically affect how the thread works.

Since we decided on "descent" and tied it to the linchpin of the elder, we've determined the mayor is falling from power. The house and the sword are part of this thread, and so also have something to do with it. Let's say the mayor killed old man Manley in the manor house with the sword, which he then gave to the museum, so in fact, the evidence is right there on display. The house is now haunted by Manley, who won't rest until he is avenged.

This is far more interesting. Now, let's add the subtypes of hazards into play. We can select any of them, but we'll go with Elder (dictator), Landscape (furnace), and the Weird (sodomasochist). We can then integrate them with our hazards giving us Mayor (dictator), Old Manor (furnace), and Ancient Sword (sodomasochist).

From this, we can come up with a lot of questions which we'll ask in our framework. These are things we don't know the answer to, but things we, as the Keeper, find interesting and want to find out about in play. There should be nothing ignored or foregone at this point. We're setting up dominoes, wanting to see how they will tip over in the game. Don't cheat and try to guess. We'll explore this further in the next section.

Formalizing the Framework

Every framework shares the following basic structure:

THE TRAGIC END: what happens if evil wins.

THE UNKNOWN: open questions to be answered during play.

LURKING EVIL: the hazards facing the characters.

DARKNESS GROWS: each hazard or framework may have a hazard track which can advance over time, in response to the characters' actions, or both.

THEME: The texture of the thread.



Short scenarios may have only a single thread or two; more intricate scenarios may be comprised of multiple threads to form a cat's cradle.

A framework is a set of hazards with their relevant motivation, driving force, and so on.

Creating a framework means making decisions about backstory and about NPC motivations. Real decisions—binding ones—that call for creativity, attention and care. You do it outside of play, between sessions, so that you have the time and space to think. A thread has some obvious mechanical components, but fundamentally it is the conceptual structure that is of prime importance.

The purpose of your preparation is to equip you with interesting things to say and do. As the Keeper, you're going to be playing your threads and playing your hazards, but that doesn't mean anything mechanical. It means saying what they do. It means offering opportunities to the players to have their characters do interesting things, and it means responding in interesting ways to what the players have their characters do. Accordingly, when you create a framework, follow your own inspiration.

Choose the things that are suggestive to you, things that put you in mind of weirdness, horror, romance, violence, gore, danger, or trauma. Choose the things you'd love to read in a book, skipping the things that don't spark your interest.

You can also give your framework a name, if you like. For now, we'll still stick with Thread A and see what becomes of it.

THE TRAGIC END: The mayor is found dead in the manor, with the old sword in his hand and twenty-five stab wounds. It is ruled a suicide by the coroner. The house remains haunted.

THE UNKNOWN: Why did the mayor kill Manley? What does the sword look like? Can anyone use the sword? Does the sword corrupt? What will the ghost do to intruders? How can the sword be destroyed? Can the characters save the mayor? How far will the mayor go to keep his secret?

LURKING EVIL: Mayor (dictator), Old Manley Manor (furnace), and Ancient Sword (sodomasochist)

DARKNESS GROWS: Hazard tracks are not something we've gone into detail about yet, so we'll address them next.

Creating and Using Hazard Tracks

A hazard track is a reminder to you as Keeper that your hazards have impulse, direction, plans, and intentions, along with the will to sustain action and to respond coherently to the players.

When you create a hazard, if you have a vision of its future, give it a hazard track. You can also add hazard tracks to hazards you've already created.

Jot down a list of events that are spurred by characters' actions or the passing of time. Finding items, clues, and whatnot can be good ways to spur things along, as well as the usage or discovery of Lore. As the characters gain knowledge, the darkness gains power. This happens all the time in horror works. Each hazard track is called by its appropriate type (e.g., elder track, doom track, and so on). You are free to particularize them even further by attaching them to a particular thread or a specific hazard (such as Doom Track for Thread A or, better yet, Mayor Hink's Track).

On the track, list some things that will happen:

1. Something's coming, but maybe it can be stopped.
2. Signs and portents.
3. The danger manifests fully.
4. And so on until bad things happen.

As you play, advance the tracks, each at their own pace, by checking things off the list. Hazard tracks are both descriptive and prescriptive.

DESCRIPTIVE: when something you've listed happens, advance the track to that point.

PRESCRIPTIVE: when you advance the hazard track otherwise, it causes the things you've listed.

Hazard tracks can be derailed. When something happens that changes circumstances so that the countdown no longer makes sense, just scratch it out.

For the most part, list things beyond the characters' control: the decisions and actions of NPCs, conditions in a population or a landscape, evolving relations and conflicts between rivals, and so on. When you list something within the characters' control, always list it with an "if", implied or explicit:

"If Turnbull explores the attic," not "Turnbull explores the attic"

Prep circumstances, pressures, and developing NPC actions, *not* future scenes to which you intend to lead the characters.

Let's put together a hazard track for our creatively named "THREAD A." We could give one to each of the hazards, so let's do so.

Mayor Track

Mayor Hink starts to drink heavily (when questioned or after the first day the investigators have been in town).

Mayor Hink is caught trying to burn down the house. (After the sword is discovered or after the investigators explore the house.)

Mayor Hink crashes his car. (Day after his arson attempt.)

Mayor Hink is removed from office. (Day after he crashes his car.)

Old Manor Track (Advance track once per day.)

Strange lights are seen around the house.

A dog is devoured by the house.

The electrician is eaten by the house.

The ghost fully manifests.

Antique Sword (Advance track once per day.)

The curator cuts his hand on the sword.

A child stabs a family member with the sword.

The sword is put into the vault.

The sword is stolen.

Now, as you can see, there is a fully fleshed-out framework, ready for exploration by your players.

Creatures, Strange and Horrible

H.P. Lovecraft invented all sorts of nightmare horrors that inhabited his works, which have bled over into popular culture to such a degree that many of his most famous creatures are familiar to many people likely to play this game. If anything, the people most drawn to this sort of game may be the ones for whom the scares come the hardest—familiarity indeed breeds contempt.

By necessity, it falls upon the Keeper to craft new terrors: it is the unknown that is the most terrifying. Rather than present a ready-made list of monstrosities, it is far better for you to be able to quickly and easily come up with some of your own. Don't worry; we'll present the mechanical underpinnings for a handful of foul fiends to see you on your way. Once you see how easy it is, you'll want to make your own anyway.

The Thing Is...

All of this is incredibly easy. As you've come to understand, you don't need to have heavy blocks of stats to represent things. Tags do a lot of the heavy lifting, so all you really need to have is a handful of tags to help you easily put a handle on your creatures.



An Overview of ASHES

The elemental bits of any adversary (be it mundane, alien, or otherwise) are as follows, broken into five categories (ASHES: Armor, Shock, Harm, Extras, Special):

ARMOR: How much harm it ignores.

SHOCK: How terrifying it is to behold.

HARM: How much harm it inflicts.

EXTRAS: Additional attacks, weaknesses, or strengths (generally represented by tags).

SPECIAL: Unique moves.

The ASH Scale

This quick table enables you to throw together the essential bits of a creature at a moment's notice, using the building blocks of Armor, Shock, and Harm.

	ARMOR	SHOCK	HARM
0	None	None	No attack/grappling
1	Light	Spooky	Fist/kick/head-butt
2	Medium	Scary	Small claws/bites
3	Heavy	Frightening	Acid/claws/tentacles/strength
4	Incredible	Terrifying	Fangs/strong tentacles/great strength
5	Monstrous	Horrifying	Great claws/powerful tentacles/incredible strength

ARMOR, SHOCK, AND HARM: All creatures have a value of 0 to 5 in each of these categories.

REMEMBER: *you are encouraged to choose, although you can roll a d6-1 for each of these values if you want to generate something totally random. Or roll 3d6 (-3) and assign out or, you know, just choose.*

A SIMPLE RULE OF THUMB: give the creature a composite ASH score equal to the number of characters in play x 2. Three players would give you six points to divvy up as you see fit, for example. This works best for convention games or shorter story arcs, but for extended play over multiple sessions, it may get stale and predictable rather quickly.

Extras

This catchall category works for notes or other bits and pieces of things that can have a mechanical impact in play. You should include creature tags and what-have-you here, like “aquatic,” “stealthy,” and “lives in the north end of the swamp.”

Creature Tags

AERIAL: Can fly and swoop.

AQUATIC: Can swim and breathe underwater.

ALIEN: Strange anatomy, +1 shock. (Its intelligence is usually equal to or greater than human.)

FAST: Attempts to flee from the creature inflict full damage on a partial success.

FIERY: The Keeper may elect to do half harm as damage and put an ON FIRE tag on the target. The target must get a success on roll+luck for the fire to go out by itself, or takes a point of harm each round until the fire is extinguished (via roll+reason).

INVULNERABLE TO X: The creature cannot be harmed by whatever X is: rocks, fire, water, whatever. This can be broad or narrow, mystical or mundane. If you make X everything, however, it's not so much a creature as an unstoppable doom. Rethink that choice and consider making that the worst possible thing on a hazard track. Things should have at least one weakness, if they are otherwise wickedly tough.

MINION: Can't take much harm. Put a number in parentheses and that's how much damage it can take before it is out of commission.

MYSTICAL: This thing is otherworldly. It can do ranged mojo (inflicting AP harm damage equal to its shock) or more. Assign a +/- damage value. Mystical +2 equals shock +2 damage. Mystical -2 equals shock -2 damage.

NIGHT VISION: This thing gets around just fine in the dark. Doesn't matter how—even if it's blind and has radar, darkness presents no problem.

STEALTHY: The creature is hard to spot. It requires a 10+ roll to be detected until it reveals itself.

SLOW: The creature is easy to get away from. A partial success means a character suffers no ill effect.

SWARM: There are many of these things. A swarm's main advantage is its damage ignores armor.

TENTACLED: May engage many targets at once.

WEAKNESS TO X: All damage from a particular thing or type is considered AP and inflicts +2 harm.

The Interplay of Creatures and Hazards

Creatures can fall into any hazard category. You might think it can't be landscape, but remember breeding pits and guardians? Yes. You can attach creatures to any hazard. They will use the moves of that category and are motivated by the impulse of the subtype. In essence, a creature is an extension of the subtype, if not the actual subtype itself. It's also good to note that not all creatures are necessarily monstrous in appearance. They should all have some weirdness to them—even the more typically mundane ones.



EXAMPLE

A forest (furnace) wants to consume things. A wolf could be a forest guardian. It wants to devour any who venture within. At the other end of things, a forest (barrier) wants to keep things out. An old bear could be a forest guardian driven to protect its territory.

Creature Tags

You are encouraged to create tags necessary for your story. Tags should help, not hinder. Use them to remind you of important key things, not to realistically port something over. For example, an owl has night vision, so why write it down? That's common sense. Noting Doctor Grey's night vision, on the other hand, is completely encouraged.

Special

The Special part of ASHES covers aspects particular or unique to a creature. Just as the playbooks have custom moves, creatures can have custom moves as well, things not covered anywhere else. This is where you should let your imagination run wild. It also works as a spot to place reminders for something you don't want to forget about in the course of play. If you want to have a move where the creature does a **BRAIN SUCK**, then you could quantify it as follows.

BRAIN SUCK

Whenever a target tries to flee and gets a partial success or less, the creature attaches itself to them. It can only be removed with a roll+might success. If it is able to drill through the target's skull (3 or more harm), the target immediately takes 4 shock and **ACTS UNDER PRESSURE** to resist the entity's commands.

A Tag by Any Other Name: Extra versus Special

Technically, there is no real difference. Specials may have a bit more information under them which you may want to refer to until you've got it down (but that's what you'll probably do with stock creature tags until you get a feel for them anyway).

In practice, you'll find having the Special move you concocted at the end, in its new category, will serve you in several ways. Having it at the bottom of your descriptive block lets you know it's important, likely untested, and you will have plenty of space to detail it nicely without interrupting the flow. Once you find it works in play, go ahead and move it over to your arsenal of creature tags, and then come up with your next Special thing.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter what tag goes where. Why worry about format and semantics? You've got stories to tell, and monsters to bring to life.

Damage Track for Creatures and NPCs

The player characters are a bit more durable than creatures (they have one extra segment on both damage tracks). However, you have an *infinite* number of creatures, and some of them are likely to have skin that can easily deflect a shotgun blast at point-blank range. Any creature tied to a hazard doesn't have to worry about shock. That's your call and should go with what the narrative dictates, e.g., the mayor's aide (tied to an Elder mayor) may freak out; a cultist, on the other hand, won't.

Creatures and NPCs can take FIVE segments of damage as follows:



SEGMENT 1: Cosmetic damage, pain, concussion, or fear (if the NPC is likely to be afraid of pain).

SEGMENT 2: Wounds, unconsciousness, bad pain, broken bones, likely fatal, sometimes immediately so.

SEGMENT 3: Maybe 50-50 that it's immediately fatal; otherwise, terrible wounds, death soon.

SEGMENT 4: Usually immediately fatal, but sometimes the target has to wait to die, mangled and ruined.

SEGMENT 5: Immediately fatal and bodily destructive.

A Motley Assortment of Things That Go Bump in the Night

Lovecraftian Creations

Deep Ones

“I think their predominant colour was a greyish-green, though they had white bellies. They were mostly shiny and slippery, but the ridges of their backs were scaly. Their forms vaguely suggested the anthropoid, while their heads were the heads of fish, with prodigious bulging eyes that never closed. At the sides of their necks were palpitating gills, and their long paws were webbed. They hopped irregularly, sometimes on two legs and sometimes on four. I was somehow glad that they had no more than four limbs. Their croaking, baying voices, clearly used for articulate speech, held all the dark shades of expression which their staring faces lacked.”

-The Shadow Over Innsmouth

A: 2 S: 2 H: 2

EXTRA: Aquatic

SPECIAL

BENEATH THE SURFACE: A deep one is treated as stealthy whenever submerged.

GLUG, GLUG, GLUG: By taking a hard move, the Deep One can pull or knock a character at close range into the water. This move can be taken on a character already in the water within close range of the Deep One to initiate drowning.



Ghouls

“These figures were seldom completely human, but often approached humanity in varying degree. Most of the bodies, while roughly bipedal, had a forward slumping, and a vaguely canine cast. The texture of the majority was a kind of unpleasant rubberiness.”

-Pickman’s Model

A: 1 S: 1 H: 2

EXTRA: Fast

SPECIAL

BURROW: The ghoul can dig through unworked earth at preternatural speeds.

GRAB AND CHEW: When a ghoul hits, the character must **RESORT TO VIOLENCE** before he can attempt escape.

INFECTION: Any character bitten must get a success on **ROLL+LUCK** (-HARM) or begin to transform into a ghoul himself.

Mi-Go

“They were pinkish things about five feet long; with crustaceous bodies bearing vast pairs of dorsal fins or membraneous wings and several sets of articulated limbs, and with a sort of convoluted ellipsoid, covered with multitudes of very short antennae, where a head would ordinarily be.... As it was, nearly all the rumours had several points in common; averring that the creatures were a sort of huge, light-red crab with many pairs of legs and with two great bat-like wings in the middle of their back. They sometimes walked on all their legs, and sometimes on the hindmost pair only, using the others to convey large objects of indeterminate nature. On one occasion they were spied in considerable numbers, a detachment of them wading along a shallow woodland watercourse three abreast in evidently disciplined formation. Once a specimen was seen flying—launching itself from the top of a bald, lonely hill at night and vanishing in the sky after its great flapping wings had been silhouetted an instant against the full moon.”

-The Whisperer in Darkness

A: 2 S: 3 H: 2

EXTRA: Aerial, Alien

SPECIAL: Can speak human languages, scientifically advanced

Nightgaunts

“Shocking and uncouth black beings with smooth, oily, whale-like surfaces, unpleasant horns that curved inward toward each other, bat-wings whose beating made no sound, ugly prehensile paws, and barbed tails that lashed needlessly and disquietingly. And worst of all, they never spoke or laughed, and never smiled because they had no faces at all to smile with, but only a suggestive blankness where a face ought to be. All they ever did was clutch and fly and tickle; that was the way of night-gaunts.”

-The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath

A: 2 S: 2 H: 0

EXTRA: Aerial, Alien

SPECIAL

TICKLE, TICKLE, TICKLE: If a nightgaunt is able to close with someone, the target must immediately **ACT UNDER PRESSURE**. Failing, they begin laughing uncontrollably (-1 ongoing) and take 1 harm at intervals until they lose consciousness.

Shoggoths

“We were on the track ahead as the nightmare plastic column of foetid black iridescence oozed tightly onward through its fifteen-foot sinus; gathering unholy speed and driving before it a spiral, re-thickening cloud of the pallid abyss-vapour. It was a terrible, indescribable thing vaster than any subway train—a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and unforming as pustules of greenish light all over the tunnel-filling front that bore down upon us, crushing the frantic penguins and slithering over the glistening floor that it and its kind had swept so evilly free of all litter.”

-At the Mountains of Madness

A: 4 S: 4 H: 4

EXTRA: Alien, Slow, Tentacles

SPECIAL

AMORPHOUS: Given enough time, a shoggoth can ooze through nearly anything. It also rapidly heals. If not destroyed in one encounter, it will certainly be restored before the next.

Creatures of the Wood

Bats

A: 0 S: 1 H: 0

EXTRA: Swarm

SPECIAL

FRENZIED: When controlled or frightened, a swarm can become dangerous, capable of inflicting 1 harm per exchange.

Bear

A: 1 S: 1 H: 3

Wolf

A: 0 S: 0 H: 2

Wolf, Pack Leader

A: 1 S: 0 H: 2

EXTRA: Fast

Wolf, Tainted

A: 1 S: 1 H: 2

EXTRA: Fast, Stealthy

SPECIAL: Has human intelligence



Odds and Ends

Dispensing with Experience

Characters in *tremulus* are generally static, but you should reward the players for good play. Whenever a group resolves a mystery or story arc, you should give any surviving characters an advance. Don't worry about keeping up with experience—simply consider how the story is progressing, and grant them an advance when it feels right and natural to do so.

Death Is Too Easy

Certainly, you can easily inflict damage on the characters at nearly any time, using the flimsiest of in-game rationalizations. But that's not a particularly creative way to approach things. Remember how you are supposed to make the characters' lives interesting? Death is not especially interesting for the person for whom the Grim Reaper calls. Arbitrary damage diminishes trust with your players and isn't playing the game straight. It is far better for damage to result from their actions or for them to get brutalized or know the threat of death is near rather as a consequence than just a random whim.

In the real world, lightning can strike anyone at any time, and bring the mighty low. But what you are crafting together with your players is a collaborative work of fiction, and leaving such matters of import to sheer happenstance with no intrinsic logic won't do you or your players any good. The narrative should lead towards a reasonable conclusion based upon the actions of the characters, not random luck. You're all working towards getting a taste of that scary pie, the payoff, the place where all the schemes and nightmares converge.

The Secrets of Rituals

Casting rituals, rites, and even intoning certain words of power requires Lore. A character with knowledge of a ritual and insufficient Lore may still attempt to perform it, though doing so is likely foolhardy. They must roll (see **RITUALS, RITES, AND WHATNOT**), and take an amount of damage equal to the ritual's power regardless of how many points of Lore they are short. A ritual's Power equals the amount of Lore needed. All ingredients are destroyed in the process, whether the ritual succeeds or not.

Sample Rituals

Purify Silver

POWER: 1

MATERIALS: 1 oz. of unrefined silver

EFFECT: Purifies (gives silver a mystical tag)

DURATION: Permanent

CASTING TIME: 1 hour

TIME & PLACE: Midnight under a full moon in an open field

Enchant Weapon

POWER: 3

MATERIALS: 2 oz. of pure silver

EFFECT: +1 harm, AP

DURATION: Permanent

CASTING TIME: 2 hours

TIME & PLACE: Open field, night sky

Contact Lesser Entity

POWER: 5

MATERIALS: Symbol of the creature, valuable item or artifact (gold/platinum/silver), spilled blood (1 harm) of the caster or a loved one, other uncommon ingredients, and one rare ingredient.

EFFECT: The character opens a telepathic link to the entity. While it may provide secret knowledge and insight, it has a corrupting influence if the connection is maintained for a long time (several days).

DURATION: Varies

CASTING TIME: 2 hours

TIME & PLACE: The ritual may be performed in any weird place or in an area favored by the entity type, day or night.

Summon/Dismiss Lesser Entity

POWER: 7

MATERIALS: Rare ingredients (such as something from the target creature or something the creature likes/is attracted to), fire, and blood sacrifice (animal or other).

EFFECT: The creature is brought forth/or sent through a mystical gate that appears as the item is burned within a magic circle (or pentagram or runes or whatever ritualistic symbol you decide).

DURATION: The creature when summoned will perform one task for the summoner. If it is something like “protect me” (or the like), it will begin to become difficult to control after a fortnight, and the caster must appease it (repeating the ritual, bargaining with it, sacrificing to it, or the like). If dismissed, the creature is gone, unless brought back through by another ritual.

CASTING TIME: 2 hours

TIME & PLACE: Must be conducted at a locale favored by the entity in question (such as a graveyard for a ghoul or by the ocean for a deep one) under the cover of night.

Contact Outer God

POWER: 10

MATERIALS: Sacred item, rare ingredients, human sacrifice.

EFFECT: The character is able to communicate with the god in question. The god may be willing to imbue the character with certain rituals and powers in return for favors or intangibles (such as firstborn or one’s soul). Failure to meet the god’s demands will result in far-reaching and usually terrible consequences.

DURATION: Varies

CASTING TIME: 3 hours

TIME & PLACE: Must be conducted in a locale favored by the god (such as a coastline, mountain, or cavern) beneath a cloak of darkness (usually night, but could be underground).

Tips and Tricks

This section will help you most after you've read through the rest of *tremulus*. It is intended to provide a closer examination of and insight into some of the various inner workings of the game.

Giving Things Away

Clues

When a character opts to find a clue by using the **POKE AROUND** move, it is usually in the early phase of a story, where she is still gathering information. She is preparing, at least, to **PUZZLE THINGS OUT**, if not hoping to discover some way to advance the story. You should be prepared to have some clues arise over the course of the game, but you don't need to have them all spelled out.



Think about what bit of evidence could be found to help advance the plot of the story. Was a button left behind? A key? A smudge on the window? A bloody footprint in the basement? A strange scale of unknown origin? If it's a clue, make it relevant to the story. Is your story about a winged serpent and someone finds a clue? What if it's a leathery feather tucked into a book? Suddenly this NPC, who previously had nothing to do with the story, is involved on some level. Clues shape and advance the direction of things, allowing the players to have a direct impact on the narrative. Make them *count*. Clues *may* be items, but do not have to be, and should be of little, if any, practical use, like a rusted knife or a gun with its barrel twisted.

Items

Characters will often **POKE AROUND** to see what they can find. They may opt to get an item, rather than a clue. While a clue can be an item, when a character chooses an item, it should *never* be a clue—the character made her choice for utility over insight.

GOOD: A character may opt to have a good item. What good item she finds is up to the Keeper. You can always ask what they were looking for, and if it seems something reasonable to find where they are looking, let them have it. Why not? You're not working at cross-purposes. You're telling a story together. Someone looking for a gas can in an old pickup truck? Sure, and it's even full. Looking for a shotgun in a child's bedroom is not so likely, but there is a slingshot on the dresser, right next to Johnny's bag of favorite marbles. When you're considering what a good item could and should be, look to what's most helpful to the situation at hand (such as a flashlight after the lights go out) or can be potentially useful, if not right now, then somewhere down the line. In this way, you can foreshadow possible events to the characters. Finding a box of silver ammunition or a set of sharpened stakes communicates two very different things.

MINOR: Minor items should be those of limited utility, quality, or both. For example, should a player choose a gun, let the character find an old gun with one bullet, or a rusted old shotgun (unreliable). Ammo would be a separate item. Remember? This is a minor choice, so it shouldn't be anything fantastic. Other things that could be selected could be an oil lamp (low on oil), or even a pitchfork (yes, a pitchfork sounds great, but try carrying one around town or into narrow catacombs). If you're choosing, you can always ask them what they'd like to find, or what they think they'd find in the bedroom, nightstand, or what-have-you. You can always say no, but if it sounds interesting, why not? A minor item can turn out to be quite useful. Should a player's resourcefulness turn an otherwise limited thing, such as a kettle, into something helpful, you should reward their creativity and applaud them for contributing to the narrative.

LORE: When a character opts to gain Lore, she is telling you several things. She may not know exactly what to ask next, or more likely, she wants to gain the currency needed to power her Lore move. It is up to you how much you tell her, if anything. At the very least, you should provide some contextual, relevant bit of information hinting towards the bigger picture of the story you're telling. Remember, as always, to be honest with your characters and generous with your answers, but refine those to apply to only one or two of the questions normally found on the list. If you get in the habit of providing *too* much information, you'll find your players may *always* opt to go for Lore, relying on you to answer too many questions.

RITUALS: Your characters may decide they need some sort of ritual to defeat a horrible entity threatening to devour the locals, if not the world. It is then they shall likely turn to a library, a study filled with tomes, or some other repository of knowledge to discover some ancient words that can help them in their present predicament. You may allow rituals and spells and all sorts of magic into your game. How much you allow will certainly affect the tone and tenor of the game. You should limit the discovery of rituals to restricted libraries and weird places. If you do allow a study to have a book with rituals in it, then you're making it weird, and you should note that somewhere. Rituals should require a time, a place, and one or more ingredients in addition to some amount of Lore. If you're introducing a ritual, make it relevant to their circumstance. In all likelihood, they are trying to find some sort of bane or counter to whatever they're dealing with. Make the ritual helpful, but just don't have it immediately defeat the thing (such as the characters find and learn a Banish Ghosts ritual), unless you decide to shift the focus more on accumulating Lore and the other requisite ingredients, rather than fighting with the ghost itself (which becomes more incidental and peripheral to the story).

SECRET PLACES AND SPACES: Characters may decide to find some hidden area or threshold when they **POKE AROUND**. You get to decide what it is. This is another way for them to have a direct impact on the narrative while simultaneously keeping you on your toes. Sometimes, it may be obvious. Characters may be looking at the fence line for a way through. You could tell them they find a torn piece of fence they can squeeze under, if you want to move the story in one direction. Alternatively, you could present them with something else, like a half-buried door to a long abandoned root cellar. In either case, the players know this development is a direct result of their decision to **POKE AROUND**, and thus feel empowered to help drive the narrative forward in new, interesting directions.

Handling Acts Under Pressure

When a character rolls a 10+, he succeeds. When a character rolls a 6 or less, he earns a consequence (and you can take a hard move against him, the group, or save it for later). That's all clear cut. A partial success (7-9 roll) grants you an opportunity to present him with a tough decision that serves to shape the narrative and drive the story forward.

Come up with three choices: a worse outcome, an ugly choice, and a hard bargain.

For example, let's put you in the role of a bespectacled doctor prowling around a cemetery. You see a creature spring out from behind a tombstone and decide to flee. You **ACT UNDER PRESSURE** and roll an 8.

The Keeper presents three options:

WORSE OUTCOME: Take 1 harm and get lost as you flee blindly away.

UGLY CHOICE: Lose your glasses or take 2 damage as the creature connects.

HARD BARGAIN: You get away, but your loyal NPC companion does not.

Some players may make their minds up after hearing the first two options, and that's okay, but you should strive to make each choice a dangerously attractive, bitter pill. If you have difficulty coming up with three choices at first, it gets easier over time, and you can always ask for input from the players to help you out.

Conveying Horror and Building Dramatic Tension

Creating an engaging experience drenched with nocturnes and nightmares should be harrowing only for the characters, not for the Keeper, nor the players. Let's examine ways to build up the situation through a few simple techniques.

Breathe Life Into the Ordinary

Make the people the characters meet *real*. This was discussed earlier and bears repeating. Don't just describe someone as "a guy in a butcher shop." Give him a name. Call him Vincent, have him speak with a Brooklyn accent, smell too much of blood, and let him fancy himself a lady's man. Or have the local doctor not just be someone to see to get healed. He's out sometimes. (Make a ROLL+LUCK to see if he's around.) And he has a limp and a bad scar across his face where shrapnel caught him in the Great War. Make them people the players will care about, and then put them in harm's way so that the players will work for their survival. This cannot be stressed enough: if the characters are fighting for the world, make the world worth fighting for.

Cut Scenes Short

While you want the players to explore the narrative space, there are times when they are languishing over a meal, or examining the title of every book on the bookshelf. You can give them a gentle nudge or narratively jump in and advance time forward. Using techniques such as, "The sun is setting and everyone else is retiring for the evening, what do you do?" or "You spend several hours poring over the book titles until your eyes are strained and your back aching as you hear Miss Peterson climb the stairs." There are times to linger and times to move on. Whenever possible, skip the boring bits; if everyone is engaged and having a good time, let the scene wrap up naturally. Your group will develop its own comfortable rhythm over time. Introducing strange elements when scenes run long is a great way to reengage everyone and remind them of the dangers lurking in the darkness.

Expanding and Contracting

There are moments the players may want to gloss over, such as navigating a passageway through a carnivorous hedge maze or exiting a strange, haunted mansion. These are the moments where you should slow time down just a bit. Zero in on the entrance into the maze. Tell them how the vines reach out hungrily for their flesh. Let them hear their cracked leather shoes descend down the stairs, each step creaking resentfully, and how the rustling leaves brushing against the attic windows sound like rainfall. To keep things even more interesting, juxtapose such moments with a rapid acceleration of the pace. While you spend several moments letting them contend with entering the maze, you can rapidly move to the exit, describing how things are resolved depending upon their **ACT UNDER PRESSURE** rolls. In this way, *tremulus* can easily be used in broad, general strokes as well as narrow, discrete ones.

Obfuscate on Occasion

While you should be generous and truthful with the information the characters learn, you can intimate and obscure in many other ways. Remind them that while you, in your role as the Keeper, are their honest ally, not all the NPCs they meet will have the characters' best interests at heart, and will likely misdirect and mislead them...or worse. Of course, they can always attempt to **READ A PERSON** if they would like, to attempt to discern what their agenda might be.

Help: A Double-Edged Sword

One of the greatest assets the characters have in their fight against dark forces is their ability to assist one another, and once the players realize the power of the Help move, they are likely to use it quite regularly. Too much use of it has its own dilemmas for them, as failed rolls can cause the characters to lose Trust amongst each other or add hard moves for the Keeper. It's important to remember that if a helper only gets a partial success (7-9), they open themselves up to consequences *even if the person they helped succeeds* (gets a 10+ on their roll). It can well become a case of 'no good deed goes unpunished', as a creature shifts its focus, the ground crumbles way beneath one person as they help another to safe footing, and so on. Separating characters who have grown used to helping one another also serves to heighten the terror and sense of dread for everybody.

Less Is More

Provide only sparse detail when the characters reach an important place, like the old cemetery. Sometimes, you must play the provocateur. Give them the most meager description as a catalyst for their questions. And when they start asking, dribble out tantalizing snippets. Certainly, they can see a figure in the graveyard, but they can't make out who they are or what they're doing. Do they get closer? Then they can see it's a woman kneeling in prayer in front of Old Manley's tombstone. Then a shadow crosses behind her. What do they do? Get them involved. Let the situation unfurl. Reveal it piece by piece, moment to moment (which is far better and far less forgettable than giving a precise initial description). It will save room for questions and shadows, and that is always a far better thing to do.

Opposites Repulse

Go against the grain whenever possible as you present elements of your story. The young girl, nearly fifteen, who stares with hollow, vacant eyes and speaks in a distant, imperious voice is far more disturbing than little Nancy down the lane. A scientist, presumed mad, with a pleasant visage and an equally pleasant demeanor is at odds with expectations as well. Explore the types of weirdness that arise from mundane but odd situations, like a little diner where a hulking brute waits tables sheepishly while the petite, elderly lady buses the tables, glaring threateningly at any who meet her stare. There is a story in that moment, waiting to be told. Or simply changing your presentation of things—dropping into a slow tenor when you ask if they really want to order another glass of tea, or cheerfully describing their descent into the catacombs—can throw the players off-balance...which is right where you want them to be.

Use Recurring Motifs

Think about what the theme of the story is about (as represented by the texture of the thread). Is it “ascent”? Then have things in your story reinforcing this. They don’t have to be subtle. Only you know the theme. Have the football team on track to have its best winning season in six years. Have the old sheriff retire and his deputy promoted. Be as blatant as you like. Have the old church steeple be replaced with a new one, or describe how the town finally has the funds to finish the clock tower located on the square. Even though the players don’t consciously know, in their bones they’ll get a sense of it. Trust me.

Letting the Hammer Fall

NPCs should suffer. And die. And not of natural causes. You have to let some blood flow across the pristine streets of your town. Corpses need to twitch on the front lawns, their necks snapped by nasty neighbors and otherworldly menaces. You need to let the characters know that, for all the languid explorations they’ve made through the town’s library and excursions into the catacombs beneath, until they have resolved the mystery and eliminated the pending threats, the stakes are high and people will die, and these people who die aren’t just nameless non-entities. They are people they know, and if you’ve done your job well, care about. Why? You’ve tricked them into caring as you lulled them into a false sense of security. That’s what all these elements have been leading up to. If they get frantic, you know you’ve succeeded as a Keeper.

Other Considerations

Engage the Players

Have the players do their part in the heavy lifting. Rome wasn't built in a day, and it wasn't built by one man. It was built stone by stone, as should your story and the setting in which your story lives. Give the players creative space to contribute to the narrative. Ask them what kinds of places are in the town your stories revolve around. This shouldn't feel like an interrogation. Involve them naturally as needed. When one person wants to visit the antique shop, ask another one what the owner's name is, and another the name of the shop and where it's located.

Make Maps Like a Madman

Though you aren't rolling any dice, you definitely have plenty to do. Sketch out places and spaces as the needs dictate. With Ebon Eaves, the enclosed playset, as with any other town, you'll want to give yourself some rough geographical points. Is the town in the mountains? What's nearby? Give it the lightest of touches. Zoom in and sketch out the town as it unfolds. If the antiquarian owns an antique shop, where is it? Generally, think of an old town in your mind's eye, and then rough out the centerpiece. For most towns, you can create a town square, and flesh out the buildings on the square as the narrative unfolds. Either decide arbitrarily or recruit your players to help you place the church, the pharmacist, and the general store. They'll be happy to help.

Don't Fill in All the Blanks

As with the rest of the design philosophy, you don't need to craft any more than you need. The more empty spaces on the map, the more opportunity there is for weirdness to arise in future play sessions.

Keep Track of Every Name

This may sound obvious to most of you, but names are more than just names in a storytelling game. They carry weight and hold power. They are the waitress, the hardware store owner, or the creepy electrician the characters secretly suspect is a cultist. Write these names down. Scribble them on the map. As the characters meet them in the future, let them know who they are. This isn't a memory game. Put the names out there in the open as they come into play, and remind players who they are if they can't quite place them. Encourage them to jot down the names as well. Putting them on the edge of your sketched-out map as they are encountered is a great way to keep them in play during a session.

Have a List Handy or Improvise

While we're on the subject of names, it doesn't hurt to have a prepared list of names to call upon as the situation demands. If you don't, change around the names of your friends who aren't playing with you, grab names off of nearby items, or even ask the players to pitch in and help you come up with the name of the traveling snake-oil salesman they just met.

Getting a Handle on Tags

Tags are used to make your job easier. You can use them to take moves. You can create new ones as you deem fit. Just use common sense to define them. If they are mundane tags for mundane things in the characters' possession, let them know. Be generous with them. Even if you have some odd tags, you can let the characters know that as well (with the exception of tags on creatures, until they are revealed or discovered). If anything, knowing the kitchen is weird will disturb them tremendously.

Building Momentum

While conventional scenarios lend themselves well to pacing, a game where the characters are largely in control of exploration presents its own challenges.

The Slow Burn

tremulus excels at languid pacing, so it isn't necessary to rush things along. You can reveal bits and pieces of the puzzle as the characters explore the nooks and crannies of various parts of the milieu. Do not be surprised if the players are very satisfied with the intimate nature and slower pacing of things. Events will unfold in a step, as evil trundles ever towards them. Frameworks are there to guide you along.

The Pressure Cooker

Hazard tracks are the surest way to keep things moving at a steady clip. You can have some tracks reactive (based upon the characters' actions), and others that move along regardless (at certain intervals, be it hourly, daily, or in longer cycles). Keeping the events on a compressed track ensures an inexorable end, should the characters dally. And they'll learn quickly that if they are locked in a haunted house, and someone is dying each hour, the lurking doom will eventually get to them if they don't make haste.

Tracks Are Not Compacts

Your use of tracks is not a contractual arrangement with the characters, but serves to provide narrative drive and energy for your framework. If you want to accelerate your story, this is the place to do it. You were going to have a forest fire on Day Three? Make it Day Two instead. If you've run a framework before and you know it takes six hours to work through, you can move it along. Instead of the fire taking place on Day Two, perhaps the characters arrive just before the fire breaks out, or they came to see what was going on because of the fire. The hazards are there to aid and serve you.

To be fair, you should not arbitrarily advance tracks to undermine the characters' progress. You need to give them an opportunity to participate and prevent some of the elements. If the tracks involve things they have no direct knowledge of, don't feel compelled to let them try to do anything counter to it. For example, if a dam is going to break in five

days, and they don't know it is leaking, it is fair to have the characters hear about the cracks (which were going to occur on Day Three) if they explored the dam the day before. If they were investigating another part of the mystery, you can present that knowledge about the cracks in the dam or not (via clues or NPCs or the like). You should rarely, if ever, advance a game ending track to the very end, however, without the characters having some sense of it. That's not fair, and you should strive to play fair. Having them spend all their time trying to prevent a cultist from summoning a creature only to have a meteor flatten everyone is not fair at all.

Keeping the Nightmare Alive

Your characters have come through the first mystery unscathed, or at least with their limbs intact and most of their wits about them. That's a win for the good guys. Congratulate the players. Celebrate their achievement. You will have time enough to plot against their characters later, as they cherish their (likely rare and brief) victory.

Once the first mystery has finished, or even after the first session has been wrapped, soak it all in. Revisit your frameworks. Explore the new characters and places that have inevitably sprung into being. What threads are unresolved? Where do you go next? You can set aside all those characters. You can create a brand new framework. You can build an entirely new town using Ebon Eaves. These are all viable choices.

Alternately, you can let the story continue. You can let the town grow organically. You can let their little slice of horror ferment and fester, as their connections with the townsfolk broaden and grow deeper. There are so many more stories to be told in and around things. The frameworks are designed to lead to as many (if not more) questions as answers. Exploring these fascinating fragments can lead to untold hours of rich mystery and endless adventure for those brave souls willing to see what horrors await them.

If starting a new mystery, you should likely reset any ongoing bonuses accrued from the previous one. It's up to you, but it can certainly create a new shroud of the unknown and allows for expansion and different takes on familiar NPCs, and the like.

Using Playsets: Ebon Eaves and Beyond

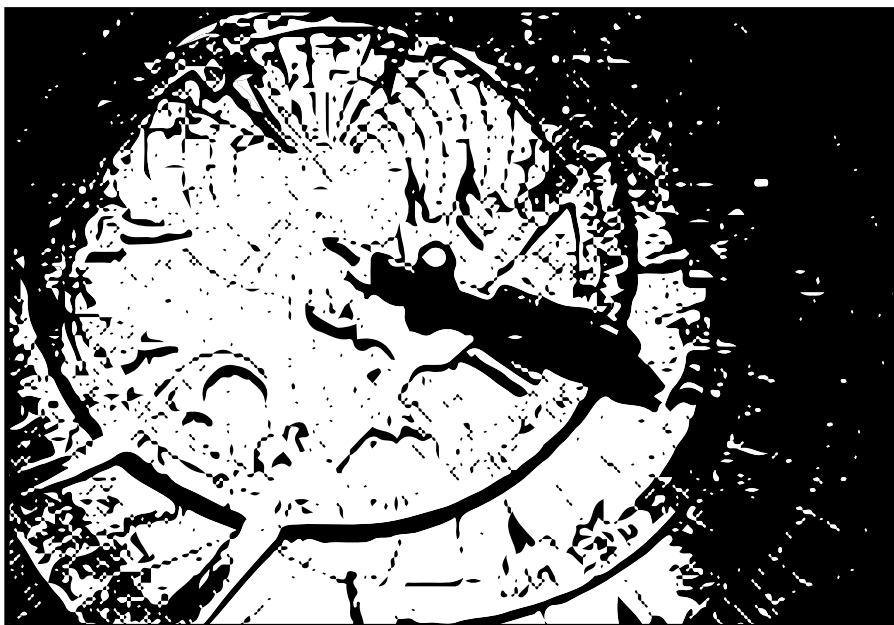
While playbooks describe the characters who are the actors in the story you create with your friends, a playset is a milieu you can readily drop them into by progressing through sets of questions which serve to define the frameworks of the setting, often forming a “cat’s cradle”: a complex, intricate network of threads with multiple plotlines which may have nothing to do with each other. Experienced Keepers familiar with the nuances of Haiku or improvisational roleplaying should have little difficulty using them on the fly.

While ideal for pickup-and-play gaming, playsets benefit from being structured into frameworks. If this is your first foray into storytelling games, you may want to send out the playset questionnaire to your players, or have the group gather around for about five or ten minutes face-to-face, maybe after you wrap up another game, and get their decisions right then. Armed with this information, you can use it to work through the framework. Keep in mind, this is *not necessary* and likely something you’ll not do once you have a few sessions under your belt. If anything, you’ll be energized, as will your group, to put together the playset, select playbooks, and then jump into a game in a surprisingly short amount of time. After you’ve completed the first session, you can then properly formalize the frameworks, adding in hazard tracks, creating creatures and the like. Ultimately, you can run this with no prep whatsoever, or as much as makes you comfortable while leaving questions unanswered.



On the Fly

When you're just going to wing it, use the **TOWN WORKSHEET** (p. 192). It gives you places to jot down the names of the different sections and a handy place to put the hazards. Let the snippets and the direction the players take guide you. Things *will* fall into place.



Masters of Time and Place

Ebon Eaves can be anywhere at any time. By default, it is roughly set in 1920s America. That doesn't mean it has to be. Some of the descriptors suggest certain places and times. Your players are going to ask where and when this game is taking place, even before you get to the questions, so tell them you'll all figure that out together, after determining the results. Once you read over the **TOWN LORE** and **LOCAL COLOR** for your town, throw it out to the group and see what they do with it. In three playtests, Ebon Eaves was set in the foothills of West Virginia in 1928, the Inland Empire of Central California in 1923, and on a small island off the Florida Keys in 1933. The players love having a say in where and when the story takes place. After you get that settled, ask the time of year, and even particularize it to the month, date, and day. Your players will love this, and you will too.

Structuring Chaos

After the players make their choices in a playset, you'll have some data within which to construct the frameworks. This section goes step-by-step through the process of taking the informal structure of the playset and putting it into a more familiar format. Keep in mind, this example is only one possible direction you can take the town creation information—there are bound to be countless others.

Let's suppose the players say "yes" to the first three questions for both LOCAL COLOR and TOWN LORE. This gives us ABC and ABC with Keeper Info of LC1 and TL1.

Group together the information as follows:

Player-facing

LOCAL COLOR

[ABC] A NICE, OLD TOWN

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves may have been a destination once upon a time, but its time has passed. No kids walk the streets. The folks are greying and are nice enough in a drug-hazed, dream fugue sort of way – except for the handful whose eyes are sharp and smiles are predatory.

KEEPER NOTES: LC1

TOWN LORE

[ABC] THE HAUNTED TEMPLE AT TWILIGHT

THE MYSTERY: On the outskirts of Ebon Eaves, near the forest, lies The Temple House. It belonged to Jebediah Temple who up and shot his whole family one night before blowing his brains out with a shotgun. Since then, strange lights have been seen in the woods. Some folks claim that you can see the ghosts of Jebediah and his family through the windows of The Temple House just as the sun sets beyond the tree line.

KEEPER NOTES: TL1

Keeper-facing

LOCAL COLOR

[LC1] A NICE, OLD TOWN

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves has long succumbed and rotted away due to past dealings with dark entities. It is little more than a dry husk, a corpse. Most folks saunter along blissfully awaiting death, their minds refusing to accept what their forebears did so long ago, selling off their souls for a period of bliss. The resulting offspring of the cursed generation were twisted, mutated things cast aside in the woods. Those who were not already infertile underwent surgical procedures so they could not give birth. The town elders, the most ancient of the lot, seek to bring in fresh blood and strike a new bargain to give themselves a second lease on life.

HAZARDS

ELDERS: The Town Mayor, Jonathan Finch

WEIRD: The Creatures in the Woods

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ABC]

TOWN LORE

[TL1] THE HAUNTED TEMPLE AT TWILIGHT

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Jebediah Temple was the leader of the Second Church of the Starry Twilight. It was in an old mansion he refashioned for that express purpose. It was said to be on cursed land. The land took its toll. The once pious preacher went mad and took up with the local librarian, much to the dismay of both the townsfolk and his wife, who was pregnant with their fourth child. He began to traffic with dark forces, and this pushed his wife over the edge. When Jebediah's evil ways were revealed, it was discovered nearly half the town was under his influence, so the remainder took rifle, shotgun, and axe to cleanse the town once and for all. The Temple House has become a place of great power and great evil, soaked in blood and black sorcery.

HAZARDS

LANDSCAPE: The dark forest, the Temple House

TOWNIES: The surviving remnants of the original cult, hoping to rebuild.

WEIRD: Entities drawn to the psychic pain and suffering of the Temple House.

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ABC]

Next, list the hazards out separately.

HAZARDS (LOCAL COLOR)

ELDERS: The Town Mayor, Jonathan Finch

WEIRD: The Creatures in the Woods

HAZARDS (TOWN LORE)

LANDSCAPE: The dark forest, the Temple House

TOWNIES: The surviving remnants of the original cult, hoping to rebuild.

WEIRD: Entities drawn to the psychic pain and suffering of the Temple House.

Take the hazards and create threads.

Jonathan Finch (the mayor) and the Creatures in the Woods create a simple thread. Looking over the information, we'll make the Creatures in the Woods the linchpin, and give this thread the texture of "revenge." We'll get into more detail in just a bit.

The dark forest, the Temple House, Cultists, and Entities provides a much more involved thread. Let's make the Entities the linchpin. There are several different directions this can go, such as "rivalry," "maturation," or "ascent." We've got "revenge" going in the other thread, so let's go with "maturation" to provide some grist for the mill.

You may note we don't have subtypes yet. Those are coming. You can select a specific subtype at any time. They are generally obvious in a playset, but you are encouraged to go against the grain as you like.

Assign subtypes.

THREAD A

The mayor (prophet)

The Creatures in the Woods (outcast)*

THREAD B

The dark forest (maze)

The Temple House (prison)

Cultists (family)

Entities (megalomaniac)*

**the linchpin of the framework*

Now, we can keep these stories separate or mix them together. Let's make this a proper cat's cradle, and link the Mayor into both of these threads.

THREAD A

The mayor used to be a part of the cult, but broke off on his own when he was not selected as the leader. He now believes he is the town's only salvation. He figures if he can find fresh blood to lift the ancient curse, the townsfolk will then worship him, and he'll be able to crush the cult. The Creatures in the Woods, on the other hand, want everyone in the town to burn.

THREAD B

Some of the cultists live in the catacombs beneath the ruined remains of Temple House. They scare off the locals. A handful of them live and work in Ebon Eaves, and report back periodically. The dark, twisted entities are seemingly under the control of the cultists, but they have grown more powerful and soon will be able to take control of the cultists. Already, their strength grows, and the forest and the Temple House have started to fall under their control. The entities sense the cultists' hatred of the mayor, and they seek to seduce him with the promise of power and revenge, using him to help destroy the shackles that bind them to the cultists.

Putting it All Together

FRAMEWORK A

THE TRAGIC END: The mayor performs the dark ritual, yet is no match for the Creatures in the Wood that rampage through the town, burning it.

THE UNKNOWN: How powerful is the mayor? Does he already know the dark ritual? What exactly are the Creatures in the Woods? What are their powers?

LURKING EVIL: See thread A (earlier)

DARKNESS GROWS: See hazard tracks A (following)

THEME: revenge

HAZARD TRACKS (FRAMEWORK A)

THE MAYOR	THE CREATURES IN THE WOODS
Mayor seen leaving the library.	Creatures slaughter a deer.
Mayor orders strange stuff.	Hunters see the creatures.
Mayor receives mail order.	Hunter is killed.
Mayor enacts ritual.	Creatures raid a house and kill an innocent.
	Creatures steal an item of power from the mayor.
	Creatures gather en masse to destroy the town.

FRAMEWORK B

THE TRAGIC END: The Entities, free of their dead masters, control the town through the mayor and the older residents and restore the Temple House to its former glory.

THE UNKNOWN: What are the entities? How powerful?

LURKING EVIL: See thread B (earlier)

DARKNESS GROWS: See hazard tracks B (following)

THEME: maturation

HAZARD TRACKS (FRAMEWORK B)

CULTISTS	ENTITIES
In casual guise, ordering some building materials.	Spotted as spectral entities.
Begin restoring the house.	Manifest in the woods.
Restore the house.	Take over the forest.
Have a run-in with the mayor.	Take over the house.
	Take over the mayor.

You can certainly get into even further depth by placing the triggers for when the different hazards occur. And you should do so as suits your comfort level; the system is such it supports as much or as little as you like. As for the entities and creatures, come up with what works for you from ASHES. Following are a couple of approaches suitable for those who want some guidance.

THE CREATURES IN THE WOODS

A: 1 S: 1 H:2, EXTRAS: Stealthy

SPECIAL: Telepathy. The creatures can communicate silently with each other when in the woods.

ENTITIES

A: 0 S: 2 H: 1, EXTRAS: Invulnerable to Mundane, Stealthy, Weakness to Magic

SPECIAL: Possession. An entity can possess a corrupt and/or weakened mind (those with 3 or more shock). It may only try once per target per day. A vulnerable target must **ACT UNDER PRESSURE** to resist.

ON A 10+, they resist.

ON A 7-9, they are possessed.



Ebon Eaves

a creepy little town to call your own



EBON EAVES

A CREEPY LITTLE TOWN TO CALL YOUR OWN

You have been lured to the town of Ebon Eaves. Fragments of fact and fancy have painted a picture of the old town in your mind's eye.

WHAT YOU THINK TO BE REAL about the town and its people:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Are the locals friendly? | A |
| Do they exhibit strange behavior? | B |
| Is it an old community? | C |
| Does the town have a tragic past? | D |
| Are there any secret societies? | E |
| Are the landmark buildings in disrepair? | F |
| Is the economy in decline? | G |

You **MUST ANSWER YES** to three and **ONLY** three.
JOT DOWN or CIRCLE YES ANSWERS.

WHAT WEIRDNESS YOU'VE HEARD about the town:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Have strange lights been seen in the area? | A |
| Is there a history of ghost sightings? | B |
| Has an incident of mass murder ever occurred here? | C |
| Have there ever been reports of flying creatures? | D |
| Have there ever been rumors of dark rituals? | E |
| Is there a history of madness amongst the townsfolk? | F |
| Are there any old ruins or buildings in or about the town? | G |

You **MUST ANSWER YES** to three and **ONLY** three.
JOT DOWN or CIRCLE YES ANSWERS.

OPEN or SECRET?

OPEN: Answer these questions collectively. Decide amongst yourselves what is **TRUE**. This gives the characters a better sense of what they are getting into. This is recommended for quick pick up play, con games, and groups of two or fewer players. Those unfamiliar with the game are best going this route as well.

SECRET: A little more time consuming, though quite rewarding, is for the Keeper to have each player answer the questions independently (on a questionnaire or scrap piece of paper), tally the results, and determine the end results by majority rule. This works best in groups of three to five.

REMEMBER: How you answer these questions is going to **SHAPE** your **EXPERIENCE** within the **STORY** you will **CREATE** with the Keeper.

FOR THE KEEPER

The player choices generate two **ALPHA** codes you use to reference the **INVESTIGATOR NOTES**. At the end of each **INVESTIGATOR NOTE**, there is a **LOCAL COLOR (LC)** or **TOWN LORE (TL)** key which references a corresponding entry in the matching **KEEPER NOTES** section. A handy **TOWN WORKSHEET** (found on the following page) makes it easy to keep track of everything.

AN EVEN PLAYING FIELD

By default, the characters should all be new to the area or returning after a very long absence. This ensures that everyone is experiencing the strangeness of Ebon Eaves together for the first time, and no one has a particular advantage (real or perceived) over another. That being said, if you choose to allow some characters to be already embedded in the community, proceed with caution.

Ebon Eaves

TOWN WORKSHEET

Local Color

NAME	
INVESTIGATOR	ALPHA
KEEPER	LC

Hazards

ELDERS

TOWNIES

LANDSCAPE

DOOM

WEIRD

Town Lore

NAME	
INVESTIGATOR	ALPHA
KEEPER	TL

Hazards

ELDERS

TOWNIES

LANDSCAPE

DOOM

WEIRD

Local Color (Investigator Notes)

[ABC] *A Nice Old Town*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves may have been a destination once upon a time, but that time has passed. No kids walk the streets. The folks are greying and are nice enough in a drug-hazed, dream fugue sort of way – except for the handful whose eyes are sharp and smiles are predatory.

KEEPER NOTES: LC1

[ABD] *A Lovely Place to Visit*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is a thriving coastal town full of eccentrics. It has distanced itself from its dark past and is on the threshold of becoming a tourist destination. The coats of paint on most buildings are fresh and whitewashed, like the smiles of the locals.

KEEPER NOTES: LC2

[ABE] *Signs of the Elders*

ON THE SURFACE: While nice enough, most of the locals are consumed with spending their time in various intimate activities. There is one club for the women, another for the men, and even one for the children. The crime rate is low. Most outsiders avoid the place, as the streets seem too quiet, too empty.

KEEPER NOTES: LC3

[ABF] *Faded Glory*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves, a simple mining town located in the foothills, gets by. The folks have long since resigned themselves to their lot in life, and rather than be melancholy, embrace their free time with excessive carousing and strange pursuits. As such, general upkeep of the town itself has gone by the wayside. The people dance while their world crumbles away.

KEEPER NOTES: LC4

[ABG] *On Borrowed Time*

ON THE SURFACE: The highway bypass put a nail in the coffin of Ebon Eaves. No longer on a main thoroughfare, its hot springs are not enough of a draw to get people to visit. Those who come to town are treated like royalty. The rooms are cheap. The food is plentiful and piping hot. A visitor can put on five pounds easily over the course of the weekend or with a slice of Daisy's homemade pie.

KEEPER NOTES: LC5

[ACD] *Battle Scarred*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is a quaint cottage community located about an hour's drive from the nearest city. About fifty years ago, Hermann's Chemical Factory exploded, and the fire spread to most of the town. It burned for three days. No one could save the souls trapped inside. Nowadays, there are strict fire laws and a mammoth fire station. A local brewery stands where the factory once did.

KEEPER NOTES: LC6

[ACE] *The Enclave*

ON THE SURFACE: After the last war, Ebon Eaves retreated in on itself. It lost a lot of sons and more than a few daughters. Now, it wishes merely to be left alone. There are several secret orders which have sprouted up over the years. Most have fallen off, with the notable exceptions of The Fraternal Lodge of Life and Liberty and The Darkling Sky.

KEEPER NOTES: LC7

[ACF] *A Study in Antebellum*

ON THE SURFACE: Not much has changed in Ebon Eaves since the Civil War. The Winslett family still owns the general store and pretty much runs things. Folks go off to college, and they come back. Less attention is given to maintaining the buildings. Vines weave in and out of the cracks in the sidewalks and masonry, threatening to bury everything in a thick layer of green.

KEEPER NOTES: LC8

[ACG] *Southern Rustic*

ON THE SURFACE: The world outside hurries by, and the folks of Ebon Eaves couldn't care less. They have festivals and fairs and are largely regarded as a fun weekend destination with a community headed up by Buddy and Juniper Wisdom, owners of Wisdom Farms. Despite this, the Caldecott Casino up the road—the latest encroachment of competition—has been pulling away the revenue stream. The folks know the town will assuredly die a quiet death, but are too set in their ways to change.

KEEPER NOTES: LC9

[ADE] *Frayed Knots*

ON THE SURFACE: About twenty years ago, Jessica Wayne was hung for killing her parents. Folks largely put it in the past, until her younger sister went crazy a few years later. Both sisters had a strange tattoo on their wrists. No one could make heads or tails out of them. Soon after, the powers that be figured there must be something in the water and built the asylum about three miles outside of town.

KEEPER NOTES: LC10

[ADF] *Grim Prospects*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves used to be a nice little place until Mayor Manning took over. He came in from the big city with his silver tongue and slick ways about thirty-five years ago. That's when the crops shriveled up. Farmer Johnson tried to run against him. He and his family died in a house fire. Since then, Manning's run unopposed. The folks are friendly enough until you realize those smiles are like the cheap plaster on the courthouse steps, cracked and worn.

KEEPER NOTES: LC11

[ADG] *Rose Colored Glasses*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves has seen better days, yet the inhabitants trudge ever onward. Yellow Fever hit the thriving community in the 1890s and since then, folks have never been the same. Their spirits are broken. They are polite, warm, and surprisingly intimate with strangers. Their lust for life is largely gone, though they speak of better days ahead in hollow tones.

KEEPER NOTES: LC12

[AEF] *Baker's Dozen*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is a quaint, bustling, community which saw its heyday twenty or so odd years ago. That was when McKenzie Baker, a dark, swarthy man, moved into town and remodeled the old Windsor Place, where he began holding decadent, extravagant parties. Heavily into the occult, he formed a lodge known as the Silver Circllet and selected a dozen acolytes from the locals to serve him. After his passing last year, the Silver Circllet has disbanded, and Windsor Place sits crumbling on the hilltop overlooking the town.

KEEPER NOTES: LC13

[AEG] *Circling the Drain*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is a town of secrets, a town of shadows. The people are friendly to a fault, yet they gather privately in the fields on certain nights. It seems every month or so, another business closes down, and another family moves out of town. A third of the houses stand vacant and boarded up, and there is little hope of relief in the days ahead. Forester Stern, an investor from the big city, thinks he can turn things around.

KEEPER NOTES: LC14

[AFG] *Dens of Decay*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is a small town known for its decadence and extreme hedonism. They say anything is available there for a price. Drugs, death, companionship, and other exotic desires can be fulfilled. It is virtually lawless, unless you count Regal Dearth, the man who runs The Lazy Susan, a small jazz club with lavish opium dens in the back.

KEEPER NOTES: LC15

[BCD] *Ground Down and Spit Back Up*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is a little known enclave located far off the beaten track. About fifty years ago, a lot of folks underwent secret government experiments. It made national headlines about five years ago, though the details of exactly what was done remain a mystery. In light of world events, the news faded rapidly. The residents settled for an undisclosed amount, but few have to work, though many carry on as they always have.

KEEPER NOTES: LC16

[BCE] *Keepers of the Silver Flame*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is a town of dark shadows and perpetual twilight. Nestled in a deep valley amidst high mountains, direct sunlight never strikes the community. The people are quiet and pale, regarding outsiders with suspicion and distrust. Dominating the town square is the Order of the Silver Flame, an ancient lodge peculiar to the locals, situated directly across from the town hall.

KEEPER NOTES: LC17

[BCF] *Better Things to Do*

ON THE SURFACE: Once upon a time, Ebon Eaves was involved in government projects and was nicknamed “The Brain Trust”. The administration discarded them once their work was complete and left them to their own devices. The town is an oddity. It is in a sad state of disrepair, with many of the stores on Main Street boarded up and vacant. There is one boarding house open to the few travelers who pass through.

KEEPER NOTES: LC18

[BCG] *Leave Us Be*

ON THE SURFACE: No one goes to Ebon Eaves anymore. Even the town sign warns “It’s Not for Outsiders”. The roads have long been overgrown and the place has been ignored by the county. Up until about five years ago, a truck would go to the nearest town to bring back supplies. No more. The town sits on Windham’s Cove, an old inlet, and is otherwise surrounded by old growth forest.

KEEPER NOTES: LC19

[BDE] *The Raid and the Rapture*

ON THE SURFACE: During the Prohibition Era, Ebon Eaves became an ideal transport center for whiskey coming down from Canada. Rival gangs moved in from New York and a blood bath ensued, which threatened to destroy the town until the rise of the Silver Saints. These vigilantes serve The Church of the Seventh Star. Since then, the locals have become bible-thumping, god-fearing folks who believe in the word of Pastor Ezekiel O’Sullivan, the Church’s militant leader.

KEEPER NOTES: LC20

[BDF] *Shadow of the Orphanage*

ON THE SURFACE: Open Arms Orphanage once stood upon the hillside overlooking Ebon Eaves, a testimony to its progressive thinking and caring nature. Now, the half-burned, crumbling ruin is a reminder of that fateful day when Eloise McElroy went mad and tried to burn the place down. Open Arms stands untouched; the lock rusted to the gate for over seventy-five years.

KEEPER NOTES: LC21

[BDG] *The Hanging Tree*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves sprang up first as a tent community about ten miles down the road from the big city. It was close enough for folks to gather around the big old oak and hustle for whatever crumbs the city folk were offering—usually back-breaking work for little more than watery soup and two bits. Then the city folk came without cause and started the hangings. Over ten men hanged, causing the branches on the old oak to creak under their weight. The rest of the town folk never forgot that over the years. The oak overlooks Memorial Park on the northern edge of the town. The people have been suspicious of outsiders ever since, which has cast a pall over its otherwise pastoral splendor.

KEEPER NOTES: LC22

[BEF] *The Raven's Roost*

ON THE SURFACE: Beyond the lights of the suburban sprawl lies the seaside community of Ebon Eaves. Once the haven of pirates and their kin, it is a small, tightly knit community that has been growing in the last decade. The urban renewal has focused on new construction, creating dissent amongst older members of the community. Jack Fenwick of Fenwick Manufacturing heads up Rook House, a private men's club, while his far younger wife, Madeline, oversees Twine, Rook House's sister society.

KEEPER NOTES: LC23

[BEG] *The Keepers of the Dead*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is little more than a giant mausoleum, catering to a strange clientele of folks fascinated with death and its trappings. Labeled the Suicide Capital of the South, it is nestled deep in the swamps and hidden by cypress trees and Spanish moss. Franklin Funerary offers rooms for rent above its funeral parlor and viewing areas. Some visitors claim to hear strange chanting and drums at night. The locals advise it is dangerous to go wandering off into the darkness and leave it at that.

KEEPER NOTES: LC24

[BFG] *Seclusion*

ON THE SURFACE: The town of Ebon Eaves is little more than a rough center where the rural community gathers when not working their fields or hunting the old growth forest which surrounds them to the north and west. There used to be a bridge to Coffin Mills, but it burned down about twenty years ago and was never rebuilt. Those who work at the small factory generally only come home on the weekends, using the portage ferry to cross the deep, fast waters of the Cavanaugh Wash. Its landmark research hospital, Daniel T. Justice Memorial, brings a regular influx of the sick hoping for a reprieve from death. This is rarely the case.

KEEPER NOTES: LC25

[CDE] *The Penitent*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves sits smack dab in the center of a dry county—the only place grandfathered in when the laws were changed about thirty years ago. As such, it gets a mishmash of drifters and drinkers and unsavory types. Add to the fact it is situated beneath a mental health facility to the north (about five miles up the road) and a penitentiary to the southwest, and one can only wonder about the things the locals have seen. The bar, aptly named The Oasis, is small but surprisingly roomy and rarely crowded. There is a small rattling window air conditioning unit, two pool tables, a small bar, and three tables along the opposite wall. Dexter Tree, the chief bartender, doesn't truck with any trouble. A pass-through window cut into the back wall allows for folks who live in the poorer district of town to buy beer directly without ever setting foot inside.

KEEPER NOTES: LC26

[CDF] *Paradise Lost*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves was once an exclusive island paradise, with only about fifty homes. The residents were all devoted to boating, having copious amounts of leisure time. Taken in by a smooth-talking con man and their own greed, they lost their shirts, and were forced to open their arms to outsiders. The place looks like the run-down resort that it is. Marble fountains are cracked and falling apart. There is a makeshift town hall in what the Meriwethers used to call their home. Bernadette's Boarding House is home to many who come to enjoy the fine fishing and pleasant climate. The old folks are begrudgingly beholden to the new folks, and are habitually passive-aggressive.

KEEPER NOTES: LC27

[CDG] *The Collapse*

ON THE SURFACE: Some say Ebon Eaves was never prosperous. Most folks claim it was a gambling den and Lincoln himself slept in the Bent Spoon Lodge just up the road a ways. Even the oldest of the old can't remember a time when living was more than hand-to-mouth. The oldest citizens in town say their parents told them things were good when the Richmond Mines were still open, though no one knows why it ever closed or why the Richmonds refuse to reopen it.

KEEPER NOTES: LC28

[CEF] *Rust*

ON THE SURFACE: The factory town of Ebon Eaves sits in the heart of a manufacturing region and is one cog of a very large and dysfunctional machine. The folks care little about the outside world and even less about general appearances. They work long hours and spend their precious free time in worship at The Black, a monolithic basalt building, which is surprisingly well-maintained.

KEEPER NOTES: LC29

[CEG] *Lost Promises*

ON THE SURFACE: The citizens of Ebon Eaves had never known anything other than prosperity until the passing of Reverend Bartholomew Green. Now they suffer unknown blights and misery on a staggering scale. Crime has risen. Violence has grown more pervasive. Crops refuse to grow. Animals miscarry and cows give sour milk. The folks seek another to lead the lost flock and restore them to the proper path.

KEEPER NOTES: LC30

[CFG] *An Emptiness Resides*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves used to be a college town until twenty years ago, in 1904, when the college relocated to the city up the road a stretch. Now the sprawling campus is overgrown and abandoned. Ebon Eaves used to be a lot of things. Now it's little more than lost shadows and empty dreams. There is an overgrown racetrack where no horse has set foot in a decade. Even the statue of the founder, Edward Black, stands slightly crooked in the town square, a side effect of the earthquake of '04. Most of the local residents comprise parts of the Falcon Faculty. Old Professor Eddie, a historian half off his rocker, can still be found puttering around the Wright College grounds, mumbling to himself.

KEEPER NOTES: LC31

[DEF] *End of an Era*

ON THE SURFACE: In its heyday, Ebon Eaves was a prominent destination among the jet-set. Nestled in a private cove along the coast, it boasted a lavish yacht club and a vineyard that is still known for its reds and clarets. An indiscretion between a producer and a local girl made national headlines and cast the town in a negative light. The power of the press, guided by Hollywood, versus an angry father protecting his family resulted in the town being blacklisted. With the loss of revenue, the yacht club closed down, and only the quality of its wines has enabled the town to survive. Fishing is a popular pastime, and some tourists are interested enough in a celebrity experience to give Ebon Eaves the hope of a brighter future.

KEEPER NOTES: LC32

[DEG] *The Widening Gyre*

ON THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is where dreams go to die. Located in the suburbs of the city, it provides a reasonable commute for those who can no longer afford the bright lights, but refuse to give up quite yet. Aspiring writers, actors, and comedians have made Ebon Eaves their new home. The older folks are a dour lot who walked the same path as the younger and don't wish to be reminded of their failures. They keep largely to themselves, spending a lot of time in the Granville Mansion doing god-knows-what. It has largely become a community of transients, and once the founders finally die off or move away, the younger generation relying upon them will have no choice but to find another cottage town to cling to.

KEEPER NOTES: LC33

[DFG] *Disintegration*

ON THE SURFACE: In ten years, if that long, Ebon Eaves will be no more. In twenty, it is doubtful anyone will even remember its name. That's a good thing, for the land has been cursed, the people victims of a tragic and sorrowful string of circumstances dating back to its beginnings. It was settled twice. The first time, the people disappeared akin to the same events surrounding Roanoke. The land is deceptively beautiful, but in its tranquility lies untold danger. The nearby mines have collapsed three times, killing more than a hundred men through the years. Over a dozen men have been struck by lightning in the past fifty years. Children wander into the woods and are never seen again. Tranquil Manor, the small asylum, is full-to-brimming with locals driven mad. Few visitors come, save for thrill seekers and salesmen new to the area. Few locals have the will to leave, fearing the bad luck will follow them wherever they go.

KEEPER NOTES: LC34

[EFG] *Black Well's Lullaby*



ON THE SURFACE: The town of Ebon Eaves lies upon worthless land, ruined by the discovery of oil and the recklessness of man. Once, there was a fine lake nearby, Lake Wells, famous for fishing and recreation. Many a local depended upon it, if not for their living, then certainly for their cupboards. The Frelander Lodge took issue when Slake Refineries set up shop on its shores and began processing the huge oil deposits found beneath Brennan Keys' homestead. Fearful the lake would be polluted, the refinery was repeatedly vandalized in an effort to drive the corporation out. Edmund Slake eventually got tired of fighting them and closed the plant down. Abandoned and untended, the worst happened—pipes rusted and oil seeped into the land and the water. The once beautiful lake, now called Black Wells, is a stagnant swamp of muck and mire. The Lodged denied any wrongdoing on their part and even had Keys held accountable—the little wealth he had was paid to the city in damages for his part in the dealings with city folk. Most tourists come to see the place where Jack Reynolds, a folksinger, got his inspiration for *Black Well's Lullaby*, a melancholy song about lost love.

KEEPER NOTES: LC35

Local Color (Keeper Notes)

[LC1] *A Nice, Old Town*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves has long succumbed and rotted away due to past dealings with dark entities. It is little more than a dry husk, a corpse. Most folks saunter along blissfully awaiting death, their minds refusing to accept what their forebears did so long ago, selling off their souls for a period of bliss. The resulting offspring of the cursed generation were twisted, mutated things, cast aside in the woods. Those who were not already infertile underwent surgical procedures so they could not give birth. The town elders, the most ancient of the lot, seek to bring in fresh blood and strike a new bargain to give themselves a second lease on life.

Hazards

ELDERS: The Town Mayor, Jonathan Finch

WEIRD: The creatures in the woods

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ABC]

[LC2] *A Lovely Place to Visit*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is wrapped in mysteries tied deeply into its town lore and guards its secrets carefully. Sheriff Parks does what he can to keep things hush-hush and is aided in his efforts by Amanda Clementine, the elderly librarian. Tommy Magellan is a city-slicker real estate agent who is interested in constructing resort homes in the area. The investigators' arrival triggers the awakening of a long dormant, dark presence.

Hazards

ELDERS: Sheriff Parks, Amanda Clementine

WEIRD: The Dark Presence

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ABD]

[LC3] *Signs of the Elders*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: While The Cigar Club and The Student Union are simple social groups for the men and children respectively, the ladies of The Washburn Society have long been protectors against the dark, unnatural forces plaguing Ebon Eaves.

Hazards

ELDERS: The Washburn ladies

TOWNIES: The children

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ABE]

[LC4] *Faded Glory*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Everyone knows the Granville Mines located in the Lonely Hills are a deathtrap. The thing is, there aren't a lot of options in Ebon Eaves, so people drink heavily to forget their troubles. The mayor is greedy and brooding, and drinks as much as anyone else. These are simple folk; no one's looking for change.

Hazards

ELDERS: Mayor Wallace Hink

TOWNIES: The miners

LANDSCAPE: Granville Mines, The foothills

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ABF]

[LC5] *On Borrowed Time*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is a cozy little town which is showing great signs of wear. The folks are desperate. An ancient evil lurks in the foothills. An evil with which the settlers long ago made a pact. Now, the sacrifices have slowed. People have been disappearing. The Starry Twilight Church, a group of fanatic cultists run by Daisy McGee, seeks to restore the status quo with the creature, and has made more dark promises. They treat outsiders like royalty before fattening them up, drugging them, and turning them over to the thing in the hills.

Hazards

ELDERS: Daisy McGee

TOWNIES: Daisy's diners

WEIRD: Thing in the hills

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ABG]

[LC6] *Battle Scarred*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Amanda Hermann was involved in mysticism and the occult in her youth. She and her friends played with rituals and rites in the basement of the chemical building and inadvertently summoned a fire vampire. In exchange for sacrificing the factory, she was gifted with great powers. No one speaks of her walking out of the fire while everyone else died. Some of the elders witnessed the fire vampire feasting upon those trying to escape. Those folks tend to drink heavily. Amanda Hermann, now 62, still looks youthful and is shunned by the community at large.

Hazards

ELDERS: Amanda Hermann

TOWNIES: Firemen

LANDSCAPE: The Blessing Brewery

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ACD]

[LC7] *The Enclave*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is an old farm community, dating back to the early 1700's. Once nicknamed Patriot's Point, the town's outlook changed after The Great War. This attitudinal shift is largely attributed to Deacon Justice Jones, a pacifist who promotes peace and is the founder of The Fraternal Order of Life and Liberty. The Darkling Sky is a loosely organized militia formed in response to Jones' preaching. There have been several small eruptions of violence between the two groups, and it is only a matter of time before someone goes too far.

Hazards

ELDERS: Deacon Justice Jones

TOWNIES: The Darkling Sky

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ACE]

[LC8] *A Study in Antebellum*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Aside from the rundown town square, Ebon Eaves hasn't changed much since its founding. It is a quaint community, founded in courtesy and tradition and unaccustomed to change. For example, The Winslett Family, nice folks, still hold their private rituals off in the old growth forests every full moon without fail. Visitors are told to watch out for wildlife if they decide to go hunting or hiking, for no one knows what they might run across.

Hazards

ELDERS: The Winslett Family

LANDSCAPE: The Dark Woods

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ACF]

[LC9] *Southern Rustic*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves held a certain appeal to the city folk, who often looked at it as a relaxing getaway. With the introduction of the casino into the area, the town has put an even greater emphasis on wholesome family fun. People wonder why the Wisdoms don't raise more of a fuss, but neither Buddy nor Juniper want a spotlight turned on their "son", Kidney, whom they keep locked away in the basement. Kidney is not quite right in the head and has been kept out of asylums only by the Wisdom's close community ties. Aside from the family, only the retired medical doctor, Joshua Brothers, and the town sheriff, Van Hearst, know about him and his condition.

Hazards

ELDERS: Buddy and Juniper Wisdom

LANDSCAPE: Wisdom Farms

WEIRD: Kidney, an unholy offspring

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES: [ACG]

[LC10] *Frayed Knots*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Jessica Wayne and her younger sister Gossamer were the pride and joy of Ebon Eaves. They were candy strippers at the hospital. They did charity work. They went on long hikes together. Then something happened in the woods. Something that drove Jessica mad enough to kill her parents. Gossamer, fifteen at the time, was taken in by the Seven Sons Nondenominational Church (SSNC). She was quiet and withdrawn. Yet she came home from doing errands one day when she was eighteen, the same age at which her sister killed their parents, and crucified the pastor. She was committed to Weeping Angel Asylum, and her screams sometimes seem to echo through the woods and carry across the town on a quiet day. Many businesses have closed, and foot traffic has all but dried up with such shocking and terrifying reminders of the tragedy of the Waynes.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: Weeping Angel Asylum, The Forest

WEIRD: Gossamer Wayne, thirty-five

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ADE]

[LC11] *Grim Prospects*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Mayor Pendleton “Pen” Manning is a dark priest for a death cult. Ebon Eaves was given to him in a vision by his master. Now, he prepares for the day when the stars align and his god shall wreak ruin upon the earth. He has recruited a select coterie of locals into his service. The rest of the people are meek and fearful, lest they meet the same mysterious fate as any who have spoken against him or his harsh justice.

Hazards

ELDERS: Mayor Manning

LANDSCAPE: Corrupted farmland

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ADF]

[LC12] *Rose Colored Glasses*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: It wasn't the Yellow Fever that hit Ebon Eaves. It was something far, far worse. They were struck with a gypsy curse, a curse destined to repeat every twenty-five years until they can find a way to end it. No one knows what Geoffrey Malmouth and his rowdy men did to the gypsies after they drove them into the old ruins in the woods. Old stories say they came back quiet and bloody. The townsfolk think they can atone by being nice to visitors. Things are never quite that easy.

Hazards

WEIRD: The Curse

LANDSCAPE: The broken tower in the woods

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ADG]

[LC13] *Baker's Dozen*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Old McKenzie Baker may have died, but his followers brought him back in a less than pristine condition. He is confined to a refrigerated room in the sub-basement of his manor, though he wanders about from time to time. The Dozen, led by Tabitha O'Flaherty, the most charismatic of the lot, attempt dark experiments to restore him to his former glory. They have closed the mansion down from its extravagant days to where it is now—a mad laboratory littered with relics of the occult.

Hazards

ELDERS: Tabitha O'Flaherty

TOWNIES: The Dozen

WEIRD: McKenzie Baker

LANDSCAPE: The Windsor Place

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ADG]

[LC14] *Circling the Drain*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: The people are simple folk who have long held campfire parties as a way to blow off some steam. They don't invite outsiders, as they generally let their hair down, drink heavily, and engage in other activities a bit beyond the norm, be it self-mutilation as performance art or more rampant displays of exhibitionism. Forester Stern, positioned as the town's savior, is actually an occult priest who hopes to use their heightened emotional energies to fuel some rituals. He has met with little to no success. He keeps the town alive, just barely.

Hazards

DOOM: Manifesting emotional maelstrom

LANDSCAPE: The stone circles in the fields

WEIRD: Forester Stern

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [AEG]

[LC15] *Dens of Decay*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Regal Dearth went to the Dreamlands once when he was a child. Since that fateful day, he's tried nearly everything to get back there. He grew up in Ebon Eaves and believes the land has power. In a bit of irony, he bought Marcy's drugstore (where he had his first Dreamlands experience), bulldozed it, and constructed The Lazy Susan in its place. His mad quest to enter the Dreamlands at any cost has caused the very fabric between the real and the imagined to collapse a bit, as the Otherness bleeds into the nooks and crannies of the town.

Hazards

ELDERS: Regal Dearth

DOOM: The Otherness

LANDSCAPE: The Lazy Susan

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [AFG]

[LC16] *Ground Down and Spit Back Up*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: The elders of Ebon Eaves decided to sell their poor to the government for testing. The poor had nothing to do with this decision. A separate water supply carried various chemicals and toxins into their drinking and shower water. A small fraction of them survived, usually the women. The experiments also accelerated the gestation cycle and increase dfertility. The offspring were often stillborn. Others had weak immune systems and died young, though a few escaped to the abandoned coal mines. Taylor Rain and her twin brother, Maximilian, were the only ones to not only survive, but prosper. They went to law school, uncovered the truth, and sued the government in a class action lawsuit. Never married, the pair lives in a mansion in the center of town, administering the settlement funds. Their widowed mother, Quince Rain, lives in a boarding house and never speaks to them.

Hazards

ELDERS: Taylor and Maximilian Rain

LANDSCAPE: Abandoned coal mines

WEIRD: Quince Rain

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BCD]

[LC17] *Keepers of the Silver Flame*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is located in Shadow Vale. An old factory town, it is largely self-sufficient, selling its goods to the nearby city, while the handful of farmers supply enough fresh produce for the community. The original founders were Masons who lost their charter during the Civil War, when they broke with tradition by allowing women to become members. Reformed as The Order of the Silver Flame, it is a charitable organization charged with looking after the poorer members of the region, while also protecting the town's dark secrets.

Hazards

TOWNIES: The Order of the Silver Flame members

LANDSCAPE: The Valley

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BCE]

[LC18] *Better Things to Do*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: The residents of Ebon Eaves were more than happy to be freed from working on military applications and have turned to more esoteric applications of the scientific method. Maybe a dozen are left of the original group, and all but three putter around harmlessly. Triage, the consortium formed by the remaining three, is still trying to perfect teleportation, with mixed results—they have lost test subjects and brought strange things through. Failed experiments are thrown in the Dump, a deep, seemingly bottomless chasm in the woods north of town. Every once in a while something crawls up out of the sludge and wreaks havoc, and is clinically considered part of the price of progress.

Hazards

ELDERS: The Triage

LANDSCAPE: The Dump

WEIRD: Sludge creatures

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BCF]

[LC19] *Leave Us Be*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is dying a quiet death. And its residents are fine with that, as most of them are mad. Weeping Angels Asylum was the scene of an uprising six years ago, and it grew dark and bloody. Inmates escaped. Shots were fired. A consensus was reached. Weeping Angels is now entirely voluntary, and inmates come and go as they will. Most are largely harmless. The town subsists chiefly on beets and fish, with the occasional bit of wild game. Tristan Woods, known as the Alderman, keeps things together and encourages the xenophobic behavior. The town has reestablished its ties to the Deep Ones living off the coast.

Hazards

ELDERS: Tristan Woods

TOWNIES: The mental cases

WEIRD: Deep ones

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BCG]

[LC20] *The Raid and the Rapture*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: It wasn't the gangs that almost tore Ebon Eaves apart; it was the evil in their hearts that awakened The Beast. Pastor O'Sullivan used to fight monsters and founded The Church of the Seventh Star. He trained his followers to fight back the rising tide of darkness. While they managed to succeed, the Beast got into their blood and twisted them. O'Sullivan is barely able to contain his wrath and sees sin everywhere he turns. His followers, the Silver Saints, are little better than thugs, abusing their bit of power. The Beast already stirs in its sleep. Should it awaken, things will certainly grow far more sanguine.

Hazards

ELDERS: Pastor Ezekiel O'Sullivan

DOOM: The Beast awakening

LANDSCAPE: Church of the Seventh Star

TOWNIES: The Silver Saints

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BDE]

[LC21] *Shadow of the Orphanage*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves never recovered from McElroy's madness. Her sin seeped into the soil. Over a hundred children died when she burned Open Arms Orphanage. She had been infected by a brain burrower that made her view children as evil. Although she died in the fire, the brain burrower is still alive, trapped within the ruins, feasting upon the tormented souls still trapped with it and waiting for someone to stumble upon it once more.

Hazards

DOOM: The brain burrower

LANDSCAPE: Open Arms Orphanage

WEIRD: Ghost orphans

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BDF]

[LC22] *The Hanging Tree*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves doesn't care much for outsiders. Considering them a necessary evil, the locals are close-mouthed and quiet with strangers, preferring their own company. The hangings in the past were due to the involvement of some of the townsfolk with a strange cult connected to the town lore. The cult has survived, going deep underground, and it carries on their traditions of bleeding the fields and other pagan fertility rites.

Hazards

TOWNIES: Shadow cultists

LANDSCAPE: Memorial Park

WEIRD: The Hanging Tree

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BDG]

[LC23] *The Raven's Roost*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is undergoing a transformation. Under the secret direction of Madeline Fenwick, the older parts of town are being excavated under the auspices of improving the community. In truth, the Fenwicks are looking for something, a long-forgotten relic of untold power which, unbeknownst to any, lies beneath Fenwick Manufacturing itself.

Hazards

ELDERS: Madeline Rook, occultist

LANDSCAPE: Fenwick Manufacturing

TOWNIES: Rook House and Twine members

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BEF]

[LC24] *The Keepers of the Dead*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is known as Creepsville to folks in the neighboring townships. The only traffic it gets is from those tourists with a deep interest in the macabre and a growing number of alienists intrigued by this strange obsession with the dead. A lot of folks die off in the swamps, and it's chalked up to suicide. Franklin Funerary does a booming business. Mitchell Hemsworth, the present owner of the funeral home, is wheelchair-bound. His daughter, Amanda, handles the day-to-day operations and is the high priestess of the local death cult.

Hazards

ELDERS: Amanda Hemsworth

LANDSCAPE: The Swamps

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BEG]

[LC25] *Seclusion*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves was once home to a small private university until it went belly up and was bought by private investors. It became the Daniel T. Justice Memorial Hospital. Malcolm Coffin, who runs the family-owned Coffin Mills, funneled money through his cousins to buy the property. Daniel T. Justice was a renowned scientist who was heavily involved in life-extending research, and headed the science department of Calhoun University until he died from the result of his experiments. A branch of the hospital—off limits to all but staff—continues his work, often using patients to further its research. Malcolm Coffin has tuberculosis and doesn't want to die. Justice, a revenant, haunts the halls and wants his dark research discontinued.

Hazards

ELDERS: Malcolm Coffin

TOWNIES: Mills factory workers

LANDSCAPE: Coffin Mills

WEIRD: Daniel T. Justice (revenant)

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BFG]

[LC26] *The Penitent*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: In 1898, the folks of Wainscott County decided to give up the sins of alcohol. This raised the ire of Ebon Eaves, as they grew corn and trafficked in sour-mash. With the economy of Ebon Eaves on the verge of collapse, Theodore Tree came ambling into town. Part snake-oil salesman and all silver tongue, he managed to persuade the city folk to turn a blind eye towards Ebon Eaves. In return, the townsfolk gave him ownership of The Oasis, free and clear. Today, his grandson runs the place, while Teddy spends his days reading occult treatises and his nights trying to persuade otherworldly entities to cure his cancer. He is in the beginning stages of recruiting certain locals to his cause.

Hazards

ELDERS: Theodore Tree

DOOM: Teddy's Pact

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CDE]

[LC27] *Paradise Lost*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Located just off the Florida panhandle, Ebon Eaves is nestled on a sprawling island that is largely overgrown ruins at this point. Sometimes folks come from the mainland to take advantage of the cheap rooms and see how the wealthy used to live in the once-exclusive community. When the elite owners of the island lost their shirts, many threw themselves off Huntsman's Reef. Mayor Justin White lives in a crumbling mansion atop a hill in the center of town. It also serves as the court house and town hall. People think he's a bit off, and they're right.

Hazards

ELDERS: Mayor Justin White

TOWNIES: The old folk, collectively known as the Broken

LANDSCAPE: Huntsman's Reef

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CDF]

[LC28] *The Collapse*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: In the early 1800's, Ebon Eaves was a wildly raucous coal mining town. Percival Richmond, then mayor and chief claimant to the largest stake in the area, discovered silver in the Richmond Mines. Jesse, his brother, was a mean and nasty good-for-nothing who murdered his brother, married his widow, and ran the men ragged digging for the precious ore. No more silver was found, and the surveyor realized Percy salted the mine. Refusing to believe his brother of capable of such a thing, Jesse had the men dig deeper, where they uncovered an ancient, subterranean city and woke something up. One man, Frank Jacobs, got out alive and blew up the mines, trapping the darkness within. Jesse saw the man hanged and, harrowed by the experience, lived a humble life ever after. No one ever bothered to read the diaries or reports. Ansel Richmond, recent inheritor of the family estate, hopes to get the mines going and revitalize the town once more.

Hazards

ELDERS: Ansel Richmond

LANDSCAPE: Richmond Mines

DOOM: The Lurkers beneath

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CDG]

[LC29] *Rust*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: The folks of Ebon Eaves embraced all that technology had to offer until it took over their lives. Now, they are servants of the machine, mere slaves to science. And then the machine began to disintegrate. The Black is a small group of Luddites who secretly suspect the machines are up to something and live simply. As it stands, an entity has established a presence beneath the earth, where the toxic runoff pools and turns the grass grey.

Hazards

TOWNIES: Slaves of the machine

LANDSCAPE: Toxic pools

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CEF]

[LC30] *Lost Promises*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Reverend Bartholomew Green was two hundred years old. He protected the town through his knowledge of what he called “the craft”, but told the townsfolk was “old time religion”. Now, the Darkness no longer is paid its tributes, and the town is panicking. No one knew his secrets. That is, until his nephew, David Dobbins, found the cache of leather-bound journals in Green’s cellar. Dobbins is leading the hunt to find someone to replace the Reverend, yet even he doesn’t know the full story—the means of appeasement are not found in any book in his collection, though resurrection rituals are.

Hazards

ELDERS: David Dobbins

DOOM: The Darkness

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CEG]



[LC31] *An Emptiness Resides*



BENEATH THE SURFACE: Wright College was the cornerstone of the community, having been founded in 1827, and it produced a fair number of lawyers, politicians, and scientists. It took a more esoteric turn in 1898, when Professor Oswald Edwards was hired as its Dean. He focused more on the humanities and liberal studies and brought in faculty from Miskatonic University during the course of his supervision. Many of them, it turned out, had left Miskatonic under clouds of suspicion for their bizarre behavior and beliefs. Edwards wanted to pierce the veil between life and death. In October of 1903, with the help of his faculty, he nearly did. Even then, his occult activities left a taint upon the town. Miranda Sanders, then a student, witnessed Edwards performing strange rituals and her family had enough clout to see the school shut down. They were unable to precisely pin anything other than misconduct on any of the faculty and, in order to keep things quiet, paid them for their silence. This largely bankrupted the town, which now is heaving its dying breaths. Old Professor Eddie, as Edwards is now known, putters around, faking his madness and plotting to take revenge upon the lot of them—he was so close to learning the secrets which lay beyond.

Hazards

ELDERS: Old Professor Eddie

LANDSCAPE: Wright College, The Derby

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CFG]

[LC32] *End of an Era*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves could've been another Nantucket, but fate dealt it a bad hand, as did some indiscreet Hollywood producers. Now, no one goes there, at least not publicly. In addition to the Ebon Vinery, there is a secluded and remote manor for those wishing to indulge in their wilder fantasies. No one outside of the Pitch family knows what is used to make the grapes grow so rich and distinctly robust. Tiffany Miller, the victimized girl, took the money she got in an out-of-court settlement and established a discreet brothel. Few locals are aware of The Silk Rope, Tiffany's place, as it caters to the rich and anonymous. Her father, the chief alderman, is a hopeless drug addict, who manages to conceal his own dark habits.

Hazards

ELDERS: Tiffany Miller

LANDSCAPE: Ebon Vinery

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [DEF]

[LC33] *The Widening Gyre*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: With all the desperation in the air, it was only a matter of time before it manifested into something. And it did, twenty-seven years ago. There was a mass suicide. People have largely forgotten it. Most of those living in town at the time have left. New souls, every bit as tarnished and frantic, have taken their place and placate the creature's hunger. For there is, beneath it all, a dark creature growing bloated from its decade's long feast, and now it craves flesh. Granville Mansion is where the Bloated has gathered its followers to bring it fresh dead while it gains strength.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: Granville Mansion

TOWNIES: Bloated cultists

WEIRD: The Bloated

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [DEG]

[LC34] *Disintegration*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves is disappearing bit by bit. The land is reclaiming what it gave up so unwillingly so many years ago. Within Tranquil Manor lies the only one who sees the problem clearly, a local girl, Jennifer Blackwell. She has irregular periods of lucidity, but they are mistaken for her frequent delusions. She knows there is a darkness waiting just beyond the veil to consume everything. Jennifer calls it the Sinkhole. She knows the only way to save the town is to unravel its mysteries before it's too late.

Hazards

ELDERS: Jennifer Blackwell

DOOM: The Sinkhole

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [DFG]

[LC35] *Black Well's Lullaby*

BENEATH THE SURFACE: Ebon Eaves was a pure place of power unlike any other the world. Alan Seemly, as a loyal priest of the Outer Forces, knew it fell upon him to desecrate it. Only then, he was certain, could the Master come into the world. He prayed for a sign, and oil was discovered. He infiltrated The Freelanders Lodge, a small social fraternity, and twisted them to his ends, using them to close the Refinery. Next, he went with his son and destroyed the pipes, losing his son in the process. When his lodge brethren learned of his actions, he was cast out, though they vowed to keep his secret, feeling the loss of his kin was penance enough. He cared not. He resumed his dark studies and was near to bringing his masters through, when the song, Black Well's Lullaby, was released. It reminded folks of how things used to be, reminded them of the land's purity, and Rose Hill sprung up, the only sign of fresh life along lake's shoreline in years. Now Alan plans and waits for an opportunity to destroy it and the town once and for all.

Hazards

ELDERS: Alan Seemly

LANDSCAPE: Black Wells

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [EFG]

Town Lore (Investigator Notes)

[ABC] *The Haunted Temple at Twilight*

THE MYSTERY: On the outskirts of Ebon Eaves, near the forest, lies The Temple House. It belonged to Jebediah Temple who up and shot his whole family one night before blowing his brains out with a shotgun. Since then, strange lights have been seen in the woods. Some folks claim that you can see the ghosts of Jebediah and his family through the windows of The Temple House just as the sun sets beyond the tree line.

KEEPER NOTES: TL1

[ABD] *The Observatory of Oswald Brood*

THE MYSTERY: An excessive number of shooting stars have been spotted in the skies around Ebon Eaves over the last forty years. So many in fact that amateur astronomer, Oswald Brood, had an observatory constructed two years ago. He has reported seeing strange insect-like creatures in the night skies. Everyone thinks he's mad and gives him and his estate wide berth. Only a few folks have mentioned the Reaper, a ghost said to be a harbinger of death, who appears on moonless nights. They claim the Reaper must be somehow related to all of this.

KEEPER NOTES: TL2

[ABE] *The Slab in the Woods*

THE MYSTERY: Streaks of multicolored lights appear several times a year over the cornfields west of Ebon Eaves. Folks believe they are nothing more than an atmospheric anomaly and don't pay them much heed. Yet, they stay indoors when the lights are seen and lock their shutters tight. Somehow or other, for the past dozen years, after the lights appear victims are found upon the massive old slab located in Wheeler's Field with their entrails scattered around it.

KEEPER NOTES: TL3

[ABF] *The Long Shadow of Lancaster Heights*

THE MYSTERY: Forty years ago, Scott Lancaster built a tower in the foothills north of Ebon Eaves where he'd conduct strange experiments well into the night and sometimes until sunrise. The place became known as Lancaster Heights, and one night a thunderous boom awoke all across the town. Folks ran to see what happened at his estate and found it completely devoid of any living thing, though the structure and the surrounding landscape was unharmed. Mysterious men came in and boarded the place up. It has sat abandoned ever since. On some nights, folks see ball lightning rolling across the town, and claim they hear the faint, tormented screams of a man.

KEEPER NOTES: TL4

[ABG] *The Burned Out Asylum*

THE MYSTERY: Travesty Wells was the only daughter of Herbert and Virginia Wells, and following in her father's footsteps, had a fascination with science and engineering. She built a device that killed her parents. Some say it was an accident, others intentional. All agreed she needed to be placed in the Periwinkle Retreat and Wellness Center. Three weeks later, the place inexplicably burned down, save Travesty's room. Identifying the corpses took three years, and sources say her body was never recovered. The place was rebuilt a few years later. The memorial wing has an abundance of suicides.

KEEPER NOTES: TL5

[ACD] *The Crater Rock Comet*

THE MYSTERY: A meteor hit the center of town seventy-five years ago, creating Crater Rock, a tourist attraction. Ten years later, Jacob Manning became known as the Crater Rock Cannibal when he was arrested for killing and butchering twenty-four of his neighbors in a single night. He told folks the angels told him to do it. He hanged himself in his jail cell over the weekend before he was arraigned.

KEEPER NOTES: TL6

[ACE] *Home, Sweet Home*

THE MYSTERY: The Harbor House, the most beautiful residence in Ebon Eaves, has been on and off the market a dozen times in as many years, ever since the Sterling Massacre. People say the lights flicked off and on of their own accord, and that's even before Randal Sterling, the famed architect who designed and oversaw its construction, slaughtered his whole family and was found chewing on his own entrails while mumbling to himself in Latin.

KEEPER NOTES: TL7

[ACF] *Darkly Dreaming*

THE MYSTERY: They say that bad streaks run in cycles in Ebon Eaves, whether they are the lightning storms, the quakes, or the fits of madness which seem to strike the inhabitants. It doesn't matter if they've lived in the area their whole life or not, as in the case of Malcolm Richards, who moved into town the night before he slaughtered twenty parishioners. By the way, he was going to be the new preacher. The madness seems to strike every dozen years, give or take, so it is due at any time. Richards, the only madman caught alive, resides in the asylum and babbles about doing God's will.

KEEPER NOTES: TL8

[ACG] *The Bronze Sundial*

THE MYSTERY: Archer Lewis, of the acclaimed 1904 Lewis-Locke expedition, discovered a most curious sundial in South America, one undoubtedly of Greek origin. He donated it to his hometown, where it has been prominently displayed on the courthouse steps since 1917. Thrice people have been killed on the steps. In 1918, a judge tripped and impaled himself on it. Three years later, in 1921, a woman knifed her husband, and he collapsed upon it. More recently, in 1924, Alexander Moore killed five people, one each night for five nights, before being apprehended. Each morning, their heads here found placed before the sundial, as if offered in sacrifice.

KEEPER NOTES: TL9

[ADE] *Dark Matters*

THE MYSTERY: Twenty years ago, Sterling Labs went bankrupt. It was a small research center owned by Professor Wyatt Whitcombe and his wife, Laura. She couldn't keep things going after he ran off. Some folks claimed she killed him, but no one could ever prove anything. Last year, Wyatt returned looking haggard and pale, but with enough funding to get things going again. Since his arrival, strange things have been happening—livestock has gone missing, on some nights an otherworldly green nimbus around Sterling Labs can be seen, and the graveyard has been robbed with disturbing frequency.

KEEPER NOTES: TL10

[ADF] *Beyond the Stars*

THE MYSTERY: Howell Industries launched their first rocket on the flats outside of Ebon Eaves three years ago. Since then, things have gotten mighty strange. Falling debris became common. Odd bits of rock and old coins would fall out of the sky every so often. This was chalked up to the increase in storm activity. A year to the day after the first launch, a small meteor disintegrated over the town, cascading a strange mist into the air. No one reported any ill effects. The debris stopped as suddenly as it began, but the storms became lightning storms and folks began spotting giant bats around Carver's Caves. Two months ago came the laughing sickness. People are suing Howell Industries and there is presently an injunction preventing them from doing additional testing.

KEEPER NOTES: TL11

[ADG] *Ichabod's Tomb*

THE MYSTERY: While everyone knows Ebon Eaves used to be located a little further west, until recently most didn't know the old town had been swallowed up by a sinkhole caused by an earthquake in 1792. Michal Ichabod, the town founder, was a brilliant recluse, tradesman and tinkerer, but he vanished along with most of the occupants in the disaster. Archaeologists from Miskatonic University—with permission from the Governor himself—have begun excavating the buried remains as part of their "Restore America" project. They also hope to scientifically explain the reddish-white glowing spheres which are infrequently seen in the area.

KEEPER NOTES: TL12

[AEF] *Colors Out of Space*

THE MYSTERY: Kendrick McDaniel had a farmstead just down the old trail north of town near the ridgeline, which went belly up when he overworked the land. At least that's what the locals say. And the same folks say the financial stress drove him plum mad. Some saw lights—all sorts of colors—descend on his place one night. When they investigated, the place was found abandoned, as though Kendrick and his kin had never been there. Except his truck was still there—running—with the keys in the ignition. Where he burned leaves in an old pit there was something burning, could've been a man, or a goat, or some unholy combination of the two. It moved. The sheriff made certain it quit moving. Since then, people steer clear of the place, and don't mention the McDaniel name too much.

KEEPER NOTES: TL13



[AEG] *The Broken Circle*

THE MYSTERY: On the edges of Ebon Eaves, near the poor section of town, stand the remnants of the Grant Mansion. It was a great structure, built in the 1800's. Grant was a slave trader and his home was destroyed by the townsfolk after the Civil War. At least part of it was...the inner chamber, known now as the Vault, was made of heavy, strange stones imported from overseas. When it couldn't be burned, people figured nature would eventually claim it, and let it be. On some nights, people report seeing fog roll out of the Vault and flee. This is generally within a few days of others reporting an abundance of shooting stars in the night skies.

KEEPER NOTES: TL14

[AFG] *Hell's Bells*

THE MYSTERY: Long ago, Indians took their mad to a spot known as Four Winds to be purified. Some would come back enlightened. Most were never seen again. The Indians claimed it was a spot of great power. When settlers took over the territory, the Indians warned them of the dangers. The townsfolk didn't heed them and built the First Presbyterian Church on the spot. During construction, seven people died. Undeterred, the church was completed three months later. It burned down within a week of completion, leaving the stone structure gutted. The fire melted stained glass windows, yet the bell survived and rang continuously throughout the blaze, as if by an unseen hand. The town was relocated two miles to the south, where it stands today. On clear evenings, people claim to see flickering lights as if the church is again on fire, and the bell rings out. Most say if you are outside when the bell rings, you'll go mad.

KEEPER NOTES: TL15

[BCD] *Galileo's Blade*

THE MYSTERY: Twenty-five years ago, the singular copy of Galileo's Blade—a scientific find—was stolen from the Barkley Museum of Natural History in broad daylight. People only remember that because two weeks later the J.K. Barkley First National Bank was robbed and fifteen people were slaughtered. Since then, both the bank and museum are claimed to be haunted. Visitors have reported seeing the ghost of the White Lady in the museum stacks, lost and lonely. The night watchman, Teddy, claims to have seen at least three different ghosts in the bank while patrolling, and a strange one in the night sky on more than one occasion.

KEEPER NOTES: TL16

[BCE] *Foggy Hills*

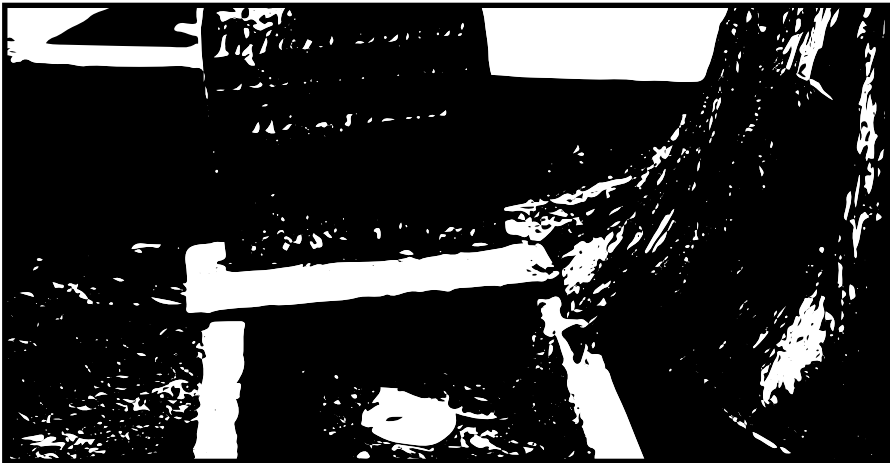
THE MYSTERY: Forty years ago, give or take, Andrew Sanderson convinced seventy-five folks to kill themselves up on the ridgeline folks call Foggy Hills. No one knows how he did it. No one wants to. His body was never found. Late at night, people claim his ghost haunts Foggy Hills, looking for more victims. The locals won't set foot up there, claiming something in the land changed that night. Children are told to behave or Foggy Drew will come for them too.

KEEPER NOTES: TL17

[BCF] *Fool's Gold*

THE MYSTERY: A hundred years ago, a wagon train carrying gold and its armed escort disappeared somewhere close to where Ebon Eaves stands today. No one knows exactly where. The locals generally don't pay it much mind, but every so often someone gets swept up in a gold fever, sells all their goods, and goes off into the hills trying to find the treasure. No one ever comes back. Since the most recent outbreak, people keep an eye out for folks showing The Signs, and have to physically restrain them from going. Sometimes the fever passes, sometimes they swallow their own tongues and suffocate. Water and soil samples indicate nothing abnormal, though Blake's Pharmacy does a booming business in therapeutic aids. Folks still drift through hoping to strike it rich by finding the lost gold.

KEEPER NOTES: TL18



[BCG] *Beecham Cemetery*

THE MYSTERY: Sue Franklin was found digging up her baby girl's corpse in the cemetery fourteen years ago. The groundskeeper had seen people do strange things before and carried her to Sister Carrie's Home for Wayward Souls. Sue was found the next morning in a bloody mass of bones and body parts, cradling a head in her arms, and singing a soft lullaby. She had killed five indigents. Her husband's body was found with a cavity in his chest—evidently, his heart had been ripped out up on Pershing Point. Sue was hanged for murder after the jury deliberated for less than five minutes.

KEEPER NOTES: TL19

[BDE] *The Midnight Marshes*

THE MYSTERY: Some folks claim the marshes on the fringes of town kind of sprang up overnight about forty years ago. Geologists figure it was some underground cave that overflowed or seeped through the topsoil after scratching its way up through the earth. The trees are inexplicable. They grew up dark and thick and fast, shrouding out the daylight. That's when someone or another gave it its name. Wise folks don't go in. Swarthy vagrants do, from time to time. People have seen the dead walking in there and heard strange chanting in some foreign language, so it's best to avoid it altogether. A few curious locals claim a monstrous flying horse has driven them away. When they sober up, they disclaim ever seeing any such thing.

KEEPER NOTES: TL20

[BDF] *The Night Terrors*

THE MYSTERY: A month ago, people—young and old alike—began sleepwalking in Ebon Eaves. It started around the time someone vandalized the statue of Carol Young that was erected in 1909. The sleepwalking started with maybe a handful of folks, but has grown to around twenty or so. This happened once before—in the late 1800s—and it ended with bloodshed and madness. Certainly, people were not carried off into the night sky as some of the locals claim.

KEEPER NOTES: TL21

[BDG] *The Curious Cave Drawings*

THE MYSTERY: There is an ancient cavern system beneath Apocalypse Peak, the small mountain standing alone to the west amongst the hills. Amateur spelunkers discovered a new tunnel system and found within some curious cave drawings, a small stone encampment, hiking equipment at least a hundred years old, and fragments of bone. When they attempted to take a picture, they claim their camera was thrown out of their hands, and they fled in terror. They say bats swarmed them, and they barely made it out alive. This could be an amazing find, or more likely, a mere flight of fancy concocted by some college kids looking for some attention.

KEEPER NOTES: TL22

[BEF] *The Cornucopia*

THE MYSTERY: Ebon Eaves has the richest soil in the land, and some folks say they owe it all to Peter Ellis, a horticulturist and local legend. Things grow surprisingly quick and hardy—even things that shouldn't grow, given the general clime. Sensitive banana, lemon and olive trees grow just as well as more standard crops. Ellis claims one simple philosophy, "Look after nature, and it'll look after you." Some of the locals find him charming, but somehow unsettling. A rare few claim to have spotted the spirits of their loved ones beckoning them to Druid Hill, a small rise with an olive grove at its top.

Keeper Notes: TL23

[BEG] *Illumination*

THE MYSTERY: The old parts of Ebon Eaves are fashioned in a very classical Greek tradition. The Manley Manor stands apart. It seems to be far older and sits cozily but abandoned on the far edge of town near a dairy farm owned by Mayor Thad Wilson. Johnny, Thad's youngest son, has claimed to have seen the spirit of old Manley moving through the house in the dead of night. No one paid him any mind until the house's lights began flickering on and off three weeks ago, even though the power was cut off long ago. People now give the place a wide berth.

KEEPER NOTES: TL24

[BFG] *Doom*

THE MYSTERY: The Ashford family has always been known for two things: wealth beyond measure and a history of madness in the family line. Angela Ashford, a mere twenty-two and last of the line, has returned home to put her father to rest and restore the estate according to his last wishes. Already, she has the town in an uproar, and the sole boarding house is filled to capacity. After one night in Ashford Manor, she was found wandering half-naked in the streets, bleeding and in a stupor, mumbling the words..."It can't be." To keep away reporters, Mayor Castwick's family has taken in the poor girl, and her personal physician is already in attendance. Work on the home has been temporarily suspended.

KEEPER NOTES: TL25

[CDE] *Maker's Mark*

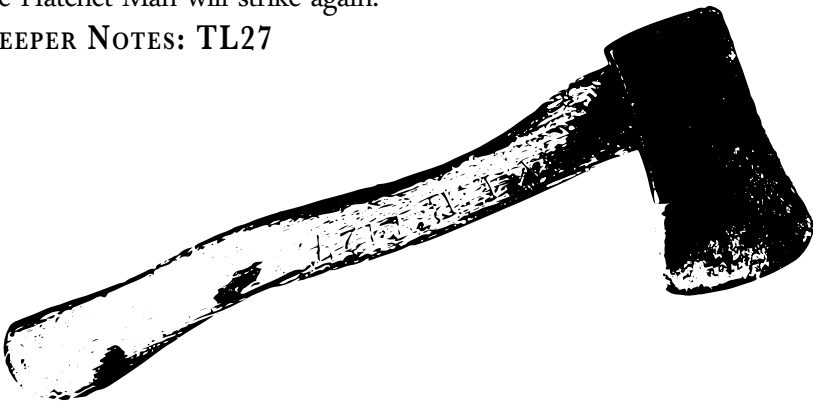
THE MYSTERY: The livestock have been going missing around Ebon Eaves for years, and whenever it happens the townsfolk get in an uproar. Everyone except Tucker Thompson, who is able to demand more for his produce and is growing rich from everyone else's continued misfortune. The local authorities investigated him long ago, and just chalk it up to his good luck and everyone else's bad luck. Early this spring, Shelly Caldwell claimed to have seen an enormous thing—bigger than a man—swoop down and swallow one of her cows. She described it as leathery-winged snake thing. Neighbors hearing her screams rushed out and found her in hysterics. Though it was a windless night, they noted the nearby branches and leaves were shaking. No one can make head or tail of the incident.

KEEPER NOTES: TL26

[CDF] *Hatchet Man*

THE MYSTERY: William Laws, Billy to his friends, chopped up five of them with an axe at the end of a poker game. Skip Peterson, an ex-wrestler, managed to subdue him before he could become victim number six. Billy's eyes were glazed over and he was foaming at the mouth. Peterson noted a bite mark on his friend's arm that wasn't there before he went outside to get some fresh air and stretch his legs. Billy was found dead later that night, hanging from the ceiling. That was fifteen years ago. Since then, there have been two more similar incidents, roughly five years apart. People are fearful the Hatchet Man will strike again.

KEEPER NOTES: TL27



[CDG] *Dissonance*

THE MYSTERY: Porter Labs went bankrupt over twenty years ago after their sonic experiments resulted in the entire community going stark raving mad. The militia was called in and forced to subdue the locals, using lethal force in some cases. During the incident, the Labs exploded, and some of the soldiers claimed to see at least one, if not two, men fly out of the wreckage. They later recanted these statements as a trick of the light or an afterimage from the experience. Most of the citizens recovered, though madness and stunted growth have occurred among a handful of the populace. The government came in, went through the wreckage, and left with a truck bed loaded down with crates marked TOP SECRET.

KEEPER NOTES: TL28

[CEF] *In the Blood*

THE MYSTERY: Lorraine Raslo is the first woman in the state to be convicted of mass murder. She killed her husband, Stanley, her brother-in-law, Mark, and her three children. She even calmly turned herself in, saying she was doing God's Will, and the world was a better place without them. She carried herself well until the day of her sentencing when Jack, Stanley's youngest brother, entered the court room. Lorraine screamed and lunged at him, saying "He said you were dead. I have to finish God's work! Stop him!!!" Currently, she resides in the State Mental Asylum, and is the subject of many articles and papers. Jack Raslo has become quite popular since he returned home, and it is no rumor he has his eyes set on the mayor's seat.

KEEPER NOTES: TL29

[CEG] *Cryptic*

THE MYSTERY: In the forest just north of town lies Ashwake Fields, where the folks who died of Yellow Fever in 1878 lie buried. At least that's what the Government was told. An overgrown, broken monument rests atop the site. No one living knows what it says. Most locals give it a wide berth, and teenagers are often dared to go out there on moonless nights. Most won't go. The few who do venture within the forest depths claim the monument whispers to them, and they won't ever go back out that way again.

KEEPER NOTES: TL30

[CFG] *The Railyard*

THE MYSTERY: Ebon Eaves used to be a mainline distribution center until Madman Magilligan—self-proclaimed “King of the Hobos”—killed the conductor and caused the train to derail, killing seven other hobos and the conductor’s wife. The resulting explosion created a strange gas cloud which rolled through the town. The fires burned for three days. A dozen more folks died of respiratory failure in the subsequent week.. Horribly burned, Magilligan managed to pull through and was electrocuted two months later in the state capital. The Railyard is now largely abandoned, the new track going north of the town. A few folks have committed suicide in the past month, after claiming to see the ghost of the Madman coming for them.

KEEPER NOTES: TL31



[DEF] *Give and Take*

THE MYSTERY: Brandon O’Connell was the favored son of Ebon Eaves, so when he said he saw something strange on Topper’s Hill, folks believed him. His claim, however, far exceeded credulity. He said he saw three devils dancing while Old Man Hammer played his fiddle. Folks didn’t like Old Man Hammer anyway. They lynched him then and there. (People later claimed mass hysteria and it was largely swept under the rug.) As he was hanging, Old Man Hammer laughed and told them they’d be sorry. They were. Brandon O’Connell’s political future was tarnished, and he had to settle for the mayorship instead of the Governor’s seat. For the townsfolk, it was worse. On the first night of a full moon, madness causes someone to disappear.

KEEPER NOTES: TL32

[DEG] *Tempest*

THE MYSTERY: Rolling thunders echo across the wild lands around Ebon Eaves, and there is no lightning. In the raining skies, people see pale, amorphous horrors, and then they blink, and the lightning crashes upon them. They say it's a trick of the wide open skies, yet huddle in their homes whenever one of the strange storms descends upon them, threatening to wash the land away for good. The storms seem to center around Tristan Chapel, a long abandoned church located on the corner of Main Street.

KEEPER NOTES: TL33

[DFG] *The Passage of Time*

THE MYSTERY: The Old Clock in the center of town is known as Jake's Fall. It's where Jake Cantor plunged to his death at half past seven in the morning. The clock stopped the moment he hit the ground. Anyone who has tried to repair it has jumped from the clock tower to their doom within a fortnight. The clock never stays fixed.

KEEPER NOTES: TL34

[EFG] *The Black Grove*

THE MYSTERY: Before the Church of Inner Starlight became popular in town, it was viewed as a cult. Now the good Pastor Brown speaks before a full crowd every Saturday morning, preaching the evils of the Black Grove and how it is a metaphor for a corrupt heart. The Black Grove is an expansive clearing in a copse of oaks east of town. Within it stands a circle of seven reddish-black cut stones of unusual origin, each about 3-4 feet tall. He says some of the town has not embraced the church and seeks to find solace elsewhere. Usually, someone goes into hysterics and Pastor Brown saves them with his faith. Pastor Brown is a faith healer and folks from the city come to him with the sick, the crippled, and the old, with hope and donations aplenty. He is said to be able to do all, except make the blind see.

KEEPER NOTES: TL35

Town Lore (Keeper Notes)

[TL1] *The Haunted Temple at Twilight*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Jebediah Temple was the leader of the Second Church of the Starry Twilight. It was in an old mansion he refashioned for that express purpose. It was said to be on cursed land. The land took its toll. The once pious preacher went mad and took up with the local librarian, much to the dismay of both the townsfolk and his wife, who was pregnant with their fourth child. He began to traffic with dark forces, and this pushed his wife over the edge. When Jebediah's evil ways were revealed, it was discovered nearly half the town was under his influence, so the remainder took rifle, shotgun, and axe to cleanse the town once and for all. The Temple House has become a place of great power and great evil, soaked in blood and black sorcery.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: The dark forest, the Temple House

TOWNIES: The surviving remnants of the original cult, hoping to rebuild

WEIRD: Entities drawn to the psychic pain and suffering of the Temple House

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ABC]

[TL2] *The Observatory of Oswald Brood*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Oswald Brood is the illegitimate son of local wealthy landowner, Michael Phipps. While Oswald grew up in the big city, he knows someone here is his father and intends to find out whom. He sunk all his money into the Observatory project, also getting funding from the state, but has no results he dares share—the establishment would certainly find him mad. He witnessed an incursion of Mi-Go descend in the vicinity of Breaker's Point, a mountainous region to the south. This has awakened the ghost of Jackie Winston, better known as the Reaper, who harbors an old grudge with the Phipps line.

Hazards

ELDERS: Michael Phipps

LANDSCAPE: Breaker's Point

DOOM: Mi-go

WEIRD: The Reaper

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ABD]

[TL3] *The Slab in the Woods*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Within the community, there is a secret coven which adheres to regular, ritualistic sacrifice to their dark lord and master, an entity which feeds upon the soul as it leaves the body. The cult calls it the Wendigo. The cult was founded by Taylor Blaine, the butcher who moved to town sixteen years ago. The Wendigo spared his life along with his daughter's when their truck broke down near the cornfield. Blaine's bloodline served the Wendigo ages ago, and it reawakened when he found his way back to Ebon Eaves. As a councilman, Taylor has recruited a number of folk to his cause, chiefly the corrupt souls filling the prison, who are often used for the regular sacrifices.

Hazards

ELDERS: Taylor Blaine

LANDSCAPE: The Cornfield, The Slab

TOWNIES: Cultists

WEIRD: The Wendigo

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ABE]

[TL4] *The Long Shadow of Lancaster Heights*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Scott Lancaster was once a young assistant to Nikolai Tesla. It was there he experienced his first vision of what lay beyond and was touched with an ecstasy unlike any man had felt before. Cast out for tampering with his master's devices, he moved to Ebon Eaves. As his obsession grew, he built the tower and soon reached into the spaces beyond, staying longer and longer, until his pet cat got tangled in the current, scattering Lancaster to the winds. From time to time, he is able to manifest enough energy to take over a body, and it is then he attempts to restore himself. People who are possessed think they are going mad or were touched by god, often waking up with cuts and scratches, lost time, and a feeling of utter bliss.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: Lancaster Heights

TOWNIES: The altered folks who have been touched

DOOM: The glowing sphere

WEIRD: The Possessed

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ABF]

[TL5] *The Burned Out Asylum*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Travesty Wells is a mad genius. Had she used her abilities for good, she would have been lauded and world-renowned. As it turned out, she was pure evil from birth. Her parents gave her experimental drugs to suppress her darker desires, which worked for a while before amplifying her dormant psychic powers, manifesting all her fury and rage into fire and brimstone. Drained, she was taken in and kept sedated. But again, her body shrugged off the drugs and she let the place burn. Quite mad, she has withdrawn into the forgotten cave system beneath the town and has been stealing parts to build her earthquake machine to destroy it. The memorial wing of the Asylum, where the chapel is located, is where the victims' ghosts are trapped, lusting to kill Travesty, whispering in the dark their plans, driving some patients (usually the most sane) over the brink.

Hazards

ELDERS: Roger Perish (Asylum Director), Travesty Wells

DOOM: The Earthquake Machine

LANDSCAPE: Periwinkle Retreat and Wellness Center

WEIRD: Ghosts of the damned

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ABG]

[TL6] *The Crater Rock Comet*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: What hit the town wasn't a meteor; it was a damaged alien craft. The creature inside, an Elder Thing, spent ten years working its way out. Jacob Manning was unfortunate enough to see it. It reached inside his mind and commanded him to make sure no one knew about it. Fearful of the thing, his mind snapped, and he slew his neighbors, afraid they could reach into his mind too. He was found feasting on their brains, though that news never came out. Judge Thresher, a descendant of Manning, doesn't like people poking around in the town's business. The Elder Thing wants to repair its craft, now deep in the limestone caves beneath the town, and return to the stars.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: Crater Rock, the Limestone Caves

WEIRD: The Elder Thing

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ACD]

[TL7] *Home, Sweet Home*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Randall Sterling was drawn back home after achieving riches and fame. He bought up some old properties to build his dream home for his family. One of those parcels of land was a Beggars' Graveyard years before. He had the tombstones tilled into the earth, and built over it. This disrupted the rest of Connolly Macklin, once a minor servant of some dark god. Randall began having strange dreams, as Connolly tried pulling him into the Dreamlands. Sterling began reading up on the occult and contacted Macklin's god, who taught Randall what he believed would be a cleansing ritual. In fact, it allowed Connolly to possess Randall fully. Connolly slew the family and sought further help from his god, which, reveling in the misery, left him to his own devices. Now Connolly Macklin, in Randall Sterling's body, rots in a padded cell in Bertrand "Bitter End" Asylum, praying for release.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: The Harbor House, Bertrand "Bitter End" Asylum

DOOM: The Answered Prayer

WEIRD: Connolly Macklin

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ACE]

[TL8] *Darkly Dreaming*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Ebon Eaves is situated near a dimensional gateway located in the deep interior of Hartley Forests. It is regularly used by an array of malevolent entities crossing into this plane. They have such great power that their psychic energies manifest in myriad, random ways, both mental and physical. Only the purest of heart are disturbed. Malcolm Richards, now quite sane, has only vague recollections of what he did, seeing it as though "he was detached from his body, looking down and watching someone control him". He is corrupted though, and any strain could cause him to snap once more. The entities are once again making their migration.

Hazards

ELDERS: Reverend Malcolm Richards

LANDSCAPE: Hartley Forests

DOOM: The Bad Streak

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ACF]

[TL9] *The Bronze Sundial*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Archer Lewis is a fraud. He never adventured further than the big city, where he drank and gambled all his funding away in a few months. He slunk back into Ebon Eaves, where he told his grandfather about his failure. His grandfather told him he lost an old, strange, sundial in Black Reach in his youth. Hoping for a trophy to conceal his failure, Archer roamed the hills and valleys of Black Reach for days before spotting the landmark he was looking for—a leafless tree which looked like a hand. He dug and found the sundial in a few hours. He concocted a story about his adventures, tales he got largely from books, and donated the sundial. He fears the cursed relic he brought into the town, but fears the discovery of his failure and deception even more.

Hazards

ELDERS: Archer Lewis

LANDSCAPE: Black Reach Vale (around the Hand Tree)

WEIRD: The Sundial

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ACG]





THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Sterling Labs was established by the military to identify some practical applications of stolen Tesla technology, with a particular emphasis on translocation. Professor Wyatt Whitcombe, a brilliant physicist, set up shop in his wife's hometown of Ebon Eaves. Laura is of an old, tainted bloodline; they are worshippers of dark powers. She combined her husband's science with her occult knowledge to achieve their goals, but the technology failed, and he was pulled through a dimensional vortex where he was lost in the Dreamlands, living with ghouls for two decades. Though now returned, he is not the same man. He has not only a taste for dead flesh; he depends upon it for survival. And he must drink fresh blood. Laura has hired several unseemly men to rob graves to sustain Wyatt while they seek out a path to his salvation. He has turned to science and the portals. She has returned to the ways of her forefathers and has begun calling upon dark entities to save him at any cost.

Hazards

ELDERS: Professor Wyatt Whitcombe, Laura Whitcombe

LANDSCAPE: Sterling Labs

DOOM: The answer to Laura's prayers

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ADE]

[TL11] *Beyond the Stars*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Entities beyond earth felt it hubris for humanity to reach into the stars. In return, they seeded the target area with rare minerals (which they use for sustenance) while they planned their mission. This caused temporal disruptions in the skies, and items out of time began to fall over Ebon Eaves. Once phase one was complete, the alien entities (a bat-like, hostile race called Nightgaunts), came through and landed in the hilly region south of the town. Having established a colony deep within Carver's Caves, they now prepare to systematically and surreptitiously eliminate all the scientists associated with the project, destroy their research, and the town itself, if need be. The Nightgaunts have a weaponized nerve gas that is usually instantly fatal to their enemies. Human physiology reacts differently—endorphin levels continue to escalate uncontrollably until the body exhausts itself through laughter, or the brain literally cooks itself.

Hazards

DOOM: Eliminate the scientists

LANDSCAPE: Carver's Caves

WEIRD: Nightgaunts

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ACE]

[TL12] *Ichabod's Tomb*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: The archaeologists have been sent to find an old relic buried somewhere within the depths of the tomb. They are secretive and distrusting of anyone outside of their circle. One of them is corrupt and plans to betray the others. The entire team wishes to keep the townsfolk ignorant. A fire vampire—an alien extra-dimensional entity—is drawn to the power of the item. The relic is an infernal device created by the mad genius, Michal Ichabod, who was an immigrant from a small, European town.

Hazards

ELDERS: Professor Smythe

DOOM: The Betrayal

LANDSCAPE: The Dig

WEIRD: The Archaeological team, Fire vampire

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [ADG]

[TL13] *Colors Out of Space*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: The McDaniel family was abducted—plucked out of time and space by malevolent forces—and Kendrick was sent back to create a portal to grant the evil entities free entry. He botched the ritual and released some ancient forest god from its shackles. It blessed him with transformation and Kendrick went quite mad, set himself on fire, and cast himself into the pit. The Ancient made its way to the Pale Woods and intends to extend the forest to the ends of the earth, returning the land and the creatures to their ancient primal forms along the way.

Hazards

DOOM: The Primal Forest restored

LANDSCAPE: The Old Pit, The Pale Woods

WEIRD: The Ancient

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [AEF]

[TL14] *The Broken Circle*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Charles Grant was pure evil. While he traded slaves during the day, at night he partook of dark debaucheries in his inner chamber. He drank blood. He called upon great mystical forces. They granted him eternal life for as long as he held the townsfolk's favor or, barring that, never left his estate. He agreed. Fate is a fickle mistress at best, and the town decried him for his ways during the Civil War. He ran into the Vault and locked it, now he is little more than a stark-raving mad husk of a man. His descendants have quietly moved back into the area, and seek to restore the family name and fortune. They are looking for a certain journal believed to be locked in the impregnable vault of their ancestor.

Hazards

ELDERS: Winston Lewis, Amanda Lewis

DOOM: Opening the vault

WEIRD: Charles Grant

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [AEG]

[TL15] *Hell's Bells*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: An ancient force was drawn to this region ages ago and trapped by a powerful shaman. It cannot leave the area, nor can it physically manifest. Yet it can control the weak-minded and the mad. It drove a local to burn down the church, and the man was hung for his crime. The old gallows still stands, crumbling near the burned out church, yet strangely, it has not rotted away after all these years. Those who see flickering lights are actually seeing the spirit as it tries to possess them. The poor and downtrodden are its greatest targets, and it possesses them to wreak havoc upon the locals whenever possible.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: The Old Gallows, the Bell tower

DOOM: The Madness

WEIRD: Ancient Spirit

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [AFG]

[TL16] *Galileo's Blade*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Emily Baker was studying her late father's journals while cleaning up the estate for sale. Drawn to his writing, she read about his travels in other planes of existence with great interest. It was then she found the rare copy of Galileo's Blade, penned by the genius himself. text, she read about his travels in other planes of existence with great interest. In the book were detailed accounts of how to give one's mind an edge to slice through the veils of reality. She tried it and fell through, without knowing how to return. Before she disappeared completely, she saw the book arrive at the library, and appears from time to time looking for it. J.K. Barkley, banker and bibliophile, still appears spry and youthful. He stole the book and put it in his collection. The watchman has seen ghosts in the bank, spirits trapped due to the disruption caused by Emily, but they are harmless. Teddy has seen nothing unusual in the night sky—just a bad case of nerves and cheap moonshine.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: The Baker Estate

WEIRD: The White Lady

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BCD]

[TL17] *The Foggy Hills*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Andrew Sanderson was possessed by the spirit of a far older man, a sorcerer named Jeremiah Wake, while hunting along Foggy Hills. Back in Andrew's day, one could bag a covey of quail, or find a buck scouting out if one was lucky. Jeremiah Wake was a town founder who was burned for witchcraft and vowed vengeance upon those responsible. With his dark magic, he got his revenge, yet it cost him dearly. The mortal vessel was lost in the process, and Jeremiah was trapped in limbo. Now he lies weak and dormant, waiting for another vessel to ensorcel, so he can continue his bloody work. Andrew's spirit actively haunts the area, warning folks away from meeting the fate that found him.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: Foggy Hills

DOOM: Jeremiah Wake

WEIRD: Foggy Drew

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BCE]

[TL18] *Fool's Gold*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: The soldiers weren't transporting gold at all—not much anyway—instead they had in their possession an ancient relic of great power they were ordered to bury in the badlands. They never made it. They were ambushed by Indians and the container spilled open, destroying every last person present, save a soldier chaplain who managed to bury it at the cost of his own soul. Now he haunts the hills as a ghost, able to do little more than manifest enough to warn folks off. Unaware of his own appearance, he often drives many of them to run off into the ravine. The relic is large, heavy, and made of strange metals. It is a device crafted by alien intelligence and is presently dormant.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: The Pass

DOOM: The Relic

WEIRD: Ghost chaplain

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BCF]

[TL19] *Beecham Cemetery*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Sue and her husband lost their child to the whooping cough. Grief makes people do strange things. They made a deal with Old Skitters to bring her back. The crazy old wild man taught them a ritual that required blood sacrifice. Sue performed it on Pershing Point, an ancient stone monolith dating from long before the town's founding. She wept as she ate her husband's heart on the way to the graveyard. It drove her completely mad, and she killed those trying to restrain her. Geoffrey Keats found the child alive when he went to replace her in the grave. He gave the child to the Parker family, who couldn't have any kids of their own. They have all kept the secret, but Molly, now fourteen, is strangely disturbed, with a gaunt, hollow look to her eyes.

Hazards

ELDERS: Patrick and Esmeralda Parker

LANDSCAPE: Pershing Point

WEIRD: Molly Parker

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BCG]

[TL20] *The Midnight Marshes*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH:Trudy Periwinkle was a witch, plain and simple. She consorted with agencies who gave her the Sight. Still, it didn't keep her from being burned. She promised a blight to fall upon the land and that she'd return to exact vengeance upon their descendants, six times removed. True to her word, the blight has come to Ebon Eaves. And the vagrants are her followers, answering the call of their dark mistress and seeking to bring her back. Already her star-steed, a Byakhee, flies the perimeter, unafraid to drive off the locals.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: Midnight Marshes

DOOM: Trudy Periwinkle

WEIRD: Byakhee

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BDE]

[TL21] *The Night Terrors*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: The Nightgaunts have finally overcome their strange prison deep beneath the Carol Young monument and are once more free to roam the night skies. Carol Young was a great outdoorsman, mayor, and hunter of the weird. The Nightgaunts must feed upon madness to regain their strength, and have combined their psychic energies to drive the townsfolk of Ebon Eaves insane. Once the townsfolk turn upon each other—exhibited first as sleepwalking, then rising paranoia, and eventual homicidal behavior—the Nightgaunts will sweep in for the feast. The broken bits of their prison can be fashioned to fight them. Their lair is in a cave in the high reaches of Cloudripper Mountain.

Hazards

DOOM: The Madness

LANDSCAPE: Cloudripper Mountain

WEIRD: The Nightgaunts

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BDF]

[TL22] *The Curious Cave Drawings*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Todd Williams, his brother Chad, and their cousin, Brad Caster, did indeed rediscover some ancient cave drawings and the campsite of the unfortunate explorers who located it a century before. The original team hunted down a shapeshifter, and rather than let it escape, collapsed the tunnel to trap it with them. It yet lives. It killed Chad, and the other two, traumatized, blocked the incident from their minds. The creature wants to work its way into a position of power and turn the town towards its own oblique purposes. When it was loose long ago, it was called the Night Flyer. It was bolder and ravaged the plains without peer. The cave drawings depict it in its monstrous flying form.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: The Caverns

DOOM: Taking power

WEIRD: The Shapeshifter

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BDG]

[TL23] *The Cornucopia*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Ebon Eaves is secretly controlled by a nature cult under the direction of Peter Ellis. He is the reincarnated spirit of the original High Druid, who returns every other generation. The nature cult practices sacrificial rites to the Beast of a Thousand Young in return for its prosperity. He conducts regular rituals with the Woodsmen, a select coterie of loyal followers.

Hazards

ELDERS: Peter Ellis, Sherriff Cooke

TOWNIES: The Woodsman

WEIRD: The Spirits

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BEF]

[TL24] *Illumination*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Clark Lewis is the town electrician and last surviving member of a very old cult. He hopes to resurrect the cult by performing certain rituals away from prying eyes, and has chosen the Manley Manor for his secret work. Manley, a tight-lipped mentor, taught Clark enough so he could be brought back. Lewis has plans of his own, and has brought Manley back as a slave to teach him. The boy, Johnny, did indeed spot Manley, and Lewis is trying to turn that to his advantage by playing up the haunted house angle. He has been overly successful in that regard, as it has drawn a few gawkers from the nearby city. He now confines Manley to the cellar when he is not about.

Hazards

ELDERS: Clark Lewis

LANDSCAPE: The Manley Manor

WEIRD: Pope Manley

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BEG]

[TL25] *Doom*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Reginald Ashford was a vain man filled with hubris. He thought he could outwit the curse placed upon the line—no male would live past fifty nor would a woman keep her sanity beyond forty. He traveled the world to consult with seers and sages, and learned how to die and come back. Doctor Keating administered the lethal dosage into Reginald's veins and assisted his passing and transport to the ancestral estate. For the final part of the ritual, Doctor Keating had to drug Angela, the heiress to the Ashford Estate, with strange, exotic drugs and drip her fresh blood into his mouth to restore her ancestor. Reginald is alive again, though weak and arthritic. Angela is unsure of what's going on, and is certain she's losing her mind.

Hazards

ELDERS: Doctor Keating

DOOM: The Ashford Curse

WEIRD: Reginald Ashford

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [BFG]

[TL26] *Maker's Mark*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Ruth Maker is in love with Tucker Thompson, but he regards her as only the butcher's wife. She heard him complaining about how he was near to the poorhouse and thought she'd change his luck with a charm handed down to her from her grandmother, who was known as the crazy old herb lady. She attached the charm to his brand and cast the spell. Tucker caught her in his barn bleeding, and yelled at her to get out. Undeterred, she knows once she works up the nerve to tell him what she did for him, they will find happiness. Anything he owns, whether branded or not, is under the protection of the spell until the charm is removed. The spell was not meant to be maintained so long—the creature grows in strength and shall soon hunger for more than the flesh of beasts.

Hazards

WEIRD: Ruth Maker

DOOM: The Winged Snake unbound

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CDE]

[TL27] *Hatchet Man*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: A Mi-Go experiment is loose in the environs of Ebon Eaves. It was a genetically engineered creation designed to sow madness into its victims via its saliva. Originally developed to fight the Nightgaunts—enemies of the Mi-Go—this one has acquired a taste for human flesh. However, once it feeds it goes into a long torpor. If an infected human bit another, the contagion would spread. So far, that hasn't happened, but it's only a matter of time, if its nest isn't located and the creature put down.

Hazards

DOOM: The Feeding

WEIRD: The Mi-Go experiment

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CDF]

[TL28] *Dissonance*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Porter Labs was a privately held company looking into military applications of weaponized sound. The research was directed by Professor Harold Porter, a brilliant physicist, who was directly tapped for the project. Despite his brilliance, he could not resolve the complex equations, or more accurately, was not able to build machines to the fine tolerances needed to proceed with his work. Lamenting this while drinking heavily one night at Patrick's Grill in the next county, Marvin White, an engineering student, overheard him and suggested some techniques. He quickly became Porter's protégé. Marvin had brilliant insights and was able to hand lathe all the parts. The resultant device wavered into some strange frequencies that triggered spontaneous evolution in both Porter and White. They were able to actually escape the fate of the Labs. Some of the townsfolk, those with the highest intelligence, were slightly altered as well. They have children thought to be crazy, but who perceive reality on an entirely different plane. Porter and White feel responsible for what they have wrought, fight their monstrous urges, and strive to restore themselves and the town.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: Porter Labs

DOOM: Porter and White's loss of humanity

WEIRD: The Evolved

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CDG]

[TL29] *In the Blood*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Lorraine Raslo discovered her husband's journal and believed he was insane, until she saw him transform. In the journal, he detailed how he is of a line of serpent-men dating back to pre-history, and when his sons come of age, he will pass on the family secret. She thought she killed the last of them, as Stanley's parents had passed away, and Jack was presumed dead. When Jack showed up, she appeared to be quite crazy, but knows the evil in him. Jack felt the pull to return home when his siblings passed. He had been studying with his kin in Africa and is known as a flamboyant explorer. Now, he seeks to run for mayor, and uses his powers to aid him in his goals.

Hazards

ELDERS: Jack Raslo

TOWNIES: Raslo supporters

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CEF]

[TL30] *Cryptic*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Ashwake Fields was on hallowed ground until a group of cultists started the Living Flame Church there in 1864. The monument was erected by Ezekiel Stubbs when he burned the church to the ground in 1878. He knew magic and salted the earth so the dead would not rise again, for they had been pulled from the loamy soil once before. His wards have broken. Darkness has awakened. And it is only a matter of time before the sleeping beasts, the long buried cultists, rise once more. The teenagers they have touched become unwitting puppets, serving their dead masters in the dream realms.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: Ashwake Fields

WEIRD: Altered teenagers

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CEG]

[TL31] *The Railyard*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Madman Magilligan slept in the fertilizer car and was exposed to the strange chemicals therein, which caused him to hallucinate. When he got out of the car, he knew something was wrong. He told the conductor, who told him he knew the intent of the chemicals, and Magilligan killed him. The conductor's wife knocked Magilligan out before he could stop the train, and she drove it full speed into the Railyard. She and her husband were willing servants of a dark god who was using them, along with Jansen Chemicals, to treat the soil so it might nourish the Mi-Go and expand their colony. Reddish-green grass has begun to sprout in the Railyard and if it spreads to the farmlands, it will likely fulfill the original plan enough to make the dark god happy.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: The Railyard

DOOM: The Blood Grass

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [CFG]

[TL32]

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Old Man Hammer knew a touch of dark magic; just enough to appease the winged things which liked to toy with the town. He enchanted them with his mastery of the fiddle and they let the town be. After his murder, the creatures have reverted to their old ways, and resumed their torture of the townsfolk with a fresh glee, taking one victim each full moon. They may soon grow tired of this game. They intentionally spare the Mayor, a truly good man, knowing each strike against the town gnaws upon his soul.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: Hammer Hilltop

DOOM: The creatures strike

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [DEF]

[TL33] *Tempest*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: A storm cult resides within the old community. They seek to call the lightning eaters from the sky and harness their power, but are too weak for this at present. The best they can manage is to call the strange creatures for a few moments. Recently, Tiffany Blaine, a beautiful young widow, moved into the community and brought with her the promise of power. She is being carefully recruited by the Storm Lord, Franklin Wills, to serve as their conduit. If Tiffany joins, untold power may await the cult. Franklin Wills owns Tristan Chapel and has been making idle promises to renovate it for the past seven years. Since the county court clerk, Percy Fredericks, is in his inner circle, he has little to fear from the Mayor's Office.

Hazards

ELDERS: Franklin Wills, Percy Fredericks

LANDSCAPE: Tristan Chapel

DOOM: The recruitment of Tiffany Blaine

WEIRD: Lightning Eaters

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [DEG]

[TL34] *The Passage of Time*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: A crippled thing was seen flying into the clock tower forty years ago. When Jake Cantor spotted it and went up to free it, the injured Nightgaunt struck him. He staggered back and fell to his death. Most folks don't remember what happened that morning, except Spinster Belle, his former fiancée, who works in the library and keeps largely to herself. She saw the thing, but no one believes her, feeling she's still lost in grief. Perhaps she is. The only way to stop the curse is to clear the nightgaunt from the clock tower where it still resides.

Hazards

LANDSCAPE: The Old Clock

WEIRD: Nightgaunt

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [DFG]

[TL35] *The Black Grove*

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Pastor Brown is a former cult member and no longer practices dark sorceries. Or so he thinks. He uses his magic to heal people, but in truth he possesses a split-personality and at night he takes on the robes of the Crimson Master, rails against Pastor Brown and the Church of Inner Starlight, and worships Nyarlathotep. No one knows his secret, as he wears a mask as the Crimson Master. The Pastor is a fervent ally for the characters.

Hazards

TOWNIES: The cultists

DOOM: The Crimson Master achieving dominance, Pastor Brown expanding his church

WEIRD: The Black Grove

SEE ALSO: INVESTIGATOR NOTES [EFG]



Parting Words

Creating Custom Playsets

There will come a time when you will want to create your own playset. While not for the faint of heart, it can be very rewarding. You need to have at least two sets of questions you want to ask. One should be largely concerned with the environmental factors and geography of the place. The other should deal predominately with the weirdness that swirls all around the place. In Ebon Eaves, there are seven questions concerning local color, and seven dealing with the town lore, all of them saturated with varying degrees of weirdness.

These questions then create distinct subsets you use to derive the combinations. What is particularly novel is the interplay and friction, the connections formed when you combine these two subsets together. Be prepared to do a lot of work. For Ebon Eaves, with unique combinations of three formed from a set of seven questions, there are thirty-five permutations. Double that, since there are two sets of questions, and you're up to 70 blurbs you'll need to write. And double that again, since you're creating information which is both player-facing and Keeper-facing. This takes the total up to 140 blurbs you're writing. And you want each of them to be unique, working in conjunction with any of the other choices. And you need to add hazards into each of them.

On the flip side, once you're done, there are a lot of combinations. Ebon Eaves, the enclosed playset, has 1,250 possible combinations. And by formalizing these into frameworks and adding textures, the number goes up even higher (there are fourteen different textures, so you could have up to 17,500 different experiences of Ebon Eaves with what's included). This doesn't take into account what each person will bring to the game and their playbooks, and how that will affect the game.

Creating Custom Playbooks

Without a doubt, you or your crew will want to create your own playbooks at some point. You will rend your hair and gnash your teeth over the fact there is not a _____ included, or that somebody wants to play a _____ (since they *always* play a _____ in “these types of games”). Or you will want to take more ownership of the game or might have a particular angle you want to explore, e.g., you want all the players to play professors at a university, and you want to create more discrete playbooks. Which is totally fine.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when rolling your own playbooks.

1. Ensure niche protection. Is this playbook overlapping with another playbook’s “cool thing” (see below)? If so, consider either eliminating the other playbook from your roster, or see how you can make this one more unique in conception.
2. Make certain all the initial attributes add up to +3 (the default for starting characters). If someone has a Reason +2, Passion +1, Might +1, then Luck -1 would balance them out (and Affinity would be a 0). Look at the existing playbooks for guidelines.
3. Think of the “cool thing” that will set the character apart from others. Jot it down. A lot of the moves are about substitution, breaking an existing rule, expanding an existing move, taking an existing move into another space, or providing some type of location move (such as the antiquarian’s shop, which does really great stuff, but within a limited scope). All of the playbooks have five moves to choose from, and each person gets to pick two. Consider different builds that could arise from the playbook, and see if they hit a sweet array of various archetypes. You can make playbooks with an essential move given (such as with *The Alienist* and *The Doctor*), but these should be kept to a minimum.

4. Determine the look. Picture in your mind's eye the different ways the character could look. It is doubtful the Alienist is hulking, or the Detective clean-cut. Provide an interesting spectrum of choice.

5. Determine their gear. What stuff would this character have normally? If there are some really cool items they *may* have, then consider adding them to the list of stuff they can choose from. Only character types that have brushed up against weird stuff on a regular basis should be able to choose +1 Lore right at the start.

6. Consider the Lore move. This is the thing which should bind all the various permutations of an archetype together. For example, the Detective has **DEDUCTIVE REASONING**. I doubt there'll be much argument about that being central to various types of detectives. Choose something which other characters cannot do. Make it something special. Consider how easy it will be for that character to gain Lore. (Do they have any move which aids them in the collection of clues or puzzling things out?) If not, consider giving their Lore move a bit more punch. If so, give them something which may be of more limited scope. Again, see existing playbooks for ideas.

7. Don't overthink it, especially for a one-off. If you at least follow the net +3 rule, things generally won't go too wrong for you. Should a character be unreasonably powerful, you'll either notice it quickly or a helpful player will point this out straightaway.

Kickstarter Credits

We had initially planned on listing the backers in the front of the book, but we had to reevaluate where to appropriately place them since there were so many, well over 1,500 folks backed it. What with multiple copies purchased by some folks, the actual number of folks getting terrified exceeds 2,000. Now, without further ado, we proudly present our backers. The names are listed alphabetically by first name and are grouped by pledge level. Some folks chose to remain anonymous and just supported our project. We thank one and all!

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