

Fear of Falling

Steve Hatherley

This is a really, really horrible thing to do to an investigator.

Let's face it, if there's an investigator in a parachute then something has gone very wrong. It would have to be an absolute disaster...

In The Air

It is a routine flight. Fairly long, very dull. The monotonous droning of the engines is almost soporific enough to send the investigators to sleep. Everything is going smoothly. The weather is fine and the flight is on schedule. Then everything goes wrong.

The sound of breaking glass alerts the investigators to trouble. The pilot shrieks as something slits his throat. A ghoulish tittering and giggling mingles with agonised screams. The co-pilot stares in horror as the bloody outlines of a star vampire becomes visible.

The star vampire (1/1D10 SAN loss) finishes with the pilot before starting on the co-pilot. It hauls him free of the seat and drags him out of the cockpit and onto the wing. There it sits, happily picking holes in the wing and drinking the poor co-pilot's blood. Controls smashed and broken, the plane starts to enter a dive.

The aircraft is not in an airworthy state and is going to crash. Soon. The investigators will have to jump for it. It is unlikely that they have had much interest in parachutes until now. Fortunately, several are within easy reach and it is a simple matter (a successful Idea roll) to fit the harness correctly. Then it is all just a question of taking a deep breath and leaping out.

Parachuting

The jump begins in freefall. Terminal velocity, 120 miles per hour or 180 feet per second, is reached within 3-4 seconds – the investigators need to be thinking about deploying the canopy.

Pulling the ripcord releases the canopy, which fails on a roll of 96-100: the investigator loses 0/1D6 SAN and falls helplessly to his death. Otherwise the canopy is open. Once open, the parachute is at the mercy of the winds. The investigators can only wait for the star vampire to join them.

The Star Vampire



STR 14 CON 15 SIZ 34 INT 10 POW 15 DEX 8

HP 25 MOVE 6/9 flying

Damage Bonus +2D6

Weapons: 1D4 talons 40%, 1D6 + 2D6 damage

Bite 80%, 1D6 STR (blood) drain.

Armour: 4 point hide plus invisibility (50% reduction to hit). Bullets do half damage.

San loss: 1/1D10 SAN

The star vampire, a huge member of its race, is not entirely keen spending time in a frail human aeroplane, the star vampire (after indulging itself in the despatch of pilot and co-pilot) wrecks the

'plane and waits for its target(s) to leave. There will be plenty of time to deal with them then. If the investigators decide not to leave, it picks sadly through the wreckage, mourning the loss of a fine meal.

Soon enough it arrives. Invisible once more, it falls behind as the investigators plummet earthwards in freefall, but catches up once canopies are open. Brave investigators might want to wait until the last possible moment before pulling the ripcord. If they fail an Idea roll then they have left it too late and land with a sickening squelch. If the successful Idea roll is followed by a failed Luck roll, the star vampire arrives before they land. Otherwise they are on the ground and able to prepare for the star vampire's attack.

The star vampire gets it wrong first time, tearing through the canopy to get at its target beneath. The canopy immediately collapses, dropping the terrified investigator out of reach. SAN loss 0/1D6, and the investigator plummets to his death. Scratch one meal.

Wiser now, the star vampire leaves the canopy alone and goes directly for its victim. Suspended in the harness, the investigator can attempt to defend himself. With nothing to brace against, all gun skills and melee skills suffer a penalty of -20%.

Other investigators can also attack the star vampire. Shots that miss the star vampire may well hit their unfortunate colleague. Re-roll near misses (by 10% or less), if successful the investigator has been hit instead.

Landing

With the Star Vampire dead or driven off, the investigators land on the ground. As one of them lands with a thud, he suddenly jolts himself awake. He is still on the plane, having just dozed off. His companions are safe in their seats – they are all alive. It was only a dream.

Keeper's Notes

Fear of Falling works best if earlier investigations have not been successfully completed. There should be doubts in their minds – did they really finish everything? What happened to the shoggoth? Is it really all over?

The investigators shouldn't know how close they are to falling asleep. Although the dream only happens to one of them, don't tell the other investigators that it is a dream – they should behave as if it is really happening. SAN loss for the unfortunate dreamer is 0/1 – the earlier SAN losses are ignored.

Note: *Fear of Falling* was originally submitted (in a substantially altered form) to Mark Morrison for the *Fearful Passages* book. It didn't make the grade for (I gather) two main reasons. First, it is a little too short (fair comment). Second, it is a little too deadly (this from the man that edited *Orient Express!*) – but at that time it took place for real!

Fear of Falling appeared in *The Unspeakable Oath* #9.

Steve Hatherley is also the creator of **Tales of Terror**, a collection of adventure seeds for *Call of Cthulhu* and other roleplaying games. For more details visit www.talesofterror.net