STRANGE TIMES

Demo V0.3

By Gavin Rubin

THE CALL OF THE VOID:

A common experience where an individual feels a sudden need to do something that is either dangerous or self destructive. Most who have felt this phenomenon have no desire to harm themselves, yet the urge to do so comes to them nonetheless. It is as if there is an instinct within us to seek out danger. An obsession with knowing the forbidden feelings of death and suffering.

This is a game about horrible things happening to those who feel compelled to answer the void's call.

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QUICK REFERENCE

CHARACTERISTICS (pg. 5-6)

Characters have three Saves, each with two corresponding Traits

Body | Strength – Speed
Mind | Intellect – Knowledge
Spirit | Instinct – Empathy

CRITICALS (pg. 13)

Double values (11, 22, 33, etc.) on a d100 are Critical Results

ADVANTAGE (pg. 13)

The player rolls twice and takes the result they prefer

DISADVANTAGE (pg. 13)

The player rolls twice and takes the result the GM believes is worse

OMENS (pg. 14)

After a player rolls a 100 (0,00) they may choose to either have the roll be treated as a Critical Failure or gain an Omen to have the roll be treated as a Critical Success

The GM in the future can spend Omens to have a character make a roll with Disadvantage regardless of any benefits

TRAIT ROLLS (pg. 8)

When a character performs an action, the player will roll 1d100 trying to get below a Target Number

Target Number:
Relevant Trait + Skill + Condition(s)

PUSHING (pg. 9)

After a player fails a Trait Roll, they may reduce the relevant Save by the difference between the Trait Roll and the Target Number to succeed instead. This cannot affect Criticals

ASSISTING (pg. 13)

Before another player makes a Trait Roll, an Assisting player may lose 5 from the relevant Save to give the rolling player Advantage

WILLPOWER (pg. 12)

The GM may offer a player Willpower for performing a specific action.

Players can spend Willpower to reroll Trait and Save Rolls

ITEMS (pg. 15)

Items can be used to make tasks possible, grant a roll Advantage, or negate the need for a roll entirely

QUICK REFERENCE

CONDITIONS (pg. 7)

Characters can gain conditions through play. At their most basic, Conditions apply negative values to Trait Rolls but can have more complex effects

SAVE ROLLS (pg. 10)

When a character reacts to something, the player will roll 1d100 trying to get below a Target Number

Target Number:
Relevant Save

When a character fails a Save Roll, they gain a consequence based on the number rolled. For suggested consequences, see the chart below

HOSTILE ENCOUNTERS (pg. 16)

When characters are in the presence of an imminent threat, they are in a Hostile Encounter

Whenever a player fails a Trait Roll while in a Hostile Encounter, they will need to lower a Save based on the threats intended lethality

Harmful - 1d10
Dangerous - 2d10
Deadly - 3d10

FAILED NUMBER ROLLED	100-71 MINOR	70-41 MAJOR	40-11 SEVERE	10-01 FATAL
Possible Effects	Lower a Save by 1d10 Gain a -5 Condition that lasts the Episode Gain a -10 Condition that last for minutes/hours	Lower a Save by 2d10 Gain a -15 Condition that lasts the Episode Death in hours unless assisted	Lower a Save by 3d10 Gain a -25 Condition that lasts the Episode Gain a permanent -10 Condition Death in minutes unless assisted	Permanent loss of Character

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CHARACTER SHEETS & MODULES AT

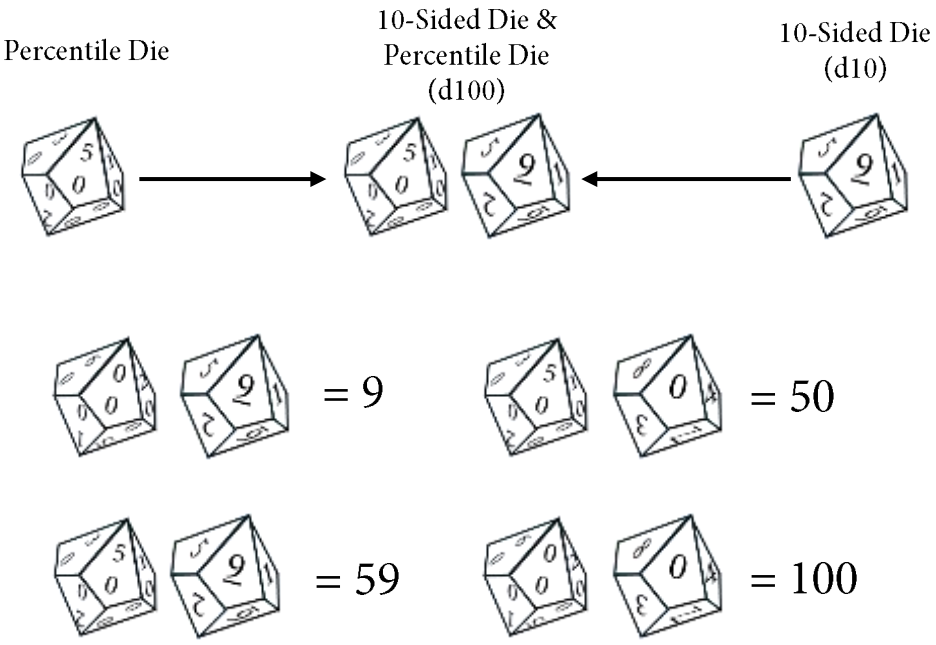
STRANGETIMESRPG.COM

WHAT IS STRANGE TIMES?

Strange Times is a setting agnostic investigative horror RPG. It combines the competency of detective narratives with the powerlessness of horror stories. Players will be taking the role of those who became obsessed with learning about the dark forces hiding in their world--be they monsters, aliens, or ghosts. Every dive into the dark unknown will wear them down until they need to claw their way back into the light. They are the ones compelled to find the horrors hiding in the night.

WHAT DICE DO YOU USE?

Strange Times is a d100 system ("d" standing in for "die" as in singular of "dice" and the 100 referring to the number of sides it has). Now, if you don't know what a d100 is already, you are probably wondering where on earth you are going to get a 100-sided die from. You don't! Instead, you get two 10-sided dice (d10s) and have one of them represent the tens place and one represent the ones place. Some d10 are specially made for the tens place and are referred to as "percentile dice."



HOW DO YOU PLAY STRANGE TIMES?

Strange Times has one player take on the role of Game Master and 1-5 players take on the roles of characters. All players have a responsibility to play their parts in a way such that the game tells a gripping story.

As the Game Master, you are expected to place the characters into exciting mysteries that expose horrifying truths about the world. You will need to either construct the mystery before you start playing or find a prewritten module to run. Mysteries will involve locations, NPCs, and clues, and it is up to you to make all of those things interesting. Once play starts, you introduce the characters to their setting and will be narrating the result of actions taken by the players. It is your responsibility to interpret the rules to determine how actions will be handled mechanically, if at all.

As a character, you will be dictating the actions of an imaginary individual inside the fiction. It is up to you to bring that character's wants and desires to life through the actions they take during the game, though a couple things should remain true about all characters. You will want to play your character in a way that allows for the narrative of the game to progress, and your character should want to solve the problem rather than just solve the mystery. Characters with these traits make for more interesting and dynamic narratives overall.

Over both of these roles is a game system that helps facilitate the actions being taken and introduces elements of uncertainty; this is what you could refer to as the "rules" of the game.

Through conversation between the Game Master and the players, with matters of chance and skill being determined by the dice and the game system, Strange Times allows for narratives of intrigue and mystery to form right at the table.

WHAT WILL THE CHARACTERS DO?

It will be discussed in future sections that players will have a shared goal in their setting, and by engaging with their shared goal, the players will be presented with mysterious circumstances that demand their attention. In additional to this, all characters in Strange Times are assumed to have some obsession with the unknown and have a deep **need** to know more. With the shared goal providing opportunity and the characters' impulsive curiosity creating a set motive, Strange Times maintains a captivating game loop.

Characters will seek to further their goal, find something weird that they then feel compelled to investigate, discover a solution to the mystery and/or problem, and then return to their lives as normal ready for the next adventure.

ON MATTERS OF FIGHT OR FLIGHT

As you read through the rules of Strange Times, you will find that, for a game about running into terrifying monstrosities and unknowable horrors, there are no defined rules for fleeing, hiding, or fighting. To be clear, characters are expected to do all of those things, so why aren't there rules? Because, in RPGs, rules replace conversation. If there are systems that define how something should work, then players can simply point to that rule. The process becomes procedural, and procedure is comforting. When a character comes face to face with the horror of the session, the last thing they should be feeling is comfort. The player should be panicking to find a way, *any way,* to get out of the situation. It is up to the player to pitch ideas to the Game Master about *how* they run, *how* they hide, or *how* they fight and for the Game Master to decide what should be rolled as a result, if anything.

A NOTE FOR GMS

You will occasionally come across the phrase "**A Note for GMs**" in the text. These are asides that do not contain any rules, but important context for how rules are meant to be applied and tips for running the game. Even for experienced GMs, it is recommended you pay close attention to these asides.

PLAYING THE GAME

PLAYER TERMINOLOGY

Game Master – Often abbreviated to "GM," this is the person in charge of the table. They will create the mystery, interpret and apply the rules of the game, and determine the consequences of actions. Despite playing the game, they will not be referred to as a "player" (this is confusing but standard terminology).

Player – This is everyone at the table who is not the GM. They will be in charge of dictating the actions of a singular character in the story. When this book refers to "the player" it is referring to the person at the table.

Character – This is the avatar of the player. A character is a manifestation of the player's imagination and is the person experiencing the story. They have characteristics that help determine the result of actions such as Saves, Traits, and Skills. When this book refers to "the character," it is referring to this imaginary person and their abilities. As a general rule: the player makes decisions, the character experiences the consequences.

PLAYTIME TERMINOLOGY

Playtime is broken into **Sessions**, **Episodes**, and **Seasons**.

Session - A **Session** is whatever length of time your group plays for in one sitting. It could be 45 minutes, or it could be 8 hours, whatever works.

Episode - An **Episode** is a single storyline. This could be an individual mystery, an unnatural event, an encounter with a horror, or some combination. Ideally, players will finish one **Episode** for every one to two **Sessions** on average.

Season - A **Season** is a grouping of **Episodes.** They may have an overarching plot in common or not. While there is no defined number of **Episodes** for a **Season**, 6-12 is recommended. The final **Episode** of a **Season** should be somewhat conclusive to the current plot of the game.

A Note for GMs: The end of a **Season** is a great time to check in with how players are enjoying the game. Check whether they want the story to continue or are happy ending the game here and moving on to a new plotline or even a new RPG!

SAVES

Saves are a measure of a character's ability to resist negative effects as well as their capability to push themselves further. There are 3 **Saves**.

> **Body** - The character's ability to resist being moved, dodge out of the way of danger, and general health.
>
> **Mind** - The character's ability to keep sane, tell the difference between reality and fiction, and rationalize illogical events.
>
> **Spirit** - The character's ability to avoid succumbing to fear, motivate themselves to keep fighting, and overcome magic.

Characters will have **Base Saves** that are used to determine the starting value for their **Saves**. If a **Save** ever reaches 0, the character is removed from play.

RESILIENCE

Resilience is a character's general ability to deal with difficult situations. Characters will determine their starting **Saves** by adding their Resilience to all of their **Base Saves.**

TRAITS

Each **Save** has two corresponding **Traits** associated with it. Whereas **Saves** are a character's ability to resist things, **Traits** are the character's ability to perform related actions.

SAVE	TRAIT	DESCRIPTION
BODY	STRENGTH	The character's ability to lift heavy objects, push things, and to perform general athletic feats.
	SPEED	The character's ability to run fast, evade threats, and react first.
MIND	INTELLECT	The character's ability to think on the fly, make things, and use magic/technology.
	KNOWLEDGE	The character's ability to recall information, make connections, and general access to trivia.
SPIRIT	INSTINCT	The character's ability to notice things, tell when something is wrong, and fight for their life.
	EMPATHY	The character's ability to connect with, lead, and communicate to others.

SKILLS

Skills are the specific talents a character possesses that can help that character perform related tasks. They are not connected to any **Trait** or **Save** but can help a character when applicable (See Pg. 8 | TRAIT ROLLS). There is no limit to what a **Skill** could be, but they range in value from +5 to +25.

CONDITIONS

Conditions are negative attributes the characters gain through play, often through failing **Save Rolls** (See Pg. 10 | SAVE ROLLS). At their most basic form, **Conditions** are inverse **Skills** ranging from -5 to -25 that can make related tasks more difficult; however, **Conditions** can also have more creative and unique effects. For example, if a character falls from a tree, they could receive the **Condition**:

Broken Leg: -15

or

Broken Leg: 5 - Whenever the character moves to a new location, they subtract one from Broken Leg. When it reaches 0, the character is immobilized.

or

Broken Leg - Whenever the character moves to a new location, they lose 1d5 from their Body Save.

or

Broken Leg - The character can only crawl unless assisted.

Each one of these would be a fitting effect for the Broken Leg Condition and each have their place depending on the current situation the players are in. GMs are encouraged to be creative when assigning **Conditions** to players to better elicit the themes of their game (See Pg. 39-41 for example **Conditions**).

A Note for GMs: Players have very limited room on their character sheet. Any effect other than the simple flat negative will need to be remembered. That is not to say "do not use more creative **Conditions**," but use them sparingly and don't feel like you should never assign a flat negative **Condition**.

ROLLING DICE

There will be times when it is uncertain whether a character will succeed at an action. When such a time arises, the GM will call for the player(s) to roll dice. The GM will state which **Trait** or **Save** the roll will be made with and then the player will determine and announce a **Target Number** (details of which are explained in the following sections). The player will roll 1d100 and if the result is below or equal to the **Target Number** announced, the action is successful. Otherwise, it is considered to be a failed roll.

TRAIT ROLLS

If the action that caused the roll was player driven (meaning the player requested to perform the action) then the GM will call for a particular **Trait** to be used. The **Target Number** for the roll will be equal to that **Trait** for the character performing the action.

If the character has a **Skill** the player believes is applicable, they may ask the GM if they can add the **Skill** to the **Target Number** before the roll is made. If the character has a **Condition** that would hinder their action, the GM may dictate the player to subtract it from the **Target Number**. Only one **Skill** may be used for any individual roll, but any number of **Conditions** can be applied.

Once a final **Target Number** is determined, the player rolls the dice. On a success, they do the action without further complication. On a fail, either the player does not achieve their goals, something bad happens, or both.

EXAMPLE-

GM – You follow the creature into the woods but lose sight of it.
Player 1 – Can I try to identify any trail it left behind? I mean, it is covered in slime, it had to leave some clue as to where it went.
GM – Sure. Make an Intellect roll.
Player 1 – Can I add my Tracking Skill to it?
GM – Yeah, that definitely applies here.
Player 1 – Perfect! My Intellect is 40 and my Tracking is a plus 10, so I need a 50. *Rolls Dice* … 13! Success!

PUSHING TRAIT ROLLS

If a player fails a **Trait Roll**, they may choose to **Push** their character to succeed instead. To do this, the player must reduce the **Save** that corresponds to the **Trait** used by the difference between the number rolled and the **Target Number** needed for success.

EXAMPLE-

Player 1 – I want to try and intimidate the farmer into telling us more about what he saw that night.
GM – Go ahead and give me an Empathy Roll.
Player 1 – Can I add my Brute Skill? I do look rather menacing.
GM – Sure, go ahead.
Player 1 – My Empathy is 30 but my Brute Skill is +15, so I need a 45 or less. *Rolls Dice* … 48. I am going to Push, dropping my Spirit Save from 40 to 37 to make that a success.

Only **Trait Rolls** may be **Pushed** and only if they are not a **Critical Failure** (See Pg. 13 | CRITICALS). The GM may deny a player the ability to **Push** a roll but must announce that the roll cannot be **Pushed** before the roll is made.

A Note for GMs: Remind players that they can **Push** failed **Trait Rolls** often. To be blunt, this is the cool part of the game. Failure is often optional to the players, and they should be aware of that and take advantage of it.

In a similar vein, if a player is considering whether or not to **Push** a roll, don't be afraid to communicate how "worth it" the **Push** will be on occasion. The most important thing to maintain is the feeling that **Pushing** rolls is worth doing. If a player is considering losing 21 from their **Mind Save** to learn about the towns rather mundane past, consider finding a way to suggest the cost is probably not worth the result.

SAVE ROLLS

There are times when the characters will need to be reactive. Rather than the player dictating what they want their character to do, the GM will ask the player to roll using one of their character's **Saves** to resist a negative effect. The **Target Number** will be their character's current **Save**. No **Skills** or **Conditions** are added or subtracted. The player rolls the dice. On a success, the character avoids the consequence. If they fail, the GM determines a consequence based on the number rolled. The lower the failed roll was, the worse the outcome. (See chart below for suggested consequences)

FAILED NUMBER ROLLED	100-71 MINOR	70-41 MAJOR	40-11 SEVERE	10-01 FATAL
Possible Effects	Lower a Save by 1d10 Gain a -5 Condition that lasts the Episode Gain a -10 Condition that last for minutes/hours	Lower a Save by 2d10 Gain a -15 Condition that lasts the Episode Death in hours unless assisted	Lower a Save by 3d10 Gain a -25 Condition that lasts the Episode Gain a permanent -10 Condition Death in minutes unless assisted	Permanent loss of Character

EXAMPLE-

GM – You try and read the text in the ancient tome. Before I tell you about what it says, I am going to need a Mind Save.

Player 1 – Okay! My Mind Save currently a 60! Easy! *Rolls Dice* … 62! No! So close!

GM – Oh man, that is a Major Consequence. As you read the book, you feel the words imprint onto your mind. Lower your Mind Save by 1d5 and gain a condition called "Otherwordly Visions" at -10.

A Note for GMs: Make sure it is clear to the players that it is the number of the failed roll that determines the severity of the consequence, not their current **Save**. This means that the lower a character's **Save** gets, the more likely it becomes for something more severe to happen to them, but it isn't guaranteed to be worse.

CREATING CONSEQUENCES

As shown by the example, suggested consequences in the chart are not meant to be viewed as the only options for failed **Save Rolls**. Rather, they are guiding markers for GMs to get an idea of what an appropriate consequence could be. GMs can create their own consequences or combine multiple effects if appropriate. Here is a short description of the intended severity of each bracket.

Minor: A small set-back or inconvenience.

Major: A noticeable effect with lasting impact or a significant complication.

Severe: A detrimental consequence or permanent mark on the character.

Fatal: The character is no longer playable.

A Note for GMs: As with **Conditions**, the flexibility of creating consequences is optional. You can always lower **Saves** or give players flat **Conditions**.

PREDETERMINED CONSEQUENCES

Sometimes the GM already has a particular consequence in mind. If a character is bitten by a zombie, "Infection" makes sense as the consequence for a failed **Body Save Roll** regardless of the result. In that case, the GM could remove the use of the chart entirely (inform the player before the roll that the result will be a binary pass/fail). The GM could also use the chart to determine the severity of the consequence. For example, the player will be infected if they fail the roll; however, if they rolled a **Minor Consequence**, the infection might take days to take hold whereas a **Severe Consequence** might see them turning in minutes.

GAINING WILLPOWER

Players can gain a resource called **Willpower** throughout play. The GM can offer a player a **Willpower** in exchange for the player's character performing an undesirable action. This represents the character giving in to their obsession with the unknown. By indulging now, the character might prove more resourceful in the future.

EXAMPLE-

GM – You hear a noise coming from the basement. A strange clicking echoing behind the door.
Player 1 – I don't like the sound of that. I'm going to wake the others.
GM – It seems like a thrilling discovery… I will offer you a Willpower if you open the door right now instead.
Player 1 – That is pretty tempting… Fine, I'll change my Willpower from 1 to 2 and open the door. What horror do I see?

Characters will have a **Base Willpower** which determines how much **Willpower** they start play with.

A Note for GMs: Use **Willpower** to help create dramatic and tense scenes and/or to help direct the players towards the story when they are getting off track. This is your way of nudging the players into the fun parts of the game.

USING WILLPOWER

A player may spend one of their character's accumulated **Willpower** to reroll any **Trait** or **Save Roll**. This can be done immediately after the roll is made. The player must take the new result unless they wish to spend another **Willpower** to roll again.

ADVANTAGE & DISADVANTAGE

Characters might have things either helping or hindering them outside of their attributes. The way the GM can model this is by giving the player **Advantage** or **Disadvantage** with their **Trait Rolls** or **Save Rolls**. **Advantage** means that the player rolls the dice twice and uses whichever result they prefer. **Disadvantage** is the same, but the player uses the result that the Game Master believes is worse for the player.

If the player wishes to use **Willpower** on a roll made with **Advantage** or **Disadvantage**, they only reroll one of the results.

ASSISTING

A character may **Assist** another character with a **Trait Roll**. The assisting player pitches to the GM what they are doing to help and, if the GM approves, the assisting player loses 5 from the **Save** relevant to the **Trait Roll** and the player performing the **Trait Roll** gains **Advantage** or removes **Disadvantage**. This should be done before the **Trait Roll** is made.

CRITICALS

Rolls of doubles (22, 44, 66, 88, etc.) are a **Critical** result. If the roll was a success, it is now a **Critical Success**, meaning the player gets more out of the action than originally intended. If the roll was a failure, it is now a **Critical Failure**, meaning the player receives an additional penalty and the roll cannot be **Pushed** (but can be rerolled with **Willpower**). Rolls cannot be **Pushed** to become **Criticals**.

OMENS

Omens are a sign of bad fortune to come. When a player rolls a 100 (0,00) the player may choose to either have the roll be treated as a **Critical Failure** or to have their character gain an **Omen** and have the roll be treated as a **Critical Success**. The GM in the future can spend a character's **Omen** to have the player make any roll with **Disadvantage**.

Characters will have a **Base Omen** which determines how many **Omens** they will start play with.

A Note for GMs: Consider giving players **Omens** in additional ways, such as for failed **Save Rolls** or **Critical Fails.**

ROLL SUMMARY

TRAIT ROLL

1. The Player announces their intent.
2. The GM calls for a specific Trait to be rolled.
3. Advantage/Disadvantage and Assistance are declared.
4. The Player may request a Skill.
   The GM declares Conditions.
5. The Player determines and announces a Target Number.

   Target Number
   Trait + Skill – Condition(s)

6. The Player rolls a d100 and decides whether they wish to spend Willpower (or gain an Omen if they rolled 0,00)
7. The player states whether the result is a success or failure and whether it is a critical.
   If the result is a non-critical fail, the player may **Push** the roll to make it a success.

SAVE ROLL

1. The GM calls for a specific Save to be rolled.
2. Advantage/Disadvantage is declared.
3. The Player determines and announces a Target Number.

   Target Number
   Save

4. The Player rolls a d100 and decides whether they wish to spend Willpower (or gain an Omen if they rolled 0,00)
5. The player states whether the result is a success or failure and whether it is a critical.
   If the result is a fail, the Player states whether it is a Minor, Major, Severe, or Fatal consequence.

ITEMS & WEAPONS

Most **Items** have no defined effect. Rather, **Items** can be used to justify a character being able to perform an action, gain **Advantage** on a roll, or to avoid needing to roll completely. For example, if a character is trying to navigate out of the woods and has a compass, the GM might give that player **Advantage** on their **Instinct Roll** for the character to find their way out or declare that no roll is needed and the character can simply escape the woods. The GM should aim to reward players for bringing the correct equipment or using **Items** creatively.

Players may not share **Items** between characters, but they can use them as justification for giving **Assistance**.

Weapons are also **Items**. They can be used to make tasks easier and help characters achieve goals that would otherwise be difficult or impossible. They do not apply damage, and they are NOT an answer. Shooting monsters might slow them down or even kill one of many, but players shouldn't expect to see their problems off entirely with a shotgun and some chutzpah.

A Note for GMs: The effect of weapons on the horrors in the game is completely at your discretion; however, players should always be rewarded for successful rolls in some way, and you should be consistent in what that success looks like. That is to say, if you have a player roll to stab, slash, or shoot something and they succeed, then that should have some noticeable effect. That effect might be killing a zombie or slowing down a werewolf, but something needs to happen. If you are certain that weapons are useless in the current situation and a player wishes to use their weapon, do not make them roll. Tell them how the weapon fails and give them an opportunity to try something else.

HOSTILE ENCOUNTERS

When there is an active threat near characters, those characters are considered to be in a **Hostile Encounter**. Whenever a character fails a **Trait Roll** while in a **Hostile Encounter**, the threat will harm that character causing them to lower a **Save**. The amount lost is determined by the GM based on the intended lethality of the threat: Harmful - 1d10 | Dangerous - 2d10 | Deadly - 3d10

Whenever a character lowers a **Save** this way, the GM may ask for that player to make a **Save Roll** using the lowered **Save**. As a general rule, GMs should ask for the additional **Save Roll** when they want the hit to be dramatic or when the loss is significant (10+ as a rule of thumb).

If the GM believes a character has not taken an appropriate action to avoid or engage with the threat (thus avoiding the need to make a **Trait Roll**), they may have that player make a **Save Roll** to try to avoid lowering their **Saves**.

A Rather Long and Important Note for GMs:

Note that this is not the traditional combat that you would see in most RPGs. There are no turns, monsters do not have hit points, and weapons will not deal damage. Rather, **Hostile Encounters** are simply a continuation of normal play with higher stakes.

It is important for GMs to recognize that the threat does not get a turn, but that doesn't mean they aren't active. Phrases like "the monster charges at you; what do you do?" puts the onus on the player to act. If the player does act by saying "I dodge out of the way!" then they get to roll a **Trait** with **Skills** and **Pushes** on their side. If the player does not act, saying something to the effect of "I just scream," is when the GM can have the player make a **Save** to avoid consequence. This keeps inaction from being a solution to threats.

Most threats will not engage with all **Saves**, and that is perfectly fine. In fact, most corporeal threats will largely only hit the **Body Save** of characters, and that is part of the design. Whereas **Mind** and **Spirit** are important throughout the investigation, **Body** and its corresponding **Traits** tend to only come up when the characters are fighting for their lives. This is the payoff for characters having high **Body** attributes.

Of course, that is not to say corporeal threats can't hurt other **Saves**. A werewolf threatens a character's **Body** primarily, but a long stare from the predator can absolutely lower one's **Spirit**. This is a way to threaten the **Saves** players have lowered throughout play.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

The next paragraph and the following 2 pages are dedicated to a full and drawn-out example of what playing Strange Times should look like.

EXAMPLE-

GM – You come to a dark cave in the middle of the woods. The trail comes to a dead end here.

Player 1 – This must be where the bodies are! Let's get help and come back in the morning.

Player 2 – Great idea! We can get the sheriff involved!

GM – Before you do that… What if I were to offer you both a Willpower to go in now?

Player 2 – In the middle of the night!? No way! Let's get the sheriff.

Player 1 – … But, I mean, it's two Willpower…

Player 2 – You can't be serious…

Player 1 – Com'on! It'll be fun!

Player 2 – I swear if you get my character killed... We will take the Willpower and go in…

GM – You both enter the cave. A small path with a shallow slope becomes apparent. You see trails of blood on the ground, as if the bleeding body was dragged. You also see shallow cuts in the wall.

Player 1 – Can I examine the blood trails? I want to figure out whether the people were alive when they were taken here.

GM – Absolutely. Let's call it Knowledge and you can even add your Medicine Skill to it.

Player 1 – Awesome! I have a 50 in Knowledge and +10 for Medicine so I need a 60! *Rolls Dice* … 44! Critical success!

GM – Nice! The blood spatter does indicate they were alive when they were dragged. You also notice there are layers of blood, the topmost of which are recent, within a few days, and the others are older. Perhaps a month as an estimate.

Player 2 – The same time Mr. Ferns reported losing cattle… Can I take a closer look at the shallow cuts? Maybe adding Cryptozoology?

GM – I think that works. I want you to use Knowledge and I am going to say you have Advantage.

Player 2 – Sweet. Knowledge is 30, cryptozoology is 20, so I need a 50. *Rolls Dice* …. 78 and… *Rolls Dice* …. 23!

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

GM – So, you recognize these marks. They look exactly like the depictions of troll marks you were looking at in the library this morning.

Player 1 – I knew it was a troll! Let's keep going!

GM – You continue down the path. As it becomes narrower and darker, I want you both to make a Spirit Save.

Player 1 – Spirit is currently at 56 *Rolls Dice*… 48. Success!

Player 2 – Spirit is 39… *Rolls Dice* … 72… Failure.

GM – Oh, that is a Minor Consequence. You are going to gain a new Condition called "Claustrophobic" at -10.

Player 2 – Yeah, that makes sense. I'll write it on my sheet.

GM – The path eventually opens up to a large grotto. You see what remains of the villagers: a pile of viscera and meat. That's when you hear a moan come from the pile. Someone in it is still alive.

Player 2 – We need to help them! I run to the pile.

Player 1 – I follow!

GM – You run up to the man. It's the shopkeep! He's still breathing but his wounds look pretty gruesome. It is doubtful he would be able to make the journey back into town.

Player 1 – Can I try bandaging him up? I have my Medicine Kit.

GM – Absolutely. Roll Intellect and add your Medicine Skill.

Player 1 – Intellect is 40 and +10 for Medicine, I am shooting for a 50 or less … *Rolls Dice* … 100! I will take the Omen and treat this as a Critical Success.

GM – Sweet! You quickly dress the man's wounds. The bleeding stops and he already seems visibly better.

Player 2 – I want to ask "what happened to you?"

GM – The man is still pretty dazed, but through labored breath, he lets out a whisper. "The troll…" You then see him lift his arm as he points behind you.

Player 1 – Oh no… I turn around.

GM – You see a large green figure pulling itself through the small hole and into the chamber. The troll has returned to its den.

Player 2 – Crap! We got to get out of here right now!

Player 1 – Wait you coward! What about the shopkeep!?

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Player 2 – We can't save him if we're dead! I make a run for the exit!

GM – Make a Speed roll. I think your -10 Claustrophobia is going to be working against you here as you need to squeeze through the opening again.

Player 2 – Speed is 40, minus 10, I am going to need a 30; this doesn't look good. *Rolls Dice* … 84! Oh no!

GM – The troll lets out a barking sound before pouncing on you. Its claws sink into your skin. Lower your Body Save by 2d10.

Player 2 – *Rolls Dice* That's 12, dropping me from 42 to 30 on Body.

GM – 12 Damage? Go ahead and make a Body Save then.

Player 2 – Shooting for a 30 *Rolls Dice* … 34… I don't think I can take a Severe Consequence. I will spend a Willpower to reroll. *Rolls Dice* … 54… At least that is only a Major Consequence.

GM – Good Call. I am going to say you are heavily wounded from this and will die in a matter of hours if not taken to a hospital. Worst of all, the troll is raising its claws for another strike.

Player 1 – Can I try and draw its attention with my pistol?

GM – Yeah, roll your Instinct.

Player 2 – Can I Assist? I can yell at the troll to keep it distracted.

GM – That makes sense to me; lose 5 from Spirit to pay for the Assist. Go ahead and make the shot with advantage.

Player 1 – Awesome! I need 70 with my Shooting Skill. *Rolls Dice*… 14, that's a success and *Rolls Dice* … 66! That's a Critical!

GM – Well done! You land a slug directly in the troll's head and it passes out. You are safe for now, but you can already see the wound regenerating. It won't be down for long.

Player 1 – Can I drag the shopkeep out?

GM – You can if you make a Strength roll. I am also going to spend that Omen of yours from earlier. The shopkeep has clearly been marked for death. Roll with Disadvantage.

Player 1 – I need a 45… *Rolls Dice* … 30, and a… *Rolls Dice*… 49! I will Push and drop my Body Save by 4 points to succeed at the roll.

Player 2 – Fantastic! Let's get outta here before the troll wakes up!

BETWEEN EPISODES & IMPROVING

Once an **Episode** ends, it is assumed that some number of weeks will pass before the next one (in game time). This will give the characters an opportunity to recover from their injuries, both physical and mental, before jumping into another horrific mystery.

At the end of an **Episode**, players will gain **Experience**. They receive 1 **Experience** by default and then they will make a **Body Save**, **Mind Save**, and **Spirit Save Roll**. For each **Save Roll** they *FAIL*, they receive 1 additional **Experience**. There is no other consequence for failing the **Save.** Players may spend **Experience** to improve their characters.

- Spend 1 exp to increase a **Skill** by 1 to a maximum of +25
- Spend 10 exp to gain a new **Skill** starting at +5
- Spend 10 exp to gain a **Base Willpower**

Afterwards, players return **Resilience**, **Omens**, and **Willpower** to their base value, and return all of their characters **Saves** to **Save Base + Resilience.** Any unspent **Willpower** or **Omens** are lost. The GM informs players of any **Conditions** that should be removed.

A Note for GMs: To prevent players from abusing the **Experience** system, lock **Save** spending once the mystery has been resolved and they are no longer in danger. They may still roll dice, but they cannot **Push** or **Assist** rolls.

CHANGING THE GAME

Strange Times was made to be easily modified to help accommodate different desired tones and play styles. The following pages are dedicated to optional rules to add into your game. While none of these modifications are necessary, it is highly encouraged for GMs to look through and add in the individual rules they believe would best serve their desired experience.

Inter-Character Conflicts: Should players want contradictory things or compete for a result, the conflict is handled via an open bid of the relevant **Save**. Any player may initiate a conflict. The GM then declares which **Save** is relevant to the situation and the initiating player makes an opening bid. Going clockwise around the table, each involved player may either bid a higher amount than the previous bid or pass and remove their involvement from the conflict. Bidding continues until only one player remains. That player achieves their goal but loses their bid from the relevant **Save.**

EXAMPLE-

GM – The gun collapses to the floor with a clatter.
Player 1 – I rush to pick it up!
Player 2 – Wait! I want to try and get to it first! Let's start a bid!
GM – Set your bid with your Body Save.
Player 2 – I'll bid 1.
Player 1 – I'll go 2.
Player 2 – Make it 3 then.
Player 1 – I bet 15.
Player 2 – 15!? You're crazy! I pass. You got it.
Player 1 – Sweet! I lose 15 from my Body Save and grab the gun.

Abilities: There are the unique talents or aspects individual characters can possess. If a character has a weird quirk, or if there is something a character can do easily that would otherwise be impossible or require a roll, then it can be modelled as an **Ability. Abilities** can take on many different forms depending on the setting: spells, special training, cybernetic implants, etc. See example below.

Mask of Mischief-
Description: Your face becomes moldable like clay. You may form it into a new shape and take on the appearance of another for up to 3 hours. Lose 1d10 from your Mind Save.

Luck Roll: If a player asks a question the GM does not know the answer to, a **Luck Roll** can be made to determine the answer. The GM has the player roll a d10 and makes a judgement based on the result (lower being better). Alternatively, the GM states the odds before the roll is made (i.e. 3 out of 10). Optionally, when the GM calls for a **Luck Roll**, the player may spend a **Willpower** to automatically gain the favorable response.

Roleplay Based Progression: Rather than characters gaining **Experience** by failing **Saves** at the end of **Episodes**, the GM may award **Experience** for roleplay during sessions. GMs should answer the following 3 questions for each player at the end of each Episode.

- Did the player reference their character's Background?
- Did the player reference their character's Origin Encounter?
- Did the player cause complications due to their character's Trouble?

For each questioned answered "Yes" the character is awarded 1 **Experience**.

Relationship Compels: During character creation, players should be explicit on the pre-existing relationships and power dynamics at play between the characters. During play, the GM can offer **Willpower** to act on these relationships and dynamics.

EXAMPLE-

Player 1 – I am going to lead the way into the cave; sound good?
Player 2 – Yeah, works for me!
GM – Hold on. Didn't you say at the start that you want your character to be the "brave one" and the "defacto leader" of the group? I am going to offer you a Willpower to lead the way.
Player 2 – And be the first one hit by razor sharp claws? No, thank you!
Player 1 – … What was that thing about "razor sharp claws?"

Connections: Each character will have **Connections** representing important relationships outside of their work with the unknown. Players may start with any number of **Connections**. Each **Connection** has a value determined by the player, but the total value of all **Connections** cannot be higher than the characters **Base Resilience**. See example below.

*Example- **Tommy (Lover): 5***

During an **Episode**, players may use an unmarked **Connection** to automatically pass any **Trait** or **Save Roll**. This can be done after the roll is made. Afterwards, the player marks the **Connection** as used and lowers its value by 1.

GMs can choose to lower **Connections** by 1 as a **Severe Consequence**. This does not mark the **Connection**.

If a **Connection** ever reaches 0, it is removed permanently from the character.

At the end of every **Episode**, players must roleplay scenes with the **Connections** that were lowered during play, showing how that character let the trauma of the session impact their relationship. Players then unmark each **Connection**.

At the start of a new **Season**, players may distribute a number of points to increase their **Connections**. The number of points they have access to is 1/10th their **Empathy**, rounded down (i.e. 50 **Empathy** is 5 points, 35 **Empathy** is 3 points, etc.). Players can create new **Connections** this way.

GM Initiated Resting: At a point of the GMs choosing, the GM may offer the players rest during a **Session**. If the players accept, they regain their current **Resilience** to each **Save** currently at or below **Base Save**.

A Note for GMs: This is really only suggested for particularly long **Episodes** spanning multiple **Sessions** and only at the GMs discretion.

Notice Roll: The GM can offer a player to make a **Trait Roll** using **Instinct** to notice something nearby. This should never be used to reveal critical information. Anything gathered via a **Notice Roll** should add context and details, not solutions.

Brutal Saves: Critical Fails for **Save Rolls** are treated as one consequence bracket lower (i.e. a **Major Consequence** would become **Severe**).

Draining: Successful **Save Rolls** may still cause the players to lose some of the relevant **Save.**

Last Chance: Should a character ever reach 0 with a **Save**, rather than that character being removed from play immediately, the player may choose to either set all **Saves** to 1 and stay alive or to perform one more action that is automatically a **Critical Success**. This can only be done once per **Episode**.

Obsession Experience: GMs may offer **Experience** in addition to or in place of **Willpower** for characters indulging in their obsession.

Turn Order: When a **Hostile Encounter** begins, players enter a turn order. Turn order is determined with a **Speed Trait Roll**. Critical successes go first, then successes, then failures, then critical failures. Ties are broken in favor of the lower roll. On a player's turn, they may attempt one action. Almost all actions should require a **Trait Roll** of some sort. The threat does not get a turn; they are still the consequence of player failure.

CHARACTER CREATION

AN OBSESSION

Anyone can investigate the horrors of the unknown. It doesn't take an amount of strength or skill or knowledge. The only requirement is that the person be *obsessed*. That they have a need. A need that surpasses their desire for comfort and safety. A need that makes them look into the dark. A need that overrides their instinct for survival and justifies each step towards the writhing horror before them. They need to *know*. Every character has a curiosity about what hides in the shadows and is willing to put everything on the line to learn a fraction of the truth. Anyone else would give up the moment they got a glimpse into reality. Characters must possess this need to justify, again and again, looking into the depths.

While creating a character, keep this obsession in mind. The GM can use your obsession to put you into dangerous situations, so it may be beneficial to consider how your character rationalizes their obsession. Is it because the truth is the only thing that matters to them? Or perhaps they want to prove that they aren't crazy. Maybe they feel a need to protect the rest of the world from the dark forces. Either way, they will step forward when everyone else steps back.

GETTING SET UP

Before creating a character, be sure to have everything you need in place. Grab a writing utensil and a character sheet. You should either be familiar with the system's rules or be with someone who is. Ideally, you are at the table with the other people you will be playing the game with, discussing ideas and bouncing character concepts and relationships off of each other. Character creation is quick, so waiting until the day of the first session to make a character is completely alright.

Before you start making decisions, make sure to discuss the setting's specifics with the GM so that your character fits within the world. You should also check in with them occasionally during character creation to ensure world cohesion.

A Note for GMs: Just because you don't have a character doesn't mean you should not be involved with character creation. It is up to you to be the guiding hand making sure all characters will be relevant to story. Specifically, if you are only intending on playing a single **Episode**, be certain that all characters will have the ability to shine and do not be subtle when you think a player's idea might be too niche for current game. It is better to tell them now than for them to discover it after hours of play.

CREATE YOUR PAST

The first step to making a character is figuring out what your character was up to before the events of the game.

Background-
What did the character do before they started their current adventure?

Trouble-
What aspect of your character causes them problems?

Origin Encounter-
What did your character see that caused them to believe in dark forces?

These concepts will help direct choices made in character creation as well as roleplay opportunities in game. You can fall back on these attributes as a guidepost to what your character would do in certain situations.

CHOOSING TRAITS

Once a character's past is defined, you will need to determine their 6 **Traits**. Distribute the following values across your **Traits** in whatever way you see fit.

50 | 40 | 40 | 30 | 30 | 20

A Note for GMs: Because of the cerebral nature of investigation, players might find that **Strength** and **Speed** are not rolled as much as the other **Traits**. However, they do tend to be rolled when things matter most. It may be beneficial to inform players of this trend in gameplay.

CALCULATING BASE SAVES

Calculate a characters **Base Saves** using their **Traits**. Each **Base Save** is equal to average of the related **Traits** (rounded down).

Base Body = 1/2 (Strength + Speed)
Base Mind = 1/2 (Intellect + Knowledge)
Base Spirit = 1/2 (Instinct + Empathy)

Once these are determined, they can be adjusted in game independently of the character's **Traits** i.e. a character can lose **Base Body Save** without affecting their **Strength** or **Speed** and vice versa.

RESILIENCE, WILLPOWER, OMENS

Your character will start with a **Base Resilience** of 15, **Base Omens** of 0, and a **Base Willpower** of 1.

If your character has a **Base Spirit Save** of 40 or higher, increase your character's **Base Willpower** by 1.

A Note for GMs: Manipulating these values is an easy way to adjust the feel of a game. Consider lowering the **Base Resilience** for larger groups, giving extra **Base Willpower** for an easier game or **Base Omens** for a more dangerous one.

STARTING VALUES

Set your character's **Resilience**, **Willpower**, and **Omens** to their base value.

You can then determine the starting value of each **Save** by adding **Resilience** to the **Base Save** value. For example, if you have a **Resilience** of 15 and a **Base Body Save** of 30 then your starting **Body Save** is 45.

CREATE SKILLS

Your character will have 3 starting **Skills.**

One **Skill** starts at +20
One **Skill** starts at +15
One **Skill** starts at +10

If your character has a **Base Mind Save** of 40 or higher, your character gets an additional +5 **Skill** or may add +5 to one of their starting **Skills.**

Skills can be anything, but players should confirm **Skills** with the GM to ensure they will be appropriate for the game and neither too broad or too specific. The **Skills** a character has can drastically change how they are played as these will likely inform character choices in the future.

A Note for GMs: If you would like horror to play a major role in your games, then it is recommended that you encourage your players to avoid taking any sort of Stealth Skill as this can often lead to anti-climactic horror scenes where players "roll the horror away." While characters are welcome to try and hide from things, Stealth Skills can often drain the tension from what would otherwise be a tense moment.

LIST OF GENERAL SKILLS

The following table is a list of possible **Skills** a player can take. This list is by no means a limitation to what players can choose but could prove to be a good starting point if players feel paralyzed by the possibilities.

Agriculture	Deception	Home Repair	Philosophy
Alchemy	Disguise	Hunting	Photography
Architecture	Divination	Inspection	Physics
Art History	Driving	Interior Decoration	Piloting
Athletics	Etiquette	Intimidation	Psychology
Attunement	Explosives	Investing	Racing
Bureaucracy	Fashion	Leadership	Research
Biology	Fast Hands	Legal	Rope Tying
Brawling	Finances	Listening	Running
Chemistry	Fishing	Literacy	Sailing
Chicanery	Footwork	Logistics	Seduction
Cleaning	Foraging	Mathematics	Shooting
Climbing	Foreign Language	Medicine	Smelling
Command	Fraud	Monologuing	Smooth Talk
Computers	Gambling	Music	Story Telling
Cooking	Geography	Mythology	Sword Fighting
Crafting	Hacking	Navigation	Telecommunication
Cryptography	Hairdressing	Obscure Trivia	Tracking
Cryptozoology	Herbology	Occult	Witchcraft
Dancing	History	Painting	Zoology

GRAB ITEMS

Select two starting **Items**.

If your character has a **Base Body Save** of 40 or higher, you may select an additional **Item**.

Much like **Skills**, **Items** can be anything. **Items** do not have designated effects, rather they are used to help with rolls made during the game.

If you are having trouble determining what **Items** your character should have, consider taking one **Item** based on your background, one **Item** based on your trouble, and/or one **Item** based on your origin encounter.

BUILDING THE TEAM

If you are playing with others, it is important that you determine your relationship with everyone else's character before you start playing. Your characters should not be strangers as this often leads to awkward and forced roleplay. The specifics are up to you, but there are two things all groups should have.

The first is a mutual respect and understanding. Whether or not your character likes these people is irrelevant; these are the only people that believe your character when they talk about the horrors they have seen. This is your character's justification for sticking with them even during times of tension.

The other aspect all groups need is a common goal. Why do you all seek out the unknown? This will depend largely on your setting and may be provided by the GM. Perhaps you are fantasy adventurers keeping your local village safe, government agents sent out to neutralize threats, or just podcasters that don't have the best understanding of boundaries or safety. This is to provide the motivation your characters need to seek out trouble and have stories worth telling. Take the time needed to have your character justify this goal as important and worthy of their effort.

GENERAL ADVICE

SAFETY TOOLS

Given the horror themes in Strange Times, it is important to set up the communication channels needed for players to express when they are no longer having fun. Players should be a little uncomfortable, as is the nature of horror, but no one should have a bad time. Here are a couple options on how to form those channels easily and without judgement.

X-Card: Place a card or piece of paper with an "X" inscribed in the middle of the table in reach of all players. If any player is disturbed or triggered by the events happening in game, they may touch the X-Card, signaling all players to end the current conversation and move on to the next scene. DO NOT question the player that touched the X-Card on why they felt the need to use it.

Lines and Veils: Lines are things that cannot be talked about ever. Veils are things that can be talked about, but not in detail. For example, if horses are a line, then the subject of horses will never enter the game. If horses are a veil, there can be horses, but no one will describe a horse in detail or put significant focus on it. Before play, open a discussion about the lines and veils of the people at the table. Lines and veils may be added during play.

THERE IS NO WINNING

The most important thing to realize for playing any RPG is that it is not a game, it is a story. Games are things you win whereas stories are things you tell. Think of this as you and your friends writing your own TV show or movie. Your primary goal should be to entertain, though that looks different depending on where you are sitting at the table.

If you are playing a character, think of yourself as an actor writing their lines as they go. An actor can't "win" a movie. The best an actor can do is play their part well in a way that is engaging for the audience which, in this case, is the other people at the table.

If you are the Game Master, think of yourself as the director. The director in any project is in charge of keeping the story focused and keeping the pace up, but you also need to leave room for your actors to breath.

PLAYER TIPS

Some people assume that because they are not the person in charge of the game, they do not have any responsibility for the fun at the table; this is not true. RPGs function best when everyone is working together to make the game enjoyable. Here are some tips to help make your game fun for everyone.

Care About Other Characters: It is very common for people to become self absorbed in their RPG character. Try and take some of that energy and put it into caring about the other characters at the table.

Stay on Task: Because this is an investigation RPG, there is some assumption that the characters should follow the clues of the mystery and try to be invested in the story. While some goofing off and gags are expected, try to keep the story flowing.

Help the Game Master: The GM is putting in a lot of work to run the game; try to make their lives a little easier. This can be as simple as putting in a little more effort into learning the rules, helping others when they are confused, or engaging with the NPCs and environments they put effort into creating.

GENERAL TIPS FOR GAME MASTERS

While being a GM can be challenging, it is also an extremely rewarding skill to develop. Here are a few ideas to have your games hit the ground running and make the experience more memorable for your players.

Encourage All Characters: This is perhaps the most important tip. When someone does something creative, weird, or in character, be sure to find a way to encourage that behavior. Be excited with them and mention how much you enjoy their idea (sometimes even if you didn't). Players tend to love their characters, and it means a lot to them when someone else loves them too.

Enhance the Experience: Do whatever you can to make the experience more immersive and fun. Do voices for NPCs, play appropriate background music, use a sound board, make prop versions of the clues to hand out to players, turn out the lights when the characters are in the darkness (smart bulbs are very affordable and great for this). While all of these are totally optional, each one makes sessions more engaging and memorable for players.

Moments Over Plots: It is extremely important to have a cohesive and interesting plot; however, players tend to only remember the interesting moments of any given session. Consider what big moments might happen in play and put some planning time into how to make those moments sing.

Keep it Pacey: Try to recognize when the story is slowing down and start to encourage players to move on to the next spot (this can be a great time to offer **Willpower**). Likewise, if the game is moving too fast, try and ask questions to the players to slow them down. You should be the master of the story's speed. As you get closer to the end, try to increase the stories tension until the big finale and then end the game almost immediately afterwards.

Have Stakes: Make sure there are clear consequences for failing to follow the plot. Something bad should happen when the characters do not accomplish their task and they should be aware of that.

Ask Questions: Do not be afraid to ask the players what they are expecting or what they want out of a situation or roll. You don't need to guess at what they envision an action looking like; you can just talk to them.

MYSTERY TIPS FOR GAME MASTERS

Writing a mystery can be intimidating at first, but it is incredibly satisfying to have players follow the trail of clues to a conclusion. Here are a few tips to help GMs write and run compelling mysteries.

High Concepts: To start writing a mystery, consider two things: what is happening and why is it weird? This is your high concept that will help you plan the rest of the adventure. The "what" should be something that is straightforward: a string of bank robberies have occurred. Then throw in the weird twist: it is by a man who invented a teleporter powered by ghosts.

Plan Out Lead Clues: Lead Clues are the clues that literally lead the players to important locations in the mystery. Once you have your high concept, start considering what path your Lead Clues will carve out for the players to follow. This could be a straight line or a sprawling web, just so long as it is a compass for players to experience the mystery. Lead Clues should be obvious and require minimal effort to find as they are the guarantee the mystery will be completed if not solved.

Add in Supporting Clues: Supporting Clues are the clues that give context to what is going on. They answer the who, what, when, where, and why left out by the Lead Clues. Supporting Clues should be somewhat hidden and require either creative play or rolls from the players to find. Once you have a path of Lead Clues, sprinkle in Supporting Clues that hint towards the greater truth of what exactly is happening.

Float Clues: If there is a clue that is important to the story, or if it is just something you are excited to tell players, then consider how it could appear in other places should the players not find it in its intended location. Some clues might not even have an intended location and just float to the location the players are currently at once it is appropriate.

Don't Marry a Solution: Your job as a Game Master is to create problems, not to solve them. The players will always have a more creative and more interesting solution than you so embrace it. It is recommended you come up with a solution for your creation, but you should be ready to throw it out the door for whatever the players come up with almost immediately.

MYSTERY TIPS FOR GAME MASTERS

While creating a mystery, make sure you have your C.L.U.E.S. in place.

Call	The event that puts the characters into action. This is how they discover that something worth looking into is happening.
Learning	This is the bulk of playtime where players learn more about the true nature of what has been going on and who and/or what is responsible.
Unexpected Twist	Something occurs that the players weren't expecting. This should push them to act sooner than anticipated or put them in an undesirable situation.
Escalation	Things get worse. Lives are put in danger, the characters are constantly under threat, and everything in the shadows comes to the forefront.
Solution	The characters find a way to stop the worst from happening. The mystery is solved, no one is in any more danger, and the dark forces are repelled back.

C.L.U.E.S. can be a handy tool to make sure there is a good arc to adventures. While not all mysteries will follow C.L.U.E.S. exactly, it acts as a useful guidepost when you are stuck writing.

HORROR TIPS FOR GAME MASTERS

A misconception many people hold about running horror games is that they need to actually scare players to be successful. That is not true. Horror themes and elements do not need to be scary to exist and, in many cases, horror is not about being scary but having ideas that other genres cannot accommodate. Things that are bizarre, disturbing, and even sometimes wacky. This is why genres like *horror comedy* and *action horror* exist; not because they are scary, but because they have strange elements. All of this is to say, do not judge your games based on how scary they are. Scaring players is not a requirement to have fun nor does it need to be a goal… *but…* it is really fun if you can pull it off. Here are some tips for achieving that experience.

Lose Your Shame: To communicate horror well, you will have to do some things that are inherently silly. You need to fully commit to those things for them to land. This also means sometimes you will have players laugh at you, and that is a good thing! Horror and Comedy are very similar, and people laugh when they are uncomfortable or surprised; it means you are close.

USE SOUND: Horror is all about the senses. You can describe what players see, taste, feel, and smell. You can ***make*** them hear things. Get comfortable making uncomfortable sounds with your mouth: meeps, squelches, splats, shrieks, howls, growls, creaks, screams, snarls, weird voices, etc. Practice it when you are alone and consider noises ahead of time.

Use Your Body: Use motion to amplify the words and noises you are making. If you are describing the zombie's jerking motions, make jerking motions. If you say there is disgusting viscera on the ground, look disgusted. If the demon is reaching towards a player, then reach towards the player.

Say Consequences Before Rolls: Tell players what will happen if they fail a roll when the suspense is high. If the player needs to pass a **Body Save** to not be grabbed by the monster, then tell them that they will be dragged off into the darkness if they fail. Allow the dice roll to have all the tension it deserves.

Hint at the Horror Early: Use the players' imagination against them. Hint at what the horror is capable of early on and the players will begin to dread the eventual encounter, making it all the more satisfying when it does happen.

NPC GUIDE

Using NPCs: NPCs (or Non-Player Characters) are the people the characters will run into and communicate with during the game. They do not have any sort of **Traits,** nor can they adopt **Skills** or **Conditions**. Normally, no dice should be used to determine the success of an NPC's actions; however, from time to time, the characters may ask an NPC to do something that is outside of their normal capabilities. When that occurs, consider how good that NPC would be at performing the action and consult the chart below to determine a **Target Number**.

NPC TARGET NUMBER							
Terrible	Inept	Poor	Average	Talented	Skilled	Trained	The Best
10	**20**	**30**	**40**	**50**	**60**	**70**	**80**

Once a **Target Number** is determined, communicate that to the players and have one of them roll the dice before resolving the roll as normal. NPC rolls cannot be **Pushed**, though they may be granted **Advantage/Disadvantage** and cause a **Critical** result. Characters may **Assist** NPCs.

Make Each NPC Memorable: Because of the nature of mysteries, there can be a lot of different people the players speak to, and each one has to be memorable. That sounds like a big challenge, but it boils down to three things:

- Personality - How the character behaves
- Voice - What the character sounds like
- Mannerisms - Weird things the character does

Great characters have something interesting about all 3 of these but engaging in any one aspect really well while embodying the character will still make them pop out. **Do not make it subtle**. If a character is friendly, make them overly friendly. If a character is French, make them aggressively French. If a character likes to end dialogue with the phrase "or so it goes" then overuse it. Make them stand out in the players' minds so they will remember the encounter and remember what they said.

STRANGE TIMES SPECIFIC ADVICE

Have Players Announce Target Numbers: It is important to get players in the habit of announcing target numbers before they roll early on. When the players do this, not only does it give you information you need in order to interpret the roll but allows other players to be engaged with the roll.

Have a Consequence in Mind: Anytime you ask for a roll, consider what the consequence for failing the roll will be before the roll is made. Will the character simply fail at their task? Will they succeed, but at a cost? If it is a save, what could a minor, major, or severe consequence look like? What Condition could this cause? (See next page for examples). If you cannot think of a good consequence that would still allow for the story to function, consider whether the dice roll is necessary.

Saves are for Emphasis: GMs should call for **Saves** whenever they want to emphasize the danger, confusion, or depressing nature of a situation. A great fall could cause a **Body Save.** A strange book of swirling text can call for a **Mind Save**. Gruesome dead bodies might threaten players with a **Spirit Save.**

Not All Saves: Not all **Episodes** will threaten all **Saves** equally and that is a good thing. Some **Episodes** will see players investigate strange alien glyphs that seem to weaken the **Mind Save** whereas others will be about the players fending off fishmen with spears and largely hit the **Body Save.** What is important is that players won't know which to worry about until they are in the thick of it.

Keep the Threat Active: When in a hostile encounter, the threat should be doing things to make the characters lives more complicated. However, this is not to say that the threat should be asking the players to make **Saves** constantly. Rather, you should aim to describe the threat's actions and then ask the players "what do you do" to try and elicit reactive **Trait Rolls** that progress the story.

Keep Conditions Interesting: Using a creative condition is the best way to add unique aspects to horrors. Either make your own or take inspiration from the following pages of examples.

Body Conditions

These are example conditions that could result from a failed Body Save.

Infected: # *– The Game Master, at a moment of their choosing, can dictate that a Body Save Roll needs to be made. If failed, subtract 1 from Infected. When Infected reaches 0, the full effects of the infection take hold.*

Bleeding Out *– Lose 1d5 Body Save whenever you fail a Trait Roll.*

Twisted Ankle *– The GM may spend an Omen from your character to render them momentarily immobile without assistance.*

Exhausted: -5 *– Exhausted is subtracted from all Trait Rolls. Whenever you make a Trait Roll using Strength or Speed, lower Exhausted by 5 before the roll is made.*

Left Arm Destroyed *– Reduce Strength by 10. This Condition can only be removed through advanced medical technology or magic.*

Shakes *– Cannot use Items effectively.*

Stench *– You make Empathy Rolls with disadvantage if the person can smell.*

Blinded/Deafened *– Any task requiring sight/hearing requires a critical success to pass. Otherwise, it is treated as a failure. (Reminder that rolls cannot be Pushed into Criticals)*

Wounded *– Doubles the cost of Pushing rolls with Body.*

Heart Attack *– Any failed Body Save you make is now Fatal. Must seek professional medical attention to remove Heart Attack.*

Mutated *– Part of your body is now alien in both function and appearance.*

High Fever *– Make Mind Saves with Disadvantage.*

Lycanthropy *– During a full moon, your body becomes covered in fur. The GM may offer you Willpower to have you give in to your animal instincts.*

MIND CONDITIONS

These are example conditions that could result from a failed Mind Save.

True Sight: # *– The GM may reduce your True Sight by 1 to put your character in a private Hostile Encounter (1d10) with a threat no one else can perceive. The Hostile Encounter ends once you escape/defeat the threat or after 2 successful actions. If True Sight is reduced to 0, remove True Sight.*

Madness: # *– Madness cannot be removed. The GM may add to Madness whenever you fail a Mind Save. If Madness ever exceeds your Base Mind Save, your character is removed from play.*

Regressed *– You can only do actions related to your Background & Trouble.*

Curious *– You must succeed a Spirit Save to refuse Willpower.*

Visions # *– You foresee a horrible fate. Roll a d100 and record the number next to Visions. Whenever that number is rolled by anyone, you receive a Major Consequence decided by the GM.*

Burnt Image *– You have a perfect recollection of an object you can't unsee. Whenever you encounter the physical object again, gain 1 Omen.*

Memetic Infection *– You have learned of something that doesn't exist yet. If all characters have Memetic Infection, the thing becomes real.*

Connected *– You will be pursued by the threat personally.*

Imaginary Friend *– You occasionally see someone no one else can. They are your friend. The GM may spend an Omen from your character to put your friend in mortal danger. If they would ever die, you lose 4d10 Spirit Save.*

Alien Hand: # *– The Game Master, at a moment of their choosing, can dictate that your non-dominant hand attempts to act on its own. This is rarely in your best interest. Afterwards, subtract 1 from Alien Hand. If Alien Hand is reduced to 0, remove Alien Hand.*

SPIRIT CONDITIONS

These are example conditions that could result from a failed Spirit Save.

Panicked: # *– The Game Master, at a moment of their choosing, can dictate that a roll will be made with Instinct regardless of the task. When they do, subtract 1 from Panicked. When it reaches 0, remove this condition.*

Shaken *– Doubles the cost of Pushing rolls with Spirit.*

Dread *– Lose 1d5 Spirit Save whenever you fail a Trait Roll.*

X-Phobia *– You have Disadvantage on rolls when in the presence of X.*

Pessimist *– Increase your Base Omens by 1 while you have this condition.*

Possessed *– You are being controlled by a spiritual entity and are considered a threat to the other characters. The GM dictates your actions. Whenever you lose Body Save while possessed, you may attempt a Spirit Save Roll to remove Possessed. There is no consequence to failing this Spirit Save Roll.*

Frightened *– Trait Rolls involving violence are made with Disadvantage.*

Self-Doubt: # *– After you succeed a Trait Roll, the GM can force you to reroll the result. When they do, subtract 1 from Self Doubt. When it reaches 0, remove this condition.*

Helpless *– You cannot perform Strength or Speeds Rolls without Assistance.*

Impressionable *– Make Mind Saves with Disadvantage.*

Psychosomatic *– Failed Body Saves are always considered Critical Fails.*

Insomnia *– Lose 1d10 Body Save whenever you try to sleep*

Cautious *– You may spend 1 Willpower to give yourself Advantage on a Roll before it is made. You may no longer spend Willpower after a Roll is made.*

STRANGE PLACES

Strange Times can be found in any setting. There are no rules or systems based on the location or time period the game takes place, which offers a lot of freedom. The rules can be applied to any background and still function.

If you are a GM interested in creating your own strange world, then this section will be your step-by-step guide to doing so. However, if you prefer to just have a setting as a sandbox to create in, then see the premade settings at the back of this section and presented in the modules.

The following pages will cover the fundamentals of setting creation followed by an example of how these steps organically create an interesting environ.

CORE CONCEPT

The core concept is the generic description of the setting. The overarching idea that everyone has touchstones for. Think about the big picture. This setting can be anything, but it should be something everyone at the table will find interesting and everyone is comfortable with.

Example: Mid 18th Century Caribbean Pirates

POSSIBLE HORROR

After the Core Concept is determined, you should take a moment to consider what horrors could exist in such a setting. If you are expecting to write multiple Episodes, it would be useful to have a list of go-to plot hooks made from the start. Don't be afraid to get weird with it. Unexpected genre shifts subvert expectations, which can create unique and amazing experiences.

Example: Mid 18th Century Caribbean Pirates

Horrors: The Kraken, Ghost/Skeleton Pirates, Ancient Curses, Fish People, UFO Abducting Pirates, Vampire Captain, Island of Living Plants, Time Travelling Ship, Devil Worshiping Crew

PLAYER GOAL

Now that you are confident in what the players will be facing, consider the grand purpose of the players will be. Why are they the ones constantly running into these horrors? This is partially answered by the characters' obsession with the dark forces; it is assumed that characters are the type of people to seek out these strange occurrences. However, having something that reinforces that desire, or replaces that desire with a need, can help players connect with the motives of their characters. While this goal can be mundane, remember that the supernatural is always an option.

Example: Mid 18th Century Caribbean Pirates

Player Goal: Learn about the curse that plagues them and find a way to stop the nightmares.

LIMITATIONS

Now you will want to consider what limitations the setting naturally imposes on the players and what limitations will need to be introduced as contrivances. The two things to consider are "why won't the characters leave" and "why won't they call for help." For some settings, this is a given. For others, they need to be introduced during the game. There is a reason every modern horror movie has the characters' car battery die and their phones lose all cell signal in the first act.

Example: Mid 18th Century Caribbean Pirates

Limitations: Players will be stuck on their ship for long periods of time with most civilization far away. Travel is slow and requires supplies so they will not be able to leave most destinations empty-handed. Most communication will need to be done with extremely slow messengers.

SETTING SPECIFICS

Last concept to iron out is anything that makes this setting unique from the others in the same vein. The ideas that will matter to the players but aren't obvious from the core concept. Sci-Fi, as an example, leaves a lot of questions to be answered. How far into the future? What level of technology? What are computers like? How does space travel work? And so on. This is also your opportunity to add strange and unique twists to the world.

Example: Mid 18th Century Caribbean Pirates

Setting Specifics: Parallel universe where a dense fog made travel back to Europe impossible for unknown reasons. Characters will own and operate a small ship along with a few other crew members. Well established civilizations and ports, but there are still many uncharted islands.

Game Masters can stop here and have a great setting to play Strange Times in. The next few steps are for GM seeking to direct there setting mechanically as well as thematically.

SKILLS & ITEMS

Once you have an understanding of where the player will be, what sort of obstacles they will face, and why they must be the ones to face said obstacles, you can start working on the mechanical side of the game. It is recommended you prepare a list of **Skills** and **Items** you believe will be useful in the setting. While it is encouraged that players write in their own **Skills** and **Items** based on their vision of the character, it would be useful to be able to hand them a list of ideas and options to pull from should their imagination falter.

You should consider what aspects will be important in your games and direct **Skills** that direction. For our example, if you plan on featuring naval activities heavily, then you might have listed **Skills** for "Rigging," "Ship Piloting," and "Cannon Operation," but if you plan on naval activities being minimal, then they might combine all of those **Skills** into "Sailing."

You should also communicate this to players when they are selecting **Skills** and making their own. If a player wants to take "French Language" as a **Skill** but you have no intention of that coming up, then you should communicate that to the player and suggest a more useful or generic alternative such as "Foreign Languages." Likewise, if a player has a **Skill** that you believe will be too useful in your setting such as "Robbery" than you might ask that player to choose a more specific **Skill** such as "Lock Picking."

Example: Mid 18th Century Caribbean Pirates

Skills: Bluffing, Command, Firearms, Fishing, Foraging, Foreign Language, Intimidation, Literacy, Navigation, Parley, Rigging, Rituals, Sea Creatures, Swashbuckling, Tall Tales

Items: Almanac, Bag of Marbles, Canteen, Compass, Flint and Tinder, Flintlock Pistol, Fruits, Gunpowder, Jar of Dirt, Machete, Pocket Watch, Rapier, Rope, Rum Bottle, Shovel, Spy Glass

SETTING SPECIFIC MECHANICS

Now is your time to get creative with Strange Times. The systems are flexible for a reason. While the base game can perfectly accommodate any setting, adding in mechanics unique to your world can help bring it to life. This can be a simple as reflavoring an existing mechanic, altering existing rules, or adding in new mechanics all together. Let Strange Times be a skeleton for you to hang whatever musculature you see fit (or you can just let it be a skeleton. It is a horror game and skeletons are terrifying).

Example: Mid 18th Century Caribbean Pirates

New Mechanics:

Willpower from Greed: Rather than the GM offering **Willpower** for giving into obsession, the GM will offer **Willpower** for particularly greedy actions.

Ship Actions: Characters can take actions on behalf of the ship (maneuvering the ship, firing cannons, etc.). Whenever they do, they will add the ship **Skill** "Crew Level" in addition to one of their own **Skills**. "Crew Level" starts at +0.

Hull Save: The ship has a Hull Save and can take Damage as well as make **Hull Save Rolls** following the same rules as the characters. The Ship can gain Conditions. Hull starts at 30.

EXAMPLE SETTINGS

The remaining pages of this section are dedicated to 3 example settings. These are not meant to be taken as completed works, but rather ideas and concepts to be used in making your own settings for Strange Times.

SETTING: CARRIBEAN PIRATES

Horrors:

The Kraken, Ghost/Skeleton Pirates, Ancient Curses, Fish People, UFO Abducting Pirates, Vampire Captain, Island of Living Plants, Time Travelling Ship, Devil Worshiping Crew

Player Goal:

Learn about the curse that plagues them and find a way to stop the nightmares.

Limitations:

Players will be stuck on their ship for long periods of time with most civilization far away. Travel is slow and requires supplies so they will not be able to leave most destinations empty-handed. Most communication will need to be done with extremely slow messengers.

Setting Details:

Strange History: This is a world that at one point was very similar to ours. However, in 1686, a dense fog covered the entire Atlantic Ocean, making all navigation impossible. Many have tried, but none have ever returned. This has separated the Caribbean Isles and the Americas from their colonizing influences, but not their philosophies.

New World: Ever since the fog, the land has changed. New islands appear where there was once nothing, and once grand ports have disappeared into the sea. No one knows why.

Powerful Factions: Now that the western hemisphere is isolated, new factions separate from the European nations have formed. Some hold onto their power when they used to be part of the Spanish or English fleet, others are pirate lords that find themselves now enforcing laws rather than breaking them. Either way, there are both powerful friends and powerful enemies to make.

SETTING: CARRIBEAN PIRATES

Skills & Items:

Skills: Bluffing, Command, Firearms, Fishing, Foraging, Foreign Language, Intimidation, Literacy, Navigation, Parley, Rigging, Rituals, Sea Creatures, Swashbuckling, Tall Tales

Items: Almanac, Bag of Marbles, Canteen, Compass, Flint and Tinder, Flintlock Pistol, Fruits, Gunpowder, Jar of Dirt, Machete, Pocket Watch, Rapier, Rope, Rum Bottle, Shovel, Spy Glass

Setting Mechanics:

Willpower from Greed: Rather than the GM offering Willpower for giving into obsession, the GM will offer Willpower for particularly greedy actions.

Ship Actions: Characters can take actions on behalf of the ship they are on (maneuvering the ship, firing cannons, etc.). Whenever they do so, they will add the ship Skill "Crew Level" in addition to one of their own Skills. "Crew Level" starts at +0 but can be improved through play.

Hull Save: The ship has a Hull Save and can take Damage as well as make Hull Save Rolls following the same rules as the characters. The Ship can gain Conditions. Hull starts at 30.

Supplies: The crew must be fed or suffer heavy penalties. Every day at sea cost 1 Supply. Supplies can either be foraged from islands or purchased at ports for 10 gold each. Everyday without food sees the characters losing 1d10 from Body and Spirit.

SHIP SHEET

STRANGE TIMES

Ship Name

GOLD

HULL

MAX

CONDITIONS

SINKING IN ● DAYS ● HOURS ● MINUTES

CREW

EQUIPMENT

ROOMS

CARGO

FAILED HULL SAVE

100-71	70-41	40-11	10-01
Lose 1d2 Hull Gain a -5 Condition Sinking in Days	Lose 1d5 Hull Gain a -10 Condition Room / Crew / Equipment Disabled Sinking in Hours	Lose 1d10 Hull Gain a -15 Condition Room / Crew / Equipment Destroyed Sinking in Minutes	Destroyed

SETTING: LOW FANTASY

Horrors:

Skeletons, Trolls, Wizard Creations, Evil Liches, Wraiths, Dragons, Large Snakes, Unicorns, Fairies, Minotaurs, Eye-Beam Monster, Wyvern, Ghouls

Player Goal:

Players are under oath to protect people from the dark forces of their world

Limitations:

Takes days to journey to a location. Through magic, messages can be sent rather easily; however, there is seldom someone else nearby powerful enough to help.

Setting Details:

Low Fantasy: Think "dark ages with an undercurrent of mysticism." Magic and mythical beasts exist, but most people will never witness them. There are the ultra rich and ultra poor with few existing within the margins. This is a harsh world with very little sympathy.

Magic is Shunned: People don't trust what they don't understand, and few understand magic. Using magic of any sort in public will cause witnesses to become more hostile towards the user.

Humans, Dwarves, and Elves: Humans, Dwarves, and Elves are the dominant species of the world, with the vast majority being human. Dwarves are known for their stoic culture and short tempers. Elves are known for their extremely long lives and quick wit. If a character has a 40 or higher in Strength, they may choose to be a Dwarf. If a player has a 40 or higher in Knowledge, they may choose to be an Elf. Otherwise, they must be a human.

SETTING: LOW FANTASY

Skills & Items:

Skills: Alchemy, Animal Training, Archery, Athletics, Beast Knowledge, Brawl, Charm, Deception, Enchantment, Identify Arcane, Magic Type, Martial Skill, Medicine, Plant Speak, Performance, Quick Hands, Realm History, Religion

Items: Bow & Arrow, Bucket, Cast Iron Pan, Crystal Ball, Divination Kit, Flint & Tinder, Large Pole, Magic Wand, Martial Weapon, Mirror, Mystical Book, Small Pet, Shield, Torch, Vial of Acid, Waterskin

Setting Mechanics:

Magic Spells: Characters with a **Knowledge Trait** of 40 or more can cast magic spells. When a character wishes to cast a spell, they describe the desired effect to the GM who then declares a negative modifier between -0 and -50 based on how strong the effect is. The player then makes a **Knowledge Roll** to cast the spell, subtracting the modifier from the **Target Number**. If the spell fails, it is treated as a failed **Save Roll** causing a **Minor**, **Major**, **Severe**, or **Fatal** consequence. This **Knowledge Roll** may still be **Pushed**.

Once a spell has been cast successfully, the caster must add it to their character sheet as an **Ability.** Whenever a character gains a spell this way, they increase their **Base Omens** by 1.

If a player casts a spell from a scroll, no negative modifier is subtracted, and the spell is not added to the players **Abilities**.

Species Ability: Characters gain the following abilities based on species.

<u>DWARF ABILITY</u>
Stout- *Your body is dense. You have* ***Advantage*** *on rolls to move others and to prevent others from moving you.*

<u>ELF ABILITY</u>
Magical- *You have* ***Advantage*** *on* ***Knowledge Rolls*** *to use spell scrolls.*

<u>HUMAN ABILITY</u>
Helpful- Increase **Base Willpower** by 1. You may spend **Willpower** on other consenting character's rolls.

SETTING: DYSTOPIAN SCI-FI

Horrors:

Parasitic Aliens, Space Ghosts, Experiment Gone Wrong, FTL Demons, Time Travel Paradoxes, Space Maddened Killer, Flesh Consuming Ooze, Portal to Hell, Eldritch Gods on Moons, Planet Sized Organisms

Player Goal:

Players are underpaid insurance investigators sent out to examine claims.

Limitations:

It takes weeks required to travel across space. Messages can only travel at the speed of light, drastically hampering communication abilities.

Setting Details:

Dystopian Sci-Fi: A universe of slow spaceships making runs between planets lightyears away. Most people live in poverty and are constantly trying to find ways of making enough money to escape their problems, but they never will be able to. Debt consumes most. A handful of major companies control all aspects of life, and they have a singular goal: profit at any cost.

Retro-Tech: Despite the advancement of technology, some machines have regressed in form. All communication must be localized and thus communication devices are simple radios. "Internets" are regional; each planet has its own, but spaceships and distant bases will only have downloaded material. As a result, computers are massive and can only be accessed through terminals. Most have an AI to help synthesize the data for easier use. Fear of corporate espionage has caused limits in remote access so most technology can only be operated at designated control panels.

Android Limitations: While androids are firmly in the uncanny valley, they have been programed to be more human. They can feel facsimiles of emotions and have desires. They are created to be additional crew members with specific functions when a human replacement would be too expensive; they are not super computers with limitless knowledge.

SETTING: DYSTOPIAN SCI-FI

Skills & Items:

Skills: Bureaucracy, Command, Computers, Data Reading, Disguise, Engineering, Exo-Biology, Explosives, Firearms, Inspection, Laser Cutting, Mech Piloting, Medicine, Navigation, Psychology, Science, Ship Piloting, Space Religions, Starship Repair

Items: Paperwork, Cheap A.I. Watch, Data Pad, Dissection Kit, Fire Extinguisher, Flashlight, Laser Pointer, Mag-Boots, Med-Pack, Motion Scanner, Pet Cat, Photon Rifle, Power Armor, Repair Kit, Safety Manual

Setting Mechanics:

Playing an Android: If a player would like to be a robotic companion, they can choose to do so. They gain the following abilities.

Machine- *You are made of metal and circuits. By default, you have Advantage on most Body Save Rolls and Mind Save Rolls.*

Priority One: Company Profit- *Rather than your obsession being with the unknown, you are compelled by your Corporate Programming. The GM can offer you Willpower to do things that are in the company's interest at the expense of your team members' safety. If you refuse, lose 1d10 Spirit.*

Owned By Insurance Corporations: The characters are owned by the insurance company and must complete investigative tasks. Failure to complete a task will result in termination via deactivation of their vessels cryo-pods. The characters will always have the same 3 tasks.

- Determine validity of claimed event
- Document cause of claimed event
- Find reason to void claim

CARDIS INSURANCES

Form 211-A3: Claim Investigation Report

REPORTED CLAIM

_____

_____

CLAIM INVESTIGATION

INVESTIGATOR I.D. -	CLAIM # -

*Does the claim appear to be valid?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*Is the danger still present after investigation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*Is the claim entitled to payment?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If the above question was answered "No" please state plausible reasoning for voiding claim:

_____

_____

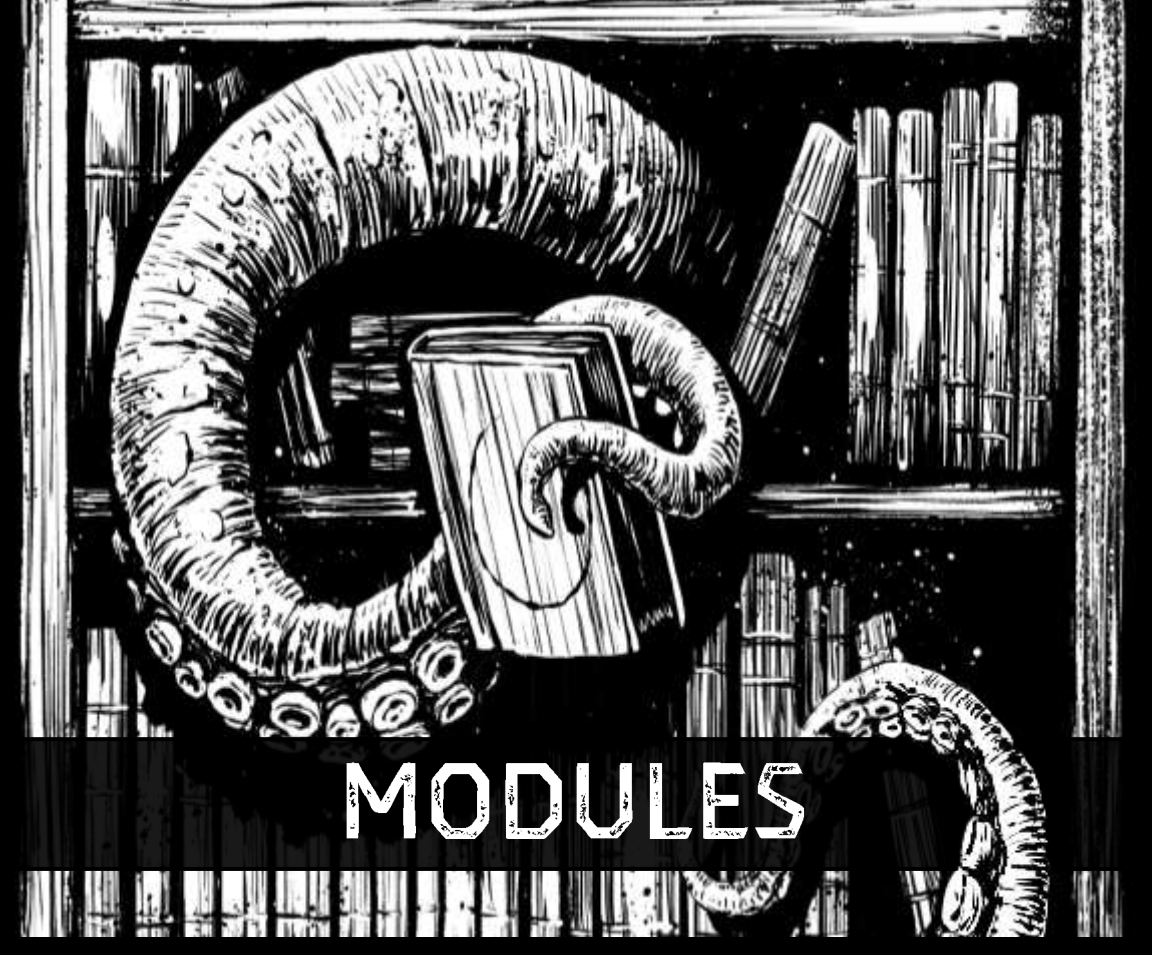
DETERMINED CAUSE OF CLAIMED EVENT

- ❑ Devouring Slime
- ❑ Extraterrestrial Ghost
- ❑ Parasitic Organism
- ❑ Space Maddened Killer
- ❑ Experiment Gone Wrong
- ❑ Hostile Alien
- ❑ Portal to Hell Dimension
- ❑ Time Travel Device

❑ Other: _____

*If any of these questions were answered "No," payout for claim investigation will be doubled

SETTINGS



MODULES

RUNNING THE MODULE

Each module comes with tips and suggestions to best help run the mystery. While these are all optional, they might have insights as to how to get the most out of an adventure.

SETTING DESCRIPTION

The Setting Description is a quick rundown of the module's assumptions about the environment it takes place in as well as any additional or optional rules fitting for the setting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is a high-level overview of the ongoing action, as well as what happened before the character's arrived. It sets the groundwork for the adventure. GMs should try to fully understand this section before reading the rest.

HIDDEN INFORMATION

Some clues and testimonies follow a **H** icon representing that the information is **Hidden**. This does not mean someone is actively hiding them or attempting to withhold information (though that sometimes is the case), but that they will require more than a generic effort to discover. This might be a player saying the right thing at the right time or a successful Trait Roll, whichever comes sooner. For example, if a note is hidden in an office and a player specifically wants to "search the desk" then it makes sense that they will just find the note there without needing a roll. A player saying they "search the room" will likely need to roll to find the information. Note that if something is not labeled as "Hidden" then it should become apparent without effort from the players.

CONTROL PANEL

This is the Strange Times "Control Panel" →

It is to there help GMs run the module. While there is nothing vital to the mystery on it, GMs might find it helpful to piloting the session and making sure things run smoothly. If you are struggling to make a scene feel impactful, check the control panel for useful information.

Environment Adjectives

or

Map

Important Information

Suggested Saves

Character Information

Tips and Reminders

Scene Suggestions

DEMO MODULES

These are the modules included in the demo:

DRAINED (Pg. 58)
Setting- Dystopian Sci-Fi
A distress signal from a nearby moon base quickly becomes a fight for survival.

FEEL – A sci-fi body horror nightmare with nowhere to run

TAGS – Contained Mystery | Linear | Isolated Environment | Sci-Fi | Body Snatchers | Intense Body Horror | Vampires | Lethal

MEADOWS & MISCHIEF (Pg. 70)
Setting- Wild West
A discovery of a town's past and the secrets once buried.

FEEL – A paranoia filled adventure of discovery and dread

TAGS – Uncovered Dark Past | Genre Mash-Up | Swarming Creatures | Fairies | Creepy Child | Traps

THE SHADOW OF DOUBT (Pg. 87)
Setting- 1940s America
An investigation into a small town where someone goes missing every month.

FEEL – A slow burn, sprawling mystery that slowly leads to a single destination

TAGS – Sandbox Mystery | Many Locations & NPCs | Red Herrings | Creature Feature

RUNNING THE MODULE

Understanding Pace: This module has the players walking into the middle of a horror movie. The intro has already happened, and now they are going to experience the aftermath. Let them discover an aspect of the horror before revealing it. Allow the story to naturally progress into a nightmare as players try to find some way of surviving.

They Live: The threat doesn't kill people; it takes them over. The people are still very much alive and aware of what is happening to them. Play into the horror of this. Allow the people who are being controlled to speak (through great effort) and describe their panicked eye movements. Death should be a preferred outcome.

Vents: The monsters travel through the vents of the map. Rooms that have a vent in them are denoted with a Vent Icon. The monsters can appear in these rooms at any time. Use this for dramatic moments.

VENT ICON

SETTING DETAILS

DYSTOPIAN SCI-FI: A universe of slow spaceships making runs between planets lightyears away. Most people live in poverty and are constantly trying to find ways of making enough money to escape their problems, but they never will be able to. Debt consumes most. A handful of major companies control all aspects of life, and they have a singular goal: profit at any cost.

RETRO-TECH: Despite the advancement of technology, some machines have regressed in form. All communication must be localized and thus communication devices are simple radios. "Internets" are regional; each planet has its own, but spaceships and distant bases will only have downloaded material. As a result, computers are massive and can only be accessed through terminals. Most have an AI to help synthesize the data for easier use. Fear of corporate espionage has caused limits in remote access so most technology can only be operated at designated control panels.

ANDROID LIMITATIONS: While androids are firmly in the uncanny valley, they have been programed to be more human. They can feel facsimiles of emotions and have desires. They are created to be additional crew members with specific functions when a human replacement would be too expensive; they are not super computers with limitless knowledge.

PLAYING AN ANDROID: If a player would like to be a robotic companion, they can choose to do so. They gain the following abilities.

Machine-
Description: You are made of metal and circuits. By default, you have Advantage on most Body Save Rolls and Mind Save Rolls.

Priority One: Company Profit-
Description: Rather than your obsession being with the unknown, you are compelled by your Corporate Programming. The GM can offer you Willpower to do things that are in the company's interest at the expense of your team members' safety. If you refuse, lose 1d10 Spirit.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SET UP-
The crew will receive a distress signal from a nearby forested moon facility: Wimbley Mining Base. Upon investigating, they will find that the workers of the facility are in desperate need of a medical officer; theirs has gone missing and the security officer was badly injured while searching for the missing doctor. The workers of WMB hope the crew can help figure out what it was that caused the injury and help find the medical officer. It will be in the crew's best interest to agree; the intense ionosphere of the moon fried the ship's flight computer upon entry; they will need a replacement if they are ever going to take off from this rock.

GM BACKGROUND-
The Wimbley Mining Base is a relatively new facility. Due to the intense UV radiation and eternal day-time tidal lock, the base is windowless and outside travel is forbidden. A skeleton crew of 7 individuals run the entire facility.

Two days ago, a sudden rock fall crushed 2 workers. Their violent demise awoke ancient spores inside the soil.

Thirteen hours ago, their bodies were excavated. A mysterious red fungus was growing on their bodies and in the ground where they were killed. Their bodies were brought to the medical bay.

Three hours ago, the medical officer Wilhelm Bram went missing. He has been infected with the red fungus and now is on the search for blood as a pseudo-vampire.

Fifty minutes ago, the security officer, Mac Douglas, was attacked by the pseudo-vampire. He fired his rifle instinctively as soon as he was struck, and the vampire ran away. The wound was deep and bleeding profusely. Luckily, the bleeding stopped on its own after a couple minutes.

THE RED FUNGUS

The red fungus found in the cave is a parasitic organism that feeds on the proteins and iron inside blood. If it enters an open wound, it will spread until it takes control of the host. This process takes anywhere from 30 minutes to 8 hours, depending on how active the person is. An infected individual will experience minor fever, chills, and intense thirst. In addition, infected areas will cease to bleed.

PSEUDO VAMPIRE

Once a person is controlled, the fungus can pilot their body around as a pseudo vampire searching for more blood. The body of a pseudo vampire is drained of all moisture, making them appear gaunt and lanky. The veins of the body are bulged to the surface with some bursting, revealing the red fungus sprouting out. The person is still alive, and some retain the ability to speak but only in a hoarse whisper.

Pseudo vampires will use the vents to travel and ambush their prey, targeting those it perceives as weak and alone. They are attracted to blood, be it inside of a person or pooled onto the ground. They are also incredibly resilient and can survive almost any injury.

At the start, Dr. Wilhelm Bram is the only Pseudo Vampire. Mac Douglas will turn soon if not cured.

Should a character be attacked by a pseudo vampire, they will lose 2d10 Body Save and need to make a successful Body Save Roll or become Infected.

Infected: 3/2/1/0 - The Game Master, at any moment of their choosing, can dictate that a Body Save Roll needs to be made. If failed, subtract 1 from **Infected.** When it reaches 0, the red fungus takes control, turning you into a pseudo-vampire.

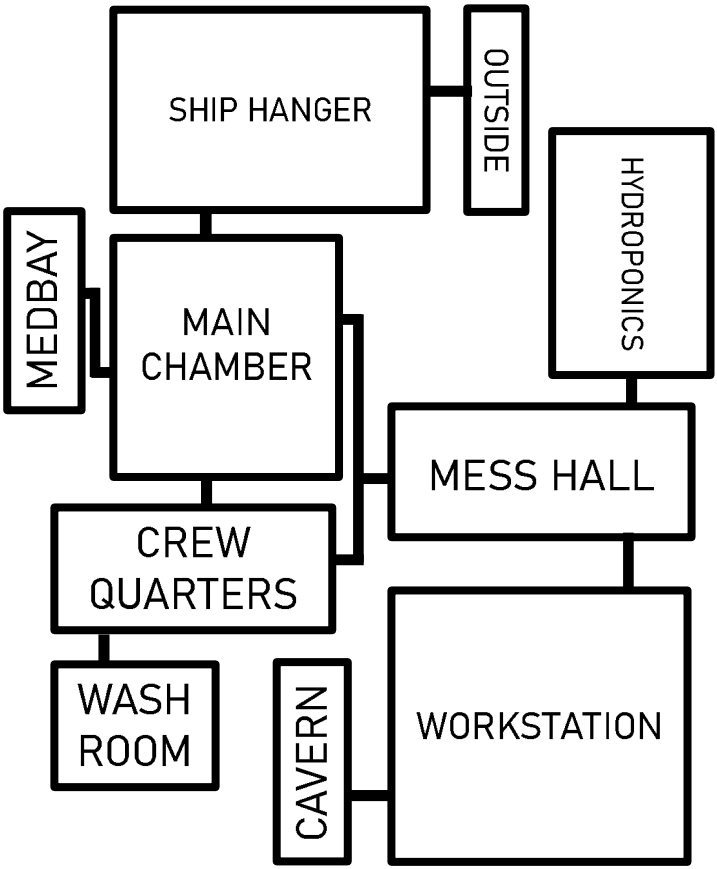
GM Note – If you would like to keep the exact nature of the Body Save a mystery, consider calling the condition "Thirsty" until the players understand what the red fungus is.

ANTI-FUNGALS

Several antifungals can be found in the base such as garlic, silver nanoparticles, and UV radiation. If an infected individual (not a pseudo vampire) is exposed to these directly, they make their next Body Save for the Infection with Advantage. On a Critical Success, they are cured of the red fungus.

If a pseudo vampire is exposed to antifungals, they become vulnerable. Any successful attack can kill them off for good.

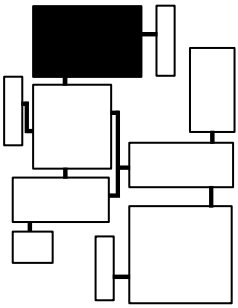
MAP OF WIMBLEY MINING BASE



INTRODUCTION

The characters are all relaxing on their spaceship when they get a distress call from Wimbley Mining Base. The crew of the base are stationed in a small facility on a nearby moon next to a UV intense class B star. All the distress signal communicated was that they are in need of medical assistance (determine with the players why they are obligated to respond to the distress signal). After the characters get ready, their ship descends into the hanger of the WMB. It was a rough flight into the moon's atmosphere.

SHIP HANGER



The characters find themselves in a hanger meant for a small space craft or lander. Large tools and machinery for ship upkeep are covered in dust from lack of use. The whole place looks abandoned, but as soon as the hanger doors close, a man walks through the interior doors.

Clues:

- Mac Douglas comes in once the hanger doors are shut. He greets the crew before informing them that their medical officer Dr. Wilhelm Bram has gone missing and it appears an animal has gotten into the facility. Helping with either of these would be of great service. Wilhelm was last seen in the Medbay, and he changed the security code to get inside.
  H | Mac has blood on his clothes from an animal attack. He fired a shot in panic and scared the thing off before he could see what it was.
  H | Mac is no longer bleeding despite the large size of the wound. ,
  H | Small red sprouts can be seen in the wound.
  GM Note – Mac is infected with the Red Fungus. He will turn in a matter of hours.

- The ship has visible damage on the sides. It appears that the moons ionosphere caused damage upon entry.
  H | The ship's flight computer is fried. Flying without it is near suicide. It will take about 12 hours to repair and that is only if the needed parts are available.

- Several dusty crates are around. It appears that this area is seldom used.
  H | The parts needed to repair the ship can be found in the crates.

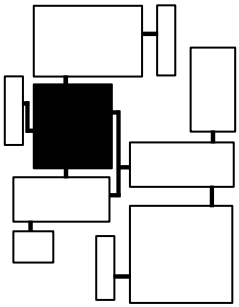
Mac Douglas is a kind and fatherly man. He is happy for the easy security job in his final years before retirement.

"Thank the stars someone was nearby. We could use a hand."

Try to keep Mac being infected a secret until later in the scenario but highlight that he is drinking a lot of water.

Suggested Scene: *After the characters discover that the pseudo vampires are using the vents to move around,* if anyone is in the Ship Hanger, they hear a metal clang from somewhere. If they investigate, they will see a vent grating fell off. Shortly after, they will be attacked by a pseudo vampire.

MAIN CHAMBER



The room is a dimly lit living area. There is a long metal table in the middle with random items scattered about. Couches adorn either side along with several other chairs of various designs. As the characters enter, they see all the living workers of WMB arguing about what to do next.

Clues:

- Samantha Beck is decorated as the officer. She is trying to get Jesus and Vanessa to calm down but is clearly losing control of them and her temper.
  H | There was a mining accident 2 days ago. Two miners were lost.
  H | Samantha's uniform is of a high-ranking position. Too high to be running this place.
  H | Samantha was reassigned to this location after being declared "incompetent."
  H | Samantha believes that the creature is an animal that snuck in through the hanger.
  GM Note – Current research suggests that the moon is incapable of supporting animal life.

Samantha is smart but lacks confidence. She panics easily under pressure.

"What did I do to deserve this reassignment?"

- Jesus Gonzalez is demanding they hunt down "whatever it is that hurt Mac." He seems very worried about what is happening.
  H | Jesus is the base's mechanic. He can help repair the characters' ship.
  H | Jesus recently lost his older brother Alejandro in a mining accident 2 days ago. He is not handling the loss particularly well.

Jesus is quiet. He is still upset about the lose of his brother and is worried about losing someone else.

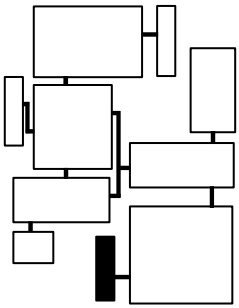
"Alejandro would know what to do…"

- Vanessa Hammon is dismissing the threat, claiming that "Mac probably scared the thing off with his gun."
  GM Note – Vanessa will leave to take a shower shortly after the characters enters the room. She announces this. She will be attacked by a pseudo vampire there unless the characters intervene immediately.

Vanessa is unserious and relaxed. She just wants to avoid work at all cost.

"How many of us have to die before we get a day off?"

CAVERN



A large cave with icy crystals protruding out of the walls. Portable lights are set up to illuminate the area. Several tunnels sprout from the main cave.

Clues:

- The cavern is wide. Most of the icy crystals have been harvested, but some still remain. Mining equipment can be found throughout the cave.
  H | Pseudo vampires lurk in the cavern when it is too dangerous to be inside the base.

- *If Vanessa went to the showers alone: …*
  Cries for help can be heard down one of the tunnels.
  H | If the sound is followed, they lead to a bed of red fungus that can be seen protruding out of the ground. Vanessa is laying on top of the fungus, drained of all fluid with the fungus running through her veins. She lets out another cry for help.
  GM Note – The patch of red fungus can still be found without Vanessa, but it will be much more difficult.
  GM Note – If Vanessa is freed, she will either die immediately or become a pseudo vampire.

When a character sees Vanessa, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence-
She is… *alive?*
Gain Condition: Panicked
(Pg. 41)

CREW QUARTERS

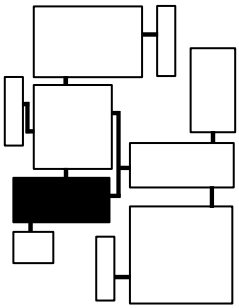
A corridor with 8 rooms. Each door is labelled with the name of the person who lives inside. One is empty.

Clues:

- Most rooms are inconsequential.

- Inside Samantha's room is a computer with the base's records and current activity.
  H | There is a letter detailing her transfer order.
  If Vanessa went to the shower's alone …
  H | There is a flashing alert that a vent malfunctioned in the Wash-Room
  H | There is a recent entry into the Cavern.

- Inside Wilhelm's room is picture of Wilhelm with another man who looks similar. There is a small urn next to the photo.
  H | The urn is labeled - Mark 11/38



Consider adding in personal touches to each room based on who lives inside.

Mac – Retro CD Collection
Jesus – Sports Memorabilia
Alejandro – Rock Carving Kit
Isabelle – Diary with Gossip
Vanessa – Dirty Magazines
Samantha – Military Posters
Wilhelm – Medical Textbook

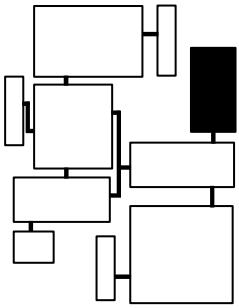
HYDROPONICS

A long room with multiple hydroponic beds growing various crops. Minimalist robotic arms hover above tending to the plants below.

Clues:

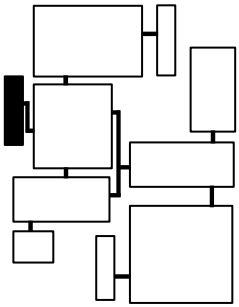
- Crops of various plants are grown here.
  H | Garlic is grown here.

- UV lamps light up the room.
  H | Plants need rest time. The lights are on an automatic timer to shut off.
  H | Pseudo Vampires will not enter this room while the UV lights are on.



Suggested Scene: *If characters are hiding here after realizing that it is safe,* have the lights shut off at a moment of tension. Then the characters hear the vent grate open as a Pseudo vampire enters the room.

MEDBAY



The Medbay is locked with a 4-digit number code: 1138
A room full of medical supplies.

Clues:

- The Medbay is in disarray. Papers and equipment are thrown everywhere.
  H | The air vent grating in this rooms has been ripped off violently.
  H | A bottle of silver nanoparticles labeled "AgNP" can be found on the floor.

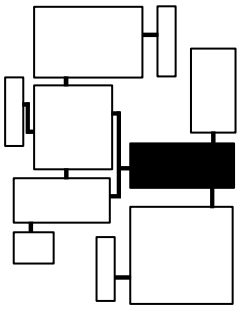
- The medical fridge has been broken into.
  H | The lock has been smashed. Wilhelm would have had a key.
  H | There are no blood bags

- The bodies of Alejandro and Isabelle are still on stretchers. They are largely unrecognizable.
  H | Their bodies have been drained of blood.
  H | There is a red fungus growing in their veins.

- There is a computer terminal here. It is locked with a four-letter password.
  H | The password is Mark
  H | An audio program is pulled up. There is a recent recording on it. *Clue 1, Pg. 69*

If a character sees the fungus in the veins, they might need to make a **Mind Save.**
Suggested Consequence-
You become fully aware of the veins under your skin.
Decrease Mind Save

MESS HALL

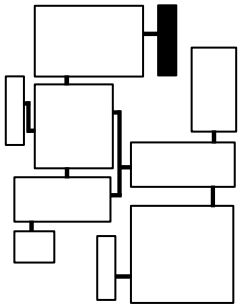


A small cantina with a functional kitchen. There are several metal tables, most of which have been used as a storage space.

Clues:

- There is a large walk-in freezer with various meat and grain products.
  GM Note – A Pseudo Vampire can be trapped here but the cold will not kill it.

OUTSIDE

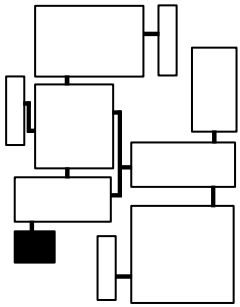


The moon's long orbit has placed this side in an effective eternal day. A tree line can be seen about 100 feet from the hanger doors.

Clues:

- The harsh sunlight will cause UV burns in seconds. Protective clothing has only limited effects.
  GM Note – A pseudo vampire would only survive a few seconds in direct sunlight.

WASH-ROOM



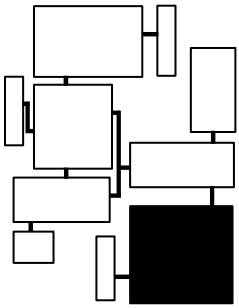
A small washroom with several toilets and showers.

Clues:

- *If Vanessa went to the showers alone …*
  There is a shower still running, but no one is inside.
  H | Steam is escaping through an open vent grate.

When a character sees the empty room, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence-
What happened to Vanessa?
Gain an Omen

WORKROOM



Large benches and lockers with geology and mining equipment. Minecarts filled with crystals are pushed off to the side next to empty, large metal crates.

Clues:

- There is a passageway into the Cavern. A digital sign above it say's "next shipment due in: 89 Days."

CLUES

CLUE #1

Recording on the Medbay Computer:

Voice of Dr. Wilhelm Bram: *This is Doctor…. Doctor Wilhelm Bram, first…. (sigh) Third class surgeon reporting from the Wimbley Mining Base. We… well… I have been exposed to what I believe to be a parasitic fungal organism. While working on the deceased Alejandro, I pricked my finger on a shard of bone. I removed it immediately and…. And I did not bleed. I thought nothing of it originally, regloved, and continued my work. After 8 hours, I began to show signs of infection. I became hot, had sudden chills, and needed to consume copious amounts of water. Upon removing my glove, I… I saw a new growth of fungus emerging from my fingertip... Whatever it is…"*

(Knock on door)

Voice of Mac: *"Doc? You in there?"*

Voice of Dr. Wilhelm Bram: *Don't come in!... Whatever it is, it is spreading… I can feel it in my veins… If this is to be my last message, know that I did what I could to keep this contained…. I do not believe I will make it out of this lab alive… Funny… I am almost exactly the age of Mark when he… when I… Ugh! It's in my head!…"*

(A scream followed by a lengthy silence. The sound of destruction follows before the sound of a metal hatch opening.)

MEADOWS & MISCHIEF

RUNNING THE MODULE

Understanding Pace: This module is a medley of horrors. As the session goes on, the mystery should get stranger and stranger until the nature of the terror is revealed. Players should feel like they are constantly under threat as they experience and discover the weird events happening to the town.

Hidden Monsters: Players should largely only see the results of the creature's actions for the first half of the game. Keep what is causing the events a secret for as long as possible.

Creepy Child: This module features a creepy child prominently. Use it. Once the party meets the child, they should constantly be popping up in the worst places. Nothing unnatural, but unnerving. Use a monotone voice and say ominous things.
*(**Trigger Warning:** the child is effectively one of the monsters of this scenario. As a result, they can be used as a hostile force in the game. However, doing this will likely cause a scene where the characters hurt something that looks like a child. If you or anyone in your group is not comfortable with that, do not use the child for hostile encounters.)*

SETTING DETAILS

WILD WEST: A frontier with limitless possibilities. A new beginning for some, a chance of wealth for others, and to a few, an escape from the laws of civilization. People in this setting are optimistic to a fault, always believing that life will work itself out so long as they work hard. However, these people are also wary of strangers. Laws out here are light, and some scoundrels will take advantage of that fact.

HORSES & WAGONS: There is a lot of empty space between settlements in the west. Horses and carriages are a requirement for safe and easy travel. Without them, even a trailed journey can become dangerous.

WORD TRAVELS FAST: It is hard for anything to be kept a secret. People are often bored, and gossip and rumors help make the day go by. The characters' exploits will often be known before they arrive at the location. This can either work for or against them.

GUNSLINGING: Only a fool would venture west without a weapon. The threat of using a gun is more important than the actual function. People will be more polite and accommodating toward those with weapons, but respectful use is expected. If someone taunts or threatens someone with a gun, those around them will respond in kind.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SET UP-
Strange events are happening in the cattle town of Galdin. After a fierce windstorm, one of the cows was found dead and picked clean of flesh. Along with this, farmers have reported a strange buzzing coming from within the woods at night. Fear of a new predator has the farmers spooked and they have urged the sheriff to reach out for help to investigate exactly what happened to the cow.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

GM BACKGROUND-
Galdin was founded in 1818 by Irish immigrants hoping to escape the persecutions of city life. After a safe journey west, the small tribe of 30 members were able to carve out a successful settlement in the northeast region of the Colorado Territory. However, unbeknownst to the other travelers, their good fortune was not luck.

A girl by the name of Brianna May had made a deal with the fae back when she was in Ireland. The original contract was that she would bring a young court of fairies with her to the new world if they ensured her protection. When Brianna wished to escape from the city and move west, she turned to the fairies again for aid to keep her safe. This time, the fairies' price was much more steep. They would accompany her to the west, but now they wanted her first born in exchange once they reached the age of 8. Desperate for escape, Brianna agreed.

Despite the contract, Brianna refused to relinquish her child on their 8th birthday. This angered the fairies who began to torment the town of Galdin as a punishment for the betrayal. Crops were ruined, cows were killed, people were murdered, and a child was abducted. After the other residents of Galdin discovered that Brianna was the cause of the blight, she was burned as a witch, and her home was sealed with iron gratings to keep the evil at bay.

Many abandoned Galdin after this. For years, only a few families maintained the settlement, but when the cattle industry boomed after the civil war, many prospecting ranchers became interested in Galdin again. New life was breathed into the town as more people made their way to the almost forgotten community. The newcomers were not aware of the horrible events of the past, and those that did know did not speak of it. All the old families would say is "do not go into the witch's house."

After the windstorm, the chimney to the "witch's" home was knocked over, breaking the iron grate sealing the fairies in the basement. The starved creatures immediately flew out of the chimney and devoured the first thing they could: the cow in the field. Now they emerge every night to exact their revenge on the town that imprisoned them.

FAIRIES

The fairies are an ancient species of mischievous creatures native to the United Kingdom and Ireland. They are tricksters that love nothing more than having humans fall victim to their deadly "pranks."

The fairies can produce a bright biofluorescent light in their mouth and use this to lure people into the woods. This is known as the Will-O-Wisp.

Fairies have a singular goal: to replace a child with a changeling such that they may enter human society.

Individual fairies can be killed rather easily by normal means; however, fairies have 2 unique weaknesses: they are burned by iron and sunlight. They will go to great lengths to avoid both. Changelings do not have these weaknesses.

Should a character be attacked by a single fairy, they will lose 1d10 from their Body Save. If they are attacked by a swarm of fairies, it will be 4d10 instead.

The fairies in this scenario have been imprisoned and starved for over 75 years. They desire vengeance and will do so by tormenting the townsfolk of Galdin.

Each night, the Faries emerge to perform "pranks." They will do 2 or 3 a night. The fairies are experts at staying hidden; no one ever sees a fairy in the act unless they want to be seen. By the time the characters arrive, the fairies will have already done the following:

Eaten the cow in the field
Dug up the grave of Brianna May and stole the body
Replaced Martin Hernandez with a changeling (the real Martin is alive)
Placed traps in the woods
Lured and Killed Erik Flinn
Created an effigy of skulls on the edge of the forest

There will be more death and destruction in the nights to come. The next page is some of the possible "pranks" the fairies could commit during the module. The GM may cause them in any order they feel is most dramatic or roll to randomly determine them.

PRANKS

1. THROW THE WITCHES BODY:
The fairies will find someone wandering at night (preferably the characters) and drop the body of Brianna May onto them.

2. THE FAE FEAST:
A massive pile of flour, rotten meat, and inedible branches will be found on the main road. If not eaten by sundown, the fairies will become more violent.

3. LURE PEOPLE INTO THE WOODS:
The fairies will use their Will-O-Wisp to bring people into the trapped forest.

4. RELEASING HORSES INTO WOODS:
The fairies untie all the horses in the stable and scare them into the woods.

5. TAINT DRINKING LIQUIDS:
The fairies will pour blood into the towns water supply, put soured milk into milk jugs, and urine in beer taps.

6. ANGRY BULL
The fairies will torment a bull into a fit of rage before releasing it onto main street. Anyone attacked by the bull will lose 3d10 from their Body Save.

7. DEAD BIRDS
The fairies will fling dead birds aggressively through windows.

8. DROWNING IN RIVER
The fairies will use their Will-O-Wisp to bring someone to the river and then try to drown them in the water.

9. HOLLOWED ANIMALS
The fairies remove the insides of various animals (mostly pets).

10. BURNING THE CHURCH
The fairies set fire to the town's church. Father McLeary claims that he saw the "winged devils" that did it and that they tried to attack him, but he held up his cross and "the power of Jesus protected [him]."

INTRODUCTION

The characters arrive in the mid afternoon to the main road of Galdin: a small cattle farm in northeast Colorado. It is a pleasant town. Wide open pastures make up the majority of the hamlet with a large forest to the north and a creek to the east. People can be seen walking in the street and most welcome the new faces with a bright smile and gentle wave. It seems happy here. However, the urgent note the characters received the day before from the town sheriff implies otherwise *Clue 1, Pg. 82* (determine why the sheriff reached out to them specifically). After depositing their carriage at the nearby coach house and tying up their horses, the characters are approached by Sheriff Mabel.

MAIN ROAD

A long dirt road that acts as Galdin's main thoroughfare. Most of the shops and public spaces connect to this road and can be seen clearly down the strip. Most of the homes are built seemingly randomly in the meadow.

Environment Adjectives
Friendly, Happy, Homely, Open, Pretty, Quaint, Small, Trusting, Warm

Clues:

- Sheriff Charlet Mabel has a somber look as she approaches the party. She greets them before asking them to come with her to the farm fields.
  H | A cow's skeleton was found in the fields 2 days ago. This is what the letter was about.
  H | A pile of skulls was discovered this morning near the forest.
  H | Charlet inherited the job of sheriff when her husband died and "no one else stepped up."

- Several buildings can be seen from the main road: the church, the inn, the lending library, and the saloon are the prominent figures. The characters are informed that they will be staying at the inn.

Charlet is a strong leader. She is naturally charismatic but often stoic. She is extremely well respected in Galdin.

"I've given my word to keep these people safe, and I don't intend to break my word."

Consider adding locations not specifically mentioned in this module for characters to interact with, such as:

Lumber Mill
General Store
Bank
Blacksmith
Post Office
Barber Shop

FARM FIELD

A wide expanse of grassland. Cows can be seen spotted around and the forest blocks the view of the horizon. The grass is long and sways with the wind on the cool autumn day.

Environment Adjectives
Beautiful, Cow-Covered, Green, Idyllic, Lush, Vulnerable, Wide-Open

Clues:

- The field is several acres wide. A bunkhouse can be seen to the south and to the north is the farmhouse.

- There is the skeleton of a cow. *If Sheriff Mabel is with the party,* she reports that it was found like this 2 days ago after a mighty storm.
  H | The skeleton has no traces of meat left.
  H | Tiny needle-like indents can be seen in the bones of the cow.
  GM Note – These are the teeth marks of the fairies.

- At the edge of the tree line is a pile of skulls stacked into a mound. 4 skulls in total. The top skull is the only one with visible viscera on it. *If Sheriff Mabel is with the party,* she says it was found this morning.
  H | The top skull is the only skull that is recent. The rest are approximately 60 years old.
  H | *If Sheriff Mabel is with the party,* she informs them that only one person is missing from town: a farmhand by the name of Erik Flinn.

Consider having some farmhands in the field to talk to the characters. They can discuss what they have seen at night (such as lights from the woods) or their feelings on Erik Flinn.
H | Some might know about the "Galdin Witch"

When the characters discover the skull pile, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence-
Is this a threat?
Decrease Spirit Save

BUNK HOUSE

A small dwelling meant for several people on the southside of the pasture. It is largely featureless.

Environment Adjectives
Dull, Grey, Musty

Clues:

- The door is unlocked. Inside are several beds with storage trunks at their base. A man by the name of Samual Grant is laying down in one of the beds.
  H | Samual assumes Erik ditched town.

- Erik's trunk is locked.
  H | It does not appear as if anything is missing nor did Erik take things out.

Samual is a poor mannered man in their early 20s. They often make jokes at the expense of others.

"So if he doesn't come back, I get Erik's stuff, right? "

CEMETERY

A group of headstones and crosses by the river. A gentle babble can be heard from the running water.

Environment Adjectives
Falling Apart, Improper, Plain, Unkept

Clues:

- There is a cluster of graves. A grave marked for a Brianna May is separate from the others. The headstone is mostly bare outside of the name.
  H | Brianna May's grave has loose soil
  H | The casket in Brianna May's grave is empty

When the characters discover the empty casket, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence-
Where is the body?
Gain an Omen

THE CHURCH

A tall wooden building at the heart of Galdin. It is a well decorated structure, but clearly aged. Numerous filigrees and marks denote it as a catholic institute.

Environment Adjectives
Aged, Decorated, Dusty, Empty, Intricate, Open

Clues:

- Father McLeary is often seen outside the church doors smoking cheap cigarettes. He wears a metal cross around his neck.
  H | The cross is made of iron.
  H | The church keeps records of every sermon. It is the only recorded history of the town.
  H | Father McLeary is aware that the town executed a witch by the name Brianna May.
  H | Father McLeary can locate the sermon given before Brianna Mays execution, but it will take him some time. *-Clue 2, Pg. 82*

Father McLeary is kind and quick witted. He is very casual about religion despite his position.

"People don't 'find God.' They realize that He has always been by their side."

- The church has been used as a large storeroom for the town. General tools, supplies, and rations can all be found in the crates piled into the corner.

- In the basement are the church records which are largely composed of past sermons. Some of the town's history can be pieced together by reading them, but it requires interpretation and time to do so.

If the characters ask anyone about the town's history, they will be pointed towards either the church or the lending library for information.

FARMHOUSE

A large home built at the north end of the farm. It has been well maintained and is clearly loved.

Environment Adjectives
Big, Cozy, Red

Clues:

- Farmer Glenn Camper has not seen Erik for 2 days.
  H | Glenn heard Erik was dancing at the saloon with a girl named Rosie Meyer the night before he went missing.
  H | Glenn has a large collection of firearms.

Farmer Glenn is a lighthearted individual happy to help anyone who asks.

"No need to spin yarn dry; let me pour ya' a drink!"

FOREST

A dense wooded forest with a thick canopy blocking out the light. There is space to move and even run, but navigation can be difficult.

Environment Adjectives
Dark, Deep, Disorienting, Ominous, Unnerving

Clues:

- *If it is nighttime,* a bright light can be seen from the wood. Those who see the light feel compelled to follow.
  GM Note – This is the Will-O-Wisp

If a player sees the light, consider offering them a **Willpower** to investigate immediately.

- The trees are large and easily block line of sight.
  H | There is a strange green ooze on the trees similar to sap.
  GM Note – This is secretion from the fairies

- **HIDDEN TRAP!** – A pit full of spikes.
  H | Inside the pit is a headless body. It is wearing the clothes Erik was last seen in.

- **HIDDEN TRAP!** – A rope snare attached to an angry hornet's nest.

- **HIDDEN TRAP!** – A trip wire that causes a swinging spike log to fall.

If players are walking through the Forest, consider having them make **Body Saves** to avoid the traps.

THE INN

A small inn at the edge of town. It is plainly decorated on the outside, but the inside is covered in items and memorabilia from far away places.

Environment Adjectives
Bright, Colorful, Decorate, Neat, Quiet, Tacky

Clues:

- Gloria Hernandez is the person who runs the Inn. She is happy to house the characters while they help the sheriff. She gives a room key for each pair.
  H | Gloria says that her son, Martin, is usually a terror but has been so well behaved the past few days.

Gloria Hernandez is a bubbly individual that always says something kind.

"So glad you're visiting our humble Galdin!"

- A newspaper is framed on the wall. -*Clue 3, Pg. 83*

- Martin Hernandez is an 8-year-old child that often hangs around the Inn.
  H | Martin has been replaced with a changeling.
  GM Note – Martin will quickly learn of the character's intent and will try to convince them to leave before "the bad things happen."

Martin Hernandez (or the thing that is pretending to be Martin Hernandez) is a creepy, unnerving child.

"Hello… I hope you slept well…"

LENDING LIBRARY

An old two-story home made of stone that has been redone as a public library.

Environment Adjectives
Aged, Book Smell, Brown, Calm, Leathery, Old

Clues:

- Numerous bookshelves filled with different books and novels. They have varying stages of wear.
  H | There is a book much older than the others labeled "The Traditions of Éire." It has a tattered ribbon marking a page. – *Clue 4, Pg. 84*

If the characters ask anyone about the towns history, they will be pointed towards either the church or the lending library for information.

- Noises can be heard from upstairs. The passageway to the stairs can be found with minimal effort.
  GM Note – The noises are from the movement of Cara and Cillian Kelly.

LENDING LIBRARY (UPSTAIRS)

The upper level to the library where Cillian Kelly is housed with his caretaker Cara Kelly.

Environment Adjectives
Blank, Dark, Dingy, Old

Clues:

- Cillian Kelly is an old man that lives on top of the Lending Library. He is visibly unwell.
  H | Cillian has severe memory issues due to his old age.
  H | Cillian was one of the original town settlers.
  H | Cillian was an artist but has not been able to draw for some time.
  GM Note – At some point during the module, Cillian will draw a depiction of the fairies. Clue 5, Pg. 84/85

Cillian Kelly is often peaceful and mute but can become agitated if confused.

- Cara Kelly is Cillian's caretaker. She is usually by his bedside.
  H | Cara is Cillian's niece
  H | Cara has some medical training.

Cara Kelley is a very pleasant and gentle woman. She has a mother's instinct.

"Oh, let me get that for ya darlin'."

SALOON

A mostly stereotypical saloon with decorations and comfortable furniture everywhere. The Irish influences of the founders can be seen, but it isn't overbearing.

Environment Adjectives
Comfortable, Friendly, Loud, Merry, Obnoxious, Open, Strong, Warm

Clues:

- Most of the people in the saloon are unbothered by the cow incident. They are just happy to be drinking.
  H | Some patrons declare that "the witch has returned." They do not know about the legend but know of her house up the hill.

Suggested Scene: Have someone annoyingly flirt with a character before wandering into the woods.

- Rosie Meyer remembers seeing Erik two nights ago.
  H | She claims they were going to go for a walk outside when Erik said he needed to "go relieve himself" before wandering into the woods.
  GM Note – Erik saw the Will-O-Wisp

Rosie is a polite but selfish person. She wants what's best for her and doesn't care much about others.

"That no good Erik; ditching town after dancing with me. If I ever catch that man…"

WITCH'S HOUSE

An old brick house, overgrown and unattended, far away from the rest of Galdin. It is placed in a relatively empty field near the edge of the forest.

Environment Adjectives
Antique, Cramped, Creepy, Damp, Dark, Dusty, Foul, Slimy, Small, Untouched

Clues:

- The front door has several metal locks on it. The windows have similar protection in the form of metal bars across their length.
  H | The locks and metal bars are made of iron.

- At the back of the home is a knocked over chimney.
  H | The chimney fell over recently.
  H | There is an iron grate in the rubble.

- The inside of the house is small. There is a kitchen area, connected living area, and a hall with two doors: one leading to an adult's bedroom and one leading to a child's bedroom.
  H | A strange green ooze can be found on the walls of the home.
  GM Note – This is secretion from the fairies
  H | There is a no fireplace despite the chimney.
  H | There is a false wall. Behind it is a chimney flue leading down and a door that leads to a basement.

- The child's bedroom has a small bed and a few old children's toy (blocks, spinning top, etc.)

- The adult's bedroom has minimal furniture: a bed and a nightstand.
  H | In the nightstand are 2 strange documents in an unknown language (Gaelic). They appear to have been written with the strange green ooze. One has been burnt. *Clue 6, Pg. 86*

- The basement is covered in hardened green ooze. It is hard to see anything underneath. If it is during the daytime, dozens of fairies can be found here.
  H | The real Martin Hernandez is inside a cocoon like vessel. They are alive and can be removed.

Suggested Scene: *If the characters are here when night falls,* they can hear the sounds of fairies flying out of the chimney.

Suggested Scene: *If the characters are here during the night,* fairies will be crawling on the walls.
GM Note – Save this as a possible climactic scenario.

Suggested Scene: *If the characters are here during the night,* Martin Hernandez is hiding under the child's bed. If he attacks the characters, his eyes will become beady, and his mouth will extend out to reveal jagged and razor-sharp teeth.

CLUES

CLUE #1

Letter received by the characters:

Your services are hereby requested in the town of Galdin at your earliest convenience. A cow was found dead in the field, and it is unknown how it was killed. We hope for you to shed light on the situation. You will be paid a sum of $200 for identifying the cause of death. God be with you.

Sincerely,
Sheriff Charlet Mabel

CLUE #2

Sermon of Brianna May's execution:

For 15 years, Galdin was a paradise. Crime was not present, everyone worked and was happy, but due to the sins of Ms. May, Galdin has lost its impeccable record. For the last 5 weeks, tragedy after tragedy has befallen our humble town and we were left asking the lord "Why us? Have we not been through enough?" May He forgive us for our insolence. Rather than look towards the divine for blame, we should have looked toward our fellow man. Brianna May, who we at one point considered to be a friend, had made a deal with the devils of the old country: Safe passage to the America's and into the West and in return she would give them her first born. Nonetheless, when the bastard William was born, Brianna May saw it fit to shuffle off the cost onto us. Allow me to remind you the price we paid:

The death of 6 cows. A blight on our crops. Bellies filled with rotten meat and raw grain. The death of Anthony Roberts, Gregory Freeman, and Wilhem Toll. The Disappearance of little Jeremy Holmes.

How much more will we have to pay to fulfill a single sinner's debt? By hanging Brianna May, we might once again know peace. Let us end this torment and seal off the evil in that house once and for all.

CLUE #3

Newspaper framed in the inn.

Published by the Denver Daily in 1893

SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF GALDIN'S FOUNDING

Prosperity and hope. That was the promise given to the founders of Galdin in 1816 when they first arrived in the United States. Not 2 years later, they learned of the harsh reality of the new world. That many would not give the new settlers the opportunities promised due to their Irish heritage. It was this prejudice that sent the settlers west, where they would eventually discover the meadows and woods of what we now call Galdin. For years, the settlers flourished in the Colorado territory. Crops planted well, cattle grew fast, and the nearby river always delivered fresh and clean water. It was a paradise.

Sadly, it was not meant to last. After a supposed witch trial and execution of a woman by the name of Brianna May in 1833, many thought the town to be cursed. Dozens fled west to Denver, leaving the once idyllic settlement to be forgotten. However, fate had other plans. Those that stayed continued to raise cattle, and after the Civil War caused the cattle boom we are still in, interest was renewed in Galdin. Ranchers came first, but soon to follow were workers hoping for pay and shopkeeps selling supplies. By 1870, Galdin was reborn as one of the fastest growing towns in the west with amenities that rival Denver. Now, 75 years from its founding, despite the shadow of its past, Galdin's future has never looked so bright!

H | 1833 is exceptionally late for a witch trial.

CLUE #4

The Traditions of Éire marked page

The creatures of the fae wilds are diverse, but they do share some traits in common. For one, they all obey a strict hierarchy. Fae Queens are considered to be the highest position. Below them are fairies and gnomes, and then the trolls and ogres. To betray or question this order is punishable by death, often via exposure to sunlight.

There is also a great cultural significance around food. Many fae do not require food, but they are always hungry. To be presented with food is considered to be a great honor, and feasts are often used as political offerings, be it land trades, allyships, or peace deals. To not eat the food present, or even leaving a crumb, is considered an incredible insult. This is perhaps why so many fae dislike humans. What the fae consider "food" is alien to us, and thus any early attempts at negotiations were likely short lived. Perhaps this was for the best. The fae's disdain for iron might have prevented the early Gaelics from developing their metalcraft which allowed for their rise to power.

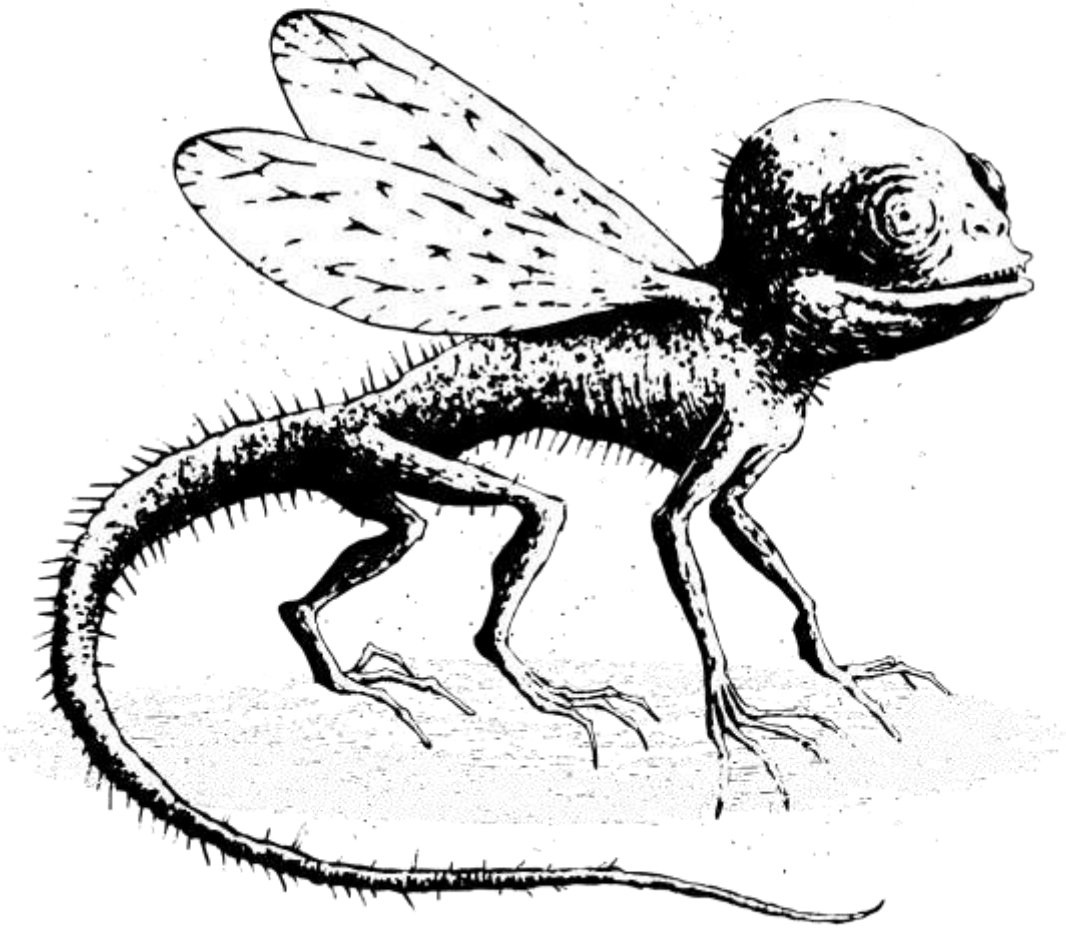
CLUE #5

Cillian Kelly's drawing description

A creature that has both reptilian and insectoid features. It has a slender body with a long and winding tail. Its limbs are thin and end in razor claws. On its back are a set cicada wings almost too small for its body. Its head is bulbous and hosts a set of beady eyes that seem to be looking into the soul of the viewer. It has a narrow set of lips that fail to hide its needle-like teeth.

CLUE #5

Cillian Kelly's drawing



CLUE #6

Strange Documents

Translated from Gaelic

Document 1
The fae court hereby agrees to the request of Brianna May: safe passage to the new world so long as she brings a breeding set of fairies with her. She may in no way attempt to harm the fairies. Once in the new world, this contract is to be considered completed with no debt held by either party.

Document 2
The fairies of the young court hereby agree to assist Brianna May again with her travels. The fairies will accompany the caravan west until settlement is found and ensure safety from the wilds of the new world. In exchange, Brianna May agrees to give the fairies of the young court her first born child once they turn the age of 8. Failure to do so … (the document has been burned below this point)

THE SHADOW OF DOUBT

RUNNING THE MODULE

Understanding Pace: This mystery is a slow burn. Ideally, players will forget that this is a horror game until they encounter the monster. Allow players to explore at a leisurely pace, gathering clues and testimonies as they see fit until they reach the big climax. Let the dramatic moment linger, and as soon as it is over, try to draw the story to a conclusion with the players finding a solution to the problem.

Put Them in the Well: This scenario is relatively safe up until the characters eventually enter The Well. *You want them in The Well.* That is the climatic moment that the rest of the mystery is building up to and, for the best results, you want them to go in as soon as they realize that is where the monster is hiding.

Red Herrings: There are numerous red herrings throughout the adventure; do not be fooled by them. There is a very simple (if bizarre) solution, and the rest are the ravings of a madman.

SETTING DETAILS

Late 1940s America: A time of change and optimism in the United States. After WWII, people were hoping to move on from war and focus on change on the home front.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SET UP-
It is currently Wednesday, May 25th 1949.

A darkness has fallen on the town of Argenta. Once a month, a person goes missing, seemingly pulled out of their domiciles in the middle of the night. The local police can't make heads or tails out of it, but they know people are scared and need answers. With no leads, the police turned to independent investigators to hopefully shed light on the mystery. This is the role the characters will play.

GM BACKGROUND-
Peter McCall was the chemistry professor at the local university, famed for his advancements in silver electroplating. However, during his time overseas for wartime research, he had an encounter with a dark entity. He was driven to madness and paranoia. His fears were innumerable. He was convinced that the world is a very dangerous place and was frustrated and confused by the fact that no one else was as terrified of the things hiding in the shadows.

His obsession lost him his reputation, his career, and his friends. Desperate, he turned to the occult. He began experimenting with dark forces he did not fully understand and tapped into a power far greater than he expected. He was warped into an embodiment of his hatred of those who doubted him. The Thing That Was Peter McCall, confused by their new body, hid in the stone well at the center of town. They emerge every new moon to execute their revenge. Each disappearance is of a man who wronged Peter McCall, and the thing will not rest until all who doubted him are silenced.

The next disappearance will be May 27th.

THE THING THAT WAS PETER MCCALL

The creature was once Peter McCall and carries with them all of the emotions and beliefs they had when they were human. They have a deep hatred for the residents of Argenta but particularly the men that would openly mock them. When the night is darkest, they crawl out of the well to find one of these men, kill them, and drag their body back to their lair.

Boredom overtook the creature early on and they have been building a collection of books to read. They also talk to the now polished skulls of their victims. Whether or not they actually hear the voices from the beyond is unknown.

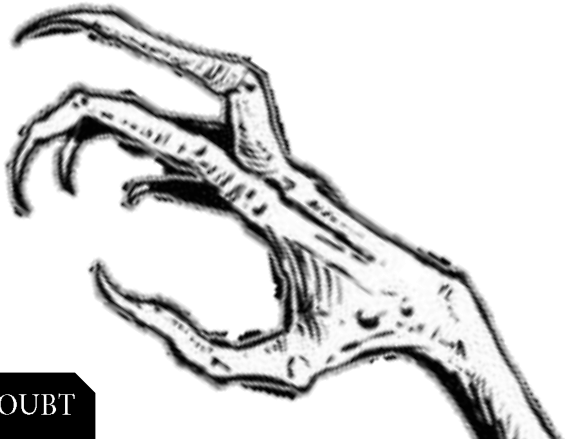
The creature does not want to hurt the characters but will if the creature believes that the characters will expose their hiding spot. This may cause the creature to emerge early on a non-new moon to pursue them.

The creature has adopted Peter's fears: direct sunlight and moonlight, silver, lake water, etc. They will be afraid of and avoid these objects at all cost. Whether or not they have any real effect on the creature is up to the GM.

The magic spells Peter used to commune with the dark forces can also be used against him. An appropriate use of the spells or a recreation of Peter's original summoning circle may send the creature to Hell, bind them to a location, or banish them from existence depending on the GM's interpretation.

Likewise, the spells in the book "Wards of Scotland" may prove to be effective against the creature or at least hold it at bay.

Should a character be attacked by the creature, they will lose 4d10 Body Save.



THE THING THAT WAS PETER McCALL

"They doubted me… They said there was nothing to be afraid of; that monsters don't exist… they will soon learn to regret those words."

Suggested Scenes During a Hostile Encounter

The creature feels the skull of a character, mumbling "time to make a new friend" | The creature reaches for a character and pulls them into the darkness | The creature grabs a character's arm and snaps the bone underneath | The creature takes to the air while holding someone | The creature stabs its hand into the stomach of a character

INTRODUCTION

This scenario starts with the characters driving through the late spring woods of upstate New York in the rain. The driver and car were sent by the Sheriff of Argenta to fetch the characters in the hope that they can help with a mystery his officers can't seem to solve. As they enter Argenta, the buildings are all made of dark stone but become wooden as the car moves deeper inwards. A pale stone well marks the town center, apparently a relic of the fishing village this town was supposed to be before silver was discovered in the hillside. The town square has several buildings of note: a store front with a boarded-up window labeled "The Argenta Press" written above the door, The Silver Hand Inn where the characters are supposed to lodge, and the sheriff's office where the characters are meant to go to first.

THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

A small police station with several officers filing out paperwork and chatting. At the back of the building is Sheriff Gruber's office. He welcomes the characters in.

Clues:

- Sheriff Matthew Gruber is waiting in his office. He is happy to see the characters and gives them any information they need to know. People have been going missing in the middle of the night every month for the past 6 months. Outside of the first two being professors, there is no known connection between victims. Break-ins coincide with the last two disappearances, but they are assumed to be unrelated.
  H | People are scared. No one walks the streets at night, and the workers at the mine all quit.
  H | Break-ins occurred at Argenta Library and Argenta University along with the disappearances.
  H | Sheriff Gruber needs the characters to investigate so they can mark the people down as "Disappeared." It is a clause in the town's bylaws.

- List of Missing People with Location of Disappearance
  -Phil Carter – April 28th, 2031 Lahuske St.
  -Isaac Wilhem – March 29th, 301 Silver Ave.
  -Will Finley – February 27th, The Argenta Press
  -Gregory Milton– January 28th, 577 Harlow St.
  -Peter McCall– December 30th, 1507 Woodle Rd.

Environment Adjectives
Cluttered, Distracted, Friendly, Loud, Unserious

Sheriff Gruber is polite but obviously views this case as an inconvenience more than anything. Does not seem to be very good at his job.

"This is all quite unusual, but probably nothing serious."

List of locations available to the players:

Argenta Library
The Argenta Press
Argenta University
Gregory Milton's House
Isaac Wilhelm's House
Peter McCall's House
Phil Carter's House
The Silver Hand Inn
The Silver Mine

H | Elizabeth Jordan's House
H | The Well

ARGENTA LIBRARY

An old building near the center of town. Multiple additions have been grafted onto the original construction to accommodate the increasing population of Argenta.

Clues:

- The doors to the library have recently been repaired.

- Meridith Jones is at the front desk organizing books.
  H | Only books from the restricted section were taken. They haven't yet determined which books were taken as it isn't a high priority.
  H | There is a list of people who have checked out restricted books. - *Clue 1, Pg. 100*

- Generic, scientific, and historical information can be learned here.
  H | Every disappearance happened on a new moon. The next new moon is this Friday (May 27th)

Environment Adjectives
Dark, Deep, Disorganized Dusty, Hypnotizing, Long, Organized, Strange

---

Merideth Jones is a mean old lady. She does not like people and is annoyed with anyone who talks to her.

"SSSSSSSSSHHHHH!!!!"

THE ARGENTA PRESS

A small paper press office. A machine can be heard whirring away as well as the frantic movements of someone inside.

Clues:

- James McLeary saw Will Finley the night he was taken. Heard the crash as he was walking home at night.
  H | James heard what sounded like big wings
  H | Peter McCall sent various letters to be published. They never were.

- There is a hole in the side of the building about 6ft in diameter, boarded up. It breaks through to the office.
  H | The hole is broken inwards.

- In the office is a wooden desk, a turned-over chair, and the debris from the forced entry.
  H | A letter from Peter McCall - *Clue 2, Pg. 101*
  H | Grey dust mixed in with the debris.

Environment Adjectives
Chaotic, Cramped, Dirty, Fast, Loud, Overwhelming

James is confused and overwhelmed.

"Please find Mr. Finley…"

If this is a character's first time seeing the damage caused by the creature, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence- Whatever did this was incredibly powerful. The ideas of what it could be swirl in your head.
Decrease Spirit Save.

ARGENTA UNIVERSITY

A small but impressive campus made of black stone located on the north-east side of Argenta. Students can be seen walking between classes. There is a noticeable increase in security.

Environment Adjectives
Art Deco, Clean, Claustrophobic, Impressive, Looming, Modern, New

Clues:

- President Justin Loom is in his office at the administration building.
  H | Justin Loom hated Peter McCall
  H | The medical center was broken into. Only a couple things were stolen: gauze and generic reading glasses. Assumed to be a student prank.
  GM Note – Justin Loom is the next victim

Justin Loom is smug. He puts on an air of superiority but feigns sympathy well.

"Let's make this quick; I am very busy"

- The medical center is still under repair with a glass window being broken.
  H | Green fluorescent blood can be found on the floor.

If this is a character's first time seeing the green blood, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence- This thing is not natural…
Gain an Omen

The science building has 3 offices: Peter McCall's, Gregory Milton's, and Thomas Verne's.

- Peter McCall's office has been mostly cleaned out and his name has been etched off the door.
  H | A letter from Justin Loom threatening Peter McCall's employment - *Clue 3, Pg. 102*
  H | Avid Reader" award from the university

- Gregory Milton's office is still intact
  H | A receipt from the Argenta Library for "The Origin of Species." It is not in the office.

- Thomas Verne's office has a note posted on the door "Gone Fishing. Back May 27th." He is the professor of geology.
  H | Thomas Verne can identify the grey dust as being from stone used in the original construction of Argenta before the mine.
  GM Note – If players are struggling, have Verne mention the Well specifically.

Thomas Verne is happy-go-lucky. He is very excitable and more than happy to help anyone that asks.

"You know, a majority of people can't tell the difference between a rock and a mineral. Can you believe that!?"

ELIZABETH JORDAN'S HOUSE

An old large home at the edge of town embedded in the surrounding woods, isolated from everything else. It is slightly overgrown, but clearly still lived in and upkept.

Environment Adjectives
Decorated, Floral Patterns, Expensive, Old-Money, Peaceful, Perfumed

Clues:

- Elizabeth Jordan is almost always home and welcoming to strangers. She is wearing mourning attire that the characters would know is appropriate for 2-5 years after a spouse's death.
  H | The title of the book "Circles of Protection" was a mistranslation. The book should have been named "Circles of Communion." – '*Horrid Book.*'
  GM Note – Circles of Protection is the book McCall used to contact the entity that caused his change.
  H | The book "Wards of Scotland" actually details how to create protective circles.

- Elizabeth has an extensive collection of black spined books. It would take weeks to find one that is useful.

Elizabeth Jordan is overly friendly to everyone. She is happy to talk and gossip.

"I know it is strange to read such dark books, but after Harold died… well… A woman needs her hobbies."

A player could attempt to cast of spell from the Wards of Scotland book by passing an **Intellect Trait Roll**

GREGORY MILTON'S HOUSE

A nice home near the university. It is tall and made of wood. It appears to be overgrown with weeds and dust is visibly collecting on surfaces.

Environment Adjectives
Dusty, Quiet, Rustic

Clues:

- There is a hole in the side of the home about 6ft in diameter, boarded up. It breaks through to the office.
  H | The hole is broken inwards.

- In the office is a wooden desk, a turned-over chair, and the debris from the forced entry. The bookshelf has been cleared.
  H | A letter from Peter McCall - *Clue 4, Pg. 102*
  H | Grey dust mixed in with the debris.

If this is a character's first time seeing the damage caused by the creature, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence- Whatever did this was incredibly powerful. The ideas of what it could be swirl in your head.
Decrease Spirit Save

ISAAC WILHELM'S HOUSE

A mansion on the East side of Argenta. Stone statues and silver filigree decorate the home's lower exterior. Everything about the home radiates expense.

Environment Adjectives
Bright, Expensive, Fancy, Ostentatious, Silver-Plated, Spacious, Tacky

Clues:

- There is a hole in the side of the building on third story about 6ft in diameter, boarded up. It breaks through to the bedroom of Isaac Wilhelm.
  H | The hole is broken inwards.

- In the bedroom is a bed, turned over furniture, and a broken mirror. The wreckage from the event has not been cleaned.
  H | Large silver nuggets can be found throughout the room, once used as decoration.
  H | Grey dust mixed in with the debris.

- Jessica Wilhelm did not see the event (they have separate bedrooms) but did hear the commotion.
  H | Jessica stopped at the door to the bedroom, believing she heard voices.
  H | Due to fear, the mine has been abandoned by its workers. - '*I guess McCall got what he wanted*'
  H | Isaac openly mocked Peter McCall after he sent letters trying to close the Mine.
  GM Note – Consider moving the letter clue from the Silver Mine to here. - Clue 6, Pg. 104

When the characters see the damage, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence-
How did the thing get up to the third story?
Gain an Omen

Jessica is still distraught about the taking of her husband. She is desperate to have him back.

"How could anything happen to my Isaac?"

PETER McCALL'S HOUSE

A dilapidated and overgrown small home at the south-east corner of town. It was clearly a cheap house before the abandonment.

Environment Adjectives
Aged, Dark, Destroyed, Foul, Overgrown, Stained, Strange, Torn, Warped

Clues:

- There is a hole in the side of the home about 6ft in diameter.
  H | The hole is broken outward.
  GM Note - The creature emerged from the house rather than breaking in

- All mirrors have been removed from the home.
  GM Note - Peter McCall had a fear of silver

- In the bedroom is a newspaper article clipping from the Argenta press criticizing McCall. - *Clue 5, Pg. 103*
  H | The article was written by Will Finley

- The bookshelves have been cleared of most books. Dictionaries, thesauruses, and encyclopedias are all that remain.
  GM Note – The creature reads books for entertainment

- In the main study where the hole is, a large circle drawn with chalk can be seen with strange sigils written along the edge. It appears to be fully intact.
  H | This room has been exposed to months of rain, yet the chalk has not been washed away.
  H | On the wall is a bronze placard: "Argenta University Reading Champion"
  H | The sigils around the circle are a pidgin language that crosses Latin with Sumerian.
  H | The sigils translate to: "Entity of the underworld, giver of wishes, commune with my blood to answer my prayers."
  GM Note – There is no grey dust.

If this is a character's first time seeing the damage caused by the creature, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence- Whatever did this was incredibly powerful. The ideas of what it could be swirl in your head.
Decrease Spirit Save

If someone attempts to copy the sigils, they might need to make a **Mind Save** with **Disadvantage.**
Suggested Consequence- The image of the sigils is burned into your memory.
Gain Condition: Compelled
*See **The Well***

Someone can attempt to recreate the sigil circle. Doing so could be a method of removing the creature, either sealing it away, killing it, or banishing it to hell.

PHIL CARTER'S HOUSE

A two-story home on the lake shore. The home is built in the middle of a meadow with no other houses in sight. There is a boat house 50 yards from the house.

Environment Adjectives
Calm, Peaceful, Simple, Wet

Clues:

- There is no hole in the house or lake house.

- Sue Carter is the only child of Phil Carter. She is a young woman in her 20s wearing handmade clothing.
  H | Sue's mother died when she was a baby.
  H | Sue heard gunshot the night her father went missing.
  H | Sue's father told her to stay inside and not look out the window the night he disappeared. He said that it was going to be a "dark night."
  H | Sue spits at the name "Peter McCall." She says that he threatened their livelihood by spreading rumors about the lake.

Sue is independent and tough. She is frustrated that the police have not been helpful and does not like talking to others. Even though her face will never show it, she wants her dad back.

"You gonna find my pa?"

- The meadow stretches out in all directions.
  H | Near the boathouse is a shotgun shell
  H | In the middle of the meadow, green fluorescent blood stains the grass. Broken reading glasses can be found nearby.

If this is a characters first time seeing the green blood, they might need to make a **Spirit Save.**
Suggested Consequence-
This thing is not natural…
Gain an Omen

- Inside the boat house is the shotgun resting on a desk broken in half. Everything else is in place.

THE SILVER HAND INN

A homely inn next to the town center. The characters have complimentary rooms.

Environment Adjectives
Empty, Homely, Quaint

Clues:

- Merideth May runs and owns the Inn.
  H | Business has been struggling lately

Merideth is kind and always willing to offer advice should the characters ask.

"Always nice to see new faces in Argenta, especially as of late. Seems like no one wants to come here anymore."

SILVER MINES

A mining operation recently abandoned. No one is around, including any security. There is a small worker's building near the mine entrance. On the door is a torn "Help Wanted" poster.

Environment Adjectives
Abandoned, Crumbling, Dark, Decrepit, Maze-Like, Narrow, Silver, Vast

Clues:

- Inside the mine are tracks leading deeper into the earth. Items such as lanterns, pickaxes, and dynamite can be found inside.
  GM Note – There is no grey dust. The rock is black.
  GM Note - The mine is meant to be a red herring; however, if the players are convinced that it is the true lair of the monster, consider moving it here if it is late in the session.

- Inside the workers building is a main office.
  H | A letter from Peter McCall - *Clue 6, Pg. 104*

The trek through the mine can be physically demanding. Communicate this to the players, and, *if they want to go deeper,* they might need to make a **Body Save.**
Suggested Consequence- Rocks fall from the ceiling, hitting your back as you try and navigate the Mine
Lose Body Save

THE WELL

A pale stone well located at the heart of Argenta. A spool of rope still hangs over the opening even though it is no longer in use.

Environment Adjectives
Dusty, Grey, Pale

Clues:

- The well is a prominent landmark of the town square
  H | The well is the source of the grey dust.
  H | There is something moving down there.
  GM Note – This is where the creature is. Avoid the players making this connection early on.

Because it is vital for investigators to learn that the creature is hiding in the well, consider having one of them have dreams at night that hint towards its location. The dreams should be progressively more descriptive as the adventure goes on.

1st Dream: A circle of black
2nd Dream: An unfocused grey band appears around the circle
3rd Dream: The grey band comes into focus and appears to be brick

Once players realize that the creature is inside the well, if one of them has the Compelled condition, have them make a **Spirit Save** to resist going down the well.

THE WELL (INSIDE)

The descent into the well is approximately 40 meters deep into darkness. At the bottom, the well opens up into a reservoir about 20 ft in diameter. Very little light reaches down this deep and it is hard to see anything not immediately underneath the well tunnel. A thin layer of water covers the floor.

Clues:

- During the descent, claw marks can be seen along the sides of the well.
- Against the wall is a pile of books stacked high.
  H | The Origin of Species is one of the books.
- There is a stone with 5 skulls neatly arranged on top.
- A splashing can be heard. If a light source is used to try and identify the source, then the splashing amplifies as whatever it is tries to avoid the light.
  H | The thing making the noise is the creature
  GM Note – The creature is the thing that used to be Peter McCall

Creature Description-

The first thing seen is two eyes glowing an eerie yellow, staring directly at the intruder of its home. It is a humanoid figure with burnt black skin obscured by the darkness of the well reservoir. Its limbs are unnaturally long. Even crouched down, it stands taller than most men. Its hands end in claws. Leathery black wings can be seen folded against its back. For now, it just stands there… watching.

Environment Adjectives
Creepy, Dark, Quiet, Wet

The creature will not attack immediately. It has no desire to harm the characters but will if it believes they will reveal its hiding spot.

TIPS FOR EMBODYING THE CREATURE

Respond to the name Peter McCall

Talk to the skulls on the rock

Speak in a calm soft voice and switch to an intense roar without warning

Once discovered, be excited by the presence of another person, but **do not let them leave** after entering the well

Convey a great sense of justice. What you did was right and needed.

CLUE #1

Argenta Public Library Restricted Section Checkout List-

DATE	*NAME*	*TITLE*	*STATUS*
11/21/45	*Will Tims*	*Beliefs of Buddha*	*Returned*
3/7/1946	*Elizabeth Jordan*	*Myths of Egypt*	*Purchased*
4/18/1946	*Peter McCall*	*African Rituals of Harm*	*Returned*
10/18/1946	*Will Finley*	*Kama Sutra*	*Purchased*
1/14/1947	*Gregory Milton*	*Theory of Evolution*	*Purchased*
1/22/1947	*Peter McCall*	*Creatures Unknown to Man*	*Returned*
2/17/1947	*Elizabeth Jordan*	*Magic of the Roman Empire*	*Returned*
4/2/1947	*Peter McCall*	*The Psychology of Fear*	*Purchased*
4/29/1947	*Thomas Penn*	*History of the East*	*Returned*
11/10/1947	*Elizabeth Jordan*	*Circles of Protection*	*Returned*
2/12/1948	*Elizabeth Jordan*	*Artifacts of the Sea*	*Purchased*
5/30/1948	*Ernest Williams*	*Improve Theater Theory*	*Returned*
10/30/1948	*Peter McCall*	*Circles of Protection*	*Overdue*
10/30/1948	*Peter McCall*	*Metamorphosis of Bipeds*	*Overdue*
3/29/1949	*Elizabeth Jordan*	*Wards of Scotland*	*Purchased*

GM Note – If reading this to aloud to players, only focus on names they will recognize – Peter McCall, Gregory Milton, and Will Finley. Mention that a woman by the name "Elizabeth Jordan" appears several times.

CLUE #2

A letter sent to The Argenta Press-

Citizens of Argenta,

My name is Peter McCall - I am the Professor of Chemistry at Argenta University. It has come to my attention that Lake Luhaske, the source of Argenta's drinking water, is unsafe. The concentration of peptides is not in alignment with similar lakes, and the pH has historically been more basic than the local mineral make-up would typically allow for. This would usually indicate a larger than predicted population of marine life in the lake; however, upon investigating other possible reasons for these discrepancies, I came across the history of the Kavi'daga people which I fear may be related to the mysterious data.

The Kavi'daga were an ancient civilization that lived along the shores of Lake Luhaske. They were described as having "fish-like" features, such as bulbous eyes, rough and scaly skin, and webbing between their fingers. They were considered one of the most dangerous cultures of the Americas. Then they vanished. It is my belief that they did not leave the lake but instead completed their evolution and have since been resting on the lakebed. I fear that, with our constant fishing and consuming of the lake water, we might anger the Kavi'daga, and thus I implore you to write to the mayor urging him to switch our water supplies with a safer source and terminate fishing in the lake immediately. We must fear the consequences should we not take action.
-

For the consideration of publication in the Argenta Press at the earliest possibility

CLUE #3

A letter found in Peter McCall's office-

Peter McCall,

You are herby relieved of all teaching duties here at Argenta University until further notice. Dr. Verne will be taking over your classes for the Spring Semester. This will come with a pay deduction of $16,275 effective on January 1st.

While a reason does not need to be given for this action, I want you to know that this is due to the numerous complaints I have received from your students about your "lectures." I did not think I would have to remind you that you are the Professor of Chemistry, not the Professor of Dark Arts. While you cannot be fired due to your tenure, I will be expecting your resignation before the end of the summer. If I do not receive it by August, then funding to your research will also be cut along with another deduction to your salary. I suggest you begin looking for alternative work immediately.

Sincerely, Justin Loom, President of Argenta University

CLUE #4

A letter found in Gregory Milton's office-

Dear Gregory,

I hope this letter finds you well. I understand your current frustrations with my, as you would say, "fixations" with the supernatural; however, I implore you to consider our history together. I know what a loss of sanity looks like, and this is not it. My frustration is that no one else sees it. The world is not merely a product of our scientific observations but influenced by the beyond. We should respect it, and we should fear it. I am of more sound mind than any other, I need you to recognize that... I also need a favor. I need you to convince Wilhelm to halt mining operations. I have proof of a subterranean species living in the silver mines and I fear we are close to disturbing its slumber. Wilhelm will not listen to me after the last incident, but this new discovery explains my old readings! I never considered the possibility of a new animal in my interpretations. Please friend. See what I see. There are forces in this word that should frighten us.

Your Friend, Peter McCall

CLUE #5

A newspaper clipping found in Peter McCall's home-

A DULL REACTION TO CHEMITRY PROFESSOR'S MAD RAVINGS

Little hope remains for the future of Argenta University's chemistry studies. Professor Peter McCall, once famed for his work in the field of "electro plating," gave a talk this Wednesday at the Wilhelm Auditorium on campus. Great minds from across the nation came to our little town to hear his recent findings on what was initially claimed to be a breakthrough in UV radiation. The full name of the talk, only stated once the lecture had begun, was "the harsh effects of reflected UV emissions on neurotransmitters." To put that in layman's terms, his speech was on how the moon can cause violent and erratic behavior.

It is in the Professor's opinion that we should avoid going outside at night to reduce these effects and that repeat exposure could eventually cause a "permanent bout of madness." Perhaps Dr. McCall has experienced this phenomenon firsthand because the predominant theory amongst the crowd was that the professor had fallen into the realm of utter quackery. Numerous scientist jeered at the lecture and not a single person took what Dr. McCall had to say seriously. Even his colleague and once friend Dr. Milton could not defend the hypotheses presented.

I am trepidatious to diagnose a man I hardly know when I, myself, am not qualified to do so, but I think it is inarguable that Dr. McCall is experiencing an acute form of "shell shock." It is well known that he went over seas during the World War II to conduct research, and while he has never spoken of his work there publicly, many can attest that he did not return the same man. The once "man of science" has now fallen into raving about the horrors of the occult, monsters, and now the moon itself. Dr. McCall seems to be afraid of his own shadow and is convinced that we should fear it as well.

Published April 18th 1946

CLUE #6

A letter sent to the Silver Mine

Dear Miners of the Wilhelm Silver Mine,

My name is Professor Peter McCall. I am the head of the chemistry department at Argenta University. What I have to say may be disturbing, but I believe the silver in the mines to be toxic. "Cursed" is probably a more accurate term for it, unscientific it may sound. I believe that silver was placed into the hillside for a good reason, and us digging it up is near thievery. Now, I do not believe we have taken enough yet to be noticed, but if mining continues, especially with that loud dynamite, I fear what might be "awakened." If you have any questions, feel welcome to meet me in my office, Monday through Thursday between the hours of 3:00 and 6:00pm.

I urge each and every one of you to cease your work in the mine. Please do not let skepticism lead to our downfall. This is something we should fear.

-Sincerely, Peter McCall

THANK YOU FOR PLAYING!

A special thanks to…

Bojana Ivanic

My life partner that has been with me every step in this project. I could not have done any of this without her love and support.

Ben Lieberman

My best friend who introduced me to RPGs in high school and inspired the creation of Strange Times. If not for his friendship, I would have never discovered this hobby.

SECTION 6: SUPPORT

Thank you so much for checking out Strange Times! This is a passion project for me, and through a lot of hard work, it has become my favorite system. I will keep working on it until it until it is my favorite physical RPG book as well. That goal will eventually be reached, even if it is just me dragging the system forward for a decade, but if you would like to see a Strange Times book sitting on your shelf a little sooner than that, please consider supporting Strange Times. That can look like subscribing to the Strange Times RPG Patreon, giving feedback at StrangeTimesRPG.com, or creating and sharing your own content for the system. The more support I get, the sooner I can see Strange Times realized into a proper RPG.

Here is what will be added to Strange Times in the future:

Quality

- Horror illustrations throughout the book
- Professional formatting
- Better layout for included mysteries

Book Content

- Fully realized settings to play in with accompanying modules
- Campaign downtime mechanics
- More dynamic healing and improving options between episodes
- A fleshed out General Advice and Setting Creation section
- Full section on writing and running mysteries
- Random Tables
- Lists of Skills, Items, and Abilities
- Nightmarish concepts to include in games
- Curated list of RPGs, Books, Movies, and TV shows to pull inspiration from

Non-Book Content

- Pamphlet Mysteries
- Campaign and Setting Zines

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