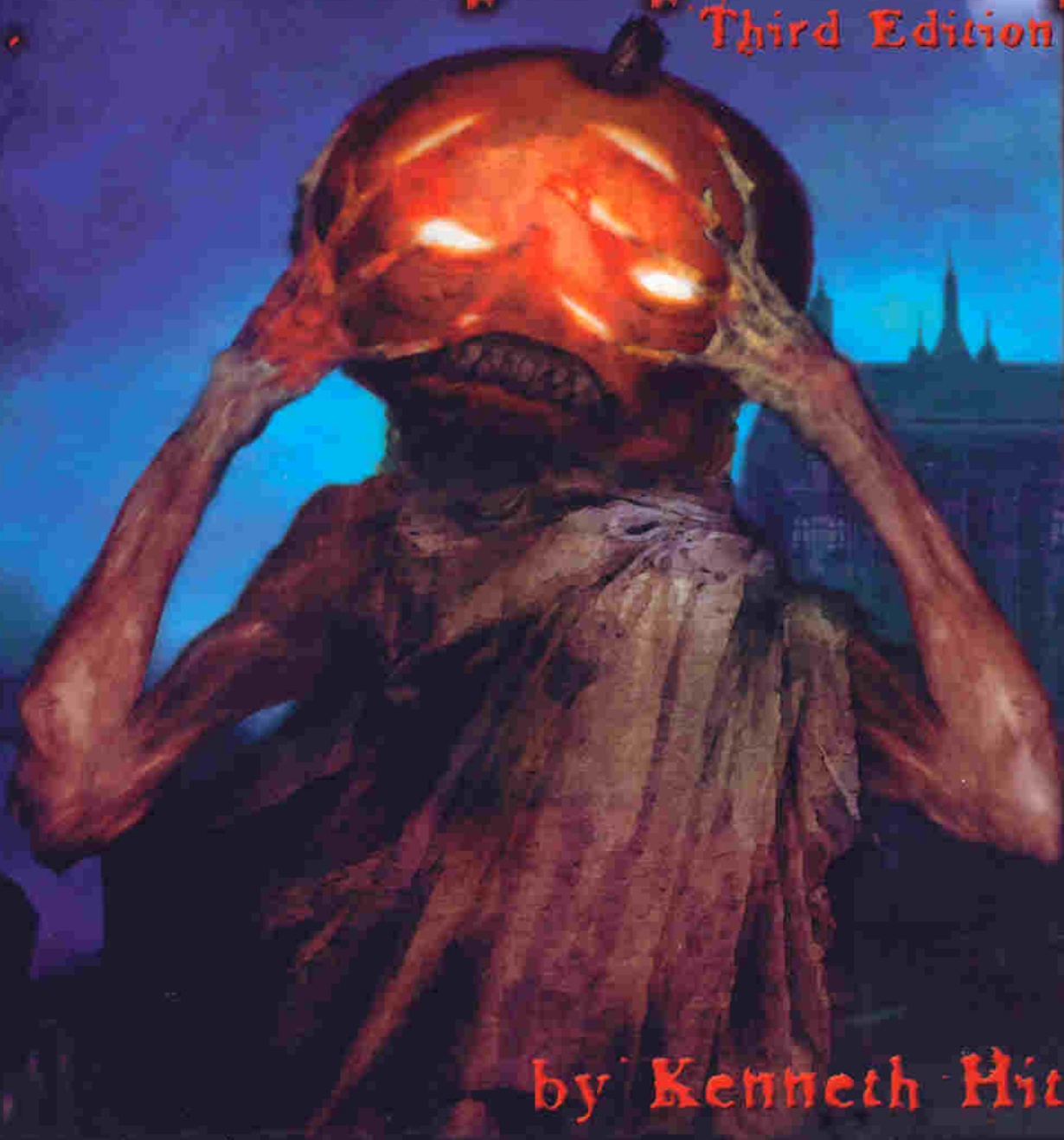# GURPS
HORROR

Third Edition

by Kenneth Hite

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS

HORROR

Third Edition

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The *GURPS Horror* web page can be found at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/horror/**.

Page References

See **www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html** or *GURPS Compendium I,* p. 181, for a list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set.* AE refers to *Alternate Earths,* AET to *Alternate Earths 2,* BE to *Bestiary,* BO to *Black Ops,* CB to *Cabal,* CI to *Compendium I,* CII to *Compendium II,* CM to *Celtic Myth,* FB to *Fantasy Bestiary,* G to *Grimoire,* M to *Magic, Second Edition,* P to *Psionics,* SPI to *Spirits,* STM to *Steampunk,* UN to *Undead,* VO to *Voodoo,* WWi to *Who's Who 1,* and WT to *Warehouse 23.*

ENTER FREELY AND OF YOUR OWN WILL

"There is no delight the equal of dread."
– Clive Barker, "Dread"

So what is horror?

Horror is a matter of intent, and a matter of content. Anything written to frighten the audience is horror. Horror is usually a goal, not a genre; horror can appear in Westerns, romances, science fiction, fantasy, and mysteries. Wherever the writer wants to make your flesh creep, there is horror. Horror can be a genre, though, and in one sense it's the oldest genre of all. The first stories we have, from the Sumerian epics, are full of evil gods, the birth of monsters, and malevolent scorpion-men. And we have only added to that supply of scares over the next five millennia. Vampires, werewolves, psycho killers, haunted houses, and hundreds of other time-tested elements now jam-pack the horror toolbox.

They are, however, diverse elements. Horror doesn't have to be supernatural – the Black Death was completely natural, and completely horrific. Horror doesn't have to be human – the slow, inevitable death of the universe scared H.P. Lovecraft more than any personal narrative ever did. But horror doesn't stay in its box – the Black Death helped inspire the legend of the vampire, and the inevitable laws of physics gave the 20th century both the mighty Godzilla and Great Cthulhu. Horror is as sloppy as a Jack the Ripper killing, and as neat as Joseph Mengele's fingernails.

With something so slippery, it can take some work to get it right. That's true of writers, and film directors, and artists – and roleplayers. The GM has to want to scare you, work to scare you, try to scare you. You, the players, have to want to be scared, work to be scared, try to be scared. Horror is the most collaborative of styles, which makes it perfect for role-playing games. GM and players must contract to play a horror game, and agree to build the atmosphere of fear together. Otherwise, it just plain won't work.

But when it does work – well, then, you have roleplaying at its finest pitch. Fear is the strongest, oldest emotion of all, buried deep in all our psyches from the caveman days when we were one campfire away from the saber-tooth tigers. But as deep as it's buried, you can bring it to the surface with some dim lighting, a hushed tone, and a good story. It's a bottomless well of power, catharsis, and bloody farm implements, and it's waiting for you.

So enter freely, and of your own will, both GM and player, ready to scare and to be scared, to join hands around the metaphorical campfire, listen to the snarl of the saber-tooth tiger, and to share the oldest and strongest emotion – and to make it brand new again.

Pleasant screams.

– Kenneth Hite

About the Authors

J.M. ("Joe") Caparula is a freelance game writer and assistant manager of a game store in Madison, Wisconsin, where he lives with his wife Ann. His first project for Steve Jackson Games was *GURPS Riverworld.* He harbors a life-long fascination with vampires, and Halloween is his favorite holiday. He wrote the second edition of *GURPS Horror* in 1990.

Scott Haring has made too many contributions to *GURPS* and to Steve Jackson Games to fit in a tiny blurb like this; most recently, he edited *Pyramid* magazine, authored a chapter of *GURPS Y2K,* and co-wrote *GURPS Traveller: Planetary Survey 5 – Tobibak.* He currently lives in Luba, Texas, with his wife Louise and two children, and is working on reanimating dead games. He wrote the first edition of *GURPS Horror* in 1987.

Kenneth Hite fervently believes that he was the first person to buy *Call of Cthulhu* in the state of Oklahoma, and has been playing horror RPGs almost continuously since then. In addition to his long-running "Suppressed Transmission" column in *Pyramid* magazine (currently collected in two books), he has written *The Cainite Heresy* for *Vampire: the Dark Ages,* part of *Back East: The South* for *Deadlands,* a chapter of *GURPS Y2K,* and *GURPS Cabal.* He also wrote the horror roleplaying guide *Nightmares of Mine* for Iron Crown Enterprises, from which some of this book's text is adapted. He lives in Chicago with many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore, his wife Sheila, and a tell-tale heart.
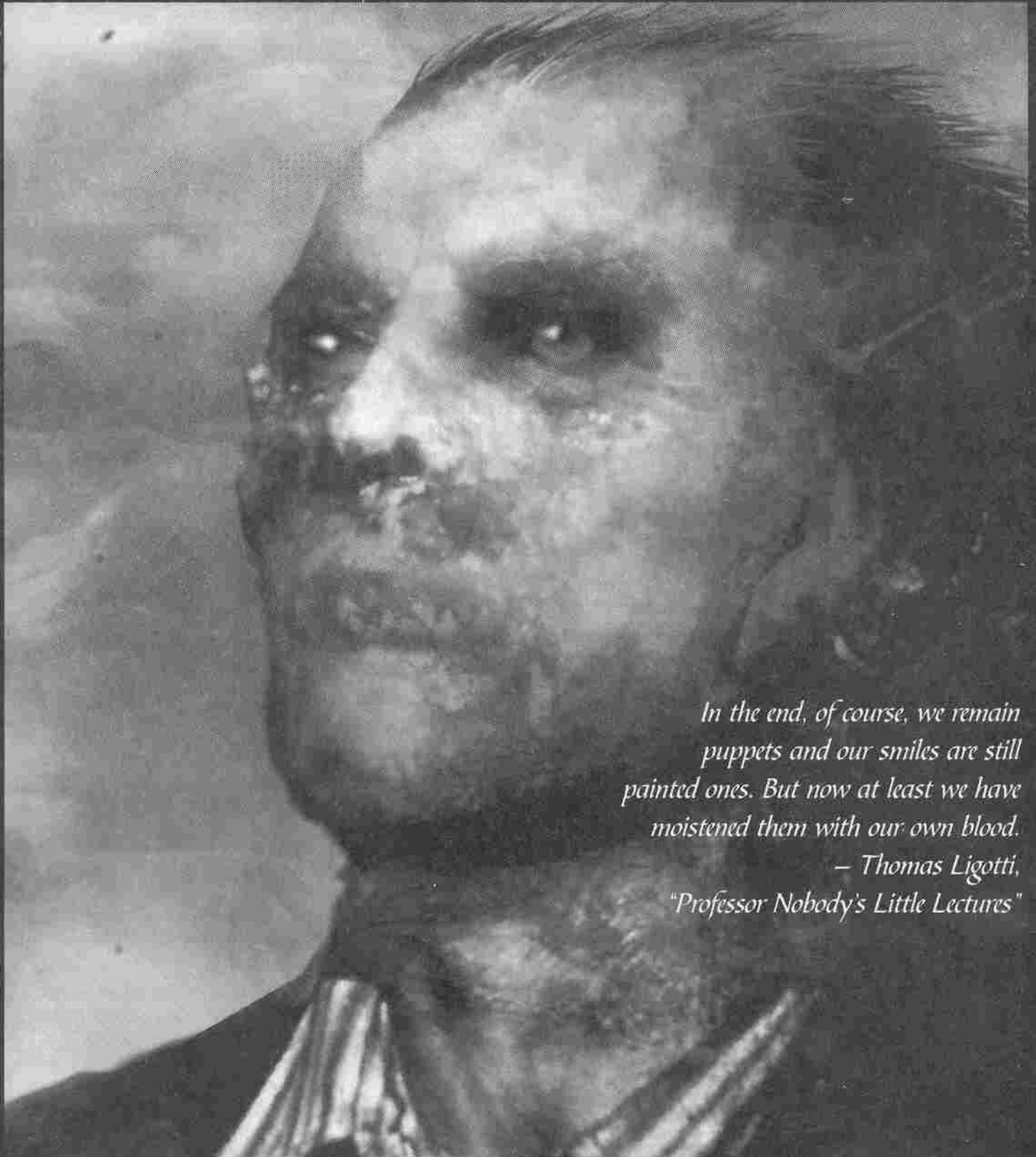
*In the end, of course, we remain
puppets and our smiles are still
painted ones. But now at least we have
moistened them with our own blood.*
— Thomas Ligotti,
"Professor Nobody's Little Lectures"

Personalizing Characters

A number of qualities crop up again and again among the heroes of horror fiction. The vampire hunter is always resolute, the explorer is always resourceful, and the victims of the mad slasher are always stupid. (We've all screamed, "Don't go outside alone, you idiot!" at one time or another.) However, players should balance the ease and familiarity of such concepts with the potential for freshness and surprise in role reversal: playing a vampire hunter who is a paranoid coward would be an interesting switch from the typical Van Helsing type! Each player should decide for himself where the line falls between archetype and stereotype when creating his own character.

Of course, that leads to the question: what is a paranoid coward doing out vampire hunting? Give your character a motivation, a reason to go down into the crypt at night when good sense would make you or me just leave town in a hurry. Sometimes, a character hook (see pp. 25-26) can provide such a trigger; in other cases, it might just come from within the character himself. A man who's killed a few vampires has good reason to be paranoid, and even a coward can get into danger again for a sufficiently important incentive. What motivates him – be it the promise of treasure, the desperate need to save face, the desire for some eldritch lore that only the Vampire King possesses, or threats to his loved ones – is what you must decide.

Remember not only to adjust the big things about your character; little things can bring him alive, too. Even something as simple as a catch phrase, a nervous habit, or a lucky key chain can help crystallize your alter ego in your mind – and, just as important, in the minds of your fellow players and the GM.

Horror can strike anyone, anywhere, anywhen. From a small band of dwarves tracking a manticore to its lair before it kills again to an elite company of space marines dropped into a malevolent living ocean, any traditional player-character types (and many untraditional ones, from visionary painters to realtors with peculiar Transylvanian clients) can become the heroes of a horror story. Horror protagonists can range from 25-point teenagers alone in the woods to 600-point elite black ops, or beyond! (For more focused discussion of campaign power levels, see *Against the Darkness: Heroes*, p. 67.) The only hard and fast requirements for a horror character are that he be interesting to play and that his background fit into the campaign to the satisfaction of the GM.

Typical Characters and Backgrounds

Determining a character's occupation and background is important. A high steel worker may indeed lead an exciting life, but it would take an extraordinary leap (so to speak) to get him involved in the spooky happenings of the campaign. Still, that leap might be worth the effort – a good GM should be willing to work with the players to create unique characters. (See *Character Hooks*, pp. 25-26, for more "leaps.")

In any case, to fit into a horror campaign, most characters will need three things: an interest in the subject (which can be generated easily if the first victims of the werewolves are the PC's family), free time, and a source of income. A 9-to-5 accountant could easily dash off in pursuit of the unknown, but he's not likely to have a job upon his return, and paying the bills during the adventure could become a problem. Unless the GM intends to highlight the contrast between the "mundane" world of paychecks and vacation time, and the world of paranormal horror, money shouldn't be a life-or-death problem. Adventurers should be wealthy, have an occupation that allows them to chase the unknown while still drawing a paycheck, or have a steady outside source of cash.

Character Templates

A *character template* is a list of attributes, advantages, disadvantages, and skills that a player can choose from in order to quickly build a specific type of character without neglecting important abilities or getting bogged down in the rules. The point costs of these abilities are listed, and the sum is given as the "template cost." The player pays this cost, specifies the options he wants, writes those abilities down on his character sheet, and spends his remaining points to customize his character.

You never have to choose a template, and it's possible to mix characters created with and without templates in the same campaign. Templates are just a way of buying many abilities at once; they have no in-play effects and aren't discount-priced package deals. Characters made from templates are 100% compatible with characters cut from whole cloth, and the abilities on templates can be treated as nothing more than recommendations, exactly like those listed in the *Character Types* sections of other *GURPS* books.

Skills

On the templates in this section, *primary skills* are skills that are absolutely required, *secondary skills* are helpful skills that it's hard to imagine the character not having, and *background skills* are skills chosen for descriptive reasons rather than utility. Skills are listed in the following format: *Skill Name (Difficulty)* Relative Level **[Point Cost]**-Actual Level. For example, "Research (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-15."

Customizing Templates

Once a template has been purchased, the player must *customize* it by spending his remaining character points. The template does not influence how these points are spent. If the template has fewer disadvantages than the campaign permits, more may be taken, giving extra points to spend. The same goes for quirks, which the player should always pick himself. Players will often want to improve some of the skills already covered in the template, too.

Altering Templates

Templates are *guidelines,* not rules. When customizing a template, the player is free to alter any or all of the items that came with it. Subtracting items from a professional template may result in someone who is less than professionally competent – which could explain, of course, why he's the one who winds up chasing monsters through the sewers instead of teaching at seminars.

Character Templates vs. Racial Templates

Character templates are *not* the same thing as the racial templates in Chapter 3 and elsewhere. Racial templates use attribute modifiers instead of attribute levels, and often include advantages that are unavailable on a less-than-racial basis and disadvantages that don't count against the campaign disadvantage limit. When combining the two types of templates, add their point costs together. Next, discard duplicate advantages and disadvantages, adjusting the total cost accordingly. Finally, add any racial attribute modifiers to the character template's attribute levels, and alter dependent skill levels to match.

Academic   70 points

A professor, teacher, or researcher at a university or other center of higher learning. He is easy to get into an adventure, as people often bring mysteries to a professor, hoping for expert help – and the professor may be able to pass off an adventure as "research," thus staying employed. Many fantasy-genre wizards closely resemble academics, and an academic can easily fit into horror games in ancient Alexandria or Rome as well as modern Oxford or futuristic Trantor.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: A total of 20 points from Claim to Hospitality (Universities) [1 to 10]; Language Talent [2/level]; Mathematical Ability [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Status [5/level]; Tenure [5]; Versatile [5]; and +1 IQ [15].

Disadvantages: A total of -20 points from Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Age [-3/level]; Bad Sight [-10]; Clueless [-10]; Combat Paralysis [-15]; Curious [-5 to -15];

Delusions [-5]; Duty (Teaching; non-hazardous, 12 or less) [-5] or (15 or less) [-10]; Hard of Hearing [-10]; Indecisive [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; and Oblivious [-3].

Primary Skills: Research (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-15; and either *two* "academic" M/H Scientific skills (such as Anthropology, Archaeology, Astronomy, Chemistry, History, Literature, Mathematics, Physics, or Psychology) at IQ+2 [8]-16 or *one* M/VH Scientific skill (such as Genetics, Linguistics, or Physiology) at IQ+2 [16]-16.

Secondary Skills: One of Bard, Teaching, or Writing, all (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13; and Language (of scholarship; see below) (M/A) 1Q-1 [1]-13.

Background Skills: A total of 3 points in Administration (M/A); Savoir-Faire (M/E); or further Languages.

Customization Notes: Reputation (as an expert in the chosen field) is common, but rarely above the +1 level; a +4 likely indicates a media personality rather than a truly cutting-edge scholar, at least in the modern era. Of course, Reputation can cut both ways, especially for researchers active in the occult. A negative Reputation for odd beliefs is possible: "Nobody on campus knows pre-Incan societies like Dr. Mayweather, but don't ask her about the Mt. Lapize cave paintings unless you want to hear her spout nonsense about bird-men."

Specifics of curriculum and available knowledge will vary with milieu. In a dark fantasy game, a professor might teach Alchemy and Astrology; in a futuristic campaign, Planetology and Xenology are more likely. The "language of scholarship" will vary as well; under the Romans it was Greek, but from about 400 A.D. to 1900 A.D. in the West, anyone with any pretense to scholarship knew Latin, or claimed he did. This template does not include Calligraphy, Computer Operation, Theology, or other skills that may be academically necessary in some settings.

By taking Poverty and reducing skill levels, you can create a student to accompany the frail old Professor on his monster-hunting missions. Student athletes can add muscle, spoiled heirs sent to daddy's alma mater can provide funds and contacts, and so forth. You can build an entire party based on a small "independent study group" with some odd notions of hands-on research!

In a cinematic campaign, the Eidetic Memory and Intuitive Mathematician advantages, and the Science! skill, would be ideal additions.

Aristocrat   85 points

The aristocrat has earned his money and social station the old-fashioned way: by inheriting them. Large amounts of disposable income and other resources, as well as a potential lack of responsibilities, make the aristocrat easy (and fun) to play.

He might be a true aristocrat, with a peerage certified by the college of heralds, or simply the favored child of a wealthy industrialist. In small American towns, the banker's son might be an aristocrat; in orbital colonies, the captain's daughter might hold such a place. Position, inheritance, and immunity from lesser folks' troubles are the aristocrat's lot in life. The aristocrat may feel noblesse oblige that causes him to protect his people, or he may be desperately struggling against his own family curse.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Either Filthy Rich [50] or Patron (Wealthy family; provides cash, 12 or less) [50]; plus 25 points from Alcohol Tolerance [5]; Ally Group (2-5 75-point bodyguards; 12 or less) [20]; Appearance [5 to 25]; Claim to Hospitality (Elite society) [5 to 10]; Fashion Sense [5]; Heir [5]; Luck [15]; Status* [5/level]; and +1 [10] or +2 [20] to any attribute.

Disadvantages: A total of -30 points from Addiction [Varies]; Alcoholism [-15]; Chummy [-5]; Compulsive Behavior [Varies]; Extravagance [-10]; Greed [-15]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Laziness [-10]; Lecherousness [-15]; Overconfidence [-10]; Selfish or Self-Centered [-5 or -10]; and Short Attention Span [-10].

Primary Skills: Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+4 [8]-14.

Secondary and Background Skills: Any *two* of Chess or Games (any), both (M/E) IQ+8 [16]-18; Administration, Falconry, or Gambling, all (M/A) IQ+7 [16]-17; Sex Appeal (M/A; HT) HT+7 [16]-17; Appreciate Beauty (M/VH) IQ+2 [16]-12; Dancing, Driving (any), Fencing, Piloting (any), Riding (any), or Sports (any), all (P/A) DX+3 [16]-13; or Carousing (P/A; HT) HT+3 [16]-13.

* Filthy Rich provides +1 Status.

Customization Notes: Family may present certain other options for an aristocrat, from hereditary Enemies to a family Reputation as cursed, eccentric, or vampiric. See the notes on family hooks in *Character Hooks* (pp. 25-26). Feel free to select additional skills within reason; part of the fun of being a wealthy aristocrat is the luxury to pursue your studies in Akkadian epigraphy, Chinese porcelain, or mad science without distractions or obstructions.

Artist   55 points

The artist, seeking inspiration in uncanny lore or dream-inducing narcotics, is another character concept just waiting to be snatched into the realms of darkness. The artist meshes well with most horror subgenres, but works best in games with an urban or cosmopolitan setting; artists need audiences. The artist can be a painter, photographer, or sculptor, an architect, or an actor. The key element here is "artistic sensitivity" that turns into sensitivity to things decidedly undecorative.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: A total of 25 points from Appearance [5 or 15]; Charisma [5/level]; Fashion Sense [5]; Fit [5]; Musical Ability [1/level]; Sensitive [5]; Single-Minded [5]; Strong Will [4/level]; and Voice [10].

Disadvantages: A total of -25 points from Addiction [Varies]; Bad Temper [-10]; Glory Hound [-15]; Jealousy [-10]; Intolerance (Rival art school) [-5]; Manic-Depressive [-20]; Obsession [-5 to -15]; Poverty [-10 or -15]; Reclusive [-10]; Reputation (Unsavory or eccentric character) [Varies]; Selfish [-5]; Skinny [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Put 12 points into any combination of Architecture, Performance, or Photography, all (M/A); Artist, Directing, Musical Composition, or Musical Instrument, all (M/H); Singing (P/E; HT); or Dancing or Sculpting, both (P/A).

Secondary and Background Skills: A total of 3 points in any of Make-Up, Musical Notation, or Scrounging, all (M/E); Acting, Bard, Choreography, or Streetwise, all (M/A); Appreciate Beauty (M/VH); Driving (any) or Stage Combat, both (P/A); or Carousing (P/A; HT).

Customization Notes: Depending on the milieu, some artists will have other skills; for instance, a painter in the pre-Industrial era may know Chemistry for mixing paints.

Attorney   65 points

A legal representative makes a good character for a horror campaign: he can represent clients who are involved with occult phenomena, and clear up those pesky breaking-and-entering charges the other PCs may tend to accumulate. The attorney's field of law can also draw him into horror, possibly through circuitous routes; Jonathan Harker, in *Dracula*, was a real-estate solicitor! (In Britain, attorneys are called *solicitors* if they represent personal clients, *barristers* if their job is to present the case before the court.) Attorneys can play the role of investigator (a la Perry Mason) *and* legal agent, which could entangle them with the Cabal (see p. 66), government conspiracies, or other powerful occult organizations.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Comfortable Wealth [10]; plus 15 points from among Charisma [5/level]; Intuition [15]; Sanctity [5]; Single-Minded [5]; Status 1 [5]; Voice [10]; and additional Wealth [10].

Disadvantages: A total of -20 points in Bully [-10]; Code of Honor (Professional ethics) [-5]; Compulsive Lying [-15]; Enemies [Varies]; Greed [-15]; Honesty or Secret (Dishonest) [-10]; Odious Personal Habits ("Pedantic," "shameless," etc.) [-5 to -15]; Overweight [-5]; Sense of Duty (Clients) [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Law (M/H) IQ+3 [10]-16; either Research or Politics, both (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-15; and *one* of Bard (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-15, Diplomacy (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-14, or Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-15.

Secondary Skills: Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12 and Writing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Criminology, Interrogation, or Intimidation, all (M/A); Accounting, Detect Lies, or Psychology, all (M/H); and improved levels with primary or secondary skills.

Customization Notes: Every bureaucratic culture since ancient Egypt has had lawyers or something similar. Modify the skills involved for the milieu (Theology for lawyers in medieval France or modern Iran) and specialty (Accounting for tax lawyers, for instance). A successful attorney of any kind will spend some of his remaining points on Reputation and additional Wealth.

This template can also be used as the basis for police or other legal "desk-job" types, and for politicians in the Western world, including those on "oversight committees" investigating the paranormal. For politicians, add Reputation and extra Status. For desk-job types or highly placed politicians, Administrative Rank, Legal Enforcement Powers, or Security Clearance may be necessary.

Child   40 points

A child can be an overly curious investigator or someone with supernatural abilities (usually psionics). A young psi is often an innocent victim of his own powers, which can lead to complications with the authorities when the other PCs try to explain his behavior. A child can be challenging to play – if only because of the inconvenience of adult supervision. This can be avoided by choosing orphans or runaways, or by using the traditional "children's horror" model, in which bad things never seem to happen at school, and parents are always conveniently oblivious to the terrors. If kids are the only people who can see the monsters in the closet, they have to keep the grownups safe and ignorant.

Attributes: This template assumes a typical 11-year-old (see p. B14): ST 7 [0]; DX 9 [0]; IQ 8 [0]; HT 8 [0].

Advantages: A total of 50 points from Alertness [5/level]; Appearance [Varies]; Charisma [5/level]; Danger Sense [15]; Empathy [15]; Fearlessness [2/level]; Intuition [15]; Legal Immunity [5]; Less Sleep [3/level]; Luck [15 or 30]; Musical Ability [1/level]; Pitiable [5]; Sanctity [5]; and +1 [10], +2 [20], or +3 [30] to any attribute. In cinematic campaigns, options also include Absolute Direction [5]; Absolute Timing [5]; Cultural Adaptability [25]; Daredevil [15]; Faerie Empathy [10]; Lightning Calculator [5]; Special Rapport [10]; True Faith [15]; and Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Youth (11 years old)* [-14]; plus -18 points from Bad Sight [-10]; Bad Temper [-10]; Clueless [-10]; Combat Paralysis [-15]; Compulsive Lying [-15] or Truthfulness [-5]; Confused [-10]; Congenial or Chummy [-1 or -5]; Distractible or Short Attention Span [-1 or -10]; Shyness [-5 to -15]; Gluttony [-5]; Imaginative [-1]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Nosy [-1] or

Curious [-5 to -15]; Overconfidence [-10]; Phobias [Varies]; Stubbornness [-5]; and Weak Will [-8/level].

Primary Skills: *One* of Climbing or Stealth, both (P/A) DX+2 [8]-11; Throwing (P/H) DX+1 [8]-10; Acting (M/A) IQ+3 [8]-11; or Artist (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-10.

Secondary Skills: Area Knowledge (Neighborhood) (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-10; plus *one* of Computer Operation or First Aid, both (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-10; Bicycling or Swimming, both (P/E) DX+2 [4]-11; or Riding (Horse) (P/A) DX+1 [4]-10.

Background Skills: A Hobby Skill (M/A) IQ+2 [3]-10; plus 3 points in Chess, Fishing, or Games (any), all (M/E); Musical Instrument (M/H); Singing (P/E; HT); or Dancing or Sports (any), both (P/A).

* It is common for children to adventure alongside adults in horror tales; therefore, Youth is treated as "open ended." A child of 11 in a society where the age of majority is 18 has 7 levels of Youth, for -14 points.

Customization Notes: The setting will govern whether children need to worry about Wealth, whether parents or teachers count as Patrons or Contacts, and so forth. Kids vary as much as adults: a troop of Boy Scouts may have skill in Orienteering, Survival, etc. that other children wouldn't, while a gang of Dickensian urchins might have Blackjack, Pickpocket, and Survival (Urban), among other skills. A staple of children's horror is the kid who's into comic books, horror movies, etc. and thus has a useful (or misleading!) skill in Occultism.

Clergyman
60 points

A priest, minister, imam, rabbi, etc. If a clergyman is attached to a particular church, he will often get involved in the problems of church members – and some of those problems may be supernatural. For millennia, of course, it was a major part of the clergy's job to oppose the evil supernatural, from witches to demons to the unquiet dead. Even today, clergymen with special training (e.g., Catholic exorcists) act as supernatural "troubleshooters," and can become involved in adventures throughout the world.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Religious Rank 2 [10]; and 15 points chosen from Charisma [5/level]; Empathy [15]; Fearlessness [2/level]; Imperturbable [10]; Language Talent [2/level]; Musical Ability [1/level]; additional Religious Rank [5/level]; Strong Will [4/level]; True Faith [15]; and Voice [10]. Status 1 is free from Religious Rank for any faith that can be openly professed.

Disadvantages: Disciplines of Faith or Vow appropriate to your faith [-5]; plus -15 points chosen from Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Age [-3/level]; Compulsive Behavior (Religious observance) [-5]; Fanaticism [-15]; Honesty [-10]; Intolerance (Religious) [-5 or -10]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Pacifism (Cannot Kill) [-15]; Poverty [-10]; Secret [Varies]; Sense of Duty (Coreligionists or all humanity) [-10 or -15]; and Truthfulness [-5].

Primary Skills: Bard (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Performance/Ritual (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; and Theology (M/H) IQ [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: Language (liturgical or scriptural, such as Arabic, Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, or Old Slavonic) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; and *two* of Poetry, Research, or Teaching, all (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Exorcism, Musical Composition, or Musical Instrument, all (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; or Singing (P/E; HT) HT+1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: Area Knowledge (Parish) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; plus 9 points in any of First Aid or Musical Notation, both (M/E); Administration, more Languages, Leadership, Occultism, or Writing, all (M/A); or Detect Lies, Diplomacy, History, Literature, Naturalist, or Psychology, all (M/H).

Customization Notes: Clerical requirements, tasks, and range of interests will vary with religion, setting, and position in the church hierarchy (if any). The church a clergyman serves will sometimes act as a Patron, providing living expenses, limited research facilities, and possibly the resources to combat supernatural horrors.

Criminal
80 points

Against his will, a criminal can find himself enmeshed in matters far blacker than petty theft or even murder for hire. Like the aristocrat, the criminal is a character concept for all seasons. However, it usually hampers the unity that the heroes need to confront horrors (and the teamwork *players* need to help build the atmosphere of fear) if the criminal preys on others in the party.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: A total of 30 points chosen from Alertness [5/level]; Charisma [5/level]; Contacts (Street; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3/contact]; Danger Sense [15]; Daredevil [15]; Double-Jointed [5]; Luck [15]; Manual Dexterity [3/level]; Night Vision [10]; Patron (Crime lord; reasonably powerful, 9 or less) [15]; and Wealth [10 to 30].

Disadvantages: A total of -35 points chosen from Callous [-6]; Code of Honor (Pirate's or "stays bought") [-5]; Compulsive Lying [-15]; Enemy (Law-enforcement agency; 6 or less) [-15]; Greed [-15]; Kleptomania [-15]; Laziness [-10]; Light Sleeper [-5]; Obsession (Stealing a particular item) [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Reputation (Crook) [Varies]; Secret (any) [-5 to -30]; Selfish or Self-Centered [-5 or -10]; Social Stigma (Outlaw) [-15]; Status -1 [-5]; Trademark [-1 to -15]; and Trickster [-15].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Stealth (P/A) DX [2]-13; and Streetwise (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

Secondary Skills: Running (P/H; HT) HT-1 [2]-9; and *three* skills from *each* of these two lists (or spend a total of 12 points on any of them):

1. Panhandling (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Acting, Courtesan, Fast-Talk, Fortune Telling, Gambling, Intimidation, or Merchant, all (M/A) IQ [2]-13; or Sex Appeal (M/A; HT) HT [2]-10.
2. Computer Operation (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Electronics Operation (Communications or Security Systems), Holdout, Lockpicking, Shadowing, or Traps, all (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Blackjack, Brawling, or Starglazing, all (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14; Guns (any) (P/E) DX+3 [2]-16*; Climbing or Filch, both (P/A) DX [2]-13; or Escape, Pickpocket, or Sleight of Hand, all (P/H) DX-1 [2]-12.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Disguise or Survival (Urban), both (M/A); Forgery or Poisons, both (M/H); Computer Hacking (M/VH); Fast-Draw (any) or Knife, both (P/E); Driving (any) (P/A); or Carousing (P/A; HT).
* Includes +2 for IQ.

Customization Notes: This is a fairly basic template, suitable for street criminals such as dope dealers, gangsters, and hookers. More refined crooks should use the Aristocrat or Attorney template, while tougher ones can be built on the Retired Military template. In cinematic campaigns, *any* profession can nurture an unseen criminal mastermind; to "criminalize" a template, add traits such as Patron (Crime lord), Enemy (Law-enforcement agency), and Greed.

Detective   75 points

Rooting out crime and rooting out horrific evil are parallel missions; the detective may easily turn from the one to the other. Historical (especially Victorian and pulp-era) and modern horror seem to be the most fertile ground for the detective, but a fantasy city or futuristic starport might also have a crime-solver. Police detectives and private detectives each have their own set of problems and advantages, but both see the horror as a puzzle to be solved and a challenge to be beaten.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Alertness +1 [5]; Composed [5]; and a total of 15 points from Acute Vision [2/level]; Administrative Rank [5/level]; additional Alertness [5/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Intuition [15]; Legal Enforcement Powers [Varies]; Patron [Varies]; Sensitive or Empathy [5 or 15]; Single-Minded [5]; and +1 to DX or IQ [10].

Disadvantages: A total of -15 points from Bully [-10]; Curious [-5 to -15]; Duties [Varies]; Edgy [-5]; Fanaticism [-15]; Honesty [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Sadism [-10]; Sense of Duty [Varies]; and Workaholic [-5]. Cinematic detectives are often physically handicapped, which can be very dangerous in a horror game!

Primary Skills: Criminology (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; *one* of Forensics (M/H) IQ [4]-12, Research (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13, or Streetwise (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; and *one* of Shadowing (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13 or Stealth (P/A) DX+1 [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: Law (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; and *three* of Acting, Disguise, Fast-Talk, Holdout, Intimidation, Lockpicking, Photography, Tracking, or Writing, all (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Boxing (P/A) DX+1 [4]-12; or Artist, Cryptanalysis, or Detect Lies, all (M/H) IQ [4]-12.

Background Skills: Area Knowledge (Community) (M/E) IQ [1]-12; and a total of 6 points in Computer Operation or Savoir-Faire, both (M/E); Armoury (any) or Languages (any), both (M/A); Forgery or Poisons, both (M/H); Black Powder Weapons (any), Guns (any), or Knife, all (P/E); Driving (any) or Stealth, both (P/A); or any primary or secondary skill.

Customization Notes: Replacing the more physical skills with Computer Programming and Computer Hacking yields the stereotypical computer-wielding "hacker detective," who trawls public and private databases for evidence of criminality – or hidden vampire bank accounts. Adding Brawling, Fast-Draw, and similar skills can create the traditional pulp gumshoe.

Doctor   65 points

Spending one's career battling disease seems to be excellent preparation for battling more supernatural menaces to public health. Between their familiarity with corpses, clinical demeanor, and undeniable utility to hard-pressed parties of monster hunters, doctors have a natural role as investigators of the horrific.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: A total of 25 points from Disease-Resistant or Immunity to Disease [5 or 10]; Empathy [15]; Higher Purpose (Saving lives) [5]; Status 1 [5]; Unfazeable [15]; and Wealth [10 or 20].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Hippocratic Oath) [-15]; Duty (Non-Hazardous, 12 or less) [-5]; plus -15 points from Addiction (Stimulants or tobacco) [-5]; Callous [-6]; Extravagance [-10]; Greed [-15]; Guilt Complex [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Pacifism [-15]; Sense of Duty [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Physician (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; and any *two* of Diagnosis, Forensics, Psychology, or Veterinary, all (M/H) IQ [4]-14.

Secondary Skills: Any *four* of Administration, Criminology, Electronics Operation (Medical), Language (Latin), NBC Warfare, Research, or Writing, all (M/A) IQ [2]-14; Hypnotism, Pharmacy, or Thanatology, all (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-13; or Genetics, Physiology, or Surgery, all (M/VH) IQ-2 [2]-12.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in any of Computer Operation or Savoir-Faire, both (M/E); Theology (M/H); Driving (Automobile), Piloting (Light Airplane), or Sport (Golf or Tennis), all (P/A); Carousing (P/A; HT); Skiing (P/H); or any primary or secondary skill.

Customization Notes: In a traditional fantasy campaign with overt magic, the doctor's role may go to a cleric with healing spells and perhaps the Herbalist skill. A police medical examiner will have Legal Enforcement Powers and police Contacts. An EMT will have advantages such as Fearlessness and Toughness, a high Driving skill, and First Aid skill instead of Physician and other Medical skills.

Explorer   80 points

An explorer leads expeditions into parts unknown. There are a number of possible motivations for exploration – advancement of knowledge, fabulous wealth, or personal glory, to name a few. Pure explorers are less common in the modern day, but the character concept can easily cover hired wilderness guides, mercenary scouts, or doughty anthropologists.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 13 [30].

Advantages: Fit [5]; and 25 points from Absolute Direction [5]; Alertness [5/level]; Animal Empathy [5]; Cultural Adaptability [25]; Disease-Resistant [5]; Language Talent [2/level]; Military Rank [5/level]; Patron [Varies]; Wealth [Varies]; and replacing Fit [5] with Very Fit [15].

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Advantages: A total of 15 points from Animal Empathy [5]; Common Sense [10]; Extra Fatigue 1-3 [3/level]; Fit [5]; Less Sleep [3/level]; Luck [15]; Strong Will [4/level]; and Toughness (DR 1) [10].

Disadvantages: A total of -25 points from Bowlegged [-1]; Charitable [-15]; Clueless [-10]; Easy to Read [-10]; Gullibility [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Poverty [-10]; and Truthfulness [-5].

Primary Skills: Agronomy (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-12; and either Driving (Construction Equipment) (P/A) DX+1 [4]-11 or Teamster (Horses) (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-11.

Secondary Skills: *Two* of Carpentry or Gardening, both (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Blacksmith, Mechanic (Gasoline Engine), or Weather Sense, all (M/A) IQ [2]-10; Animal Handling (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-9; or Riding (any) (P/A) DX [2]-10.

Background Skills: *One* of Fishing (M/E) IQ [1]-10; Distilling or Merchant, both (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Swimming (P/E) DX [1]-10; Guns (Rifle or Shotgun) (P/E) DX+1 [1]-11*; or Bolas or Lasso, both (P/A) DX-1 [1]-9.
* Includes +1 for IQ.

Customization Notes: Customizing this template will usually require a further expansion of the character concept; given its low cost, a farmer could also be a fertility mage, revival preacher, or stealthy poacher of the king's deer.

Journalist   50 points

A journalist is either a writer for a newspaper (respectable or otherwise) or magazine, or a TV or radio reporter. He is a natural for horror, because his job is to investigate offbeat happenings. A freelance journalist will have a far less predictable – and probably lower – income than a regularly employed reporter; however, he doesn't have to take assignments he doesn't want, and is free to investigate anything that will make a salable story. Journalists may be dedicated to the truth, to the public's right to know, or to the ancient credo: "If it bleeds, it leads."

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: A total of 20 points from Alertness [5/level]; Charisma [5/level]; Contacts (Any; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3/contact]; Imperturbable [10]; Intuition [15]; Patron (Publisher or network; provides "press pass," 9 or less) [15]; Reputation [Varies]; Serendipity [15]; Single-Minded [5]; and Strong Will [4/level].

Disadvantages: A total of -20 points from Callous [-6]; Curious [-5 to -15]; Delusions ("I'm immortal when I'm carrying a notepad, camera, microphone, etc.") [-5 to -10]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Obsession (Get the facts) [-5]; Odious Personal Habits ("Aggressive," "rude," etc.) [-5 to -10]; Reputation [Varies]; Stubbornness [-5]; Vow ("Always dig up/publish the truth") [-5]; Weirdness Magnet [-15]; and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Research (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Writing (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; and native language skill at IQ+2 [2]-15.

Secondary Skills: Speed-Reading (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; and any *two* of Area Knowledge (City) or Savoir-Faire, both (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Bard or Fast-Talk, both (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Detect Lies (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; or 2 more points in Writing.

Disadvantages: A total of -20 points from Delusions [Varies]; Duties [Varies]; Intolerance (any) [-5 or -10]; Jealousy [-10]; Loner [-5]; Megalomania [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; and Xenophilia [-5 or -15]. In the horror genre, many explorers seem to have Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Primary Skills: Survival (any) (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; and *one* of Cartography or Orienteering, both (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; or Navigation (M/H) IQ [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: *One* of Merchant or Prospecting, both (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Anthropology, Archaeology, Intelligence Analysis, Naturalist, or Strategy, all (M/H) IQ [4]-12; or Linguistics (M/VH) IQ-1 [4]-11; and *one* of Administration, Language (any), or Leadership, all (M/A) IQ [2]-12; or Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ [1]-12; and a total of 3 points in Cooking, First Aid, Gesture, or Scrounging, all (M/E); Animal Handling or Packing, both (M/H); Guns (Rifle) (P/E); Boating, Climbing, Lasso, or Riding (any), all (P/A); or any primary or secondary skill.

Customization Notes: In a campaign with space travel, add the following secondary skill options: Astrogation or Xenobiology (any), both (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Planetology (any) or Xenology, both (M/H) IQ [4]-12.

Farmer   25 points

The isolated rural inhabitant who confronts supernatural phenomena may find only misunderstanding among fellow PCs. Playing a farmer requires a worldview different from that of most urban gamers. A love of the land and an acceptance of any legends attached to it are paramount. In more urbanized settings, city folk may distrust farmers or see them as "backward rednecks."

Background Skills: *One* of Criminology, Shadowing, or Streetwise, all (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; History, Law, or Literature, all (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; or Conspiracy Theory (M/VH) IQ-3 [1]-10; plus a total of 4 points in Computer Operation (M/E); Electronics Operation (Communications), Photography, or Video Production, all (M/A); Typing (P/E); or Driving (Automobile) (P/A).

Customization Notes: On-camera TV personalities tend to have Attractive or better appearance and Voice; on-air radio reporters often have Voice. For a photojournalist, switch the places of Photography and Writing skill on the template, and replace the additional native language skill with Acute Vision +1. This template is also suitable, with tweaking, for "fringe investigators" such as conspiracy theorists and UFOlogists, as well for the less rugged breed of P.I.

See *Writer* (pp. 16-17) for another template suitable for freelance journalists.

Mystic   85 points

This is actually *two,* closely related templates (both of which cost 85 points):

Practitioner

An actual practitioner of some arcane and preternatural art. Psychics who find missing children, astrologers, palm readers, spiritual healers, and witch doctors all fall into this category, as do more sinister types such as sorcerers and pagan priests, *if their powers are genuine.* The template below describes a basic "seer," who may read tarot cards or simply gather impressions from the crime scene.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: *One* of Awareness, ESP Power 5 ("Danger Sense"), Magery 1, Oracle, or Telepathy Power 3 ("Empathy"), all [15]; plus 15 points from among Alertness [5/level]; Animal Empathy [5]; Blessed [10]; Divination Talent [5]; Intuition [15]; Luck [15]; Reawakened [10]; Religious Rank [5/level]; Serendipity [15]; and Spirit Advisor [Varies].

Disadvantages: A total of -20 points chosen from Alcoholism [-15]; Destiny [Varies]; Edgy or Paranoia [-5 or -10]; Flashbacks [-5 to -20]; Guilt Complex [-5]; Insomniac [-10 or -15]; Light Sleeper [-5]; Nightmares [-5]; Sense of Duty (To prevent bad visions from happening) [-10]; Unluckiness [-10]; and Voices [-5 to -15].

Primary Skills: *One* of Fortune Telling or Occultism, both (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-15; Astrology (M/H) IQ [4]-14; or Augury or Dreaming, both (M/VH) IQ-1 [4]-13. Spend 15 points on magic spells or psionic skills (if you possess Magery or psionic power; otherwise, spend these points on additional advantages from the list above).

Secondary Skills: A total of 9 points in Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore), Mind Block, Performance/Ritual, or Research, all (M/A); Theology (M/H); Conspiracy Theory (M/VH); or any primary skill.

Background Skills: Any *one* of Acting, Bard, Fast-Talk, Gambling, or Hidden Lore (any), all (M/A) IQ [2]-14.

Monsters as Characters

Games in which the protagonists are monsters – vampires, werewolves, ghosts, etc. – have become very popular in the last decade. The central horror of such games does not necessarily rest on the even more horrific enemies that the protagonists must face (although the "conventional" methods of horror can be useful in such situations and scenarios), but on the horror of the characters' monstrous state. Monsters-as-characters games focus on the horrors of isolation and alienation, self-hatred, and angst.

These can be powerful themes, but care must be used to prevent the campaign from becoming emotionally stale or monotonous. This can be varied by introducing other styles, or by occasionally emphasizing the paradoxical rewards of monstrousness – the beauties of the night, the glories of extra senses, and the feral joy of the hunt. Of course, if the central horror of isolation and alienation is too successfully removed, the campaign will become a more conventional "adventure" game, similar to a straight supers campaign or pulp adventure game.

In general, this style of campaigning depends on the GM to maintain a sufficiently fearsome and intricate world background. The horrific nature of everything the character perceives thus reinforces his own horrific nature: the world as metaphor for the soul. By battling the evils of the world (in suitably horrific fashion), the evils within the character's monstrous nature are also kept at bay. This interpretation can also work well with a psychological horror game (see *Psychological Horror,* p. 90).

Charlatan

Charlatans include syndicated horoscope writers, stage magicians who scrupulously call their feats "illusions," and so on. A challenging and *very* amusing character type to roleplay is the quack sorcerer, who hides his ignorance of the occult as he slips deeper and deeper over his head into a horror adventure. The template below is for the basic charlatan, soon to be in over his head.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Luck [15]; plus a total of 15 points from Ally (100-point trained accomplice; 15 or less) [15]; Ambidexterity [10]; Autotrance [5]; Charisma [5/level]; Danger Sense [15]; Double-Jointed [5]; Empathy [15]; Intuition [15]; Manual Dexterity [3/level]; Sanctity [5]; Serendipity [15]; and Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Secret (Charlatan) [-5]; plus a total of -25 points from Addiction [Varies]; Callous [-6]; Compulsive Lying [-15]; Delusion ("I have real magic powers") [-5 to -15]; Enemy (Previous victims; 9 or less) [-10]; Greed [-15]; Jealousy [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Selfish or Self-Centered [-5 or -10]; and Trickster [-15]. Alternatively, take the full -30 points as Epilepsy [-30].

Primary Skills: Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-13 and Psychology (M/H) IQ [4]-13. Spend 10 points to buy level 13+ in at least two of Fire Walking or Gesture, both (M/E); Bard, Disguise, Fortune Telling, Holdout, Intimidation, Occultism, Performance, or Snake Charming, all (M/A); Hypnotism, Theology, or Ventriloquism, all (M/H); Meditation or Breath Control, both (M/VH); or Escape or Sleight of Hand, both (P/H).

Secondary Skills: Acting (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12. Spend 4 points to buy level 12+ in at least two more of the skills listed above.

Background Skills: Spend 4 points to buy level 11+ in at least two more of the skills listed above.

Customization Notes: From the Voudun *bokors* in *GURPS Voodoo* to the refined academics in *GURPS Cabal* to the spirit mediums in *GURPS Steampunk*, the range of possible mystics is far wider than even these two templates can indicate. See those books or *GURPS Wizards* for more specific approaches to mystical heroes.

Occultist   60 points

The occultist investigates the occult and paranormal as a career. He can be a true believer in the authenticity of his field, or a researcher dedicated to disproving the supernatural – it's up to the player. Traditionally, occultists in fiction are either clear-eyed, capable "occult detectives" or sheltered, theory-minded academics.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: A total of 20 points chosen from Acute Senses (any) [2/level]; Alertness [5/level]; Awareness [15]; Common Sense [10]; Danger Sense [15]; Intuition [15]; Second Sight [5]; Serendipity [15]; Single-Minded [5]; Spirit Empathy [10]; and Tenure [5].

Disadvantages: *One* of Curious [-5], Delusions ("All tales of the occult are true!" or "All tales of the occult are false!") [-5], or Odious Personal Habit (Annoying skeptic) [-5]; plus -15 points chosen from Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Curious [-5 or -10]; Light Sleeper [-5]; Reputation (Spooky weirdo) [Varies]; Stubbornness [-5]; Weirdness Magnet [-15]; and Xenophilia [-5 or -15].

Primary Skills: Occultism (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-15 and Research (M/A) IQ [2]-14.

Secondary Skills: A total of 8 points in Electronics Operation (Sensors), Hidden Lore (any), Interrogation, Photography, or Writing, all (M/A); or Detect Lies, Forensics, or Psychology, all (M/H).

Background Skills: Any *one* of Conspiracy Theory, Psionics, Ritual Magic (any), or Thaumatology (M/VH), all IQ-3 [1]-11.

Customization Notes: This character concept has much potential overlap with academics, detectives, journalists, mystics, and writers; spending extra points on some of those templates' primary skills can produce a more focused occultist, if desired.

In a more restrictive milieu like 17th-century Salem, occultists may be forced either to have state or church backing (Legal Enforcement Powers or Religious Rank), or to keep their involvement in the paranormal a dark Secret.

Policeman   45 points

Like the detective, the policeman's fight against crime and disorder often leads to horrors beyond the mundane. The detective is traditionally more of a "lone wolf," but the policeman works implicitly as part of a hierarchy. The policeman is a more adaptable character concept; the "town watch" or "aediles" existed for centuries before logic and observation were actively applied to crime solving. The detective uses brains where the policeman uses guts and organization. A good police force will have both detectives and policemen, and so might a good horror party. A policeman has the force of law behind him. Unfortunately, he loses this when he leaves his jurisdiction, and cannot become *professionally* involved in an investigation unless a crime is suspected.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [10]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: A total of 20 points in Alertness [5/level]; Contacts (Street; skill 12, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [1/contact]; Fearlessness [2/level]; Fit [5]; Legal Enforcement Powers* [5 to 15]; Strong Will [4/level]; and +1 or +2 to any attribute [10 or 20].

Disadvantages: A total of -25 points from Addiction (Tobacco) [-5]; Bad Temper [-10]; Bully [-10]; Callous [-6]; Cannot Harm Innocents [-10]; Dependents [Varies]; Duty (To force)* [-15]; Guilt Complex [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Intolerance (any) [-5 or -10]; Odious Personal Habit ("Authoritarian" or "sloppy") [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Secret (Corrupt) [Varies]; Sense of Duty [-5 to -10]; Stubbornness [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Beat) (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-13; Area Knowledge (City) (M/E) IQ [1]-11; Brawling (P/E) DX+1 [2]-11; Criminology (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-10; Guns (Pistol) (P/E) DX+3 [4]-13†; Guns (Shotgun) (P/E) DX+1 [1]-11†; Law (opt. spec. in criminal law/procedure) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-8/14; Law Enforcement (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Wrestling (P/A) DX [2]-10; Writing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; *one* of Shortsword (P/A) DX [2]-10 or Tonfa (P/H) DX-1 [2]-9; *one* of Bicycling or Motorcycle, both (P/E) DX+1 [2]-11, or Driving (Automobile) or Riding (Horse), both (P/A) DX [2]-10.

Secondary Skills: Climbing (P/A) DX-1 [1]-9; Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Holdout (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Intimidation (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Running (P/H; HT) HT-1 [2]-9; Stealth (P/A) DX-2 [1/2]-8; Streetwise (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Computer Operation (M/E); Administration, Armoury (Small Arms), Electronics Operation (any), Interrogation, Research, or Shadowing, all (M/A); Animal Handling, Detect Lies, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Forensics, Psychology, or Tactics, all (M/H); or Guns (any)† or Shield, both (P/E).

* Serving police officers *must* have at least 5 points of Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points for services like the FBI; 15 points for agencies like the Gestapo) and a -15-point Duty; ex-cops, bounty hunters, and rent-a-cops have neither.

† Includes +1 for IQ.

Customization Notes: This template represents a typical big-city beat cop, but could be used for a county sheriff, federal agent, ex-cop, or corporate rent-a-cop with suitable choices of advantages and skills. In a 100-point campaign, *heroic* cops will be much more competent, with additional DX and IQ, advantages such as Combat Reflexes, Higher Purpose, and Intuition, and high Fast-Draw and Guns skills, martial-arts skills, and a broader and deeper collection of background skills. See *GURPS Cops* for detailed coverage of policemen.

Retired Military   85 points

Who better to fight the forces of evil than a warrior? Soldiers are as universal as clergy and criminals, and for much the same reasons. From the noble knight to the battle-scarred and cynical veteran, the soldier is on the front lines against the horrors of many a game world. This template assumes a *retired* soldier; those on active duty will have a hard time getting leave to go investigate haunted houses.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Advantages: A total of 20 points in Combat Reflexes [15]; Courtesy Rank [1/level]; Fearlessness [2/level]; Fit or Very Fit [5 or 15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Reputation (Decorated) [Varies]; Strong Will [4/level]; and Toughness (DR 1) [10]. NCOs and officers may find Charisma [5/level] and Voice [10] useful. Pilots may also choose from 3D Spatial Sense [10]; Absolute Direction [5]; Acceleration Tolerance [10]; and Acute Vision [2/level].

Disadvantages: A total of -30 points in Bloodlust [-10]; Callous [-6]; Chummy [-5]; Duty (Reactivation; 6 or less) [-2] or (9 or less) [-5]; Fanaticism (Patriotism) [-15]; Flashbacks [-5 to -20]; Intolerance (Enemy race or culture) [-5]; Nightmares [-5]; Odious Personal Habit ("By the book") [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Post-Combat Shakes [-5]; Sense of Duty (Comrades in arms or command) [-5]; and Workaholic [-5]. A wounded vet may have a physical disadvantage such as Lame [Varies], One Eye [-15], or One Hand [-15].

Primary Skills: Any *one* specialty of Gunner (P/A) DX+2 [2]-15* *or* Guns (P/E) DX+3 [2]-16*; NBC Warfare (M/A) IQ [2]-12; and Savoir-Faire (Military) (M/E) IQ [1]-12.

Secondary Skills: Tactics (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10, plus a set of specialty skills such as:

Air Force Pilot/Combat Aviation: Aviation (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Gunner (Cannon or Machine Gun) (P/A) DX+1 [1]-14*; Gunner (Guided Missile) (P/A) DX+1 [1]-14*; and Pilot (Heavy Airplane, Helicopter, High-Performance Airplane, or Light Airplane) (P/A) DX+1 [4]-14.

Airborne: Brawling (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-12; Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Guns (Grenade Launcher) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-15*; Guns (LAW) (P/A) DX+2 [1]-15*; Hiking (P/A; HT) HT-1 [1]-10; Knife (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-12; No-Landing Extraction (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Parachuting (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14; and Stealth (P/A) DX [2]-13.

Armor: Armoury (Vehicular Weaponry) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Driving (Tracked) (P/A) DX [2]-13; Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Gunner (Cannon) (P/A) DX+2 [2]-15*; Gunner (Machine Gun) (P/A) DX+1 [1]-14*; and Mechanic (Gas Turbine or Diesel Engine) (M/A) IQ [2]-12. Also use this for mechanized infantry vehicle crews.

Artillery: Armoury (Artillery) (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Driving (Heavy Wheeled or Tracked) (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Forward Observer (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Gunner (Cannon or Mortar) (P/A) DX+2 [2]-15*.

Combat Engineer: Demolition (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Driving (Construction Equipment or Tracked) (P/A) DX [2]-13; Engineer (Combat) (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-13.

Infantry: Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Driving (Tracked or Heavy Wheeled) (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12 *or* Hiking (P/A; HT) HT-1 [1]-10; Mechanic (Gasoline Engine) IQ-1 [1]-11; Spear (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Throwing (P/H) DX-2 [1]-11; and 4 more points in Gunner and Guns skills such as Gunner (Machine Gun or Mortar)* or Guns (Grenade Launcher, LAW, Light Automatic, or Rifle)*.

Background Skills: Armoury (Small Arms) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]
-11; Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A)
IQ-1 [1]-11; First Aid (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Navigation (M/H)
IQ-2 [1]-10 *or* Orienteering (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Survival
(any) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; plus 4 points in any of Armoury
(any), Electronics Operation (any), or Mechanic (any), all
(M/A); Judo (P/H); or *any* of the specialty secondary
skills above. NCOs and officers may also spend these
points on Administration or Leadership, both (M/A), or to
raise Savoir-Faire (Military) or Tactics.

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Customization Notes: Soldiers vary even more than mystics
in specialty, background, and skill sets. *GURPS Warriors,* and
the various military templates in the *GURPS Traveller* books,
provide more customized and specific soldier templates. For
"elite forces" templates, see *GURPS Special Ops.* This tem-
plate is geared toward a modern-day milieu; adjust skills
appropriately for other settings.

Scientist   70 points

The man of science who seriously pursues occult phe-
nomena will usually be scorned by his comrades, so it is a
lonely job. Still, some institutes (both official and covert) study
paranormal events such as ESP and magic. An alternative to
the occult scientist is the skeptic who will seek natural expla-
nations for everything he encounters, no matter how unusual.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: A total of 20 points from Alertness [5/level];
Collected or Imperturbable [5 or 10]; Higher Purpose [5];
Lightning Calculator [5]; Manual Dexterity [3/level];
Mathematical Ability [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Status
[5/level]; Strong Will [4/level]; Tenure [5]; Wealth [10 or
20]; and +1 IQ [15].

Disadvantages: Curious [-5]; and a total of -20 points from
Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Age [-3/level]; Bad Sight [-10];
Clueless [-10]; Code of Honor (Professional) [-5]; Delu-
sions (Crazy theory) [-5]; Fanaticism [-15]; Hard of Hear-
ing [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Low Empathy [-15]; Oblivious
or Callous [-3 or -6]; Obsession (Proving theory) [-5 to
-15]; Poverty [-10]; Shyness [-5 to -15]; Stubbornness
[-5]; and Workaholic [-5]. A *mad* scientist may possess
Overconfidence [-10] – or even Megalomania [-10]!

Primary Skills: Either *two* of Anthropology, Archaeology,
Artificial Intelligence, Astronomy, Botany, Chemistry,
Computer Programming, Cryptology, Ecology, Geology,
Mathematics, Metallurgy, Naturalist, Paleontology,
Physician, Physics, Psychology, or Zoology, all (M/H)
IQ+4 [12]-18; or *one* of Biochemistry, Genetics, Linguis-
tics, Nuclear Physics, Paraphysics, Physiology, or Psion-
ics, all (M/VH) IQ+4 [24]-18.

Secondary Skills: Research (M/A) IQ [2]-14; Writing (M/A)
IQ [2]-14; and *one* of Computer Operation (M/E) IQ [1]
-14; or Electronics Operation (any) or Mechanic (any),
both (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13.

Background Skills: Any *one* of Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ [1]-14;
or Language (any), Leadership, or Teaching, all (M/A)
IQ-1 [1]-13.

Customization Notes: Be sure to customize your scientist to
reflect the knowledge available in the setting. In an openly
magical setting (or a secret facility in a hidden-magic
world), a scientist might possess Thaumatology. In pre-1920
(and cinematic post-1920) settings, most scientists will pos-
sess some amount of Engineer skill, and (cinematically) the
Gadgeteer advantage. Modern gadgeteers will likely have
some Electronics skill, too. The Eidetic Memory, High Tech-
nology, and Intuitive Mathematician advantages, and the
Science! and Weird Science skills, are suitable in *any* cine-
matic setting.

Writer   45 points

Writers of horror stories, general fiction, and non-fiction
all make good candidates for horror characters. All writers do
research and investigative work when doing a project; this can
lead them into adventures. Writers are less responsible than
journalists, and less wary than academics. This can also lead
them into adventures. The horror writer may find his stories
coming true, an unsettling prospect in and of itself. Another
option is the writer of skeptical criticism whose job it is to
debunk supernatural phenomena.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Literacy [0, 5, or 10]; plus enough further advan-
tages to total 20 points, chosen from Alcohol Tolerance
[5]; Higher Purpose (Artistic truth and experience) [5];
Intuition [15]; Less Sleep [3/level]; Reputation [Varies];
Sensitive [5]; Serendipity [15]; Single-Minded [5];
Unfazeable [15]; and Versatile [5].

Disadvantages: A total of -20 points from Addiction [Varies];
Alcoholism [-15]; Bad Sight [-10]; Combat Paralysis
[-15]; Compulsive Behavior (Bibliomania) [-5]; Delu-
sions [Varies]; Jealousy [-10]; Laziness [-10]; Loner or
Reclusive [-5 or -10]; Oblivious [-3]; Poverty [-10 or

-15]; Stubbornness [-5]; Truthfulness [-5]; and Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Primary Skills: Research (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Writing (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; and native language skill at IQ+2 [2]-14.

Secondary Skills: Speed-Reading (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; *one of* Computer Operation (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Typing (P/E) DX+1 [2]-11; or Calligraphy (P/A) DX [2]-10; and *two of* Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Bard or Poetry, both (M/A) IQ [2]-12; or History, Literature, or Psychology, all (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Knowledge, Professional, or Scientific skills as personal subject specialties; e.g., Criminology, Hidden Lore, or Occultism, all (M/A); or Conspiracy Theory (M/VH).

Customization Notes: The writer traditionally differs from the detective and the journalist by not actively pursuing a story on the street. Adding skills from other templates can produce a writer who leaves his chair and keyboard behind more often. Some writers wangle teaching jobs, or (as in Victorian England) clerical sinecures; both the Academic and Clergyman templates can be mined for possibilities.

Advantages, Disadvantages, and Skills

In a horror campaign more so than in any other kind of game, it is imperative that the players and GM get together *before* character creation to discuss supernatural advantages and disadvantages, and skills that grant access to paranormal abilities or secret knowledge. Some suggestions are given below, but in the end, the GM's word is final.

Advantages

Certain advantages either have special significance or work differently in **GURPS Horror.**

Blessed   see p. CI34

Not only *good* deities grant favors to their worshippers, of course. An individual may be "blessed" by a dark or evil deity – possibly even against his will! Those blessed by such gods, or by horrific Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, may acquire an unsavory Reputation or even worse disadvantages.

Channeling   see p. CI34

This advantage can open up great opportunities – and dangers – in a horror campaign. A channeler can learn a lot from a recent kill, possibly even including the nature or species of monster responsible. GMs who don't want to derail their investigative adventures should make sure that plenty of malevolent spirits are hanging around too-willing channelers, if only to make the player sweat before opening up his character to the unseen. (Similar caveats apply to Medium, p. CI41.) Since a spirit must otherwise spend fatigue points to speak (p. 49), it's a good idea for a party that includes a ghost to also include a channeler. This lets the undead PC participate more meaningfully in the campaign.

Clerical Investment   see pp. B19, CI22

Note that this advantage gives no special powers per se when combating horrific supernatural beings. True Faith (p. CI47) is needed to use faith as a "weapon." Clerical Investment does give access to useful skills such as Exorcism, Occultism, and Theology, however, and may potentially give access to consecrated ground, holy water, church records, or blasphemous tomes locked away from the less-godly laymen.

Contacts   see p. CI22

By building and using Contacts, players can help co-create the world of a horror campaign. GMs should reward players by making their Contacts useful – even an unreliable or foolish Contact can provide valuable clues accidentally, or advance the story by revealing something that turns out to be a trap. Contacts also make great victims of the horror, since the PCs have a previous relationship with them, adding extra "reality" to their death. (The GM should replace murdered Contacts as soon as practicable without charging extra points.)

Two types of Contacts are especially appropriate for horror campaigns:

Collector Contacts. Dealers in (or producers of) rare or collectible items, many of which might have occult significance. In a world with a pervasive supernatural content, there will be an "occult collectibles" market, just as our world has many collectors of serial-killer memorabilia. Specific items might include antiques, old magical equipment, funerary jewelry, weapons, books, or magical herbs. Collector Contacts can provide information about items, other collectors, upcoming conventions, who needs cash fast, and who always seems to find the best goods. Base cost depends on the collector's network and stock: 1 point for a bottom-feeder or someone in a small market (effective skill 12), 2 points for a major broker (effective skill 15), 3 points for a respected authority in the field or the main player in a large market (effective skill 18), or 4 points for the undisputed top collector (effective skill 21).

Supernatural Contacts. Figures within the "supernatural community" of the campaign world – both supernatural creatures (and their minions) and those who oppose them. In the world of **GURPS Cabal,** for example, this includes Cabalists and "clued-in" anti-magic operatives. In the Shadow War of **GURPS Voodoo,** this would be Voudun practitioners, Lodge magicians, etc. In a world where a secret clique of vampires rules things from behind the scenes, this consists of the vampires, their servitors, and vampire-hunters. Base cost depends on the level of knowledge and influence within the supernatural community: 1 point for a "street level" mage or monster with few contacts of his own (effective skill 12), 2 points for a "wired-in" member (effective skill 15) of either a supernatural group (e.g., an Adept or higher in the Cabal) or its opponents (e.g., an FBI agent on the "uncanny murder and UFO conspiracy" beat), or 4 points if the Contact is a major figure in the campaign world (effective skill 21; e.g., the vampire lord of a city, the head of Project Sandman, the high priest of the Lord Beneath the Ice).

Fearlessness

This advantage (and similar advantages, such as Collected, Composed, and Imperturbable) may be inappropriate in horror campaigns where the intention is both to create fear within the players and to depict its effects on the characters. Games of psychological or cosmic horror require the characters to be genuinely terrified, where pulp horror or conventional "monster hunting" games can take full advantage of a "fearless vampire hunter." As with any element of the game, consider whether this advantage works for or against the mood and theme you are trying to construct and maintain. The Sanity-Blasting Fright Check rules (p. 98) may also serve as balancer or corrective in such a game.

Patron (Secret)

In games of conspiratorial horror, or even more conventional campaigns involving a secretive occult or supernatural world beneath or inside our own, PCs may have a "false-flagged" Patron. The heroes may assume, for example, that they work for the CIA, but they actually report to a reclusive vampire who has pulled the strings of the federal government since 1923. If a player has paid points for this advantage, however, the GM should leave the onus of forcibly altering the relationship on the player; a secret Patron, even a supernatural or horrific one, will not turn against a valuable tool without provocation.

Strong Will

This is a natural gift of both supernatural villains and those who would oppose them. Its more general usefulness counteracts some of the concerns with its narrower cousin, Fearlessness (see above), but a GM looking for material in the contrast between weak humanity and implacable monsters may need to watch this advantage closely. Of course, for GMs running games of monster-hunting special forces, or games with monsters as the PC party, this advantage will likely be *de rigueur*.

True Faith

True Faith is useless against Things Man Was Not Meant To Know in most "cosmic horror" games, predicated as they are on the notion that mankind and his gods are meaningless specks in the void. In such campaigns, ghouls, vampires, and other undead may exist – and be equally immune to True Faith. GMs should discourage players from buying completely useless advantages, where possible, without giving away too many surprises in the plot.

Unfazeable

Like Fearlessness and Strong Will, this advantage may work against the mood of some horror games. (This is especially true because players who truly roleplay this "advantage" may well wind up with dead characters!) If the GM allows it in a full-bore horror game, it should cost at least 20 points. It is, however, especially appropriate for monsters-as-characters games; the GM might choose to call for Fright Checks against torch-wielding mobs or angry FBI agents armed with activated-charcoal bullets, and the Unfazeable vampire is the one who doesn't flinch or duck behind the

sarcophagus. Another possibility is to allow a -50% limitation, "Only vs. familiar horrors," reducing the cost to 8 points. A callous former mercenary might be Unfazeable at the sight of a bloody corpse, or even a zombie ("It's just a walking corpse.") but a horrific Thing From Beyond or giant spectral rat might still give him the jim-jams. In campaigns using Sanity-Blasting Fright Checks (p. 98), this advantage provides only a +4 bonus, taken *before* the number is halved.

World Sight

Like Channeling and Medium, the shamanic power of World Sight may be something of a mixed blessing in horror settings. If the spirit world darkens with the material one, the spirits may demand more horrific sacrifices from their servants . . .

New Advantages

The following paranormal advantages can add spice to a horror campaign. Players should seek the GM's permission before purchasing any of these traits; indeed, many of them are really only suitable for NPC monsters.

Secret Advantages and Disadvantages

The protagonists of horror adventures are often encountering the supernatural for the first time. They have no idea how it will affect them. One way to simulate this is to assign characters *secret* advantages and disadvantages – qualities that even their players don't know about. Such secret traits can often tie in with character hooks (see pp. 25-26).

A useful technique is to balance secret advantages against secret disadvantages, which will have no net effect on the character's point total. In this case, *don't* count additional points of disadvantages or quirks toward the campaign's disadvantage limit (if any) or the -5-point limit on quirks. The GM need not give all PCs secret traits worth the same number of points (or even give all PCs secret traits!); this helps preserve the uncertainty.

Secret advantages and disadvantages should be chosen from qualities that the subject would not have discovered previously. A person could easily have Magery or Magic Resistance, psionic power, or Animal Empathy without ever realizing it. Previously unknown disadvantages might include certain Phobias (especially Squeamishness) or even a Split Personality. Someone might be a Weirdness Magnet all his life and never figure it out. And anyone might have an old family Patron or Enemy (such as a vampire – or even an entire supernatural conspiracy, such as the Cabal).

When a secret quality comes into play, *don't* explain exactly what is happening. Just give a vague hint: "Sorry, Bill, you missed your Fright Check after all. That corpse really got to you . . ." There are some advantages that a person might *never* know about, such as Immunity to Disease – if he thinks about it at all, he thinks he's been lucky.

Body of Swarm   60 points

You can become a swarm (see p. B143) of gnat- to rat-sized bodies. Your swarm's damage (from biting, stinging, etc.) equals thrust damage for your ST; its Move equals your character's normal Move. Your constituent bodies can communicate instantly and work in a coordinated fashion over a one-mile distance. Additional range can be purchased per the Mindshare distance table on p. CI61.

Your swarm has full Injury Tolerance (see p. CI58): it has no vital areas, does not bleed, and treats cutting and impaling attacks as crushing damage. It is dispersed by hits equal to your HT. A dispersed swarm is effectively "unconscious" and unable to act in concert. A determined foe might contain and continue to damage your dispersed bodies; should you reach -HT, enough of your bodies have been killed to dissociate your consciousness and kill you!

Special Enhancement: Flying Swarm. Your component bodies can fly at twice your normal Move. +50%.

Special Enhancement: Humanoid Form. You can assemble your component bodies into any vaguely manlike form, giving you a limited ability to "morph" (although you will not pass close inspection). +50%.

Special Enhancement: Insect Form. Your component bodies are so small that they can eventually penetrate all but special protection. You can penetrate normal clothing in 2 turns, unsealed armor in 5 turns. For combat effects, see p. B143. This lets you pass through insect-sized cracks, keyholes, ventilation grids, etc. +25%.

Special Limitation: Always On. Your normal form is that of a swarm. -40%.

Special Limitation: Tenuous Form. You must make a conscious effort to maintain cohesion. Whenever you take damage or have to roll vs. HT, make a Will roll. If you fail, your body collapses into a normal swarm of its component creatures. You must concentrate for seconds equal to the damage taken, or the amount by which the HT roll failed, to reform your body. Additional damage to the swarm while you are reforming adds to the total time needed. -50%.
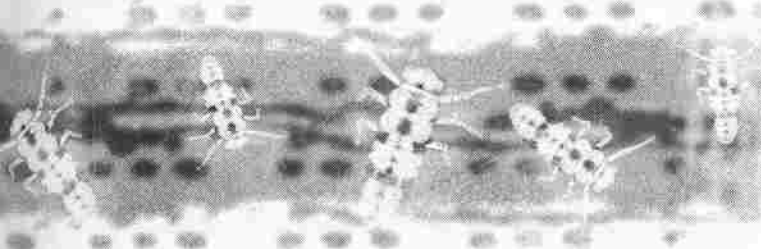
Dream Travel   3 points/level

Dream Travel is a single-skill psionic power that allows access to the dreamworld. When you are asleep, your dream self can enter the dreamworld and operate there. Your consciousness leaves your physical body behind, just as with Astral Projection (pp. P10-11).

There are several important differences between Dream Travel and Astral Projection. First, Dream Travel only works when you are sleeping normally (at the GM's discretion, certain drugs or sleep rhythms may enhance Dream Travel). Second, your dream self only travels to the dreamworld; it cannot travel in the physical world (for that, take the Astral Projection

power). Finally, your dream self is unaware of what is happening to your physical body while you are "out."

Your dream self has your normal abilities in the dream world, along with PD equal to Power/2 (maximum 6) and DR equal to Power/4. You may also add half your Power to attempts to manipulate the dream world using skills such as Lucid Dreaming, and to contested Will or skill rolls against dream opponents.

Dream Travel *skill* is a standard Mental/Hard psi skill.

Ghost Form   100 points

See *Ghosts in the Game* (pp. 48-53) for a description of this complex advantage.

Independent Body Parts   35 points

Your limbs continue to fight after they've been severed. Cinematic zombies, unwholesome sorcerers, and creatures made up of undifferentiated masses of protoplasm (or worms, or bacteria) often have this ability.

Cutting attacks that would normally cripple a hand or foot (damage over HT/3) will separate it from the arm or leg without injury. Similarly, cutting attacks that would normally cripple an arm or leg (damage over HT/2) will detach it from the torso without harm. The severed limb falls to the ground and starts fighting as the ally of its owner, who *does* suffer the usual crippling effects (p. B127). It may be reattached later (see below). If the limb's owner is killed, the limb lives on as an independent entity that will pursue and attack its former owner's enemies.

Non-cutting damage, or cutting damage to already-severed body parts, will damage parts normally, but each part is treated as a separate entity. Hands and feet have their owner's HT and 1/3 his hit points (round up), while arms and legs have his HT and 1/2 his hit points (round up). Damage to limbs is never applied to body hit points for creatures with this advantage. Other abilities are as follows:

Arm: Has its owner's DX. Wiggles along with a Move of ST/4 and a Dodge of DX/2 (round down). It has full ST for striking and strangling, but only ST/4 for grappling or dragging things around. It can attack a foe in its hex (roll vs. Combat/Weapon skill to hit), but can only attack his feet or legs if he is standing. An arm with a hand can punch, grapple, or use a one-handed weapon at -2 damage; one without a hand can only club foes (treat as a punch). A disembodied arm is attacked at -2.

Leg: A leg with a foot has a DX equal to its owner's DX-2. It hops along at its owner's Move-3 and dodges at his DX/2 (round down). It cannot grapple or wield weapons, but may leap in the air and kick foes, using the owner's unarmed combat skills and damage. Treat a leg without a foot as an arm without a hand (above) and -2 DX. Animated legs are attacked at -2.

Hand: Has its owner's DX. It can run along on its fingers with Move and Dodge equal to DX/2 (round down). Its only effective attack is to crawl up someone's body and strangle. Treat this a grapple attempt (p. B111); use the rules for strangling (p. B112) on successive turns. The hand may use its owner's *full* ST for this attack only. Hands are targeted at -4.

Foot: A foot has a DX equal to its owner's DX-2. Its Move and Dodge are 1. Its only effective attack is to trip a moving person. Anyone moving through a foot's hex or leaving close combat with a foot must win a Quick Contest of DX with the foot or fall down. A foot is targeted at -4.

When an undead body part is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, it is crippled and can no longer attack. Roll against HT to see if the injury is permanent (see p. B129). Body parts can be reattached by holding them in place for 1 minute. Crippled body parts can be reattached if the injury is temporary or lasting, but remain crippled. Permanently crippled body parts are lost forever.

Special Enhancement: Detachable Head. You can be decapitated normally (see p. CII53), but you suffer no ill effects and can reattach your head, as above. Your severed head has your DX and HT, HT/2 hit points (round up), Move 0, and Dodge 0. It is targeted at -5 in combat and can bite foes in its hex (see p. B111). Your head is your seat of consciousness; while it is detached, your body fights on as its ally, like a limb severed from the body. +15%.

Special Enhancement: Instant Reattachment. You can reattach your limbs as above, but you only have to hold them in place for one *second*. +50%.

Special Limitation: No Reattachment. Your severed limbs are animated, but can never be reattached. Cannot be combined with "Instant Reattachment" or "Reattachment Only." -60%.

Special Limitation: Reattachment Only. Your limbs can be cut off without affecting body hit points, and can be reattached as above, but are inert and lifeless on their own. -50%.

Pestilence   5 points/disease

Monsters that epitomize disease and the fear of disease may be able to infect the living with horrible plagues. This deadly (though often slow-acting) attack is an advantage for supernatural beings; "normal" people who spread disease should take Social Disease or Terminally Ill (p. CI84) instead. Each disease carried is a separate advantage; see pp. CII167-174 for ideas. Bubonic plague, rabies, leprosy, and typhoid fever are all possibilities, but the GM may wish to tailor the pestilence to the campaign. A cutting-edge modern game of ecological consciousness may involve a monster that spreads Ebola or another rain-forest virus as a punishment to greedy invaders of the green Hell, while a game of psychological horror and paranoia may require an illness that affects the brain, such as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (the human form of "mad cow disease").

After suitable contact with a being that possesses Pestilence, the GM should secretly roll vs. the HT of each character. Modifiers: -3 if wounded by the carrier, +1 if merely touched, +2 otherwise. On a failed HT roll, the victim is infected with the disease, which progresses normally. If there was no direct contact with the creature, use the *Contagion* rules (p. B133) instead. Ghosts can use their power of Probability Alteration (see p. 51) to apply a penalty to the victim's HT roll and improve his chances of becoming infected. Multiple diseases require multiple HT rolls. Immunity to Disease protects completely.

Victims of *undead* who have Pestilence and either Dominance or Infectious Attack will become undead themselves if their HT ever reaches 0 due to a disease contracted this way.

Spirit Advisor   Variable

You have a "spirit friend" who shares his wisdom with you. This may be a ghost, a manifestation of a previous incarnation, a guardian angel, or any other minor spirit. The GM roleplays the Spirit Advisor, who should be built like any other NPC (see *GURPS Spirits* for guidelines). Unlike an Ally, a Spirit Advisor is not expected to fight on your behalf; it simply provides information and advice. Most Spirit Advisors have the equivalent of Occultism-16 and may have two or three Scientific or Professional skills at a high level. Spirits may also have useful amounts of Area Knowledge, or the ability to perceive the imperceptible. The GM can use the Spirit Advisor to give warnings, clues, and other valuable information. Generally, the advice of the spirit is good, although it may be colored by the entity's priorities and prejudices.

The cost of this advantage is 10 points, modified by the *Frequency of Appearance* modifiers on p. B23.

Spirit Invulnerability   50 points

This advantage is available only to ghosts and other spectral beings or spirits with the Materialization ability (pp. 51-52). Spirits that have it cannot be killed by damage to their physical form; reducing them to 0 HT simply forces them back into spirit form and prevents them from assuming material form again until their lost HT would have fully recovered. When the ghost's physical form is destroyed, it automatically returns to spirit form with full normal HT and suffers no ill effects. This applies only to damage from physical sources. Damage that directly affects the mind or spirit remains.

The cost of this advantage can be reduced by taking Vulnerabilities (see p. CI106). One level of Vulnerability negates the advantage with respect to that form of attack, while additional levels do extra damage as usual.

Terror
30 points + 10 points/-1 to Fright Check

Others are struck by irrational, supernatural fear in your presence. This can take various forms: a psychic attack, an aura of dread, a face that looks like a dead loved one to everyone who views it, etc. Anyone who sees you must make a Fright Check immediately; a new roll is required if you reappear after an absence of at least one hour.

Modifiers: The modifiers on p. B93 and pp. 96-98; +1 per appearance after the first within 24 hours. Penalties can be purchased for 10 points per -1. Multiple beings with Terror cause *one* Fright Check at the highest penalty among them, with an additional -1 for 5 creatures, -2 for 10, -3 for 20, -4 for 50, and -5 for 100 or more.

Special Limitation: Chilling Touch. You cause fear as outlined above, but only in those you touch. Spirits can take this ability, and need not materialize to use it. Neither PD nor DR protects against this touch. -20%.

Special Limitation: Terror can normally be turned off to let you engage in social activities. If you can't turn it off, you have Horrific Appearance (p. CI80) *instead* of Terror, and suffer a -6 reaction penalty at all times. This is a disadvantage worth -30 points.

Disadvantages

Horror characters are traditionally a maimed, diseased, and otherwise disadvantaged lot. For some more possible uses of disadvantages as character hooks, see pp. 25-26.

Addiction
see p. B30

A large part of running a horror game is taking a part of normal human existence and adding a scary or disturbing supernatural component. In some cases, such as addictions, normal human existence can become scary and disturbing all on its own. Psychological horror games and games in which monstrous PCs battle their own inner compulsions to retain shards of humanity can both benefit from some prominent addictions, either in PCs or main NPCs.

Delusions
see p. B32

Two Delusions are especially appropriate (and amusing) in a horror campaign:

💭 "The supernatural is so much hogwash. There is no such thing as a ghost (monster, demon, whatever), so I have nothing to fear in this graveyard (decrepit old house, dank and foul-smelling cavern, wherever)."

💭 "The supernatural is everywhere. There are ghosts in my attic, gremlins in my car, zombies in my closet, and vampires in my cellar."

As Mulder and Scully proved for eight seasons, a party with both Delusions represented is in for some grand roleplaying.

False Memories

This kind of Delusion is common in psychological and conspiratorial horror. False memories usually result from alien abduction, brainwashing, telepathic manipulation, or good, old-fashioned "hysterical amnesia" in which the mind crafts its own "screen memory" to block out something too horrible to recall. Characters may begin the game with false memories, which the GM may wish to handle similarly to Amnesia (p. CI86). Point values are assigned based on the importance of the "real memory" the false one covers up.

Trivial Memory. This is the memory of one, relatively minor incident; e.g., you missed a test, your third-grade teacher's name was Ms. Weishaupt, or you owned a tin model of the Roswell saucer as a kid in 1937. Recalling the truth may make some things snap into place, or confuse the issue further, but it won't involve a major trauma. *-1 point.*

Meaningful Memory. This is the kind of memory that could affect your life; e.g., you fell asleep once on guard duty, you own a different car than the one on your title papers, or you had a brief affair with a necromancer. Recalling the truth will likely affect your behavior (drink more coffee on guard duty, check your car for other changes, stay out of bars near cemeteries), but it won't keep you from functioning normally and it won't derail your "normal life." *-5 points.*

Significant Memory. Memories like these deal with major events or people in your life; e.g., you were abducted by UFOs, you had a best friend who served with you in 'Nam, there was no Gulf War, or your job or college career was vastly different from your recollection. Recalling the truth will change your life if you let it, but will not shatter it completely. *-10 points.*

Crucial Memory. These memories go to the core of your being; e.g., you are actually a robot, your wife isn't who you married, or you sold your first-born son to Moloch. Recalling the truth will radically rescript your existence in almost all respects. *-15 points.*

Once you discover a false memory, the GM will replace your Delusion with disadvantages worth as many points as the Delusion (Guilt Complex, Obsession, and Sense of Duty seem like good starts).

Phobias
see pp. B35-36, CI93

Here are some more, suitably horrific things to be afraid of:

Being buried alive (taphephobia): A common fear in Victorian times and earlier, and still common today in nations with less-than-rigorous embalming and funerary practices. Taphephobes will not willingly go underground, and must make a Will roll even to enter a basement! *-5/-10 points.*

Ghosts (spectrophobia): This fear will kick in not only during actual encounters with the spectral undead, but also in "haunted houses" (genuine or not), cemeteries, and similar environments. *-5/-10 points.*

> The fact that the object of a fear does not actually exist does not rule out phobic reactions to it.

Infinity (apeirophobia): An eminently suitable terror for a cosmic horror game! It might, in practice, resemble a weirdly selective form of agoraphobia. Apeirophobes will flee from the implications of modern cosmology, astrophysics, and even planetary geology; the GM can require either a Fright Check or a straight -4 modifier to use such skills. *-5/-10 points.*

Madness (dementophobia): A dementophobe will not only fear obviously insane people, but constantly obsess about any signs of approaching insanity in himself. Prior to the 1920s, many people believed in congenital or inherited insanity; evidence of insane ancestors will trigger a Fright Check (at -4 in situations where inherited insanity is scientifically or culturally accepted). Some dementophobes routinely test themselves for incipient mania; others deny, loudly and often, any sign of mental instability in themselves. *-10/-20 points.*

Mutilation (traumatophobia): Any mutilated person or object will trigger a Fright Check in a traumatophobe; *being* mutilated triggers one at -6, and can eventually bring on additional disadvantages, from Callous to Delusions ("I'm just fine" or "The doctors did this to me"). Fright Checks are also required in any situation involving heavy machinery, potentially maiming combat, etc. *-10/-20 points.*

Poisoning (toxiphobia): One of the most common fears in Western culture. Reactions range from obsessive concern about food or drink to manic efforts to filter, purify, and secure anything ingested. In some campaigns, vampires will trigger Fright Checks for toxiphobes; see *Poisoning Phobias* (p. 48) for details. *-15/-30 points.*

Rats (zemmiphobia): A vampire who commands rats will likely notice any phobic reaction and send his swarms to torment his victim. Vampires are very, very cruel that way. *-5/-10 points.*

Sex (coitophobia): Some vampires will trigger coitophobic attacks, as will succubi. Coitophobes will also react badly in overly sexualized contexts such as dance clubs, strip joints, or music video channels. They are, however, immune to conventional seduction attempts. *-10/-20 points.*

The point value of any Phobia should be adjusted to suit the campaign. Bedouins with thalassophobia (fear of the ocean) in a *GURPS Arabian Nights* campaign aren't as badly hampered as thalassophobic pirates in a *GURPS Swashbucklers* game! As well, the fact that the object of a fear does not actually exist does not rule out phobic reactions to it, or to things reminiscent of it – spectrophobes in a setting with no real ghosts will still react badly to sudden gusts of wind, "cold spots" in the house, or dimly seen reflections in a window.

Skills

Some skills merit special consideration in a horror campaign.

Occultism   see p. B61

This skill is central to a horror campaign. After all, the purpose of horror roleplaying is to match wits with the supernatural, the uncanny – to wit, the occult. The most common use for Occultism is to determine the heroes' knowledge of legends and folklore relating to the supernatural phenomena they are investigating. GMs should apply penalties for obscure legends, or those that deviate from more common legends in subtle ways. The roll can also be used to allow the investigators to "deduce" the nuances of a particular legend by recalling trivia about similar legends. For example, the GM might give the following information to a group facing a vampire, if they make the appropriate Occultism rolls:

Occultism at +5: Vampires don't like daylight.

At +3: Vampires don't like garlic.

At base skill level: Vampires can only cross running water at noon or at midnight.

At -2: The appearance of vampires worldwide appears to be governed by a cycle relating to sunspots and the price of gold, and it's time for trouble . . .

At -4: The vampire the PCs are pursuing appears to be the one described in a certain 18th-century tome, and here are some of his personal likes and dislikes . . .

Remember that *everyone* has an Occultism default of IQ-6. Thus, an investigator without Occultism would get the information above with a successful roll vs. IQ-1, IQ-3, IQ-6, IQ-8, or IQ-10, respectively. A badly failed Occultism roll can result in dangerous misinformation: "Uh-oh, maybe garlic *doesn't* bother werewolves . . ."

A Hobby skill (see p. B54) pertaining to comic books, horror movies, science fiction/fantasy, etc. may be used in place of Occultism for information about common monsters such as vampires and zombies; however, this information could be erroneous if the local legend differs from popular concepts. Of course, an SF fan would know nothing about Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, whereas an actual occultist might.

Finally, it is important to remember that, just as the players may not know everything their characters know (which is

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Disadvantages From Fright Checks

One of the biggest creative challenges for the GM is to determine just what sort of psychological burden to place on a character who has been badly frightened. It isn't easy; recommendations from the players are welcome. Often, the most diabolical suggestions will come from other players, who delight in thinking up gruesome fates – as long as none of it happens to *their* character.

Make sure that the newly acquired disadvantage is connected to the frightening event in some way. Remember, the human mind is capable of some very convoluted reasoning to avoid unpleasant realizations.

Example: Lt. Harry Collier is in a downtown alley at 11 p.m. to meet an informant. He hears muffled screams around the corner, and runs to investigate. He arrives just in time to see a 12-foot-tall, tentacled abomination drag a decapitated wino down an open manhole. Failing his Fright Check in a big way, Collier acquires a mild Phobia or other disadvantage. Collier's player decides to treat it this way: the monster preys on street people, who have no money; the way to stay away from the monster is to keep as much money as possible. So Collier adds the disadvantage Miserliness.

The next night, Lt. Collier is poking around that same alley for some clues (we never specified Collier's IQ, but it must not be very high . . .), when he discovers the half-eaten body of another unfortunate transient, stuffed in a Dumpster. This calls for another Fright Check, and Collier fails again. This time, because the smell of rotting garbage was so strong at the time of the shock, Collier makes a subconscious association between the two. This does not translate directly into a fear of garbage – that would be too easy. Another player suggests saddling Collier with the Odious Personal Habit that everything he comes into daily contact with be spotlessly clean and, if possible, disinfected. Lt. Collier becomes the only detective on the force to take three showers a day.

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why skills like Occultism exist), the characters don't necessarily know everything the players do. The GM should make sure that the *characters* know something before they act on that knowledge.

Photography (Spirit)   see p. B47

In horror settings, those with Photography skill must specialize in either mundane or spirit photography. Photography (Spirit) covers photographing spirits, paranormal energies, and similar supernatural phenomena. Depending on the campaign, it can also encompass alchemical fixers and developers, lenses ground to kabbalistic proportions, the use of Kirlian apparatus, etc. (the GM might require Alchemy, Occultism, Paraphysics, or Psionics as a prerequisite).

Examining a spirit photograph of an entity can give the same information that the 35-point Awareness advantage or the Aura spell (p. B163) grants, although the GM may require the examiner to succeed at an Occultism or similar skill roll to interpret the data.

CHAPTER 2

ALONE AGAINST THE DARK

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.
— *Friedrich Nietzsche,*
Thus Spake Zarathustra
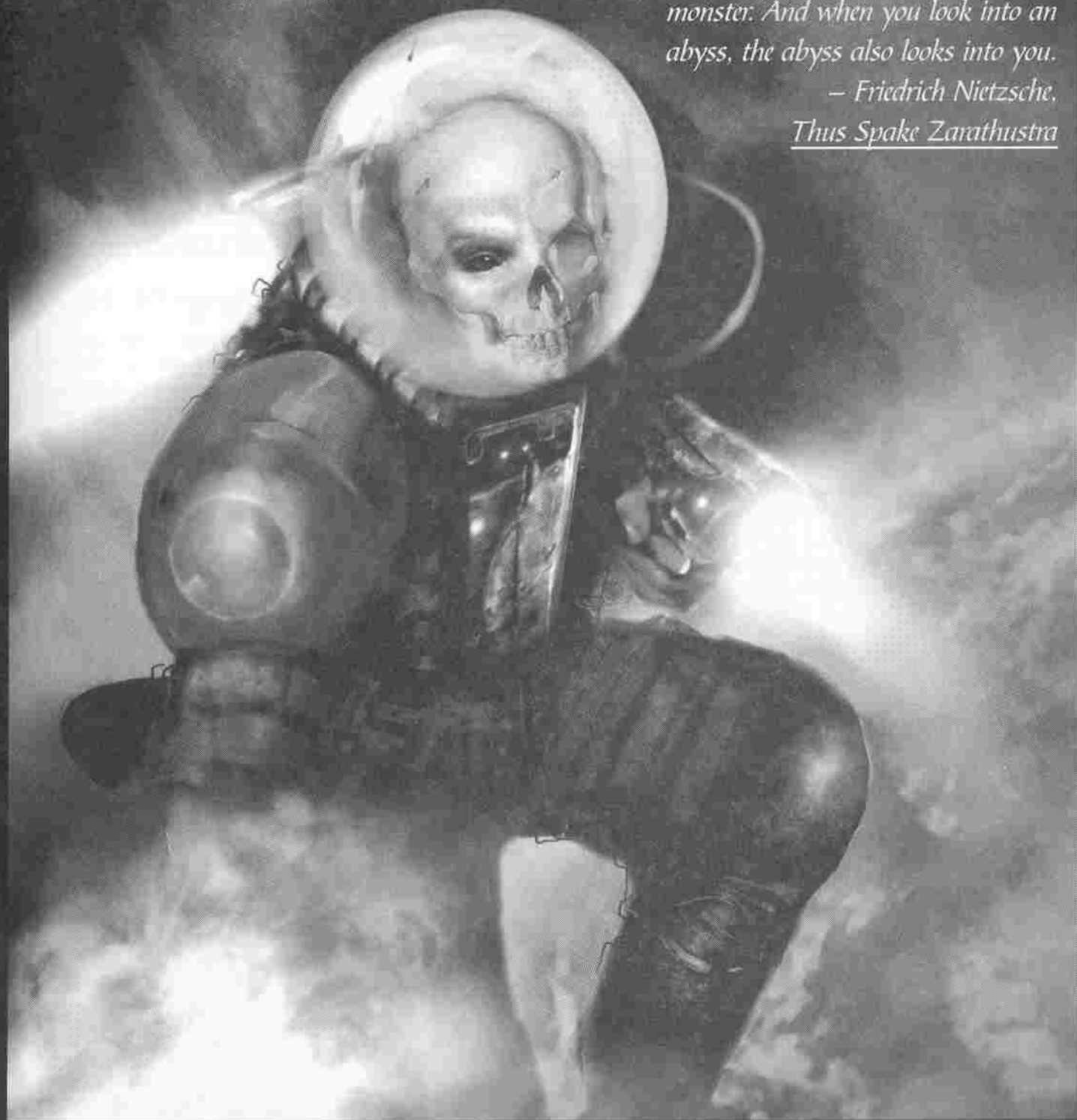
Horror-genre characters should be constructed and played in a manner that maximizes both player and GM fun, and fear – which are the same thing. Here is some story-oriented advice on how to do just that.

Embrace Your Fear

Horror roleplaying is different from other kinds of roleplaying. Not only do the players need to handle all the normal details of their characters' development, they need to work collaboratively to maintain the atmosphere that the GM is trying to build. Poorly timed jokes or out-of-character comments are rude in *any* game, but in a horror game, they can be fatal to everyone's enjoyment.

In addition, many of the details of character creation, development, and play can differ when the goal of the game is not only to gain character points, but to enjoy the mood of the uncanny that the GM and other players will be building. The hero's goals, of course, will still be to survive and thrive – nobody needs to play the girl who goes to the crypt alone at midnight in her nightgown . . . unless he really wants to!

The point of horror roleplaying, like all roleplaying, is for the GM and players alike to have fun. In horror, that fun comes from building an atmosphere of fear together. In some games, the fun comes when the players compete against the GM and against each other. The GM throws in a trap, the players escape it; the GM throws in a monster, the players kill it; the GM throws in a magic sword, the players fight over it. In horror games, the traps and monsters (and even the magic swords) are still there, but they are just tools with which to build the game.

If the GM works at building a horrifying scenario and the players wisecrack through it, kill all the mummies, and loot the haunted castle, then nobody won. If the GM slaughters the adventurers with an endless army of vampires, leaving the players frustrated while he gloats at their incompetence, nobody won. In horror roleplaying, whether the heroes killed the mummies or were swarmed by vampires, everybody wins only if the players were creeped out. This means that the players have to cooperate with each other and with the GM, and that the GM has to take seriously his responsibility to tell a scary story and work at doing it right.

Motivation, or "Why Are We in This Graveyard at Night?"

Every player must answer that question for his own character. In one-shot games, there may be *no* motivation besides surviving the night – the heroes were just unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Over a longer campaign, an adventurer needs a reason to keep breaking into crypts, following strange lights into the swamp, and otherwise risking a messy, painful death. It can be tough to supply such a motive; after all, the people who know the most about vampires are the people who would logically try to stay as far away from them as possible. Why not just leave town? A few possible motivations follow; many of them can tie into character hooks or the PC's family history. (The GM will, ideally, also have some answers for you; see *Cowards Die A Thousand Deaths*, p. 104.)

Duty: "I solemnly swear to protect the United States of America from all enemies, natural and supernatural, corporeal and incorporeal, quick and dead, at home, overseas, or in any dimension from which evil may strike. So help me God."

Greed: "Look, princess, all I want is the reward. All the prof wants is a sample of that thing's blood. And all the kid wants is, well, a little gratitude from you."

Morals: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. If we do not save the innocent, we have conspired with that which will destroy them."

Revenge: "Them vampires done kilt my brother, turned my gal, and run over my dog. Ain't nobody runs over my dog and lives, even iff'n they is already dead."

Judicious use of Code of Honor (p. B31), Disciplines of Faith (p. CI89), Duties and Sense of Duty (p. B39), Obsession (p. CI93), and Vow (p. B37), will let you model these motives during character creation, and net you some points in the bargain!

As for why you're in the graveyard *at night*, well, if people saw you carrying shotguns and jerry cans of gasoline into the graveyard during the day, they'd call the cops.

Character Design

Character creation is a key part of roleplaying. This is even truer in horror, because the player's crucial personal investment in the horror will be determined by his character's background. Everyone in a traditional fantasy roleplaying game wants treasure (if only to give it to the more deserving poor). Not everyone wants to see the Vampire Lord defeated; an evil adventurer might even want to join him! The player should make certain that his character concept meshes with the GM's vision of the horror campaign.

Character Concept

Coming up with a character concept is an essential part of any roleplaying game. Making a concept "work" in the horror genre depends a great deal on cooperation between players and GM, and between the players themselves. The traditional horror game or horror story presupposes that the protagonists are all "good" – or at least that the evil they face is so overwhelming that the assassin and the knight (or the hit man and the FBI agent) will have a powerful common interest in stopping it.

Brief Biography

Once you've generated your character, go over his sheet and come up with a brief biography. Try to work in all the advantages, disadvantages, and skills you've been thinking of as numerical point values. Transform them into the stuff of a life story. You don't have to write an epic, or even an encyclopedia entry – you might simply try to compose your character's resumé, or write one diary entry for each year of his career. This exercise doesn't just give the character more depth and reality; it also increases player identification with the character, which is an essential component of building horror. Just answering a few seemingly simple questions about the character, from his physical appearance to the names of his parents to his happiest childhood memory, can bring a character into sharp focus and reality. This can happen before the first numbers are written on the character sheet; indeed, the GM may work with you to generate the character in just that fashion. Finally, any character biography can be mined for character hooks.

Character Hooks

A "character hook" is some aspect of a PC's personality or history that the GM can use to develop plotlines or scenes in the campaign. When the player puts these "hooks" into his character's background, he gives the GM license to use them in the campaign. Since it's a horror campaign, these uses are liable to be unpleasant for the character. Sometimes, the GM won't even tell the player what a given hook means; if the hero doesn't know where his brother disappeared to 10 years ago, it's more of an unpleasant surprise when said brother turns up as the Vampire Lord's footman.

Why would any sensible player let the GM do that to his character? First, it helps create the story and gives the player an investment in that story. Remember, horror gaming is even more of a collaborative effort than regular roleplaying. With a character hook for the GM to use, that collaboration is built in. When blasphemous evil directly affects something in the hero's past, it's more meaningful to the character *and* the player than if it was the brother of some passerby who was enslaved by the Vampire Lord.

Second, more selfishly, it gives the player some guaranteed "spotlight time" or "story share." The GM should always make sure that every player gets some time in the spotlight of the main action, or has some share in helping to solve the mystery, defeat the evil, or remove the curse. By utilizing hooks, characters who haven't been front and center in the campaign so far can have their turn. Many common advantages and disadvantages – including Allies (p. B23), Dependents (p. B38), Enemies (p. B39), and Patrons (p. B24) – can serve as ready-made character hooks.

Here are some common hooks, with hints on how to use them in a horror game. Many of them can be tied into the character's family history. This has two great advantages. First, the theme of the family opening the protagonist up to malevolent supernatural influence is at the heart of the Gothic horror tradition (see *Gothic Horror,* p. 91). Second, attention given to the character's family deepens the character's reality for player and GM alike, and can generate further hooks. (You might even be able to get points for one of them, as a Dependent!)

Childhood Curse

The childhood curse is a traditional fantasy or fairy-tale character hook. Often, a powerful witch or evil faerie, jealous of (or wronged by) the hero's parents, placed the curse on him. Its effects can be as dramatic as the player and GM feel necessary; as long as the character is still playable, the sky is the limit. The curse can be a "delayed-action" curse such as a Gesa (p. CM88-89); e.g., on the victim's 21st birthday, he will kill his brother. In a fantasy or early historical setting (such as ancient Greece or Viking Europe), the victim will probably know about the curse, and may even be able to quote the specific prophecy. In a more modern game, he could have been born under a very unlucky astrological conjunction (or during an eclipse of the moon), which opens him up to dark forces. Unless his family consists of occultists (which is its own kind of curse), he might not even know about it.

The curse might instead be a family curse; if all of your ancestors have died at sea, then news of a haunted ship takes on a whole new significance. The curse might be evaded; if someone is cursed because his family owns the Dreadnight Diamond, he can renounce his family, convince them to sell the diamond, or steal it and sell it himself. Alternatively, the family blood could be tainted; if the hero's great-great-grandfather was a werewolf, then he should be very careful under the full moon. In a modern or futuristic game, the curse might even be a mutation. Curses can be bought as Destiny (p. CI97), Weirdness Magnet (p. CI100), or any number of other disadvantages. Some curses might not actually affect the PC, but his Evil Twin (pp. CI77-78). And some unlucky souls are simply Cursed (p. CI96).

Evil Ancestor

This hook can be tied into any of the other hooks in this section, either as cause (because of Great-Uncle Jonas' blasphemous experiments, the castle has been cursed for centuries), effect (Great-Uncle Jonas was only the first and most famous member of the family to fall victim to the disturbing family brain malady), or both (for the player with an urge toward the highly baroque). Even worse, Great-Uncle Jonas might not even be dead . . . Evil ancestors might pass down unpleasant physical disadvantages, or give a descendant an unwholesome Reputation as the scion of a tainted line.

Haunted Item

Something that the character owns is haunted, cursed, possessed by a ghost or demon, or otherwise an entryway for the malign forces of the supernatural. A ring with a curiously glowing stone, a sword with a thirst for human blood, or simply an eldritch tome bound in the skin of a mighty necromancer will all create more than their share of adventure possibilities. If the item is also tremendously valuable, useful, or even magical, then both the character and the player may be unwilling to get rid of it despite its unsavory nature. Some items also have an uncanny tendency to return to their former owners, often after a chain of bloody coincidences.

The item may even be a *place* – a demon-plagued barony, a swamp with something from beyond lurking in it, or a full-fledged haunted house. Haunted property is, of course, often inherited from one's family. The process of exorcising the ghosts or unraveling the curse may involve uncovering horrific truths about the inheritor's past or ancestry. Will the hero be as willing to exorcise the ghost of his own ancestor as he would some nameless revenant?

Unless the haunted item is High Technology (p. CI26), the source of Wealth (p. B16), etc., is unlikely to involve any formal point costs or benefits.

Insanity

If the character has been insane in the past, then a whole realm of possibilities opens up for the GM. In a psychological horror game (p. 90) run with large helpings of surrealism (see p. 86), it may become slowly, horribly obvious that the "former" madman is *still* insane; his memories and observations simply cannot be trusted. If the GM is not willing to go to such surrealistic lengths (which are not for everyone), he can still justify virtually anything in the character's past, from a long-lost son to mass murder. The specific circumstances of the original descent into madness may still linger as a Phobia (pp. 21-22) or Berserk stimulus (p. B31) to be triggered by some climactic event in the campaign.

Modern genetic research has cast significant doubt on the old superstition of the "bad seed" or the hereditary insanity of a given bloodline (barring congenital illnesses, of course), but that doesn't mean that a family history of insanity can't play an important role in a horror campaign. After all, modern genetics is also notably skeptical about vampires, werewolves, and cannibal monsters from Pluto. Especially in a pulp-era, Victorian, or earlier historical horror setting, a sensitive fellow's own fear of insanity could end up driving him insane.

Missing Relative

The long-lost sibling, spouse, parent, or child is a natural target for the machinations of the GM's plot. Whether the missing relative surfaces as a victim, a puppet, or an active agent in the horror plaguing the party, the character is in for some unpleasant decisions. In a science-fiction horror game, these decisions might not end with the relative's sorry demise, because one can never be sure there isn't a clone somewhere (ghouls, doppelgangers, ghosts, and shapeshifting aliens can fill much the same role in more traditional horror games).

It's an extra dose of unpleasantness if the hero's vanished great-great-grandfather shows up in the middle of the action when he has no business even being alive. Immortality is seldom a good thing in the horror genre, and an ancient relative might have some very unsavory knowledge about the family . . .

Missing Time

This hook is most common in tales of UFO paranoia, but the "mysterious spell of amnesia" is used as a device in many other genres as well. This is a blank check to the inventive or fiendish GM; anything that can be justified by insanity can just as easily have occurred during the "blank spot" in the amnesiac's memory. The GM can handle this using secret advantages and disadvantages (see p. 18), treat it as a False Memory (see *Delusions*, p. 21), or modify the Amnesia disadvantage (p. CI86) to suit the specific case.

Missing time in a family history is a little harder to construct, but it is sometimes worth it. If the courthouse with the family records burns down, then anything could have been true about the character's ancestors. Imagine the shock as he discovers that his grandparents never existed – no birth certificates, no death certificates, no marriage certificates. Who were they? And where did his *parents* come from?

Character Development

Once the character is fully designed, laden with hooks, and (hopefully) part of a well-defined history and setting, it's time for the campaign to begin. Ideally, he will begin his existence fitting into the world and the campaign – that's part of what all those hooks are designed to do. It is the player's job to make sure that the character continues to fit as well (or better) *during* the campaign. Remember, the horror game, even more than most roleplaying games, is a collaborative, cooperative exercise. If the campaign is a globetrotting one (see pp. 73-74), having a would-be hero take on some important responsibility that doesn't let him jet off to the Darkest Congo at the drop of a telegram will make it harder for him to fit the campaign. If the campaign is about paranoia and the secret war, don't let an investigator turn into a blinkered skeptic.

In the course of the campaign, however, it's important to let each character develop as an individual. The happy-go-lucky thief will not be as jolly after a few brushes with the Ghoul Prince. He may turn sober and thoughtful, planning his actions meticulously. He may take to hedonism and excess, laughing too loud and partying too long, trying to forget his nightmares in the fleshpots and wineshops of the city. He may simply withdraw into a shell, fighting mechanically until his

certain doom. It is impossible to tell how any person, real or fictional, will react to the kind of stress and fear that a horror game creates. The one thing that is for sure is that he will change as a result.

You don't have to plot this out as a player; just let these reactions happen and they will seem natural and organic to the character. If this evolution means that one day you no longer feel like playing the character, talk to the GM about retirement options – or even a messy but inspirational death. GMs love the "guilt-free kill," which adds a note of horror and personal danger without hard feelings from players. The campaign will gain another major plot element, and your character will have died as a person rather than living as a cardboard cutout.

Party Design

Players often work together when designing their characters; a balanced party is the goal of many player groups. This makes a great deal of sense. With a variety of character types, a larger variety of problems can be solved and the game can deal with a greater range of subjects. More practically, it can mean the difference between life and death for them all if one is a capable healer, scout, warrior, etc.

Group fear feeds on itself; as long as all the players are letting the fear happen, or at least not interfering with its development, then the feeling becomes stronger for everyone.

In horror, this kind of player teamwork is useful. Horror games sometimes have an additional level of danger that clever character design can somewhat mitigate. It is even more useful on a dramatic level. If the players design their characters to have overlapping histories, or even linked character hooks, it adds depth to the campaign world while giving the players an important reason to work together. Not all GMs will want to show their hand this early in the campaign, but it is an unusual GM who doesn't jump at the chance to work the characters' backgrounds together in some way, even if they (and the players) don't fully understand it yet.

The only thing to watch out for is a level of coordination that seems almost "too good to be true," especially for a batch of random strangers who just happen to meet in a tavern to fight elemental evils. Damage to the internal reality of the campaign is damage to its ability to create fear. For example, the novel *Dracula* teams a lawyer (Jonathan Harker) and his wife (Mina Harker) with three suitors of his wife's vampirized girlfriend – an aristocrat (Lord Godalming), an explorer (Quincey Morris), and a doctor (Dr. Seward) who just happens to know personally an occultist who is the world's leading expert on vampires (van Helsing). It looks unbelievable in this paragraph, but Stoker makes it work in his novel. The GM and players can make similarly jury-rigged player groups seem believable, if they're willing to put enough effort into their mutual "backstory," and into the campaign background.
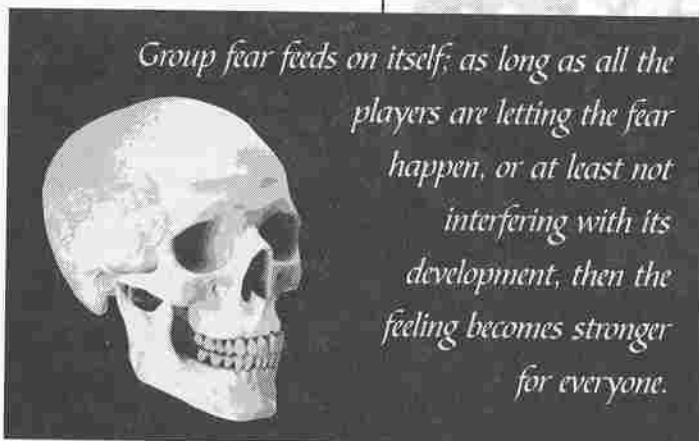
Working With the Other Players

In many games, the players are competing. There are only so many gold pieces out there, after all, and somebody has to get them. This can work even in horror roleplaying, but it's tactically a much trickier decision. Players who are in competition find it tempting to bicker: if the thief got the magic gloves that the healer wanted, the healer might not heal him. In horror, the party's enemies are stronger and more focused on the party than the antagonists in most other genres. In a conventional fantasy game, the orcs usually stay in their dungeon or fort; in a horror fantasy game, they are stalking the heroes through the alley shadows and are in league with a demon. Internal rivalry can mean a messy death for the whole group.

Many groups require that every PC in a horror game be explicitly on the same side. This can mean that everyone takes "good" disadvantages (e.g., Honesty) and not "evil" ones (e.g., Sadism), works for the same employer, or simply agrees that stopping the evil is more important than personal concerns. This may seem limiting, but it accurately reflects virtually all horror fiction and film; it's true to the genre. It makes tactical sense as well. In game, the thief is too busy keeping an eye on the shadowy horrors to pick fights with the healer; the healer knows full well that if he doesn't heal the thief, nobody watches the party's back. Out of game, the player only has to focus on one challenge: building an atmosphere of fear by getting into the GM's world.

A player shouldn't neglect the other players while building the atmosphere of fear. Group fear feeds on itself; as long as all the players are letting the fear happen, or at least not interfering with its development, then the feeling becomes stronger for everyone. Group fear is also easily broken. Especially if the game is becoming tense and scary, there's a natural impulse to break the tension somehow: Coke run, bad jokes, anything. Don't give in to that impulse; you not only cheat yourself out of the thrill of fear, you cheat the other players.

One handy way to keep yourself immersed in the game is to refer to the other players by their character names; keep as much of the dialogue "in character" as possible. Instead of saying, "Doug, can your psychic tell if this slab was used for human sacrifice?", say, "Armand, can your powers tell if this slab was used for human sacrifice?" It's a small thing, but it sometimes makes a big difference in helping everyone stay in the moment.

The Challenge

The players in a horror game must walk a fine line between unrealistic foolishness (unless they're playing foolish characters, most likely in a one-shot) and uninteresting sobriety. By all means, analyze the clues the GM hands out, do your best to anticipate surprises and deadly traps, and don't rush in where angels fear to tread. But don't over-think every blood spatter, don't spoil your own fun by stolidly preparing to confront "just another vampire," and do your best to get caught up in the excitement and to help build that cooperative atmosphere of horror. Of course, in a well-oiled game, the ritual of examining death scenes and interviewing witnesses, or of packing a bandolier with silver bullets and wooden crossbow bolts, can itself help build the tension, get the players into the mood of things, and set everyone up for a grand payoff indeed.

Investigation

Believe it or not, 90% of the time, your GM wants you to solve his horrific puzzle, figure out the pattern of the killings, decipher the map, and get to the killing ground under your own steam. Each GM delivers clues in his own way. Learning to read your GM is a useful skill, albeit one outside the scope of this book. Failing that (or in addition to it), the "five Rs" of horror investigation can often yield information, and hence exciting action, with a minimum of aimless thrashing around:

1. Recon. Examine the scene of the horror, in person, and gather as much information as possible. Use psionics, spells, technology, or information-gathering skills such as Forensics, as well as Sense rolls. Map the area and treat it like a crime scene; in most horror scenarios, it probably is!

2. Research. Check out local histories, police or newspaper archives, or family records for similar happenings, and hit the occult texts for cases of comparable horrors. Occultism and Research are the obvious skills here, but Area Knowledge, History, and similar skills might come into play.

3. Routine. With the information from recon and research in hand, look for routines, for patterns. Watch for both regularity in the horror (similar modus operandi, timing, victims, location) and breaks in other patterns (birds stop calling, unpredicted fog in area). If you have a suspect, learn his routine and look for deviations from it – perhaps the aristocratic Count didn't visit his club on the night of the exsanguinations. The relevant skill will vary, but Intelligence Analysis is often applicable. This is also a good place to try the Intuition advantage.

4. Rationale. If simply examining routines hasn't led you to either the next horror or a suspect, begin figuring out motives (see the list of villain motives on p. 101 for some hypotheses). Why would the horror act in this way? Even irrational horrors have causes, which you can sometimes deduce from their effects. Criminology and Psychology skill can be useful, as can Intuition.

5. Records. This is a player action, not a character action. Make copious notes on anything you uncover; keep "case files" and a game calendar to which you and the other players can refer. Pretend you're taking notes for a course and that everything will be on the final exam. Re-reading these notes can often trigger your own intuition.

Monster-Hunting

In almost any horror campaign, the heroes might find themselves on the trail of a monster. In many cases, once they've found the horror, they will have to deal with it. This can take the form of a dungeon crawl (or its modern equivalent, the sewer-and-subway crawl), a vigil in a haunted house, or a chase through the foggy streets of Whitechapel.

In combat with horrors, your enjoyment of the game shouldn't come from reducing the monsters to targets on a board and mechanically eliminating them; it should come from feeling your character's fear, and channeling it into energy and motivation. Don't cheat yourself of a horrific encounter by treating it as an exercise in orc-chopping combat. Stay in character, stay on the edge – and stay alive.

That last can take some doing. If your GM has calibrated the scenario correctly, you should have about a 50% chance of winning. To improve your odds, adopt some sensible strategies before you pry off that first coffin lid. Your GM will be glad to see the heroes take sensible precautions, especially if the players can convey the sense of fear, grim duty, or white-hot hatred their characters feel going into battle. Playing a competent hero won't spoil the game for your GM nearly as much as playing an incompetent one can spoil it for you. The following "five Ts" are a basic checklist for the truly dangerous monster-hunter to build upon:

1. Threat Assessment. Make sure that you know what you're dealing with, how many of them there are, and what and how the horrors kill. This should flow from the "five Rs" given above. Research and Occultism rolls will come in handy here.

2. Tailoring. Select the right tools for the job; e.g., wear neck protectors if you're fighting vampires, carry silver bullets for werewolves, and pack asafetida bombs for evil spirits. For every attack form the monster is known to have, as revealed by your threat assessment, develop a countermeasure. Bring only what you need (a van-load of equipment will slow you down), but bring *exactly* what you need – and bring enough of it. This may come down to an Occultism roll (or a Streetwise roll, if what you need is illegal).

3. Tactics. Practice unity of command. Even if you don't have a "party leader," someone should be in charge in combat. If you can't communicate during combat, make sure that everyone knows his task – and his backup task, if someone is taken out. Strike the horrors with your full strength at their weakest point; don't split the party. Tactics and Leadership rolls may come into play here.

4. Targeting. Know your objective and don't get distracted. If you're there to rescue the princess, rescue the princess and get out. If you're there to kill the Vampire King, don't get sidetracked skewering zombie rats or looting the crypt. Villains love to expend cannon fodder to weaken their foes, and they especially love to booby-trap the treasure. This doesn't demand any specific skill, but the GM might roll for Common Sense or make secret Tactics rolls if the party starts drifting off target.

5. Thoroughness. Never leave a horror behind. Don't let the undead rise again to fight another day. If you have to, come back in broad daylight and drench the crypt with bleach, garlic, holy water, or gasoline – maybe all four.

The Monster-Hunter's Toolbox
Useful Gear

Famed ghost-hunter Harry Price (1881-1948) recommended colored chalk, candles, thread, matches, flashlights, a notebook and pencil, a camera, sandwiches, and brandy as the standard kit for investigators of haunted houses. Upgrade the camera to a digital video camera, and add an MP3 or DAT recorder, and his list still works today. Some other useful modern-day equipment includes:

Cellular Phone: Handy for inter-party communications (but unwise if you suspect monitoring or tracing). As well, a cell phone with police, fire, and other emergency numbers on speed dial can provide anything from a distraction to a quick medevac in an emergency. $70, 0.25 lb.

Duct Tape: Holds thermocouples on walls, repairs broken equipment, and serves as makeshift handcuffs (Escape-3 or Quick Contest of ST vs. ST 18 to escape), rope (a 60-yd. roll can be braided into a 20-yd. rope that can support 200 lbs.), or direction marker, among other things. 60-yd. roll is $8, 1 lb. Matte-black, weather-resistant tape costs twice as much.

EMF Detector: Senses electric and magnetic fields, and radio emissions. Can come in handy in settings where ghosts or spirits are composed of electromagnetic energy. Commercial EMF detectors work at relatively short (1-5 foot) ranges. $200, 0.5 lb.

Fiberscope: Optical fiber within a steerable steel-mesh tube, with lenses at both ends. It can be snaked around corners, under doors, through heating ducts, etc. to provide a view of a hidden space. The tiny lens gives -3 to Vision rolls. A 1-yard-long version with an eyepiece is $2,250, 2 lbs. A special video camera and 4" LCD monitor add $1,400, 1 lb., but let an entire group see, and record, anything being examined.

Glow Stick: A plastic tube containing chemicals that create light when mixed by shaking or bending the tube. Lasts 6 hours, and illuminates (dimly) a 5-foot radius. Comes in a variety of colors; some monster-hunter teams assign each man a color for easy ID. $1, 0.25 lb.

GPS Receiver: Receives signals from the NAVSTAR (NAVigation Satellite Timing And Ranging) satellite network, giving your precise location anywhere in the world. This effectively grants Absolute Direction. (Roll vs. Orienteering to determine where you *should* be, the direction you're facing, etc.) Useful for pinpointing your location in haunted woods, underground tunnels, and other places that aren't on the map. By setting waypoints, you can use it to retrace your steps if you've gotten turned around. GPS signals may not penetrate thick rock – be careful while caving. $200, 0.5 lb.

Headset Radio: Compact, voice-activated mike-and-earplug combo allows whispered communications between dispersed party members at up to 150 yards. A nice compromise between "don't split the party" and "sneak ahead to see what's going on." $50, neg. wt. Standard *tactical* models have a range of 1 mile, and are $700, 1 lb.; state-of-the art *encrypted* tactical headsets are $5,000, 0.5 lb.

Infrared Flashlight: Shines a beam of infrared light, useful for scanning a dark room without giving away your own position (assuming you have IR goggles or similar). $30, 1 lb.

Kryptonite™ Lock and Chain: Useful for tying up stronger beasts, securing doors and gates behind you, and keeping your bike safe. Price depends on ST rating: $100 for the lock and $10/yd. for the chain at ST 15, up to $300 for the lock and $50/yd. for the chain at ST 30. Weight is 2 lbs. per yd. per point of ST over 14.

Light-Intensifier Goggles: Concentrate and amplify existing visible light, granting Night Vision (p. B22) at the cost of peripheral vision. They are of no use in total darkness. Battery life is 12 hours. $6,000, 1.5 lbs. Bulkier (5 lbs.), less effective (-2 to Vision rolls) goggles, usually old Soviet models, can be had for as little as $800.

Shoulder Light: Useful when you need both hands free, the shoulder light is a powerful (30,000 candlepower), compact light source easily mounted on a shoulder strap, helmet, or gun barrel. $50, 1 lb.

Squirt Gun: Powerful plastic water guns use pump action to spray liquid (garlic oil, holy water, silver nitrate solution, etc.) onto foes with liquid susceptibilities. Quality pressure-loading squirt guns hold one gallon and have Malf 16, SS 12, Acc 2, 1/2D –, Max 12, RoF 2~, Shots 8, Rcl 0. Use Guns (Flamethrower) to hit. $30, 6 lbs. empty.

Thermal Detection Device: A hand-held IR sensor with a built-in computer that can distinguish the heat signatures of living beings from other heat sources; useful for finding "cold spots" or "warm spots" at a distance, and thus for detecting ghosts or invisible creatures. $600, 1 lb.

Thermographic ("Infrared") Film: Produces pictures even in complete darkness, as long as heat sources are present. A Photography roll is necessary to take and develop IR photos. Costs $1 per exposure.

Ultraviolet Flashlight: Some vampires that react to "sunlight" are specifically sensitive to ultraviolet (UV) light. The beam of a UV flashlight may harm them as sunlight – or even as "concentrated sunlight," doing double damage. A flashlight has SS 12, Acc 3, 1/2D 5, Max 15. Use Beam Weapons (Laser) or Guns (Pistol)-4 to hit. Effective RoF is 6; use the laser autofire rules (p. B120) to simulate a continuous beam. An adjustable longwave/shortwave UV flashlight is $70, 5 lbs. A high-intensity handheld UV lamp must be plugged into the wall, but does *quadruple* sunlight damage. $225, 8 lbs.

Zippo™ Lighter: The lighter that won WWII. Rugged construction, a reliable flint mechanism, and near-perfect ergonomics give you a failsafe instant source of fire. Requires butane fuel for every 100 lights. $20, neg. wt.
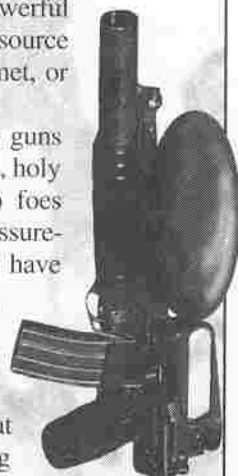
Silver Weapons

Pure silver hand weapons (swords, daggers, etc.) or arrowheads cost 20 times as much as ordinary steel ones, *if they can be found*, but break as though they were of *cheap* quality. Silver-coated or -edged weapons cost three times the listed value. Silver bullets must be made of solid silver or silver alloy; silver coating won't do. When they can be found (roll vs. Area Knowledge to find a willing gunsmith), silver bullets cost 50 times the usual price.

Making Silver Weapons

Someone with the appropriate Armoury skill can *make* silver weapons. This can be convenient, as any outsider asked to manufacture silver weapons will know what the party is up to. This might lead to a new ally, but it will probably just start rumors that the PCs are armed, dangerous lunatics – and in a world where the Cabal (p. 66) is strong, word of such a purchase may quickly reach the wrong ears . . .

Hand-loading cartridges for firearms requires an Armoury (Small Arms) roll. This is not difficult with the proper tools, but any improvisation will give at least -4 to the roll (GM's decision). The GM should make this roll in secret. Success means a batch of reliable ammunition. Failure reduces the Malf number of the gun by the margin of failure when firing that ammunition; critical failure reduces Malf by 10! Time required is at the GM's discretion: a motorized progressive loader with prepared components can turn out 1,000 rounds per hour, while an improviser with inadequate tools and a lump of silver might take hours to make just one round.

Shotgun shells can be loaded directly with silver coins, as long as the coins are not too large for the bore. Even today, you can buy a couple of dozen worn silver dimes in any major American city and nobody will raise an eyebrow; at worst, the shop owner will mark you as a survivalist stocking up on precious metals. Use the shotgun's usual statistics (damage, SS, Acc, etc.), but halve 1/2D and Max. Otherwise, treat hand-loaded shells exactly as any other hand-loaded ammunition (see above).

Damage from Silver Weapons

Silver weapons of all kinds do their regular damage to targets that can be damaged by normal weapons. Against creatures only affected by silver, damage depends on the weapon:

Pure Silver Weapons: Full damage.

Silver Alloy Weapons: Coin and jewelry silver are usually alloyed with copper. The amount of silver in the alloy is expressed as its *fineness*, in parts per thousand. A fineness of 925 means the alloy is 92.5% silver; a fineness of 500 means the alloy is 50% silver. Alloy weapons do less damage to silver-vulnerable creatures according to the percentage of silver in the alloy (round down). For instance, a .45 ACP bullet made of pure silver would do 2d damage. One made of 1880s English coin silver (925 fine) would do 2d-1. One made of 1920s English coin silver (500 fine) would do 1d. (And modern coins contain *no* silver.) Cheap "silver" jewelry and tableware are thinly plated with silver alloy; this metal has no effect on such fell beasts.

Silver-Coated or -Edged Weapons: -1 damage per die, but the coating must be at least 90% silver.

Crucifixes

A small silver crucifix or other holy symbol can be bought at any jewelry store for $25 to $50, depending on workmanship and design. A hefty silver cross, say a foot long, could also be used as a weapon: swing-1 crushing damage, reach 1, cost $200, weight 2 lbs., minimum ST 7, 1 turn to ready. Use Axe/Mace skill to hit.

Helpful Herbs

Asafetida: The pungent resin of *Ferula foetida*, a tall, leafy plant native to northern India, Iran, and Afghanistan. It can grow wild in any high, dry climate, such as the American Great Plains. Medieval magicians used its nauseating smell in exorcisms and other rituals to drive away evil spirits. A common spice in Persian and Indian cuisine, most Westerners know it as the "active ingredient" in Worcestershire sauce. Asafetida powder, cut with rice flour to deaden the smell, is $2 an ounce; the pure resin costs $10 an ounce.

Garlic (Allium sativum): Garlic cloves are readily available at any supermarket; six cloves cost $1. Native to central Asia, garlic now grows wild as far as Italy and France, and can be grown in gardens in any temperate region. In some campaigns, the garlic oil (which makes up about 0.1% of the plant) will have a more powerful effect, perhaps four times that of raw garlic, on susceptible monsters. The principal components of garlic oil are diallyl disulfide, diallyl trisulfide, and allyl propyl disulfide; they do not exist in garlic naturally, but must be catalyzed by heat and water.

Wolfsbane (Aconitum lycoctonum): A blue-purple-, white-, or yellow-flowered plant, common in the Swiss Alps. It can be grown as a garden plant in any temperate region; it is a hardy and handsome perennial. The alkaloid aconitine, which can be extracted from the plant, is a deadly poison; see p. B132. Many herb shops carry wolfsbane, but it is neither fresh nor particularly potent (werewolves get +3 to endure its smell). A sachet of wolfsbane is $15. Fresher, more potent wolfsbane can be found at herb farms ($5 for an effective dose), or in the wild (requires three hours of searching and a successful Botany, Herbalist, Naturalist, or Poisons roll).

CHAPTER 3

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT
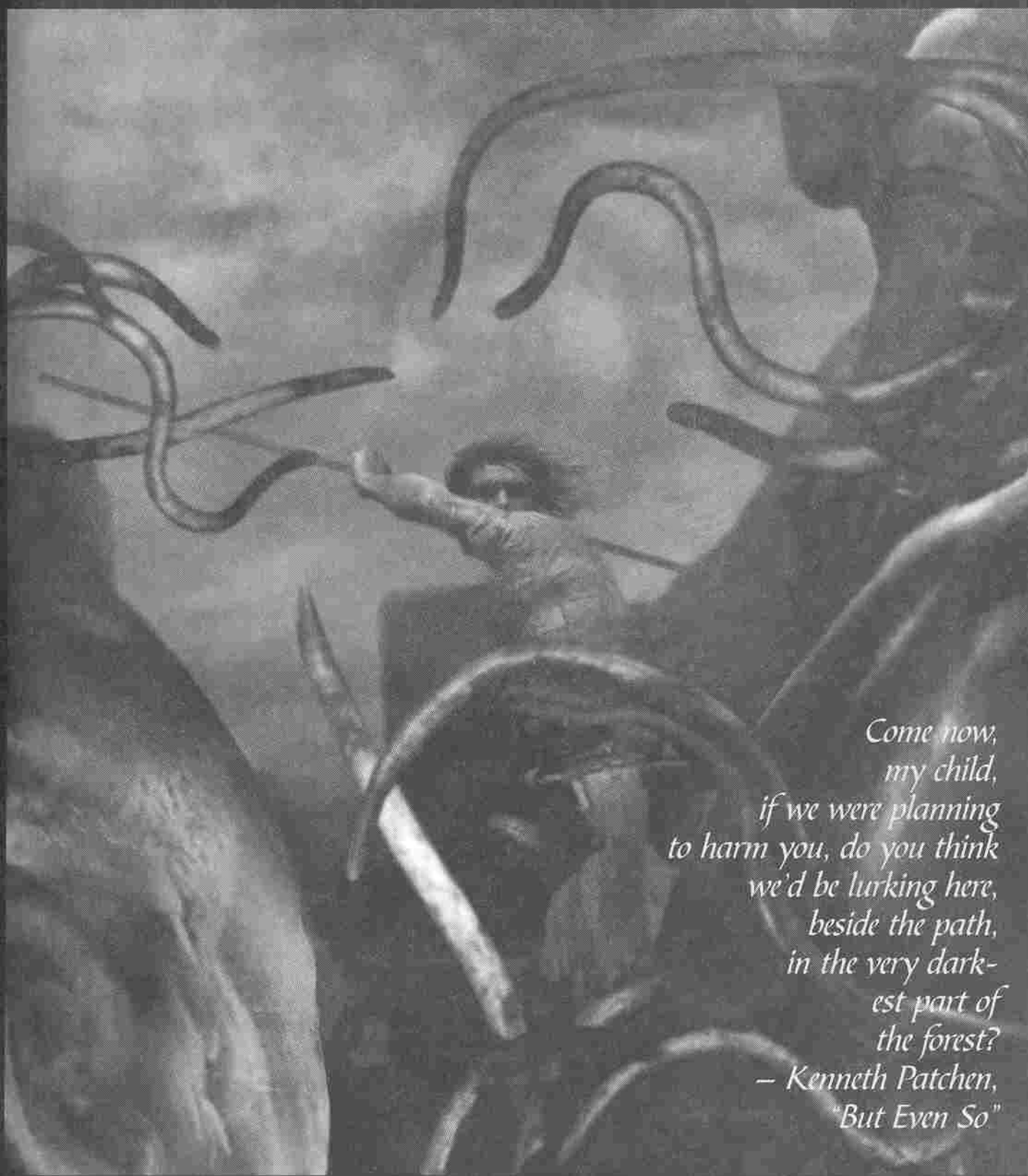
Come now,
my child,
if we were planning
to harm you, do you think
we'd be lurking here,
beside the path,
in the very dark-
est part of
the forest?
— Kenneth Patchen,
"But Even So"

On the other side of the coin from the heroes, pulling and tugging at the shadowy corners of the story and setting, lurk the monsters. A monster isn't just some big, slobbery ooga-booga thing with an insatiable appetite for babysitters, or a moth-eaten piece of leftover Transylvanian scenery. The monster is, at its heart, the alarm bell for horror; it's the signal that Something Has Gone Very Wrong. Going back to the original Latin *monstrum,* for example, "monster" originally meant "wonder," or "portent." The monster was an omen or sign of some ordinarily invisible power, the symptom of the gods – the unknowable – pressing into the world we know. (The word *monstro* means "to show," and the same root appears in the word "demonstrate.") But the monster was also a warning, foretelling death, madness, and disaster. And so it is in your game. As the visible aspect of the unnatural, the supernatural, the uncanny, or the Just Plain Not Right, the monster – in whatever form it takes, or refrains from taking – lies at the heart of the horror game.

Choosing Your Monster

Selecting the right monster, or set of monsters, thus becomes a crucial part of horror game design. Gearing the monster's power level to the PCs, and its powers to their skills and abilities, comes at the end of the process, once you've decided which monster to throw at the intrepid party. Before that, make sure your monster fits the setting you've chosen; monsters don't just come out of nowhere. (Even if they *seem* to do just that.) If the Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know has to be summoned, who summoned it? Why? How long ago? If vampires in your game come only from infection, then who infected this vampire? Did he do it on purpose? If you're running an Old West game, what's a mummy doing here at all? Is it a museum specimen, stolen from New Orleans? The main attraction of a traveling sideshow? Or is it an Anasazi mummy, created by long-forgotten shamanic magic to guard the pueblo from intruders?

Thoroughly Modern Monstrosity

Many supernatural legends have their origins in pre-industrial periods, and have never been properly "updated" to allow for modern technology. For example, vampires do not cast a reflection in a mirror – but what about cameras or X-rays? The best way to deal with such questions is to define the legend (and the game reality) as accurately as possible. Work from first principles. In the above example, the GM needs to ask himself *why* vampires do not cast reflections. Some legends say it is because the vampire has no soul, which is what the mirror is reflecting. Others say the mirror is silver-coated, and silver is harmful to vampires. If using the former explanation, then all reflective or image-capturing devices will be useless; vampires certainly won't show up on video surveillance cameras, and the telephone might not even pick up their voice! If using the latter explanation, then only silver-coated or silver-backed reflective surfaces would be ineffective; some cameras use silvered film and mirrors, but X-ray machines do not.

Incorporeal beings such as ghosts pose different problems. Sometimes, ghosts are manifest – but can they be photographed? Generally, yes, since a photograph (or video image) is a recording of rays of light, and it can be said that a ghostly manifestation is one of light. However, GMs may wish to redefine their concept of ghosts to prevent photographic recordings; perhaps a ghost manifestation is merely a *psychic* illusion that can only be perceived by the mind. Some ghosts might even use magic to render a camera useless. Of course, if photographs of ghosts are to be used as proof, the PCs will run into another set of problems: convincing authorities that such photos are not hoaxes.

If you're moving a monster out of its "native" habitat, a little thought about what you're moving, and why, can pay big dividends of game realism – and hence, of horror.

Race or Monster?

Almost all the monsters in this book appear in racial template form rather than being presented *GURPS Bestiary*-style. This is for two reasons. First, an awful lot of gamers out there enjoy playing monsters (see *Monsters as Characters,* p. 13); they should be able to slap a monster template onto a character template and be ready to go. Second, the GM should put as much thought into a monster – especially if it's the main villain of a scenario, much less an entire campaign – as he does into any important NPC. For these reasons, we focus on monsters as they express the theme of the GM's game, or as they embody horrific elements in their own right, rather than as targets for a fire-hose of silver bullets.

Not that there's anything wrong with a fire-hose of silver bullets on occasion, of course. If you'd rather have the quick convenience of a *Bestiary*-style block of statistics, simply apply the racial template to an average human and derive the relevant statistics. For instance, the zombie (pp. 58-59) might be listed as follows:

Zombie

ST: 11	**Move/Dodge:** 5/5	**Size:** 1
DX: 10	**PD/DR:** 0/0	**Weight:** 150 lbs.
IQ: 8	**Damage:** 1d-3 cr*	
HT: 10/15	**Reach:** C, 1	

* Unarmed. Zombies may have weapons, used with a Combat/Weapon skill at level 10-12.

Zombies are corpses animated by magic. Being dead, they are unaffected by disease, poison, and extreme temperatures, and don't sleep, breathe, feel pain, or bleed. Zombies are always the mindless slaves of some wizard. They are immune to spells resisted by IQ, and can't be distracted or negotiated with. They can be stopped by the Pentagram spell, and are affected by Control Zombie and Turn Zombie. Zombies lose 1 HT/minute in areas without mana.

Stereotypes and Archetypes

The *stereotyped* monster can be fatal to a horror campaign. The aura of uncertainty that is central to horror is lost when the party meets nothing more interesting than the same creatures the players have seen in countless horror films. For instance, the stereotyped vampire – "All I vant is some of your bluuuuuud!" – is boring indeed. Stake his heart and get on with the game.

Still, if something has been done over and over again, then there must be something important in it – regardless of all the trite movies, books, radio shows, and comic books. The symbolism – the *archetype* – is always there in the "popular" monsters. If a particular story, character, or creature survives terrible treatment, then it is because something about it *matters* to a lot of people. The challenge when running a horror campaign is to find the jewel in the heart of each "stock" element, and to build around it a new shape, something no one has ever seen before, something the players will never forget.

To interpret a "classic" monster, think about the characteristics that the different versions of the creature share, or those that are most important in the stories. But don't stop there – think about *why* these characteristics, and not others, are important. What do they symbolize? What fears, and what desires, does the monster represent?

For instance, what is vampirism *really* about? Is it about wearing a black cloak and speaking with an accent? Probably not. Is it about flying at night and turning into a bat? That's fun – but it's still not central. Is it about living forever, at the cost of isolation from humanity? Ahh . . . now, we're getting somewhere. But it can also be about the danger and romance of being a predator on mankind. And, in most modern versions, it's definitely about sex.

Books about classical horror creatures are common; they can help tremendously. Knowing what such a creature is about gives players and GMs a consistent mood and framework for the campaign. Finally, remember that supernatural creatures, like people, have histories and motives. They should appear for *reasons*. The supernatural should never be commonplace enough to support a random "wandering monster" approach, or it will rapidly lose its interest. Of course, "The PC is acting like an idiot and deserves to have a monster jump on him!" may sometimes be a perfectly valid reason.

Monsters as Fears

With the above in mind, the remainder of this chapter has been organized into sections centering on some basic human fears. Each fear has a "signature" monster, some variations, and game notes attached to it. The monster given for each fear is a starting point; this organization is descriptive, *not* prescriptive. If you decide that vampires are fundamentally not about the fear of taint and disease, but rather the fear of the unloved dead, then revamp (ahem) your bloodsucker accordingly. (Some creatures, and some fears, have pointers and advice for such adjustments.) Add new monsters for specific fears, and recombine monster templates with Frankensteinian abandon. The point of this section is to help the GM think about monsters in terms of their role as thematic elements first and foremost, as portents of the uncanny, rather than as opponents.

Fear of Taint

This fear is not precisely the fear of disease (see p. 56) or the fear of the unnatural per se (see p. 48), but something between the two. Corruption, decay, unwholesomeness . . . any rot that spreads is a taint. Before germ theory, disease might well have been considered a taint; to the Victorians and their ancestors, madness was a taint passed down through corrupt blood. Fear of tainted blood, writ large and pathologically, becomes not only the fear of disease, but of foreigners, illicit mating, and death. Where all of these fears overlap lies the vampire.

The Vampire

A vampire is a powerful undead creature that sustains its existence by feeding off the energy of the living. It is perhaps the most widely recognized supernatural creature. Vampire legends are common in almost every culture from every time period – a word meaning "vampire" can be found in most languages, modern and historical. Our English word "vampire" probably comes from a Slavic root word, *obyr*, specifically via the Bulgarian *vapir*.

Our mythic vampire also seems to have emerged from the Slavic Balkans; the vapir was just one of many walking-dead legends intimately involved with religious warfare in that region between the Orthodox Church and the Bogomil heresies, in part over the notion of proper burial. According to some scholars, the Balkan vampire legend arose from concerns that the new burial practices were somehow heretical, which is to say tainted (by sin), and therefore ineffective. This concern, fertilized with traditional nature-demons (such as the *vrykolakas* of Greece, which more closely resembles our modern werewolf), widespread fears of disease and plague, and other pagan ancestor and burial spirits, became the vampire: a pale, hairy, walking corpse that drinks the blood of the living.

Interestingly, the next stage in the legend's evolution also came during a time of religious turmoil in the Balkans, as Catholic Austria expanded its influence into Orthodox Serbia and Transylvania. "Vampire panics" began to sweep the Balkans and Eastern Europe, throwing villages into hysteria over reports of gore-bloated walking dead. From 1650 to 1750, cheap, sensationalistic pamphlets carried word of the vampire plague to Germany and Britain, where the vampire entered the Gothic shudder-tale tradition, and merged with the dark, tormented Gothic antihero (see *Gothic Horror*, p. 91).

The modern image of the vampire owes much to 19th-century English literature. The glamorous European noble represented everything that the Victorian Englishman disdained: dark secrecy, sexual power, and the old order versus the new individualism. The poets Byron, Keats, Coleridge, and Shelley were fascinated by vampirism, and referred to it often in their works. Byron's physician, Dr. John Polidori, created the aristocratic vampire with *The Vampyre*, published in 1819. Bram Stoker perfected the model with *Dracula*, published in 1897. Stoker added a mish-mash of actual Transylvanian folklore, dramatic effect, and Gothic standbys to the vampire story. His black-caped stalker of the night, sleeping in his coffin by day and impelled by murderous deviant sexuality, is the forerunner of the 20th century's film vampires. Anne Rice's 1976 *Interview With the Vampire* further divorced vampires from unglamorous, grubby peasantry – and from medieval traditions of crosses and garlic – while emphasizing the vampire as romantic outsider and sexual ideal.

Vlad the Impaler

The voivode (governor) of Wallachia from 1456 to 1462, Vlad Tepes ("the Impaler") got his nickname from his habit of impaling his enemies on wooden stakes; he likely killed between 40,000 and 100,000 people in this fashion during his turbulent reign. A tireless warrior against the Turks, Vlad was eventually defeated by his brother Radu and fled to imprisonment in Hungary. He left Hungary in 1475, and died the next year trying to regain his throne; his grave has not been authoritatively identified to this day. Vlad's father was Vlad Dracul ("the Dragon"), and during his lifetime, Vlad was also known as Dracula ("son of the Dragon").

Vlad remains a kind of national hero in Romania, but his murderous habits effectively blackened his name in Hungary and Germany. Lurid, moralistic narratives of his bloody reign and ignominious death appeared for centuries after the Turks absorbed Vlad's Wallachian homeland. Bram Stoker took these tales as fact and identified his vampiric Count Dracula with the historic prince of Wallachia. Vlad makes an absolutely wonderful main villain for any vampire game, but it might be fun to make him a *hero* – one Romanian epic poem tells of Vlad's battles against the evil undead, including vampires! A write-up of the historical Vlad in *GURPS* terms appears on pp. WWi56-57.

The numerous legends and myths concerning vampires are beyond the scope of this book. GMs are strongly encouraged to invent their own vampire legends that are unique to their campaign. The GM should decide what the vampire represents in terms of what society regards as evil, dangerous, or antisocial. Draw from this concept to determine the creature's powers and weaknesses. Once the GM has defined exactly what the vampire is, it should be easy to deal with whatever actions the PCs take against it.

The attributes and information given below are based on a consensus modern, Western notion of vampires, as defined by folklore, literature, and cinema. All of the powers and disadvantages of vampires should be considered *optional*, and can be ignored or modified to suit the GM's campaign. *GURPS Blood Types* gives still more vampire variations, as well as advice and background for a vampire-hunting campaign. One technique, also used in the film *Captain Kronos, Vampire Hunter*, is to assume that there are many different kinds of vampires. Vampire hunters won't automatically know the weaknesses of their prey; they will have to investigate specific cases to discover them.

Vampire   265 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +10 [110]; HT +5 [60].

Advantages: Alertness +4 [20]; Bite [30]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Dominance [5]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Magery 1 [15]; Night Vision [10]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Vampiric Invulnerability [150].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Blood; occasional, daily, ages without it) [-40]; The Draining [-10]; Dread (One of garlic, hemlock, wild rose, wolfsbane, or wormwood) [-10]; Dread (Religious symbol within 6 yards) [-16]; Dread (Running water) [-20]; No Body Heat (Except after feeding) [-1]; No Reflection [-10]; No Shadow [-10]; Nocturnal [-10]; Pallor (Except after feeding) [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Sterile [-3]; Unhealing [-20]; Vulnerability (2d from holy water) [-6]; Weakness (1d/minute from sunlight) [-60].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Can be turned using True Faith [0].

Innate Spells*: Body of Air at IQ+5 [12]; Shapeshifting (Bat or Wolf) (VH) at IQ+5 [24].
   * Include +1 for Magery.

Variations

Changing the Dependency (the substance, the frequency, or the result) is the most common alteration. The search for life force causes some varieties of vampire to feed on sex, beauty, youth, will, psychic power, or even spinal fluid! Pre-Christian and post-Anne Rice vampires often have no Dread of holy symbols; others require the symbol-wielder to possess True Faith before such a Dread becomes effective. Many vampires can summon or command animals such as rats, wolves, or bats; such vampires might have Beast Summoning and Mammal Control as innate spells. Likewise, some vampires are reputed to be able to cloud the minds of mortals. There is little support for this in folklore, but the GM may let vampires take certain Mind Control spells (e.g., Charm, Daze) as innate spells.

Many vampires have some form of Compulsive Behavior, such as "Can't enter a house unless invited in," "Must count small objects (like seeds) whenever encountered," and "Must untie any knots encountered." All are worth -10 points. Other possible disadvantages include Dependency (Earth from own grave) [-60], Frightens Animals [-5 or -10], and Vulnerability (Decapitation or heart shot) [-5 each]. These traits have been taken from fiction and folklore about the undead (not always vampires!) and added to vampire lore over the years. The cinematic "stake through the heart and a cloud of dust" Vulnerability (4d, impaling wooden weapons, heart shot only) is worth -25 points (this is actually *five* levels of Vulnerability, but the first simply cancels Vampiric Invulnerability toward the attack).

Often, both in cinema and folklore, vampires *also* have the equivalent of Resurrection (p. CI64) unless they (or their ashes) are buried in a specific fashion: at a crossroads, with its head cut off and stuffed with garlic, and a stake through the heart. This was the traditional burial method for suicides in Europe (practiced in Britain as late as the 19th century), and in early Balkan folklore, some vampires were the walking corpses of suicides buried improperly. Scattering the ashes of a vampire in running water often does the trick, too.

The Ghoul

Often closely associated with the vampire, the *ghoul* also operates across a broad spectrum of associated fears. The ghoul in the vampire legend is a mortal who subjects himself to the vampire in order to be granted life, blood, or some other mysterious boon. The madman Renfield, from *Dracula*, is the classic ghoul, but most fictional and cinematic vampires have some kind of companion figure who serves them in daylight, and who somehow partakes of, even desires, their taint. The simple addition of the Bloodthirst disadvantage (p. CI96) to any mortal will create such a ghoul, although many also possess Slave Mentality (p. CI94) and any number of Delusions and Odious Personal Habits. In some versions of the story, the vampire may allow the ghoul some kind of power, usually either minor hypnotism or uncanny strength.

Technically, however, a ghoul is a corpse-eating monster, often associated with graveyards, derived from Arabian legends. The *ghul* is one of the djinn (spirits better known to the West as "genies"), but material in nature rather than composed of "smokeless fire." The word "ghul" comes from the Arabic "to seize," as with paralyzing fear (as Burton theorized) or simply with the supernaturally strong arms of the *ghilan* (the plural of "ghul"). In Bedouin lore, ghilan lurked by the sides of lonely pathways, luring travelers to their death by starting fires or making noises to distract them from the road. Ghilan could also assume the shape of a friend or beautiful woman, although they could never change their feet, which remained those of as ass. Ghilan must be killed in one blow, as a second blow will restore them to life.

Ghul — 285 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +4 [45]; DX +3 [30]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Alertness +3 [15]; Claws [15]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; DR 3 [9]; Extra Hit Points +3 [15]; Fast Regeneration (Only after a second blow, -20%) [40]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Night Vision [10]; Silence 1 [5]; Temperature Tolerance 5 [5].

Disadvantages: Gluttony [-5]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats human carrion) [-15].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Can be imprisoned by the Seal of Solomon [0].

Inherent Magic (Knacks): Alter Body (Except for feet, -10%) [72].

Skills: Stealth at DX [2]; Survival (Desert) at IQ [2].

As Arab culture urbanized, ghilan changed from cannibalistic ogres lurking by the side of the road to beings more often associated with graveyards and the unwholesome dead (corpses are ritually unclean in Islam). These became the funerary ghouls, who garbed themselves in burial finery, mocked the living, and prowled beneath the city in search of corpses (in this respect, they take on some aspects of the Unseelie; see p. 55). Ghouls came to take on some of the characteristics of the plague dogs that dug up corpses in India and elsewhere in the East, sometimes sporting a bizarrely canine-human appearance. William Beckford introduced them to Western audiences in his novel *Vathek*, and H.P. Lovecraft further elaborated on their lore in "Pickman's Model" and his Dreamlands stories.

Funerary Ghoul   *116 points*

Attribute Modifiers: ST +4 [45]; DX +3 [30]; HT +3 [30].

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Alertness +3 [15]; Claws [15]; DR 4 (vs. bullets and other projectiles) [8]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Smell [-10]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Necrophilia (see p. UN104) [-15]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats human carrion) [-15].

Skills: Camouflage at IQ+1 [2]; Climbing at DX [2]; Jumping at DX+2 [4]; Stealth at DX [2]; Thanatology at IQ [4].

From Lovecraft's Dreamlands ghouls came the ghouls of traditional fantasy games, whose paralytic touch evokes both the paralyzing fear of the vast desert expanses and the fear of corpse-borne disease. (These ghouls have been modified from the Ghouls in *GURPS Fantasy Folk* for increased toughness and to better match with the other two types of ghouls, above.)

Fantasy Ghoul   *155 points*

Attribute Modifiers: ST +2 [20].

Advantages: Alertness +2 [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Double-Jointed [5]; Extra Hit Points +5 [25]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Night Vision [10]; Silence 1 [5]; Temperature Tolerance 5 [5]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Smell [-10]; Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-25]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats human carrion) [-15]; Reputation -4 (Horrible bottom-feeders) [-20]; Sense of Duty (Welfare of ghoul race) [-15].

Inherent Magic (Knacks): Paralyze Limb [40]; Total Paralysis [80].

Skills: Camouflage at IQ+1 [2]; Scrounging at IQ [1]; Stealth at DX [2].

Fear of Nature

Nature is not the kindly mother we see in Disney films. She is famously red in tooth and claw, completely unforgiving, and sadistically clever in finding new ways to kill slow, weak, or unlucky beings. Including man. Especially man. With all his vaunted tools, talents, and civilization, man remains at the mercy of nature, from hurricanes to rat swarms to carnivorous predators.

Man also remains at the mercy of his "animal nature," that portion of humanity that never quite came down from the trees. The "beast within" revels in killing, drinking rich foamy blood, and rutting under the stars. Civilized humans fear the attraction of the animal life, just as they fear the danger of the natural world. "Give up your worldly cares," the animal nature calls, "and become one with the predatory, lustful world around you." This is the call of the wild, and the call of the werewolf.

The Werewolf

Werewolves (and other were-beasts) are found in the legends and myths of many cultures. Each of these – and the movies and books that have come from them – offers a slightly different story. It can be theorized, however, that were-beast legends originated with hunting magic. Early cave drawings depict human hunters wearing the antlers and skin of a deer (human forms were rarely depicted in cave paintings). Modern tribal hunters are often accompanied by shamans wearing the skin of the animal to be hunted, to form a magical link between the two parties. The shamans perform rituals that involve them taking on the characteristics of the beast. Totemic animals, beasts from which tribes supposedly descend, also contribute to the were-beast myth. These ancient concepts, combined with modern psychological ideas such as the conflict between primordial beast and civilized man, have helped shaped our notion of werewolves.

The shaman's ceremonial wolf skin became a powerful, fearsome, and uncanny concept in the classical, and later the Christian, world. Magical wolf skins, or a magical ritual on a wolf skin, or eating the flesh of wolves (or people), or similarly primitive and disturbing rites turned the willing into werewolves (or *lycanthropes,* from the Greek words for "wolf-man"). In classical and medieval lore, the werewolf uses some sinister ritual to shapeshift from a human being into a large wolf, rather than into a hybrid form.

The werewolf has only one thing on his mind – killing. Sometimes the werewolf eats part of his kill, but the killing is the important thing. Since the average werewolf has already eaten well enough in human form, he is not ravenous; rather, his lupine nature makes him cruel and hateful. Though not particularly intelligent, the werewolf is cunning enough to avoid large groups, obvious traps, and hunting parties; he prefers to ambush lone victims. Humans – particularly children – are the werewolf's favorite prey, but he will settle for livestock, pets, and wild animals in a pinch.

The template below replicates this medieval and classical tradition. (See *Quick-and-Dirty Shapeshifting* for specific rules for using this template and the following one.)

Fear of Sex

Central to the fear of nature is the fear of sex. During sex, after all, humans are obeying their most primal, animal drives rather than the rationality that civilized cultures tend to exalt. Sex is also messy, often involving fluids and skin and other natural things mostly covered up at other times. Finally, sex can create new life, the central key to fertility magic and to horror literature from the Sumerian epics to *The Children of the Corn*. The explicit fear of sex seems most common in relatively restrictive societies such as Victorian England and Puritan America. In the Puritan mind, the fear of sex mixed especially strongly with the similar fear of natural "wilderness," which was full of deadly, un-Christian Indians (see *Fear of Natives*, p. 45).

Vampires Again

Such shared puritanism could explain why British and American vampire stories almost always have a sexual component. Their vampires are usually sexually attractive, sexually deviant, or both. (With the onset of AIDS, the sexualized vampire once again symbolizes disease, just as it did in Bram Stoker's syphilis-plagued Victorian London.) Use the following variant template to create such a sexy beast:

Romantic Vampire   281 points

Advantages: Beautiful [15]; Charisma +3 [15]; remove No Body Heat [1]; remove Social Stigma (Dead) [20]; Vampire (see p. 34) [265]; Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Broad-Minded [-1]; Lecherousness [-15]; Responsive [-1]; Secret (Sexual deviant) [-10]; Secret (Vampire) [-30].

Skills: Acting at IQ [2]; Erotic Art at DX [4]; Savoir-Faire at IQ+2 [4]; Sex Appeal at HT [2].

Romantic vampires traditionally pass for human in society, which explains the Secret and the lack of Social Stigma. A romantic vampire will likely have a Reputation as a great lover (or, possibly, as a depraved wanton). The skills are traditionally picked up over the centuries, not "racially learned" per se.

Succubi

Succubi (singular: *succubus*) are immaterial beings that materialize to feed on sexual energy. The medieval Church identified them as demons; they reportedly switched from female form to male form (in which case they were called *incubi*), impregnating female victims with their male victims' stolen sperm! (The offspring of such a mating might become a half-demon, or be otherwise tainted.) It's likely that the origin of this legend is related to "night hag syndrome," which is the sensation of someone (often perceived as an old woman) sitting on your chest at night, preventing you from breathing. This syndrome affects 15% of Americans, and is also called Awareness During Sleep Paralysis, or ADSP. The same phenomenon might also explain many alien abduction stories.

However, for the purposes of a rousing R-rated horror game, ADSP is actually *caused by* succubi, which have been plaguing humanity since the days of ancient Greece and Rome. Succubi charm and seduce their victims, and drain their essence through the sex act, often killing them. Some will instead enslave a favored victim, granting powerful wishes but constantly draining his life force to the point where he is always on the verge of death.

Succubus   270 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +2 [20]; HT +3 [30].

Advantages: Constriction Attack [15]; Double-Jointed [5]; Extra Fatigue +5 [15]; Ghost Form (Physical Form, +80%; Cannot use poltergeist effect, possession, or probability alteration, -60%) [120]; Hermaphromorph [2]; Magery 1 [15]; Night Vision [10]; Racial Skill Bonus (+3 w. Erotic Art) [8]; Very Beautiful [25]; Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Broad-Minded [-1]; Dependency (Sexual energy; common, nightly) [-15]; Lecherousness [-15]; No Reflection [-10]; Nocturnal [-10]; Responsive [-1]; Self-Centered [-10]; Social Stigma (Evil spirit) [-15].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit [0]; Can be detected by sensitive individuals and animals [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0].

Innate Spells:* Nightmare at IQ+5 [12]; Sleep at IQ+5 [12]; Steal HT at IQ+11 (Requires sexual intimacy, -25%) [18]; Steal ST at IQ+11 (Requires sexual intimacy, -25%) [18].

Skills: Sex Appeal at HT+2 [6]; Shapeshifting at IQ+1 [6].

    * Include +1 for Magery.

The Shaggy Ones

Especially in pre-industrial societies, which often lived or died based on flukes of the weather or wildlife, nature embodied uncontrollable, wayward chance, killing or saving at its whim. In ancient Greece, especially, wild nature was seen as a mad, energetic force to be placated and feared. The classical Greeks explicitly contrasted the "Panic" (named for Pan, god of nature – and of terror) of the wild with the Apollonian calm of reason and logic. Nature spirits, for the Greeks, were unpredictable wild things that might help you or attack you for no reason – creatures of pure natural emotion, whim, and madness.

The prime servitors of Pan were the *satyrs*, goat-like creatures embodying all base lusts, for food, wine, and sex. The ancient peoples of the Middle East knew of similar beings, the *se'irim*, or "shaggy ones." (According to Sir Richard Burton, the ghilan, or ghouls, also embodied the stark fear of the desert; see p. 35.) In later art and poetry, the satyrs became "domesticated" out of their true horror, their insatiable greed and lechery tamed to mere stereotyped quirks. In earlier, less "civilized" times, however, the poor farmers of the Mediterranean hill country knew that the shaggy ones were malevolent, crazed entities who could only be placated with worship and sex. Perhaps the tendency of modern movie serial killers to stalk couples having sex in remote wilderness locations is a remnant of the shaggy ones' murderous erotomania. (Playing up the sexual angle, and the wilderness element, can tune the satyrs to Fear of Nature themes.)

Both satyrs and se'irim resemble goats that walk upright. Their faces are twisted combinations of goat and man, leering and drooling with their lusts, or twisted in inhuman laughter. Their horns and hooves are sharp, but their madness is their true weapon.

Shaggy One   137 points

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST -2 [-15]; DX +3 [30]; HT +1 [10].
Advantages: Alertness +2 [10]; Animal Empathy [5]; Butting Horns [5]; Claws (Sharp hooves; +2 kicking damage) [15]; Musical Ability +2 [2]; Penetrating Call [5]; Terror (-7 to Fright Checks) [100].
Disadvantages: Alcoholism [-15]; Gluttony [-5]; Lecherousness [-15].
Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Prefer to work in groups [-1].
Skills: Carousing at HT [2]; Musical Instrument (Pan-pipe) at IQ [4].
Some shaggy ones seem to possess Pheromone Control (p. CI63) usable on humans.
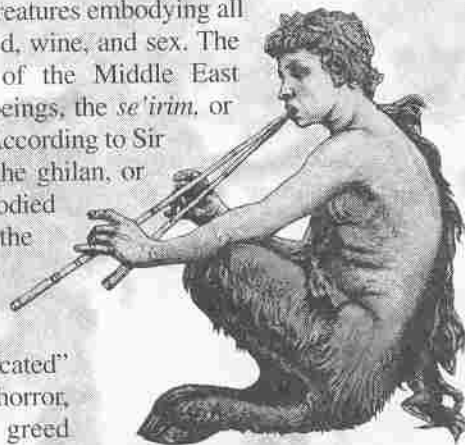
Man-Eaters

Many monsters of nature are based at least in part on man-eating predators. The name of the Persian-Indian monster, the manticore, simply means "man eater"; the legend probably evolved from tales of the Bengal tiger. The chemosit (p. 109) and ngojama (p. 109) likely sprung from the fear of man-eaters as well. No large predator habitually attacks man, but a sufficiently old, sick, or desperate beast will do so. Before guns and electric lighting, when the ranges of the large carnivores pressed up against the cleared fields of the villages, man-eating animal attacks were probably far more common than they are today.

The worst animal attacks in history came in 1898 in the Tsavo thorn forest in Kenya. Two young, healthy lions, for no known reason, began to attack native workers building a bridge over the Tsavo River. Between March and December, the lions killed 135 workers, often tearing them to pieces within earshot of their fellows. Bridge engineer John Henry Patterson tried to stalk and kill the lions, seemingly without result. The lions attacked in broad daylight, in full view of large groups of men, but vanished into the thorn forest before they could be caught or even tracked. The lions leapt nine-foot fences and pulled natives out of 15-foot trees. They began preying on the hospital, and when Patterson moved the patients out of the hospital and left the old building full of blood as bait, the lions attacked the new hospital while he waited fruitlessly by his trap. Patterson finally killed the first lion in December; on Christmas week, he fell out of his blind when the second lion attacked him, breaking his leg. Somehow, he managed to kill the beast with his last bullet, from six inches away. The skins of the lions of Tsavo are still on display at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

Man-Eating Lion   112 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +15 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [90]; DX +3 [30]; IQ -4 [-30]; HT +5 [60].
Advantages: Alertness +13 [65]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Double-Jointed [5]; Enhanced Move (Running) 1/2 [5]; Extra Hit Points +3 [15]; Faz Sense (3-hex range, -20%) [8]; Four Legs [5]; Night Vision [10]; Sharp Claws [25]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Silence 3 [15]; Thick Fur [29].
Disadvantages: Attentive [-1]; Bestial (Extreme) [-15]; Bloodthirst [-15]; Dead Broke [-25]; Dull [-1]; Horizontal [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Odious Personal Habit (Eats people) [-15]; Presentient [-20]; Short Arms [-10]; Short Lifespan 5 [-50]; Sleepy (50% of the time) [-10]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15]; Staid [-1]; Stubbornness [-5].
Skills: Climbing at DX [2]; Jumping at DX [1]; Stealth at DX+1 [4]; Survival (Savanna) at IQ+1/IQ+7* [6].
   * Specialized to the lion's home range: used the higher value within that range, the lower one outside that range.

This template describes a smarter-than-average man-eating lion. To recreate one of the lions of Tsavo, start by increasing the beast's Stealth and removing Sleepy. For the nearly super-natural cunning displayed by those lions, the GM might want to add advantages such as Intuition, or even buy off Presentient . . .

Werewolf   *Variable*

PPT   **190 points + variables**

Attribute Changes: DX +4 [Varies]; HT +2 [Varies].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +4 [8]; Acute Taste and Smell +4 [8]; Alertness +5 [25]; Claws [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell (Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%; Offensive smell: wolfsbane, -20%) [20]; Enhanced Dodge [15]; Enhanced Move (Running) 1/2 [5]; Four Legs [5]; Penetrating Call [5]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Slow Regeneration [10]; Speak With Animals (Wolves and dogs only, -30%) [11]; Thick Fur [29]; Ultrahearing [5].

Skills: Brawling at DX [1]; Running at HT [4]; Stealth at DX [2]; Survival (Woodlands) at IQ [2]. (*Add* these points to any points already possessed in these skills.)

NPT   **-126 points + variables**

Attribute Changes: IQ -5 [Varies].

Disadvantages: Bestial [-10]; Color Blindness [-10]; Dead Broke [Varies]; Dull [-1]; Gluttony [-5]; Horizontal [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Sadism [-15]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15].

The Wolf-Man

Screenwriter Curt Siodmak took the basic medieval legend of the werewolf and transformed it from the story of a magical serial killer to the tale of a cursed wanderer. In 1941, his script for *The Wolf Man* rewrote the werewolf legend, adding the full moon, the silver bullets, the contagious bite of the werewolf, and other familiar elements of the modern werewolf story.

In the modern version, the beast is not a true, four-legged wolf, but a two-legged, hairy-faced wolf-man. The curse victim assumes beast form at the rising of a full moon. The transformation takes only three seconds (the movies make it seem longer), during which the body grows long, fur-like hair; the ears become pointed; the face becomes elongated, and the teeth become more prominent; the hands lengthen and claws appear; and the entire body becomes more muscular. The beast reverts to human form with the setting of the moon or the rising of the sun – whichever comes first.

Wolf-Man   *Variable*

PPT   **409 points + variables**

Attribute Changes: ST +8 [Varies]; DX +2 [Varies]; HT +4 [Varies].

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +4 [8]; Alertness +10 [50]; Altered Time Rate 1 [100]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell (Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%; Offensive smell: wolfsbane, -20%) [20]; DR 15 (Against everything *but* silver, wolfsbane, magic, or psionics; Hardened, +30%; Reduces knockback, +20%) [45]; Fur [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison (Not vs. wolfsbane, -10%) [14]; Instant Regeneration (Can't heal damage caused by silver, wolfsbane, magic, or psionics, -30%) [70]; Penetrating Call [5]; Sharp Claws [25]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Super Jump 2 [20]; Ultrahearing [5].

Skills: Brawling at DX [1]; Stealth at DX [2]. (*Add* these points to any points already possessed in these skills.)

NPT   **-110 points + variables**

Attribute Changes: IQ -3 [Varies].

Disadvantages: Bestial [-10]; Bloodlust [-10]; Dead Broke [Varies]; Gluttony [-5]; Infectious Attack [-5]; Innumerate [-5]; Mute [-25]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats people) [-15]; Presentient [-20]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15].

As well, some wolf-men have a Vulnerability to silver. Occasionally, a wolf-man will have Untrained Shape-Changing (p. CI100) or be subject to Lunar Influence (p. CI39).

Becoming a Werewolf

Lycanthropy is usually the result of a family curse administered by a person of great evil. It might be a latent condition that does not show up for several generations, or it could be as common as red hair (often considered a sign of witchcraft or lycanthropy in medieval Europe). Werewolves from a long line of werewolves might even have some lupine abilities (Acute Taste and Smell, Night Vision, etc.) while in human form, although at reduced levels.

A popular modern concept holds that a person bitten by a lycanthrope will become one; such werewolves have the Infectious Attack disadvantage (p. CI97). If an adventurer is bitten, the GM should make his resistance rolls in secret and let him discover his lycanthropy through play.

A newly infected lycanthrope probably won't know he has the disease. Even after the transformations begin, the afflicted person has no memory of the event. Traditionally, a werewolf goes to bed on the night of a full moon, only to wake the next morning remembering vague nightmares and feeling tired and sore. Then he will turn on the radio to hear accounts of grisly attacks, and wonder what could be behind it all . . .

Quick-and-Dirty Shapeshifting

Shapeshifting is the subject of *GURPS Shapeshifters*. Those without that book can use the following "rule of thumb."

An alternate form is always an *advantage*. Its point cost depends on the character who possesses it, and is calculated as follows:

1. Create the beast form as you would any character.

2. Total everything with a positive cost to find a "positive point total" (PPT). Total all negative values to get the "negative point total" (NPT). For changes in attribute levels and existing traits, use the *difference* between the forms (e.g. a ST 11 human who has ST 19 in wolf-man form adds 90 points to PPT; a Wealthy human who is Dead Broke in wolf-man form adds -45 points to NPT).

3. Apply NPT as a percentage limitation on PPT (e.g., NPT -70 becomes a -70% limitation on PPT). The limitation cannot exceed -75%, regardless of NPT (e.g., NPT -100 would give only a -75% limitation). Moreover, the point savings due to the limitation cannot exceed 80% of NPT (e.g., NPT -50 and PPT 100 would result in a -50% limitation, normally worth -50 points, but since this would exceed 80% of -50 points, or -40 points, it is reduced to -40 points).

The following limitations can be applied to the *final* cost of the advantage:

Special Limitation: Involuntary Change. When the time comes for you to change, you must – regardless of your wishes or of other circumstances. This is the traditional "werewolf's curse," familiar from Lon Chaney movies. -30%.

Special Limitation: Required Ingredient. Medieval werewolves often required a special salve (usually a compound of belladonna, aconite, and fat) or the skin of a wolf to make the change. A change requiring a wolf skin is a -20% limitation; one requiring (for example) nudity and a thorough slathering of were-salve is a -40% limitation. A change that requires a specific magical wolf skin is best handled with a magic item, rather than as an advantage. This limitation is incompatible with Involuntary Change.

Special Limitation: Time-Sensitive Change. Your change can only occur at specific times. "Night only" (the common medieval requirement) is a -20% limitation. The familiar Hollywood "on the nights of the full moon" would be a -30% limitation.

Stopping a Werewolf

The notion that only silver can harm a werewolf is but one possibility; the GM might not wish to incorporate it into a "realistic" campaign. Some medieval law codes provided that a werewolf must be beheaded with a double-edged sword, perhaps as a parallel to the monster's dual nature. However, the method recommended by the Inquisition and other authorities is still the best one: kill the creature in human form, while he is vulnerable to all attacks.

There is no known cure for lycanthropy. The GM may decide that the curse can be removed, but this should involve a long quest, at great risk. (One possible quest might involve the night-blooming feng-feng plant of Tibet, which coincidentally acts as a specific against aconite – wolfsbane – poisoning.) Someone who learns that he has the affliction (probably from comrades, possibly through deduction) can only hope to control the effects, most obviously by being aware of the phases of the moon and by taking precautions such as locking himself in a cage on the appropriate nights.

Fear of Madness

While taint and nature threaten the normal, rational world from without, madness gnaws at it from within. The madman hiding within orderly society, just like the mad urges hiding within each of us, can never be predicted, bargained with, or prevented. Historical societies responded to madness as best they could; the Greeks attempted to channel it into sports or, at worst, religious and dramatic catharsis. To Islamic cultures, the mad were touched by God, monsters in the old sense of divine portents and omens – but they were also avoided assiduously, where possible. Proud, rational Georgian and Victorian England spun theories on the cause and cure of madness, while exhibiting maniacs to the idle (but oh-so-sane) rich for a shilling a peek. These changing theories on madness' cause led to changing monsters to personify it, from airy spirits to the spawn of tainted lineages to glassy-eyed deviants to infantile serial slashers.

The Serial Killer

The modern serial killer is most often a sociopath, unable to tell right from wrong in any meaningful way. Many, though far from all, serial killers were abused as children; a significant percentage began killing animals well before turning to humans. The serial killer usually (but not always) chooses targets he finds sexually attractive, and generally repeats the same method and the same kinds of circumstances. Only after three separated killings with the same modus operandi do law-enforcement authorities consider the case to be a serial killing in progress – and if the victims are social outcasts (such as prostitutes or the homeless), it can take considerably longer than that.

Historians of crime trace serial killers as a phenomenon back to Jack the Ripper (see p. 43), although there exist several individual cases, both solved and unsolved, in the century or so before his time. Certain pre-modern mass murderers, such as Gilles de Rais, the infamous Bluebeard, and Vlad Tepes (see

p. 34), might also have been what we would consider serial killers today; however, they were in positions of great political power and influence. (In modern times, Idi Amin, dictator of Uganda, and Jean-Bedel Bokassa, of the Central African Republic, equaled the feats and derangement of those murderers, killing without clear political or ideological reason.) As well, some historical "werewolf" cases might actually have been serial killers on the loose: a prefiguring of the serial killer's rebirth as the modern werewolf, showing the human face of sanity to the world while concealing a ravening monster within.

Serial Killer   -66 points

Advantages: Intuition [15]; Luck [15].
Disadvantages: Bad Temper [-10]; Bloodlust [-10]; Compulsive Behavior (Murder, with an uncommon trigger event) [-10]; Delusion (Major; could be almost anything) [-10]; Loner [-5]; Obsession (Next murder) [-10]; Sadism [-15]; Secret (Serial killer) [-30].
Skills: Acting at IQ+1 [4].

This is really more of a character template than a racial template, and is intended to be fairly broad, covering most known cases of modern serial killers. The whole range of personality disadvantages, from Careful to Necrophilia, is available as well, with Clueless, Low Empathy, Migraine, Solipsist, Trademark, and Voices being common. Some serial killers (such as Zodiac and the Son of Sam) use guns; *psycho killers* never do.

The Psycho Killer

The psycho killer is the cinematic version of the serial killer, the "slasher" in films such as *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*. He is the serial killer turned into an archetypal monster. Psycho killers almost always have grotesque sexual dysfunctions, hellish personal stories, and an insatiable appetite for murder. They tend to kill on significant days, such as the anniversary of some past trauma or earlier spate of murders. They also tend to commit widely spaced mass murders or spree killings rather than true serial killings. Unlike serial killers, psycho killers do not retain the same modus operandi, often settling for a simple trademark, such as a hockey mask or a pattern of harassing phone calls.

Psycho Killer   141 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +3 [30]; DX +3 [30]; HT +3 [30].
Advantages: Catfall [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Extraordinary Luck [30]; Hard to Kill +2 [10]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Cutting/Impaling Bonus) [30]; Recovery [10]; Toughness (DR 2) [25]; Weapon Master (Medium-sized class: all psycho killer weapons; see below for special rules) [35].
Disadvantages: Bloodlust [-10]; Compulsive Behavior (Murder, with an uncommon trigger event) [-10]; Delusion (Major; could be almost anything) [-10]; Intolerance (Sexually active women) [-5]; Loner [-5]; Low Empathy [-15]; Obsession (Slaughtering babysitters) [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (Voyeuristic babysitter-slaughterer) [-15]; Sadism [-15]; Secret (Psycho killer) [-30]; Solipsist [-10]; Trademark [-1].
Skills: Brawling at DX+2 [4]; Stealth at DX+2 [8].

Psycho Killer Weapons

Psycho killers prefer to use their bare hands or melee weapons to dispatch their prey. However, the weapons listed on pp. B206-207 – mere swords, knives, and the like – are woefully inadequate for any self-respecting homicidal maniac. Below are some special weapons for your favorite psycho killer. Note that psycho killers have a special form of the Weapon Master advantage that lets them use improvised weapons at a generous DX default, specified for each weapon below. Normal humans must use a specific Combat/ Weapon skill, usually at a penalty; this is noted in parentheses. This skill penalty does not apply to psycho killers who know the weapon skill in question; they may roll against their *full* skill to hit!

Board with Nail: Swing-2 impaling. May get *stuck*. 1 turn to ready. DX-2 (Axe/Mace-2).

Boat Hook: Swing-1 impaling. May get *stuck*. 1 turn to ready. DX-2 (Axe/Mace-2).

Chainsaw: Swing+1d cutting. 1 turn to ready. DX-2 (Two-Handed Axe/Mace-2).

Chair: Swing+2 crushing. 1 turn to ready. DX-2 (Two-Handed Axe/Mace-2).

Fondue Fork: Thrust-2 impaling. DX-1 (Knife-1).

Garden Weasel: Swing-1 impaling. May get *stuck*. 1 turn to ready. DX-2 (Axe/Mace-2).

Golf Club: Swing+1 (putter) or swing+2 (driver) crushing. DX-2 or Sport (Golf) (Two-Handed Axe/Mace-2).

Hedge Clippers: Thrust impaling, or swing-2 cutting if closed on a limb (or neck) to cut it off. DX-2 (Two-Handed Axe/Mace-2).

Machete: Swing+1 cutting. DX-2 (Shortsword).

Pitchfork: Thrust+4 impaling, but any DR is *doubled*. 1 turn to ready. DX-2 (Spear-2).

Pool Cue: Swing+1 crushing or thrust-1 impaling. DX-2 (Broadsword-2).

Post-Hole Digger: Thrust+2 cutting. 1 turn to ready. DX-2 (Spear-4).

Power Drill: Thrust+2 impaling. May get *stuck*. DX-1 (Knife-2).

Power Saw: Swing+(1d-1) cutting. 1 turn to ready. DX-2 (Two-Handed Axe/Mace-3).

Scissors: Thrust-1 impaling. DX-1 (Knife-1).

Screwdriver: Thrust-2 impaling. DX-1 (Knife-1).

Scythe: Swing+2 cutting or swing impaling. 1 turn to ready. DX-2 (Two-Handed Axe/Mace, at -2 if impaling).

Straight Razor: Swing-2 cutting. DX-1 (Knife-1).

Tire Iron: Swing crushing. DX-2 (Broadsword-2).

The Evil Clown

Beyond even the psycho killer as a modern icon of terrifying madness lurks the evil clown. In masterpieces such as Stephen King's novel *It*, and in eye-poppingly bad films such as *Killer Klowns From Outer Space*, the evil clown has staked out his territory as the official emblem of everything that society fears. The image of the clown as messenger of chaos and the uncanny goes back a long way, back even before Punch, the murderous clown-puppet of British lore.

Punch's ancestor Harlequin, a figure in the 17th-century *commedia dell'arte*, may have come from the medieval painted jester, or Fool, whose "madness" let him speak the truth outside the borders of law and reason. Groups of jesters, called "mummers," who wore painted masks and motley while staging exaggerated combats, appeared in medieval Troyes by the 13th century. According to some scholars, their traditions descend from the cultists of Dionysos, who performed madcap antics at the death of the year in ancient Greece.

The mummers, and their British counterparts, the Hognels, were often accused of harboring witches and conspirators in their ranks. The template below assumes something even worse: that within such nomadic bands of clowns lurk inhuman (or mutant) beings known as "palefaces" or "chalkies," who worship a bizarre, mad god (most likely a Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know) and seek ecstasy in insanity. Palefaces have a thick, almost rubbery, white skin, and no body hair. Their main power is the ability to send out certain pheromones, some of which trigger irrational fear (or even flashbacks and hallucinations) in humans, others of which make them seem harmless, pleasant, and innocent to normal humans.

Normal *adult* humans, that is. Human olfactory organs change radically at puberty; children are immune to the paleface's literal "odor of sanctity." Beyond even their ability to sense palefaces, children have much to fear from the chalkies. The reason for this lies not just in the strange madness-worship of these mutants, but also in the fact that palefaces are unable to sire children amongst themselves: they need a human partner for that. A human partner who has gone utterly mad *before* leaving puberty. Thus, palefaces are always on the lookout for children to frighten and torment.

Evil Clown   203 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +2 [20]; DX +2 [20]; IQ +1 [10]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell (Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%) [23]; Double-Jointed [5]; DR 2 [6]; Group Skill Bonus (+3 w. Acting, Bard, Body Language, Detect Lies, Fast-Talk, and Intimidation) [18]; Longevity [5]; Mimicry (Needs only 5 minutes to learn new voices, +65%) [25]; Night Vision [10]; Penetrating Call (Laughter) [5]; Rapier Wit [5]; Recovery [10]; Sanctity (Adults only, -20%; Scent-based, -20%) [3]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Terror (-5 to Fright Checks; Scent-based, -20%) [64].

Disadvantages: Berserk [-15]; Bully [-10]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Intolerance (Prepubescent children – especially quiet, intelligent, and creative ones) [-5]; Sadism [-15]; Secret (Inhuman monster that delights in tormenting and murdering children) [-30]; Unnatural Feature (Chalk-white skin) [-5].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Compelled to work a "day job" as a clown or mime, preferably in a circus [-1]; Incredibly cruel and gross sense of humor [-1]; Tends to almost phobic reaction toward cuddly toys, such as teddy bears and dolls [-1].

Skills: Acrobatics at DX [4]; Disguise at IQ+1 [4]; Performance at IQ [2]; Psychology at IQ+1 [6]; Sleight of Hand at DX+1 [8].

An even more seductively evil clown might have the telepathic Illusion skill (p. P21) or some Illusion and Creation spells (pp. M51-53) to lure children into its grasp. Paleface high priests will have evil Clerical Magic (p. CI35), and possibly even the Satire skill (p. CM57).

Fear of Mutilation

There's something nastily specific about mutilation that gives it its own unique frisson. In a way, this fear is an internalization of the fear of the grotesque or freakish – what if *we* were like that? (That fear also powers the fear of blasted heaths and twisted trees, used by horrorists from Shakespeare to Lovecraft.) We fear the mutilation of our bodies, such as the famous "injury to the eye" condemned by the Comics Code Authority as unsuitable for children's entertainment. Sometimes, that fear latches onto something external; sometimes, the fear is our own creation.

Mutilation Panics

Among the many kinds of mass hysteria to which mankind is prone (see *Poisoning Phobias*, p. 48), one of the most peculiar is the mutilation panic. Usually emerging in times (or places) of social stress or dislocation, the mutilation panic causes normal people to be certain that some unknown fiend wielding a knife or claws has attacked them. Everyone knows someone who knows someone who was assaulted; some people swear they saw murder being done.

Such panics erupted in London over a period of about 100 years, from the "London Monster" of the 1780s, who reportedly slashed young women with a knife and vanished, to the "Spring-Heeled Jack" of the 1820s and 1870s, who attacked young women with flame breath and "metallic claws" before bounding away as if he had springs on his heels. Rapidly urbanizing societies in Africa and Southeast Asia have periodic epidemics of "penis thieves," who somehow mutilate strange men on the street without being seen. Many cities in India have their own high-jumping "monkey man" attacker. Reading about such incidents may amuse us, far away – until it starts happening in our own city.

Jack the Ripper

Almost synonymous with the creeping fog of London and death on a gaslit street is the name of Jack the Ripper. For three short months in 1888, Jack the Ripper (who signed that name to a letter he sent to a local vigilance committee) terrorized the East End, killing at least five prostitutes in and around the Whitechapel area. Over a century later, he remains the most famous uncaught serial killer in history.

Terrified by and fascinated with his grisly ritualistic killings, the London public (including Queen Victoria) followed Red Jack's exploits in the sensational newspapers. Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes, and Mary Jane Kelly all died under Jack's knife between August and November of 1888, disemboweled and horribly mutilated.

Though there are many theories and suggestions as to Jack's identity, the killer was never apprehended. He seemed to drop out of sight in the mists of the city after killing Mary Jane Kelly, though it is possible that the fiend was indeed responsible for later, less publicized deaths, as well as earlier ones often attributed to him.

It is possible that the Ripper had some knowledge of anatomy; he might have been a doctor gone bad. Aleister Crowley hinted that "Saucy Jack" might have had intimate knowledge of occult ritual. One of the most interesting theories is that "Jack" was actually an influential member of the secret society of Freemasons, and that the ritualistic killings were a cover-up for an indiscretion on the part of Victoria's grandson, the Duke of Clarence, a Mason.

Sir Charles Warren, superintendent of Scotland Yard, was a Mason. A large part of the cabinet and Parliament were also Masons. This could explain the ineptitude of the Yard in apprehending the killer, as well as the anomaly of Warren's actual destruction of evidence when a chalked message, supposedly from the Ripper, implicates the "Juwes" – not Jews, as Warren claims, but names from Masonic ritual. (For more on this theory, see Alan Moore's graphic novel *From Hell* or the Sherlock Holmes film *Murder by Decree*.)

Red Jack has also been identified as an Irish terrorist, a mad gynecologist, a ritual butcher, an arsenic-addicted drug fiend, a misogynist poet, Lewis Carroll, Queen Victoria, an alien invader, a vampire, and an astral parasite. Whoever (or whatever) "Old Leather Apron" actually is, he can easily be the focus for any number of encounters with player characters, who may become his pursuers . . . or his victims.

The Ripper

Elements common to all mysterious mutilators include a deliberate attempt to spread panic, slashing attacks, and rapid retreats. Some mutilators have exaggeratedly animal or mechanical features, but since all seem able to vanish into a crowd, that is not necessarily a requirement. One possible explanation posits a lineage descended from a particularly active succubus (see p. 37) in 17th-century England. Within this interlinked set of families, demon blood occasionally surfaces, creating a ripper. A (usually) younger son of one of these families will plunge headlong into ever-wilder pursuits, seeking ever more debauched stimulation, until suddenly, in a moment of sadistic glory (usually involving the torture or abuse of some terrified underling or prostitute), his ripper heritage becomes apparent.

Rippers are not gregarious, although their naturally competitive instincts occasionally cause them to gather in order to boast about their fell doings, and to egg each other on to further excess with wagers and raillery. Each ripper has a unique style or mark, distinguishable by other rippers or by occult scholars specializing in such things. (Some scholars speculate that each style is the inheritance of one particular demon; a ripper in the direct male line of descent from another will repeat his ancestor's style precisely.) Occasionally, the demonic heritage in a particularly powerful ripper is so strong that he gives up mutilation for serial murder, as may have occurred in 1888.

Ripper   342 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +5 [60]; DX +1 [10]; HT +3 [30].

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Alertness +4 [20]; Catfall [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Hard to Kill +3 [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Imperturbable [10]; Invulnerability (Mind Control) [75]; Less Sleep 2 [6]; Regular Regeneration [25]; Silence 5 [25]; Super Jump 4 [40]; Talons [40].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Fear; occasional, weekly) [-20]; Sadism [-15]; Secret (Ripper) [-30]; Trademark [-5].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Loves to play cat-and-mouse with his victims [-1].

Skills: Acrobatics at DX [4]; Brawling at DX+2 [4]; Jumping at DX [1]; Stealth at DX+2 [8].

cent energies, or weird bio-matter, usually held in a clear (but impervious) container attached to a lot of clicking, whirring machinery. Some brains cleverly armor the whole structure, often using robotized manipulators to build it. The brain usually communicates with the outside world using psionics, but weird science might allow for some sort of voice synthesizer, or the brain could jack into computers using a neural interface. A severed head can vocalize like a normal head, given a source of air to pass over the vocal cords.

Disembodied brains might not seem to hold many adventure possibilities, but with imagination, they can be fiendish foes. See the No Physical Body disadvantage (p. CI83) for rules details. Any disembodied brain worth its salt has an IQ of 15+. Many brains have psionic talents, and may be able to manipulate their creators (or whoever rescued them) telepathically, along with anyone else who comes too close. A psionic brain should have at least power 10 and skill 15 with its psi abilities. Suitable psi powers include ESP, Psychokinesis, and Telepathy; brains might even keep themselves alive by Psychic Vampirism (p. P16). Some brains might turn to the black arts instead, casting spells and summoning demons to serve them. Others lack exotic powers, but their superior intellects still make them dangerous masterminds, plotting strategy for a team of criminals, vampires, or other low sorts.

Adventures involving disembodied brains should play up the shock value of such revolting experiments. Rumors of missing cadavers and unexplained disappearances may lead to the laboratory of a presumed-to-be-innocent college professor, where tanks of formaldehyde house the horrible results of his latest scientific theories.

Brains are scary things, and not all brain-monsters have to be surgically removed human organs. Such creatures may be extraterrestrial in origin, or perhaps the result of some strange scientific experiment that mingles brainwaves with extra-cosmic radiation. They might float around on membranous wings, or levitate, and use a dangling, prehensile "spinal cord" (or telekinesis) to manipulate objects. Such entities should be given a full racial template, like any other alien menace (see p. 54). These creatures often "possess" the bodies of their victims, or control their victims by wrapping their prehensile nerves around the spinal cord, allowing them to mingle with human society.

Variations

Some rippers may possess the Terror advantage – all the better to feed their Dependency – or may Morph between normal human appearance and monstrous form. By compounding the Dependency with Murder Addiction (p. CI98), one can create a template for an even more powerful psycho killer (p. 41), or for another species competing for the same niche in the ecology of the subconscious. To truly capture the ripper's inhuman combat abilities, consider using the cinematic rules from p. BO64 (especially *The Scrub* and *Ghostly Movement*).

Rippers might in fact be spectral entities, created by mass social and psychic turmoil, with Ghost Form (Cannot hear its name being invoked, travel instantaneously, ride in vehicles, or use dream travel, possession, or the poltergeist effect, -65%) [35]. Spectral rippers will likely have the Steal ST spell, and possibly Extra Fatigue, to fuel their materialization requirements.

The Ultimate Mutilation:
The Disembodied Brain

A popular staple of 1950s B-grade horror films was the disembodied brain. Films centered around such horrors (*The Brain That Wouldn't Die*, etc.) invariably involved a mad scientist seeking to preserve either a brain or a severed head after the death of the body. Naturally, the brain had a mind of its own that ultimately led to the scientist's downfall as the repulsive nature of the experiments became known to civilization at large.

The GM should decide upon the nature of the brain's life-support system. This might be bubbling chemicals, incandes-

The Creeping Hand

The severed hand of a serial killer (see p. 41), evil sorcerer, mad scientist, or other unwholesome sort can often return from the grave – either deliberately or through a chain of unlikely circumstance. Returning hands often have an obsessive desire to take revenge on their body's killer, or occasionally to be sewn onto a living body in order to take control of it (treat this as Contest of Wills between the hand's original owner and the new body). If the new owner seems obdurate, the hand might wait until the new owner is asleep and then animate the sleeping form for mayhem, leaving the owner tired but none the wiser. For severed-hand statistics and additional possibilities, see *Independent Body Parts* (pp. 19-20).

Fear of the Universe

The universe is vaster than we can truly comprehend, no matter how many zeroes we add or telescopes we build. What cannot be comprehended cannot be truly known, and it is from the unknown that terrors, the Things From Beyond, come. Originally, the Things From Beyond lived in the dark forests or mountains where our caveman ancestors wouldn't go at night. As we moved out of the caves, the Things inhabited foreign, dangerous parts – "beyond the Pillars of Hercules" or "in Darkest Africa." Now that the world has been explored and nature has been tamed, the Things come from the distant past or future, or from outer space, or from other dimensions entirely. They are unknowable and mysterious; their victims do not know the Things' weakness, or even if they have one. Worst yet, discovering these secrets does no good – the truth will drive you mad with fear. These entities, and their truths, are Things Man Was Not Meant To Know.

Things Man Was Not Meant To Know

H.P. Lovecraft did not invent the "cosmic horror" genre (see pp. 89-90), or even the concept of inconceivable alien entities howling and scratching at the borders of the cosmos, but his Cthulhu Mythos set the pattern for almost every subsequent depiction of such Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. This section follows Lovecraft's pattern to enable the GM to create his own unique pantheon of chaotic deities and ancient monstrosities. Such a pantheon can appear in campaigns involving ancient cults, powerful sorcerers, and globe-spanning conspiracies of evil . . . or as the corruption slowly eroding the heart of a single small town in New England.

Creating a Pantheon

Things Man Was Not Meant To Know (or simply "Things") fall into three main categories:

Cosmic Deities: Extremely powerful beings inhabiting the far corners of the universe. (But not always traditional "gods" with magical powers. To Lovecraft, there was no magic, just incomprehensible science practiced in superior dimensions. The dimensions themselves became his Deities.)

Ancient Ones: Monstrous abhorrences that wait in dormancy to unleash their power upon mankind.

Minions: Alien races and biologically or magically altered human cultists who serve the other beings.

Before creating Things for a campaign, the GM must determine the nature of his history and how the Things came into being. In a godless universe of pure chaos, the GM may wish to eliminate the need for Cosmic Deities and simply create races of Ancient Ones. Alternatively, "pure chaos" may be manifested in a central Cosmic Deity who radiates entropy to the corners of the cosmos. The GM may also wish to pursue a Manichean concept of Order versus Chaos, or Good versus Evil – and perhaps Evil happens to be winning just now.

Fear of Natives: The Manitou

The *manitou* is derived from American Indian legend, and represents the living spirit of a deceased shaman. This concept is also found in other tribal cultures where shamans or witch doctors are held in reverence.

Manitous return to the living because of injustices or crimes committed against the deceased shaman or the tribe. They are reborn among the living in the form of an animal (usually the shaman's totem animal; often a wolf, buffalo, bear, or deer), staying in that form until the animal reaches maturity. At this point, the manitou can freely change between animal and human form. If a manitou is killed, in either form, it will always return until it has obtained its revenge on those who committed the injustices.

A manitou in human form will have above-average attributes (in the 12-14 range) and a skill level of 15 or better in Bow, Knife, and Knife Throwing or Axe Throwing. It will wear skins of the animal of its birth, providing it with the PD and DR of that beast. The manitou can freely change into the shape of its animal counterpart (treat as a Shapeshifting spell known at skill 20), with all the attributes and abilities of that animal. It will also possess magical powers – usually one or two Animal or Elemental spells at high skill levels.

Manitous most often manifest themselves (in the white man's horror fiction, anyway) when the white man commits crimes against Native Americans. Desecrating burial mounds, violating treaties, and so forth will attract the attention of a manitou, should the tribe lose its shaman through such an act. Since the manitou is reborn as an infant animal, it will usually be several years before the creature will strike. A manitou will savagely attack white men while in animal form, quickly changing back to human form before the authorities arrive. Its thirst for revenge will never be satisfied – it can only be stopped by destroying it. One can adapt this legend to any location where one civilization moves in on another; perhaps Druid "manitous" harass the legions in a Roman horror game, or Martian "manitous" haunt British colonists in a steampunk setting.

The GM must then decide the role of Earth and humanity in the general scheme. Usually, humans are insignificant nothings compared to the vastness of Things, and it is often this realization that leads to horror. On the other hand, humanity may play an important role in the fruition of the Things' plans – perhaps there are items and places of great significance on even a backwater like Earth, left by ancient races. It is often the human devotees of Things that are charged with obtaining such artifacts and assisting in the manifestation of Deities or the awakening of Ancient Ones.

Finally, the GM should specify the relationship between Cosmic Deities, Ancient Ones, and Minions. Some Ancient Ones and Minions may actively worship the Deities; others may not be aware of the Deities' existence, or may pursue their own ends. Minions may only recognize a certain Ancient One as the "one true god," and could even be actively working against other Minions. The GM may wish to create a timeline of ancient history for his universe, showing how all three types of Things played their role in the affairs of the universe, Earth, and mankind.

Cosmic Deities

Inhabiting the corners of the cosmos, existing simultaneously across time, space, and other dimensions, are the Cosmic Deities. Most are blindly chaotic or extremely evil. They do not concern themselves with the affairs of humans unless summoned to Earth by magic or incomprehensible science. When they manifest, they are too horrifying to view without going mad – all Cosmic Deities cause a Fright Check at -10 or worse.

Cosmic Deities are so alien that they must be anchored to this plane by some means when they manifest. The Deity's worshippers must provide at least 20 points of HT to anchor the entity; otherwise, it cannot manifest in this dimension and certainly will not reward their petition. HT is usually supplied through sacrifice, but it may also be provided through magic (such as Steal Health, p. M74) or by some hyperdimensional vortex.

No game statistics are provided for Cosmic Deities; their very nature defies description in such terms. Suffice it to say that they cannot be defeated, reasoned with, or even comprehended by mere mortals.

Ancient Ones

The Ancient Ones are creatures or races who once ruled the Earth (or even our section of the galaxy), but somehow lost control. Some of them now occupy parallel dimensions, and are waiting for human servants to assist in their return; others remain on Earth, dormant, waiting to arise when conditions are right.

Ancient Ones are usually physical, and can be attacked by physical means. However, their cultists still consider them gods, and many Ancient Ones have significant psionic or extradimensional powers and resources. They are as terrifying to behold as Cosmic Deities, causing Fright Checks at up to -15. They may appear as a distorted parody of earthly life, such as an impossibly alien creature, or as an indescribable morass of protoplasm, tentacles, and sucker-mouths.

Describing the Indescribable

Things Man Was Not Meant To Know specifically violate every principle of reason, including rational description. This doesn't necessarily help the GM. Words like "indescribable" and "unnameable" may be the best possible adjectives for such Things, but the players will want to know the difference between this Thing and the last one. Make sure that you think about your Things with as much care as you would any other monster; describe their foulness as it assaults every sense. One good trick is to begin with two already unpleasant creatures – e.g., an octopus and a bat, a toad and a rat – and mash them together in your head, adding adjectives as needed. If you get stuck, roll 3d on the following table, alternating between columns, until you feel inspired again.

Things Man Was Not Meant To Know Description Table

Die Roll	Column A	Column B
3	Writhing	Sickly Green
4	Glistening	Foul
5	Viscous	Covered with a Thousand Eyes
6	Slime-Covered	Diseased
7	Quivering	Rugose
8	Putrid	Blob-Shaped
9	Malodorous	Hideous
10	Squamous	Dripping
11	Oozing	Tentacled
12	Fiery	Shaking
13	Many-Limbed	Coal-Black
14	Filthy	Greasy
15	Colorless	Immense
16	Non-Euclidean	Pustulent
17	Revolting	Nauseating
18	Shambling	Horrible

Ancient One   1,580 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +40 [185]; DX +5 [60]; IQ +8 [125]; HT +8 [125].

Advantages: Claws [15]; Extra Fatigue +200 [600]; Extra Hit Points +22 [110]; Ghost Form (Physical Form, +80%; Unlimited Lifespan, +30%; Must be summoned, -30% limitation on Physical Form) [186]; Magic Resistance 30 [60]; Psionic Resistance 30 [60]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Spirit Invulnerability [50]; Terror (-10 to Fright Checks from Horrific Appearance) [100].

Disadvantages: Callous [-6]; Fanaticism (Self) [-15]; Frightens Animals [-5]; Horrific Appearance [-30]; Inconvenient Size [-10]; Lifebane [-10]; Low Empathy [-15]; Megalomania [-10].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirit, and Turn Spirit (but note Magic Resistance) [0]; Completely alien psyche and motivations [0].

Variations

This template describes a *minor* Ancient One, the terror of a plateau or a frozen icecap rather than a globe-trampling entity that haunts many dimensions. Ancient Ones may have many other potentially horrifying traits, including:

Enemies. Ancient Ones can be fierce rivals. An Ancient One often has a worthy opponent – probably an equally revolting Thing with equally dangerous powers. This might provide an avenue of help for the poor humans, but Thing Wars can have unpleasant side effects . . .

Gross physical power. Ancient Ones can easily have attributes of 30+; IQ can reach 150, while ST and hit points can be in the thousands, for asteroid-sized beings whirling in the space around dead pulsars. Many Ancient Ones have Hyperflight (see p. CI57), or can travel through ancient gates. Ancient Ones often possess high Damage Resistance (DR 20-150), even in material form, or Regeneration, or both.

Limited time. Ancient Ones not native to this dimension must wait until some special event before they can manifest themselves on Earth. Whatever the occurrence is, it should be extremely rare (e.g., once every 100,000 years). If such Things visited Earth more often, there would be nothing left for them to visit.

Mental contact. Some Ancient Ones can establish mental contact with a person, and grant special knowledge; this is how worshippers learn what to do in order to serve the Thing. It almost guarantees that the contactee will have his rational mind blasted by the experience. Outside standard Ghost Form telepathy (see p. 49), many Ancient Ones have massive levels of psionic power – especially Astral Projection (pp. P10-11), Dream Travel (p. 19), Psychic Vampirism (pp. P16-17), Psychokinesis (pp. P17-19), and Telepathy (pp. P20-26) – although after accounting for Psionic Resistance, their fine skills are seldom particularly good.

Useful worshippers. Many Ancient Ones require active help from "this side" to do whatever they want to do *now*, especially since the stars won't be exactly right for another 8,000 years. This help might take the form of mass worship, ritual sacrifices, and the like. Ancient Ones may require HT, fatigue, willpower, magical energy, or even knowledge from worshippers. A Thing's cult might even count as an Ally Group (see pp. CI19-20).

Minions

Cosmic Deities and Ancient Ones often have inferior races of creatures as servants, messengers, and soldiers. These Minions travel to dimensions the Things themselves cannot enter easily or conveniently. Minions are horrible, but not nearly so terrifying as their masters. Many are still strong enough to wipe out a group of heroes without much thought, but others are fair fights – one at a time.

Minions range in size from human-sized, or slightly smaller, to the size of small office buildings – not nearly as mind-boggling as their planet-sized masters! The GM may wish to use some of the other monsters in this chapter as Minions, suitably remodeled by alien hyperscience rather than demonic curses.

Minion   219 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +10 [110]; DX +2 [20]; HT +6 [80].

Advantages: Awareness [35]; Terror (-3 to Fright Checks from Horrific Appearance) [30]; and 40 points from among DR [3/level]; Extra Arms (often tentacles; see pp. CI54-55) [Varies]; Flight (Winged Flight, -25%) [30]; Magic Resistance [2/level]; PD [25/level]; Psionic Resistance [2/level]; Strikers (esp. Claws, Horns, and Teeth; see pp. CI66-67) [Varies]; and still more Terror [10 points/-1 to Fright Checks].

Disadvantages: Bad Smell [-10]; Callous [-6]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Frightens Animals [-5]; Horrific Appearance [-30]; Lifebane [-10]; Low Empathy [-15]; No Sense of Humor [-10].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Completely alien psyche and motivations [0].

Variations

This template describes a roughly average Minion, likely a major servitor race created in unguessably ancient eons to do an Ancient One's bidding. More human-scale Minions will have less ST; larger ones can have ST and hit points in the 30-40 range. Minions needn't be humanoid, or have *any* distinct form; many are blobby malignities, like the byle (pp. 108-109). Some Minion races are more intelligent than humanity, with IQ 20 being a likely ceiling for the racial average.

Minion races often use weapons and other technological artifacts; a few even possess the High Technology advantage (see p. CI26). Some Minions can mentally enslave humans. They might accomplish this with magic spells or psionic powers, or via a completely alien or hyperscientific form of mind control, against which magical and psionic defenses are worthless (Strong Will would still help). Minions generally possess either DR or Insubstantiality; those that do not will have other defenses: Body of Swarm (p. 19), Vampiric Invulnerability, or at the very least Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Brain, Impaling Bonus, or Vitals) (see p. CI58).

Fear of the Unnatural

In the natural order of things, we are born, we live, we die, and we stay dead. In the natural order of things, you never hear a talking cat, or see a stone burst into flower. In the natural order of things, you never see an unearthly light glowing without a torch, or a bird devour a man alive. In the natural order of things, you never see a spirit without a body.

The Ghost

Ghosts are the spirits of deceased beings that remain connected to the living world, usually through an object or location. They can inhabit (or "haunt") almost any item or place, as limited only by the GM's imagination. Ghosts may be even more ubiquitous than vampires in the world's legendary consciousness; almost every culture has some notion of the spectral undead. The origin of ghost legends may spring from any combination of wishful thinking, hallucinations, schizophrenia, ancestor worship, dreams or nightmares, and shamanic trance states. Ghost stories and legends can be precise or vague; details in ghost stories often seem to fade and return like the spirits themselves.

Most ghosts are the spirits of people who were gravely wronged during their lifetime, and were not able to complete the transition into the world of the dead. Common ghost origins include murder at the hand of a loved one, betrayal by family or friends, and knowledge of a crime or other foul deed. Generally, any sort of serious "unfinished business" may result in a deceased person becoming a ghost. Unfortunately, some ghosts' unfinished business involves murdering someone, meeting the Devil at the crossroads, or punishing the innocent descendants of the long-dead guilty party. Ghosts are also not limited to humans; many tales involve ghostly animals such as dogs and horses that are somehow associated with a cursed victim or family.

Ghosts in the Game

To describe ghosts as PCs, "main monsters," or villainous NPCs, it's simplest to begin by defining their abilities outright. These rules were adapted from *GURPS Spirits, Undead,* and *Voodoo. Spirits* has substantial additional coverage of human-spirit interactions, including guidelines for designing, playing, and running spirit-centered games.

Attributes

Ghosts have the same attributes as humans: ST, DX, IQ, and HT. When confronted in the spirit world, these attributes define what the ghost can and can't do.

Fatigue Points: To interact with the material world, a ghost must spend energy, expressed as a fatigue cost. Fatigue points are the most important attribute of a ghost; powerful ghosts may have *hundreds* of fatigue points! The average tends to be closer to the human norm, however: 10-20 points. Ghosts recover from fatigue normally (see p. B134).

Special Energy Sources: Ghosts can tap into some places or people to obtain energy quickly. They can use this siphoned energy to replenish their own or to power their special abilities. Haunted houses, vulnerable descendants, the ghost's grave, or some other location significant to the ghost's life often provide such additional energy. Such a resource is termed a ghost's *focus,* and in some cosmologies (including most conventional ghost stories), every ghost has one specific to itself. Ghosts can only tap into this energy if they are near their focus.

In some cosmologies, *any* place associated with death or the underworld (caves, cemeteries, battlefields, plague pits, etc.) can channel energy to a ghost. Some places are simply more transparent to, or closer to, the spirit realm (e.g., ley-line intersections in a magical game, or places where dimensions intersect in a cosmic horror world). A house built on a ley nexus, or the banks of the River Styx's earthly spring, or "the old Indian burial ground" may become a haunted house without anything bad ever having happened there, simply because it attracts so many ghosts to feed on its energies! Of course, houses that attract ghosts tend to have bad things happen anyway; having ghosts regularly drain your energy can make you nervous, jumpy, or even homicidal.

Acts of worship from a great number of people can grant 20-100 additional points per day, depending on the number of worshippers (roughly one point per worshipper). Ghost worship is fairly rare in Western horror stories, but many cultures – from Voudunist Haiti to Confucian China to ancient Rome – practiced ancestor worship, venerating (and sacrificing to) the ghosts of their dead progenitors. Horrific cults may

worship the ghost of their long-dead sorcerous founder, giving him energy enough to direct them from beyond the grave! Some ghosts can actually gain energy from sacrificed blood or burnt offerings, at 1 energy point per sacrificed HT point.

Will: This important trait allows ghosts to resist attempts to control or expel them, and to control and influence others. It usually hovers at 2-5 points above IQ, but it might well equal or exceed twice IQ for single-minded entities.

Ghost Abilities

Ghosts are invisible and intangible to the physical world; as a general rule, only other ghosts can sense them without the aid of magic or psi. (Some animals, such as dogs, horses, owls, and bees, can sense particularly powerful or malevolent ghosts.) Beyond this, they have a number of special powers:

Perception

Ghosts can see, smell, and hear normally. Their sense of touch is very limited unless they materialize (see pp. 51-52). They can even taste objects to a limited degree; in particular, many ghosts enjoy the smell and taste of ritually offered food and drink, including (especially!) fresh blood.

A ghost's senses go beyond the normal human range, however. All ghosts have the equivalent of the Empathy advantage, and can sense strong emotions in humans by "seeing" their auras. Through the same sense, they can detect mages, as well as demons and other supernatural beings. To hide from a ghost, such beings must win a Quick Contest of their Will vs. the ghost's Sense roll.

Ghosts also have the ability to hear their names whenever they are ritually invoked, regardless of distance or intervening barriers. This can include anything from an unlucky passerby reading a tombstone, to a medium attempting to channel a departed one's soul, to a sorcerer's ritual of summoning.

Movement

Determine Move normally for ghosts. Since they aren't bound by physical limits, they can move in any direction, in the air, and through solid objects. As well, they can instantly transport themselves to the scene of their death or into the presence of someone who ritually invokes their name (see above). Ghosts can also "hitch a ride" inside a vehicle, but it costs 1 fatigue/hour to maintain a connection to the vehicle.

Physical barriers do not impede ghosts, but magical wards will keep them out. Examples include Pentagram (p. M62), Repel Spirits (p. G85), Astral Block (p. G85), "Utter" spells (pp. M78, G93), and similar spells or rituals (such as consecration and exorcism), at the GM's discretion.

Communication

Ghosts can project their thoughts as speech and hear thoughts directed at them. This is similar to psionic telepathy, but communication is not stopped by Mind Shields and neither the ghost nor those with whom it's communicating can read thoughts or do anything but "speak" to each other. Such communication costs the ghost 1 fatigue per short sentence (a few seconds' worth of speech). Evil ghosts sometimes use this power to "plant" thoughts in a mortal's head, making him "hear voices." Someone with the Voices disadvantage (pp. CI94-95) may be haunted by one or more ghosts. These thoughts can't control a person's actions, but may trigger repressed anger or fear and cause people to fling themselves off rooftops, slaughter their families, or otherwise behave uncharacteristically.

Dream Travel

Ghosts don't sleep or dream themselves, but they can enter the dreams of mortals. Entering or leaving a dream requires a Will roll and costs 1 fatigue. From within a person's dream, the ghost can communicate with the dreamer and even alter elements of the dream to suit its purposes, but nothing the ghost can do in a dream will affect the dreamer physically. At worst, the ghost can create a terrifying nightmare that causes the victim to make a Fright Check upon awakening. The penalty to the Fright Check is determined by the content of the nightmare and the victim's personality (GM's call). A severe scare *could* harm the victim, and repeated nightmares might wear at the victim's sanity.

Some Specialized Ghosts

Ghost legends are common and extremely varied. Here are a few specific examples.

Headless Horseman

Headless horsemen are the ghosts of beheaded military officers. Some are the result of execution for earthly crimes, which range from murder to high treason. Others seem to be the result of battle casualties – "head sliced off by a single blow" or "head carried away by a cannonball" are the usual stories.

A headless horseman will haunt the area where he was killed, his focus being the plot of land where he met his end, his grave, or even the axe and chopping block used to execute him. The creature materializes every night as a headless figure in a black cape, riding a black horse. It is usually seeking something during its ride, depending on the nature of the legend. It could be a loved one, a betrayer, or even his head. Headless horsemen appear to be physical, but they are as incorporeal as any ghost. A horseman's most common attack is to materialize, sever the victim's head, and make off with it. Headless horsemen are bound to an area "a night's ride" from their focus. They can be exorcised like any ghost, but they typically have a high IQ, which may make the task difficult.

Headless horsemen may appear in any campaign, including those set in the modern day. A common 20th-century equivalent is the dispatch rider whose head is carried off by a wire strung across the road (a common trick of partisans). A headless SS motorcyclist haunting the roads of Normandy would make an interesting encounter.

Phantom Ship

A common legend among sailors and lighthouse keepers is that of the phantom ship. Phantom ships almost always stem from lengthy stories of ships lost on stormy seas. Such a ship materializes under conditions similar to those present during its loss. A phantom ship is usually a multi-masted schooner or clipper, as many of these legends originated in the 15th through 18th centuries (the Age of Sail). The ghost of the ship's former commander is almost always the captain, while the crew typically appear as skeletons (although they are still ghosts).

A phantom ship may be a harmless apparition, or its captain and crew may seek vengeance on other ships in the area, depending on the legend. Phantom ships frequently make a material impression on the world around them. Sailors are rescued, and only after a succession of adventures do they discover that they are on a phantom. Phantom ships are known to appear in the midst of modern naval battles and disrupt the action. They also appear in inland towns to entice young men away to a phantom adventure. The focus of a phantom ship is the wreck of the ship itself, which may be on the ocean floor or beached on a nearby island.

If a phantom ship is to be the centerpiece of a campaign or story arc, the GM may wish to develop full statistics for it, using *GURPS Vehicles* and the *Undead Vehicles* rules on pp. UN92-94.

Poltergeist

Almost all ghosts have some poltergeist powers (see p. 51), but a poltergeist is specifically an angry, immaterial, and typically invisible entity that manifests primarily through psychokinesis. According to modern parapsychology, a poltergeist is usually connected to children, or to adolescents leaving childhood. It could be the ghost of a deceased child, a pregnant woman, or a person who simply loved children, or the "child-self" of a troubled teenager somehow astrally projected (usually subconsciously). A poltergeist should be thought of as a ghost that acts like a child; it will throw tantrums, lie, play hide-and-seek, etc.

A poltergeist's powers most often include telekinesis and pyrokinesis, although the GM can choose any magical or psionic ability appropriate to its specific origins. These should be added to the ghost template (p. 53). A poltergeist will rarely materialize, preferring to annoy its victims in an attempt to draw attention to itself, usually by hurling things with telekinesis. If the poltergeist does not receive attention, it can become more dangerous than playful, using its powers to threaten its victims until it gets what it wants. Just what a poltergeist wants is up to the GM, but it should be something unfulfilled during its earthly lifetime. In some cases, the poltergeist's focus was abused, and the ghost wants revenge and exposure.

Poltergeists are usually first noticed by children, which makes them prime candidates for hoaxes (the result of a child's overactive imagination).

Doppelganger

Legends of ghostly doubles – *doppelgangers* – differ widely, but are commonly associated with a person executed for a crime he did not commit. Typically malign, such a spirit attempts to cause someone else to be wrongfully executed. The doppelganger assumes the form of a moral, innocent person and commits terrible deeds while in that form. It taunts its victim gradually, starting out with minor insults and working its way up to theft, assault, and murder. A doppelganger's focus is usually an image of the victim, such as a photograph or a painting, but it can also be a mirror, in which case the doppelganger only materializes when the victim gazes into it. To exorcise such a ghost, one must discern its true identity. The doppelganger will also disappear if the real criminal is found and executed.

Other doppelgangers are simply "death-fetches": irrefutable omens of their look-alike's impending demise. The Irish *banshee* is such a fetch, although it might not look like the victim. The banshee's famous wail, however, only occurs when its victim is in earshot.

Possession

Ghosts have the ability to displace a living being's soul, thereby taking control of his body. This is resolved as a Quick Contest of Wills, and can only be attempted once per day on any given person. If the ghost wins, he gains control over the body for 3d seconds. This costs 5 fatigue points. On a tie, the victim suffers from the equivalent of the Split Personality disadvantage (with the subject in control, not the ghost) for the same length of time.

The ghost can try to extend the possession by taking a penalty to its Will roll and spending extra energy. Taking possession for 3d *minutes* is done at -2 Will and costs 7 fatigue. Attempts to possess for 3d *hours* are at -4 Will and cost 10 fatigue. Possession for 3d *days* has a -8 penalty and costs 15 fatigue. A critical success on the ghost's part or a critical failure by the victim doubles the length of the possession. A critical failure by the ghost or a critical success by the victim costs the ghost 3d fatigue (in addition to the normal cost) and disables the ghost's possession ability for 3d days.

The subject's state of mind and physical circumstances modify the possession attempt. If the subject's soul has left his body – e.g., by astral travel, a Soul Jar spell (p. M73), or a near-death experience – then the ghost's roll is at +8. If the victim is undergoing a painful or terrifying ordeal (torture, rape, starvation, etc.), then the ghost is at +6. If the subject is in an altered state of mind (from drugs, alcohol, fever, etc.), then the ghost has a +4. Even a willing person gets a resistance roll (representing an instinctive reluctance to lose control), but the ghost's roll is at +10! Each previously successful possession of a particular subject by the ghost gives the ghost +1 to its roll (maximum +3).

A ghost's vital energy infuses a possessed body with greater strength, speed, and endurance: raise the body's ST by 1/5 the ghost's ST (not fatigue points), and raise its DX and HT by 1/8 the ghost's DX and HT, respectively.

The Poltergeist Effect

By spending some of its energy, a ghost can affect the material world, moving objects, throwing punches, and performing other physical actions. The fatigue cost is great, however, so most ghosts are only capable of affecting small objects for short periods of time.

Each *action* the ghost attempts costs it fatigue. The effective ST and DX the ghost applies determine the cost, and *can* exceed the ghost's "natural" attributes. An action costs 1 fatigue per 2 ST exerted. DX costs 1 fatigue for a base level of 10, +1 fatigue for every +2 DX. With enough energy, a ghost can perform a number of effects: slamming doors, using typewriters or computers, even pushing or punching people. A direct attack does thrust-3 damage based on the ST of the effect.

Probability Alteration

A ghost has the power to channel its will to affect the outcome of an event. The effects depend on the intended result and the amount of energy the ghost spends.

The ghost must first win a Quick Contest of Wills with the subject, unless the ghost is trying to *help* the subject, in which case only an unopposed Will roll is required. If the ghost succeeds, then it can apply a bonus or penalty to any one roll, at 2 fatigue per +/-1 (maximum +/-10, for 20 fatigue). This includes short actions, long actions, or such things as rolls on the Job Table. Activities that are not normally resolved by random rolls may also be affected in this way, but the GM must assign a base probability for success or failure before assessing the bonus or penalty. The chart on p. B45 can be useful here.

Use of this power requires a great deal of imagination on the part of the GM and players. Anybody who's had a bad day knows the myriad of little things that can go wrong in the course of normal life, and can draw upon those experiences for inspiration.

Materialization

Ghosts can assume a material or semi-material form, emerging in the physical world. There are three levels of materialization, ranging from sound effects to actual solidity. Most ghosts don't have enough energy to become fully solid, and only powerful ghosts can materialize for any length of time. Full materialization is also dangerous for the ghost, as it makes the ghost vulnerable to physical attacks. The levels of materialization are as follows:

Sounds: The ghost uses enough energy to produce disembodied sounds. Simple sounds (moans and howls) are easier than complex noises or speech. These are real sounds, and can be picked up by microphones and recording devices. In fact, if the ghost wishes, the sounds can *only* be picked up by machines, producing disembodied voices on an audio tape, over a radio frequency, etc. Producing simple sounds costs 1 fatigue per 10 seconds. Speech or complex sounds cost 1 fatigue per second, and a Will roll is required to make the right sounds or say the words clearly. A failed Will roll results in unintelligible noise.

Visual Effects: The ghost can cause a visual manifestation of its form to appear. This form has no solidity or weight, and is translucent unless the ghost spends extra fatigue to make it appear solid. This costs 1 fatigue per 5 seconds, doubled if the ghost wants to appear solid.

Full Materialization: This costly effect temporarily provides the ghost with a physical body. It costs 1 fatigue point for every two levels in *each* physical attribute (ST, DX, and HT), rounded up. Clothing appears around the ghost at no additional cost, but other objects (including weapons and armor) cost 1 fatigue per pound of weight. This energy cost must be paid after each minute.

If the ghost has any special powers or advantages, then it may use them normally in material form. The ghost retains its immunity to dehydration, disease, fatigue, poison, radiation, starvation, suffocation, and mundane climatic or weather conditions, but it can otherwise be harmed by the same attacks as other physical beings, unless it has special defenses. If the ghost is reduced to -HT or lower, it must make HT rolls to avoid death (see p. B126); failure on any of these rolls means irrevocable destruction!

Multiple Forms: Normally, ghosts always materialize in the same form (their "normal" form). However, they can learn to materialize in other forms using the Shapeshifting skill (p. CI144). The ghost's advantages and disadvantages do not change, and its attributes are determined normally for materialization (above), but the ghost can vary its size and appearance. Ghosts most often use this ability to appear as animals or strange, inhuman creatures (or to assume human form, if their natural form is something other than human).

Ghost Weaknesses

Next to being unable to affect the material world without spending energy, the biggest limitation faced by ghosts is that they have very short life spans. Every month, a ghost must make a Will roll. A roll of 14 or higher is an automatic failure, and any missed roll reduces HT by one. If HT ever reaches 0, then the ghost is destroyed.

Modifiers (these *do* affect the 14 maximum): +2 if the ghost has a compelling reason to stay on earth; +2 if it stays within 50 yards of its place of death or another suitable place of power (haunted house, ley nexus, extremely violent murder site, etc.) for the whole month; +1 to +5 if it is being paid respect, remembered by its family, or worshiped.

If these bonuses add up to +3 or more, then Will rolls to maintain HT fail only on a roll higher than modified Will or a 17 or 18, whichever is lower. If they total +5 or more, the ghost doesn't have to make a Will roll at all that month!

Point Cost

The traits listed above (starting on p. 48) are collectively considered a 100-point advantage, called Ghost Form. It can be modified by the enhancements and limitations below. Treat any total less than -75% as -75%.

Special Enhancement: Physical Form. The ghost has a particular physical form that it can assume at will (per *Materialization*, above) at the cost of only 1 fatigue point to remain in that form for as long as it wishes. It costs nothing for the ghost to return to incorporeal form. The physical form has the ghost's normal attributes and abilities, including any advantages that apply to the physical world. If the ghost's physical form is reduced to 0 HT and fails a HT roll, then it is forced back into ghost form. The ghost cannot change the appearance of its physical form without materializing another (and paying the *full* fatigue cost) or having an appropriate advantage or spell; however, this enhancement can be taken multiple times for multiple physical forms. +80%.

Special Enhancement: Spectral Touch. The ghost can use "touch-only" abilities while insubstantial by interpenetrating with the subject. Any ghost can use Steal HT, Steal ST, or the Chilling Touch version of Terror (p. 20) this way, but this enhancement is required to use any other touch-only ability (such as Deathtouch or the Pestilence advantage) when incorporeal. +40%.

Special Enhancement: Unlimited Lifespan. The ghost doesn't have to make monthly Will rolls to avoid losing HT, making it effectively immortal. +30%.

Special Enhancement: Visible. The ghost is normally visible, at no energy cost. The advantages (free visual effects) and disadvantages (being visible to normal sight) cancel out. +0% if the ghost is obviously unnatural (glowing, translucent, etc.), +5% if it looks human; an additional +5% if the ghost is only visible to living beings and not machines (cameras, etc.), or -5% if the ghost is only visible to machines and not living beings.

Special Limitation: The ghost can't produce the effects listed under *Materialization.* -20% for Can't Materialize, -15% for Sounds Only, and -10% for Sounds and Visual Effects Only. Only the -10% level can be combined with Visible. Cannot be combined with Physical Form.

Special Limitations: Missing Power. The ghost lacks a basic ghost ability. Each missing power is a separate limitation: -5% if it can't hear its name being invoked, appear instantly to a summoner, or ride in vehicles; -10% if it can't use dream travel, communicate telepathically, sense auras, or tap fatigue from places of power and worshippers; -20% if it can't use the poltergeist effect, possession, or probability alteration.

Ghost
<div align="right">80 points</div>

Advantages: Ghost Form [100].
Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior [-15] *or* Obsession [-15] (chosen by the ghost's player); Dread (Exorcism) [-5].
Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit [0]; Can be detected by sensitive individuals and animals [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0].

Malevolent Objects

Ghostly life after death is practically normality itself compared to life where there should not be, and never has been, any. An inanimate object taking on a life of its own is the shadowy inverse of the ghost. The horror is compounded when the object turns on its human creators. These malevolent objects are almost never the result of possession or poltergeists – the explanation for their sudden animation is usually never made clear.

Malevolent objects come in many shapes and forms, but they are often items of some personal importance. Children's toys, particularly dolls and stuffed animals, are popular candidates. Furniture, such as beds, antique rockers, or large chests, might also become malevolent, though the threat would most likely be limited to Fright Checks. Even particular items of clothing, such as an old dress found in a trunk in the attic, may suddenly turn against their wearer, or against someone hiding in the attic.

A common malevolent object in the modern world is the mad machine. Vehicles are the most common – killer cars, phantom rigs, even malign planes and boats have all been known to surface in horror cinema. Other mad machines include the megalomanic computer, the TV set that shows only horrible crimes being committed against (or by) the viewer, or the telephone that badgers its owner with incessant ringing and sounds of terror (or maniacal laughter, or the pleas of dead loved ones) emanating from the receiver.

For a given malevolent object, the GM should specify DR and hit points; mobile objects also require ST, DX, and Move. Such objects rarely need an IQ score – their motive is only to destroy or terrorize humans. Stopping a malevolent object requires nothing short of destroying the object itself, but even then, the evil may not be at rest – picture the doll's severed head still cackling away . . .

Alien Invaders

Aliens make especially interesting adversaries in a horror campaign, because the GM is free to develop them in any way he chooses. Using the movies as a cue, aliens can be mindless, malevolent eating machines, or they may be here to help humanity in some mysterious, powerful way. A common theme is the alien scout: one extraterrestrial or spaceship is sent to Earth either to find a suitable world for colonization or to reconnoiter for a planned invasion. This makes a good adventure because a lone invader will operate in secret, and the GM does not have to worry about widespread media attention and mass hysteria. On the other hand, the mass hysteria approach is good for a humorous cinematic campaign, especially if the aliens are feared and misunderstood.

Another popular approach is the "aliens among us" theme. In this scenario, the aliens are basically humanoid, and intermingle with humans to gain whatever ends they are pursuing. This can make for an intense, paranoid campaign in which the PCs do not know who is human and who is an alien. In fact, some of the *PCs* may be aliens (or Unseelie, in a steampunk campaign; see p. 55), secretly in league with the GM to create an atmosphere of mistrust and paranoia. *GURPS Atomic Horror* and *Illuminati* both have excellent advice for "covert alien invasion" games; *Atomic Horror* also has templates for five more alien invaders. An alien invaders campaign may also cross over into a Things Man Was Not Meant To Know campaign if the aliens are especially powerful and ancient, or are servitors of more powerful beings.

No matter what they want, aliens are especially difficult for human heroes to deal with. Occult research, fiction, television, and the movies can prepare them for vampires and werewolves, but each alien invader has its own unique set of abilities, weaknesses, and motivations. (Depending on the campaign, of course, details about alien races might be Hidden Lore, or even misunderstood Occultism.) Because of the variety of aliens in horror, there is no way to give "standard"

rules; the GM must develop them himself. Aliens can be formless blobs (see *Byte*, pp. 108-109); humanoid but bizarre, with green skin, eyestalks, and laser breath; or *almost* human, except that rubbing alcohol makes them melt. Developing creepy new aliens offers a wonderful opportunity to pit the characters and the *players* against something they actually know *nothing* about.

Alien Invader — 125 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST -2 [-15]; DX +1 [10]; IQ +1 [10].

Advantages: Acute Vision +2 [4]; DR 2 [6]; Extended Lifespan 4 [20]; High Technology (+2 TLs) [50]; Night Vision [10]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Telepathy Power 8 [40].

Disadvantages: Curious [-5]; Hidebound [-5]; Intolerance (some aspect of human society; varies) [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Reduced Hit Points -1 [-5]; Solipsist [-10]; Unnatural Feature (usually the eyes) [-5]; and one -15-point mental disadvantage that provides a motivation: Fanaticism (for conquerors), Lecherousness (for B-movie aliens who abduct beautiful women), Sadism (for those who conduct cruel experiments), Xenophobia (for aliens who are simply *hateful*), etc.

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Completely alien psyche and motivations [0]; Uncomfortable in light brighter than twilight [-1].

Skills: Mindwipe at IQ-1 [2]; Psi Sense at IQ+1 [6]; Sleep at IQ-1 [2]; Telecontrol at IQ-1 [2]; Telereceive at IQ+4 [12]; Telesend at IQ+4 [12].

This is a standard "UFO mythology" alien, such as a Grey, "Nordic," or Saurian. Depending on the specific alien form, invaders may have other advantages – and this template may apply only to aliens bioengineered to subvert Earth! Many B-movie style alien invaders also have Monstrous Appearance: bug eyes, dripping slime, etc.

Fear of Others

From the suddenly hushed voices as you enter a room to the weird hang-up phone calls you get in the night, a pattern emerges. There are people – if they're really people – conspiring against you. They don't like you, which means that they don't like normal, decent people either. Moderns see the hand of the hated Other in political murder and television advertising alike – our medieval ancestors saw it in blighted grain, stillborn children, and cattle that dried up. Anything that goes wrong is somebody's fault. And they're out there, planning to do it again. They hide in plain sight, in anonymous crowds or in wild places where normal, decent people don't go: in our era, the burned-out industrial neighborhoods; in medieval times, the moors. They are among us, and they are watching.

The Unseelie

The notion of the Others, up to no good, can spawn conspiracy theories (see *Conspiracy,* p. 81) or help power the notion of the Hidden Race, the infiltrators, the *not quite human* beings just outside our peripheral vision. One powerful version of this legend is the myth of the Unseelie, the malevolent races of faeries who hate mankind and seek only to do him harm. The Scots divided faeries into two groups: the Seelie, or "blessed" faeries, who were at least neutral to humankind, and the Unseelie, in league with Hell and the restless dead. In folklore, however, almost all faeries have characteristics the Scots ascribed to the Unseelie – they are soulless, capricious, cruel, and selfish. They ruin the crops and sour the milk. Their "elf-shot" weapons never miss, and are always poisoned. The faeries live under the hills, or deep in the dark and tangled forests, emerging only to steal babies and rape maidens foolish enough to be alone at night outside.

Other Hidden Races

Any hidden race can fill the mythic role of the Unseelie in a horror game, including vampires (p. 33), werewolves (p. 39), and palefaces (p. 42). Hidden races such as Ape-Men (p. 108) and Gill-Men (p. 109) can be the objects of cryptozoological investigation (see p. 61). Hidden races can also be Minions of Things Man Was Not Meant To Know (p. 45).

Belief in faerie slowly receded as populations became less dependent on farming and had less contact with the wilderness, and as more romantic and *cute* faerie stories were written. By the Victorian era, anthropologists had a great deal of work to do separating the genuine ancient faerie lore from the vast body of artistic, humorous, and pious work layered atop it during the three previous centuries. They came up with an ingenious theory: faerie legends are half-remembered stories of the earliest inhabitants of Britain (inaccurately called "Picts" by these scholars). Pushed aside by invading Celts and Saxons, the "Pictish" race took to living in hills and underground, raiding settlements for food and women, killing where they could with primitive flint axes and arrows (which can helpfully be found in abundance all across the Unseelie stomping grounds in Britain). Eventually, deprived of light and nutrition, the Hidden Race degenerated (in good Victorian anthropological fashion) into stunted, cannibalistic troglodytes similar to the Morlocks of H.G. Wells.

Horror writer Arthur Machen took these theories as the basis for his tales of the Little People, who lurked in the hills practicing ancient magics, occasionally emerging from hiding to further some nefarious plan. They communicated through hints, inscriptions, songs, and susurration that no outsider could decipher. Those who investigated these communications inevitably come to a bad end. Some of Machen's work hints that the debased folk intermingled with the anonymous crowds in London, slipping through the streets with their Stone Age stalking and killing skills intact. These Machen-style Unseelie would be excellent monsters for a Victorian-era game, or even more threatening presences in a medieval setting.

To properly build fear with the Unseelie, emphasize their invisibility. They may be lurking in the alley, readying their deadly flint arrows and axes; they may attack from ambush in the hills by the standing stones, and then vanish into the limestone tunnels. These Unseelie can't take on our heroes in a stand-up fight, especially if guns enter the equation. Instead, they will strike from the shadows to deplete adventurers' ammunition, lead investigators deep into the caves or chalk hills until they become completely lost, and then swarm the tired heroes in pitch blackness.

The Unseelie template below depicts a "Victorian naturalist" version of Machen's debased little folk, with no magical powers whatsoever. Their secret communication is a robust and redundant system of hisses, chalk-marks, and physical gestures. For a supernatural version of the Unseelie taken from Scots and earlier folklore, use the Evil Faerie template on p. 56.

Unseelie   -34 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST -2 [-15]; DX +1 [10]; IQ -2 [-15].

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Alertness +2 [10]; Cast Iron Stomach [15]; Extra Hit Points +3 [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Night Vision [10]; Recovery [10]; Secret Communication [20]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Silence 2 [10].

Disadvantages: Dying Race [-10]; Illiteracy [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Lecherousness [-15]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats human beings) [-15]; Paranoia [-10]; Primitive (TL0) [-35]; Sadism [-15]; Secret (Hidden race) [-20]; Sense of Duty (Unseelie race) [-15]; Unattractive [-5].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Secretive [-1].

Skills: Camouflage at IQ+1 [2]; Disguise at IQ+2 [6]; Scrounging at IQ [1]; Stealth at DX [2]; Survival (Moors or Urban) at IQ [2].

Some Unseelie are Ugly, or even downright Hideous. An unusually large percentage of Unseelie possess Bowlegged and Dwarfism, as the pressures of evolution continue to force them into a smaller and smaller niche. For cavern-dwelling Unseelie, Albinism might be common as well. Depending on the campaign, Unseelie might have the Bardic Lore or Hypnotism skills, the Terror advantage, or various types of unpleasant magic. Unseelie Lecherousness applies *especially* to attractive humans; the dying Unseelie race yearns to replenish its gene pool from the superior stock of humanity.

Faerie Fear Filters

The Unseelie, like the vampire, can fill any number of fear slots, depending on which aspects of the legend you emphasize. To the Victorians, the entire concept of a "degraded race" epitomized the fear of taint (see p. 33), and the hideous possibility that such beings had interbred with their own ancestors only made things worse. Working from that fear of sex brings us to the fear of nature. Faeries have always had much of the nature spirit to them, which quality they share with the shaggy ones (see p. 38). As well, "Pictish" Unseelie are yet another version of the fear of the natives (see p. 45).

The various myths of the Wild Hunt, or Machen's story "The Great God Pan," indicate that the Unseelie also intersect with the shaggy ones in the fear of madness (see p. 40) – another trait the Victorians associated with cultural and racial degeneracy. The Unseelie serve as metaphoric examples of the mutilated (with their stunted forms), and as Machen demonstrated, they work well in cosmic horror as emblems of the impossibly lost and ancient past still haunting the (supposedly) rational and progressive present. The "pod people" and "body snatchers" of silent alien invasion lore are modern updates of the Unseelie myth, this time emphasizing their sheer otherness.

Fear of Disease

When you kill a third of humanity, you get people's attention. The Pest, the Black Death, the Great Dying – the bubonic plague catalyzed the fear of disease, even as it burned its grim designs onto Western culture. The mysterious figure in black, bringing the rats with him; the tolling of the discordant bell as the swollen grotesque staggers toward your doorway; the surrender to madness as the world disintegrates . . . all of these fears come from the fear of disease. Somehow, even when we discover that disease is not the breath of demons, or the hand of a hateful god, or the machination of a hidden conspiracy, but the work of trillions of tiny, swarming monsters, it does nothing to comfort us.

The Killer Virus

The killer virus can serve horror in three primary ways: as the horror itself, as the bringer of the horror, or as the result of the horror. In any of these roles, the virus can be the centerpiece of the campaign, one taut scenario, an ongoing grim backdrop, or a distant menace, depending on how much of a medical game the GM feels like running.

The Plague is the Horror

The pestilence is the thing that heroic medical and emergency personnel work to stop before millions die – the stuff of movies such as *The Andromeda Strain* and *Outbreak*. This is a tailor-made no-magic horror scenario. Scientific articles or even popular descriptions of modern plagues such as the Ebola and Marburg viruses will give a GM plenty of potential material for games from the goriest splatter to the most harrowing psychological horror. Plagues needn't be modern; PCs fighting the Black Death or smallpox in 16th-century London (or the 21st-century Congo) will have the same desperate fear of a horrific killer just out of their technological reach.

Straightforward medical suspense requires player investment; they must believe in the town under quarantine, have fellow PCs infected, or find their characters faced with enemies who make their progress a personal matter. Perhaps the crusty general doesn't want to risk saving lives – or the leering necromancer wants to see the city strewn with corpses. The team can enjoy some crisis decision-making as they decide whether to expend valuable time and resources thwarting their foe, or to stay in the lab desperately searching for a cure. Even if they fail, the game isn't over – as Stephen King's *The Stand* demonstrates, the plague might be only the beginning. (For more on post-holocaust horror, see p. 83.)

The Plague Brings the Horror

In *The Stand*, the plague destroys civilization and reason, clearing the way for the unnatural, magical struggle of good and evil. Such a plague might level the playing field between man and Unseelie, or the social collapse might fuel maniacal cults of Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. As if global cataclysm and typhoid fever weren't bad enough, horror is also full of plagues that create supernatural effects, either by pseudoscience or by unleashing the life energies of the

millions of dead. In Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, a plague turns the survivors into vampires. (For another vampire virus, see pp. BO104-105.) Horror plagues might also create B-movie zombies (see p. 59), or be the evolutionary trigger changing humans into the ravening Minions of far-future Things. Some monsters might be immune to the plague, and be tempted to prey more openly on mankind as civilization's defenses fall and the fresh meat piles up in the streets. And with millions of people dying suddenly and traumatically, there will be a lot more ghosts around . . .

The Horror Brings the Plague

Who would want such a horrible thing? Why, someone truly horrible, of course. Nosferatu spread plague as a matter of course, and a necromancer might move from taking advantage of the pestilence to taking an active hand in it. Conspiracies of hidden villains might unleash biological warfare agents or magically engineered plagues for their own fell purposes. Cults worshiping Things Man Was Not Meant To Know might uncork the virus as a mad sacrifice to their uncaring Cosmic Deity. A monster might even unwittingly spread a horrific disease in its wake – a werewolf might have plague-carrying fleas, or a succubus could transmit demonic STDs.

Stopping the Plague

In some cases, the heroes can halt the plague by rediscovering lost magic, undertaking a desperate quest to sear the heart out of the Fallen Pest-Lord, or staking nosferatu. That's plenty for many games. However, players with a more cerebral bent, or those playing characters with a lot of medical knowledge, might want to work directly on a cure. The following rules apply the *New Inventions* rules on pp. B186-187 to the search for a cure.

The "gadget" in this case is the suppressant, vaccine, or antidote for the plague. The relevant skill is Physician instead of Engineer; the GM may wish to require a specialty in epidemiology, virology, etc., or skill in Biochemistry or Genetics (Genetic Engineering). The nature of the disease may also require the use of Alchemy, NBC Warfare, Occultism, Pharmacy, Thaumatology, Weird Science, or Xenobiology. A *player* who deduces the disease's vector, etiology, cause, and true nature (demonic imp-virus, mummy cooties, mad-science serums in the water, germs from the planet Zelkor) should get a bonus on the "conception" roll. Make a "working model" roll once per month – or once per *year*, in a high-realism campaign.

Even at TL7-8, realistic disease research requirements are grim: a cure for polio required millions of dollars and decades of research. In the case of AIDS, *billions* of dollars and over 15 years of study have developed only a few (expensive and bulky) suppressants. If the germ is a variation on a known bug, or if there has been a long, ongoing research effort on the disease, the GM might realistically cut the research time from years to weeks or months. Such time scales, as abbreviated as they are, might still prove too long for many games. Fortunately, PCs

often have magic, high technology, secret alien formulae, and other advantages that the Mayo Clinic does not – and when all else fails, the GM can adjust things cinematically.

For cinematic germ-stomping, use the *Gadgets and Gadgeteering* rules on pp. CI121-123. The Gadgeteer advantage is *required;* the relevant skills are as described above (usually Physician). As well, the GM may wish to require skill in Science!, Weird Science, or something similarly cinematic and arcane. Cinematic horror cures have the following complexities;

Average: A formula to stop the development or progress of symptoms (a suppressant).

Complex: A formula to prevent an uninfected person from contracting the disease (a vaccine).

Amazing: A formula to completely cure the disease in an infected patient (an antidote).

Cost and TL will vary with the disease; a hyperscientific cognitive biowar fever left behind in an Ancient One city might be TL16, but reading the right tome in the Vatican Library might reduce the disease's mystery – and effective TL. Generally, anything magical, supernatural, or parascientific should be considered at least two TLs higher in a no-magic or secret-magic setting. (Of course, the GM may vary the effectiveness, onset time, and other traits of the cure as dramatic tension requires.)

The GM may also wish to combine these guidelines with the *Reinventing Invention* rules on pp. CI125-127 – and remember that the "bugs" in an alien invader vaccine may be big bugs indeed! While the PCs are working with all their dangerous, virus-covered equipment, the GM can work with the *Contagion* and *Infection* rules on pp. B133-134 – especially if infection could turn a PC into a horror himself.

Nosferatu: The Plague Vampire

There is a type of vampire, the *nosferatu* (from a Romanian corruption of the Greek for "plague carrier"), that doesn't look like Dracula. These vampires are dead white, with long fingernails and rat-like teeth. They look and smell awful, can assume mist form but not animal form, and summon rats, not wolves. When they suck blood, it isn't sexual, or even romantic – the victim wastes away and dies in agony. The nosferatu, like many vampires, is a symbol of disease – a starkly medieval image, disgusting and evil. Where Dracula's aristocratic bearing and sexual charisma hint at syphilis, the nosferatu is the plague, or perhaps typhus. The nosferatu are the "walking pestilence," sapping strength and life, and then spreading throughout the land by transforming their victims into their likeness.
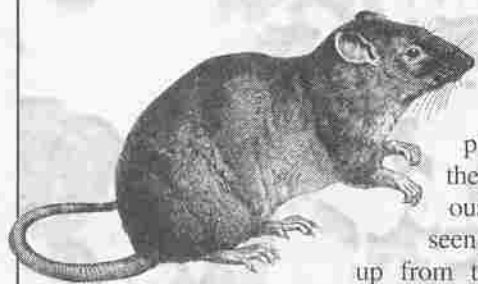
This older image can suggest more scenario ideas: a plague has struck the town. A mysterious figure has been seen at night – coming up from the sewers, some say. A reward has been offered to anyone who can stop the Bringer of the Black Death. Investigators who work to find the meaning behind the monster can find ways of dealing with it. For example, a vampire's aversion to garlic is due to the bulb's nourishing, healing qualities; his fear of running water stems from the fact that it is generally considered clean, and cleans that which enters it. Perhaps salt, sunlight, and other traditional purifiers will also stop the monster!

The GM can use a monster's meaning to rework its appearance into a more appropriate and interesting form. In an American Civil War setting, such a vampire might be accompanied not by rats, but by the pigs that fed on the bodies of dead soldiers. In a post-nuclear war setting, the nosferatu might bring an army of cockroaches, glowing green at night.

Nosferatu   190 points

Advantages: Claws [15]; Pestilence (Bubonic plague) [5]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Vampire (see p. 34) [265].

Disadvantages: Bad Smell [-10]; Bloodthirst [-15]; remove Dominance [-5]; Dread (Garlic; already part of vampire template) [0]; Dread (Salt) [-20]; Frightens Animals [-5]; Infectious Attack [-5]; Lifebane [-10]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Vulnerability (Stake through heart) [-5].

Innate Spells*: Beast Summoning (Rats) at IQ+5 [12]; Mammal Control (Rats) at IQ+5 [12]; remove Shapeshifting [-24].

* Include +1 for Magery.

Fear of Death

In the long run, we are all dead. All fears – and all hopes, and all dreams – lead to the grave. In its gaping emptiness, we see nothing but worms, smell nothing but decay. It will come for us all, ready or not. Sometimes it comes early – but it may be even more fearsome when it comes too late.

The Zombie

Zombies are dead bodies animated by powerful magic (such as the Zombie spell, p. M73), usually under the control of their "creator," if any. Zombie flesh is dead flesh, running the gamut from corpselike pallor, through greenish discoloration, to ongoing rot and decay. (Undead with bones only are skeletons, not zombies; see p. 110.) Zombies are usually human, but not always – imagine a faithful family pet returning from the dead to terrorize his former masters.

Zombies may use any weapon from a tire iron to a .45 automatic, but they are much more effective with hand weapons than with guns, as they seldom remember to aim or reload. A zombie follows the verbal orders of its creator or anyone its creator commands it to obey. Zombies can also be "programmed" with simple commands: "Attack anyone other than me who comes into this room, and keep attacking until they leave." If a programmed zombie's creator dies or never comes back, the zombie will stand, eternally vigilant, ready to carry out its orders.

Zombies feel no pain, are never stunned, and never suffer any skill penalty from wounds. If a zombie has a limb crippled in combat, it will fight on, dragging itself across the floor if necessary. One missing foot reduces Move by 1; one missing leg or two missing feet reduces Move by 3; legless, a zombie with at least one good arm will drag itself along at Move 1.

Zombie   -110 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +1 [10]; IQ -2 [-15].

Advantages: Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Extra Hit Points +5 [25]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood) [5]; Invulnerability (Mind Control) [75]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Smell [-10]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Dead Broke [-25]; Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-25]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Eunuch [-5]; Hidebound [-5]; Low Empathy [-15]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Obdurate [-10]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Slave Mentality [-40]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing [-30]; Unliving [-50].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Affected by Control Zombie, Pentagram, and Turn Zombie [0]; No mental skills [0]; Will become a skeleton [0].

Variant Zombies

B-Movie Zombies

In the B-movie world, certain contaminants – from chemical spills, to cometary radiation, to strange diseases – can animate corpses and turn them into the walking dead, or even transform living humans into zombies. Many of these creatures are characterized by a ravenous appetite for human flesh, and may be extremely difficult to dispose of without dispersing the chemicals over an even wider range. Since these zombies have a powerful hunger for human flesh (especially brains) and quite often emerge from graveyards, they can be seen as yet another type of ghoul (p. 35), this one melding fear of taint with fear of death and mutilation.

B-Movie Zombie   -131 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +1 [10]; DX -1 [-10]; IQ -2 [-15]; HT +5 [60].

Advantages: Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Independent Body Parts (No reattachment, -60%) [14]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood) [5]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Smell [-10]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Dead Broke [-25]; Dependency (Human flesh or brains; occasional, daily) [-30]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Dread (Daylight) [-30]; Dread (Fire) [-20]; Gluttony [-5]; Hidebound [-5]; Infectious Attack [-5]; Low Empathy [-15]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Obdurate [-10]; Reduced Move (Running) -2 [-10]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing [-30]; Vulnerability (4d from head blows) [-20].

Voodoo Zombies

Zombies created by Voudun sorcerers, or *bokors*, are made from living people via administration of a ritual preparation compounded from puffer fish (which contain the contact poison tetrodotoxin), some amphibians, and a variety of plants found in Haiti. They can traditionally be laid to rest by tasting salt or (sometimes) by the sight of the sea; as well, a powerful magician or priest can return a zombie to normal life. These zombies are a monster of a culture born in forced labor; the horror is not of being attacked by one, but of *becoming* one – a senseless, mindless, unfeeling slave for eternity.

In historical horror campaigns, evil landowners may have zombie workers and servants, and local people guard the graves of relatives at night in case a "death" was not natural, but caused by zombie poison. In more modern times, becoming a zombie is the ultimate punishment for social transgressions. It could happen to anyone, from a violent criminal to an overly inquisitive anthropologist.

Voodoo Zombie   -185 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +1 [10]; IQ -2 [-15].

Advantages: Doesn't Sleep [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Night Vision [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Smell [-10]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Dead Broke [-25]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Low Empathy [-15]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Obdurate [-10]; Reduced Move (Running) -1 [-5]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Slave Mentality [-40]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Vulnerability (4d from salt) [-40].

The Mummy

Mummies are embalmed (or naturally mummified, by dry, thin air) corpses reanimated. Although cultures from the Incas to T'ang dynasty China to the medieval Aragonese have practiced mummification, the most common mummies, in horror and in the real world, are those of the ancient Egyptians. Ancient Egyptian religion required that the physical body be preserved for as long as possible. The earliest known attempts at mummification were around 2600 B.C., although bodies from earlier periods were naturally preserved through the desiccating effect of the sand in which they were buried. Mummies are usually reanimated through magic, or by the power of the gods – although the eldritch tana leaves (see p. CB108) can also be used to revive and sustain mummies.

The mummified corpses of pharaohs are the best known mummies, but certainly not the only type. Women, high priests, viziers, work crew "foremen" (anyone, in fact, with money and power) could be mummified. Moreover, all sorts of animals were mummified: birds, cats, wolves, horses, dogs – even fish, snakes, and crocodiles. Imagine a scenario in which the Grand Vizier, upon revivification, raises an army of herons or cobras to do his bidding.

A mummy rarely attacks directly. It prefers to "play dead," then ambush its victims. A mummy's favorite attack is to strangle from behind. If a mummy successfully grabs a victim from behind, it will continue to strangle him until he breaks free or dies (see p. B112). Thanks to their dry wrappings (and sometimes to their embalming resins), mummies are very flammable.

Mummies' tombs are often repositories of fabulous riches and of equally immense archaeological knowledge. The down side is that mummies are usually driven by their creators or by their own maniacal will to exact a horrible revenge upon anyone who defiles their tomb. A rare few mummies are *not* controlled by other entities – they are powerful wizards who cheated death by taking the undying mummy-form themselves. They are independent, malevolent, and highly intelligent. Lesser zombies of many types usually serve such mummies. These beings may wish only to be left alone, to search tirelessly for their reincarnated bride, or to send their minions hunting for the Perfect New Body . . .

The Mummy's Curse

The mummy of King Tutankhamun purportedly carried a powerful curse: "Death will come on swift wings to him that toucheth the tomb of the Pharaoh." The death (by infected mosquito bite!) the following year of Lord Carnarvon, one of the sponsors of the Tut excavation, gave credence to the story. To replicate such effects, mummies might have the Pestilence advantage, an army of creatively vengeful cultist minions, or (for mummified wizards), the following spell:

Mummy's Curse   Regular

Caster *must* touch the subject. There is no immediate effect, but the subject must make a HT roll. If he fails, he acquires the Curse. The victim must roll against his basic HT once per week; a failed roll does 1 hit of damage. If the victim's HT ever reaches 0, he will fall into a coma and look very much like a mummy himself. Eventually, unless help is found, he will die, but his body will not decay. He will not automatically rise as a mummy, but any wizard who knows the Zombie spell (p. M73) is at +4 to use it on him.

The Mummy's Curse always has a cure, but the GM should keep this a secret. It may be a spell (such as Remove Curse), an elixir, or a rare herb. Different versions of this spell may exist, each with a different cure. No one may be affected by more than one Mummy's Curse at a time.

Duration: Permanent until cured.

Cost: 3.

Prerequisites: Curse and Pestilence. The wizard must also be a mummy.

Mummy
125 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +10 [110].

Advantages: Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Extra Hit Points +5 [25]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Imperturbable [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Brain, or Vitals) [15]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Vampiric Invulnerability [150].

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior (Remain in tomb and guard it; kill abductors and return if forcibly removed from tomb) [-15]; Dependency (Funerary amulet; rare, constantly) [-150]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Hideous Appearance [-20]; Reduced Move -1 [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Sterile [-3]; Unhealing [-30]; Unliving (Mitigated by funerary amulet, -60%) [-20]; Vulnerability (2d from fire) [-20].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Dislikes fire [-1]; Protective of amulet [-1].

> *In the long run, we are all dead.*
> *— John Maynard Keynes*

This template assumes that the mummy draws his power and unlife from an amulet of some kind; e.g., a papyrus scroll, a magical gem, or a canopic jar containing his preserved heart. To adapt this template to mummies without such amulets, remove Dependency, Vampiric Invulnerability, and the limitation on Unliving; this reduces template cost to 95 points. Some mummies have Obsession (Search for true love) [-5 to -15]. Mummified high priests will have Magery or Power Investiture (and possibly Blessed), and many of the culturally specific spells in *GURPS Egypt* or other appropriate historical worldbook.

More Monsters

The GM seeking more and more varied monsters for his game should begin with *GURPS Undead,* which expands on this book's necessarily abbreviated treatment of vampires, mummies, zombies, and their ilk, and *GURPS Spirits,* which does the same for ghosts, djinn, faeries, and other immaterial entities. *GURPS Monsters* provides specific NPC monsters suitable for a wide range of campaigns, many of which can be reverse-engineered to yield "generic" monster templates. *GURPS Creatures of the Night* contains many more monsters, in *GURPS Bestiary* format.

Worldbooks such as *GURPS Black Ops, Cabal, Myth,* and *Voodoo* provide monsters specifically tailored to those campaign frames. Genre and historical sourcebooks provide monsters based in specific milieus: *GURPS Atomic Horror, CthulhuPunk, Egypt,* and *Russia* will richly reward further investigation. Finally, the GM who wishes to taint the bright colors of fantasy with dark horror should look into *GURPS Fantasy Folk* and *Fantasy Bestiary* for suitable targets.

The Natural Unnatural

Perfectly natural creatures, either out of place (like the phantom pumas regularly seen in England today) or out of time (like the dinosaurs reputed to exist even now in the swamps at the head of the Congo River), anchor the world of "cryptozoology": the search for ambiguous, legendary creatures. Many "cryptids" (as such beasts are called) combine evocative folklore with truly monstrous zoology; the Loch Ness Monster is, according to some theories, a 60-foot eel! Such exaggeratedly enormous creatures can be frightening in their own right, and on a deeper level, enormous or out-of-place cryptids can symbolize nature gone horribly wrong, or possibly taking her rightful revenge on a heedless mankind. One example of such a cryptid, and the legendary framework you can string from it, follows. For more cryptids, see the Ape-Man (p. 108), the Gill-Man (p. 109), and pp. WT91-101.

The Piasa Bird

A less common cryptid, the piasa bird is a legendary creature of the Illini Indians. Near Alton, Illinois, a huge bird is carved into the cliff face of an enormous bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. First seen by Father Marquette in 1673, the French explorer noted that no Indian, no matter how brave, would look upon the carving. This is due to the terrifying legend of the bird, still spoken of in the region.

Piasa translates from the Illini language as "the bird that devours men." Thousands of years before the arrival of white settlers, the giant bird held sway over much of the land, able to carry away deer in its talons and feed on them at its nest in the bluff. Once it mistook an Indian hunter for a small deer, and from that time on it desired only human flesh. Many warriors attempted to slay the bird, but without success. A chief named Ouatoga finally set out on a solitary quest for the beast, fasting for many weeks and praying to the Great Spirit for guidance. The Spirit appeared to Ouatoga in a dream and directed him to assemble 20 of his best warriors to hide in waiting, while another warrior waited alone as bait.

Ouatoga was brave and offered himself as the bait. The bird was spotted atop the bluff, and, swift as lightning, swept down upon the chief. All 20 warriors released their arrows and the bird fell screaming into the river. Ouatoga was safe, and the image of the bird was engraved upon the bluff in commemoration. Ever after, however, the piasa bird was thought unlucky; a brave who felt the shadow of the piasa pass over him knew that he would die soon.

If such a beast did once exist, could others still inhabit the bluffs of the Mississippi Valley? Does the piasa bird relate to the mysterious thunderbird of the Southwest, or to the many pterodactyl sightings in modern Texas? Tales of giant beasts are prolific throughout Indian culture. Giant wolves and fish are spoken of – even the Bigfoot legend (originally described as a giant bear) may have its origins in Indian lore. Shamans who were killed by such beasts are likely candidates for manitous (see p. 45) and may provide unexpected assistance (or obstacles) to investigators attempting to track down the truth behind the legends.

Hell and Horror

Fear of Hell: Demons

The demons of horror fiction are quite different from those of fantasy. Fantasy demons are red-skinned, flame-clad giants with horns and wings; a horror demon might look like that, but chances are that you'll never see it. The demons of horror spread their evil subtly on the mortal plane, usually through possessed humans. In most cases, when a demon is encountered in our world, it will be channeling its powers through the body of a human victim (see *Possession*, p. 51). Demons put a *lot* of wear and tear on the bodies they "borrow." (For yet another look at demons, see *GURPS In Nomine*.)

Demons may be servants of Hell, or simply inhabitants of some very dangerous, unpleasant dimension. In fact, some say that demons are not true physical beings at all, even on their home plane, but are instead nothing more than pure, sentient evil. When they visit our plane, they busy themselves by inflicting as much sorrow as possible on anyone they can. A few demons are openly violent, but most prefer to cause emotional pain, torturing the loved ones of their possessed victim.

Occasionally, a demon will enter our world to breed with human beings, producing human-looking children with demonic powers. Whether a demon must visit this plane in his physical form to produce such children is a topic of debate among occultists; some hold that any child conceived by a possessed individual will also have a demon's power. Nor is it clear what might happen to these demon-spawn if they were exorcised. Many experts believe that such children have no human soul, but a few theorize that they are normal humans, possessed before birth.

Some occultists believe that demons are incapable of voluntarily bringing their physical form onto our plane of existence, and can operate here *only* by possessing humans. Others maintain that some demons can and do physically enter our world under their own power. Most agree that a (usually foolish) sorcerer who knows the proper spell can summon any demon here in its native shape.

In their native shape, demons may have any number of horrific traits. They will likely have Monstrous Appearance, some form of dangerous Strikers (horns, talons, fangs, etc.), and even higher attributes. Some demons may have Body of Swarm (p. 19) or Flight (Winged Flight, -25%). To randomly generate a demon's physical form, see p. M113 or pp. G82-83. Some material beings derived from Sumerian demonology appear on pp. 120-121.

Fear of No Hell: Frankenstein's Monster

Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein* carries the interesting subtitle: *Or, The Modern Prometheus.* Prometheus, in Greek myth, stole the secret of fire from the gods, and liberated mankind from their tyranny forever. In Shelley's mind, the power of reason and science had done the same with the Christian God. But, she asked, what then? Without God, how will man know the boundaries of evil – and what does it mean that there is, now, nothing that Man Was Not Meant To Know?

Her protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, uses alchemy (*not* electricity) to awaken a being constructed of corpses, whom he blasphemously names Adam. Adam eventually grows to hate his creator, and seeks to drive him mad, kill his bride, and destroy him – just as, in Shelley's mind, man had destroyed God. The Monster, Adam, is a symbol of the fear that there *is* no Hell; that man is truly the master of his own destiny – and is therefore doomed forever by his own selfish pride.

In the movies, of course, Frankenstein's electrical Monster becomes a symbol of mindless scientific "progress" and brute physicality – the "abnormal" brain in his misshapen cranium simply drives him further along the road to mindless rage after society rejects him. He learns to fear fire, the gift of Prometheus – and to hate those who use it. He wishes to reproduce, only to discover that his own hideous nature prevents it. In the later Universal "monster mash" movies, Frankenstein's Monster becomes a kind of goon enforcer for Dracula, or occasionally an innocent (though still mindless and bestial) being torn between the evil Dracula and the tormented Wolf-Man.

Demon — 270 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +6 [70]; DX +2 [20].

Advantages: Extra Fatigue +5 [15]; Ghost Form (Unlimited Lifespan, +30%) [130]; Invulnerability (Spells resisted by IQ)* [75]; Magery 1 [15]; Night Vision [10].

Disadvantages: Cannot Harm Innocents (Prevents direct harm of *truly* good folk only, -50%) [-5]; Excommunicated [-10]; Social Stigma (Demon) [-15]; Vulnerability (1d from "cold iron" or silver) [-5]; Vulnerability (1d from holy water and blessed items) [-5]; and at least -25 points in "evil" mental disadvantages: Bloodlust, Lecherousness, Sadism, Self-Centered, etc.

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Affected by Astral Block, Banish, Pentagram, Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit [0]; Can be detected by sensitive individuals and animals [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0].

  * Demons resist these spells *automatically.* This is a modification of Invulnerability (p. CI59).

Frankenstein's Monster — 165 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +8 [90]; HT +3 [30].

Advantages: Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Extra Hit Points +7 [35]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood) [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper [-10]; Dread (Fire) [-20]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Obsession (Revenge on creator *or* reproducing) [-10]; Reclusive [-10]; Reduced Move (Running) -1 [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing (Can be repaired by a mad scientist) [-20].

In *Frankenstein*, Adam had a voracious intellect, with skills in Chemistry, Philosophy, and other abstruse fields. In the movies, of course, the Monster is barely sentient. IQ and skills have been left at normal human levels as a compromise.

CHAPTER 4

DARK THEATRES
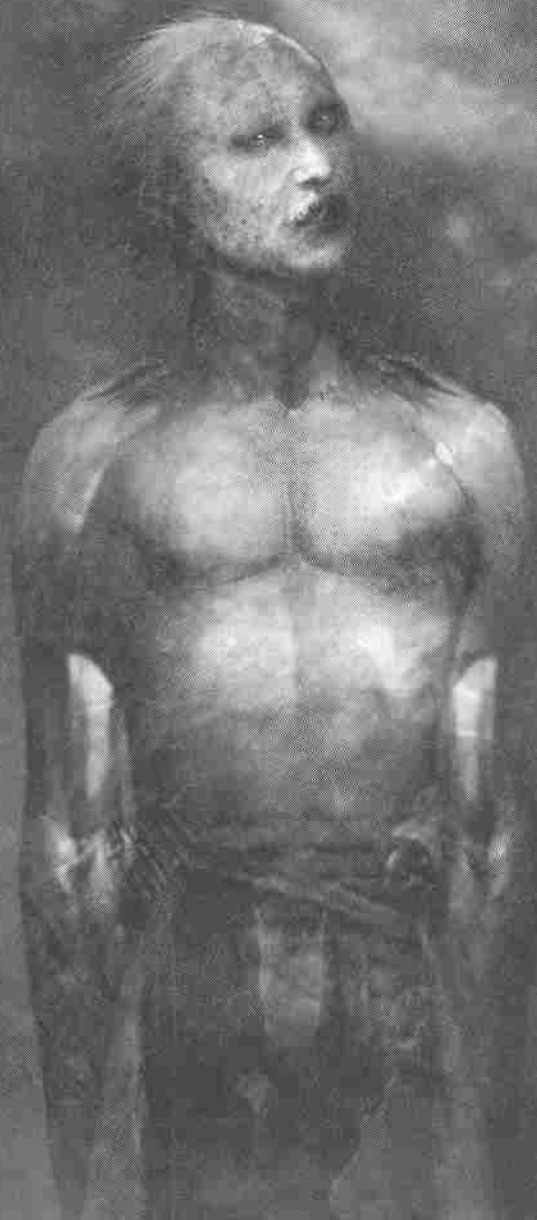
I had to invent plans and
stratagems, and to look about,
and to think of things
beforehand, because nobody
must dream on anything that I
was doing or going to do . . . .
— Arthur Machen,
"The White People"

When you start a **GURPS Horror** adventure or campaign, you have a number of decisions to make. First, decide whether you want a one-shot adventure or an extended campaign. If you decide on an extended campaign, get some idea of its narrative structure. Next, determine the game's approximate power level, and that of the PCs. After that, think about the monster, or monsters, to put up against your PCs. While making these decisions, determine the "ground rules" of your game, and the boundaries of the playing field: is it an epic, globetrotting game of war to the knife against Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, or a deadly serious hunt for the foul vampire who threatens one young girl? You probably already have some idea of the genre and background of your game (a fantasy world, a historical horror game, a science-fiction universe, etc.), and you'll want to keep design considerations related to those genres in mind while you work on your horror game. Finally, you should guide the players in creating their characters, making sure that the PCs will fit into the campaign you plan to run. Making these decisions carefully will ensure that your campaign runs smoothly – and horrifically.

Campaign Length

The GM may choose to run either a one-shot adventure or an extended campaign. A one-shot will run just a few play sessions (or even only one), while an extended campaign can run many nights, or even indefinitely. The campaign's length will affect every other decision, including the type of characters the players design, the monsters they face, and the resolution of the plot.

One-Shots

The one-shot adventure lends itself well to horror roleplaying. It has a simple, linear plot with a definite conclusion. A one-shot should play like a horror movie or short story: normal people find themselves besieged by the unknown, and struggle to survive and perhaps even defeat the monster that threatens them. Adventures of this type can usually be played out in one to three sessions.

A one-shot is usually easier to run than an extended campaign, because it is *finite*. The GM can design a simple, straightforward adventure involving a single horrific threat, without worrying about the mundane repercussions of the plot. No one has to pay for the barn the heroes use to toast Frankenstein's monster in a one-shot, nor do you have to worry about what would happen if they *don't* save the President from becoming a werewolf. PCs in a one-shot adventure can be tailored to the story and tied to the monsters or the plot through their advantages, disadvantages, quirks, and skills. And because they are designed for just one adventure, you don't have to be too concerned if some of them give their lives in the valiant struggle against the forces of the night.

Extended Campaigns

The extended campaign, on the other hand, could run forever. It features a number of successive, often overlapping plots involving the same protagonists. Some players will

create purpose-built investigators, paying special attention to combat and occult skills. Others will start with the same kinds of "plain folks" they would play in a one-shot, and let them *grow* into occult investigators in the course of play; these characters will be especially meaningful to the players, because they were actually *played* from their very first encounter with the supernatural.

An extended campaign lets the GM and players investigate the personalities of the heroes and their supernatural opposition in much greater depth than is possible in a one-shot. It also gives the GM room to develop "epic" plots, in which only the PCs stand between the armies of evil and the unsuspecting world. A good extended campaign will play like a television or novel series, in which new threats arise as old ones are overcome, and old enemies reappear with fiendish new plots.

To run an extended campaign successfully, a balance must be struck between continuity and risk. A "campaign" in which every player designs a new character every week isn't a campaign at all. *Some* of the PCs need to survive from one adventure to the next.

Yet true risk is necessary. The players *must* be aware that their characters put their lives in jeopardy every time they seek out the unknown. Death is a reality in horror, and it must threaten PCs as well as NPCs. Otherwise, a horror campaign will quickly deteriorate into a weekly waltz through a carnival spook house, where the investigators stick their tongues out at the werewolf before plugging him full of silver bullets.

Sometimes, a PC in an extended campaign *must* die – but when it happens, make it count. Arrange things so that the sacrifice will help destroy the creature, rescue the beautiful heroine, or cover the rest of the party's escape. Of course, you're not responsible for the stupidity of the players. If someone does something so foolish that he deserves to die, then let him die. PCs are not immortal just because they're *player* characters.

Narrative Structures

Many campaigns are built around a narrative structure, such as the ever-popular quest for an item or battle to defeat a master nemesis. If the narrative structure is intended to climax before the end of the campaign, then it is a "story arc" within the larger campaign. Many campaigns (especially short ones) have only one story arc: the story of the campaign itself. The narrative structure of the campaign is something like the format of the scenario, but it operates over a larger scale.

It is important to emphasize that a narrative structure does not mean that the PCs are cardboard cutouts to be moved by the GM along a pre-assigned story track. Some narrative structures require more "scripting" (or, as those who dislike scripting call it, "railroading") than others, but none of them should replace the players' decisions as the key motivator of the characters' actions. Players are justifiably sensitive to what they see as too much railroading of the storyline, although every player's idea of "too much" is different. It is a rare player, for instance, who is comfortable simply being dumped into a setting with no idea of what the GM has in mind or what kind of stories would work best in it. (If you find yourself with

such players, however, count your blessings; they are almost always more than eager to involve themselves in your world, and they get into more trouble than any GM could ever think to throw at them.) Players will, for instance, seldom abandon the quest in the middle of the story arc, but they usually appreciate having more than one way to complete it.

Of course, nothing prevents the GM from presenting a series of choices that eventually lead to the same outcome, introducing false dichotomies, or using the old "Schrödinger's plot" trick (if the questers leave the city from the east gate, the beggar with the cryptic prophecy is at the east gate; if they leave from the north gate, he's on the north). As a general rule, it's acceptable to railroad as long as the players don't see the tracks or hear the whistle; after all, *somebody* has to move the story along, and as with all the hard parts of the game, that's the GM's job. Just be ready to move with the PCs; if, despite everything, they leave a story hanging in the middle, that's another source of loose ends to bedevil them later on. It's usually wise to have a main narrative structure and one or two "subplot" structures for the adventurers to enmesh themselves in if they leave the main one, whether accidentally or on purpose.

Here are a few common narrative structures, with some hints on using them in horror-roleplaying campaign design.

Escape

The Escape narrative structure begins with the protagonists in some terrible predicament, from which they must extricate themselves. They can be trapped in the dreams of a madman, under sentence of death by the Illuminati, infected with vampirism, or something equally upsetting. They may face opposition from a villain or villains in their attempt to escape, but unlike the Nemesis structure (see below), the focus is on the heroes rather than their opponent. This makes Escape an excellent structure for psychological horror or characters-as-monsters games.

Putting the PCs into the predicament should be done either openly at the beginning of the game or as soon as possible; players tend to react badly to involuntary PC confinement. The climax of the Escape narrative has to be neatly timed; if it happens too early, much of the potential for horror is lost; if it happens too late, the players will be frustrated and sullen.

Gauntlet

The Gauntlet is something of a combination of Escape and Quest (see below); the protagonists are moving through a horrifying place or series of places. They are not necessarily imprisoned in the Gauntlet, nor are they necessarily searching for anything in particular. Think of the Gauntlet as the "road movie" of horror. (The movie *Deliverance* is a classic Gauntlet narrative.) When the heroes emerge on the other side, they will be free of the horror; therefore, the climax of the Gauntlet narrative usually occurs right before the final boundary is reached. The allegorical weight of the journey at its heart makes the Gauntlet an excellent structure for psychological horror or madness-and-dream horror. A Gauntlet is also an ideal shorter arc to include in any other structure (especially its cousins, Escape and Quest).

Extended Campaigns and Plausibility

Any random group of people, thrown together by Fate, might have a supernatural encounter . . . once. That's enough for a one-shot adventure. But what if the characters survive and the players enjoy themselves?

One of the biggest questions will be just why these particular people continue to encounter supernatural phenomena. The GM must create a rationale for the party to form a cohesive group. He must also provide a logical motivation for them to go *looking* for spooky events.

The most direct solution is to set up an organization to which most or all of the PCs belong. They can be part of an official police or government agency, sworn paladins of the Crown, initiates of a lodge of white magicians, tabloid TV journalists seeking sensationalism, or members of a peculiar gentlemen's club or academic ghost-hunting society. The party can have a specific headquarters, budget, and pool of clients from which the GM can draw adventures. This may require a lot of advance preparation, but the players should be invited to participate in this process, as their input will also help them flesh out the PCs.

An alternative approach is the mysterious benefactor (perhaps a Secret Patron; see p. CI28). This entails providing the party with a single patron (usually an individual, not an organization) who requires their services in exchange for reward. The patron's interest in the supernatural may be purely academic, or it may be more sinister. Perhaps the patron is a member of some secret order (such as the Golden Dawn), a cultist worshiping a dark deity, or a fanatical collector who is simply "using" the investigators to gain valuable information or artifacts.

The GM should firmly integrate the patron organization or benefactor into the game world, rather than leaving it as a generic plot-spawning device. Make the NPC who sends the group on missions a real, three-dimensional person. Introduce fellow workers who can get into scrapes later on. Give the organization its own rivals and patrons. Center an occasional scenario on these other employees, rivals, and patrons. In desperate cases, the investigators may return from their latest assignment to find their organization destroyed, taken over by evil, or both. This will give them a mystery to solve and a nemesis to pursue; eventually, they may even decide to rebuild the organization themselves.

The heroes might also cut out the middleman, get organized, and set up shop as professional occultists. This allows the players total control over their clients and the types of adventures the party gets into (possibly to the chagrin of the GM), but will provide interesting challenges as they attempt to secure funding and run their own "ghost-breaking" business (demonstrating that even Accounting and Administration skills have a place in a horror campaign!). As their organization grows, so will their enemies. Powerful monsters, sorcerers, and other occult entities may feel threatened by this new force in the world and take preemptive action.

Nemesis

In the Nemesis narrative structure, the protagonists are opposed by a villain or villainous force, whether the Lord of the Vampires, the Ancient Order of Black Magicians, or the Grey aliens. The narrative is the story of their battle, which can occur in one place or all over the world. The climax is the final showdown between the heroes and the villain. Most "monster movies" utilize the Nemesis structure.

The heroes can be opposed by the villain directly throughout, or they can battle an ever-escalating number of monsters, henchmen, goons, undead, or whatever and only gradually come to the realization of the villain's true nature or identity. The Nemesis almost always dwells in a particularly foul and unpleasant (or at least horrifically dangerous for visitors) lair. The Nemesis narrative is an excellent one for thematic unity and building a consistent tone; this has made it one of the classic narratives for horror roleplaying. It is especially strong in pulp and conspiratorial horror.

GURPS Cabal

Rather than a common patron, a common *enemy* might help explain an extended campaign that pits the same heroes against a panoply of monsters and supernatural terrors. One possible enemy is the Cabal: a secret society of black magicians, psis, and monsters that has existed since the time of the Pyramids. (Of course, the Cabal is as suitable a patron for monstrous or magical PCs as it is an enemy for monster-hunting ones!)

Below are the key elements of the "Cabal mythos." Earlier editions of *GURPS Horror* gave a more complete outline of the Cabal's tactics, magic, and rationale; that material, *greatly* expanded, now appears in *GURPS Cabal.* Those who desire details are encouraged to consult that volume.

† The Cabal wishes to protect its own existence, to expand its power, and to keep knowledge of the supernatural (magic, psionics, vampirism, etc.) out of the hands of the rest of the world. The Cabal has no compunctions about killing, lobotomizing, zombifying, or devouring anyone who impedes these objectives.

† The Cabal has many scattered Lodges of 10-20 Cabalists each, usually concealed in other organizations. If something (or someone, such as the PCs) begins to present a problem that the local Lodge can't handle, they call in higher-ranking and more powerful Cabalists to help . . . and so forth, escalating as the PCs' power does.

† Every Cabalist has two, usually more powerful, Cabalists watching over his shoulder, ready to avenge his death or exposure by meddling PCs. These avengers can be any kind of monster, magician, conspirator, or phenomenon the GM wishes to incorporate.

† The Cabal itself fears some of the Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, especially the hellish and primordial qlippoth: the insectile survivors of a reality quake (see p. 120) at the dawn of Creation. This does not stop the madder or more vicious Cabalists from experimenting with, and trying to control, such Things.

† Between its own 4,000-year history and a magical time-portal phenomenon known as the Gates of Thoth, the Cabal can appear in any place or time required by the campaign.

† Among the Cabal's secrets are ways to enter the astral plane, commune with dead gods, and manipulate powerful magical forces that mortals know nothing about. In short, the Cabal can do anything the GM needs it to do in order to move the game along.

Picaresque

In the Picaresque narrative structure, the protagonists battle a random assortment of foes. This is essentially a "no narrative structure" narrative structure. Many TV series are fundamentally Picaresque, with *Kolchak: the Night Stalker* being the premier horror example. Few novels are Picaresque, although many continuing series become Picaresque on a large scale. Many long-running horror campaigns become Picaresque in much the same way, built up out of a series of story arcs using other structures.

Picaresque has the advantage of being almost impossible to railroad; players with a severe allergy to railroading will enjoy it. It also makes a good way to introduce one of the other narrative structures. If, in the course of the Picaresque story arc, the heroes make an enemy of some potential Nemesis, or decide to Quest after some mystical device, the fact that they chose their fate will make them accept the awful horrors in store for them. The disadvantage is a tendency to sink rapidly into formula or meaninglessness. The GM must make a concerted effort to keep the Picaresque campaign interesting and varied (building a detailed world helps here). It is also harder to develop a thematic unity for a Picaresque campaign, which can make some styles of horror (such as psychological horror) more difficult to pull off.

Quest

The Quest is the classic narrative structure of fantasy roleplaying, and still holds a great deal of attraction for players and GMs. In the Quest, the adventurers must travel to a distant place and carry out some specific action. This often involves obtaining some object – a magic sword, the Holy Grail, an abducted sister, etc. It might instead involve destroying an object, or simply activating it. The climax of the Quest comes at the final stage, where the heroes have reached the goal and must battle the final foes to achieve their mission. Often, a Quest is necessary to defeat a Nemesis. The Quest works equally well for high-action pulp horror and subtle psychological horror; all of cosmic horror can be seen as the Quest for forbidden knowledge.

Mix and Match

Obviously, these narrative structures can be combined in any number of fashions. For instance, the TV series *The X-Files* combines a Nemesis (the conspiracy to cover up UFOs) with a Quest (to find "the truth" and Mulder's sister)

and elements of the Picaresque (the various mutants, serial killers, and miscellaneous adventures not connected to the Nemesis or the Quest). In general, a long-running campaign winds up taking on a number of narrative structures, often at the same time. If the GM is paying attention, each structure can have its own satisfactions and its own sense of closure.

Protagonists and Antagonists

Without characters, there's no story, and without a story, there's no game. The players will build the protagonists, and will often surprise you with their eagerness to fit a PC into your plot. This means you need to think about what kind of game you're running, and what kinds of heroes you need to oppose the villains you want to run.

Against the Darkness: Heroes

Protagonists in horror stories fall into two basic categories: investigators of the supernatural and men on the street. In general, experienced investigators will be more powerful characters, built on at least 100 points (and often considerably more). Man-on-the-street PCs may be 50- or 75-point "accidental heroes" sucked into the horror, but it fits the flavor of the story better if they are 25-point "average Joes." Lower-point PCs will also tend to flee in terror more realistically – and it may be easier to frighten *players* who are concerned about their characters' fragility.

Just Plain Folks

In a man-on-the-street story, the hero usually *is* the monster's target. He has no background to prepare him for adventure; indeed, he lived a perfectly mundane, perhaps even boring, life until IT turned its baleful gaze upon him. In some stories, the protagonist never finds out *why* the thing was after him, but more often, some link between himself and the monster becomes apparent.

This type of adventure features people from all walks of life: doctors, construction workers, housewives, students, etc. The one thing they'll likely have in common is a *lack* of familiarity with the occult. The members of *Poltergeist's* Freling family were just Plain Folks, as were most of the people sliced up in *Halloween*. It's a good idea to establish some link among the PCs, binding their fates to each other and to that of the monster. Perhaps they are all members of a single family haunted by ghosts, or guests at a remote resort besieged by werewolves. This depends on the adventure – a street gang will fit into a zombies-in-the-subways adventure much better than will a troop of Girl Scouts.

These heroes usually have one goal: survival. This may be as simple as holding the monster off until dawn, or as difficult as escaping from a deep, haunted swamp. Either way, the PCs know that if they can just hang on long enough, they'll be safe.

For this reason, Plain Folks work best in a one-shot adventure. Normal people are not suited to extended contact with the occult – they simply lack the drive to seek out and combat man's most terrifying foes. On the other hand, it can be amusing to roleplay an average person facing a supernatural threat. And "average" does not mean incompetent; the police detective, the big game hunter, and the movie starlet are all average in this context, because they do not deal regularly with the occult. In fact, they might not even *believe* in ghosts and aliens until they come face-to-face with them – but when they do, things will get interesting, fast.

An extended campaign, however, demands heroes in the Monster Hunter vein – no one else would go *looking* for supernatural trouble. If the PCs are Plain Folks, yet supernatural events keep seeking them out, there is probably a Weirdness Magnet at work.

Fearless Monster Hunters

Plain Folks will do anything to get away from horror, but Fearless Monster Hunters go looking for it. This sort of campaign centers on the heroes' investigations into the supernatural. Obviously, these PCs will be much better prepared to deal with occult threats. They will usually have appropriate weapons, not the least of which is a working knowledge of supernatural beings, gained either through extensive research or first-hand experience.

Monster Hunters will usually become involved in an adventure after the haunting begins – they will be called in to help with something beyond explanation. Some occult investigators charge for their services; others are motivated by altruism or the quest for knowledge. PCs in this sort of campaign may have different goals. They may want to eliminate a threat to mankind, or to increase man's understanding of the supernatural. Or they may be in it for the money. These goals may lead to conflict – for example, the party's priest will want to exorcise a demon, while the occultist in the group will want to capture it for study.

Let the Players Play

A roleplaying game is not a book or a movie. The GM must not expect the PCs to fear anything predictable or easily defended against. Movie mad slashers kill victims who are too preoccupied or helpless to fight back or escape. Players usually do not let their characters back themselves into corners and faint at convenient moments. If the only danger is physical violence, modern settings provide guns that no werewolf's fangs or slasher's knife can match. Players will not act like the cannon-fodder in horror films, and although you can mechanically simulate fear with repeated Fright Checks, it's vastly more satisfying (for both the GM and the players) if the fear rises organically from the game – if the story, and the danger, are genuinely *scary*.

Horror scenarios generally build on the dramatic power of the situation and on the ability of the heroes to interact. The climax of a horror scenario is the group facing the unknown. If a group of players and their characters are not comfortable with one another, or have had little experience working together as a group, a horror scenario is a good way to create camaraderie among them – they will have no one else to depend on, make decisions with, or send down that darkened hallway. In a well-established group, horror scenarios provide one of the best opportunities for roleplaying, as the group will find their skills and experience challenged by unpredictable events.

Pre-Generated PCs?

Some GMs go so far as to pre-generate PCs for horror games. This has some clear advantages. Players are more willing to sacrifice their character's life or run terrible risks if they didn't invest time in his creation. The GM can balance the heroes against the opposition for the right degree of danger and suspense. The GM can easily work the entire party into the same plot or theme, if the campaign requires one.

On the other hand, without the player investment of time and individual creativity in character creation, it becomes harder for the GM to make the horror "personal." A player tends to identify with and care about a character that he created or designed himself; this identification is fundamental to the sense of fear and suspense that the GM wants to create in horror. As well, a player designing a character will often have good ideas that the GM can use, and the player might offer character hooks (pp. 26-26) that the GM had not thought of. If the players and GM work together during character creation, many of the advantages of pre-generated characters can accrue to player-designed heroes. This is perhaps the best compromise between the needs of the campaign and the enjoyment of the individual players. Another compromise might lie in running a brief one-shot "teaser" before the full campaign begins (see p. 99).

Monster Hunters will gain enemies among the forces of the occult, particularly in a world in which the Cabal is strong (see p. 66). They may become involved in a long-running, two-way game of cat-and-mouse as they pursue a clever monster who wants them just as badly as they want him. In such a case, the investigators can never be sure whether they are closing in on their prey or walking into a cunning trap.

The Nature of the Beast: Enemies

Every story demands conflict, and thus antagonists for your protagonists, the PCs. In a horror game, the antagonists are likely to be monsters, black magicians, vile cultists, or something similar. The type of game you plan to run will help you determine the general approach to take in the all-important task of enemy design. (For advice on picking specific monsters, see Chapter 3; for specific villainous motivations, see pp. 101-103.) The simplest horror adventure pits the PCs against a single monster, or perhaps a small band of creatures. This sort of story lends itself best to a one-shot adventure or a single play session in an extended campaign, as it lacks the complexity to hold the players' attention over several sessions. Still, a single monster can provide an entertaining evening of terror for a few players, particularly if the beast is a hunter such as a werewolf, a psycho killer, or a pack of walking dead.

One Enemy

A more involved single-monster adventure is the One Enemy extended campaign, in which the adventurers face an army of monsters led by a single individual of immense power. The heroes may have to discover the identity of the leader, or they may know from the start and simply lack proof. Once the investigators are on to the leader's identity, the One Enemy will command his minions to attack them relentlessly. The One Enemy can be counted on to kidnap Dependents, arrange "accidents," and generally harass the PCs to death.

A typical candidate for One Enemy status might be a charismatic young senator who is secretly a powerful sorcerer. The party must try to stop him from increasing his power to the point where he can take over the country (or – gasp! – the planet), but they can't just walk up and shoot him – he's too popular and well-guarded. Instead of moving against him directly, the investigators must gather evidence against the warlock senator, while foiling his nefarious plots and defending themselves from the attacks of his puppet fiends.

Desperate Struggle

Similar to the One Enemy campaign is the Desperate Struggle, in which the heroes wage a secret war against a growing army of monsters. They have discovered the supernatural threat, but they can convince no one of its truth. When they turn to the authorities for help, they are dismissed as crackpots. Foes in this sort of scenario are seldom intelligent; instead, they are fertile or contagious, as appropriate. Werewolves, fungoids, walking dead, and creatures from the deep are great foes for a Desperate Struggle.

An even more sinister struggle involves a foe that can blend in with humans – perhaps the Unseelie, an alien race, or a band of demons intent on possessing and subjugating humanity. In this situation, when the investigators look for official help, they are likely to reveal themselves to enemies who have *already* infiltrated the government. Thus, the PCs become fugitives from the law, trying to defend mankind from a threat it can't perceive.

A particularly grim version of the Desperate Struggle is a campaign focusing on the never-ending fight against the Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. Such a campaign is based on the thoroughly depressing premise of "cosmic horror" (see p. 89-90); horrible monsters of incredible power and malevolence are continually trying to establish dominance on this planet, inflicting a horrible and painful extinction on mankind. The heroes, no matter how brave, resourceful, or powerful, are flyspecks compared to these creatures. With luck, they may be able to hold the Things off for a time, but the final doom of mankind is likely.

Obviously, this can be a bit of a downer for players used to slaying dragons in one turn, or ruling entire galaxies. The change of pace will probably do them good – a horrible death or two will heighten their appreciation of a hard-earned victory. The key to making this type of campaign appealing is to emphasize the bravery and nobility of the hopeless fight: "'Tis a far, far better thing I do . . ."

The GM should allow small victories – disrupting a cult ritual that would summon a certain horrible Thing, for example, thus slamming the gate to trap him on the "other side" until the stars are again right, which won't happen for another 87 years. That may not be long for an eternal Thing to wait, but to mortals, it's a significant success.

Anything Goes

If one horror is not enough, you can throw your campaign open to everything your imagination can devise, presenting a supernatural smorgasbord in which Anything Goes. The campaigns discussed above assume that only one kind of monster exists, and that the rest are merely legend. The Anything Goes campaign, however, assumes that *any* of them could be true. Werewolves, zombies, mad slashers, Things Man Was Not Meant To Know – they all exist, and they'll all be coming to get the PCs.

The main advantage of this sort of campaign is that the players won't be as readily bored. Every adventure brings a new enemy, so tactics that work one week may well be useless the next. An Anything Goes campaign doesn't need to have a Picaresque narrative structure (p. 66), but unless the GM takes special care to build another, it will come to resemble one.

Reckless introduction of creatures can quickly reduce the campaign to a chorus of "The Monster Mash" – monsters of every conceivable kind tripping over one another, until none of them are frightening any more. Keep the variety level high, but let the players deal with one threat before moving on to the next. Reintroduce an old nemesis from time to time, to play on old emotions (and disadvantages), keeping a thread of continuity running through an otherwise chaotic campaign.

Design Parameters

A horror campaign, given its primary directive of evoking emotion and building atmosphere, can't easily afford the "ad hoc" quality that other campaigns can allow or even thrive on. The design of the horror campaign, while not necessarily as unitary as the design of a horror scenario, should serve to clear the area for the construction of an emotional impact. This involves answering fundamental design questions, so that aspects of the game don't wind up working at cross-purposes. Answering them defines the directions along which the GM will be building or growing the campaign.

High-Powered Horror

Once the Monster Hunters grow powerful (say, 300 points or more), they become *really* fearless – and that isn't the point of horror gaming. The GM should make sure that the horror tracks the PCs' power progression, and should be prepared to throw something else at them at any time. High-powered gaming requires a *lot* of improvisation; players are devious sorts who always come up with some kind of last-ditch plan. Have a backup strategy; know your game history and do not be caught off guard by a sudden reconnaissance-in-force into the Hell-Jungle of Darvis III, or a magical assault on the sanity of the Vampire King. Knowing your villain (see *A Good Bad Man Is Hard To Find*, p. 100) is crucial to knowing how he plans to gorily slaughter the PCs this time – and you should be ready when those meddling investigators try to thwart him with something you still hadn't anticipated.

Endanger Others

Just because the Monster Hunters are bulletproof doesn't mean their friends are! Investigators will have Dependents, Allies, Patrons, and other folk they care about; a vampire who kidnaps the hero's kid sister, or kindly old mentor, or boyfriend can lure a powerful foe onto chosen ground. Right-thinking PCs will still feel vicarious fear if monsters threaten perfect strangers. A school bus full of kids, the parish priest, or even the cop or soldier who ran into danger before the party got there can trigger a useful level of concern.

Keep it Mysterious

Never tell the players what they're hunting. The foes attack from the darkness, then fade back into it; the shape gliding through the water can't be picked up on infrared if it's cold-blooded; the undead sorcerer *looks* familiar, but he's just too decayed for recognition. Keep the horrors mysterious, and the fear of the unknown can do its work for you. Even if a single ghoul can't kill a black op in a stand-up fight, he can harry, scar, and unnerve him forever. Mess with the players' minds, and with their characters' perceptions. Play change-up with the monsters, work different archetypes and fears, swap out characteristics between templates. Keep the players guessing – and keep them nervous about what they might discover.

Change the Story

Don't run a scenario or a campaign that depends on straight-up confrontation for its horror. Draw horror from the world, or from the horror's intangible effects on the investigators. Use the fear of social isolation (see pp. 86-87) to point up the price the heroes pay for their power and for their calling. Cosmic horror (see pp. 89-90) draws power from slow discoveries, not from unkillable monsters – even if the PCs easily defeat the Minions, dread can set in when they realize the Cosmic Deities are eternal. Psychological horror (see p. 90) can work even better with high-powered Monster Hunters; they have more to fear from their own disintegration. In a conspiratorial game, the heroes don't know whom to fight, or where the enemy is. A game in which the players take the role of monsters (see p. 13) can be as much an exploration of the dark side of power as a matter of counting the odds.

Weaken the Heroes

Ammo runs out. Spells drain fatigue. Spaceships suffer mysterious engine malfunctions. After a sufficiently long battle, or under certain field conditions, the heroes might have to rely on knives, fists, and wits rather than technology or sorcery. An Escape scenario (see p. 65) might even begin with the heroes captured, stripped of weapons and gear, and chained in the monster's lair!

Alternatively, change the battleground. Put the heroes underwater, or in hard vacuum, or deep in quicksand – anywhere penalties start to apply. Monsters might use blinding, stunning, paralyzing, and similar attacks in addition to long-range ambushes or hit-and-run tactics.

Keep in mind, however, that horror gaming requires collaboration far more than it does helplessness for its effect. If the players wanted to play 50-point victims, they would have built those characters instead! Keep the obstacles fair, and always make sure it's about the horror rather than about some GM need to "win."

Raise the Stakes

Feel free to add more horror if the heroes seem to be having too easy a time of it. Instead of six ghouls in the lair, there are a dozen. Or the lair opens onto a disused New York subway tunnel – and there are 60 ghouls there. Guarding a skeletal subway train. Where the Ghoul King sleeps with his seven hand-picked bodyguard brides. Pull back the visible scope (p. 71) as needed to reestablish a mood of horror.

Remember that monsters attack when and where they have the advantage: no light, deep in the swamp, in dreams, etc. Use their advantages ruthlessly. If the monsters and the PCs are evenly matched, the monsters should attack the heroes in detail. They should mob stragglers, and launch murderous assaults on investigators who "just went ahead to scout." They may even use mazes, illusions, or lures to separate the party.

Finally, make the monsters *tougher.* Monsters with Vampiric Invulnerability should always come back; a living villain you want to stay alive should have Hard to Kill or Regeneration – or both. If the PCs still have a tactical advantage, give the main villain powerful magical artifacts or advanced technology (the kind the heroes cannot use if captured). At a last resort, any monster can worship a Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know . . .

Target the Threats

Even Superman has his kryptonite. High-powered adventurers will have weaknesses. For instance, psionic vampires can threaten magic-proof heroes. A brilliant magus might go down under a swarm of wererats before he can cast a spell. Mind control can turn combat gods against their own allies! This approach works best as a reaction to the investigators' actions; a monster becomes scarier if its attacks get personalized. PCs with Overconfidence can be lured into ambushes, and those with Paranoia fooled into shooting off all their silver ammo at wild dogs. The players will be trying to figure out the monsters' weaknesses – the monsters should be doing the same to the hunters!

Scale

Scale is the level at which the protagonists are interacting with the world, and the results of their actions upon it. Are they acting on a *prosaic scale,* simply struggling to get by, scrounging their next meal, and hoping to avoid a messy and predictable death? Or are they acting on an *epic scale,* resolving the fate of nations, saving the world, and daring Hell itself?

Normally, low-powered characters operate closer to the prosaic scale, while higher-powered ones operate at an epic scale. But this is only the standard use of these types; compelling, gripping, and frightening horror can be created by juxtaposing opposites as well. Many horror novels and films feature average people somehow stopping some monstrous evil that could spell the doom of millions – and tautly ratchet up the horror thanks to such stakes. At the other pole, a useful way to integrate super-powered characters into a game world is to present them with prosaic stakes: one person's life, dignity, or sanity. The need to work on a "human" scale can also restrain those whose normal temptation is to blot out the sun with their heroics . . . and again, the thematic tension helps create nervousness, and hopefully fear, in the players. (Making the monsters more dangerous can easily return higher-powered characters to the prosaic concerns of their own survival, too.) The decision of scale should hinge on how comfortable the GM feels letting the players have the ability to alter his world by their actions.

The GM can independently decide on questions of scale, at least at first. Some players can become impatient with a prosaic scale, but with enough creativity and effort by the GM, they can be won over. At some point, of course, the party's actions will begin to determine the scale of the campaign. Like PC power, scale has a tendency to slip upward during the course of a long-running campaign. This should not be any problem for the prepared GM, and unlike power, scale can be dramatically lowered (at least temporarily) without too many player complaints.

Splatter (see pp. 88-89) and psychological horror games classically operate on the prosaic scale. Games in which the PCs are supernatural monsters, or supernatural monster-hunters, often begin as prosaic-scale games and escalate as the protagonists become more confident and familiar with their surroundings and powers. Pulp is a favorite style for epic-scale gaming, especially in horror, although it can work on a fairly prosaic level for some time. Much of Robert E. Howard's pulp horror, for instance, concerns his heroes barely surviving some malevolent creature's slavering assault rather than battling for the fate of the world. Conspiracy and cosmic horror gain much of their power from slowly widening the scale of the campaign; what initially seems only to concern one PC or NPC becomes a battle against insidious forces that can topple governments or devour continents. Silly horror can operate at any scale, although it seems most comfortable when fluctuating wildly between extremes.

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Scope

Scope is what the PCs can see, touch, influence, and kill. Where scale relates to why the horror must be stopped (To save a life? Or to save Chicago?), scope deals with what, who, and (sometimes) how. Scale is the heroes' goals and ambitions; scope is their range of action. A campaign that only deals with one village is smaller in scope than a campaign with ramifications throughout the realm, or through all history. Scope is related to the power and scale of the campaign; usually, the higher the power and the larger the scale of the campaign, the bigger the scope. Although larger-scope games are usually epic-scale games, that's not always the case. A campaign of vast scope can chase across all of Europe for the prosaic stakes of one kidnapped woman's life; or a professor and his graduate students can save the entire world with a single day trip to a rural Massachusetts backwater. Think of scale as how much the heroes hope to achieve and scope as how important they see their allies and opponents as being.

Visible Scope

However, the players and their characters seldom have all the information; the werewolves infesting Limehouse might be only one part of the larger plan of the Beast Lord to bring all of Europe to an animal state. The heroes see only the werewolves in Limehouse (the *visible scope*), not a horror that affects the entire Continent (the *actual scope*).

In horror, especially, it is usually a good idea to keep the visible scope smaller than the actual scope. This increases the element of the unknown (and the potentially horrific) in the campaign. It also helps the GM keep a handle on the campaign – if the players can see the actual scope, the heroes might upset some important apple carts upon which the storyline depends. Some styles of horror, such as cosmic horror or conspiratorial horror, absolutely depend on this rule. With other styles, such as pulp horror, it's less important. And in psychological horror, the visible scope is almost always the actual scope by definition – it's all about what's happening in the protagonist's head.

The climax of the story arc or of the campaign is the place where the players can get a glimpse, however transient, of the actual scope of the game. This provides a reward for the players while (hopefully) delivering a shock of vertiginous dread. When the climax has passed, so should the vision of the actual scope. Players will hopefully work even harder to get another glimpse of the actual scope; this can only result in better roleplaying and more focused attention to the game.

Precisely Calibrated Evil

The PCs' power level can help determine the power of the horrors as well as the nature of the campaign. Generally, the main *on-screen* horror (the chief villain or main monster) should be twice to three times as powerful as the average PC, but not immune to the party acting in concert. The henchmen, chief lieutenants, and secondary horrors should at be roughly the same level of power as the PCs; these will be the most common antagonists for the party. Hordes and hordes of lower-powered guards, goons, summoned monsters, etc. will round out the cast. The key to this calibration is to keep the heroes endangered throughout the game, but not instantly doomed.

As the PCs increase in power, you can track their progress through the hierarchy of evil. The low-powered monsters are overcome, the chief lieutenants are thwarted one by one, and eventually the chief villain can be faced down on something like equal terms. The only thing the GM must keep in mind is that the powers of darkness should always stay dangerous; by the time the heroes have taken down the Vampire Lord of Jamaica, they have come across evidence of his (vastly older and more powerful) sire back in London, or of the Horrific Swamp Entity he traveled to Jamaica to placate and awaken . . .

Austerity

Austerity is the degree to which the heroes are held accountable for their actions. A vigilante who shoots a black magician in a *very austere* modern horror game will have the local police department on his tail (using every weapon in the modern forensic arsenal: fiber matching, fingerprints, DNA typing, etc.). If caught, he will be indicted and tried, and if convicted, he will go to prison or be executed. If he shoots the same black magician in a *moderately austere* modern horror game, he will be "on the lam" and unable to cross the path of the law again, but he will be able to stay "underground" in the same city without the police finding him. In the same situation in a *lenient* (low to no austerity) modern horror game, as long as there aren't any eyewitnesses, the gunman is home free; the police might even decide that the black magician deserved killing, and conveniently ignore any clues left behind by the assassin.

Austerity generally tracks the level of game-world realism; a grittily realistic campaign is normally an austere campaign. However, the consequences of a given realistic situation might vary significantly in severity. For example, advances in forensic science in the last century have made it much harder to get away with murder, even though the austerity level of the real world has remained roughly the same. Similarly, a game set in a freewheeling frontier such as the pirate-infested 17th-century Caribbean or the Old West might have fewer (or at least different) consequences than a game set in a bureaucratic cyberpunk future. Fundamentally, however, actions do carry consequences in the real world, and an austere game will attempt to replicate them. Even at high levels of surrealism (see p. 86) or fantasy, the party's actions can have dramatic and mythic (as opposed to social) repercussions, such as dramatic irony, justified fate, and karma. Even the highest level of unreality can be played as an austere game, if the GM so chooses.

The styles of horror game that privilege game-world realism normally gravitate toward greater austerity. Cosmic, conspiratorial, and psychological horror games are traditionally more austere. Pulp and splatter campaigns are traditionally less austere, as are games where the heroes are supernatural creatures. (Silly horror is almost always totally lenient.) A *cinematic* game often relaxes the austerity of the laws of the campaign world, the laws of physics, or the laws of plausibility – sometimes, all three! Within these broad categories, it is certainly possible to make adjustments one way or another. A psychological horror game of slowly building madness, for instance, can begin as a completely austere game and gradually grow more and more lenient as the PCs' grasp of reality disintegrates. Cosmic and conspiratorial horror can be played at almost any level of austerity, although cosmic horror depends on realism, and paranoia on consequences, too much to work well as fully lenient games.

Either way, the GM should warn the players about the level of intended austerity. This should probably be done out of game, while setting up the campaign; players hate surprises of this nature. If the warning doesn't take, of course, the GM is free to force the whole party to flee to Guatemala to avoid the FBI's investigation of their four-state murder-and-robbery spree.

Boundaries

The physical setting of the campaign, the place where the action will unfold, plays an important role in campaign design. It can seemingly be changed with greater ease than can, say, the level of austerity, but it retains a great deal of impact upon the initial design. Since horror campaigns depend so strongly on background details, detailing the setting or settings with which the heroes will interact should take a high priority. This only gains importance if key elements of mood, important clues, or the central concepts of the horror itself are dependent upon the setting, as they so often are.

The main choice is between a campaign that draws its power from its location and depends on consistency in that location to give it depth, and the campaign that draws its power from its variety and depends on the scope of that variety to give it impact. There are possible compromises between the localized and the globetrotting campaign, but most horror games will gravitate to one or the other extreme. If the GM didn't anticipate, and plan for, this tendency, he will be playing catch-up at a very inconvenient time.

Localized

The localized campaign is mostly or entirely restricted to one city, county, province, or small country. Individual scenarios may take place outside it, but they are driven by events inside the main campaign setting, and the PCs can expect to return to their "home base" at the end.

This approach gives the GM a chance to build a highly detailed, believable section of the game world. The heroes will be interacting with the same NPCs, passing the same locations, hearing connected rumors, and generally inserting themselves deeply into the game world. This pays enormous dividends in horror. The heroes care about the area and are easier to motivate. Familiar faces or locations can suddenly turn scary or dangerous, increasing the level of horror. Every advantage that a realistic, detailed game world carries is at least potentially accessible in the localized campaign.

The localized campaign also answers one of the nagging meta-game questions any long-running horror campaign faces: "Why do we keep running into these horrible monsters?" In the localized campaign, the answer is simple: the monsters are where you live. GMs are encouraged to come up with additional variations on that answer, or at least some game-world explanation that will hold up under moderate scrutiny – be that an interdimensional vortex, a meteor strike, or the curse of the dead autarch who ruled these lands millennia ago.

A localized campaign can harbor a whole battalion of horrors, if it is set in the sort of place where horrors happen; players are much more willing to believe in a lot of unrelated horrors in Victorian London or modern L.A. than in suburban Aurora, Illinois or some generic fantasy city. Fortunately, horror literature is full of places where the horrors seem nonstop: Stephen King's Maine, H.P. Lovecraft's Miskatonic Valley, the Sunnydale of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* and the Louisiana bayous of *Swamp Thing.* The real world also has no shortage of places full of horrific history and legendry: London, Paris, New Orleans, Cairo, and Transylvania only scratch the surface. Any large American city can hold as many horrors as the ambitious GM can stuff into its alleys, steam tunnels, and warehouses; New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles are all classic horror settings with enough variety that investigators of the horrific can never dare to leave.

The final advantages of localized horror campaigns are the psychological ones of implication and constraint. If everywhere the heroes go at home is full of horror, it implies that nowhere is safe, and that any knowledge (of a place's true nature or history, for example) is *dangerous* knowledge. These are feelings and implications that the horror GM should eagerly exploit. The sense of constraint that comes from the localized campaign is simply the sense of being imprisoned with Something Dangerous, writ larger and kept in the background. The party will wrestle against the city limits or the county line without even knowing why they feel trapped.

Globetrotting

The globetrotting campaign trades the security and depth of the localized campaign for uncertainty and rootlessness – two very 20th-century fears. It's not surprising, then, that the majority of globetrotting horror adventure is set in the 20th century, from the pulp horrors of the 1920s to the far-flung conspiracies of modern times.

For the globetrotting campaign to function, there must be some sort of rapid communication, so that the investigators can find out about the evils festering across the continent or overseas. Globetrotting also requires some sort of rapid transport to place them rapidly and reliably on the forefront of the worldwide war against evil. Letting the action slow down for a four-month caravan trip or sailing voyage to the haunted temple is a sure way to let the steam out of any horror game.

Across the Planes

One useful option for horror settings is to add extra planes of reality. Even the grittiest game of austere urban terror can have wild, surrealistic scenarios – in the dream world of one of the main characters. Plenty of haunted houses have "etheric windows" into the spirit world. Allowing (or forcing) the intrepid ghost-hunters into the realm of the spectral undead can present a whole new range of options for terror – beginning with the likelihood that the hunters are now the hunted. Perhaps a local cemetery casts an "etheric shadow" back in time to the witch-trials that took place there on Gallows Hill, allowing creepy foreshadowing, visions, and (highly localized, dangerous, and completely GM-controlled) time travel. And what is the traditional "gate to Hell" but a dimensional rift? With a dream realm, a spirit world, a shadow of the past, and the antechamber to Hell, you're already halfway to multi-planar gaming action, all without compromising the reality of your basic setting. In fact, the high contrast between these horrific planes and the material world can actually increase your players' identification with the game setting as "the real world."

For more discussion of alternate planes of existence, see pp. CII180-184 or *GURPS Spirits*; for a multi-planar cosmology optimized for horror gaming, see *GURPS Cabal.*

The globetrotting campaign need not be restricted to late historical or modern horror games, of course. High-fantasy games can use crystal balls and flying carpets or magical gateways to replace telegraphs and jet planes. Games set in the world's dreamlands, or assuming rapid astral travel, can do the same thing without even requiring the minimal time of conventional transport. A tolerant and cooperative group of players will often let the GM "fast forward" past the long journey in even the lowest of low-tech environments, and perhaps substitute prophetic visions for CNN. A wide-ranging futuristic globetrotting horror game requires rather more development of the nature of the world (or worlds) involved, but science fiction makes globetrotting a snap.

The advantages of the globetrotting game are variety and isolation. When a campaign's worth of horrors can be drawn from any corner of the world and scattered across four continents, the campaign is potentially thematically richer than one in which all the horrors have to come from Comanche legendry and occur in West Texas. Varying the types of monsters and their settings can also help keep the campaign from falling into formula. As well, variety can be used to build believability. Spacing out the horrors geographically prevents the players from asking why their home base just happens to be Monster Capital of the Known World – although it does leave the GM to decide why evil lurks everywhere the party goes. (For some answers, see *Extended Campaigns and Plausibility*, p. 65.)

This question can be used to feed the protagonists' isolation. Thematically, the "dangerous knowledge" motif is only strengthened by having horrors manifest all around the world; the truism that "everywhere is dangerous" becomes far more obvious to players whose characters have, indeed, been everywhere. If everywhere is dangerous, then nowhere is safe. The investigators are isolated from all normal society, since normal society (foolishly or blindly) believes that it is safe at home. This theme of isolated alienation is a powerful one in many styles of horror – specifically cosmic horror, conspiracy, and psychological horror.

Uncanny Powers

Powers above and beyond those of mortal men remain crucial to almost all genres of roleplaying games, but in horror games, they take center stage. After all, a central concern of horror is the "unnatural," that which violates the Way Things Should Be – which is something that magic, psionics, weird technology, and their ilk do with abandon. The trick in horror is to incorporate only those elements of the unnatural that the game can withstand, and to plan for their effects on the story, on the heroes' actions, and on the feel of the world itself.

Magic

Magic plays an important role in much horror roleplaying as a "rational" cause for supernatural events, or as a tool to use against overpowering evil. In horror fiction and movies, magic is typically portrayed as corrupting or malevolent. Magic can be a weapon, a symptom, or the evil itself. Spells do not just *occur* in these worlds of horror; they have a sickly green

Rural or Urban?

Another potential dichotomy exists between rural and urban horror. Rural horror is the oldest type . . . the horror of the Wild Places far from human contact. Cosmic horror and psychological horror seem to flourish with special poison here, where the insulation between protagonist and Outside is stripped to its thinnest.

Urban horror is a modern horror; it goes back to the "penny dreadfuls" surrounding the Ripper murders, or at its earliest, to Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" or "Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." The horror in the city is the horror of alienation from humanity and of separation from truths (such as, ironically, nature). The nature of urban horror makes it fertile ground for characters-as-monsters and paranoia-and-secret-war style stories.

Of course, the increasing fears of urban crime and the increasing suburbanization of the horror audience mean that the lines between rural and urban horror are not as clear-cut as once they were. The "urban jungle" and the secluded toxic waste dump conspire to make any horror possible, whether in the heart of Texas or the wilds of Manhattan.

nimbus, drain the life or sanity from their caster, or are gifts from dark gods or evil powers. Some horror campaigns might allow the heroes to use "white magic" such as healing spells or light spells, but many make even the most benign spell fraught with peril to body and soul. Evil spells are sometimes the only spells available in horror games, emphasizing the "unnatural" (and usually horrifying) source of magic. How the GM deals with magic will strongly affect his campaign.

Magic can be treated three different ways in a horror campaign. A *no-magic* campaign eliminates magic completely, a *secret-magic* campaign allows the PCs to learn a limited number of spells or magical techniques, and a *full-magic* campaign allows full-fledged mages, using most or all of the types of magic available in the game world.

The No-Magic Campaign

A no-magic campaign takes place in a world where magic simply does not exist. Not only are the PCs prevented from taking spells, but their adversaries also lack magical abilities. This requires rethinking the "magical" talents of many supernatural creatures.

Creatures that possess magical abilities (such as ghosts and vampires) and creatures that can only be affected by magic will strongly unbalance a no-magic campaign. The GM should modify such entities, making their powers psi abilities (if psionics are being used), deriving them from weird science (a mutant virus that causes "vampire" effects in its carriers), or eliminating them altogether. Eliminating the powers of a ghost renders it useless as an adversary (although it can stay a terrifying "astral shadow" in the scenery), and this will go for many other creatures as well. Thus, the no-magic campaign works best if it revolves around physical adversaries: revenants, genemod lycanthropes, etc.

Another possibility is a grimly realistic game, centering on horrors real but ignored as uncomfortable, including serial killers, cults, and insanity; social alienation, street crime, and poverty; historical horrors, such as atrocities or human sacrifice; scientific horrors, such as plagues and toxins; and brutal and error-prone conspiracies. This can be a difficult game to run for any length of time, but it makes an excellent "background reality" for a bleak horror campaign or a game of psychological horror.

Players who prefer weapons to spells will enjoy the no-magic campaign, provided the GM limits the presence of supernatural entities (most of which cannot be dealt with without some form of magic). However, psis will be able to cope with almost anything in the bestiary, if their power levels and skills are high enough (see *Psionics*, below).

The Secret-Magic Campaign

This is perhaps the best type of horror campaign, as it gives the heroes the ability to deal with the supernatural without allowing them to get too powerful. In the secret-magic campaign, there is usually a more restricted palette of magic available; it might be limited solely to the spells in *Basic Set.* The PCs must have a good reason for knowing magic (perhaps they are academicians, professional occultists, etc.), and the GM may wish to restrict the Magery level allowed to PC wizards. The supernatural creatures in Chapter 3 will all have their normal magical abilities. A few of the more powerful or disturbing villains may know particularly vile spells from *GURPS Magic* or *Grimoire.*

GURPS offers several ready-made secret-magic settings. *GURPS Cabal* presents a secret-magic campaign using a broad spectrum of potent magical techniques and spells, demonstrating that low power is *not* the crucial element in a secret-magic campaign. That element is approach. *GURPS Voodoo* contains a ritual magic system in which magical effects *seem* to be coincidence, or can be easily explained away by skeptics; meanwhile, the magic itself is complex enough to require isolation, time, and effort. All of these things push magic to the background of the world, if not necessarily of the story.

The thing to remember in this type of campaign is that magic is *secret*. If it is used openly, it could get the magicians into trouble. This is perfect for an environment such as Renaissance Germany or Colonial New England, where any practice of magic will be considered proof of witchcraft and punishable by death. Magic is practiced covertly by secret societies, and magical texts are not widely available to the public, so would-be wizards may be hard pressed even to *find* the spells they wish to know.

It is possible for a secret-magic campaign to become a full-magic campaign. As the PCs develop and learn new spells, the GM must keep them on their toes by providing adversaries with *better* spells. At some point, the GM will need to bring up the volume as the full-magic campaign takes over.

The Full-Magic Campaign

In this type of campaign, the full range of magical effects might appear, including necromancy, improvised spells, and clerical magic. Both the heroes and their adversaries can become powerful wizards. Most fantasy horror campaigns will be full-magic campaigns, but any setting where the existence of magic is common knowledge (if not common practice) can hold a full-magic campaign. The full-magic campaign in a historical setting makes for good "alternate history" roleplaying, as the forces of magic play important roles in historical events. *GURPS Technomancer* provides an example of a full-magic world of science and sorcery in a modern setting with plenty of potential for horror.

Psionics

In the modern horror genre, psionic powers have earned a place in the arsenal of heroes and villains alike. Psionic investigators ("sniffers"), billing themselves as "professional occultists," are common protagonists, while the misguided or vengeful psi (almost invariably a teenager) has become a staple of contemporary horror films.

Psionic powers did not enter the popular imagination until the late 18th century. Campaigns set in an earlier period can allow psi abilities, but these will most likely be perceived as witchcraft. For example, the "Witch of Endor" in the Bible is an example of what we would call a "spirit medium" today.

Magic Items

Several "stock" magic items appear in the horror genre. The most common of these are listed below. They may be used "as is," or altered by the GM to fit into his campaign. In most campaigns, the GM should not permit PCs to *start* with these items, but they might be acquired in play.

Cross of Protection. An antique brass cross, about five inches tall, hanging from a heavy brass chain. Contains the Turn Zombie spell (p. M73) at Power 23 (so it operates at 18 on our low-mana Earth). The user doesn't have to understand magic to cast the spell; he need only prominently display the Cross before a zombie and wish very hard that the monster would go away. This might delude the naive into believing that *all* crosses repel zombies!

Demon Candle: This two-foot-tall, six-inch-wide candle is said to be made of tallow from human fat. If burned all the way down, it will call a demon to this plane. If the human who lit the candle is no longer present, the demon will seek him out. Roll a Quick Contest of Wills between demon and summoner when they meet. If the summoner wins, the demon will serve him; if he loses, the demon will punish him.

Mirrored Gate: Most of the time, this is nothing more than an ordinary full-length mirror in a somewhat baroque frame – but on rare nights, it takes on a special power. At midnight of the winter solstice, should that night also have a full moon, the mirror becomes a gateway to a dimension inhabited by hideous creatures. Be careful, because the gate closes at dawn. And be sure not to let any Things follow you home . . .

Spirit Dagger: An ornate, jeweled knife, seemingly no more potent than more common blades, but having the power to wound ghosts as easily as a normal dagger cuts mortals.

Tome of the Sorcerer: This ancient, leather-bound manuscript once bore a gold-stamped title, but that has long since worn away. The spirit of a 16th-century sorcerer is bound into the pages, and anyone reading the book will be immediately subject to possession by the sorcerer. Handle this using the rules for ghostly possession on p. 51. The sorcerer's motives are up to the GM.

Voodoo Doll: This waxen figure is made with some part of its subject: hair, fingernails, etc. It contains the Pain spell (p. M26), and is effective *only* against the person it is made to resemble. On the other hand, it is "always on," in that it costs the witch no energy to cause the subject pain.

Window to the Soul: This four-inch-long prism is enchanted with the Aura spell (p. M53). The user must look through the prism at the subject. It requires no energy expenditure or skill roll. Someone who doesn't know about the item's properties is not likely to recognize the hazy glow about the subject as a true aura . . . prisms do funny things with colors anyway.

Spiritualism and telepathic contact have always had followers, and became popular trends in the Victorian era, the period between the World Wars, and the 1950s and early 1960s (thanks to "The Amazing Kreskin" and his imitators). At present, there are several institutions established to research and understand psi powers – and there have been real-world efforts by almost every major intelligence agency to use psionics for espionage. The roleplaying opportunities here are manifold; see *GURPS Psionics* for more details. Horror campaigns involving psis can open up still wider areas of roleplaying when supernatural creatures are introduced. It is often better and safer to *communicate* with ghosts and spirits than to attempt to defeat them.

Psi abilities can generally be divided along hero/adversary lines, with "soft" powers such as Antipsi, ESP, Healing, and Telepathy suited to PCs, and "hard" or violent talents such as Psychokinesis and Teleportation reserved for their foes. Naturally, there will be some overlap, depending on the degree of power and skill in each area. Some of the nastier Telepathy skills, such as Mindwipe and Telecontrol, will definitely belong to the villains in a cinematic game. On the other hand, in the movie *Scanners,* the heroes and villains have identical psi powers, and only their motives differ – a strikingly "realistic" use of psi, and of horror.

Especially at first, GMs will be more able to control the game's flow if the PCs' psi talents aren't too powerful. The information-gathering and combat potential of psionics can easily derail any game if the GM is unprepared. One power at Power 10-12 is usually sufficient, with perhaps one or two other latent powers (see p. B166).

Black Technology

As Clarke's Law reminds us, any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. The use of secret, "black" technology (defined as technology not commonly available or public knowledge in the campaign world) to give intrepid horror-hunters an edge goes all the way back to the winged sandals and invisibility cap of Perseus in Greek myth. From alchemical "handgonnes" manufactured by Swiss dwarves in a fantasy game to dimensional distorters that translate CIA agents into the dream realm, "black technology" is just another way to say "magic item," without the baggage – or mana dependence – of enchantment.

Black technology can appear in any game set above TL0, but it begins to come into its own in TL5 game worlds; *GURPS Steampunk* and *Steam-Tech* present many intriguing devices created by mad science and suitable for use even in no-magic horror games set in the Victorian period. *GURPS Black Ops* introduces black technology into the alien-haunted present and near future. *GURPS Psionics* presents "psychotronic" technology, built to reproduce, enhance, suppress, or otherwise affect psi powers. *GURPS Technomancer* presents the kinds of secret technology that might be under construction even in a world of open magic use.

The presence of black technology in a game generally works directly to enhance the sense of empowerment of both the heroes and humanity at large. Broadly, black technology represents reason, which is seldom horrific. On the other

hand, ever since *Frankenstein*, gifted horrorists have presented black tech that actually subverts reason and decency; making sure that the black ops know (or better yet, simply hinting at) what kind of research produced the Sleep Inversion Field will go a long way toward rekindling that all-important sense of unease in the players. Using extraterrestrial or *unhuman* technology, with concomitantly uncanny side effects, can even enhance the alienation and dread of cosmic horror – especially if the investigators must unleash some dread eldritch radiation to stop a radiation-spawned Thing That Must Not Be.

Super Abilities

Super advantages, super-powers, and other abilities beyond those of normal men can unbalance games predicated on the heroes' vulnerability – including many horror games. At their fullest extension, in a supers game, horror becomes fairly difficult, although by no means impossible (see *Supers*, pp. 81-82). However, super abilities don't have to be an all-or-nothing proposition. The GM might allow super abilities at a low level, capping racial and super advantages (pp. CI49-71) at 20 points and vetoing flashy, four-color ones such as Body of Fire and Stretching. This can replicate a "pulp sensibility" suitable for pulp horror games, with heroes who can cloud men's minds or bend horseshoes in their bare hands, but who remain suitably vulnerable to tentacular horrors from the jungles of the Yucatan.

The other way to introduce super abilities into a horror game is to make the powers themselves horrific. Add limitations such as "Must drink human blood to activate" and "Attracts ghosts," balance the powers with an equal quantity of unpleasant disadvantages, or require a Fright Check every time these gifts are used. If all super abilities in the game come with such costs, or spring from unholy energies, then the heroes might decide to track down the source of their uncanny abilities in order to rid themselves of their terrifying (albeit occasionally useful) curse!

Horrifying Genres

In a very real sense, horror is not a genre in itself; it is a feeling, a flavor, or a goal. The "default horror" campaign involves supernatural monsters preying on the innocent in a relatively modern setting (horror fiction, intended solely and explicitly as such, goes back only to 1764), but horror is where you find it – and where you put it. From the Westerns of Joe R. Lansdale to the fantasy of Robert E. Howard, from Dennis Wheatley's Satanist spy stories to Ridley Scott's *Alien*, horror transcends genre. You can mix horror into any game, either as a single scenario in a campaign of adventure or romance, or as a full ingredient present in every note of the setting and storyline. You can openly announce a "horror detective game" or covertly sneak horror into a rousing samurai epic

(see *Adding Horror In*, p. 95). After all, the central themes, and many of the specific components, of horror have held together remarkably well for millennia; there's no reason why they can't translate to any given setting or time period.

Fantasy Horror

The great strength of the fantasy campaign as a horror campaign is the capacity for design that the GM enjoys. Every element of the fantasy world can, in theory, be built to support the atmosphere of horror and the fears, monsters, effects, or themes that the GM wants to highlight. This allows a great unity of tone that will go a long way toward building the proper atmosphere.

The great weakness of the fantasy campaign as a horror campaign is that the world is harder to believe for the players. Horror depends upon emotional involvement for its power. If the players haven't accepted the world or any of its inhabitants as "real" for the purposes of the game, they won't be as frightened of its horrors or as concerned for its inhabitants.

The cure for this weakness is to concentrate on fantasy's strengths. Not only can the GM build the world to his own specifications, he can build it as deep as needed to involve the players mentally and emotionally. This is part of the reason why character hooks (see pp. 25-26) and, more generally, character backgrounds are exceptionally useful in fantasy games.

There are many different flavors of fantasy, but they usually fall within one of the types discussed below.

High Fantasy

High fantasy is the type of game with which most role-players are instinctively familiar. Dragons, wizards, elves, and the whole arsenal of fantasy tropes from Tolkien and others are often thought of as the defaults for a roleplaying game. Like any other type of game, high fantasy can be turned to horror.

To retain and use the elements of high fantasy while still providing fear for the players and genuine challenges for the characters is not as easy as it sounds, however. Like science-fiction horror, the elements of the genre tend to make the protagonists *powerful,* and powerful heroes are, realistically, harder to threaten – especially more than once.

To succeed, the GM should make every effort to craft the horrors to involve the adventurers emotionally, whether they are physically threatening or not. One of the conventions of high fantasy is that powerful wizards or mighty warriors end up as kings. Remember that a horror that threatens the lowliest peasants in the kingdom indirectly threatens the king.

In a standard high-fantasy world, many powerful monsters, villains, or magics can threaten the heroes in a more conventional sense, of course; the key is to keep them horrific in addition to being merely dangerous. This might be as simple as making the Great Dragon into the Great Skeleton Dragon. By itself, that's a fairly unpleasant image. Now combine the Great Skeleton Dragon with the themes of plague, famine, and pestilence. Give the Dragon armies of rats and locusts to command, poisonous breath, and undead servitors made of the dried husks of starvation victims. Let the Dragon's breath magically poison wells and cause horrible creatures to emerge from the tainted ground. Put the Dragon's lair in a miasmal swamp, a vast graveyard, or even the famine-depleted towers of a once-mighty city. Now, you have a set of horrific images that even the hardiest warrior or most devout cleric might find daunting.

Any standard fantasy element can be made horrific in this fashion. High-fantasy horror demands creativity of execution on the part of the GM, but it is far from impossible to carry out.

Low Fantasy

Low fantasy is, as its name implies, the "low-level" version of standard high fantasy. This type of campaign is often played by gamers looking for more personalized challenges than the high-powered fantasy campaign can offer. These are, of course, exactly the sorts of challenges that horror games offer as well. This makes low fantasy an admirable match for horror gaming.

The low-fantasy campaign can be set in a high-fantasy world where the adventurers are far less powerful than the other actors. The scope is narrow, often using a localized campaign structure to keep the party in the Thieves' Quarter of a mighty city, for instance. Low-fantasy protagonists tend toward the prosaic scale, stealing gems from the temple of the Rat God rather than cleansing the world of his foul worship. The GM should craft an enticing setting to bring low fantasy off well. If players come to like and know their characters and the GM's world, they will give up some flexibility in options or scope for the chance to play in that particular setting.

Even at high power levels, the heroes can be powerful without being godlike. Magic cannot lay waste whole cities, or even whole squads of orcs. Even the most puissant warrior is hard pressed by four or five brigands. This "grim and gritty" or "realistic" fantasy makes an excellent match with historical fantasy, too. It also tends to be the flavor of fantasy most effortlessly supported by the *GURPS* rules.

Historical Horror

The typical historical campaign is actually another type of fantasy campaign, sometimes called "historical fantasy." In this type of campaign, the adventures take place on Earth in the historical past, but with the covert addition of the supernatural and magic, as with the secret-magic campaign (see p. 75). This is also called a "secret history" campaign; historians do not record the magic and supernatural occurrences of these times, or if they do, they explain them away as legend, coincidence, and superstition. Most historical horror novels are secret histories, although some are more closely tied to historical characters and events than others. Secret history is easier to run in a low-fantasy environment, and that's how most historical campaigns turn out. Historical gamers have the advantage of existing *GURPS* sourcebooks, to cut out all the tedious research and get right to the gore.

Dreamworlds

Dreamworlds are a fairly odd subset of fantasy. Such a world might be the shared unconscious of all human dreamers, the Place Where Dreams Come From, or even the dreaming mind of one person. The form it takes is completely up to the GM, and can vary without warning. One minute, the adventurers can be in a nightmare about high school; the next minute, they're fighting for their lives against vampires in a black desert. This mutability plays well with high levels of surrealism (see p. 86), and can be the trigger for a lot of horrific effects.

Dreamworld horror presents great opportunities for fans of cross-genre gaming. Even the heroes' home milieu can vary. Dreamers might enter the dreamworld in a variety of ways: shamanic vision quests, psychotronic supercomputers, hypnotic pendants, etc. In a campaign set in a shared dreamworld, the GM can permit almost any kind of PC, from a medieval monk, to a 1920s psychic, to a 23rd-century psychonaut.

Dreamworlds needn't shift capriciously, of course. Either the GM or the campaign source material (or both) can lay down the "laws of dream," or simply state that the archetypal unconscious doesn't shift much over time. H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands, for instance, don't alter radically, and it is the quality of the imagery and the picaresque elements of the narrative that give them their dreamlike feeling.

The horror GM running a lot of adventures in dreamworlds has to walk a fine line between conveying the uncanny and surreal atmosphere of a dream and giving the players enough to "hold on to" that they can advance the action. The players need to be given some reason to involve their characters in an environment that, almost by definition, doesn't play fair or make a lot of sense.

GURPS Egypt

One particularly ripe segment of ancient history is ancient Egypt. Its myths of life after death, dismembered gods, and the unknown beast that the dark god Set used as his mask are all guaranteed to creep the flesh of any modern gamer. Egypt is the origin of our tales of ghouls, mummies, and curses of the dead.

GURPS Greece

Ancient Greece is another familiar setting for gamers. The problem is that Greek myth was polished for millennia to remove the sordid bloodthirstiness that makes for good horror gaming. Between the mad female cultists of Dionysos, the mutilation of the corn god Kronos, and the various chimerae and Gorgons lurking over every ridge, however, there's plenty of raw material available.

GURPS Imperial Rome

Ancient Rome is also familiar, and it has the advantage, like Egypt, of being associated with particularly gruesome and memorable events. Gladiatorial games, mad Emperors, and vile secretive cults are all excellent fodder for horror. The Roman legends of ghosts, necromancy, and blood magic also make superior fear-fertilizer.

GURPS Arabian Nights

"Arabian Nightmare" horror has been a steady, if minor, stream in horror fiction since the Gothic novel *Vathek*, set in the palace of the lord of the evil djinn. Medieval adventurers can encounter the djinn, ghuls, and other haunts of the desert while on Crusade (Dracula became a vampire while fighting the Turks slightly later than this period), or the whole campaign can take place in the lands of Islam.

GURPS Swashbucklers

The "swashbuckling era" contains, in addition to the requisite pirates and musketeers, a number of elements of interest to the horror GM. With the opening of the world in the Age of Exploration, the main themes of pulp horror and Things From Beyond come alive. Most of the actual legends of vampires (including Elizabeth Bathory, the Blood Countess of Hungary) take place during this period. The piratical wars over the Caribbean are rich territory for *GURPS Voodoo* campaigns (and for *Seas of Dread, Sails of Daring*, pp. 106-111). Real-life Satanism existed in Louis XIV's Versailles, and the Great Witch Hunt was in full swing throughout the era. London's aristocratic Hell-Fire Club practiced black magic (or at least decadent orgies) suitable for games of conspiracy and high intrigue.

GURPS Old West

The Western genre is one with which every gamer is at least roughly familiar. To combine the familiar with the uncanny is the very soul of the horror experience; as a result, horror and the West go well together. The Western horror game can be as simple as running any other historical horror game. Transplanting vampires, werewolves, and other horror tropes to the Old West is certainly possible and often successful.

Victorian England

Many of the classic works of horror literature are set in Victorian England (or its immediate successor, Edwardian England). The works of Bram Stoker, Robert Louis Stevenson, William Hope Hodgson, Arthur Machen, M.R. James, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (along with such real-life horrors as Jack the Ripper; see p. 43) have made Victorian England an archetypal horror setting. In truth, it almost seems to have been designed to serve as one. The stark contrasts between the polite society of the rich elites and the Darwinian struggles of the poor can support virtually any kind of horror beneath the surface. The vast British Empire can bring horror home from anywhere in the world. The advances in technology are only outpaced by such beliefs as spiritualism, racial memory, and the occultism of the Golden Dawn (all ideal subjects for horror games).

Victorian horror can be played in any style. Splatter-minded GMs can explore the killings of Red Jack. Pulp horrors or dreamworld hallucinations can swarm from the opium dens of Limehouse. Conspiracy horror flourishes here with the beginnings of the military-industrial complex (or Communism, or UFOs, or any number of menaces born in the Victorian world) and the machinations of the Freemasons (or vampires, Theosophical master races, or any other suitably pedigreed Secret Masters). Cosmic horror can sit on the hills behind Stonehenge and even older structures, as once again new scientific knowledge, from Lyell's geology to Darwin's evolution, upsets Man's comfortable view of himself as meaningful to the universe.

The amount of source material, both historical and horrific, is overwhelming but is summarized well in **GURPS Steampunk**, with specific attention to the world of weird technology and bizarre exploration. Enough modern authors have discovered, emphasized, or created similarities between Victorian England and our own time that almost any modern horror campaign can be set in the 1890s as easily as the 1990s.

However, the epic, almost mythic themes of the Western give the GM an opportunity for something even grander. From the alienation and psychological horror possibilities inherent in the "lone gunslinger" archetype to the cosmic horror and desolation that can come from examining the intrusion of civilization into Lands Where It Does Not Belong, the myths of the Western can easily be seen in darkened, frightful colors. The casual acceptance of deadly violence can itself become a horror theme. Indians can be seen as elements of the Gothic "wildness" (as Hawthorne, among others, saw them) or as the ultimate innocents, crushed by forces they could barely comprehend. The conventional John Ford Western theme of the protection of the innocent and the corruption of violence is almost a Gothic in itself. Finally, the collapse of the Southern slave plantation culture gave rise to both the "Southern Gothic" horror subgenre and many rootless wanderers with psychological scars – in other words, ideal character types.

The Roaring '20s

The era 1918-1939, between the World Wars, is the great era of the pulp magazines, and the greatest of them was "The Unique Magazine," *Weird Tales,* the spiritual home of Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, and H.P. Lovecraft. The work of Einstein and Shapley (and the carnage of WWI) had destroyed the 19th century's confidence in natural law, and H.P. Lovecraft exploited those new fears (and others) in his work. Lovecraft broke horror out of clanking chains and sheeted forms, and flung it into the modern world of airplanes, wire-recordings, and non-Euclidean mathematics to deal with alienation, isolation, and knowledge that can, and does, destroy sanity and convention. This cosmic horror (see pp. 89-90) redefined and revolutionized the genre.

On a more boisterous note, the great social leveling of the postwar era swept aside much of the taste for genteel or traditional Victorian horror; the jaded 20th century demanded horrors deeper, richer, and more modern. The monsters became more exotic, the mysticism more lurid, and the action more brutal. This mix (mined to perfection by Robert E. Howard) became the basis for what we now call pulp horror (see p. 90). Simultaneously, the new artistic medium of film began to create horrors of its own, and from the expressionist menace of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) to the lurid delights of *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) came pulp horror's cousin, "cinematic" horror.

The history of the pulp era is also a natural for horror campaigning. Prohibition turned millions of people into criminals overnight and created a subterranean syndicate that thrived on murder and violence. The second great era of archaeology was opening, and the far corners of the world were being explored – a natural source for armies of Things From Beyond. Spiritualism and "ghost-hunting" were even more popular in the 1920s than they were in the 1890s, as millions tried to communicate with loved ones lost in the War. Weimar Germany provided a decadent backdrop for expressionist horrors of shifting reality, as well as conspiracies and secret societies aplenty (among them, of course, those perfect game villains: the Nazis).

In the horror of expressionism, urban horror comes into its own. The city has become too big for any human mind to encompass. Either a cosmic entity or a sort of god, major cities are not the same as villages, where a person can know every inhabitant, or towns, where a person can know the name of every street. Cities contain more mysteries than a person could ever know. They draw people like magnets, making those who should be happy where they are leave everything behind and run away. Throughout 1920s literature, great cities (especially New York and Chicago in the U.S., and Berlin in Germany) lurk like enormous ghosts within the fabric of every urban building and every urban life. Big cities function literally as higher beings – kabbalistic spirits who may either grant all our wishes or crush us.

See *GURPS Cliffhangers* for more detailed coverage of both the pulp genre and the history of this period.

The Western environment also has unique elements that can easily be turned into specialized Western horror tropes: the traveling medicine show, the abandoned mineshaft, the riverboat and the mournful train whistle, San Francisco's mysterious Chinatown (and a town named Tombstone), and of course the whole concept of the ghost town itself.

Interested GMs should see *GURPS Deadlands* for an entire supplement covering the territory where *Horror* meets *Old West.*

GURPS World War II

Another rich historical era for horror is WWII itself. It is certainly difficult to find a clearer struggle between Good and Evil for even the pulpiest GM to base a campaign on. At the same time, the forces of Good have enough dark sides (from Stalin to Hiroshima) for the most psychologically subtle explorations of human (or inhuman) evil. This vast moral range leads to a broad range of options in horrific themes to explore. Of course, a WWII horror campaign need not be concerned with deep themes. A vampire awakened by the invasions of Transylvania, or an OSS mission against the German "Werwolf" resistance that uncovers real werewolves, can provide "conventional" horror thrills aplenty against the vast backdrop of the war.

GURPS Atomic Horror

The general message of the 1950s and 1960s B-movies was surprisingly nuanced, despite its black-and-white presentation: science creates horrors that only science can put down – but putting them down simply breeds new horrors in their stead. The natural temptation is to play B-movie horror in a silly style, as pure camp (or at least as pulp horror). That's certainly workable and fun, but it gives short shrift to the subject matter. Conspiratorial horror is another logical style for such games, as fears of radiation and fallout invisibly poisoning bodies were easily transferred to fears of invasion by Communists, shapeshifting aliens, or both. Cosmic horror is another natural outgrowth of many B-movies, from the ancient survivals like the *Creature From The Black Lagoon* to the malevolent alien races and cosmic scale in such movies as *Five Million Years To Earth.* The UFO lore of the 1950s – the "modern myth of things seen in the sky," to quote Carl Jung – presents even more opportunity for both styles.

Modern-Day Horror

The modern-day horror campaign can be seen as either a low-tech version of the science-fiction campaign or a disproportionately broad take on the historical campaign. The advice to GMs of both science-fiction horror and historical horror applies here: avoid letting the heroes have more power than the horrors they must fight, and know your background material well.

The modern era can potentially place vast amounts of firepower, equipment, and information at the fingertips of occult investigators. The GM should make sure that the availability of each is no higher than he intends it to be; taking guns and computers away from modern-era monster hunters

is not as easy as taking candy from a baby, but it creates much the same reaction in the players. This is not to say that the heroes of modern horror games should be kept unarmed and ignorant. Much of the special horror of modern gaming comes from the realization that all the ammunition and megabytes in the world cannot stop a determined modern horror. Much of the enjoyment of modern horror comes in trying.

> *I think we're property.*
> *— Charles Fort*

Knowing the material is easier in a modern horror game; most modern horror novels and virtually all contemporary horror movies are set in the present. The GM can research such trivia as store closing times, travel times, prices, and the top speeds of cars far more easily for a modern setting than for any other. Even his wild guesses will be closer, since he's extrapolating from his own environment and personal experience. However, errors or unbelievable moments can break the players' suspension of disbelief faster in the modern subgenre, because the players have a better intuitive grasp on what is plausible in "the real world" – even a version of the real world that contains mind-controlling aliens or punk-rock vampires.

Some subsets of modern horror gaming are discussed below. None of these types of games *has* to be set in modern times, of course, but most of them assume a "modern" default.

Conspiracy

This brand of horror plays on the fears of alienation and isolation that much modern horror evokes, and combines them with the fears of observation and stalking that are among the oldest of human fears. When further combined with some feared Other (godless Communists, brainwashed assassins, faceless corporations, Grey aliens, occult secret societies, etc.), conspiratorial horror flowers in all its poisonous glory. Conspiracy literature and mythology flourish in times of great social change, when people seek reasons, even frightening ones, for the turmoil in their lives. The modern age is one such time, and most conspiratorial horror games are set in the present.

Many common elements of horror fit well with the theme of the conspiracy; the Unseelie lurk among us, the power of black magic corrupts (as does all power), nobody can tell who the werewolf is, and the Conspiracy is trying to turn us all into zombies. The vampire is a classic conspiratorial villain: a rich foreigner who lives by invisibly draining the lifeblood of decent people everywhere. The inspired GM can easily give a conspiratorial touch to other monsters and horror themes, from mummies with alien implants to secret military weather-control stations that always make the nights around the base Gothically dark and stormy.

Paranoia is an important feature of the conspiratorial horror campaign, but it need not be the only feature, or even the central feature. Pulp-style horror, for example, can root out conspiracies with only a tinge of paranoia attached to them (as in the "Fu Manchu" novels of Sax Rohmer). Conspiratorial horror can be used metaphorically in a psychological horror game (such as *The Madness Dossier,* pp. 117-122), or can be the framework of a surreal dark-fantasy game (such as *GURPS Cabal*). Even cosmic horror melds with conspiracy, if the Secret Masters are something other than human. Indeed, the sole comfort of the conspiracy myth is that someone cares about your fate, even if they are malevolent. In a cosmic horror conspiracy game, the invisible machinery crushes the protagonists by accident.

See *GURPS Illuminati* for a fuller discussion of the themes, modes, and methods of conspiratorial roleplaying.

Supers

Supers, like the mighty warriors and powerful wizards of high fantasy, are hard to threaten and even harder to frighten. Low-powered supers are easier to scare (and are essentially the protagonists of many pulp horror adventures), but they're far from the more common four-color mold. Super-powered horror is a tricky type of campaign to run. An individual scenario in a supers campaign might be scary (especially if the heroes have lost their powers or are in their secret identities), but if every single session sees the supers mysteriously lose their powers only to be trapped in a haunted house, the players will quickly lose interest. To run a successful super-powered horror campaign requires techniques similar to those used in high-fantasy horror: involve the heroes in the horror even if it doesn't threaten them directly, restrain their powers for some plausible reason, or simply make the villains really, really scary. (See *High-Powered Horror,* p. 70, for more general advice.)

Unconventional horror styles often work better than "standard" horror in a supers game. A psychological horror game might find supers even more vulnerable to doubt and self-loathing than normal people, who don't have the outlet of being able to fly. Supers might be made vulnerable more plausibly and scared more effectively by insanity than "normals." Cosmic horror might simply outclass the heroes, while conspiratorial supers games might pit them against other supers or simply leave them unsure of whom their targets are.

An odd version of super-powered horror is the monsters-as-characters style game. Vampires, werewolves, and ghosts (for example) traditionally have powers on a par with those of many supers. Placing them in a world full of other supers who are not seen as horrible monsters by everyone around them might point up their plight even more convincingly – and it would certainly give them no shortage of suitably strong opponents.

Science-Fiction Horror

It can be difficult to run a satisfactory horror game in the science-fiction environment. Many elements of science fiction tend to increase the power and options available to the protagonists, while horror's interest seemingly lies in limiting them. To keep the sense of speculative dread alive, the GM must use the genre's strengths against the players. Computers can correlate information that has extremely disturbing implications. Psionic powers can provide another way to perceive things that shouldn't be perceived. New planets can be Bad Places indeed. A spaceship can be a horrifying hunting ground for malevolent aliens – or a haunt for conventional ghosts, if it is a derelict lost for centuries in a dark nebula. New technologies can create new monsters and new problems. Cloning, braintaping, and similar advances can enable new and sophisticated forms of psychological horror, or just raise the bar for traditional paranoia. The simple message of dehumanization in some science fiction is frightening enough to many people that it can profitably become the centerpiece for a horror game; that, after all, was part of the theme of that science-fiction classic, *Frankenstein*.

A complementary tactic is to take away the heroes' technological crutches. If the ghost-haunted derelict ship also has power and computer outlets incompatible with the salvagers' equipment, they are suddenly restricted to their wits and guts. There's no reason to believe that vampires are any more vulnerable to blasters than to bullets, and horrific Things Man Was Not Meant To Know are the very negation of all that scientific progress stands for. In the end, it comes down to matching the threat to the party, just as with all horror – and if the threat has to be escalated, the GM has entire universes to draw upon.

Cyberpunk

The "true" ancestor of the cyberpunk subgenre is the hard-boiled noir thriller, but the overlap between cyberpunk and horror is natural. Both present vast powers that are either uncaring or actively malevolent, both deal with the struggle to remain human against sometimes overwhelming odds, and both have sharply conflicted attitudes toward technology. Of course, cyberpunk is not really about any kind of reasonable future; it's a metaphorical look at the present. As such, once the GM has found or written a suitable cyberpunk world, it is no harder (and thanks to the exaggerations of the metaphor, it may even be easier) to use cyberpunk as the basis for a horror game than it is to run a modern-day horror game. The "One-and-Twenty" of *GURPS Cyberworld* makes a good horror setting; indeed, it already has a cosmic horror adaptation in *GURPS CthulhuPunk*. For general cyberpunk world-creation, details, and gaming advice, see *GURPS Cyberpunk*.

Cyberpunk horror, like modern horror, can be played in any of the various horror styles or in standard "modern monsters" mode. Splatter-style horror, for example, shares much of the metaphorical baggage that cyberpunk possesses . . . so much so that some splatter novelists refer to themselves as "splatterpunks." For instance, both cyberpunk and splatter writers argue that stylistic excess and a voyeuristic love of appearances (even, or especially, unpleasant

ones) are essential components of "truthful" writing. Pulp-style cyberpunk horror can be achieved by playing up the link between cyberpunk and noir fiction: the loner (or group of loners) walking the thin line between the law and the criminal world. In horror, he walks the thin line between the innocent and the monstrous. Psychological horror is a natural for cyberpunk, and cyberpunk's omnipresent bionic or genetic modifications make monsters-as-characters a viable style as well (perhaps "real" vampires can actually wander openly through a world of gen-emod pseudo-vamps). The conventions of cosmic horror only reinforce cyberpunk's bleak outlook and message of alienation. Finally, many of the operating assumptions of conspiratorial horror and the cyberpunk subgenre are the same, from the super-powerful military-industrial complex to the omnipresent surveillance equipment.

Post-Holocaust

Many classics of horror fiction depend on the destruction of civilization not only for their power but for their backdrop. The post-holocaust story itself depends on the "horrible amidst the familiar" that much "straight" horror tries to invoke. In some horror novels, such as Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend,* the horror causes the end of civilization; in others, such as William Hope Hodgson's *The Night Land,* it merely blossoms among the ruins.

As a setting for horror roleplaying, the post-holocaust subgenre demands less work than most science fiction: only the Big Disaster (or Disasters) needs to be worked out in any kind of consistent detail, since the world is almost always near-future Earth. (For some sample Big Disasters, see *GURPS Autoduel, Reign of Steel,* and *Y2K.*) Post-holocaust settings can also be used as fantasy settings, if the disaster that ended civilization was magical or supernatural.

Many styles of horror can function in post-holocaust science fiction. Splatter, pulp, psychological, monsters-as-characters (whether mutants or more "traditional" monsters), and silly horror work just as well in post-holocaust settings as in any other. The only styles that do not play well are conspiratorial horror (which typically requires a functioning, even Byzantine, society) and cosmic horror (which loses much of its power if the world is *already* destroyed). However, even these are not beyond the scope of post-holocaust horror. If at least two sides in the secret war survived the holocaust (which they might – especially if they caused it), then it's back to business as usual. An interesting post-holocaust setting might be one in which the cosmic horrors have won, and the heroes are the dregs of the resistance, battling transdimensional evil in its time of power.

Space

The space-traveling science-fiction campaign is simply globetrotting writ large. The GM's primary job is to build a convincing universe (*GURPS Space* makes an excellent starting point) and populate it with truly alien horrors. These horrors will probably conform to the basic tropes of horror on some level, but their manifestations should be (literally) unearthly if the players are to remain immersed in a truly futuristic and interstellar setting. If, for instance, each alien species is simply a different kind of vampire (draining blood, salt, water, mental force, or whatever), the campaign will rapidly turn tiresome. The details that are so important in horror gaming generally become even more important in space-traveling horror; not only must the GM build a world with every phrase, he must make the travelers' surroundings, capabilities, and options even clearer than normal.

Any style of horror can function in a space-traveling campaign, although the traditional approaches are pulp and psychological-splatter (a combination that works to perfection in *Alien*). Cosmic horror is a natural mix with space travel; the bigger the GM makes the (believable) universe, the more horrific becomes the discovery that it will be snuffed out by something even larger. If the GM has developed this future society enough for the players to appreciate it (or depend on it), conspiratorial horror becomes a viable far-future horror style.

Horror Across Time

The traditional time-travel story has rarely been used for horror. However, it makes an excellent mechanism for joining many different aspects of historical horror in the same campaign. A time-travel campaign where the heroes battle Egyptian mummies, medieval Unseelie, and Victorian black magicians, each on their own turf, would be globetrotting horror gaming (pp. 73-74) on a tremendous scale. (The Order of the Hourglass, from pp. 76-79 of *GURPS Time Travel*, is a ready-made campaign frame for such a game; the rest of the book has much good advice for the GM running a time-travel campaign of any sort.) Time travel can also serve as the linking mechanism for a long-running conspiracy game, or be played for purest pulp.

The eons-long scale of cosmic horror can make time travel an excellent source of horrors; the mayfly span of human history can be brought home to the players simply by direct personal comparison. At higher levels of unreality, horrors from outside time itself can easily appear in any year; if the thing controlling the travelers' journey through time is also the hideous evil they are trying to stop, the GM has a lot of potential for horrifying developments.

A variant of time-traveling horror is to have the same group of players take on the roles of characters in campaign arcs a century (or more) apart. The players might play aristocratic dabblers in Forbidden Knowledge in antebellum New Orleans in one arc, their angst-ridden descendants (or reincarnations) in pulp-era Europe in the next, and end up in cyberpunk Japan in the mid-21st. The villain in each arc can be part of the same ancient conspiracy, or can even be the same villain (for instance, a vampire or immortal black magician).

Alternate-Historical Horror

One way around the necessity for secret-magic or no-magic historical campaigns is to run a horror game set in an *alternate* history, where the monsters and magic are right out in the open. Brian Stableford's *Empire of Fear* and Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula*, for example, both set aristocracies of vampires in power in alternate-historical Europes. GMs can easily create any desired horror world as an alternate Earth, perhaps starting from the worlds in *GURPS Alternate Earths* and *Alternate Earths 2*. Such an alternate history might even be the source of the monsters plaguing our world, and the heroes must shut down the parachronic gateway linking our world to the ossified hopping-vampire mandarinate of Ming-3 (pp. AET31-49) and the Grey alien Gestapo that dominates Reich-5 (pp. AE33-51).

CHAPTER 5 OMINOUS FEELINGS, GATHERING SHADOWS

A skillful literary artist has
constructed a tale. If wise, he has
not fashioned his thoughts to
accommodate his incidents; but
having conceived, with deliberate
care, a certain unique or single
effect to be wrought out, he then
invents such incidents — he then
combines such events as may best
aid him in establishing this
preconceived effect . . . .
In the whole composition there
should be no word written, of which
the tendency, direct or indirect, is not
to the one pre-established design.
— Edgar Allan Poe,
reviewing _Twice-Told Tales_

Surrealism

Surrealism is a close cousin to the supernatural; neither is necessary for horror, but both are seemingly vitally intertwined with the genre. Either can make a horror game impossible to accept if too overdone.

Where the supernatural is the violation of the "natural laws" (or "moral laws") of the game world, surrealism questions the laws' existence and ignores their reality. Surrealism can be a fundamental shifting of the nature of the narrative, the world, the characters, or anything else that might seem to be a point of reference. The value of such surrealism is its ability to place the heroes in a "place without laws," where anything can happen. In a horror game, "anything" is usually *bad*. The level of surrealism – but not necessarily its type or nature – can and should be tailored to remain fairly consistent throughout the campaign, although the climax can pull out any stops that the GM likes.

The GM can mitigate the alienating effects of increasing surrealism by increasing the depth and consistency in the "non-horror" portion of the game world, but this takes work. At its best, however, this can provide a particularly horrifying contrast, as the shards of the world come apart in an especially well-detailed locale.

As well, the GM can contain surrealism within the confines of madness (where it rules supreme) or dream (where it might not; see *Dreamworlds*, p. 78), or within certain places in the game world where the fabric of space and time is worn thinnest. These places needn't even manifest the traditionally supernatural to become scary places indeed – especially if everything seemed so *normal* on Elm Street just a few minutes ago.

Elements of Horror

What makes horror roleplaying different from other games? The difference between running a horror campaign and running a more conventional campaign is the central intent of the game: to produce an emotional response in the players of enjoyable, interesting fear. All roleplaying campaigns are about telling stories, vicarious adventuring, and similar exercises of the mental muscles; horror is no different in that respect. The horror campaign must speak to all those needs at the same time as it evokes the atmosphere of fear.

This atmosphere is crucial. A story can deal with the supernatural, yet not be horror. A story can deal with violent death – even mysterious, violent death – yet not be horror. And a story can contain neither overt supernatural events nor violence, yet be horrifying. The keys to horror are *uncertainty, isolation,* and the *unnatural.*

Uncertainty

Uncertainty is vital to horror, and the tension produced by uncertainty must always be present to run a successful horror campaign. In other types of games, there is a clear course of correct action that is difficult to follow: the ring *must* go into the volcano, the diamond studs *must* get to the Queen, etc. In a horror adventure, the difficulty is often that there is no clear course to follow – too much is unknown and too much is morally uncertain. The uncertainty may be about the nature of

life and death (are ghosts souls or are they psychic "snapshots"?), about whether a being is malevolent or benign (is little Clara possessed, or just cranky?), about the nature of good and evil (can we use our vampiric powers to stop our fellow vampires?), about whether the supernatural is involved in a given situation (why is Old Man Withers never around when the ghost is?), or about what is real and what is illusion or madness.

How many of us, if we really faced Dracula, would kill him instead of stopping to talk first? How many would have enough courage and a sufficiently strong stomach to actually drive in the stake? How many of us would shove a cross in the face of a wealthy businessman or participate in a full-fledged séance in a suburban home without feeling more than a little bit stupid? How many of us would quit our jobs and tear up our credit cards, even if we knew that Grey aliens controlled the banks?

Keep the notion of the devil's choice in mind. In conventional games, the choices are easy: kill the dragon or run away. In horror games, they can be harder: if you run away, the vampire won't just stay there in his dungeon, he will keep eating people. Investigators and monster hunters will often be asked to make hard choices on the basis of insufficient information: should we destroy the haunted house? What if the "haunting" is only a bunch of bored children or the lonely owner?

You can add another layer of moral complexity with ease: what if killing the vampire means the death of a PC? Of an innocent? How far are the players willing to take their fictional alter egos in the struggle against evil? What if the sweet little girl can't be cured of her deadly disease, or demonic possession, or lycanthropy? Does she have to die? What if the whole village has to be destroyed in order to save it? Although you shouldn't push it if your players are looking for pulp escapism or moral clarity, good horror campaigns are often made of such dilemmas.

Isolation

Isolation, too, is fundamental to horror. Rarely does an "impossible" event occur in front of hundreds of witnesses. Instead, there will be only a few observers. Part of the fear of the supernatural comes from the knowledge that nobody will ever believe your story! As a result, traditional horror fiction – and good horror adventures – will isolate the protagonists. They will be unable to get help. Perhaps worse, they will be unable to get an "objective" outside confirmation of what is happening to them; they must rely on their own beliefs and experiences to deal with the impossible.

Physical isolation is a classic horror theme. At the height of the story, the protagonists may be locked up in the haunted house, sealed into the crypt, or snowed in alone. The dramatic action could take place in the wilderness or in an isolated rural area, or on a small boat, island, or spaceship. The heroes could even be trapped in an interdimensional or intertemporal "twilight zone."

The isolation can also be *social*. A strange experience may draw adventurers into the world of the supernatural when they look for answers and explanations. The things they learn will separate them from the people around them. By the time they have enough information to start making decisions, they will discover that they are on their own. Who will understand, advise, or even believe them? Only other people equally caught up in supernatural doings. Those who deal with the supernatural must make their own choices and live with the results.

Sometimes, social and physical isolation can be combined. A small party of Westerners, dealing with native Voudun on a Caribbean island, will be very alone indeed. A group of brave Haitian houngans, tracing an ancient evil to 1930s Mississippi, will be even more isolated! Or the heroes might be fleeing from authorities, or even led to doubt their own sanity or the safety of others in their presence.

Regardless of the situation, everyone is alone and afraid when the lights go out. Supernatural scenarios do not have to involve malevolent and dangerous forces, but frightening situations do occur, even if the fear turns out to be unjustified.

The Unnatural

One element common to all horror is the uncanny, or the unnatural. Even the most mundane serial-killer story draws its power from the unnatural madness of the killer. The unnatural is that which contrasts with the "normality" of the game world. In a fantasy world with talking animals, such as Narnia, the presence of a talking dog is not uncanny and does not promote horror. In a relentlessly modern scenario, a talking dog might well create an atmosphere of horror, especially if its power of speech is unexplained – or if it keeps telling you to kill your neighbors, because they're really demons in disguise . . .

The uncanny and the unnatural therefore depend upon the game world for their nature. They depend upon the players' belief in, and sense of, the game world for their power. Too much unreality and the game world seems nonsensical; nothing has the power to surprise or unnerve. Not enough unreality and it becomes a straightforward adventure story rather than a horror story.

Elements of the unnatural should be present (or potentially present) at every stage of the horror scenario. The sense of "things just don't seem right" is a powerful trigger for nervousness, just one step from fear. The setting should be too old, or too dark, or too *something*. NPCs should seem odd, or dangerous, or both – at least at first. The timing should foreshorten, or collapse, or stretch oddly. The GM should make everything just slightly off-kilter in a horror game until he gets a better instinct for his world and for his players' reactions to it. Sometimes, in modern horror especially, these instincts and reactions develop rapidly. In fantasy or science-fiction horror, they might take some time to grow, as the players first have to figure out what's *normal*.

> *Now, my suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose . . . I suspect that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of, in any philosophy.*
> – J.B.S. Haldane

Styles and Themes

While keeping the general horror ingredients above in mind, the GM will likely want to play the actual game in a familiar style, and bring certain themes to the foreground in the story and setting details. Sometimes the GM's choice of horror genre or subgenre (see *Horrifying Genres*, pp. 77-84) will indicate a bias in these areas, but roleplaying games – even horror games – should be opportunities for creative freedom, not straitjackets or prisons. You may find your game naturally gravitating toward a single style, or emphasizing a certain theme; if so, then go with the flow and follow the lead of the story you're all writing together.

Modes and Approaches

The campaign-design sections of *GURPS Cabal* and *Undead* use the concept of "modes" to help define the campaign within a chosen genre. The mode is how you approach the genre, what your goals are, and what flavor you'll add. Modes are like adjectives; you can use more than one, but it's a good idea to avoid too many at once.

This book, dealing as it does with a single, potentially tricky genre, breaks out some common horror modes for further analysis in questions of scale (p. 71), scope (p. 71), austerity (p. 72), etc. Modes can also include styles (pp. 88-91), themes (pp. 91-92), or unique approaches driven by the campaign milieu, by the GM's favorite films and stories, or by the questions the campaign seeks to explore. Here are a few modes not covered elsewhere in this book:

Camp: Every cliché is exaggerated, every decision is a soliloquy, and the world abounds with Important Capital Letters. There's always fog on the moor, and the wolves howl at dramatic moments. Whether played for postmodern irony or pure sense of wonder, camp is about forgetting yourself in glowing black and white – or, as in the case of Lord Dunsany, in luxuriant, fin-de-siècle purple. B-movie horror, fairy-tale horror, and even some of the pulps take on elements of camp.

Fortean: The world is not just stranger than we imagine, it's stranger than we *can* imagine. There may not be any truth, but rather many competing truths, each dumping rains of carp on us and randomly painting things blue. Coincidence is causation and everything is weird if you look at it right. Forteanism can be played for silly horror, as increasing madness and surrealism, or as the omen heralding the uncanny.

Gothic: Human concerns, especially human emotions, are central. How humans react to the fury of nature, or the oppression of convention, or the icy hand of death, tells the story. Passion is the key to experience; the great tragedy of becoming a vampire is not becoming undead but never again seeing the sunrise with your true love. See *Gothic Horror* (p. 91) for the traditional structure of Gothic horror stories.

Investigative: The focus is on solving puzzles and finding out new things. The fun in the game lies in encountering uncanny new monsters, and fitting them into the world's unholy pattern. Investigative games tend to slowly but steadily increase the game world's visible scope (see p. 71). Cosmic horror games, after Lovecraft's model, work well as investigative ones.

Technothriller: Although technothriller borrows the narrative thrust and suspense of the pulps, there's no need to rush to action without lovingly inventorying the weaponry and detailed plans for using it. Finding black Soviet brainware, building a steampunk ghost-solidifier, setting up a textbook ambush on a vampire lord – that's the fun of technothriller gaming. Medical suspense (see *The Plague is the Horror*, p. 56) might make an interesting mix with technothriller, and much of the frisson of modern-day cosmic horror is the use (and uselessness) of ever-more-powerful devices – which only reveals the horrors, and their power, more clearly!

Wainscot: The point of wainscot, or secret world, games is the interface between the hidden and the visible, the occult and the mundane. Like the rats in the walls behind the wainscoting, horrors skitter about in society's blind spot, gnawing away unseen. The creative friction between the real world and the supernatural world of horror keeps the mundane in the foreground. Wainscot games sometimes switch repeatedly from austere (in the "real world") to lenient (behind the walls and in the shadows).

Styles

Regardless of genre or subgenre, the campaign can be played in one or more of the traditional horror *styles*. It's usually a good idea to stay mostly within a single style, since – like horror in general – every style depends on repetition, conventions, and shared themes to build mood and develop dramatic unity and conviction. That said, briefly changing styles within a campaign can allow the players (and GM) to exercise unused creative muscles. Players will often appreciate a brief scenario that lets them see their characters in a different light. If player interest is flagging, a more permanent shift in style might be in order; a campaign with that kind of "fresh blood" in its veins can gain a whole new lease on unholy life.

Some of the most important styles of horror, with their characteristic themes and conventions, appear below. The GM shouldn't feel imprisoned by these conventions, but he should be aware of them and not violate them groundlessly. It can be difficult to evoke the proper style without at least some nod to the themes that have made it worth evoking in the first place.

Splatter

Splatter is horror that elevates gore above all . . . horror that glories in the physicality of severed limbs, bright arterial blood, and flyblown corpses. The goal of splatter is to force open the eyes of the players, to make them actually see and feel the results of horror. Often, splatter is combined with a subversive political message implying that the "normal" world is built upon a foundation of horrors, and that nothing is truly safe or innocent. (This, interestingly enough, is where splatter and cosmic horror can meet: in their common insistence that normality is just refusal or inability to see the inevitable horror around us.) In less politically charged contexts, splatter's goal is simply to bring our suppressed fears into the light either for their shock value or as a refining ordeal.

Consistently GMing in the splatter style requires at least as much discipline as in any other style or the recitation of wounds, atrocities, and general unpleasantness becomes hackneyed and loses its power. The GM should vary the types of horrors described while keeping each horrific image vividly alive in the players' minds. Keeping the heroes alive is of secondary concern. Splatter can be profitably used as a source of information about the campaign. This can be done directly, by conveying important plot developments and clues in the gruesome descriptions (which gives the players an incentive to pay attention rather than blotting out the unpleasantness of the imagery), or indirectly, as a signal that "things are getting

worse" (or "things are not as they seem"). Indirect uses of splatter as information can turn into the use of splatter as metaphor; this specific use of splatter mixes well with other horror styles, especially cosmic horror and psychological horror.

It is certainly possible to build an entire campaign around splatter-style horror, where the escalation of grue is the theme of the campaign, but the GM should make sure that his players want to engage in a welter of blood over the long haul. If so, splatter can be used as the horrific element in a near-conventional "hack-and-slash" game, or as the dominant image in a subtle exploration of social and personal disintegration; it is capable of supporting either of these goals, or anything in between.

Cosmic Horror

Cosmic horror derives its power from its immensity: the horrors are bigger than the world, older than the world, and, in some sense, create and underlie the world. They can't be escaped, evaded, or defeated; the only thing that keeps the tiny pockets of innocence that feeble humans call "normality" in existence is that the horrors have no reason to act directly against them. The horrors will win in millennia; to them, millennia are as seconds to us. In cosmic horror, all knowledge is dangerous (much as all knowledge is doubtful in psychological horror). Everything that seems to explain the world simply reveals more of its innate horror and madness, which makes cosmic horror oddly suited to florid surrealistic excesses, as well as to slow, academic exploration of the Awful Truth.

Once the players stop thinking about "winning" and start thinking about sharing the feeling of fear, cosmic horror becomes one of the richest and most rewarding styles for role-playing adventure. Even a short-ranged, minor victory becomes a triumph; one person saved from the madness and corruption of the Things Man Was Not Meant To Know is a success made infinite by its very triviality. Cosmic horror can function in any genre, although it does tend to require a more "intellectual" culture than many fantasy worlds possess. Cosmic horror works well in the present day; like conspiracy gaming (with which it shares many thematic similarities), cosmic horror is more fun if the players recognize the world being horrifically revealed to their characters' eyes.

Thrills vs. Gore

When running a cinematic horror campaign, it is all too easy to rely on gory situations to create Fright Checks. But remember that not all horror films use special effects to excite their audiences. Instead of grossing us out with steaming entrails and rotting corpses, they *thrill* us with their roller-coaster pacing and nerve-wracking suspense. Producing a good thriller without a lot of gore is the mark of a skilled director. Similarly, running a hair-raising adventure without blood and guts is a sign of a talented GM.

To make a thriller work, the GM *must* keep the players from figuring out exactly what they're up against until the very end. Reveal things a little at a time. Don't show the monster right off – let the party arrive just after it leaves, or have it attack them in near darkness. They shouldn't really see it until (or after!) the final confrontation.

The majority of the adventure should take place at night. Emphasize darkness in the scene descriptions. When the players make Vision rolls to see things – which they should have to do often – impose heavy penalties for darkness. When a Fright Check is called for, apply the darkness penalty to that, too; poor visibility can be disorienting and disconcerting.

Include lots of unexplainable occurrences. The monster's victims don't turn up in bloody chunks – they just disappear. The house keys a PC leaves in his jacket pocket are lost, only to turn up later in his mailbox. The monster ducks into an alley that the heroes *know* is a dead end, but by the time they get there, it's gone.

Lovecraft's approach remains the classic model for cosmic horror, but there are numerous other possibilities. The keys are to keep human goals, powers, and beliefs nearly irrelevant in the actual scope (see p. 71) of the campaign world, and to widen the visible scope (see p. 71) gradually to reveal this fact. Even high fantasy can become cosmic horror if the GM plays the potential of nonhuman, immortal races to its fullest. The elves' reticence is no longer shyness, but pure and dispassionate disinterest. Any style of horror carried to the utmost extremes of nihilism can become cosmic horror, if the GM and players allow it.

Pulp Horror

Running horror in the pulp style means running it more intensely, more earnestly, and, most of all, more thrillingly. If horror roleplaying is about conveying the emotion of fear, then pulp is about conveying thrills. The pulps had their origins in the "penny dreadfuls" of Victorian London, and their successors in the paperback originals and cheap horror movies of today's shopping-mall complexes, but their heyday was the era between the World Wars. For this reason, pulp-style games are often historical games set in the "pulp era" (see *The Roaring '20s*, p. 80). However, any game can be played in the pulp style, regardless of setting; what distinguishes pulp is its attitude of fast-paced or high-colored excitement, not the specific accoutrements of the Jazz Age. Hence, pulp gaming has much in common with "cinematic" gaming, in that both concentrate on emotion and effect rather than on realism and detailed storylines.

The greatest danger in pulp horror is that the game will cease to be horror and become simply adventure. There's nothing wrong with adventure roleplaying, of course, but if the GM or the players (or both) are expecting horror and not getting it, disappointment may set in before everyone can adjust to pure adventure gaming. The key to keeping pulp horrifying is to intensify the dark themes and dark colors of the villains. Let the players sense what exactly is meant by "unutterable evil" when the Cold Ones feed in a kindergarten. Pulp responds well to both thrills and gore, which can add to the sensation of speed and change if the GM switches between the two.

Psychological Horror

Psychological horror explores the effects of horrors on the psychologies and personalities of its characters. From the classic British ghost story to the serial-killer trash novel, psychological horror remains a major vein of the genre.

Psychological horror games are even less "victory-oriented" than cosmic horror games, since the theme is the disintegration of the PCs' beliefs under unimaginable stress. Games in which the PCs begin as monsters (see p. 13) are common, if metaphorical, treatments of psychological horror themes. Surrealism, hallucinations, delusions, and dreams can also add metaphorical weight, or become further symptoms of the heroes' collapse. However, where games of madness center on the disintegration of intellect, psychological horror is fundamentally about the destruction of the protagonist's central being, his soul.

Given its ultimate dependence upon the decay of character ability, will, and personality, it is usually unwise to attempt psychological horror with inexperienced roleplayers. Even veteran roleplayers might not want to explore their characters' failure directly. However, for the player looking for a change from stories of triumph, victory, and personal empowerment, the narrative of psychological disintegration can be a welcome and powerful option.

Psychological horror games can be more or less symbolic and metaphorical in substance and style, and elements of psychological horror can be used in "standard" horror games. Even in psychological horror, of course, there can (and should) remain the possibility of redemption and rebirth. A game where the heroes are doomed to fail can be just as tedious and predictable as one where they are destined to succeed.

Psychological horror is similar to the noir genre, in which alienated individuals become damaged by the corruption around them. In more conventional horror, of course, isolated people become damaged by the literal evil around them. The connection can swing between these two narratives, or hew more closely to one over the other. The trick in psychological horror is for the GM and players to recognize when some horror truly damages the psychology of a PC, and when it merely creates a physical scar. Survivor guilt, the corruption of power, callousness toward life, skeptical hatred, and other emotional injuries should have as much of a role in psychological horror as gunshot wounds, claw marks, and half-healed fang punctures.

Silly Horror

Humor has a welcome place in horror, largely because laughter is itself a defense mechanism. A frightened person is very relieved when he finds he can laugh! In a cinematic campaign filled with stock horror elements, humorous horror can be the best kind.

You can use stock horror elements to drive the humor by taking a leaf from *GURPS Discworld*. Run a game where everyone – monsters and heroes alike – knows that horror clichés have the force of natural law. Or you can take your cues from Abbott and Costello, or Bugs Bunny, and run a game where the monsters that can't really hurt anybody. (They still inspire Fright Checks – all the better to get people running around and falling over things.) Funny monsters are so slow that any cretin can run away from them, or so stupid that a tap on the far shoulder can fool them by making them turn the wrong way.

However, the players can't take advantage of the monsters' legal-mindedness or incompetence to blow them away, or the adventure becomes a bloodbath instead of a comedy. If weapons are allowed in this sort of campaign – and they don't have to be – make sure the heroes are terrible marksmen. Better yet, contrive things so that their guns are useless; give them dud ammo or blanks, or let the monster steal their weapons to use them for doorstops. Monsters shouldn't be deadly, and neither should the hunters; both should be in a continually shifting balance where even death is an inconvenience, and the most powerful gun can be stopped up with a convenient carrot.

Another requirement is players with a sense of humor. Let's face it: for some people, role-playing is a serious challenge, a life-or-death struggle. Don't try to give these players a silly campaign; no one will enjoy it. In humorous horror, as in any cinematic campaign, be prepared to drop any rule that slows the game down. When playing for laughs, keep it light, fast, and funny.

Themes

Presenting a theme is not a matter of passing out handouts labeled "This is the game about corruption." Nor is it a matter of an NPC nodding sagely and offering a few thoughts on the topic of doom. Themes are hidden notes, best kept under the story itself. Think of the theme as the game's skeleton, the bones of the game: they give it structure and let it stand up – and like your own skeleton, if the bones of your game ever show up too clearly, that's seldom a good sign. You don't have to decide on a theme at the beginning; if you're telling a good story, your theme will show up. Themes show up in little bits of offhand character development, or evocative symbolism; eventually, these tiny pebbles add into an avalanche that sweeps your story to its climax.

Betrayal

The theme of betrayal plays a key role in horror. "Trust no one" is the code, but it's easier said than done. Players and characters alike tend to let down their guard around the obviously harmless or actively useful NPCs. The GM should occasionally remind them that this is a mistake. Especially in conspiratorial horror, but to an extent in any game, any NPC can be a villain. The friendly clown can be a madman, the nice old lady at the sweetshop can be a cannibal, and the heroes' own mentor can be using them for his own fiendish purposes. Little marks of betrayal can show up in symbolic fashion (thirty pieces of silver, to melt down for bullets) or as the tragic flaw in a truly beloved (and otherwise noble) NPC. Betrayal can be easy to overuse, and it can actively prevent the players from investing any emotional energy in the game world if it becomes too common in all but the most conspiratorial games. However, it works at the heart of isolation in the horrific world: we are all separate from each other, alone against the dark.

Corruption

Closely related to betrayal, corruption is the slow change of something good into something evil. Decaying flesh, rotting meat, disintegrating cities, eroding morality – all of these things tell the story of horror loose in the world. In dark, gritty campaigns, the corruption is omnipresent; the party may

Gothic Horror

The Gothic novel is the immediate ancestor of the horror genre, and the source of many of its most common themes and symbolic elements. Between Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764, and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, published in 1820, an entirely new kind of story was invented, formalized, and endlessly repeated with one or another element emphasized for a small note of variety. The Gothic "shilling shocker" was the "slasher film" of its day; audiences thrilled to its almost ritual predictability, even as critics ignored or trivialized it. The Gothic shudder-tale continued to reemerge in other times of great social stress, from Victorian England (with Bram Stoker's 1897 *Dracula*) to post-Vietnam America (with Anne Rice's 1976 *Interview With the Vampire*).

In classic Gothic horror, the landscape is tempestuous, foreign, or both; a sense of wildness obtrudes on the action. The main setting is the haunted castle; or, more generally, an antiquated or anachronistic building with some elements of the supernatural at least conjecturally present (such as a ruined abbey or rambling, centuries-old mansion). Those elements themselves are often antiquated or at least exotic (paintings, statues, suits of armor, crypts, and grottoes). The villain is a dark, powerful, fascinating man with a mysterious or supernatural past; this is the source of our modern impression of the vampire, among other things. The hero and heroine are young, innocent lovers (usually blond, or at least "fair"). The evils stem from some ancient family tragedy, typically one tying the villain and the heroine together. Eventually, the evils are vanquished and love is rewarded.

The specter, the dream, the mysterious stranger, and the fascination with religious ritual are all present in the earliest Gothic tales. By the turn of the century, they were amplified with elements of the German "terror-tale," such as the magical cure, the femme fatale, the ghostly bride or groom, insanity, and physical metamorphosis. These tropes can still be seen in modern horror stories.

A pure Gothic horror campaign would be an interesting combination of historical anachronism, recurring surrealism, prosaic scale (although handled in an epic manner), and dreamlike imagery. The PCs would be relatively powerless except when their natural passions (love, purity, faith, etc.) are invoked. An imaginative GM might not even need to restrict it to its native late-18th-century Europe for its full effect. See *GURPS Screampunk* for more on Gothic roleplaying – especially its fertile interaction with steampunk Victoriana.

have to choose to defend a corrupt world against an even worse alternative. In brighter, more heroic games, the corruption comes from outside: invaders from Mars, skeleton ships from the Dry Tortugas, or vampires from far-off Transylvania. Corruption might have a face, making it either a mirror or a target (or both) for the PCs. Images of corruption include not only rot, mold, and decay, but also horror elements such as the ruined castle or abandoned factory. A GM who increases the visible scope of the corruption while limiting the scale of the game increases the players' sense of confinement – make sure they fight back and do not withdraw.

Doom

Corruption is a process, but doom is a destiny. Doom can hang over individuals (see *Character Hooks*, pp. 25-26), the whole party, or the entire campaign world. Doom appears in ravens croaking prophecy, in lowering storm clouds, and in ruins of once-mighty planets. Doom is a powerful theme in cosmic horror; to rise above it, players need to believe that even a small victory means something – that it is better to light the proverbial candle than to curse the darkness. This can, ironically, help PCs (and players) adjust themselves to a corrupt setting; if everything is doomed by Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, it's hard to get worked up about a county sheriff on the take. The GM will need to decide how to balance this "anesthetic" effect of doom on a corruption-themed game. One possibility is to back off from the purely nihilistic cosmic horror style and intimate that the corruption caused – and hastens – the doom. Another good way to combine them in cosmic horror terms is to present the corruption as a *symptom* of the doom: society crumbles because it is doomed, not the other way around. Corruption and doom also work together to permeate the settings, and color the villains, in traditional Gothic horror (see p. 91).

Struggle

On an up note (at least for horror), struggle can be the theme of the game. It can be as simple as "good must fight evil or see evil prosper," which is ideal for pulp games but adaptable for any style. In cosmic horror, struggle is more uncertain; effective heroes must use Knowledge Man Was Not Meant To Use to thwart Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. In psychological horror games and traditional Gothic tales alike, the struggle can be completely internal; the struggle against madness, beast instinct, or ancestral taint. This "internal struggle" can be mirrored in the outer world – a PC vampire may have a nemesis who embodies those dark impulses, perhaps one of his own get! The symbolism of struggle is the symbolism of warfare, swords, clashes by night – thunder and lightning in the natural world, gangs and street-races in the modern one.

Symbolic Settings

Most horror scenarios (and many horror games) take place in one of two symbolic settings: the *Bad Place* or the *Invaded House*.

The Bad Place

The Bad Place, one of the oldest tropes of the horror genre, is a natural setting for horror scenarios. Want ghosts? Go to the haunted house. Want vampires? Go to Transylvania, or to Carfax Abbey, or to that rundown mansion on the edge of town. Setting the action in the Bad Place is good for beginning GMs or for GMs writing essentially stand-alone scenarios, as well as for an episode in an ongoing horror campaign.

The Bad Place usually has a number of characteristics that help the horror scenarist make the horror work. First, the Bad Place is usually complex or confusing. Setting a horror scenario on a football field is possible, but once the monster

(a spectral football player? a zombie cheerleader?) appears, the flat and open geography turns the scenario into a simple chase or a tactical combat – thrilling, perhaps, but not very scary. Move the horror into the locker room, where the heroes slip on the tile and catch sights of moving forms that turn out to be their reflections in the mirror. Move it into the parking lot, where something could be under (or inside) every car. Move it under the bleachers, where all those posts and columns and hanging steel frameworks seem to exist solely to brush up against the heroes, and where claustrophobia has full rein. Even a zombie cheerleader would be scary under the bleachers, with the game in full swing, and with the rustling of candy wrappers and the heavy thumping of feet overhead.

> *Even a zombie cheerleader would be scary under the bleachers, with the game in full swing, and with the rustling of candy wrappers and the heavy thumping of feet overhead.*

Second, the Bad Place is hard to escape. The door of the haunted house slamming shut, the only boat on the island drifting away from its cut rope, the blizzard closing in, the sound of the airlock closing – all of these signal the "starting gun" of horror. The heroes are now confined with the horror. They can be confined in time as well; if the horror isn't stopped at the Bad Place tonight, the vampires will spawn, Lady Valentine will go mad forever, or the Things Man Was Not Meant To Know will burst through the gates of Euclidean space-time. If the PCs are free to turn around and leave at any time, it's harder to create the atmosphere of suspense. Ideally, of course, their moral fiber will keep them in the Bad Place, but the GM can't always count on that.

The Bad Place is often anachronistic, a relic from the past intruding on the present. It is an unnatural survival, a relict, a Thing That Should Not Be. (In this, it is similar to the ghosts that often haunt it; they, too, are things of the past intruding where they should not be.) The original Gothic novels were set in ruined castles, abbeys, and other crumbling structures that by their very existence mocked the notion of orderly progress and the laws of history. The Bad Place isn't usually anachronistic in the other sense – a futuristic thing intruding on a timeless past – but it isn't impossible: a cybernetic abattoir dropping into our time from the dystopian future would be a Bad Place, too. Unless a fantasy world has an extraordinarily well-realized history (for the players, not just the GM or PCs), this will be a difficult sense to convey in a fantasy horror game. Intrusive anachronism is much easier in historical or modern horror; in science-fiction horror, it might be so easy to find that it loses its effect.

This sense of anachronism, of being unmoored in time and place, is part of the third great theme: the Bad Place as unnatural and malevolent in itself. The Bad Place has an atmosphere of desolation. Not only is the mansion haunted, but the leaves of the trees on the lawn rustle by themselves without any wind. Doors jam shut or open at inconvenient (or deadly) times; books that never existed sit fatly on the shelves; furniture seems to move by itself when nobody is watching; the eyes on the painting follow you around the room. The poltergeist is an excellent illustration of the melding of the unnatural malevolence of the setting with the lore of the ghost. Even nature itself is unnatural; freak lightning storms, a malevolent pea-soup fog, and "the worst blizzard in 20 years" can all evoke this effect.

The Invaded House

The inverse of the Bad Place is the Invaded House. The Invaded House is a place of safety, security, and normality invaded by some disruptive, intrusive, unnatural entity. Where the story of the Bad Place is that of the forces of natural order, or good, invading a domain of the unnatural, or evil, the story of the Invaded House is that of the Threat From Outside. The Invaded House depends for its power on the comfort level of the place invaded; the hero will feel less shock at being attacked in a motel room just off the Interstate than he will in his parents' lovely split-level in the suburbs. The horror becomes more awful by contrast to the normality and comfort that it violates. The invasion can be creeping and subtle, like a hidden invasion of body-snatching pod creatures, or sudden, relentless, and brutal, as with a psycho killer's murderous assault on a sorority house on Halloween.
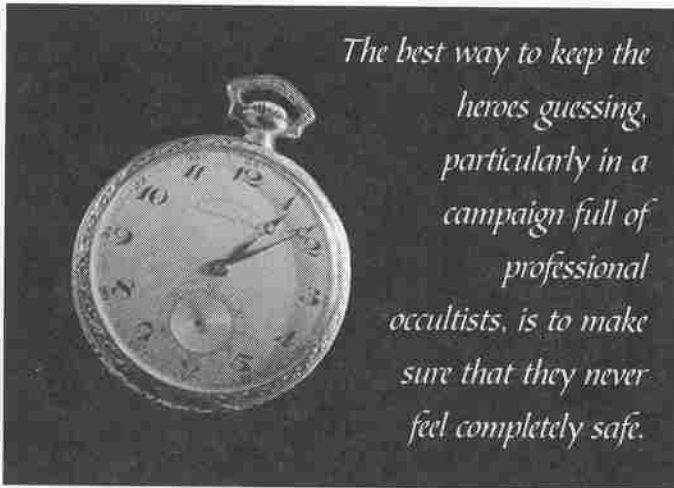
Psychologically, the Invaded House is a metaphor for the body. The violation of personal space inside home walls is analogous to allowing a foreign object inside the skin. The William Hope Hodgson novel *The House on the Borderland* makes this obvious, with the basement (where the vile, pallid, pig-like beasts may lurk) representing the hero's unconscious; his fanatic attempts to safeguard his upstairs study mirror his steadily disintegrating sanity. Although this can be a difficult concept to clearly communicate in a game setting, the players will be aware of it, if only subconsciously. If the GM plays on it deftly enough, the players may never know why they flinched when the creature burst through the windows and the lights suddenly went out.

The Invaded House is, unfortunately, a one-trick pony; if used too often, then the violated sense of comfort and security is never present in the first place. The players and their characters come to regard safety as an illusion, because no place is safe from the evil. This is often a desirable (and useful) state of mind for the GM to encourage, but it does mean that he has to work out some new Bad Places for a while, or avoid climactic scenarios and settle for tension-reducing investigative sessions.

Combinations

Too much evil can transform the Invaded House into a new Bad Place: the windows are broken, the furniture is upended, there are bullet-holes in the walls, and something horrible has died in the bedroom after swearing revenge. Suddenly, the place of comfort is damaged, warped, and unnatural. The heroes might be reluctant to leave their home, even after it has become the center of innumerable blasphemous manifestations, all stemming from the first Invasion. GMs should not necessarily rely on this, since the sense of closure derived from driving the horror out of the sunlight is part of the reward of horror roleplaying. If the Invaded House is to become a full-fledged Bad Place, allow the party a chance to realize it, leave, and come back loaded for bear in a grand climax.

> The best way to keep the heroes guessing, particularly in a campaign full of professional occultists, is to make sure that they never feel completely safe.

The GM can combine the two settings in the same scenario – evil attacks, good counterattacks – or in a longer story arc. Perhaps our heroic Green Berets have plunged deep into the Mekong Delta to discover the Temple of the Bat God. They fight off his minions in the Bad Place and leave the jungle. However, the Bat God's cultists follow the soldiers back to Los Angeles and set up a cult shrine there (a symbolic Invaded House, as foreign evil sets up camp in the protagonists' homeland). The L.A. cult attacks the commandos in their civilian life (an Invaded House scenario), after which the heroes strike back at the cult shrine (by now, a Bad Place) and then mount "one more mission" back into the Delta (a really, really Bad Place) to destroy the Bat God forever.

Running Horror

The key to the horror roleplaying session is to make it scary, to build an atmosphere of fear. The players should be nervous, jumpy, whispering for no reason, and starting at imaginary noises. The GM has two roads to this goal. One road is external, with the GM acting on the players' environment, perceptions, and personal knowledge or fears. The other road runs through the frightening world that the PCs inhabit and with which they interact; the players' identification with their characters transfers that fear to them. The ideal horror session will involve both approaches.

Parallels can be seen with an effective horror movie. The audience is frightened externally: the movie is shown in the dark, jarring and nerve-wracking music constantly builds tension, and disturbing camera angles and lighting effects create nervousness. Internally, the audience identifies with the protagonist and shares his fear of the horrific monster or nightmarish plot with which he has become entangled. The GM should keep these twin dynamics, the external and the internal, in mind when working to make a horror roleplaying session scary.

Timing

The best way to keep the heroes guessing, particularly in a campaign full of professional occultists, is to make sure that they never feel completely safe. If they visit the spooky old graveyard at three o'clock in the afternoon, don't let them drive home safely and go to sleep in their comfy, secure beds. Arrange things so that they'll be detained at the cemetery until sundown. Then let the air out of their tires. Then, as they start to walk home, hit them with a wave of zombies. After they have worked their way out of that predicament, let them retreat to their nice, safe, suburban home – and *really* let them have it!

In general, whenever the players and their characters feel that they've earned a respite . . . when they think that they are safe . . . *that's* the time to hit them with something really shocking!

Changes of Pace

Another way to guarantee that the heroes retain their fear of the horrific is to ensure that they don't face it *every* play session. This can be done overtly, by throwing in a non-horror adventure, or covertly, by setting up an adventure that *appears* horrific but turns out to have a perfectly rational explanation. Perhaps the party will want to explore the jungles of Africa in search of lost civilizations, or maybe they'll have to rescue a Dependent who has been kidnapped by the mob (of course, in a world full of occult menaces, the mundane capture of a vampire-killer's daughter may have been arranged by a supernatural mastermind). Or they could become involved in an investigation of what seems to be a string of vampire killings, but turns out to be nothing more than a clever serial killer covering his tracks. You can even play the double-reverse on this one: a real vampire might also be after the murderer – he might not want to have rumors of vampires flying about!

Props and Atmosphere

Once the adventure is worked out, and *before* the players show up, it's time to think about atmosphere. Plan the physical conditions for the play session: furniture, lighting, background noise, and any props you might use. If at all possible, run your horror adventure after dark, by candlelight. An imaginary ghost is much more frightening in the dim glow of a candle than under the blue-white glare of a fluorescent tube.

Creepy theme music also helps. Choose some horror-film soundtracks, Bach organ fugues, or Gothic rock, and play them softly during your game session. The music will soon drop below the players' level of conscious awareness, just as it does during a film, but it will continue to evoke a suspenseful mood. Sound-effects albums *don't* work; instead, they cheapen the effect of a good horror adventure.

Props can also add a great deal to a horror campaign. Just setting a skull-shaped candle-holder on the table, right next to the battle map, will remind the players of the genre. If the adventure calls for the investigators to find an ancient manuscript, scrawled in blood, then get some parchment paper and a brown calligraphy pen and *make* the scroll. Then, when the time comes, don't just read the players the text – hand them the actual document! (Don't worry that your calligraphy isn't up to the standard of a Gregorian monk – relevant scrolls would be penned by sorcerers, not scribes.)

Pictures of monstrous foes can also help the players visualize the adventure. Consider preparing a set of "flash cards" before every session, photocopying or sketching an image of each monster to be encountered during the evening's adventure. Don't hand the cards to the players. Instead, when an adventurer runs into a horror, flash the illustration in the candlelight for just a few seconds – "You see *this!*" – before hiding the card again. That one candlelit glance will set the players' imaginations rolling, conjuring monsters far worse than anything that could be described in words. This technique is especially effective in Things Man Was Not Meant To Know campaigns.

Adding Horror In

If a GM tells his players that he is running a *GURPS Horror* campaign, they will expect encounters with the weird and the unnatural, but they may not be as frightened by them. Thus, consider *not telling the players it's a horror campaign.* Let them think they are playing detectives, treasure-hunters, or something equally prosaic. Don't let them see this book. Let them find out the hard way that they are involved with That Which Should Not Be.

Another way to throw a curve at the players is to introduce horror into other types of campaigns. The classic example is the old *Night Stalker* TV show, a horror story in a crime drama. Kolchak, the hard-nosed reporter, investigates a series of murders, and eventually comes to the conclusion that a vampire is responsible. Of course, no one believes him, and he has to hunt it down himself. See *Horrifying Genres* (pp. 77-84) for more examples of transplanted horror.

The best way to introduce horror elements is *gradually.* Adventures that seem at first to be mundane and predictable may lead to encounters with outré horrors and unearthly phenomena. It is best to lead the players to expect a mundane ending, only to twist it into something unexpected.

The biggest problem with "transplanted horror" is that the party will probably not be equipped for horrific

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Who Can You Trust?

One wicked technique for building fear is to cast suspicion on one or more of the PCs. Perhaps it seems clear that *one* of them is in league with sinister forces, but nobody knows which one. Perhaps the clues point to one individual – but if that's the case, there had better be some overwhelming reason for the others not to subdue, arrest, or kill him immediately. When the players start giving *each other* suspicious looks, the atmosphere will become much tenser!

With the right group of players, the GM can actually make this true! If one of the players is willing to *be* an actual monster in disguise, and can enjoy the challenge, then the others will certainly remember that adventure for a long time . . . especially the climactic, chilling moment of recognition. This "wolf in the fold" approach can sometimes work against party unity and player cooperation, so make sure the horror will be worth it.

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encounters. They may lack magical or psionic skills, or may know nothing of occultism and supernatural legends. The GM must be careful lest the heroes become nothing more than powerless victims. Every foe should have a weakness – one that can be exploited by the adventurers using the skills that they possess.

Another alternative is to introduce an NPC who possesses skills suited to supernatural encounters. However, he should be designed so that he cannot use his abilities without the PCs' help. For example, the NPC could be a professional exorcist, but the ghost to be exorcised speaks a foreign language, one that only a PC understands. Perhaps the NPC is physically frail or crippled after years of battling the unclean, forcing our heroes to valiantly defend their feeble ally (and allowing the players to keep their rightful place in the spotlight). The GM should allow the players to come up with creative ways to use their abilities with those of their NPC specialist.

Fright Checks

The key game mechanic for horror roleplaying in *GURPS* is the Fright Check (pp. B93-94). Possible triggers for a Fright Check include seeing horrific monsters, finding their freshly killed victims, or even witnessing suitably creepy signs of the supernatural. Modifiers will depend on the circumstances, and on the person making the Fright Check. A hardened, battle-weary team of black ops will react quite differently from a team of decadent, absinthe-drinking, visionary surrealists – the black ops may chew through a pack of werewolves without breaking a sweat, while the surrealists may remain calm in the face of hallucinatory specters pouring out of a corpse's mouth. The species of the adventurer may also alter the equation; *any* encounter in the dark will carry at least an extra -1 on Fright Checks for humans, but cave-dwelling, nocturnal hobgoblins might instead take penalties for encounters in the daylight!

Fright Check modifiers for a variety of horrific situations are given below. The GM is free to modify or ignore any modifier that seems inappropriate.

Monsters

The "intrinsic" Fright Check modifier for a monster can range from -1 (a swarm of rats) to -10 or worse (a Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know). Many factors affect the "scariness" of a monster, including:

Number. A horde of monsters is scarier than just one. Roll at -1 for 5 monsters, -2 to 10, -3 for 20, -4 for 50, and -5 for 100 or more (as for Terror, p. 20).

Proximity. If the monster is close enough to attack you when first seen – you turned the corner and *there it was* – roll at -2. If it's close enough to be on you in seconds, there's no modifier. If it's at an apparently safe distance (usually 100 yards or more), roll at +1. Vast distances (e.g., seeing a monster miles away through binoculars) give +3. *Perceived* threat is what matters; a giant space virus might be miles away, but if it can cross interstellar distances, you have no doubt that it can get to you in seconds, and there's no bonus for distance.

Size. Small monsters (dog-sized or smaller) give +1. Human-sized monsters give no modifier. Anything from bear-sized up through elephantine gives -1. Truly huge monsters (Godzilla, King Kong) give -3. Mind-boggling sizes – "Look! The giant space virus is blocking out the sun!" – give -6.

Unusual appearance. Disgusting features, such as a trail of slime or a foul odor, give -1. Alien appearance – such as a five-sided head with one eye and two mouths on each side – gives -2. Something that utterly defies the laws of biology and physics gives -3.

Viewer preparation and familiarity. If the hero is warned about the monster before he sees it – "I hear it in the next room. Be careful, doctor. All your years of study haven't prepared you for this." – then roll at +1. If he has seen this type of monster before, apply another +1 – more for multiple past experiences. Recent experiences *with that specific monster* give +1 per encounter in the past 24 hours (as for Terror, p. 20). All Fright Checks assume a basic level of surprise, but a *completely* unprepared victim (GM's call) rolls at -1 or -2, depending on the circumstances.

Dead Bodies

Most people are unfamiliar with death, and must make a Fright Check upon encountering a dead body. A number of factors affect how "scary" such an encounter will be; these are summed up in the modifiers below. Also use these modifiers, with an additional -2, when a character actually sees someone die.

Grisliness. A peaceful-looking body, prepared for burial, gives +6. A body with no signs of violence gives +2. A typical violence victim (knife in the back, gunshot wound) gives no modifier. More violent ends can go from -1 (stabbed 17 times) to -3 (chopped into a thousand pieces). Witnessing extreme violence gives similar modifiers (seeing the giant crocodile pick up the security guard and bite him in half is good for -3). A skeleton gives no additional modifier, but a partially decomposed body gives an extra -2.

Number and type of dead. Finding a single human body, or witnessing a single death, is considered the norm. Larger numbers – "Come here, sergeant, the basement's packed with 'em!" – give -1. Incredible numbers (an entire city) give -3. If the victim is an animal, a Fright Check is still required, but at a +4.

Proximity. Only the two extremes of distance give any modifier. An encounter at a great distance (more than a quarter-mile) is at +1; one at close quarters (you open the door and the body falls on top of you) is at -1.

Victim's relationship to character. If the victim was a Dependent, the Fright Check is at a -6; if a loved one (but not a Dependent), -4; a friend, -2; an acquaintance, -1.

Viewer preparation or familiarity. An advance warning gives +1 – or +3 if you had a long time to steel yourself for the shock (e.g., identifying a body after the policeman's phone call). Those whose professions involve a familiarity with death (doctors, police, soldiers, etc.) won't have to make a Fright Check unless the corpse has been mangled or drained of blood, or the victim was a close friend; even then, they should get a +2 or more. For some people (a combat medic or an assassin, for instance), a "mere" dead body would not require a roll at all. Likewise, there is no need to roll if you kill someone yourself; it is unlikely that you will be scared by your own victim, unless his subsequent behavior is vividly unnatural.

Bizarre and Supernatural Happenings

There is no limit to the weird things a GM can do to the players. This loose category includes events like turning on the faucet and getting slime instead of water, finding a dead cat in your freezer, or coming across an entire wall covered by six-inch cockroaches. In general, the more people affected, the more danger involved, and the stranger the event, the more severe the Fright Check penalty. Some examples:

No modifier . . . An apparition in a mirror; a picture falls from the wall.

-1 . . . An unnatural howling in the dead of night; all the doors in a house slam shut simultaneously.

-3 . . . A wall covered with loathsome insects; blood runs from the faucets.

-5 . . . Attacked by furniture.

-7 . . . The ground opens up and zombies crawl out.

-10 . . . The oceans turn to blood.

Forgotten Lore and Horrible Secrets

In some horror games (psychological and cosmic horror especially), the horror might come not only from monsters and corpses, but also from the heroes' discovery of horrifying truths about the world, themselves, or their place in the universe. These discoveries can require Fright Checks. Since much horror magic forces the caster to directly confront, accept, and indeed invite such knowledge, even casting a spell might demand a Fright Check!

Cumulative Effects of Fear

The heroes in a horror campaign will be exposed to *many* frightening situations; therefore, the GM may wish to make Fright Checks more difficult as the victim becomes more frightened. To do this, apply a -1 penalty to subsequent Fright Checks for every *failed* Fright Check. Each *successful* Fright Check removes one point of this penalty as the victim "regains his composure" (this merely removes the penalty; it never grants a bonus). These modifiers are cumulative *for one adventure only,* assuming the investigators get a certain amount of R&R between adventures.

Example: Agatha Witherspoon's normal Fright Check target is 16 (IQ 13 plus Strong Will +3). However, she missed two previous Fright Checks, so she rolls against 14 instead. She succeeds, so her next Fright Check will be at 15.

Note that some results on the Fright Check Table – notably new Phobias and permanent IQ loss – will also negatively affect future Fright Checks. This effect is *in addition* to the cumulative modifiers, if using this option.

Multiple Fright Checks

Some situations will call for players to make more than one Fright Check. This usually occurs when things are going from bad to worse. For example:

The party breaks through some rotten wallboard at a point where another room is indicated on their map. Sure enough, there's a small alcove beyond the hole. They shine a light inside, revealing a skeleton chained to the far wall. (Everyone makes a Fright Check at no modifier.)

One of the investigators steps in, curses as a pair of rats scurry for a hole in the far wall, and examines the skeleton more closely. "Judging from these marks, I'd say this poor fellow was eaten alive by rats!" (Everyone makes another Fright Check at -2, for a grisly death.)

Then, someone else spots a reflection in the dim lantern light, and asks, "What's that on his finger?" The closest PC examines the finger, and then recoils in horror. "Oh, my God! I recognize that ring! It's Dr. Henderson!" (After a few screams, *another* Fright Check is made at -2, because the victim was a friend.)

In general, the modifiers for sequential Fright Checks are not cumulative. If a horror is gradually revealed, forcing several Fright Checks, each new modifier is applied to only one Fright Check. In the example above, the -2 modifier (". . . eaten alive by rats!") to the *second* Fright Check does not apply to the third Fright Check ("It's Dr. Henderson!").

Ad Hoc Fright Checks

At times, the mechanical rolling, looking up, and applying of Fright Checks will actually snap the players out of the mood of fear you have all worked to create. In such circumstances, the players may allow the GM simply to assign 1d turns of stun and move on. After the action, the players can roll "true" Fright Checks and receive any Quirks, disadvantages, or other ill effects. Such ad hoc gaming can rub some players the wrong way; in this as in all things horrific, the GM should work with his players to increase cooperation and build horror.

Whether a Fright Check is required in a given case will depend on the campaign. In a traditional Gothic horror game, discovering that one's grandfather went mad might demand such a Fright Check; in a gritty alien-hunting black ops game, only the realization that an alien race is pulling the ops' strings will shake them to the core. In *The Madness Dossier*, pp. 117-122, learning the truth about the irruptors or the reality quake would call for such a Fright Check.

In general, the more clearly and completely the new discovery reveals an Awful Truth threatening the heroes' sanity or worldview (or even the worldview that they still desperately wish to believe in), the greater the Fright Check penalty. Some examples:

No modifier . . . This information demonstrates the Awful Truth, but it might be explained away. *The graphically realistic graffiti art in the subways shows ghouls killing people.*

-1 . . . This information clearly demonstrates the Awful Truth; it takes willful denial to reject it. *This transit police report clearly indicates the presence of a ghoul colony in the New York subways.*

-3 . . . This information shows the Awful Truth goes deeper, or has wider meaning, than previously thought; alternatively, the Awful Truth strikes directly at your life or beliefs. *These diaries prove that a group of madmen have spread ghoul colonies to the West Coast. Your grandfather somehow became a ghoul and faked his death.*

-5 . . . Knowing this information, or casting this spell, assuredly opens the character or his loved ones up to evil, madness, or Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. *Your grandfather infected your children with the ghoul virus the last time he visited you.*

-7 . . . The Awful Truth has global scope, or is the kind of shock that could easily unhinge you. *The ghoul cult has existed for centuries, and controls major healthcare institutions. Your grandfather initiated you into the ghoul cult as a child and erased your memory of it until now.*

-10 . . . This knowledge, or spell, could destroy the world – perhaps it's doing so right now. *The ghoul cult has laced this year's flu vaccine with the ghoul virus.*

Scenario Design

There are as many ways to build horror scenarios as there are horror GMs, but it is possible to distill a sort of general process. A *story hook* gets the heroes into the adventure and sets the stage, they encounter the horror in a *first blood* combat, they follow the scenario through a few *twists*, and then they confront the evil for the *payoff*. Along the way, they may meet NPCs, decipher clues, build weapons, or just run as fast as they can to head off evil at the pass. If your campaign or your horror scenario doesn't need all of these elements, go ahead and leave them out; for example, plenty of effective horror scenarios just set the stage and jump right into the payoff, or have no NPCs at all. The thing to keep in mind is that, ideally, everything in the scenario should be subordinated to, or directed toward, creeping out the players and building the atmosphere of fear.

The Story Hook

The opening of the horror scenario can take place wherever the heroes would normally be; the objective is to get them from there to the place where the horror lurks or ravages. Sometimes, that's as simple as having the clock strike midnight; other times, a convoluted chain of clues and events leads to the climax of the scenario. The initial story hook can be as stereotypical as a PC's uncle leaving him a haunted house in his will, or it can be deeply and intricately worked into the campaign's storyline. Working a story hook into a character hook (see p. 25-26) will let the GM hang it more plausibly and more reliably, since at least one party member should have a reason to follow the tug. Allies, Contacts, Dependents, Enemies, Patrons, and Secrets can all bring story hooks to the party, either willingly (an Enemy launches a sorcerous attack), unknowingly (a Dependent opens the sealed door in the basement), or unwillingly (an Ally is kidnapped by a tribe of ghouls).

First Blood

The initial encounter with a supernatural creature is one of the most important events in a horror adventure. It is the heroes' first taste of the unexplainable impinging on an ordered world. The GM should carefully build suspense when leading up to the encounter, creating a sense of helpless doom in the players.

Sanity-Blasting Fright Checks

In some horror games, especially those dealing with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, certain frights can literally blast the sanity from those who behold (or discover) them. The Thing simply *cannot* exist; the mortal mind cannot perceive it and remain sane. Such horrors use the following Sanity-Blasting Fright Check rules (adapted closely from the Mythos Fright Check rules in *GURPS CthulhuPunk*).

In a Sanity-Blasting Fright Check, the victim rolls against *half* his normal target number, rounded down. For example, if the intrepid archaeologist has IQ 12, Combat Reflexes (+2 to Fright Checks), and Fearlessness +1, he would have a normal Fright Check roll of 15. However, if he were confronted by a sanity-blasting horror, he would roll against a 7.

Second, the victim may not claim an IQ bonus larger than +4, from any source, *before* his target number is halved. For example, if our archaeologist had three levels of Strong Will and another level of Fearlessness, his normal Fright Check target would be 19. However, his Fright Check against sanity-blasting horror would be rolled against an 8, as the +4 maximum bonus to IQ gives him a maximum of 16 before halving. Thus, mental discipline and willpower cannot enhance a Sanity-Blasting Fright Check by more than +2.

Finally, any time a Sanity-Blasting Fright Check is critically failed, the victim *permanently* loses one level of Will, losing one level of Strong Will or gaining one level of Weak Will, as appropriate.

As the party follows the trail of mysterious events leading up to the confrontation, each encounter should be more unusual than the last. For example, in a series of murders, the first victim might be knifed to death rather violently, the second victim might be decapitated, and the third victim might be drained of all blood and his head not merely severed, but *missing*. No matter what actually caused these deaths, the final encounter with it will be more frightening because of the increasing degree of violence, and therefore apprehension.

Another technique is to create a pattern of deaths that inevitably points to one of the PCs as a possible victim. If one party member is an alcoholic, the fact that all of the victims were lushes themselves should make everyone uncomfortable. Some of the heroes' backgrounds could also point disturbingly toward the creature. An investigation into an alleged vengeful Indian spirit will take on a new tone if one of the investigators comes from a family that was involved in Indian massacres or the violation of treaties.

When the creature finally manifests itself, maintain the mood of increasing suspense. Instead of throwing the creature directly into combat, leave physical trails to be followed: corpses, large footprints, mysterious sounds, etc. The players should never be able to understand instantly what the creature looks like or how it operates. Always keep something hidden, even during the final confrontation. If some mysteries are left unsolved at the end of the adventure, then so much the better.

Building in the Twists

One clue, or one death, or even one string of deaths might not be enough for the scenario. There may be a whole series of vile murders that lead the investigators to their final confrontation, or there may be a number of interludes for investigations, evading misguided police, or simply deciding whether to bring silver bullets or holy water (or both).

Whether the scenario is limited to one place or meanders through the surrounding countryside, it is helpful to keep the narrative twisted. If the investigators have to uncover clues A, B, and C to find the shapeshifting aliens, let them find clue A, then C, then B (or a red herring, depending on the timing). Key witnesses can tell things in flashback. The crucial letter should refer to another, missing, document. The monster's trail might break off – or double back and meet itself at an ideal spot for an ambush. If there's time, throw in the ambush and have it lead to further clues (a dropped medallion, the unique smell of the insects' shells, the direction of the luminous slime track).

One way to experiment with building in the twists is not to space out and reorder the clues but to dump many, many clues onto the players in short order. This strategy has a number of possible outcomes for the GM. The attempt to follow any given thread can be treated as a "standard" horror scenario, perhaps with its own twists if time allows. This gives the players a gratifying sense of choice, while still allowing the GM to plot the climax. The confusion of clues can simply be used as a compressed version of the standard twists, with the horrific climax itself being the final clue that sets up the full horror. The mass of knowledge that points to evils can itself be seen as something horrible; in such a scenario (or campaign), it soon appears that any fact or piece of information holds a dark, hateful implication.

The Teaser

The "reality" of a horror adventure can sometimes escape the players – especially if their favorite PCs emerge from hazard after hazard without so much as a scratch. If the GM wants to throw a scare into the players – while at the same time starting the campaign in a unique fashion – he can use a "teaser" session to get them in the right mindset.

At the beginning of the first game session, the players are handed pre-generated characters with a few paragraphs of background material. These should be more-or-less average folks – *not* 100-point heroes. Examples might be a group of kids driving along a lonely back road, a band of hunters in their northern cabin, or a squad of troops patrolling a disputed boundary.

Things begin to go wrong. The engine of the boat refuses to start, or the telephone line goes mysteriously dead.

Then the evil strikes. The victims are totally unprepared; they die in an awful fashion, probably never understanding what is happening to them. This will give the players a good dose of fear and hopelessness, without endangering the "real" PCs.

Ideally, the GM will draw the deaths out across the entire evening of play, timing the last fatality for the end of the play session. *Just possibly,* one or two of the victims might escape. It's far likelier that they will all die like trapped rats . . . or suffer madness, possession, or some worse fate.

This, of course, is the equivalent of the horror movie's "teaser." The hapless victims were the first prey of the Awful Menace that threatens the world – and the players got to *experience* it.

After the carnage, the GM can let the players create characters for the next game session. These "real" PCs can even be connected to the deceased victims. They might be investigating the killing for a newspaper or law-enforcement agency; they might just be concerned relatives. Of course, there might be no connection at all – it's up to the GM. Whatever their motivation, the GM can be sure that the players will be warier than they otherwise might have been!

However, if the players do a good enough job in the first session, either tactically or as roleplayers, this should give the "real" PCs some help later on. Perhaps someone can leave a dying message or evidence. It's even possible that someone could escape the original attack. If so, he becomes an NPC, played by the GM. He might become a victim later on, or be possessed . . . or even reenter play as a PC, if the party needs to replace losses! The players will probably have a sentimental fondness for such a survivor, so if the GM wants to kill him horribly, *later,* the effect will be even greater.

This "information is dangerous" approach is particularly useful in cosmic horror or conspiratorial campaign styles.

The purpose of building in the twists is to keep the players off-balance, nervous, and looking around. If the narrative doesn't admit any twists, fake them, or shorten the scenario. This uncertainty leads to contemplation of the unknown; while that is going on, the GM has a chance to build the tension and horror, or punctuate it with more blood and horrific revelations.

Making it Different

Clues are not the only channel through which the GM can introduce twists into horror roleplaying. Occasionally, an entire scenario can be designed from the ground up to be a twist on the larger framework of the horror campaign.

Inversions

One of the biggest difficulties in horror roleplaying is keeping each session from following an all-too-familiar format: players are presented with mystery, players figure out which supernatural monster is responsible, heroes beat up monster, mystery is solved. By turning expectations on their head, the GM can prevent "formula horror."

The Hunter Becomes the Hunted

Instead of waiting for an innocent victim to come begging for help, start the adventure with an (apparently) unprovoked attack on the heroes. They will have to recover from the ambush, and then figure out what is behind it and how to stop it. Thus, the action happens at the monster's pace, not the players'.

Twist the Stereotypes

A fight with a werewolf always takes place on a deserted moor? Try downtown San Francisco. The vampire is always holed up in his castle, waiting? Put him on a transatlantic 747 and see how the players deal with it! Take a stereotypical situation, one with which the players are familiar – maybe one they've already encountered – and put a twist on it that will totally warp their expectations.

Supernatural Smokescreen

The longer a horror campaign goes on, the more the players are conditioned to look for an eerie and supernatural explanation. Occasionally, don't give them one! Try a haunted house that is really the work of a mad (and murderous) electronics genius, or a series of unexplained disappearances connected with sightings of humanoids from beneath the sea . . . who turn out to be wet-suited saboteurs. You might also think about outright hoaxes.

Hoaxes

A hoax is a legend with no basis in reality. Many legends are imaginative explanations for mundane mysteries, such as footprints or strange noises. Mournful howls late at night can be attributed to everything from a lone dog to the blowing of the wind, but people find werewolf legends much more exciting. If a story like this catches on, people will go looking for *it* instead of the true cause. This leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy situation in which the legend hunter convinces himself that *anything* he comes across is evidence for the legend's existence.

Hoaxes can be a good break from regular horror fare, and will throw the players for a loop when they realize that the mysterious ghost that haunts the town cemetery doesn't exist at all. It can also redirect their thinking toward more scientific approaches to investigation – if they had dismissed the ghost legend from the start and just looked at the evidence, they could have saved themselves a lot of work. Some hoaxes may be deliberately manufactured, often to divert attention from a *real* supernatural phenomenon.

Remember that many people are convinced that *all* supernatural legends are hoaxes. In games set in the present, most of the NPCs that the PCs try to impress will fall into this category. Convincing people of the truth behind the legends requires skill in Diplomacy and even Law. Occult investigators will need reaction rolls of Very Good or better to gain assistance from authorities, who are the biggest skeptics of all. The GM should apply reaction modifiers based on the quality of evidence that the party presents, with physical evidence garnering the biggest bonuses.

The Payoff

The payoff is the big moment: ultimate evil confronts the heroes! This is when you should pull out all the stops. If you don't scare the players now, you won't for the rest of the session.

Ideally, the payoff should occur as close as possible to the point when the players have deduced the full extent of the horror. The longer they have to understand the horror, the less scary it gets (in most cases, at least); it's no longer the unknown, but part of the observed world. Returning to the earlier example, suppose the players have clues A and C, plus a creepy and disturbing (but basically cosmetic) red herring. After they've cogitated on those enough, they find clue B (which sits right inside the front door of the Bad Place, perhaps). Ideally, they should instantly realize the truth – about 60 seconds before all Hell breaks loose. Since both GMs and players are fallible, this timing breaks down sometimes. That's not fatal as long as the players are sufficiently engrossed in the scenario that they intuitively accept the unexplained, or as long as the horror is scary enough that even a period of thinking about it causes goose bumps.

A Good Bad Man Is Hard to Find

Heroes deserve villains worthy of their steel (or lead, or laser beams). The players will certainly expect there to be some motive force behind all the random horror their characters have slogged through. If that force is intelligent, a true villain, then roleplaying it gives the GM a chance to shine. The GM can also use a villain's intelligence to step up the horror a notch.

Villains and Beasts

The basic distinction between beasts and villains is that villains are intelligent. Beasts may stalk the heroes by instinct, hunt them with cunning, and attack them with subtlety, but if they do not act intelligently, then they are not true villains. For instance, Michael Myers in *Halloween* is a beast; his attacks on the various babysitters are carried out with (only) the cunning and savagery of a predatory animal. Freddy Krueger from *Nightmare On Elm Street* is a villain; he plans to entrap the teenagers who cross him, he is motivated by revenge, and he reacts to their defenses with intelligent countermeasures.

This is not to say that beasts must always attack in mindless waves, or have no reasonable behavior or motivation. They can, of course; both the unstoppable wave and the irrational attack are trademarks of the horror genre. However, it's reasonable to make a pack of werewolves at least as cunning as a pack of normal wolves, for example; that's more than enough challenge for most parties. They will strike stragglers and the weak, they will pull back to a safe distance for stalking when they meet resistance, and they will try to herd the game onto unsafe ground.

If these werewolves reason out where the party is likely to be (as opposed to just hitting the same "hunting ground" every full moon), take out any observers, prepare traps or snares, strike the strongest foe (or the obvious magician) first, or in any other way show that they are reasoning, reacting beings, then they have become villains. And, somewhat beside the point, the party is probably doomed; the GM can almost always coordinate the attacks of the villains more effectively than the players can coordinate their defenses.

This is one reason why most horror scenarios have only one villain (if any) at a time. The lead werewolf will use his brain and the others will simply follow orders in good storm-trooper fashion. This tends to balance the scenario a little more. Also, using only one villain helps to focus the players' fear and the GM's attention. Unless the players and GM are used to multiple-target scenarios, multiple villains often simply confuse the issue.

Villainous Motives

The villain's motive should always be considered in the design of any scenario, especially a horror scenario. Even if it's just a matter of deciding that the villain is a homicidal alien or a thirst-crazed vampire, some motivation is necessary. This will determine what the villain's actions are likely to be. If the villain is simply gripped with homicidal mania or feeding frenzy, then he will stop at nothing to slaughter the party; the scenario will be a nonstop harrowing, or a "track the creature to its lair" story. If the necromancer has to open the Gate of Slumber to the Evil Dreamhound, he will seek to secure the location of the Gate; that will probably become the Bad Place at the climax.

The question of motive will also address whether the villain fights to the death or flees to the safety of some Even Worse Place. Most intelligent beings, and almost all animals, do not fight to the death without a tremendously important reason. The GM should know that reason, and perhaps even let the players in on it in the investigatory sessions or early twists that open the scenario. This can even be used (and should be used, if possible) to build the atmosphere of fear. Dropping the clue that the Queen of the Blood Spiders is willing to do anything to protect her eggs will unnerve any player who stops to think about what "anything" could mean.

Below are some possible villainous motivations, with notes on using them in horror scenarios. Some of these would also be appropriate motives for beasts.

Power

Perhaps the most common villainous motivation is power. Something must be gained, destroyed, or used to increase the villain's power, or some opponent (such as the heroes) must be killed to ensure the villain's power. This action need not make a lot of sense on the surface; necromancers or cultists might actually gain power simply by random killings. The reason why the villain wants this power is another motivation entirely (often greed, political conquest, or another motive from this list); power for power's sake is a particularly sterile motive for a proper villain. Beasts almost never act to increase their power; advance planning and forethought are not bestial hallmarks.

Survival

Some villains (and many beasts) are motivated by survival to do the awful things they do. For instance, vampires have to drink human blood to survive. This can be a perfectly good engine for a basic horror scenario: villain slays innocents, heroes track villain to lair, and battle ensues. If the villain is a recurring one (intended to power a story arc or the entire campaign), then his motivation for the specific actions in the scenario needs to be determined. For example, a vampire prince might be basically motivated by survival, but needs a magic key to increase his power over the dream realms. The scenario is about the search for, and attempted theft of, the magic key. It is thus about the villain's attempt to gain extra power to ensure his survival.

Self-Defense

Many villains are motivated by self-defense; the pesky heroes keep interfering with their plans and trying to kill them! One can hardly blame an intelligent villain for wanting to take the initiative for a change. Villains may also be defending themselves against the actions of NPCs or society at random; e.g., the woodcutter has ventured into the Unseelie grove, so the woodcutter's village (which happens to contain the heroes) must be destroyed before the sacred black oak is cut. Beasts, too, are often motivated by self-defense.

Revenge

A variant on self-defense is revenge; the villain can feel wronged by one of the heroes, someone else nearby, or society at large. A great many psychics, mad scientists, and "intellectual" villains seem to be driven by revenge. Vengeful villains will often not take rational precautions, or may use suicidal techniques. This can make them harder to stop, but easier to track.

Victims: Their Creation and Abuse

For a horror campaign to be truly horrific, there must be a supply of victims. The easiest solution is to victimize the heroes, but this is rarely satisfactory in the long run (see *The Teaser*, p. 99, for an exception). If the PCs are repeatedly killed off, most players will lose interest in the game; therefore, NPC victims are needed – blood sacrifices to keep the game universe interestingly horrific.

Victim Types

The Innocent: This person is truly undeserving of the fate that the callous GM has planned for him (or, more likely, her). This could be an elderly grandfather, a small child, or a sweet and helpful babysitter. The players should be shocked and outraged at the fate of the victim, and their characters should immediately plot revenge.

Joe Average: This is the everyday man on the street. Perhaps he is the paper vendor that one of the heroes stops by every day on the way to work, or a co-worker, or the mailman. The death of Joe Average should shock the party simply by virtue of the fact that it is completely unexpected and inexplicable.

He Deserved It: A very satisfying type of victim is the one who *deserved* to die. A crooked cop, a street thug, a grasping slumlord . . . but *not* the heroes' chief antagonist in the campaign. That would make things too easy! The players should find themselves torn between their feelings of glee at the demise of such a wretched soul, and their shock at another unpleasant death. And remember: if the PCs had a reason to dislike the victim, they may be suspects in his death!

Sneaky Victim Tricks

Framing the PCs for the victims' death is only one of many ways that the GM can put a little backspin on the basic "monster kill." Carefully picking the victims, nurturing them, or even transmuting them into villains can add depth (and all-important uncertainty) to a horror game.

Dependents: Emphasizing danger to valued NPCs, without actually killing them, will get good roleplayers worried – and worry is an appropriate emotion. The danger doesn't have to be overt. Just remind those players whose PCs have Dependents that, in this type of campaign, the Dependent could get involved *at any time* . . . especially at night, when the moon is full.

Fiendish Long-Term Plots: A fiendish GM will create victims with well-developed personalities and introduce them long before they are needed as bodies. These characters should be built up over a number of game sessions. The heroes should get to know them, maybe trust them, and perhaps even think of them as friends and allies. Certainly, the *players* should come to take their existence for granted: the landlady, the precinct captain who takes their unbelievable reports, the wise-ass reporter who covers their story, etc.

The players will soon come to "believe in" these NPCs, especially if they are friendly or have unusual and useful talents. Then, when something horrible happens to the victim, the effect on the players will be greater. And it doesn't have to be a blood-and-gore ending. If the old landlady, whom the PCs have known for three game years, vanishes, with no trace except a smear of green muck, *and nothing more is ever found,* the players' imaginations will haunt them for a long time.

Snake in the Grass: Here's an especially evil variation on that last technique: create a NPC, and keep him around for a long time – perhaps through a whole adventure. Then, in a later adventure, when the players have come to rely on that NPC as part of the furniture . . . have him turn out to be a villain or even a monster! A similar plot twist is to let one of the first victims turn out, in the end, to have been a monster.

Nice to See You Again: Any deceased PC immediately becomes the "property" of the GM. Between demonic possession, ghosts, zombies, fungus-infected ghoul-mutants, and the like, you never know when you'll be seeing an old friend. The timely reappearance of a dead PC – or at least his mortal shell – is guaranteed to make an impression on the players. See *GURPS Undead* for more on reanimating dead PCs.

Dark Religious Mania

The villain worships some powerful god, or even a Thing That Man Was Not Meant To Know, who demands sacrifice. Perhaps he must perform some horrific ritual to open the way for the Antichrist. He objects to good gods (and their worshippers) on theological grounds, and seeks to undermine and destroy their domain. This might be seen as another version of power; indeed, dark religious mania is a common motivation for power-driven scenarios. However, it is so common (especially in black magic or cosmic horror scenarios) that it merits its own entry. A god capable of inspiring religious mania in beasts would be a very disturbing deity indeed.

Forbidden Knowledge

Ever since Frankenstein (or Faust, or Prometheus), horror villains have been driven by the desire to know too much. This drive can seem similar to insanity (or no motivation) to the uninformed. In the horror genre, sometimes even seeking magical powers carries with it a dangerous cost; magic itself is something that man was not meant to know. This motive has much in common with both power and dark religious mania. Beasts are virtually never motivated by hunger for forbidden knowledge.

Twisted Honor

Perfect for pulp-style horror, the villain works from some "heroic" code, now turned to the service of evil. Perhaps the villain is a mercenary, hired to serve some more shadowy force, but one who honors his contract to the letter. An immortal villain, such as a vampire or a lich (or a conspiracy), might be fighting for some long-forgotten cause such as the throne of the Merovingian kings or the crusade against the Albigensians. Even if the villain has another motivation entirely, he may have a personal code that he clings to – he grants Dwarves a quick death, he will never violate a temple of the Forgotten God, or any enemy has the right to challenge him to single combat. This can add great depth and realism to many otherwise-identical ravening fiends.

Sheer Malevolence

Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The villain has become so powerful that mere morality means nothing; killing and torture and the rest of it are merely enjoyable hobbies. This seems to be the motivation for many villains, and is not even terribly unrealistic. Especially in fantasy horror, many beasts simply ravage for the sheer joy of it. The GM should expend extra effort to make sheerly malevolent villains interesting; absolute power also leads to eventual boredom.

No Motivation

Some villains may have no motivation – or at least not one that the heroes can detect. Cinematic psycho killers seem to have no motivation barring murky Freudian theories about their past. The villain's actions may merely be coincidence; Albuquerque just happens to be in the saucers' flight path. Nihilistic cosmic horror draws its power from the notion that nothing has any purpose whatsoever, including the actions of Cosmic Deities, Ancient Ones, and their Minions. Beasts, of course, might also have no motivation besides instinct or random chance.

Opportunity

The GM needs to consider how the villains will gain the opportunity to blight the heroes' existence. In many scenarios, the players will take care of this themselves, as the whole point is to track down and confront the villain. In other scenarios, especially those climaxing in the Invaded House, the opportunity needs to be built in. The GM should approach this problem by answering two questions: "What is the scariest way for it to work?" and "What makes internally consistent sense?"

Scary opportunities happen when the heroes are constrained in some way. They might be physically restrained, although most players object to "capture" scenarios. They might be constrained by the presence of witnesses; e.g., they can't shoot the demon-child while the cops are watching. They might be constrained by the presence of dependents or innocents; e.g., the werewolves will attack while the hero is walking his date home from the movies. They might be constrained in time and attention. If the GM is using the mass of clues as his approach to building in the twists, the already-distracted and harassed players can be pelted with omens, stalkings, attacks, and general atmospherics. Time these elements so that the players are just about to snap when they reach the climax of the scenario, or move the payoff to the place in time (and location in the game world) where the snap will happen.

Sensible opportunities depend on the heroes' defenses and the villains' or beasts' means and motives. The PCs should seldom have perfect defenses in horror games (especially since the GM should be reluctant to pass out such things), but there should be some logical way for the villains to find the flaw. If that logical way is the torture and mutilation of the party's trusted butler (whose maimed corpse can show up at any time for maximum effect), so much the better. Neither beasts nor villains will normally make suicide attacks. Traditional vampires don't attack at noon on Sunday; it isn't sensible or scary.

A particularly fiendish villainous opportunity is one that the adventurers themselves have set up. If they've taken a ring from the body of the zombie that attacked them, perhaps the villain can use it as a magical connection to the person who is wearing it. If they've read aloud the inscription carved on the tomb wall, it could trigger the mummy's curse or the wrath of the dark gods. In Invaded House scenarios (see pp. 93-94), if the party has brought something evil or unnatural (the aforementioned zombie ring, for example) into a place of safety, it can be the means of entry for the horrors outside.

Connected to this are the opportunities created by the heroes' relations with the villain. Do they knowingly oppose the villain? Does the villain knowingly oppose them? Often, one won't know of the other's existence. The heroes might not know of the cult of the Lord Beneath the Ice, although the cult's vile auguries have warned them of the heroes' plans. Alternatively, the cult might not have known that this town had its own mystical defenders when they set up shop; the heroes have the advantage of seeing the evil first.

"First contact" between heroes and villain will play a vital role in determining the villainous reaction. If the heroes surprise the villain, he might lash out earlier and with more force than he otherwise would have. If he knows of the heroes in advance, he might try to ambush them, conspire against them, or suborn them. He might even befriend one of them, acting as a trusted NPC and lulling his victim into a false state of confidence. Particularly fiendish GMs might introduce such a "friendly villain" from the beginning of the campaign – perhaps as the party's patron or mentor! This kind of villain might simply use the heroes to clear out his competition so that he is the only force of the Dark Occult left in the whole province, or he might play them as pawns in an even bigger and darker game.

The nature of the hero-villain relationship is a fertile source of plots and stratagems. It creates opportunities for villainous action, just as it prevents others.

Cowards Die a Thousand Deaths

After a few sessions of horror, the monster hunters may start to take what seem to be sensible precautions: they stop going into the crypt, simply dynamite the old deserted mill, never read any eldritch scrolls, always leave the chest sealed, and possibly even move to the next duchy to grow the perfect avocado. In short, they turn into cowards. Cowardice may be an understandable reaction in the world of most horror roleplaying games, but it should never be a wise one. This is because it short-circuits the atmosphere of fear for the players, and it spoils all the GM's fun.

The GM should go out of his way to get the action moving. If the heroes have character hooks or disadvantages (or skills or advantages!) that make them especially susceptible to curiosity, fascination, or even possession, the GM should invoke them to short-circuit cowardly strategies. The priest might find himself dreaming of the sealed chest night after night until finally he dreams that he opens it – and awakens to find himself standing beside the chest, which has somehow become unlocked. NPCs are another great way to drag the action back to the Bad Place or into the tension of a horror scenario. If the party won't do it, let their trusted mentor happen to read the eldritch parchment aloud, or have someone's sister wander into the crypt at night.

Most important, the GM should make every effort to demonstrate that the adventurers *need* the knowledge or the accomplishment that they're avoiding; e.g., if they refuse to read the blasphemous tome, they never find the spell that short-circuits the lich lord's mental powers. This demonstration can be active rather than passive: the villain steals the sealed chest, and opens it when the stars are right for the evils within to prosper; dynamiting the mill only gives the festering Thing In The Basement more time to grow; etc. The players should learn that there are only two choices in horror: face your fears now or let them grow stronger. If they learn that at the expense of one or two characters' limbs, sanity, or lives, then that's just part of the tuition.

TALES TO TERRIFY

Here then are the stories written on the Book of Blood. Read, if it pleases you, and learn. They are a map of that dark highway that leads out of life towards unknown destinations. Few will have to take it. Most will go peacefully along lamplit streets, ushered out of living with prayers and caresses. But for a few, a chosen few, the horrors will come, skipping to fetch them off to the highway of the damned.
— Clive Barker, "The Book of Blood"

This chapter pulls together the advice and concepts discussed earlier to present three sample horror campaign frames in various styles, with notes on how the design parameters from Chapter 4 play out in each case. Each frame includes character guidelines, potential narrative structures, and suggestions for further variations. These frames are designed to support extended campaigns, but they could host one-shot scenarios with some sacrifice of detail.

Seas of Dread, Sails of Daring

"The very deeps did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy Sea."
– Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

Variations

This campaign could easily become a cosmic horror game, even at cinematic power levels, by making Duppy Jonah an Ancient One or even a Cosmic Deity (see pp. 45-47) devoted to roiling chaos and madness, although campaign tone will likely remain closer to Robert E. Howard than H.P. Lovecraft. Any campaign that combines razor-sharp rapiers and zombie pirates can potentially be a splatter style game. By emphasizing Duppy Jonah as a corrupting aberration from the past, the roiling seas and lowering hurricanes at its command, and the likelihood of tainted lineages in isolated plantations on the Jamaican coast, an ambitious GM could run an interesting "pirate Gothic" campaign in this setting. The clear moral stance of pulp can be eroded by the GM looking for a darker, "noir pirate," corruption-themed campaign: one can hardly help but sympathize with Mayan priests and Voudun bokors who unleash the powers of Duppy Jonah upon the rapacious white men who slaughter, rape, and enslave their people.

To Europeans in 1674, America is the new world, a land of wonder, where any traveler's tale or mariner's legend could be true. Mermen splash in black lagoons, sea serpents surface in weed-choked oceans, and new islands appear where none were mapped. The Americas are also a new world of opportunity. The Spanish conquistadors pull galleon-loads of gold out of fallen jungle empires, and brave English and French sailors "go on account," turn pirate, and steal what they can from the Spanish. No man's birth is held against him, as long as he can swing a cutlass and has a purse of doubloons to spend. However, the New World is a world of horrors, both ancient and recent. Pirates go mad with bloodlust and commit grotesque atrocities, Buzzard Cult medicine men and Voudun bokors cast nefarious

magics, and ghost ships descend upon the unwary from out of fog-shrouded mangrove bayous.

The New World is a world still unformed, simultaneously too new to have settled entirely out of Chaos and as old and as fluid as the sea itself. And a powerful entity wants to keep it that way, an enormous undersea beast – perhaps the father of all krakens, or a ghostly monstrosity in kraken form, or both – known to the Jamaican slaves as "Duppy Jonah." (A duppy is a ghost or devil, while Jonah personifies life under the sea – the pirates have corrupted this name to "Davy Jones.") Duppy Jonah has breathed new life into the ancestral terrors of black, white, and red Americans alike, setting American waters aboil with monsters and feeding the dreams of evil men on land. Duppy Jonah seeks to return America to Chaos, and to create a formless magical realm in the Western Hemisphere.

The Campaign

Genre: Piratical swashbuckling. Zombie- or skeleton-crewed ships captained by evil necromancers or revenant pirates prowl the Caribbean in search of blood and magic, and Protestant pirates swear that the Inquisitors in Havana and Maracaibo bind demons to guard the gold in Spanish galleons!

Style: A quintessential pulp-horror game, stocked with any number of horrific monsters and fell cults inspired by Duppy Jonah and its spawn.

Mode: A game of cinematic adventure, full of ropes to swing on, cannons loaded with zombie-killing rock salt, and cutlass-wielding animated skeletons. The backstory makes an excellent stage for Fortean-mode gaming, as anything and everything can be explained by appealing to Duppy Jonah's dreams of Chaos. Pirate games also can be irresistible in the camp mode.

Theme: The basic theme is struggle – the heroes must defeat the forces of Chaos and build a new civilization in the new world. The genre's emphasis on physical combat, and the tempestuous weather of the sea, will reinforce this theme.

Design Parameters

Scale: Anywhere from prosaic to epic. The heroes can struggle to rid one small town of an evil Aztec mummy necromancer, or crisscross the seven seas battling Duppy Jonah's minions for the fate of continents. Many campaigns will begin with a first prosaic adventure and build to epic levels.

Scope: Initially, pirate heroes will have little scope for action past their cannon muzzles. Knights of the Silver Sword (see below) will be able to pull political strings at higher levels. Adventurers with a seagoing ship can theoretically operate across a global scope.

Visible Scope: The heroes might initially see only local hauntings or monster outbreaks, and imagine America to be a traditional fantasy-style "wilderness" rather than a sphere of Chaos. Members of the Silver Swords may know of Duppy Jonah, but only learn of the scope of its powers as the campaign progresses.

Austerity: Lenient. Between a pulp style and the anarchic nature of the pirate Caribbean, adventurers can get away with almost anything, with nothing more than an enemy's curse to discourage them.

Boundaries: Initially restricted to the Caribbean (a quintessential Bad Place), but potentially expandable to the entire Western Hemisphere and the South Seas.

Other Settings

This campaign draws power from the theme of exploration and the collision between civilization and the wilderness. Duppy Jonah could easily become the Etruscan sea-god Nethuns in a campaign of ancient Greek sailors colonizing the western Mediterranean, or Baba Yaga (see pp. RU97-100) in a game of medieval settlers in the dark woods. Steampunk explorers of Darkest Africa – or Mars – might also face some primal entity that prefers to keep the maps blank.

The archetypal legend of settlement and violence in modern times is the American Western. The West makes a perfect backdrop for a game in which an ancient American monster (possibly an immensely powerful Piasa Bird; see p. 61) uses every occult means at its disposal to hamper the railroads, the marshals, and the other trappings of civilization in its trackless wastes and rocky mountains. Only a tiny band of Texas Rangers sees the threat and fights the unknown, riding masked and firing silver bullets . . .

Although it departs from the campaign's central theme of "civilization vs. chaos," GMs who want to use the other half of *GURPS Swashbucklers* may wish to run a campaign set in Musketeer-era Paris. In 1572, a French warlock carried Duppy Jonah's egg back to Paris with him from the Caribbean, and left it in the lowest level of the Paris catacombs to hatch. By the time of the Musketeers, the spawn of Duppy Jonah have become vampires, werewolves, and other horrors preying on the dark places in the City of Light.

Characters

The default party is a cinematic pirate crew with all PCs built on 150 points (likely including at least one "ship's conjure" with two or three ritual-magic Path skills) that slowly gets sucked into the maelstrom of Chaos. They may elect to serve one of the following Patrons:

The Royal Society: Established by King Charles II of England in 1660 to advance the study of natural philosophy. The Royal Society wishes to investigate the wild rumors of magic, and obtain specimens of the strange monsters, from the New World. The Royal Society is a small, wealthy group, appearing on a 6 or less; a 5-point Patron in a standard game. In a "clockpunk" game, its technological edge makes it a 10-point Patron.

The Order of the Silver Sword: An elite offshoot of the Order of the Golden Fleece, established by the Grail-seeking pirate duke René of Anjou in 1434 to combat evil magic in the lands of the Turk. The Order maintains commanderies in Paris, Vienna, Marseilles, Seville, Ghent, Havana, Panama, and (secretly) London. All knights of the Order have Awareness [15] (p. CI33), True Faith [15] (p. CI47), and Visualization [10] (p. CI47), plus a -15-point Duty to the Order. Knights should be at least 250-point characters with powerful magical rituals, deadly fencing maneuvers, and perhaps a smattering of cinematic occult, paranormal, or super advantages. The Order is a reasonably powerful organization with magical training, appearing on a 9 or less in the Caribbean; a 25-point Patron. In a Silver Swords "musketeer" game, hunting down vampires in the Paris sewers, the Order appears on a 12 or less and is thus worth 50 points.

For a less piratical game, the PCs could be members of the Lucumi society, a group of good Voudun initiates who wish to unite decent men of all races while protecting blacks and mulattos (pp. VO18-19), or Spanish members of Oculus Dei, a recently founded order within the Jesuits attempting to use secret calculating engines to direct society toward reason and freedom (pp. STM138-141).

Uncanny Powers

In the "civilized world," magic is secret or scoffed at; Africans, Native Americans, and savvy pirates know of it and respect or fear it. Magic in the "default" campaign is ritual magic, as seen in *GURPS Spirits* and *Voodoo*. However, this campaign can also work with either the traditional magic system of *GURPS Magic* or, more subtly, with the Hermetic magic rules of *GURPS Cabal*. If mana-based magic is used, Europe and Europeanized sections of the New World, such as Mexico City, Havana, or Boston, are low-mana areas. The rest of the Americas have normal mana, but native-born Europeans must have an Unusual Background to possess Magery or any occult, supernatural knowledge. The state of magic in Africa, the Indian Ocean, the China seas, and the rest of the world "east of Suez" is the GM's call; most likely the organized states such as China, Japan, and Mogul India also have low mana.

Cinematic Pirate Template
100 points

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

Advantages: A total of 30 points in Acute Vision [2/level]; Alertness [5/level]; Ambidexterity [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Rapid Healing [5]; and Toughness (DR 1) [10].

Disadvantages: A total of -30 points from among Alcoholism [-15]; Bloodlust [-10]; Bully [-10]; Callous [-6]; Chummy [-5]; Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5]; Greed [-15]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Intolerance (Spaniards) [-5]; Jealousy [-10]; One Eye [-15]; Odious Personal Habits [Varies]; Overconfidence [-10]; Sense of Duty (Comrades in arms) [-5]; and Social Stigma (Outlaw) [-15].

Primary Skills: Black Powder Weapons (Flintlock Pistol) (P/E) DX+1 [1]-14*; Boating (P/A) DX+1 [4]-14; Knife (P/E) DX+2 [4]-15; Seamanship (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-12; Shortsword (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12.

Secondary Skills: Axe (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Brawling (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14; Climbing (P/A) DX [2]-13; Gunner (Cannon) (P/A) DX [1]-13*; Navigation (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-8; Sailor (M/A) IQ [2]-10.

Background Skills: Area Knowledge (Caribbean) (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-12; Carousing (P/A; HT) HT [2]-12; Knife Throwing (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14; Scrounging (M/E) IQ [1]-10; Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Streetwise (M/A) IQ [2]-10; Survival (Island/Beach) (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Swimming (P/E) DX [1]-13.

* Includes +1 for IQ.

Customization Notes: This template can serve as the basis for a 150-point cinematic pirate PC in a "Seas of Dread, Sails of Daring" campaign. In a realistic pirate campaign (or for NPC sailors on Spanish galleons), drop ST and HT by one point and DX by two points to make a 60-point template. Pirate captains should raise Navigation to 12+, add Meteorology at 12+, and take Shiphandling skill; Leadership and Tactics are also likely.

In a "clockpunk" game, agents of the Royal Society may use black technology such as repeating air guns, reliable breechloaders, advanced chemicals (gas bombs, truth drugs, etc.), and even TL(4+1) Gatling guns, hang gliders, and submarines!

Psionics and super-powers don't exist.

Here Be Monstres

The most common monsters in the setting will likely be Voodoo zombies (see p. 59), at least to start with. Caribbean cultures have many different types of vampire, including the Jamaican *obayifo*, Haitian *loogaroo*, and Mesoamerican *civateteo* (see *GURPS Blood Types* for details). However, the roiling energies of Duppy Jonah have bred and preserved many other fell creatures, of wildly varying kinds and natures.

In keeping with the fast pace and pulp roots of this campaign frame, these monsters appear in *GURPS Bestiary* format rather than as full racial templates. PCs in this campaign frame should be humans, not monsters – part of the theme of the game is the stark and obvious contrast between normal humanity and Chaos.

Ape-Man

ST: 13-25	Move/Dodge: 6/6	Size: 1
DX: 12	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 300-400 lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: *	
HT: 12/12-20	Reach: C, 1	

* Per a human of the same ST, either with fists (thrust-2 crushing) or a club (swing+1 crushing).

These hairy, apelike creatures seem somehow created by, and kin to, the enormous forests of the American mainland. Called *ulak* on the coast of Nicaragua and *sokqueatl* in the woods of northern California, the ape-man has long, matted hair (usually reddish or brown), big feet, an uncertain temperament, and an overpowering stench (hence his other nickname, "skunk-ape").

Byle

ST: 5-45	Move/Dodge: 7/0	Size: 1-12
DX: 12	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 10-1200 lbs.
IQ: 1-5	Damage: Special	
HT: 14/5-40	Reach: C	

Also called a "boil," an "ebullition," or simply a "blob," a byle emerges from an area where Duppy Jonah is most powerful, and where the powers of Chaos are least constrained. Chaos can form a byle out of anything, but most byles are shapeless, oozing masses of seaweed, swamp slime, Spanish moss, or sea-bottom muck. They can be any size from that of a cat to that of a longboat; they grow by absorbing victims.

Byles normally lurk in dank, dimly lit places, waiting for victims to come to them. A victim may be absorbed by a byle of at least equal weight. It takes a byle three turns to absorb a human-sized victim. The victim must win a Quick Contest of ST with the byle to escape. On the first turn, the Contest is against 1/3 the byle's ST; on the second turn, it's against 2/3 the byle's ST; on the third turn, it's against the byle's full ST. If friends are trying to help the victim pull free, each helper

may add half his ST to the victim's for the purpose of the Contest. An absorbed victim takes damage. Armor protects for a number of turns equal to its DR, after which the byle inflicts anywhere from 1 point to 4d damage per turn, depending on its size. Engulfed victims also face suffocation (p. B122).

Byles take only one point per die of crushing or cutting damage, and are completely immune to impaling damage. They take normal damage from fire and explosions. Their watery mass extinguishes any flame except Greek fire after one turn. Roll vs. HT if a byle takes damage from an explosion; on a success, it has fragmented into 1d smaller byles, which share the original byle's ST and hit points among them equally. Byles never suffer stunning or unconsciousness; at 0 hit points, they simply stop moving. At -3×HT, a byle is destroyed. Byles are affected normally by magic.

Chemosit

ST: 30-35   **Move/Dodge:** 9/6   **Size:** 2
DX: 15   **PD/DR:** 1/1   **Weight:** 150-250 lbs.
IQ: 5   **Damage:** 2d-1 cut
HT: 15/20-25   **Reach:** C

A beast of African legend given rebirth by the powers of Chaos in America, the chemosit combines the hindquarters of a hyena with the arms and head of an ape. It also has the wicked claws, powerful jaws, and sharp teeth of the hyena, and is monstrously strong for its size. It is totally inimical to humans, and specializes in biting and clawing attacks to the brain (-7 to hit). Apparently, it considers brains a delicacy and wishes to get right to the main course!

Chemosits are nocturnal and (fortunately) solitary. They are at home in the trees, despite their hyena-like hind feet, and will ambush from above whenever possible. They are known to steal into villages at night, making off with a new victim each evening. Entire villages have been abandoned due to a chemosit terrorizing the area. Chemosits can be found wherever African slaves or maroons live, but seem to favor the jungles of Surinam and Brazil.

Gill-Man

ST: 15   **Move/Dodge:** 6/6   **Size:** 1
DX: 12   **PR/DR:** 2/2   **Weight:** 200-500 lbs.
IQ: 8   **Damage:** 2d+1 cr
HT: 14   **Reach:** C

Apparently the originals for the legends of mermen, the gill-men live in shallow, estuarial waters, or in deep rivers such as the Amazon and Orinoco. They are humanoids, with repulsive features, gills, and fins on their backs and limbs. They may have unspeakable human ancestry; they remain lasciviously attracted to nubile young humans, especially women.

Gill-men move as easily on land as on water, and keep their full Move while swimming. They cannot remain out of water for long, however; every 10 minutes, a gill-man must make a HT roll or take 1 point of dehydration damage. They generally fight with claws, but they may use stone knives, spears, or even spearguns, at the GM's discretion; gill-man spearguns function much as thrown spears, both in and out of water.

Ngojama

ST: 14   **Move/Dodge:** 7/7   **Size:** 1
DX: 13   **PD/DR:** 1/1   **Weight:** 140-170 lbs.
IQ: 10   **Damage:** 1d+2 cut
HT: 15   **Reach:** C, 1

The ngojama is a humanoid demon from African legend, covered with a short, bristly fur. Four iron claws grow from the palms of its hands, preventing it from using normal weapons. The creature sees in darkness as well as it does in daylight. It has a Stealth skill of 14, and usually emerges to ambush its victims.

Ngojama are employed as assassins or guards by evil sorcerers. They can be summoned by a Summon Demon spell (p. M74), if the caster knows the appropriate ritual of calling. They are notoriously difficult to control – an ngojama adds +3 to its Will after being summoned.

More Monsters

Any creature in **GURPS Fantasy Bestiary** that derives from American or African legend might turn up in this campaign, especially the kraken (p. FB38), lucsa (p. FB43), and sea serpent (p. FB64). Other excellent monsters for a "Seas of Dread" game include the giant electric eel (p. WT94), giant octopus (p. BE61), giant venus flytrap (p. BE69), and swamp ghost (p. BE69), as well as the more conventional aquatic beasts from **GURPS Bestiary.** Marine creatures from **GURPS Dinosaurs,** such as armored fish and plesiosaurs, can also exist in the Seas of Dread, preserved in puddles of time by the relentlessly atavistic mind of Duppy Jonah.

Siren

ST: 15-18   **Move/Dodge:** 10/6#   **Size:** 1
DX: 12   **PD/DR:** 1/1   **Weight:** 100 lbs.
IQ: 5   **Damage:** 1d cut
HT: 16   **Reach:** 1

Sirens have the body of a human women from the navel up, that of a bird below. They have wings, though, as well as talons. Their voices raised in song are very beautiful, so beautiful that most people who hear them are compelled to come closer.

This would be a gross mistake, however – sirens live on rocky coasts, with jutting, sharp boulders lurking just off-shore. Those who approach invariably wreck on the rocks, and the sirens fly out and feed on their flesh!

The sirens' song is a Lesser Geas spell (p. M68) at level 21! Each siren beyond the first gives +1 to skill. This does not affect resistance – for resistance purposes, no spell is considered to be over 16 – but does affect range. Instead of casting their spell at -1 per yard, the sirens use the range modifier from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* on p. B201. Thus, ten sirens (skill 30) have an effective skill of 16 at 1/4 mile, while one siren (skill 21) has an effective skill of 16 at only 15 yards.

Victims who fail their resistance roll *must* do all they can to move their ship closer to where the song is originating. This may cause fights on a ship – weapons may even be drawn: the enthralled adventurer *must* try to get closer. This feeling will last for ten minutes after leaving the spell area, then fade away.

Those who are under the spell and shipwrecked have no willpower when attacked by the sirens – they supinely accept death. Shipwreck victims who successfully resisted the spell may fight. Sirens do 1d cutting damage with their talons. They cannot fly very far or long, however – they can spend five turns in the air before having to land. Their Move on land or in the water is 3; in the air, they have Move 10.

The sirens' song, it is said, tells of their journey from Libya to the New World after their defeat by Odysseus.

Skeleton

ST: 9   **Move/Dodge:** 6/6   **Size:** 1
DX: 12   **PD/DR:** Special   **Weight:** 90-130 lbs.
IQ: 8   **Damage:** 1d-4*
HT: 10   **Reach:** C, 1

* Unarmed. Skeletons may have weapons, used with a Combat/Weapon skill at level 12-14.

Skeletons of those who died unburied in the New World can be easily raised by the forces of Chaos or by almost any magician of talent (usually using the Zombie spell, p. M73). Sometimes, in heavily Chaotic areas, especially where violent blood is spilled, skeletons will rise spontaneously. Skeletons of sailors can serve as crew on a magician's ship if need be, and skeletons use various weapons (especially cutlasses) in combat.

Skeletons have DR 2 against missiles and impaling attacks. Impaling attacks do no bonus damage, while crushing attacks do double damage. Skeletons are unaffected by disease, poison, and the extremes of pressure or temperature; have no vital areas; and don't sleep, breathe, feel pain, or bleed.

Possible Narrative Structures

Each of the following five story arcs illustrates one of the narrative structures from pp. 64-67 as it might play out in this campaign world.

The Spanish Prisoners

The party starts out in the dungeons of the Inquisition, suffering from missing time (p. 26). Breaking out of their cell is comparatively easy, but our amnesiac heroes find that these dungeons seem to go on forever, and that the Inquisition has stored Things more dangerous than any prisoners in some of them. From the horrors they fight, fellow prisoners they meet, and scraps of memories they recall, they can piece together the awful truth. (Escape)

The Eighth Sea

According to pirate legend, at sunset on Midsummer's Eve, you can sail over the horizon to a magical ocean full of ghosts and merfolk. The Silver Swords want a team to cross into this legendary ocean, battle any horrors there, chart its currents, and return to our own plane through the Bermuda Triangle with their report. (Gauntlet)

Inspirational Material

Bloch, Robert. "Terror in Cut-Throat Cove" (1958). Cthulhu Mythos short story set in the modern Caribbean. (As well, Donald J. Walsh's "The Rings of the Papaloi" (1971) ties Voudun to the Cthulhu mythos, and the pulp horror stories of Hugh B. Cave are often set in the Caribbean.)

Crandall, Reed, et al. *Piracy* (EC Comics, 1955-1956). EC "new direction" comic, now collected in two volumes by Gemstone.

Ellis, Richard. *Monsters of the Sea* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1995). A fascinating combination of real oceanography and marine biology with lurid legends of sea serpents, mermaids, krakens, blobs, and globsters.

Hodgson, William Hope. *The Boats of the Glen Carrig* (Chapman and Hall, 1907). Deadpan nautical horror slowly turns ever more surreal and disturbing; the atmosphere of dread is unequalled.

Masters, Phil. *GURPS Atlantis* (Steve Jackson Games, 2001). Much information on Atlantis, undersea life, and similarly useful topics.

O'Sullivan, Steffan. *GURPS Swashbucklers* (Steve Jackson Games, 1999).

Powers, Tim. *On Stranger Tides* (Ace, 1987). This rollicking adventure is the seminal pirates-and-Voudun historical-fantasy horror novel.

Rogozinski, Jan. *Pirates! An A-Z Encyclopedia* (Facts on File, 1995). An excellent general reference.

Sabatini, Rafael. *Captain Blood* (McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, 1922). Despite the sanguine title, the piratical protagonist is a perfect pulp hero in this non-horror novel.

Back For Seconds

The cruelest pirate who ever lived, Francois L'Ollonois, was deserted by his men in Nicaragua in 1668, captured by cannibals, sawn to pieces, and eaten. Unfortunately, it didn't take. He returned as a greater shadow (p. UN78) and has begun raising (literally) a devil's crew of the worst, most bloodthirsty pirates who ever died violently. He is Duppy Jonah's favored tool for sweeping the seas clean of settlements – and he has a grudge against one of the heroes. (Nemesis)

The Black Cormorant

The adventurers (along with few spares and thugs) crew the *Black Cormorant,* a trim, 100-ton sloop owned by Sir Henry Morgan, the former pirate who now serves as Governor of Jamaica. Morgan knows something is going on (he may even be a Knight of the Silver Sword), and he wants the heroes to take the *Black Cormorant* everywhere they hear of monsters and magic. He pays well for knowledge, and better for trophies, and his trusty crew can keep any doubloons they happen to find. (Picaresque)

Heart of Emerald

The Portuguese governor of a remote province of Brazil, deep in the jungle, has gone mad. The heroes must ascend the dinosaur- and byle-haunted Amazon in search of Governor Curtés, who has become the god-king of the gill-men of El Dorado. (Quest)

Blood in the Craters

"They did not eat, much less digest. Instead, they took the fresh, living blood of other creatures, and injected it into their own veins. I have myself seen this being done, as I shall mention in its place. But, squeamish as I may seem, I cannot bring myself to describe what I could not endure even to continue watching. Let it suffice to say, blood obtained from a still living animal, in most cases from a human being, was run directly by means of a little pipette into the recipient canal . . ."

– H.G. Wells, **The War of the Worlds**

Doomed by its steady cooling, Mars wheels dry and nearly dead 140 million miles from the Sun. As the red planet swung past its blue neighbor, the Martians planned a desperate strike, an invasion across space to extend their species' unnatural life. The Martians channeled the entire output of their civilization over a period of decades into the effort, and launched themselves across the interplanetary void in 1897. They landed in their mighty cylinder-craft, and their immense war machines easily battered aside the primitive human defenses. The greatest city of Earth, London, lay battered and desolate after barely 15 days of war, and the Martians were poised to begin seeding their new home with life in their own

unearthly image. Unfortunately, even advanced Martian bio-science had not counted on the profusion of Earthly bacteria – some virus laid the invasion low and left humanity in possession of the wet, warm planet Earth, vigilant against renewed attack.

But no plague kills everybody. The variations of biology guaranteed that some Martians – primarily the biological warfare specialists, as it turned out – survived. These Martians, cut off from the home world, must now work in secret. They must hide in the rubble of London, and study the recalcitrant Earth for its weaknesses. They must use the technology salvaged from the wreckage of their invasion to build a new army, here on Earth. As Britain – and mankind – rebuilds from the disaster and adapts Martian mechanisms to human steam and electricity, it looks up into the unfriendly skies. However, the horror from the red planet festers and roils underfoot . . .

The Campaign

Genre: Science fiction, specifically steampunk. The Martian invasion brought new technologies and new biologies to Earth – and both present dangers, horrors, and opportunities.

Style: The Wellsian emphasis on realism, and the monstrous habits of the Martians and their creations, present great opportunities for splatter-style horror. Red blood, bloated Martian tissue, and the claustrophobic feel of an urban-ruin campaign setting also work toward grim, gritty gore.

Mode: Investigative. The heroes must slowly penetrate to the heart of the wrecked zone, and the heart of the Martian covert presence, to defeat the horrors. The Martians are highly intelligent villains who will use subterfuge, misdirection, and similar tactics to avoid discovery and defeat. Elements of the wainscot mode may also appear – especially if the GM has initially presented the campaign as a more traditional steampunk-adventure game with the failed Martian invasion as the "McGuffin" delivering steampunk technology to the players.

Theme: Corruption and doom intertwine here. The invaders attempted to flee a doomed Mars by corrupting (and inevitably dooming) the Earth. The invasion itself failed, but the survivors continue to taint and corrode the Earth. The events of the Martian invasion combine the futile, doomed resistance of the human military with the doom that befell the plague-stricken invaders. In the aftermath of this twin doom, corruption breeds in ruined London and in the laboratories where unscrupulous scientists are adapting the Martians' soulless technologies for human war. The wrecked landers, devastated city, and stench of plague and carrion evoke and symbolize doom; the fleeting sight of inhuman beings scuttling through the wreckage, or a glimpse of red Martian weed growing in the sewer, can hint at the corruption festering beneath a recovering England.

Design Parameters

Scale: This frame can support any scale from prosaic to epic, from rebuilding a single block in London to the defense of the Realm against a renewed invasion.

Scope: Scope can likewise vary widely, from a desperate fight in the rubble of the Tower of London to coordinating military strikes against secret Martian outposts beneath Loch Ness. Much of this will depend on the party: are they elite units of His Majesty's Army, bluff detectives from the Special Branch or New Scotland Yard, or just gentlemen of leisure means and iron conscience?

Visible Scope: This will also vary, depending on the boundaries. The "stealth" version of this campaign, which begins as a "standard" *GURPS Steampunk* game, will likely expand its scope steadily from London to the inner solar system. Depending on the GM's intentions and abilities, such expansion may surprise the players or merely their characters.

Austerity: Unless the campaign is set in the chaos immediately following the invasion, it will likely feature at least a moderate level of austerity. The civilized order is, after all, what humanity defends against Martian chaos and poison.

Boundaries: The ruins of London and the south of England, at least initially. Depending on the campaign, the boundaries can expand to Mars or Venus, if the investigators seek to root out evil at its source.

Characters

The standard adventuring party in this campaign can consist of traditional 100-point heroes with any mix of skills and backgrounds present in post-invasion, early 1900s London. Initially at least, scientists, academics, and detectives will be the most likely delvers into the horror in the ruins.

Uncanny Powers

This campaign frame has little supernatural content, in accordance with its science-fiction background. The Martians have access to advanced technology (see *Red Technology*, p. 113), especially biotechnology. Not all of the Martians' biotechnology remains under their control. Human scientists (and governments) have experimented with the Martians' germ plasm; in a more cinematic game, these experiments might result in sera that grant super abilities. (The GM should concentrate on the advantages presented in *GURPS Bio-Tech*, unless he really wants a four-color game of steampunk articulated battlesuits, Martian invulnerability rays, and antigravity belts.) The heroes might also gain super abilities as "fallout" from exploding Martian craft, or from weird hybrid germs that bred in the Martians' corpses. In either case, the GM should emphasize the horrific nature of the power; see *Super Abilities* (p. 77). Given that Martians are telepathic, psionic powers may also exist in humanity.

Martian Monsters

The Martians, and their unwholesome creations, are examples of the monsters and fears mentioned in Chapter 3, specifically tuned for this campaign frame. The Martians themselves combine vampires with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know; the Martian ghouls are both ghouls and potential Unseelie or zombies; the marauds are this setting's "werewolves," while psychic silhouettes are its "ghosts"; and the myrmidons combine the Fear of the Unnatural with a Fear of Nature to create something creepy, in the Wellsian tradition. Other monsters can appear through these lenses: Martian psionics can, no doubt, implant serial-killing impulses in an unsuspecting human victim, and Martian biotechnology is surely up to the task of creating cryptids or rippers.

Martians   231 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +5 [60]; DX +2 [20]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Bite [30]; Composed [5]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; DR 3 [9]; Extra Arms (6, for a total of 8 tentacles) [60]; Extra Fatigue +10 [30]; Extra Flexibility [10]; Extra Hit Points +3 [15]; Extra Legs (8 tentacles, cannot kick) [10]; Improved G-Tolerance (0.5 G; Affects IQ penalties only, -50%) [5]; Injury Tolerance (No Neck or Vitals) [10]; PD 1 [25]; Pressure Support [10]; Sharp Teeth (Beak) [5]; Telepathy Power 10 [50]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Blood; occasional, daily) [-30]; Dying Race [-10]; Hard of Hearing [-10]; Invertebrate [-20]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Solipsist [-10]; Weak Immune System [-30]; Weakness (Bright Earth sunlight; 1d fatigue per minute) [-30].

Variations

With greater emphasis on (and less ambivalence about) reverse-engineered Martian technology, this frame can easily support cliffhanging pulp adventure rather than grim splatter horror. Widening the scope from London to the rest of the world (or to the surface of Mars) can also psychologically "open up" the game's feel, as the players subconsciously flex their adventuring muscles against a variety of settings.

Alternatively, the GM can widen the scope but keep a taut, uncertain, claustrophobia by turning the campaign into conspiratorial horror. Assume that either the Martian ghouls or the Martians themselves can take human form, lurking unseen in humanity's midst and slowly leveraging access to, and understanding of, Martian technology into scientific and political power and influence. This conspiratorial version might begin to resemble the "covert invasion" campaign in *GURPS Atomic Horror*, riffing off themes from 1950s paranoia such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

Rather than expanding the covert invasion, the GM can present an expanded overt war, in which the Martians wrecked the entire civilized world rather than dying en masse in the first month of the conquest. All of Europe, America, and Asia might lie in ruins, with the game now drawing on post-holocaust horror (p. 83), complete with mutated Martian life forms, poisonous rubble, and desperate cannibal survivors.

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Blue and violet appear black [0]; Sexless [0]; Vast, cool, and unsympathetic [-1].

Skills: Telereceive at IQ [4]; Telesend at IQ [4].

The quasi-octopoid Martians are the result of billennia of evolution on their steadily dying world. A Martian is approximately the size of a bear, with most of its mass in its bulbous head (which also contains its heart and lungs). The back of the Martian's head is a large tympanic membrane; on the front are two large, red eyes over a fleshy beak surmounting a lipless, V-shaped mouth. Above and below the mouth emerge two bunches of eight tentacles each. Martians are black, brown, or gray in color, although they appear more reddish in bright light or after a recent feeding.

The Martian digestive system has evolved out of existence; Martians now live directly on the blood of higher animals. They can drain blood through their upper tentacles, or use syringes and pipettes to inject it. While feeding (or dying), Martians emit a sonorous hooting or howling sound, which may at one time have been their form of speech. They now communicate exclusively through telepathy (individual Martians may also possess other telepathic skills: Sleep, Telecontrol, etc.).

Earth's gravity (1 G) is three G-increments higher than Mars' (0.38 G); Martian ST, DX, and HT are affected per the rules on pp. S98-99. Under Earth's gravity, Martians suffer a -4 to Move simply hauling their own bodies around! Thus, most Martians use bionic limbs, exoskeletons, or (especially) robot vehicles. Martians in this campaign frame do not receive the High Technology advantage because they are cut off from their home planet and must make do with salvaged invasion equipment and bootstrapped Earth technology.

Red Technology

Martian technology is approximately TL9, with human reverse-engineered Martian tech effectively TL(5+1) through TL(6+3) in *GURPS Steampunk* terms (the Martians invaded right on the cusp between TL5 and TL6 in Western industrial societies). The primary Martian weapon is the heat ray, which has the game effects of a TL9 flamer, but with no visible flame. The Martians assaulted the Earth with a deadly black smoke, which seemed to be some sort of chemical weapon that killed humans across many square miles with one burst. For statistics for Martian weapons and tripod walkers, see pp. WT51-54.

At present, the Martians have some of their surviving technology in working order, especially the germ-plasm matrices where they created the black smoke and the red weed that was to overrun Earth's surface. The surviving Martians are currently reengineering their own native life (especially the red weed, which serves as a vampiric combination of kudzu and strangler vine), and corrupting and altering Earthly species to serve their vile ends. In general, the Martians can accomplish any of the TL9 biotechnological tasks described in *GURPS Bio-Tech*.

Martian Ghouls   -45 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +1 [10]; IQ -2 [-15].

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Alertness +2 [10]; Bite [30]; Claws [15]; DR 3 [9]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Night Vision [10]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Silence 2 [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Albinism [-10]; Bloodthirst [-15]; Bowlegged [-1]; Dead Broke [-25]; Hidebound [-5]; Hideous Appearance [-20]; Illiteracy [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Low Empathy [-15]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Obdurate [-10]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Slave Mentality [-40].

Skills: Stealth at DX [2].

These Martian-built humanoids exist to scavenge the ruins of London (and, increasingly, the alleys and underworlds of England's other cities) more effectively, and to obtain more blood for the Martians themselves. Martian ghouls not only crave human blood for themselves, but can fill their stomachs with excess blood and bring it back to their Martian masters, like hunting beasts returning with prey. An early effort, the ghouls' hideous, pallid countenance makes using them as covert spies or couriers difficult without disguise (which usually requires human assistance), but this is sometimes worth the risk. The Martians may be improving the template for specialized tasks or environments.

Marauds   34 points

Attribute Modifiers: DX +4 [45]; IQ -2 [-15]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2 [4]; Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Alertness +3 [15]; Claws [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell (Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%) [23]; Enhanced Dodge [15]; Enhanced Move (Running) 1/2 [5]; Night Vision [10]; Penetrating Call [5]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Thick Fur [29]; Ultrahearing [5].

Disadvantages: Color Blindness [-10]; Dead Broke [-25]; Hidebound [-5]; Illiteracy [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Poor Grip [-5]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Semi-Upright [-5]; Slave Mentality [-40]; Stress Atavism (Moderate, uncommon) [-8]; Stuttering [-10].
Skills: Brawling at DX [1]; Running at HT [4]; Stealth at DX [2].

The Martians use the marauds – "uplifted" terrestrial predators – as more effective killing machines, and as experimental subjects to learn more about Earth's fertile, multifarious ecology. The Martians have more trouble keeping the marauds under control, possibly due to the tendency of the beast flesh to rebel against the brain grafts and other techniques the Martians use to impose their will. (Such rogue marauds, who have bought off their Slave Mentality and Reprogrammable Duty, would make excellent PCs in a "monsters as characters" game; see p. 13.) The template above is an uplifted wolf maraud.

Myrmidons   52 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST -5 [-40]; DX +4 [45]; IQ -5 [-40]; HT +2 [20].
Advantages: Body of Swarm (Humanoid Form, +50%; Insect Form, +25%) [105]; Cast Iron Stomach [15]; Clinging [25]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Mindshare (Global consciousness, maintenance drone, 1-mile range, thousands of drones; communication is detectable, -20%; can be jammed, -10%; and is slower than light, -10%) [51]; Unfazeable [15]; Venom 1 (Corrosive; Squirted, +35%) [21].
Disadvantages: Bad Grip [-10]; Color Blindness [-10]; Dead Broke [-25]; Hidebound [-5]; Horrific Appearance [-30]; Illiteracy [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Mute [-25]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Slave Mentality [-40].

In their continuing efforts to design truly effective and loyal servitors, the Martians soon fastened upon Earthly ants. Ants combine Martian tirelessness with an easily directed hive mentality. By slightly expanding and strengthening the ant genome, the Martians created humaniform hive entities to serve as invisible spies or formidable fighters. Myrmidons are capable of chemical communication, and attack by squirting a jet of formic acid. To date, the practical ceiling on myrmidon size appears to be about 5,000 thumb-sized ants, or about one human mass. The Big Bugs on p. 91 of *GURPS Atomic Horror* might be more examples of such Martian experimentation with Earthly insects.

Psychic Silhouettes   -90 points

Attribute Modifiers: IQ -2 [-15].
Advantages: Ghost Form (Cannot ride in vehicles, or use poltergeist effect, possession, or probability manipulation, -65%; Visible, looks human, to living beings only, +10%; Sounds and visual effects only, -10%) [35]; Single-Minded [5]; Unfazeable [15]; and *one* of Pheromone Control (Non-chemical, treated as "No Obvious Effect," +20%), Sonic Blast (2d; Only affects living beings, -20%; Reduced range, 3 hexes, -5%), or Terror, all [30].
Disadvantages: Cannot Learn [-30]; Dead Broke [-25]; Hidebound [-5]; Low Empathy [-15]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Obdurate [-10]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Slave Mentality [-40].

As the Martians enhanced their biological powers, they also worked to maintain their psychic advantages. Those Martians capable of powerful Mental Stabs soon discovered that they could create "psychic silhouettes" by fatally blasting humans who were in the grip of powerful emotions. The emotional energies would project the form of the unfortunate human into the room or alley where he died, and power effects related to his final emotion. Humans killed in the throes of fear created terrifying psychic silhouettes, humans filled with rage created psychic silhouettes that could emit deadly howls, and those blasted while experiencing overwhelming lust could inspire it in the living. Subject to Martian psychic control, the silhouettes can guard a location or distract an opponent.

Possible Narrative Structures

Each of the following five story arcs illustrates one of the narrative structures from pp. 64-67 as it might play out in this campaign world.

Lambeth Run

A potential introductory arc, in which a mixed party of marauds and altered humans escapes from the Martians' experimental warrens beneath ruined Lambeth, and must make peaceful contact with human authorities while staying alive and one jump ahead of the Martians. The PCs may be the escapees, or they may be patrolling human soldiers and police who must decide whether to trust these inhuman entities – and whether to engineer another mass breakout. (Escape)

Down in the Tube Station at Midnight

The heroes are passengers on the first run of the new armored London Underground carriages from the rebuilt port at Greenwich to the railhead in Kensington. Hundreds of workers have died reopening the Underground and laying repaired tracks; it's up to the travelers to find out why, and to survive the discovery. (Gauntlet)

Wacht am Himmel

Besides America and the Empire, Germany has sent the most aid to rebuild and restore Britain. The Kaiser is, after all, related to the royal family. Suspicious folk, however, murmur that the Germans have sent a lot more engineers, military men, and scientists than tons of food or loans of gold. Could the Stelle Gesellschaft, a German "astronomical society," be part of some sinister plot to steal Martian technology for the German war machine? Or might their real agenda be something darker yet? (Nemesis)

The Thames That Try Men's Souls

The heroes man (or spend considerable time assisting) the River Patrol, which helps guard grain shipments and transport rebuilding teams. They also investigate peculiar murders along the Embankment, and show visiting biologists the bizarre growths infesting the wreckage of the Royal Gardens at Kew. (Picaresque)

The Other Red Meat

In all the turmoil, nobody paid much attention to the other attempted vampiric invasion of London in 1897. A correspondent of the missing Dr. Abraham van Helsing convinces the heroes to find out what happened to van Helsing during the attack, and whether the vampire that he hunted escaped to Transylvania alive. As they follow the trail from Carfax to Castle Dracula, the investigators can also explore the potential Martian heritage of Earth's first vampires. (Quest)

Inspirational Material

Cambias, James. *GURPS Mars* (Steve Jackson Games, 2002).

Carella, C.J. *GURPS War Against the Chtorr* (Steve Jackson Games, 1993). Sourcebook adapting David Gerrold's war of the worlds, focusing on ecological catastrophes.

Jeter, K.W. *Morlock Night* (DAW, 1979). Other Wellsian horrors in another steampunk London.

Moore, C.L. "Shambleau" (1933). A different take on a different vampire on a different Mars; still well worth reading.

Rowland, Marcus L. *Forgotten Futures* (Heliograph, 1999). Billed as "The Scientific Romance Role Playing Game," this game and its worldbooks rigorously (and wonderfully) explore the consequences (both stated and implicit) of various works of Victorian and Edwardian SF.

Smith, Clark Ashton. "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis" (1932). A brilliant tale of vampiric horrors set on a luridly dying Mars.

Wells, H.G. *The War of the Worlds* (Indiana University Press, 1993). The critical edition of Wells' classic 1898 novel. Elements of this campaign frame also owe a debt to his 1896 novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and his 1905 short story "The Empire of the Ants."

Films

Five Million Years to Earth (Roy Ward Baker, 1968). Ancient malevolent Martian life, the stern science of Professor Quatermass, and modern London intersect in this incredible, yet underrated film.

War of the Worlds (1988-1990). An enjoyable, albeit less-than-rigorous, TV series "sequel" to the 1953 movie; centered on covert Martian plots.

The Secret History of History

Once upon a time, the Anunnakku enslaved mankind. They reshaped human consciousness to leave initiative, creativity, and inspiration under their control, in a separate part of the mind. By redesigning our language, and perhaps even the linguistic-perceptual centers of the human brain, they placed everything we could say or see under their control. They reinforced their controls with memes: belief structures (analogous to genes) that spread and reproduce throughout human societies. Their agents, the inhuman (or superhuman) *sedu*, became the overseers of mankind, a mankind programmed by word and faith to believe the sedu, and to believe the Anunnakku codes in our "subconscious."

Somehow, a small group of humans rebelled. Perhaps a sedu went rogue, and used "his" humans to rebel against the Anunnakku, accidentally aborting their programming. Perhaps one of the sedu took pity on us and freed us. Or perhaps even the Anunnakku weren't perfect, and their control of us broke down as the memes mutated unpredictably and as humanity scattered across the globe and built thousands of different languages and cultures. At any rate, the rebels succeeded, somehow, in triggering a reality quake that overturned history itself, leaving a new past in its wake.

In the new history (called "History A" by Project Sandman), this cataclysm happened in 535 A.D. Everything before that date never really happened; it is a screen memory, a delusion, a scrim created by the global human subconscious. The century after that date was almost a global Dark Age: the Byzantine Empire lost a third of its population in the Plague of Justinian, Rome lay in ruins, China and India descended into chaos and civil war, and even Teotihuacán and the Maya states collapsed. Famines and storms swept over the world. These events were aftershocks from the reality quake, the result of a global population maniacally searching for direction and order after the eclipse of their subconscious "gods," the Anunnakku.

Project Sandman

In 1888, a small coterie of scholars in the British Museum launched an expedition to the banks of the Tigris River to settle some major discrepancies in the archaeological record. Their shovels unleashed some horrible creatures, which only the fortuitous use of the expedition's dynamite supply defeated. The Duncorne Foundation (named for the expedition's sponsor, whose fortune and government connections drove this first incarnation of Project Sandman) compared other reports from around the globe with the bizarre evidence brought back from the Tigris. Slowly, after many more encounters with creatures irrupting into our present from a vanished history, they pieced together the truth.

Much as an earthquake leaves fractures in the geological strata along its fault line, the reality quake left many discrepancies in the archaeological record, from the age of the Sphinx (hydrologically dated to 6,000 years before the earliest possible culture could have carved it) to the 250-year gap in the strata above the Greek city of Tiryns. All of these fault lines pointed to the year 535 A.D. as the "epicenter" of the great cataclysm that thrust our own history (History A) onto the surface of reality, and buried the history of the Anunnakku and sedu (History B) deep below. But just as an earthquake sometimes flings up material from deep in the earth onto the surface, the reality quake cast up anomalous shards of the previous reality into our past. Among those reality shards are various odd and legendary artifacts (perhaps including the Holy Grail, which various medieval authors claimed was lost after the "Dolorous Blow"), and the surviving sedu and their minions, the irruptors, from History B.

Lord Duncorne's government connections eventually transformed the Duncorne Foundation into the British government's Project Sandman, named for its mission: to keep the Anunnakku—and the rest of the world—asleep. Sandman became a joint Anglo-American operation in 1943 following a string of irruptor outbreaks in North Africa and Italy. Project Sandman was the real motive force behind the mind-controllers of the British Tavistock Institute and the CIA's MKULTRA experiments, and it continues their work today in its covert headquarters in Cambridge, England and its operational base near the Dugway Proving Grounds in Utah. Most Project Sandman agents go under deep cover as CIA or MI6, but answer only to the Project's directors.

The Madness Dossier

"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out–bang!–just like a candle!"

*"I shouldn't!" Alice exclaimed indignantly. "Besides, if **I'm** only a sort of thing in his dream, what are **you**, I should like to know?"*

"Ditto," said Tweedledum.

"Ditto, ditto!" cried Tweedledee.

He shouted this so loud that Alice couldn't help saying, "Hush! You'll be waking him, I'm afraid, if you make so much noise."

*"Well, it's no use **your** talking about waking him," said Tweedledum, "when you're only one of the things in his dream. You know very well you're not real."*

*– Lewis Carroll, **Through the Looking-Glass***

For 15 centuries, the Red King has been asleep, knocked out by a cataclysm so massive that it threw all of history – past and future – into a new pattern. The Red King's servants, the ones who survived the reality quake, slowly shook themselves out of the rubble of their superseded history and began trying to wake him up. For over a century, only the archaeologists, neurolinguists, and commandos of Project Sandman have stopped them. Every day the Red King stays asleep is a day that history remains familiar, that human beings remain free, that the madness dossier remains closed. And all it costs is the life, the morals, and the sanity of everyone who works for Project Sandman.

The "Red King" is a Sandman slang term for the entities that once ruled the world, known to archaeologists as the Anunnakku (a species of Sumerian god or demon). Nobody knows for sure if the Anunnakku were aliens, supermen somehow mutated (or evolved) from *Homo sapiens,* or just the ruling caste of an unguessably ancient civilization that somehow mastered the art of control. Because before the reality quake, the Red King was in control. Humanity was linguistically programmed to obey his orders, and the orders of his servants. It still is. The Red King's servants use the ancient post-hypnotic blocks and memetic programs in the human subconscious to control us, to hide in plain sight, and to bring about their victory. Project Sandman has hacked the human source code, fighting fire with fire . . . using the minds of the innocent as the burning ground.

The Campaign

Genre: Modern-day espionage and micro-conspiracy. Project Sandman operates super-covertly, through a special-ops strike force and a deeply theoretical analysis section. The irruptors don't control world governments, but they do move through the population unseen, thanks to their powers over human perception.

Style: Psychological horror, as the agents must continually use horrific methods (mind control, along with the other less-savory aspects of espionage work) to defeat horrors using the same methods. If the GM wishes to emphasize this style, the agents' *own* actions might spark Fright Checks.

Mode: A quintessential wainscot game, making the question of boundaries between universes (as well as between defenders and irruptors) its major concern. Much of the horror of the irruptors comes from their ability to "hide in plain sight." With only moderate tweaks, this can also be an action technothriller – in which case the GM may wish to add more, and more horrific, irruptors.

Variations

This setting is not cosmic horror, but it can take on much of cosmic horror's mood and style if the GM emphasizes the irruptors as aliens and if he establishes that History A is truly doomed regardless of Project Sandman's sacrifices. In a cosmic horror game, learning the truth about our universe, or seeing an irruptor, causes a Sanity-Blasting Fright Check (see p. 98). A cosmic horror variation would also support a more investigative mode, including a campaign in which the heroes were outsiders (other government investigators, independent archaeologists, or tenacious reporters) chasing down the mysterious Project Sandman and stumbling into the nature of reality. Outside the cosmic horror style, the open-ended nature of reality quakes can justify any amount of the Fortean mode for a GM interested in questioning reality and perception by presenting streams of ever-more-bizarre events.

Theme: Betrayal and corruption meet in this game; the heroes must betray their own morality and become corrupt to defeat amoral slavers from another reality. However, that reality *was* the real one; History A is artificial, and it is breaking down under the irruptor onslaught. Insanity, mirrors, social disintegration, and "the curious madness of crowds" can all highlight these themes, along with the inevitable question: if you know memories and perceptions can't be trusted, how can you trust yours?

Design Parameters

Scale: Epic, from day one. In theory, if Project Sandman fails at any mission, it could flick out our existence like a light bulb. In practice, some mission failures "merely" cause a reality temblor that retrocreates another batch of irruptors (see *Reality Quake Table,* p. 119).

Scope: In theory, agents are restricted by orders from their superiors, and by their own personal morality. Much of the psychological horror in this campaign comes from the actions they must take to widen their scope.

Visible Scope: The same as the scope; Project Sandman agents are fully aware of the potential consequences of their actions. For an investigative game with different protagonists, the visible scope will expand with a jerk when the investigators learn the truth about the irruptors.

Campaign Crossovers
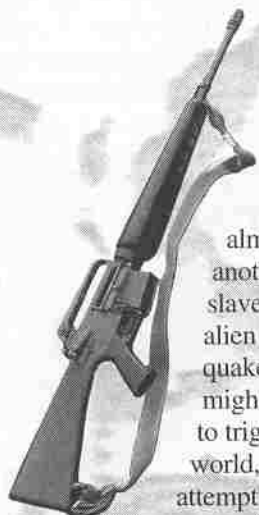
GURPS Black Ops

The Company could easily discover the truth about History B, and the GM can use Project Sandman as a task force inside either the Company or Argus. The Prima are almost certainly the Anunnakku by another name; the Greys may be a new slave race bred by the sedu, or another alien race drawn to Earth by the reality quake's shockwaves. The Tunguska blast might have been the Greys' failed attempt to trigger *another* reality quake. In a grim world, it might not have been a *failed* attempt . . .

GURPS Cabal

Project Sandman becomes the Wheel of Ptah lodge, the irruptors are the wedge of a qlippoth invasion, and the Anunnakku are the First Creation's archangels, trapped outside the Four Realms by the reality-quaking Deluge that created the Pearl-Bright Ocean. Irruptors should have innate spells (especially in the Mind Control college) at high levels and Dependency on mana, and perhaps Ghost Form. The Lemurians, and possibly the Reptoids, might be irruptors under this scenario – or have histories of their own to restore.

GURPS Psionics

In the world of the Phoenix Project, Project Sandman is a crucial project of the Psiberocracy, with significant staff representation from the Psibercorps. The Phoenix Project may be running its own investigation of the irruptors. Whether Project Sandman is a sinister government program spun out of control, or whether the Phoenix Project is a gang of addlepated do-gooders who risk demolishing all of history with their amateur interference, is up to the GM.

GURPS Warehouse 23

This setting would put a high Fortean-Mundane lens (pp. WT25-27) on the Warehouse and its contents. In this game world, the Warehouse is "the Sandbox," an ontologically secure facility where Project Sandman stores and studies every known artifact from History B. The heroes can be agents assigned to the Sandbox, or the Sandbox can be a recurring setting and plot device. Many of the objects in *Warehouse 23* make excellent History B artifacts, especially the Oracle Gem (pp. WT48-49) – which might even be what the rebels used to trigger the 535 A.D. cataclysm!

Austerity: This campaign is lenient to moderate in the field; agents have broad discretion, little oversight, and access to wide range of mind-control techniques. However, for taut psychological horror, it should be very austere in moral and psychological consequences – agents who habitually slaughter witnesses should be given the Bloodlust disadvantage, for example.

Boundaries: Project Sandman has a global mission, and most campaigns will be globetrotting ones (with special emphasis on the eastern Mediterranean). However, a suitably large and historically unstable city (Jerusalem, Istanbul, Cairo, Rome, Athens) can be the setting for a localized campaign.

Characters

Agents of Project Sandman begin at 200 points, with up to -5 points in quirks and up to -40 points in disadvantages (not counting the ones from the Project Sandman package, below).

Project Sandman Package   63 1/2 points

Advantages: Alternate Identity [15]; Patron (Project Sandman; 15 or less) [75].

Disadvantages: Extremely Hazardous Duty (To Project Sandman) [-20]; Secret (Sandman) [-30].

Skills: Archaeology at IQ-2 [1]; Hidden Lore (History B) at IQ-2 [1/2]; Hypnotism at IQ [4]; Language (Danbe) at IQ+3 [10]; Psychology at IQ-1 [2]; Sign Language (ASL) at IQ+2 [6].

This package can be applied to any other character template, and reflects basic Project Sandman training in archaeology (for artifact identification, and to locate fractures in history), and in psychology and hypnotism (for memetics and mind control).

Danbe is an isolate language spoken by a hill tribe in western New Guinea; Project Sandman neurolinguists believe that of all human languages, it contains the least Anunnakku programming. Danbe-speakers can add (Danbe - 12) to any roll to resist sedu or Anunnakku commands or influence; e.g., an agent with Danbe-15 would get +3 to resist. Danbe is a Mental/Hard language.

Sign languages work on different parts of the brain than spoken languages, and Sandmen use ASL to exercise those regions, as well as for silent communication. Regular ASL use gives the user +1 to Will rolls to thwart or resist irruptors. This bonus is cumulative with any Danbe benefit.

Many Sandmen also have Disciplines of Faith for Islam, Bahá'í, or Mormonism, since all three religions were founded after 535 A.D., and they are therefore not as suspect as pre-quake beliefs.

Uncanny Powers

Most of the uncanny powers in this campaign come from either the techniques of the Anunnakku or the black technology that Project Sandman has developed to combat them.

Alphabet of the Anunnakku: The Anunnakku programmed the human perceptual cortex to respond instinctively to certain images. One glyph causes the beholder to

perceive the user as a "normal person" in the mind's eye; irruptors need only wear a headband or large placard bearing this symbol to appear human when among humans. Other glyphs cause the beholder to run in fear, slip into a hypnotic trance, obey without question, and so forth. At the GM's discretion, a separate symbol might exist to induce any mental advantage or disadvantage temporarily.

The skill to create a glyph is Symbol Drawing (Anunnakku) (M/H). Humans cannot design new glyphs, but they can learn some by rote. Human witnesses of a glyph may either submit without resisting or roll to resist at Will minus the Symbol Drawing skill of the glyph's inscriber. However, a critical success burns out the relevant mental circuitry, with lasting effects; e.g., a critical success when resisting the "flee immediately" glyph might result in the Berserk or Overconfidence disadvantage.

With sufficient knowledge of these memes, the user can convince almost any human to believe almost anything.

Memes and Memetic Engineering: The Anunnakku also planted memes in human languages and cultures to serve as the human "source code." With sufficient knowledge of these memes, the user can convince almost any human to believe almost anything. Memetic knowledge in this setting is subsumed under the Enthrallment skills on pp. CI139-140. For humans, these skills are one level harder than given (Persuade and Sway Emotions are Mental/Hard, while Suggest and Captivate are Mental/Very Hard) and require the usual amount of time. For irruptors, these skills have their regular difficulties, and all but Persuade require only one-quarter the given time. Memeticists may use Psychology skill rather than Bard skill to start the Enthrallment process. Humans resist memetic Enthrallment at *half* their Will. For more on memes and memetic engineering, see ***Transhuman Space*** (the GM may wish to substitute the rules there for the rule of thumb given here).

Mind Control and Brain Hacking: Both irruptors and Sandmen practice mind control and Brain Hacking (pp. CI160, WT114-117). So far, all Project Sandman mind-control equipment and techniques *only* work on humans, and *not* on irruptors. Project Sandman has access to (and likely invented) much of the psychotronic tech from ***GURPS Psionics,*** especially the communication and information equipment (pp. P63-64), covert operations equipment (pp. P67-68), and psychotronic weaponry (pp. P70-73). Project Sandman neurochemists have specialty drug cocktails that can induce any mental disadvantage (usually resisted at HT-6). The GM should feel free to invent any disturbing equipment or drugs to add to the Project Sandman arsenal.

Reality Quake Table

If an event occurs, or an irruptor plan comes to fruition, that the GM feels might trigger a slippage in the fault lines of history, roll 3d. Such events, and their effects on the roll, might include:

● A large cult is established to worship the Anunnakku and try to "believe" or "wish" them back into power. Roll at +1 for 100 cultists, +2 for 1,000 cultists, and so on.

● An irruptor is unequivocally revealed to a large, media-connected population. This can go either way: the massive shock and revulsion might reinforce humanity's "amnesia" about the Anunnakku, or the sight of an irruptor might trigger their fear and belief. Roll 1 or 2 dice, depending on the number of surviving witnesses and scale of the event; add odd totals to the die roll, subtract even totals.

● A large number (100+) of humans die in a day in a reality subduction zone (see p. 120). Roll at +1 for 1,000 deaths, +2 for 10,000, and so on.

● Irruptors successfully insert memes, Anunnakku glyphs, etc. into the media stream. Roll at +1 for 100,000 surviving humans influenced, +2 for 1 million, and so on.

● Irruptors discover and use an artifact from History B on a human population. Roll at +1 for 1,000 surviving humans influenced, +2 for 10,000, and so on.

If the event (other than a mass death) occurred in a reality subduction zone, add 1 to the result. If a sedu survives to coordinate the quake, add 3 to the result. If all surviving witnesses believe a Project Sandman cover story and no irruptors survive in the area, subtract 3 from the result.

6 or less – No result.

7-9 – No result, but add 1 to any further roll made within a week.

10-11 – No result, but add 2 to any further roll made within a week.

12-13 – No *immediate* result, but if the event is not reversed or contained (by massive propaganda blitz, commando action, etc.), roll again at +2 in 1d×10 hours. This modifier is cumulative if rolled more than once.

14-15 – Reality temblor in 2d hours; local area becomes a reality subduction zone and 3d irruptors are retrocreated nearby.

16-17 – Reality quake will occur in 2d months, if not reversed or contained; reality temblor will occur as 14-15, above.

18 or more – Reality quake will occur in 2d weeks, if not reversed or contained; 1d reality temblors will occur worldwide in 1d days.

Other Abilities: Depending on campaign flavor, the GM may wish to allow cinematic martial-arts techniques as examples of human potentials based on clearing one's mind of Anunnakku influence. Some irruptors possess psionic talents, and the GM may wish to allow innate human psionics as well. However, since any human psionic ability may be a legacy of Anunnakku tampering, using psionics may expose agents to subversion, mind-altering, Delusions, Will losses, or worse!

Irruptors

"Irruptors" is the generic term for entities native to History B who irrupt into our history to attempt to restore their own. All irruptors can sense reality subduction zones, the presence of History B artifacts or entities, etc., as per the Second Sight advantage (p. CI43). Irruptors seem to be genetically modified creations of the Anunnakku, although whether the Anunnakku started with animal, human, or alien DNA may be unknowable. They closely resemble various demons from Sumerian (and later Akkadian and Babylonian) myth, which gives credence to the theory that the Anunnakku first arose, or first enslaved mankind, in the fourth millennium B.C. in Sumer. The following write-ups give the most common types of irruptors, and their most common tasks in History A.

Basmu   377 points
Attribute Modifiers: ST +3/+14* [59]; DX +3 [30]; HT +5 [60].
Advantages: Alertness +10 [50]; Butting Horns [5]; Constriction Attack [15]; Danger Sense [15]; Extra Flexibility (Snake body) [5]; Extra Hit Points +15 [75]; Fangs [10]; Night Vision [10]; Second Sight (History B) [5]; Tunnel (Move 8; Only in sand, -30%) [84]; Venom 2 (Poisonous; Spit, +35%) [41].
Disadvantages: Cold-Blooded [-5]; Inconvenient Size [-10]; Light Sleeper [-5]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Sadism [-15]; Sense of Duty (History B) [-10]; Solipsist [-10]; Weirdness Magnet [-15].
Skills: Brawling at DX+1 [2]; Hidden Lore (History B) at IQ [2]; Intimidation at IQ+2 [6]; Survival (Desert) at IQ+2 [6]; Stealth at DX [2].
* Hybrid ST (see p. CI176). The first number is for the human arms, the second is for the snake body (with No Fine Manipulators, -40%). Use the second number when calculating encumbrance and constriction damage.

The basmu, or snake demon, is the size of a large anaconda, although its coloring and banding match the Asiatic horned viper. It, too, has horns, as well as human arms and hands. The basmu serves as a protector and guardian of important irruptor sites, especially ones in the desert, where it can tunnel under the sand and lie in wait for interlopers.

Girtablullu   286 points
Attribute Modifiers: ST +7 [80]; DX +2 [20]; HT +2 [20].
Advantages: Ambidexterity [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Danger Sense [15]; Enhanced Move (Running) 2 [20]; Extra Fatigue +4 [12]; Flight (Winged Flight, -25%) [30]; Second Sight (History B) [5]; Striker (Scorpion tail;

Reach 2) [15]; Talons [40]; Venom 3 (Poisonous) [45]; Weapon Master [45].
Disadvantages: Berserk [-15]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Sadism [-15]; Sense of Duty (History B) [-10]; Solipsist [-10]; Weirdness Magnet [-15].
Skills: Brawling at DX+1 [2]; Hidden Lore (History B) at IQ [2]; Shortsword at DX+2 [8]; Stealth at DX [2].

The girtablullu, or scorpion-men, play a major role in epics such as that of Gilgamesh as dangerous fighters and protectors of magical treasure. In practice, the girtablullu seem to be the foot soldiers of the sedu; they may have their own psychological programming for ruthlessness and efficiency in battle. A girtablullu has a human head and body, vulture wings, raptor legs and talons, and a 5' scorpion tail. Girtablullu sometimes use guns, but prefer wide-bladed swords and knives, such as the kukri.

Kusarikku   170 points
Attribute Modifiers: ST +6/+40* [91]; DX -1 [-10]; HT +7 [100].
Advantages: DR 2 (Skull only, -50%) [3]; Extra Hit Points +3 [15]; Psychokinesis Power 10 (Single-skill Pyrokinesis) 10 [30]; Second Sight (History B) [5]; Striker (Sharp horns; damage as Talons) [45].
Disadvantages: Bad Temper [-10]; Inconvenient Size [-10]; Increased Life Support (Needs twice as much food as a human) [-10]; Incurious [-5]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Sadism [-15]; Sense of Duty (History B) [-10]; Solipsist [-10]; Weirdness Magnet [-15].
Skills: Brawling at DX+1 [2]; Pyrokinesis at IQ-2 [1]; Throwing at DX+1 [8].
* Hybrid ST (see p. CI176). The first number is for the human head, torso, and arms, the second is for the lower body and legs (with No Fine Manipulators, -40%). Use the second number when calculating encumbrance and charging or trampling damage.

Reality Subduction Zones

In geology, subduction zones occur where one tectonic plate folds another beneath it, often triggering a number of smaller temblors. A reality subduction zone is such a line between histories. Pieces of History B often emerge in such areas, and retrocreated irruptors (popped out of causal limbo by the stress-release of grinding histories) tend to appear there as well. Some Project Sandman theorists believe that the major reality subduction zones appear where there were large Anunnakku settlements or bases in History B, such as Iraq, Israel, Greece, and the Nile, Indus, and Hwang Ho valleys. Other such zones occur in areas where irruptors have repeatedly attempted to trigger them, such as London, New York, Berlin, Paris, and other major cities. Still others have no clear cause, or may be associated with the cataclysm of 535 A.D., such as a volcanic crater in western Java, the Kenyan uplands, and Lubantuun in Belize.

Where girtablullu are the infantry, the kusarikku, or bullmen, are the artillery. Immensely strong, capable of battering their way through a steel wall, the kusarikku can also rapidly heat objects by manipulating molecules with subvocalized intonations and focused mental energy. A kusarikku has a human head and a powerfully muscled human torso and arms, with the lower body and hind legs of a bull, and bulls' horns.

Sedu   957 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +10 [110]; IQ +3 [30]; HT +3 [30].

Advantages: 3D Spatial Sense [10]; Alertness +3 [15]; Altered Time Rate 2 [200]; Charisma +6 [30]; Disease-Resistant [5]; Enhanced Dodge [15]; Enhanced Time Sense [45]; Extra Fatigue +10 [30]; Extra Hit Points +7 [35]; Flight (Winged Flight, -25%) [30]; Imperturbable [10]; Intuitive Mathematician [25]; Language Talent +5 [10]; PD 2 [50]; Perfect Balance [15]; Pheromone Control [25]; Recovery [10]; Resistant to Poison [5]; Sanctity [5]; Sanitized Metabolism [5]; Second Sight (History B) [5]; Secret Communication (Invisible, +40%) [28]; Temporal Inertia [15]; Terror (-6 to Fright Checks) [90]; Unaging [15]; Very Beautiful [25]; Very Rapid Healing [15]; Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Callous [-6]; Glory Hound [-15]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Sadism [-15]; Sense of Duty (History B) [-10]; Solipsist [-10]; Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Skills: Acting at IQ [2]; Archaeology at IQ [4]; Bard at IQ+11*† [8]; Captivate at IQ+5 [14]; Detect Lies at IQ§ [2]; Diplomacy at IQ+1† [2]; Fast-Talk at IQ [2]; Hidden Lore (History B) at IQ [2]; History (Esoteric) at IQ [4]; Persuade at IQ+3 [8]; Psychology at IQ+3 [10]; Suggest at IQ+5 [14]; Sway Emotions at IQ+3 [8]; Symbol Drawing (Anunnakku) at IQ [4]; Tactics at IQ+1 [6].

* Includes +6 for Charisma.

† Includes +2 for Voice.

§ From Psychology default.

The sedu were the master caste of the Anunnakku, whose job it was to supervise humanity and rule over it. Humans have been programmed to obey the sedu, and to react to their terrible beauty with almost primal fear and worship. On top of that, the sedu are expert memeticists, and can draw the compelling glyphs of the Anunnakku alphabet. A single sedu would be a tough target indeed for a Project Sandman team, and sedu almost always have guardians and servitors (both irruptor and brainwashed human) in their vicinity. The sedu seem very similar to djinn, angels, sidhe, and other beings from human mythology; they have four wings but otherwise appear fully (even perfectly) human.

Ugallu   450 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +15 [150]; DX +1 [10]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Alertness +5 [25]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Extra Fatigue +10 [30]; Extra Hit Points +3 [15]; Faz Sense (3-hex range, -20%) [8]; Lightning (2d; Only during storms, -15%) [34]; Night Vision [10]; Probability Alteration (see Ghost Form, p. 19) [20]; Psychokinesis Power 30 (Only to affect atmosphere, -20%) [120]; Second Sight (History B) [5]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Talons [40].

Disadvantages: Callous [-6]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Sadism [-15]; Sense of Duty (History B) [-10]; Solipsist [-10]; Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Skills: Cryokinesis at IQ+5 [14]; Knife at DX+2 [4]; Meteorology at IQ [2]; Pyrokinesis at IQ+5 [14].

Possibly intended as a variant kusarikku, the ugallu is built on a leonine model. It sports a lion's head on a human body, with raptor feet and a lion's tail. It has an even stronger degree of control over molecular motion than the kusarikku, but can use it only on the atmosphere – usually to alter the weather. An ugallu also generates a strong bioelectric field, capable of shooting a powerful electrical spark at its foes, once a storm has sufficiently ionized the air.

Possible Narrative Structures

Each of the following five story arcs illustrates one of the narrative structures from pp. 64-67 as it might play out in this campaign world.

Breakdown or Breakout

Having seen and done enough, the agents try to "come in from the cold" and defect from Project Sandman to some other cause. Neither side believes their intentions genuine. (Escape)

Earthquake Whether

While on a mission in Djakarta, the agents encounter a new Anunnakku glyph that rotates their perceptual cortices into History B during the 535 A.D. cataclysm. They must fight off the attacks of the irruptors, decipher the strange surreal imagery of History B, and avoid destroying too much of downtown Djakarta before their willpower completely erodes and they become loyal warriors in the sedu army – or die of psychosomatic injuries received as the reality quake swallows them up. (Gauntlet)

Chevalier Sans Peur et Sans Merci

A sedu who identifies himself with Lancelot begins operations in England and France, recreating the Arthurian legend with ever-more grandiose results. Does he intend to goad the agents into striking a second Dolorous Blow, and use himself as the fulcrum to restore History B? (Nemesis)

Lawyers, Guns, and Memory

The heroes are elite agents of the DEA looking into rumors that rogue elements of the CIA and MI6 are smuggling drugs. (In a dark game, these agencies are doing just that to fund Project Sandman; in a lighter one, it's irruptor disinformation.) One lead after another takes them from battle to battle against both Project Sandman and the irruptors; with tolerant or eager roleplayers, the PCs will likely wind up switching sides with total abandon as one or the other faction brain-hacks them. (Picaresque)

Inspirational Material

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Ellis, Warren. *Planetary* (DC/WildStorm, 1999-present). Gripping comic about "reality archaeologist" superheroes uncovering the hidden history of their comic-book universe.

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Jaynes, Julian. *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Houghton Mifflin, 1976). Intriguing and inspirational, if wrongheaded, theory.

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Watson, Ian. *The Embedding* (Gollancz, 1973). Classic SF novel about alien linguistic design, the interplay of language and perception, and memetics before it was called that.

Red King Black-Box Hunt

The directors are convinced that if the Anunnakku are aliens, the ship that brought them to Earth must be somewhere. Perhaps its navigation systems could help pinpoint the Anunnakku's home; certainly, its advanced technology could even the odds. Its "reality stabilizers" might even be what keeps the Anunnakku asleep, rather than vanished with the rest of their history. Now, all the agents have to do is track down every single myth of a fallen stone, grail, chariot, or flying saucer – but if they find the Anunnakku ship, they could end the fight right there. (Quest)

BLASPHEMOUS LORE

"I couldn't live a week without a private library."
— H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Woodburn Harris, 2/25/29

Bibliography

Even more than most bibliographies, this one can only scratch the surface of the available material. These choices represent the authors' opinions, but feel free to check out the nonfiction works below, and look in *their* bibliographies, for more directions.

Nonfiction

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Carter, Lin. *Lovecraft: A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos* (Ballantine, 1972). Carter attempts a Lovecraft biography while presenting the most complete "beginner's roundup" of the mythos outside Sandy Petersen's brilliant RPG, *Call of Cthulhu* (Chaosium, 1981). Chris Jarocha-Ernst's *A Cthulhu Mythos Bibliography & Concordance* (Pagan Publishing, 1999) is obsessively complete, while Daniel Harms' *Encyclopedia Cthulhiana* (Chaosium, 1998) organizes the Mythos itself.

Coleman, Loren and Clark, Jerome. *Cryptozoology A to Z* (Simon & Schuster, 1999). A handy first guide to cryptids.

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Douglas, Adam. *The Beast Within* (Chapmans, 1992). A vital and intriguing exploration of the werewolf myth.

Fort, Charles. *The Book of the Damned* (Boni and Liveright, 1919). Possible, probable, and highly unlikely nonfiction. Collected with its three sequels in *The Books of Charles Fort* (Henry Holt, 1941). These books are vastly readable, and great weirdness mines. The great collector of frogs-from-the-sky stories, Fort raises important questions about the way we dictate "reality."

Garrett, Laurie. *The Coming Plague* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994). The scary truth about diseases such as AIDS, Ebola, and their ilk.

Hardy, Phil (editor). *The Overlook Film Encyclopedia: Horror* (Overlook, 1994). The cinephile's reference work on horror, with entries on over 2,000 films.

Jones, Stephen and Newman, Kim (editors). *Horror: The 100 Best Books* (Carroll & Graf, 1990). A hundred horror writers and critics each pick a book; the result is a browser's paradise.

Kendrick, Walter. *The Thrill of Fear* (Grove Press, 1991). A history of horror entertainment since the Gothic novel.

King, Stephen. *Danse Macabre* (Everest House, 1981). King's addictively readable nonfiction examination of four decades of horror books and movies.

Lovecraft, H.P. *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (Dover, 1973). Accessible book version of Lovecraft's seminal 1936 essay.

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Sullivan, Jack (editor). *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural* (Penguin, 1986). An excellent first reference guide to the field, though sadly becoming dated.

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Fiction

There is so much good horror fiction out there that any list must, by its nature, be arbitrary. The problem metastasizes further, given that even quite mediocre horror fiction can often make a really great model for horror gaming, if only by spawning ideas of the "Well, if *I* were writing this" variety. That said, the material below is for the most part good stuff, somewhat culled for gameability or game inspiration; however, some of it is just there because it will scare you out of a year's growth.

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Bear, Greg. *Blood Music* (Arbor House, 1985). A tale of intelligent viruses that transform living things from within. All the more terrifying because it is *not* supernatural.

Bellairs, John. *The House With the Clock In Its Walls* (Dial, 1973), *The Mummy, the Will, and the Crypt* (Dial, 1983), *The Spell of the Sorcerer's Skull* (Dial, 1984), *The Dark Secret of Weatherend* (Dial, 1984), and many more are excellent sources for kid-character roleplaying, as well as being great "juvenile" horror novels.

Bierce, Ambrose. *Can Such Things Be?* (Cassell, 1893). Bleak, savagely ironic short horror fiction.

Blackwood, Algernon. *The Willows and Other Queer Tales* (Collins, 1935). Reading these short stories is an education in building and using narrative atmosphere; Blackwood's *John Silence: Physician Extraordinary* (Eveleigh Nash, 1908) collects the adventures of *his* "occult detective."

Blaylock, James P. *Homunculus* (Ace, 1986). Necromantic shenanigans in Victorian London, featuring morbid humor and memorable characters. With *Night Relics* (Ace, 1994) and *All the Bells on Earth* (Ace, 1995), Blaylock finds just the right mix of dreamy California regionalism and horror.

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Dean, Pamela. *Tam Lin* (Tor, 1991). Excellent atmospheric horror-fantasy novel set on a small college campus in the 1970s, and centering on ghosts, faerie, and the power of the stage.

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Feist, Raymond. *Faerie Tale* (Doubleday, 1988). Splendidly evoked evil faeries in upstate New York.

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Goldstein, Lisa. *The Red Magician* (Timescape, 1982). A powerful, quiet story of Jewish magic in Nazi-occupied Europe. Goldstein mixes ancient magic and modern horror into a truly moving book. A versatile author, in *Dark Cities Underground* (Tor, 1999) she presents the secret-magical horror of subway construction.

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Laidlaw, Marc. *The 37th Mandala* (St. Martin's, 1996). A New Age charlatan accidentally unleashes Things Man Was Not Meant To Know as "spirit guides."

Lee, Tanith. *Red as Blood* (DAW, 1983). This beautifully perverse collection of short stories takes the classic fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, and turns them into atmospheric and grisly tales of fantasy and horror. A perfect example of how to make the familiar horrific.

LeFanu, Joseph Sheridan. *In a Glass Darkly* (Richard Bently, 1872). Anthology containing the novelette "Carmilla," the first great erotic vampire story, and many other minor masterpieces. *Carmilla and Other Classic Tales of Mystery* (Penguin, 1996) is an excellent modern anthology of LeFanu.

Leiber, Fritz. *Conjure Wife* (Twayne, 1953). A haunting novel of secret witchcraft in a 1950s university. *Our Lady of Darkness* (Berkeley, 1977) is a luminous, literary urban horror fantasy (a genre Leiber invented in 1941 with the short story "Smoke Ghost").

Ligotti, Thomas. *The Nightmare Factory* (Carroll & Graf, 1996). Collects Ligotti's three main anthologies in one omnibus. Ligotti is the premier writer of short horror alive today. Madness, puppets, and more.

Lindholm, Megan. *Wizard of the Pigeons* (Ace, 1985). A truly superb book about magic and supernatural menace among the street people of Seattle. This book is a fine example of how magic can be all around us, yet unnoticed except by those who choose to look for it.

Lovecraft, H.P. *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (Arkham House, 1985), *At the Mountains of Madness* (Arkham House, 1985), and *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (Arkham House, 1986). These three omnibus volumes contain the corrected texts of Lovecraft's fiction (originally published in the pulps between 1924 and 1941). Lovecraft is the greatest American horror author since Poe, both in terms of vision and influence.

Machen, Arthur. *The Great God Pan* (John Lane, 1894). The linked story collection introducing Machen's "hidden race" Unseelie. The standard collection of Machen's best work is *Tales of Horror and the Supernatural* (Knopf, 1948). Chaosium is currently re-releasing corrected, complete versions of the linked stories.

Matheson, Richard. *Hell House* (Viking, 1971). One of the best haunted-house stories ever penned. Matheson's short stories are also reliable shockers, and his novel *I Am Legend* (Fawcett, 1954) combines a great "scientific vampire" with post-apocalyptic psychological horror.

McCammon, Robert R. *They Thirst* (Avon, 1981). A vampiric apocalypse. *Usher's Passing* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1984) is a Southern Gothic family drama sequel to Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher." *The Wolf's Hour* (Pocket, 1989) is WWII werewolf action. All are compulsive page-turners.

Newman, Kim. *Anno Dracula* (Simon & Schuster, 1992). Alternate-historical horror in a world where Dracula won.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Complete Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (Doubleday, 1966). Poe remains horror's greatest literary practitioner. His stories are as searing today as they were when first published (between 1827 and 1846). Vital.

Powers, Tim. *The Anubis Gates* (Ace, 1983), *On Stranger Tides* (Ace, 1987), *The Stress of Her Regard* (Ace, 1989), and *Declare* (HarperCollins, 2001). Ingenious blends of history and macabre fantasy, filled with werewolves, Voudun, vampires, and djinn. Excellent resource material on running historical horror. His modern-day secret-magic series, *Last Call* (Morrow, 1992), *Expiration Date* (Tor, 1995), and *Earthquake Weather* (Tor, 1997) is just as good, and adds possession, ghosts, and ritual magic.

Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire* (Knopf, 1976). The novel that revamped the legend for the postmoral world, emphasizing the psychological horror, guilt, and loneliness of vampiric immortality. Along with its many sequels, *the* reference for a turn-about campaign in which the heroes are vampires.

Roszak, Theodore. *Flicker* (Summit, 1991). Deeply creepy conspiratorial history of early horror film.

Saberhagen, Fred. *The Dracula Tape* (Warner, 1975), *The Holmes-Dracula File* (Ace, 1978), and *An Old Friend of the Family* (Ace, 1979). A modern rethinking of the Dracula story, portraying the Count as a misunderstood defender of his homeland.

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (Lackington, 1818). The original mad scientist/construct novel. The 1983 Marvel edition – the complete novel, not a comic book – features beautiful illustrations by *Swamp Thing* creator Berni Wrightson.

Shepard, Lucius. *Green Eyes* (Ace, 1984). Pseudoscience zombies and a genuinely creepy tropical atmosphere.

Simmons, Dan. *Song of Kali* (Bluejay, 1985), *Carrion Comfort* (Dark Harvest, 1989), and *Children of the Night* (Putnam, 1992). Excellent, stark horrors of (respectively) Calcutta cultists, psionic vampires, and the vampire as fear of disease mingling Dracula and AIDS.

Smith, Clark Ashton. *Out of Space and Time* (Arkham House, 1942). Smith's first anthology of Cthulhu Mythos stories, which have a lush, lyrical cruelty all their own. *A Rendezvous in Averoigne* (Arkham House, 1988) is the best current anthology of Smith.

Smith, Thorne. *Topper* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1926). The first "friendly ghost" story. It has given birth to countless film and video imitations, but the funny, sexy, irreverent original remains unsurpassed.

Stableford, Brian. *The Empire of Fear* (Simon & Schuster, 1988). Alternate-historical viral-vampire novel.

The Werewolves of London (Simon & Schuster, 1990) begins an increasingly complex, mystical saga of cruel angels and family tragedy.

Steakley, John. *Vampire$* (Roc, 1990). Plain and simple vampire-hunting adrenaline. Absolutely perfect model for fearless vampire-killing games.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Longmans, 1886). The horror classic. Stevenson wrote other tales of horror and adventure, especially "The Body Snatcher" (1884) and "Thrawn Janet" (1887). The first is about a grave robber, and has nothing to do with any movie invasion.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula* (Constable, 1897). Still the greatest vampire novel of them all. Stoker's lesser works can be enjoyably pulpy, such as *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (Heinemann, 1903), which provided the basic inspiration for the 1932 film *The Mummy*; *Lair of the White Worm* (William Rider & Son, 1911), which became a gloriously weird Ken Russell film in 1988; and *Dracula's Guest and Other Weird Stories* (George Routledge, 1914).

Strieber, Whitley. *The Wolfen* (Morrow, 1978). Somehow believable novel of a hidden race of wolf-men living in New York City.

Weinberg, Robert. *The Devil's Auction* (Leisure, 1990) and *Armageddon Box* (Leisure, 1991). Modern pulp horror in slam-bang style, with plenty of occult name-dropping.

Wellman, Manly Wade. *John the Balladeer* (Baen, 1988). These beautifully written stories, written over the course of Wellman's long career, are set in rural America and give a perspective on Things Man Was Not Meant To Know (and on rural America) remarkably different from Lovecraft's. *Worse Things Waiting* (Carcosa House, 1963) collects more great horror stories.

Wheatley, Dennis. *The Devil Rides Out* (Hutchinson, 1934), *Strange Conflict* (Hutchinson, 1941), *Haunting of Toby Jugg* (Hutchinson, 1948), *To the Devil a Daughter* (Hutchinson, 1953), *The Ka of Gifford Hillary* (Hutchinson, 1953), and *The Satanist* (Hutchinson, 1960). Spies, Satanists, and tough-guy action; Wheatley's "Black Magic" series has everything a horror game could want.

Wilson, F. Paul. *The Keep* (Morrow, 1981). A morally tangled story of a demonic vampire preying on the SS. *The Tomb* (Berkley, 1984) is a remarkably successful update of the old Sax Rohmer-style "weird menace" pulp horror to the modern day.

Yarbro, Chelsea Quinn. *Hotel Transylvania* (St. Martin's, 1978). The first in a long series of historical romance novels starring the heroic, gyneolatrous vampire, the Comte de Saint-Germain.

Zelazny, Roger. *A Night in the Lonesome October* (Morrow AvoNova, 1993). Humorous horror novel of a Halloween night where the world might or might not perish forever; narrated by Jack the Ripper's dog, Snuff.

Comics

Bissette, Steve (editor). *Taboo* (Spiderbaby Graphix/Tundra/Kitchen Sink, 1989-1995). A pet project of Steve Bissette, this fat, semi-regular anthology is notable for the stellar quality of its contributors. Works hard to live up to its name, so the easily offended should stay away.

Brown, Chester. *Yummy Fur* (Vortex Comics, 1986-1994). While not exactly a horror story, it may be the most genuinely frightening story ever committed to the comics medium. Particularly gut-wrenching is the fiercely ironic story of "Ed the Happy Clown" that took up the first 20 issues of the book. Definitely requires a mature sensibility.

Conway, Jerry, et al. *Werewolf by Night* (Marvel Comics, 1972-1977). Reliable and workmanlike werewolf comic.

De Matteis, J. M. *I . . . Vampire* (DC, 1981-1983). This suspenseful vampire drama was the main feature in *House of Mystery* from #290 to #319.

Delano, Jamie, et al. *Hellblazer* (DC/Vertigo, 1988-present). Ongoing flagship horror title centers on a British sorcerer and the shambles surrounding him. Garth Ennis' run is particularly good.

Feldstein, Al, et al. *Tales From the Crypt* (EC Comics, 1950-1955). This dime comic and its EC stable-mates *Haunt of Fear* and *Vault of Horror* "corrupted" an entire generation, changing the face of American horror forever by combining stories of remarkable psychological and social insight with genuinely disturbing gore by some of the greatest comics artists who ever lived.

Fleisher, Michael, et al. *Wrath of the Spectre* (DC, 1988). Reprints the classic Jim Aparo-illustrated horrific-vengeance run of DC's ghostly superhero from *Adventure* #431 to #440. John Ostrander's run on the *Spectre* title from 1992 to 1998 is also worth reading.

Gerber, Steve, et al. *Vampire Tales* (Marvel Comics, 1973-1975). This anthology series is best known for showcasing Roy Thomas' creation, Morbius, the Living Vampire, the first vampire in comics since the CCA ban of 1954, and a unique techno-vampire for a superhero cosmos.

Kubert, Joe, et al. (editors). *Weird War Tales* (DC, 1971-1983). Occasionally brilliant war-horror anthology series became the spawning ground for the Creature Commandos. The Haunted Tank first appeared in *G.I. Combat.*

Lash, Batton. *Wolff & Byrd, Counselors of the Macabre* (Exhibit A Press, 1979-present). Humorous look at the legal troubles of the supernatural. Continues under the title *Supernatural Law.*

Moore, Alan. *From Hell* (Borderlands Press, 1995). With Eddie Campbell's intricate black-and-white art, Moore tells a story of Jack the Ripper, sacred geometry, and the conspiratorial horror at the heart of the 20th century.

Moore, Alan and Wein, Len, et al. *Swamp Thing* (DC/Vertigo, 1972-1976; 1982-1996). This Gothic monster comic has had some remarkably wretched periods, but its first run, by Len Wein and Berni Wrightson, raised the genre to new heights. Then in the '80s, under writer Alan Moore and artists Steve Bissette and John Totleben, *Swamp Thing* unexpectedly became arguably the best mass-market comic of all time. More recent runs by writers Rick Veitch and Doug Wheeler are also exemplary. Don't let the two campy movies scare you off.

Morrison, Grant. *Doom Patrol* (DC/Vertigo, 1989-1993). Surrealistic superhero book with genuine moments of horror throughout. Ignore all other versions of this title. *The Invisibles* (DC/Vertigo, 1994-2000) is high-flying comic conspiracy without a net.

Niles, Steve (editor). *Fly in My Eye* (Eclipse/Arcane, 1988-1992). Consistently excellent, inconsistently published trade-paperback-sized anthology.

Sala, Richard. *The Chuckling Whatsit* (Fantagraphics, 1997). The comics version of German expressionist film. Brilliant images and a storyline that always threatens to become camp horror, but never quite does.

Wolfman, Marv. *Tomb of Dracula* (Marvel Comics, 1972-1979). A slam-bang scare-fest backed by some of the best artistic talent of the 1970s. The strong characterization of Dracula is memorable.

Filmography

Movies have given us our most graphic images of horror. The films listed here are all suggested viewing, albeit sometimes as story mines rather than as masterpieces of cinema. Most are classics, must-sees for horror gamers; some, though, are obscure masterpieces that one does not always find on the late, late show. Many of these are available on video or (increasingly) DVD; check your local dealer.

The Abominable Dr. Phibes (Robert Fuest, 1971). A campy variation on the "evil genius" model, Vincent Price's Dr. Phibes is a mad musician who kills his enemies by using the Ten Plagues of Egypt.

The Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas (Val Guest, 1957). This low-budget, black-and-white feature (a very early release from the U.K.'s legendary Hammer Film Productions Ltd.) presents a curiously low-key but exciting cryptid hunt.

Alien (Ridley Scott, 1979). Neo-Lovecraftian SF horror that brought the creature-from-outer-space film to new heights of terror *and* believability simultaneously. Also presents a very gameable story. The first sequel, *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986) is action rather than suspense, but still quite gameable in a different way.

An American Werewolf in London (John Landis, 1981). An excellent study of the genesis of a werewolf, both startling and funny. The dream sequences are the most terrifying part of the movie, inspirational for oneiric horrors.

Beetlejuice (Tim Burton, 1988). The best modern haunted-house comedy. Of special interest for its creepy-yet-funny view of the afterlife, which one could easily port to a campaign where *everyone* is a ghost.

The Believers (John Schlesinger, 1987). Excellent suspense movie about a man's battle with a malevolent Santería cult.

Big Trouble in Little China (John Carpenter, 1986). A loving tribute to Hong Kong action movies. Features excellent special effects, an intensely quotable script, gunplay, epic martial-arts battles, and lots of magic.

The Birds (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963). Nature goes mad; a bravura course in using any common element to build terror.

The Blair Witch Project (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999). Low-fi horror builds nearly perfect atmosphere of suspense, terror, and dread with verité style.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene, 1919). Widely – and accurately – regarded as the first horror film masterpiece; its surrealistic sets, camera angles, and storyline remain unmatched today.

Candyman (Bernard Rose, 1992). Chicago urban legend manifests as spectral horror in this gritty, powerful evocation of a Clive Barker short story.

Cat People (Jacques Tourneur, 1942). The 1982 version features flashy special effects and a nude Nastassja Kinski, but the original is more subtly intriguing. In this version of the lycanthrope legend, the affliction is an ancient family curse rather than a disease, and the transformation is tied not to the lunar cycle, but to sexual arousal.

Cemetery Man (Michele Soavi, 1994). Existential zombie love story about a gravedigger and his undead girlfriend. And then it just gets weird.

A Chinese Ghost Story, (Ching Siu-Tung, 1987). Martial arts, comedy, romance, and tree-vampires with extensible tongues!

Curse of the Demon (Jacques Tourneur, 1956). Demon-summoning scrolls and satanic cults in England. Tourneur proves that you don't have to *show* the monster to make horror scary.

Deliverance (John Boorman, 1972). Another non-supernatural horror classic of civilization against savagery, the epitome of the Gauntlet story.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931). Fredric March received a well-deserved Oscar for his dual lead in this creepy gaslit horror film.

Dracula (Terence Fisher, 1958). Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing square off in the best film version (known as *The Horror of Dracula* in America) of the novel, epitomizing the lush, sensual, almost operatic tradition of the U.K.'s Hammer Film Productions Ltd. Tod Browning's 1931 version, the classic starring Bela Lugosi, is brilliantly shot, but badly marred by an abysmal script.

Evil Dead II: Dead by Dawn (Sam Raimi, 1987). This excessive movie careens wildly between gore, slapstick, and genuine fright. Loads of fun and lots of good ideas. (*The Evil Dead* was essentially the same film with a fraction of the special-effects budget; *Army of Darkness: Evil Dead 3* is a swell fantasy-adventure roller coaster with little true horror.)

The Exorcist (William Friedkin, 1973). This movie about a little girl tormented by demons, and the battle for her soul, is an atmospheric must-see, and a brilliant example of the power of the prosaic scale.

Five Million Years to Earth (Roy Ward Baker, 1968). Sensational British science-fiction horror story about psionic monsters buried beneath London.

Flatliners (Joel Schumacher, 1990). Intensely gameable setup and rich atmospherics save this disorganized film about a team of would-be thanatologists exploring the afterlife by dying repeatedly.

The Fly (Kurt Neumann, 1958). Silly but unsettling, thanks to Neumann's direction. The remake (David Cronenberg, 1986) is gorier and less effective, but more "realistic." Both are worth seeing.

Frankenstein (James Whale, 1931), *The Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935), and *Son of Frankenstein* (Rowland V. Lee, 1939). The prototypical mad scientist/construct films, worth seeing for their insight into the man-as-God issue as well as their chills. None of the hundred-plus Frankenstein sequels measure up to these originals, although *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957) comes close.

Freaks (Tod Browning, 1932). A respectful, but still grim study of the fear of mutilation and of the dangers of betraying an insular, marginalized community not unlike the Unseelie.

Fright Night (Tom Holland, 1985). Affectionate look at vampire-hunting movies that slowly becomes a truly tense thriller.

The Frighteners (Peter Jackson, 1996). Excellent story about a ghost-hunter that smoothly moves from light comedy to dark horror at a rapid clip.

From Dusk Till Dawn (Robert Rodriguez, 1996). Action-camp horror full of violence, vampires, and attitude. Scary and thrill-packed, but not terrifying.

Ghostbusters (Ivan Reitman, 1984). A tightly plotted, group-of-adventurers-encounter-the-supernatural movie, this time played for laughs. Modern setting, great special effects, and a textbook example of how to create supernatural adventures.

Godzilla, King of the Monsters (Ishiro Honda and Terry Morse, 1956). Though followed by an infinite series of ultra-campy sequels, the original film is cheap, grainy, melodramatic and very, very scary. The original Godzilla is nobody's big monster buddy; he's a literally unstoppable force of nature, a walking embodiment of nuclear terror.

Halloween (John Carpenter, 1978). The first and best movie of the slasher-flick boom of the 1970s and 1980s. The sequels are all forgettable.

The Haunting (Robert Wise, 1963). Quiet, tense ghost story, or a subtle tale of psychological disintegration? Either way, an often-overlooked horror masterpiece with useful roleplaying applications. Addresses the interaction of psychological and psychic pressures in a supernatural situation. Avoid the 1999 remake at all costs!

Hellraiser (Clive Barker, 1987). Gory, fetishistic horror directed by a noted horror author. Not for the squeamish, but Barker's vision is truly hellish, with plenty of roleplaying potential for those with a taste for Grand Guignol.

House (Steve Miner, 1986). The movie suffers from jokiness, but the essential concept of the haunted hyper-geometrical house makes a great game concept. The sequel is even sillier, but rings further changes on the setting.

House of Wax (Andre de Toth, 1953). Vincent Price gives one of his most terrifying performances ever, as the wax museum curator who turns victims into sculptures for his Chamber of Horrors. Highly evocative, and a great Victorian atmosphere throughout.

The Howling (Joe Dante, 1981). The other great modern werewolf movie.

The Hunger (Tony Scott, 1983). Ancient, decadent vampires live the life of the idle rich. Short of substance, but scary and very sexy with leads Catherine Deneuve, Susan Sarandon, and David Bowie.

I Walked with a Zombie (Jacques Tourneur, 1943). Ignore the title, this is a transposition of *Jane Eyre* to the Caribbean, and a respectful, haunting look at Voudun and the deeper zombie legends.

In the Mouth of Madness (John Carpenter, 1995). Surreal Lovecraftian tale of a missing horror writer whose books are changing reality.

Invaders from Mars (William Cameron Menzies, 1953). A minor alien-invasion classic that set the pattern for the 1950s' science-fiction horrors.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, 1956). A paranoiac horror/thriller *without* monsters, special effects, or even death, and all the more terrifying for it. The 1993 remake is worth seeing; the 1979 remake has aged badly.

Jacob's Ladder (Adrian Lyne, 1990). Hallucinogenic psychological horror surrounds a Vietnam vet. Surrealism at its horrific finest.

Jaws (Steven Spielberg, 1975). A prime example of the "Fear of Nature." This pure, elemental battle against a great white shark demonstrates that horror easily transcends the supernatural.

The Legend of Hell House (John Hough, 1973). This film, about a group of people promised big money for proving or disproving the existence of an afterlife in the granddaddy of all haunted houses, makes a good adventure premise. Lots of detail on the use of psychic abilities.

The Lost Boys (Joel Schumacher, 1987). New Wave vampires in modern California. The title refers to the followers of Peter Pan, which is sort of what this movie is about. Light, but lots of fun.

The Mummy (Karl Freund, 1932). Short on shocks, but maintains a horrific mood throughout. Gave us the "forbidden reincarnated love" and "human guise of the mummy" reused by later films.

Near Dark (Kathryn Bigelow, 1987). An intelligent, very scary vampire film in which the word "vampire" never appears. Set in the modern-day West, the vampires here are monsters of social upheaval – the ones your mother warned you about.

Night of the Living Dead (George A. Romero, 1968). Combining stomach-turning walking-dead action with bleak social commentary, this zombie movie is only equaled by its sequel, *Dawn of the Dead* (George A. Romero, 1978), set in a besieged shopping mall.

The Nightmare Before Christmas (Henry Selick, 1993). Giddy animated musical with much worthwhile Tim Burton-driven surreal imagery.

A Nightmare on Elm Street (Wes Craven, 1984). Amid all the hype and hoopla about its countless sequels, it's easy to forget just how unsettling this film can be on first viewing, due largely to its brilliant central concept and imaginative and surreal special effects.

Nosferatu (F.W. Murnau, 1922). Murnau's silent masterpiece is a surrealist Gothic. The remake (Werner Herzog, 1979) presents the nosferatu as the irruption of fatal reality into comfortable bourgeois life.

Poltergeist (Tobe Hooper, 1982). A flashy ghost story about an average suburban family. The most impressive aspect of this movie is Hooper's ability to make everyday objects – TV sets, stuffed toys, steaks – seem alive and malevolent.

Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960). The first modern psycho killer movie. There is no gore, just suspense, misdirection, and a creepy atmosphere. Even if you've heard the plot, see the movie.

Re-Animator (Stuart Gordon, 1985) and *From Beyond* (Stuart Gordon, 1986). By far the best filmic adaptations of Lovecraft's work, but based on third-rate stories. Still, full of supremely good-humored awfulness.

Ringu (Hideo Nakata and Chisui Takigawa, 1998). A Japanese suspense masterpiece, borrowing from many other horror movies but blending them into its own tense story of a deadly videotape.

Rosemary's Baby (Roman Polanski, 1968). Witchcraft and Satanism among the uptown New York affluent. Polanski masterfully builds the ominous, paranoid atmosphere.

Scream (Wes Craven, 1996). The ultimate in postmodern slasher flicks. The characters' attempt to play by the horror-movie "rules" lifts this far above the run-of-the-mill psycho killer flick, as does Craven's assured direction. Both sequels are decent as well.

The Seventh Victim (Mark Robson, 1943). A psychological horror film with complex characters, it deals with disillusionment and suicide. Interesting to GMs for its handling of a satanic cult, mysterious and unknown throughout the movie.

The Shining (Stanley Kubrick, 1980). Not much of an adaptation of the novel, but a brilliant movie. Superb direction, an eerie score, and a memorable performance by Jack Nicholson contribute to a terrifying atmosphere.

The Silence of the Lambs (Jonathan Demme, 1991). The most mature and polished psychological horror-thriller of recent decades. The film's combination of gothic imagery and seeming realism works on many levels.

The Sixth Sense, (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999). A luminous combination of ghost story and psychological horror tale.

Suspiria (Dario Argento, 1977). Witchcraft, gore, and nigh-hallucinogenic scenery make this Italian film eminently watchable, if no more sensible.

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Tobe Hooper, 1974). This no-budget tour-de-force redefines the psycho killer as modern werewolf. Point to notice: the horrors in this film take place *entirely* in broad daylight.

The Thing (Christian Nyby, 1951). Notable for the conflict between the scientists, who want to capture or communicate with the Thing, and the soldiers, who want to kill it. In the remake (John Carpenter, 1982), the Thing gains the ability to mimic the appearance of any human, making it impossible for the residents of an isolated Arctic camp to trust one another.

Tremors (Ron Underwood, 1990). A seamless, brilliant updating of the 1950s B-movie to the modern era pits a small desert town against giant, malevolent sandworms.

The Vanishing (George Sluizer, 1988). Psychological horror cripples a man when his wife suddenly – vanishes. Avoid the mediocre U.S. remake of this Dutch gem.

The Wicker Man (Robin Hardy, 1973). Set in modern-day Great Britain, this movie concerns a small offshore island where the inhabitants still keep an interest in the "old religion." Celtic mythology in a modern setting, done with thriller-movie flair and a sense of humor.

The Wolf Man (George Waggner, 1941). Not the first werewolf picture, but the one that set the rules for the Hollywood wolf-man as tragic victim-monster.

Young Frankenstein (Mel Brooks, 1974). Uproarious send-up of the whole horror film genre. If for no other reason, see this film so you'll understand your players' jokes.

Television

Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-present). Possibly the best continuing horror TV series ever, and a model of story arc development. Easy on the eyes, too.

Dark Shadows (1966-1971; 1991). This no-budget 1960s Gothic soap opera still commands a fanatically loyal audience today, due to a memorable ensemble of ghoulish protagonists. Back in syndication on cable.

Forever Knight (1992-1996). Vampire police drama with a cult following.

The Invaders (1967-1968). Alien-invasion paranoia with a 1960s twist of low-key excellence.

The Kingdom (1994, 1997). Two four-episode series about a ghost-filled hospital, created by Danish director Lars von Trier.

Kolchak: The Night Stalker (1974-1975). This campy show had a sleazy but intrepid reporter chasing down a different monster every week, over the objections of the obsessively skeptical authorities. Not great drama, by any means, or even great television, but a potential source of some good ideas.

Night Gallery (1969-1973). Rod Serling's worthy successor to *The Twilight Zone*.

Scooby Doo, Where Are You! (1969-1972). The great silly horror show, despite the total absence of actual horror. The Scooby gang is far too much like the average player group, so be warned.

Tales From the Darkside (1984-1988). Produced by George A. Romero, this is probably the best of the 1980s horror anthology series (including *Friday the 13th: The Series, Freddy's Nightmares*, and *Monsters*), despite cheesy special effects.

The Twilight Zone (1959-1965; 1985-1988). The groundbreaking series that defined and perfected TV horror. Essential. Reincarnated several times with varying degrees of success.

Twin Peaks (1990-1991). Atmospheric horror mystery created by David Lynch. The series goes rapidly downhill after the central mystery is solved in the second season.

Ultraviolet (1998). Superb, six-episode British series about a covert death squad's war against vampires.

War of the Worlds (1998-1990). 1950s alien paranoia updated to the George Bush era with gusto, if little coherence.

The X-Files (1993-present). At its peak, the best horror on television. Conspiracies, UFOs, and monsters all blend with excellent camera work and production for an atmospheric triumph.

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WHAT'S THAT, BEHIND YOU?

Do you fear the Bad Things that stalk us all? Or is it the things you cannot grasp that scare you the most – that make you realize just how irrelevant you really are? Or is the true horror the things that simply *cannot* be grasped? Then get ready to scream, because your fears are about to come to life . . .

Within the pages of *GURPS Horror* you will find everything you need to run a horror campaign, including:

- A systematic dissection of horror as a genre and as a genre treatment – everything from the most brutal splatter to the most subtle psychological horror.

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GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised and *Compendium I* are *required* to use this supplement in a *GURPS* campaign. The material on horror adventures, campaigns, and characters can be used with *any* game system.

THE PSYCHO KILLERS:

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