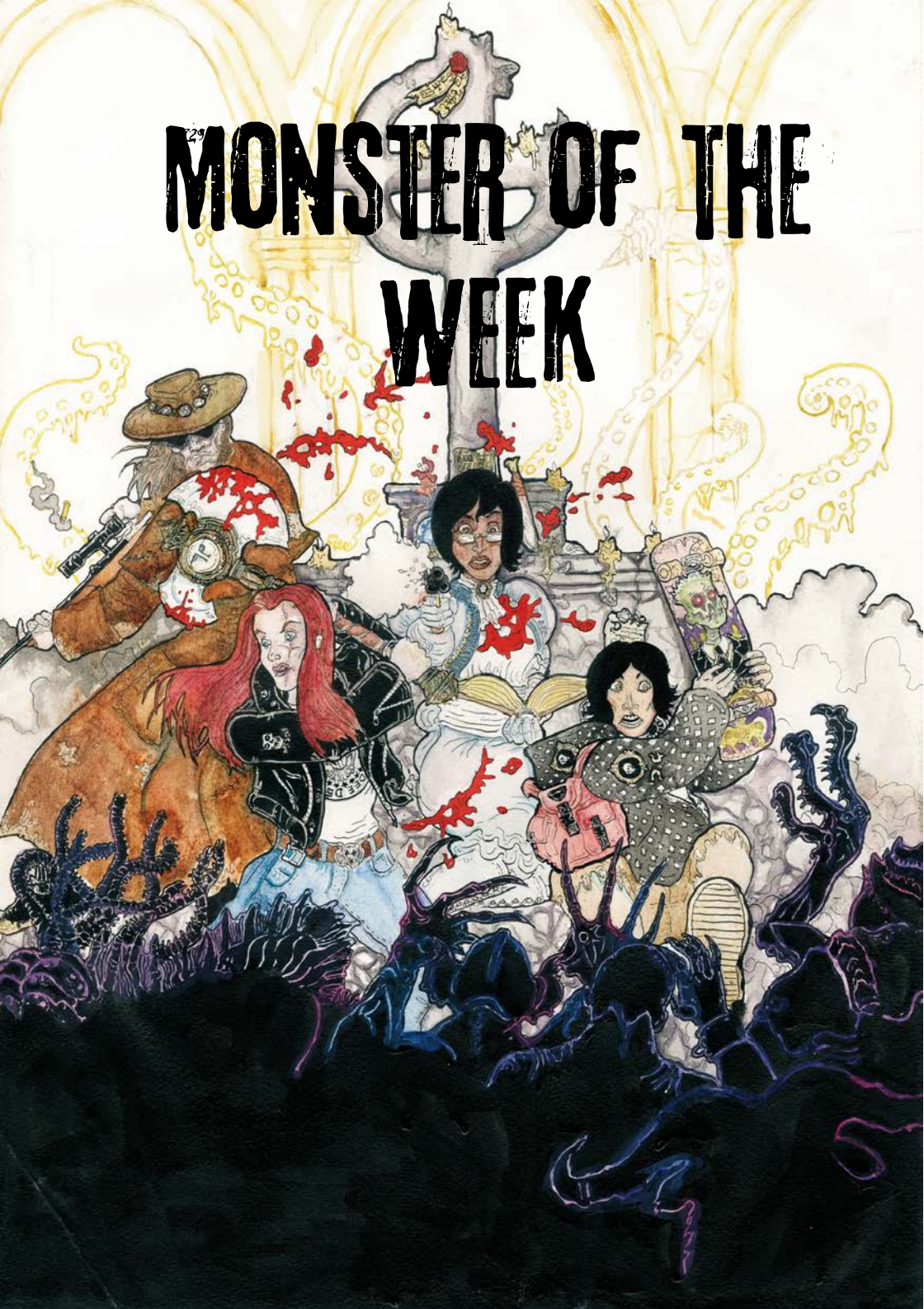


MONSTER OF THE WEEK



MONSTER OF THE WEEK

By Michael Sands
Illustrated by Daniel Gorringe
Edited by Steve Hickey



POWERED BY THE
APOCALYPSE
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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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Final edition: Andrew McLeod, Scott “It’ll be fine” Kelly, Jason “Dark past” Pollock, and Stefan “Unstoppable” Tyler, Steve Hickey, Sophie Melchior, Hamish Cameron, Jenni Dowsett, Svend Andersen, Celeste Mackintosh, Wayne Ulyate, Dale Elvy, Karen Wilson, Stephanie Pegg, Ellen Couch, Andy Millar, and Nick Cole.

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THERE ARE MONSTERS OUT THERE

Most people don't believe in monsters, but they're real. When someone finds out 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.

It could be 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 make up 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 the monsters and mysteries that the hunters will encounter, bringing the world to life, and 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; not even normal for *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 will work with two, or you could stretch it to six or seven people without breaking anything.

Make sure you have:

- A copy of each of the hunter playbooks (these are a combined rules reference and record sheet for your hunter).
- Enough player reference sheets to go round.
- A Keeper reference sheet.
- Some mystery and arc sheets for the Keeper (just one at first, and more later).
- Pencils and note paper for everyone.
- A pair of normal six-sided dice for each hunter (the Keeper won't need dice).

The files for all the things you need to print out can be downloaded 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 book, but a phone book or the cast and crew list of a film work just as well).

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

Each time you sit down to play expect to get through a single mystery in about 2-4 hours. A mystery is one situation for the hunters to deal with – like a typical monster of the week episode on *Supernatural*, *Buffy*, or *The X-Files*. 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 after.

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

- If you're going to play a hunter, read the hunter playbooks (from p. 11) and read about moves (p. 8) and ratings (p. 10). Most important is to pick which hunter type(s) you want to play.

- If you're going to be Keeper, focus on the First Session section (p. 98): that tells you what you need to prepare, and what to do for the first game. You can manage with just that for now. It's best to know the hunters' basic moves (p. 114) and playbooks (from p. 11), at least in passing.
- If you're an experienced roleplayer who hasn't played *Apocalypse World* (that's the game these rules are adapted from), check out the hunter playbooks (p. 11) and the moves (p. 8) and ratings (p. 10). From there everything else should fall into place.
- 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. The ratings (stats in *Apocalypse World*) are almost the same, the playbooks (p. 11) are different, and the basic moves (p. 59) are less similar than they appear at first glance. Luck is new (p. 68). The Keeper's (MC in *Apocalypse World*) agenda and principles (pages 82 & 101), threats (p. 87), and moves (pages 106 & 110) are different, and mysteries (pages 83 & 155) and arcs (p. 147) take the place of fronts.

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:

<http://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://genericgames.co.nz> or follow [@MotW_rpg](https://twitter.com/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

Here's an overview of how 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 (p. 5). 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 the mandatory ones 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:** the chosen one, with a special destiny. E.g. Buffy from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (p. 11).
- **The Expert:** knows all about monsters and magic. E.g. Bobby Singer from *Supernatural*; Rupert Giles from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (p. 16).
- **The Flake:** a conspiracy theorist, great at putting clues together. E.g. Mulder or the Lone Gunmen from *The X-Files* (p. 21).
- **The Initiate:** member of an ancient monster-slaying Sect, trained to fight and use magic. The Wardens from *The Dresden Files*; Annelise from the *Twenty Palaces* series (p. 25).

- **The Monstrous:** a monster fighting for the good guys. E.g. Angel from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*; Bill Compton from *True Blood* (p. 30).
- **The Mundane:** just a normal regular person, especially good at dealing with regular people you meet. E.g. Xander or Cordelia from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (p. 35).
- **The Professional:** you work for an agency that hunts monsters. E.g. Riley and the Initiative from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; Olivia Denholm from *Fringe* (p. 39).
- **The Spooky:** has psychic or magical powers. E.g. Sam Winchester from *Supernatural*; Willow from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (p. 44).
- **The Wronged:** revenge-driven, and really tough. E.g. Dean and John Winchester from *Supernatural* (p. 49).
- There are some limited edition hunter playbooks out there too: for example, the **Divine**, **Hard Case**, **Snoop** and **Summoned** which were fundraiser rewards. There are fan-made playbooks, too. You can find advice on making your own on page 187.

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 there's just one who is *The Professional*.

Follow the instructions in your playbook to create your hunter. 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 (Keeper, instructions on how to guide this process are in *The First Session* on page 98).

TEAM CONCEPTS

It's good to work out why the hunters formed their team. Have a quick discussion and see if you come up with an idea – even if it's just a vague one. If nobody has anything, you can work it out later on (after you have all made your hunters, and figured out your history together).

Don't set your concept in stone yet, either. 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. 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 (p. 180). 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 (p. 40).
- New options when you level up (p. 73). For example: the team concept has a special mystical artifact for each hunter, but the 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. 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 or Initiate makes a good mentor. A Mundane or Flake could be a friend of the Chosen. A 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 anything else the regular agents can't handle.

The team requires a Professional. The Flake, Mundane, Expert, Spooky, and Wronged are good choices to fill out the team's skill profile.

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 (p. 73). 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, 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 (p. 73). Anyone may also substitute one of the Initiate's old-fashioned weapons (p. 28) 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, 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 CREATE YOUR HUNTER

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 55.

MOVES

Moves cover situations when the game rules step in to help you determine what happens.

Moves don't cover basic stuff that anyone can do. If your hunter does something that isn't covered by a move, and it's something that anyone could do, then it just happens. You don't need a move to follow a monster down the street, talk to a cop, or break into an empty house.

If there's something normal people could never do and it's not covered by a move, then you can't do it either. For example, your hunter can't turn invisible at will, or walk through a fire unharmed.

Moves cover the in-between cases:

- Things that normal people can't do. For example, casting a magic spell.
- Things that are dangerous. For example, getting into a fight with a monster.
- Things that are more exciting if we let the dice decide how they go rather than just deciding. For example, working out whether you sneak past a sleeping dragon undetected.

Many moves require you to roll two dice and add them together (usually adding another number too) and then figure out what happens based on your total. Other moves give you a special ability that you can use all the time, or when certain circumstances appear in the game.

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 suffer the harm that threatened instead.

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” (p. 59). 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 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, and gear. Finally, introduce yourself and pick history.

LOOK, PICK ONE FROM EACH LIST:

- Man, woman, boy, girl.
- 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):

- Nightmares and visions
- Some weirdo told you
- An ancient cult found you
- Sought out by your nemesis
- Attacked by monsters
- Trained from birth
- You found the prophecy
- You found your special weapon

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

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

Heroic (pick two):

- Sacrifice
- You are the Champion
- Visions
- Secret training
- Magical powers
- Mystical inheritance
- A normal life
- True love
- You can save the world
- Hidden allies
- The end of monsters
- Divine help

Doom (pick two):

- Death
- You can't save everyone
- Impossible love
- Failure
- A nemesis
- No normal life
- Loss of loved ones
- Treachery
- Doubt
- Sympathy with the enemy
- Damnation
- Hosts of monsters
- The end of days
- 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 get 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.
- **Devastating:** When **you inflict harm**, you may inflict +1 harm.
- **Acceptance:** 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.
- **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 base, three options (which add their tags to the base tags), and a material.

Base (choose 1):

- staff (1-harm hand/close)
- haft (2-harm hand)
- handle (1-harm hand balanced)
- chain (1-harm hand area)

Options (choose 3, duplicates allowed):

- antique (add "valuable")
- artifact (add "magic")
- head (+1 harm)
- spikes (+1 harm, add "messy")
- blade (+1 harm)
- long (+1 harm)

- reach (add “close”)
- throwable (add “close”)
- chains (add “area”)

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

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.

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 a highlighted rating, or 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 leveling up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements, as described on page 75.

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 I know enough to be 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.
- Thoughtful face, lined face, scarred face, contemplative face, stern face, avuncular face, experienced 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.
- **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 wrong 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 means you were personally complicit in creating the situation you are dealing with now. 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 a haven set up, 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, 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.
- **Oubliette.** 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):

- Mallet & wooden stakes (3-harm intimate slow wooden)
- Silver sword (2-harm hand messy silver)
- Cold iron sword (2-harm hand messy iron)
- Blessed knife (2-harm hand holy)
- Magical dagger (2-harm hand magic)
- Juju bag (1-harm far magic)

- Flamethrower (3-harm close fire heavy volatile)
- Magnum (3-harm close reload loud)
- 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. Decide between you 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 a highlighted rating, or 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 Sharp, max +3

Add an option to your haven

Get +1 Charm, max +2

Add an option to your haven

Get +1 Cool, max +2

Take a move from another
playbook

Get +1 Weird, max +2

Take another Expert move

Take a move from another
playbook

Take another Expert move

After leveling up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements, as described on page 75.

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, rumped 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 of attention.
- **Contrary:** When **you seek out and receive someone's honest advice** on the best course of action for you, then mark experience if you do something else instead. 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, from a hobby or a job you had once. Decide together what it was.
- 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 a highlighted rating, or 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 Sharp, max +3

Get +1 Charm, max +2

Get +1 Cool, max +2

Get +1 Weird, max +2

Take another Flake move

Take another Flake move

Get a haven, like the Expert has, with two options

Gain another option for your haven

Take a move from another playbook

Take a move from another playbook

After leveling up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements, as described on page 75.

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.
- Hardened body, tattooed body, agile body, strong body, thin body, angular body, hunched body.
- Archaic clothes, unfashionable clothes, ceremonial clothes, mismatched 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):

- Knowledgable
- Ancient lore
- Magical lore
- Fighting arts
- Chapters everywhere
- Secular power
- Flexible tactics
- Modernised
- Integrated in society
- Open hierarchy
- Rich
- Nifty gadgets
- Magical items

Bad Traditions (pick one):

- Dubious motives
- Tradition-bound
- Short-sighted
- Paranoid and secretive
- Closed hierarchy
- Factionalised
- Strict laws
- Mystical oaths
- Total obedience
- Tyrannical leaders
- Obsolete gear
- Poor

GEAR

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

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

Old-fashioned weapons:

- sword (2-harm hand messy)
- axe (2-harm hand messy)
- big sword (3-harm hand messy heavy)
- big axe (3-harm hand messy slow heavy)
- silver knife (1-harm hand silver)
- fighting sticks (1-harm hand quick)
- spear (2-harm hand/close)
- mace (2-harm hand messy)
- crossbow (2-harm close slow)

Modern weapons:

- .38 revolver (2-harm close reload loud)
- 9mm (2-harm close loud)
- sniper rifle (3-harm far)
- magnum (3-harm close reload loud)
- shotgun (3-harm close 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 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 only know your cover identity, not about the Sect.
- 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 spooky buddies 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 UP

Experience:

Whenever you roll a highlighted rating, or 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 leveling up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements, as described on page 75.

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 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, concealed, transgressive.
- Sinister aura, powerful aura, dark aura, unnerving aura, pleasant aura, energetic aura, evil 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 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: life-drain (1-harm intimate healing)
- Base: magical force (1-harm magical close)
- Add +1 harm to a base
- Add ignore-armour to a base
- 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.
- **Incorporeal:** You may move freely through solid objects (but not people).
- **Unnatural Appeal:** Roll +Weird instead of +Charm when you **manipulate someone**.
- **Unholy Strength:** Roll +Weird instead of +Tough when you **kick some ass**.
- **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 a good guy. Ask them what convinced them.
- Romantic obsession on your part. 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 (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 a highlighted rating, or 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 Charm, max +2

Gain a haven, like the Expert has, with two options

Get +1 Cool, max +2

Take a natural attacks pick

Get +1 Sharp, max +2

Take a move from another playbook

Get +1 Tough, max +2

Take a move from another playbook

Take another Monstrous move

Take another Monstrous move

After leveling up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements, as described on page 75.

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.
- 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**, roll +Weird. Treat the results as if you had **investigated a**



mystery, but anything you discover is by dumb luck rather than skill (e.g. literally tripping over a clue).

- **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 and got a total of 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):

- Skateboard
- Bicycle
- Fairly new car in decent condition
- Classic car in terrible condition
- Motorcycle
- 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 a highlighted rating, or 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 leveling up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements, as described on page 75.

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 got when I accepted that mysterious transfer. 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.
- Chiseled face, scarred face, unshaven face, soft face, young face, old face, determined face.
- Tailored suit, shabby suit, perfect suit, utility coveralls, battledress, 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 arm, 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):

- Well-armed
- Well-financed
- Rigorous training
- Official pull
- Cover identities
- Offices all over the place
- Good intel
- Recognised authority
- Weird tech gadgets
- 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
- On-call 24/7

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 training to heal people. **When you do first aid**, Roll +Cool. On a 10+ the patient is stabilized and healed of 1 harm. On a 7-9 choose one: heal 1 harm; stabilize the injury. On a miss, you cause an extra 1 harm. First aid can only be used once per injury.
- **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 automatic loud)
- 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 automatic loud)

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 a highlighted rating, or 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 tag for your Agency or change a red tape tag |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Get command of an Agency team of monster hunters |
| <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 Professional move | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Professional move | |

After leveling up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements, as described on page 75.

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.
- 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**), you can pick the following extra magical effects:
 - 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 you have 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-armor. 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.
 - 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:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| • Violence | • Mood swings |
| • Depression | • Rage |
| • Secrets | • Self-destruction |
| • Lust | • Poor impulse control |
| • Dark bargain | • Greed for power |
| • Guilt | • Hallucinations |
| • Soulless | • Pain |
| • Addiction | • Paranoia |

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 you cave and do it anyway). 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 that 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. As you mark off Luck boxes, your dark side's needs will get nastier.

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 a highlighted rating, or 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 Weird, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Change some, or all, your dark side tags |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Charm, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Get a mystical library, like the Expert's haven option |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, 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"/> Take another Spooky move | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Spooky move | |

After leveling up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements, as described on page 75.

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 kill the things that took my loved ones.

I'll cleanse the world of their taint. 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.
- 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 type.

Why couldn't you save them? You were (pick one or more): at fault, selfish, injured, weak, slow, scared, in denial, or 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 monster type that caused your loss.

Then pick two of these:

- **Berserk:** No matter how much harm you take, you can 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, stabilize the injury and heal 1 harm. On a 7-9 pick one:
 - 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.

On a miss, the Keeper chooses what damage you did.

- **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-armor.

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 automatic 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 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 UP

Experience:

Whenever you roll a highlighted rating, or 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 Tough, max +3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gain a haven, like the Expert has, with two options |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get +1 Cool, max +2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Add one more option to your haven |
| <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 a move from another playbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Wronged move | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take another Wronged move | |

After leveling up five times, you qualify for advanced improvements, as described on page 75.

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. For each other hunter, pick an option from the list. Many of them 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.

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.

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

HIGHLIGHT RATINGS

You all need to highlight ratings. Each of you takes a turn, to pick the other hunter on the team you feel closest to right now. For your first mystery, use what you know about them and the history options you picked to guide you. The hunter you pick will then choose one of the ratings to highlight: tick that rating's highlight box. The Keeper will then pick a second rating for you to highlight. Mark that one too.

Whenever you roll one of the highlighted ratings, mark one experience (whether you succeed on the roll or not).

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 for the beginning of a mystery, you should do that now.

The Chosen has a move they always make at this point.

The Expert, Flake, Initiate, and Spooky all have moves that take place now. If you picked one of those moves, check if you have to 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.

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, as each decision and action leads to a new situation, requiring new decisions about what happens next.

The Keeper will describe the game's world to you, and ask questions. You respond to that world (with descriptions, and moves when they are called for), and answer those questions. Keep your agenda in mind as you do it.

MOVES

Hunters make moves to find the monster, and to kill 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. 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? How badly? What about the ghul?

A roof beam comes down on Ted as a giant spider smashes through the wall and scampers to freedom. 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?

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, and 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 $1 + 2 + 5 = 8$. 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 that way.*

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 monster attack witnesses and make an **investigate a mystery** roll. Your result gives you 3 hold that can be spent to ask the Keeper questions from the list in the 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. Now that you're about to start, you need the whole deal so you know what you can do.

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 failure, you expose yourself to trouble or danger without helping.

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.

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 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.

MANIPULATE SOMEONE

This move is used to get people to do what you want, but you need to give them a reason to do it first. What counts as a reason will depend on your relationship with the person. Maybe you've given them a reason to trust you, or you offer them a reward to do it, or maybe you have real (or faked) authority.

Once you have given the target 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 as long as you reward them as promised.
- On a 7-9, they'll do it, but only if you do something for them right now to show that you mean 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.

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.

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 speech 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 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).

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.
- Evict 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

If you want to perform an act of magic that goes further than the **use magic** move (or your other moves) allow, use these rules for big magic.

First, say what magical effect you want to make happen.

The Keeper will determine what you need to do for this magic spell.

The Keeper picks some of these:

- 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.

Once the Keeper has specified the requirements, you just need to make them happen and the magic will go ahead. There's no specific roll for making big magic work, but you might need to succeed on some other moves, like **use magic** or **act under pressure**, as part of the process.

Of course, magic is always perilous and big magic is way more perilous than the usual sort. The side-effects and dangers of big magic are at the Keeper's discretion.

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.

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.

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 might be an additional effect: the Keeper will tell you if there 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 (p. 135).

MONSTERS AND HARM

Monsters are 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 medical attention. This rest/treatment will reduce an injury by 1-harm.

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.

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.

If a wound is “stabilised” via a move, then you can clear the “Unstable” box. Your injuries won't get worse on their own any more.

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 p. 75).
- 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 monster.

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 that they can call on in emergencies. Your playbook has a Luck counter that keeps track of how much is left.

You can choose to mark off a point of Luck in return for a lucky break. Specifically, when you spend a point of Luck, you can choose one of these:

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

You only get a limited supply of Luck. 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 flamethrower, 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 weapon inflicts when you use it on something.
- **automatic:** This weapon can use automatic fire, which gives you *either* +area or +1 harm. Use of automatic fire will hasten the need to reload.
- **area:** This weapon can hit multiple foes. You may divide the harm you inflict among multiple targets.
- **balanced:** This weapon is easy to wield and hold on to.

- **close:** This weapon is effective at fairly close quarters – outside arms' reach, but not too far.
- **far:** This weapon is effective at long range.
- **fire:** The weapon sets things on fire.
- **hand:** This weapon is effective at a hand to hand combat range – within arms' reach.
- **healing:** This weapon 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 get healed for 2-harm of your injuries.
- **heavy:** This weapon is heavy and difficult to wield.
- **holy:** This weapon has been blessed. This will be more effective against monsters with a weakness to holy items.
- **ignore-armor:** This weapon ignores protective armor. Armor has no effect on the harm it causes. If armor has the magic tag, then a weapon needs both ignore-armor and magic to bypass the armor.
- **innocuous:** This weapon doesn't draw suspicion.
- **intimate:** This weapon is effective at the closest of quarters – within the embrace of your foe.
- **loud:** This weapon is loud enough that it draws attention.
- **magic:** This weapon is enchanted, and so can affect certain creatures 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:** This weapon spreads a lot of blood and gore around.
- **quick:** This weapon is quick to prepare and attack with.
- **reload:** This weapon has limited ammunition, and may run out at a bad time and need to be reloaded.
- **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 as a guide. The permitted range tags are intimate, hand, close, and far. Other tags are optional.

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, mediaeval 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 180, 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 you roll a highlighted rating (whether you succeed or fail) 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 (p. 75).

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 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!

***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.

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 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, there is now an even better result when you roll a 12 or more for it.

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 p. 73).

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 p. 73).

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 *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 *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

- Optionally, 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.
- Tidy up the team concept and work out your backstory.
- Go on to the things you do every game:

EVERY GAME

- Highlight ratings for each hunter. Decide who you are closest to and ask them to pick one rating to highlight, then the Keeper will pick another.
- 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 it is you're hunting, work out its weaknesses and where to find it.
- When you roll a highlighted rating, mark experience. When you mark your fifth experience point, level up.
- Protect all the innocent bystanders.
- Go and kill the monster!

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 that 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."

This section is written in the order you'll be doing things, both preparing for the game and then playing it. But first I'll talk a bit about the way you need to think about the game.

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 and then you decide how the people and monsters and anything else reacts to those actions.

The game is improvised in the wider scale too; as your story about the hunters and their world will develop a backstory and mythology 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.

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* he described his methods for running that game. As he does, I describe 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.

NO PLANNING AHEAD

One thing that is definitely *not* part of your Keeper's toolbox is deciding 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.

BEFORE YOUR FIRST GAME

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

1. Think about the style you want.
2. Get into the Keeper mindset.
3. 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 hunter 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.

The game is going to be built by you and the other players together: at this stage, you're the only one involved, so 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. This is summed up by the Keeper agenda and principles. 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 more specific applications of your agenda.

There are twelve principles:

- 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 the first one.

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. This is a write-up of one of my mysteries. 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 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 ways it can fight 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, with the motivation “to run wild, killing and destroying.”

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

Powers: Venom; Lightning blast.

Weakness: Water.

*Custom move: Mongolian Death Worm 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.*

That section at the end, the *venom custom move* (p. 180), is there to define exactly what the creature can do. A custom move gives you a definite rule saying what effect the power has when it comes into play.

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 usually aren't able to do things, but in the game they can act as if they do. 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, not just *monsters*. This mystery just happened to only need one for the worms themselves.

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).

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.
- 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'Donnell, 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 180).

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).

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 eight 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 eight. 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).

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 there will be minions, detail them now. Minions can be weaker individuals of the same kind of monster, allied creatures of different kinds, human worshippers, or human servants (perhaps unwitting).

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.

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.

Define attacks, harm capacity, and armour for all minions. Minion attacks should be in the 1- to 4- harm range (group minions should have their attacks boosted by one to represent their multiple attacks). The amount of harm required to kill the minion should range from 5 to 10 (although weaker and stronger minions are both possible). Groups of minions can be given a single harm track for all of them: 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.

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.

Bystanders need the following details:

- A name.
- A description.

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

Ashley Hadley. Bystander: 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'Donnell 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 lots of good moves to force the hunter 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 the 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:

1. Day.
2. Shadows.
3. Dusk.
4. Sunset.
5. Nightfall.
6. Midnight.

The names of each step are metaphorical: the “sunset” step of a countdown doesn't have to happen at sunset, the names are picked to give a sense of things getting worse.

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.

Dusk: Mark is killed while trying to get a window open.

Sunset: 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.

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, and I'll tell you about the game stuff you need to do.

HUNTER CREATION

The first thing you need to do is guide the other players through the process of creating their hunters.

Introduce the idea of team concepts (p. 5). Help the group come up with a concept, something that gets them all excited. If nobody comes up with an exciting concept now, you can wait until later to work that out (after they've decided their history is best).

Next, allocate hunter playbooks. 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's best for their idea of the hunter. Put some questions to the whole group, too, and get everyone's input.

If you have any limited edition or fan-made hunter playbooks that you want to add to the selection, do it. If one of the group has one that they've brought along, that should be fine too. Talk it through if you have any doubts about it (for instance, if you think adding that type of hunter to the mix won't fit the game style you've planned).

As everyone gets close to done, go around those who finished and find out what they 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 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, lead the group as they take turns to introduce their hunter. The most important things they should include are name, playbook and looks, and 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).

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.

HIGHLIGHT RATINGS

Last step before the mystery starts is to highlight ratings.

Go around the group again and have everyone pick the hunter they feel closest to, based on the introductions and history. The chosen hunter selects a rating to highlight for the hunter who picked them and you, as Keeper, pick another. There's a "highlight" box to tick beside each rating to remind them of their current highlights. Tell everyone that when they roll a highlighted rating, they should mark experience (whether they succeed or not).

When you make your highlight selection, pick based on one of these:

- An important rating (that they will roll a lot, based on their hunter's moves).

- A rating relevant to how they introduced themselves (for example, if someone is interested in magic, then highlight Weird even if they're not very good at it)
- A rating they're likely to need for the mystery ahead.
- The rating that they want you to pick.

These options are based on your Keeper principle “Be a fan of the hunters.” I'll talk more about the principles soon.

MENTION HOW THINGS WORK

This is a good time to explain the player agenda (p. 55), basic moves (p. 9), what to roll and add (p. 57), when to mark experience (p. 73), using Luck (p. 68), and how to level up (p. 73). Give just enough detail to get started, rather than trying to explain everything right now. You can remind them, or fill in more details as 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 127.

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 in unsure circumstances, 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 less specific, to allow you to build the game's world in accordance with your responsibilities. They 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.

USING 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. The rules of magic and monsters should be consistent. Normal people will act like normal people.

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.

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 an 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 p. 106). 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 gargyle 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, maybe they ask "who's most vulnerable?" and 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 – would the monster kill this victim right now, say – 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 a 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 147), 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 as experienced, bad-ass hunters they 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: don't let dumb, unsaid stuff trip the hunters 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.

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.

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.

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 reptoid 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 an injury was threatening 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. Each mystery is all about finding clues, until they face the monster behind it all. Whenever the hunters get stumped, ask them where they look next. If they ask you for information, ask them how they find it out, then get them to make the **investigate a mystery** move. Make sure that the results of investigation work with the method used: when a hunter asks a witness questions, they can learn different sorts of things to when they analyse samples in a lab. If you can't see how they'll discover something given what they are doing, ask them to explain how they will find out that answer based on that method. If they can't explain it, then tell them to ask a different question: one that they could find out the answer to.

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 can break. They can be dropped. They 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. 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.

SOFT MOVES AND HARD MOVES

“Soft moves” and “hard moves” are a bit of terminology to describe two ways to use Keeper moves.

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, then 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 that 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 has used all their Luck (and doesn't make a point of checking for danger), then you may 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 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 (picked to go with 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 59) 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:

*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 was 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 first roll 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.

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:

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.

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.

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).

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? I can't see how you'd work that out.

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.

This is the basic fighting move, covering the back and forth of a short burst of fighting, rather than a single attack.

By default both sides inflict harm as established – the hunter with their weapon and the enemy theirs.

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 someone. 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.

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:

*Once you have given the target 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 as long as you do what you offered (which might be nothing, if your reason is intangible, like the authority of an official badge).*
- *On a 7-9, they'll do it, but only if you do something for them right now to show you mean 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.

Don't make this too hard. It can be enough for the hunter to pretend to be an authority figure, or just 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 make this decision.

When a hunter tries to manipulate another hunter, things go 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 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.

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 really weak position and this is a great opportunity to use that against 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 zombie or 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 protecting *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.

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 that 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.*
- *Evict 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.*

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 p. 64 and 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.

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, if the hunters 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. Here are the options for when the hunters need to perform big magic:

- 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 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.

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 all your normal rules: 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 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.

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, the group had just finished creating hunters and were ready to start playing out the mystery. You should have your mystery preparation 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 a move that used one of their highlighted ratings marks experience.

THE TEASER

Begin playing with a scene to introduce the hook. Ask the hunters where they start their investigation. At the scene of an attack or mysterious event? Interviewing a witness or survivor? Talking to the authorities? Checking historical documents in the local library? Making plans over breakfast at a diner? Give them a good description of the place (or ask them for the description, if it's one of their haunts). Then tell them whatever strange clue drew them here (that's the hook, which you created with your mystery).

Let them talk about how they'll approach it, and maybe do some preliminary investigation: things that they could research here (on the Internet?) or they could describe – in flashback – checking things up before they came here. If anyone has ideas, let them make an **investigate** move now.

Once they have a plan (and before the discussion gets boring), cut to the hunters beginning their investigation and go on from there.

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 (p. 91).

Draw a map of everywhere they search, and everywhere there's some action. Give each place a location threat type (p. 93).

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, with their answers to your questions (and you, as Keeper, building on those answers).

Make notes of all the answers you get, in case you need them later.

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 (p. 101), and moves (p. 106).

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 p. 108).

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.

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 spirit 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.

CLOSING IN ON THE MONSTER

The hunters will steadily catch up to the monster as they investigate.

If they find the monster or its minions then there can be a fight scene – have someone **read the situation**, then get into the action with **act under pressure**, **kick ass**, and **protect someone** moves.

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).

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.
- Start the fight.
- Use the environment.
- Make maps.
- Use weapon tags.
- Be creative with moves.
- Sometimes do the obvious thing.
- Balance spotlight time.
- Sometimes don't go into detail.
- 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.

START THE FIGHT

When a fight starts, pick who gets the first move based on what's happening in the game.

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 the 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.

THE ENVIRONMENT

To keep fights fresh, ground the action in what's happening. Think about the place the fight is occurring (e.g. house, sewer, street, cave, etc.). 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). The important thing is that the extra detail creates a much more evocative picture in the imagination than “it's a rundown house” or “the leshy disappears into the forest” would have done.

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.

WEAPONS

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. 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 would strike home easily, you can use this instead of asking a hunter 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?)*

SOMETIMES 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.

SOMETIMES DON'T GO INTO DETAIL

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 it 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.
- Make maps.
- Use the combatants' weapon and attack tags.
- Use moves creatively.
- Sometimes do the obvious thing.
- Balance spotlight time between the hunters.
- Sometimes you don't need to go into detail.
- 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.

THE HARM MOVES

Injuries allow you to make harm moves against that hunter (or monster, minion, or bystander), based on how bad it is. Every time someone gets hurt, use a harm move on them.

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).

When an injury occurs, it's up to you to think about the implications and make a harm move.

UNSTABLE WOUNDS

Once a hunter has suffered 4-harm, their injuries become unstable. That means that it will get worse, until it's 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. Otherwise, the harm rules apply as normal. 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.

Additionally, 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 p. 66.

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 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.
- 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 found 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 it's 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?

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 **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's so tough it counts as having 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.

Mary: I'm reloading!

Alan: Cray? What are you doing?

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 its 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 hoodoo'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.

Mary notes down the harm to Mark.

Alan: 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 Cray -1 forward as a **harm move**.

Mary: I stake it again!

Mary rolls the dice and adds Mark's Tough.

Mary: Thirteen, even with that -! 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: 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.

AFTER THE MYSTERY

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.

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 come up include:

- Hunters' history choices that might indicate something else going on.
- Events during the mystery that hint 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.
- Things that came up in play that suggest something more. Examples include the results of the Expert's dark past move, or just someone saying something interesting about their past

(e.g. Keeper: “Have you ever dealt with a snake demon before?” Hunter: “Oh, sure, we get a lot of them back in Arkansas.”)

If something like that came up, make a note.

You'll use these notes to build subsequent mysteries, and your arcs (those are long term problems for the hunters). If you are thinking about long term problems and plots already, go and read about building arcs (p. 147) 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.
- Highlight ratings: first each hunter picks who they are closest to and the chosen hunter picks one rating, you as Keeper pick a second rating.
- 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 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.
- 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.

BETWEEN GAME SESSIONS

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 first, and then how to create your later mysteries.

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:

1. Basic concept.
2. The threats.
3. One or more countdowns.
4. 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 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 hunter could have a decision that suggests something.

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.

Name "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.
- Dusk: Minions conduct the dark ritual that awakens the monster.
- Sunset: 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.
- Dusk: The minions attempt to abduct, torture and kill people the hunters care about.
- Sunset: 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.
- Dusk: The monster finds the artifact.

- **Sunset:** 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.
- **Dusk:** The organization recruits monsters and minions directly.
- **Sunset:** 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 180). 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.
- Add to the arc as playing out individual mysteries reveals more details.

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 p. 156).
- 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 or consider these other hooks for subsequent mysteries:

- 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.

Plus, of course, you can still use hooks that are like the first mystery: something that says “monster” to a hunter but is easily overlooked by normal people.

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 to start with). Starting 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.

- 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 three examples to illustrate a variety of different monsters.

A CLASSIC VAMPIRE

Here's how I'd write up a vampire like Dracula:

Monster: Queen (motivation: to possess and control).

Powers: Immortal. Mesmerism. 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.

Attacks: Punch/throw: 4-harm hand. Bite: 3-harm intimate vampiric.

Armour: His physical toughness counts as 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 will kill him.



Custom move: Mesmerism: when he 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 he asks.

A MONSTROSITY FROM BEYOND

This is a strange, Lovecraftian alien being. It does not have a name.

Monster: Collector (motivation: to steal specific sorts of things).

It looks like a collection of moving shapes, or roiling bubbles and is an oily black shimmery colour.

Powers: Physically remove a memory. Phasing. (See the custom moves, below, for details).

Attacks: Devour memory: see powers below. 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 will kill it.

Custom moves:

Devour Memory: If the creature succeeds with a “devour memory” attack 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 memories.

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).

UHUL, DEMON PRINCE

Uhul is immensely powerful, and hard to call to Earth. He's even harder to banish. He may appear in many forms, but prefers to pass as human (with a few clues, e.g. he might have small horns at his 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 (he 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). Change form (may take any humanoid form he wants, but retains at least one “demonic” feature). Summon Uhul's spear (it appears in his hand at will).

Attacks: Fisticuffs (2-harm hand), Demonic talons (4-harm hand), Barbed iron spear (5-harm hand/close heavy).

Armour: 1-armour (he's just generally hard to hurt).

Weaknesses: A specific big magic banishing ritual (requires 7 people, some rare ingredients, and takes 2 hours to cast).

Harm capacity: 12-harm will kill him.

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.

The main thing is that 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 will kill 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:

1. Day.
2. Shadows.
3. Dusk.
4. Sunset.
5. Nightfall.
6. 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, maybe up to 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 examples 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).
- Dusk: The monster kills again (an annoying bystander).
- Sunset: 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.
- **Dusk:** The monster/sorcerer abducts a sacrificial victim (preferably the bystander or a hunter).
- **Sunset:** 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.
- **Dusk:** The monster attacks someone in a manner totally out of keeping with what the initial clues implied.
- **Sunset:** 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.
- 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 (p. 184) 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 (p. 184), and aim to kill them all. Then these events become background for a mystery with the normal hunter team, or maybe illustrate something about an arc that they might not have noticed.

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, 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 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 have one of the other ghosts in a ghost trap.*

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 guy... what was his name, James? and what he 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

At the beginning of each session, re-select highlighted ratings for the hunters.

When you re-select highlighted ratings, do it the same way as you did during the first game. Go around the group, and each hunter should pick who they feel they know best right now. That person picks a rating to highlight and then you, as Keeper, choose another.

Pick a highlight based on your agenda and principles: be a fan of the hunters, but keep their lives exciting. Sometimes highlight the rating that hunter relies on, sometimes the one you know they'll need today, sometimes the one they don't use much (to see what they do with it).

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 see them in bad spots, so we can be amazed by the ways they get out.

SUMMARY: KEEPER'S SESSION

- Re-select highlighted ratings: first each hunter picks who they are closest to, and that hunter picks one rating, then you pick another.
- 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 that 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.
- Confront the monster! Hopefully the hunters win.
- Think about how events in the mystery will affect your arcs or later mysteries. Tidy up your notes.

AS THE GAME GOES ON

As you play through mysteries and elaborate 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 before.

- 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 any countdowns that have now moved on, 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 now moves on to 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 that 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 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 on its own, but 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 some hunters are at 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 mitigate harm suffered, 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. As 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 that the hunters are most concerned with are 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.

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.

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.

TRIGGERING THE CUSTOM MOVE

Carefully define when the custom move applies. Having a specific trigger condition ensures that you know when the move applies. 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 use a different number instead of 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.

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.

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.

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 it will tell you some obscure things, then it will burn some stuff, mostly what you wanted burnt. 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 that, 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.

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 one to three (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 – give 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 player things that work with what you have planned.

ONE-SHOT MYSTERY PLAY

In general, follow the instructions for a first session. You should have a team concept for them already, or at least a selected subset of the hunter playbooks that will give everyone an idea what is in store in your mystery.

Give everyone a quick introduction to the rules before they make their hunters. The idea of moves and what the ratings mean (p. 8) 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.

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).

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 -1 (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 something that has 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's 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 extra moves from this playbook.
- Two choices of moves from another 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.

THE TEMPLATE

If you would like to put your hunter playbook into the official format, let me know (email to michael.sands@genericgames.co.nz) and I'll send you the template.

SHARING

To share your custom hunter playbook with other *Monster of the Week* players, or for advice or help working through your ideas, or to see what other people have come up with, go to my *Monster of the Week* forum: <http://apocalypse-world.com/forums/index.php?board=33.0>.

A WHOLE NEW GAME

Apocalypse World was built with hacking in mind. I don't have a lot to add to those guidelines about how to hack it, 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 Joe Mcdaldno draws from a similar place to *Monster of the Week*, but its about the messy supernatural romance side of *Buffy* and *True Blood* (and *Twilight*).
- *Dungeon World* by Sage LaTorra and Adam Koebel is a modern take on classic dungeon crawl roleplaying.

INSPIRATION

Here's a big list of things that inspired me, to a greater or lesser extent. The game inspirations are games that gave me ideas for the rules, how to arrange the text, or how to use horror in roleplaying.

The various fiction inspirations 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.

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*, and *Monsterhearts*.

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.

TELEVISION

Primarily *Supernatural* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*;

Also *Fringe*; *The X-Files*; *True Blood*; *Being Human*; *Doctor Who*; *Grimm*; *The Fades*; *Werewolf*; *Brimstone*; *Reaper*; *Sanctuary*.

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*.

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 Klevinger and Scott Wegener.

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COLOPHON

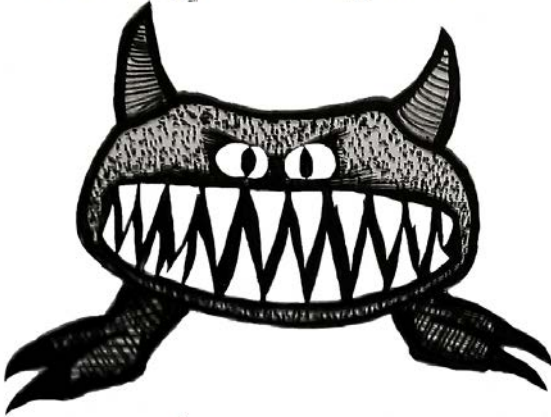
The game was written in OpenOffice and LibreOffice.

The headings use the 3rd Man typeface by Bumbayo Font Fabrik.

The text body is set in Gentium Book Basic by SIL.

I raised the funds to get this project finished and into print with IndieGoGo: <http://indiegogo.com>.

GENERIC GAMES



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