

MONSTER OF THE WEEK



MICHAEL SANDS

A MONSTER LURKS IN THE SHADOWS...

Most people don't believe in monsters, but you know the truth. They're real, and it's your task to bring them down. This revised edition of *Monster of the Week* brings that adventure to life.

Monster of the Week is a standalone action-horror RPG for 3-5 people. Hunt high school beasts a la *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, travel the country to bring down unnatural creatures like the Winchester brothers of *Supernatural*, or head up the government investigation like Mulder and Scully. This book contains everything you need to tackle Bigfoot, collar a chupacabra, and drive away demons.

In this revised edition, you'll find:

- Character creation rules to bring your hunter to life and create a cohesive hunting team.
- Eight simple moves to investigate and deal with monsters.
- An easy-to-use system based on the popular *Apocalypse World* RPG.
- Thorough mystery-creation tools and two ready-to-play mysteries.
- New material including an introductory mystery; example monsters like Balkan vampires, ghouls, and spore trolls; and hunter types like the Crooked and the Spell-Slinger.

Grab the fireplace poker and open your spell book.

That monster's going down!



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MONSTER OF THE WEEK

REVISED EDITION, 2015



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*For Amanda and Zelda with love, for their support and tolerance
over the very long time this game was in development.*

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This is a game where people make up stories about wonderful,
terrible, impossible, glorious things. All the characters and
events portrayed in this work are fictional. Any resemblance to
real people, creatures of the night, psychic hunters hellbent on
ending the werewolf threat, or actual Mongolian death worms
is purely coincidental, but kinda hilarious.

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Thanks also to all the fans who have played and enjoyed *Monster of the Week* since the first printing, especially those of you who have created new hunter classes, mysteries, monsters, talked about your games, or shared it at conventions.

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PLAY-TESTERS ROLL OF HONOUR

Revised edition: Dennis McFaull, Stefan Tyler, Paul Wilson, Chris Fletcher, Sara Fletcher, and Nasia Alevizos, John Adamus, Matthew Aaron, Mark Miller, Sophie Legacé, Rick Neal, Michael Robins.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword to the Revised Edition.	9	Get Ready For Action	93
There Are Monsters Out There	11	Introductions	94
What You've Signed Up For	12	History	95
What You'll Need	13	How To Play	96
What You Should Read	14	Hunter Agenda	96
Structure	15	The Game Is A Conversation	96
Feedback	15	Moves	97
The Hunters	17	The Basic Moves	101
The First Session	18	Big Magic.	107
Extra Hunter Types	20	Fights	109
Just One Of Each	21	Unarmed Attacks And	
Making Your Hunter.	21	Improvised Weapons.	109
Team Concepts	22	Harm	110
Team Customisation.	22	Monsters and Harm	110
Example Team Concepts	23	Healing	111
Before You Get Started.	25	Resurrection	112
Moves	25	The Luck Counter.	113
The Ratings	27	When You Run Out Of Luck	113
The Playbooks	29	Gear	114
The Chosen.	30	Getting New Gear	114
The Crooked	35	Weapons.	114
The Divine	41	Armour	116
The Expert	46	Other Gear	117
The Flake	51	Gear Tags	117
The Initiate.	55	Custom Gear Moves.	117
The Monstrous	60	Leveling Up	118
The Mundane	66	End Of Session Experience	118
The Professional	70	Improvements	118
The Spell-Slinger	75	Advanced Improvements	120
The Spooky.	81	Advanced Moves	122
The Wronged	86	Summary: Hunter's	
		Session.	125
		The First Time Only	125
		Every Game	125

The Keeper127

What You Do.128

How It Will Play Out.128

It's About the Hunters, Not

The Mystery.129

Before Your First Game .130

Think About Style130

Get Into The Keeper Mindset130

The Keeper Agenda131

The Keeper Principles131

Creating Your First

Mystery132

An Example Mystery:

Mongolian Death

Worm Attack132

Preparing Your First Mystery.136

Mystery Countdowns146

Summary: First Mystery

Creation147

Introductory Mystery:

Dream Away

the Time149

Mystery concept150

Hook.150

Countdown150

Notes.151

Threats.152

The First Session . . .163

Hunter Creation.164

Introductions165

History.165

Mention How Things Work.165

Running The First

Mystery166

The Game Is A Conversation.166

Keeper Agenda166

The Keeper Principles167

Always Say170

Moves171

The Basic Keeper Moves . .172

Threat Moves176

The Basic

Hunter Moves.181

Act Under Pressure182

Help Out183

Investigate A Mystery184

Kick Some Ass188

Manipulate Someone190

Protect Someone193

Read A Bad Situation194

Use Magic195

Big Magic197

Playbook Moves199

Actions Not Covered By A

Move199

On With The

Mystery!201

Start-Of-Mystery Moves . . .202

The Teaser.202

Beginning the Investigation.203

Use The Countdown.205

I'm Not Prepared For This .205

It Always Comes To A Fight .206

Harm.212

Healing215

An Example Fight216

End of the First Session .223

Getting Ready For Next Time.223

Summary: Keeper's First

Session.225



Between Game Sessions: Arcs	227
Arcs	228
Building Arcs	228
The Basic Concept	229
Arc Threats	230
Arc Countdowns	232
Arc Templates	233
Ancient Evil Rising.	233
The Nemesis	234
The End of Days	235
Corruption	236
Arc Custom Moves	237
Summary: Arc Creation .	237

Between Game Sessions: Subsequent Mysteries	239
Summary:	
Mystery Creation . .	240
Basic Concept.	241
The Hook	242
The Threats	243
The Countdown	260
Messing With The Formula .	264
Sessions and Mysteries	266
Mystery Letters.	267
Running Subsequent Mysteries	270
At the Beginning of Each	
Session.	270
Playing the Mystery	270
At the End of Each Session .	271
Summary: Keeper's Session. .	271

Mystery:	
Damn Dirty Apes. . .273	
Requirements.	274
Hook.	274
Countdown	274
Notes.	275
Threats.	276

As the Game Goes On	287
At the End of Each	
Mystery	288
Checking On Your Arcs .	289
Building Mythology	289
Endgame	290
Leveling Up and	
Improvements	290
Running Out Of Luck	290
Dealing With Arcs	291
Other Things To Consider .	291
How To End A Game	291
One-Shot Games	292
One-Shot Hunters	292
One-Shot Mystery Creation .	293
One-Shot Mystery Play	293
Player Numbers	294

Customising Your Game	295
Custom Moves.	296
Defining The Move.	296
Triggering The Custom Move	297
Move Types	297
Example Custom Moves. . . .	297
Custom Threats	301
Legacy Experience Rules.	301
Sharing The Keeper	
Duties	302
Custom Playbooks	302
A Whole New Game . . .	305

Inspiration.	307
Television	307
Film	307
Novels	308
Comics.	308
Games	308

Index	309
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FOREWORD

TO THE REVISED EDITION

Hi there! My name's Fred, and I'm a bit late to the party.

I've always loved the urban fantasy genre, and I've been particularly happy to see it take over primetime with shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Supernatural*, and *Sleepy Hollow*. Yet somehow the first edition of *Monster of the Week*—a game modeled after shows like those—flew under my radar.

But when I finally did find *Monster of the Week*, man, did it bite me hard: a system driven by Apocalypse Engine sexiness, a genre I go ape for, and smart choices made at every turn in the text and design. The game had it all. I was particularly taken by its clarity: this is a game that's easy to read, learn, and put into practice.

As is my way, I threw a lot of enthusiasm at the game. I started a (still-ongoing) campaign inspired in part by Harry Connolly's *Twenty Palaces* series, and I wrote up a new playbook based on a particular wizard of my acquaintance (you'll find it in this book as the Spell-Slinger).

I also looked into how this game was getting out into the world, because, man, it deserves to go far. Turns out, it wasn't getting out into the world in all the ways it could—it wasn't in retail distribution, and physical copies largely only happened via print on demand.

I wanted to help bring *Monster of the Week* to a broader audience, so I asked Michael Sands, the author, if he'd be interested in partnering with Evil Hat to get the game out to retail. Michael was on board with the idea. And he had a few revisions in mind, too. And I had some ideas about improving the layout and increasing the amount of art ... and several months later you're reading the result: a game that's as great as it ever was, and better in some ways than ever before.

I can't wait to hear how it works at your table! You're in for a treat.

— Fred Hicks





THERE ARE MONSTERS OUT THERE

Most people don't believe in monsters, but they're real. When someone finds out that monsters are real, it's usually just before they get eaten.

But some people are mean enough, smart enough, crazy enough, or hurt enough, that they live.

And some of those survivors go on a crusade against the monsters.

That's you.

It could be that you make a stand and defend your hometown from everything evil that comes there.

It could be that you take to the road and go hunt them down, wherever you can find them.

It could be that you have magic powers to put you on an even footing, or that your name came up in prophecies thousands of years ago.

The one sure thing is that you aren't gonna go back to your old safe life.

WHAT YOU'VE SIGNED UP FOR

When you play this game, most of you will create hunters, people who have devoted their lives to killing monsters.

One player will be the Keeper (that's short for "Keeper of Monsters and Mysteries"). The Keeper will be in charge of:

- designing monsters and mysteries for the hunters to deal with
- bringing the world to life
- portraying the monsters and people the hunters meet.

The rest of you will decide how the hunters work together to investigate the weird situations they find, slay the monsters causing the trouble, and save the people in danger.

Your hunters aren't normal people; you're not even normal *monster hunters*. You are the ones who stand out, larger than life and twice as badass. You can change the world—save it, destroy it, or alter it forever. One way or another, you *will* make a difference.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

The game works best with three to five people, with one of you acting as Keeper. It works with more or less people, too, but there will be a corresponding change to how much time each person gets in the spotlight.

Make sure you have:

- copies of the hunter playbooks (each of these is a rules reference and record sheet for your hunter)
- enough hunter reference sheets to go round
- a Keeper reference sheet
- one mystery sheet for the Keeper, or an introductory mystery to play (there's one on page 149)
- pencils and note paper for everyone
- a pair of normal six-sided dice for each hunter (the Keeper won't need dice).

*The files you need can be downloaded from here:
<http://www.evilhat.com/home/monster-of-the-week/>
 or from <http://genericgames.co.nz>.*

Also handy, mostly for the Keeper, is a big list of names that you can use for the characters that will be part of the game (I like to use the Story Games Names Project book, but a phone book or the cast and crew list of a film work just as well). If you want to set your adventures in real places you'll find a source of maps, such as Google Maps, will also be useful.

It's a good idea to have drinks and snacks for everyone, too.

A mystery is one situation for the hunters to deal with—like a typical monster of the week episode on *Supernatural*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or *The X-Files*. Each time you sit down to play expect to get through a single mystery in about 2-4 hours. Sometimes it might stretch out longer, so that the mystery is split like a two-part episode instead. The first game will take a little longer because you have to make up your hunters at the beginning.

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ

I've written the rulebook in the order that you'll need as you play, with all the hunters' information first and then the Keeper's section after.

If you want to skip that and just hit the basics, here's some suggestions:

- If you're going to be Keeper, focus on the First Session section (page 163): that covers what you need to prepare and what to do for the first game. It's best to know the hunters' basic moves (page 181) and playbooks (from page 29), at least in passing
- If you're going to play a hunter, read the hunter playbooks (from page 29), and about moves (page 101) and ratings (page 27). Most important is to pick which hunter type(s) you want to play.
- If you've played *Apocalypse World* (or another game based on those rules, such as *Monsterhearts* or *Dungeon World*) then plenty here will be familiar. Check out ratings (stats in *Apocalypse World*) (page 27), playbooks (page 29), and basic moves (page 101) to get a sense of the main differences. Luck is new (page 113). The Keeper's (MC in *Apocalypse World*) agenda and principles (page 131), threats (page 137), and moves (page 172) are different, and mysteries (page 132 & page 239) and arcs (page 227) take the place of fronts.
- If you're an experienced roleplayer who hasn't played *Apocalypse World* (the game these rules are adapted from), check out the hunter playbooks (page 29) and the moves (page 101) and ratings (page 27). From there everything else should fall into place.
- If you want to run a game right away, skim "Running the First Mystery" (page 166) and "On With the Mystery" (page 201) and then read through "Dream Away the Time" on page 149. That should be enough to get you up and running. You can come back for more detail later.

STRUCTURE

This book is split into two main sections, *The Hunters* and *The Keeper*. Each section contains the rules for the corresponding player role. It's helpful for the Keeper to be familiar with how the rules work for hunters as well as for their own Keeper responsibilities. There's also no reason for other players to avoid the Keeper's section (there are no spoilers there, except in the example mysteries) if you want another perspective on the rules.

FEEDBACK

If you have some feedback or just want to talk about the game, you can send me email at mike@genericgames.co.nz, or post at the Monster of the Week forum at apocalypse-world.com/forums/index.php?board=33.0

If you want to keep up with Monster of the Week news and updates, you can watch the game website at <http://www.evilhat.com/home/monster-of-the-week/> or <http://genericgames.co.nz> or follow @MotW_rpg on Twitter.





THE HUNTERS

So, you're going to be a monster hunter. I'll take you through what happens the first time you sit down to play: creating hunters, coming up with a team history, and getting on with investigating mysteries and slaying some monsters.

It's written to tell you what you need to know in the order you'll need it (with a few digressions along the way).

THE FIRST SESSION

In the first session, you'll create your hunters and investigate your first mystery.

The first step is to decide if the group wants to pick a team concept (page 22). That's the reason you are a team, for example, "We all work for a secret monster hunting agency" or "We defend our home town against the monsters that keep coming here." The Keeper may have some suggestions based on what they've been planning.

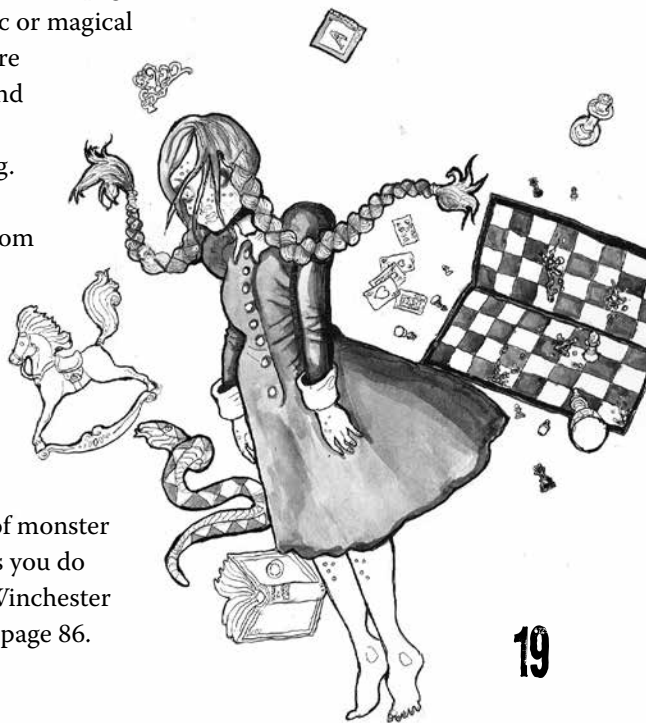
If you have a team concept that needs certain hunter types, allocate those first.

If you don't have a team concept, just let everyone pick a playbook (that's your hunter rules and record sheet) and see what the team looks like. You'll work out why they are together as you create your hunters, establish their history with each other, and as you play the game.

The hunter types are:

- **The Chosen:** a once-ordinary person who discovered they have a special destiny, and who has been given the power to accomplish it. The Chosen is good in a fight, with some weird powers. E.g. Buffy from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. See page 30.
- **The Crooked:** a criminal turned monster hunter, haunted by their past and enemies. The Crooked is good in social situations and has a lot of contacts. E.g. Anna Valmont from *The Dresden Files*, Peter Bishop from *Fringe*. See page 35.
- **The Divine:** an agent of a higher power, with a mission to fulfill. The Divine is very tough and has been granted holy powers. E.g. Castiel from *Supernatural*; Michael Carpenter from *The Dresden Files*. See page 41.
- **The Expert:** the hunter who knows all about monsters and magic. The Expert knows a lot of hidden secrets and how to find out more, and also has a well-supplied base to work from. E.g. Bobby Singer from *Supernatural*; Rupert Giles from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. See page 46.
- **The Flake:** a conspiracy theorist. The Flake is great at finding things out and seeing how the events of separate mysteries are connected. E.g. Agent Mulder or the Lone Gunmen from *The X-Files*. See page 51.

- **The Initiate:** a member of an ancient monster-slaying Sect, trained to fight and use magic. The Initiate is good with magic, and their Sect provides help (and sometimes problems). E.g. The Wardens from *The Dresden Files*; Annelise from the *Twenty Palaces* series. See page 55.
- **The Monstrous:** a monster fighting for the good guys. The Monstrous is very weird, and can have a variety of different powers based on what monster breed they are. E.g. Angel from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*; Bill Compton from *True Blood* (page 60).
- **The Mundane:** just a normal regular person, especially good at dealing with regular people you meet and have to save, and at getting captured by monsters (which can be more useful than you might expect). E.g. Xander or Cordelia from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. See page 66.
- **The Professional:** you work for an agency that hunts monsters. The Professional is good in a fight, and a good team player. E.g. Riley and the Initiative from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; Olivia Dunham from *Fringe*. See page 70.
- **The Spell-slinger:** a trained wizard, wielding powerful magic in their crusade against evil. The Spell-slinger's arcane training gives them an advantage when dealing with eldritch secrets. E.g. Harry Dresden from *The Dresden Files*; Willow from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, in the later seasons. See page 75.
- **The Spooky:** has psychic or magical powers. These powers are strange and sinister ... and not completely under the Spooky's control. E.g. Sam Winchester from *Supernatural*; Willow from earlier seasons of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. See page 81.
- **The Wronged:** revenge-driven, and really tough. The Wronged is all about killing a specific breed of monster and protecting others as you do it. E.g. Dean and John Winchester from *Supernatural*. See page 86.



EXTRA HUNTER TYPES

There are some extra playbooks out there, some official and others fan-made. You can find advice on making your own on page 302.

The currently available hunters include:

- **The Action Scientist.** Just like it says, a scientist ready for action and dealing with monsters. Directly inspired by *Atomic Robo*.
- **The Big Game Hunter.** An expert hunter who has decided to hunt monsters for the thrill of the chase rather than the need to protect.
- **The Constructed.** A built being, now free of its maker. Inspired by Frankenstein's monster.
- **The Exile.** A monster hunter from the past who has been transported to the present day.
- **The Hard Case.** The toughest, hardest to kill fighter. E.g. Ray Lilly from the *Twenty Palaces* series or Owen Pitt from the *Monster Hunter International* series.
- **The Luchador.** A heroic masked wrestler, fighting to protect the innocent between matches.
- **The Mad Scientist.** A crazy scientist who has seen the error of their ways and is now working for good. So they say, anyhow.
- **The Meddling Kid.** Jinkies! I think there's something more going on here, and old man Smithers seems to be involved! E.g. Scooby-doo and the Scooby gang.
- **The Sidekick.** They worship another hunter on the team, and is good at helping them out. And one day, they'll be just as good as their hero. E.g. Garth from *Supernatural*.
- **The Snoop.** A journalist looking for the real story behind weird events. Great at finding stuff out, terrible at fighting. E.g. The Ghostfacers from *Supernatural*.
- **The Summoned.** A creature summoned to end the world but who has decided they do not want to do that. Lots of weird powers, dangerous, and hard to kill. E.g. *Hellboy*.

Most of these are available on the *Monster of the Week* website.



JUST ONE OF EACH

Only one hunter of each type is allowed at the same time in any game. That's because you're not just *one of* that type of hunter: you're the archetype. There may be a whole agency of professional monster hunters, but only one of them is *The Professional*.

MAKING YOUR HUNTER

After you've all picked your hunter types, you'll spend about 20-30 minutes of the first session defining their abilities and establishing the relationships in your team. Follow the instructions in your playbook to create your hunter. You don't need to spend too long deciding on each option in the playbook—if you make any choices you regret, you can always revise them after the first session.

When you get to the 'Introductions' section, wait until everyone catches up. The Keeper will guide everyone as you make up your hunters, so ask them if you have any questions (For the Keeper, there are instructions on how to guide this process in 'The First Session' section on page 163).

TEAM CONCEPTS

It's good to work out why the hunters formed their team. You may have decided on this already. If not, have a quick discussion and see if you come up with an idea—even if it's just a vague one.

The combination of playbooks you've selected may demand a particular team concept. Or it may seem like two (or more) teams of hunters have been mashed together (for instance, a family and a government agency)—in which case, it's good to ask yourselves why they're co-operating.

If nobody has any ideas, you can either work it out later on (after you have all made your hunters, and figured out your history together), or you can accept that this is a random collection of hunters: sometimes it's okay to let things develop in play.

Don't set your concept in stone yet. You'll want to revise it as you make up your hunters, based on the choices you make along the way.

TEAM CUSTOMISATION

Sometimes your team concept will require additional stuff on top of the normal character creation options. This is stuff that enables the game to run smoothly. If you find yourselves saying, "It doesn't make sense that we don't have this," and everyone agrees, then it's a good candidate for customisation.

Decide as a group if any changes are needed, and what they will be. You can work these out at any point: it might come up right away when you pick your concept, or you might think of it later on.

Your concept might require:

- Equipment that isn't in your playbook options. For example: your team concept has the hunters always on the move, but none of your playbooks include transport in the gear section. You can decide the team has a van to travel in.
- Something that can be written up as a custom move (page 296). For example: the team concept is that you are all members of a secret organisation, so everyone starts with a version of the Professional's **deal with the Agency** move (page 72).
- New options when you level up (page 118). For example: the team concept has a special mystical artifact for each hunter, but these artifacts' powers are not initially available. Each hunter may choose to unlock one of their artifact's powers when they level up.

EXAMPLE TEAM CONCEPTS

Here are some example team concepts and the playbooks that work with them. Use them as they are, or as inspiration for your own ideas.

SLAYER AND ENTOURAGE

There's a chosen one, and their support group. Hopefully, together you'll be able to save the world.

The team has a Chosen, who is at the centre of things. An Expert, Initiate, or Spell-slinger would make a good mentor. A Mundane or Flake could be a friend of the Chosen. A Divine, Monstrous, or Spooky gives the team some magical powers to draw on.

THE UNEXPLAINED CASES TEAM

The Agency needs a team to handle all the weird stuff regular agents don't understand. That's you: the Unexplained Cases Team. You check out the mysterious disappearances, the fungus monsters, the alien abductions, the vampires and everything else the regular agents can't handle.

This team concept requires a Professional. A Flake, Mundane, Expert, Spooky, and Wronged would all be good choices to fill out the team's skill profile, while a Crooked might have some useful contacts.

The Professional's Agency will employ the whole team. As a customisation, allow any of the hunters to take the Professional's **deal with the Agency** move as a leveling up option (page 72). Until then, they're just consultants, contractors, or temps.



THE ORDER

You are all members of an ancient order of monster slayers.

You'll need an Initiate. Everyone else makes up the team the Initiate commands: the Spooky, Expert, Mundane, Flake, Crooked, or Chosen all work well here.

Everyone is a member of the Order, but initially only the Initiate will have to deal with your superiors. As a customisation, anyone can take the Initiate move for **when you are in good standing with the Sect** as a leveling up option (page 56). Anyone may also substitute one of the Initiate's old-fashioned weapons (page 57) for a regular weapon choice.

ROAD-TRIPPING HUNTER FAMILY

Your family's trade is hunting monsters. The nomadic life, drifting into town just long enough to find and slay whatever is causing trouble... well, it suits some of you just fine. Others, not so much.

This team concept suits the Wronged, Spooky, Divine, Expert, Flake, and Chosen best. A Monstrous could fit in too, but not comfortably. All the others except the Professional could round out the team. If there's an Initiate, maybe the Sect is comprised of certain bloodlines, so everyone in the family is a member.

You are all family, or as good as family.

Oh, and make sure you have a cool car. Or a sensible anonymous car, if that's your thing. If none of the hunters has a vehicle, you can decide the team gets one as a customisation.

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Before you get started, you need to know about two game concepts: moves and ratings.

The hunter playbooks mention some other terms that I haven't introduced yet. Don't worry about those, you don't need to understand them just now. If you want to find out more, read the "How to Play" section starting at page 96.

MOVES

Moves cover situations when the game rules step in to help you determine what happens. If your hunter wants to do something that any normal person can do, then it just happens. Moves are used to determine what happens in cases where your hunter tries to do:

- something normal people can't do, such as casting a magic spell
- something dangerous, such as getting into a fight with a monster
- something that's more exciting if we don't just decide the outcome on our own. For example, seeing if your hunter's lie to a monster-attack victim has any repercussions.

Each move is triggered when a particular situation happens in the game. Look at when the move says it happens, and follow the instructions when you do it.

*For example, you need to use the move **protect someone** to save another hunter from a bone puppet's attack. The move says **when you protect someone** from harm, roll +Cool, so you roll the dice and get a two and a five. That's seven, plus your hunter has Cool +1 for a total of eight. The move's instructions say that on a 7-9, you protect the target okay but you may suffer some or all of the harm instead.*

After you've recognised the move's trigger, it will tell you what to do next. Moves can:

- ask you to roll the dice, with the results of the roll determining what happens next
- grant you a special ability that you can use whenever you want
- give you a bonus to certain rolls
- give you extra options to use in certain situations.



THE HUNTER BASIC MOVES

All the hunters have a set of moves that allow them to investigate and deal with monsters. These are called the “basic moves” (page 101). There are eight basic moves:

- **Act Under Pressure**, used for any difficult or dangerous action that isn’t covered by another move.
- **Help Out**, used to help another hunter do something. If you succeed, you’ll give them a bonus on their task.
- **Investigate a Mystery**, used to work out what kind of monster you are dealing with, what it can do, and what it’s planning.
- **Kick Some Ass**, used for fighting. Fighting monsters, mainly.
- **Manipulate Someone**, used to try and get someone to do something for you, after you give them some kind of reason.
- **Protect Someone**, used to save someone from danger.
- **Read a Bad Situation**, used to work out what dangers are immediately threatening you. For instance, if you think you are walking into a trap, or want to do some tactical analysis.
- **Use Magic**, used to cast magic spells or use enchanted items.

In addition, each hunter playbook has its own set of moves. These are called “playbook moves.”

THE RATINGS

Your hunter has ratings that describe how good they are in certain areas that are important when hunting monsters. The ratings add to (or subtract from) your dice total when you roll for a move.

- **Cool** is how calm and collected you are. It is added to your die roll for the **act under pressure** and **help out** basic moves.
- **Tough** is how strong and mean you are in a fight. It is added to your die roll for the **kick some ass** and **protect someone** basic moves.
- **Charm** is how pleasant and persuasive you are. It is added to your die roll for the **manipulate someone** basic move.
- **Sharp** is how observant you are. It is added to your die roll for the **investigate a mystery** and **read a bad situation** basic moves.
- **Weird** is how attuned to the supernatural you are. It is added to your die roll for the **use magic** basic move.

The ratings range from -1 to +3.

- -1 is bad
- 0 is average
- +1 is good
- +2 is really good
- +3 is phenomenal





THE PLAYBOOKS

Next up are the hunter playbooks, which define how to create your hunter and what abilities each hunter can use.

THE CHOSEN

Your birth was prophesied. You are the Chosen One, and with your abilities you can save the world. If you fail, all will be destroyed. It all rests on you. Only you.

To make your Chosen, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, fate, moves, gear, and your special weapon. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.



LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, boy, girl, androgynous.
- Fresh face, haggard face, young face, haunted face, hopeful face, controlled face.
- Preppy clothes, casual wear, urban wear, normal clothes, neat clothes, street wear.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm+2, Cool-1, Sharp+1, Tough+2, Weird-1
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+2, Sharp+1, Tough+2, Weird-1
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool+2, Sharp+1, Tough+1, Weird-1
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+1, Sharp+2, Tough-1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool+2, Sharp-1, Tough-1, Weird+2

FATE

You get to decide what sort of fate is in store for you. Pick how you found out about your fate, from the list below.

How You Found Out (pick one):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nightmares and visions | <input type="checkbox"/> Attacked by monsters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some weirdo told you | <input type="checkbox"/> Trained from birth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> An ancient cult found you | <input type="checkbox"/> You found the prophecy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sought out by your nemesis | |

Then pick two heroic and two doom tags for your fate from the lists below. This is how your fate will unfold. It's okay to pick contradictory tags: that means your fate is pulling you both ways.

Whenever you mark off a point of Luck, the Keeper will throw something from your fate at you.

Heroic (pick two):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sacrifice | <input type="checkbox"/> A normal life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> You are the Champion | <input type="checkbox"/> True love |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visions | <input type="checkbox"/> You can save the world |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secret training | <input type="checkbox"/> Hidden allies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magical powers | <input type="checkbox"/> The end of monsters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mystical inheritance | <input type="checkbox"/> Divine help |

Doom (pick two):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death | <input type="checkbox"/> Treachery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> You can't save everyone | <input type="checkbox"/> Doubt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impossible love | <input type="checkbox"/> Sympathy with the enemy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Failure | <input type="checkbox"/> Damnation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A nemesis | <input type="checkbox"/> Hosts of monsters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No normal life | <input type="checkbox"/> The end of days |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of loved ones | <input type="checkbox"/> The source of Evil |

MOVES

You get all of the basic moves, plus three Chosen moves.

You get these two:

- **Destiny's Plaything:** At the beginning of each mystery, roll +Weird to **see what is revealed about your immediate future**. On a 10+, the Keeper will reveal a useful detail about the coming mystery. On a 7-9 you get a vague hint about it. On a miss, something bad is going to happen to you.
- **I'm Here For A Reason:** There's something you are destined to do. Work out the details with the Keeper, based on your fate. You cannot die until it comes to pass. **If you die in play**, then you must spend a Luck point. You will then, somehow, recover or be returned to life. Once your task is done (or you use up all your Luck), all bets are off.

Then pick one of these:

- **The Big Entrance:** When **you make a showy entrance into a dangerous situation**, roll +Cool. On 10+ everyone stops to watch and listen until you finish your opening speech. On a 7-9, you pick one person or monster to stop, watch and listen until you finish talking. On a miss, you're marked as the biggest threat by all enemies who are present.
- **Devastating:** When **you inflict harm**, you may inflict +1 harm.
- **Dutiful:** When your fate rears its ugly head, and **you act in accordance with any of your fate tags** (either heroic or doom) then mark experience. If it's a heroic tag, take +1 forward.
- **Invincible:** You always count as having 2-armour. This doesn't stack with other protection.
- **Resilience:** You heal faster than normal people. Any time your harm gets healed, heal an extra point. Additionally, your wounds count as 1-harm less for the purpose of the Keeper's harm moves.

GEAR

You can have protective gear worth 1-armour, if you want it.

You have a special weapon you are destined to wield.

YOUR SPECIAL WEAPON

Design your weapon by choosing a form and three business-end options (which are added to the base tags), and a material. For example, if you want a magic sword you could choose the following: handle + blade + long + magic.

Form (choose 1):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> staff (1-harm hand/close) | <input type="checkbox"/> handle (1-harm hand balanced) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> haft (2-harm hand heavy) | <input type="checkbox"/> chain (1-harm hand area) |

Business-end (choose 3 options):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> artifact (add the “magic” tag) | <input type="checkbox"/> heavy (+1 harm) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spikes (+1 harm, add the “messy” tag) | <input type="checkbox"/> long (add the “close” tag) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> blade (+1 harm) | <input type="checkbox"/> throwable (add the “close” tag) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> chain (add the “area” tag) |

Material (choose 1):

Finally, pick what material the business-end is made from: add “steel,” “cold iron,” “silver,” “wood,” “stone,” “bone,” “teeth,” “obsidian,” or anything else you want.

Material: _____

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Chosen by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. On your turn, pick one of these for each other hunter:

- You are close blood relations. Ask them exactly how close.
- They are destined to be your mentor. Tell them how this was revealed.
- Your best friend in the world, who you trust totally.
- A rival at first, but you came to a working arrangement.
- Romantic entanglement, or fated to be romantically entangled.
- Just friends, from school or work or something. Ask them what.
- They could have been the Chosen One instead of you, but they failed some trial. Tell them how they failed.
- You saved their life, back when they didn't know monsters were real. Tell them what you saved them from.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Chosen special: When you spend a point of Luck, the Keeper will bring your fate into play.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UP

Experience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Chosen move |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gain an ally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Tough, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Weird, max +3 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Chosen move | |

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ Delete one of your Doom tags, and (optionally) one of your Heroic tags. You have changed that aspect of your destiny.

THE CROOKED

"Yeah, I've been around the block. A bit of this, a bit of that. When I came across the secret underworld of monsters and magic... well... it wasn't so different from the underworld I already knew. It was easy to find an angle, just like before."

To make your Crooked, pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, background, heat, underworld, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.



LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, concealed.
- Hard eyes, friendly eyes, watchful eyes, smiling eyes, calculating eyes.
- Street wear, tailored suit, cheap suit, tracksuit, nondescript clothes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm +1, Cool +1, Sharp +2, Tough 0, Weird -1
- ☐ Charm -1, Cool +1, Sharp +1, Tough +2, Weird 0
- ☐ Charm -1, Cool +2, Sharp +2, Tough 0, Weird -1
- ☐ Charm +2, Cool +1, Sharp +1, Tough 0, Weird -1
- ☐ Charm +2, Cool 0, Sharp +1, Tough -1, Weird +1

BACKGROUND

You worked a less-than-legal job before you became a monster hunter. What did you do?

- ☐ **Hoodlum.** You can use Tough instead of Charm to **manipulate someone** with threats of violence.
- ☐ **Burglar.** When you **break into a secure location**, roll +Sharp. On a 10+ pick three, on a 7-9 pick two: you get in undetected, you get out undetected, you don't leave a mess, you find what you were after.
- ☐ **Grifter.** When you are about to **manipulate someone**, you can ask the Keeper "What will convince this person to do what I want?" The Keeper must answer honestly, but not necessarily completely.
- ☐ **Fixer.** If you **need to buy something, sell something, or hire someone**, roll +Charm. On a 10+ you know just the person who will be interested. On a 7-9 you know the only person who can do it, but there's a complication. Pick one: you owe them; they screwed you over; you screwed them over. On a miss, the only person who can help is someone who absolutely hates you.
- ☐ **Assassin.** When you take your first shot at an unsuspecting target, do +2 Harm.
- ☐ **Charlatan.** When you want people to think you are using magic, roll +Cool. On a 10 or more, your audience is amazed and fooled by your illusion. On a 7-9 you tripped up a couple of times, maybe someone will notice. You may also **manipulate people** with fortune telling. When you do that, ask "What are they hoping for right now?" as a free question (even on a miss).
- ☐ **Pickpocket.** When you **steal something small**, roll +Charm. On a 10 or more, you get it and they didn't notice you taking it. On a 7-9 either you don't grab it, you grab the wrong thing, or they remember you later: your choice.

HEAT

You didn't get here without making enemies. Pick at least two of these and name the people involved:

- ☐ A police detective, _____, has made it a personal goal to put you away.
- ☐ You have a rival from your background, _____, who never misses a chance to screw you over.
- ☐ You pissed off a well-connected criminal, _____, and they'll do whatever they can to destroy you.
- ☐ _____ is someone with special powers, a person or monster, who you took advantage of.
- ☐ _____ is an old partner you betrayed in the middle of a job.

UNDERWORLD

Pick how you discovered about the real underworld. Keep this in mind when you select your moves in the next section, so that everything fits together.

- ☐ The target of a job was a dangerous creature. Pick one: vampire, werewolf, troll, reptiloid.
- ☐ You worked with someone who was more than they seemed. Pick one: sorcerer, demon, faerie, psychic.
- ☐ You were hired by something weird. Pick one: immortal, god, outsider, witch.
- ☐ Things went south on a job—including, but not limited to, running into (choose one): a horde of goblins, a hunger of ghouls, a dream-eater, a salamander.



MOVES

You get all the basic moves, and two Crooked moves:

- ☐ **Artifact:** You ‘found’ a magical artifact with handy powers, and kept it. Pick one: Protective amulet (1-armour magic recharge), Lucky charm (may be used as a Luck point, once only), Grimoire (studying the book gives +1 forward to **use magic**), Skeleton key (opens any magically sealed lock), Imp stone (A weak demon is bound to serve the holder. The imp must be summoned with the **use magic** move).
- ☐ **Crew:** You have a regular crew, a team of three or four people who will help you out with pretty much anything. They count as a team (see page 119).
- ☐ **Deal with the Devil:** You sold your soul to the Devil. Pick one or two things you got out of the deal: wealth, fame, youth, sensual gratification, skill (add +1 to two ratings). Payment is due either when you die, in six months (if you picked two things) or otherwise in a year.
- ☐ **Friends on the Force:** You know a few cops who can be persuaded to look the other way, or do you a favour, for certain considerations. You can **act under pressure** to get in touch with them when you need to divert any law enforcement attention. There will be a cost, although maybe not right now.
- ☐ **Made:** You’re “made” in a gang. Name the gang and describe how their operations tie into your background. You can call on gang members to help you out, but they’ll expect to be paid. Your bosses will have requests for you now and again, but you’ll be paid. Minor trouble will be overlooked, but you better not screw over any other made gangsters.\
- ☐ **Driver:** You have +1 ongoing while driving, plus you can hotwire anything (the older it is, the fewer tools you need to do it). You also own two handy, widely-available vehicles (perhaps a sports-car and a van).
- ☐ **Home Ground:** Your crew made a point of keeping the locals happy - keeping them safe, ensuring things always went down okay. When you’re back in your old neighbourhood, you can always find people who will hide you or help you with a minor favour, no questions asked.
- ☐ **Notorious:** You have a reputation from your criminal past. When **you reveal who you are**, your terrifying reputation counts as a reason for people to do what you ask, for the **manipulate someone** move. Revealing your identity to someone can create other problems later, of course.

GEAR

Effective weapons, pick three:

- ☐ .22 revolver (1-harm close reload small)
- ☐ .38 revolver (2-harm close reload loud)
- ☐ 9mm (2-harm close loud)
- ☐ Shotgun (3-harm close messy)
- ☐ Hunting rifle (2-harm far loud)
- ☐ Big knife (1-harm hand)
- ☐ Baseball bat (1-harm hand)
- ☐ Submachinegun (2-harm close reload area)
- ☐ Assault rifle (3-harm close/far area)

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Crooked by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. When it's your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- This hunter knows about your criminal past. Tell them what crimes they saw you commit.
- This hunter was there when you decided to give up the life and hunt monsters instead. Work out together what happened.
- This hunter is your younger sibling or child (possibly adopted). You look out for them.
- This hunter is a cousin or more distant relative.
- This hunter saved your life when a monster had the drop on you. Now you owe them one.
- This hunter worked with you on a semi-legal or illegal job. Work out what it was.
- This hunter is your moral compass. When you talk over things with them, their advice keeps you on the straight and narrow.
- You're powerfully attracted to this hunter. Maybe someday you'll deserve them.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as just 0-harm. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Crooked special: Whenever you spend a Luck point, someone from your past (heat or underworld) will re-appear in your life. Soon.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. More than four harm is especially dangerous.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes)

LEVELING UP

Experience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll a six or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the list below.

IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take another |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Tough, max +2 | Crooked move |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take another |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +2 | Crooked move |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gain an ally: one of your old crew. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recover a stash of money from the old days, enough to live without care... for a year or two. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook | |

After you have leveled up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these, from the list below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ Erase one used luck mark from your playbook.

THE DIVINE

I am the Light, the Sword.

I am sent to defend the meek from Darkness.

All Evil fears me, for I am its end.

To make your Divine, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, mission, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.





LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, androgynous, asexual.
- Blazing eyes, terrifying eyes, placid eyes, sparkling eyes, perceptive eyes, starry eyes, glowing eyes.
- Dirty clothes, perfect suit, rumpled suit, casual clothes, practical clothes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm+1, Cool+1, Sharp-1, Tough+2, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+2, Sharp-1, Tough+2, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough+2, Weird+1
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool+1, Sharp=0, Tough+2, Weird-1
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+1, Sharp=0, Tough+2, Weird+1

MISSION

You have been put on Earth for a purpose. Pick one:

- ☐ You are here to fight the schemes of an Adversary.
- ☐ The End of Days approaches. Your role is to guide these hunters and prevent it from coming to pass.
- ☐ The End of Days approaches. Your role is to guide these hunters and ensure it comes to pass.
- ☐ You have been exiled. You must work for the cause of Good without drawing attention from your brothers and sisters, as they are bound to execute you for your crimes.
- ☐ One of the other hunters has a crucial role to play in events to come. You must prepare them for their role, and protect them at *any* cost.

MOVES

You get all the basic moves, and pick three Divine moves:

- ☐ **Boss from Beyond: At the beginning of each mystery**, roll +Weird. On a 10+, your Superiors ask you to do something simple. On a 7-9, they ask you to do something complicated or difficult. In either case, you get to ask them one of the questions from the **investigate a mystery** move right now. On a miss, you are required to do something terrible. If you do not accomplish what they've ordered, you cannot use this move again until you have made up for your failure.
- ☐ **Angel Wings:** You can go instantly to anywhere you've visited before, or to a person you know well. When **you carry one or two people with you**, roll +Weird. On a 10+ you all go where you wanted. On a 7-9, you don't quite manage it. Either you are all separated, or you all appear in the wrong place.
- ☐ **What I Need, When I Need It:** You may store any small object you own, putting it into a magical space nobody can get to. You may retrieve anything you stored at any time; it appears in your hand.
- ☐ **Soothe: When you talk to someone for a few seconds in a quiet voice**, you can calm them down, blocking any panic, anger, or other negative emotions they have. This works even if the thing that freaked them out is still present, as long as your voice can be heard.
- ☐ **Lay On Hands:** Your touch can heal injury and disease. When you **lay your hands on someone hurt**, roll +Cool. On a 10+, heal 2 harm or an illness, plus they're stabilized. On a 7-9, you can heal the harm or illness as on a 10+, but you take it into yourself. On a miss, your aura causes them extra harm.
- ☐ **Cast Out Evil:** You may **banish an unnatural creature from your presence**. Roll +Tough. On a 10+ it is banished. On a 7-9 it takes a little while for the banishing to take effect—the creature has time to make one or two actions. Either way, the banished creature is unharmed, and you have no control over where it goes. This move may be used on unnatural hunters (e.g. the Monstrous). On a miss, something is keeping it here. That's bad.
- ☐ **Smite:** Your body and divine weapon always count as a weakness against the monsters you fight. Your unarmed attacks are 2-harm intimate hand messy.

GEAR

Pick one divine weapon:

- ☐ Flaming sword (3-harm hand fire holy)
- ☐ Thunder hammer (3-harm hand stun holy)
- ☐ Razor whip (3-harm hand area messy holy)
- ☐ Five demon bag (3-harm close magic holy)
- ☐ Silver trident (3-harm hand silver holy)

You also get divine armour (1-armour holy). It has a look suited to your divine origin.

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Divine by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. When it's your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- If you are protecting another hunter as your mission, tell them this: You have a crucial role in what is to come. I am here to guide and defend you.
- They should not be involved in this situation: the prophecies didn't mention them at all. This gets your attention but you don't know what it means yet.
- They are, at heart, a good and righteous person. You must help them stay that way.
- They are an abomination, and should be destroyed. Except you can't—work out with them why not.
- Their prayer (perhaps an informal or even unconscious prayer) summoned you.
- They fill you with feelings of sexual infatuation. You are confused by the associated mortal emotions.
- They saved your life, and you understand (intellectually at least) that you owe them for it.
- They're the person you go to for advice on mortal stuff (e.g sex, food, drugs, television, etc).

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as just 0-harm. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick “Unstable”.

Okay ☐☐☐☐ | ☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UP

Experience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever your roll totals 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the list below.

IMPROVEMENTS:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Tough, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gain a lesser divine being as an ally, sent from above to help with your mission |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +2 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Weird, max +2 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Divine move | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Divine move | |

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ Erase one used Luck mark from your playbook.
- ☐ Change your mission. Select a different mission from the normal options, or (with the Keeper's agreement) a new mission of your creation.

THE EXPERT

I have dedicated my life to the study of the unnatural. I know their habits, their weaknesses. I may not be youngest or strongest, but my knowledge makes me the biggest threat.

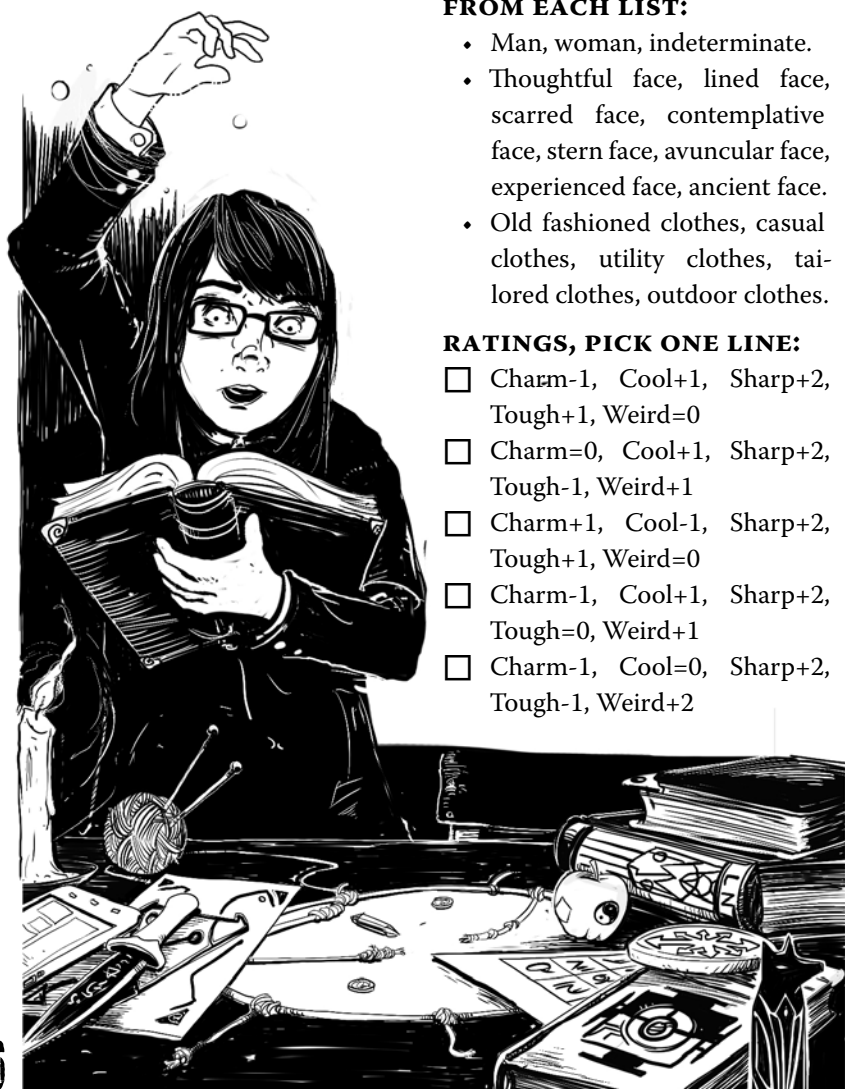
To make your Expert, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, moves, haven, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.

LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, indeterminate.
- Thoughtful face, lined face, scarred face, contemplative face, stern face, avuncular face, experienced face, ancient face.
- Old fashioned clothes, casual clothes, utility clothes, tailored clothes, outdoor clothes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+1, Sharp+2, Tough+1, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool+1, Sharp+2, Tough-1, Weird+1
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool-1, Sharp+2, Tough+1, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+1, Sharp+2, Tough=0, Weird+1
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool=0, Sharp+2, Tough-1, Weird+2



MOVES

You get all of the basic moves, plus pick two Expert moves:

- ☐ **I've Read About This Sort Of Thing:** Roll +Sharp instead of +Cool when you **act under pressure**.
- ☐ **Often Right:** When a **hunter comes to you for advice** about a problem, give them your honest opinion and advice. If they take your advice, they get +1 ongoing while following your advice, and you mark experience.
- ☐ **Preparedness:** When **you need something unusual or rare**, roll +Sharp. On a 10+, you have it here right now. On a 7-9 you have it, but not here: it will take some time to get it. On a miss, you know where it is, but it's somewhere real bad.
- ☐ **It Wasn't As Bad As It Looked:** Once per mystery, you may attempt to **keep going despite your injuries**. Roll +Cool. On a 10+, heal 2 harm and stabilize your wounds. On a 7-9 you may either stabilize or heal 1 harm. On a miss, it was worse than it looked: the Keeper may inflict a harm move on you, or make your wounds unstable.
- ☐ **Precise Strike.** When you inflict harm on a monster, you can **aim for a weak spot**. Roll +Tough. On a 10+ you inflict +2 harm. On a 7-9 you inflict +1 harm. On a miss, you leave yourself open for the monster to hit you.
- ☐ **The Woman (or Man) With The Plan: At the beginning of each mystery**, roll +Sharp. On a 10+ hold 2, on a 7-9 hold 1. Spend the hold to be where you need to be, prepared and ready. On a miss, the Keeper holds 1 they can spend to have you be in the worst place, unprepared and unready.
- ☐ **Dark Past:** You dabbled in the worst sort of mystical arts before you became one of the good guys. If **you trawl through your memories** for something relevant to the case at hand, roll +Weird. On a 10+ ask the Keeper two questions from the list below. On a 7-9 ask one. On a miss, you can ask a question anyway but that will mean you were personally complicit in creating the situation you are now dealing with. The questions are:
 - *When I dealt with this creature (or one of its kind), what did I learn?*
 - *What black magic do I know that could help here?*
 - *Do I know anyone who might be behind this?*
 - *Who do I know who can help us right now?*

HAVEN

You have set up a haven, a safe place to work. Pick three of the options below for your haven:

- ☐ **Lore Library.** When you hit the books, take +1 forward to **investigate the mystery** (as long as historical or reference works are appropriate).
- ☐ **Mystical Library.** If you use your library's occult tomes and grimoires, preparing with your tomes and grimoires, take +1 forward for **use magic**.
- ☐ **Protection Spells.** Your haven is safe from monsters—they cannot enter. Monsters might be able to do something special to evade the wards, but not easily.
- ☐ **Armory.** You have a stockpile of mystical and rare monster-killing weapons and items. If you **need a special weapon**, roll +Weird. On a 10+ you have it (and plenty if that matters). On a 7-9 you have it, but only the minimum. On a miss, you've got the wrong thing.
- ☐ **Infirmary.** You can heal people, and have the space for one or two to recuperate. The Keeper will tell you how long any patient's recovery is likely to take, and if you need extra supplies or help.
- ☐ **Workshop.** You have a space for building and repairing guns, cars and other gadgets. Work out with the Keeper how long any repair or construction will take, and if you need extra supplies or help.
- ☐ **Oublette.** This room is isolated from every kind of monster, spirit and magic that you know about. Anything you stash in there can't be found, can't do any magic, and can't get out.
- ☐ **Panic Room.** This has essential supplies and is protected by normal and mystical means. You can hide out there for a few days, safe from pretty much anything.
- ☐ **Magical Laboratory.** You have a mystical lab with all kinds of weird ingredients and tools useful for casting spells (like the **use magic** move, big magic, and any other magical moves).

GEAR

You get three monster-slaying weapons.

Monster-slaying weapons (pick three):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mallet & wooden stakes (3-harm intimate slow wooden) | <input type="checkbox"/> Magical dagger (2-harm hand magic) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silver sword (2-harm hand messy silver) | <input type="checkbox"/> Juju bag (1-harm far magic) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cold iron sword (2-harm hand messy iron) | <input type="checkbox"/> Flamethrower (3-harm close fire heavy volatile) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blessed knife (2-harm hand holy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Magnum (3-harm close reload loud) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Shotgun (3-harm close messy loud) |

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Expert by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. On your turn, pick one of these for each other hunter:

- They are your student, apprentice, ward, or child. Between you, decide which.
- They came to you for advice, and your advice got them out of trouble. Ask them what the trouble was.
- They know about some of your dark secrets, but they've agreed to keep quiet about them. Tell them what they know.
- A distant relation. Tell them exactly what.
- You were previously both members of an eldritch group, now disbanded. Ask them why *they* left, then tell them why *you* did.
- They once helped you get a singular item that is now part of your haven. Tell them what it was.
- You were taught by the same master. Ask them how it ended.
- You saved their life in a tight spot. Tell them what happened.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UP

Experience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Add an option to your haven |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Add an option to your haven |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Weird, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Expert move | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Expert move | |

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.

THE FLAKE

Everything's connected. But not everyone can see the patterns, and most people don't even look that hard.

But me, I can never stop looking deeper. I can never stop seeing the truth.

I spot the patterns. That's how I found the monsters, and that's how I help kill them.

To make your Flake, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.

LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, transgressive, concealed.
- Wild eyes, moving eyes, focused eyes, searching eyes, suspicious eyes, wide eyes, guarded eyes.
- Ratty clothes, casual clothes, rumpled suit, neat clothes, comfortable clothes, army surplus gear.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm+1, Cool+1, Sharp+2, Tough-1, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool+1, Sharp+2, Tough-1, Weird+1
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool-1, Sharp+2, Tough+1, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool-1, Sharp+2, Tough=0, Weird+1
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool-1, Sharp+2, Tough=0, Weird+2



MOVES

You get all of the basic moves, plus pick three Flake moves:

- ☐ **Connect the Dots:** At the beginning of each mystery, if **you look for the wider patterns** that current events might be part of, roll +Sharp. On a 10+ hold 3, and on a 7-9 hold 1. Spend your hold during the mystery to ask the Keeper any one of the following questions:
 - *Is this person connected to current events more than they are saying?*
 - *When and where will the next critical event occur?*
 - *What does the monster want from this person?*
 - *Is this connected to previous mysteries we have investigated?*
 - *How does this mystery connect to the bigger picture?*
- ☐ **Crazy Eyes:** You get +1 Weird (max +3).
- ☐ **See, It All Fits Together:** You can use Sharp instead of Charm when you **manipulate someone**.
- ☐ **Suspicious Mind:** If someone lies to you, you know it.
- ☐ **Often Overlooked:** When **you act all crazy** to avoid something, roll +Weird. On a 10+ you're regarded as unthreatening and unimportant. On a 7-9, pick one: unthreatening or unimportant. On a miss, you draw lots (but not all) of the attention.
- ☐ **Contrary:** When **you seek out and receive someone's honest advice** on the best course of action for you and then do something else instead, mark experience. If you do exactly the opposite of their advice, you also take +1 ongoing on any moves you make pursuing that course.
- ☐ **Net Friends:** You know a lot of people on the Internet. When **you contact a net friend to help you** with a mystery, roll +Charm. On a 10+, they're available and helpful—they can fix something, break a code, hack a computer, or get you some special information. On a 7-9, they're prepared to help, but it's either going to take some time or you're going to have to do part of it yourself. On a miss, you burn some bridges.
- ☐ **Sneaky:** When **you attack from ambush, or from behind**, inflict +2 harm.

GEAR

You get one normal weapon and two hidden weapons.

Normal weapons (pick one):

- ☐ .38 revolver (2-harm close reload loud)
- ☐ 9mm (2-harm close loud)
- ☐ Hunting rifle (2-harm far loud)
- ☐ Magnum (3-harm close reload loud)
- ☐ Shotgun (3-harm close messy loud)
- ☐ Big knife (1-harm hand)

Hidden weapons (pick two):

- ☐ Throwing knives (1-harm close many)
- ☐ Holdout pistol (2-harm close loud reload)
- ☐ Garrote (3-harm intimate)
- ☐ Watchman's flashlight (1-harm hand)
- ☐ Weighted gloves/brass knuckles (1-harm hand)
- ☐ Butterfly knife/folding knife (1-harm hand)

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Flake by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. On your turn, pick one of these for each other hunter:

- They're somehow tied into it all. You've been keeping an eye on them.
- They're a close relative. Ask them to decide exactly what.
- Old friends, who originally met through a long chain of coincidences.
- You went through hell together: maybe a monster, maybe military service, maybe time in an institution. Whatever it was, it bound you together, and you have total trust in each other.
- Members of the same support group.
- Fellow freaks.
- The signs all pointed to working together. So you found them and now you work together.
- You know each other through cryptozoology and conspiracy theory websites.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UP

Experience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Get a haven, like the Expert has, with two options |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gain another option for your haven |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Weird, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Flake move | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Flake move | |

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.

THE INITIATE

Since the dawn of history, we have been the bulwark against Darkness. We know the Evils of the world, and we stand against them so that the mass of humanity need not fear. We are the Flame that cleanses the Shadows.

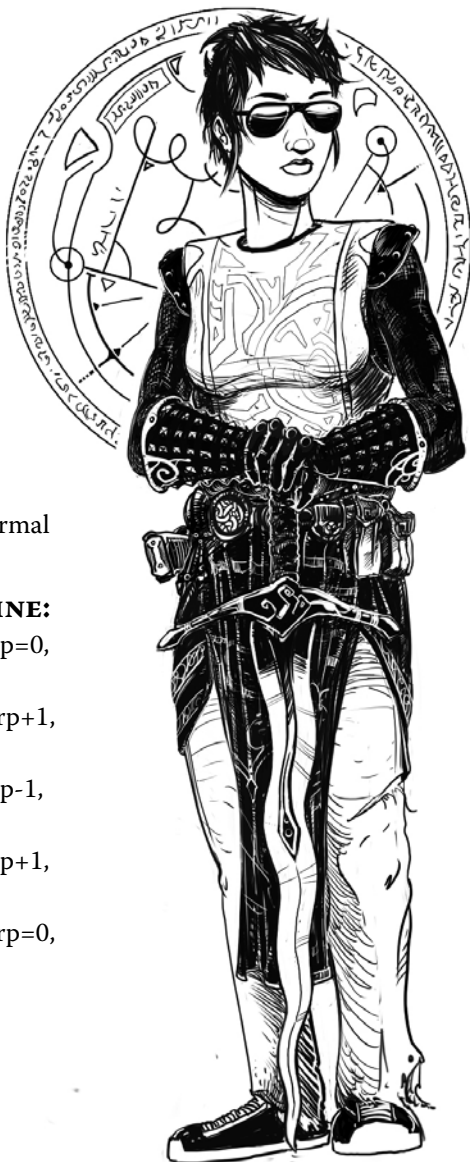
To make your Initiate, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, moves, Sect, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.

LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, masked, concealed.
- Hardened body, tattooed body, agile body, strong body, thin body, angular body, hunched body.
- Archaic clothes, unfashionable clothes, ceremonial clothes, mismatched clothes, formal clothes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+1, Sharp=0, Tough+1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool+1, Sharp+1, Tough-1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool=0, Sharp-1, Tough+2, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool-1, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool=0, Sharp=0, Tough+1, Weird+2



MOVES

You get all of the basic moves, plus four Initiate moves. You get this one:

- When you **are in good standing with your Sect, at the beginning of each mystery**, roll +Charm. On a 10+ they provide some useful info or help in the field. On a 7-9 you get a mission associated with the mystery, and if you do it you'll get some info or help too. On a miss, they ask you to do something bad. If you fail a mission or refuse an order, you'll be in trouble with the Sect until you atone.

Then pick three of these:

- **Ancient Fighting Arts:** When using an old-fashioned hand weapon, you inflict +1 harm and get +1 whenever you roll **protect someone**.
- **Mystic:** Every time you successfully **use magic**, take +1 forward.
- **Fortunes:** The Sect has ancient prophecies or divination techniques to predict the future. Once per mystery, you may use them. If **you look at what the future holds**, roll +Weird. On a 10+ hold 3, and on a 7-9 hold 1. On a miss, you get bad information and the Keeper decides how that affects you. Spend your hold to:
 - have a useful object ready.
 - be somewhere you are needed, just in time.
 - take +1 forward, or give +1 forward to another hunter.
 - retroactively warn someone about an attack, so that it doesn't happen.
- **Sacred Oath:** You may bind yourself to a single goal, forsaking something during your quest (e.g. speech, all sustenance but bread and water, alcohol, lying, sex, etc). Get the Keeper's agreement on this—it should match the goal in importance and difficulty. While you keep your oath and work towards your goal, mark experience at the end of every session and get +1 on any rolls that directly help achieve the goal. If you break the oath, take -1 ongoing until you have atoned.
- **Mentor:** You have a mentor in the Sect: name them. When you **contact your mentor for info**, roll +Sharp. On a 10+, you get an answer to your question, no problem. On a 7-9 you choose: they're either busy and can't help, or they answer the question but you owe a favour. On a miss, your question causes trouble.
- **Apprentice:** You have an apprentice: name them. Your job is to teach them the Sect's ways. They count as an **ally: subordinate** (motivation: to follow your instructions to the letter).
- **Helping Hand:** When you successfully **help out** another hunter, they get +2 instead of the usual +1.
- **That Old Black Magic:** When you **use magic**, you can ask a question from the **investigate a mystery** move as your effect.

SECT

You are part of an ancient, secret order that slays monsters. Where are they from? How old are they? Are they religious? Why do they stay secret? How do they recruit?

You also need to pick the Sect's traditions (these will be used by the Keeper to determine the Sect's methods and actions):

Good Traditions (pick two):

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledgable | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapters | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ancient lore | everywhere | in society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magical lore | <input type="checkbox"/> Secular power | <input type="checkbox"/> Rich |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible tactics | <input type="checkbox"/> Nifty gadgets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modernised | <input type="checkbox"/> Open hierarchy | <input type="checkbox"/> Magical items |

Bad Traditions (pick one):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dubious motives | <input type="checkbox"/> Strict laws |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tradition-bound | <input type="checkbox"/> Mystical oaths |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Short-sighted | <input type="checkbox"/> Total obedience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paranoid and secretive | <input type="checkbox"/> Tyrannical leaders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Closed hierarchy | <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete gear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Factionalised | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor |

GEAR

If the Sect has **fighting arts** or **obsolete gear**, then pick three old-fashioned weapons. If the Sect has **modernised** or **nifty gadgets**, you may pick two modern weapons. Otherwise, pick two old-fashioned weapons and one modern weapon.

You also get old-fashioned armour (1-armour heavy).

Old-fashioned weapons (pick either two or three, as above):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sword (2-harm
hand messy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver knife (1-harm
hand silver) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Axe (2-harm hand messy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting sticks (1-harm
hand quick) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Big sword (3-harm
hand messy heavy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Spear (2-harm hand/close) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Big axe (3-harm hand
messy slow heavy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mace (2-harm hand messy) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Crossbow (2-harm
close slow) |

Modern weapons (pick either one or two, as above):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> .38 revolver (2-harm
close reload loud) | <input type="checkbox"/> Magnum (3-harm
close reload loud) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9mm (2-harm close loud) | <input type="checkbox"/> Shotgun (3-harm
close messy) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sniper rifle (3-harm far) | |

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Initiate by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. On your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- They are a lay member of your Sect.
- You fought together when the tide of monsters seemed unstoppable. Ask them how it went.
- Friends, but they first met you under your cover identity, and learned about the Sect later. Ask how they feel about that.
- They are your close relative, or partner/spouse. Decide between you exactly what the relationship is.
- Fellow ancient weapons/martial arts club members.
- They're described in the prophecies, but the role they will play isn't stated.
- An ex-member of the Sect, but still friends. Ask them why they left or got thrown out
- You met researching mystical weirdness, and you've been occult comrades ever since.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If all your Luck boxes get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UPExperience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 Weird, max +3
- ☐ Get +1 Cool, max +2
- ☐ Get +1 Sharp, max +2
- ☐ Get +1 Tough, max +2
- ☐ Take another Initiate move
- ☐ Take another Initiate move
- ☐ Get command of your chapter of the Sect
- ☐ Get a Sect team under your command
- ☐ Take a move from another playbook
- ☐ Take a move from another playbook

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED**IMPROVEMENTS**

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ Become the leader, or effective leader, of the whole Sect.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.



THE MONSTROUS

I feel the hunger, the lust to destroy. But I fight it: I never give in. I'm not human any more, not really, but I have to protect those who still are. That way I can tell myself I'm different to the other monsters. Sometimes I can even believe it.

To make your Monstrous, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, breed, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.

LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, mysterious, transgressive.
- Sinister aura, powerful aura, dark aura, unnerving aura, energetic aura, evil aura, bestial aura.
- Archaic clothes, casual clothes, ragged clothes, tailored clothes, stylish clothes, street clothes, outdoor clothes.



RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm-1, Cool-1, Sharp=0, Tough+2, Weird+3
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+1, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird+3
- ☐ Charm+2, Cool=0, Sharp-1, Tough-1, Weird+3
- ☐ Charm-2, Cool+2, Sharp=0, Tough=0, Weird+3
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool-1, Sharp+2, Tough-1, Weird+3

BREED

You're half-human, half-monster: decide if you were always this way or if you were originally human and transformed somehow.

Now decide if you were always fighting to be good, or if you were evil and changed sides.

Define your monstrous breed by picking a curse, moves, and natural attacks.

Create the monster you want to be: whatever you choose defines your breed in the game. Some classic monsters with suggestions for picks are listed below. These are *only* suggestions: feel free to make a different version!

MONSTER BREED SUGGESTIONS

- **Vampire:** *Curse:* feed (blood or life-force). *Natural attacks:* Base: life-drain or Base: teeth; add +1 harm to base attack. *Moves:* immortal or unquenchable vitality; mental domination.
- **Werewolf:** *Curse:* vulnerability (silver). *Natural attacks:* Base: claws; Base: teeth. *Moves:* shapeshifter (wolf and/or wolfman); claws of the beast or unholy strength.
- **Ghost:** *Curse:* vulnerability (rock salt). *Natural attacks:* Base: magical force; add hand range to magical force. *Moves:* incorporeal; immortal.
- **Faerie:** *Curse:* pure drive (joy). *Natural attacks:* Base: magical force; add ignore-armour to magical force. *Moves:* flight; preternatural speed.
- **Demon:** *Curse:* pure drive (cruelty). *Natural attacks:* Base: claws; +1 harm to claws. *Moves:* dark negotiator; unquenchable vitality.
- **Orc:** *Curse:* dark master (the orc overlord). *Natural attacks:* Base: teeth; add ignore-armour to teeth. *Moves:* Unholy strength; dark negotiator.
- **Zombie:** *Curse:* pure drive (hunger), feed (flesh or brains). *Natural attacks:* Base: teeth; +1 harm to teeth. *Moves:* immortal; unquenchable vitality.

CURSES, PICK ONE:

- ☐ **Feed:** You must subsist on living humans—it might take the form of blood, brains, or spiritual essence but it must be from people. You need to **act under pressure** to resist feeding whenever a perfect opportunity presents itself.
- ☐ **Vulnerability:** Pick a substance. You suffer +1 harm when you suffer harm from it. If you are bound or surrounded by it, you must **act under pressure** to use your powers.
- ☐ **Pure Drive:** One emotion rules you. Pick from: hunger, hate, anger, fear, jealousy, greed, joy, pride, envy, lust, or cruelty. Whenever you have a chance to indulge that emotion, you must do so immediately, or **act under pressure** to resist.
- ☐ **Dark Master:** You have an evil lord who doesn't know you changed sides. They still give you orders, and they do not tolerate refusal. Or failure.

NATURAL ATTACKS

Pick a Base and add an extra to it, or two Bases.

- ☐ Base: teeth (3-harm intimate)
- ☐ Base: claws (2-harm hand)
- ☐ Base: magical force (1-harm magical close)
- ☐ Base: life-drain (1-harm intimate life-drain)
- ☐ Extra: Add +1 harm to a base
- ☐ Extra: Add ignore-armour to a base
- ☐ Extra: Add an extra range to a base (add intimate, hand, or close).



MOVES

You get all the basic moves, plus pick two Monstrous moves:

- ☐ **Immortal:** You do not age or sicken, and whenever you suffer harm you suffer 1-harm less.
- ☐ **Unnatural Appeal:** Roll +Weird instead of +Charm when you **manipulate someone**.
- ☐ **Unholy Strength:** Roll +Weird instead of +Tough when you **kick some ass**.
- ☐ **Incorporeal:** You may move freely through solid objects (but not people).
- ☐ **Preternatural Speed:** You go much faster than normal people. **When you chase, flee, or run** take +1 ongoing.
- ☐ **Claws of the Beast:** All your natural attacks get +1 harm.
- ☐ **Mental Dominion:** When you gaze into a normal human's eyes and **exert your will over them**, roll +Charm. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 1. You may spend your hold to give them an order. Regular people will follow your order, whatever it is. Hunters can choose whether they do it or not. If they do, they mark experience.
- ☐ **Unquenchable Vitality:** When you have taken harm, **you can heal yourself**. Roll +Cool. On a 10+, heal 2-harm and stabilise your injuries. On a 7-9, heal 1-harm and stabilise your injuries. On a miss, your injuries worsen.
- ☐ **Dark Negotiator:** You can use the **manipulate someone** move on monsters as well as people, if they can reason and talk.
- ☐ **Flight:** You can fly.
- ☐ **Shapeshifter:** You may change your form (usually into an animal). Decide if you have just one alternate form or several, and detail them. You gain +1 to **investigate a mystery** when using an alternate form's superior senses (e.g. smell for a wolf, sight for an eagle).
- ☐ **Something Borrowed:** Take a move from a hunter playbook that is not currently in play.

GEAR

If you want, you can take one handy weapon:

- ☐ .38 revolver (2-harm close reload loud)
- ☐ 9mm (2-harm close loud)
- ☐ Magnum (3-harm close reload loud)
- ☐ Shotgun (3-harm close messy)
- ☐ Big knife (1-harm hand)
- ☐ Brass knuckles (1-harm hand quiet small)
- ☐ Sword (2-harm hand messy)
- ☐ Huge sword (3-harm hand heavy)

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Monstrous by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. When it's your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- You lost control one time, and almost killed them. Ask them how they stopped you.
- They tried to slay you, but you proved you're on the side of good. Ask them what convinced them.
- You are romantically obsessed with them. Ask them if they know, and if they reciprocate.
- Close relations, or a distant descendant. Tell them which.
- You saved them from another of your kind, and prevented reprisals against that individual creature (maybe it's another good one, or maybe it has a hold over you).
- They are tied to your curse or origin. Tell them how.
- You fought together against the odds, and prevailed.
- They saved you from another hunter who was prepared to kill you. Ask them what happened.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If all your Luck boxes get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UP*Experience:* ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Tough, max +2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Monstrous move | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Monstrous move | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gain a haven, like the Expert has, with two options | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a natural attacks pick | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook | |

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ Free yourself from the curse of your kind. Your curse no longer applies, but you lose 1 Weird.
- ☐ You turn evil (again). Retire this character, they become one of the Keeper's threats.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.

THE MUNDANE

You heard about how monsters only pick on people with crazy powers who can fight back on even terms? Yeah, me neither. But, hell, I ended up in this monster-hunting team so I gotta do what I can, right?

To make your Mundane, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.

LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, boy, girl, androgynous, concealed.
- Friendly face, alluring face, laughing face, trustworthy face, average face, serious face, sensual face.
- Normal clothes, casual clothes, goth clothes, sporty clothes, work clothes, street clothes, nerdy clothes.



RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm+2, Cool+1, Sharp=0, Tough+1, Weird-1
- ☐ Charm+2, Cool-1, Sharp+1, Tough+1, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm+2, Cool=0, Sharp-1, Tough+1, Weird+1
- ☐ Charm+2, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough+1, Weird-1
- ☐ Charm+2, Cool+1, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird-1

MOVES

You get all the basic moves, plus pick three Mundane moves:

- ☐ **Always The Victim:** When another hunter uses **protect someone** to protect you, they mark experience. Whenever a monster captures you, you mark experience.
- ☐ **Oops! If you want to stumble across something important,** tell the Keeper. You will find something important and useful, although not necessarily related to your immediate problems.
- ☐ **Let's Get Out Of Here!** If you can **protect someone** by telling them what to do, or by leading them out, roll +Charm instead of +Tough.
- ☐ **Panic Button:** When you need to escape, **name the route you'll try** and roll +Sharp. On a 10+ you're out of danger, no problem. On a 7-9 you can go or stay, but if you go it's going to cost you (you leave something behind or something comes with you). On a miss, you are caught halfway out.
- ☐ **The Power of Heart:** When fighting a monster, if you **help someone**, don't roll +Cool. You automatically help as though you'd rolled a 10.
- ☐ **Trust Me:** When **you tell a normal person the truth in order to protect them from danger**, roll +Charm. On a 10+ they'll do what you say they should, no questions asked. On a 7-9 they do it, but the Keeper chooses one from:
 - They ask you a hard question first.
 - They stall and dither a while.
 - They have a "better" idea.
 On a miss, they're going to think you're crazy and maybe dangerous too.
- ☐ **What Could Go Wrong?:** Whenever you **charge into immediate danger** without hedging your bets, hold 2. You may spend your hold to:
 - Inflict +1 harm.
 - Reduce someone's harm suffered by 1.
 - Take +2 forward on an **act under pressure** roll.
- ☐ **Don't Worry, I'll Check It Out:** Whenever **you go off by yourself** to check out somewhere (or something) scary, mark experience.

GEAR

You get two Mundane weapons and a means of transport.

Mundane weapons (pick two):

- ☐ Golf club, baseball bat, cricket bat, or hockey stick (2-harm hand innocuous messy)
- ☐ Pocket knife or multitool (1-harm hand useful small)
- ☐ Small handgun (2-harm close loud reload)
- ☐ Hunting rifle (3-harm far loud reload)
- ☐ Sledge-hammer or fire axe (3-harm hand messy)
- ☐ Nunchuks (2-harm hand area)

Means of transport (pick one):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skateboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Classic car in terrible condition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly new car in decent condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Van |

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Mundane by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. When it's your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- You are close relations. Tell them exactly how you're related.
- Initially rivals, you both now respect each others' talents.
- Romantically involved, or you just have a crush on them. Ask them which they prefer.
- They're your hero, exactly the kind of monster hunter you aspire to be. Tell them why you worship them.
- Good friends. Tell them if it's from way back, or recently.
- You're a bit suspicious of them (maybe due to their unnatural powers or something like that).
- They introduced you to the existence of monsters. Tell them how you feel about that.
- You saved their life from a monster due to an unlikely chain of events. Tell them what.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If all your Luck boxes get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay ☐☐☐☐|☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UP

Experience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Get back one used Luck point |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Get back one used Luck point |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Tough, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Mundane move | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Mundane move | |

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.

THE PROFESSIONAL

It's kind of strange when your regular 9-to-5 job is to hunt down monsters. Still, that's the job I took on when I joined this outfit. It pays well, and the benefits are good. Like they say "You don't have to be crazy to work here, but it sure helps!"

To make your Professional, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, Agency, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.



LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, concealed.
- Chiseled face, scarred face, unshaven face, soft face, young face, old face, determined face.
- Tailored suit, shabby suit, perfect suit, utility coveralls, battle-dress, paramilitary uniform, lab coat.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm=0, Cool+2, Sharp-1, Tough+2, Weird-1
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+2, Sharp+1, Tough+1, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool+2, Sharp+1, Tough-1, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+2, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird+1
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool+2, Sharp+2, Tough-1, Weird-1

AGENCY

Decide who it is you work for. Are they a black-budget government department, a secret military unit, a clandestine police team, a private individual's crusade, a corporation, a scientific team, or what?

Is the Agency's goal to: destroy monsters, study the supernatural, protect people, gain power, or something else?

Pick two resource tags for the Agency, and two red tape tags:

Resources (pick two):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Well-armed | <input type="checkbox"/> Offices all over the place |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Well-financed | <input type="checkbox"/> Good intel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rigorous training | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognised authority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Official pull | <input type="checkbox"/> Weird tech gadgets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cover identities | <input type="checkbox"/> Support teams |

Red Tape (pick two):

- ☐ Dubious motives
- ☐ Bureaucratic
- ☐ Secretive hierarchy
- ☐ Cryptic missions
- ☐ Hostile superiors
- ☐ Inter-departmental rivalry
- ☐ Budget cuts
- ☐ Take no prisoners policy
- ☐ Live capture policy



MOVES

You get all the basic moves, plus four Professional moves.

You get this one:

- When you **deal with the Agency**, requesting help or gear, or making excuses for a failure, roll +Sharp. On a 10+, you're good—your request for gear or personnel is okayed, or your slip-up goes unnoticed. On a 7-9, things aren't so great. You might get chewed out by your superiors and there'll be fallout, but you get what you need for the job. On a miss, you screwed up: you might be suspended or under investigation, or just in the doghouse. You certainly aren't going to get any help until you sort it all out.

Then pick three of these:

- ☐ **Bottle It Up:** If you want, you can take up to +3 bonus when you **act under pressure**. For each +1 you use, the Keeper holds 1. That hold can be spent later—one for one—to give you -1 on any move *except act under pressure*.
- ☐ **Unfazeable:** Take +1 Cool (max +3).
- ☐ **Battlefield Awareness:** You always know what's happening around you, and what to watch out for. Take +1 armour (max 2-armour) on top of whatever you get from your gear.
- ☐ **Leave No One Behind:** In combat, when **you help someone escape**, roll +Sharp. On a 10+ you get them out clean. On a 7-9, you can *either* get them out *or* suffer no harm, you choose. On a miss, you fail to get them out and you've attracted hostile attention.
- ☐ **Tactical Genius:** When you **read a bad situation**, you may roll +Cool instead of +Sharp
- ☐ **Medic:** You have a full first aid kit, and the training to heal people. **When you do first aid**, roll +Cool. On a 10+ the patient is stabilized and healed of 2 harm. On a 7-9 choose one: heal 2 harm or stabilize the injury. On a miss, you cause an extra 1 harm. This move takes the place of regular first aid.
- ☐ **Mobility:** You have a truck, van, or car built for monster hunting. Choose two good things and one bad thing about it.

Good things: roomy; surveillance gear; fast; stealthy; intimidating; classic; medical kit; sleeping space; toolkit; concealed weapons; anonymous; armoured (+1 armour inside); tough; monster cage.

Bad things: loud; obvious; temperamental; beaten-up; gas-guzzler; uncomfortable; slow; old.

GEAR

Pick one serious weapon and two normal weapons.

You get *either* a flak vest (1-armour hidden) *or* combat armour (2-armour heavy) for protection.

Serious weapons (pick one):

- ☐ Assault rifle (3-harm far area loud reload)
- ☐ Grenade launcher (4-harm far area messy loud reload)
- ☐ Sniper rifle (4-harm far)
- ☐ Grenades (4-harm close area messy loud)
- ☐ Submachine gun (3-harm close area loud reload)

Normal weapons (pick two):

- ☐ .38 revolver (2-harm close reload loud)
- ☐ 9mm (2-harm close loud)
- ☐ Hunting rifle (2-harm far loud)
- ☐ Shotgun (3-harm close messy)
- ☐ Big knife (1-harm hand)

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Professional by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. On your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- Your relationship with them has romantic potential. So far it hasn't gone further.
- They're on the Agency's watch list, and you've been keeping an eye on them.
- You are related. Tell them how close.
- You met on a mission and worked together unofficially. And successfully.
- They've worked with the Agency before, and they're well regarded.
- You were friends back in training, before the Agency recruited you. This could be military, law enforcement, or some weirder school: decide the details between you.
- They pulled you (and maybe your team) out of a terrible FUBARed mission.
- You got sent to "deal with them" as a hazard to the Agency's policies one time. Tell them how you resolved this.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If all your Luck boxes get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay ☐☐☐ | ☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UP

Experience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Add a new resource |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +2 | tag for your Agency <i>or</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Sharp, max +2 | change a red tape tag |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Tough, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Get command of an Agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another | team of monster hunters |
| Professional move | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another | another playbook |
| Professional move | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a move from |
| | another playbook |

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ Get some or all of the other players' hunters hired by your agency. They get the **deal with the agency** move, as well as salary and benefits.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.

THE SPELL-SLINGER

Fight fire with fire magic.

To make your Spell-slinger, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, Combat Magic, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.



LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Woman, man, androgynous.
- Rumpled clothes, stylish clothes, goth clothes, old fashioned clothes.
- Shadowed eyes, fierce eyes, weary eyes, sparkling eyes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+1, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool-1, Sharp+1, Tough+1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool=0, Sharp+2, Tough-1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough-1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough=0, Weird+2

COMBAT MAGIC

You have a few attack spells you can use as weapons. When you use these spells to **kick some ass**, roll +Weird instead of +Tough. Sometimes the situation may require you to **act under pressure** to cast your spell without problems.

Pick three options from the list below.

Your combat spells can combine any of your base spells with any of your effects.

Combat magic, pick three (with at least one base):

Bases:

- ☐ **Blast:** 2-harm magical close obvious loud
- ☐ **Ball:** 1-harm magical area close obvious loud
- ☐ **Missile:** 1-harm magical far obvious loud
- ☐ **Wall:** 1-harm magical barrier close 1-armour obvious loud

Effects:

- ☐ **Fire:** Add "+2 harm fire" to a base. If you get a 10+ on a combat magic roll, the fire won't spread.
- ☐ **Force or Wind:** Add "+1 harm forceful" to a base, or "+1 armour" to a wall.
- ☐ **Lightning or Entropy:** Add "+1 harm messy" to a base.
- ☐ **Frost or Ice:** Adds "-1 harm +2 armour" to a wall, or "+1 harm restraining" to other bases.
- ☐ **Earth:** Add "forceful restraining" to a base.
- ☐ **Necromantic:** Add "life-drain" to a base.

MOVES

You get all the basic moves and four Spell-slinger moves. You have this one:

- **Tools and Techniques:** In order to use your combat magic effectively, you rely on a collection of tools and techniques. If you don't use them, there are drawbacks. Cross off one; you'll need the rest.
- **Consumables:** You need to have certain supplies— powders, oils, etc— on hand to cast your spell. They're used up when you cast the spell. If you don't have them on hand, your body will be the substitute: take 1-harm ignore-armour when you cast.
- **Foci:** You need wands, staves, and other somewhat obvious props to focus your efforts at their most powerful. If you don't have what you need on hand, your combat magic does 1 less harm.
- **Gestures:** You need to be able to wave your hands around obviously in order to use your combat magic. If you're restrained in any way, you can still cast the spell but it's more likely to go wrong; take -1 ongoing to your combat magic.
- **Incantations:** You must speak in an arcane language to control your magic without it filtering directly through your mind. If you use combat magic spell, successfully or failed, while unable or unwilling to speak, you must immediately **act under pressure** to avoid scrambling your thoughts—producing hallucinations, sensory deprivation, and general befuddlement.



Plus pick three of these:

- ☐ **Advanced Arcane Training:** If you have two of your three Tools and Techniques at the ready, you may ignore the third one.
- ☐ **Arcane Reputation:** Pick three big organizations or groups in the supernatural community, which can include some of the more sociable types of monsters. They've heard of you and respect your power. With affected humans, take +1 forward when you **manipulate** them. You may **manipulate** affected monsters as if they were human, with no bonus.
- ☐ **Could've Been Worse:** When you miss a **use magic** roll you can choose one of the following options instead of losing control of the magic:
 - **Fizzle:** The preparations and materials for the spell are ruined. You'll have to start over from scratch with the prep time doubled.
 - **This Is Gonna Suck:** The effect happens, but you trigger all of the listed glitches but one. You pick the one you avoid.
- ☐ **Enchanted Clothing:** Pick an article of every-day clothing—it's enchanted without any change in appearance. Take -1 harm from any source that tries to get at you through the garment.
- ☐ **Forensic Divination:** When you successfully **investigate a mystery**, you may ask "What magic was done here?" as a free extra question.
- ☐ **Go Big or Go Home:** When you must **use magic** as a requirement for Big Magic, take +1 ongoing to those **use magic** rolls.
- ☐ **Not My Fault:** +1 to **act under pressure** when you are dealing with the consequences of your own spellcasting.
- ☐ **Practitioner:** Choose two effects available to you under **use magic**. Take +1 to **use magic** whenever you choose one of those effects.
- ☐ **Shield Spell:** When you **protect someone**, gain 2-armour against any harm that is transferred to you. This doesn't stack with your other armour, if any.
- ☐ **Third Eye:** When you **read a bad situation**, you can **open up your third eye** for a moment to take in extra information. Take +1 hold on any result of 7 or more, plus you can see invisible things. On a miss, you may still get 1 hold, but you're exposed to supernatural danger. Unfiltered hidden reality is rough on the mind!

GEAR

You don't need much—aside from any foci or consumables to power your magic. Still, it's good to carry some backup. Pick one:

- ☐ Old revolver (2-harm close reload loud)
- ☐ Ritual knife (1-harm hand)
- ☐ Heirloom sword (2-harm hand messy)

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Spell-slinger by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. On your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- They act as your conscience when the power goes to your head. Ask them about the last time this happened.
- Blood relation, though you were out of contact for years. Ask them how they reconnected with you.
- Mentor from another life. Ask them what they taught you.
- Your magic-fueled rescue of them introduced them to the supernatural. Tell them what creature was after them.
- An old rivalry has turned into a tight friendship. Tell them what you once fought over.
- You thought they were dead, and now they're back. What "killed" them?
- They're an on-again/off-again love interest. Ask them what keeps you apart. Tell them what keeps you together.
- A comrade-in-arms. You've faced the biggest threats together.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay ☐☐☐|☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UP*Experience:* ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 Weird, max +3
- ☐ Get +1 Cool, max +2
- ☐ Get +1 Sharp, max +2
- ☐ Get +1 Tough, max +2
- ☐ Take another Spell-Slinger move.
- ☐ Take another Spell-Slinger move.
- ☐ Take a move from another playbook.
- ☐ Take a move from another playbook.
- ☐ Take another Combat Magic pick.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below:

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ Erase one used Luck mark from your playbook.
- ☐ Take another Combat Magic pick.
- ☐ You may cross off another option from your Tools and Techniques.

THE SPOOKY

I can do things, things that normal people can't. But there's a price—I haven't paid it in full, yet, but the bill's gonna come due soon. It's best I don't tell you any more. You get too close, you'll get hurt.

To make your Spooky, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, moves, dark side and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.

LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, boy, girl, concealed, androgynous.
- Burning eyes, dark eyes, pained eyes, blank eyes, unblinking eyes, piercing eyes, shadowed eyes, creepy eyes.
- Ratty clothes, casual clothes, goth clothes, neat clothes, nerdy clothes.



RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm+1, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough-1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool+1, Sharp=0, Tough+1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm+2, Cool=0, Sharp-1, Tough-1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool-1, Sharp+1, Tough+1, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool-1, Sharp+2, Tough=0, Weird+2

MOVES

You get all the basic moves, plus pick three Spooky moves:

- ☐ **Telepathy:** You can read people's thoughts and put words in their mind. This can allow you to **investigate a mystery** or **read a bad situation** without needing to actually talk. You can also **manipulate someone** without speaking. You still roll moves as normal, except people will not expect the weirdness of your mental communication.
- ☐ **Hex:** When you cast a spell (with **use magic**), as well as the normal effects, you may pick from the following:
 - The target contracts a disease.
 - The target immediately suffers harm (2-harm magic ignore-armour).
 - The target breaks something precious or important.
- ☐ **The Sight:** You can see the invisible, especially spirits and magical influences. You may communicate with (maybe even make deals with) the spirits you see, and they give you more opportunities to spot clues when you **investigate a mystery**.
- ☐ **Premonitions:** **At the start of each mystery**, roll +Weird. On a 10+, you get a detailed vision of something bad that is yet to happen. You take +1 forward to prevent it coming true, and mark experience if you stop it. On a 7-9+ you get clouded images of something bad that is yet to happen: mark experience if you stop it. On a miss, you get a vision of something bad happening to you and the Keeper holds 3, to be spent one-for-one as penalties to rolls you make.
- ☐ **Hunches:** **When something bad is happening** (or just about to happen) somewhere that you aren't, roll +Sharp. On a 10+ you knew where you needed to go, just in time to get there. On a 7-9, you get there late—in time to intervene, but not prevent it altogether. On a miss, you get there just in time to be in trouble yourself.

- ☐ **Tune In:** You can **attune your mind to a monster or minion**. Roll +Weird. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 1. On a miss, the monster becomes aware of you. Spend one hold to ask the Keeper one of the following questions, and gain +1 ongoing while acting on the answers:
- *Where is the creature right now?*
 - *What is it planning to do right now?*
 - *Who is it going to attack next?*
 - *Who does it regard as the biggest threat?*
 - *How can I attract its attention?*
- ☐ **The Big Whammy:** You can use your powers to **kick some ass**: roll +Weird instead of +Tough. The attack has 2-harm close obvious ignore-armour. On a miss, you'll get a magical backlash.
- ☐ **Jinx:** You can encourage coincidences to occur, the way you want. **When you jinx a target**, roll +Weird. On a 10+ hold 2 and on a 7-9 hold 1. On a miss, the Keeper holds 2 over you to be used in the same way. Spend your hold to:
- Interfere with a hunter, giving them -1 forward.
 - Help a hunter, giving them +1 forward, by interfering with their enemy.
 - Interfere with what a monster, minion, or bystander is trying to do.
 - Inflict 1-harm on the target due to an accident.
 - The target finds something you left for them.
 - The target loses something that you will soon find.

THE DARK SIDE

Your powers have an unsavory source, and sometimes you get tempted to do things you shouldn't. These could be orders from whatever granted your power, or urges that bubble up from your subconscious. Something like that. Whatever it is, it's unsettling.

Pick three tags for your dark side:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Soulless | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor impulse control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> Addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Hallucinations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secrets | <input type="checkbox"/> Mood swings | <input type="checkbox"/> Pain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lust | <input type="checkbox"/> Rage | <input type="checkbox"/> Paranoia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dark bargain | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-destruction | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt | <input type="checkbox"/> Greed for power | |

The Keeper can ask you to do nasty things (in accordance with the tags), when your powers need you to. If you do whatever is asked, mark experience. If you don't do it, then your powers are unavailable until the end of the mystery (or until you cave). As you mark off Luck boxes, these requests will get bigger and nastier.

GEAR

You get two normal weapons and any magical items or amulets that you use to invoke your powers.

Normal weapons (pick two):

- ☐ .38 revolver (2-harm close reload loud)
- ☐ 9mm (2-harm close loud)
- ☐ Hunting rifle (2-harm far loud)
- ☐ Shotgun (3-harm close messy)
- ☐ Big knife (1-harm hand)

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group. On your turn, introduce your Spooky by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.

HISTORY

Go around the group again. On your turn, pick one of these for each hunter:

- They taught you to control your powers, to the extent that you can control them at all.
- You are blood-kin. Decide together exactly what.
- You are married, or romantically involved. Decide between you the exact relationship.
- You're old friends, and trust each other completely.
- You used your powers on them one time. Decide if it was for selfish reasons or not, and tell them if they found out about it.
- You've known each other some time, but since your powers manifested, you keep them at a distance emotionally.
- You hope they can help you control your powers.
- They saw you use your powers for selfish or vindictive reasons.

Ask them who the victim was, and then tell them what you did.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If all your Luck boxes get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

Spooky special: As you mark off Luck boxes, your dark side's needs will get nastier.

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick “Unstable.”

Okay ☐☐☐☐ | ☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UP

Experience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 Weird, max +3
- ☐ Get +1 Charm, max +2
- ☐ Get +1 Cool, max +2
- ☐ Get +1 Sharp, max +2
- ☐ Take another Spooky move
- ☐ Take another Spooky move
- ☐ Change some, or all, your dark side tags
- ☐ Get a mystical library, like the Expert’s haven option
- ☐ Take a move from another playbook
- ☐ Take a move from another playbook

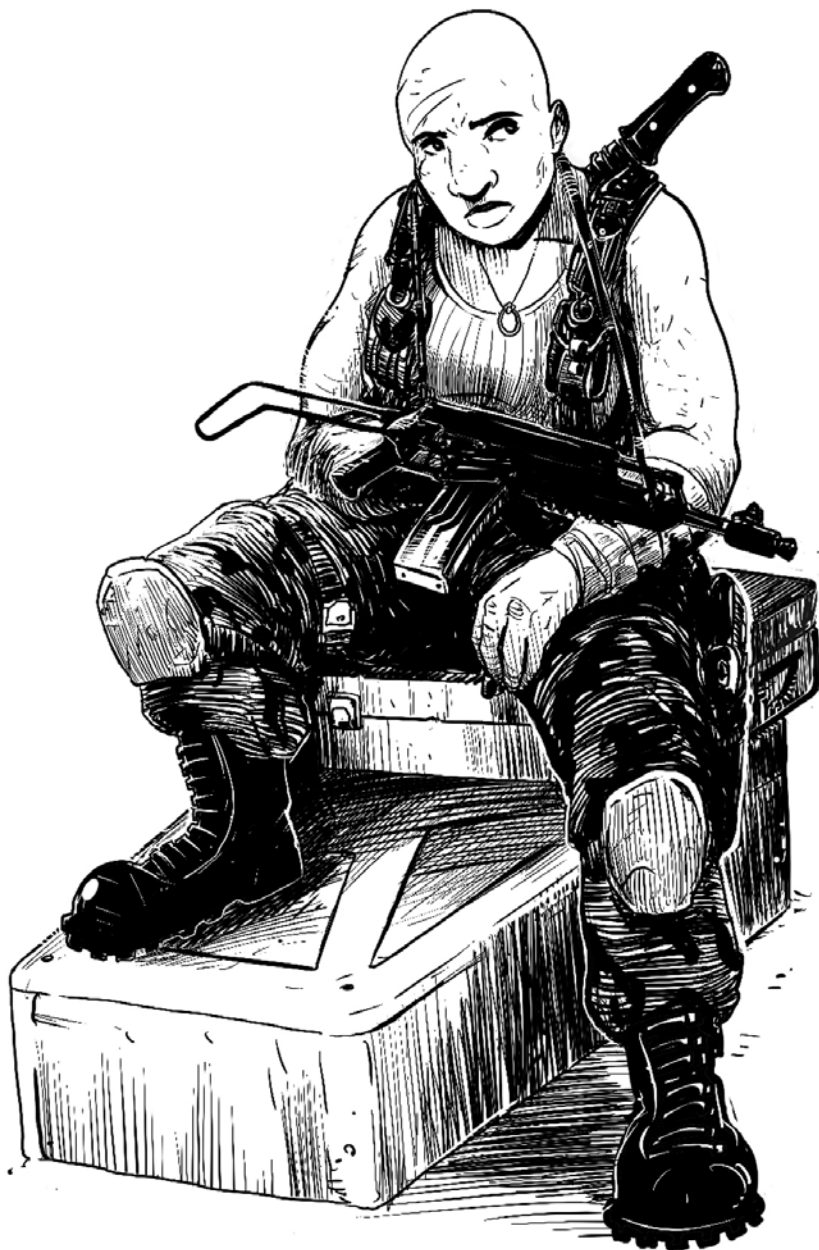
After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They’re below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ You discover how to use your powers at a lower price. Delete one dark side tag permanently.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.

THE WRONGED

They took my loved ones. Back then I wasn't strong enough to fight, but I studied, trained, and now I'm ready to cleanse the world of their taint. I'll kill them all. That's all I have left.



To make your Wronged, first pick a name. Then follow the instructions below to decide your look, ratings, who you lost, moves, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.

LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, concealed.
- Sad eyes, icy eyes, angry eyes, untouchable eyes, emotionless eyes, hurt eyes, harrowed eyes.
- Nondescript clothes, ragged clothes, casual clothes, hunting gear, army surplus gear, old clothes.

RATINGS, PICK ONE LINE:

- ☐ Charm=0, Cool+1, Sharp-1, Tough+2, Weird+1
- ☐ Charm=0, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough+2, Weird=0
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool=0, Sharp+1, Tough+2, Weird-1
- ☐ Charm-1, Cool-1, Sharp=0, Tough+2, Weird+2
- ☐ Charm+1, Cool-1, Sharp=0, Tough+2, Weird+1

WHO YOU LOST

Who did you lose? Pick one or more of:

- ☐ Your parent(s): _____
- ☐ Your sibling(s): _____
- ☐ Your spouse/partner: _____
- ☐ Your child(ren): _____
- ☐ Your best friend(s): _____

WHAT DID IT?

With the Keeper's agreement, pick the monster breed.

My prey: _____

Why couldn't you save them? You were (pick one or more):

- ☐ at fault
- ☐ selfish
- ☐ injured
- ☐ weak
- ☐ slow
- ☐ scared
- ☐ in denial
- ☐ complicit

MOVES

You get all the basic moves plus three Wronged moves. You get this one:

- **I Know My Prey:** You get +1 ongoing when knowingly investigating, pursuing or fighting the breed of monster that caused your loss.

Then pick two of these:

- ☐ **Berserk:** No matter how much harm you take, you can always keep going until the current fight is over. During a fight, the Keeper may not use harm moves on you and you cannot die. When the fight ends, all harm takes effect as normal.
- ☐ **NEVER AGAIN:** In combat, you may choose to **protect someone** without rolling, as if you had rolled a 10+, but you may not choose to “suffer little harm.”
- ☐ **What Does Not Kill Me...:** If you have suffered harm in a fight, you gain +1 ongoing until the fight is over.
- ☐ **Fervor:** When you **manipulate someone**, roll +Tough instead of +Charm.
- ☐ **Safety First:** You have jury-rigged extra protection into your gear, giving you +1 armour (maximum 2-armour).
- ☐ **DIY Surgery:** When **you do quick and dirty first aid on someone** (including yourself), roll +Cool. On a 10+ it's all good, it counts as normal first aid, plus stabilize the injury and heal 1 harm. On a 7-9 it counts as normal first aid, plus one of these, your choice:
 - Stabilise the injury but the patient takes -1 forward.
 - Heal 1-harm and stabilise for now, but it will return as 2-harm and become unstable again later.
 - Heal 1-harm and stabilise but the patient takes -1 ongoing until it's fixed properly.
- ☐ **Tools Matter:** With your signature weapon (see your gear, below), you get +1 to **kick some ass**.

GEAR

Pick one signature weapon and two practical weapons.

You have protective wear, suited to your look, worth 1-armour.

If you want, you may take a classic car, classic motorcycle, plain pickup, or plain van.

Signature Weapons, pick one:

- ☐ Sawn-off shotgun (3-harm hand/close messy loud reload)
- ☐ Hand cannon (3-harm close loud)
- ☐ Fighting knife (2-harm hand quiet)
- ☐ Huge sword or huge axe (3-harm hand messy heavy)
- ☐ Specialist weapons for destroying your foes (e.g. wooden stakes and mallet for vampires, silver dagger for werewolves, etc.). 4-harm against the specific creatures it targets, 1-harm otherwise, and other tags by agreement with the Keeper.
- ☐ Enchanted dagger (2-harm hand magic)
- ☐ Chainsaw (3-harm hand messy unreliable loud heavy)

Practical weapons, pick two:

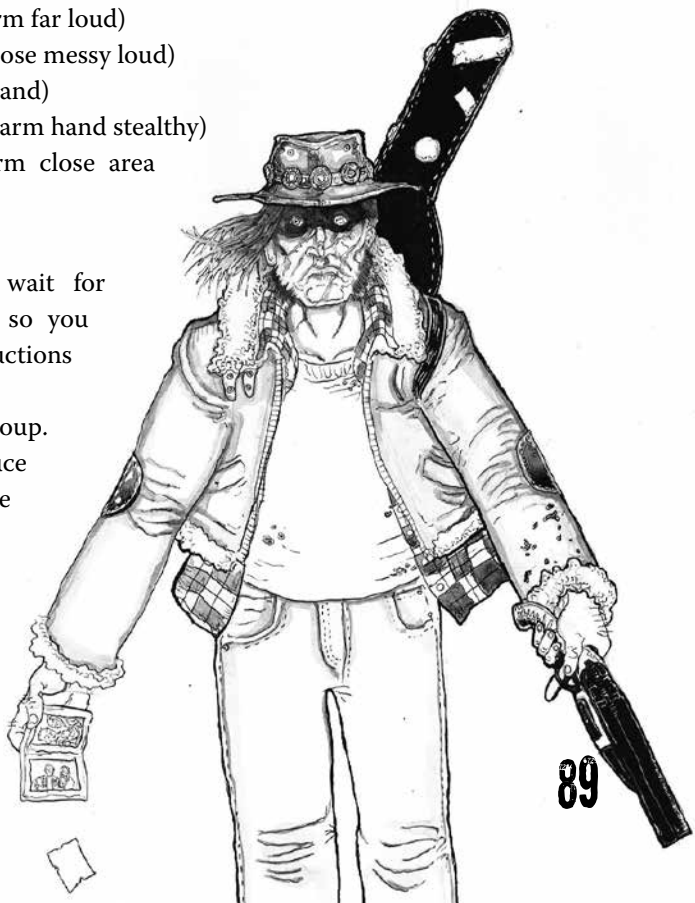
- ☐ .38 revolver (2-harm close reload loud)
- ☐ 9mm (2-harm close loud)
- ☐ Hunting rifle (2-harm far loud)
- ☐ Shotgun (3-harm close messy loud)
- ☐ Big knife (1-harm hand)
- ☐ Brass knuckles (1-harm hand stealthy)
- ☐ Assault rifle (3-harm close area loud reload)

INTRODUCTIONS

When you get here, wait for everyone to catch up so you can do your introductions together.

Go around the group.

On your turn, introduce your Wronged by name and look, and tell the group what they know about you.



HISTORY

Go around the group again. When it's your turn, pick one for each of the other hunters:

- They helped you at a critical point in your quest for revenge. Tell them what you needed help with.
- They stood between you and what you needed to find out. Ask them why.
- They also lost a friend or relative to these monsters. Ask them who it was.
- Relations, close or distant. Tell them exactly what.
- You saved their life, back when they were a pathetic newbie hunter. Ask them what you saved them from.
- You respect their hard-earned knowledge, and often come to them for advice.
- They showed you the ropes when you were learning how to fight.
- They saw you absolutely lose it and go berserk. Tell them what the situation was, and ask them how much collateral damage you caused.

LUCK

You can mark off a Luck box to *either* change a roll you just made to a 12, as if you had rolled that; *or* change a wound you have just taken to count as 0-harm, no matter how bad it was. If your Luck boxes all get filled, you've run out of good luck.

Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Doomed

HARM

When you suffer harm, mark off the number of boxes equal to harm suffered. When you reach four harm, tick "Unstable."

Okay ☐☐☐☐|☐☐☐☐ Dying

Unstable: ☐ (*Unstable injuries will worsen as time passes*)

LEVELING UPExperience: ☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever you roll and get a total of 6 or less, or when a move tells you to, mark an experience box.

When you have filled all five experience boxes, you level up. Erase the marks and pick an improvement from the following list:

IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 Tough, max +3
- ☐ Get +1 Cool, max +2
- ☐ Get +1 Sharp, max +2
- ☐ Get +1 Weird, max +2
- ☐ Take another Wronged move
- ☐ Take another Wronged move
- ☐ Gain a haven, like the Expert has, with two options
- ☐ Add one more option to your haven
- ☐ Take a move from another playbook
- ☐ Take a move from another playbook

After you have leveled up *five* times, you qualify for advanced improvements in addition to these. They're below.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

- ☐ Get +1 to any rating, max +3.
- ☐ Change this hunter to a new type.
- ☐ Create a second hunter to play as well as this one.
- ☐ Mark two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Mark another two of the basic moves as advanced.
- ☐ Retire this hunter to safety.
- ☐ You track down the specific monster(s) responsible for your loss. The Keeper must make the next mystery about them.
- ☐ Change the target of your vengeful rage. Pick a new monster breed: **I know my prey** now applies to them instead.
- ☐ Get back one used Luck point.





GET READY FOR ACTION

Once you've picked your hunter playbook, work through it to create your hunter, making the choices your playbook gives you.

The Keeper will guide you through the process, and can answer any questions you have.

INTRODUCTIONS

When you've all reached the "Introductions" section, you'll take turns introducing your hunter to the others. Describe how your hunter looks, and the main things the team would know about you. What are you good at? What drives you? What personality traits stand out? The Keeper or the other hunters might have some questions for you too. Answer them as appropriate.



HISTORY

When everyone has introduced their hunters, you'll each take another turn, this time picking "History." That's the significant shared memories, or relationships, between the hunters. Each playbook has a list to choose from.

Select one of the hunter players to start. This starting player picks a history option from the list for each other hunter in the group. Many of these options require some additional detail. Sometimes the history choice will tell you who decides on the detail. If not, just work it out between you. The Keeper or the other hunters might ask questions here as well. Answer these, too.

If there's an option that you'd like to assign but it's not clear which hunter would fit it best, ask the group if anyone wants to volunteer. It's okay if you can't decide which option to assign to a hunter. Pass the turn to the next player and choose your remaining options after you've learned more.

At each other hunter's turn, they'll pick a history option for you, so in the end each pair of hunters will have two history choices defining their backstory. This gives you a good opportunity to figure out which of your history options might fit with them—and which ones might complicate your relationship.

Take a few moments to work out what the history choices imply about how and why the team came to work together. Tie this in to your team concept, or use it to build a team concept if you didn't pick one already.

GET STARTED

The Keeper will have prepared a mystery for you to investigate, and will start by telling you what clues drew you in.

MOVES FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE MYSTERY

If you have a move that is triggered at the beginning of a mystery, you should make it now.

The Chosen and Initiate have moves they always make at this point.

The Divine, Expert, Flake, and Spooky all have moves that can take place now. If you picked one of those moves, make it now (if it's mandatory) or decide if you want to (if it's optional).

HOW TO PLAY

This is what you do when you are playing your hunter.

HUNTER AGENDA

When you're playing your hunter:

- Act like you're the hero in this story (because you are).
- Make your own destiny.
- Find the damn monsters and stop them.
- Play your hunter like they're a real person.

Think like your hunter would think. Do what your hunter would do. Remember that you're a badass: extremely dangerous, and good at what you do.

When you get into a fight, you might take a lot of harm, but hunters are lucky and heal quickly. Use Luck to avoid harm if you need to. Alternatively, you can hold on until the end of the fight and then take a break to rest up and heal. For the full harm and healing rules see page 110.

You need to work out what's behind each situation. Then work out how to find it and what its weaknesses are. Then kill it.

THE GAME IS A CONVERSATION

This is an improvisational game in which you create a story together.

The story emerges from a conversation between the players, with the Keeper describing the initial situation and the rest of the players describing what their hunters do in response.

This leads into an ongoing back-and-forth between the Keeper and hunters. The Keeper will ask you questions and describe how the inhabitants of the game's world react, based on your answers.

The Keeper will also present you with situations and crises to do with the monster you're hunting and its potential victims. These require new decisions from you about what happens next: you'll describe what your hunter does, and make moves when they're called for. Each of your decisions and actions will lead to new situations.

When deciding how to react, think like your hunter and keep your agenda in mind.

MOVES

Hunters make moves to find the monster, and to defeat it. Moves are moments of danger and uncertainty. You never know quite how they'll turn out.

Your hunter's moves cover all the things you can do where the game's rules get involved in the story.

Most of the time, you'll be describing what your hunter says where they go, or what they do without activating a move. That goes for everything that a normal person could do, in situations where failure would not be interesting and where there's no particular danger.

In circumstances where a normal person couldn't do what you want to do, or the drama of the story requires it, or it's dangerous that's when the moves come in and control how well you do.

Here are some examples:

*Archer is checking out the site of a monster attack. There's blood and guts all over the place, and police have walked in and out of the area. Archer starts trying to track where the monster went after the attack. When she makes the **investigate a mystery** move, what does she discover?*

*Chris realises that a ghul is sneaking up on him, so he gets out his sawn-off shotgun and blasts it in the face as it leaps for him. Does Chris get hurt? He makes the **kick some ass** move to find out how bad his injuries are and what happens to the ghul.*

*A roof-beam comes down on Ted as a giant spider smashes through the wall and scampers to freedom. Ted's partner, Rainer, grabs a chair and tries to wedge the beam so there's room for Ted to escape. Does she succeed? How badly is Ted hurt? Is he trapped? She needs to make the **act under pressure** move to find out.*



GET READY FOR ACTION

YOU HAVE TO MAKE THE MOVE

A key element of the use of moves is “You have to make the move.”

This means that if you want to (for instance) **manipulate someone** in the game, you need to describe your hunter doing that. How do you ask? What do you offer, to make them do what you want? Why would they believe your offer is genuine?

For example:

Alan, the Keeper: “The flayed one is racing you to the car, and it looks like it’s going to get to you before you can close the door. So Mark, what do you do now?”

*Mary, playing her hunter Mark: “I **kick some ass!**”*

Alan: “What are you doing?”

Mary: “I’m going to smash it out the way with my baseball bat so I can get in the car.”

Alan: “That sounds like you’re not really getting into a fight: what’s most important? Killing the flayed one or getting to the car?”

Mary: “Oh, yeah, killing it I guess. I’ll stop running and just start smashing it on the head.”

*Alan: “Sure. The flayed one brandishes its skinning knife as it grabs you. It screams, ‘You will become one of us now, hunter!’ Now roll **kick ass**.”*

It works the other way too—if you are describing what you are doing, someone might notice that you are making one of the moves. In that case, go ahead and roll the dice to see what happens.

For example:

Alan: “Okay, you get to the place the body was found. You can still see some bloodstains on the concrete, and there’s some scratches there that might be related to the attack.”

Mary: “I want to carefully check the bloodstains, to work out how she was killed. Like is it a blood spray from a torn throat or did she bleed out slowly from a wound or what?”

*Alan: “That sounds like you’re **investigating a mystery**. Why don’t you roll?”*

Sometimes the Keeper will ask you questions to clarify what’s going on. That’s cool; for the game to work, everyone needs to clearly understand what’s happening, so make sure your answer in as much detail as you can.

ROLLING THE DICE

Often the rules for a move will tell you to roll, say, +Cool. This means you should grab two everyday six-sided dice, roll them, add them together and then add whatever number is written down for your hunter's Cool.

If it says something else instead of Cool (usually another rating), then add that number instead. So, if you are told to roll +Weird, roll two dice and add your Weird rating. If you are told to roll +Tough, roll two dice and add your Tough rating. If you have a negative rating, like -1, then you subtract one from your total instead.

The move description will say what the different results mean. Usually, 7 or higher is good, and 10 or higher is really good. A result of 6 or lower is a miss, which means the Keeper will have an opportunity to screw your hunter over.

Example:

*I need to roll “manipulate someone.” That’s a +Charm roll, and my Charm is +1. I roll the dice and get a 2 and a 5. My total is $1 + 2 + 5 = 9$. That’s a partial success for **manipulate someone**.*

BONUSES AND HOLDS

Sometimes a move will give you a bonus to future dice rolls: you get to take the bonus “forward” or “ongoing.” Sometimes a move will give you a “hold.”

FORWARD

If you get +1 forward, you get +1 on your very next roll only.

For example:

*Another hunter can give you a bonus of +1 forward as the result of a move. The next thing that happens is that you charge in to attack a monster. You get +1 on your **kick some ass** roll. If you had decided to **use magic** instead, to cast a protection spell, then you would have gained the +1 on that roll. Once you have used the bonus, it’s gone.*

ONGOING

If you get +1 ongoing, you get +1 to every roll you make until the situation no longer applies.

For example:

*If you **read a bad situation**, you might be awarded +1 ongoing while using an escape route you spotted. You get +1 on all rolls while escaping via that route, but nothing more once you have escaped. You also get no bonus if you don't try to escape via the way you spotted.*

HOLD

When you get a hold, you'll get a number of points. Each point can be spent one-for-one to get a specific effect. The move will list the effects you can spend your hold on.

*For example, you are interviewing the witnesses to a monster attack and you make an **investigate a mystery** roll. Your result gives you 2 hold. You can spend your hold to ask the Keeper questions from the list in the **investigate a mystery** move.*

You ask a witness, "Did you see where the attacker went?" and spend one hold. ("Where did it go?" is one of the questions.)

The Keeper says (as Mrs Henderson, the witness), "It scurried over there, and pulled up that grating and went into the sewers."

As the conversation with the witnesses continues, you spend the next hold to ask the Keeper about the monster's powers. "Hey, from all the things they've told me, can I work out any powers?" ("What can it do?" is another question.)

The Keeper replies, "The witness descriptions don't agree at all. It must be able to change shape or maybe change memories."

Later the last hold goes to ask the Keeper about whether a witness is hiding something. That exhausts your hold, so you don't get any more questions for now.

THE BASIC MOVES

I introduced the basic moves earlier: the things every hunter can do to find the monster and kill it. Now that you're about to start, let's go into more detail about what these are.

ACT UNDER PRESSURE

This covers trying to do something under conditions of particular stress or danger. Examples of acting under pressure are: staying on task while a banshee screams at you; barricading a door before the giant rats catch up; resisting the mental domination of a brain-worm; fighting on when you're badly injured.

When you **act under pressure**, roll +Cool.

- On a 10+ you do what you set out to.
- On a 7-9 the Keeper is going to give you a worse outcome, hard choice, or price to pay.
- On a miss, things go to hell.

HELP OUT

When you **help another hunter** with a move they are making, roll +Cool.

- On a 10+ your help grants them +1 to their roll.
- On a 7-9 your help grants them +1 to their roll, but you also expose yourself to trouble or danger.
- On a miss, you expose yourself to trouble or danger without helping.

Note that help bonuses do not stack: if two people **help out**, the hunter just gets +1 on their roll.

INVESTIGATE A MYSTERY

Investigating can be done any number of ways: following tracks, interviewing witnesses, forensic analysis, looking up old folklore in a library, typing the monster's name into Google, capturing the monster and conducting tests on it, and so on. Anything that might give you more information about what's going on is fair game for an investigate move.

When you **investigate a mystery**, roll +Sharp.

- On a 10+ hold 2, and on a 7-9 hold 1.

One hold can be spent to ask the Keeper one of the following questions:

- *What happened here?*
- *What sort of creature is it?*
- *What can it do?*
- *What can hurt it?*
- *Where did it go?*
- *What was it going to do?*
- *What is being concealed here?*

On a miss, you reveal some information to the monster or whoever you are talking to. The Keeper might ask you some questions, which you have to answer.

It's important that your attempts to investigate (and the results you get from them) are plausible and consistent with what's happening. For example, if you're using laboratory equipment to investigate evidence, you probably won't be able to learn anything about the monster's magical origins. The Keeper is obliged to answer truthfully, but not necessarily in full—just what you can work out in your current situation and using your current methods. The Keeper may choose to describe how something you've just discovered relates to something you learned previously.

The Keeper may ask, "How do you find that out?" If you don't have a good answer, choose another question instead.



KICK SOME ASS

This is used when you are fighting something that's fighting you back.

When you get into a fight and **kick some ass**, roll +Tough.

On any success (i.e., total 7 or more) you and whatever you're fighting inflict harm on each other. The amount of harm is based on the established dangers in the game. That usually means you inflict the harm rating of your weapon and your enemy inflicts their attack's harm rating on you.

You can take seven harm before you die.

If you roll a 10+, choose one extra effect:

- You gain the advantage: take +1 forward, or give +1 forward to another hunter.
- You inflict terrible harm (+1 harm).
- You suffer less harm (-1 harm).
- You force them where you want them.

On a miss, you get your ass kicked instead. You suffer harm or get captured, but don't inflict any harm back.

MANIPULATE SOMEONE

This move is used when you want someone to do something for you and they don't want to do it. To get them to do what you're asking you'll need a good reason. What counts as a good reason depends on what you are asking for and your relationship with them.

For friends and allies, you might just need to ask. For witnesses to a monster attack, you could tell them you are with the police, or just offer them some cash for answering your questions.

Once you have given them a reason, **tell them what you want them to do** and roll +Charm.

For a normal person:

- If you get 10+, then they'll do it for the reason you gave them. If you asked too much, they'll tell you the minimum it would take for them to do it (or if there's no way they'd do it).
- On a 7-9, they'll do it, but only if you do something for them right now to show that you mean it. If you asked too much, they'll tell you what, if anything, it would take for them to do it.
- On a miss, your approach is completely wrong: you offend or anger the target.

For another hunter:

- On a 10+, if they do what you ask they mark experience and get +1 forward.
- On a 7-9, they mark experience if they do what you ask.
- On a miss, it's up to that hunter to decide how badly you offend or annoy them. They mark experience if they decide *not* to do what you asked.

MANIPULATING MONSTERS

Manipulate someone does not normally work on monsters, even if they can reason and talk. You can try and make a deal with one if you really want, but you don't get to roll to ensure it keeps its side of the bargain. You just have to hope it's an honourable fiend. Good luck with that.

If you take the Monstrous move **dark negotiator** (or any other move that specifically allows it) then you are allowed to manipulate monsters, at least if they can reason and talk. Of course, a monster probably needs a different sort of reason than normal people—quite possibly something you really won't want to do.

Minions may or may not be susceptible to manipulation. It may be possible to manipulate minions who are human, or almost human; those that are incapable of understanding or reason cannot be manipulated.

PROTECT SOMEONE

If someone is about to suffer harm and you can somehow prevent it, then you can try to protect them.

When you **prevent harm to another character**, roll +Tough.

On any success (i.e., 7 or more), you protect them okay, but you'll suffer some or all of the harm they were going to get.

If you got a 10+ choose an extra:

- You suffer little harm (-1 harm).
- All impending danger is now focused on you.
- You inflict harm on the enemy.
- You hold the enemy back.

On a miss, then you end up making things worse.

READ A BAD SITUATION

When you look around and **read a bad situation**, roll +Sharp.

On a 10+ hold 3, and on a 7-9, hold 1.

One hold can be spent to ask the Keeper one of the following questions:

- *What's my best way in?*
- *What's my best way out?*
- *Are there any dangers we haven't noticed?*
- *What's the biggest threat?*
- *What's most vulnerable to me?*
- *What's the best way to protect the victims?*

If you act on the answers, you get +1 ongoing while the information is relevant. For example, if you ask for the best way into the monster's lair then you'll get +1 while you are infiltrating it. But once you're in, the information doesn't help you any more. The bonus is only applied once on each roll, even if more than one question applies to your course of action.

On a miss, you might mis-read the situation (e.g. "Everything is fine here! It will be totally safe to go investigate alone!"), or you might reveal tactical details to your enemies (which means the Keeper can ask the questions above of you).

USE MAGIC

When you **use magic**, say what you're trying to achieve and how you do the spell, then roll +Weird.

- If you get a 10+, the magic works without issues: choose your effect.
- On a 7-9, it works imperfectly: choose your effect and a glitch. The Keeper will decide what effect the glitch has.
- On a miss, you lose control of the magic. This never ends well.

By default the magic has one of the effects listed below, lasts for around thirty minutes, and does not expose you to danger, unwanted attention, or side-effects. If there's a glitch that might change.

Effects:

- Inflict harm (1-harm ignore-armour magic obvious).
- Enchant a weapon. It gets +1 harm and +magic.
- Do one thing that is beyond human limitations.
- Bar a place or portal to a specific person or a type of creature.
- Trap a specific person, minion, or monster.
- Banish a spirit or curse from the person, object, or place it inhabits.
- Summon a monster into the world.
- Communicate with something that you do not share a language with.
- Observe another place or time.
- Heal 1-harm from an injury, or cure a disease, or neutralize a poison.

Glitches:

- The effect is weakened.
- The effect is of short duration.
- You take 1-harm ignore-armour.
- The magic draws immediate, unwelcome attention.
- It has a problematic side effect.

The Keeper may require one or more of the following:

- The spell requires weird materials.
- The spell will take 10 seconds, 30 seconds, or 1 minute to cast.
- The spell requires ritual chanting and gestures.
- The spell requires you to draw arcane symbols.
- You need one or two people to help cast the spell.
- You need to refer to a tome of magic for the details.

If you want to do magic that goes beyond these effects, it counts as **big magic**. Big magic uses different rules, described below.

BIG MAGIC

Sometimes the everyday spells and rituals of the **use magic** basic move aren't enough. **Big magic** covers everything more powerful, such as bringing someone back from the dead or opening a portal to another dimension. Big magic is both more powerful and more dangerous than the basic **use magic**.

Decide what magical effect you want to make happen, and tell the Keeper. They will determine what you must do in order to cast the spell. The options (and the Keeper can pick more than one) are:

- You need to spend a lot of time (days or weeks) researching the magic ritual.
- You need to experiment with the spell—there will be lots of failures before you get it right.
- You need some rare and weird ingredients and supplies.
- The spell will take a long time (hours or days) to cast.
- You need a lot of people (2, 3, 7, 13, or more) to help.
- The spell needs to be cast at a particular place and/or time.
- You need to **use magic** as part of the ritual, perhaps to summon a monster, communicate with something, or bar the portal you opened.
- It will have a specific side-effect or danger.



Once you know the requirements, you need to arrange them. Once you've done that, the magical effect you want will simply happen. You don't need to roll any move for **big magic** itself, but you might need to roll some other moves, as you try to meet the requirements.

Here are some examples of how you can use **big magic**.

The hunters want to discover where a particular person is, with only a photograph to go on. The Keeper decides this will require three people to take part in the ritual, and that they need a very precise map of the area—the spell will guide a pendulum to the person's location.

*The hunters are investigating a frogbeast that's been devouring people. After discovering it's from an alien dimension, the hunters propose casting a spell that "detunes" it from our dimension and sends it home (or somewhere else, at least). The Keeper decides this will require a few experiments taking up the afternoon, the spell will take around six hours to cast, it requires them to **use magic** to banish the frogbeast from this dimension, and it will expose them to danger—the frogbeast will feel the spell being cast and know where the force is coming from.*

*One of the hunters on the team has died, and the others want to bring her back to life. The Keeper decides that it will take some weeks of research, the ritual requires her body, it must take place at dawn on the spring solstice in view of the rising sun, they must **use magic** to summon back the dead hunter's soul from Death's realm, and it exposes them to a big danger—Death will be angered by this transgression.*

FIGHTS

Here are some things to remember when you get down to the slaying.

Don't always go right to rolling dice for **kick some ass**. That move puts you in danger of harm as well as your enemy. If you can find a way to attack *without* putting yourself in danger, then you can inflict harm on the enemy without suffering any yourself (and without needing to succeed on a roll).

Remember you can try to **protect someone** whenever they are threatened with harm. Think about who needs protecting, and where everyone is in relation to each other. If you set things up right, you might even be able to save a teammate from the harm they're going to suffer if they miss a roll.

Remember that you can **help another hunter** to give them +1 on a roll. This can sometimes be the difference between life and death, plus if you help in a fight the Keeper might say you can add the harm from your attack to the attack of the hunter you're helping—so you can take a monster down faster.

UNARMED ATTACKS AND IMPROVISED WEAPONS

If your hunter has been caught unarmed, and is just fighting with fists and feet, you do 0-harm hand/intimate. You can still hurt things if you have a bonus to harm. That could come from getting a 10+ on a **kick some ass** roll, or a move you have.

If your hunter grabs a random object to use as a weapon, decide between you and your Keeper about how it is rated. Here are some guidelines:

- If it's hardly more dangerous than a punch, 0-harm hand.
- If it's sharp or heavy (kitchen knife, lamp), 1-harm hand.
- If it's really heavy (microwave, bar stool), 2-harm hand heavy.
- If you can throw it, add "close" range.

HARM

When you take harm, the Keeper will tell you what happened and how many points of harm it was. Mark off that number of boxes on your harm track. There will be an additional effect: the Keeper will tell you what it is.

Injury severity depends on how much harm you have suffered:

- 0-harm wounds have only minor, short term effects.
- 4-7 harm wounds are serious and *unstable*. They will get worse unless treated. Mark the “Unstable” box.
- 8-harm or more will kill a normal human, including a hunter.
- Note that armour reduces the harm suffered by the number of points it is rated for.

There are more details in the Keeper section (page 212).

MONSTERS AND HARM

Monsters are usually a lot harder to kill than humans. Minions (lesser supernatural creatures) can be as well.

All monsters (and some minions) have *weaknesses*. That means they cannot be killed until you use their weakness against them. How to use a weakness against a monster depends on what the weakness is.

Weaknesses can include:

- Things that can be used as a weapon: e.g. fire, cold iron.
- Specific methods of attack: e.g. a silver weapon, decapitation.
- Something to do: e.g. a magic ritual, a burial procedure.
- A harmful environment: e.g. sunlight, running water.

If you know the monster’s weakness, use it.

If you don’t know its weakness, find out using your moves.

If you don’t use a creature’s weakness, it will come back, even if you win the fight.

HEALING

A 0-harm wound goes away right after you get it. It can cause a momentary problem, but after that it is purely cosmetic.

Moderate wounds (1-3 harm) will improve when your hunter has a chance to rest up (e.g. a decent night's sleep), or get some first aid treatment. This reduces an injury by 1-harm.

First aid does not normally require a move, it's just regular practice. Hunter moves that provide healing may be used in addition to first aid. You can only benefit from first aid once per injury or condition.

Serious wounds (4+ harm) require treatment. They are normally unstable, meaning that they will worsen if untreated (the Keeper will tell you when to mark off another point of harm). Left too long, serious wounds will kill you. If a move tells you that the injury is now stable, you can erase the mark in the unstable box. If you take more harm and are still at 4-harm or more, then your injuries become unstable again. For serious wounds, first aid heals one harm but it will still be unstable.

What counts as treatment depends on the wound, but it will usually be one of the following:

- A hunter's healing move.
- Time in an infirmary in someone's haven.
- A visit to a doctor or emergency room.
- A magic spell.

Healing moves will mention how many harm they heal.

HEALING BETWEEN MYSTERIES

After a mystery is concluded, but before the next one, all the injured hunters will get some healing.

If there was a while to rest between mysteries, then heal all your harm.

If there was no time to rest between mysteries, then heal 1-harm.

RESURRECTION

If someone wants to bring a slain hunter (or someone else) back from the dead, this requires **big magic**. But there's an extra step for this particular case.

When you return to life, roll -Weird (so subtract three if you have +3 Weird, add one for -1 Weird, etc.). The weirder you are, the weirder it is when you come back from the dead.

On a 10+, you have changed a little. Mark experience and pick any one of the options below (for 7-9 or miss results).

On a 7-9, choose one of these:

- You come back a little bit broken (memory loss, stressed, disconnected).
- You come back a little different. Add 1 to one rating (max +3) and subtract 1 from another (min -2).
- You come back very different. Change to a new playbook, just as if you took that advanced improvement (see page 121).
- Your revival satisfies an ancient prophecy.
- Something comes back with you (e.g. a possessing spirit, a slain monster is revived, an ancient evil is released), but it's not a pressing danger.
- You, or the one who brought you back, owes a favour to a powerful spirit, monster, or demon.

On a miss, choose one of these:

- You come back broken (soulless, insane, depressive).
- You come back disabled. Take -1 to a rating (to -2, at worst).
- Your revival satisfies an ancient, dark, and terrible prophecy.
- Something comes back with you (e.g. a possessing spirit, a slain monster is revived, an ancient evil is released). It is an immediate and pressing danger.
- You, or the one who brought you back, owes a huge debt (soul, firstborn, ten years of servitude, etc.) to a powerful spirit, monster, or demon.



THE LUCK COUNTER

Every hunter has a certain amount of Luck they can call on in emergencies.

When you mark off a point of Luck, you can choose one of the following lucky breaks:

- Decrease a wound you just suffered to 0-harm.
- After you roll, retroactively change the result to a 12.

Your playbook has a Luck counter that keeps track of how much is left. You only get a limited supply. Make it count.

WHEN YOU RUN OUT OF LUCK

When you have marked off all your Luck, the Keeper is allowed to hit you with more bad stuff. Fate will be looking for some payback.

If your playbook includes fate-related stuff (such as the Chosen's fate or the Spooky's dark side), running out of Luck means all that bad stuff is going to start happening.

GEAR

Here are the rules for gear, vehicles, teams, allies, havens and all that.

GETTING NEW GEAR

If you want to get something that you could just buy, just buy it.

You can also get new gear when you take certain improvements.

If you want something that you couldn't just buy (like a flame-thrower, or a magical artifact), or something you don't have the resources to get, then you need to do something special (like call in a favour, or steal it). Tell the Keeper what you're doing, and play through the acquisition attempt to see how well it works.

The same thing can apply if you want an ally, a team under your command, or something else hard to arrange (like an Expert's haven).

If you do everything necessary to get the new gear, well, then you get it (even without using an improvement or anything like that).

WEAPONS

All weapons have some "tags" (i.e. lists of descriptions) that describe how they work. All weapons have a harm and range tag, that let you know how much harm an injury from it causes, and how far away the target can be.

For example: Power drill (2-harm hand loud messy)

"2-harm" "hand," "loud," and "messy" are the tags. "2-harm" is the harm tag, "hand" is the range tag, and "loud" and "messy" are descriptive tags.

Here's what the tags mean:

- **1-harm, 2-harm, 3-harm**, etc: This is how much harm the attack inflicts.
- **area**: Can hit multiple foes. You may divide the harm you inflict among multiple targets.
- **balanced**: Easy to wield and keep your grip on.
- **barrier**: Does harm to anything that passes through. Counts as armour against any attacks that pass through it.

- **close:** Effective at fairly close quarters—outside arms’ reach, but not too far.
- **far:** Effective at long range.
- **fire:** Sets things on fire.
- **forceful:** Pushes things around, allowing you to “force them where you want them” in addition to normal attack effects.
- **hand:** Effective within arms’ reach.
- **life-drain:** Transfers life energy: the wielder is healed for as many points of harm as were inflicted. E.g. if you inflict 2-harm, then you heal 2-harm from your injuries.
- **heavy:** This weapon is heavy and difficult to wield.
- **holy:** This will be more effective against monsters with a weakness to holy items.
- **ignore-armour:** Ignores protective armour. Armour has no effect on this harm. If armour has the magic tag, then the attack needs both ignore-armour and magic to bypass the armour.
- **innocuous:** Doesn’t draw suspicion.
- **intimate:** Effective at the closest of quarters—within the embrace of your foe.
- **loud:** Loud enough that it draws attention.
- **magic:** Enchanted, and so can affect certain creatures and armours that are proof against normal weapons.
- **many:** These weapons are small enough you can carry a large number of them.
- **[a material]:** This weapon is made from the named material, and is thus useful against monsters with that weakness.
- **messy:** Spreads a lot of blood and gore around.
- **quick:** Fast to prepare and attack with, giving you a better chance of going first.
- **reload:** This weapon has limited ammunition, and may run out and need to be reloaded.
- **restraining:** A successful attack entangles or grabs the victim.
- **slow:** This weapon is slow to prepare and attack with.
- **small:** This weapon is tiny and easy to conceal.
- **unreliable:** This weapon needs regular cleaning and maintenance, otherwise it just isn’t gonna work.
- **useful:** This weapon has other uses aside from violence.
- **valuable:** This weapon is antique, or made of valuable materials.
- **volatile:** This weapon is dangerous and unstable.

CUSTOM WEAPONS

If your hunter (or your foes) get a new weapon that needs tags, you can define your own. Think about the way the weapon is used and what effects it will have, then write down tags in accordance with that.

Every weapon must have a harm and range tag. There's no upper limit on the harm rating, but 4 or more is unusually destructive. Use the existing weapons in the hunter playbooks and the following table as a guide. Permitted range tags are intimate, hand, close, and far. Other tags are optional.

- If it's hardly more dangerous than a punch, 0-harm hand.
- If it's sharp or heavy, 1-harm hand.
- If it's dangerous, 2-harm hand heavy.
- If it's a weapon designed to kill, 3-harm.
- If it's overkill for a person, 4-harm.
- If you can throw it, add +close.

For example, a hunter decides they want a super-soaker type water gun for a monster that has "water" as a weakness. It needs a "liquid" tag (not "water," because you could fill it with something else too), so write it: water gun (0-harm close liquid).

ARMOUR

Armour reduces the harm suffered by the wearer, by the number of points that it is rated for. For example, if you are wearing a leather jacket worth 1-armour, and a sewer mutant claws your arm for 3-harm, you only suffer a 2-harm injury.

1-armour includes heavy leather jackets, motorcycle armour, bulletproof or stab-proof vests and other light but significant protection.

2-armour includes military body armour, police riot gear, medieval mail, or other seriously bulky and highly effective protective gear.

If armour has the magic tag, then normal weapons that have ignore-armour don't bypass the rating. Only weapons that have magic and ignore-armour will bypass magic armour.

Normally hunters can only get gear worth 1 or 2-armour. Armour worth more than that would be something very rare and special: perhaps ancient magic, or the results of weird science.

OTHER GEAR

In general your hunter can simply use other gear without needing any extra rules for it.

It's not necessary to define every piece of equipment that comes into play, but if something becomes significant in play then you can define it in more detail so that everyone's on the same page. This can be done via gear tags and custom gear moves.

GEAR TAGS

Defining tags for a piece of gear gives you a definition of what it can do, and the advantages or disadvantages of using it.

Tags come into play by opening up possibilities for the hunters. For example, night-vision goggles (tag: see in the dark) allow you to follow a creature's tracks even when it's dark.

CUSTOM GEAR MOVES

If tags aren't quite enough, you can also define a custom move for gear. Custom moves are dealt with in detail on page 296, but the basic idea is simple: just define when the gear works, and what it does for the user.

For example, if you get a sports car, you could define a custom move to represent its speed and performance. E.g. "When you **flee or pursue in a sports car**, you get +1 ongoing."



LEVELING UP

You get an experience point whenever your roll totals six or less, or when a move tells you to. Mark your next experience box.

Whenever you mark the fifth experience box on your playbook, you **level up**. Erase all five marks and choose an improvement from the list in your playbook. Mark the improvements off as you take them: each can only be selected once.

Then you start collecting experience marks again, until you level up again when you get another five experience points.

When you have leveled up five times, you can start choosing from the advanced improvements list as well (page 120).

END OF SESSION EXPERIENCE

At the end of each session, the Keeper will ask the following questions:

- Did we conclude the current mystery?
- Did we save someone from certain death (or worse)?
- Did we learn something new and important about the world?
- Did we learn something new and important about one of the hunters?

If you get one or two “Yes” answers, each hunter marks one experience. If you get three or four, each hunter marks two.

IMPROVEMENTS

There are ten types of improvement. Here are the details:

GET +1 TO A RATING (MAX +X)

Permanently raise the specified rating. The maximum is a limit: you can only raise the rating to the listed maximum, and no further. If your rating is already at (or above) the listed maximum, then don't select this improvement.

For example, your hunter has Tough=0 and you select an improvement: “+1 Tough (maximum +3).” Increase your Tough rating to Tough +1.

TAKE ANOTHER MOVE FROM YOUR PLAYBOOK

Select another one of the moves from your playbook.

TAKE A MOVE FROM ANOTHER PLAYBOOK

Select a move from any other playbook that's available in your game (whether it's currently in use or not).

This improvement requires a little care. It won't always make sense to take certain moves (especially supernatural ones). Make sure that the new move makes sense for your hunter.

GAIN AN ALLY/GAIN A TEAM

You gain a new ally or a friendly team of people to help you out. You might already know the ally/team, or they might be new to the story.

Allies and teams are defined the same way, even though an ally is individual and a team is several people (usually 2-6). The main difference is that for a team, the motivation describes how they act *as a team*, but the individual members can have their own, different, motivation when they do their own thing.

Pick one of the following types (the "motivation" is the guideline for the Keeper about how they act):

- Ally: subordinate (motivation: to follow your exact instructions)
- Ally: lieutenant (motivation: to execute the spirit of your instructions)
- Ally: friend (motivation: to provide emotional support)
- Ally: bodyguard (motivation: to intercept danger)
- Ally: confidante (motivation: to give you advice and perspective)
- Ally: backup (motivation: to stand with you)

If the ally/team members don't have names yet, pick them now. Decide what their background is too, how they look, and any special skills they bring.

GAIN A HAVEN LIKE THE EXPERT HAS

You get a haven. When you take this, it will tell you how many options you can pick from the list in the Expert playbook.

Decide how you got the haven, and where it is.

ADD AN OPTION TO YOUR HAVEN

Select a new haven option from the list in the Expert playbook. You have added this facility to your haven.

Don't bother taking this improvement if you don't have a haven!

CROOKED: RECOVER A STASH OF MONEY

Like it says, you get a big pile of cash to spend. It's a lot, but not unlimited.

INITIATE: GAIN COMMAND OF YOUR CHAPTER OF THE SECT

The Initiate can take this. It means they get promoted to be head of their local chapter. This gives the Initiate access to all the Sect's local facilities and command of the chapter's members.

It doesn't mean you can constantly bring people along to help you on your mysteries—you need to take a team under your command for that.

You can still call on resources from the Sect on a case by case basis, using your usual start-of-the-mystery move, but you can ask for bigger things now. Of course, your new superiors also expect more from you.

MUNDANE: ERASE A LUCK MARK

Erase a used Luck mark from your sheet. You have bought some time before Fate comes for you.

PROFESSIONAL: ADD RESOURCE TAG/ CHANGE RED TAPE TAG

If you want to add a new resource tag, pick one from the list in the Agency section of your playbook.

If you want to change a red tape tag, erase the one you don't want and put a new one from the list in its place.

Either of these changes may imply the Agency is altering tactics or objectives, so there might be further consequences because of this.

SPELL-SLINGER: TAKE ANOTHER COMBAT MAGIC PICK

Pick a new combat magic option, either a new base or a new extra.

SPOOKY: CHANGE SOME OR ALL OF YOUR DARK SIDE TAGS

Erase the old tags and substitute new ones that you want to change to. You don't get to have any fewer, just change them around.

This implies that you have changed your relationship with your powers in some way.

ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

After a hunter has leveled up five times, they unlock the advanced improvements. That's a list of new improvements you can choose from in addition to the basic improvements. From now on, when you level up choose from either the basic or advanced improvement lists.

Some of the playbooks have special advanced improvements of their own. These are unlocked at the same time (after five level-ups).

+1 TO ANY RATING (MAX +3)

Just like the normal +1 to a specific rating advance, except you can choose whichever you want. +3 is the maximum for any rating—once you're there, you can't improve any further.

CHANGE YOUR HUNTER TO A NEW TYPE

When you change your type, pick another playbook you wish to change to.

Your ratings and history stay the same.

You may change your name or look, if you want.

For your old moves, check each one and decide (with the Keeper) if it is intrinsic to who you are, or just something you did for a while. If it's intrinsic, keep that move. If not, erase it.

Then add new moves from your new playbook, as if you were creating a new hunter.

Finally, you may or may not get the new gear, or keep your old gear, depending what makes sense given the circumstances of your change.

MAKE A SECOND HUNTER

Create a new hunter to join the team. You can play both hunters at once, or maybe take turns, deciding which of them will come along on a mystery on a case-by-case basis.

Make up the new hunter as normal, except for history. Only pick history for the hunters played by different people—don't tie your own hunters together with history picks.

RETIRE TO SAFETY

Your hunter retires to a safe place. They no longer actively hunt monsters, and have found a place to live that's safe from old enemies.

Give your hunter to the Keeper to look after from now on. They are safe from the Keeper's threats, and never count as a threat themselves. Your retired hunter might, at your and the Keeper's discretion, count as an ally for the other hunters.

ERASE ONE USED LUCK MARK

Erase a used Luck mark from your sheet. You have bought some time before Fate comes for you.

MARK TWO OF YOUR BASIC MOVES AS ADVANCED

This means you get better at the basic moves.

There's a new result for each advanced move, that applies when you roll a 12 or higher. These 12+ results represent the extraordinary levels of success you can now achieve. See below for details.

ADVANCED MOVES

If you have advanced a basic move, you gain access to an even better result when you roll a 12 or more for the move.

For **act under pressure**, on a 12+ you rise above the pressure completely. You may choose to either do what you wanted and something extra, or to do what you wanted to absolute perfection (so that people will talk about it for years to come).

For **help out**, on a 12+ you make the difference. The person you are helping acts as if they just rolled a 12 on their move, regardless of what they actually got.

For **kick some ass**, on a 12+ you devastate and overawe your enemy. You inflict and suffer harm as normal, and pick one of these enhanced effects:

- You completely hold the advantage. All hunters involved in the fight get +1 forward.
- You suffer no harm at all.
- Your attack inflicts double the normal harm.
- Your attack drives the enemy away in a rout.

For **protect someone**, on a 12+ you defend them perfectly. Both you and the character you are protecting are unharmed and out of danger. If you were protecting a bystander, they also become your **ally** (pick a type for them as if you had taken the “gain an ally” improvement on leveling up, see page 119).

For **manipulate someone**, on a 12+ you absolutely convince them. They do what you want *right now*. For a hunter, they must **act under pressure** to resist your request. If they do what you ask, they mark one experience and take +1 ongoing while doing what you asked. For a bystander, not only do they do what you want right now, they also become your **ally** (pick a type for them as if you had taken the “gain an ally” improvement on leveling up, see page 119) for the rest of the mystery (or, if you do enough for them, permanently). Note that allies can be lost, too! If they discover you’ve manipulated them into acting against their best interests, your new **ally** may become a threat to you.

For **investigate a mystery**, on a 12+ you may ask the Keeper any question you want about the mystery, not just the listed ones.

For **read a bad situation**, on a 12+ you may ask the Keeper any question you want about the situation, not just the listed ones.

For **use magic**, on a 12+ you are infused with magical power. What you wanted to do happens and the Keeper will offer you some extra benefit on top of that.



PLAYBOOK-SPECIFIC ADVANCED IMPROVEMENTS

These are only available to the hunters of the type listed. They become available after you have leveled up five times, the same as the usual advanced improvements.

FOR THE CHOSEN

- Delete one doom tag from your fate, and (optionally) change one heroic tag as well.

FOR THE DIVINE

- Change your mission. When you choose this, you accept that your initial mission has failed, that it is impossible, or that things have changed too much to continue. Whatever the reason, decide with the Keeper what your new mission is. If none of the original choices are right for you, make up something new.

FOR THE INITIATE

- Become the leader, or effective leader, of the whole Sect.

This operates similarly to becoming the leader of your chapter. You are now in charge of everything. You don't have superiors any more (except maybe divine ones), but you'll still have to manage the factions within the Sect to get things done.

FOR THE MONSTROUS

- You have freed yourself from the curse of your kind: your curse no longer applies, but you lose 1 Weird.
- You turn evil (again): retire this character, they become one of the Keeper's threats.

Turning evil takes your hunter out of your control permanently. The character is now a threat, for the Keeper to use against the hunters. Given how many of the team's secrets your hunter knows, this option shouldn't be chosen lightly!

FOR THE PROFESSIONAL

- You can get some or all of the hunters hired by your agency (they'll get the **deal with the agency** move, as well as salary and benefits).

All the hunters you pick are now Agency employees. They all get the deal with the Agency move, and everything else that goes along with being an agent.

FOR THE SPELL-SLINGER

- You may cross off another option from your Tools and Techniques. This works just like when you first created your Spell-slinger—you are now less restricted in your spell casting.

FOR THE SPOOKY

- You discover how to use your powers at a lower price. Delete one dark side tag permanently.

FOR THE WRONGED

- You track down the specific monster(s) responsible for your loss—the Keeper must make the next mystery about them.

Note that this doesn't mean you get to automatically win. You just get a shot at them. Keeper, the Wronged's targets should be central to the next mystery but otherwise create the mystery as normal.

- Change the target of your vengeful rage. **I know my prey** now applies to these monsters instead.

SUMMARY: HUNTER'S SESSION

There's two parts to this: the things you'll do just at the start of a new game, and then the things you'll do every time.

THE FIRST TIME ONLY

- Choose hunter playbooks and come up with a team concept.
- Create your hunter while everyone else creates theirs.
- Go around the group: each of you introduces your hunter to the others
- Go around the group again: each of you picks a history option for every other hunter on the team.
- Keeping your selected history options in mind, tidy up the team concept and work out your backstory.
- Go on to the things you do every game (see below)
- At the end of the first session, review your hunter's playbook and decide if any of the options you picked didn't match your vision of what the character would be like. If you need to make some changes, go ahead and do it.

EVERY GAME

- Do all the start-of-mystery moves.
- Get the first clue from the Keeper, and make a plan.
- Investigate the mystery: interview witnesses; check out where key events happened; look into any other weird stuff going on.
- When you know what you're hunting, work out its weaknesses and where to find it.
- Whenever a roll totals six or less, mark experience. Whenever a move tells you to, mark experience.
- When you mark your fifth experience point, level up, select an improvement and reset your experience to zero.
- Protect all the innocent bystanders.
- Go and kill the monster!
- When you're done, answer the end-of-session experience questions and mark any experience you earn from the answers.





THE KEEPER

If you are going to be the Keeper, your responsibilities are quite different to playing a hunter. This section takes you through all that.

It's written to tell you what you need to know in the order you'll need it (with some digressions along the way).

WHAT YOU DO

Your job as Keeper has two parts.

First, before each game you need to spend a few minutes inventing a mystery: a monster and a situation for the hunters to investigate and sort out.

Second, when you sit down to play, you are responsible for portraying the hunters' world: describing the places, people and monsters they meet, and how those things react to the hunters' actions.

Incidentally, the term "Keeper" comes from the classic game Call of Cthulhu. It's short for "Keeper of Arcane Lore" there, but in Monster of the Week the meaning is "Keeper of Monsters and Mysteries."

HOW IT WILL PLAY OUT

This is an improvisational game. You will start each mystery having defined the monster and other details, but you won't know how the situation will play out once the hunters get involved. Let them do what they want: it's your responsibility to decide how the people and monsters and anything else react to those actions.

The game is improvised in the wider scale too: you and the other players will develop a backstory and mythology about the hunters and their world as you play. When something happens in an individual mystery, you can weave some of those events back into later events to build a consistent world.

NO PLANNING AHEAD

One thing that the Keeper definitely does *not* do is decide what is going to happen to the hunters. You'll prepare the situation that they're coming in to investigate, and you'll think about what would happen if they didn't come.

But once you sit down to play your mystery with the hunters, then everything is up to them. They get to choose which places they visit, which people they talk to, how they chase down the monster, and everything else.

Your preparation gives you a sketch of what's going on, just enough for you to work out how everything will react to what the hunters do.

It's fine to speculate about what is likely to happen. Say if you have a hunter who is likely to be sympathetic to a particular person in the mystery, you can go ahead and think about some possible things that might happen because of that. Or perhaps you set up a place because you are sure that the hunters will track the monster down there and have a big fight. That sort of thing is fine: just as long as you remember it's only a *possible* outcome.

What you should not do is *force* the story to go a certain way. Instead, let the hunters do whatever they want, in the situation you have set up for them.

IT'S ABOUT THE HUNTERS, NOT THE MYSTERY

Another thing to remember is that although in each game of *Monster of the Week* the hunters have a mystery to solve, this isn't really a game about solving mysteries. We want to see the hunters being awesome, and that requires that they solve the mystery and find out your secrets about what's going on in the wider world. Then we see what they do with the answers.

We play for the times when the hunters realise they need to do something terrible, or put themselves in danger, or pull out all the stops. When the hunters make those decisions, and we play out all the consequences, that's what this game is about.

BEFORE YOUR FIRST GAME

There's a few things you need to do before you begin.

- Think about the style you want.
- Get into the Keeper mindset.
- Create a mystery for the hunters to investigate.

THINK ABOUT STYLE

Before you begin playing, spend some time thinking about the style you want to bring to the game. Consider the monster hunting fiction that excites you the most, and maybe watch or read some of it. Generate some ideas about how you want the world of the game to work, how it will look to the hunters, and what sorts of things might be going on. You'll find a list of my favourite monster hunting fiction on page 307 if you need some extra inspiration.

The game is going to be built by you and the other players together: so at this stage consider your ideas just a sketch. Once the hunters are created and the game begins, all your sketches might get overwritten. Having something in mind gives you a skeleton of the world to begin with, but you'll fill in the details as a group, in play.

GET INTO THE KEEPER MINDSET

You also need to prepare yourself for how to run the game.

I've codified my best practices for running *Monster of the Week* into a 'toolbox' of advice. This toolbox owes a huge debt to Vincent Baker: in *Apocalypse World* Vincent described his methods for running that game. As he's done, I'll present an **agenda** for what you do as Keeper, what you should **always say**, the **principles** you use to create the world, and the **moves** you can make.

I'll have more to say about these later, but I'll present them here so you have them in mind while you prepare your first mystery.

THE KEEPER AGENDA

The Keeper agenda is what you should focus on in play. It's the foundation for everything else you do.

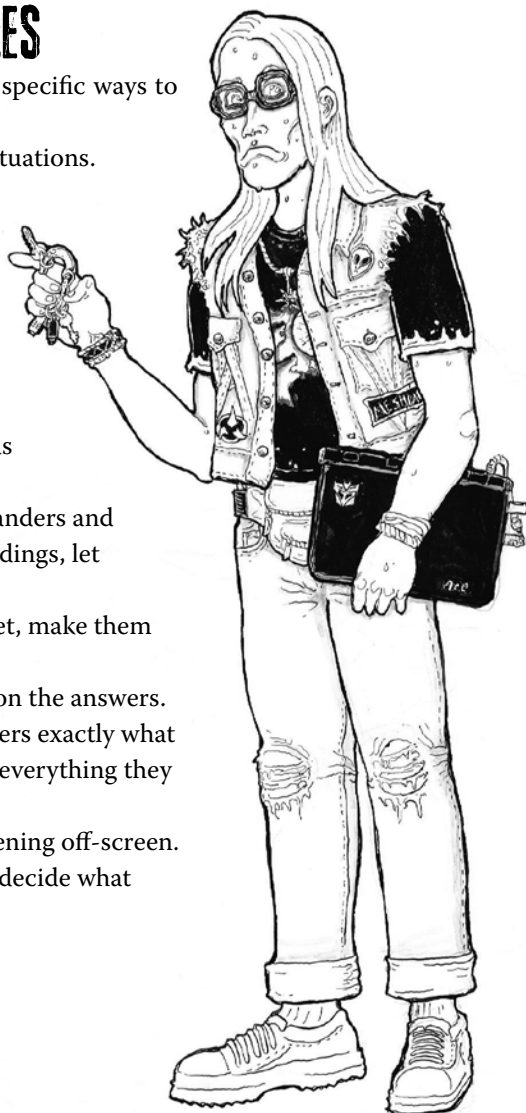
Your agenda is made up of three elements:

- Make the world seem real.
- Play to see what happens.
- Make the hunters' lives dangerous and scary.

THE KEEPER PRINCIPLES

The Keeper principles are twelve specific ways to apply your agenda:

- Put horror in everyday situations.
- Address yourself to the hunters, not the players.
- Use the Keeper moves, never use their names.
- Be a fan of the hunters.
- Build up a coherent mythology of the world as you play.
- Nothing is safe. Kill bystanders and minions, burn down buildings, let monsters be slain.
- Name everyone they meet, make them seem like normal folks.
- Ask questions and build on the answers.
- Sometimes give the hunters exactly what they earned, rather than everything they wanted.
- Think about what's happening off-screen.
- You don't always have to decide what happens.
- Everything is a threat.



CREATING YOUR FIRST MYSTERY

Before each game, you'll create a mystery for the hunters to investigate. Here's how to build your first mystery.

If you want to skip this step, you can use either of the introductory mysteries: "Dream Away the Time" on page 149, or "Damn Dirty Apes" on page 273. Then you can resume reading at "The First Session" on page 163 for advice on how to run the game.

A mystery is made up of six basic elements. You can create them in any order, but I'll show you the order I usually use:

- A basic concept for the mystery.
- The hook that got the hunters' attention.
- The monster.
- The minions, bystanders, and locations that are involved.
- The mystery countdown.
- Optionally: custom moves for special aspects of the mystery.

Before I get into the guts of it, here's what a finished mystery looks like. Read it, and then I'll talk about how the pieces fit together.

AN EXAMPLE MYSTERY: MONGOLIAN DEATH WORM ATTACK

The hunters get a report of some strange deaths at a local museum. Professor Josh Singer, Dr Jennifer Sofia, and Michelle Fitzsimmons were last seen alive working late unpacking and cleaning up new items for the collection. The next morning they were found "burned and partially dissolved" (according to police reports).

The monsters are three newly hatched Mongolian death worms. They're bright red and look moist and intestinal. Each is about 5cm thick and 50cm long. They have a deadly venom that they can spit, and excrete via the skin. Plus, they can

shoot lightning bolts. They like things dry, and water is poisonous to them.



There's someone here working for the monster, sort of. Dr Kelly Morrison became obsessed with them during field work in the Gobi Desert, and she smuggled the eggs back. Her plan didn't include them hatching and getting out, but now that they have she wants to protect and observe them.

While the hunters are investigating, they are likely to come across these people:

- *Dr Frances Ferrara, who worked with the victims. She'll be helpful to the hunters, which may endanger her.*
- *Detective Patrick Eagan. He's the police officer in charge of investigating the deaths, and won't appreciate the hunters getting involved.*
- *Chris Larsen, museum administrator. A stickler for procedure, he will annoy the hunters with demands for authorisation and interfere with anything he thinks is strange or against the rules.*

The Natural History Museum is a large, modern complex. It's divided into several wings, each with plenty of exhibition halls, offices, store rooms, and work rooms. Looking for things here, the hunters are going to be poking into all kinds of dark corners.

The worms have split up and are looking for warm, dry spaces to nest. Once they find those (and finish digesting their initial meal) they'll start hunting through the museum: they won't need to start small, either, due to their venom. Humans will be on the menu right away. Once they've eaten and grown, they'll mate (each is hermaphroditic) and each lay a clutch of eggs. When those hatch, a plague of dozens of worms will spread out from the museum.

WHAT THAT ALL MEANS

That mystery writeup shows the level of detail you need to play the game. You also give the hunters a reason to come and investigate the situation and to deal with the monster(s) at the bottom of it. You start the game knowing what the monster's doing, some important people and places, and with a plan about what will happen if the hunters don't sort it out.

When you're making up your own mystery, some of these elements will be defined in game terms to make it easier for you to manage them. I left the jargon out of the example, but I'll describe each of the pieces now. These are the six mystery elements I mentioned before.

COMPONENTS OF A MYSTERY

The *basic concept* is your original idea, the thought that led to this mystery.

In the example, the basic concept is the Mongolian death worms—the stories are awesome, so I wanted to make a mystery about them.

The *hook* is whatever has drawn the hunters' attention to the situation: reports of deaths or disappearances, a monster sighting, or some weird phenomena. You'll tell the hunters up front what the hook is, but after that it's totally up to them how they deal with what's going on.

In the example, the hook is the news reports of the first three deaths.

Next there's the *monster*. The monster has a type that defines its motivation, a description of what it looks like, what it can do, the attacks it can use in a fight with the hunters, and some *powers* (its supernatural abilities). Monsters also have a *weakness*: until the hunters use the monster's weakness against it, it cannot be destroyed.

*Mongolian Death Worms are monsters. They are **beasts** (a specific style of monster in the game), which means they have the motivation "to run wild, killing and destroying."*

Powers:

- **Venom:** *When you are poisoned by a worm, its venom will cause 1-harm every five minutes until the injury is stabilized or the affected area is flushed clean with water.*

Attacks: Venom: 4-harm hand/close poison; Lightning blast: 3-harm close electricity stun.

Weakness: Water.

Next up are *minions*. These are servants of the main monster, who help it out and work against the hunters. Minions also get a type and motivation to guide you about how they act.

In the example, Dr Kelly Morrison is a minion. She's a guardian, with the motivation "to bar a way or protect something." She's going to try and protect the worms as they nest and breed, because she wants to study and understand them.

There's also a list of *bystanders*. These are the people involved in the situation. These can be people who are in danger, who might help the hunters' investigation, who might get in the way. Bystanders each have a type and associated motivation.

Dr Francesco Ferrara, is a victim with the motivation "to put herself in danger." She'll put herself in danger by helping the hunters as much as she can.

Detective Patrick Eagan is a detective, with the motivation "to rule out explanations." If the hunters talk to him, they'll quickly discover that the deaths were no normal accident or criminal attack.

Chris Larsen is an official with the motivation "to be suspicious." He is there to get in the way of the hunters by bringing up annoying regulations they need to comply with, and that sort of thing. Just so the hunters don't have too easy a time exploring the museum.

Next up is one or more *locations* that will be important. Locations are allocated a type from a list. The type has a descriptive name and a motivation. Locations in this game are able to do things. The motivation tells you what sort of things this particular place will do.

*In the example, the one location is the Natural History Museum. It's a **Wilds**, with the motivation "to contain hidden things." The plan is to have it full of scary places, and fake-out scares, as well as people to protect and worms to hunt down.*

Those elements (*monsters, minions, bystanders, and locations*) are *threats*. *Threats* are the things that make trouble for the hunters, one way or another. Each *threat* gets a *type* and a corresponding *motivation*.

Any kind of *threat* can have a *custom move*, too. This is a special rule that defines something this particular threat can do. See page 296 for how to create custom moves.

The last required element is a *countdown*. That's what would happen if the hunters never dealt with this situation. I've summarized it in the final paragraph of the example, but when you're making your own mysteries, you'll note down six particular events that will happen unless the hunters prevent them.

That covers enough ideas and game-related notes to get started creating your first mystery.

PREPARING YOUR FIRST MYSTERY

This first mystery is going to be everyone's introduction to the hunters and to your game's world. Build a straightforward hunt, to give the hunters space to talk and get a sense of how the team operates. Pick a classic monster that everyone will recognise from folklore, urban legend, or pop culture.

Once you have a monster, come up with a basic concept. Think about what the creature could want, and what bad stuff is going to happen if the hunters don't stop it. The bad stuff might be personal, local, or apocalyptic in scale.

I'll build an example ghost story while we go through the process, to illustrate each piece.

The basic concept is a haunted house story. There'll be a ghost, murdered unjustly, who wants restitution and is lashing out at anyone who stays in the house.

Marie O'Connell is the angry ghost. She was murdered by her husband Damian (in an unjustified jealous rage) and subsequently drove him to suicide.

THE HOOK

Now come up with a hook for the hunters. That's the mysterious event or clue that points to a supernatural problem. The hook is what came to the hunters' attention: it needs to clearly point to the mystery.

The ideal hook screams "There is a monster here!" to a hunter, but would be easily dismissed by normal folks who don't believe in monsters. It also suggests what sort of monster it might be.

A family just moved into the haunted house and attracted the attention of the ghost. The house has been in the family for a long time, but uninhabited for many years. Local news reports have been running puff pieces about the haunting. Specifically, the family have heard strange noises, objects have been moved, and parts of the house are always cold. The articles mention the tragic suicide of Damian O'Connell in the house 42 years ago, after his wife Marie disappeared.



THE THREATS

Now the mystery needs some threats. These are the things that will interfere with the hunters as they attempt to sort out the mystery.

Threats come in four types:

- **Monsters** (the big bad behind these events).
- **Minions** (allies of the monster, usually weaker creatures).
- **Bystanders** (normal folks who are involved).
- **Locations** (significant places).

Threat categories are more concerned with the role that the entity will have in the mystery than rigid definitions. Sometimes powerful creatures will be “minions” because that’s how they fit into the situation. In other cases, normal people could be a “minion” (if they’re inadvertently supporting a monster) or even a “monster” (if they’re a mass murderer). Think about how the situation in your mystery is set up, and choose threat types based on which part each element plays.

MONSTERS

Start with the monster. Most mysteries will have just one: the single creature behind everything bad that's going to happen.

Monsters need the following details:

- A description.
- A monster type and motivation.
- Supernatural powers.
- Attacks and armour.
- How much harm will kill it.
- Any weaknesses it has.
- Custom moves for its powers (optional).

First, pick the monster's type. The twelve types (and the motivations that go with them) are:

- Beast (motivation: to run wild, destroying and killing)
- Breeder (motivation: to give birth to, bring forth, or create evil)
- Collector (motivation: to steal specific sorts of things)
- Destroyer (motivation: to bring about the end of the world)
- Devourer (motivation: to consume people)
- Executioner (motivation: to punish the guilty)
- Parasite (motivation: to infest, control and devour)
- Queen (motivation: to possess and control)
- Sorcerer (motivation: to usurp unnatural power)
- Tempter (motivation: to tempt people into evil deeds)
- Torturer (motivation: to hurt and terrify)
- Trickster (motivation: to create chaos)

In my example, Marie O'Connell, a ghost seeking justice, makes a good Executioner with the motivation "to punish the guilty." To give her a reason to be angry at the hunters, she wants to be properly laid to rest (Damian buried her under the basement floor), and treats anyone who isn't actively doing that as one of the guilty parties she is punishing.

Next up, think about the supernatural **powers** the monster possesses. Think about your initial inspiration for the monster and work out what it can do. There's no particular level of detail you need for monster powers. Some might be a simple descriptive note, such as "can fly." For others you might need more detail: note down as much about the power's effects and limitations as you can think of (this is a custom move for the power: there's more about them on page 296).

For powers, Marie has the ability to appear instantly anywhere in the house. And telekinesis which allows her to throw knives and stuff around, and hold doors and windows closed.

As she's only a ghost, a lot of attacks won't hurt her. Only attacks using rock salt, cold iron, or magic can harm her at all (I'm drawing inspiration straight from Supernatural here). This is a power that restricts what attacks can affect her. There's also a special weakness that a monster has that must be used to kill her for good—that's addressed below.

Once you know the monster's powers, it's time to make a note of its **attacks**. Think about how it hurts and kills, and define an attack for each method. Attacks are described just like hunter weapons: how much harm is inflicted, the range of the attack, and any descriptive tags for additional effects. Pick something in the range of 2 to 4 harm for each attack.

Marie's attack uses her telekinetic powers. I describe this as 2 to 4-harm close (the exact harm will depend on what she has to work with: the kitchen will be especially dangerous).

Now decide how resilient the monster is.

Decide how many points of **harm** will kill it. Take seven as your basic minimum (the same as a hunter). Increase it based on how large and robust the monster is. There's no set maximum, but more than fourteen would be exceptional. Sometimes a monster might be more fragile, too: in those cases, reduce the harm capacity.

Secondly decide if it has an **armour** rating, based on its innate toughness or a power that makes it harder to hurt. 1- or 2- armour is normal. Higher values make it difficult for the hunters to hurt the monster, and no armour makes the monster very vulnerable.

Marie is an averagely resilient ghost. I'll set her harm capacity to seven. But I won't give her any armour: her incorporeal power is enough for the hunters to deal with.

Now think about a **weakness**. All monsters must have one, and most monsters have two or three. If the monster's weakness is not used against it, then the hunters cannot kill it. Weaknesses come in three main types:

- Something that will harm the monster directly, such as using silver against a werewolf.
- An environment that weakens or harms the monster, such as sunlight against a vampire.
- A special ritual or action that must be taken, such as an exorcism to drive out an evil spirit.

Think about your idea about the monster, and decide what it will have as weaknesses.

For weaknesses, I pick "her mortal remains" (that works well with allowing proper burial to lay her to rest) and "the house" (her association is so great that harming the house can also harm her).

Marie can be harmed by rock salt, cold iron, or magical attacks but she can't be killed unless her body is properly buried or destroyed or unless the house is destroyed.

If you haven't already worked out what the monster is trying to achieve, give that some thought now. If the initial concept doesn't suggest a plan, look at the type you have given the monster. Use the motivation as a starting point, and work out what is the *worst* thing that this monster could be planning to do here?

Marie is obsessed with being laid to rest properly. She can't communicate with anyone directly, she's just going to violently attack them whenever they don't seem to be helping her. If people persist in not helping, she's just going to kill them. Because the family have been here longest without helping her, she'll target them first.

MINIONS

Decide if the monster is working on its own or if it has minions to help it. If it has minions, detail them now. Minions can be weaker individuals of the same kind of monster, allied creatures of different kinds, human worshippers, or human (perhaps unwitting) servants.

Minions need the following details:

- A description.
- Minion type and motivation.
- Supernatural powers, if any.
- Attacks and armour.
- How much harm will kill it.
- A weakness (optional).
- Custom moves for powers (optional).

There are ten minion types:

- Assassin (motivation: to kill the hunters)
- Brute (motivation: to intimidate and attack)
- Cultist (motivation: to save their own skin at any cost)
- Guardian (motivation: to bar a way or protect something)
- Right hand (motivation: to back up the monster)
- Plague (motivation: to swarm and destroy)
- Renfield (motivation: to push victims towards the monster)
- Scout (motivation: to stalk, watch, and report)
- Thief (motivation: to steal and deliver to the monster)
- Traitor (motivation: to betray people)

Minions may have powers and weaknesses like a monster. They are usually weaker, but otherwise you can follow the rules and guidelines for monster powers and weaknesses.

Define attacks, harm capacity, and armour for all minions. Minion attacks should be in the 1- to 4- harm range. The amount of harm required to kill the minion should range from 5 to 10 (although weaker and stronger minions are both possible).

A group of minions can be defined the same as an individual. Do this if the minions are a gang or swarm of nameless goons or critters, to keep things simple. Define their attacks, armour, and harm capacity to account for the group as a whole. A group of minions should have their attacks boosted by one to represent their multiple attacks. The group can be given a single harm track for all of the minions: harm taken represents defeat of the group as a whole.

If minions have armour, they normally have 1-armour, and only rarely 2-armour or higher.

There's no obvious minions in the situation so far, but I have an idea that Marie has a psychic connection with the rats that live in the house. They'll make good minions, probably mainly to keep an eye on everyone in the house.

The possessed rats are Scouts (motivation: to stalk, watch, and report). If they attack, they do 1-harm intimate as a swarm. 10-harm must be inflicted to disperse the group completely.

BYSTANDERS

Bystanders are the normal people who are involved in the situation. They're the victims, witnesses, interfering cops, and anyone else.

Each bystander needs the following details:

- A name.
- A description.
- A bystander type and motivation.

There are nine types of bystander:

- Busybody (motivation: to interfere in other people's plans)
- Detective (motivation: to rule out explanations)
- Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)
- Helper (motivation: to join the hunt)
- Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)
- Official (motivation: to be suspicious)
- Skeptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)
- Victim (motivation: to put themselves in danger)
- Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Include at least two bystanders: it's important to have some people for the hunters to save.

Start by defining the people directly involved in the situation: surviving victims, witnesses, official investigators. Think about why they are here, why they're involved in the monster's plan, and what they want to achieve. Coming up with those details helps develop them as real people, in a real world.

You generally don't need to worry about how much harm a bystander can take (it will almost always be seven, the same as a hunter) or what their weapons are. If a bystander has a good chance of getting involved in a fight (helpers in particular might do this), note down what they're armed with.

It's a good idea to include some partially defined bystanders: just a name and type. You can use them in play for unexpected bystander characters: just add any extra details at the time.

For bystanders, there's the family who've moved into the house. Their names are Mark and Andi Hadley and their kids Sean and Ashley.

The family moved to the country for Andi to get a rest after quitting a stressful job, and to help with Sean's asthma. Mark has a job he can do from the country—he's a web designer. Andi was a lawyer. Sean is 11 and Ashley is 6.

Now I need to pick which sort of bystander each one is.

Mark Hadley is a Skeptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations). Having him regard any talk of ghosts or magic as foolishness will give the hunters something they need to deal with: how do they handle Mark and still get the ghost sorted out?

Andi Hadley is a Witness (motivation: to reveal information). Because I've made Mark into someone difficult, I'll make Andi helpful. At least, that will be her intention at first. Once things get strange and stressful, she won't handle it well. Helpful bystanders are a whole new sort of problem for the hunters!

Sean Hadley is a Victim (motivation: to put himself into danger). I'm going for the easy "kids in peril" scares here.

Ashley Hadley is a Helper (motivation: to join in the hunt). I can see a six year old being totally fascinated by a team of monster hunters. Of course she wants to help out!

The bystanders could be rounded out with some more people in the town, but I think we have enough.

LOCATIONS

Locations are places that can cause trouble for the hunters. They're metaphorically hostile, encompassing all the stuff that can go wrong around the hunters (like the phones not working, or a car not starting, or getting lost and ending up alone in the dark).

Locations need the following details:

- A name.
- A description.
- Location type and motivation.
- Optionally, a map.
- Optionally, one or more custom moves.

There are ten location types:

- Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)
- Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)
- Den (motivation: to harbor monsters)
- Fortress (motivation: to deny entry)
- Hellgate (motivation: to create evil)
- Hub (motivation: to reveal information)
- Lab (motivation: to create weirdness)
- Maze (motivation: to confuse and separate)
- Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)
- Wilds (motivation: to contain hidden things)

Define a location for anywhere that you expect significant parts of the mystery will take place. Anywhere that is going to be an important scene of investigation or action, or where the monster is active should be written up as a location threat.

Good locations to start with are:

- The general area.
- The monster's lair.
- Places where the monster has been active, or attacked someone.
- Places that the bystanders will be found.

Maps can help define the location so that everyone can see how it looks. Even a quick sketch of the area can help the group picture what's going on and what the place is like. Another good source for town or region maps is to find an appropriate looking place in Google Maps and print it out.



*We have the O'Connell house. A location is an obvious fit, but what kind? Maybe it's a huge, rambling place, making it a perfect Maze (motivation: to confuse and separate). That will give it lots of good moves to force the hunters to explore dark, cluttered rooms... alone. The house has one custom move: Once Marie closes the front door, **if you try to leave the house**, you can not get out. Only laying Marie to rest, or destroying her, will allow the hunters (and family) to leave.*

There's also the nearby town. It's likely the hunters will do a bit of preliminary asking around, making a Hub (motivation: to reveal information) a good choice. The town's small, not much more than a service centre for nearby farms. There's a run-down motel that the hunters will probably end up staying in, a diner, and a couple of bars.

MORE THREATS

As you continue to detail the mystery, you may realise that you need to go back and add another threat of a certain type. Just put them in as you think of them.

MYSTERY COUNTDOWNS

Each mystery has a *countdown*: this is the sequence of terrible things that will happen if the hunters don't stop the monster. The countdown will be your guide to what will be going on off-screen as the hunters investigate.

To create the countdown, think about what would happen if the hunters never came to help.

- Who would be attacked?
- Who would die?
- What is the monster's ultimate plan?

Once you have an idea, divide it into six events in the order they will occur. Then allocate them to the steps in the countdown. Countdowns always have the following six steps:

- Day.
- Shadows.
- Sunset.
- Dusk.
- Nightfall.
- Midnight.

The names of each step are intended to give a sense of things getting worse. They are metaphorical: the "sunset" step of a countdown doesn't have to happen at sunset; the steps don't have to happen on the same day.

As the countdown is what would happen if the hunters didn't interfere, it normally won't play out how you wrote it. But even when the monster's plan has been derailed, it will still be trying to achieve its goals and the countdown is useful as a guide (or something to adapt) to determine what happens next.

For example:

Here's the countdown for our haunted house story.

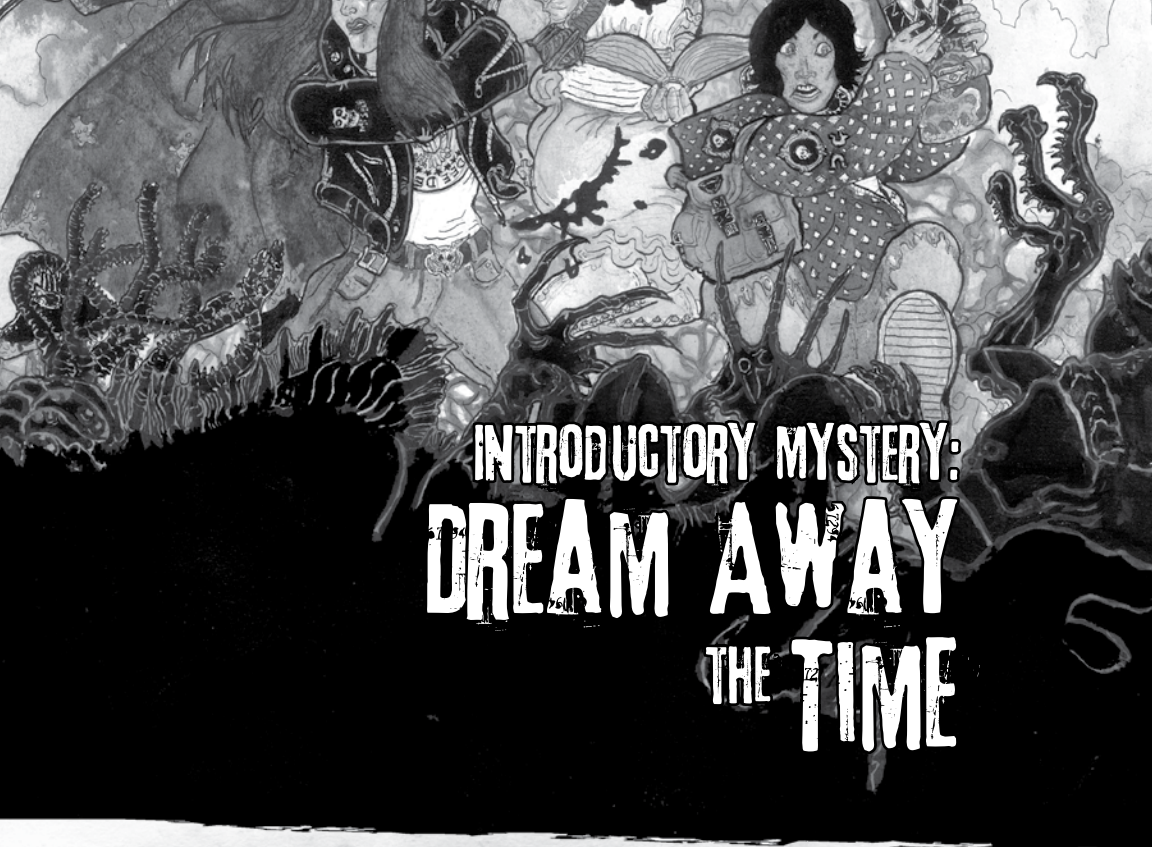
- **Day:** *Marie traps the Hadleys in the house.*
- **Shadows:** *Marie begins scaring them, hoping to push them towards the cellar by fear.*
- **Sunset:** *Mark is killed while trying to get a window open.*
- **Dusk:** *Marie tries to get Andi and the kids to dig up her remains, but they don't understand and she kills them all in a rage.*
- **Nightfall:** *In another year, Marie kills four more people who squat in the house overnight.*
- **Midnight:** *Five years later, another family moves in and Marie kills them.*

This is all the stuff that will happen if the hunters never came. I expect that with the hunters present, they'll be trapped in the house as well as (or instead of) the Hadleys. After that, I'm not sure how it will go. We'll find out when we play.

SUMMARY: FIRST MYSTERY CREATION

- Come up with a cool but uncomplicated *basic concept* for the monster and mystery.
- Create a *hook*: the clue that caught the hunters' attention.
- Create the *monster*: name, description, type & motivation, then define its powers, weaknesses, attacks, armour, harm capacity, optionally custom moves.
- Create the *minions* (if any): name, description, type & motivation, then define their powers, attacks, armour, harm capacity, optionally weaknesses and custom moves.
- Create the *bystanders* (at least two): name, description, type & motivation.
- Create the *locations*: name, description, type & motivation, optionally maps and custom moves.
- Define the mystery *countdown*: six terrible events that would occur if the hunters never came.
- Go back over everything and make sure it all hangs together. Fill in gaps where something seems to be missing.





INTRODUCTORY MYSTERY: DREAM AWAY THE TIME

Here's a first mystery you can use if you don't have time to prepare your own.

This mystery, like any mystery, asserts that certain things will be true in your game. When reading it, decide if these things fit your vision. In this case, for the mystery to work it requires the existence of Faerie (along with the inhabitants of Faerie that are causing trouble in Handfast).

MYSTERY CONCEPT

The village of Handfast has a long-standing contract with Oberon, King of Faerie. In return for Oberon's blessings of health and prosperity, the town needs to give up a beloved child every forty years at midsummer.

This pact was upheld for centuries, but the various upheavals of the twentieth century mean no-one's left in Handfast who knows about it. The last child was given over to Oberon exactly forty years and one day ago. He's angry and has invoked the penalty clause.

HOOK

The hunters will be alerted to the mystery by the following events in Handfast and the surrounding farmland.

- One unusual weather event after another: a summer heat-wave, a tornado, flooding.
- A spate of attacks in which a person alone, at night, has been beaten and suffered a single cut, but can remember nothing about the event or their attacker. This has happened four times over the past week.
- Accounts from a number of homes in town of food spoiling overnight, knives being blunted, objects being thrown about, and appliances failing.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Oberon has Violet (a changeling) and Bonecruncher (a redcap) cause trouble in town.
Shadows	Violet finds the most beloved child.
Sunset	Violet and Bonecruncher abduct the most beloved child.
Dusk	Oberon lets Bonecruncher off the leash. He kills several people.
Nightfall	Bonecruncher makes his lair in the town hall, killing more people in the process.
Midnight	The other townsfolk must leave or be eaten.

NOTES

This mystery is unusual in that the most dangerous supernatural being here (Oberon) is not the monster to be defeated (which is Bonecruncher the redcap). Oberon has set certain things in motion, but Bonecruncher is the immediate danger to the town and the hunters. Threat types are defined by their role in the mystery, which is why this one has Oberon as a “minion” even though he’s really in charge.

Aside from defeating Bonecruncher, the mystery has a few other threads the hunters might want to tie up.

- Oberon is indulging his desire for revenge due to the town’s betrayal, but for him this is quite a small betrayal. If the hunters propose some kind of reparation, he’ll be happy to leave the town to its own devices. Cunning hunters might even argue that the things he has already done are enough punishment for the town to consider the contract quit. Another angle they can take is that none of the people now suffering were parties to the contract (Oberon will respond that they benefited from his influence over the town, so are bound by the terms for that reason). Hunters could also call upon another major power as a mediator, but they would still need to successfully present their argument against Oberon. Note that it is possible the hunters may use **manipulate someone** on Oberon, but he will demand a high price, such as servitude for one hundred years, or a unique magical treasure.
- Bonecruncher could be sent away as one of the terms of a deal the hunters cut with Oberon, but otherwise the redcap will be left to roam and kill as he wishes.
- Violet poses another problem. She is currently happy being a member of Oberon’s court, but her family would love to have her returned. Hunters might think about restoring her memories of her mortal life, or breaking the glamours of Faerie. A disenchanted Violet will be unhappy to lose Faerie (and her friends there) but will gradually settle back into a normal life. And, after all, her fairy friends can still come and visit (that could be a starting point for a later mystery). Hunters can use **manipulate someone** on Violet as with any normal person, although her wants are rather twisted by her time in Faerie.

In case the hunters go looking for it: beloved children were sent to Faerie on Midsummer Day in 1615, 1655, 1695, 1735, 1775, 1815, 1855, 1895, 1935, and 1975. These dates assume a game set in 2015—shift them if your game is set some other time! The most recent disappearance must be 40 years back, and you can shift the town’s founding date from 1615 if needed to make it fit.

THREATS

OBERON, KING OF FAERIE

Minion: Right Hand (motivation: back up the monster)



Oberon has waited forty years and one day, and no beloved child has been given to him. As the contract is now null and void, he wishes to punish the town for their failure to live up to their end. In order to do so, he has dispatched two vassals with the orders, “Create chaos, scare them, perhaps even kill some of them.” The vassals are Violet, the last beloved child given to him (who has no memory of her life before she was brought to Faerie) and Bonecruncher, a redcap (an ogre who dyes his hat with the blood of his victims).

Most likely, Oberon will remain in his fortress in Faerie. Extraordinary events might draw him to the mortal world, but otherwise he will remain offscreen unless the hunters go and find him. Note that actually fighting Oberon is a terrible idea. When physically threatened, Oberon’s first action is to summon his army, which should give the hunters some idea of what they’re dealing with.

In person, Oberon is patronising and arrogant. After all, he is an immortal elf-king and these are just a bunch of dirty human monster hunters. Try to give the impression that anything he does for them is an immense favour.

Powers:

- **Gift Of Power:** Oberon may gift mortals with various powers and traits, such as magical knowledge, luck, bountiful harvests, or eternal youth. He will only do so for a very high price.
- **Glamour.** Oberon may appear in any guise he wishes, and likewise transform others.

Oberon has many other powers but those two will be the ones most appropriate for this mystery. If it really seems like he should have another power, feel free to add it for your game.

Attacks: Sword: 3-harm hand poison; Host of elf-knights plus goblin infantry: 4-harm hand/close/far area.

Harm capacity: 15 □□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Armour: Faerie mail: 3-armour magic

Weaknesses:

- **Winter.** Note that this weakness is of little use as the mystery takes place a few weeks after midsummer day.
- **His Word.** If Oberon lies to or goes back on a promise or contract, the wronged party has power over him, which counts as a weakness. As Oberon is aware of this, he will go to extraordinary lengths to never put himself in this position.

OBERON'S FORTRESS

Location: Crossroads (motivation: bring people and things together)

This is in Faerie. The hunters may travel here to try and come to an arrangement with Oberon.

If you want, you can make the journey through Faerie a major task and extend the mystery. Alternatively, you can have the hunters **act under pressure** to find their way, or have them meet a guide who will take them swiftly to Oberon.

King Oberon is very powerful and has hosts of fairies under his command, so the hunters should treat this as a negotiation rather than a battle.

VIOLET, A CHANGELING

Minion: Thief (motivation: to steal and deliver to the monster).

Although 43 years old, her aging has been slow and she appears about 15. She wears silken elf-dresses, decorated with flowers and leaves. She is barefoot, but has her dagger and bag of dust on a woven belt.

This is the last human child given to Oberon. With no memory of her mortal life, she is a willing servant to the King of Faerie. She knows nothing of the mortal world, except that it is dangerous and people are not to be trusted.

Her current mission is to find the most beloved child in the town, and along the way take whatever revenge she wishes on the town that has betrayed her Lord.

Violet is curious about mortals, and playful, so the hunters can probably get her talking easily. Play her as unworldly and naïve, but a little wild and dangerous as well.

Powers:

- **Bane dust.** Violet has a large bag of this “pixie dust”. When cast about, it causes misfortune and mishaps (including spoiling food, making people ill, and causing things to fail or break).
- **Glamour.** Violet may alter her guise at whim, but may not change her size.

Attacks: Faerie dagger. 1-harm intimate/hand sleep magic. Anyone harmed by this dagger may also suffer “falls into an enchanted slumber” as a harm move.

Harm capacity: 7 Okay ☐☐☐☐ | ☐☐☐☐ Dying

Armour: None

Weaknesses: She is a normal human.

BONECRUNCHER, A REDCAP

Monster: Beast (motivation: to run wild, destroying and killing)

A seven foot hulking brute, with red eyes, gray stony skin, and sharp teeth. He wears a woollen cap dyed with blood, and a shapeless tunic that's spattered with more.

Bonecruncher is working for Oberon, taking revenge on the town and keeping an eye on Violet.

Bonecruncher is a simple creature, desiring only to kill mortals to dye his cap and then eat their flesh. Oberon has given him strict orders not to kill anyone yet, but Bonecruncher's hunger is growing and his will is quickly weakening. He's taken to following people who are alone at night, concealing himself in a cloak of shadows, brutally beating them and cutting them a single time in order to keep his cap damp with their blood. With so many potential victims around it's only a matter of time until Bonecruncher snaps and eats someone.

If the hunters talk to him, Bonecruncher will insult and threaten them, hoping to provoke a fight. If things go badly, he'll call shadows to conceal his escape.

Powers:

- **Shadow Glamour.** He may cloak himself in shadows, and put shadows in people's minds (this is why they don't remember him).
- **Immense Strength.** He automatically beats any normal human in contests of strength.

Attacks: Razor-sharp Poleaxe: 3-harm hand/close; Terrible Talons: 1-harm hand; Sharp Teeth: 2-harm intimate ignores-armour.

Harm capacity: 9.



Armour: None

Weaknesses:

- **Fresh Blood:** Needs fresh blood to dye his cap frequently. The weakness is activated if the cap is destroyed or stolen, or if the blood dries out.

THE OLD FOREST NATURE RESERVE, NEAR HANDFAST

Location: Wilds (motivation: to contain hidden things)

This is where Violet and Bonecruncher are lurking between attacks.

In the center of the forest is an overgrown stone circle. This is where Violet and Bonecruncher are camping, and it's also the place where a portal to Faerie may be found. It's elusive—difficult for mortals to find unless a fairy guides them or magic is used.

When a hunter uses magic at the stone circle, they may choose “Open a path to Faerie” as the effect. Any fairy (including Violet) may freely open or close this path.



HANDFAST, THE TOWN

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

A remote town, settled in 1615 but far from the main trade routes. It is nestled in a fertile valley, and has a history of being a thriving farming town. More recently, it's become a tourist haven, as a lovely piece of history that's off the beaten track.

The town has a quaint town square surrounded by shops, a few businesses nearby, and the rest is houses (for both locals and tourists).

TORNADO AND FLOOD WRECKAGE

Location: Maze (motivation: to confuse and separate)

Parts of Handfast have been badly damaged by the recent freak weather events, and the abandoned and damaged homes are difficult to get through. Because the storms were supernaturally driven, the pattern of damage is arbitrary: some destroyed houses have neighbours that are perfectly fine.

Violet and Bonecruncher will both take advantage of these areas to hide or shake off pursuit.

HANDFAST CHILDREN'S PARK

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

Not far from the center of town is a large play area. Children will be found here after school closes and during the weekends. The play area has an elaborate (and huge) fairy-tale fort for the kids to climb on.

The fort is also a hangout of the village's teenagers after dark on Fridays and Saturdays.

Violet can often be found here, watching the children play, and deciding which family she will target next.

MAX TILLEY, A BELOVED CHILD

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

Max is the most beloved child in Handfast. He's a cherubic four year old, charming and full of laughter.

MARY AND SAMUEL TILLEY, MAX'S PARENTS

Mary—Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

Mary works at an artisanal bakery in the center of town. She's tall, with short hair and doesn't have any patience for messing about. She's forthright, sometimes verging on rude, when dealing with people.

Samuel—Bystander: Skeptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)

Samuel looks after Max and the family home (he's also an aspiring writer). He's a messy dresser, perpetually worried about something he might have forgotten to do.

JOHN AND ALICE CHILTON, VIOLET'S PARENTS

John: Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

As a traditional breadwinner in his youth, John never quite recovered from the loss of his child, and threw himself into his career (he was a workshop foreman) to cope. Now that he's approaching retirement, he's feeling a little lost.

Alice: Bystander: Helper (motivation: to join in the hunt)

Alice had a different reaction to her loss—as the worst has now happened, the world holds nothing that can harm her any more. If she learns that her daughter is involved in the events in Handfast, she will do anything necessary to get her back.

If the hunters come to the Chiltons with news of Violet, they will initially view the hunters as crazies and disregard them. If the hunters can provide proof—most likely a photo, or leading Violet to her parents—then they will be eager to “get her back” and will accept and help with anything the hunters suggest—up to and including taking part in a magic ritual.

OFFICER EDWARD TURNER

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

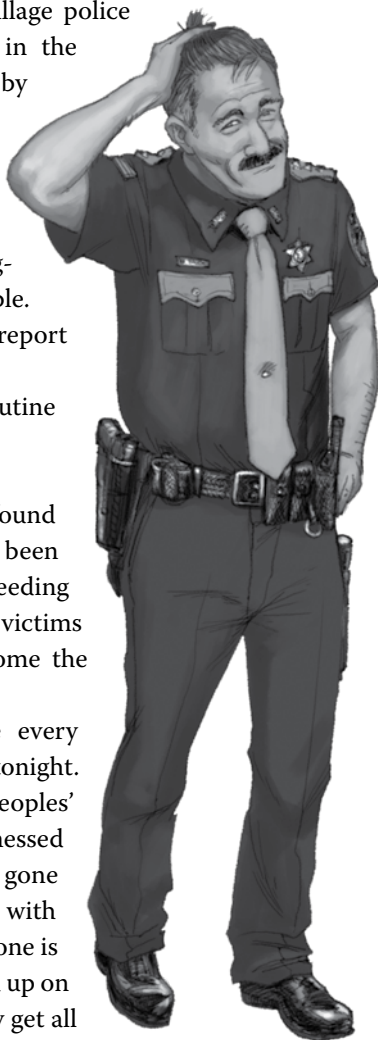
Officer Turner is the whole of the village police force, which is run from an office in the front room of his cottage. Optimistic by nature, he thinks that most likely this is pranks getting out of hand. In his experience, bad things don't really happen in Handfast. Play up his geniality, and inability to really recognise the possibility of something terrible.

The four victims of the assaults all report the same thing:

- They were out at night on a routine chore or walk.
- It was very dark.
- They woke up, or were found and woken, to find they had been beaten and left with a big bleeding cut on their forearm. Some victims were cut on the left arm, some the right.
- An assault has taken place every second night. The next is due tonight.

The strange phenomena in peoples' homes are even weirder. Things are messed up, gadgets and tools broken, and food gone bad. The victims are either families with young children or homes where everyone is over forty, but the Sheriff hasn't picked up on that yet—a hunter might spot it if they get all the household details from the police.

Sheriff Turner has no idea what the heck is going on here. Maybe college students up to pranks? Who knows?



INTRODUCTORY MYSTERY: DREAM AWAY THE TIME

THE ASSAULT VICTIMS

These are the four people attacked by Bonecruncher:

Trait	Bystander type	Name
Boisterous	Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)	Alice Rigsdale
Lazy	Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)	Christopher Prower
Sarcastic	Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)	Constance Hopkins
Elegant	Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)	Frank Gardiner

Unfortunately, they only provide useful information by omission. Each knows only the following:

- They were out at night on a routine chore or walk.
- It was very dark.
- They woke up, or were found and woken, to find they had been beaten and left with a big bleeding cut on their forearm. Some victims were cut on the left arm, some the right.

Magic (“observe another time or place”) can allow the hunters to see what really happened. CCTV footage is of limited use as Bonecruncher cloaks himself in shadow when attacking, although the result will definitely be suspicious, as a blob of shadow engulfs each victim.

JANE HOWLAND, EDITOR OF THE HANDFAST HERALD

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to pass on information)

Aged 48, Jane is old enough to have heard hints of the contract, and remembers Violet’s “death”, but has no reason to connect these or suspect a conspiracy.

She does, however, have a willingness to chat to visitors and a huge archive of Handfast Herald issues, all the way back to April 1830.

Investigating the archive looking for missing or dead children, or at mid-summer, reveals a pattern of “dead” children. Every forty years (in 1855, 1895, 1935, and—for Violet—1975), on midsummer day, a loving obituary is presented for a child between two and five years old.

THE CROWNE TAVERN

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together).

This centuries-old tavern is the main bar, diner, and restaurant for Handfast. Most anyone can be found here sometime, having coffee, a meal, or drinking in the evening.

Ely Holbeck is the owner.

ELY HOLBECK, BARTENDER

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

Well-used to dealing with tourists, Ely will happily “play along” with the hunters questions as long as they buy some food or drink. A young man, he’s got no knowledge at all of the contract, but if prompted for weird stuff, he’ll mention that as a kid he used to go into the “haunted” spot in the centre of the Forest Reserve. He can describe how to get there (or show them himself, if given a good reason). Like all mortals, Ely will be unable to see the stone circle where Violet and Bonecruncher are staying without some help from the hunters.

OTHER BYSTANDERS

Use these templates as starting points for any other people the hunters talk to.

Trait	Bystander type	Name
Tough	Detective (rule out explanations)	Richard Story
Geeky	Victim (put herself in danger)	Eleanor Browne
Bookish	Witness (reveal information)	Joseph Latham
Mean	Victim (put himself in danger)	John More
Honest	Gossip (pass on rumours)	Elizabeth Thompson
Morose	Witness (reveal information)	Susanna White





THE FIRST SESSION

Getting everyone into a room to play is the next step.

I'm going to assume that you get all the saying, "Hi," and getting snacks and drinks and catching up out of the way first. I'll tell you about the game stuff you need to do.

HUNTER CREATION

Your first task is to guide the other players through the process of creating their hunters.

Introduce the idea of team concepts (page 22). Help the group come up with a concept that gets them all excited. If nobody thinks of an exciting concept now, you can wait until later to work that out (wait until after they've decided on their hunters' histories with each other).

Next, allocate hunter playbooks. It's perfectly reasonable to limit the hunter types available if you have a particular style in mind for your game. This can also speed up hunter creation, as there are fewer decisions to make.

If the team has a concept that requires certain playbooks, have people choose from those first. Otherwise, just let everyone have a quick look at each and grab the one they like the look of. If anyone is having trouble, ask them what sort of hunter they would like and you can suggest which playbooks suit that idea.

Then get everyone to follow the instructions in their playbook up to "Introductions." Be ready to answer any questions, and watch for anyone who seems to be having trouble. You can help them work out what moves or options will best fit their idea of the hunter. Put some questions to the whole group, too, and get everyone's input. If people seem to be getting bogged down, tell them to just choose what seems coolest now as they'll have a chance to revise things after you play your first session out.

As everyone gets close to done, go around those who've finished, find out what they've picked, and point out any implications you can see from their choices. For example, there might be a mismatch between the ratings they picked and what they need to roll for their moves, or a possible duplication of abilities with the other hunters. That sort of thing isn't necessarily bad, but it's worth thinking about whether they really want to do it.

INTRODUCTIONS

Once everyone's ready to introduce themselves, facilitate taking turns to introduce hunters. The most important things each player should describe are their hunter's name, playbook and looks, though they can add more if they want.

You should ask a few questions of each player to tease out more details that you and the others might need to know, especially about things that will have a big impact on the game (the Chosen's destiny, the Professional's agency, the Wronged's loss, etc). This is also a good time to ask what each hunter can do, so that everyone can see how the team works together.

HISTORY

Then go around the group again and have each player pick their hunter's history with the other hunters. They do this by picking one of the shared events or relationships from the list in their playbook.

Some picks require extra details: follow the instructions listed. If it doesn't say who decides, the player concerned gets the final word. Help with suggestions if anyone has a mind-blank when the time comes to think of something, and make sure everyone's cool with the answer.

At the end, each hunter should have two facts about their history with every other member of the team (one they picked themselves, and one picked by the other hunter about them).

Now you can work out the team's story, based on all those bits of history. You don't need to go into detail, but work out the basics of how the hunters got to know each other and started hunting monsters together, and maybe a rough chronology of what happened when.

MENTION HOW THINGS WORK

This is a good time to explain the player agenda (page 96), basic moves (page 101), what to roll and add (page 99), using Luck (page 113), when to mark experience (page 118), and how to level up (page 118). Give just enough detail to get started, rather than trying to explain everything right now. You can fill in more details when they are needed.

RUNNING THE FIRST MYSTERY

I'm going to start by talking a bit about the way to play the game, then remind you of the Keeper **agenda** and **principles**, then discuss how to use them. I will then introduce two more concepts you need: what you should **always say** and the **Keeper moves**. That will give you all the rules you need to run the game. I'll pull all of this together to explain how to run your mystery on page 201.

THE GAME IS A CONVERSATION

This is an improvisational game in which you create a story together.

The story emerges from a conversation between the players. You'll describe an initial situation and the other players will describe how their hunters respond. This leads into an ongoing back-and-forth between you and the hunters, as each decision the hunters make leads to a new situation, requiring new decisions about what happens next.

To help you make your decisions about what happens next whenever the outcome is uncertain, the rules restrict you to certain options. These parts of the conversation are called "moves." Keeper moves work differently to hunter moves: your moves are more general, to allow you to build the game's world in accordance with your responsibilities. The moves flow from your Keeper agenda, Keeper principles, and the things you should always say, so I'll explain more about those, first.

KEEPER AGENDA

Remember that your agenda is to:

- Make the world seem real.
- Play to see what happens.
- Make the hunters' lives dangerous and scary.

HOW TO USE THE KEEPER AGENDA

Making the world seem real means that you describe the world in a way that makes sense. Most things are going to be the same as they are in our world. Normal people will act like normal people, for instance. As part of making the world seem real, the rules you establish for magic and monsters should be consistent (unless you decide to undermine that in order to make the hunters' lives dangerous and scary—see below).

Play to see what happens means you let the story develop naturally. When you prepare a mystery, you decide what will happen if the hunters don't get involved. When the hunters start interfering in the monster's plans, let the results from that happen organically, based on what the hunters do and the moves you decide to make.

Make the hunters' lives dangerous and scary. Well, that's just what it says. The hunters are cool action heroes and for that to matter they need to be dealing with horrific and overwhelming stuff. The harder it is to save the bystanders they meet, the more rewarding it will be when they manage.

The sections that follow (about your principles, the things you should always say, and your moves) are all designed to support you in sticking to your agenda.

THE KEEPER PRINCIPLES

Remember that your principles are:

- Put horror in everyday situations.
- Address yourself to the hunters, not the players.
- Use the Keeper moves, but never use their names.
- Be a fan of the hunters.
- Build up a coherent mythology of the world as you play.
- Nothing is safe. Kill bystanders and minions, burn down buildings, let monsters be slain.
- Name everyone they meet, make them seem like normal folks.
- Ask questions and build on the answers.
- Sometimes give the hunters exactly what they earned, rather than everything they wanted.
- Think about what's happening off-screen.
- You don't always have to decide what happens.
- Everything is a threat.

USING THE KEEPER PRINCIPLES

The Keeper principles keep your agenda at the front of your mind. Here's more detail on each of the principles:

Put horror in everyday situations because that's a way to make it hit home. If the victims are regular people, just like us, then that gives the horror emotional bite. Plus we're creating a world almost like the real one.

Address the hunters, not the players to keep things immediate. If you talk to Diana the hunter instead of Stefan the player, you're putting him into that zone, where he needs to deal with what Diana has in front of her right now.

Make your move but never use its name. You have a list of moves you are allowed to make (see page 172). You should not, however, tell the hunters that you are picking a particular move from the list. Tell them what happens in the story, the actions that comprise your move. *"The swamp gargoyle grabs you and leaps up onto the roof, leaving everyone else in the alley"* is a lot more interesting than *"I separate you! Francis, you're grabbed and on the roof now."* Grounding your moves in the events of the game keeps the sense that things are happening because they make sense, rather than that you picked an option from a list.

Be a fan of the hunters because that's the whole point of the game. We're here to see how awesome these hunters can be. Your job is to make life hard for them, but only so you can see how the hell they get out of their next predicament!

Build up a coherent mythology of the world as you play is another way to make the world seem real. When the hunters fight a vampire, it should have the same instincts, powers and weaknesses as the vampire they fought a month ago (unless you already know that there are several kinds of vampire, of course.) Keep track of what's happened, and how it fits together. Then you can start working out the deeper truths that underlie it all.

Nothing is safe because this is a horror game. The monsters are going to kill people (or worse) unless the hunters stop them. And the same goes for your monsters and minions: when the hunters track them down, let them die. Let stuff burn, explode, or fall into a magical rift forever.

Name everyone they meet, make them seem like normal folks is there to make the hunters want to save these people. But normal folks could be jerks, or dumb, or annoying, and they still need to be saved. If the hunters meet a bystander a second time, make sure that bystander remembers what happened last time and acts based on what the hunters did then.

Ask questions and build on the answers helps you populate the world. At the beginning, none of you know what the story is here. You're going to invent details as you fill the world, but some of this is up to the other players. When a hunter does something, ask how they do it. What did it seem like to everyone else? Why do they do it that way? Have you fought one of these creatures before? What did you learn then? Use the answer they give you and expand on it: build it into the game's mythology and into the mysteries and recurring threats you create.

Sometimes give them exactly what they earned, rather than what they wanted keeps things interesting. Usually it's pretty obvious what the hunters want when they make a move, but you don't have to give them more than the rules say. For example, say someone chooses "Who's most vulnerable?" Your answer could be "Well, you can see where another ghoul is hiding, you could get behind it" but sometimes the answer is "the one that's half dead on the floor in front of you." Don't always do this—remember to do what your preparation and honesty demand (see the always say section, below). But, sometimes, just do what the rules demand.

Think about what's happening off-screen is a reminder that what you're focused on right here and now isn't the only thing that's going on. What is the monster doing at the moment? What about the people the hunters talked to before? Who is in danger and who is up to something? If the hunters have split up, what are the others doing?

You don't always have to decide what happens. Sometimes there are places where you have a choice—for instance, would the monster kill this victim right now?—and you don't have a clear idea how it should play out. Maybe you can give the hunters a chance to intervene. Or you could think about what's going through this monster, minion or bystander's head, and let *them* decide. Does the monster really want to kill that person, or would it maybe take them captive, or maybe scare them and leave? Or maybe the victim has a plan? You don't need to make every single judgment based on some unattainable perfect first impulse. There are other ways to work it out.

Everything is a threat. Obviously the monsters and minions are threats, but so is everything else. "Threat" here is meant very broadly—a threat is anything that's going to make trouble for the hunters. So even the people the hunters are trying to help are going to be threats. They'll get in the way, or panic, or do something really stupid. That applies to everything else that turns up in the game, too. Places, objects, cults, police departments. Everything is a threat.

ALWAYS SAY

When it's time for you to say something, what you say is one of these:

- What the principles demand.
- What the rules demand.
- What your prepared mystery and arcs demand.
- What honesty demands.

USING WHAT YOU ALWAYS SAY

The “Always say” rules ensure you stick to your job.

Say something that the principles demand. The principles keep the style of the game grounded in action-horror, and help you decide what will come next.

Say what the rules demand. When someone makes a move, follow the rules for that move. Don't apply them inconsistently.

Say what your prepared mysteries and arcs demand. That's what you prepared them for, after all. If the mystery countdown says the rakshasa is going after the mayor next, that's what you say (unless other events have changed its plan, of course). Arcs are ongoing or recurring threats, like season-long stories or big bad monsters (I talk more about them on page 227), but are treated here the same as mysteries.

Say what honesty demands means you should let the hunters know anything they would be aware of. For example, there's a monster waiting to ambush them and they're walking right into it. But an experienced, bad-ass hunter would know to be careful here. It makes sense to say to them, “This would be a good ambush spot—maybe you want to **read a bad situation?**” Or, if they're talking about the werewolf they're hunting and they say, “Silver kills werewolves” but that isn't true for *your* werewolves, then let them know, “Actually silver is a myth, but wolfsbane works.” Or if they're going to make a move like **protect someone** and they'll need to throw themselves in front of a flesh-stitcher, let them know that they're going to suffer a **lot** of harm if they do it.

More generally: You should be a fan of the hunters, so don't let dumb, unsaid stuff trip them up.

Extending that, you can always give a player a do-over if a situation wasn't what they thought it was. For example, if someone chooses to suffer harm as a move result, thinking it will only be a minor injury but in fact it's enough to kill them. In that case, let them go back and choose the option that keeps them alive instead.

MOVES

Moves cover situations when the game rules step in to help determine what happens.

Just as the hunters have basic moves and playbook moves, you have a set of basic Keeper moves. You also get moves that go with each type of threat, and harm moves for when someone (or something) gets hurt.

For the hunters, their moves cover specific cases. Hunter moves say that when a hunter does **this**, it is resolved like so. Your Keeper moves are more general, giving you broad but definite options.

TO DO IT, YOU HAVE TO DO IT

This is important: when you (or the hunters) make any move, you must describe how it happens.

Always say what is happening in the game, not just the rules side of things. Don't tell someone "roll **act under pressure**!" tell them "the warlock's gaze insinuates itself into your mind and as it hisses, 'Kill your comrades,' you feel an overwhelming urge to comply. What do you do?"

There's a flip-side to this as well. When one of the hunters is doing something that is a move, make sure they follow the rules for that move. For example, if someone says "I go up to the park ranger and ask her 'Did you see anything weird last Sunday night?'" then you should ask them to roll the **investigate** move before you decide how the ranger answers.



THE BASIC KEEPER MOVES

Every time it's your turn in the conversation to tell the hunters what happens, or when they look at you expecting you to say something, use one of these moves:

- Separate them.
- Reveal future badness.
- Reveal off-screen badness.
- Inflict harm, as established.
- Make them investigate.
- Make them acquire stuff.
- Tell them the possible consequences and ask if they want to go ahead.
- Turn their move back on them.
- Offer an opportunity, maybe with a cost.
- Take away some of the hunters' stuff.
- Put someone in trouble.
- Make a threat move, from one of your mystery or arc threats.
- After every move, ask what they do next.

USING THE KEEPER MOVES

These moves are your main tool in play. Most of the time, when you're saying something, it will be one of these Keeper moves. Here are the detailed explanations of them all:

Separate them is just that. You can arrange a separation lots of different ways. Maybe a monster grabs someone, maybe someone falls behind, or maybe you can just say, "While Francis is checking out the kitchen, you're upstairs searching the bedrooms." Anything to get the hunters away from each other and from the people they're trying to help. Separating people can be used to make them vulnerable, or you can use it to put certain people together, away from the others, if you think that will lead to something interesting.

Reveal future badness allows you to hint at something that the hunters will need to deal with later. It can be obvious, for example when they see a person with a snake-like face approaching, or when they ask about what's likely to happen as part of an **investigate** move. It can be subtle, such as you mention the sun is setting (and, by implication, that the monsters are coming), or they hear an indistinct noise ahead of them while they explore a haunted house. It could be something from your mystery countdown that will be happening soon. It could be something from one of your arcs that might not matter right now, but which creates awareness of bigger problems for the hunters.

Reveal off-screen badness is similar, but it's something happening right now, somewhere else. It could be things seen or heard in the distance (screams, sirens, a fire, etc). Or it could be what's going on from someone else's point of view, such as a potential victim seeing the monster coming for them. You can even cut away from the hunters, just like in a TV show, and show the players who is in danger, or who is up to something.

Inflict harm, as established is used when a person or other thing in the world was being threatened with damage and nothing prevented it. The "as established" part is important—you can only inflict harm that is plausible and already present in the story. For example, if a hunter is pushed down a flight of stairs you immediately have a good idea of the potential harm. It is likely they'll be shaken and bruised, possible that they broke a bone or got a concussion, but they can't suffer severe burns.

Make them investigate keeps the game moving. In each mystery the hunters need to find clues until they know enough to face the monster behind it all. If the hunters get stumped, ask them what they look for next. If they ask you for information, ask them how they find it out, then get them to make the **investigate a mystery** move. The answers from investigating depend on what the hunter did: by asking a witness questions they will learn different things than when they analyse samples in a lab. If the hunters ask a question and you can't see how they could discover that, ask them to explain how.

Make them acquire stuff. Use this move when the hunters need something special, like they want to build a spirit detector, or cast a spell, or find an old book, or get a new weapon. Ask them how they pay for it, steal it, or find it.

Tell them the possible consequences and ask. Often, the hunters will want to do something but it isn't a move. Let them know they can do it, but only if they pay a certain price or suffer certain effects. For example, you can get away through that vent, but you'll have to leave your shotgun behind. Or you can grab that bag, but only by putting yourself in the firing line. The consequences could be a move, too: "you can do it, but you'll need to **act under pressure**."

Turn their move back on them is for when a hunter misses a move roll. Whatever they were trying to do happens to them instead. If they were trying to **protect someone**, they made the danger worse. If they were **investigating a mystery**, they revealed something to the monster. If they were **using magic**, it has the opposite of its intended effect.

Offer an opportunity, maybe with a cost. If they need something, offer what they need and tell them what they need to pay for it. For example, maybe the sheriff will let them continue investigating in his town, but only if they guarantee his children's safety.

Take away some of the hunters' stuff. Things break. Weapons can be dropped. Vital equipment can be thrown across the room by a monster, or smashed to pieces. The "taking away" doesn't have to be permanent, either: cellphones can lose the signal, the car could be out of gas, or a gas leak might make it too dangerous to fire a gun right now.

Put someone in trouble. Hunters are out to save people, so you need to provide people for them to save. Threaten bystanders, endanger other members of the team, and send monsters after a hunter's family. Plus there are other kinds of trouble as well, such as suspicious cops or neighbours who don't like the hunters snooping around.

Make a threat move, from one of the current mystery's threats or one of your arc threats. This list of Keeper moves is not the whole story. Each type of threat has its own list of special moves it can make: see pages 176 to 179. Use these when the threats are present and active.

After every move, ask what they do next. Just as it says, every time you make a move, immediately ask what the hunters do next. Let them drive the action, by asking what they do next at every chance you get.

WHICH KEEPER MOVE TO USE

Mostly it will be obvious what should happen next, and picking your move is easy. Other times it's not so obvious, and you might need to think a little about what you will do. That's fine, take a moment if you need to. Or you can just ask the hunters what they do—that's a good default move when you can't think of anything right now.

If you can't decide, you can always fall back on your Keeper principles or your agenda, and describe something consistent with them.

SOFT MOVES AND HARD MOVES

You can use each Keeper move in one of two ways: as a "soft" move or as a "hard" move.

A **soft move** is one that threatens danger, or pushes the hunters in a certain direction, but there's a way to stop the danger, or divert it.

For example: "The ice weasel races down the hall, teeth bared to rend!"

This is a **reveal future badness** move, and gives the hunters something to react to—they can do something to prevent the danger, or ignore it and do something else instead.

A **hard move** doesn't give the hunters a chance to react.

For example: "The ice weasel shoulders your arm out the way, and its teeth bite deep into your shoulder, ripping through clothes, skin, and muscle. Take four harm."

This time it's **inflict harm as established**, but because it's used as a hard move, the hunter doesn't have any chance to respond (or avoid suffering the harm).

SOFT MOVES SET UP HARD MOVES

Use soft moves to set up situations that will lead to a hard move. A soft move gives the hunters something to deal with. If they solve that problem, great. If not, then a follow-up hard move is the consequence of failure.

WHEN TO MAKE A HARD MOVE WITHOUT SETTING IT UP

As well as a failed attempt to deal with a soft move, events in play can turn out so that a hard move is appropriate. Specifically:

- When the hunters hand you a golden opportunity
- When a hunter misses a roll (that is, rolls a 6 or less)
- When a hunter has used up all their Luck.

Handing you a golden opportunity is a situation where, for example, the hunter says, "I leap down into the horde of zombies!" If you inflict 4-harm on them from zombie bites and clawing, that's too bad: they knew what they were getting into.

Missing a roll (with a total of six or less) is *always* a time when you can make a hard move. The hunter's screwed something up badly, so do whatever you need to. For example, if a hunter tries to **protect someone** and blows it, then you can inflict harm on the victim, maybe even kill them: make whatever was threatened come to pass.

The last one's a different case. When *someone has used all their Luck*, they become 'doomed.' This means you are allowed to make hard moves against them any time. For example, let's say a hunter says "I'll go check out the camp site" and you know the yeti have set up an ambush there. Normally it would make sense to give them a chance to spot this, for instance by asking if they want to **read a bad situation** as they approach. But if the hunter is doomed (and doesn't make a point of checking for danger), then you can choose to make a hard move, which means they only find out when two yeti grab them.

These situations are times when you are *justified* making as hard a move as you like. You don't *have* to, but you can. Always refer back to your agenda and principles when you make these choices.

THREAT MOVES

Each type of threat has its own set of special moves it can make. Use these as well as the basic Keeper moves when you're describing what a threat is doing.

Threat moves are used in the same way as the basic Keeper moves, except that a particular threat has to be the source of the move.

MONSTER THREAT MOVES

Monsters get fourteen moves:

- Hint at its presence
- Display its full might
- Appear suddenly
- Attack with great force and fury
- Seize someone or something
- Attack with stealth and calculation
- Order underlings to do terrible acts
- Destroy something
- Escape, no matter how well contained it is
- Give chase
- Return to home ground
- Boast and gloat, maybe revealing a secret
- Return from seeming destruction
- Use an unnatural power

USING MONSTERS

Monsters are the key threat type, always there in the shadows, behind everything bad that is happening. They should be dangerous and scary, but also remote at first. Let the monster be revealed slowly, as the hunters close in. This will be matched by the hunters gradually learning about the monster's powers and weaknesses.

Don't be afraid to use the monster threat moves to get it out of trouble, either. Especially in cases where the hunters track it down early in the mystery, you can let it escape for the time being, allowing it (and the hunters) a chance to rest and regroup.

Finally, it will likely come down to a fight between the hunters and the monster. This is the chance to throw everything at them: use all its unnatural powers, gloat, and generally make the final fight as tough and exciting as possible.



MINION THREAT MOVES

Minions get eleven moves:

- A burst of sudden, uncontrolled violence
- Make a coordinated attack
- Capture someone, or steal something
- Reveal a secret
- Deliver someone or something to the master
- Give chase
- Make a threat or demand on behalf of the master
- Run away
- Use an unnatural power
- Display a hint of conscience or humanity
- Disobey the master, in some petty way

USING MINIONS

Minions are there to support and guard the monster. While monsters should be kept at a distance to start with, it's fine for minions to be noticed and fought early in the mystery.

Minions can also be used to build up tension, giving the hunters a feeling of being surrounded by danger, or of constantly being watched.

Don't have minions always fight to the death: they can flee, surrender, or offer a deal to be left alive or betray their master. This is especially true for human minions.

BYSTANDER THREAT MOVES

Bystanders get ten moves:

- Go off alone
- Argue with the hunters
- Get in the way
- Reveal something
- Confess their fears
- Freak out in terror
- Try to help the hunters
- Try to protect people
- Display inability or incompetence
- Seek help or comfort

USING BYSTANDERS

Bystanders don't normally intend to cause trouble for the hunters, but they do so anyway. Think of each bystander as a person who wants one simple thing (which is represented by their motivation). A **victim** might want to just stay in his apartment, whatever the hunters say is coming. An **official** might just want to finish the paperwork and be done with this case, without dealing with any crazy hunters.

When thinking about bystander moves, consider the bystander's motivation, and what dumb thing they could do that will lead to trouble for the hunters. What can the bystander complicate for the hunters? How can they get in the way? This applies even when the bystander helps the hunters: this will give the hunters extra problems, starting with keeping the helper alive.

Bystander motivations are not always things that immediately lead to trouble. For example:

A **witness** is motivated to reveal information. Although when you reveal information to a hunter, that does tend to lead to trouble: telling the hunters where to find a monster usually leads to them going to fight it! Witnesses might also give the hunters too much information, or tell them something incomplete or just plain wrong.

A **helper** can easily create trouble despite wanting to help the hunters, just by giving the hunter someone to look after. Or consider a helper who tries to lure the monster towards the hunters.

An **innocent**, wanting to do the right thing, can cause trouble by insisting that the authorities get involved, or by telling people the whole truth at an inopportune time.

Any normal person the hunters talk to should be given a name and threat type, almost always a bystander type. If you have no particular idea what their role in the story is going to be, default to **witness** if they might have some clues for the hunters, or **victim** otherwise.

LOCATION THREAT MOVES

Locations get eleven moves:

- Present a hazard
- Reveal something
- Hide something
- Close a way
- Open a way
- Reshape itself
- Trap someone
- Offer a guide
- Present a guardian
- Something doesn't work properly
- Create a particular feeling

USING LOCATION THREATS

Locations normally don't have intentions in the way that monsters, minions and bystanders do. Instead they stand in for things that go wrong around the hunters, due to hazards in the environment. For example, in a **maze**, an exit door could get jammed, or the GPS in the hunters' car might start glitching out.

Location threat moves give you ways to move the mystery along, or put obstacles in the way of the hunters. They're useful to pace the mystery as it plays out—to slow the progress down, or speed it up. The moves also work well when there's action, to keep things exciting.





THE BASIC HUNTER MOVES

The earlier description of the basic hunter moves (on page 101) is written from the hunters' point of view. Here's some extra information about the moves from the Keeper's point of view.

ACT UNDER PRESSURE

Here's the move:

This covers trying to do something under conditions of particular stress or danger. Examples of acting under pressure are: staying on task while a banshee screams at you; barricading a door before the giant rats catch up; resisting the mental domination of a brain-worm; fighting on when you're badly injured.

When you act under pressure, roll +Cool.

- *On a 10+ you do what you set out to.*
- *On a 7-9 the Keeper is going to give you a worse outcome, hard choice, or price to pay.*
- *On a miss, things go to hell.*

This is a general purpose move, for any time a hunter tries something that is dangerous or liable to fail, and isn't covered by any other moves (either a basic move, or one from a playbook).

The pressure can be anything from being detected when they're hiding to resisting death as they try and escape a blazing building.

Make sure you establish what the pressure is at the start, so the hunters know what they're in for if they mess up. You need to know what they're trying to do, and to let them know what's making it hard.

A result of 7-9 tells you to give them a worse outcome, hard choice, or price to pay—they can do what they wanted, if they accept what you pick. It is still a success, so they should be able to do what they wanted, although the cost might be high enough that they decide not to. Use your agenda and principles to help decide.

For our hiding example, maybe they can stay hidden, but only if they let the monster trap them in a dead end. Or they have to go so far back that they can no longer see what's happening. In both of these cases, the hard choice is about where they're positioned in the story. They could stay hidden, but have to pay the price.

For the burning building, maybe they can escape if they jump out a second floor window. Or they can run through flames to escape or stay somewhere that is safe for now. In these cases, the price is some harm from the fall or the fire.

On a miss, then whatever the pressure has overwhelmed the hunter.

HELP OUT

Here's the move:

*When you **help another hunter** with a move they are making, roll +Cool.*

- *On a 10+ your help grants them +1 to their roll.*
- *On a 7-9 your help grants them +1 to their roll, but you also expose yourself to trouble or danger.*
- *On a failure, you expose yourself to trouble or danger without helping.*

This is used when a hunter wants to help another hunter make a move. Helping will give the other hunter +1 on a single roll. It's okay to see what the result is before deciding to help out, as long as it still makes sense that the hunter could do something to help improve the results.

Make sure they tell you what concrete action they are taking to help out. If they can't think of how they help, then they don't get to do it. You should also make sure their actions actually do help in the game, too. For example, helping with an attack might allow the helper to add their weapon's harm to the injury the first hunter inflicts on the monster.

A result of 7-9 means that the hunter succeeds in helping, but exposes themselves to trouble. A lot of the time this trouble will be obvious, as when they are helping someone **kick some ass**. Here you could inflict harm on both of the hunters. In other cases the trouble will be less obvious, such as a when trying to help **investigate a mystery** by interviewing witnesses: this might lead to hostile rumours circulating about the hunter later on, or make an enemy of a witness.

On a miss, the help does no good and the helper exposes themselves to trouble or danger. This could be the same as the danger of the move being helped, or something else entirely.

INVESTIGATE A MYSTERY

Here's the move:

Investigating can be done any number of ways: following tracks, interviewing witnesses, forensic analysis, looking up old folklore in a library, typing the monster's name into Google, capturing the monster and conducting tests on it, and so on. Anything that might give you more information about what's going on is fair game for an investigate move.

When you investigate a mystery, roll +Sharp.

On a 10+ hold 2, and on a 7-9 hold 1.

One hold can be spent to ask the Keeper one of the following questions:

- *What happened here?*
- *What sort of creature is it?*
- *What can it do?*
- *What can hurt it?*
- *Where did it go?*
- *What was it going to do?*
- *What is being concealed here?*

On a miss, you reveal some information to the monster or whoever you are talking to. The Keeper might ask you some questions, which you have to answer.

It's important that your attempts to investigate (and the results you get from them) are plausible and consistent with what's happening. For example, if you're using laboratory equipment to investigate evidence, you probably won't be able to learn anything about the monster's magical origins.



The **investigate a mystery** move will be used frequently. When the hunters begin each new mystery, they will have (at best) a vague idea of what they're hunting. Investigation is the main way to find out what's going on, where the monster is, who they need to protect, and anything else they need to know.

The move covers any investigation technique the hunters can think of: interviewing witnesses, sending monster DNA to the lab, tracking it through the alleys, looking at a dead body and reconstructing what happened, looking through ancient tomes of monster lore, and hacking into police databases. These are all legitimate ways to investigate.

Ask yourself, "Could they conceivably find anything useful that way?" If the answer is "Yes," tell them to go ahead. If the answer is "No" then ask, "How would you find that out?" If they have a good reply, let them know the answer. If there still isn't a way to find out, you can ask them to pick a different question instead.

It's important that you give the hunters as many clues as you can. It's easy to make the hunters work hard to discover the details of the mystery. But that isn't part of your agenda. Every success on an **investigate** move should give the hunters something solid. You should also be generous with obvious details, even on a miss. We play to find out what the hunters do once they've uncovered the mysteries, not how they do it. The **investigate** move is a way for you give them the information they need to decide.

For example, if a hunter is **investigating** by looking at the body of a monster victim, you should describe the state of the body first. "It's been ripped apart, looks like it went for the heart. The heart is missing." Those details don't require a move, because they're obvious and don't address the **investigate** questions directly. If the hunter then gets a success on the roll, they may ask you to tell them about the creature's powers—that's something that requires careful analysis of the scene and injuries.

Sometimes the answer to one of the questions will be a negative, such as when you are asked for more about the creature's weaknesses when the hunters have already discovered them all. In these cases, make it clear that they know this. "Your hours poring over the books tell you that the creature has no more weaknesses."

Misses for this move lend themselves to trouble with normal people (e.g. annoying the witness; being caught stealing evidence, etc) or giving away information to their enemies (e.g. the monster or minions hear about questions being asked; the hunters are observed in their evidence collection; etc).

AN EXAMPLE INVESTIGATION

Here's an example showing how an investigation scene might play out.

Our cast is:

- Mary, playing Mark (a Wronged hunter).
- Chris, playing Cray (a Spooky hunter).
- Alan, the Keeper (who is also playing Officer Hannah Tarlton, a bystander, whose motivation is to join the hunt).

The investigation:

Hannah has brought the hunters to the place she saw an attack take place. The hunters are posing as FBI agents.

Alan (speaking as Hannah): *"Right, here's where it happened," says Hannah, "You can see the blood on the wall there. Our witness said the attacker ran off down that alley and over a fence."*

Chris (speaking as Cray): *"You mind if I take some samples?" Then I just start, without waiting for permission.*

Alan (speaking as Hannah): *"Uh, sure. Forensics are already taking a look at it."*

Mary (speaking as Mark): *"So, what did the witness have to say about the attacker? I'm interested in anything, even if it's kinda weird."*

Alan: *Okay, roll **investigate a mystery** for me.*

Mary rolls the dice and adds Mark's Sharp.

Mary: *I got a nine. One question?*

Alan: *Well, you already asked about the witness seeing anything weird, so I figure you're interested in its powers?*

Mary: *Definitely.*

Alan: *Okay, Hannah says "Well, the guy claimed that the attacker just vaulted over that fence down there. But he'd been drinking."*

Mary (speaking as Mark): *"Right. Witnesses, huh?"*

Chris: *While they are chatting I want to test the bloodstains to work out what it is.*

Alan: *Um, how do you test a bloodstain for what kind of monster attacked?*

Chris: *I'm going to get out my chemistry test kit and try the samples with, like, silver to see if there's a reaction that you might see from werewolf blood, or if there's sulphur present that might mean it was a demon, or if it reacts to holy water, that could be a vampire or demon blood. That sort of thing.*

Alan: *I guess that might work. But only for things you could learn from the bloodstains—and it seems to be mainly human blood, maybe all human. Roll it.*

Chris rolls the dice and adds Cray's Sharp.

Chris: *Yeah, a twelve. First question: what is it?*

Alan: *Okay, you find a couple of splashes of blood that are a slightly different colour—more richly red, and slower drying. They react to the holy water test, and let's say you had garlic in there too. The blood starts smoldering in contact with both. So a vampire, most likely.*

Chris: *Vampire. Got it. In that case, next question is "what can it do?"*

Alan: *How are you going to find that out from bloodstains?*

Chris: *Remember how I spent all that time researching vampires for the case last month? I know that turned out to be a chupacabra, but I still read all those books.*

Alan: *Okay, so we flash back to you going over all those old books, and you're making a list of vampire powers on a pad: super strength, fast, mesmerism, rapid healing are the things you wrote on the list. Hannah says "So, you finished your tests and everything? I have a job to do here."*

Chris (speaking as Cray): *"Yes, that's everything for now. Thanks for your help."*

Alan: *Cool, she gets back to her own work. What do you do now?*

KICK SOME ASS

Here's the move:

*When you get into a fight and **kick some ass**, roll +Tough.*

On any success (i.e., total 7 or more) you inflict harm on (and suffer harm from) whatever you're fighting. The amount of harm is based on the established dangers in the game. That usually means you inflict the harm rating of your weapon and your enemies inflict their attack's harm rating on you.

If you roll a 10+, choose one extra effect:

- *You gain the advantage: take +1 forward, or give +1 forward to another hunter.*
- *You inflict terrible harm (+1 harm).*
- *You suffer less harm (-1 harm).*
- *You force them where you want them.*

On a miss, you get your ass kicked instead. You suffer harm or get captured, but don't inflict any harm back.

This is the basic fighting move, covering the back and forth of a short burst of fighting, rather than a single attack.

By default when a hunter **kicks ass** both sides inflict harm as established—the hunter with their weapon and the enemy theirs. The precise amount of harm that's traded will depend on what's happening at that moment in the fight.

For example, Hoss the hunter is going to shoot a zombie with his shotgun (harm-3 close load messy reload), while the zombie is trying to bite Hoss (the zombie's bite attack is rated "2-harm hand"). If the zombie is still out of reach (i.e. out of hand range), Hoss will inflict 3-harm on it but be safe from the zombie's bite. Once the zombie is right up in Hoss's face, then Hoss can still blast it for 3-harm and this time the zombie can bite him back for 2-harm.

Don't automatically call for this move any time a hunter attacks something. If a hunter attacks a foe that cannot (or will not) fight back, then it is appropriate to just use the Keeper move **inflict harm as established** instead. What the hunter's doing could also be a move like **protect someone** or **act under pressure** (or another move altogether): use what the player has stated the hunter's intentions are and the actions they've described the hunter taking to determine what makes sense.

On a success of 10+, the hunter gets to pick an extra effect. Always ask them what happened.

If the hunter takes +1 forward, or gives another hunter +1 forward, then make sure to ask them what they did to set up an advantage. This might include things like tactical maneuvering, grappling with the enemy, pushing the enemy back, or knocking the enemy off balance.

If the hunter inflicts terrible harm, then they inflict one more point of harm. That means they did something extra-nasty with their attack, so be sure to ask them what that was.

If the hunter suffers less harm, then reduce the harm the enemy inflicts by one. Ask them what they did to reduce the harm.

If the hunter forces the enemy where they want them, this will allow them to push the bad guys wherever they want. Be generous with this, as long as it's consistent with what is happening in the game: you can't drive the monsters out if they're in a dead end, for instance.

When a hunter misses on **kick some ass**, they're usually going to be in a lot of trouble. Your move doesn't always have to be **inflict harm as established**. Sometimes your other moves can apply too: maybe the hunter gets captured, or the monster gets a chance to flee the fight.



MANIPULATE SOMEONE

Here's the move:

This move is used when you want someone to do something for you. You'll need a good reason for them to do it, and what counts as a good reason depends on what you are asking for and your relationship with them.

For friends and allies, you might just need to ask. For witnesses to a monster attack, you could tell them you are with the police, or just offer them some cash for answering your questions.

*Once you have given them a reason, **tell them what you want them to do** and roll +Charm.*

For a normal person:

- *If you get 10+, then they'll do it for the reason you gave them. If you asked too much, they'll tell you the minimum it would take for them to do it (or if there's no way they'd do it).*
- *On a 7-9, they'll do it, but only if you do something for them right now to show that you mean it. If you asked too much, they'll tell you what, if anything, it would take for them to do it.*
- *On a miss, your approach is completely wrong: you offend or anger the target.*

For another hunter:

- *On a 10+ they mark experience and get +1 forward if they do what you ask.*
- *On a 7-9, they mark experience if they do what you ask.*
- *On a miss, it's up to that hunter to decide how badly you offend or annoy them. They mark experience if they do not do what you asked.*

Here's the most important thing to remember about the **manipulate someone** move: the hunter needs to offer something that makes the target willing to do what the hunter asks.

This doesn't mean it should be hard. It can be enough for a hunter to pretend to be a police officer, or say "I'll look after you," or promise to help out later.

But don't let it be too easy either. If a hunter is asking a bystander to be bait in a monster trap, there may be nothing the hunter can offer that will convince them to do it. Use the target's motivation to help determine what might be enough for them. Use your agenda of making the world seem real and the rule to always say what honesty demands to assess whether the target would be willing to do what the hunter is asking for.

When a hunter tries to manipulate another hunter, things work differently. In this case, the incentive is the experience check and bonus that will be available to the target if the move succeeds. The target hunter gets to choose whether that incentive, along with whatever they were offered in the game, is enough to convince them to do what is asked.

Misses on this move naturally lead to offending the target, or the hunter coming across as obtuse or annoying. When the move is used on the other hunters, one of these results will probably happen naturally. For misses with bystanders, the target could see through a disguise, or refuse to believe a critical lie (or truth!). Look at the threat type for the character (or pick one for them right now) and their motivation will give you an idea how they are going to react.

If the hunter promises something as part of manipulating someone, but then fails to do what they promised, you can use that in the game. If they ever meet that person again, this failure is not going to be forgotten! That means that you can set a new mystery in the same place, and the hunters will need to deal with bystanders who have no reason to trust them, or who may even want revenge.



MANIPULATING MONSTERS

By default the hunters can't manipulate monsters. Even if a monster can talk and reason, it cannot be trusted to keep its word. You should certainly allow the hunters to make a deal with a monster, if they try to, but they do not get to roll **manipulate someone** and they certainly will not get a guarantee that the monster will hold up its end of the bargain. From the monster's point of view, hunters wanting to make a deal are probably in a weak position so this is a great opportunity to take advantage of them.

The only exception is when a hunter move explicitly allows it (such as the Monstrous move **dark negotiator**). If a hunter has a move allowing this, then **manipulate** works as normal (although what a monster wants in return could be quite unpleasant).

Minions may or may not be vulnerable to manipulation. If the minion is a normal human working for a monster, then hunters can manipulate them fine. The other extreme are minions who can't understand speech and may not be capable of making deals, such as brain-eating zombies or a malevolent fungus. Make decisions for the in-between cases as they come up, and remember that the minion might want something nasty in return for doing what the hunter asks.

PROTECT SOMEONE

Here's the move:

*When **you prevent harm to another character**, roll +Tough.*

On any success (i.e., 7 or more), you protect them okay, but you'll suffer some or all of the harm they were going to get.

If you got a 10+ choose an extra:

- *You suffer little harm (-1 harm).*
- *All impending danger is now focused on you.*
- *You inflict harm on the enemy.*
- *You hold the enemy back.*

On a miss, then you end up making things worse.

This can be used any time someone is about to suffer harm, including as the result of another move (i.e. a **kick some ass** move that means a hunter is going to suffer harm).

As with **help out**, always ask the hunter how they are going to protect *this* person in *this* situation.

By default, any success means that the hunter has successfully protected the target (so the target is not harmed at all) but the hunter will suffer harm instead (usually, but not always, the same harm).

On a 10+ the hunter gets to pick an extra effect. Ask the hunter what happened.

They can choose to suffer little harm, taking one less harm. Ask what they do to reduce the harm.

If they choose "All impending danger is now focused on the hunter," they've put themselves right in harm's way. Ask them what they do to get all the danger. Don't be shy when this is picked: the hunter has *chosen* to have the entire enemy force have a go at them.

If they choose to "inflict harm on the enemy," they get to harm an enemy as well as protecting the target. Ask how they did that. As usual, the amount of harm done depends on the hunter's weapon.

If they choose "Hold the enemy back" then the bad guys can't get past the hunter. Other hunters, or even bystanders, may help fight from this position if it makes sense. This works best when defending a small space like a doorway. If the hunters are in the open, the bad guys will be able to work their way around them eventually.

Missing a **protect someone** roll is very bad. In general, harm to both the original victim and the hunter is a good choice. Things could be even worse, e.g. the target might be captured as well. As with **kick some ass**, when things go bad here, they go *really* bad. Feel free to inflict harm as established and follow up with a hard move.

READ A BAD SITUATION

Here's the move:

*When you look around and **read a bad situation**, roll +Sharp.*

On a 10+ hold 3, and on a 7-9 hold 1.

One hold can be spent to ask the Keeper one of the following questions:

- *What's my best way in?*
- *What's my best way out?*
- *Are there any dangers we haven't noticed?*
- *What's the biggest threat?*
- *What's most vulnerable to me?*
- *What's the best way to protect the victims?*

If you act on the answers, you get +1 ongoing while the information is relevant. For example, if you ask for the best way in to the monster's lair then you'll get +1 while you are infiltrating it. But once you're in, the information doesn't help you any more.

On a miss, you might mis-read the situation (e.g. "Everything is fine here! It will be totally safe to go investigate alone!"), or you might reveal tactical details to your enemies (which means the Keeper can ask the questions above of you).

This move is for when a hunter goes into a situation they know is hostile—e.g. when they know the monster's in this house somewhere. It can also be used in the middle of a dangerous situation, if the hunter needs some more tactical information.

Misses on **reading a bad situation** lend themselves to you turning the move back on the hunter—ask them some of the questions on behalf of whatever enemies are present, and then have the enemies act on those answers.

Misses can also give you a chance to put the hunters into danger—for example, they just failed to notice the ambush they're walking into.

USE MAGIC

Here's the move:

*When you **use magic**, say what you're trying to achieve and how you do the spell, then roll +Weird.*

- *If you get a 10+, the magic works without issues: choose your effect.*
- *On a 7-9, it works imperfectly: choose your effect and a glitch. The Keeper will decide what effect the glitch has.*
- *On a miss, you lose control of the magic. This never ends well.*

By default the magic has one of the effects listed below, lasts for around thirty minutes, and does not expose you to danger, unwanted attention, or side-effects. If there's a glitch this might change.

Effects:

- *Inflict harm (1-harm ignore-armour magic obvious).*
- *Enchant a weapon. It gets +1 harm and +magic.*
- *Do one thing that is beyond human limitations.*
- *Bar a place or portal to a specific person or a type of creature.*
- *Trap a specific person, minion, or monster.*
- *Banish a spirit or curse from the person, object, or place it inhabits.*
- *Summon a monster into the world.*
- *Communicate with something that you do not share a language with.*
- *Observe another place or time.*
- *Heal 1-harm from an injury, or cure a disease, or neutralize a poison.*

Glitches:

- *The effect is weakened.*
- *The effect is of short duration.*
- *You take 1-harm ignore-armour magic.*
- *The magic draws immediate, unwelcome attention.*
- *It has a problematic side effect.*

The Keeper may require one or more of the following:

- *The spell requires weird materials.*
- *The spell will take 10 seconds, 30 seconds, or 1 minute to cast.*
- *The spell requires ritual chanting and gestures.*
- *The spell requires you to draw arcane symbols.*
- *You need one or two people to help cast the spell.*
- *You need to refer to a tome of magic for the details.*

Magic, by its nature, breaks the rules. The **use magic** move lists the possible effects for magic spells. Magic that goes beyond these effects counts as **big magic** (see below).

When a hunter **uses magic**, it's important to ask them what they're trying to do (and work out which of the effects they are trying for). Ask the hunter how they cast the spell, and what it looks like too.

Then consider the scope of what they're doing, how they said the spell is cast, and decide if you will require anything extra from the list.

Pick extra requirements based on the size of magical effect. Magic that has a big effect should need a bigger effort. Usually pick one or two things including anything the hunter included in their description of casting the spell. You can offer alternatives, too, so that the hunter *either* takes one minute *or* needs arcane symbols, say.

Partial successes when **using magic** mean that the hunter has to pick a glitch. Glitches are bad news, but it's up to the hunter to decide which one happens. Magic should always be dangerous and unpredictable, so hammer that home when you decide how the glitches take effect.

On a miss **using magic**, make as hard a move as you like: anything can happen when magic goes wrong. Reversing the intended effect of the spell is an option, so that the exact opposite of what the hunter wanted happens. You can also go for off-the-wall weirdness: portals to other dimensions; angry spirits converging on the hunter; or changes to the laws of physics around the hunter—that sort of thing.

ONE THING BEYOND HUMAN LIMITATIONS

This particular effect is an important one because what you allow here will define how powerful magic is in your game.

For a gritty game, going 'beyond human limitations' might include:

- lifting a car just enough to free someone trapped underneath
- carrying on despite a nasty injury
- resisting a mental attack from a monster.

For a more super-heroic game, going 'beyond human limitations' might include:

- flying up to a rooftop.
- surviving a deadly injury.
- reading the thoughts of everyone around you.

So, when a hunter wants to exceed human limitations, think carefully about what allowing their desired effect in this case implies for your entire game. You can think of your decisions about this as a dial that determines how much power the hunters can get from everyday magic spells.

If you think the desired effect is too powerful, tell them they would have to do it with by using a **big magic** ritual instead).

BIG MAGIC

The rules for the **use magic** move are constrained, but **big magic** is not. **Big magic** is for everything else, from curing someone of vampirism to opening a gate to another dimension.

The only limits on **big magic** are those that have been established in your game. For example, it may be that you decided magic never allows anyone to travel into the past.

Even these established rules might be broken if there is a strong enough reason in the story. For example, the hunters might realise that the *only* way to defeat a monster is to go back in time to when it was weaker. If you reveal that a limit can be broken in certain circumstances, think about what this reveals about the world. This sort of event should always be a big deal, with big repercussions in your story. In our time travel example, maybe travel into the past changes the timeline irrevocably; or maybe the rule being broken unleashes an angry time god on the hunters.



When the hunters want to do **big magic**, you decide what it requires, the same as when someone uses magic normally. Once the hunters meet the requirements, the spell happens successfully, without a roll. Here are the options for requirements that you can choose from:

- Spend a lot of time (days or weeks) researching the magic ritual.
- Experiment with the spell—there will be lots of failures before you get it right.
- The hunter needs some rare and weird ingredients and supplies.
- It will take a long time (hours or days) to cast.
- The hunter needs a lot of people (2, 3, 7, 13, or more) to help.
- It needs to be done at a particular place and/or time.
- You need to **use magic** as part of the ritual, perhaps to summon a monster, communicate with something, or bar the portal you opened.
- It will have a specific side effect or danger.

You can pick multiple requirements, that all need to be satisfied:

For example, you can tell the hunters “You need to spend a few days doing research and then get a lava snake fang to cast this spell. And then you’ll need three people to help you cast it.”

You can also give the hunters alternatives:

For example, you can tell the hunters “You need to spend a few days doing research for a simple version, or if you get a lava snake fang then you can cast it right now. Either way you need three people to help out.”

Make the requirements consistent with how big a deal this spell is going to be. Also, because the big magic does not require a roll for any move (except, incidentally, as part of meeting the requirements), you need to consider the perils and side effects of the spell and bring them into play as Keeper moves.

PLAYBOOK MOVES

I've gone into detail about how to handle the basic moves, but there isn't room to cover all the playbook moves in the same depth.

The overarching rule is to interpret results using the Keeper's agenda, principles, things to always say, and all your moves. If you stick to those, you won't go wrong.

ACTIONS NOT COVERED BY A MOVE

Sometimes the hunters will come up with something they want to try that isn't covered by existing moves. Depending on exactly what it is, there are several ways to deal with this.

If the action is something a normal person could do, then you can just accept it. Look at your list of Keeper moves and see if any of them apply to the action: if they do, then use that move. Quite often, I find that the Keeper move that applies is "Ask them what they do next." Let them do what they want and see what comes of it.

If it's something that moves the mystery along, and you can't think of how rolling dice for it will be more interesting than just accepting it, that's another case where it's best for them to just do it.

If it's something that a normal person could do, but it's really hard and/or dangerous, ask them to **act under pressure**.

If it's something that a normal person couldn't do at all, then you can ask them to **use magic**, or **big magic**.

In fact, **act under pressure** and **use magic** are intended to be catch-alls. If you can't work out which move to use, one of these two will usually work.

Another alternative is to quickly make up a custom move for this particular situation. Only do this if you think it will come up again, and only once you are comfortable enough with the moves that you can do this quickly. There's a section on making custom moves on page 296.





ON WITH THE MYSTERY!

That covers the basic rules that you need to keep in mind—it's time to get on with the mystery. The previous section was a long digression: but if you cast your mind back to “Running the First Mystery” (on page 166), the group had just finished creating hunters and were ready to start playing out the mystery. You should have your prepared mystery in front of you.

START-OF-MYSTERY MOVES

First, check if anyone has a move to roll at the beginning of the mystery. The Chosen always does, and an Expert, Flake, Initiate, or Spooky might have one. Ask them how they do the move. Then have them roll and see what the effect is. Make sure that anyone who rolled six or less marks experience.

THE TEASER

Begin the game with a scene to introduce the hook.

The way you introduce the hook allows you to select a certain atmosphere and pace for the mystery. For example:

- Dramatize the most recent monster attack, showing the victim from the monster's point of view.
- Ask the hunters what they are doing when they find out about the hook.
- Describe the hunters at a diner near the scene of the latest attack, discussing the hook.
- Describe the hunters at the scene of the latest attack, checking out the environment for clues and talking to witnesses.

The default is to start the hunters at the scene. Other options will increase the time it takes to complete the mystery and allow more time for the hunters to develop their characters and relationships. If you dramatise the monster attack, you may find it gives players who are new to the game a nice sense of competence when their hunters start investigating the mystery and ask the right questions.

Introduce the teaser and then ask the hunters what they're doing. For example, are they undercover? What do they want to check out first?

BEGINNING THE INVESTIGATION

Tell them about the location and sketch a quick map of the area (or show them one you already prepared). Include important features, especially anything that was mentioned in the hook—where bodies were found, which house appears to be haunted, the location of the police station that filed the report, and so on. Then ask them “So, where are you going first? Are you all going or are you going to split up and cover more ground?” After this, let the hunters drive the investigation.

Play out the hunters’ interviews with normal folks, and their examination of places. If they meet bystanders you prepared with the mystery, use the details you wrote down. If they talk to someone new, give that bystander a name, and a bystander type (pages 142 and 178).

Draw a map of everywhere they search, and everywhere there’s some action. Give each place a location threat type (pages 144 and 179).

ASK QUESTIONS

All the way through this first mystery, you need to ask questions all the time. That’s how to get a handle on the hunters: how each approaches things, how the team works together, and how each hunter’s backstory is going to factor into the game. When they do something, ask them *how* they do it. If they want to know if they have a torch (or whatever), ask them “Do you normally carry one?” When they find out about an important location, ask them if they’ve been there before. If they have, ask them what it was like. Let everyone contribute to the world you are creating in your game, and, as Keeper, build on their answers to your questions.

Make notes of all the answers you get, in case you need them later.

GIVE THEM TOUGH CHOICES

The heart of the game is seeing what the hunters decide when they’ve only got an array of crappy options to choose from. Make sure they have difficult choices, and push at them to go one way or another.

There are any number of ways you can do this. Here are some of my favourites:

- a monster’s weakness that is terrible to take advantage of.
- a **big magic** ritual that has nasty stuff for its requirements.
- a monster that is, in its way, a victim.
- a simple but awful solution to the mystery’s central problem.

CALL FOR MOVES

Call for **investigate** and **manipulate** moves when the hunters look for clues. And if they go somewhere dangerous, suggest that they might want to **read a bad situation**.

If a hunter wants to do some crazy, impossible stuff then remind them they can **use magic** for that sort of thing.

USE YOUR KEEPER MOVES

Keep in mind your agenda and principles (page 166), and moves (page 172).

Respond to the hunters' actions with your Keeper and threat moves. Make soft moves that the hunters must deal with, and then make a hard move if they don't deal with it (see page 174).

Recall that when a hunter misses a move roll (that is, their total is six or less), you get to respond with a move of your own (and it can be a hard move):

- For **act under pressure**, things go to hell for the hunter.
- For **help out**, the hunter exposes themselves to trouble or danger.
- For **kick some ass**, the hunter gets their ass kicked.
- For **protect someone**, the hunter makes things worse.
- For **manipulate someone**, the hunter angers or offends the target.
- For **investigate a mystery**, the hunter reveals something to the monster or whoever they are talking to.
- For **read a bad situation**, the hunter reads the situation all wrong or reveals tactical details to their enemies.
- For **use magic**, the hunter loses control of the magic and anything can happen.

Remind the hunters that they can **help** each other, too, especially if someone just missed a roll by one (help can be given after a roll has been made). However **help** bonuses do not stack (e.g if three hunters successfully **help**, they don't give a +3 bonus).

USE THE COUNTDOWN

Mark off the steps on the countdown if the corresponding event happens in play, or when you decide it has now happened off-screen.

Advancing the countdown isn't one of your moves by itself, but it represents a move that was just made or is about to be made. Good times to advance the countdown are:

- you **announce off-screen badness** that warns about the event about to happen, or shows that it is happening now.
- a hunter blows an **investigate** move that could have led to finding out about the next event.
- you make a move for a threat that completes the next event.
- a hunter misses a move roll attempting to stop the next event.

As the countdown is what would happen if the hunters didn't interfere, you will usually need to revise the plan based on what happens in play. The hunters might prevent something directly, or the monster might change its plans in response to what the hunters do. Maybe some of the events will be changed, or maybe some will be skipped, or they could all become irrelevant. That's fine. The important thing is that the countdown provides you with a guide to what the bad guys are trying to do.

I'M NOT PREPARED FOR THIS

The hunters will do things you didn't expect. They might check out somewhere you didn't define, or talk to someone you hadn't thought about.

If this happens, just make a note of the person or place, give them a name, and quickly pick a threat type for them. That's all you need to do, after which you can treat that person or place the same as any of your prepared threats.

You can even do this with monster and minion threats, if it makes sense, although then you also need to pick powers, weaknesses, attacks, armour, and harm capacity. It's less common for an unexpected monster to be called for, but you can never be sure. The hunters might summon a creature to help them, or something like that.

In general, just note down the minimum that you need to get on with the game, and then get on with it. Fill in more details if and when you need them.

IT ALWAYS COMES TO A FIGHT

Once the hunters get a handle on what they're hunting, they'll want to take it out. The following sections have a lot of advice for running fights, but this is the overview.

Start fights somewhere interesting, with lots of stuff that can be used in move descriptions, by you and the hunters. Every fight scene should have a location threat type, too, so remember to use those location threat moves when appropriate.

Aim to have a couple of set-piece fight scenes: it's really the hunters who determine how fast they catch the monster, but you still have a bit of control over the pacing via your moves. For example, if the hunters track down the monster early on and it feels anticlimactic, have the monster disengage or run away (perhaps using the monster threat move **escape, no matter how well contained it is**). Conversely, if the hunters are moving slowly, the monster might decide to attack them first (the monster threat move could be **show its full power, attack with great force and fury**, or **attack with stealth and cunning**), or it could send minions after them (monster: **order underlings to do terrible acts**, minions: **a burst of sudden uncontrolled violence, a coordinated attack, give chase**).

Try to hurt the hunters: they have plenty of Luck at the beginning so they are not any real danger. A hard fight in the first mystery sets an expectation of danger and risk for the game, which helps create a sense of horror.



KEEPING FIGHTS INTERESTING

There are going to be a lot of fights, and you need to keep them novel. It's easy to fall into giving everyone a turn, the hunters each rolling **kick some ass** one at a time, but that's dull.

I'm going to present a variety of techniques to keep fight scenes exciting. Use them in your game (with your Keeper moves) whenever you can. The techniques are:

- Think about what's at stake.
- Decide who has the initiative.
- Use the environment.
- Make maps.
- Apply weapon tags.
- Be creative with moves.
- Most times, do the obvious thing.
- Balance spotlight time.
- Don't drag things out
- Use soft moves to set up hard moves.

THINK ABOUT WHAT'S AT STAKE

There are a lot of reasons for the hunters to get into a fight. Think about what their enemies want. If a monster is fighting to destroy the hunters before they kill it, then it has more at stake than if they caught it sneaking around. In the first case, it might fight to the death. In the second, maybe it just wants to run away.

Take a moment to work out what the combatants want to achieve, and that will help you pick their tactics.

DECIDE WHO HAS THE INITIATIVE

When a fight starts, pick who gets the first move, and base your decision both on what's happening and in accordance with your agenda and principles.

If a hunter just missed a **read a bad situation** roll, maybe the first she knows about the troll is when it attacks. Conversely, if the hunters have made a concerted effort to infiltrate a lair undetected, they'll be the ones attacking without warning.

Other times, both sides are aware of each other. Use your common sense here, and base the decision on what's happening, as always in accordance with your agenda and principles.

If a hunter or a monster is using a weapon that has the 'quick' tag they will normally go first, and anything tagged 'slow' will normally go last.

USE THE ENVIRONMENT

To keep fights fresh, make sure the action, your moves and questions all take advantage of where it's happening. Whether it's in a house, sewer, street, or cave, think about what makes this particular location unusual for this sort of place (and always include something unusual, something that sets it apart from average).

For example:

This house looks rundown but normal, except there's a dusty smell from the piles and piles of magazines everywhere. Looks like the owner really loves National Geographic.

The leshy disappears into the forest and as you reach the edges you see the whole place is damp and marshy, with mud and moss that your feet start sinking into.

The extra details in both those examples might not directly affect what happens in the game (although they might). They create a much more evocative picture in the imagination than "It's a rundown house" or "The leshy disappears into the forest" would have done, which can help inspire the hunters when they're deciding what to do

You should also decide on a location threat type every time a fight takes place. This provides you with hints about how to describe the place (based on its motivation), and gives you access to the location threat moves.

MAKE MAPS

Drawing a map is a good idea, and will give everyone an agreed picture of the space and who is where. Make sure you include details that the hunters (and their enemies) can use to their advantage. Use details like what furniture is present, where the slimy puddles are, the iron candlesticks around the temple altar, where the traffic is rushing past. Even if the hunters don't use these things, you can. When someone is hurt don't just say that they take harm. Say that they get thrown at the altar, knocking candlesticks everywhere.

APPLY WEAPON TAGS

Pay attention to the tags of the weapons used in the fight, so you can work them into your descriptions of what's going on. Many of the weapon tags can influence the direction of the fight and the story in unpredictable directions. As well as the hunters' weapon tags, use the monster's and minions' attack tags.

Make sure that you take weapon range tags into account, too. If a weapon is being used out of its normal range, that will be a disadvantage to the wielder. That might prevent it from being used at all, or it might be less effective (e.g. causing less harm than usual, or requiring an **act under pressure** to use it properly).

BE CREATIVE WITH MOVES

Vary the Keeper moves you use. If you find yourself repeating the same sort of thing, take a moment to check the Keeper moves list and think about what else could happen right now.

Call for the hunters to use **act under pressure**, **help out**, **protect someone**, and **read a bad situation** whenever an opportunity comes up, so the hunters do not just use **kick some ass** all the time.

Remember that you can also use the move **inflict harm as established**. If an attack doesn't require the hunter to expose themselves to danger, just let them **inflict harm** instead of asking them to **kick some ass**.

Make sure the hunters always describe what they are doing in detail. If they've used enough detail, you'll find it easy to work out how to react.

When a hunter misses a move roll, think a little about what could go wrong, given what they tried and what else is happening.

For example:

Terry (playing the hunter Isis) says "I shoot the cyclops slug." You can ask "Okay, where do you shoot it?" or "Are you leaning around the doorframe or coming into the passage to get a clear shot?" or "Is it a carefully aimed shot or quick shot?"

*If Isis misses her **kick some ass** roll, then you can react based on the answer:*

- *If she shot it in the face, it could blind the single eye.*
- *If she shot it in the body, it can't come at her so fast.*
- *If she went into the passage, it can slime her.*
- *If she stayed in the doorway, it can smash through the wall.*
- *If she tried to get a careful shot, maybe the cyclops slug rushed her before she could fire.*
- *If she tried a quick shot, maybe it hits something else important (a victim, or a gas pipe maybe?)*

MOST TIMES, DO THE OBVIOUS THING

Don't get hung up on trying to always think up the most innovative, creative thing to do. Usually, if you think about what exactly is happening, it will be obvious what should happen next (whether you are deciding how a monster reacts, or what move you should make in response to what a hunter just did). In those cases when there is a single, obvious thing to do next, trust your instincts and do it.

BALANCE SPOTLIGHT TIME

You need to strike a balance between spotlight time (giving each hunter a turn) and doing what is obviously next. E.g. if one hunter keeps attacking the monsters, take a break from them to check what everyone else is up to (even if the fight is the main thing that is going on).

If some of the hunters don't join the fighting, ask them what they're doing while it goes on. Give these activities just as much emphasis as the combat: those hunters might be able to help save the day with magic, or a non-combat use of a monster weakness, or some other cunning plan.

DON'T DRAG THINGS OUT

Don't be afraid to resolve fights quickly, especially if the hunters are fighting outclassed minions, or a difficult bystander. One successful **kick some ass** can be enough to win an easy fight. Remember that many minions and most bystanders won't just fight to the death: they might surrender or flee after a single hit.

USE SOFT MOVES

Don't just use hard moves on the hunters (or anyone else). Use soft moves that prepare for a follow-up hard move, giving the hunters a chance to do something about whatever is coming.



SUMMARY: RUNNING FIGHTS

- Think about what's at stake.
- Work out how the fight starts based on what's happening in the game.
- Describe the location and pick a type for it, then use those details and threat moves. Consider what makes this place unusual.
- Make maps.
- Use the combatants' weapon and attack tags.
- Use moves creatively.
- Most times, do the obvious thing. Usually the first thing you think of is perfectly appropriate.
- Balance spotlight time between the hunters.
- Don't drag things out. You can zoom out on the action when it's not so important, or not so interesting.
- Use soft moves and give the hunters a chance to react.
- Try to hurt the hunters: they can handle it.

HARM

Whenever a character (hunter, monster, minion, or bystander) gets harmed, note down the wound and how much harm was caused. For example, “clawed left arm, 3-harm” or “shot in the head, 2-harm.”

Remember that if the victim has armour, that reduces the amount of harm suffered by its rating.

If it's a hunter, tell them how many harm boxes to check off. Make sure you know if they're up to four (after which the injuries become unstable, and will get worse until treated).

Describe the pain, how bad the wound looks, how much blood is coming out, if a bone is sticking out, if they're feeling faint, and so on. All the gory detail you can think of. This leads into which harm move affects them.

THE HARM MOVES

Harm moves are used when a hunter, monster, minion, or bystander suffers injury of any kind (physical, magical, psychic, etc.). Pick a harm move based on how many points of harm were suffered and the details of the injury.

The harm moves are listed below, along with the minimum harm level for each.

0-harm or more:

- Momentarily inhibited.
- Drop something.
- Take -1 forward.

1-harm or more:

- Fall down.
- Take -1 ongoing.
- Pass out.
- Intense pain.

Unstable wounds:

- +1 harm.

8-harm or more:

- Dead.

HOW TO USE THE HARM MOVES

Injuries must be as serious as they have been described in order to make the world seem real. Use the harm moves to help with that impression. Use a harm move whenever someone is hurt, to represent the immediate effects of the attack.

Think about each of the harm moves you could use, and whether any of the following might apply:

- Is the wound bad enough that the victim might be knocked down? Examples of wounds that might cause knockdown: a really strong hit; a hit with lots of inertia; an intensely painful wound; being hit in the legs.
- Is the wound going to cause ongoing difficulty? Examples of ongoing difficulty: intense pain; something got stuck in the wound; an irritant (dust, sand, gravel) gets in the wound; it's somewhere distracting (like your hand).
- Could the wound render the victim unconscious? Examples: a blow to the head; shock from blood loss.
- Is the wound going to be especially painful? For example: burns; injuries to the hands or face; an existing injury is struck again.
- Could the injury kill the victim? Examples: blood loss; head trauma; chest or abdomen hits (which could rupture a major organ).

UNSTABLE WOUNDS

Once a hunter has suffered 4-harm, their injuries become unstable. That means that it will get worse, until it's properly treated.

While the injuries are unstable, you may tell the hunter they take another point of harm at any time. Use the same process as deciding which harm move to use: given the type and severity of the injuries, would it be likely to have gotten worse yet?

If an unstable wound has been left for a day and you haven't added any more harm yet, do it then.

MINIONS, BYSTANDERS AND HARM

For minions and bystanders, you don't have to track wounds in detail. You can just make a call based on each injury: is this enough to take them out of the fight? Is this enough to kill them? Make the decision about the injury's severity based on your usual Keeper's agenda and principles, and (for minions) based on the harm capacity you picked for them.

Bystanders, and some minions, will be inclined to flee or surrender when injured rather than fight to the death.

KILLING MONSTERS

When you defined the monster, you picked the harm capacity it has. That's how many points of harm it can take before it's dying. You should inflict harm moves on monsters as normal whenever they are injured.

Monster injuries do not become unstable when they have taken four harm or more. The hunters will have to inflict all the harm themselves.

Additionally, recall that the monster is only *really* dead if the hunters used a weakness against it.

WHEN A MONSTER ISN'T REALLY DEAD

If the hunters deal enough damage to a monster to kill it (or enough to kill it several times over), but haven't used a weakness, then that monster is not dead. One way or another, it will come back.

Here's some ideas for ways a seemingly-dead monster can come back:

- The monster just keeps going, regardless of the terrible injuries it has sustained.
- The monster's apparently dying body turns to dust, or mist, or shadow, and escapes.
- The monster returns in a new form (maybe as an even more dangerous spirit?).
- Fire (or acid, or whatever) simply has no effect on the injured monster.
- The monster reveals a new power, healing itself suddenly or overwhelming the hunters.
- Minions hold the hunters back, while others grab and run off with the crippled monster.
- No matter what the hunters did to it, slowly the pieces of the monster make their way back together and rebuild themselves.
- Far away, minions begin a magical ritual to return the monster to life.
- The monster has tricked them: the thing that died was a fake (A magical illusion? A transformed minion?).
- The monster was just pretending to be almost defeated: as soon as the hunters drop their guard, it goes back on the offensive.

KNOWING THE MONSTER IS DEAD

When the hunters finally take down a monster, it needs to be really obvious.

Lots of monsters can disappear, turn invisible, and so on. That means that you should ensure a dying monster gets a good description of how it dies.

If a monster just falls over when the hunters inflict the final blow, that's an anticlimax. But if it bursts in a huge spray of blood and gore, or explodes and takes down the building, or gets pulled screaming into another dimension?

Then everyone knows they properly killed it.

HEALING

The rules for healing (from the hunters' perspective) are on page 111. In brief, they are:

- 0-harm wounds only apply at the moment they happen: no healing time is required to get over them.
- Stable wounds get better by 1 point for each day of rest, or when medical attention is given.
- 4+ harm wounds need stabilization and long term treatment. It's your call how long that takes. As a general rule, any proper treatment (a visit to a doctor or emergency room, or time in a haven infirmary) will stabilise the injury and heal 1 harm.
- 8-harm or more means the victim is dead.
- Routine first aid heals 1 point of harm for a single injury or condition and takes a few minutes. Additional first aid will only help someone if there's a new injury or condition to treat.
- Healing moves will say how much they heal.

Additionally, at the end of a mystery all the hunters get healed to account for the time passed.

If there's downtime before the next mystery, have everyone erase all harm: there's time for them to have had all the treatment they need.

If the next mystery follows right on the last, everyone gets 1-harm healed. That represents that they've had time for some recovery, but not much.

For monsters and minions, it's up to you to decide if (and how much) they might have healed between encounters. Some creatures might have the power to heal easily and be completely fine the next time the hunters meet them; others might heal the same as a normal human does, or not at all.

AN EXAMPLE FIGHT

This illustrates some of the techniques I've outlined above, demonstrating how it works in play.

Our cast is:

- Alan, the Keeper, playing (variously): Jerry Parsons, a bystander, and Lucius, a vampire (already on 3-harm from an earlier encounter).
- Mary, playing Mark (a Wronged hunter)
- Chris, playing Cray (a Spooky hunter)
- The house is a location: deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders).

*Mark and Cray are pursuing a vampire. They've tracked it to a disused house, and **manipulated** the caretaker, Jerry, to let them in.*

Alan: *Jerry leads you into the house, shining a flashlight around. The place is full of furniture covered in sheets to keep the dust off.*

Alan (speaking as Jerry): *"The place seems like I left it—um, I don't think anyone's been in here."*

Mary (speaking as Mark): *"We're sure it... ah, he came this way. Probably best you leave us to it now."*

Alan: *The door swings shut with a slam.*

*Alan used the location move **close a path**.*

Alan: *At the same moment you notice a trail in the dust—someone has been coming and going here recently. Cray, there are three ways out of the hallway—into the house, left into a family room or lounge, and right into what was maybe a study. There's a flicker of movement in the study. Jerry is walking down the hall shining his flashlight around.*

*Alan used the Keeper move **announce future badness**. He then sketches a map of the hallway and adjoining rooms.*

Alan (speaking as Jerry): *"Did you hear that?"*

Chris: *Cray's going to check out the study.*

Chris (speaking as Cray): *"Hey Mark, watch my back!"*

Alan: *Are you **reading a bad situation**?*

Chris: *I sure am.*

Chris rolls the dice and adds Cray's Sharp.

Chris: *I got... eight. Let me see... any dangers we haven't noticed?*

Alan: *The only things moving in here are you guys and whatever's in the study.*

Chris: *Okay, it clearly knows we're here.*

Chris (speaking as Cray): *"Show yourself you unholy bastard!"*

Alan: *Are you stepping into the room?*

Chris: *Yes, but slowly.*

Mary: *Mark's covering him with the rifle.*

Alan: *There's a swirl of shadow and the vampire takes form directly in front of you.*

*Alan used the monster move **appear suddenly**.*



Chris: *I already have my magnum out, okay?*

Alan: *Sure.*

Although Chris didn't say Cray got his gun ready, there's no reason to think that he wouldn't have done so in this situation.

Chris: *I shoot it in the face!*

Alan: *The vampire's trying to grab you by both shoulders, and opening its mouth ready to sink fangs in your neck. But you can shoot it in the face as it comes for you. Mark, you don't have a clear shot here. Jerry jumps and screams when the shots are fired. Roll me **kick ass**.*

*Alan used the monster move **attack with great force and fury**.*

Chris rolls the dice and adds Cray's Tough.

Chris: *Right, that's a... five. Crap.*

Alan: *Did you remember +1 for reading the situation just then? You're acting on what you saw.*

Chris: *Yeah, five is with the bonus.*

Alan: *Yeah, so you shoot it in the face a couple of times and it doesn't even slow down. It grabs your shoulders and comes in to bite.*

*Because Cray's **kick some ass** move failed, Alan is responding with **inflict harm, as established**.*

Mary: *Can Mark get a shot now? Before it bites him?*

Alan: *Um... I guess, it's close but Cray's still in the way. You could maybe club it.*

Mary: *Can I knock its face away?*

Alan: *With the rifle butt? Yes, that might work. Roll... This seems like it will interrupt the attack, so roll **protect someone**.*

Mary: *Sweet, I use **Never again** to make it like I rolled a 10. As usual, all impending danger on me.*

*The vampire's bite was interrupted by Mark's **protect someone** move, so Cray doesn't suffer harm.*

Mary (speaking as Mark): “Bring it!”

Alan: *Okay, so you smash its face, and it spins Cray out the way and comes for you. It smashes you up against the wall on the far side of the hallway, and you notice you go a ways into the plaster. Now what?*

*This is the Keeper move **inflict harm, as established** and the effects of the successful **protect someone** move.*

Mary notes down that Mark took 2-harm.

Mary (screaming as Mark): “ARRRRGH!”

Alan: *Okay, you drop your rifle too.*

*Alan uses the harm move **drop something**.*

Mary: *Sure, I drop the rifle as I fly back and scramble for my sawn-off. BLAM! Both barrels, sucker!*

Alan: *Okay, roll **kick some ass**. It's trying to get with the biting on you, but it's going for inside your elbow rather than your neck, grabbing for your arm as you shoot.*

Mary rolls and adds Mark's Tough.

Mary: *Ha ha! Eleven! I shoot it in the gut, so it goes flying back! Four harm!*

*Alan notes down 3-harm from shotgun blast for the vampire: it has 1-armour. Again, this is **inflict harm, as established**.*

Alan: *Yep, the vampire is blasted back, catches itself on a covered table, then gets back up. It caught your arm with its talons before you fired, so you take two harm as well, and there's blood everywhere*

Mary: *I'm reloading!*

Alan: *Your hands are covered in your own blood, so it's going to take a few moments to finish that. Cray? What are you doing?*

*Alan used the harm move **momentarily inhibited** to reflect Mark's injury.*

Chris: *I'm going back into the hallway to check Jerry isn't doing anything stupid.*

Alan: *Okay. He's not—just standing there, mouth open, watching what you're all doing. The vamp grabs the dust sheet and swirls it up in the way. When it comes down you can't see where it's gone, although the only options are out the front door or into the other room. Unless it can turn invisible or something.*

*Alan used the bystander move **display inability or incompetence** for Jerry, and the monster move **escape no matter how well contained it is** for Lucius.*

Chris: *Okay, I want to make sure it can't escape. I'm casting a spell to keep it in here.*

Alan: *Sure, you can **use magic** to bar a place or portal to a monster. I think keeping it from leaving counts. How do you cast this spell? I think you're going to need at least some weird ingredients.*

Chris: *It's undead, so I'll use some goofer dust. I sprinkle it on the door and write mystic symbols in it with my finger.*

Alan: *Okay, roll it. Mark, what are you doing while this hoo-doo's happening?*

Mary: *Just keeping an eye on things. I get the mallet and stakes we brought out of my pack, too.*

Alan: *Keeping an eye where exactly?*

Mary: *On the lounge room or whatever, and on Cray.*

Mary (speaking as Mark) *"Hurry that creepy shit up! There's a disappearing vampire in here!"*

Alan: *Okay. Jerry screams. You both look back and the vampire has him, neck chomped and blood all over the place.*

*Alan used the monster move **attack with stealth and calculation**.*

Alan notes down that Jerry took 5-harm from a vampire bite.

Alan: *Jerry's gone all limp in the vampire's grasp.*

*Alan used the harm move **pass out**.*



Mary (as Mark): *"Dammit!" Can I get there in time to save him?*

Alan: *Ah... maybe, if you **act under pressure**?*

Mary: *Is there like a light hanging above him I can shoot down?*

Alan: *Sure! So, you want it to fall on the vampire? Protecting Jerry?*

Mary: *Yes! And I'll use **never again** for a ten. I guess all its attention is focused on me now?*

Alan: *Yeah, when the light fitting comes down, it smashes on top of it, and the vampire drops Jerry and just looks at you, then starts walking towards you like a gunfighter heading for a showdown.*

*This is the result of the **protect someone** move.*

Alan (speaking as Lucius): *"Very well! I will take you first."*

Mary (speaking as Mark): *"Cray! Forget your stupid spell! Grab the vamp so I can stake it!"*

Chris (speaking as Cray): *"What? Grab it? No way!"*

Chris: *I'll cast a spell to make the cable from the light shade snake down and tie it up!*

Alan: *That's the 'trap a monster' effect. How do you cast the spell?*

Chris: *I just look hard at it and focus my mind, and then pull it down like I'm using the Force.*

Alan: *Cool.*

Chris rolls and adds Cray's Weird.

Chris: *Yeah, it's a nine. Glitch is short duration "Make it fast, Mark!"*

Alan: *Okay, so the vampire's all tangled but the cable's already starting to come loose.*

Alan (speaking as Lucius): *"What? What's happening? Gah, stupid plastic rope!"*

Mary: *I stake it!*

Alan: *Sure, roll **kick ass**—it might be able to scratch you a bit even tangled up.*

Mary rolls the dice and adds Mark's Tough.

Mary: *Nine! I guess it gets me then. I do 3-harm with the stake.*

Alan notes down harm to Lucius, and that Lucius has been hit with a weakness: a wooden stake to the heart.

Alan: *Mark, take one harm. You hammer the stake in but it doesn't look like it went in far enough to get the heart yet. It gets one nasty scratch across your face that momentarily blinds you: take -1 forward.*

Alan has given Mark -1 forward as a harm move. Mary notes down the harm to Mark.

Mary: *I stake it again!*

Mary rolls the dice and adds Mark's Tough.

Mary: *Thirteen, even with that -1! I inflict terrible harm!*

Alan notes down that harm, sees that this puts Lucius at 12-harm total: he has harm capacity of 10, so this is enough to kill him (and permanently, as a weakness has been used). Alan chooses to not to inflict harm on Mark again, reasoning that between being trapped and staked through the heart, the vampire is no longer actively fighting back.

Alan: *Okay, that sure got the heart. There's a burst of dust as the vampire's flesh disintegrates, leaving just the bones and shriveled heart, complete with stake.*

The details of what happens when a vampire gets staked are part of the game's mythology.

END OF THE FIRST SESSION

Once the mystery has been solved, take some time to go around the table and check that everyone's happy with how it played out. If the hunters didn't finish up this mystery, that's okay too. Just finish when you or the group thinks it's a cool time to put "To be continued..." up on the screen. You can find out what happens next time.

Then ask the end-of-session experience questions:

- Did we conclude the current mystery?
- Did we save someone from certain death (or worse)?
- Did we learn something new and important about the world?
- Did we learn something new and important about one of the hunters?

If you get one or two "yes" answers, have the hunters mark one experience. If you get three or four, they mark two.

It's a good idea to let everyone revise aspects of their hunter now that they've played: they might want to change something now they've seen how the game works. Ask them if they have any more ideas about their hunter's backstory, what their hunter's planning to do next, what they thought of the mystery, and anything else they liked or didn't like. Make a note of all the answers, for ideas you can use later.

Then you can let everyone go home, or go home yourself.

GETTING READY FOR NEXT TIME

Make notes of all the stuff you might need to remember later:

- Elements from a hunter's past.
- Friction in the hunter team.
- Themes with emotional resonance for the hunters or players.
- Ideas for monsters that might be particularly unsettling.
- Bystanders they might meet again.
- Any monsters that got away.
- Facts about how the world works in your game.

LOOKING AHEAD

Now think about events from the story that suggest there's something bigger going on in the shadows.

The sort of things that might have come up include:

- Hunters' history choices that indicated a pattern of events or a significant incident.
- Events during the mystery that hinted at bigger troubles happening somewhere else.
- Unfinished business from the mystery.
- Hunter choices that have a wide reach, such as the Chosen's fate, the Professional's Agency, and the Initiate's Sect.
- Anything that came up in play that suggested something more is going on, or that a secret is waiting to be uncovered. Examples include the results of the Expert's dark past move, or someone saying something interesting about their past (e.g. Keeper: "Have you ever dealt with a snake demon before?" Hunter: "Oh, sure, we got a lot of them back on the farm.")

If something like that came up, make a note.

You'll use these notes to build subsequent mysteries and your arcs (arcs are long-term problems). If you're already thinking about long-term problems and plots, go and read about building arcs (page 227) and start your first one. It may not be totally defined yet: it could just be one or two threats and a couple of notes. That's fine. You can develop and polish it as you go on.

If nothing springs to mind yet, wait until events in later mysteries give you some ideas.

SUMMARY: KEEPER'S FIRST SESSION

- Discuss team concepts, and maybe pick one for the game.
- Guide the others through picking playbooks and creating their hunters.
- Do introductions and history for the hunters.
- Have any hunters with start-of-mystery moves do them now.
- Start the mystery with a teaser scene.
- Let them begin investigating. Ask lots of questions to work out how each hunter does things, and to find out about their pasts.
- Put lots of horror into the stuff they find. Give them problems so they can show how cool they are as they solve them.
- Make sure that if a hunter rolls and gets a miss, they mark experience.
- When any character suffers harm, use a harm move on them.
- Make a note of everything you can.
- Have some fights and action scenes as they get close to the monster.
- They confront the monster. Hopefully, the hunters win.
- Go through the end-of-session experience questions and have the hunters mark experience based on the answers.
- Discuss how it went. Let them change their hunters around a bit if required.
- Look at your notes, and think ahead. Think about possible future mysteries and monsters.

May Be Lifemore
'Heartbeat' Heard
Researchers convinced seismic
data is proof of organic
stirrings beneath seafloor
by Alex Rhodes

The recent press release by
Pickman Industries Marine
Research Division, stating that
they believe they have found
evidence of

Fishman Proves Authentic, Scientists Baffled

Arkham
marine
Fishman
"We
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chairman
Board.
A Business Trip
As managing director of Goss
theaters throughout Scotland,
Manny is visiting Canada,
the U.S. primarily on busi-
he finds the monster is like

TRIFYING BEAST ked In New York

Until that time, despite the denials
of Williamsburg hold their breath
and share stories about encounters
baby. Everyone has heard of alien
Aimee Downing, owner of Nikki's
Bakery and Cafe. She continues,
"Two of my neighbors have miss-
found a lot of blood. I'm scared,
I keep my cats indoors, so I
think they're okay."

Triangle Head Sighting Is Described By Scotsman

ditionary science team, led by renowned
the cadaver of the Old Sow
ment released Thursday.
"but the corpse
of creative
Two friends, a minister and his
wife, were visiting him at the
time he saw whatever it was.
He decided to take his guests
down to see Cathkin Marsh in
his car. The Marsh is about six
miles from Outmouth.
"A few miles down the marsh,
I spotted the monster," Mr.
Manny related.

Companions Skeptical

"The people in the car were
very skeptical. So I stopped and
walked to the edge of the water.
There, right enough, about 30
yards across the water from me,
was the monster."
He did not see the monster's
infamous head at first. "It was
then it stood up and looked
around the trunk and stared right
at me."

Smoky Escape

Manny quickly raised his
camera and took the now-
famous photograph of Triangle
Head- the only one known to
He says the creature then
did some sort of purple
and used it as a screen to
his escape. He did not
When asked about

Green-Eyed Shadow' Attacked, Witnesses Say

From Ganelle Press Services
TEXARCANA - Jay
Schnitzer, 25, who witnesses
say was attacked by a "large,
shadowy creature with bright
green eyes" at his home was
treated at a hospital here early
Sunday for major injuries.
Schnitzer lost both of his feet
in the attack.
Witnesses in Cambur, a
small Miller County commu-
nity miles north of here
officials searched
and Sunday said
Brian several suspicious
grass, but
termining



Mysterious Blue Box Sightings around England

Crash Pilot Says Dragons Forced Him Down



BETWEEN GAME SESSIONS: ARCS

There's a few things you need to do after each game session, and before the next. I'll take you through those here.

In fact, you already started when you thought about what came up in the previous session that you could use later on. Going over the events of the last mystery provides you with ideas to use for the next mystery, or for new or existing arcs.

Most importantly, before the next game you will need to create a new mystery for the hunters to deal with. That works pretty much the same as the first one did.

I'll discuss arcs here, and then how to create your later mysteries in the next chapter.

ARCS

Arcs are like mysteries that play out slowly in the background. They describe things that are causing trouble for the hunters over the long term. Think of them like the season-long plots used in *Buffy* and *Supernatural*: a big bad monster and its ongoing plan is a perfect basis for an arc.

BUILDING ARCS

An arc is made up of four basic elements, similar to a mystery. You can create them in any order you want, but I'll go through them in the order I usually use:

- Basic concept.
- The threats.
- One or more countdowns.
- Optionally, some custom moves.

Arcs work fine without being fully detailed at first. Sometimes you'll have only a few ideas about what's going on. That's fine: just note the details you have now, and fill in others as you think of them. Events in play will suggest further elements to be added in later.



THE BASIC CONCEPT

Decide on a starting concept for your arc. Mysteries usually start with a monster, but arcs can come from a wide variety of places: a hunter's history, unfinished business from a mystery, or a neat idea you have for an evil plan.

You may get some ideas for arcs right at the beginning of a new game when the hunters are created. Perhaps the team concept and backstory of the team suggests something. Some playbooks also have built-in arc seeds, specifically:

- The Chosen's fate. Use the details that you work out with the player about what is in store for the Chosen.
- The Divine's mission may require an arc, depending on the details you worked out with the player.
- The Initiate's Sect and Professional's Agency both deserve an arc. Use the choices the player made to decide what the organisation's motivations are, and how these will affect the hunters. The organisation may mean well, but still cause trouble by accident. On the other hand, some organisations might have a sinister purpose for hunting monsters.
- The Wronged's loss: every Wronged should have an arc involving the creature(s) that caused their loss.
- Any player might make a decision during hunter creation that gives you an idea for an arc.

In all these cases, ask the player questions about their hunter and their history, in order to tease out ideas you can use for an arc.

Another way to get arc ideas is to take unfinished business from the mysteries you play. For example:

- If the hunters failed to defeat a monster, it might decide to track them and get revenge. Alternatively, it might restart its evil plan somewhere else.
- If the hunters failed to notice and stop an evil plot, the plotters can move on to the next step in their terrible plan.
- If the hunters miss an important detail, it might start a new problem (for instance, a roach-person's eggs are left in place to hatch a new generation).

Lastly, as the game goes on you might notice that previously unconnected facts or events make more sense if they were really connected all along. That is the seed of an arc. Maybe you've had two mysteries that both had a naga as the monster. Could there be a naga conspiracy that led to both situations? Think about what the nagas might be trying to achieve, and use that as your arc concept.

An example arc:

Let's say that there was a particularly annoying werewolf pack leader who eluded the hunters. She seems like a good choice to start an arc around (especially as the team has a Wronged who is hunting werewolves).

The hunters killed most of the werewolf pack, so the leader will definitely hold a grudge, and she was pretty smart in her tactics, so the idea of her starting a crusade against the hunters makes perfect sense.

ARC THREATS

Arc threats are created (and work) in exactly the same way as mystery threats, except there doesn't need to be a monster. Arcs dealing with human organisations (an Agency or Sect, for example) might be made up of only bystanders and locations.

For example:

Our werewolf leader was already written up as a threat in that original mystery, so we'll add her first.

Nina Keenan. Monster: Queen (motivation: to possess and control). I'll omit her werewolf powers and weaknesses here, but they will be the same as when she appeared previously (and in keeping with the established rules for werewolves).

The Wronged is hunting a werewolf too. His name is George Tovey, but the Wronged just calls him "the black werewolf." Let's put that one here too. This threat was established by the player when she made the Wronged, but it is currently unallocated to any mystery or arc. I'll add him to this arc now.

"The Black Werewolf" aka George Tovey. Monster: Torturer (motivation: to hurt and terrify).

My idea is that Nina is in charge of this new pack, and she's brought in George to be her top enforcer.

That's enough key werewolves for this pack, but we'll add two minion threats for the rest of the pack. The first I'm calling "werewolf brutes." They're my generic werewolves to throw in at will. I'll also have a few who are going to be tougher, and sent after the hunters. They'll be "werewolf assassins." Both groups are named after their minion type.



Werewolf brutes (there are a dozen or so). Minion: Brute (motivation: to intimidate and attack).

Three werewolf assassins. Minion: Assassin (motivation: to kill the hunters).

Nina's new werewolf pack will have taken a town (let's call it "New Hampstead") as their new territory, and will be beginning to take over the whole area. I'll define that as a location, because sooner or later the hunters will go there.

New Hampstead and surrounds. Location: Den (motivation: to harbour monsters).

Given that the most likely thing that will happen to the hunters when they visit is a succession of werewolf attacks, that type seems very appropriate.

I don't think the arc needs any more threats at this stage. Maybe some of the people in New Hampstead will be bystanders in this arc later on, but this is enough to start with. The initial ideas have given me plenty to use when writing up mysteries: werewolf attacks, people asking around about the hunters, rumours of werewolf activity, and so on.

ARC COUNTDOWNS

Arc countdowns are like mystery countdowns, except they are on a bigger scale.

Aim for each step of the countdown to have the potential to be a whole mystery (either with the hunters attempting to stop it, or dealing with the aftermath).

For example:

The arc countdown for our werewolf revenge arc is going to center on Nina and George getting ready to take out the hunters.

- **Day:** *Nina consolidates her hold over New Hampstead and creates a bunch of new werewolves.*
- **Shadows:** *The pack begins sending out spies to find the hunters and assassins to kill the hunters' loved ones and support network.*
- **Dusk:** *George decides to target the Wronged, by hunting down her family (aiming to turn them into werewolves, rather than "just" kill them).*
- **Sunset:** *The pack makes a concerted assault on the hunters and takes them out.*
- **Nightfall:** *The pack kills any other monster hunters who are active in the region, and begins turning people in positions of authority.*
- **Midnight:** *Nina rules the whole region through the pack.*

Note that this countdown needs to be created a little differently than usual. Because the arc was triggered by the hunters' actions, it's not what would happen if they never got involved. They're already involved! So this one is what will happen if the hunters don't find out about Nina and the werewolves, or if the hunters do not stop Nina's plan in time.

ARC TEMPLATES

Here are some simple skeletons for arcs that allow you to slot in some threats and build up the rest of the arc quickly.

Use them as-is, or as inspiration for your own arcs.

I've included a starting point in each. These are events that might happen in your game that provide a perfect opportunity to put that arc into play.

ANCIENT EVIL RISING

This centers on a dormant, dead, or imprisoned monster and the allies or servants working to bring it back.

Starting point: the hunters stumble upon early preparations for the awakening.

Threats:

- The monster that's awakening.
- Minions and allied monsters.
- The location where the monster is waiting.

Countdown:

Day	Minions are collecting potential sacrifices to prepare for the awakening.
Shadows	Minions conduct a dark ritual to prepare the way, killing the sacrifices.
Sunset	Minions conduct the dark ritual that awakens the monster.
Dusk	The monster awakens and wreaks havoc.
Nightfall	The monster builds up its armies of minions.
Midnight	The monster converts the area into a hellish kingdom where all humans are enslaved or killed.

THE NEMESIS

This works for any hunter(s) with a nemesis—possibly a monster that escaped, or the one the Wronged is hunting down, or something from a destiny or dark past. The nemesis might be after an individual hunter, or the whole team.

Note that my werewolf example arc, above, is a version of this template (although with a few changes, to reflect the details of that particular game).

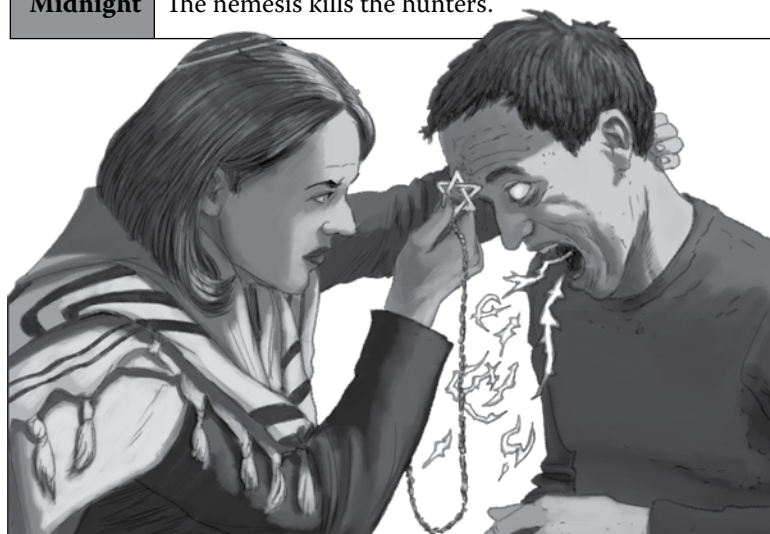
Starting point: A monster gets away, or there is a Wronged in the team.

Threats:

- A monster (the nemesis).
- Minions and allied monsters.
- Bystanders (people the hunter cares about).

Countdown:

Day	The nemesis recruits allies and minions.
Shadows	The nemesis starts investigating the hunters, to find out where they are vulnerable.
Sunset	The minions attempt to abduct, torture and kill people the hunters care about.
Dusk	The nemesis sends minions out to interfere with the hunters during other mysteries.
Nightfall	The nemesis and minions set a trap for the hunters.
Midnight	The nemesis kills the hunters.





THE END OF DAYS

This is about the Apocalypse. The world is going to end.

Starting point: The End of the World is prophesied, or the hunters are told of what is being planned by a monster or conspirator, or there is a Chosen in the team.

Threats:

- Several monsters, including at least one destroyer.
- Hordes of minions.
- A location (the place it begins).

Countdown:

Day	A monster starts looking for a special artifact that is needed to bring about the end.
Shadows	There are prophecies, clues in mysteries, and other signs that bad things are coming.
Sunset	The monster finds the artifact.
Dusk	The monster and minions go to the place it will begin, and conduct an evil magic ritual.
Nightfall	The Apocalypse begins.
Midnight	The world is destroyed (or irrevocably changed for the worse).

CORRUPTION

This is for games with a critical organisation that the hunters have to trust. Unfortunately it has been infiltrated by evil, or perhaps always has been evil. A Professional's Agency or Initiate's Sect might qualify, or it could be an organisation that the hunters come across, or ally with, in play.

Starting point: The hunters come across something that shows that they are being lied to, or that people they trust are up to something sinister.

Threats:

- Minions (the traitors).
- Bystanders (the people who bought the cover story).
- Monsters behind the scenes.
- Locations for organisation sites.

Countdown:

Day	The organisation sends the hunters on a mystery with incomplete intelligence.
Shadows	The organisation sends a second team to do something at odds with the hunters' goal on a mystery.
Sunset	The organization recruits monsters and minions directly.
Dusk	The traitors start liquidating good agents.
Nightfall	The traitors start openly doing out-and-out evil deeds.
Midnight	The evil plan is complete (e.g. immortality for the traitors, "We'll be eaten last," etc.).

ARC CUSTOM MOVES

Arcs and arc threats may have custom moves, the same as mysteries and mystery threats (the rules for custom moves are on page 296). Think about creating custom moves for threats that the hunters will deal with directly, or to highlight special features of the arc.

For example:

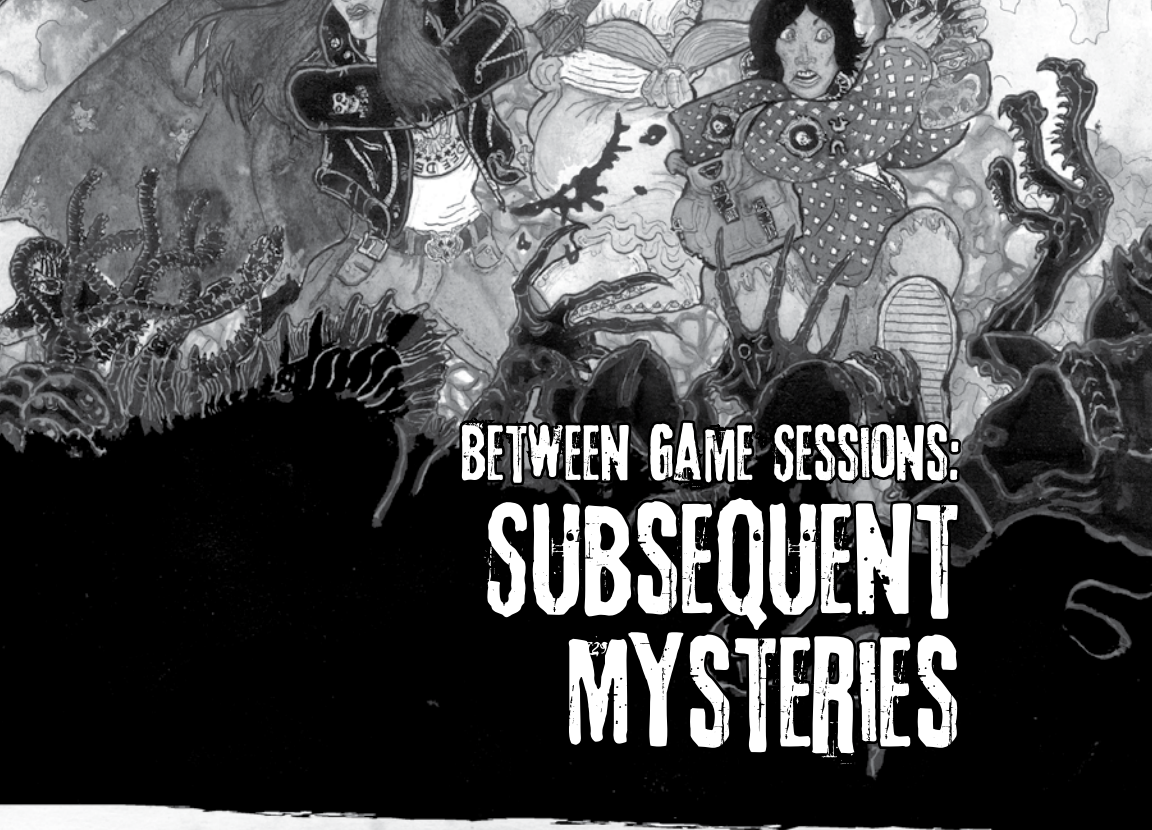
This arc relies on the werewolves “recruiting,” so let’s think about how that happens. I don’t want it to be every time you get hurt by a werewolf, maybe it has to be a serious injury?

***When a werewolf attack causes 4-harm**, you start becoming a werewolf. You’ll be feverish all the time, and suffer random pains. As the full moon approaches, you’ll have sharper senses (especially smell, hearing, and night vision) and crave raw, bloody meat. The transformation may be stopped by a big magic ritual, or treatment with silver (anything that will affect the whole body, such as colloidal silver capsules, will do). If not cured by the next full moon, you’ll transform and it will be too late to save you: change your playbook to *Monstrous*. Note that almost no bystanders who suffer such a werewolf attack will be able to cure it, so they will almost all be turned.*

SUMMARY: ARC CREATION

- Come up with a basic concept: a long-term evil plot that threatens the hunters or the world.
- Create the threats for the arc, using the rules for mystery threats.
- Create a countdown for the arc.
- As you play, add more details to the arc based on what happens in each related mystery.
- Advance the arc countdown when the hunters do not stop the evil plan.





BETWEEN GAME SESSIONS: SUBSEQUENT MYSTERIES

The process for creating subsequent mysteries is much the same as when you create the first one. I'll summarize the process again here, and then explain what you need to do differently.

SUMMARY: MYSTERY CREATION

- Come up with a basic concept: a cool monster, mystery idea, or something inspired by a previous mystery or by your arcs.
- Create a hook: the clue that caught the hunters' attention.
- Create the monster(s): name, description, type and motivation, define powers, weaknesses, attacks, armour, harm capacity.
- Create the minions (if any): name, description, type and motivation, define powers, weaknesses, attacks, armour, harm capacity.
- Create the bystanders: name, description, type and motivation.
- Create the locations: name, description, type and motivation.
- Define the mystery countdown: six terrible events that would occur if the hunters never came.
- Create any custom moves required for these threats, or the mystery as a whole.



BASIC CONCEPT

Start by coming up with a concept. Think about:

- Favourite monsters from myth, folklore, urban legend or popular culture.
- Loose ends from previous mysteries.
- The next problem from one of your arcs (see page 227).
- Steal a plot from somewhere else and file off the serial numbers (by changing the location and/or type of monster).
- A place you've been, or know about, that has potential as somewhere a monster could be lurking.
- Any secrets the hunters found out and want to explore.
- Bystanders from old mysteries call the hunters for help.
- A monster the hunters failed to kill returns.
- Ambush the hunters with monsters of a type they've fought before.
- Return to the place a previous mystery happened.
- Create a different variety of monsters they have previously encountered.

Pick something that inspires you, then work out what's going to be happening.

If your concept has a monster, what does it want to achieve?

If the concept has come from somewhere else, work out which monster(s) fit into it.

USING YOUR ARCS

You can use arcs in a few different ways to inspire your mysteries:

- Use aspects of the arc. Most obviously, the next event in the arc countdown could be the basis of a mystery. A mystery might also be connected tangentially to the arc, for instance if the arc threats have indirectly caused it.
- The hunters might investigate elements of an arc on their own initiative, so they might pre-empt the next countdown event.
- The threats from an arc might turn up as minor (or major) elements in a mystery. For instance, maybe a minion from the arc is an ally of the monster in your mystery?
- Clues referring to an arc can be found while investigating something else.
- While investigating a mystery, the hunters could be targeted by monsters or minions from an arc. Possibly this is a pre-emptive attack, or possibly the hunters are just in the way of something the creatures need to do.



THE HOOK

The hook is the clue that brought the hunters to this situation, such as something weird in the news that says “monster” to hunters but seems normal to those who aren’t in the know. For subsequent mysteries you can consider other sorts of hooks:

- If any of the hunters have a particular interest in a specific sort of monster or phenomenon, their research could find signs of suspicious activity.
- A bystander that the hunters have helped before might contact them if they encounter another monster.
- A monster that has reason to hate the hunters can come looking for them. The hook here might be the first attack on the hunters.
- A clue that is similar to something the hunters have seen before, but with an important difference.
- Something the hunters have done might have drawn supernatural attention, so that the next mystery comes to them. The hook will be when things start getting weird.
- One of the hunters is told a prophecy or has a vision of what is going to happen (or is already happening).
- If the hunters are associated with an organisation (e.g., a Professional’s Agency or Initiate’s Sect) then they may be given the mission by their superiors.

THE THREATS

Just like the first mystery, your threats are monsters, minions, bystanders, and locations.

MONSTERS

For your monster, it's best to start with something from folklore or urban legend (there's plenty of online sources for this: I use Wikipedia as my starting point). Working from established folklore means everyone will have a general idea about what the monster is capable of (once they work out what it is).

If you don't want to take a creature from folklore or urban legend as the basis of your mystery, here are some other good sources:

- Use a monster from another source (perhaps a film, novel, TV show, or comic). I recommend changing things around a little, so that any of your players familiar with the source won't recognise it immediately.
- Use a basic idea from folklore or urban legend, but change it in major ways.
- Come up with a cosmological reason for the monsters in your game, and use that to decide how they consistently appear and act. A game in which monsters are dangerous manifestations of features in the natural world (cities, forests, oceans, etc) will have a very different style to one where every monster is an inscrutable intrusion from outside our universe.
- Create your own creature, perhaps based on your game's existing mythology.
- Use a monster breed the hunters have encountered before, but vary its abilities or motivation.
- Use a monster breed the hunters have encountered before, but showing a different aspect of it (e.g. maybe the sewer troll they met before was a hermit, and most sewer trolls live in family groups).

Pick a type based on the creature's motivation rather than its abilities. Not every blood-drinking vampire is a devourer, for example; it might be a breeder, because its real goal is to create an army of vampire minions.

Here are the twelve monster types again:

- Beast (motivation: to run wild, destroying and killing)
- Breeder (motivation: to give birth to, bring forth, or create evil)
- Collector (motivation: to steal specific sorts of things)
- Destroyer (motivation: to bring about the end of the world)
- Devourer (motivation: to consume people)
- Executioner (motivation: to punish the guilty)
- Parasite (motivation: to infest, control and devour)
- Queen (motivation: to possess and control)
- Sorcerer (motivation: to usurp unnatural power)
- Tempter (motivation: to tempt people into evil deeds)
- Torturer (motivation: to hurt and terrify)
- Trickster (motivation: to create chaos)

Decide on all the remaining elements that you'll need: its powers, attacks, armour, harm capacity, and weakness(es):

- Pick the type for the motivation this monster needs.
- Note down all the supernatural powers that it has.
- Define weaknesses.
- Define its attacks: how much harm does it do (usually 3-5)? What range? Are any other tags required?
- How much armour does it have?
- How much harm can it suffer before it dies (usually 8-12)?
- Optionally, custom moves for the monster's powers.

When your hunters are experienced and capable, you can make the monsters tougher than those guidelines. For attacks, the normal range is 3- to 5-harm, but go higher if a monster especially dangerous. An attack doing 8-harm or more is instant death (hunters have ways to survive such nasty attacks, of course: spending Luck, or another hunter **protecting** them).

If you haven't already worked out what it's trying to achieve, give that some thought now. You need to know what its plan is, even if that plan is just "eat a lot of people." If your initial idea doesn't suggest a plan, look at the type you have given it. The motivation should suggest a certain sort of goal. Think about that, and then work out (given what you've already thought of) what is the *worst* thing that monster could be planning here? The plan could also fulfill the next stage in one of your arcs, or be a new twist on something that happened in a previous mystery.

EXAMPLE MONSTERS

Here are some examples to illustrate a variety of different monsters. Note that I've given each one a monster type that fits the basic concept of the creature, but if you use it in a mystery you should consider whether it fits the monster's role for that adventure, and change the type if you find a better match.

A CLASSIC VAMPIRE

A vampire based on the novel *Dracula*.

Monster: Queen (motivation: to possess and control).

Powers:

- Immortal.
- Mesmerism: When **it commands you**, roll +Cool. On a 10+, you can choose whether to do it or not. If you do, mark experience and take +1 forward. On a 7-9, you can choose whether you do it or not. If you do, mark experience. If you don't, take +1 the next time he tries to mesmerise you. On a miss, you do what it asks.
- Transform into wolf, bat, or shadow.
- Extremely strong.
- Can climb any wall.
- Incredibly stealthy.
- Vampiric bite: victims bitten three times become vampires themselves.
- Master vampire: he controls all the vampires he has created.
- Plague bringer: Disease and vermin thrive when a vampire is nearby.

Attacks: Punch/throw: 4-harm hand;

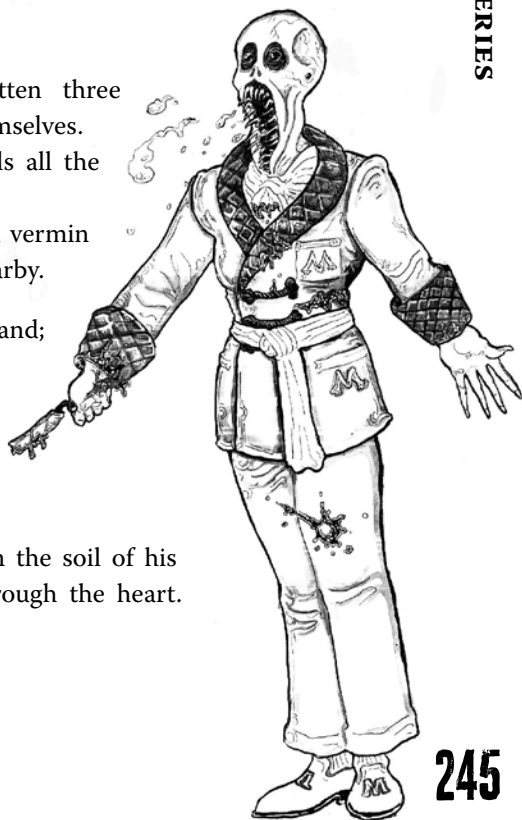
Bite: 3-harm intimate vampiric.

Armour: Physical toughness:

1-armour.

Weaknesses: Must subsist on human blood. Must sleep in the soil of his homeland. A wooden stake through the heart. Decapitation.

Harm capacity: 9 harm.





A MONSTROSITY FROM BEYOND

This is an alien being. It has no name. It looks like a collection of moving shapes or roiling bubbles and is an oily black shimmery colour.

Monster: Collector (motivation: to steal specific sorts of things).

Powers:

- **Devour Memory:** If the creature succeeds with a “devour memory” attack (see below) it extrudes a tentacle into the victim’s head. The victim takes 3-harm ignore-armour and loses one memory of the Keeper’s choice. It doesn’t much care if the victim is human or not, so it will be happy eating memories from anything that has them.
- **Phasing:** The creature is not exactly in our dimension, so it can squeeze itself through solid objects. Note that when it lashes people with its tendrils in defense, they will in fact lash *through* the target (that’s why it has ignore-armour).

Attacks: Devour memory: 3-harm ignore armour 1-memory; Tendril lash: 4-harm close ignore-armour phasing.

Armour: Its semi-physical body counts as 2-armour.

Weaknesses: Its form can be disrupted by high energy (e.g. intense heat, industrial-voltage electricity, high powered laser, etc.).

Harm capacity: 12 harm.

UHUL, DEMON PRINCE

Uhul is immensely powerful, and hard to call to Earth. It's even harder to banish. It may appear in many forms, but prefers to pass as human (with a few clues, e.g. small horns at its temples) or as a towering archetypal demon (reptilian, red, fangs, cloven hooves, wings, and tail).

Monster: Tempter (motivation: to tempt people into evil deeds).

Powers:

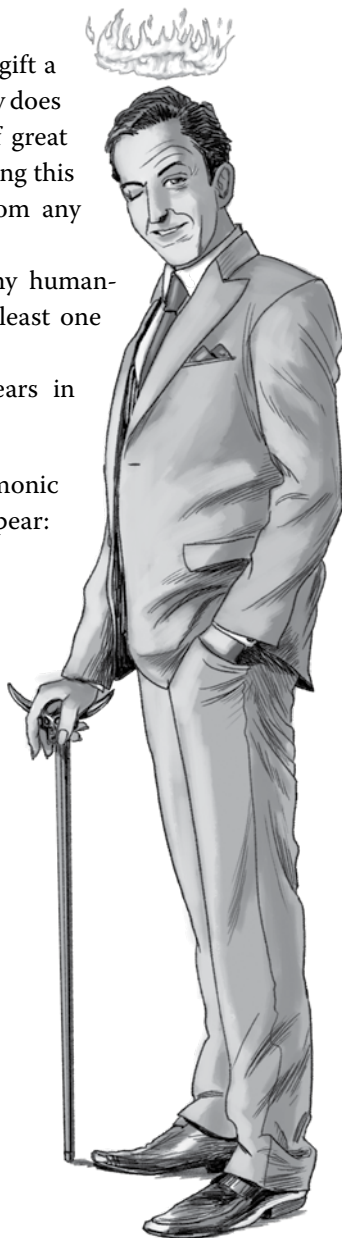
- **Grant Magical Power:** Uhul may gift a human with a magical ability. It only does this in exchange for something of great value, such as a soul. Hunters making this deal can take a magical move from any playbook, or something similar.
- **Change Form:** Uhul may take any human-like form it wants, but retains at least one demonic feature.
- **Summon spear:** The spear appears in Uhul's hand at will.

Attacks: Fisticuffs: 2-harm hand; Demonic talons: 4-harm hand; Barbed iron spear: 5-harm hand close heavy.

Armour: 1-armour (just generally hard to hurt).

Weaknesses: A specific **big magic** banishing ritual (requires 7 people, some rare crystals, requires **use magic** to banish Uhul, and takes 4 hours to cast).

Harm capacity: 12 harm.



A VRYKOLAKAS, A BALKAN VAMPIRE

A vrykolakas rises each night to visit the houses of people it knew. At each house, it knocks once and calls for its friends and family. Anyone who answers the knock begins to suffer from a wasting disease, and when dead they will also rise as a vrykolakas.

These creatures have bloated bodies which their skin stretches and strains to fully cover, resulting in some areas that are flushed and others that are near-transparent. They wear the remains of whatever they were buried in, although it is partly chewed if you look closely (a consequence of their hunger before they got out of the coffin).

A vrykolakas sleeps in its den (any place that won't be disturbed) during the day (except for Saturdays, when it must lie in its grave).



Monster: Breeder (motivation: to give birth to, or bring forth, evil).

Powers:

- **Wasting Call:** If the vrykolakas knocks (once) on your door and calls your name, and you answer, you will contract a wasting disease. You suffer 1-harm from the wasting disease every day, and you will die and rise again as a vrykolakas once it gets to 7-harm. Killing the original vrykolakas will stop the disease's progression.
- **Night Terrors:** If the monster comes into your bedroom, it can suffocate you. If you have the vrykolakas' wasting illness, add +2 to the harm total from the disease. If not, take 3-harm from the suffocation and life drain before you wake up.

Attacks: Claws: 1-harm hand messy; Teeth: 1-harm intimate contagious ('contagious' gives the victim the wasting illness).

Armour: 2-armour

Weaknesses: Sleeps in its grave on Saturday; Fire; Decapitation.

Harm capacity: 10 harm.

SPORE TROLL

Spore trolls are fungal creatures that grow when an animal is infected with special spores. The infected animals grow supplementary fungal masses and keep getting bigger and bigger. Although strong, spore trolls aren't very smart. They exist to defend the queen-mass, and to (eventually) explode, releasing more spores and infesting a new area. Each nest centers on a queen-mass, a horrible growth that is the nexus of all the offspring spore-trolls and other fungal workers and drones.

Monster: Parasite (motivation: to infest, control, and devour)

Powers:

- **Spore Explosion:** may infect victim: within a few days, they begin turning into another spore troll.
- **Regrowth:** if dismembered, they will regrow lost body parts in a few hours.

Attacks: SMASH!: 3-harm hand messy; Cutting lash: 2-harm close.

Armour: 2 armour.

Weaknesses: Link to the fungus-queen-mass: destroying the queen-mass or severing the mental link allows the spore troll to be destroyed.

Harm capacity: 12 harm.





A CLASSIC WEREWOLF

A person can become a werewolf in two ways. They may be cursed (by a **big magic** ritual) or injured by a werewolf but not killed.

Werewolves transform into wolves on the night of the full moon each month, and run wild, attacking any human or animal prey they find.

Although a werewolf is very tough in wolf form, it doesn't heal any faster than normal. This means that werewolves can be identified—if wounded in wolf form—by looking for a corresponding injury in the daytime.

Monster: Beast (motivation: to run wild, destroying and killing).

Powers:

- **Transform into a wolf:** automatically, every night of the full moon.
- **Supernatural toughness:** gains extra harm capacity and armour in wolf form.

Attacks: Human—as normal; Wolf—Bite: 2-harm hand; Wolf—Rend: 3-harm hand messy.

Armour: Human—none; Wolf—1-armour.

Weaknesses: Silver; Wolfsbane.

Harm capacity: Human: 7 harm; Wolf: 18 harm.

THE DE-IDENTIFIER

An entity from another dimension that feeds on what makes any thing distinguishable from other things. The creature appears as a hovering scaled creature with a catlike form. It moves via gentle flight, unaffected by gravity. When it takes away something's individuality, it must touch the target and concentrate for a few seconds.

The hunters may hear about cases of people and things disappearing without a trace—in fact, they are still there, just nobody can tell them apart to recognise them. During the investigation, mention the presence of some generic people and objects—these are the current victims! If the hunters try to find out such a person's name, or what they look like, they will not be able to (which should be a big clue about what is going on).

Monster: Devourer (motivation: to consume people).

Powers:

- **Unaffected by gravity:** It moves wherever it wishes, drifting at walking speed.

Attacks: Take away individuality 0-harm concentration hand (see below).

Armour: None.

Weaknesses: Identity (if the hunters somehow name it, they may kill it; this will require **big magic** or a very creative plan); Banishment (it may be sent back to its own dimension permanently).

Harm capacity: 7-harm.

Custom moves:

Take Away Individuality: when it touches something, the De-Identifier takes away aspects of the entity that may be used to tell it apart from others of its kind. Entities with their individuality taken away are still whole, so the hunters can interact with such objects or talk to such people, etc. However, it will be impossible recall anything to help find that object or person again (only **use magic** or **big magic** will supersede this effect). If any hunter is successfully targetted by this custom move, take away a single thing that distinguishes them each time—their name, or an aspect of their look. When a hunter's name and all look choices are gone, they are completely de-individualised. Recovery of these things will require **big magic**.

CHUPACABRAS

Historically, chupacabras are a fairly new urban legend originating in Puerto Rico in the 1990s. Perhaps that is just when they began visiting us?

The chupacabras is a thin, doglike, spiny creature that drinks blood. It is most known for attacking farm animals, but will happily feast on human blood if given the chance.

Individually, chupacabras are not very dangerous to a hunter team. However, they often appear en masse: a plague of the creatures afflicting a region.

Monster: Devourer (motivation: to consume people).

Powers:

- **Night Walker:** A chupacabras can disappear into the darkness, reappearing in its den. It cannot be tracked home, as it did not walk through the intervening space.

Attacks: Bite: 1-harm hand; Blood-suck: 2-harm intimate, must bite first.

Armour: None.

Weaknesses: Sunlight; Enclosure (if you can trap it within a given area, it may not night-walk away and may be killed).

Harm capacity: 5-harm.



GHOUL

Inspired by H. P. Lovecraft, these ghouls are once-human cannibal gibberers-in-darkness. They have pronounced snouts, a hunched and scrambling gait, and rubbery skin. Their teeth are long and sharp, and their dirty claws grab and tear.

Ghouls are created when a person repeatedly engages in cannibalism, or simply spends too long in morbid contemplation of graveyards and sites of death. These proclivities may lead to a gradual transformation into a ghoul, especially when a nest exists nearby.

Ghouls usually seem to have a low intelligence: only interested in eating and horrifying humans around them. However, some maintain their memories and rationality (to a greater or lesser extent). These may learn many secrets of the world while traversing the ghoul tunnel networks, as well as through their dealings with the undead and other unnatural beings.

Monster: Torturer (motivation: to hurt and terrify)

Powers:

- **Immortal:** Ghouls do not age.
- **Tunnels Beneath:** Ghouls delve systems of tunnels beneath graveyards, first to access the flesh of the dead, but they may also travel great distances (sometimes even through time) via these passages.
- **Rubbery Flesh:** The sinews and body of a ghoul is strong and tough. Hunters who attempt to contest with a ghoul in brute strength take -1 ongoing.
- **Creature of the Night:** Ghouls can see perfectly well in the dark, but bright light dazzles them.

Attacks: Grabbing claws (1-harm hand), Rending teeth (1-harm intimate).

Armour: The rubbery flesh of a ghoul counts as 1-armour.

Weaknesses: Sunlight.

Harm capacity: 8 harm.



MINIONS

Minions can be supernatural creatures (maybe weaker versions of a monster breed), or normal people (who could be voluntarily or involuntarily helping the monster). They can also be a group that work together.

Minions help the monster and work against the hunters.

There are ten minion types:

- Assassin (motivation: to kill the hunters)
- Brute (motivation: to intimidate and attack)
- Cultist (motivation: to save their own skin at any cost)
- Guardian (motivation: to bar a way or protect something)
- Right hand (motivation: to back up the monster)
- Plague (motivation: to swarm and destroy)
- Renfield (motivation: to push victims towards the monster)
- Scout (motivation: to stalk, watch, and report)
- Thief (motivation: to steal and deliver to the monster)
- Traitor (motivation: to betray people)

Decide on all the elements that you'll need:

- Description.
- Pick the type (and associated motivation) for the minion.
- Note down all the supernatural powers it has, if any.
- Weaknesses, if any.
- Define its attacks: how much harm does the minion do (usually 2-4)? What range? Are any other tags required?
- How much armour does it have, if any?
- How much harm can it suffer before it dies (usually 5-10)?
- Optionally, custom moves for the minion's powers.

As with monsters, when your hunters are experienced and capable, you can make the minions tougher than these guidelines.

Remember minions may be a group of undistinguished foes as well as individuals. If you create a group minion, the harm capacity is how much is required to kill or disperse the whole group.

EXAMPLE MINIONS

Here are two example minions, illustrating a couple of ways to create a minion that isn't just a weaker version of a monster.

HOMUNCULUS SWARM

The homunculus swarm is a number of small critters. A golemancer has been building them from parts of dead people. They act as scouts and guards for the golemancer while she builds bigger and better versions.

They look nasty: strips of muscle, bits of bone, pieces of organs, an eye or three; all just kinda put together into a vaguely sensible shape, with varying numbers of legs, claws, and teeth. They're not smart or, individually, very tough.

Minion: Brute (motivation: to intimidate and attack).

Attacks: Individuals have an attack of 1-harm (if rat-sized) or 2-harm, (if cat-sized). There aren't any bigger ones (yet). If they attack as a group, then they have a 3-harm area attack. Range is hand/intimate.

Harm capacity: 7-harm will disperse the swarm. Each point of harm kills one or two individuals.

CHUCK THE BARTENDER

Chuck is the hunters' good friend at their favorite bar, always happy to give them a couple of free drinks and to listen to them unload about their problems. Unfortunately, Chuck also makes a bit of extra money passing information back to the hunters' biggest enemies.

Minion: Traitor (motivation: to betray people)

Chuck is friendly and a little too generous. He won't do anything obvious against the hunters, but make him just a little nicer than he needs to be. And make sure that the monster hears about everything that they tell Chuck (assume the monster knows how to fill in any gaps the hunters have left out because they are talking to a civilian).

Chuck's just a normal person. He doesn't have any special powers, attacks, or armour.

BYSTANDERS

These are people who, often inadvertently, make it harder for the hunters to solve the mystery.

Think about your agenda and principles when you're creating bystanders. Make sure each has something that they will want from the hunters. It works best if it's something simple, like "go away and leave me alone," or "save me."

It's useful to put some partially-defined bystanders into each mystery, with just a name and threat type. That way, when the hunters want to talk to someone you didn't think of in advance, you can just use the next partial description (and fill in any extra details then and there).

There are nine bystander types:

- Busybody (motivation: to interfere in other people's plans)
- Detective (motivation: to rule out explanations)
- Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)
- Helper (motivation: to join the hunt)
- Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)
- Official (motivation: to be suspicious)
- Skeptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)
- Victim (motivation: to put themselves in danger)
- Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Decide on the details the bystanders need:

- A name.
- A description.
- Bystander type and motivation. This may suggest what they will want from the hunters.
- Optionally, a custom move.

EXAMPLE BYSTANDERS

Here are a couple of example bystanders. They're a bit more detailed than you need for a single mystery: this level of description is for someone who is going to be a recurring character.

HARVEY JONES, MONSTER INVESTIGATOR

Harvey is a conspiracy theorist and cryptozoologist, just short of donning a tinfoil hat. If there's a Flake on the team with the **net friends** move, maybe they even know Harvey (probably one of his pseudonyms).

Bystander: Detective (motivation: to rule out explanations).

If there's monster activity in Harvey's town, he's going to be investigating it. He's likely to get in the way of the hunters, both directly and by annoying other people before the hunters get to them. He'll be suspicious of the hunters (maybe even deciding they are Men in Black).

He can also be encountered investigating a mystery away from home: he could pick up on the same things that the hunters did and have worked out that a monster is active there.

CHRISTINE FLEMING: SHE WOULD LIKE TO HELP

Christine is an empathetic type, who will notice any of the hunters who have emotional baggage, and try to draw that out of them. It's always better to talk things out, right?

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing).

Use Christine to give the hunters a whole different thing to worry about: someone trying to give them amateur psychological aid for their perceived emotional damage (chances are that she can find at least two members of the team who seem damaged).

LOCATIONS

Locations are significant places in the mystery. Define a location threat for any places that are likely to be important during the mystery. You can also add a location threat type when, during play, a place becomes the scene of action or significant events.

It's important to note that the types describe the location in terms of what sort of things happen there, not the actual form of it. A diner could be a crossroads, because people meet there. Another diner could be a hellgate, because creatures from beyond are summoned in the back room. When picking a location threat type, think of what the place is emotionally, symbolically, and functionally, not literally.

There are ten location types:

- Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)
- Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)
- Den (motivation: to harbour monsters)
- Fortress (motivation: to deny entry)
- Hellgate (motivation: to create evil)
- Hub (motivation: to reveal information)
- Lab (motivation: to create weirdness)
- Maze (motivation: to confuse and separate)
- Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)
- Wilds (motivation: to contain hidden things)

Decide on all the details your locations need:

- A name.
- A description.
- Location type and motivation.
- Optionally, a map.
- Optionally, one or more custom moves.

EXAMPLE LOCATIONS

Here's two example locations to illustrate some different ways you can use location threats. As with the example bystanders, this might be a little more detail than required for an average location in a mystery: this is the amount you'd need if it is a central part of a mystery or will be a recurring place.

THE PORTAL OF DARKNESS

Here's a location that could be the center of a mystery (or an arc).

A huge, ancient gateway made of a circular grassy area surrounded by three enormous stones which are covered in eldritch runes.

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information).

Although the portal looks scary, it's not dangerous in itself. Instead, the records of the site and deciphering the runes carved here can give the hunters a lot of clues about what's going on. If the portal is eventually activated, it might change to be a *hellgate* or *lab* instead.

HOME

This location is someone's home: maybe a Chosen, Mundane, or Spooky who is still living with their family. It's safe, but also has their family to cause trouble.

Location: Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit).

Custom move: When you **make excuses to the family for something to do with monster hunting**, roll +Charm.

- On a 10+, you smooth over things but you might need to help out with some chores in the near future.
- On a 7-9, they know you aren't telling the whole truth. You smooth over things for now, but you'll need to make an effort to be seen as the good kid. Also, take -1 the next time you roll this move.
- On a miss, they catch you out. You're in big trouble!

Note that this move doesn't need to just apply to a hunter who lives here. Sometimes the other hunters might need to make excuses to the family, too!

THE COUNTDOWN

To create the mystery countdown, work out what will happen if the hunters never come to help. Remember, this is just your plan for what will happen until the hunters interfere, and the step names are metaphorical.

Then allocate them to the steps in the countdown. Countdowns have the following six steps:

- Day.
- Shadows.
- Sunset.
- Dusk.
- Nightfall.
- Midnight.



MYSTERY SCOPE

The countdown gives you a way to define the scope of a mystery.

A confined, personal mystery has each event about the same person, or their immediate family and surroundings.

An epic mystery has the effects of each step affecting a wider area. The countdown for an epic mystery might start with a hook that focuses on a home, neighbourhood or town while its final steps affect the whole world (or the whole universe).

To make the mystery more intense, a good trick is to take your finished countdown, move the “midnight” event to “dusk” or “sunset.” Work out what happens next to fill up the remaining steps again.

MYSTERY TEMPLATES

Here are some simple skeletons for mysteries that allow you to slot in a monster and build up the rest of the mystery quickly. Use them as-is if you're in a hurry, or as inspiration for your own mysteries.

A BUG HUNT

A straightforward monster hunt. Bug hunts suit monsters that have simple motivations, such as a devourer, torturer, beast, or executioner.

Hook: There have been one or more killings which, to those in the know, are obviously the work of an unnatural creature.

Threats:

- The monster.
- A location: the general vicinity.
- A location: the monster's lair.
- At least two bystanders to be potential witnesses and victims (some sympathetic, others annoying).

Countdown:

Day	The monster kills again.
Shadows	The monster kills again (a helpful bystander).
Sunset	The monster kills again (an annoying bystander).
Dusk	The monster abducts some innocent victims.
Nightfall	The monster devours all the captives.
Midnight	The monster grows in strength and power.



AN EVIL RITUAL

A monster (or an evil human sorcerer) is planning a terrible ritual to unleash horrors upon the world.

Hook: An ancient prophecy, a vision of the future, or everyday investigation and research tells the hunters that the ritual is going to occur.

Threats:

- A monster.
- Some minions (including your sorcerer, if you have one).
- A location (the ritual ground—most likely a hellgate).
- At least one bystander (a potential sacrifice).

Countdown:

Day	The monster/sorcerer prepares the ritual ground.
Shadows	The monster/sorcerer kills in the process of getting something required in the ritual.
Sunset	The monster/sorcerer abducts a sacrificial victim (preferably the bystander or a hunter).
Dusk	The ritual begins.
Nightfall	The victim is sacrificed.
Midnight	The ritual is completed and horrors are unleashed.

NOT WHAT IT SEEMS

This template is used for mysteries that start out looking like one sort of monster but which turn out to be something else (maybe just a different variety of that type, maybe something totally different).

You'll need to come up with the monster, and work out why it initially seems to be something else. Is it intentionally trying to throw off the scent? Is it a different variety with different motives and habits?

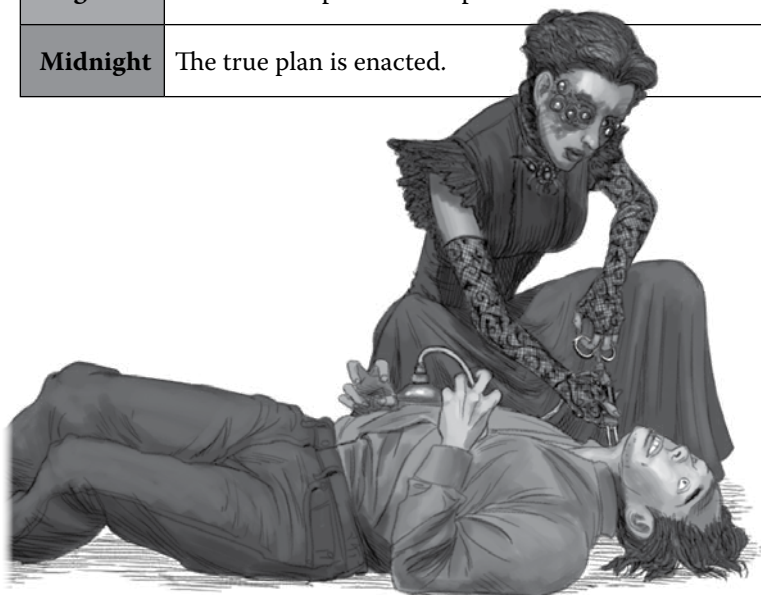
Hook: A death that appears, to those in the know, to be a certain sort of monster.

Threats:

- A monster.
- The area where the attacks are happening.
- Lots of bystanders.

Countdown:

Day	The monster attacks someone else in a misleading manner.
Shadows	The monster does something that hints that it is not what the initial clues implied.
Sunset	The monster attacks someone in a manner totally out of keeping with what the initial clues implied.
Dusk	Someone sees the monster's true nature and escapes.
Nightfall	The monster puts its true plan into action.
Midnight	The true plan is enacted.



MESSING WITH THE FORMULA

The instructions above are the formula for a normal *Monster of the Week* mystery. But if every mystery ends up being built the same way it will get boring. Change things up now and again to prevent that.

Here are some ideas of how to do this:

- Give the mystery two monsters, at odds with each other. Maybe the hunters will have a chance to team up with one, in a “my enemy’s enemy...” sort of story? Maybe *both* monsters need to be stopped?
- Revisit a person, place, or monster that was especially memorable. This is a good way to build up your game’s mythology and to advance an arc. Returning to elements that you’ve used before means there will be associations and prejudices built in. Make sure to get your notes from the previous time(s) and update each threat: think about what’s the same and what has changed.
- There’s no monster at all. This could be due to the situation having a weird but natural explanation. Or it could be that there is supernatural weirdness about the place (a location threat) that needs to be dealt with. You could even have a monster with a pseudo-scientific explanation (like a mind-controlling fungus, or a deadly disease). These options work great for a game inspired by *The X-Files* or *Fringe*, where the team is not necessarily hunting monsters, but instead investigating weird events.

You can write up a weird phenomenon as if it were a monster, complete with motivation, powers, and attacks. For a weakness, decide what the hunters need to understand to prevent any ongoing danger. When the hunters investigate the mystery, they can learn more about the phenomenon’s origin, effects, and how to stop it.

- There’s no monster, but instead low-powered minions are the problem. A plague of giant spiders, for example, could work this way.
- A session where the hunters are off-duty gives an opportunity to explore the relationships in the team, and with their friends and family outside the team as well.

- The discussion of one-shot games (page 292) includes some ideas for more intense, self-contained mysteries that you can use in an ongoing game as well.
- A flashback mystery could explore aspects of the team's history (such as when they met, or events that intrigued you from the characters' backstories).
- There are no bystanders. In this sort of mystery, maybe the hunters are thrown into a remote location with only unnatural horrors for company. There won't be any time for chatting to normal folks, you'll be too busy staying alive.
- A comedy episode. Set things up to be silly, maybe in a way that pokes fun at the hunters and yourself. You can steal one of the comedy episode ideas from *Buffy*, *Angel* or *Supernatural*, and then adjust it to make your own version.
- A mystery based directly on what's happening in one of your arcs. This will contribute to the ongoing plot, and can help alert the hunters about the bigger problem.
- A deadly mystery, where the players all create new hunters with just 1 or 2 Luck. Use the tweaks for a one-shot game (page 292), and aim to kill them all. These events can then become the background for a mystery with the normal hunter team, and may illustrate something about an arc they haven't noticed yet.
- You can present the hunters with hooks for two (or more) mysteries, and let them decide which one they want to deal with. This is a very high-stakes tough choice, especially if the hunters can see the mysteries relate to different evil plots they need to stop (i.e. your ongoing arcs). Once the first mystery has been dealt with, you'll need to decide how things have worsened in the other situation(s): the countdowns may have advanced a little, or a lot. Make these decisions based on your Keeper agenda, principles and what you always say.

In the end though, take any cool idea you have, write it up as a list of threats and you're good to go.

SESSIONS AND MYSTERIES

Most mysteries will fill one session of play, so that you can sit down for an afternoon or evening and play through a self-contained mystery. Of course, there's plenty of ways to vary that if it doesn't work for your group.

Some groups have short time slots by necessity, so you might need to break each mystery up over two or three sessions.

Alternately, if you have a longer block of time to play or just work through a mystery quickly, you might be able to get through two mysteries at a time.

MULTI-PART MYSTERIES

You can build two-part mysteries, or even longer connected sequences.

For a two-part mystery, build it just like two normal ones, except that the end point of the first mystery (monster defeated and/or secret revealed) leads into the next one. That way you can end on a shock-reveal and tell everyone "to be continued..." If events in the game fall into place just right you might be able to end on a cliffhanger, but you can't count on this.

The second mystery is probably best just sketched out, for you to complete once the first one is done. That way you will know which threats from part one are still around, and tailor the conclusion of the mystery based on what the hunters did in the first part.

Sometimes a mystery might just take longer to finish than expected. In these cases, you can stop in the midst of the action and say, "To be continued..." Before the next session, have another look at the remaining sections of the mystery and update them based on what has already happened, then continue the mystery from where you left off.

LONGER MYSTERY SEQUENCES

If you want to build a longer set of connected mysteries, the same process applies. A series of connected mysteries works well for an arc—you can just drop in the next adventure in the series now and again, the way that *The X-Files*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Fringe* intersperse one or two episodes about the overarching plot amongst the usual monster-of-the-week episodes.

The more connected the mysteries, of course, the less you can assume in advance. Not knowing what the hunters will achieve in the coming mysteries, you'll have to make the ones further in the future more vague. You might have a monster that is supposed to be a key player later on killed early, so bear in mind the need to be flexible and ready to change your plans depending on what happens in play.

ABSENCES

I expect play to mainly be the same group of people meeting together to play out a series of mysteries. Real life doesn't always allow that.

One of the advantages of the mystery-centered structure is that it allows some of the players to miss a game with minimal disruption. You can just say, "Oh, Owen is off hunting down something on his own this week, and can't help you with this case." Next time when the player is back you can ask what they were doing on their own (or write a mystery letter for them to cover it.)

MYSTERY LETTERS

Mystery letters are a technique to give the hunters information to set up a new mystery and start the game with a roar. They're especially useful when:

- You are running a convention game.
- Someone missed a game, to bring them (and yourself) back up to speed.
- There's been a hiatus in your game.
- There's some unfinished business from the last game session.
- You want to give the hunters some clues about the mystery.
- You want to start with the hunters already in the midst of the action.

The letter should briefly remind the hunter what happened last time, and where you left off. Include any new information that you want to give the hunter. For example, you can put the hook for this mystery and some background information they have already discovered.

Then put in a custom move for the hunter to roll, or pick from a list of options. The moves should either provide some useful information, or put the hunter right into the action, or both.

Here's some fragments from letters I used for a convention scenario. The team are in a haunted house, attempting to exorcise a poltergeist.

An information-finding move:

Obviously you checked out the haunting's background before the job. Roll me +Weird, to see what you've found out, or worked out. On a 10+ ask me two of these, on a 7-9 ask me one. On a miss, you can ask me one anyhow but you had to do something dangerous to find out. I'll let you know what that was. The questions you can ask:

- *What's the buzz on the cryptozoology and ghost hunter message boards and mailing lists?*
- *I found some writing in blood on a mirror. What did it say?*
- *What did I notice when I looked at the map?*

A move to get into the action:

The initial check of the house went okay, but then things turned bad. Roll me +Sharp and see what happened: On a 10+ pick two, on a 7-9 pick one:

- *You have the poltergeist in a ghost trap.*
- *You do not have a huge shard of mirror embedded in your leg (that means you do otherwise).*
- *You know where some of the other ghosts are.*

On a miss, well. I'll let you know what's going wrong (everything).

In both moves I have options that will suggest what's going on beyond the immediate situation. In the first, the fact that the map is important is raised even if they don't ask me about it. In the second, the "other ghosts" had not been mentioned earlier, so this is the first hint that there's something extra going on.

There's also that negatively phrased option about the mirror shard. The hunter has to pick it to avoid trouble, because otherwise (by implication), they'll have that injury.

EXAMPLE MYSTERY LETTER

Here's an entire mystery letter to use as a model. This one is for a hunter who was away because the player missed the previous session.

Dear Carter,

Remember how you'd taken that sample from the lake creature for tests? You've got your results back from your friend in the police forensic lab. Ask me one of these questions to find out what you learned:

- Is it related to anything we have met before?*
- Did we really kill it?*
- How does it tie in with that old woman... what was her name, Janice? and what she told you?*

You've been away from the team for a week now, and I'd like to know what you've been up to, and what you achieved. Here are some things I know you wanted to do:

- Check up on where the Unseeing Ones might have holed up.*
- Research a spell that will cure Theresa.*
- Get hold of some of those "can kill anything" bullets from that creepy dude.*

If there's anything you want to add to that list, go ahead and ask. I'll let you know if it's okay (anything you could do in a week should be fine).

Roll +Sharp to see how much you got done.

- On a 10+ you can pick two of them to be done, on a 7-9 only one.*
- On a miss you can pick one if you want, but you got into trouble doing it. Getting you out of that trouble is where we'll kick off today.*

Love and kisses, your Keeper

Here you can see: a reminder and a chance to learn a little about the bigger picture, a custom move that can tell the hunter some useful facts and add information for the story, and another move to help the hunter work towards one of their goals.

RUNNING SUBSEQUENT MYSTERIES

Mostly, this works just like the first one. There's just a few differences.

AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH SESSION

If it's a new mystery, have everyone who has a start-of-the-mystery move do it now.

Update the hunters' harm to account for healing time:

- If there's been some time to get treatment and recover, have everyone erase all harm.
- If you are following right on the last mystery, everyone gets 1-harm healed.

PLAYING THE MYSTERY

This goes just like the first time, except you don't need to ask so many questions.

As you go on, there's room for more interaction with normal folks, for fighting tougher monsters or large groups of minions, and stuff like that.

It's also good to put pressure on the things that hold the team together. Say your hunters have a disagreement about how to handle a bystander who's in the way. That's interesting: it's an opportunity to push and see what happens in a more intense situation. Take these tensions and put the hunters into positions where they have to make similar decisions. This is not something you do to mess with them: it's being a fan. Being a fan means being interested in what happens when the hunters have to make hard decisions.

And you should play hardball with the hunters. They are awesome, and they have a load of different ways to avoid harm and stay alive. So have your monsters and minions hit the hunters as hard as they can. Do not shy away from making the monsters tough, and giving them attacks that could easily kill a hunter. Hunting monsters is not supposed to be easy or safe.

We're not interested in the hunters having everything go their way. It's much cooler to put them in bad spots, so we can be amazed by the ways they get out and to give them tough choices so we can find out what they truly believe in and what they're willing to do.

AT THE END OF EACH SESSION

At the end of each session, remember to ask the end-of-session experience questions:

- Did we conclude the current mystery?
- Did we save someone from certain death (or worse)?
- Did we learn something new and important about the world?
- Did we learn something new and important about one of the hunters?

If you get one or two “Yes” answers, have the hunters mark one experience. If you get three or four, they mark two.

SUMMARY: KEEPER'S SESSION

- Update injured hunters for healing since the last mystery. All harm is healed if there's been time, or just 1-harm each if you're following right on from the last mystery.
- Do start-of-mystery moves for hunters who have them.
- Tell the hunters the hook.
- Let them investigate the mystery.
- Ask questions.
- Take note of everything you can.
- Put lots of horror into the stuff they find. Give them problems so they can show how cool they are as they solve them.
- Put pressure on the relationships in the hunter team, or on their relationships with bystanders.
- When they meet someone you didn't prepare, give them a name and bystander type (usually a **witness** or **victim**).
- When they visit somewhere you didn't prepare, describe it and give it a location type.
- Make the action and fight scenes exciting.
- When a hunter misses on a roll, have them mark experience.
- When any character suffers harm, use a harm move on them.
- Confront the monster! Hopefully the hunters win.
- Ask the end-of-session experience questions to see whether each hunter gets to mark zero, one or two experience.
- Think about how events in the mystery will affect your arcs or later mysteries. Tidy up your notes.





MYSTERY: **DAMN DIRTY APES**

The mystery is set in a small university town. The university needs to have an engineering school, a medical school, and a liberal arts faculty. The villain who set things in motion is an unbalanced professor, forced to resign from the university in shame and now ready to take his revenge. In true evil villain fashion he'll demonstrate that his theories work—and so what if that proof takes the form of an army of crazed cyborg primates?

REQUIREMENTS

Like “Dream Away the Time,” this mystery requires some things to be true about your game. In this case, mad science that works in parallel with magic to bind spirits, and the spirits themselves: entities from another dimension that are hostile to life.

HOOK

The hunters will hear that a spate of unusual burglaries at a university has now culminated in a murder.

What makes the burglaries unusual is that they have been targeted on engineering and electronics workshops. Some artifacts have also been stolen from the Anthropology department. In all the raids, security cameras and alarms have been tampered with.

Yesterday a security guard called Chris Lamb was torn to pieces (literally) during another theft in the Engineering building.

COUNTDOWN

Day	Another attack takes place, this time leaving a survivor (Pauline Brooks).
Shadows	Dr Beech enhances himself with bionic experiments, thereby fusing an evil spirit into his mind. This leaves him completely deranged.
Sunset	Dr Beech sends his minions after his academic rivals.
Dusk	Dr Beech sends his army out to conquer the university.
Nightfall	The university is captured. Dr Beech announces that he is now “grand chancellor” in an attack on the graduation ceremony. He begins transforming more people and animals into insane bionic soldiers.
Midnight	The army is called in to deal with the primate army, and the town is devastated with great loss of life.



NOTES

This mystery has a fairly limited scope, with most of the events and investigation likely to take place at the university.

Many of the bystanders know or suspect the truth, but have reasons to hide their involvement. Be sure to let the hunters know when the bystander they are talking to is being evasive or obviously concealing something, and make the hunters push each character hard to get the information. These secrets are another way to see how much the hunters will do—in this case, how hard will they push these bystanders?

The strange thefts (in order of occurrence):

- Medical school labs: 18 living monkeys and 3 chimpanzees. This was initially assumed to be the Animal Freedom Militia, and so far no-one has connected it to the spate of burglaries.
- Electronics workshop storeroom. Various components stolen, no doors unlocked or unbroken—access probably via a loose ventilation grille.
- Robotics lab. Several works-in-progress and some parts stolen.
- Anthropology library. Some books on pagan cults stolen.
- Another electronics lab (this time in the computer science department). Various parts, including programmable control chips, stolen.
- Medical school labs: A number of experimental prosthetics and control computers.

THREATS

DR LAWRENCE BEECH, MAD SCIENTIST

Monster: Sorcerer (motivation: to usurp unnatural power)

The stress of academic life has led to Beech flipping out and deciding to take over the university and rule it as an absolute monarch. He's only just moved into his hidden lab, where he's putting the final touches on his army of robo-primates before taking over the university. Beech was not a normal, sane person even before this flipout.

Beech has no supernatural powers or abilities beyond those he uses to create his supersoldiers. If Beech upgrades himself, he gains the powers and upgrades marked "post-upgrade" below.

Powers:

- **Etheric-Bionic Binding Spell:** Uses intricate mathematical programming techniques to bind bionics to a living host. An other-dimensional consciousness is installed into the bionics as a control interface. Has the unfortunate side effect of overwriting the host mind with the mind of the other dimensional being (which cannot comprehend this universe).
- (Post-upgrade) **Surgical robot hand** (see attacks).
- (Post-upgrade) **Minion radio net.** He can sense anything that any of his bionic minions can sense, although he must actively concentrate to do so.
- (Post-upgrade) **Etheric blast** (see attacks).
- (Post-upgrade) **Etheric awareness.** He is conscious of all living things in his immediate vicinity (within about 50m), regardless of obstacles. "Etherically active" individuals are easier for him to detect—for hunters, that's anyone with Weird +2 or +3.

Attacks: (Pre-upgrade) Ineffectual slap: 0-harm hand; (Post-upgrade) Surgical robot hand: 3-harm hand slow; (Post-upgrade) Etheric blast: 1-harm close magic ignores-armour

Armour: (Pre-upgrade) None; (Post-upgrade) 2-armour.

Harm capacity: 7. Okay ☐☐☐☐☐☐ Dying Unstable: ☐

Weaknesses: **Gloating monologue:** Dr Beech cannot be defeated until the hunters have listened to him rant about his evil plans; (Post-upgrade) **Etheric-Bionic Control Interface:** If the interface is disrupted with magic or electromagnetic energy, Dr Beech will no longer be able to control the bionics and is vulnerable.

DR BEECH'S RESEARCH LAB

Location: Den (motivation: to harbour monsters)

Dr Beech can currently be found here. He sends monkeys and chimps to do or obtain anything he needs outside his lab.

Beech has been absent from work for a week. That's long enough to have been noticed by people who also know about the allegations, but most of them have assumed he's on "gardening leave" while the whole mess is sorted out.

If the hunters visit Beech's apartment they will find it abandoned, with some evidence of packing for a long absence.

The lab was originally a disused storage basement attached to the university's steam tunnels. Beech has converted it into a robo-primate conversion factory. There are workbenches, operating tables, surgical robots, and a large number of robo-primates: up to 30 monkeys, and Koko and the chimps (if they are not on a mission elsewhere).

The surgical robots can be used as a weapon by Beech, but they're tied to the operating tables, so easily avoided. They are, however, a very dangerous part of the background of any fight. If a hunter ends up on an operating table, the robotization process will begin, starting with removal of limbs.

THE STEAM TUNNELS

Location: Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)

The tunnels are the only way the hunters can get to Dr Beech's lab, and they have been rigged to repel intruders with ambushes. Beech has set up lots of motion detectors and cameras to ensure he's warned about intruders, and he will send out monkeys to deal with anyone snooping around. The monkeys are equipped with infrared-vision camera eyes, so they can see heat signatures in the total darkness of the tunnels.

The tunnels can be confusing to navigate, so you might want to call for an **act under pressure** move for the hunters to orientate themselves properly after a monkey attack.

KOKO, ROBO GORILLA (MARK 3)

Minion: Assassin (motivation: to kill the hunters)

A possessed bionic silverback gorilla, Koko has been kept caged so far as he is too dangerous and unstable to be let out. Once Beech knows about the hunters, or is ready to make his move, Koko will be unleashed.

Note that Koko was not stolen from the university, but acquired through other means. Most likely, Dr Beech has been in contact with animal smugglers, but this loose end is a good candidate for tying into other parts of your own game.



Powers:

- **Immense Strength.** Koko's augmented gorilla limbs can overpower any human and deal with almost any barrier or weight.
- **Laser cannon.** Koko has a laser cannon mounted over his left shoulder.

Attacks: **Laser:** 2-harm hand close far; **Tear limb from limb:** 4-harm hand messy.

Armour: Bionic Armour Plating: 2-armour.

Harm capacity: 12.



Weakness: **Etheric-Bionic Control Interface:** If the interface is disrupted with magic or electromagnetic energy, Koko will no longer be able to control the bionics and is vulnerable.



CLARA, VIRGIL, AND NIM: ROBO CHIMPS (MARK 2)

Minion: Thief (motivation: to steal, and deliver to the master)

The chimps are crazy, but smart. They like to sneak about and steal things.

Powers:

- **Electro-grapple.** Each chimp has one arm replaced with a mechanical grapple and line. The hand may be fired up to 30 meters and winched back in. The chimps can use this to ascend, swing around, attack, and steal things.

Attacks: **Electro-grapple Strike:** 2-harm close restraining; **Grapple:** 3-harm intimate hand restraining messy; **Bite:** 2-harm intimate.

Armour: **Bionic Armour Plating:** 1-armour.

Harm capacity: 7.

□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Clara
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Virgil
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Nim

Weakness: **Etheric-Bionic Control Interface:** If the interface is disrupted with magic or electromagnetic energy, the chimp will no longer be able to control the bionics and is vulnerable.

ROBO MONKEYS (MARK 1)

Minion: Plague (motivation: to swarm and destroy)

Beech has around thirty robo-monkeys of various species. The monkeys will tend to attack as in two groups of about 15 each, and the stats below are for one of these groups of 15.

Powers:

- **Railgun:** Each monkey is equipped with a small electromagnetic cannon, which they'll load with whatever comes to hand—stones, rubbish, poo, etc.
- **Camera Eyes:** They can see infrared, so the robo-monkeys have excellent vision in total darkness, especially for spotting people.

Attacks: **Railgun:** 0-3-harm (depends on ammunition) close far; **Bite:** 2-harm intimate.

Armour: Bionic plating: 1-armour

Harm capacity: Each group: 5.

Group one: ☐☐☐☐☐

Group two: ☐☐☐☐☐

Each point of harm suffered by the group means 3 monkeys are out of action.

Weakness: Etheric-Bionic Control Interface: If the interface is disrupted with magic or electromagnetic energy, the monkey will no longer be able to control the bionics and is vulnerable.



UNIVERSITY QUAD

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

There's a large quad in the center of the university campus. It's usually filled with students. On the edges of the quad the hunters will find two cafes, the university library, and the main administration building.

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS

Location: Hub (motivation: to reveal information)

The various departments the hunters may be interested in are all similar: long hallways, doors with opaque numbering systems (different for each department), and an assortment of offices, classrooms, labs, and storage areas lining any particular corridor.

UNIVERSITY GRAND HALL

Location: Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)

The Grand Hall is almost a hundred years old, and built in an ornate gothic style. A cramped balcony looks down on the main stage and seating area. Stained glass windows illustrating academic virtues take pride of place behind the stage.

This is the hall where the graduation ceremony is held each year, and it's at that ceremony that Beech plans to attack. He is trying to capture as many of his academic enemies as possible.

For his attack, Beech will position the monkeys and chimps on the balcony, then take the stage escorted by Koko. He will then announce his takeover in a deranged monologue, declaring that he is now "grand chancellor" of the university. The only reason he will pause will be to order the robo-primates to restrain anyone escaping or to subdue anyone resisting.

After Beech has finished his speech, the primates will begin escorting groups of staff and students through the steam tunnels to the robo-primate conversion factory.

PAULINE BROOKS

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put themselves in danger)

A security guard at the university, doomed to be maimed in the events of “day” in the countdown. Before then, Pauline can help the hunters with details of the usual routine for the security team. They’re generally more concerned with students causing minor trouble rather than any kind of serious threat.

Attacks: Nightstick: 1-harm hand

Armour: Stab-proof vest: 1-armour

Harm capacity: 7.



DR ANDREW CROUCH, MEDICAL SCHOOL DEAN

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put themselves in danger)

Hates Dr Beech intensely, regarding him as unbalanced and dangerous. It was Dr Crouch who finally revoked Beech’s funding and triggered the current crisis.

Does not want to reveal anything about Dr Beech because it would reflect badly on the school. He has little idea about the details and extent of Beech’s research except that many other people thought it was crazy, out-beyond-the-fringe stuff.

DR KAREN WATHEY, PROSTHETICS RESEARCHER

Bystander: Gossip (motivation: to pass on rumours)

Previous collaborator with Dr Beech, decided he was going too far and stopped helping. Also leaked details of Beech’s ethics violations to the Dean in an effort to get Beech punished.

Does not want to reveal anything about Beech because it might endanger her own career. She knows that Beech has no qualms at all about breaching ethics rules, and has begun to worry about the possibility that he has no qualms about breaking other rules either.

DR HARVEY NOBLE, ROBOTICIST

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put themselves in danger)

Noble has devoted much of his career to criticizing Dr Beech, ever since their first disagreement over who deserved the nicer office in a building that has since been demolished and rebuilt.

Noble will happily rant about the various shortcomings of Dr Beech, but his perspective is that Beech acts mainly in order to snipe at Noble. Any useful information is likely to be hidden in Noble's general accusations of misconduct. He is aware that Beech was looking into "crazy" control systems for bionics, verging into parapsychology in some cases.

DR CLAYTON HOLT, ETHICS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Holt is in charge of the university research ethics committee and thus has access to a number of Beech's research proposals. Most of these—especially the most recent and disturbing ones—were denied.

Holt also oversaw the ethics breach complaints against Beech and is aware that Beech was conducting hideous prosthetic experiments on animals.

The university (specifically Dean Crouch) prevailed upon the committee to keep the details of these sessions confidential due to the danger they posed to the university's reputation. Holt is not wholly happy with that situation and can be persuaded to reveal what he knows if the hunters provide good reasons (such as clues that Beech is continuing his work illicitly).

AMY PRITCHARD, STUDENT

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

Former student of Dr Beech. Shocked by the experiments he was conducting, Pritchard has now joined the Animal Freedom Militia.

Does not want to tell anyone about Beech and the experiments because she's ashamed of her own involvement in them. She knows a great deal about Beech's theories of etheric-bionic synergy, but has no idea that he has managed to get them working in practical applications, even imperfectly.

ROBIN HARDING, ANIMAL FREEDOM MILITIA LIBERATIONIST

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

Harding is the head of the university's branch of the AFM. She is a strict vegan, and a zealous protector of animals.

If questioned, she denies the AFM had anything to do with the stolen primates, but only because they have not been able to free the primates themselves. The activities of other animal liberators are fully supported by the AFM.

Harding has plenty of contacts with animal shelters and rescue groups, and would be good to have on-side if any of Beech's primates are rescued alive and need to be rehabilitated.

CRAZY CATS CLUB

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

A bar and punk/alternative music venue, this is also the *de facto* headquarters of the Animal Freedom Militia. The bar is cramped and noisy, the walls covered with messy murals and graffiti.

If the hunters come here undercover as cops or other authority figures, the patrons will tend to be hostile.

Amy and Robin can be found here most evenings, and if not then someone will know where they are.

CLAIRE GUIMARAS, LOCAL POLICE CHIEF

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Concerned mainly with the weirdness of the crime, Guimaras has no particular leads when the hunters first arrive. It's clearly linked to the other recent thefts at the university, but the extreme violence of the attack on the security guard has left her puzzled.

Later in the adventure, forensic technicians will report that samples from the scene reveal that at least two chimpanzees were involved. This fact does not help Guimaras in any meaningful way.

If the hunters can give her some leads or any kind of explanation about what is really going on, she'll be grateful.

OTHER BYSTANDERS

Use these templates as starting points for any other people the hunters talk to.

Trait	Bystander type	Name
Stoic	Witness (reveal information)	Lavonyelle Robinson
Punctual and organised	Victim (put herself in danger)	Yvette Suhre
Spiritual	Gossip (pass on rumours)	Bernard Warnes
Determined and optimistic	Victim (put herself in danger)	Louise Farrar
Over-dramatic	Busybody (interfere in others' plans)	Kris Kiesling
Grumpy	Official (be suspicious)	Yukiko Katagiri





AS THE GAME GOES ON

As you play through mysteries, and elaborate on the team's history and the world, here are the things you need to keep in mind.

AT THE END OF EACH MYSTERY

This works the same as for the first mystery:

- Tidy up your notes from the mystery.
- Talk to everyone about how it went and see if they have plans for what to do next, or ideas for later.
- Think about whether the mystery gave you more ideas for your existing arcs, or suggested a new one.



CHECKING ON YOUR ARCS

After each mystery, look at each of your arcs and think about what got revealed in play. If something relevant happened, update the arc with the new, altered, or defeated threats.

Advance countdowns based on events in play or off-screen. You should do this if events during the last mystery pointed to it (for example, if the hunters failed to foil the evil plot), or if it has been so long that the next event in the arc countdown would have happened (for example, isolated reports of zombies over the past couple of months become widespread reports of zombie attacks).

If you advance an arc due to off-screen events, you should make the next mystery about that arc so the hunters have a chance to stop it progressing further.

Also, an arc countdown might suggest an idea for the next mystery, even if it's not directly tied to the countdown advancing.

BUILDING MYTHOLOGY

As the game goes on, over the course of many mysteries, keep building up the mythology of your world: the history, logic, and rules behind why things are the way they are. What are the rules of magic? Why are these monsters out there? Who are the big powers that are conspiring against humanity?

This should develop naturally. As the world develops, you'll find yourself thinking "Why did this monster do that?" or "Why does this mad cult leader want that?" The answers to questions like this will form the basis of your mythology.

To make the process easier, keep track of all the pieces you created with a mystery or added as you played. Keep the mystery sheets too. Track any loose ends, enjoyable threats, significant deaths, and other details that might be worth revisiting.

Look at the implications of each mystery: do they suggest something that should be part of your mythology? Maybe you've discovered a rule for magic or how monsters come to be? Or how these creatures operate, or what their ultimate goal is?

Arcs and mythology work hand in hand. How your mythology accretes will suggest the ways your arcs should play out. And the arcs will point at elements that ought to be part of the mythology.

ENDGAME

The game has some built-in measures of progress: things that might tell you that one of the hunter's stories is coming to a close, or even that the whole team's story is. I'll talk here about what to look for and how to deal with these signs when you see them.

LEVELING UP AND IMPROVEMENTS

Most sessions, expect each hunter to level up once or twice, getting one or two improvements. At first, this does not contribute one way or another to how the story is playing out.

However, when the hunters get to the advanced improvements after five level-ups, they will be getting to peak effectiveness. A hunter who has taken most of their starting improvements and a few advanced improvements will have a wide array of moves to deal with the problems they encounter, and things usually go the way they want.

Once a hunter reaches this point, try to push arcs relating to that hunter towards closure. Depending on exactly how fast the hunters earn advances in your game, expect them to reach this point after ten to twenty sessions.

There's also that advanced improvement "retire your hunter to safety." If anyone picks that, or is seriously considering it, that's a clue that that hunter's story is approaching an end (although it might not be the end of the story for the rest of the team).

RUNNING OUT OF LUCK

Luck scores are another measure of story progress. Luck will gradually get used up as you play.

If a hunter is getting to the end of their Luck, that's another sign their story needs to end. If not, they'll be killed by a monster sooner or later (either because they can no longer reduce the harm they suffer, or because of a hard move you make against them).

Some hunter types have special effects as they spend Luck, as well:

- When the Chosen spends Luck, you need to include something from their fate in the game.
- When the Crooked spends Luck, that means someone from their past is going to reappear soon.
- When the Spooky spends Luck, the demands of their dark side will grow.

DEALING WITH ARCS

The other game element that feeds in to the endgame are your arcs: if the arcs the hunters are most concerned with have concluded (either via the hunters stopping whatever is happening, or failing to stop it), that suggests it's nearing time to wind up.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

The rhythms of hunter development and arcs are not the only things that you should use to make decisions about when a game is ending. If a hunter dies and the player creates a fresh replacement, or someone decides to play a second character, then that new hunter starts at the beginning. This will mix up the capabilities between the different characters. And if hunters are retiring and being replaced on the team, that might mean you're in for a long saga.

HOW TO END A GAME

If you feel that things are moving towards a climax and resolution, it's a good idea to talk to the rest of the group and mention that you feel that way. They'll let you know if they agree, or if they think there's still unfinished business to deal with.

If there is general agreement that it's time to finish the game, make sure you plan the next few mysteries to suit. Have them be bigger in scope, more epic, and ensure the important arcs get resolved.

If there's no agreement that it's time to finish up and there's enthusiasm to continue, that's your cue to start thinking up some new arcs to replace the ones that have been dealt with, and maybe for some new hunters to join the team.

ONE-SHOT GAMES

If you want to run a single mystery (maybe as a convention game or for a change from a regular game), here's what to do.

ONE-SHOT HUNTERS

Use mystery letters to share background information the hunters should know. They can also be used to let them know any custom rules for creating their hunters (see below). If you're not providing specific hunter playbooks, you can write letters that are aimed at different specialities: for example one for a brawler, one for a magician, one for an investigator.

The hunters should start with fewer Luck points: give them 1-3 (depending on how tough you want the mystery to be). You may allow them to have a free level-up after creating their hunter, to make up for having fewer Luck points to save them.

It's useful to pick a team concept for the game, and just tell everyone who the team are and how they operate. You may need to make certain playbooks mandatory, suggest others that fit in, and leave out others completely. For example, if your team concept is centered on the Professional, having an Initiate might not work so well. Don't offer the Initiate playbook as an option.

I strongly advise that you let everyone make up their own hunter (even if you restrict the types available). Making all the choices during hunter creation—about their abilities, history and so on—gives the players a stake in the way the game is going to play.

You may reduce the options available in hunter creation to suit your mystery. You can do this with a mystery letter: include an instruction like "By the way, when you are picking your moves, **this move** will be especially useful for this mystery, **that move** is not allowed, and **other move** will probably not be very relevant."

ONE-SHOT MYSTERY CREATION

A twist or two works very well in a one-shot game. For example, give the hunters a hook that appears to be a classic monster (ghost, vampire, werewolf, etc), but which turns out to be something quite different.

You can make things easy on yourself if you bring a map of possible locations, a list of names, and some pre-written bystanders (e.g. you can always find room for a suspicious cop and some naïve victims).

Without the expectation that the game will continue, you should also feel free to ramp up the danger level of the threats. You can have:

- more unnatural powers.
- more minions, or multiple monsters.
- higher damage attacks for monsters and minions.
- higher harm capacity for monsters or minions before they are killed.
- threats target the hunters, or their loved ones, directly.

Also, think about the scale of events. In a one-shot, the stakes of the mystery can be huge: zombie epidemics, the legions of Hell being unleashed on earth, hideous gods from beyond the stars—any huge threat is fair game.

If your team includes hunters with central story elements (the Chosen and her fate, the Wronged's nemesis, the Professional and her Agency, the Initiate and his Sect, etc) then tie those into the mystery as well. Think about these central elements when you decide which hunter books to bring to the table, and then you can leave the right-shaped holes in your mystery (e.g. you could leave yourself space to adjust the threats to match the Chosen's fate). You should have time to do this as the other players make up their hunters: as they go, find out what they picked for their hunters, and you can quickly adjust your notes to fit, or suggest to the players things that work with what you have planned.

ONE-SHOT MYSTERY PLAY

In general, follow the instructions for a first session.

Give everyone a quick introduction to the rules before they make their hunters. The idea of moves and what the ratings mean (page 25) is enough. Explain other rules when you need them in the game.

Go a little easier on the questions, as you don't need to build so much mythology from the answers.

You can also go much harder on the hunters in play. Push for more horror, and don't hold back with the danger.

PLAYER NUMBERS

The ideal number of people to play *Monster of the Week* is three or four hunter players and a Keeper. Of course you can't always arrange exactly that many people to play.

If you only have one or two hunters in a game, it's going to be more focused on those hunters. Let them talk more, and make an extra effort to draw in elements that the players come up with for their hunter's stories, weaving them into your mysteries and arcs.

If you have more than four hunters, you'll find hunter creation takes longer: if you want, you can save some time by having each player only pick history for some of the group—such as for every second hunter going around the table. Connections with other hunters can develop in play.

You may also find that spotlight time is harder to juggle with such a large group. You can suggest the team splits up to cover the mystery, allowing you to switch back and forth between the different groups as the mystery unfolds. You can encourage the other players to share the spotlight and to be fans of the other hunters.

With large groups, you will also find that each hunter makes fewer move rolls (and so will get a little fewer experience marks), and that combat can become either a cake-walk or overly drawn out. Some of the techniques for keeping fights interesting will help in these situations (see page 207).



CUSTOMISING YOUR GAME

There are a variety of ways you can customise your *Monster of the Week* game. Here's my advice, working from modest changes (custom moves) to the most ambitious (hacking it into a whole new game)

CUSTOM MOVES

Custom moves are moves that you create to give your own game a unique feel and identity. If you want to define a monster's unique powers, special things that another threat can do, or even new moves that the hunters can use, create a custom move using the process below.

DEFINING THE MOVE

Custom moves for threats start with a basic idea. What does the threat need to be capable of? If the threat's abilities are not covered by the existing Keeper and threat moves, then you need to define a custom move.

Custom moves for the hunters could be available as an improvement, or something they can all do when certain conditions are met. It can also codify something that a hunter does already, if you want a consistent rule for how it works.



TRIGGERING THE CUSTOM MOVE

Carefully define when the custom move applies: having a specific trigger condition ensures that you know when to use the move. The trigger is there to enforce describing the move properly, so there's no doubt about when it happens. Something like "when you go down into the sewers," "when you call on the demon Uhul," or "when you're splashed with lamia-bile."

MOVE TYPES

Moves come in three main types:

- A roll, usually adding a rating. Define what happens on a good success (10+), partial success (7-9) and a miss (6-). Note that you could specify a different number to add, not just a rating: harm suffered, number of people sacrificed to cast a spell, etc.
- A bonus or penalty for some circumstance.
- A special effect that applies in certain circumstances.

Use the moves I've provided throughout this book as examples and guidelines. All the character moves, the basic moves, and the example moves in the Mysteries and Arcs section have been created to fit this pattern.

Custom moves might be much more limited than other moves, or they might be vastly more powerful. That's fine, as long as they are just what is needed for that part of your game.

EXAMPLE CUSTOM MOVES

Here are a bunch more examples to show you the sorts of moves you might create. I've put the trigger of the move in **bold**, so you can see when it applies. Then I've explained more reasons for creating the move that way, and the effect I intend.

AN AURA OF TERROR

*An ancient wraith has an aura of terror. **Anyone within 5 metres of the wraith** takes -1 ongoing, unless they **act under pressure** to resist the fear.*

This is a penalty move, triggered by being close to the monster. It's designed to make attacking the ghost up close harder, which may get the hunters thinking of alternative ways to defeat it.

KNOWS IT LIKE THE BACK OF HIS HAND

*Ed O'Grady (bystander: witness) is a keen walker, and knows the woods and hills nearby like the back of his hand. If you **ask his advice** on the terrain or how to find somewhere, hold 1 that you can spend to get +1 on any roll you make following his directions.*

This is a bonus move, something to mark out this particular bystander as someone worth paying extra attention to.

THE INFERNAL HUNTING PACK

*This hunting pack of thirteen infernal hounds (minions: brutes) serve a demon lord. The hounds may **mark someone for death** with a bite. The marked person is then allowed to escape, but the pack will know the location of a marked person forever.*

This is a special-effect move, triggered by the hounds biting a person. This move adds a long-term problem that could remain in play even after the current mystery is solved.

SEARCHING THE MARSHES

*When you **search in the marshes** (location: maze) roll +Sharp. On a 10+ things seem to point somewhere in particular: take +1 forward for investigating. On a 7-9, you can investigate, but then you must pick one of the bad things below. On a miss, all three bad things are true.*

Bad things that can happen in the marshes:

- *Something is following you.*
- *You are lost, and your phone and GPS are not working properly.*
- *You stumble upon something abominable.*

Searching the marshes is a roll move. It is designed to make the marshes a bit more exciting than a usual location threat. By making it a roll, you make the player pick what happens. This gives them a bit more of a stake in the situation (plus it can be exciting just knowing there's a special move to roll).

NIGHTMARES

*When you go to sleep in this town, count how many times you have slept here and roll +sleeps. On a 10+, you have nightmare visions of what is to come and you know it can't be stopped: you must **act under pressure** to break out of your despair and actually do something about the visions. On a 7-9 you have nightmare visions of what's coming, but that's all. On a miss, you sleep like a baby.*

This move belongs to the location threat that describes the town. It is another roll type move, that tells the hunters that this town is in big trouble, and they need to sort it out before too many nights pass.

CALLING THE FLAME SPIRITS

Here's a move for a hunter who made the **use magic** move a lot for a particular effect, so we decided to make a custom move for that spell.

*When you **call the flame spirits** you need to spill some very strong liquor into a fire and call the spirits by name (as many or as few names as you want). Roll +Weird. On a 10+ all the spirits you named come, and they'll tell you some specific things and burn anything you want. On a 7-9 one of them comes and tells you some obscure things and then it burns some stuff, mostly what you wanted burned. On a miss, the fire spirits are angered. They might refuse your summons for a long time, or some of them might appear and demand a significant sacrifice from you right now, or else.*

This is another roll move, designed to be a slightly different version of **use magic** that deals with this particular spell. Note that it is safer, but a lot more specific, than the **use magic** move.

INACCURATE MEMORIES

Here's a move for a mystery that deals with a monster that can dominate people's minds.

*When a hunter **questions someone who has seen the monster**, they get told one of these in addition to any normal questions and answers:*

- *They say something that directly contradicts a fact the hunters already know (e.g. "I was at work" when they know she wasn't).*
- *They can't remember that time at all.*
- *They can remember the time, but their memory is an obvious fabrication (e.g. "After I got home I had dinner, watched some TV, then I had dinner").*

This is a special-effect move. The obvious contradictions here are a way to let the hunters know that the monster they are after can get into people's minds and change their memories, or make them lie, or something like that.

CHECKING OUT AN AGENCY FACILITY

Here's a move for an arc. It goes with an arc about a Professional's Agency.

*When you **explore an Agency facility** it counts as **investigating a mystery**, but you can also ask these questions:*

- *What do I find out about the Agency's real goals?*
- *Who do I find out something suspicious about?*

This is a special-effect move, adding some extra options for investigation that bear on specific issues that have come up in the hunters' previous investigation of the Agency (and a similar move in your game would have questions tailored to what's already happened to your hunters). You add more questions later, if the hunters come up with other things they want to look for.

CUSTOM THREATS

If there's a need for a threat type that doesn't quite fit into the ones that are already defined, just add it. All that's needed are a name, a motivation, and any custom moves it can make.

Think about whether it is a monster, minion, bystander, or location. If it doesn't fit into any of those, you can create a new threat type with its own list of special moves.

EXAMPLE CUSTOM THREAT: AN EVIL CULT

This custom threat represents an evil cult infesting a small town. It's a minion threat.

They're Everywhere! (motivation: make people scared to speak out).

This threat has this custom move.

When a hunter **asks locals about something weird**, roll +Sharp.

On a 10+, the hunter works out:

- if they are talking to a member of the cult, this person is concealing something important.
- if they are talking to a normal person, this person is too scared to reveal anything.

On a 7-9, the hunter knows something isn't right, but not exactly what.

On a miss, the cult gets told that this hunter is asking questions about them (regardless of whether that was the subject or not).

LEGACY EXPERIENCE RULES

In the first edition of *Monster of the Week*, the way hunters gained experience points was different. Here is the original system for those who prefer the it, or are interested in what it was.

Hunters do not mark experience on a missed roll (6 or less), and there's no end-of-session list of questions that can earn experience.

Any specific moves that say a hunter marks experience are unchanged.

At the beginning of each session, each hunter should pick another hunter on the team who they feel they currently have the closest relationship with. That hunter's player picks a rating to highlight. Then the Keeper picks a second rating to highlight for each hunter.

Whenever a hunter makes a roll with a highlighted rating, they mark experience, regardless of whether the result is a hit or a miss.

SHARING THE KEEPER DUTIES

If your group wants to swap around the duties (who is the Keeper, and who plays the hunters), the game can handle that without much trouble.

You'll need to decide if you have all the game's arcs open, for people to use how they want when it's their turn to be Keeper, or secret. If the arcs are secret, then each of you will have to look after your own, and tie them into your own mysteries.

Then you can take turns as Keeper, each preparing a mystery and running it. I'd suggest that each current Keeper's hunter take a break from the team (because tracking everything that your hunter and all the mystery threats are doing is too much to handle). You may want to consider a team concept that allows some of the hunters to be absent, whenever convenient, in a believable way. For example, you might all work for an organisation that investigates monsters, with each team built as needed at the time: that way any hunter can be said to be on another case (or on leave) to explain their absence.

It's also a good idea to keep a shared journal (or set up a wiki) with all the mysteries, monsters, and other things you have encountered, so that everyone will be on the same page when re-using elements from earlier mysteries.

CUSTOM PLAYBOOKS

I encourage the creation of custom hunter types for your game, and to share the results with other players and groups over the Internet. Here's how to go about putting a new playbook together.

CONCEPT

To start with, make sure your concept is good enough. If you can only think of a single example of your possible hunter type in fiction, the concept is probably too specific. But if you can think of a *type*, then it's a good candidate. Aside from that, just go for something really cool.

RATINGS

Rating lines should add up to three, and normally each hunter type has one rating that is always +2. If you give a line a second rating at +2, count that second +2 as a +3 instead.

A normal rating line:

Charm +2, Cool +1, Sharp -1, Tough +1, Weird=0 (Total 3)

A rating line with two +2 ratings:

Charm -1, Cool +2, Sharp -1, Tough +2, Weird=0 (Total 2, but counted as 3 due to the second +2)

The Monstrous always gets +3 Weird, as a special case: there's an unstated move that gives the Monstrous +1 Weird.

The Chosen varies the rule as well: she gets two +2 ratings (each line has a different pair), plus each line adds up to four: the Chosen also has an unstated extra move to give her this advantage.

MOVES

Each hunter type gets three moves as well. For many, one or two of these moves are mandatory.

Some of the moves don't count as one against their count: that's for moves that aren't purely an advantage, but that have both a good and bad side. The Initiate's move when **in good standing with the Sect** is one of those: the move's good and bad sides balance out, so the Initiate gets another three choices of purely useful moves.

Some playbooks have moves that are purely bad (the Monstrous' curse and the Spooky's dark side, for example). When a playbook has a purely bad move, give them an extra useful move to make up for it.

Not all the moves in the playbooks are explicitly called that, either. For example, the Expert's haven is a move, but not referred to as one. Do this if your move is something special that doesn't fit into the usual list of things the hunter can do.

GEAR

Gear and weapon lists are primarily driven by what makes sense for the playbook. Try to include items that push towards your vision of what is cool and exciting about the concept.

HISTORY

The history choices are another place that gives you a great opportunity to drive towards your concept. Each potential relationship with another hunter should reflect an aspect of what makes your new hunter type exciting.

IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements usually include:

- One rating that may be improved to +3.
- Three ratings that may be improved to +2.
- Two choices of moves from another playbook.
- Two choices of extra moves from this playbook.
- Two special choices. These should be specific to the hunter type and reflect how they will develop and grow.
- Optionally, add an advanced improvement (or two) specific to this hunter type. Only do so if there is something that really needs to be here, like the final resolution of thematic issues unique to the playbook.

BALANCE?

Don't worry about balancing your hunter type against the others. If you follow the guidelines above (more or less), the playbook will work fine with the other hunter types.

SHARING

Please share your own content with other *Monster of the Week* fans. See page 15 for some places that you'll be able to find us.

A WHOLE NEW GAME

Vincent Baker's *Apocalypse World* was built with hacking in mind. I don't have a lot to add to the guidelines in that game, but as you may not own *Apocalypse World*, I'll say a little about what to do if you want to take these rules and use them for something else.

The key things are the Keeper's agenda and principles, and the basic moves. They are the most important dials that control how the game plays out.

The setting can be left mainly implicit. Use the playbooks, basic moves, threats, and Keeper moves to provide the game's setting. That allows each group to fill in the other details to suit themselves and their game.

If you want to compare and contrast, here are some other hacks of *Apocalypse World* that might be of interest:

- *Monsterhearts* by Avery Mcdaldno draws from a similar place to *Monster of the Week*, but it's about the messy supernatural romance side of *Buffy* and *True Blood* (and *Twilight*). In particular, check out how the basic moves in *Monsterhearts* emphasise different ways of resolving conflicts to *Monster of the Week*.
- Avery also created *Simple World*, a framework for building your own game using rules based on *Apocalypse World*. It's a really good place to start your hack.
- *Dungeon World* by Sage LaTorra and Adam Koebel is a modern take on classic dungeon crawl roleplaying.
- *Sagas of the Icelanders* by Gregor Vuga has moves and playbooks that reflect expected social roles.
- *World of Dungeons* by John Harper is an extremely cut down (but still perfectly playable) version of *Dungeon World*. It's a great illustration of how little you can get away with.





INSPIRATION

Here's a big list of things that inspired me, to a greater or lesser extent.

The various fiction inspirations below fed into my conception of what monster hunters in the modern world might be like. They cover a range of styles, from straight-up horror through to comedy. *Monster of the Week* can fit anywhere along that continuum, but by default it's like the television show *Supernatural*. That's my number one inspiration.

The game inspirations gave me ideas for the rules, how to arrange the text, or how to use horror in roleplaying.

TELEVISION

The primary sources are *Supernatural* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Also relevant are: *Fringe*; *The X-Files*; *True Blood*; *Being Human*; *Doctor Who*; *Grimm*; *The Fades*; *Werewolf*; *Brimstone*; *Reaper*; *Sanctuary*; *Sleepy Hollow*; *Penny Dreadful*; *The Vampire Diaries*; and *The Originals*.

FILM

Big Trouble in Little China; *Near Dark*; *Dracula* (any version: my favorites are Murnau's *Nosferatu*, Herzog's remake of *Nosferatu*, and Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*); *The Hunger*; *Bubba Ho-Tep*; *An American Werewolf in London*; *Dog Soldiers*; *The Lost Boys*; *Fright Night* (old or new); *Hellboy & Hellboy 2: The Golden Army*; *Army of Darkness*; *My Name Is Bruce*; *Troll Hunter*; *Attack the Block*; *Alien*; *Aliens*; Carpenter's *The Thing*; *Night Watch* and *Day Watch*.

NOVELS

The Dresden Files by Jim Butcher; the *Twenty Palaces* books by Harry Connolly; the *Felix Castor* books by Mike Carey; the *Monster Hunter International* books by Larry Correia; *Dracula* by Bram Stoker; anything by H. P. Lovecraft; the *Strain* trilogy by Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan; *Declare*, *Last Call*, *Expiration Date*, *Earthquake Weather*, and *The Anubis Gates* by Tim Powers; Charles Stross' *Laundry* series; Garth Nix's *Old Kingdom* trilogy; *The Rook* by Daniel O'Malley.

COMICS

Hellboy, *BPRD*, and *BPRD: Hell On Earth* by Mike Mignola; *Hellblazer*; *Atomic Robo* by Brian Clevinger and Scott Wegener; *Nextwave: Agents of H.A.T.E.* by Warren Ellis and Stuart Immonen; *S.H.O.O.T. First* by Justin Aclin and Nicolas Daniel Selma; *Dylan Dog* created by Tiziano Sclavi

GAMES

This is a hack of Vincent Baker's *Apocalypse World*, which is a great game, and I highly recommend it if you feel like spending some time in a post-apocalyptic wasteland.

Other games that provided inspiration (in no particular order): *Unknown Armies*; *Fiasco*; *Geiger Counter*; *Mouse Guard*; *InSpectres*; *GURPS: Black Ops*; *GURPS: Horror*; *Cold City*; *Call of Cthulhu*; *Trail of Cthulhu*; *Dungeon World*; *Monsterhearts*; and *World of Dungeons*.

Graham Walmsley's *Play Unsafe* has great advice for improvisation in games (and *Monster of the Week* is largely improvised, so that advice is all directly applicable). His book *Stealing Cthulhu* has advice about writing Lovecraftian adventures: these ideas can be used to good effect for *Monster of the Week* mysteries, too.



INDEX

- Absences, 267
- Act under pressure, 26, 101, 182
 - advanced moves and, 122
 - as a general purpose move, 199
- Cool and, 27
- custom moves and, 297, 299
- Crooked and, 38
- examples of, 97, 171, 182
- Expert and, 47
- fighting and, 209, 221
- during the investigation, 204
- Keeper moves and, 173,
- Keeper's notes, 182
- kick some ass and, 199
- Monstrous and, 62
- Mundane and, 67
- Professional and, 72
- Spell-Slinger and, 76, 77, 78
- Action Scientist, 20
- Actions, not covered by moves, 199
- Advanced arcane training move, 78
- Advanced improvements, 120-21
 - basic moves, 121
 - erasing used Luck mark, 121
 - change Hunter type, 121
 - endgame indicator, 290
 - improve a rating, 121
 - playbook-specific, 123-24
 - retire to safety, 121
 - second hunter, 121
- Advanced moves, 122
- Agency, 71, 165, 293, 300
- Alien Monstrosity from Beyond, 246
- Ally, 56, 119
 - chosen and, 34
 - creating using advanced Manipulate Someone move, 122
 - crooked and, 40
 - divine and, 45
 - types of, 119
- Always the victim move, 67
- Ancient evil rising, 233
- Ancient Fighting Arts move, 56
- Angel*, 19
- Angel (character), 19
- Angel wings move, 43
- Annelise (character), 19
- Apocalypse, 235
- Apocalypse Engine system, 9

- Apocalypse World*, 14, 130, 305, 308
- Apprentice move, 56
- Arc(s)
- basic concept, 229
 - building, 228
 - checking on, 289
 - countdowns, 232
 - custom moves, 237, 300
 - endgame indicator, 29
 - how to use, 241
 - templates, 233-36
 - threats, 230-31
 - unfinished business and, 229
- Arcane reputation move, 78
- Armory (haven option), 48
- Armour
- for hunters, 116
 - for monsters, 139
- Artifact move, 38
- Assassin
- Crooked background, 36
 - example of, 278
 - minion type 141, 254
- Atomic Robo*, 20, 308
- Aura of terror, 297
- Baker, Vincent, 130, 305, 308
- Balance (for playbooks), 304
- Balkan vampire, 248
- Basic moves (hunter), 25-26, 101, 165, 181-96
- Basic moves (keeper) 172-3
- Battlefield awareness move, 72
- Beast, 138, 244
- examples of, 134, 155, 250
- Beech, Dr. Lawrence, mad scientist, 276
- Beginning of mystery moves, 95
- Berserk move, 88
- Beyond human limitations, 106, 196
- Big Game Hunter, The, 20
- Big magic, 107-8, 197, 203
- examples of, 108, 198
 - Keeper's notes, 197-98
 - resurrection, 112
- Big whammy move, 83
- Bishop, Peter (character), 18
- Bonecruncher, a Redcap, 155
- Bonus
- forward, 99
 - moves, 297, 298
 - ongoing, 100
- Boss from beyond move, 43
- Bottle it up move, 72
- Breed, Monstrous, 61
- Breeder, 138, 244
- example of, 248
- Brute, 141, 254
- example of, 255
- Buffy (character), 18
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 9, 13, 18, 19, 265, 305
- Bug hunt, 261
- Building your own game, 305
- Burglar (Crooked background), 36
- Busybody, 142, 256
- Bystanders, 142, 256
- examples of, 257
 - first mystery and, 135, 137, 147
 - subsequent mystery creation and, 256
 - using, 178
 - moves, 178
 - wounds and, 213
- Calling the flame spirits move, 299
- Cast out evil move, 43
- Changeling, 154
- Character names, 13
- Charlatan (Crooked background), 36
- Charm (rating), 27
- Checking out an Agency facility, 300

- Chosen, 30-34, 18, 95
 advanced improvements and, 123
 arcs and, 229
 mystery moves and, 202
 one-shot mystery and, 293
 running out of Luck and, 290
 Chuck the bartender, 255
 Chupacabras, 252
 Claws of the beast move, 63
 Collector, 138, 244
 example of, 246
 Combat magic move
 bases, 76
 effects, 76
 Comics (sources), 308
 Compton, Bill (character), 19
 Connect the dots move, 52
 Connolly, Harry, 9
 Constructed, 20
 Consumables, 78
 Contrary move, 52
 Cool (rating), 27
 Cordelia (character), 19
 Corruption, 236
 Could've been worse move, 78
 Countdown, 135, 146, 205, 260
 arcs and, 232
 in *Damn Dirty Apes*, 274
 in *Dream Away The Time*, 150
 Crazy eyes move, 52
 Creature of the night, 253
 Crew move, 38
 Crooked, 35-39, 18
 recover stash of money and, 119
 running out of Luck and, 290
 Crossroads, 144, 258
 examples of, 153, 157, 161, 281, 284
 Cultist, 141, 254
 Custom move(s), 296, 22, 199
 examples of, 297-98
 triggering, 297
 types of, 297
 Custom playbooks, 302-4
 Custom threats, 301

Damn Dirty Apes mystery, 273-85
 Dark Master curse, 62
 Dark negotiator move, 63, 104, 192
 Dark past move, 47
 Dark side, 83
 Day, 146, 147
 Deal with the Agency move, 22, 23, 72
 Deal with the devil move, 38
 Deathtrap, 144, 258
 example of, 277
 De-identifier, 251
 Demon (Monstrous breed), 61
 Den, 144, 258
 example of, 277
 Destiny's Plaything move, 32
 Destroyer, 138, 244
 Detective, 142, 256
 example of, 161, 257
 Devour memory attack, 246
 Devourer, 138, 244
 examples of, 251, 252
 Dice rolling, 99
 Divine, 41-45, 18, 95
 advanced improvements and, 123
 arcs and, 229
 DIY surgery move, 88
 Don't worry, I'll check it out move, 67
Dracula, 245, 308
Dream Away the Time mystery, 149-161
 Dresden, Harry (character), 19
Dresden Files, The, 18, 19, 308
 Driver move, 38
Dungeon World, 14, 305, 308
 Dunham, Olivia (character), 19
 Dusk, 146, 147

- Electro-grapple, 279
- End of days, 235
- Endgame, 290-91
- Equipment, not in playbook, 22, 114, 117
- Etheric-bionic control interface
 - and powers, 276, 278, 279, 280
- Evil cult, 301
- Evil ritual, 262
- Executioner, 138, 244
- Exile, 20
- Experience, 118, 165, 202
 - end of session and, 118, 223
 - rules, legacy, 301
- Expert, 46-50, 18, 95, 202
 - haven, 119, 303
- Faerie (Monstrous breed), 61
- Fate, Chosen's, 31
- Feed curse, 62
- Fervor move, 88
- Fight(s), 109, 206-11
 - environment usage in, 208
 - example of, 216-22
 - initiative in, 207
 - Keeper techniques and, 207
 - maps and, 208
 - resolution of, 210
 - soft moves and, 210
 - spotlight time and, 210
 - weapons in, 209
 - what's at stake, 207
- Fighting arts move, 57
- Film (sources), 307
- First session, 163, 225
 - ending, 223-24
 - game workings, 96, 165
 - history, 165
 - Hunter creation, 164
 - introductions, 165
 - playbook selection, 18
 - running, 166
 - team concept selection, 18
- Fixer (Crooked background), 36
- Fizzle (use magic option), 78
- Flake, 51-54, 18, 95, 202
- Flight move, 63
- Folklore, 243
- Forensic divination move, 78
- Fortress, 144, 258
- Fortunes move, 56
- Frankenstein's monster, 20
- Friends on the force move, 38
- Fringe*, 18, 19, 264, 265, 307
- Game feedback, 14
- Game play, 12, 96-100
 - advanced improvements, 120-21
 - advanced moves, 122
 - advanced playbook-specific movements, 123-24
 - armour, 116
 - basic moves, 101-6
 - big magic and, 107-8
 - end of session experience, 118
 - every game hunters' summary, 125
 - fight, 109
 - file downloads, 13
 - first time hunters' summary, 125
 - gear, 114, 117
 - harm, 110
 - healing, 111
 - improvements, 118-20
 - improvised weapons, 109
 - leveling up, 118
 - Luck, 113
 - moves, 25-26
 - ratings, 25, 27
 - recommended number of players, 13, 294
 - resurrection, 112
 - time allotment, 13
 - unarmed attacks, 109
 - weapons, 114-16
- Game website, 14
- Games (sources), 308
- Garth (character), 20

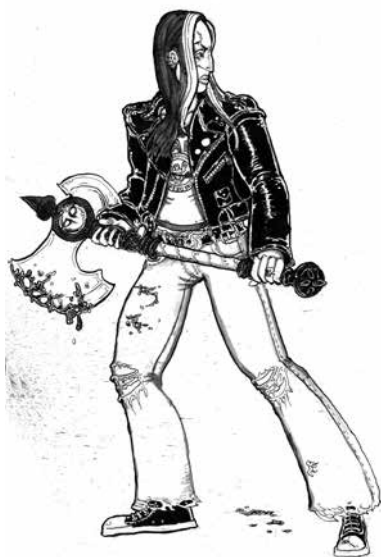
- Gear, 114
 - custom moves, 117
 - custom playbooks, 303
 - new, 114
 - other, 117
 - tags, 117
- Gestures, 77, 106, 195
- Getting started, 95
- Ghost (Monstrous breed), 61
- Ghostfacers (characters), 20
- Ghoul, 253
- Giles, Rupert (character), 18
- Gloating monologue, 276
- Go big or go home move, 78
- Google Maps, 13, 144
- Gossip, 142, 159, 161, 256, 282
- Greek vampire, 248
- Grifter (Crooked background), 36
- Guardian, 141, 254
- Hacks, 305, 308
- Hard Case, 20
- Hard move(s), 175, 204
- Harm, 110, 139, 212
 - monsters and, 110
 - moves, 212
 - using, 213
 - unstable wounds and, 213
- Harper, John, 305
- Haven, 48, 119
- Haven options, 48, 119
- Healing, 111, 215
- Heat, 27
- Hellboy*, 20, 307, 308
- Hellgate, 144, 258
 - examples of, 259, 262
- Help out, 26, 27, 101, 183
 - advanced moves and, 122
 - during investigation, 204
 - fight and, 209
 - initiate and, 56
 - protect someone and, 193
- Helper, 142, 178, 256
 - example of, 158
- Helping hand move, 56
- Hex move, 82
- History, 18, 95, 125, 165, 224, 225
 - in one shots, 292
- Hold, 99, 100
- Home, 259
 - custom move, 259
- Home ground move, 38
- Homunculus swarm, 255
- Hoodlum (Crooked background), 36
- Hook, 134, 136, 147, 150
 - in *Damn Dirty Apes*, 274
 - in *Dream Away the Time*, 150
 - in subsequent mystery creation, 242
- Hub, 144, 258
 - examples of, 157, 259, 281
- Hunches move, 82
- Hunter(s), 12
 - agenda, 96
 - creation, 21, 164
 - custom moves, 296
 - every game summary, 125
 - extra types, 20
 - first session only summary, 125
 - making second, 121
 - new type, 121
 - one-shot, 292
 - playbooks 13, 29-91
 - reference sheets, 13
 - type limitation, 21
 - types, 18-19
 - what to read, 14
- I know my prey move, 88
- I'm here for a reason move, 32
- I've read about this sort of thing move, 47
- Immortal move, 63
- Improvements, 118-20, 290
 - advanced, 120-21
 - custom playbooks, 304
 - increase rating, 118
 - take another move, 118-19

- Improvisational gaming, 96, 166
- Improvised weapons, 109
- Incantations move, 77
- Incorporeal move, 63
- Infernal hunting pack custom move, 298
- Infirmiry (haven option), 48
- Inflict harm as established, 175
- Initiate, 55-59, 19
 - advanced improvements, 123
 - command your sect improvement, 120
 - custom playbook, 303
 - one-shot mystery and, 293
 - sect arc, 229
 - start-of-mystery move, 95, 202
 - using the sect as a hook, 242
- Initiative, fights, 207
- Innocent (bystander), 142, 256
 - examples of, 158, 257, 284
 - moves, 178
- Introductions, 94, 165
- Introductory mystery, 13
 - Damn Dirty Apes, 273-85
 - Dream Away the Time, 149-61
 - Mongolian Death Worms, 132-35
 - The Old O'Connell House, 136, 138-40, 142-43, 145, 147
- Investigate a mystery, 26, 102, 184-86
 - advanced moves and, 122
 - divine and, 43
 - example of, 97, 100, 186-87
 - expert and, 48
 - initiate and, 56
 - Keeper moves and, 183
 - monstrous and, 63
 - Sharp and, 27
 - spell-slinger and, 78
 - spooky and, 82
- Investigation, beginning, 203-11
- It wasn't as bad as it looked move, 47
- Jinx move, 83
- Jones, Harvey, monster investigator, 257
- Keeper (of Monsters and Mysteries), 12
 - actions not covered by a move, 199
 - agenda, 131, 166-67
 - always say rules, 170
 - arc creation, 228-37
 - awarding experience, 223
 - before first game, 130-32
 - between sessions, 223-24
 - bystanders creation, 142-43
 - countdown, 146-47, 205
 - do the obvious, 210
 - fight example, 216-22
 - fights, 206-11
 - file downloads, 13
 - first mystery preparation, 135-47
 - first session, 163-65, 202-211, 223
 - hard moves, 175, 204
 - harm, 212-13
 - harm moves, 212-13
 - Hunter creation, 21, 164-65
 - Hunter healing, 111, 215
 - Hunter moves and, 181-98
 - improvisational play, 128-29
 - introductory mysteries, 149-61, 273-85
 - investigation and, 203-05
 - killing monsters and, 214-15
 - locations creation, 144-45
 - materials needed, 13
 - minions and, 141-43, 215
 - monsters and, 137-40, 215
 - keeper moves, 166, 168, 171-74, 204, 209

- mystery components, 134-35
- playbook moves, 199
- preparing for next time, 223-24
- principles, 131, 166-69
- reference sheet, 13
- role of, 14, 96, 98, 128-29
- session length, 13
- setting limits of use magic move, 196
- sharing duties, 302
- soft moves, 174
- spotlight time and, 210
- threats and, 137-145, 176-79
- unexpected player actions, 205
- use magic and, 195-96
- what to read, 14
- Kick some ass, 26, 97-99, 103
 - advanced moves, 122
 - examples of, 97-98, 218-19, 222
 - fight and, 207, 209-210
 - help out and, 183
 - improvised weapons and, 109
 - Keeper's notes, 188-89, 193
 - monstrous and, 63
 - protect someone and, 193
 - spell-slinger and, 76
 - spooky and, 83
 - Tough and, 27
 - wronged and, 88
- Knows it like the back of his hand custom move, 298
- Koebel, Adam, 305
- Koko, robo gorilla, 278
- Lab, 144, 258
- Large groups, 294
- Laser cannon, 278
- LaTorra, Sage, 305
- Lay on hands move, 43
- Leave no one behind move, 72
- Let's get out of here move, 67
- Leveling up, 118, 165, 290
 - options, 22, 24
- Lilly, Ray (character), 20
- Location(s), 137, 144, 258
 - examples of, 135, 145, 259
 - examples of custom moves, 277, 298-99
- threat moves and, 179, 208, 259
- types, 144
- Lone Gunmen (characters), 18
- Longer mystery sequences, 266
- Lore Library (haven option), 48
- Lovecraft, H.P., 253
- Luchador, 20
- Luck
 - counter, 113
 - running out of, 113, 290
- Mad Scientist, 20
- Made move, 38
- Magical Laboratory (haven option), 48
- Manipulate someone, 26, 104
 - advanced moves and, 122
 - Charm and, 27
 - Crooked and, 36, 38
 - Dark Negotiator move, 63
 - example of, 98-99
 - Flake and, 52
 - Keeper's notes, 190-92
 - manipulating monsters, 104, 192
 - Monstrous and, 63
 - Spooky and, 82
 - Wronged and, 88
- Maps, 13, 144, 208
- Maze, 144, 258
 - examples of, 157, 179
- Mcdaldno, Avery, 305
- Meddling Kid, 20
- Medic move, 72
- Mental dominion move, 63
- Mentor move, 56
- Midnight, 146, 260-61
 - examples of, 147, 150, 232-36, 261-63, 274

- Minion(s), 137, 141, 147, 254
 - example of, 134, 142, 152-54, 231, 255, 280
 - group of, 141
 - healing and, 215
 - in fights, 213
 - manipulation, 104, 192
 - threats and, 177, 301
 - types of, 141
 - using, 177
 - wounds and, 213
- Mobility move, 72
- Mongolian Death Worm Attack*
 - mystery, 132-35
- Mongolian Death Worm, 134
- Monster(s), 134, 137, 147
 - armour, 139
 - attacks, 139
 - examples of, 134, 138-40, 155, 230, 245-53, 276
 - harm and, 110
 - healing and, 215
 - killing, 214-15
 - manipulation, 104, 192
 - powers, 139
 - in subsequent mystery creation, 243-44
 - threat and, 176
 - types of, 138, 244
 - using, 176
 - weakness and, 140
- Monster Hunter International*, 20
- Monsterhearts*, 14, 305
- Monstrous, 60-65, 19
 - advanced improvements and, 124
 - custom playbooks and, 303
 - manipulate someone and, 192
- Moves, 25, 97
 - advanced, 122
 - basic, 26, 101-6
 - general purpose moves, 199
 - Keeper, 171-74
 - making, 98-99
 - in custom playbooks, 303
 - in playbook, 26, 199
 - triggers for, 25, 297
 - types of, 297
- Mulder, Agent (character), 18
- Multi-part mysteries, 265-66
- Mundane, 66-69, 19
 - erase a Luck mark, 120
- Mystery
 - basic concept of, 134, 136
 - bystanders, 135
 - changing formula, 264-65
 - countdown, 135, 146-47, 260-61
 - creation, 240-44, 254, 256, 258, 260-61
 - creation, one-shot, 293
 - Damn Dirty Apes, 273-85
 - Dream Away the Time, 149-61
 - end, 288
 - hook and, 134, 136, 242
 - investigation and, 203-11
 - locations, 135, 137, 144, 258
 - minions and, 134, 141, 254
 - Mongolian Death Worm Attack, 132-35
 - monster and, 134, 136, 138-40, 243-44
 - The Old O'Connell Haunted House, 136, 138-40, 142-43, 145, 147
 - scope, 261
 - sheet, 13
 - templates, 261-63
 - threats and, 135, 137

- Mystery letters, 267-68
 - examples of, 268-69
- Mystic move, 56
- Mystical Library (haven option), 48
- Mythology building, 289
- Net friends move, 52, 257
- NEVER AGAIN move, 88
- Nightfall, 146, 147
- Not my fault move, 78
- Notorious move, 38
- Novels (sources), 308
- Oberon, King of Faerie, 152-53
- Official (bystander), 142, 178, 256,
 - examples of, 158, 283
- Often overlooked move, 52
- Often right move, 47
- Old O'Connell Haunted House*
 - mystery, 136, 138-40, 142-43, 145, 147
- One-shot games, 292-93
- One-shot hunters, 292
- One-shot mystery
 - creation, 293
 - play, 293
- Oops! move, 67
- Orc (Monstrous breed), 61
- Order, The (team concept), 24
- Oubliette (haven option), 48
- Panic button move, 67
- Panic Room (haven option), 48
- Parasite, 138, 244
 - example of, 249
- Penalty move, 297
- Phasing, 246
- Pickpocket (Crooked back-ground), 36
- Pitt, Owen (character), 20
- Plague, 141, 254
 - example of, 280
- Playbook, 18-21, 164 -65
 - advanced improvements, 123-24
 - Chosen, 30-34
 - Crooked, 35-40
 - Divine, 41-45
 - Expert, 46-50
 - Flake, 51-54
 - Initiate, 55-59
 - Monstrous, 60-65
 - Moves, 26, 199
 - Mundane, 66-69
 - Professional, 70-74
 - selection, 18-19
 - Spell-Slinger, 75-80
 - Spooky, 81-85
 - Wronged, 86-91
- Player
 - agenda, 96
 - numbers, 294
- Power of heart move, 67
- Practitioner move, 78
- Precise strike move, 47
- Premonitions move, 82
- Preparedness move, 47
- Preternatural speed move, 63
- Prison, 144, 258
 - examples of, 259, 281



- Professional, 70-74, 19, 21, 165
 - add resource tag, change red tape tag, 74, 120
 - advanced improvements, 124
 - Agency arc, 229
 - example custom moves and, 300
 - one-shot hunter/mystery creation and, 292-93
 - team concepts, 22-23
 - using the Agency as a hook, 242
- Protect someone move, 26, 105
 - advanced moves and, 122
 - basic Keeper moves, 173, 175
 - examples of, 25, 170
 - fight and, 109, 209
 - Initiate and, 56
 - investigation and, 204
 - Keeper's notes, 188, 193
 - Mundane and, 67
 - Spell-Slinger and, 78
 - Tough and, 27
 - Wronged and, 88
- Protection Spells (haven option), 48
- Pure Drive curse, 62
- Queen, 138, 244
 - example of, 245
- Ratings, 27
 - in custom playbooks, 303
- Read a bad situation, 26, 105
 - advanced moves and, 122
 - hard moves and, 175
 - examples of, 100, 170, 207, 216-217
 - fight and, 207, 209
 - investigation and, 204
 - Keeper's notes, 194
 - Professional and, 72
 - Sharp and, 27
 - Spell-slinger and, 78
 - Spooky and, 82
- Renfield, 141, 254
- Resurrection, 112
- Reveal future badness, 172
- Right hand, 141, 254
 - example of, 152
- Riley and the Initiative (characters), 19
- Road-tripping hunter family (team concept), 24
- Roll move, 297-98
- Sacred oath move, 56
- Safety first move, 88
- Sagas of the Icelanders*, 305
- Scooby-doo and Scooby gang (characters), 20
- Scout, 141, 254
 - examples of, 142, 255
- Sect, 57, 293
- See, it all fits together move, 52
- Sessions, 266
- Shadows, 146, 260
- Shapeshifter move, 63
- Sharp (rating), 27
- Shield spell move, 78
- Sidekick, 20
- Sight move, 82
- Simple World*, 305
- Singer, Bobby (character), 18
- Six-sided dice, 13
- Skeptic, 142, 256
 - examples of, 143, 158
- Slayer and entourage (team concept), 23
- Sleepy Hollow*, 9
- Smite move, 43
- Sneaky move, 52
- Snoop, 20
- Soft moves, 174, 175, 204, 210
- Something borrowed move, 63
- Soothe move, 43
- Sorcerer, 138, 244
 - example of, 276
- Special-effect move, 297
 - examples of, 298, 300

- Spell-slinger, 75-80, 9, 19
 - advanced improvements, 124
 - combat magic pick, 120
- Spooky, 81-85, 19
 - advanced improvements, 124
 - changing dark side tags, 120
 - custom playbook, 303
 - endgame indicator, 290
 - start-of-mystery moves, 95, 202
- Spore troll, 249
- Spotlight time, 210, 294
- Start-of-mystery moves, 202
- Story Games Names Project book, 13
- Subordinate (ally), 56, 119
- Subsequent mysteries
 - running, 270-71
 - session beginning, 270
 - session ending, 271
- Subsequent mystery creation, 240-65
 - countdown, 260
 - scope, 261
 - templates, 261-63
 - threats, 243-59
- Summoned, 20
- Sunset, 146, 260
- Supernatural*, 9, 13, 18-20, 307
- Surgical robot hand, 276
- Suspicious mind move, 52
- Tactical genius move, 72
- Tags
 - gear, 117
 - weapon, 114-15
- Team concepts, 18, 22, 119, 164
 - customisation, 22
 - examples, 23-24
 - selection, 18
- Team playbook option, 119
- Telepathy move, 82
- Television (sources), 307
- Tempter, 138, 244
 - example of, 247
- That Old Black Magic move, 56
- Thief, 141, 254
 - example of, 154, 279
- Third eye move, 78
- This is gonna suck (use magic option), 78
- Threats, 135, 137, 176-79
 - arc and, 230-31
 - custom moves and, 296-300
 - in subsequent mystery creation, 243-59
- Tools and techniques move, 77
- Tools matter move, 88
- Torturer, 138, 244
 - example of, 253
- Tough (rating), 27
- Traitor, 141, 254
 - example of, 255
- Trickster, 138, 244
- True Blood*, 19, 305, 307
- Trust me move, 67
- Tune in move, 83
- Twenty Palaces*, 9, 19, 20
- Twilight*, 305
- Uhul, demon prince, 247
- Unarmed attacks, 109
- Underworld, 37
- Unexplained cases team (team concept), 23
- Unfazeable move, 72
- Unholy strength move, 63
- Unnatural appeal move, 63
- Unquenchable vitality move, 63
- Urban legend, 243

- Use magic, 26, 106
 - advanced moves and, 122
 - as a general purpose move, 199
 - big magic and, 107, 108, 197-98
 - Crooked and, 38
 - custom moves example, 299
 - effects, 106
 - Expert and, 48
 - fight example, 220
 - glitches, 106
 - initiate and, 56
 - investigation and, 204
 - Keeper's notes, 195-96
 - Spell-Slinger and, 78
 - Spooky and, 82
 - threats and, 247, 251
 - Weird and, 27
- Valmont, Anna (character), 18
- Vampire (Monstrous breed), 61
- Vampire (example monster), 245
- Victim (bystander), 142, 178, 256, 282
 - examples of, 135, 161
- Violet, a changeling, 154
- Vrykolakas, 248
- Vuga, Gregor, 305
- Vulnerability curse, 62
- Wardens, The (characters), 19
- Weapons, 114
 - custom, 116
 - improvised, 109
 - tags, 114-15, 207, 209
- Weird (rating), 27
- Werewolf (Monstrous breed), 61
- Werewolf (example monster), 230-32, 250
- What could go wrong? move, 67
- What does not kill me move, 88
- What I need, when I need it move, 43
- Wikipedia, 243
- Wilds, 144, 258
 - examples of, 135, 156
- Willow (character), 19
- Winchester, Dean (character), 19
- Winchester, John (character), 19
- Winchester, Sam (character), 19
- Witness, 142, 178, 256
 - examples of, 160-61, 282-84
- Woman (or Man) with the Plan move, 47
- Workshop (haven option), 48
- World of Dungeons*, 305
- Wounds, unstable, 213
- Wronged, 86-91, 19, 165, 293
 - advanced improvements, 124
 - arc, 229
- Xander (character), 19
- X-Files, The*, 13, 18, 264, 307
- Zombie (Monstrous breed), 61