

# *The GameMaster's Apprentice*

## **Adventure Guide: Horror**

**Author: Nathan Rockwood**  
**Graphic Designer for Cards: Max Johnson**  
**Artist: Amanda Asofsky**

### Special Thanks

This project was backed on Kickstarter by more than 360 supporters. Without their help, The GameMaster's Apprentice would never have been more than a pet project in my own home games.

Thanks so much!

*Visit us online at [www.LarcenousDesigns.com](http://www.LarcenousDesigns.com)*



*The GameMaster's Apprentice deck and documentation, copyright 2014, owned by Larcenous Designs, LLC.  
Larcenous Designs, LLC, and associated marks are owned by Nathan Rockwood. Graphic design and  
iconography by Max Johnson.*

# Table of Contents

<a href="#">INTRODUCTION</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">What is an Adventure Guide?</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">How to use this guide</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">ADVENTURE FRAMEWORKS</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Framework Creation Summary</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Choose a Core</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Ask a Big Question (Optional)</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Choose a Doom</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Create Three Other Problems</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Ask 1-3 Little Questions (Optional)</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">The Point: Scene Creation</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Example of a Complete Framework</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Blank Framework Sheet</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">ADVENTURE PREMISES</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Fill in the Blanks</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">The Questgiver</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">The Task</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Reasons</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Horror Premise Tag Symbols</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">CHARACTERS</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Professions</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Horror Character Tag Symbols</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">ENCOUNTERS</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Premade Combos</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Horror Encounter Tag Symbols</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">UNCERTAINTY</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Fearful Chaos</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Suspicion Tag Symbols</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Questionable Decisions</a>	<a href="#">24</a>

# INTRODUCTION

## What is an Adventure Guide?

An Adventure Guide is a collection of tips for designing and/or running a role playing game, in a given genre, and using The GameMaster's Apprentice deck of cards. These guides should be helpful whether you are using the base, genre-neutral deck or any of the genre-specific decks, and (up to a point) can even be used without the deck of cards, though that defeats the true purpose of the guide: to provide enough inspiration and enough examples that, once you've exhausted the possibilities presented here, you'll have an easy time creating your own story seeds using just the cards.

## How to use this guide

After this introduction, you'll find a section dedicated to advice on constructing an open-ended story framework. That framework can serve as structure you fill in, giving you a more complete adventure, or you can use it to help run a more free-flowing story. While this is 100% useable without the cards, this style of adventure prep is also ideal for games where the cards will be used heavily (either as GM support, or as the GM itself), as it provides options to use the cards to choose from, and suggests characters and dangers the cards might be referencing in their random events or story seeds.

Next, the guide goes over advice on generating quest seeds. This consists primarily of tables that work both by themselves and with the deck, and which are aimed at the conventions of the horror genre.

Wrapping it up after that are two sections meant to help tweak the use of the deck to generate horror-appropriate characters and random events, and then a section on ways of creating genre-appropriate levels of uncertainty and suspicion!

These tools can be used independently or in concert, during prep or during play; I recommend reviewing them all briefly before you start, and then you can decide how you will get the most benefit out of them!

## ADVENTURE FRAMEWORKS

The guidelines here are essentially a set of advice on preparing the framework of an adventure, quickly and efficiently. It might seem overly simplistic, but we're targeting a framework instead of a full adventure because it provides you as a GM with two essential ingredients. First, it ensures you have enough information to always answer the quintessential question, "What happens next?" Second, it gives you the freedom to let the story evolve naturally.

One of the biggest problems with a traditional pre-printed adventure is its limited scope of choices and possible outcomes; that's a large part of what inspired *The GameMaster's Apprentice* in the first place. However, even though I love using random content to enhance my games, I do like to be able to keep things consistent--and planning ahead in broad strokes can make that much easier, and makes the stories that result feel more real and engaging.

These frameworks are partially inspired by my work on *Missions for the Demon Hunters: A Comedy of Terrors Role Playing Game*, which was in turn inspired by many other games, some based on the Fate and Apocalypse World systems. If you think the frameworks here work well for your games, you might want to check out those books for more ideas!

### Framework Creation Summary

So, to make an adventure framework, follow these steps--a more detailed explanation of each will follow this brief checklist:

- Choose a Core
- Ask a Big Question which the game will revolve around (optional)
- Choose a Doom
  - Describe the Doom's Goal
  - Outline the Doom's Plan to achieve this goal, in 2-3 stages
  - Create the Cast for the Doom, describing 1-3 characters or features
- Create 3 other Problems
  - Choose a different Type for each Problem (recommended)
  - Give each a Goal
  - Outline the Plan each has, in 2-3 stages
  - Create a Cast for each Problem, including 1-3 characters or features
- Ask 1-3 Little Questions that provide interesting hooks (optional)

## Choose a Core

A Core is a central principle of the genre; naturally, a given game will be likely to touch on more than one genre convention, but selecting a single Core when planning out a framework is meant to help you focus on choosing other elements that will work well together. The theory here is that stating your target up front will make it easier to achieve. If you find the Cores to be too broad for your tastes, select the most relevant and refine it; reword it or replace it with a more specific version.

Here are three Cores that cover a significant majority of Horror stories; you can add to the list or modify what you see here, as need be:

**To drive back the dark:** This Core is at the heart of stories where the protagonists are taking an active role in their encounters with the horrific; they may be adventurers, investigators, ghost hunters, or even just normal people taking some initiative, but the point is this: they choose to fight, at least at first, and there is a chance (perhaps a small one, but a chance nonetheless) that they can defeat their foes. The characters in stories like this are likely (but not required) to be presented as the heroes in a fairly clear fashion, and moral ambiguity is likely to be low.

**To survive the night:** This Core covers many different types of horror story: slashers, haunted houses, cabins in the woods, creepy hotels, zombie apocalypses, ghost hunts gone wrong, investigators who are doomed, etc. The common element is that the characters are in over their heads and/or surprised with the situation, and are thus likely to be unprepared and failing to work as a team, at least at first. The tension this brings often (not always, but often) leads to intra-party conflict, or works well when there are potentially traitors in the midst of the characters, be they PCs or NPCs. If the players desire such conflict, that can easily be incorporated; the same goes for high levels of moral ambiguity, as the characters' values are tested by their difficulties.

**To gaze into the abyss:** This Core is typical of stories focused on the confrontation of darkness for personal gain, power, revenge, or similar; the protagonists may be more anti-hero (or straight-up bad person) than hero. Characters in urban fantasy and modern supernatural horror, who might themselves be vampires, werewolves, ghouls, and so on, often fit into these games well: they and their world are horrific, and they know it. These tales may actually provoke fewer scares than other kinds of horror, since they present many terrible things as humdrum and commonplace, but they also have the potential to be much, much darker and more disturbing, given the sharper extremes that non-human or otherwise terrible characters might experience. These stories are practically guaranteed to force the characters into tough moral dilemmas.

## Ask a Big Question (Optional)

This isn't a required step, but something I bring in to my games because I firmly believe that a game can be as much a piece of literature as a novel or a play--and one of the things that defines 'literature' for me is the exploration of a grand question.

When it comes to a novel, the answers (or possible answers) to these questions are often discussed as 'themes' of the text, but those are actually secondary; the important part, honestly, is the question itself. While the best example I've ever seen of a game asking a big question is the classic computer-based RPG from Bioware, *Planescape: Torment*, I've also seen the tactic work well in games I and others have GMed.

If you want to give it a shot, after you've selected a Core, consider these examples of Big Questions that fit easily into the horror genre:

**How far will we go to survive?**

**How much can a person endure?**

**What is the worst pain one can feel?**

**Who can you trust?**

There is a nearly infinite variety of questions that could be asked here; think through your favorite books, movies, TV shows, and games if you need more inspiration!

Once you have a question, what do you do? Keep it in the back of your mind when planning and making decisions for your NPCs. *How far will we go to survive?* would provoke the most thought in a game where the characters are constantly threatened in a physical way, such as an apocalyptic scenario or a madman's playhouse that requires them to do terrible things. *How much can a person endure?* may sound similar, but to me the difference is that this implies a constant pressure that ramps up until a person snaps or dies--rather than the sudden life-and-death, highly-physical choices of the first question. *What is the worst pain one can feel?* may work well in a setting that plays closely to the real world in many ways, but which may subject characters to the deaths of loved ones, personal injury, loss of faith, and so on. *Who can you trust?* might require a game where each character has many pre-created connections: dependents, friends, spouses, mentors, and so on; as a GM, you would need to give them motives and desires that might leave them at odds with their PC.

But whatever you do, **you must NOT answer the question** yourself! Let the players explore possible answers as the story unfolds. The best games will develop their answers naturally, if at all, and will still leave you thinking at the end.

## Choose a Doom

A Doom is the thing that looms on the horizon. It doesn't have to be the primary focus of the story as it starts, but it squats in the darkness just beyond the firelight and *waits*. This is something that will change the world for the worse unless the characters act. In most games, the Doom is meant to be a campaign-level problem, not likely to be addressed in a story that only lasts one or two sessions, but I recommend coming up with one even for horror stories, which sometimes lend themselves to shorter games; there are two ways to approach that.

One method is to use the looming threat of the Doom to instill a sense of greater things beyond the scope of the characters' ken (they may be out to hunt down a cult leader, but even in defeat he keeps talking about the Ancient Ones rising up....); in games arranged this way, the characters are going to be dealing mostly with the Problems (see below), and the Doom is more or less for atmosphere.

The second method is to remember that the scale of these things is entirely up to you; while a Doom like *The Mask-Wearing Serial Killer* might seem like a threat so far below *The Ancient Ones* that they can't even compare, that doesn't matter here. If the serial killer wins, people die. If you want to scale things down so that the Doom's Goal will be *Killing all the college kids at the lake house and escaping into the darkness*, then do it!

The biggest challenge in picking an appropriate Doom is realizing that it doesn't have to be physical, concrete foe. *The Master Vampire* is a possibility, of course, but *The Dreams of the Old One* or *Rampant Paranoia* could work, too.

Really, any major threat that could vastly change the world if left unchecked could be a good choice for the framework's Doom. If you're not sure about an idea, think through these questions:

**Can the *characters* (as opposed to the players) potentially see the Doom coming, given warning or reason to be suspicious?**

**Once identified, could the Doom possibly be stopped by the characters?**

**Will the Doom change something significant about the world if it isn't stopped?**

If the answers to all three are *Yes*, then you probably have an acceptable Doom.

While designing your Doom, keep in mind the Core (and possibly Big Question) you already selected. Whatever it is, the Doom should fit in with a game focused on those elements.

If you can't come up with something that feels worthy of the title, take a look at the Problems section below; the suggested categories of Problems could all apply to Dooms, and might inspire you to pick a Doom you wouldn't otherwise have thought of.

Once you have a Doom, it's time to fill out some details about them.

### **Describe the Doom's Goal**

The Goal of a Doom is their endgame; here, you should specify at least one target they have, one thing that will drastically change the world if they can achieve it. Why do this? Because if you know what it wants, you'll always know how it would adapt to deal with a changing situation.

Write a sentence that describes what will happen if the players choose to let the Doom act unchecked. The Doom *The Master Vampire* might have the Goal *Spread the Curse across the globe*. The *Dreams of the Old One*, on the other hand, might be out to *Drive humanity's greatest minds to madness*, and *Rampant Paranoia* may be the driving force behind the *Launch of a present-day inquisition*.

### **Outline the Doom's Plan**

With the Doom's Goal already known, create two or three intermediary steps for it to achieve on the road to that Goal. These things will happen (or be replaced by other things mid-game, since plans do sometimes change) before the Goal is reached, acting as a literal countdown to doomsday, even if the players don't know how much time is left on the clock, and as a source of plotlines.

Write a sentence for each step of the Plan, describing both **what** the Doom is going to accomplish, and **how** it will do so. *The Master Vampire* will need to first *Recruit powerful lieutenants through the local nightlife* and then *Charm enough followers through his lieutenants to protect traveling vampires* before he can *Spread the Curse across the globe* by sea and air. The *Dreams of the Old One* will first have to *Inspire works of genius through strange, recurring dreams* and then *Urge the dreamers to come together, via the word of an apostle*, who will then *Arrange a midnight ritual of Awakening*. The increasingly dangerous *Rampant Paranoia* will start small, by causing *Preaching and Editorials about the evils of magic*, followed by *Mobs lynching magic users*.

### **Create the Cast for the Doom**

The Cast is exactly what it sounds like: one to three NPCs who either represent or are involved with the Doom in some way. They could be the Doom itself, or a henchman, victim, bystander, witness, catalyst, the questgiver for the characters.... anyone involved. Of course, more characters will likely be involved later, but this way you'll have something to draw on.

Also, keep in mind that the 'cast' for a Doom might include more than sapient characters; critical locations or events might also serve as sources of knowledge or interaction.

At this stage, description is more important than mechanics; write a sentence for each character, naming them and pinning down a few important facts. If you feel like adding stats, go for it. *The Master Vampire* will of course be a character, but he will need a few servants, and there could be *The Old Hunter* who has tracked him for years. The *Dreams of the Old One* will need an avatar or apostle to start their cult, and it might be handy to name a few artists or leaders who will have the dreams. *Rampant Paranoia* might find its start in the words of *David Belsan, Editor of the National Herald*, and then be spread in a local community by *Regina Dukakis, PTA Chairperson*, but it might also instill in the game an *Unreasoning fear* that will plague many characters--as a feature, aspect, trait, etc.



## Create Three Other Problems

Since the Doom is the big, long-range issue, Problems are the shorter-term... problems. Most settings worthy of adventure will have more than one thing going on at a time, and these Problems will serve as the driving force behind most of the early game, before the Doom starts ramping up its Plan.

Problems can be many things, just as the Dooms can; the key difference is scale. Problems are still bad, and they still have Goals that they want to achieve via their own Plans, but those Goals won't shatter the world as you know it (or, at least, not all of it). If the Doom is *The Master Vampire* trying to *Spread the Curse across the globe*, a Problem might be *Alistair Avery*, a charlatan out to *Deceive the townsfolk into buying his 'good luck' charms*.

To encourage the creation of three extremely different Problems, I advise that you make each Problem of a different Type. Below are descriptions of Types appropriate to a horror game, but you can always add to this list if you want.

**Swarm:** Bugs, rats, demonic children, bandits, zombies; they generally present little danger individually, but become a more serious issue in large groups or when ignored and left to enact their schemes. Their Goals usually revolve around destruction motivated by their own survival.

**Graveyard:** Prisons, caverns, ancient ruins, lost temples, dungeons, tiny pocket dimensions; these Problems are actually places, which may pose a danger in many ways. They might disgorge monsters into a town, or they could contain something that would be terrible and dangerous if it fell into the wrong hands.

**Beast:** A masterful vampire, an abusive spouse, a dreadful poltergeist; just because they aren't actually the Doom, that doesn't mean they are going to sit on the sidelines. A big baddie with a Goal that is less serious than "world domination" is still a Problem that needs dealing with; killing off the villagers or driving a family from their home can be enough.

**Corruption:** A dark curse, a terrible plague, rampant distrust, murmurs of rebellion; sometimes a Problem is diffuse or abstract in the extreme. These may not be capable of intentional planning, but they still have a Goal, usually one that involves spreading their darkness and causing further chaos.

### Give each Problem a Goal

Once you've selected three different Problems with three different Types, give each of them a distinct Goal. Just like the Doom's Goal, the Problems' Goals are their grand plans. Write a sentence for each that explains what will happen if the characters choose not to get involved.

If you want to be extra tricky, the Goals of the Problems could be used as steps in the Doom's Plan (possibly meaning you have to go back and edit that), tying them all together into a coherent(-ish) whole.

### **Outline a Plan for each Problem**

Harken back to the Plan you made for the Doom and repeat the process here. What are the steps involved in the Problem reaching its Goal? Think up two to three steps per Problem, and write a sentence for each step.

### **Create a Cast for each Problem**

Next, create one to three important characters or features (locations, major events, strange effects, etc) for each Problem. While it's entirely possible that some characters might be involved in more than one Problem (a vampire spreading their curse who also foments fear of the supernatural in the populace), try come up with at least one unique individual per Problem; remember that these are just inspiration, and you will probably add to these lists during play.

### **Ask 1-3 Little Questions (Optional)**

As you wrap up, you've hopefully created a number of possible starting points. Once you know who the characters are and where they begin the game, it should be fairly easy to decide which Problem presents itself first.

But if you have a real, living setting, there is going to be more going on in the world than the various disasters that strike.

Do any of the characters (player or not) have a particular fate they either seek or avoid? Are there any links between characters that might be worth exploring? What is at stake if the Problems or the Doom manage to achieve their Goals--or even just a step of their Plan? Who stands to suffer?

Ask some specific questions about situations, characters, or events; questions that can't be answered until play progresses. These are entirely optional, but force you to consider who or what stands to be lost or changed, depending on the outcomes of the story. Of course, the questions might be voided or necessarily altered before they are answered, but that's fine--these are just to keep you thinking, and to ensure that you have material to draw on if at any point you can't think of what the next scene should be.

### **The Point: Scene Creation**

Your newly-created framework is a reference sheet for where the story *might* go, without interfering with its natural evolution; it lets you play without either railroading the players down a certain path or letting the game grind to a halt for lack of content.

Introducing one of the Problems? That can be a scene. Advancing the Plan of a Problem or the Doom? Scene. One of the Cast needs to be given some screen time? Another scene. If a Problem achieves their Goal, that's one or more scenes right there, and if the Doom reaches its Goal you've probably got one or more whole *sessions* just dealing with that. And, for things with a smaller scope, the Little Questions can be dealt with, or the Big Question danced around.

## Example of a Complete Framework

GMA Framework Sheet	
Core: To Survive the Night (In a town with a dark cult controlling it from the shadows)	
Big Question: who can you trust?	
Doom: Dark Master	Plan: 1) Identify and eliminate the last holdouts in the town who resist the cult; 2) Capture 'an innocent' to sacrifice; 3) Perform the sacrifice in the temple at Midnight on the solstice  Cast: The High Priest; Ben and Tina, teenagers who want OUT.
Goal: The Master will arise and empower the cultists	
Problem 1: Cultists (Swarm)	Plan: 1) Have the sheriff 'question' any outsiders; 2) Accidents happen to 'prisoners' in the lockup  Cast: Sheriff Woodward (corrupt cult member)
Goal: Seek and destroy outsiders (PCs)	
Problem 2: Temple (Graveyard)	Plan: 1) Show the weakest-willed outsider (PC) visions of what they want; 2) Cause them to hallucinate and become paranoid about a friend; 3) Push them to kill a friend or loved one  Cast: Old Walter, the town drunk, who rambles madly...
Goal: Corrupt the mind of a visitor	
Problem 3: Fear (Corruption)	Plan: 1) Keep suspicions high, so all think everyone else is a cultist; 2) Push the townies to report each other/PCs to cult  Cast: Mr. & Mrs. Denway, who just want to protect their family...
Goal: Cause the townsfolk to rely on the Cultists for aid	
Little Questions: Will Ben and Tina survive and escape the cult? Will the PCs convince Old Walter to help them fight back? Will a PC accidentally injure or kill another PC or an innocent?	

## Blank Framework Sheet

<b>GMA Framework Sheet</b>	
Core:	
<i>Big Question:</i>	
<b>Doom:</b>	Plan:
Goal:	
	Cast:
<b>Problem 1:</b>	Plan:
Goal:	
	Cast:
<b>Problem 2:</b>	Plan:
Goal:	
	Cast:
<b>Problem 3:</b>	Plan:
Goal:	
	Cast:
<i>Little Questions:</i>	

## ADVENTURE PREMISES

The premise of a story is the back cover of the module, the elevator pitch for the game, or the message you send a friend to try and hook them into making a character. It doesn't tell you everything about the entire story, but it gives you a place to start.

Following these tips, you'll be creating fill-in-the-blank style adventure premises that will hopefully inspire further ideas. If you are going to make any firm decisions about the specific style and tone of game you want, you should make them before you start rolling; after that, if you wind up with an option that doesn't feel like it fits your concept, choose again!

To use these randomizer lists the way I do, follow these steps.

### Fill in the Blanks

Start with this sentence, treating the underlined portions as blanks to fill in:

**The Questgiver asks you to complete this task because reasons.**

If any parts of that sentence are already decided for you (or by you), fill them in first, and then skip the associated steps below; if you know the Questgiver is going to be the character's boss, there isn't a reason to randomize it. Also, before you start rolling, review these tables and replace the options you don't like with ones that fit your style.

Also, if any non-randomized part of that sentence doesn't fit (for example, in a game about surviving a haunted house, you may be **forced** rather than **asked** to survive, etc), change or reinterpret it as you see fit.



## The Questgiver

Who is sending you on this quest? For a more down-to-earth game, use the Difficulty Selector to randomize; for a game more likely to involve the strange and powerful, just use a d10. (Note! If there are several ideas listed in square brackets ([a secret society/a religion/a company]), then pick or randomize from that sub-list.)

Roll	Questgiver
1	A tremendously powerful [political/religious/corporate] leader
2	The high council or board of directors of [a secret society/a religion/a company]
3	The [wealthy patron/mob boss/supernatural creature] that once did you a favor
4	The local [police chief/mayor/bartender/historical society nut]
5	The [employer/captain/master/leader/owner] you serve
6	A [family member/friend/old flame/business partner/traveler]
7	A young [medium/"Hunter"/scholar/priest] in over their head
8	A [shadowy figure/old wanderer/note sent over to you] at the bar
9	A world-famous [celebrity/journalist/paranormal researcher]
10	A major [celestial/demonic/fae/mythical] being

## The Task

Here we have a more interesting table. The first column is aimed at games that center around surviving a foe or situation, making staying alive the focus; the second is meant to supply stories of investigation and discovery, seeking the truth at any cost; and the last is for games about protecting something or someone (the mask or facade of normality most people believe; the innocent; the characters' home). These tables have no particular weight towards the middle, since they are already broken down into three segments; just use a normal d10 after you've picked your preferred column.

However, a note on Horror, especially Survival, tasks; when building a premise with one of these, you may need to consider that the Questgiver or Reasons may not literally ask the characters for help, or be the reason they continue in the scenario. If 'A world-famous celebrity' asks the characters to 'escape a [prison/sadistic game/house],' the celebrity may be the villain who has lured the PCs into a trap for their own amusement.... likewise, perhaps 'you were promised treasure' as a reward for coming to this celebrity dinner party at a creepy mansion, but that may not materialize in the end....

Roll	Survival	Investigation	Protection
1	find [food and shelter/basic medicine/a place of safety] for your group	identify and hunt [a monster/a person/a force] terrorizing people	free a [spirit/ghost/creature/person] from a curse or horrible fate
2	escape a [prison/sadistic game/house]	investigate a [murder/theft /break in/disappearance]	destroy a [dark artifact/source of evil/unholy place]
3	heal a sick or wounded [friend/family member/traveler]	discover the truth of your [ancestry/birth/homeland]	seek the aid of a powerful or legendary [being/person/force/organization]
4	survive a period of time at [the island/the house/the cabin/the ruins]	find the answer to a seemingly impossible [riddle/question/problem]	slay or destroy a [madman/monster/force/organization]
5	identify the traitorous [enemy agent/former friend/person of power] in your midst	find a retired [investigator/professor/researcher]	stop the rise of [an ancient evil/a new dark force/a fallen champion of light]
6	keep the group from fighting over [resources/power/relationships]	prove someone innocent of crimes that may have been caused by a [madman/monster/force/organization]	temporarily ally with evil terrible to fight a worse [madman/monster/force/organization]
7	help the group survive by [fortifying/supplying/defending] their home	scout and learn about [an unknown area/an abandoned structure/a ghost ship or town]	cover up the evidence of a [supernatural event/monster/madman]
8	pretend to align with the [madman/monster/force/organization]	infiltrate and uncover the truth of a mysterious or eerie [person/town/group]	learn to use and control new [supernatural/psychic/divine /demonic] powers
9	evade or hide from an unstoppable [madman/monster/force/organization]	discover the source of inexplicable happenings in a [home/hotel/town/wilderness]	train a new [apprentice/hunter/investigator]
10	survive the trip between two places despite [the conditions/ the location/being hunted]	identify the true villain behind problems blamed on a [madman/monster/force/organization] likely innocent of them	create or reinforce a believable cover story for activities by [yourselves/a friend/an ally]

## Reasons

Why must you complete this task? What drives you? Unless some reason has already presented itself (and it might well have, either because you knew it ahead of time or because the task you picked suggests one to you--especially the Survival tasks), roll on this table to find out. Like the Questgiver table, this one is weighted to have more 'reasonable' or 'likely' (given the genre) motivations grouped in the middle, so use the Difficulty Selector if that appeals to you.

Roll	Reasons
1	you must, in order to restore a loved one's [sanity/power/life/soul].
2	you were promised [treasure/a favor/power].
3	you are compelled to by a [curse/debt/oath/duty].
4	a [lover/friend/mentor/dependent] of yours will suffer a terrible fate otherwise.
5	your [sanity/soul/family/life] hangs in the balance.
6	you must, to prevent [the group from falling apart/the deaths of innocents/greater losses].
7	you must, as this is [a personal trial/a chance for redemption].
8	you were promised [the truth at last/answers/knowledge].
9	you are the only ones who can [complete this task/know about it/survive the challenge].
10	you must, to prevent [unleashing terror/plague/famine/the end of the world].



## Horror Premise Tag Symbols

These can be used in the creation of any horror adventure, using the premise system or not; consider this an example of how to create a tag symbol table for your own games.

After (or before) filling in the blanks in the premise, draw one card and look at the three tag symbols that result; if at all possible, find a way to apply their meanings to your game. Only redraw if you can't fit two of the three into your concept; if one seems to be an outlier, just ignore that one.

<b>Tower</b>	A fortress, mansion, prison, temple, ruin, isolated base, remote island, cabin in the woods, or similar location. Hard to get in and/or out.	<b>Moon</b>	Recent events leave loyalties confused and uncertain. Who is 'good' and who is 'evil' may be in question; suspicion abounds, and betrayal may follow.
<b>Crown</b>	The rich and famous are involved; someone with a lot of money or power of another sort may be implicated, or otherwise crucial to the story.	<b>Sword</b>	Physical violence is a primary concern, either immediately before or after the story starts. Someone, PC or otherwise, is attacked or injured.
<b>Heart</b>	Family, friendship, or romance are at stake; if they were already involved, then the situation becomes more extreme. They could be in physical or spiritual danger, or the relationships to PCs might be threatened.	<b>Shield</b>	The characters must protect someone or something vulnerable; there is an express danger to the subject. They may have been threatened directly, or might represent an obvious casualty if the PCs fail.
<b>Skull</b>	Death is looming and/or has already struck close to home; regardless of the cause, someone close to the PCs is dying or dead. If only dying or threatened, they may be possible to save.	<b>Target</b>	Mental violence is a primary concern; sanity and the difference between illusion and reality will be a focus. Either immediately before or after the start of the story, someone experiences mental trauma.
<b>Sun</b>	A ray of hope in the darkness; whether it proves true or not, something suggests a positive outcome may be possible.	<b>Wand</b>	Supernatural (or apparently so) events are involved, whether or not the world is meant to be explicitly supernatural. A killer strikes and vanishes in "impossible" ways, etc.

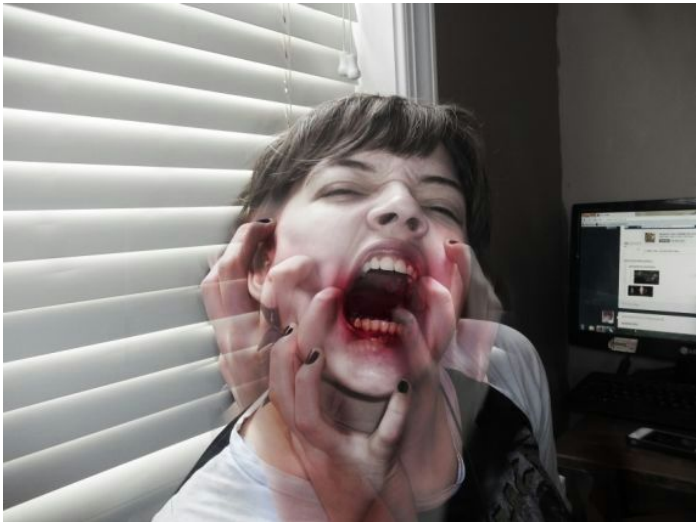
# CHARACTERS

You can already randomize characters with the deck, but to tweak them for a horror game, here are two suggestions.

## Professions

Before you draw for any other components of the character, consider giving them a random profession appropriate to the current setting--that may give you some ideas to start with.

This table is weighted with professions more thematically common in a **modern horror** setting towards the middle, so draw for the Difficulty Selector instead of rolling a d10 if you want the randomization to be more in line with those genre tropes, or change it to fit your setting more closely!



Roll	Professions
1	Royalty or Political Leader
2	Celebutante (rich kid, minor star, pop singer, former child actor)
3	White-collar (doctor, teacher, accountant, lawyer)
4	Blue-collar (mechanic, engineer, electrician, mason, plumber)
5	Punk kid (high school student, frat boy, urban legend junkie)
6	Explorer (hiker, photographer, researcher, ‘urban explorer’)
7	Vehicle operator (pilot, sailor, driver)
8	Criminal (thief, con-man, quack doctor, sham psychic)
9	Occult specialist (medium, priest, professional skeptic)
10	Experienced monster hunter

## Horror Character Tag Symbols

As with anything else, you can modify characters by drawing one card and applying the Tag Symbols; here is an example table to get you started. When you draw, try to fit at least two of the results into your NPC!

<b>Tower</b>	The NPC is taciturn, surly, and generally unwilling to talk to anyone without significant motivation.	<b>Moon</b>	The NPC is hiding a secret, either big or small, that has at least a little bearing on the story. Characters are likely to spot this, but may not be able to divine the secret.
<b>Crown</b>	Whether or not they have access to it, the NPC has a family which is rich, famous, and/or powerful.	<b>Sword</b>	The NPC has ability in physical conflict, either through training or experience; they may have scars (physical and/or mental) as a result.
<b>Heart</b>	The NPC is highly empathic, and feels strongly for others, or at least appears this way; they connect with people, forge strong bonds, and are unlikely to leave anyone behind.	<b>Shield</b>	The NPC is suspicious, guarded, and slow to trust. They are not necessarily hiding anything, but are generally cautious, perhaps to the point of paranoia.
<b>Skull</b>	The NPC is sick, either physically or mentally. They could be in danger of dying, and they could also pose a threat to the group--or it could be nothing.	<b>Target</b>	The NPC has an agenda that they want the characters' help to fulfill... though the characters may not be aware of it at first, and it may or may not align with their own goals in the end.
<b>Sun</b>	The NPC is innocent, open, optimistic, or childlike in outlook (though not necessarily in mental age or ability). This can be equally uplifting or dangerous.	<b>Wand</b>	The NPC has experience, real or merely professed, in dealing with the supernatural and/or mundanely horrific.

## ENCOUNTERS

Here are two tools to help keep things moving if you need a quick random encounter. They can be used separately or together.

### Premade Combos

If you draw for a random event, but get a combination of Noun + Verb you don't think makes any sense (or if you just want to start your game with some pre-made suggestions available), roll on this table!

Because it only provides a Noun and Verb, you can also then draw an Adjective to further modify the encounter, extending the table below from 10 results to 1200.

Roll	Verb, Noun, and Suggestions
1	Unearth/Team: What was thought to be the work of one person, in fact, more than one; a killer is really killers, or the mysterious stranger is the front-man for the mysterious group.
2	Remember/Lies: A character remembers a past deception that seemed harmless at the time, but now is much more sinister; or now discovers they have been lied to or deceived in the past.
3	Beguile/Death: Either death looms, but is escaped, or a dying character is saved in a similarly narrow fashion--but death doesn't like being cheated. Are they still in danger?
4	Violate/Deity: Something (un)holy is desecrated. A shrine is disturbed, a relic smashed, an altar profaned. The deity itself, its supernatural guardians, or its mortal priests may take vengeance.
5	Observe/Dream: Eerie dreams; this could go several different ways. A character might have a disturbing nightmare now, or could recognize things they previously dreamed happening around them--or might even begin to notice dream-like qualities in the world around them.
6	Poison/Emotion: A relationship that was positive becomes a corrupt influence, though it may take time to fester; or a highly negative emotion is raised, and it foments conflict.
7	Condemn/Magic: This makes me think of a witch-burning (or equivalent) mob forming; it could more literally indicate someone acting or speaking against magic, the supernatural, or a religion.
8	Imitate/Sustenance: Fake food? The PCs discover they've eaten something tampered with or disguised (what <i>was</i> that meat?), or the supplies they thought they had have spoiled or been stolen.
9	Silence/Network: No bars! Your battery died! You forgot the wifi password! Or, depending on the setting, the PCs are otherwise cut off from support and help.
10	Punish/Goodness: No good deed goes unpunished--literally, in this case. Either a previous good deed, or the next one the PCs do, causes unexpected harm or backlash. The person they save goes on to cause irreparable damage, or the like.

## Horror Encounter Tag Symbols

This sample tag symbol table is geared towards modifying events and encounters. These can modify any encounter (random or not) with suggestions appropriate for the genre. Try to find applications for at least two of the results.

<b>Tower</b>	The encounter introduces a new location; it could be a place to travel to, or a new but local area (such as a hidden room).	<b>Moon</b>	The encounter provides information that contradicts something previously known or discovered. Whether this revelation can be trusted, or is simply a red herring, is unclear.
<b>Crown</b>	The encounter has higher stakes than previously expected--its importance increases. This could mean a better reward or a more brutal punishment.	<b>Sword</b>	Physical injury, due to a random act of fate (broken floorboards), a sudden surprise attack (I thought you finished off all the zombies?!), or something similar, is part of the encounter; if it already was, the injury is more severe.
<b>Heart</b>	The encounter is personal for one or more characters; emotions run high, grudges boil over, hearts break. It could have been intentionally brought to this point, or it may have been an accident, but either way, people aren't thinking clearly.	<b>Shield</b>	The encounter involves a defense or protection on the part of the PCs, of themselves or someone/something else. They might have to hold off an attack, find a place to hide a fugitive ten seconds ahead of the law, or do something else along those lines.
<b>Skull</b>	Death is here; either someone has already died (perhaps the killer struck again?), or death is a likely consequences of this encounter. If it already was, perhaps a mortal injury and the struggle to survive are a fitting addition.	<b>Target</b>	The encounter serves to isolate the characters (or a character) in some way--either physically or socially, or by making them a literal target.
<b>Sun</b>	Something about the encounter (vital information, necessary supplies, a helping hand, time to rest, emotional reconciliation) assists the characters and instills hope, even if only for the purpose of letting it be dashed in the next scene.	<b>Wand</b>	Something seemingly inexplicable happens (which could be VERY strange if the universe is already blatantly supernatural). It need not involve magic, but strange forces appear to be at work; mysterious strangers appear to help, unseen assailants attack, objects vanish from locked rooms.

# UNCERTAINTY

One of the most critical components of a horror game is fear, which is more challenging to instill in the players than it is to mandate for the characters. Fortunately, there are tricks that you can use (solo or in standard play) to create at least a taste of the horror the characters are experiencing.

To a large degree, horror and fear are created by a lack of understanding and a sense that all is not as it should be--if one thing is wrong, we think, what *else* might be lurking beneath the surface? If we don't know the rules, we have no way of knowing if the universe is stacked against us or not. Will the gun I'm holding kill the beast charging at me down the hallway, or is it truly unstoppable? Tension is high; this is the climactic moment, the end of the movie: I pull the trigger, shout, and we cut to black! But is the next scene of triumph or gore?

Here are suggestions for building uncertainty in your games.

## Fearful Chaos

While the use of the random event generator is discussed in detail in the instructions for the GameMaster's Apprentice, consider these possibilities:

- If you are using the deck as a game engine, use a system of Tension (page 22 of the instructions document) that creates an appropriately high rate of random events. For example, for the slasher-flick style of horror, you might use whichever system appeals to you, but also rule that the appearance of a clue or piece of evidence in a scene automatically ramps the tension up by 1, and any scene where the killer is attacking (or the investigators are confronting the truth, etc) gets set to 8 if it wasn't already higher.
- If you are running a more traditional game with a GM, consider using a similar system of Tension and drawing against it whenever a character takes action directly opposing the villain in a new way; for example, when attacking, hiding from, or attempting to defend against them. If a random event is triggered, it must be interpreted as negatively (for the players) as possible: the wind scatters the salt circle; the groundskeeper left the back door unlocked; it turns out that stabbing the masked killer has no effect; you realize the mask is actually based on William Shatner's face and freeze in terror; and so on.
- To reiterate a suggestion from the instructions, modify any scene that needs a bit more thrill by using the sensory snippets: draw a card, read all four, and pick one or more that might evoke nervousness or suspicion (obviously modifying and working them into the scene as necessary).

## Suspicion Tag Symbols

Who can you trust? Consider making specific tag symbol tables for things like this in your game; at critical moments, or when establishing or revealing new information that might change relationships or expose unpleasant truths, draw a card. Perhaps, at the very least, mandate that a card will be drawn at one or more specific points in the game, so that you just *know* someone or something can't be trusted...but you won't know who or what until you get there.

<b>Tower</b>	Home, headquarters, or other location may be compromised; was someone here while you were away? Is it bugged? Are they watching you?	<b>Moon</b>	A suspect or bad guy suddenly seems less evil, or at least more helpful. Why would they help you? Does it serve their own ends, or were you wrong the whole time?
<b>Crown</b>	A leader may have mislead you or betrayed you. Are they being framed? Is there a reasonable explanation for their apparent actions?	<b>Sword</b>	Your weapons don't work--they may have been sabotaged, or they seem ineffective for some other reason. How could this be?
<b>Heart</b>	A friend or loved one may have an ulterior motive. Are they truly on your side? Does this mean intra-party conflict?	<b>Shield</b>	Armor, protective charms, or wards fail or simply don't do anything. Did someone disable them, or were they useless to begin with?
<b>Skull</b>	Someone thought dead might actually be alive--or someone you dealt with recently may have been dead for much longer than that. What is going on?	<b>Target</b>	Your goal is called into question--is it still possible to achieve? Is it the right goal to be seeking? Are you really the villain?
<b>Sun</b>	A helpful acquaintance or assistant may have their own agenda, or may have sold you out. Can you trust them? What did they really want?	<b>Wand</b>	Abilities, powers, or special knowledge (arcane or mundane) suddenly appear useless, incorrect, or corrupt. Can you trust your own capabilities?

## Questionable Decisions

How do you solve a mystery or investigation that was generated randomly? By tracking your Questionable Decisions.

This is similar in purpose to the tag symbol tables for suspicion, above, in that the goal is to ensure that you can't necessarily trust your assumptions, but it produces results much more closely tailored to your particular story. This version fits the most clearly in an investigative game--but that doesn't have to mean a *detective* game, necessarily. Any time when the nature of the villain, situation, characters, or setting is potentially in question, this is one method of resolving those questions without being completely arbitrary.

- 1) Starting at the beginning of a game, keep a blank chart handy, titled Questionable Decisions and labeled 1-10. If you want the characters to have the potential to get the solution right on their first try, fill in one space on the chart as "No Surprises;" pick either 1 or 10 (or both) for a low chance of this occurring, or numbers closer to 5 and 6 for a high chance.
- 2) As the game progresses, keep track of decisions that might come back to haunt the PCs later, or information that might not be trustworthy. Enter each piece into one of the lines on the table; put the least trustworthy/most dangerous assumptions in the 5 or 6 spots, and the more trustworthy/safer-bets closer to the 1 and 10 spots.
- 3) If information or a decision on the table is invalidated during gameplay, update the chart and remove or alter those entries.
- 4) If you run out of space on the chart, either start a second or replace the most trustworthy entries on the chart with your new potential problems.
- 5) During any moment when a plot twist might be revealed--such as confronting a suspected villain, or even simply retrieving information that would confirm or deny your suspicions--draw a card and use the Difficulty Selector to pick one of the entries (you can optionally roll 1d10 instead, but that produces flat odds, making each entry equally likely).
- 6) Whatever fact or character is rolled becomes something the PCs are wrong about, and now you know it (though you don't necessarily know the truth)! A blank line indicates that there were no surprises.
- 7) Erase the selected block and work this new information into the story, keeping in mind that the rest of the chart is still potentially uncertain.

This system can be used in non-horror games as well, but because it promotes uncertainty that isn't *completely* arbitrary (thus allowing your suspicions and thoughts to guide it), it works well for horror. And, of course, in extremely complex games rife with deception and intrigue, you can make multiple charts--for different organizations, people, plots and schemes, and so on.